

# EMBER

Writing comes easy for me,  
when thoughts too big spark flames in my mind.  
Flames not even I can escape.  
Once I take that breath,  
draw that line,  
leave that mark,  
I can't go back.  
Those flames don't burn out.  
Instead they grow.  
Burn and burn they might,  
until I lose that fight.  
Each war of my own,  
sickening and leaving me more ill than the last.  
Till all that's left is ash.  
What would happen if I crash?  
When I finally wake up and see,  
that it is not the flames hurting me.  
But my own infected mind.  
Now it has become far too late.  
To evacuate,  
to abandon the creation.

Feeling that others wouldn't understand completely,  
not until you see me,  
struggling to keep my mind calm,  
nails digging into the palms.  
Of hands I once thought were my own.  
But now only bow to the rule of your throne.  
Begging to create any sort of relief.  
The silence is brief.  
When all goes quiet after giving in,  
the emptiness eventually broken by yelling in my own head.  
Guilt and fear rushing through combined with my own dread.  
Or has reality finally caught up to me,  
pulling me back from what has become more than an escape,  
a distraction.  
Rather an addiction I fall back into,  
never out of the loop of relapse and regret.  
Either way I end up pleased only by pain no matter how far I get.

This addiction.  
Like disease, it has taken over my body.  
Forced to live as a puppet controlled by impulse.  
These strings, once used to sew those thoughts away,  
shut them into oblivion.  
Now tied,  
Wrist to ankle like I am a prisoner of my own head.  
To keep me silent.  
To keep me aware.  
Just enough for me to feel and bear it all.  
To keep me compliant with the rules I once thought were nonsense,  
locked away in my own head.  
So much so that now the only safehouse is through written word,  
to hide from the disease.  
I am infected with the fire I thought would burn out.  
That I thought was just a match.  
That the fire would blow away in the wind,  
and I, alone, am broken by the lines I crossed.

## ABBY

(they/them/their)

I learned about this contest through one of my teachers who knew I enjoyed creating pieces of written art. However, once I learned what the purpose of this contest was, I felt that not only is this something that I would be able to do for myself as a way of getting feelings and emotion out there, but a way that I could help others with similar experiences. I hope that after reading my work, others that have struggled with mental health will find that there will be better times, even if things get difficult. I also hope that my art can help others see that even if the struggle comes back over time, that doesn't mean they aren't trying, and they aren't alone in that.

My poem is meant to convey the feeling of hope in getting out of, or getting through certain periods of time where it seems that there is no way out.

