

INCIDENT AT 59TH STREET

People are pushing now. I can't see the man, I only hear him. "Get the fuck out of here," he repeats, "I have a fucking gun." His voice sounds wet, he spits his words. We press one another in the tight space of the subway car. "Scuse me," a man behind me says, as though it's his stop and he must get past. I'm in the middle of the group, towards the back. I kneel down, so as to not stick out. I stare at my feet.

On my left white sneaker there's a gray mark, where Ollie stepped on my foot. I left her that morning and we hugged goodbye. It was an awkward hug. I wanted a kiss, I wanted her to press her whole body against me, to squeeze me until it hurt. We had the same recurring argument, a variation on the theme. I want more than she will give. She wants no obligations. I want her no matter what. I negotiate with no bargaining power. This morning it was about the wedding. A woman she used to fuck invited her to be her wedding date and she said yes. The wedding is in two days. She would probably fuck this other woman, and there's nothing I could do about it. If she fucked this woman and then came to me the next night, I would welcome her into my bed. I hated her for making me powerless; I couldn't refuse her.

I want to call her now, to tell her what's happening. I'll call her when I get out, run up to the street and call her. I'll sound panicked, I'll ask her to come get me in a cab, frantic. I can imagine her voice, soft spoken and soothing and warm. It takes a crisis for her to give me what I want. She'll realize how much she loves me; she'll cancel the wedding date.

We're at 59th street. Only one of the doors is opened and I'm at least ten people away. The man is in the middle. The flow of people continue to push. I dropped my workbag many steps behind me. I'll get it later. The elderly woman in front of me has flowers on her purse. She's older, and frail, but she's also very strong. She grips my wrist, she twists my skin. I want to pry her fingers off me, but instead, I softly stroke her hand. That's

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what a person does, in a situation like this. It feels like the shed skin of a lizard. She's muttering Spanish under her breath. It takes me a moment to realize she is praying.

If Ollie had come with me, she'd be holding my hand. I imagine our fingers interwoven, tight. I love her hands. Strong and big, calloused at the palm. When we first danced at a bar on their monthly queer night, she pressed her hand into my stomach from behind me. I arched my neck back, leaning into her chest. I could smell her perfume, oaky and rich.

There's a popping noise, and a woman screams. A boy cries a loud shriek.

Now we're on the ground. The gun isn't a gun anymore. It's fire.

I press my cheek into the damp lap of the woman. She's whimpering now. Another pop. I imagine Ollie painting. She always held her paintbrush as though it dripped with blood. And the faces, painted on burlap sacks and old car doors, a technique born out of a time when she couldn't afford canvas. The painted faces always screamed.

This is the moment. We're those faces. Somehow, she knew fear. Fear tastes like metal and sounds like fire, muted and crackling,

bones.

How did she know?

I wonder if she'll love me when I'm dead.

I wonder if she'll paint me.

Will she paint fear?

I hope so.

No serenity, no eyes closed, no peace.

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When she paints me,
I hope she'll paint with blood.

I want her to know how I screamed.