



Differently

by Nicole Kubilus

We Think Differently

I was told I was stupid
Because I think slowly, yet I know
That my conscious walks through a labyrinth
Instead of speeding down the highway
Like everyone else does

By walking the pace
Of a crane creeping
Through muddy moss and marsh
I don't retrace my footsteps
Not even an inch
I observe how
Rock and sand forms
Concrete crop circles
That render the ridges
In my brain

The path of life
Is best framed as a maze
And I am the architect
Adjusting the design in phases
So that there is a path for me to walk
Too much open space scares me
I am a victim to the tormental elements

The details must be perfect
I lament every hole, crack, and crumble
Of a structure that keeps me safe
Even if it only exists in my head
My thoughts are raw, callused hands
Scrambling to keep every wall erect
Which is why writing in a planner
Paying bills, milling over homework
Is not a priority. You cannot see
That these are obsolete tasks
I need barricades from human nature
So I can live forever in my thoughts
The only place where I belong

We Process Our Senses Differently

My nervous system would prefer to live
In Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Mirror Room*
Where lights are suspended
Like fireflies frozen in time
Like the tiniest of galaxies
So far away that they lose
Their kinetic qualities
I could touch them
Without my hands being shocked
Or sucked into a black hole
I could gravitate to light
Without being incinerated by it

Here, I am immersed in iridescence
Swimming in glitter
Sinking deeper into the abyss
Where the abstract fluorescence
Of undiscovered ocean life thrives
I am a land-bound sea angel
Swaddled in darkness
With no sound, taste, or smell
If I do want to engage in my senses
It is a figment of my imagination

Stepping back into reality
Assailed by daylight
Air conditioning, kids cackling
Walking on reflective concrete
Hearing the hums of rush hour
Is as jarring as
Hearing heavy metal or
Staring into the sun
After waking up
From a restless night of sleep
Deprivation truly is bliss

We Move Differently

The reason that pre-teens
Walk with the gait
Of a newborn giraffe
Is because there is space
Between each bone in the body
Like how two front teeth
Grow perpendicular
Leaving a gap
To whistle through

I am an adult,
Yet I relate to that pre-teen stance
I too cannot control my limbs
As if I am writing my name
Using my non-dominant hand
And the pencil is suspended
From the longest, thinnest tree branch

Everyone around me
Is not a professional dancer
Yet carries themselves
With somatic self-mastery
How can someone walk, skip, twirl
Prance, then hold a mindful stance
Gage when to give space
And when to come close
Breaching someone's personal bubble
In an appropriate way

Yet I can't feel
Where my foot lands
Or that my hands are over my head
That I come towards someone
Like an ocean's high tide
Not having enough restraint to pull back
Even if I think hard enough
Or practice all day
It's not innate for me to coordinate
My body lacks a natural rhythm

We Communicate Differently

We are speaking a different language
When you believe that
I repeat a certain word
Fixate on something I heard
Or a concept—that it's all unacceptable

What you don't know is that
One word can be a love language
Feel as soothing as chanting om
Or humming a favorite song
Varying the tone can breathe life
To something fabricated by man

Isn't that fascinating?
Crafting a poetic hymn
Is about how a word
Rolls off the tongue
Varying the intonations
How can that not be explored
If not for revisiting the way
A word is spoken
Like the way you rehearse
How to ask your crush out

Isn't that also
An unhealthy fixation?
Who is to determine
How capable our cognition is
When we repeat and revisit
Something that matters to us
Has stakes, helps us make
Sense of things, brings us
To understand who we are
As thinkers and feelers

Words help me heal
By expressing pent up
Stress that makes me feel spent
I am fraught with wild thoughts
That need to be released
By repeating myself

We Socialize Differently

I yearn to be telepathic
Yet that is a double-edged sword
Intuit another person's thoughts
How they want to be interacted with
While not absorbing the onslaught
Of emotional tidal waves
When I don't engage
With my words, my eyes, my stance
In a way that pleases their preferences

I am a fantastically fallible person
Not a clueless contestant on *Jeopardy*
Staring at a sea of blue screens
Wondering how much money I would lose
If I picked the wrong social category
Said the incorrect answer
Didn't even phrase it as a question

I am tentatively sensitive
I sense how you feel
In a way explanation eludes me
Like how wisdom instead of smarts
Changes my heart rate
When I've trained myself
Not to think about anything

I am scared by comprehension
That goes over my head
In one ear and out the other
Yet makes my heart
Violently somersault
As if all of my senses
Were blown to smithereens
Like a deafening dog whistle
Bright lights in a white room
Hair and nails ripped off at once
Assailed by most foul smell and taste

I want to be alone, yet also blown
Away by a person that can hold space
Give me the strength, the courage to
See if our wavelengths match

We Might Need Help With Daily Living

Living in a neurotypical world
Is akin to moving to a new country
Never overcoming jet lag
No fluency in the language
Where home is a stranger
And homesickness a chronic ailment
No matter how many knick knacks
Sit on the shelves that remind you
Of who you are, where you came from

To maneuver in this world
Is like walking on ice skates
With no rink and no handrails
To speed down a hill in rollerblades
Without any protective gear
To slip on an unsalted road
Stare off the edge of a diving board
Have no sunscreen and fret being burned
To have an existential crisis
And yearn not to move an inch out of bed
Never wake up from a dream
That painted reality with Impressionist hues
Instead of realism starkness

Yes, I need help
Even though I might not look like it
You may assume that I don't
Or yearn to believe so
Much like an artist with creative block
Staring at a blank painting knowing
The deadline is fast approaching
I do not know what help looks like
Can't imagine it in my head
Or assure myself that my perception
Would translate correctly onto paper
Into reality. Please agree to help me

I cannot become a master of my destiny
Without a mentor, a maternal or paternal figure
Help makes me figure out
How to adjust my inner compass
Pass through this place with flying colors