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my illnesses are really complicated, and present in strange and extreme ways, even for a Zebra.

“So, the Zebracorn is part zebra, part unicorn: rarer than rare, isolated, believed by many not to exist, but despite everything, still fabulous”.

As Hanna became increasingly disabled, a friend helped establish the habit of writing just two sentences every day about how she was feeling.

“I’ve kept to that practice these last four years, documenting, in microform, the changes that have occurred. I may have been living inside the same room, stuck in the same bed, for all that time, but you can start to see the way that time passes differently. And through the writing, I started to notice how strange my life had become, and that the shift in the way I was able to interact with the world meant I was able to perceive it in a new light; the political structures and injustice I was suddenly prey to, the way humans treat each other, our relationships with our own bodies, and our relationships with vulnerability and mortality.”

Hanna is usually a very private person, but over the course of her extreme illness, she found she wanted to create and share this autobiographical work. As you’d imagine, there are some pretty heavy themes at play; desperation, desolation, despair, and grief for the life you’ve now lost.

“But it isn’t entirely grim,” Hanna quipped.

“Surviving this existential threat day after day necessitates a dark, sharp sense of humour and diamond-hard hope, and the work attempts to convey those parts of the experience as well. Zebracorn tries to honour the phenomenological reality of living this kind of life, jumping from the intense and concrete intimacy of human connections on the edge of crisis, the absurdity of the medical system, the political struggles, the surreality of the rules of this alien body, in a fractured structure that utilises physical theatre and video art projection.”

The production features three of Canberra’s household names, Lloyd Allison-Young, Chloe Martin and Hanna’s partner and co-writer Christopher Samuel Carroll. All trained in Paris at Ecole Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq, and all have known Hanna since before her illness took hold.

“It’s great to have these big names of the Canberra diaspora come back here to work as an ensemble. We have a shared language due to our training, but they are also people who knew me before and after this illness and can bring their own perspectives thematically to the work. I’m really excited to have them in a room together to see how their respective creative sparks will ignite the material.”

Hanna hopes that by sharing her bizarre world it’ll help increase people’s understanding of chronic illness, conditions that you can’t simply will away, the importance of maintaining ‘normal’ relationships with the outside world as we inch our way towards dismantling our ingrained, though often subconscious, ableism. Now that’s something we should all support.

*Zebracorn is part of The Street Theatre’s FIRST SEEN: new works-in-progress program that offers Canberra audiences the opportunity to be part of the creative process that pushes performance works to production-ready stage. Zebracorn plays on Sunday, 7 July at 4pm. Tickets are \$15 from <http://www.thestreet.org.au/shows/first-seen-zebracorn-hanna-cormick>*

