

GRAFFITO

Across the country the words went round and round in the heads of the children, their minds burning rubber trying to understand what it meant to remove an organ, why someone would want to, and who would want the organs of a little girl, you mean like me, a thing impossible to hear from your child and made worse once it becomes clear no organs were even removed and all this after days of fighting the hydra of news both real and fake sprouting up from all sides at newsstands, in the grocery store, overheard on the bus, everywhere, until it was no use, it had to be addressed: what had happened, how it had happened, the impossible question of why and most importantly, if nothing else could be made clear, that this would never, ever happen to their little babies because they would never let it happen, and that yes, the world can be a scary and dangerous place but you have a whole bunch of people who love you very much and who will never stop making sure you're safe, and all this said knowing full well that that little girl had damn well near the same bunch of people who loved her very much and that the only difference between her mother and every other parent on earth was the thinly stretched, light years-long arm of chance, its bony finger set in motion by the big bang itself.

So what to do now but be paranoid, to drive the teachers nuts about their after-school policies and their plans b and c and don't fuck with us, what happens if none of those work, don't make this harder than it already—and a burst of tears which scared even them, to see themselves this way when nothing had even happened to them, except that wasn't fair to say, something had: their barely tolerable image of this already violent world was hacked to pieces by an unassuming middle-aged woman, a "friend" who took no more than four seconds to convince that seven-year-old girl to walk away from that school with her and to, my god, hold her hand as if she were her mother and to slip through the streets calmly, quietly, in plain view of a slew of cameras, police, neighbors, shop owners, and worst of all, the teachers from the school who knew the girl so well and knew her mother hadn't arrived yet because she couldn't have, not from where she worked, and the poor mother with her mental health issues so predictably ignored by all and for her, hell is gone, a children's fairy tale paled against a reality where a man tells her that not her daughter but a bag filled with her daughter has been found at a construction site, and where is the mayor on this or no, actually, where's the president, oh there he is, he's upset; he says this is not the way, this heinous defacing of a federal building.