

ISSUE #2 - DIVERSITY

THE INDEPENDENT AUTHOR MAGAZINE

indie



GIVING A VOICE
TO TRAUMA

EXPRESSING
DISTRESS IN POETRY

ART AND
AUTISM

HOW THE SPECTRUM
CHANGES ART

INVISIBLE
ILLNESS

COPING WITH
PHYSICAL ILLNESS
IN WRITING

@futarinokizuna_

WELCOME!

Indie is an online magazine dedicated to the independent author and artist community. It features opening chapters, short stories, poetry, as well as advice, non fiction articles and interviews. Here, there is something for every reader, and you're able to support a large amount of creators.

This issue is on **Diversity**, with a focus on mental health, neurodiversity, people of colour and disabilities within the world of art and writing.

Please continue on with an open mind and be aware that some issues discussed in this issue may be sensitive.

COVER ART BY @FUTARINOKIZUNA_



CREATED BY ALEXANDRA KILLWORTH

Instagram: @alexandra_killworth

Facebook: Alexandra Killworth

Twitter: @alex_killworth

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CREATIVE WRITING

Featuring:

Poems from a Fractured Mind

(Matt Earl)

Nabeeha Asim

Samantha Jean

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BRICKS

POEM BY
MATT EARL

Building walls with brittle
stones, scars, bruises and broken bones

Hidden behind these emotional walls,
praying no one ever calls

Windows shut, curtains drawn I've been
building since I was born

Darkened childhood doused in sin, it's
where construction did begin.

I built it strong and so very high, never
smiled I'd only cry

Break them down stone by stone, join me
here so I'm alone

We'll hide together behind my walls safe
together for when darkness calls

MONOCHROME MADNESS

POEM BY
MATT EARL

Stories told by hidden cuts
and bruises chained to this
monochrome madness nobody
chooses.

Confined in the darkness of my
cerebral vault, wrestling dilemmas
searching for fault

rhetorical memories feed insular
fears, drowning in the remnants
of childhood tears

Smiles and laughter decomposed
years ago, the sweet smell of
death becomes friend more than
foe.

I AM LOST

POEM BY
NABEEHA ASIM

i am in face lost
with directions and a map
pencil in hand with no fear or
road

i am in fact lost
with the slightest bit of
knowledge
plunging into the unknown

i am in face lost
with dreams to create my path
needles pierce my feet on the
way to pearly white gates

i am in face lost
because of the whispers he
delivers on that silver platter

He will guide me and I will be found
however
right now
i am lost
with faith to bring me home

TEATIME

SHORT STORY BY
SAMANTHA JEAN

The steam blew like a roaring steam engine. Claire hurried to the stove, pulled the teapot, and reduced the flame. She looked around the kitchen. It was a wreck. Again.

She set her keys in the tray by the front door and opened a few cabinets until she found the teabags. Holding two mugs of steeping tea, she walked towards the back of the house.

Though the Hansel and Gretel trail of things would have been a good hint, the drifting notes of a song long forgotten hummed softly from the sunroom, guiding Claire to her 98 year old grandmother.

IMAGINARY

OPENING CHAPTER BY
ALEXANDRA KILLWORTH

My eyes open slowly.

I'm not sure what I notice at first. The glow in the dark stars on the ceiling; the weightlessness, floating sensation throughout my body; the comfyness of whatever it is I'm lying on; the lack of any memory or the throbbing pain in my temples.

I sit up groggily, rubbing my eyes with the back of my hands, feeling myself sink further into the material. Once I blink a few more times and my vision returns fully, it's like a splash of cold water hits my face.

The bright blue walls that encase me are covered almost entirely head to toe in posters; so many that with a first glance I can't even decipher what most of them feature. I suddenly realise just how small the room actually is. The tips of my shoes are only a few inches away from the wall in front of me. Wincing as a ray of light from the window strikes my eyes, making the throbbing that much worse, I look away at the rest of the room. A small, child-like desk sits securely in one corner, decorated with an array of coloured pens and pencils, scribbled on paper and a small but thick blue notebook dominates most of the available space. Next to the desk is a bin, though it's essentially empty, save for a few tiny scraps of paper and a chocolate bar wrapper. I look back at the window, now that the sun isn't trying to blind me. Under the window is a padded bench, and aside from that is a small plain oak wardrobe. Once again, child size.

A wave of fatigue washes straight through me, only to evaporate mere moments later suddenly.

I stand up, finally looking behind me and seeing the bed I was just sitting on. It's fairly small and plain, with a light blue duvet and two white pillows.

In this moment I look down at myself. A strange feeling of disassociation hovers around me and won't leave me alone. The nagging sense of a bizarre lightness won't escape me either, for my entire body seems to feel so much lighter than it should be. Yet I still have no clue who I am, or even what my face looks like. I hold my hands up to the window, and the rays of sunlight barely pass through. My eyes widen a little and my jaw hangs slightly.

I may not remember anything, but I remember I should be solid. I have a body, after all. I am made of flesh.

My eyes scan myself from my feet to my chest, which all seem extraordinarily average. Plain white socks, dark blue jeans and a basic red t-shirt with no design, no pattern, not even a logo. Damn, I really am plain as hell.

Barely coming to terms with my lack of memory, my gaze shifts to the room again. Everything is just so small. The stars on the ceiling have a strange familiarity that I can't quite place; yet it's the only thing I've seen that triggers anything for me. I drag myself over to the little desk, which isn't that difficult really, taking little effort to do so.

My hands brush over the various drawings and pictures among the desk. A small smile grows on my face. There's pictures drawn out with coloured pencils and pens, all bright bold colours, seemingly coming together to form people. I lift one up closer to me to examine. It seems to be a person with blonde hair, sat on something - probably a chair - in the middle of the page, surrounded by other bigger people in a circle. The others look practically identical, all with short black or perhaps dark brown hair, a green shirt and light brown shorts and trousers. An overwhelming sense of loneliness seeps from the figure in the middle, who I just realise is holding their hands to their face. Weeping, it looks like.

I'm in a kid's room.

Shit, I'm in a little kid's room. I'm an adult, or at least a teenager, hanging around in a child's room for no reason.

Panicking, I stride towards the door, where I'm suddenly blocked by the appearance of a girl. I slide to a stop immediately, almost stumbling from the shock.

This girl feels so much more familiar than those glow in the dark stars on her ceiling. So much so that it makes my heart sting a little, and I instinctively go to place my hand over my chest.

She's short and young, with big, natural green eyes and short but incredibly curly blonde hair resting just above her shoulders. She stands there, dumbfounded at the doorstep, letting her arms fall to the sides. I only just now realise she's wearing a pair of navy blue denim dungarees with a plain white t-shirt underneath. This must be her room; though I did think it was a boy's at first. That was my first mistake.

My mouth stays slightly open but no sound escapes. Not a single word is uttered.

"Jackson?"

I blink a few times, my eyebrows raised. Dumbly, I point vaguely at myself, still unable to say anything. But to my surprise, her little face lights up into an adorable grin, her hair bouncing on her head and shoulders.

"Jackson! You're back!"

I don't know who she is, but she seems to know me. Jackson? Is that really my name? I suppose, it does feel right, for whatever reason. The girl pushes past me, putting down the toy rabbit she was holding onto the bed, tucking it into the sheets. All I can do is stand and stare dumbly.

"I've missed you, Jackson. I haven't seen you for ages!" She loudly proclaims, holding her arms out wide.

At this point, I think all I can do is go along with it. I know nothing about myself but she seems to know something.

Who knows? Maybe this is like, amnesia or something. I could be a family friend or a relative. Neither explains why I ended up in a kid's bedroom, or why I seem to be translucent. At this point, any solution is so much more comforting than the reality.

The little girl jumps onto her bed, shifting around a bit before sitting cross-legged, her hands together in her lap. She gives me a sort of begging look, like she's expecting something from me, something I don't have or can't give.

"I've missed you too." I say, without really meaning it, but feeling like it's right to say. Perhaps that is what she's expecting from me.

I don't know for sure, but she smiles a little more up at me, kicking her legs back and forth.

Somewhere else in the house a door opens then slams shut, making me jump. The girl giggles at my reaction, jumping off her bed and wandering over to the doorway. She leans out, looking off somewhere else. The sound of footsteps from downstairs echoes up to us; heavy, firm steps.

"Daddy? Is that you?" She calls out, stepping out of her room and into the corridor outside. I follow after her, leaning above her slightly.

Down the corridor is a set of stairs, with a door leading off to the side further down and framed photos and drawings covering the walls on all sides. A feeling of nostalgia washes over me suddenly, like a pain in my heart. A light switches on downstairs.

"Hm? Yes, I'm back from work. Are you behaving yourself?" A strong, deep voice speaks out. The voice of a stern man, without a doubt.

"Yes Daddy," She playfully sings, hanging by her hands that grip onto the edges of the doorway, "Where's Mummy?"

The man walks up the stairs. I swiftly back up into the girl's room, looking around for a place to hide. In the end I back up behind the open door, pressing myself up against the wall. Every part of my body tenses, though it doesn't feel right. It feels unreal.

"She's gone into town to get something for dinner," He tells her, stopping briefly outside her door. I hold my breath. I think my knuckles might be turning white from gripping my shirt so tightly. "You be good, Sasha."

Judging by the footsteps walking away and the creaking, followed by a door shutting, I can only assume he's gone into another room. I finally breathe, feeling the tension release temporarily. Sasha must be her name. This man must be her father, though I didn't get more than a split second look at him. I couldn't risk being seen, not until I at least know more about who I am and why I'm here. Or more about this family, at the very least for sure.

So the girl turns swiftly on her heel and waddles back into her room, paying me a second glance. I watch her go over to her desk and look under each sheet of paper, a determined look on her face. Another smile appears for some reason, knowing I can't really take it seriously. Though I want to, just to connect with something or someone. She finds a piece of paper and clumsily holds it up to me in front of her face.

"It's you!" She says happily, and I can tell that behind the paper is another childish smile

I lean closely to look at the drawing. It seems to be some man with scruffy blonde hair, a red shirt and dark blue jeans. Taking another look at myself, then back at the paper, it's practically undeniable. At least I'm a pretty average guy, easy to draw for a kid. I force another smile as she lowers the drawing, putting it back on her desk without saying another word..

One of the other doors squeaks back open again, making me jump out of my skin. Sasha giggles at my reaction. I'm about to, until that man pokes his head through the open door. I feel every nerve in my body freeze on the spot, my eyes locked onto him. Now that I see the man in full, part of me wishes I really hadn't.

He's so tall he must be way over at least six feet, and he practically hits the doorway as he walks in. That might be why his posture is hunched over slightly, but he must have a hard time in a lot of houses. He has neatly trimmed and gelled hair, so dark it looks black, that's combed back smoothly. The shine of a few white and grey hairs gleams through though, one of the first signs of ageing. I wonder how old he is. His facial features are stern, inexpressive and almost cold, yet they contain a hidden warmth within them. I think it's his eyes; they appear to have something, alongside the apparent gold specks within the hazel brown. His broad shoulders stand out instantly and match the rest of his frame; firm and big, but not fat, not large. Muscular, perhaps. Though I can't quite tell beneath his plain white shirt and unfitted jeans.

"Sasha, who are you talking to?" He asks calmly, despite the accidental sternness that slips through. Maybe that's just him.

Sasha stares at him momentarily, then looks up at me, then back at her father. "No one, Daddy."

He squints at her. Then he looks at me. I feel his dominating gaze go straight through me; and it makes me feel so sick, like my organs are being twisted about horribly. Part of me wants to speak out, maybe to greet him awkwardly. Until he shakes his head briefly and walks back out and down the stairs.

"No one, Daddy."

Sasha's response echoes through my mind endlessly. That firm, powerful stare is burnt into my retinas. I just stand there mindlessly, my chest rising again and again and again. I don't think Sasha really notices. She just sits on her bed cross legged, facing the window and looking at whatever, brushing her hair repeatedly with a sparkly blue hairbrush. There's some text on it but I can't read it while she's using it.

"No one, Daddy."

I must be a no one then. I'm Jackson, but that's all.



INTERVIEWS

Featuring:
DashieDraws
Myriam Tilson

HOW AUTISM INFLUENCES ART

WITH DASHIEDRAWS

Autism, also known as the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a developmental disability that affects a person's communication and socialisation skills and emotional regulation. For in depth information, see the National Autistic Society.

For this issue, I've interviewed autistic artist DashieDraws about how their autism influences and changes their art, the way they work and being an Instagram figure.

WHEN WERE YOU DIAGNOSED WITH ASD?

I was told I had autism at 8, but formerly diagnosed at age 9.

DO YOU THINK ASD MAKES A POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOUR CREATIVITY?

For definite. I wouldn't be the person that I am without it, and what comes with my autism is tonnes of creativity. I have so much I can never fit in all that I want to do!

HOW DOES ASD INFLUENCE THE WAY YOU WORK?

I see the world differently to everyone else, neurotypicals especially, but also others with autism as we're all so varied. On top of that, my process is very different to everyone else's which then again affects the end product. No one else sees the world the way I do, which I think is quite fascinating!

DOES ASD MAKE BEING A PUBLIC FIGURE DIFFICULT AT TIMES?

Oh yes, very much so. Especially with children, I really struggle to interact with them due to their unpredictability and their own lack of social skills, let alone mine. It can also get overwhelming with the amount people trying to talk to me, and this is a lot worse when it's in person.

Physical contact is a huge struggle, so I always ask people to ask me first if they want to hug me! Which is apparently something that everyone likes to do.

Another thing that's difficult for me is phrasing my words and putting them together. Through text, like this, I sound well put together, intelligent and eloquent. However, that's very different if you speak to me in person when I'm overwhelmed, as my mouth and brain don't like to cooperate.

HOW DOES ASD DIRECTLY CHANGE YOUR ARTWORK?

I'd say it directly affects me with things such as the texture of the paper; I can't touch certain textures. It's the same with brushes, the handles have to be a texture I can deal with. Some colours hurt my eyes when they put together or next to each other, so I usually avoid that all together, or I alter the intensity of them.

And again I see the world differently, so that affects everything as well.

HOW CAN OTHER CREATORS RAISE AWARENESS OF ASD?

Educating yourself is the first step, learn about autism through the eyes of autistic people by following social media accounts, reading blogs, etc. Share that content to your followers, and tell others to share it as well. Supporting autistic people is the best way to go about it, whether it's signing their petition, to sharing their artwork or buying something off their Etsy shop. There are so many ways! Just remember to listen to us, because we know what it's like better than you do, and to educate others on the subject matter.

DO YOU EVER DRAW THINGS RELATED TO YOUR SPECIAL INTERESTS?

Art itself is my biggest and most intense special interest. But I do have others! I love myths and fantasy stuff, like nymphs, mermaids, centaurs and dragons. Mediumship is also something I'm fascinated by, hence why I jumped at the chance to illustrate a Tarot Card deck.

There are also certain animals I'm obsessed with, such as deer and multiple types of sharks. I incorporate those into my work, and I'm hoping to get better at drawing animals as I do. Relating to drawing animals, a big special interest of mine is My Little Pony. I may be 15, but I've been a fan of the show since it came out in 2010, and I love to paint the characters as humans.

Honestly anything dream-like and whimsical grabs my attention, and then I'll usually pull inspiration from it and put it into my art.



MENTAL HEALTH AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

WITH MYRIAM TILSON

Myriam Tillson, a fine artist based in the UK, is well known on YouTube and Instagram for the way her work explores complexities of human nature and communication.

Naturally, like many artists, her work can be influenced by current affairs and mental health. This month, I interviewed her to see to what extent this is true and how it might benefit her.

1- IS YOUR WORK OFTEN INFLUENCED BY YOUR MENTAL STATE AND CIRCUMSTANCES?

Yes, although I think that is unavoidable for most artists. I don't consciously try to inspire myself from how or what I feel, but it inevitably leaks into my work, and I often only realise it upon completion and once I have had some time to step back and observe the work with some distance.

2- DO YOU DRAW INSPIRATION FROM MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES, AND IF SO, HOW?

Again, not consciously, no. I think the subject of mental health issues is an inherently human one, and not as clear cut as people might think. Most people have some issues to some degree or other, and I deal with whatever my own mind is going through by creating art, although that art isn't intentionally meant to represent my issues.

It is simply naturally influenced by who and what I am, so it makes sense that whatever I am going through adds a certain flavour to what I am creating. I do aim to create pieces with heavy symbolism, but I don't actively try to pinpoint the meaning of that symbolism. I just go with the flow of whatever feels right at the time I am making it. And it usually feels right because the imagery was expressing something I didn't realise I needed to exteriorise.

3- HOW DO YOU COME UP WITH YOUR CONCEPTS AND IDEAS?

I draw a lot, and I write any idea I have down, no matter how small. I also read a lot, and make sure to browse art books and websites regularly, as keeping myself immersed in art tends to help my brain stay inspired and active.

4- HOW IMPORTANT IS ART TO YOU AND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH? IS IT A COPING MECHANISM, OR DOES IT OCCASIONALLY CAUSE MORE TROUBLE?

It has never caused me any trouble, and has in fact always helped me through things. I find words limited in how much they can express, and how deeply, and I find images much more versatile when it comes to working out complex feelings and emotions. Art is less something I do because it makes me happy, and more of a compulsion ; I have never been able to stop doing it in some form or other, for any extended period of time. It is the one way of expressing myself that I cannot do without. I wouldn't be me without art.

5- ARE YOU ESPECIALLY DRAWN TO THE 'CREEPY' OR 'WEIRD' STYLES OF ART FOR ANY SPECIFIC REASON?

Hahaha, yes, I am. « Creepy » art not so much as « strange » art (I would describe my own work more as surreal, rather than horrific). I am not interested in work that wants to shock or disgust or horrify, but I am very drawn to work that I find intriguing, even better if it is in ways I cannot explain. I love imagery where darkness and beauty work together to create a piece that is layered and that illicit conflicting emotions. I love pieces that deal with the complicated nature of life and the human mind. I find the world beautiful, terrifying, confusing, overwhelming and awe-inspiring, all in equal measure, and I respond strongly to work I feel represents my experience.

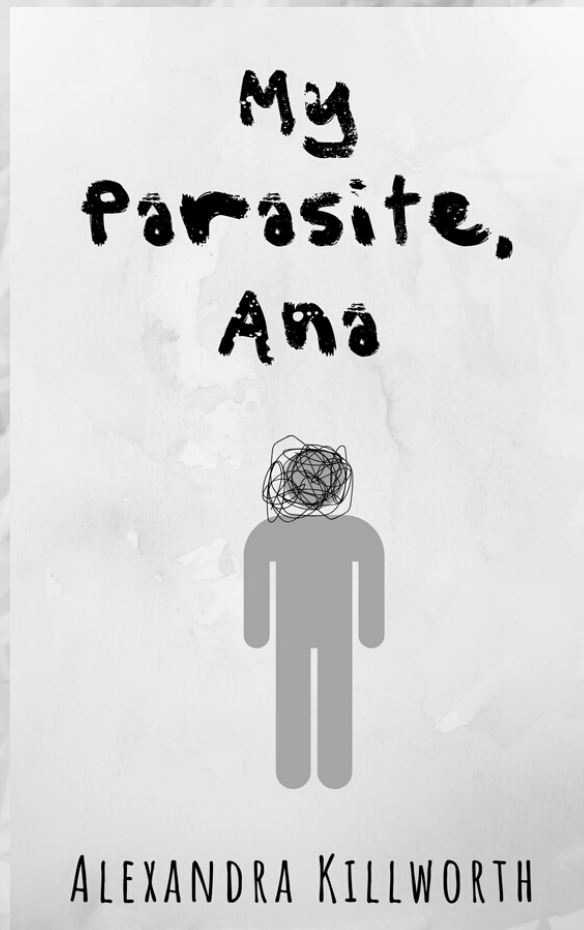


MYRIAM TILLSON



MY PARASITE, ANA

ALEXANDRA KILLWORTH



'It took over so quickly, I didn't realise I was sick'

Jonathon is your average teenage boy going through the motions- school, friends, relationships and hobbies galore. But anorexia doesn't discriminate. When his family sparks a health and diet spree, Jonathon finds himself obsessed with losing weight. Weight isn't the only thing he loses though. As he struggles through exams, rocky friendships, blooming relationships and complicated feelings, Jonathon loses piece after piece of his starved soul to anorexia.

This is the story of a boy and his parasite, Ana.

ARTICLES

Featuring:

Debbie Young

Alexandra Killworth

Rachel Burton

WRITING ABOUT TYPE 1 DIABETES

DEBBIE YOUNG

As a professional writer, my favourite strategy for coping with any form of crisis is to write about it, whether as a journal entry for my eyes only, on my blog, in a non-fiction book to share my experience in public, or under the veneer of fiction in my novels.

Nearly twenty years ago, an unwelcome, uninvited guest arrived in our household: Type 1 diabetes. That's the insulin-dependent kind, requiring multiple daily blood tests and injections or infusions via a pump. It was diagnosed first in my then-boyfriend/now-husband, not long after I met him, and a few years later in our three-year-old daughter (now 17).

WRITING AS A COPING STRATEGY

The news hit me like a bereavement, changing our lives forever. As I went through the classic five stages of grief, writing down my thoughts privately helped me reach the "bargaining" stage - the penultimate stage before "acceptance". The bargaining stage is defined as struggling to find meaning by reaching out to others and telling one's story. Realising sharing our experience might help others, I started to publish occasional posts on my writing blog.

I had by this time discovered the Type 1 diabetes charity JDRF, devoted to seeking better therapy and a cure for this currently incurable disease. I wanted to raise funds and awareness for JDRF and although I'd done sponsored walks and runs, I was uncomfortable repeatedly asking my social circle for sponsorship money. I decided instead to trade on my main strength: writing.

Gathering all the posts I'd written about T1D, I edited them to make them work in book form. The result was a slim paperback, *Coming to Terms with Type 1 Diabetes*, also available as an ebook. (More information on my website)

FROM BLOG TO BOOK

Having worked in corporate PR, I knew that, like commercial organisations, the charity would have rules about the use of its brand. I therefore wrote to ask permission to cite JDRF in the book. My request yielded a bonus: an introduction written by the charity's CEO - a credible seal of approval right at the front of the book.

Seeking a cover endorsement from a famous name, I tweeted BBC journalist Justin Webb, a co-presenter of the high-profile BBC Radio 4 Today programme, because he had recently written a moving article for the Radio Times regarding his young son's diagnosis with T1D. Not only did he tweet straight back to say yes, he also volunteered to write a piece of his own to go in my book. My friend Carol Cooper, a GP, medical writer, journalist and novelist, and teacher of patient communication skills to trainee GPs, was pleased to write a cover endorsement from a medic's perspective.

Self-publishing the book enabled me to reach a wide audience at low cost and therefore generate a greater royalty for the charity per copy sold. It sells a small but steady number online, but I also keep a small stock for other uses. If I hear of anyone newly diagnosed, I'll send them a free copy with my sympathies and the offer of a helpful chat. I have become an official spokesman for JDRF and take copies to events where I'm speaking for them. I've also given copies to the medical teams supporting my husband and daughter.

FROM NON-FICTION TO FICTION

An unexpected result was an approach from Australian author, Belinda Pollard, seeking a beta reader for the diabetes storyline in her novel Poison Bay. I was pleased that my knowledge enabled her to correct a few technical errors and to strengthen the storyline. In return she kindly promoted JDRF in the book's acknowledgements.

More recently, I've moved on to incorporating our experience of T1D in my fiction. In my latest novel, Stranger at St Bride's, one of the characters has Type 1 diabetes and the condition plays a crucial part in the mystery. I'll say not more so as not to spoil the plot, but I'm hoping it will subtly raise awareness and understanding of the condition, as well as further support for the JDRF. Stranger at St Bride's will be published in paperback and ebook on 1st July.

WHERE NEXT?

While writing about T1D has helped me write about a disabling condition affecting those close to me, I haven't yet written about my own illness: erosive rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Writing this article has made me add RA to my ideas book - thank you, Alexandra Killworth, for the prompt!

WRITING ABOUT EATING DISORDERS

ALEXANDRA
KILLWORTH

Writing about any mental illness has its difficulties. While it's important to accurately represent the illness and the issues that it produces, everyone's experience is unique and it's almost impossible to compare. As a result, when someone does write about mental illness, many are quick to judge it for not being identical to their own experience. That being said, far too many pieces of media (books, TV and film) do use mental illness for dramatic or melodramatic purposes or continue to push forward harmful stereotypes.

This is fairly evident in the world of eating disorders. Most books, TV and film with characters or narratives on EDs focus on the underweight, white teenage girl stereotype. As a result, a large amount of groups, such as people of colour, the disabled, men and the elderly continue to go underrepresented and ignored.

My most recent novel, 'My Parasite, Ana' tells the story of a queer teenage boy's experience with eating disorders. Initially, I felt confident writing about this topic because of my own experience with both anorexia and the ED community online. However, I quickly came across a few problems.

Firstly, treading the line between showing the harsh reality of the disorder while not being so graphic that it could be triggering. This was something I struggled with for a while and is the reason I never explicitly mentioned the main character's weight in numbers. The weight doesn't matter because it doesn't dictate the seriousness or validity, and I didn't want readers to compare themselves. After discussing the issue with the online ED community, I came to the realisation that as long as I didn't encourage or glamorise the behaviours, it would be fine.

That's the next issue at hand. Many TV shows or films have come under fire for often glamorising mental illness, especially eating disorders. This is typically through creating positive connotations and associations with the goal, which is weight loss. I overcame this in my novel by constantly describing the horrible side effects, both physical and mental, that come alongside ED behaviours. I also had the main character question his methods and have a fluctuating mindset—some days he feels able to eat, some days he doesn't.

Next there's the issue of my own bias. Since I have my own experience with eating disorders as a teenager, the way I present the disorder in the character is more likely to show similarities with me. To some extent, I did write in a few similarities. For example, how quickly the disorder developed and how the main character already suffered from low self esteem. However, at its core, everyone's experience is unique and therefore I made sure that his story was different to mine.

At times it was difficult to write because I am also ill. Especially when the main character's mental health really starts to deteriorate, although at the same time, I feel that I wrote those scenes well because of how much I connected with them.

The bottom line when it comes to writing about eating disorders is to represent everyone without resorting to stereotypes. Show the reality and don't glamorise. We live in a world full of fatphobic media that encourages unhealthy methods of weight loss and the last thing we need is more creative work about a beautiful underweight girl who easily starves herself. However, like with any mental illness, the portrayal needs to be accurate without damaging the creator or the reader. It's a delicate balance, but it isn't impossible to achieve.

If you or someone you know is struggling with disordered eating habits, contact your GP. Or visit the BEAT Charity website for more information.





MIMI N - SUN PROJECT

TWITTER: @_SUNPRO
INSTAGRAM: @FUTARINOKIZUNA_
WEBSITE: WWW.FUTARINOKIZUNA.COM

INVISIBLE ILLNESS

RACHEL BURTON

I work full-time as a paralegal in a law firm in Leeds and I also struggle with chronic illness – M.E, fibromyalgia and chronic migraine in my case. As you can imagine, writing books as well is very much a case of careful management of both time and energy. I know a lot of writers, particularly those writing their first novel are in a similar position, so I thought I'd share a few things that I discovered, mostly through trial and error, that helped me.

1- WRITE LITTLE AND OFTEN

When I was writing my first novel I set myself a writing goal of 300 words a day. I know that seems a very small amount but it felt manageable alongside balancing my work and my health. And here's the thing. I often ended up writing more than that, but knowing I only had to sit down and write 300 words meant that I sat down and wrote nearly every day. And sitting down and writing nearly every day is how you get that first book written!

2- MOVE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN

This is important for all writers but perhaps the most for those of us with chronic illness who feel too exhausted to go to the gym or for a walk. On days when I know I'll be sitting at my desk writing for a long period of time, I set a timer for every 45 minutes and when it goes off I get up and walk around the room, or have a stretch or dance around the kitchen for a couple of minutes. It helps get your energy moving again!

3- MEDITATE

I don't necessarily mean sitting cross-legged on the floor in silence (although if that floats your boat I highly recommend it - nothing beats it for a restorative practice in this crazy busy world). By meditation I mean allowing yourself to find time to just be, to let your brain slip into neutral and have a rest. Not only is this restorative but it's also the place where I unravel the most plot holes. Otherwise known as daydreaming, it can be done in the bath, while staring out of the window, sitting in the garden or on a gentle walk.

4- DON'T FORGET TO DO THINGS YOU LOVE

It can feel sometimes as though every spare minute that you have should be spent writing. I tried to do that and didn't find it particularly conducive to either my health or my writing process in the end. Give yourself time to do the other things you love as well. Read, knit, crochet, watch TV, cook, go to a yoga class.

We can load the guilt on ourselves sometimes and buy into the idea that a lot of time spent doing these things is wasted time but balance is important for your energy levels and your creative brain.

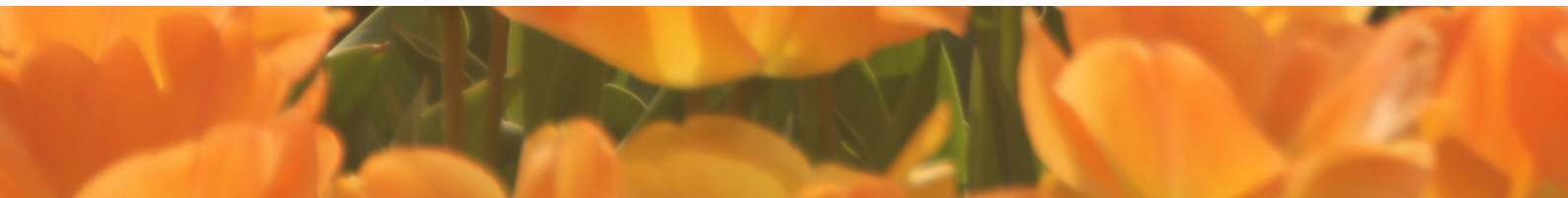
5- MAKE SLEEP A PRIORITY

It's tempting to stay up late writing, or to get up early to write before work, especially if we see other writers doing the same. But when we are living with a chronic condition, good quality rest is important - don't compromise. Your first novel will be done when it's done, enjoy the process because this will probably be the only book you write without a deadline....

And speaking of deadlines, one last little tip...

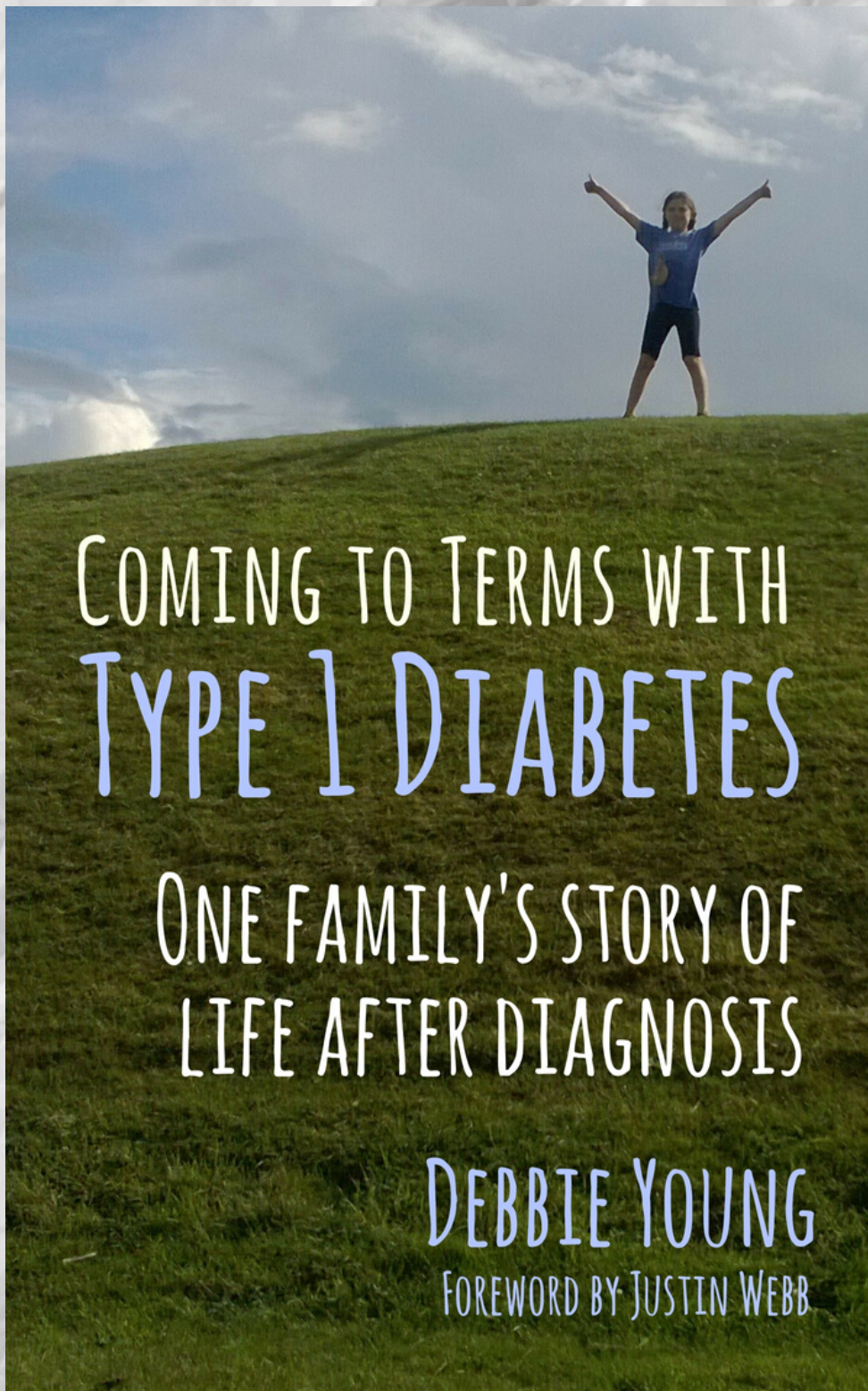
6- BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

I used to try to hide my illness and pretend I was "normal" (whatever that means). It doesn't help, and 99.9% of people will support you in any way they can. My agent and my publisher both know that I need flexible and generous deadlines because of my health. I was really nervous when I broached the subject with them but they were so helpful. So always be honest, always ask for what you need - you'll be surprised how much people want to help.



COMING TO TERMS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

DEBBIE YOUNG



COMING TO TERMS WITH TYPE 1 DIABETES

ONE FAMILY'S STORY OF
LIFE AFTER DIAGNOSIS

DEBBIE YOUNG
FOREWORD BY JUSTIN WEBB

THANK YOU

Thank you for downloading this issue of Indie! I'm happy with how it turned out and as usual, I want to thank the writers and artists involved as well as my amazing readers.

Everyone who contributed will be listed at the end so please check everyone out, you'll be supporting a wide range of creative people who all have unique, individual voices and work.

The next issue will be on Nature, so if you are a writer or artist who focuses on nature (plants, pattern, animals, weather, etc) and would like to be featured, please contact me.



CREATOR, WRITER AND ARTIST

Alexandra Killworth

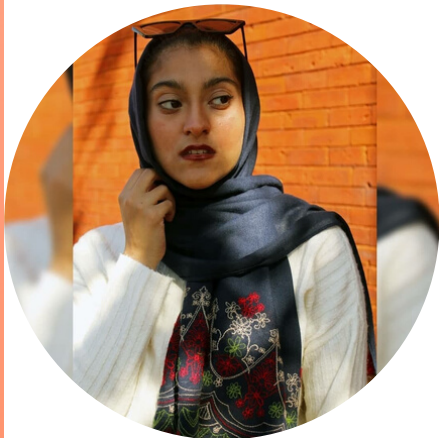
@alexandra_killworth

www.alexandrakillworth.home.blog

POET

Poems From a Fractured Mind (Matt Earl)

www.fracturedmindpoetry.com



WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Nabeeha Asim

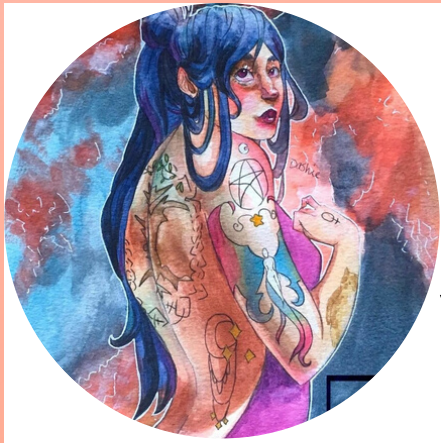
@just.nabeeha

WRITER

Samantha Jean

@samanthajeon.writer





ARTIST

Darcie Marcella

@dashiedraws_

www.dashiedraws.com

ARTIST

Myriam Tillson

@myriamtillson

www.myriamtillson.storenvy.com



WRITER

Debbie Young

@debbieyoungauthor

@DebbieYoungBN (Twitter)

www.authordebbieyoung.com

www.hulitfest.com



WRITER

Rachel Burton

@rachelbwriter

