**The Purple Line (Line 8) / *La Ligne Violette (Ligne 8)***

Tara Kun

10AM. No, 10:13AM.

Tuesday.

Train car #2 out of 9.

Overcast. Not hot.

Direction: Créteil.

Current stop: Félix Faure.

He parts the doors like a Jedi. He is eight, and his knees have grass stains. His left shoelace is torn to shreds. His mother corrals him to the seats immediately to her right, but he twists in her arms like a thirsty goat and gallops down the train car, arms stretched above our seated heads, skimming the baby hairs on our parts. His laugh is manic. He finds himself a seat.

A Nigerian man, in a smart grey suit, peers over the thin rim of his gold glasses and shakes his head. I think I see him smile. He reaches into the seats behind him, shoulder threatening its suffocating seam, and his arm returns with the newspaper—Le Monde. He crosses one leg over the other, checks his heavy watch, and his eyes scan the front page. He is practiced. He is the final cut in a scene in a film.

Across the aisle, a petite flaxen-haired woman coos over her counterpart. He has one hand cradling her knee, the other is holding a bag of frozen scallops above his left eyebrow. “Mon coeur, who would have guessed that sharing an orange would out us?”

The doors open at station Commerce. Americans know it as the “hidden hipster shopping treasure of Paris.” I know it as the neighborhood whose ATMs have been rigged to consume Euros rather than supply them. I don’t get pork buns there anymore. The doors chime.

Her boots clack on the concrete of the metro platform and dampen as she enters train car #2. She has deliberate oily black roots with dull lavender hair. It barely reaches her shoulders. Just last week she stopped telling people that she cut it herself. It’s about time. She almost forgets that she wears glasses now, and reaches into her handbag to fetch them. “I’m so blind,” she says. “And when I got glasses, it was like, a whole world I wasn’t seeing.” She balances them on her methodically pierced ears and opens Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness.* It’s a battered limited edition. Of course it is. She opens to page 1.

Jedi boy begins to scream. Must’ve just found out where he’s going.

A grandmother, I identify her as so once I spot the shimmering galaxy stickers planted haphazardly about her wardrobe, tiresomely eyes her untied shoe. She gingerly folds her torso forward with outstretched arms, in hopes that the laces will come to her. As grandmother leans headfirst, I make eye contact with an infant strapped to a man’s chest seated behind her. I hate to wonder what she thinks of me. I know she is a she, because she is the type of baby that gets her ears pierced upon being birthed. Grandmother finally reclines and breaks the baby’s stare. Thank god.

I am shocked back into train car #2 when I hear cadenced shouting from the far left corner of the train car. A man in a suede jacket and grey sweat pants that hug his ankles is verbally assaulting a mime—no, really, a mime, a mime with an unlit, soggy cigarette drooping from the corner of his mouth. The mime is excellent at feigning uninterest. I am not sure if the man in the suede jacket and cotton sweatpants that hug his ankles is performing slam poetry or a mugging.

We are now traveling below two other metro lines, toward la station La Motte Picquet. The train car starts to rumble, and two middle school girls shuffle out of their seats and onto the floor space. Wild flowers escape their shallow pockets and litter the vinyl beneath them. They holler. You can barely hear it over the sounds of the scratchy rails beneath us and the catacomb air rushing through the cracked windows.

The girls gyrate and they lose their balance as if they are being pushed by the waves in the ocean, yet somehow manage a synchronous dance of ambiguity. They stomp at their abandoned wild flowers with the soles of their worn dancers’ feet. They don’t fall, even when the train teeters to the left, and to the right, something that I’m not sure that a train should do. Instead they achieve a wordless, a telepathic-like rhythm in which they predict each other’s movements. Where are their mothers? Is anyone else seeing this?

Behind me I hear kissing noises. I glance into the darkened window to view the scene taking place behind me. “Mon chouchou…” he edges closer to her. She glares out the window, at nothing but the dirty underground wall and the derelict man’s reflection.

My attention is interrupted by Lavender hair. “Fuck, I’m on the wrong direction train.” She claps shut her book. She dog ears page one.

The doors slide open once again. La station École Militaire. A Hasidic Jewish man hobbles in. He is wearing carpet slippers and leaning on his worn wooden cane, looking perfectly out of place. I remind myself that today is Tuesday, it isn’t Shabbos. The dancing girls are holding hands now; they gambol around him, and, in a panic, he staggers back out onto the metro platform just as the doors close. His slippers shed crimson and gold wild flowers. He turns toward the metro exit, and his cane clacks against the tile floor as train car #2 picks up speed. Through the narrow panes of glass, I spy a look of relief on his face. God is still on his side.