

The Billboards

The billboards all look the same. Unique enough to catch the interest of your eyes and feelings. They all use the same system, hogging your attention. A slogan that will stick. Colors that pop out. A general picture that clutches your heart. It's an ad for the grocery store down the street, I realize too late. I almost felt sorry for it. Its a general grocery store with general foods and general workers who all look the same and ask the same general questions.

I've been walking for two minutes. Another billboard, another slogan, more colors, theres a rush of headache. My eyes catch the trees near an empty park. It looks dull. The billboard yells, "Elevate the Everyday!" in neon pink. Our eyes medically dulled to light pink a long time ago, and The Cooperation is the one that puts our tax dollars into creating new colors our eyes haven't yet seen as mundane. I take a left.

The sky looks gray from the top of a billboard. I don't think the sun sets in colors anymore, but it's dusk, so I know the sun is going down. The yellow of the billboard makes me picture what I think it could look like. I let my feet move me forward.

I don't look up anymore, just keep moving. The buses and trains are working, but my Inside Walker broke, and The Corporation has been trying to get us outside to see their billboards. I pretend I don't see the correlation. Plus, I needed coffee.

I keep my feet moving. There's a soft breeze that ruffles my jaket and it brings with it a laugh. I think my mind is playing tricks on me, but this time there's no wind, and it's there again.

I scan the street. A billboard screams, "Reimagine the everyday!" But there. Two kids, no older than fifteen. A girl with a skirt that reflects the gray, a boy whose dull

jacket is over the girl's shoulders. Hands clasped between bodies. They're staring at an art installation through the window that's been shut down for at least a dozen years. The girl has bent over in a beautiful, shrinking noise. I've never heard anything so colourful.

My feet are stuck in place. There's a rock digging into the sole of my shoe. The wind whips at my own skirt. A homeless man who sits on this corner with his broken guitar and never plays strikes a chord. Then another. A domino effect of color. I swear I see a peak of yellow in horizon. There's a full tune playing now, my body feels like moving, my brain is altering into something. Something new, unsure. Something like quiet comfort. There's a laughter over the music.

Time is gone. There's nothing left here but the sound of music and laughter. Life has hit pause.

The couple is moving. No, not moving. Running. Spinning. Twirling. The girl's skirt is following her movements like it's scared to be too far behind. That maybe if any of us are too far behind, we'll blink, and it will all be gone.

The man keeps playing chords. I've never seen him play before. I didn't know that old thing worked.

Energy is flowing out of my fingers in need of escape after being dormant for who knows how long. My fingers twitch like they ache to play like him. To make music like that. To dance like the couple. To create the existence of a third body. I don't realize I'm swaying; my body is taking itself back.

The boy's jacket draped over her shoulders has turned brighter. It's blue, I realize. That's almost shocking enough to break the spell. Instead, I think that it matches the light pink of her skirt.

Rain is starting to fall, soft drops on the hard gray concrete beneath my feet. It looks like polka dots or stars, maybe. I've only ever seen pictures. I think I can make out the constellation Orion.

I don't know how long we're all there for. Dancing, playing, escaping. Puddles form in the streets. My hair is whipping against the wind, but nothing dulls the music.

Shes being twarled. The boy spins her. My face hurts from a grin. I can't tell if the water on my face is from the rain. My feet move before I tell them to.

Socks socked through, theres water in my shoes, but nothing over the beating in my chest, the lack of dread. My arms are over my head. I'm jumping, I think. Theres vibrations up from my toes to my head, it's dizzying and nauseating and so, so good. My skirt is clinging to my legs with the desperation of not wanting to let go of the peace.

Theres more wind up here, more laughter. I don't know where the pain that sits on my chest went. I lost it in the howling wind.

Theres not a billboard in sight.