

Darkness Visible

Rachel Goldsborough

Fear.

Dark clouds;
A storm
On the Horizon,
Slowly rolling in.

I feel it.
Just a whisper.
A warning.

But,
I feel it.
Rising
From behind.

I stand in a grassy field,
Vibrant green
Beneath my feet.
My face upturned
To the warmth
Of the Sun.

Happiness.
Contentment.
Peace.

All is well.

Eyes closed,
Unable
To see.

But
Suddenly,

Could it be?
I hope not.
Not again.

From among the storm,
A hooded figure
Shrouded in
Darkness.
Footsteps matching
The beat of my Heart.

Closer.
Only
One
Heartbeat
Away.

Right?
But
I feel
Her.

One
Heartbeat
Away.

If I know
This time,
Can I prepare?

I picture
All that is
Good.

Friends.
Family.
The being I name
Divine.

Who am I?
I am smart.
I am strong.
I am resilient.
I am passionate.
I am funny.
I am sweet.
I am loving.
I am giving.

I am Good.
I am Light.

Hope
That I may

Black clouds
Follow Her.
Darker,
Larger,
More terrifying.
She is the Storm.
Her steps
Announce
An ugly Homecoming.

With Her pace.

One
Heartbeat
Away.

Closer.

Closer.

Closer.

Closer.

Closer.

She is only a
Shadow

Bask myself
In Light.
Grab it.
Hold it
Close
To my vulnerable
Heart.
Beating in time

I can do this.
The clouds
Broke
Before.
They will break again.

I can fight.
A mantra,
An affirmation,
Rings powerful:
Hold strong.

Must warn those I love.

I won't be the same.

She'll try to change me.

She will change me.

But I am not Her.

She embodies
Darkness
That cannot
Be Seen
With the Naked Eye.

She hides
The sound of Her feet
Using my heart's
Beat;
Using the very thing

I can feel Her.

She wants to
Destroy.

Still
One
Heartbeat-

We are swallowed
Whole.

Of who I really am.

But I still see
Light.

She grabs my shoulders.
Cold
Washes over me.
Dark
Wraps around me.

The Light
Is shrinking.

I cannot see Her,
But I know Her.

She is Me.
And Together,

A note from the author:

Although I know my taste in music will never be universal, I will proudly stand by Mumford and Son's album Delta as an incredible compilation of art from beginning to end. It is from this album that I was able to find the inspiration for "Darkness Visible" during a visibly dark time. Picture You transitions seamlessly into the song Darkness Visible using only a drum resonating like a heartbeat. In Picture You, the singer confesses to a fear of something unlikable yet familiar on its way, and desperately warns the person he is addressing "you don't know me like this". From here, a drum leads us into Darkness Visible, a mostly instrumental song that leaves so much space for the imagination; to visualize what you will, feel what you will. It is from those few chords; the dips and swells; the quiet murmuring of a passage from Paradise Lost in the background; the consistent, persistent drumbeat; that I try my best to write in verse what I see when I listen.

Darkness Visible is my mural of the onset of depression. The song was my paint, my words were the brushstrokes. I cannot say that when you listen to the song you won't see something different. But I do hope that were you to read my piece and follow along with the song, you'd see where my writing aligns. The way depression seems to creep up on you in a way that you can recognize, but is so subconscious and subtle that you allow yourself to doubt what's happening.

The way you start to panic as the noise of deprecating voices gets louder. The sudden pause of tension as you name what it is you're experiencing.

Then the overwhelming crash and descent into complete darkness that seems to choke off all sense of hope.

Darkness Visible offers no resolution for how we move through depression. It only offers a voice to how beautifully ugly mental illness can be. I only hope that in this writing, those who struggle with their mental health can read, interpret, and understand: the way you feel?

You are not alone.

Affective, Cognitive, and Behavioral Impacts on Decision Making

Christina Farmer

Stigma disrupts society's vital functions such as progress, innovation, and unity. In her essay, "Stigma: An Enigma Demystified," Lerita Coleman-Brown offers a comprehensive examination of the origins and operations of stigma. Her analysis centers around a two-pronged theory: stigma is a response to difference, and carried out by three psychological processes (affect, cognition, and behavior). Affect refers to feelings of dislike or fear of people that are different, cognition plays a role in creating stereotypes about perceived differences, and behavior involves using social control to isolate stigmatized people. These three forces come together to affect how people make decisions to stigmatize others in social situations. However, difference is arbitrary; any trait can be "different" depending on the context. In modern society, people are stigmatized for differences such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability. The stigma around disability plays an important role in Mitchell Zuckoff's book, *Choosing Naia*. This book tells the true story of Tierney and Greg's decision to have their unborn child after finding out that she has Down syndrome. The first part of the book describes their long and complicated process of making their decision. They approached their situation methodically by gathering as much information as possible from their family, friends, doctors, and counselors. It was a morally complicated choice to make, and they listened to many arguments from each side of the issue. They knew that they could afford to have the baby, but were unsure if they would be capable of taking on the responsibility of having a child with Down Syndrome. Greg's parents are very religious, and urged Tierney and Greg to keep the baby. In contrast, Tierney's family members (George, Tara, and Ernie) were the main proponents of abort-

ing the baby, but they expressed their prejudices toward Down Syndrome in roundabout ways. The second part of the book shows that although Tierney and Greg face challenges as a result of Naia's disability, they are grateful for their decision to have the child. Ultimately, Tierney and Greg's story exemplifies Coleman-Brown's three functions of stigma (affect, cognition, and behavior) in George, Tara, and Ernie's arguments for aborting a child with Down syndrome.

Stigma is driven by affect in the sense that the innate fear of the unknown can cause people to avoid those that are different. People often stigmatize the disabled community in indirect ways because they do not want to admit to their discomfort and fear. For example, Tierney's brother, George, argued that she should choose abortion because the baby would likely die from a heart defect. He told her that she could prevent the inevitable grief by aborting the baby. Later, Tierney's doctor informed her that the baby had a high chance of surviving, proving George's warning to be completely misinformed. George had used exaggerated medical concerns in order to hide his fear of having a niece with Down syndrome. Greg explained George's behavior by reflecting, "people don't want to give up the shield they have from discrimination... And people know that a child with Down syndrome will feel discrimination. And because they don't want to deal with that, people will tend to seek out information that confirms their belief that this is something you shouldn't do" (Zuckoff, 55). George was unwilling to admit that he was afraid of having a niece with Down syndrome, so he found another way to justify the abortion. George let his affect get the best of him, and gave Tierney and Greg advice based on his own fears. Luckily, Tierney and Greg were able to see through his misconceptions, and