



# Against It

---

*After reading “Against It,” do what you can to spread awareness of autoimmune encephalitis. Support charities focused on moving toward a better future for those with AE. Learn about AE and explain it to those around you. Are you a medical professional? Mention AE to colleagues or students as appropriate. Are you in public service? Consider how you might one day influence insurance companies to ease the process of obtaining treatment. Before you read, please pause for a moment of silence, and honor those who have lost the battle with AE alone.*

## *Against It*

*It seems a harmless kind of devil,  
stealing a bit of thought at first,  
merely a memory  
here or there to start.*

*Do trembling hands truly forebode  
That certain war will come with all Its doom?*

*Its pixie mask comes off one dawn,  
And It has crossed the borders of your brainstem.*

*Autoimmune artillery rock  
Your vital signs and sap out your salts,  
As the cities of your brain succumb to It.  
Its fiercest traitor forces fight completely unopposed.*

*Missile strike! Ten thousand neuron windows shatter.*

*Antibodies crowd round your cells  
Like berserkers raging for a king gone mad.  
Its gunmen crouch on the rooftop of your chest,  
So even as you seek out sleep,  
You smother, wake, and gasp.*

*You would rather pace a line across the floor  
From dawn to dusk and night to day  
Than lie between those bedside lamps, like a corpse*

*Laid out for a final kiss. With driving dread,  
Your heart pounds out one firm demand:  
Flee death. Flee death. Flee death.*

*In a subterranean hiding place, you shield yourself,  
Pleading all for cures. Its ants gnaw at your limbs.  
Beasts of dark imagination and twisted perception  
Torment away your dignity. The screaming insanity starts.  
How all your writhing pleases It! You thrash as It delights.  
Hope and trust clean fall away. Fear of It is left to reign.*

*It plunges you into black convulsions, wrecking  
Vicious electrical onslaughts of purest hate.  
You awaken... dirtied, bruised, shamed, scared.  
Battered again, you sink in weakness, wordless.  
Ceaseless desperate jumbled outcry is your speech,  
But we pass by. We recognize and heed your weeping.*

*“Grab on! Grab onto us!” We call down into your cave.  
“No way we’ll leave such a shining being as you behind!  
You’re captive now, but we know Its nature and Its Name.  
Over It and all Its brutal forces, we claim surprising power.*

*With merciful weapons to flow in, we subdue It,  
Lying with our arms outstretched on a field of battle.*

*“Do you hear that sound that drifts ‘round all our Healers?  
The song is a breeze among them, to cool them from labor,  
A wind of refreshing, so rest.  
There is no clear number of those fighting in hidden places.  
We merely know that none will yield you up alive. Healers  
Lead us out in battle. They fight with eyes and mouths and minds.*

*“Grab onto us, new soldier! We are advancing.  
We’ll lift you, elder warrior, over hurdles high.  
While you are wounded, little one, we’ll carry you.  
If you’re recaptured, lightning raids must rage day and night.  
Though we reel and stammer, forget and find no words,  
One day we’ll run and storm Its strongholds high.*

*“Until then, we’ll march out with the Healers  
A tattered caravan full of warriors  
Washed by that renewing wind.  
We welcome you to come among us.  
Each heart is a haven and a pillow.  
Each limps at another’s strengthening side.”*