

Home Time

She drives her foot into the suitcase of the man in front,
hopes this heeds the brunt of her annoyance.
He stops and groans, looks up from his phone,
writes *shot* instead of *shit*, and she feels proud of it.
Then she takes his place as he picks up the pace,
just another, one by one,
chewed and consumed by the huddle of
sweaty backs,
denim shorts
and shoulder straps.
Someone upfront stops,
and then someone else stops,
and then another person stops,
and then she stops,
and then her chin is pulled in
to the armpit of hell from a girl –
whose had a long day and no time to spray,
like everyone else caught in the swell.
Up on her toes she can see only heads,
long necks and crusted scalps.
No signal down here to Tweet about
that guy with the suitcase and thick-fug air,
wet with sweat and unwashed hair,

It's 6:10pm,
and every joint, place and spare parking space
has been filled.
The Witching hour.
A daily shower of Metros,
miso, cups from Nero,
brimstone, thumb and spit-out gum.
There's no room in the streets and no room
for a broom
in the tunnels below.
Nose to nose and toe to toe,
from Bank to Monument they
heel-toe their leather brogues until
they're swept
onto platform,

train,
then off again and on again,
and up and out,
into the streets, the night, the Sainsbury's glow,
in-head,
head-down,
all the way home
to fridge, to bath, to bed they go,
until it all begins again
tomorrow.

But right now, she is wondering why
she still reels in
when the train pulls in,
the rush of wind on her
chinny chin chin.
What to lose if **she** were
to lose
her grip and slip.

But it's here, it's here,
step into space
all elbows, suitcase,
face to face,
only two out and the platform heaves,
all grief and no relief,
and up roll the sleeves and deep breath
before plunge,
and wriggle and writhe to the other side,
squeeze in and begin to see the light
of overhead bulbs, and handrails clutched by bitten nails.

She exhales.

Held under branches of sodden underarms,
she closes her eyes,
tries not to count the amount
of times her foot has been trodden on.
One last gulp as the doors snap,
hot air tickling the gap of flesh on her neck.
Wait for the push,
the shove into one another,
smothered and covered in the skin

of another.

She looks up at the map,
counts the stops til her own,
despite already knowing the
exact minutes to home.

Takes in a deep breath of fags,
tea and nine hours at the desk.
Heavy bag on her shoulder,
slick flesh on her dress.

Faces blur into one man-bun mound,
and no sound but a shriek
as the train pounds the track,
thrusts her forwards,

and something presses in her back.

Thick with flab
slab of meat.

Sticky patch left on a car seat.

Her uncle squeezing past, too close from behind
at the Christmas party in Devon, when she was just nine.

Pushing something unknown
through the pleats of her skirt.

Something that made her
think of dirt

and what is to be dirty and who is dirt.

Where does the ground stop,
and where does soil begin,
at our feet and our shoes,
or where things go in?

She feels ice on her shoulders,
that well-known freeze,
she has read about in books and magazines,
that girls describe when they've been seized.

And eyes in her hair,
peeking through leaves
as though she was bare
from her head to her knees.

And there is nowhere to edge and nowhere to move,
tries to sneak into the groove between the

guy with the backpack and the girl with the crew,
but the train picks up
and she is stuck.
And he is behind her
deeper
deeper
spreads her, threads her,
hide and seeks her.
Parts her hair with his breath
on the back of her neck,
and she knows by the
softness
that he enjoys this,
and there is nothing.
No sound.
Just the wait for the moment
for the train to slow down.

And when it does they fall back,
pushes her into him
as the breaks kick in.
Lights at the windows, then the posters begin,
Jobsite, beer, kick-start your career
stop smoking, new film, don't forget your smear.
And then it stops,
and she breathes
with a squeeze.
Tries again
to turn and look him
in the eye,
but it's cramped,
and she is
clamped,
trampled on as the doors open,
at last, released
he leaves with a piece
of her.
Her voice,
tossed out the doors,
and if someone did see,
if someone saw,
they too are silent, heads lowered
to the floor.

She finds a seat,
writes a Tweet
and deletes
it.
Blinks and thinks
of nothing.
Watches
her reflection
blur into black
heads back through the tunnel
heads back home.
Then up and out
into the streets, the night, the Sainsbury's glow,
in-head,
head-down,
to front gate, straight to bed she'll go,
rest mind, rest head
until tomorrow.

The next day
she'll get on the train,
off again
and on again
and home time will come
like spray on the waves
of every look
from someone across the way
that makes her button up her
coat to her throat
and hope that
it won't
happen
again.