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The Party

She texted. She wanted to know what he was up to tonight. He responded in motion. He was getting out of the shower on his way to a friend's party. He told her as much, included the address, and continued preparing to leave.

Suddenly, a phone call. He picked up. It was her. She wanted him to wait for her, she wanted to come. She wanted him to meet her on the subway platform. "Frontish of the train," she said.

"Sounds good," he said.

"Are you leaving now?"

"Yeah."

"Cool. I'm pulling my pants up. Should be at the train in fifteen minutes."

"Sounds good."

"Ok great. This is great," she said with excitement building in her voice.

He noticed this. It made him smile.

"See you soon."

Once he got to the train station it occurred to him that something didn't add up. First he went to the wrong platform. Realized he didn't have a swipe left. Bought a new Metrocard. Then checked the map. Her stop was in the opposite direction of the party. He'd have to go backwards before they could go forwards. He wasn't quite sure what to do next. He was already underground, and likely so was she. No signal. No way to call. She'd be expecting him so he didn't have much of a choice. Just then, his phone began to ring. Somehow her signal had made it through the concrete. He picked up.

"Hey."

"Hey."

"Yeah I just realized I should be riding the train towards you actually."

"Yeah I know."

"Are you already riding towards me?"

"At the station."

"Cool. Meet at your stop?"

"Yeah. Are you going to be at the front or the back?"

"Middle. Towards the back."

"Ok . . . How will I—"

"Look for me. If you see me get on. If I don't see you I'll get off."

"Ok."

He was inspired by her decisive tone. He decided he was going to make his move tonight. He wasn't going to tell her how he felt. He was going to kiss her.

Then he realized he was on the wrong side of the tracks. He paused. Contemplated how unimportant money was in the grand scheme of things, remembered how she had sounded on the phone, exited through the turnstile, ran up the stairs above ground, across the street, and back down the other side where he bought another Metrocard before swiping his way back in to wait.

He waited. It was hot in the subway. When she arrived she was wearing denim booty shorts and a tight yellow shiny t-shirt that could be argued as see through.

"I cut my finger," she said, "see, look." Then she held up her hand so he could see it.

"I don't see anything," he said. "How did it happen?"

"A can opener."

"Ouch."

"Yeah, my can opener is old so it doesn't always work properly and I got cut by the jagged metal lid."

They had arrived at the party when suddenly, a cute black haired girl wearing a denim dress appeared out of nowhere, her name was Sophia. She was making an entrance at the front door with several bottles of booze and a man named Vincent in tow.

"Roof?" he said to Frisbee Girl.

Sophia landed a bottle of Prosecco on the kitchen counter and began unscrewing the foil.

"Roof?"

"What's this about a roof?" Vincent inquired.

"We're on a mission." John said.

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. I hear there's a roof." John looked to FB and smiled. She seemed nervous. "Come on, the roof!" he shouted as he began moving forward, leading the charge.

By this point Vincent was preoccupied talking to Sophia over an unopened bottle of cheap whiskey while she continued unscrewing champagne foil—just then, there was a loud *pop!* and Sophia smiled, while the crowd hooted and hollered.

"Woo!" yelled John.

"Yeah!" shouted Vincent.

"That was scary," said FB. "Someone could have lost an eye."

"Aw, come on," John said. "It's exciting."

"Wanna go smoke a cigarette?" she asked.

"Roof?"

"Yeah."

She walked to the front door and he followed. As they went through the door, John half peaked backward over his shoulder towards the people he was leaving behind, but he didn't look. He stuck his arm out, palm open, to catch the door as it closed. He did. But it didn't make much of a difference. The door slammed loudly all the same.

The young couple of kids began climbing the stairs. Somehow, even though she left the apartment first, he was the one leading their way up the stairs. Several floors later, one of them decided to say something:

"God, this is sooooo long. How many more floors are there?"

"We're almost there," he said.

"How much further?"

"I don't know."

"Let's just go downstairs."

"To the first floor?" he asked.

"Yeah. Come on."

John stuck his head out into the opening in the middle of the stairwell and looked down to the black and white tiled ground level, then upward, all the while counting floors.

"But we're halfway there," he said.

"That doesn't even make sense," she replied already walking downward.

"What? Come on."

He stood there for a moment and watched her walk away. Then he followed.

They reached the ground floor and went back out the double set of locked glass doors. They would have to ring the bell and face a security camera to get back in.

"I just realized I left my cat locked in my bedroom back home," she said. "I'll have to go back home and let her out."

"Oh," he said. "Well can we smoke that cigarette first?"

"Yeah, of course."

They walked to the curb and then stepped back towards the building, finding refuge by a brick column. FB looked up. "Gotta be careful," she said. "People throwing cigarette butts."

"Yeah that's true."

He removed a pack of Camel Turkish Gold cigarettes from the left pocket of his blue jeans.

She handed her lighter to him then removed a pouch of red American Spirit tobacco from the shaman medicine coin-purse around her neck and offered to roll him one. He waved her off and lit his cigarette with her lighter, taking a drag.

"What was her name?" she asked.

"Who?"

"The girl inside."

"Which one?"

"Your friend. The one that you said 'hello' to."

"Oh, her . . . Sophia."

"*Sooo . . . Fiii . . . Uhhh . . . So-fi-ah* — that's a nice sounding name." She crossed her arms and leaned back against the brick wall, "Three syllables. *So, fi, uh.*"

He looked her in the eyes. "Oh, I guess."

"I cut my finger, see—" She shoved her finger in his face, showing it to him. "I gotta go."

"What?"

She started walking away.

He stood there for a moment, watching it happen.

"Wait a minute," he said.

He panicked. He couldn't shout his feelings to her. That went against the whole plan. It was at this moment he remembered he had her lighter: he was holding it in his hand.

"You forgot . . ." he was begging her to turn around, lifting his hands up to his face, pleading with what was between them, ". . . your lighter."

She stopped.

"Oh," she said. Slowly walking back in his direction.

He did the same.

They met in the middle.

"Thank you," she said. Accepting the lighter from him.

"Of course."

He smiled.

So did she.

He leaned in and placed his hands around her forearms.

She paused.

"No. No I can't," she said. Pulling away.

He lifted his hands in the air and stepped back, turning his body to the side, away from her.

There was a sad and pensive look in her eyes.

She uncrossed her arms.

He stood there, doing nothing. She took a half step back and looked down toward the pavement. He looked directly at her then he purposefully looked away. Then they both just sort of stood there for a moment, waiting?

"Ok," he said. "Can I get a hug?"

"Yeah."

He stepped forward and embraced her. She tried to give him her usual limply clutching hug but this time he grabbed tight and squeezed.