

Derby Shoe

by Moe Cidaly

The sound of the train arriving brought people to the edge of the platform. They formed clusters at the probable points where the doors would open. I saw the headlights of the train in the dark tunnel gazing at me like they were the eyes of a gigantic snake about to lick everybody off the platform. I noticed someone standing near the edge of the platform past the danger line. As the train emerged from the tunnel two hands came out of the crowd and pushed him in front of it.

I could not believe what I saw. I waited for the crowd to react, to scream, to back off from the train and stop the murderer, but their faces remained blank. It was as though nothing had happened. The train didn't stop until its head reached the end of the station. I didn't know which one was more shocking: the incident or the people. I tried to draw their attention to it by looking and pointing towards where it had happened, but no one even looked at me. It was as if I

was invisible. I grabbed the collar of the woman standing next to me, shook it and begged her to look at me, but it was useless.

“Somebody just got pushed in front of the train,” I shouted. “Didn’t you see that?”

But they were too busy getting on the train to care. I could not wait for them; a brutality was left unanswered; I ran after the owner of the guilty hands. He must have sensed me following him for—hastily—he was trying to make his way out through the crowd by pushing against it. It was hard both for him to get away and for me to chase against that many people. I could see his newsy cap and black greatcoat but not his face. As soon as he got out of the crowd the distance between us was large and he was already on the escalator. As if struggling against water current like a salmon, I grabbed and pulled everything that could move me forward - clothes, arms - everything. It was hard not to fall back as people pressed against my upper body. My clothes and my arms were getting stuck between bodies but, finally, I pushed myself out. I chased him up the escalators. Only *he* was riding on it; no one was going in or out of the station. I was out of breath but I didn’t want to lose him; at least I needed to keep him in sight. I pulled the railings like lifelines. My thighs were bursting with a hot kind of pain. Each step seemed more painful to climb than the one before. As he reached the top, I stretched to catch him before he could run away. I caught hold of his left ankle. I still could not see his face, just his shoe sole. He started to wriggle and yank to pull his leg free, and he did. He left his black, leather Derby shoe in my hands. When I reached the end of the escalator he was gone. On all fours, I dragged my body to the ground. Then I fell flat, my chest heaving, trying to catch my breath. My head and chest felt like they were bursting, and my fingers were still around the shoe.

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There was nothing I could do but drag myself back down to the platform and see the body. I carried the killer's shoe with me. When I got there the platform was empty and the train was gone: I was the only person in the whole station. I approached the edge. I was scared to look. I expected blood and minced bones and flesh smeared along the rails and splashed on the walls and the edge. The body lay face down on the track. There was no trace of blood, no disfigurement, not even injuries. I leaned forward to get a better look and saw a medium sized man, wearing a light-grey winter suit with a scarf wrapped around his neck; the only thing out of place was that the left shoe was missing. Seconds later, the body started to bleed: small blackish-red spots behind his jacket and legs started to expand and, after covering his whole body, they pooled down on the gravel. I felt a wetness on my hand and realised I was still holding the black Derby shoe. It was covered in blood too; the same size and shape as the body's remaining shoe – they matched. But not only that. I gasped when I noticed it was identical to my own.

I could hear the next train arriving at the station, beating against the track. I feared that, as I stuck my head out from the edge of the platform, the train would hit me in the temple and burst my brain out so I pulled back. I felt a cold presence behind me. I turned around; it was the owner of the guilty hands, back to retrieve his shoe. I could see his face now; he was *I* and his hands were out and his palms were up and I knew that he was ready to push.