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MEDIA CONTACT: Monica Fernandez, Media Director, media@redhen.org

P.O. Box 40820, Pasadena, CA 91114 / (626) 356-4760 / fax: (626) 356-9974 / redhen.org

The Bearable Slant of Light

POETRY BY

Lynnell Edwards

The Bearable Slant of Light asks what the burden and gift of madness brings to a family, to our world.

What can we bear and what can we lift when a beloved, when our world, is light-struck and mad? *The Bearable Slant of Light* documents a web of clinical assessments, medications, the terrible beauties of delusion, and the fragile gifts of darkness. Poems that reach across the history of writers and artists who fought and sometimes lost their own battles against mental illness are set against the urgencies of our anxious world and the intimate struggle of one family.

ADVANCE PRAISE

“Lynnell Edwards’s *The Bearable Slant of Light* is a complex, compassionate, harrowing, and lyrical exploration of mental illness. These poems have many voices buzzing inside them, sometimes roaring cicada-loud: the words of doctors and nurses, parents, patients, and support groups; the language of manuals, assessments, intake forms, and medical charts. Both timely and timeless, *The Bearable Slant of Light* is going to mean a great deal to a great many people. What an achievement.”

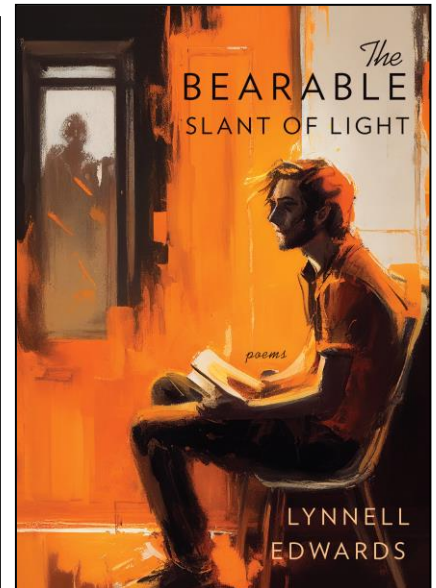
—Maggie Smith, author of *Goldenrod*

“What if you were to write a book of poems expert in their formal invention and so varied in tone that the anger and helplessness and desperation of the poems were also shot through with a tough-minded, often darkly humorous intelligence sifting through possibility after possibility of solace and finding, after all that sifting, nothing but a pile of dust? No consolations, no moments of redemption, nothing but the hard and strange and always original perception of ‘it happened this way but never the way I expected.’ Well, this is the kind of book that Lynnell Edwards has written—a book whose occasion is the mental illness of her son, but whose subject is radical estrangement/self-estrangement. Her fierce response to the myth of therapy/wellness/amelioration demonstrates a poet of superb gifts. Prose poems, lyrics, dramatic monologues, meditative flights giving way to beautifully precise descriptive writing—no form of poetic inquiry is beyond her imagination’s tenacious, tender, and skeptical engagement. On every page, the intelligence of the writing is matched by true integrity of feeling.”

—Tom Sleigh, author of *The King’s Touch*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lynnell Edwards is a poet, writer, teacher, and author of six collections of poetry, most recently *This Great Green Valley* (Broadstone Books, 2020). She serves as associate programs director for the Sena Jeter Naslund-Karen Mann Graduate School of Writing at Spalding University, where she is faculty in poetry and also book reviews editor for *Good River Review*. She lives in Louisville, Kentucky.



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MEDIA CONTACT

Monica Fernandez

Media Director

626-406-1206

media@redhen.org

MARKETING CONTACT

Tobi Harper

Marketing Director

626-406-1209

marketing@redhen.org

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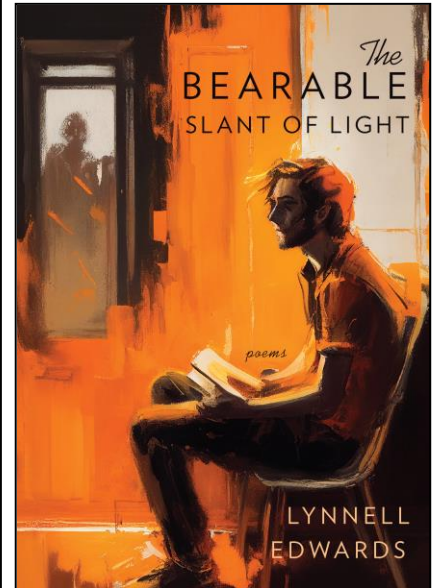


FROM *THE BEARABLE SLANT OF LIGHT*

Medical history #2

*Me: I think there's a lot of trauma he has to process
Dr. K: Did something happen?!*

The hospital happened the involuntary happened the
injectables happened *they had to rip his shirt* the doctors
the nurses the residents the techs happened the other
patients some of them pacing in the hall and loud
the first attempt happened the one-on-one happened the
eeg happened the ambulance happened *none of this is in
any kind of order you understand* the restraints and psychosis
the overdoses and noncompliance the catatonia the
mania happened the loneliness the isolation happened
so many many different meds the assessments and telehealth
happened more ambulances happened the courts
happened the ect happened the second attempt
happened the social workers happened the intensive
outpatients and treatment teams and therapists happened
seven years happened *he won't get them back*



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