

My Brains for Lunch

Sound travels. It packs its things for a 2-month trip though it only leaves for the weekend. All its large and little waves cramped up, packed up in a suitcase of echoes. Unleash them and they travel through walls. Unraveling, restlessly, they reverberate so loudly in my twisting mind, they're like human-sized crickets, piercing sound that multiplies. The sound comes alive and feels like millions of sharp steel knives that stab through my skull, into my brain.

I can't sleep when I hear someone breath, it's an anomaly in human evolution, like broken keys unable to open the doors to rest and resolution. To resolve, it's either me or this world, but it's not going to be this world, so it has to be me, but then I have to open my mouth, and don't get me started on mouths.

The shit that comes out of them...

Smooching, popping, gobbling, grating, crunching, and grinding; the words that do survive the vocal onslaught flee from the tips of zombie apocalips and shape contracts that feel as binding as my body aches to be to my bed when soundwaves try to devour my brain.

I try regardless to find meaning in these contracts. So, give me a word and I'll trade you one!

Like a corporation, I trade in self-interest.

But like the stock market in crisis, my sanity declines with every transaction.

I scramble for social currency as I observe and study the mystery of the neurotypical mind and body. The words I offer in this exchange come through a rainbow kaleidoscope of high hopes, projecting fractured light onto a canvas of alienated travel documents¹. "Transaction failed" reads the monitor at the border between our realities. I guess I've ran out of currency. The leave blowers, and the lawnmowers stole my savings. Then, the door slammers, and the ventilators gave me another reason to remove myself from society. At least when I'm not out there, it's mostly quiet.

In the silence, I maul over the yellow noise that condenses onto the grey linings of my brain. I don't want to hate the mouths that also bring love to my doorstep. Pack it up tightly and neatly into a suitcase, friendly faces deliver it to me. But when they know how it affects me, they seal it, leaving me alienated.

In the end, I tend to speak the same tongue but in a different language. Autism isn't automatic, it's not simple, it takes effort. So much effort. Senses always on guard. Caught off guard by what one may not even consider. I navigate a world built on arbitrary social cues and expectations that feel like a field of landmines. Blown out of proportions are the repercussions

¹ I am an international student, which means my official legal status in the USA is "non-resident alien".

of the neurological chemical reactions that occur when translations die. I have sensory needs permanently unfulfilled by a world that wasn't built for my common sense. I still carry the scars on my arms from when zombies first attacked and I did not know how to ward them off.

I have since learned that neurotypical people are not zombies, that suitcases do not explode like bombs and that my social currency is replenishable. But when people externalize preconceived notions on how autism manifests in me, it is hard to escape the self-fulfilling prophecy. So, I need you to see me, not as the projection of an expectation for my so-called "disorder" but see me as the technicolors that dance the way I do. See my splashes of grey and blue when I cry. See my purple when I smile, see my pink when we touch, see my orange and indigo skies of atmospheric alien light, that you may not always be able to translate, but that I demand you value without comparison to the typical.