

THE

SPREAD

AFTER SUMMER

ISSUE 3 1st EDITION

OCTOBER 2023

THE SPREAD ISSUE 3: AFTER SUMMER OCTOBER 2023

EDITOR JACKIE ZELLER

ASSISTANT EDITOR HANNAH APPLEBAUM

'AFTER SUMMER' ISSUE TITLE JAZZ BOOTHBY

FRONT COVER ANNA BLODA by JACKIE ZELLER with AVERY ODENBORG

BACK COVER DANIEL RAMPULLA

CONTACT EDITOR@THESPREAD.ORG

VISIT THESPREAD.ORG

DICKLYN



JAZZ BOOTHBY

The market crashed and I finally got to leave my last place which was filled with mold. The mold made my ex Lisa so sick she can barely talk anymore and she's probably gonna die soon. My sister died too. She went on the radio for a contest and drank so much water her stomach distended and her organs failed. She died on-air and she was 28-years-old. Where I'm living now is a much nicer neighborhood than where I'd been before and I'm so glad I moved when I did because they say the market's going up again. It's cleaner here, you can go walks here and the people all look strong and healthy. You still can't drink the water, though. They're spraying rodenticide right now so it tastes funny. But I'm glad about the rodenticide because there are a lot of rats. I woke up to my boyfriend's maid killing one the other day. With her bare hands she picked it up and squeezed it to death. She went shhhh shhhh shhhhhhhhhh while it died. I met a man online who is named Dicklyn. He offered to suck me off in his storage space because he's married and there is a camera on his building's door that alerts his husband whenever he has company so we had to make do with his storage space. Dicklyn had to be smart about these things. He could have come to mine but I didn't even know the guy. And I had to be smart about some things, too. It felt like 1,000 degrees outside. *Unseasonable*, they said. It was sticky and the sky was white. When I got to the parking lot of the storage page, I showed my papers to a really old lady who probably shouldn't have been working and she buzzed me in. Dicklyn arrived late, he was riding a scooter, the kind of scooter you kick with your feet. He was wearing a helmet, which meant he was sensible and I liked him because of that. I could tell he was happy about how good-looking I am. I am beautiful, it's true, I look like a statue. I definitely could be a model but there is something wrong with my skin. Dicklyn led me inside, I told him I had to be at work soon but he said that didn't matter. "It's kind of tight," he apologized. I remember he emphasized the word *tight*. The space was filled with oriental houseware. He had been out east, it seemed. He was much shorter and older than me, but bulky, like a bulldog. He asked me if my real name was Jazz and I said yes. I asked him if his real name was Dicklyn and he said yes. I thought it was a cool name and I was surprised it was his real name. Then he kissed me. The meds I take usually mess with my libido but this man had a neck like a mountain and I thought about how

easily he could kill me and I felt like I could cum right away. A classic man. He had a good face that hadn't been spoiled by modernity or gas attacks. I was painfully fond of him. I was getting close when my phone vibrated and I knew it was probably some lady summoning me to play with her kid and that really bummed me out. But then I remembered that I'm lucky to even be able to work, with the mold poisoning and sulfur mustard and all. Poor Lisa. Her lungs are probably still bleeding right now. I tried to stop thinking about Lisa and her bloody lungs because I wanted to be present, more mindful in general, and really focus on the task at hand. So I reached into Dicklyn's shorts, but he was flaccid so I felt around and found his balls. They were rock hard and swollen. Embarrassed, he looked up at me. "Wanna fuck me in the ass?" I said yes and I fucked him in the ass. I offered to walk him to the station, since it was on the way to the kid I had to play with. He pushed his scooter alongside me and told me about himself. His landlord had just raised the rent and he might have to sell his second house, but he didn't care because upstate was full of Gypsies anyways, he said. I told him he should probably just sell the oriental houseware if he needed money because it looked pretty expensive, but he didn't really respond to that. I also reminded him that people aren't supposed to say the word Gypsy anymore. He didn't know you weren't supposed to say Gypsy, so I told him he should say 'Romani People'. Then he started talking about how the Romani People never shower and that they are invasive and smelly. I lost interest in the conversation sooner than I expected, so I decided to tell him about the kid I had to play with, Annabelle. I said, "I have to go hang out with this lady's kid, Annabelle. She looks like a doll." I thought about asking him for money, but he said he "really better get going." He said that in a really loud voice, too loud. Then he scooted away with his helmet still unclaspd. I thought *jeez? What did I say?* I took another pill and realized I was running low which sucked because the lines at the pharmacies are eternal. I tried checking in on the PlayDate™ app but my phone screen was shattered and little shards of glass were coming off in my fingers and the sweat and specks of blood were making it glitch. I thought about calling in sick, which wouldn't have been a lie, but I didn't. When I got to the building, I showed the doorman my papers and told him I was there to see Anabelle. The doorman has hearing problems and couldn't understand me

YOU WERE PUSHING UP AGAINST ME

JAZZ BOOTHBY

I am going to walk you through the whole pitiful happening. My life was a droll. I couldn't imagine living my life. Meeting a man? How was I gonna be with him? How was I supposed to comfort him? Feed him? I wouldn't have known how to take care of anything or anyone. I would've wound up poisoning him, filling him up with whatever was wrong with me.

I was so quiet when I was young. No one ever showed me about growing up, becoming a person. That's why I was quiet, I was studying everyone, seeing how it was all supposed to get done. My existence was a crop of regrets and everything I learned was too little or too late, so I just stayed quiet.

Janis had a husband and a baby. And I worshiped them from afar. I was speechless around them, especially the husband. They lived on my mail route and every morning, I'd sit in my truck, waiting for him, the husband, to leave for work. I wanted him to catch a glimpse of me. But I looked like a clown, sweating through my mail carrier's uniform. He never noticed me.

Janis and the husband were nice people. They had money and they gave good Christmas presents. They left me cash and some nice cologne in their mailbox.

It was after summer when it happened. I was hungover that day and I remember feeling especially nauseous because I smelled like this new body lotion I was trying out. I remember it had flakes of gold in it and I could see the slivers on my skin, making everything worse.

I was fragile back then, especially with a hangover. And the slow, methodical niceties of the work were heavy. I had to make small talk with everyone. But Harriet really never shut up. Harriet lived on my route, too. She was all alone, ugly and probably a lesbian. She was a loser. Unrelievably ugly. I had never before met anyone as ugly as Harriet. She would talk my ear off about television shows I didn't watch, people I didn't know, her health problems, private family matters. But I would nod and listen and breathe deep because Harriet was unpleasant but she was kind. Anyways, why am I being cruel? I loved her.

After I dropped my mail truck off I would take the bus home. A few different times this guy sat down beside me. And he'd kinda push up against me. The first few times I saw him he'd been carrying laundry detergent and bags of clothes. And the clothes stunk. Really stunk. And he chanted. I guessed that he was going to the laundromat and chanting on his way there. He'd be chanting on and on, but so softly you couldn't make anything out. And he'd just stare ahead, like he didn't realize that he was seated next to me or pushing up against me. I wanted him to notice that I was there. He was ugly, too. He had a chin that I can only describe as absent. And he wore sandals and had talons for toenails. But I still wanted him to pay attention to me. To notice that *he* was the one who kept sitting next to *me*. Pushing up against *me*. His smell made me dizzy.

But the day it happened, I was sick and disrupted by Harriet, so I was behind schedule. The sun was already setting and

I wasn't halfway through my route. The sunset was nice to look at, and I was so hungover and stupid that I stood on the sidewalk, slack-jawed, admiring the colors. My brain was so scrambled that I actually began to cry. It sounds ridiculous, but something crossed over in me then. I decided I wasn't gonna finish my route that day.

The chanting man got in at the same stop he always got in at. And he sat down right next to me again and pushed up against me. I coughed, and then I pushed up against him a little. I remember for a split second his eyes woke up, when he noticed me, but then they dimmed when he really took me in. I was not good-looking, but I had a nice body back then, and I remember thinking, *well at least I make sure to clean myself good*. Then I swallowed my pain and retreated into the window.

He got off the bus a few stops later. The hangover imbued me with an intensity that told me something was gonna happen no matter what. So I followed him. We must have made it only a few blocks like that, with me behind him, before he turned around and started saying all sorts of things. Deadened, indistinct things I couldn't quite make out, like I was dreaming or underwater.

He was saying *you're no good, you're no good. Just forget it*. Stuff like that. Some religious stuff, too. Something about *father's cages*. He got so close to me he was spitting on me while he talked. And his talons were touching my boots. And his smell still made me dizzy, even outside.

Then he grabbed me real hard by the arm and I knew something bad was about to happen, I could just tell. And I was right. He hit me over the head and a sense of doom ran through every part of me.

So I said, *You were pushing up against me*.

I said it quietly, but intensely too. It sounded like a question when I said it.