

I first see her walking towards me on the sidewalk, just a stranger on a crowded street.

Her hair is twisted into an elaborate updo and her eyeliner is sharp. She's carrying some sort of iced coffee in one hand and tapping at her phone in the other. Both wrists jingle with several bracelets. Her top is flattering in a feminine way, accentuating the curve of her breasts and hips and fluttering gently around her shoulders. Her heels are at least three inches high and I marvel at how she is able to move so briskly in them.

My hair is short, shorn so close to my head it takes the sun at a certain angle to even tell it's there. My arms are full of old, yellowed sheets of music that could at any moment be scattered across the street if the wind picks up. My phone is buried at the bottom of my tattered messenger bag and it is probably dead. The only thing close to jewelry I have is the keyring to the music library which has several appropriately mysterious old keys jingling on it. I'm wearing an old pair of tweed pants I nicked from my grandfather's closet, an absolute monstrosity of a sweater that drowns me in cable knit that a friend of mine made last year, and the sneakers my mother bought me in high school (older than they have any right to be) which are so worn you can see my socks peeking out on both feet.

Her gaze flicks up briefly from her phone.

In that moment, our eyes meet and we are kindred spirits, women swept up in the rushing river of our society, trying to fight our way to the surface so our voices might be heard. We're clawing desperately at the shoulders of everyone around us in order to get closer to the top, to be more successful, to find some kind of respite from the world trying to shove us into tiny, ill fitting boxes.

We're the same.

Then she looks back at her phone and my eyes move to someone further ahead of me on the road and we are strangers again.