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A Spider in the Attic

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A Spider in the Attic
By: Mara Bahmer

People try to tell me that my anxiety is all in my head
They say words they think are comforting:
“You’ve done all you can do”
“Stop worrying, it’s doing you no good”
I smile politely, but inside I scream
They don’t know what it’s like
When my inner thoughts
That tell me I am nothing
That tell me I am doomed to fail
Drown out every other murmuring
Even drown out the noise around me
The television, the empty chatter of a crowded room
Even the music blasting out of my headphones
I have tried everything to chase my anxiety away
Medicines, meditations, pointless distractions
Sometimes I clean the entire house
I vacuum the carpet, the rugs, even the cobwebs
In the corners of the ceiling
To pull my attention away from my own cobwebs
The cobwebs that my anxiety, a poisonous arachnid
Weaves inside my head
The cobwebs cloud my memory so that all I can recall
Are the bad days, the days where the spider
Skitters over the surface of my brain
Making every muscle twitch
As a child I was never afraid of monsters
Maybe because a part of me knew that the beast
Slowly growing inside me
Was the most fearsome monster of all
During panic attacks, the spider takes an endless loop
Between my head and my lungs
Every worry he weaves connects to my windpipe
Clogging it further and further until I begin to suffocate
Every breath I manage to choke down
Is accompanied by cobwebs, so that the worries accumulate
Within my chest as well as my mind
Sometimes I awake from nightmares with a tightness in my throat
And I can tell that even as I sleep the spider is at work
Continuing to weave his wicked tapestry
People say that my anxiety is all in my head
In a way they are right
He resides there, yes, but I did not conjure him
He is a parasite, an uninvited resident in the attic of my body
I can’t stop worrying in the face of his constant nagging
A constant pressure building in my cranium
I can’t stop worrying
So stop telling me to