

Imitation of “To Cigarettes” by Nancy Connors

“To Anxiety”

By Olivia Brooks

I guess I’ve always had anxiety, but not in the sense of dying.  
In middle school it first conspired, as though my mind played  
tag with the tricks up other student’s sleeves.  
It’s a wave that comes and goes, making me feel as if I am flying  
above the clouds or below cement grounds.

I prepare a notion of clarity, an independent moment within myself  
to strengthen the morsels inside me shifting like a kaleidoscope,  
altering reality to something infectious that will ruin my dreams.  
A wrong message I shall receive,  
as if there is no such thing as the *Glory Days*.

And in high school, stuck up in my room,  
first half dating and second half not – sometimes the feeling  
that it’s all the same.  
Because anxiety lassos onto a person and uses them like  
an experiment to test parameters and deficits  
within a lonely soul.

People, pandemic, work, true intentions–  
I’m young but I feel as if I’ve been through it all.  
My soul seeks out the wisdom of positive influence  
and social media stars who handle rough patches  
within a day. I balance the self-help methods  
on a teeter totter in my heart,  
only for something random to shatter it apart,  
use my good days as preparation for a bad one,  
give myself reason to expect the unexpected,  
and justify the meaning that no life is near perfect.

Anxiety is like a long ago friend, aching to pursue a relationship,  
reconcile old bonds and blood, though it is never the same.  
It cannot contain me.

My overcome distraught and struggle is not what anxiety expects of me:  
sitting alone at night waiting for a reason to set flight back below that cement ground.  
I was stuck with the look of a lost child,

whose family they lost but really  
was just around the corner the whole time,  
wondering where I truly was.

Now I sit back and write about the anxieties and self-induced catastrophes,  
comfortably aware, sharp witted eyes, still a delicate heart,  
anxiety lacing itself in the backdrop far far behind,  
and my ever changing world lingering back there too, expecting me to snap.