16. Hard Out

**Karina**

You're listening to 3CR community radio. We would like to acknowledge that we livearin breathe and broadcast on uncede Kulin land, where settler colonial violence is purposeful and ongoing. We'd like to pay our respects to elders past and present and for their ongoing care and custodianship of these lands and waters. It always was, and it always will be Aboriginal land.

**Karina**

For the following and final hour of 3CR’s Disability Day 2022 special broadcast, you'll hear a conversation between myself Karina Aedo-Aguilera, and my special guest Shy, who's also known in the music scene as Swanbird, Swanny B. We're going to talk all about neurodiversity, hopefully, with a bit more nuance than listeners might hear in the mainstream, both in subject matter, but also delivery, because let's be real, we can both be pretty turbo.

**Karina**

I'm also really excited to say that she has brought in some of her music to play throughout, including a couple of unreleased tracks from her upcoming album, which is great. Also, just wanted to let listeners know that there will be some swears over the next hour, and also some heavy themes.

**Karina**

Seeing as we'll be having an in depth discussion of mental illness, describing psychosis. We talk about death and transphobia. And in some of her songs, as well. But we'll definitely be giving you a heads up when that time comes. Welcome to the 3CR studio Shy.

**Shy**

Yo!

**Karina**

So we decided to name this program "Hard Out". For listeners that don't know, hard out, I how would you say it, it's like an agreement?

**Shy**

Yeah, we sort of agreed that it would be hard out. We weren't going to censor the experiences of disability in relation to neurodivergence or mental illness or whatever, you know? We were gonna go in, it was gonna be hard out.

**Karina**

It also is like, when people say "yes", they're like, "yeah, hard".

**Karina**

I feel like that's the way a lot of our conversations go as well as the time goes on and the volume increases. But also something that I hadn't considered that was brought up to me the other day by a friend. Hard out, in broadcasting has its own definition.

**Shy**

Yeah. Hard!

**Shy**

Oh really?

**Karina**

Yeah, it says, "a sudden and inflexible ending of material in a bulletin, usually determined by a fixed length pre-recorded segment, or a pre-programmed computer event".

**Shy**

And that's the show everybody! (both laughing)

**Karina**

Well I was gonna say, in other words, that's like, no outro. Literally, end cut. I thought you might appreciate that one.

**Shy**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Karina**

And also, I feel like that's kind of the way our brains work sometimes. So I guess jumping right in. Would you like to start by telling us a little bit about yourself?

**Shy**

Absolutely, yeah. Okay, so. My name is Shy. I go by "The Runt",Monica, Swanny B, or Swanbird. I'm a trans woman, I'm nearly 32 years old. And I've been living with neurodivergence and severe mental health issues my entire life. I have a diagnosis of schizophrenia that I got at the age of 20. That was preceded by a four year long, very severe, florid psychotic episode.

I got diagnosed with ADHD at around the age 9 or 10. I've got complex post traumatic stress disorder. And I've suffered major depressive disorder, all of which just kind of melds into a pot of relatively harrowing life experience that requires a lot of therapy (chuckling). So yeah, that's my history with disability. I express a lot of that through music. And I use music as a cathartic experience. But also, it's my passion.

**Karina**

Yeah, absolutely. And as you were listing all of that stuff off, it brought up to me in my mind, you're right. It's not like one plus one equals two, right? It all adds up to an experience, which is your life.

**Shy**

Precisely.

**Karina**

But the way that people have learned to talk about them, are by ticking these boxes, right?

**Shy**

Yeah, yeah. It's all very compartmentalised into these little boxes. I don't just have ADHD, schizophrenia, CPTSD and a history of major depressive disorder, which through therapy, I have actually, pretty much mitigated. The diagnosis of that, was a lot of it was relating to my PTSD. That I was so depressed and I don't get random depressive episodes anymore, which are just spontaneously like "Oh, you should die".

I don't get that anymore. Now it's only circumstantial. So if something's really bad in my life, then I kind of dive. But yeah, the combination all of those, not that they're not complicated in and of themselves, but together they make a very complicated experience which you can't just list as diagnoses, you know?

**Karina**

Exactly. For me, as far as I know, I've only been diagnosed with ADHD. And I hate that I precede that with "only" as well.

**Shy**

Yeah. See, there's no... don't delegitimise your lived experience of disability.You can't just say "I've just got ADHD", when ADHD can be horrifically debilitating at times. And people don't acknowledge that.

**Karina**

And as you say, because of the life experience of having it undiagnosed for a long time, or not recognised as legitimate by not only people that you encounter in day to day life, but also by a system that requires you to prove how bad your life is, by ticking those same boxes by listing things off, and by spending hundreds of dollars on going to see a psych so that they can say, "yes, you're experiencing something that you already know you've experienced for your whole life".

**Shy**

Or that you don't know. You know, there's that factor too. I think especially in the context of schizophrenia. My experience with psychosis was not something I understood as a mental illness. I had no idea what was going on. I was not here. (laughing) To put it very lightly.

**Karina**

Yeah. I guess sometimes, you have to have someone explain that to you, as well.

**Shy**

You have to have someone draw it out for you. But also my diagnostic experience witch schizophrenia was not fun. It was really hard. I contested my diagnosis. And then I had to go before a board of psychiatrist who all said "sorry, you can't contest this diagnosis, because you're nuts".

And they put me on a community treatment order, where I had to be supervised taking medication, and made sure that I did that. Or I would have had to have a nurse come to my house and give me a needle with the anti-psychotic in it, once a month. And if I didn't comply with that, then they would've give me an ITO, which is where I go into hospital and they stick me once a month. And I comply until I'm done.

**Karina**

That sounds like such an awful experience.

**Shy**

It was traumatising.

**Karina**

No choice in it. No agency and having that taken away would have, like you said, been so traumatising in itself. In regards to the way you introduce yourself like, "this is my experience with disability. I have schizophrenia". In between that time and now, what did the road or journey look like to come into this place of acceptance? Was there a moment? Or was it just like?

**Shy**

No, it's been long and hard. So when I got diagnosed at 20, as I said, I rejected my diagnosis. Because I was so sick, that I couldn't believe that the world wasn't conspiring to destroy me through yet another thing. And you know, I got put on the community treatment order for which, for all it's traumatising experience and the shit time it was, it actually helped me get back to health. I had to take medication. I couldn't refuse to take medication and medication stabilised me.

**Shy**

The hardest part for the first few years was like, touching grass. Realising that I was in reality again. Trying to make sure that I was in touch with the here and now and that the table is something that I can touch and feel and that is the actual reality.

It's not wool pulled over my eyes by Satan so that I can live out another life. Really, really strange and hard experience. I also had a developmental delay as a result of doing too many drugs as a kid and also having schizophrenia for four years from 16 to 20. Or a psychotic episode rather.

Which all kind of delayed my development a little and I found myself kind of being a bit of a 16 year old at the age of 22. Which took a while to come back. The emotional development and the maturity and the adulthood was late coming for me.

I think it was about 26 years old, I went well, I'm actually an adult, alive. Doing adult things. I'm a big girl, you know? Kind of had that real shocking realisation that I was actually an adult. And I was actually living life, you know, amongst being addicted to drugs and all sorts of stuff.

I've had a really long history with the substance use and abuse and misuse and all sorts of stuff. But to get to the point where I am now where I accept my mental health parameters, and my boundaries and my limits, and I accept where I'm at as a human being and the fact I have to live with ADHD, I have to live with schizophrenia, I have to live with CPTSD. All of those things are all kind of, they're fine now. I've had 12 years to figure it out. And the last few years have been really strong for me in that.

**Karina**

Yeah. The first thing that struck me when I met you, was that you don't feel the need to explain yourself to anybody. And I think that's really important as well. For listeners who might not know that even with people who are medicated under ADHD, there are elevated statistical uses of things like alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, all of these things.

People might not understand that it's actually not an active choice. You don't wake up in the morning and go, "Alright, cool. I'm just gonna ruin my lungs for the day. And punch darts all day". You know? (both laughing)

**Shy**

You don't wake up one time at the age of 17. And say, "I'm gonna get really addicted to something, because I've got ADHD". Like, there's causes for that.

**Karina**

Yeah. And I guess where I was going with that was also something I really appreciate about you is that you're at the point where you're here with me about it. It's like "I don't need to explain that. It just is." It is what it is.

**Shy**

I'm pretty no apologies hey. I don't pretend to be something I'm not, and I don't apologise for what I am.

**Karina**

I actually think that's a really good point to go into your first track.

**Shy**

Yeah, sure. Yep. So the first track is called "They came from inside my head/House of fear feat. Scorpion King". Featuring Scorpion King, shouts out Daz. Yeah, so it was a track of my first album with Swanbird called Uprooted. I had shifted my voice quite severely so that I didn't have this sense of gender dysphoria and I've since just gotten over it, I don't care about my voice.

I'm a trans woman, people are going to look at me funny no matter what, it doesn't matter about my voice anymore. So it goes into some some content related to schizophrenia on the first half and it's got a bit of a switch up and then yeah the homie Scorpion King comes out with a feature verse. I think it's an interesting track. Yeah, that's about it.

**Karina**

Also just a content warning there will be some swears in the song.

**Shy**

I think so yeah (chuckling).

**Karina**

Yeah. So this is "They came from inside my head/House of fear” feat. Scorpion King.

**Swanbird**

**(**“They came from inside my head/House of fear” by Swanbird feat. Scorpion King)

They came from inside my head (Who?) The voices said that almost saw me dead. There's countless times I've said it, but nothing's quite like having a schizophrenia for dread (Ahhh). I'm really fucking mentally ill. I'm incurable, spend my life with medical bills. But as long as my peripheral vision sits still, I'm willing to swallow a daily pill. Didn't know you go as nuts as fuck. That's real tough luck. Should have chucked it up more often than I did (on Facebook). So you can look at me with weird pity and shit.

The brain has more power than you can imagine. There's nothing I can say that can share the magic, being harrowingly tortured by something ancient, and that just be tactile hallucinations (Was it?) I almost tapped out of life. While living with such a brutal strife. It's okay, I'm stable, at least for the moment. If I keep up my meds, the moment won't be over.

My mind has been occupied with conversation from multiple sides, except every party seems to have a brain of their own. And I just got to give up and endure my dose. I'm not okay, but I live every day and haven't stopped doing that. So I guess go me (yay). Fuck being sick. Being paranoid and scared can eat a bag of dicks. If you feel these rhymes are sad and unsettling, perhaps send a modicum of empathy to anyone who has to live with shit, you couldn't understand if your life depended on it.

**Scorpion King**

Ow ow owww. It's little Scorp, my bitches. Demented, fermented, brain sack of shit. Begrudgingly wading through the slime and piss. Three figures looming tall in this ancient crypt. De-evolving back to ancestral spit. Sharpen up these knives, let's cut off these tits. Throw 'em at the boys and throw up some fists. Centrifugal force will blow up them bigs. Prince of darkness, baby, I'll ascend these pits. Enamoured by this fertile taste. Resting embryonic states. Emulate, stipulate, agitate. Why be queer when you could be straight? Why be queer when you could be straight? Why?

**Karina**

You're listening to 3CR community radio. This is the 12 hour Disability Day 2022 special broadcast. I'm here in the studio with Shy who's bringing us some of her music, and we're just having some neurodivergent chats, I think. So before that track, we were discussing the personal side of experiencing neurodiversity.

And there's definitely elements to how you survive in every day life. And the theme of this year's Disability Day broadcast is Rest is Survival. I know with some disorders or mental illnesses, there is its own kind of special flavour of how you might rest, or how you might want to rest. Does that mean anything to you?

**Shy**

Yeah look, it absolutely does. So I guess something I want to acknowledge is that while I'm here talking about schizophrenia, and ADHD, and CPTSD, a lot of people might be saying "oh, you know, those are mental illnesses or their mental disorders", or "they're strange and abstracted from what disability might mean". And I guess to segue into how rest works, uniquely, for individuals, I guess I'd like to acknowledge that these are all invisible disabilities.

**Shy**

These are disabilities. People always lump mental illness and disability apart or neurodivergent away from severe disability, or whatever. And I find that really frustrating, because they are disabling experiences, of the human mind and body. And I rest is different for everybody under every disability. For me, for instance, I'm not good at spending time alone, I don't relax alone. That's not something I can do.

Because I am plagued by disembodied voices, and mental hijacking and telepathic communication, which all isn't real, but it's real for me, and something I have to deal with, on a day to day basis. I don't really enjoy not having social interaction to cover that, to distract from it. To push it out of my brain. So I need to be in human company, pretty much 24/7. When it comes to ADHD and stuff, I rest and relax making music. I recuperate by busying myself with things that I am passionate about, and enjoy. That is my rest time. But by the same token, as rest is survival, the pressures of keeping up with things which aren't explicitly rest, offset your ability to rest and everything becomes more difficult. You know, I guess is what I'd get out. Yeah.

**Karina**

Yeah. And I guess disability is defined for most people in a lack of an ability and it's usually just because the world's not set up for you.

**Shy**

Absolutely.

**Karina**

It's not that you're unable to do your shit. It's that you're unable to do your shit here.

**Shy**

Yeah. You've made the the biggest point I was going to make today, which is that I'm only, and a lot of people are only so disabled as they are, because the world's fucking them. The world's making sure that they cannot function comfortably within it, despite their ailments, despite their disadvantages. It's great to have wheelchair ramps or sidewalks but when people park scooters in the middle of them because they're fucking lazy, suddenly they're not functional anymore.

**Shy**

It's a complete disregard for the fact that maybe someone out there might need you to take consideration for them. Or it's not building disability ramps, it's making venues inaccessible. It's as a musician, the one that gets me is using strobe lights.

When people are epileptic all over the place, and it affects people who are photosensitive for other reasons, or even aren't photosensitive, there's nothing worse than being on stage and the lighting guy decides to press the strobe button and suddenly you can't see your instrument and you've got a headache. You know, there's a lot going on.

**Karina**

And when you say all of that stuff as well, it just occurs to me too. All of that is so heavily tied up in this bureaucratic box ticking crap, that actually has nothing to do with real life. You can say you're doing a great initiative by giving live venues money to put in disability access. But once they've got the frickin' ramp, have they considered anything the hell else?

Like, are their bathrooms accessible? The strobe thing is really, really intense as well. I went to a show recently, that my friend got free tickets to. And the supporting artist was Al Carlson, who is very open about having epilepsy, and very specifically talks about those things. And then the headliner was just almost all strobe.

**Shy**

Oh my god (chuckling).

**Karina**

And it was like, okay. Cool. Like, no.

**Shy**

Yeah. I went to a show back in Adelaide, because I'm from Adelaide, I originally grew up there, and I moved here a little over a year ago. But I had this really visceral experience of this band, who I won't name just for posterity's sake. Who we had a discussion with beforehand about how my partner was, at the time, was photosensitive.

And that it would be really, how we hate strobes, and it would be really rude for someone to use them. So you'd never guess what they did during their set. They blasted strobes at the highest speed they could for the entire set and cleared the room. And no one could watch them. And I was the supporting act. And I felt pretty bad about that. Having my partner there and us both unable to watch it.

**Shy**

Yeah. That sucks.

**Shy**

That sucks. That sucks!

**Karina**

That's the thing as well, it doesn't need, for certain things. It doesn't need all this money thrown at it either. It's just called being a decent human being. But everyone feels like they're stuck in this kind of invisible box. Because when you go into Centrelink, or whatever, the person's like, "Oh no, that's above me. I can't do that". And it's like, okay. Well, who makes that choice?

**Shy**

Yeah. And having consideration and human empathy for people is much more important than having money for infrastructure. Because if we have the consideration and human empathy, then we wouldn't have to worry about money for infrastructure, it'd already be there.

**Karina**

Yeah. The way I think about it as well is in terms of supports, ideally, in my mind, it would be: I have my community that are all able to support each other in whatever capacity that they can. But on an individual level, we are all forced to not only make money, to try not to be frickin homeless, a roof over our head, food, these basic human rights.

But also the way that the government frames something like welfare, social security, it should be a basic human right. There was a frickin; headline in the Australian last week. What did they say? It was like, "Disability a $17 billion burden". Or sorry, yeah. It was on the front. Those frickin milkbar ones on the front of that and it's like, one that is dehumanising is all fuck.

**Shy**

Yeah, that's atrocious.

**Karina**

It's not even the experience. I mean, I'm on Centrelink. I'm on Jobseeker. That's my thing, that I'm on that supplements by income. And the amount of hoops you have to jump through to get paid a tiny amount which is well below the frickin poverty line. It's not accessible to neurotypical people, let alone anyone else.

**Shy**

Yeah, I mean. Look, what is neo-liberal capitalism except for individualised separation of people from people? And just a productivity based analysis of every human being. If you cannot perform to a standard, which is helping someone make a profit, if you are not a profitable asset in the eyes of capitalism, you are dehumanised. And for people with disability, that's pretty much all of us. So we're all not... a few rungs down on the capitalism ladder of social hierarchy. And it's shit.

**Karina**

It's so shit. And it's a lie. It's not real.

**Shy**

No, it's not real. It's only as real as it's been enforced to be. It is real. We have to live it, you have to acknowledge that it's real. But it's, it's a fallacy for sure.

**Karina**

That's a really good point.

**Shy**

We have to live it. But it's also like, we don't have to live it. If we change something, we would not have to live it. But it's about community power and making that change. Which again, if you want to make big change then you need to be on the frontline of activism constantly. Like, a bunch of disabled people gathering together to get frontline activism constantly is gonna result in mass burnout. And then we're not even productive for ourselves. We have to think about, we need allyship. We need to have these discussions, we need to need to push this stuff.

**Karina**

I agree.

**Shy**

We need some accomplices.

**Karina**

It's definitely a thing of, it comes back to that rest thing. But how are we allowed to rest? You know?

**Shy**

Yeah, well. You either have to fight for your rights or fight to live, and there's no time to rest in between that.

**Karina**

Or find a really good doctor that can give you the proper Centrelink medical certificate that will exempt you from mutual obligations for three months. So that you don't have to spend 40 hours a week doing activities.

**Shy**

Absolutely. And that's nice. But also you'd think DSP would win you the ability to rest a little more, but they do just as much. They give you a participation plan and make you find work before the age of 35.

**Karina**

I remember someone I did work for the dole with a while ago, who had really bad scoliosis, and was still having to put in some work hours at the time through the work for the dole program. And the only way that he was able to get that money, was through the one program that we had doing some op shop back end work sort of thing. Where he was required to lift more than 20 kgs and it was like...?

**Shy**

(Sarcastically) That's a good consideration of someone's disability.

**Karina**

Yeah. No choice.

**Shy**

Oh, that's disgusting.

**Karina**

Yeah. I think it's a good time to go into a song.

**Shy**

Yeah, let's do that. Seeing as both just looked at each other and went "Ahhhh".

**Karina**

So listeners that are just tuning in with us now. This program's entitled Hard Out as a part of 3CR'S 2022 Disability Day special broadcast. My name is Karina. I'm here in the studio with Shy, also goes by the rap name Swanbird. We're talking a little bit about life, a little bit about music. Shy's also brought us in a bunch of her music to play as a special treat just for today, including some unreleased tracks. So super exciting. So the next song coming up is called "Emergency".

**Shy**

Yes. So this song, it's like the last song but ramped up to like 11. It's a recounting of the really, really, really difficult and harrowing experiences I had living in psychosis for four years up to the diagnosis of my schizophrenia. Yeah, it's hard to listen to for me. I'm glad the mic will be off. Because I have trouble with this song. But I would suggest that if you haven't had the experience of schizophrenia, give it a listen, if you have, I would approach with caution. It's very very explicit.

**Karina**

The song also contains some violent themes and swear words. Very heavy content warning for that one. For yourself even.

**Shy**

Yeah, for me and people with lived experience of psychosis.

**Karina**

Yeah. All right. Thank you Shy. This is Emergency by Swanbird.

**Swanbird**

(Emergency by Swanbird)

It starts like this, it's slow not quick, creeping and insidious. You begin to stop trusting your wits. Things start lining up in weird ways. Spend your days all dazed, looking for answers frenzied and frayed. You don't know you're going crazy.

First, it's a hint of something there, you seek it in a hunt, even though it should scare you. Then it feels like you're caught in the dare. Eventually it will be perpetually unfair. One day you'll hear a word coming not from a mouth but from a place absurd. A mind telepathic that can be heard. And hear you no matter how hard you spurn it.

All of a sudden, it's everyone. The words you say come out sounding dumb because you're answering something upstairs instead. And people pretend not to hear what you've said. You start getting angry when they lie. You fuckers know we can all read minds. Why fucking pretend you can't when you're not high? Don't leave me here alone to die. You're a fucking walking emergency. Get out of the city or we'll make you bleed. If you fucking come back we'll smash your teeth, put you in a hospital, you mental freak. But you keep going back to town.

Your head's all warped, it always confounds you. Even when there's risk of harm to be found. You're too far gone now. Too far gone now. I can't fucking help it. You all don't fucking get it. I'm a messiah and demon and god. And you're all supposed to be with me I thought. You're pretending like I didn't wake your powers. You throwing me away like dead flowers. I came here to make you guys legend and you fucking hate me and want me dead. Let it in. Take your pills. It'll fade then. It'll fade then. Let it in. Take your pills. It'll fade then. It'll fade then.

**Karina**

Wow, that was intense. It speaks for itself, really. I think that's the beauty of rap music as well. You don't need to explain too much. Because you can fit a lot of words into a couple of bars.

**Shy**

Yes, it's it's pretty transparent. I've done less transparent stuff. But that track was incredibly transparent.

**Karina**

And the way you were speaking about music before in the intro, as well. It's something that people might consider the special interest of your ADHD. It's how you rest. It's how you recuperate.

**Shy**

Absolutely, yeah.

**Karina**

And you produce all of your own tracks as well.

**Shy**

Yeah, I do everything. I'm not the best at it. But I do my I give it my best. I'm a bit of a bedroom producer, but I give it a red hot go.

**Karina**

That's the best way to do it. The best way to learn stuff, right?

**Shy**

Yeah, I'm getting better as time goes on, you know, slowly.

**Karina**

Just backtracking for a sec as well. Before that song you were talking about being on the DSP. I don't really know that much about that. How does it differ from just regular Jobseeker, thrown in a bag, kind of thing?

**Shy**

So I've been on the DSP for a very long time. Back when I started on the DSP, it was less trials to get on the DSP. Now, it's extremely difficult. They're very rigorous about who they consider to be disabled enough. For starters, the payments higher. That's the number one thing. It compensates for the cost of living disabled. Aside from that, if you're voluntarily looking for work, you generally avoid being hassled a little.

But as soon as you stop doing that, and you're under the age of 35, you may be put on something called a Disability Support Pension Participation Plan, which is where they attempt to make you work ready. If it is deemed that you are capable of work, which most people are, then you must study or volunteer or do whatever you need to do. Link up with a job service provider. Disability job service provider. Yeah, that's kind of how it goes. So you end up looking for work anyway.

**Karina**

Yeah. Because they're just on your ass. It's hard enough to say.

**Shy**

I mean they're kind of on your ass.

**Karina**

Yeah. Yeah, it's hard enough to say. It's a mouthful.

**Shy**

What, the Disability Support Pension participation plan? (both laughing)

**Karina**

And you're a rapper, you know, the vocal dexterity.

**Shy**

I can red leather yellow leather like nothing else (both laughing).

**Karina**

Yeah, so more hoops. More this, more that. More box ticking.

**Shy**

There's lots of hoops, just to get on the thing. There's a lot of hoops, but then living on it, you've got to comply with whatever they consider is appropriate for your standard of health. Despite the fact that you are, as a requirement of Disability Support Pension. You have to be unable to work for two years or more or something.

**Karina**

Right. And you say whatever they decide, I feel like some of the major changes that I feel like have made regular Centrelink inaccessible are things like the introduction of these weird middlemen companies. Like jobs service providers that are private.

**Shy**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Karina**

And make a profit from activities somehow, that they put you in partnerships with Work for the Dole places, all of that kind of stuff. And despite their maybe being some rules, or "I'm eligible for this on Centrelink", these private providers step in and just go, "nope, I've got your best interests at heart, the place that you want to volunteer at doesn't have fire exits close enough to the door". When in actuality legally, Centrelink should allow you to volunteer for anyone that is a a community organisation, and has public liability insurance. But then there are the the hidden motivations, these gross little systemic tentacles of the privately run system.

**Shy**

Absolutely. The thing that gets me is, the 'get you into a job no matter what' thing. So as part of the job plan that I've been given. Before I started work recently, there was this big, not really a disclaimer. More like demand or command.

That I must apply for jobs, whether I feel they are suitable, or I like them or not. It is this big thing at the front, being like "You must apply for jobs, not just the ones you want, but for jobs". And it's like, but what if I get unsustainable work, and I bomb out because I get really ill? And then I'm back to ground zero, page one, trying to look for a job again. You know, like?

**Karina**

Worse than before, potentially as well.

**Shy**

I've had to take four months off because my brains fall into pieces, you know?

**Karina**

Not only am I burned out, but my self esteem is shot to shit.

**Shy**

And I'm like, flirting with psychosis because I've had a really terrible time. It's just not good. And then my executive dysfunction goes through the roof and the ADHD swings in. It's like, welI guess I'm a failure because I lost another job, which is a huge ADHD thing. I'm sure you understand, which is the failure complex thing. You've been told all your life that you're lazy and you just don't do well enough. And then finally you have a red hot go and you bomb out. And it's just an affirmation that you failed again.

**Karina**

And it was a choice. And it was my fault. Because yes, the narrative around it.

**Shy**

Oh, absolutely. It's rough.

**Karina**

Yeah, it's hard out here. Hard out.

**Shy**

Hard out. Hard out here.

**Karina**

So you were saying that you did get a job and we were speaking before the program as well, that they were a lot more understanding in regards to the time that you want to give?

**Shy**

Yeah, it's not that I want to give, it's that I'm capable of giving.

**Karina**

Yeah. Well, so hopefully, they would align.

**Shy**

I mean, that's it. I've had moments of guilt throughout my life. Where I go, "why am I not capable of working a full time job? Why can't I just work full time? I wish I could just work full time". Part of me still has that. Where I'm just like, yeah. I wish I could work full time. I wish I could lock down a job. Work nine to five. Make huge bank and not need Centrelink. That would be absolutely fantastic. I'm sure it's very good for your self esteem, being able to do that in some capacity, but also, you probably end up hating life and work.

**Shy**

My workplace has been, thus far, fantastically understanding. I lost a friend a week ago. He died and I needed some time off work. They've given me that. I'll be back this week, that's fine. But they gave me a couple of days off, and to recuperate and get my mind straight and they were very kind about that. I've had jobs previously where they've given me heaps of time, and I haven't been able to get back because the job has been terrible. I lost a friend at my last job too during that time, and it was really hard. And I don't like the idea of bombing another job because someone else in my life has passed away.

**Karina**

Yeah. And there's something really to be said for actually, I mean you shouldn't have to rely on an individual boss being a good boss.

**Shy**

But it helps when they are, and they all are. In my job, my workplace, everyone who is directly my superior has been beyond empathetic, kind and helpful in the process of me adapting to work again. Because I hadn't worked for five years. I was recuperating, and trying to get my stuff straight.

**Karina**

Yeah, it means a lot. I guess I'm not trying to necessarily discredit the work that some people put in or the basic kindness and decency that some people have. But it's hearing you say that as well. "I wish I could work like a nine to five". All of that is also part of this narrative that you're trying to unlearn as well. You can tell yourself-

**Shy**

Yeah, it's a productivity joke.

**Karina**

It is, it totally is. You can tell yourself the system's broken until the cows come home. But that doesn't change the guilt factor or-

**Shy**

-the internalised guilt.

**Karina**

That's right

**Shy**

The internalisation of the productivity joke.

**Karina**

The Productivity joke.

**Shy**

Yeah, I'm gonna call it that. It's a joke. Like, we don't need... humans shouldn't be measured on their productivity. That's laughable. So that's where I guess that's where I'm going with that.

**Karina**

Yeah, no, I really appreciate that. It's a good perspective to have and a good reminder to have as well. You can so easily spiral down these rabbit holes of "oh well, I'm not good enough. I never was good enough. I'm letting people down. I'm letting society down. I'm a $17 billion burden".

**Shy**

Yeah. The guilt and shame that comes with a headline like that. God.

**Karina**

So you come down all the way to the bottom and then go "oh, well. The system's broken anyway".

**Shy**

Yeah. And it is broken. It's egregiously broken (chuckling).

**Karina**

I'm happy that you were able to find a space where you could find that kindness and compassion. And also tying back into what I was saying earlier. That doesn't necessarily exist in a world where people are forced to over exert themselves to jump through bureaucratic hoops. I suspect, I don't know, this is pure speculation. But I suspect that they're able to do that also because as individuals, they do have the understanding, because they are allowed to rest.

**Shy**

Yeah. And I guess my workplace encourages diversity. And they have a good team of people who understand mental health issues or have it themselves. Yeah. They encourage individuality and individual expression, and diversity and that sort of thing.

And when I went in my interview, when I got my callback, they were like, "we want to take you on, but we can't take you on immediately because your mental health needs are a priority. And we don't want to have to tell you that you have to come in or that's it. We want to be able to ease you in slowly". So they gave me a job at a later date, which was a more appropriate time for me to be eased in.

**Karina**

That's great. And reminds me that how important it is, to maintain diversity. It's not just a matter of quotas all the time, either. It's not just like, "oh, we need, every different colour of person for this ad and we need x, y z amount of queer people or people with disability" or anything like that. It's actually part of the lived, real experience of life. Yeah, everybody in it, you should have access to all kinds of people and all kinds of people should have access to spaces.

**Shy**

Doesn't that blow your mind? When you meet like a really cis, really straight person who doesn't have any disabled friends, or queer or trans friends? You meet them and they're like "Oh, you're the first trans person I've ever met!". And you're like "probably not". But also like, that's whack. How have you gotten through life like that? It's like, whack (laughing).

**Karina**

Yeah. One of the other things that I wanted to bring up today as well ties into that too. On a systemic level. The more of those boxes that you tick, the more eligible you might be for a certain service, in theory.

But then in the real lived experience of life, it does sometimes feel like, "Oh, I can't be brown, and angry. I can't have ADHD and be messy", for example. Living in society, it's like, alright. You can have one deviation from the quote, unquote, norm. There's no intersection.

**Shy**

Yeah. So if you break the status quo, it makes you eligible for help. But also, the achilles heel is that you're breaking the status quo. You'll never be eligible for help as long as you do that. Not real help. Not tangible, like, liberation, acceptance.

**Karina**

Acceptance is a big one. Being a part of a public space, like public transport or something like that. There are these certain weird unwritten rules of how you can behave. You might get stared down, or harassed or whatever, even if you don't behave in all the right ways.

If you're loud, if you're playing music off your phone, if you're all of these things, I think it's so heavily tied in to class as well. They're just like, "oh okay, they did this thing. So now, they can't be a part of this public space. And I actually don't really care about their well being anymore". So easily shut off in a part of people's brains and put in a box.

**Shy**

I've got things to say about public transport. I avoid that shit like the plague. I would rather take the trans woman tax that is Ubers, that is Didi. There's a tax to being gender non conforming, or outwardly trans or, you know I'm a big tomboy. I roll out in like a baggy shirt and sweatpants and TMs 80% of the time.

But if I'm going somewhere, and I want to look nice, I want to look femme. There's the tax, bam. It's laid on me straightaway. There's no hiding C cup boobs on the tram when you look like, for all other purposes, a bit of a boy. That makes you a threat. To me. I feel that threatening feeling. And so I'm gonna catch my Didi from the inner south all the way to Coburg for the house party, because it's just safer.

**Karina**

Also, just for listeners, Shy has some face tattoos going on as well. Which I'm sure also play into it too. You can't be more than one thing, right? You can be-

**Shy**

I've got like, big cross swords on my throat and a face tattoo and I'm blasted all over my hands and arms and my stomach and my chest. Yeah, I've got a bit of coverage (chuckling).

**Karina**

Lots of things play into that.

**Shy**

Yeah, I look scary. But then people also like to fuck with the scary guy. And then they see that like I said, I've got a chest. And that makes me even more a valid target, because I'm a freaky fruit as well. And it all stacks on top. I don't walk down King Street. Ever. Like, I avoid that place? You know?

**Karina**

I mean, especially and please cut me off if this isn't something that you want to talk about. But also if you have feelings of, or have had feelings in the past of, what's real and what's not?

Then surely all of this public hostility in certain spaces that aren't for you, from something as simple as they don't have a unisex disability bathroom all the way down to overt transphobia and violent stuff straight, would trigger all of these kinds of like, paranoid (feelings).

**Shy**

I'm like, I'm paranoid. That's half the reason I don't do the public transport thing. Honestly, I'm pretty safe on the Glen Waverley line. You know what I mean? But like, it doesn't matter.I'm not going to get on that train. 80% of time, unless I've got company. I will not take the train alone. Let's be real. If I have a company I can do it. But right now, nah. Like I would not take that home. I drive everywhere, I Didi everywhere. I'm really paranoid.

Like you said, the gender neutral toilets thing? If I can't take a piss comfortably, why am I in this venue? A lot of places are really good for that now, especially in the north, north side, that sort of thing. Or even the west side.

But you get into the CBD, and you start moving other directions. It's just... the consideration for my humanity is not taken necessarily, very seriously every time. You're right, that feeds paranoia. It feeds the idea that I'm not a real person that deserves respect.

**Karina**

It really makes me angry and just feels so much, not just the content of what you're saying, but also the casual way, you can just say that.

**Shy**

Like I said, I don't make apologies. I'm pretty real (laughing).

**Karina**

No, but I mean like, it's that normal. And the casual way in which you say you're dehumanised, it just says it all.

**Shy**

Yeah, it sucks. But you have to learn to live. As grim as the next sentence is, you have to learn to live with that, because otherwise you are going to die. And that's really hard. And I know, we put a big content warning on the show for heavy conversation and stuff.

But that's one of the big ones. Whether you're disabled, whether you're trans, if you don't learn to live with those things. In some capacity under late capitalism, late capitalism would kill you. And that's really scary.

**Karina**

For me, it's also a testament to the resilience of people. Not that anyone should have to be resilient. Under this hostility.

**Shy**

It is hostile.

**Karina**

But it's a testament. Yeah, it's a real honour to have you in the studio today.

**Shy**

Awww. Thank you, Kari.

**Karina**

Would you like to play a track?

**Shy**

Yeah, let's play "Sick".

**Karina**

Alright.

**Shy**

Because it's sick.

**Karina**

Because it's sick.

**Shy**

(whispering) Sick.

**Karina**

This is one of the ones from your upcoming album.

**Shy**

Yeah, shit's unreleased.

**Karina**

Unreleased, first time we're hearing it I'm so excited.

**Shy**

Yeah, there's definitely naughty words, it's definitely wordy in the stuff you already heard. I think it's cool. I hope you like jungle. Hope you like rave. There's a rave in it.

**Karina**

Hard Out. This is "Sick" by Swanbird. Enjoy.

**Swanbird**

("Sick" By Swanbird) Listen up bitch I feel good about myself. Feel whack as fuck. Boom bap to doom rap. My shit is top shelf. I put myself through hell, now I'm more than a shell. I won't be handing from a rope like a bell.

Take a positive spin, pin the tail on the donkey. Yeah, that's me feeling grim, feel within. Put me in the bin. I'm the fucking king. Oops, I mean queen of this thing. I'm a she, not a him. Mistakes are made in the same way.

We make the most of ourselves from day to day. Growing into my age, I feel a lifting weight. Can't say I'm the same person that was shaped to fail. Juxtaposition of black and white ,dark and light love and fight. The shit you can't buy, if you tried getting high as a kite. My style is sick, sick like my mind. (lyrics continue)

**Karina**

Awesome stuff, that was Sick by Swanbird, my special guest in the 3CR Studios. Today I liked how at the start of the show you were doing the whole "Oh, I'm just a bedroom producer", being all like humble about it.

**Shy**

I still am.

**Karina**

You still are.

**Shy**

Nothing's changed, I'm still a bedroom producer.

**Karina**

It sounds amazing. And it's so interesting to see your improvement as well from the start. Like you said, rapping faster rhyme schemes, and you produce all your stuff as well. That's pretty much all we've got time for, for today. It's just been such a pleasure. Thank you so much, Shy for coming in.

**Shy**

No, thank you for hosting me here. It's been really really lovely. I feel like we've had some some good chit chats. I had a good yarn.

**Karina**

Yeah, I feel like we came full circle. We didn't. I thought I was gonna do some self fulfilling prophecy shit with the hard out.

**Shy**

Yeah, we just have to 'hard out' it.

**Karina**

We did pretty well, though. So if listeners like the sound of Shy's music, you can get some of her music at swanbird.bandcamp.com.

**Shy**

Yep, you got it.

**Karina**

And keep your eyes peeled for her upcoming album. That will feature the previous track we just played and the one that we'll take you out with today. So you've been listening to 3CR's Disability Day 2022 special broadcast.

I hope you like what you've heard over the past 12 hours. And if there's anything that you missed from this year's special broadcast, or anything that you heard that made you go "damn, I need to go and listen back to that". You can head to 3CRr.org.au/DisabilityDay2022. Now, to take us out Shy, what are we listening to?

**Shy**

"4:13am". This was the first track I think I made for the new album. And yeah, it doesn't really tie in with the theme of the day, but I think it's a heater. So yeah.

**Karina**

That's all that matters. Hard out!

**Shy**

Hard out!

**Voiceover**

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