

“Finding My Way Out”

By Mariah DeStefano

In everyone’s life, there are ups and downs. Some events in life may be more or less severe than others, but that’s life, isn’t it? Life goes on, just as mine did during my senior year of high school when I was assigned a poem to analyze and write a paper about—Sylvia Plath’s poem, “Mad Girl’s Love Song.” This poem is narrated by a woman undergoing an apparent heartbreak, all while questioning her sanity as she undergoes severe emotional turmoil, which drove her mad. At that point in my life, I was simultaneously undergoing my own personal emotional turmoil as I was recovering from trauma that I had experienced. In reading Plath’s poem, one theme stood out to me, above all; I had come so far in life, and there was no point in living in the past when the present was right in front of me. In reading about this woman’s intensive suffering, I realized that I deserved more for myself as opposed to letting the wrongs done to me control my life. I realized that I had been existing, but it was time for me to live.

In Plath’s poem, the speaker imagines loving someone, only to come to the saddened reality that this individual does not and will never exist, undergoing something like a mental breakdown. What really resonated with me was the speaker’s tumult of emotions. In the poem, Plath writes, “I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead. / ... I should have loved a thunderbird instead; / At least when spring comes they roar back again” (Plath, lines 12-17). The speaker is nothing short of passionate and despairingly shattered, her world having had fallen apart because of the loss of this imaginary loved one. Not only this, but the feeling of agitation and the constant mention of “(I think I made you up inside my head)” (Plath, lines 3-19). To be stuck in such mental turmoil resonated with me due to the feeling of hitting rock bottom. I felt similar, too,

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believing that I was alone in my feelings, and it made me scared. I was scared to feel foreign feelings, to reflect on how my past trauma affected me, to plan for life ahead of me. It felt like the future was never coming, and I'd be stuck in this depressing state for the rest of my life. However, I came to realize that this was not always the case, despite how hard things might have seemed at the time.

Upon sitting in my room, I came to the realization that my life shouldn't be dependent on others. What had happened to me that resulted in my depressing state wasn't great, nor was it warranted, but I had one of two options: One, I could go ahead and continue to rot in my doom-and-gloom-like state, and two, I could go ahead and take control of my own life to prevent the manic state of mind portrayed in Plath's poem. I, personally, chose the latter. In reading and analyzing Plath's poem, I came to realize that life is a beautiful thing, and it shouldn't be taken for granted. Although some of us are dealt bad cards in life, we're the ones playing the hand. I certainly didn't want to resort to the likes of insanity due to losing my own grip on reality. While the narrator of Plath's poem might have lost her mind, my mind was enlightened.

At the end of my senior year of high school, I presented my paper to a board of teachers, expressing just how valuable life is. To live is to be yourself and to express yourself in the best way possible. In reading Plath's poem, I was encouraged to embrace the life I'm meant to live, and to never allow others' decisions to impact the way I decide to grow. Unlike Plath's narrator, I managed to recognize the importance of living for *myself*.

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Works Cited

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<https://neuroticpoets.com/plath/poem/madgirl>. Accessed 9 Dec. 2024.