

Thorns Covered in Petals on a Pedestal: A Collection of Lyrical Poetry **Exploring the Cause and Effects of Toxic Female Friendship**

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ABSTRACT

When a female friend envies and covets what her female friend has, this leads to a toxic female friendship. Toxicity among female friends has its effects on the victims. This leads the victim to normalize toxic friendship behavior, experience loneliness, and have lower self-worth compared to people who are not the victim of the said phenomenon. This creative work is written in a collection of lyrical poetry, portraying the cause and effects of toxic female friendship. There are fifteen poems in total, with six poems portraying the perpetrator's envy (*'PART I: Side-eyes on Shiny Emblems'*) and another nine poems expressing loneliness and lower self-worth of the victim (*'PART II: Lone to the Bone, Too Gloom to Bloom'*). This creative work, *'Thorns Covered in Petals up on a Pedestal'* shows how vicious a hint of envy can be, thus the terrible outcomes it brings in a friendship among females, especially to the victim.

Keywords: envy, loneliness, lower self-worth, lyrical poetry, toxic female friendship

INTRODUCTION

In this era, toxicity in friendships is becoming common and normalized, which is why so many people, especially youths tend to ignore the symptoms in their friendships when things start to seem unhealthy and decide just to stay, or even worse, play along and not try to make things in the friendship right once again. In the survey that was hosted at TODAY.com, the online home of America's No. 1 morning program, and SELF.com, the website of the women's well-being magazine under the same brand, given the information posted on NBC News that 84% of 18,000 women said they have at least one toxic female friend, whether it be through belittling, backstabbing, or judging (Stikes, 2011). From previous research, we also found that Indonesia is not unfamiliar with the 'toxic friendship' phenomenon. According to the official journalism website of Institut *Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember* (ITS), one of the most renowned universities in Indonesia, Tyas Ajeng Nastiti ST MDs ACP said in an Imperative Talk Show that, toxic friendship is the main problem youths these days are facing (Itsojt, 2022). These truly signify that toxic friendship is a problem that so many people, especially teenagers and youths, face today.

Hannah Baer, a writer and clinical psychology doctoral student mentioned that toxic is unspecific. But toxic people are bullies or victims, overly involved or overly removed, too negative or too positive (Baer, 2021). A toxic friendship is an unhealthy friendship, involving a friend, family member, partner, or even ex-partner that leads the victim not to have a meaningful and positive connection, leaving the victim to question oneself (Needleman, 2019).

Before going further, we will use the term 'friendship' to refer to the relationship among friends. In this creative work, we would like to focus on the toxicity that surfaces in female friendships. In light of the evidence of how toxic friendship is currently happening in the world, including Indonesia, we would like to create a collection of poetry discussing this issue. Considering the result and phenomenon stated above and the issue people are facing nowadays, our collection of poetry can bring fresh insights to readers about toxicity in friendships,

especially in Indonesia because many people know the signs and the dangers of being in a toxic friend group, yet they still find it hard to identify if they are currently in one. Furthermore, people often underestimate the dangers of toxicity in friendships, especially people who have never dealt with such problems in their friendships. Toxicity may appear in any kind of relationship, among parents and children, teachers and students, romantic partners, friends of the same gender, and so many more. In this creative work, we would like to focus on the toxicity that surfaces in friendships between two females.

We chose a collection of poetry. Poetry is defined as a form of language expression taken from the author's experience, whether from their own personal or social life (as cited in Anindita et al., 2017). Wordsworth, one of the most renowned lyrical poets stated that poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings (Patel, 2019). We choose poetry as the creative work because poetry gives freedom that is not found in the other choices, like a screenplay, a collection of short stories, novels, or children's picture books. Poetry introduces the author and readers to a more free sense of expression. Another reason why we choose to write poetry is because poetry can be a powerful tool to explore self and circumstances, as well as to challenge the ideational world where one is situated in, and at the same time evokes the feeling and realization of what it is like to be a human being (Acim, 2021, pp. 439-453). Even though poems serve as a personal vessel to express one's feelings, thoughts, and responses, we believe it is better for poems to have rhymes and meters to keep them eloquent and inspiring (as cited in Wazzan, 2022). It is also believed that poets who overlook literary devices when writing poetry, in other words, writing free verses are participating in a game with no rules (as cited in Wazzan, 2022).

Lyrical poetry portrays a powerful feeling. By definition, lyrical poetry in a sense is a direct expression of the poet's thoughts, feelings, and reflection (Patel, 2019). The directness of lyrical poems makes them stand out compared to other genres of poetry, such as narrative and dramatic poetry. Research shows that most lyrics come from the heart of the poet and directly into the heart of the readers which is why lyric poetry always appeals to the heart, not to the mind (Patel, 2019). It does not mean that we will use lyrics to convey baseless emotions and feelings, we use this genre to convey what we feel and perceive about toxic female friendship, whether it is from experiences or other people's stories, and from the research we have been reading. In this lyrical poetry collection of ours, we plan to retell people's stories and our experience of toxic female friendships and incorporate our poems with our response towards them, how they have become such a common thing, and how people tend to underestimate toxicity in female friend groups, especially people who have never dealt with toxicity in their friendships. This collection of poetry will discuss two main things, the causes and effects of toxic female friendships have on their victims. Therefore, there would be six poetries discussing the cause that can make female friendships toxic and another nine poems portraying the effects toxic female friendships may have on their victims.

CAUSE OF TOXIC FEMALE FRIENDSHIP

The root of toxic friendships between females is envy and covetousness for what the friend has (Barash, 2009). These emotions come from feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with one's life (Barash, 2009). The emotions of jealousy and desire can be summarized into a phrase - coveting what her friend has. A coveting friend equals trouble and it is not nice to have, especially when she befriended you without sincerity from the beginning (Barash, 2009). As a result, the friendship may turn sour and victims of these friendships are reported to feel shocked at what is happening and could not believe that she has been seeing this person as her own friend all along (Barash, 2009). Not only that, under jealousy and covetousness, the perpetrator has a simmering rage about how her friend is more fortunate than her (Barash, 2009). Other than jealousy and covetousness, this rage can also lead to ill-wishing the said friend.

EFFECTS OF TOXIC FEMALE FRIENDSHIP

Toxic female friendships have their cause and their effects. A toxic friendship is an unhealthy friendship, involving a friend, family member, partner, or even ex-partner that leads the victim not to have a meaningful and positive connection, leaving the victim to question oneself (Needleman, 2019). The effects of toxic relationships are reported to make victims normalize toxic friendship behavior, experience loneliness, and have lower self-worth compared to people who are not victims of relational aggression (Legarreta, 2008). In this creative work, we would highlight the second and the last effects, experiencing loneliness and having lower self-worth.

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

This collection of poetry is labeled as lyrical by genre. Lyrical poetry by definition is a short poem that expresses powerful emotions or ideas (Patel, 2019). There are characteristics that make lyrical poetry unique and different from the other two main poetry genres, narrative and dramatic. In this section, we will elaborate some of the main characteristics of lyrical and how they will materialize in my creative work. The first one is that lyrical poetry conveys powerful emotions or ideas, which is why most lyrics are made to appeal to the heart rather than the intellect (Patel, 2019). This also backs up the reason why lyrical poetry tends to be shorter in length compared to poetries distinguished as dramatic or narrative genres. Seeing that lyrics mainly are shorter in length, we plan to write poems that will not exceed five stanzas, as lengths are usually very relative and subjective in poetry. The first characteristic would materialise in my creative work by comparing-contrasting the current problem or issue with an object or concept with the help of symbolism and hyperbole, and also rhyming.

The next characteristic of lyrical poems is they use the pronoun 'I' (Kim & Gibson, 2021). According to Kendall Walton and Walt Whitman, poets using the pronoun 'I' here to speak on behalf of the experiences of more than subject, whether fictional or real (Kim & Gibson, 2021). We plan to use the pronoun 'I', 'my', 'me', and 'mine' to portray the narrator, or poet, as the main subject or character throughout my poetry collection to emphasize the subjectivity lyrical poetry has, as subjectivity is another discernible trait of the lyrical genre (Patel, 2019). In other words, the main character of the collection is the narrator, or myself, as the poet (Sigvardsson, 2017). Throughout my writing process, if we need to use other pronouns, names, or other proper nouns, they will most likely serve as the object of the story or plot.

The third characteristic of lyrical poetry is it does not tell a story. In other words, it is not presented in narrative form, as lyrical does not have anything to do with storytelling (Kim & Gibson, 2021). Even if lyrical does provide a glimpse of narrative or story, that dimension is unlikely to be the focus of the readers (Kim & Gibson, 2021). Other than genre characteristics, this section will also talk about the poetic devices and writing techniques we are planning to implement in my creative work. Some of the poetic devices that readers may notice while enjoying my work are rhyming, hyperbole, and symbolism. The reason we plan to use rhyming, hyperbole, and symbolism is to invite readers to interpret the poems in many different ways and means because poetry has a mystery in its choice of words that can make the readers lulled (Sihite & Simandalahi, 2021).

Theme

Our poetry collection focuses on expressing reactions when people are involved in toxic friendships, especially among female young adults. The theme of my creative work is that toxic friendships among female young adults can be dangerous because they are caused by envy and they bring severe loneliness and lower self-worth to the victim. The effects here also apply to

the perpetrator. As toxic female friendship is a double-edge sword, the said effects would affect both the victim and the perpetrator.

Poetic Devices

a. Rhyming

We are planning to use rhyme on most of my poems, because it allows both the author and the readers to convey and interpret the message figuratively. We plan to use Slant rhymes. By definition, Slant rhymes are rhymes that are not identical, but similar enough to suggest rhyme (Andrews-Hoke, 2019). For instance, ‘fly’ and ‘sly’ are exact rhymes. One example of slant rhymes is, ‘jail’ and ‘sale’. Rhymes such as ‘neat’ and ‘believe’, with rather different sounds and different syllable counts are also considered as slant rhymes. Slant rhymes can be found below:

From second stanza of ‘Vile Jealousy’ (Poem 2 - ‘PART I: Side-eyes on Shiny Emblems’):

May I wish you luck in your desperate endeavours
As you chart your own path while your heart wavers
May all the stars wished upon you and the coins tossed for you
All those are in vain, all you do would never turn out good

b. Hyperbole

We plan to use hyperbole to amplify the artistic sense of the message we convey. Other than that, we want readers to be able not only to discover the meaning behind the lines, but also infer their own interpretation. Below is one of our hyperboles from the creative work:

From last stanza of ‘Mademoiselle de Fontaine’ (First poem of ‘PART II: Lone to the Bone, Too Gloom to Bloom’):

Am all alone, engulfed in this icy current of isolation
With no one to shield me from this distraction I fabricate
The storm doesn’t yield, paving its way to my apparent masquerade
It’s blurry and spinning, I can feel it now— my tears of desolation

c. Symbolism

Symbolism does not consist of just mental images but also of figures of speech that amplify the meaning, ideas, attitude, outlook, and vibe of the poetry (Thwala, 2017). Readers would discover symbolism in my creative work incorporated in other literary devices as we would associate the problems that arise when dealing with toxic friendships with objects and/or concepts. Here are our symbolisms that can be found in our creative work:

‘Golden Tears, Muddy Water’ (Last poem of ‘PART II: Lone to the Bone, Too Gloom to Bloom’):

I mine the old days with tear stains on my face
I see them as gold, don’t ever let them go to waste
With every sad smile, I dig and dig and dig
In my mind, endlessly, unceasingly

I finally found the gold, oh, look how it shimmers
The faint glow, it brings a fond grin to me
But the more I treasure it, the more I feel like dirt
Being one with the soil and mud, letting myself drift off the water aimlessly

CONCLUSION

'*Thorns Covered in Petals up on a Pedestal*' portrays both the cause and effects of toxic female friendship. According to Barash's theory, the root of toxicity in female friendships stems from envy. We wrote '*PART I: Side-eyes on Shiny Emblems*' to portray envy and we used the perpetrator's point of view to get the feeling more. We also want the readers to understand and experience how the perpetrator's mind works and reacts when she sees her smarter, more fortunate, more charming, more popular friend. We convey envy in our work mostly through ill-wishing the friend and being in denial that the friend is indeed better than her and also through strong denial. Part 2 of my creative work, titled, '*PART II: Lone to the Bone, Too Gloom to Bloom*' is talking about the effects toxic female friendship has on their victims. According to Legarreta, toxic female friendship makes the victim normalize toxic friendship behavior, experience loneliness, and have lower self-worth compared to people who do not experience toxicity in their friendship. '*Lone to the Bone, Too Gloom to Bloom*' portrays the second and last effects of toxic female friendship, loneliness and lower self-worth. In this part, we wrote the poems through the lens of the victims - the victim and also the perpetrator, in order to convey more of the said effects. Something to be highlighted throughout my journey of writing my creative work, we found out that not only the victim of the friendship is under the effects, but the perpetrator as well. Like a double-edge sword, toxic female friendship harms both sides involved in it, as this adds to another measure how dangerous toxic friendship can be. Another reason is that we want the readers to understand how dangerous the effects of toxic female friendship are and why people should not underestimate toxicity in female friendship.

The first important lesson we learnt when creating this thesis, along with *Thorns Covered In Petals Up on a Pedestal* is how dangerous envy can be. As a Christian, we both are familiar with the understanding and the effects it may bring. Being taught through Sunday schools and sermons, envy, jealousy, and covetousness are familiar terms. After diving deeper into Barash's theory and explanation of how envy is the root of toxic female friendship, we realize that envy is so much more vicious than we previously thought, especially after researching and reading Legarreta's theory of the effects on toxic female friendship. It is almost impossible to think that just a tiny drop of envy in a person's heart could destroy the victim's mental and way of thinking. Through the process of writing my thesis and creating my creative work, we learnt a lot. We would also stay away from idolizing others so much that we become envious. We also learnt that having lower self-worth is never anyone's dream. By making this poetry collection, we hope that each one of us could also maintain good friendships.

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