

Who Am I Now, Living with Meniere's Disease

I used to recognise myself in the things I loved -
the hobbies that filled my days,
the simple freedom of going where I wanted
without fear or hesitation.
Life felt steady then,
as though the ground beneath me belonged to me.

Now there is a generator in my ear,
a constant grinding hum of tinnitus
that never switches off.
Even in silence, there is no silence.
The smallest movement -
someone turning too quickly,
a sudden shift on the television -
can tear the world sideways,
sending me into a violent spin
that steals my balance and my breath.

My vision bends at the edges.
I walk like I'm drunk,
legs guessing where the floor might be,
while strangers stare
as if I've chosen this staggering path.
They don't see the storm inside my head,
only the way my body betrays me.

Fatigue runs deep.
Memory slips.
Sound fades in and out,
as though the world itself is drifting away.
The activities that once defined me
sit untouched now,
waiting for a version of me
I'm not sure will return.

There is always the fear -
the fear of being alone
when an episode hits.
The spinning, the nausea, the helplessness.
I call them "episodes",
but they feel more like being dragged under
by a wave I never saw coming.

Through it all, my wife stands beside me.
She reads the signs before I speak,
keeps me safe when the world tilts,
guides me through the chaos
when I feel myself coming apart.
She is my anchor, my calm.

This illness is invisible to most.
People look at me strangely,
as if something unseen cannot be real.
Some days I feel thinned by it all,
watching life from behind glass,
wondering who I am becoming.

But I am still here -
changed, yes,
but still learning how to live
in a body that rewrites the rules without warning.
Someone held up by love.
Someone surviving storms others never feel.
Someone still moving forward,
one unsteady step at a time

By Tracey Ward