

Up:Rising

A Collection of Rebellious Imaginings From Authors With Lived Experience of Mental Health & Addictions

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear reader,

To start, let's make something very clear: this anthology is not a collection of "mental health stories". *Up:Rising* is a rebellion in literary form, a refusal to conform to industry norms that often gatekeep, silence, or exploit Mad voices.

To exist as a Mad person in a sanist world is an act of resistance. For some of us, simply surviving, let alone creating literature of any kind, is a rebellion against systemic oppression. Each piece in this anthology pushes back against all the gatekeepers who attempt to dictate not only *what* stories we're allowed to tell, but *how* we're allowed to tell them. It is rare for us to see our stories in print at all. When narratives around Madness do appear, they are often presented as palatable arcs of breakdown and recovery, trauma and triumph, Madness and sanity. *Up:Rising* breaks that mold by defying mainstream narratives and literary conventions. Within these pages, Madness is not a tragic metaphor; Madness is not a dangerous horror trope; Madness is not something to be fixed; it is something to be proudly held, tenderly explored, and/or joyfully celebrated.

Up:Rising is an unapologetic chorus of Mad voices that refuse to conform or cower in the shadows. It was born from a collaboration between two organizations rooted in community care: Workman Arts, a multidisciplinary arts organization supporting artists with lived experience of mental health and/or addictions; and Strangers in a Tangled Wilderness, a collectively-run publisher of radical culture grounded in anarchist ideals. We invited writers with lived experience of mental health and/or addiction issues from across Canada to send us their stories, poems, daydreams, imaginings, and manifestos around all the things it can mean to rebel.

What we received exceeded our expectations. While some pieces whisper rebellion through quiet acts of survival, others rage loudly against psychiatric incarceration, systemic violence, and various forms of injustice. Many of the pieces stare you defiantly in the eye while rupturing sanist stereotypes. They subvert genre. They challenge traditional literary structures. They dare to crip time and space, to be nonlinear. Some pieces queer what healing means and turn the notion of recovery on its head until it is too dizzy to stand. None of these works follow a straight path. They all twist and tangle into a messy but bold collection of rebellious imaginings. This

collection isn't about overcoming madness, it's about thriving with our madness, fully and fiercely, on our own terms.

The collective rebellion within these pages is fueled by the courage, vulnerability, and brilliance of the contributing authors. We hold deep gratitude for every contributor who trusted us with their work. We are especially grateful to all the authors living at the intersections of systemic marginalization including (but not limited to) the following intersections: Mad, neurodivergent, disabled, queer, trans, racialized, poor, criminalized, and institutionalized.

A huge thank you to all our advanced readers and reviewers. Thank you to Shae Stamp for the powerful cover art image. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to the wonderful (and incredibly chill) team at Strangers, and to our amazingly supportive colleagues at Workman Arts who have been cheering us on every step of the way.

Finally, thank *you*, reader, for picking up our book. We hope that this collection of rebellious imaginings challenges you, moves you, and inspires you to join the uprising.

Sincerely, with both rage and tenderness,

Hanan, Kelly, & Teyama