

Bamba Babou

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Prompt 5: Deep dive into two sentences from 101-126

Mental health since I was younger was and still is a stigmatized area of my life that still isn't at all easy to talk about. However, it is certainly an area that I think about a lot in terms of self-reflection. A lot of the questions that arise are why I am the way I am and what causes the answers to that question. Reading this book about patients suffering from their own mental illnesses and the difference in struggles between multiple illnesses caused me to reflect on the similarities between the characters and me. This most specifically occurs in sentences from Bromden's narration that I have grappled with time and time again.

One instance in particular that drew my interest was Bromden's narration of Rawler's death and the question he posed after his suicide. Rawler was one of the patients in the disturbed ward who would yell disturbingly at different points of the day driving him to the brink of insanity. One day he committed suicide in the toilet by cutting off his testicles. While detailing this, Bromden asked, "What makes the guy so impatient is what I can't figure out: All the guy had to do was wait. (112)" At first, I was taken aback by the question because it's the first time we really got a glimpse of what we more commonly define as mental illness 61 years later with depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts/actions. When I started thinking about the question I started wondering why I had the same urges rather than to wait for life to correct course and wait to die naturally. It's because misery and suffering don't feel temporary when they're the immediate feelings you constantly feel and there's no support around you to help deal with it. Rawler was vocal about his suffering for so long everyone in the hospital knew of him. Instead of effectively helping this man, the Big Nurse had him sent to the Disturbed ward. A man with no adequate support system, in an environment where exposing people's struggles is considered good behavior, was given up on by the very institution that's supposed to "fix" him.

For me, it was the same except I was, and still very often I am the only one aware of my struggles. When I'm made to feel like those around me, are just support systems as strong as jelly, it's hard to wait for suffering to end. There's a feeling of detachment as well from everyone else around me because I am the only one who truly understands why I feel the way I feel yet the people around me don't get a glimpse of it. They see the everyday person but don't understand, or often care, about the emotions that follow.

In the same section, Bromden notes another thing that made me think. In another one of the group therapy sessions, Billy Babbit details the time he tried proposing to the love of his life and stuttered so much that she laughed at him and the proposal failed. After having this moment of weakness and true emotional vulnerability, Bromden thinks "You got to understand that as soon as a man goes to help somebody, he leaves himself wide open. (118)" In the context of the meeting, Babbit opening up is supposed to be an encouragement to the other patients to do the same, thus confronting their fears/traumas and getting over them with the support of the ward. However, the Big Nurse dives into these moments of vulnerability like a piranha that smells blood and hounds the patients to the point where it's beyond unhelpful.

What drew me the most to this sentence was how revealing these emotions is so easily dismissed and not accounted for. The sense of relatability that the group therapy sessions are trying to achieve doesn't always reflect on society. When I open up, I never feel like I'm doing it

to improve myself then or that an understanding of my emotions will lead to anything beneficial. It's hard to do because rather than thinking this other person understands why I am the way I am, it can be used as ammunition in that relationship.