

Tyranny of the Unafflicted

(Synopsis: In this experimental, allegorical meditation on chronic illness and the poorly understood medical conditions that often underlie it, an unseen man describes his struggles with an auditory affliction amid the apathy and ableism that surround him.)

Unless you want people
to think you're crazy,

and just shut you down
and push you aside,

you pretty much have to
keep it all to yourself.

Because like, for me,
when the sounds get bad,

like so loud
they're unbearable,

I can't even tell where
they're coming from,

I can just feel them pinging
around inside my skull:

crashing together ...

pulsing and throbbing.

Like a symphony, I guess,

but not a good one,

not something anyone
wants to hear.

So I'll just ... bury

myself under pillows,

then blankets,

or maybe take everything and
make a bed on the closet floor:

try to get tucked away ...

try to ... escape.

And it's funny, you know,
when you do that,

and you look back
out of your closet,

over at where your bed is,

and the rest of your room,

and you know that's
the one place

you should always feel safe.

But instead it's like ...

a cage ... or a coffin,

and you feel like
you're just living ...

in the middle of a nightmare.

(Part II: ... sometimes ...)

And sometimes you are living
in the middle of a nightmare ...

sometimes, out of nowhere,
they pop into your dreams,

and when that happens,

the sounds, they have
lives of their own,

like, bodies of their own,

like sometimes they're these
little worm-like things,

swaying along with the sounds,

and sometimes they're bigger,

like a giant snake one time,

maybe ... 30 feet long
and a foot thick,

drilling holes all
over my yard,

until I could feel the entire
trailer shifting and sagging.

Or ... another time ...

a bunch of snakes ...

in a cooler, on a front porch,

and I reached in for a drink,

without looking,

and that's when they attacked,

and I just ... lurched
... out of bed,

out of the dream,

face first into the carpet.

That was a sight.

Rug burn on my forehead.
Big bruise on my temple.

I got a weighted
blanket after that,

try to keep my battles
contained to the bed,

but, you know, there's always
that fear they won't be,

that stress of it
happening again,

getting hurt worse if it does.

In that one place ...

you should always feel safe.

(Part III: ... a light ...)

Yeah, and then,
you know, sometimes

maybe it is better
for a few days,

and you think maybe
you see a light,

you think maybe you're
all finished with it.

This time it's over ...
This time ... it's your past.

And then, when it comes back,
when you least expect it,

it's like ... it just takes
everything you have ...

and you're there
with ... nothing.

And that's the most lonely
feeling in the world,

because you're like,

“Can this really happen
to a person ... to me?”

And I remember the first
time I realized it could.

I was sitting there
with my eyes closed,

sounds ... bouncing everywhere.

And it was like I could almost
feel these hands on my shoulders,

dragging me away from

everything I wanted,

back to that symphony

... only I can hear.

And I felt like I was just

... I don't know:

grape jelly or something ...

just being spread down
this long twisted hallway,

by a giant butter knife,

little pieces of me coming
off all along the way.

Until I was just nothing,

just ... gone.

(Part IV: ... under that thumb ...)

So yeah, you wanna
tell people about it,

but even the doctors ...

sometimes mostly the doctors,

keep telling you there's
nothing wrong ... nothing there.

Or just shrug it off,

because, I mean ...
it's not their problem,

and if they can't diagnose it,
how can it be real?

And I guess finally
you just realize

this world isn't meant
for people like you,

you realize everything was
designed by, and for,

... the unafflicted.

And that there's just this ...
tyranny ... of the unafflicted,

this ... distance they keep,
these rules they make,

about what's real
and what's not,

so they never have
to think about it,

never have to even
try to understand.

And ... there you are:

under that thumb ...

the great big thumb
of the rest of the world,

that can't even hear it,

and tries to tell you
you can't hear it either,

even though you know you can.

(closing credits)

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