

People-Watching at the Train Station and This Brain of Mine

A few paragraphs of non-fiction by Ashley DeNardo

1. The Girl in the Blue Bonnet

There was a girl in a blue bonnet. It matched her blue wool jacket. She wore this over a tan-white dress that came down to a pair of black socks inside of black shoes. Still young enough to be innocent, her mother followed her around, catching her each time she fell. That's what mothers do. They catch you when you fall. I wasn't sure who was really catching who. Almost identically dressed, maybe they caught each other. Sometimes her mother would leave her with her father. Each time she fell, he just let her. It taught her lessons about falling.

I wondered what they had to be caught from, better yet, why they were falling. They were safe. All of them. They rode their horses. They churned their butter. They didn't have the burden of telephones and computers. They were great communicators, at least with each other. Why, then, did the same sorrow dwell in their eyes?

I saw the mother drink out of a Pepsi can. I couldn't believe my eyes. Capitalism reached even them.

Is faith ever real or do we keep an image to help ourselves believe and protect ourselves from others?

I'll never know who's really right.

2. The Lady Reading the Book

She turned the pages, one by one, minute by minute. By the time we were able to leave this place she would have read 120 pages. Pages full of God, full of spirit. Pages that, by definition, were good, holy, and full of faith. Hopefully, that's all they were full of.

Clinging to this book, you could see her reading carefully, slowly, letting it all take shape within her. What value does she find in this book that she could cling to it tighter than to her own life? Is she forgiven? One "hello" would convince me of humanity

or maybe her humanity is the silence. Only angels greet strangers.

3. The stairs at the Station

Wooden handles and maybe-marble floors. The stairs led to the Floor of Gates. Each Gate, a different destination. Original wood? Original maybe-marble?

If you look hard enough, the feet glow eerily of the hundreds of people before you like their existence left traces of their whereabouts behind. As you wait and watch, more people are making history right in front of your eyes. These stairs are what connect us. They are the steps it takes to finally leave. Finally after minutes. Finally after days. Finally after years.

I watch a man, short hair, red tie, walk up the stairs. He's different than the rest of us. He's still stuck. He still has to wait. He walks up those stairs everyday. I wonder how much envy has built up inside of him that we might get to leave. Leaving him behind.

So many different people have walked up these stairs. People of many faiths, beliefs, morals, backgrounds, and races. People who left in anger. People who left in happiness. People who left in doubt. People who left for no reason at all. People making it harder on themselves. I wonder if this place holds more smiles or indifference.

All of our paths connect somewhere. Somehow, we are all connected. Maybe I parked in the same lot as you and maybe you went to my high school, just in different years. The point is, I'll never know.