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Laura Johnson

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My Son

by Laura Johnson

My son has light brown eyes any artist would envy.
Six feet six inches of muscle, gold like honey.
Young girls stop and stare. He walks with his head down.

On the outside all is well, on the inside living hell

My greatest love fears hugs—they hurt. Human touch to
him brings pain. I have asked him how; he can't explain.
I miss his long warm hugs, but not enough to cause him pain.

On the outside all is well, on the inside living hell

Thoughts are enigmas inside tossed like word salad,
always aware those men in white coats are coming to take him away.
Since the illness took his mind, there are voices only he can hear
and people only he can see.

On the outside all is well, on the inside living hell

His days and nights have no end. Money has no meaning; he
doesn't know that it takes 100 dollar bills to make 100 dollars.
In the backyard he buried all my good jewelry—no more jewelry,
just a pirate sailing his own ship.

On the outside all is well, on the inside living hell

I am not afraid of my son. Sometimes he's like a soldier without
a battle, without a war. Anger overwhelms him; furniture, mirrors,
TVs, cars, all can become his jigsaw puzzle.

On the outside all is well, on the inside living hell.

