

TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO FILE:

BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:

THERAPIST: I thought I just saw the first few flakes.

CLIENT: Oh, it's snowing.

THERAPIST: Oh it is.

CLIENT: It's snowing. Yeah. It's mostly been a bit cold and windy.

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: So yeah, I still have been really not feeling great. I don't know. Here's the getting it's kind of I was at a sci-fi convention, a big local sci-fi convention this weekend. Didn't I explain my anxiety about how I had to stay with friends and ...

THERAPIST: Yeah, you had been, I think, hemming and hawing about whether you were going to go or not.

CLIENT: Yeah. I ended up going, and so, the convention's at the hotel Westin convention center of [inaudible 00:01:35], like, a big Westin, and something like three thousand people. And last time I went it was more like two thousandish at the plaza. It was really intensely noisy and aggravating in that, like, [sigh]. There were lots of people in various costumes, which is usually very fun, like, I like that. But I was getting frustrated at people with big costumes, or big costume parts, like, blocking into the aisle, or whacking into you. And then a lot of people were excited to see each other and shrieking all weekend, and then there was the drunk talking too loud in the elevators, and just ... It was like... over stimulating isn't exactly describing it. It's like, wow. These are a lot of really kind of mildly annoying things, usually, really ramped up and in one space.

[00:03:09]

THERAPIST: Way too much?

CLIENT: Yes, like, way. And I wasn't really usually I'll start out at Convention and be like "Aww, guys. You're all over the top but that's okay. Teenage girls in Dalek costumes, that's great!"

THERAPIST: In what?

CLIENT: Um, Dalek costumes from Doctor Who. Daleks are these evil robots.

THERAPIST: Okay.

CLIENT: It used to be that they could only move forward and backward on a flat tread. Stairs defeated them. And then in the new reboot someone was like "Ha ha! We'll go up the stairs!" and then they levitated. One of the things that, these cute little teenage girls, they were wearing little, cute, like prom dancy dresses, that looked the Dalek robots. And I was like, "Oh, that's cute, you know." People do a lot of re-interpretations which is usually fun, but... I sort of never had that, "Oh everyone's really jammed in and kind of crazy and annoying, but I still love you" moment.

[00:04:35]

CLIENT: I just sort of was “Oh my God. I hate everyone”. I mean, and also I had a complete freak out before packing because I couldn’t find a bottle of painkillers. I had a bottle of Vicodin and I couldn’t find it anywhere. So I got super stressed about it, like tearing apart my apartment.

THERAPIST: Sorry. What’s hurting?

CLIENT: My hip.

THERAPIST: That did used to hurt. I know I haven’t heard for awhile, I don’t think we’ve talked about it for awhile.

CLIENT: Yeah, it’s not constant, it’s just that it’s kind of like, well, you know, it’s comforting to have the concept of it more than anything. And also, like, walking around a lot, blah blah blah. I don’t know if I really could say [inaudible 00:05:39] for awhile.

[00:05:40]

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: And then I was like, “Oh shit. I have to leave right now”. So that was just a little bit much. But it was weird. I didn’t exactly I wouldn’t say I had a good time, I wouldn’t say I had a bad time. It was mostly just a lot, is how I felt about it. And the sort of ... there’s a significant downside of... like I am acquainted or passingly familiar or friends with a ton of people there, so there’s, like if I’m sitting there talking to someone, there’s always a string of people that are like “Hey, how are you, blah blah blah” and it was just like “Hello, but I’d really like you to go away right now”. Or just, like, it was hard to just sort of hang out and talk to a few people quietly. Other than like, my hotel room. Even in, like, I had dinner with some friends in a restaurant pub attached, and of course a whole bunch of people ended up walking by our booth to go to their table. And I don’t know. I guess I kind of missed, everything’s always been kind of... it’s big and kind of overwhelming and kind of noisy, but I really miss not having any sort of, not really having the initial, “Oh, everyone hi!” or hanging out in a group of more than four people. So that was frustrating, and the thing I had forgotten, or made myself forget, is, Arisia’s panels are really disorganized and half-assed and it drives me crazy. People, the panelists always talk to their friends in the front, or they’ll be like, “I’m not prepared, I don’t know why I’m here”. I’m just like “AAAAAAGH”. So even though I knew that, I tapped out of two panels within ten minutes. I just it was too frustrating. So there was that. I don’t know. I didn’t buy books because the dealers’ room was too big. I just ...

[00:08:53]

THERAPIST: Sorry, the what?

CLIENT: The dealers’ room was really big. It’s like a... I don’t know what else to call it. You know, like a big convention center space -

THERAPIST: Oh, you mean it was really big to go in, and look around for stuff?

CLIENT: Yeah, you know, usually there’s like, there’s some books out, and t-shirts, and sort of sci-fi tchotchkes. There were a lot of them. A lot. Kind of. Like it was, I just felt like I can’t figure out what I want through this really loud, anti-Sunday, kind of stank-smelling crowd. Like, I don’t know, I was just kind of having the, everything that ever irritates me about the sci-fi fantasy fans, it knocked me all weekend. Interspersed with hanging out with people I like and talking to them, and then being really annoyed at people.

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: Yeah, it was...

THERAPIST: And have you had that? You said you hadn't had that experience before, of not also having the "aw, great to see you guys" feeling. Have you been irritated to this extent?

[00:10:32]

CLIENT: Not really. Although the last time I seriously attended Arisia, which is the convention, I was really frustrated by, like I'm signed up to do a lot of paneling about race in science fiction, and kind of wanted to murder half the audience, and had someone, [inaudible 00:11:10] basically heckle me over a t-shirt that I have that said Black Nerds Unite.

THERAPIST: That's terrible.

CLIENT: Yeah, and...

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: Yeah, so ...

THERAPIST: Those are bad, but different.

[00:11:26]

CLIENT: Yeah, because that was just like, I did this panel, I'm like "Oh, I hate everyone", basically, and then I left, and hung out with friends, and then and it was more like, parts were definitely fun, and I did like, there are usually a dozen parties happening or so, and I didn't go to any of them this year. I just was so, A) I can't drink anything, but B) I just was sort of like, I think without a little, a drink or something to make this go smooth, I'm like, I need some form of social lubrication here, and being around a lot of really drunk people while sober is boring.

THERAPIST: I can imagine that exacerbating a bunch of things that already bothered you.

[00:12:29]

CLIENT: Yeah. I mean being with them in the elevators was bad enough. I guess part of what I -

THERAPIST: What I'm wondering about is, in the medication, I mean... I'm, like, these aren't side effects, they're part of what's affecting you. It sounds like the sort of thing it's supposed to be helping with, and then the other stuff, it would help more with, or whatever, didn't get in the way... I mean I know you're having a hard time, it's not like I'm I'm not intending to just blame everything on the medicine, but in that your reaction to this was so different.

[00:11:37]

CLIENT: I mean, part of it was also, yeah. I mean I mentioned before that like, guys yelling always makes me nervous, so a convention hall of guys yelling is perhaps not ideal. So it was sort of this mix of feeling like is this the medication, am I just irritated, and... like for me the biggest frustration, and I was talking to Dr. Bond about it, and she was like "Well", so I went up to I guess the clinical I guess, the amount she wanted me to take of Celexa a week ago. So she's like, "Well, you know maybe it's more time" which, I agree with theoretically. I'm just really not enjoying it.

THERAPIST: Yeah.

[PAUSE 00:14:52 00:15:05]

CLIENT: And I think the other thing is, I'm always, I worry about expressing anger a lot, so even though I'm pretty sure that I didn't come off as particularly ruffled or whatever, I just sort of, I've just been worried about it and feeling like, is this going to get more annoying, less annoying, should I just stop going to conventions this big because it's a lot bigger than I usually go to, doing this whole, like, I don't know. I guess part of it was that I don't feel like I know if I was feeling more irritated just from jump because I've been feeling more depressed, or if I'm feeling more irritated because of medication, or if I was feeling more irritated because I'm obsessed with or concerned about feeling more irritated.

THERAPIST: I mean, from where I sit, on my hunch it might be the medication. Because it seems to me there are other times you've been really pretty low. We need to talk more about it. I wish I'd thought this through more carefully. And the medication obviously may have, but also just, I sort of don't buy that you get that irritated by being worried about being irritated, compared to how you usually are for something like this, you know? Even if it was so marked, it doesn't sound like, unless I'm misunderstanding, the kind of difference caused by "I'm just focused on being irritated, which I don't want to be, and yet worried about being, and it's making me more irritated." That feels like a small difference but it seems like a big difference.

[00:17:45]

THERAPIST: You've been to many conventions, as I understand, and this reaction, I've not heard you talk I mean, I've heard you describe annoying things or people at conventions, or other things have happened, but this is like, really not enjoying the genre.

CLIENT: Yeah. Part of this thing where I'm sort of like "waffle waffle" on is, sci-fi conventions vary a lot, and Arisia is definitely, I don't know how to say it. It's kind of rowdy. It's a little bit rowdy, it's a little bit drunk. It's kind of focused on sex a little bit. Which comes under the long boring 25-year argument with another sci-fi convention in the area. So...

THERAPIST: So there is more of that stuff than there generally is.

CLIENT: Yeah, and the hotel that it's in, while there's a lot of space, which is good, the main lobby area is like, it was designed for business conventions, not a ton of people being really social and running around screaming. So, you know, like ... there's that setup, which is kind of like, it's really harder to describe. It definitely cemented in my mind that I don't think I like, at least right now I am not liking that genre of convention, like, which is, I love the costuming that people do, but about half the other things, I was just like no. I just... like having programming running, like, all through the night. So they're doing gaming and movies.

[00:20:29]

THERAPIST: Twenty-four hours.

CLIENT: Basically something is happening twenty four hours, and there's no, like, dinner breaks or anything, or any breaks built in, so everything just feels like, really, I don't know, I guess it feels like more, people feel kind of wirey. Everyone seems kind of wirey and jittery, and, like, a lot really quickly. But yeah. I mean I definitely, like, was way more annoyed at people at Arisia than I think I've ever been at, say, like, WisCon or one of the other cons I do.]

[PAUSE 00:21:32 00:22:04]

CLIENT: Like, it's weird that I'm still sort of on the fence about, was it a good use of my time, I guess. I think I'll just say if I didn't go, I'd probably spend the whole weekend being depressed about it, if I didn't go, and being like "awww", but also going wasn't entirely great. And the other thing was so due to some poor planning or timing on my part or whatever, I end up, I wanted to leave the convention and run to my apartment Sunday evening. And so first I went to a friend's house, we were going to have dinner, and someone was going to drop me off at my house. And it didn't end up happening until a lot later, and they were really exhausted, so I was like, "Okay, I'll stay the night". And it's these friends of mine, Emma and Damian, who ... their house is borderline hoarder house and it makes me super stressed. Partially there's stuff piled everywhere and there's really not places to sit. And it reminds me of an ex who had very similar, piles and piles and piles and piles of stuff.

[00:23:43]

CLIENT: And I like, I would have skipped, like, I would have rather skipped going over there for dinner. Even though I did end up having a great opportunity to hang out with my friend Wanda for a couple of hours, and blah blah blah.

THERAPIST: Really annoying.

CLIENT: Yeah, the hoarder house part just always makes me like, "agggh!"

THERAPIST: Well, you had just been overcrowded all weekend, I think.

CLIENT: Yeah. And then having to kind of pick your way around big piles of stuff, and then they decided to get four kittens recently. Which -

THERAPIST: That's a lot of kittens.

CLIENT: Yeah, they only have two now, they're getting two more. And all I could think is, that's the worst idea ever. Also their apartment has wall to wall cream rugs. Yeah. I'm like, this is not going to go well. In the room where the kittens are right now, it's already like, just gross. It's covered in black cat hair. And yeah. The other thing which is not related to me being angry at a sci-fi con is, I managed to, I don't even know, not notice that the new semester had started for school. Yeah. And it started last week, so that's not too bad, but never actually done that. I've gotten close, but ... Doing that makes me, I had sat down I think Friday and was like, "Oh. The semester started. Well, fuck it, I'm not going to do anything with it this weekend". And then I was like, "Okay, I'll sit down Monday and work on it", and then didn't want to. And then today, I was just like "uuuugh... don't want to again". And part of it was I really miscalculated how... so [inaudible 00:26:59] to get together this week long something about multimedia stuff. It's kind of a conference in my library so there's like, keynotes each day with a catered lunch, like a bagged lunch, and workshops or discussions running every day, so it's like, two workshops in the morning, an hour and a half keynote at noon, and then afternoon workshop. Some are just talks, some are hands-on. And so, you know, like, I'm just completely not involved in it. Wasn't asked, wasn't anything. Which, like, on the one hand, I don't like working with him, other hand I find it both insulting and kind of baffling. He really just doesn't like ... So Paul's been really stressed about it, but hasn't asked me for any help. I offered to help, he was just kind of like "Hmm..."

[00:28:40]

CLIENT: So ... It feels frustrating and insulting and I'm also a little bit glad that I don't have to deal with it but I guess part of the frustration is that people have been asking me lately, "Oh yeah, that thing your department's doing". Yep. I'm not involved. It's technically not my department, it's technically another group that's half of my apartment. And then I got reminded that the main multimedia site at the [inaudible 00:29:32] doesn't list me as a member of the department. Yeah. List of multimedia consultants, and, Karl and Chet, and then someone who doesn't work for the library, and then some other people, I'm just like "What? Okay." The keynote today was a post-doc of African American studies, and the sort of title was "Storytelling, and African Diaspora, and African Americans, and Multimedia". So I was pretty excited. Initially they were supposed to have this other professor who's amazing, who has done data visualization about Haitian slave revolts, and that was just super amazing and he's very interesting. And so you know, I go trip in for the keynote, and the post-doc is this white woman that I've met before, and I was just like, "Okay, this is a little weird". And then there was very low attendance, and I was the only black person in the room, and I feel like maybe there were two people who aren't white but also aren't US citizens, if that makes sense. From Malaysian libraries. I'm just sort of like "Hmmm". And the post-doc being white wouldn't necessarily have been a problem on its own, I've certainly met her before, but it just all coalesced into me feeling really frustrated and uncomfortable and not being able to leave easily because her talk she was being filmed. So...

[00:31:58]

THERAPIST: I see, there would have been film of you getting up and walking out. I see.

CLIENT: Yeah, it's just like, you know. I wish I had my laptop then I could use the Internet. Part of what she was talking about, her talk was disorganized in a lot of things. Part of what she was talking about was the African American Studies sophomore seminars where they learn about how to do community outreach, and how to do anthropological studies and interviews and blah blah blah. So it felt very weird to have a white woman telling presumably mostly black students how to study and talk to black people. In the end that was kind of like, the nut of it, I was just like, "Hmmm, this feels very uncomfortable".

THERAPIST: I would imagine.

[00:33:04]

It was not touched on at all. Also part of her, in part of her talk she was discussing how a lot of her African-American and African students didn't do a lot with technology and are underrepresented in the tech field. And it's true, the tech field is very white. Her comment was, it's because they're not being encouraged to go into tech, [inaudible 00:33:47] and we don't see it as a possibility, and we just need to be encouraged. And I thought, no, that's not really actually the problem. The problem is systemic racism, but sure.

[00:34:01]

THERAPIST: You mean through both the educational system and the technology field in particular?

CLIENT: Right. You know, one reason, I mean it ends up being sort of circular, but it's similar to thoughts of like, why aren't there a lot of women in IT? Well, they get harrassed and it's really frustrating, or assumed to be inferior and they don't get hired, so why would you do that? I found her idea that just encouraging them through a sophomore seminar is fixing the problem to be incredibly naive.

THERAPIST: Ironically sophomoric, yeah.

CLIENT: She's like, one person's decided to do a secondary, like to start CS, computer science classes, so they can create a startup. I'm like, computer science classes and startups have nothing to do with each other. Uuugh. Which is probably part of why I didn't want to do anything with my class today also.

THERAPIST: You mean because of how you're feeling from that?

[00:35:33]

CLIENT: Yeah. And also, I mean, a lot of what she was talking about, I was like, "That's what I did as an undergrad in Folklore and Mythology". Some of these things that she's talking about.

THERAPIST: Sorry, did you say you did your undergrad in -

CLIENT: No, so some of the things she's talking about are things that I did as an undergrad in Folklore and Mythology. So like, going out into the community, and collecting stories, and interviewing people...

THERAPIST: Oh, I see, yes. That makes sense.

CLIENT: Yeah.

THERAPIST: So like anthropology.

CLIENT: Yes. So part of me was like "I already know what you're talking about". The other part of me is thinking "What you're describing as being really innovative isn't". So part of her, "This is so amazing and innovative", was recording people on film. Well, digital film. I was just kind of like, "I want to tell you, film exists, and it has for awhile". And it's interesting that they, students try to turn them into videos, except they didn't do it very well, so that was kind of weird. And then she had a whole about updating Wikipedia, because Wikipedia doesn't have a lot of information about Africa, African culture, African diaspora type stuff. And I think to me, that was the only interesting part. That's actually good, because everyone uses Wikipedia for information. Again, there was something they were updating that another editor had been reverting. There was a little, sort of, tussle over something. And her analysis of the tussle had to do with one editor being more religious and conservative and that was what was causing the tussle, when I think the problem actually had to do with, at least part Ethiopian politics, and who's been blamed for various bits of corruption or balance or, there was something going on there. I was also wondering, you know, who's the editor that's reverting it? Are they Ethiopian? Are they not? Who's writing this? Are they Ethiopian or not? And also asking one's source for information and taking that as "This is the truth which we will update Wikipedia with", is not really a great practice.

[00:38:51]

THERAPIST: The professor here was really quite naive, incompetent, and kind of offensive too.

CLIENT: Yeah, I feel like, you're a post-doc at Cambridge, put effort in, come on. And I'm kind of like, part of me is like did you get handed this last-minute, were you not initially supposed to speak? Is this a failure to prepare? Do you really not understand the racial politics? Are you just not talking about them? Because you don't want to be controversial?

[00:39:47]

THERAPIST: This may be very naive on my part, but I would imagine the white person in African-American studies would have thought about, or like, have had to deal with being comfortable talking about that kind of stuff. I mean, clearly not, or something.

CLIENT: I would think that, except that I think having a lot of white people who've done Afro Am, who are just, who are ... I don't know. I guess it seems like they just feel like... what? Yeah, that's the truth. And also they feel like, in their head, they're like, "Well I can tell whether or not something is racialized, and if I don't think it is, then it's not", as opposed to like, "Huh. I should talk to someone else. Maybe my own whiteness is preventing me from seeing something".

[00:40:56]

THERAPIST: Right. And, they won't necessarily learn better, I guess.

CLIENT: Yeah, I mean it's also possible to do... I'm curious what she's studying, what she...

THERAPIST: ... Actually does, yeah.

CLIENT: Yeah, there are definitely people who have done things like focus on the Harlem Renaissance, the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, and then completely skipped over the politics behind the Renaissance. I'm like, okay, I guess people do that, like in literature departments and stuff, but it feels very ... Someone in the English department, just focusing on the poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, ignoring politics, makes more sense than someone in Afro Am doing that.]

[00:41:54]

THERAPIST: Yes, I can see that too. Although even just in literature, by the time you're a post-doc, you'd think you couldn't get away with purely looking at the internal structure of the books you're reading, or something like that, but I don't really know.

CLIENT: It was just so... and part of me is like, I don't know, maybe she's dumbing it down for the audience, or like, partially it just seems baffling.

THERAPIST: What I am wondering about, and the answer to this might just be no, is, are you doing that thing at all where when somebody pisses you off, you tend to be a little more critical, you know what I mean? I'm thinking of that story, the Cambridge Business Review story? I'm not sure at all that's what's going on, but it did cross my mind to ask.

CLIENT: I don't know.

THERAPIST: It's not that I don't believe she could be that bad. I just ...

CLIENT: Yeah, I mean, so part of the there was an overall issue of, there was some incoherence to her talk, which someone else mentioned, so like, okay, it's not just me. But I think I definitely, I had a hard time listening, like say she was supposed to talk about something, like, part of teaching them how to do these interviews, she's like, "Well, teach them how to get to Roxbury on the bus". I'm like "Really?" That's a weird statement.

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: And also, among the other things in that statement, it's like, so Cambridge students not taking the bus, not knowing how to get to a poor area of town, or areas where there's black people... There's a whole lot going on with that statement. And so I was thinking about that

when she was sort of going on talking about some other things at various points, where I was just like, “But, how did you just say that?” So...

THERAPIST: Yeah. What I might have caught as well, probably not, but I think I get what you mean, that like, there’s a lot going on there that’s reflective of her point of view.

CLIENT: Yeah, and also since I’m already familiar with the subject, basically ... it’s quite possible that if I was less familiar with it, although a coworker of mine did comment on the bus to Roxbury thing, without any prompting, so.

[00:45:18]

THERAPIST: Yeah, the more I think about it, that’s really...

CLIENT: Yeah, it was just kind of weird.

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: So, also, there’s going to be a whole week of this, and I had planned to be supportive and show my face and now I’m thinking “You know, I don’t have to do that”. Especially since, like, so there’s been super low turnout, and people in the building haven’t bothered to show, so I think I...

THERAPIST: Yeah, you’re done.

CLIENT: Yeah. Okay. I’m going to continue thinking on your comment of was I just getting super critical because I was mad.

THERAPIST: I wouldn’t go so far as to say you were just getting super critical because you were mad. I was wondering if that was a piece of it, you know what I mean? I don’t doubt that she had the problems you described. I have the sense that from that incident, sometimes you push a little further and make the person more ridiculous. That’s what I’m wondering about. But I don’t know.

CLIENT: Yeah, I don’t know either, but it’s a big item to think of.

THERAPIST: In a good way or not a good way?

CLIENT: In a good way!

THERAPIST: Yeah.

CLIENT: Okay.

END TRANSCRIPT