

A Letter To My Hearing

by Trix Willems

This is the transcript and image description for a short graphic novel.

[Cover image: The scene from a New York street. Drawn in black pen. Different colorful patterns snake around the scene.]

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Trix: It's like how you'll never know if others see color like you do. It's all comparison.

[Image: Two drawings of a living room. One shows a blue couch, maroon coffee table, and maroon-and-white-striped wallpaper; the other shows identical furnishings but with the colors reversed.]

Trix: Which is exactly why the description "Central Processing Disorder: Sounds seem louder" was so useless. It's just how I hear.

[Image: Trix looking at a phone. A closeup of the screen shows the text "Central Processing Disorder: Sounds seem louder."]

Trix: I've always fixated on sounds. Isolating them, meditating to . . .

The gurgling rush of the heater

[Image: Long pink strands]

The wetness of feet unsticking from the floor

[Image: Maroon half circles, fanning out like petals.]

The mingling of exhales

[Image: Overlapping blue triangles with circles cut in the middle.]

All filling my head into blank noise

[Image: In the center of the panel, a younger Trix. All the images of the sounds are going into his ears, contrasting with the black background.]

The busy rattling of windows

Image: Small red shapes by black bricks and windows.

The open creak of the floor

[Image: Bent blue lines, revealing maroon underneath.]

Trix: It's a lot easier now that I know why. Before, I would just be at lunch and then . . .

[Image: Birdseye view of Trix at a table. From all around, lots of colors and patterns. Long pink triangles of music, Small maroon curves of forks, Blue twists of ice, and a variety of blue circles with different inside patterns for people talking.]

. . . and then I had to leave.

[Image: The text is where Trix's face should be. He is looking up and banging on the previous panel like the table.]

Trix: Over time I learned—I can't go to concerts. Or a club. Or a dance. Or watch a movie without earplugs. Or keep up with conversations at crowded restaurants.

[Image: Each example has a black and white drawing of the scene.]

Trix: I knew it was real.

[Image: A doctor looking in Trix's ear with an implement.]

Trix: So I don't know why I was surprised when—

Doctor: It sounds like you have an auditory processing disorder. It's rare and we don't know why it happens. Or how to fix it.

Trix: He made it real.

Trix: And even with everything I've learned, I feel broken.

[Image: In the center, Trix. Around him is an empty circle. The rest is a bunch of colors and symbolic patterns.]

Trix: The city encroaches.

[Image: Three black dots. From top to bottom, the colorful pattern leaves less and less space.]

What will happen when it reaches me?

Trix: I can already feel the sounds becoming familiar, grounding me. If these are my sounds. . .

[Image: Trix is upside down. Only his head is visible. The rest is surrounded by the colorful sounds.]

Trix: . . . then this is my city.

[Page blank except for the words, “then this is my city.”]

[Image: A two page spread of New York City. Blue squiggles weave between buildings. There are giant red dots and little pink ovals.]