

Cut Down

By Ellen Moran

You made it through your lockdown
You stayed inside, protected
Walls called out to the outside you rejected
Doors lead to the parts of yourself you neglected
Before you agreed to adhere to rules born of the
The fear of being infected
You let your own self bounced back at you
Sometimes madness pounced and smacked at you
You tracked changes in facts, scrolled social media exchanges
Tried to control reactions to leaders we elected as they decided for you
And now, the state surveills you
Tells you when you can leave and have fun
Tells you that you can't touch anyone
But this is nothing new

She was inside for so long, but never protected
Before anyone felt any fear of being infected
Walls called out to her as the place she stayed because she was rejected
Doors led only to rooms where her sense of self became neglected
She had no choice but for him to bounce back at her
His madness pounced and smacked at her
He surveilled her
Told her she can't leave, she's not worthy of fun
Told her that she better not ever touch anyone
She walked on eggshells and felt his strength
Clutched her children tightly and tried with all her might
To keep him at arm's length

Long before it got too much
Her safety net was slowly stripped away
A lockdown began
Restricting her airways
with nowhere to go she locked down her body
She locked down her heart
Although it felt like very inch of her was being torn apart
She locked up her clothes
Locked up her skin
Vowed that though it was hell inside she would never really let him in

Inside, she tries to find a space to breath
She watches comings and going of powerful men
The same men who voted to cut refuge beds
Cuts that lock doors
that long ago stopped any trip outdoors
made because she's seen as a freerider
Cuts that make her a victim and not a survivor
Cuts that take away lights that shine in her darkness
Cuts that tell her his abuse is harmless
Cuts that affect over 1.9 million
Cuts that damage children
that make it necessary for her to justify her return
Cuts that bruise and burn
Cuts that stop her from getting help sooner
Cuts to stop red flags getting torn down by abusers
Cuts that lacerate arms and legs and cigarette burns in hidden places under the neck
Cuts that can't pay for someone to text her and just check
Offer her somewhere to go
For the night when it's bad or just for a chat when she's feeling low
Cuts to be ignored
Cuts to close refuge doors

Because she's been trapped in here
For longer than you have
And her lockdown within a lockdown
Is taking the breath from her body
She's hidden and told only
That she should call a hotline
Keep calm, carry on, act like everything is fine
But domestic murders have doubled since covid - 19
She's being imprisoned in statistics
Kept in a different cage
And it's just not enough
Because he's always around
and every time she calls
the line's engaged

If you are concerned about domestic abuse please visit the Women's Aid website at
<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/> or call the UK Domestic Abuse Hotline: 0808 2000 247