

## Where You Find It by Jason Graff

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He was reading about Frida Kahlo after trying to get his nephew to observe the cat from a safe distance. *I'll never paint like that* he lamented just as the cat scratched the boy. A small tear of blood filled up the wound under his little eye. It would be simple enough to explain to his sister, he felt.

When she came home, he left quickly without saying anything about it and set out for the Q, N or R train. He made it to the station in plenty of time. The landing where he refilled his card looked down on the street. Directly below, the locksmith's awning was splattered grey and white by pigeon droppings. The traffic made its whining rush hour sound like it was in pain. People moved on the sidewalk, unaware that he was watching them.

To pass the time, he picked out a kid, maybe a bit too short to be interesting but wearing a sideways

baseball cap. His eye followed until the kid was up the street and out of sight. They might've been the same age for all anyone knows. An old lady struggled to walk her dog in the other direction. She hated the dog, he could tell by the way she grabbed at his collar and jerked the dog along. For once, he was glad he wasn't a dog.

Before he lost sight of that pair, the fit women started to come out of the yoga studio. He watched for the same two young women who'd left together the week before. They lingered on the sidewalk, their mats rolled up under the arms, just like last time. He liked the way they lingered, awkwardly as though they were not lingerers by nature.

The blonde with the horse laugh was wearing a purple top and grey leggings. The black woman was in an orange leotard. Both of them were sweaty and looked happy. When they began walking towards the station, he swiped his card and went up to the platform to wait.

They came up the stairs chatting and stood where they always did, near the bench towards the middle of the platform in front of the graffiti covered subway map. *Inspiration is where you find it*, he said to himself. He checked around to make sure that everyone was ignoring him like always.

Neither of the women ever sat at the station. They always stood talking, animatedly but happily, comfortable, alone with each other in their own beautiful world that people like him would never be permitted to enter. He felt as though he could've gone down and sat on the bench right in front of them and they would've never noticed. As the train approached, he crept up behind them so he could get on the same car. He hung on to the strap near them but not too close, listening to them laugh and talk in hushed voices. When the train stopped the next station, he turned to watch the blonde exit. Then just as she always did, the black woman found

herself a seat. Her loved her skin in black and white on the screen of his phone.

By the time the train was approaching the next station, the art of it had so taken him that it took a few frames before he noticed she had opened her eyes and was staring right at him on the screen, a stare hard and unfriendly. It was surprising to find her capable of such a look. Maybe she was a model. He wanted to ask but such conversations never went as he planned. Some women had no idea of how to take a compliment.

It crossed his mind that he liked studying Spanish artists so much because they were short. He held the phone still right where it was, so as to pretend he was looking at something else on the phone, someone else, someone special and close to him that the black woman could not know about. It must've seemed plausible that he had to hold his phone at such an angle and distance from his face to see it properly.

When the train pulled to a stop, he lowered it. He had to fight his way through the crowd to make it out on to the platform. Once safely outside the car, he looked back to try and find her, half-afraid he actually might.

A widely published writer of essays, poetry and fiction, as well as a Pushcart Prize nominee **Jason Graff's** work has been featured in journals, such as: *Per Contra*, *Carrier Pigeon Magazine*, *Shadowgraph Quarterly*, *The Ignatian* and many others. His novella, *In the Service of the Boyar*, has been published by Vagabondage Press. You can sample the future via his Humorscopes at [blueplanetjournal.com](http://blueplanetjournal.com). He lives in Richardson, TX with his wife and son.