



I was waiting in line outside the bakery and the guy in front of me took a long, slurpy sip from his disposable cup and said, “Mmm, soy good,” passionately announcing to the world that he was drinking a soy latte. I was trying to guess how old he was, observing him in a clandestine way and taking note of the semi-wrinkled skin under his stubble, the grey roots of his long, pink, greasy hair, the yellowed teeth...all these clues led me to the conclusion that he must be in his late 40s. He was sporting a typical raver look, if you know what I mean: baggy neon trousers, white platform sneakers, a lime wristband, and so on. I pulled out my phone and aimlessly scrolled between apps because his fidgeting was trickling in all directions and I wanted to avoid any potential contact. And then his gaze—I could feel it—paused on me. He was searching for something, someone to engage with, and likely knew I was using my phone as a shield. *Please don't get combative*, I pleaded inwardly, *please just let me get my loaf of bread without any aggression, please take your eyes off me, please go pick on someone else, please*, and there was no unpleasantness after all. I put my phone back in my pocket as soon as the door closed behind him, and then I saw that the sign on the door had changed now and it said that the place was a 24-hour laundromat. I thought, *is that how you hope to scandalize me?* Then it was his turn to go inside the bakery, and there was no unpleasantness after all. I put my phone back in my pocket as soon as the door closed behind him, and then I saw that the sign on the door had changed now and it said that the place was a 24-hour laundromat. I thought, *is that how you hope to scandalize me?* Then it was his turn to go inside the bakery, and there was no unpleasantness after all. I put my phone back in my pocket as soon as the door closed behind him, and then I saw that the sign on the door had changed now and it said that the place was a 24-hour laundromat. I thought, *is that how you hope to scandalize me?* Then it was his turn to go inside the bakery, and there was no unpleasantness after all. I put my phone back in my pocket as soon as the door closed behind him, and then I saw that the sign on the door had changed now and it said that the place was a 24-hour laundromat.

time, but then finally the receptionist answered and asked me why I wanted to make an appointment. I didn't want to list all my troubles because then she would just think I was a hypochondriac, so I said, *I'm having difficulty concentrating and I feel tired and anxious a lot of the time, so I want to get my B12 and iron levels checked.* She told me my doctor was on maternity leave and that they had a Dr. Eng who was taking over for the time being. Which was a relief, because frankly, I'm not too crazy about my usual doctor. Then the receptionist said, like almost in an accusatory tone, "The health card we have on file for you seems to have expired over a year ago, you don't visit us much do you?" As if I'm to work. J-B. B as in Bravo?" *No no, J-V, V as in Virginia,* I said.

Anyway, I fumbled with one hand in my wallet, found my health card, and *alphabet!* I protested, and the receptionist kept laughing, and finally she said: "Oh no sweetie, it's just that my name is Virginia, what are the odds!" And to be honest with you I just didn't believe her, I remember thinking,

*Okay, I'm going to ask this Dr. Eng when I see her, just you wait, because I will find out your real name and I will confront you.*

The receptionist giggled, and this felt to me like a mockery of my V-word. *Well sorry, I don't know the NATO meant to pop over for tea every now and then? Imagine feeling guilty for not visiting your doctor frequently enough.*

home, but the shape and layout of the room was different, so it felt familiar and strange at the same time. I had a rotary phone in front of me, and I kept dialing the number of my doctor's clinic over and over and getting the voicemail each

I was shielding the lighter from the breeze with my hand but it was running low on fluid and my cigarette remained unlit. I hadn't lost my determination, but I got distracted when I heard a cat's meow nearby. I looked around in all directions and it seemed like I could see the trees around me growing branches in front of me to join in on the rescue mission. She said: "The best way is to lure him down with food." I didn't see how that could possibly work, since the problem wasn't that the cat didn't want to come down, it was that it *couldn't*. I told her that I thought this was a job for the fire department and she smirked at me and said: "Fire departments But I was sure what she said was wrong so I politely said, *Let's give it a try anyway*, and punched the number into said she'd send help right away. I told her the name of the park and confirmed that I'd be there until someone arrived. The woman who answered the call had my ex-girlfriend's voice had turned into my ex-girlfriend's voice as well. She told me my name was very unique and asked my ethnicity in this strange, roundabout way — something like: "What language other than English would one speak to have a name like yours?" The way she asked me then? I see no one has informed you that in this country it is not."

Then she started walking away and I saw the head of the cat sticking out of her handbag, and I thought, *Shit, what am I going to say to the firefighters come and there's no cat?*

I needed to perform the role of a "good citizen" for her or prove my innocence or wasn't true. And she said, sarcastically, "Ah, lovely—is smoking permitted in public parks in Norway"

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jacket to hold—I would do it up and it would immediately come undone. So I was preoccupied with that and I felt cold and also nauseous in anticipation. I avoid taking the ferry on windy days because my stomach is so sensitive, but the traffic on the bridge was so backed up that I just had to bite the bullet. I had retreated into my scarf like a tortoise, my shoulders all tense, and I waited on the dock as long as I could while all the other passengers boarded. When I finally got on, it was already full and stuffy inside, so I walked out onto the deck even my parents call me Jen now. So I scanned my memory for any trace of offended, which made me feel bad. Then she said: “It’s Wendy, from we used to volunteer together,” she insisted, still holding on to let go of my arm. She obliged with *I’m not who you think I am, I’m pretty sure we’ve never met*, I replied. She smiled provocatively and mumbled, “Alright Jenny, if you say so.” You’ve always been too good for us.” And at it, feeling like I was about to throw up. I closed my eyes and I could still feel the woman’s piercing eyes with seasickness and I wasn’t keen to share my last name with a stranger. *My name is Jen but down. So I said, I’m sorry—I can’t place you and I don’t know any wildlife centres.* “But you’re Jenny, wanted to sit down before I felt any sicker. “Don’t you remember me?” the woman asked. She seemed mildly not a statement. And I was taken aback because I haven’t been going by Jenny since I left high school twelve years ago, my scarf like a tortoise, my shoulders all tense, and I waited on the dock as long as I could while all the other passengers boarded. The ferry was painted in dazzle camouflage, which made everything feel a bit dismal, like we were about to be taken to a war zone instead of just getting on public transit. The wind was very strong and I couldn’t get the zipper on my