

HOW TO DIE ON A SUNNY DAY

CATERINA BIONDI

Dalston is busy this morning, full of people going around with the buzzing mood of a typical London sunny day. Lately, in Gillett Square, there are parties during the weekend and the area around Dalston Kingsland station is crowded with young people, everyone with their new sandals, sunglasses and colourful vintage clothing pulled out from the closet at the first sign of sunshine. Walking down that street that I've crossed so many times before, my body moves in anxious incoordination while at every step I try to pull down my skirt that keeps coming up. God, I'm hating this skirt, I always seem to forget how uncomfortable it is.

I feel all the eyes on me, scanning over each centimetre of my skirt riding up.

Repeatedly stretching the edge of it down, I look around hoping nobody is noticing my struggle, alert and watchful for an invasive man-stare or the judging glance of an old woman. I love walking down this street on Saturday; a man preaching, the Communists flyering, the market's sweet scent of decay, the old grumpy women with their trolleys and kids in tow. I love it, usually, but not today. Today I feel all the eyes on me, scanning over each centimetre of my skirt riding up.

When I sit on the train, I can finally rest for one second. Relief. I immerse myself in the fast beats thumping in my earphones looking at the familiar landscape outside the window. My thoughts jump for a second to the box cutter I have in my bag and it makes me laugh. I think: 'God, if I die today, this would really be such a stupid way'.

I wait outside of the estate putting on a straight face, my fidgeting hand hidden in a pocket. When he comes out my confidence crumbles, I smile, trying to keep up with his questions while being distracted by his presence and my own hyper-vigilance. It's like my mind is memorising everything, trying to catch every little detail: the long and static corridors we are moving through, his solid body dancing around, his bright, kind eyes. At the same time, I need so much more focus to do simple things, like standing upright, putting away my earphones, removing my sunglasses.

His room is bright. I hate to be at a stranger's home usually, especially during the day. I feel we are wasting time hanging out inside when we could be having a drink somewhere or catching the sun in a park. However, this place feels right. It's clean, bright and warm, with a breeze coming in from the window and the small fan on the drawer. It could be also him. He's warm, welcoming, and fills the room with purpose. This is why I accept a drink. And I start to talk, the Wrey & Nephew numbing my mouth. He starts preaching his truths, telling me to live my dreams, and these banal words pronounced in a slow deep voice enchant me, like a primordial vibration resonating in my body. I tell him giggling, 'Even now, I could be trapped'.

I know that I am safe when he is human. We order some pasta, he puts on a show. Night falls down and the only risk now is for him to say 'The next time...' and all these sweet lies. He books an Uber for me and I quickly grab my clothes while the countdown starts 'He's here in 5 minutes'. Underwear, skirt, bag, sandals and 'Where's my top?'. He's here.

***I check the blue dot moving in
the live location I sent earlier to
my friend***

The driver is sweet. 'Did you have a good day?' I try, tiredly fumbling with pleasantries: 'Yes, amazing day, finally the summer arrived', an old classic. 'Hopefully, it's going to last for a bit'. I check the blue dot moving in the live location I sent earlier to my friend, then I look at the screen on the car dashboard. He could bring me wherever he wants right now. I stare through the window, these old English houses all look the same at night. 'God, if I die now, this would really be such a stupid way'.

FLOWERS FROM NOTHINGNESS VICTORIA YEE

This issue's cover image depicts a woman with no head, but flowers growing out of her neck. Her headlessness symbolises depression, emptiness and apathy towards life, but the flowers symbolise her strength and determination to create something beautiful out of the nothingness, depicting the strength of women in the face of adversity.

Victoria is a contemporary artist working with themes of identity, feminism, and travel, exploring the intersection of the personal and the universal. Her creative process is rooted in storytelling, blending intricate details with bold concepts.

