

Inheritance

By J. Lewis

From my father I've inherited green eyes,
and a predisposition for depression.
Others confuse us as simply "too sensitive."
He pondered idea after idea, so many

Scribbled thoughts in journals and on index cards
about life lived and lives unlived and mistakes made and unmade.

I would lie with him on his office floor, if I could,
underneath the examination table.
I'd cradle in the fetal position he
assumed when life became too much.

No doctors to help the Doctor,
hushed tones of "hypoglycemia," whispered around,
as a way to explain the whole incident away. Again.
In the old times – Before Prozac

Have you ever just laid there?
When the world was too much. You can tell me,

I'm good at keeping secrets. I'm right there, on that linoleum floor
with him now. Cold and speckled gray on gray shades,
going on for days and days. Because , really, we're always there,
with our shared DNAs.

Laying beneath the table, next to its four metal pedals that shift,
up or down, or tilt to or fro
and here we are,
below, on this rather down type day.

The floor of the examination room holds my weight with his,
I'd hoped to avoid getting to know the patterns
so closely. Most people only glance it from above,
but never truly know it, as they are busy

looking up. But dad and I have been down here
for ages. Forever. Waiting for nothing
Waiting
for it to pass.

Later we will walk out into the forest,
and feel alive again, surrounded by green friends

NAMI NJ Dara Axelrod Expressive Arts Mental Health Poetry Contest 2022 – 8th Place

with their trunks upright, who simply accept us
for who we are. In thought and
body, and all the ideas that existed
inside us, existed after all, even if
only on paper, even if scribbled out,

even if we cease.