



BEAUTIFUL PAIN | ELEANOR BECK | MIXED MEDIA

~~THE MAN~~

STEPHANIE PFISTER | PROSE

Sight. Smell. Sound. Touch. Taste.
Everything exactly as one would picture a cafe.
Nothing out of the ordinary.
Nothing interrupting the established flow.
Until,
Ding-Ding.

Heads turn. Eyes widen. Faces change. Some with astonishment. Some with glee. Some with disgust. Some with curiosity. Strutting in, he comes. Confidant poise. Radiant eyes. Buoyant beam. His presence captivates the cafe's attention. "Oh my god." "What is he wearing?" "That's strange." "How bold." "Good for him." The comments whisper about. Deeper into the room the man comes. Standing beside me, a stranger shakes his head, rolls his eyes, and turns away in a grimace, muttering fowl words beneath his breath. I stand there, completely confounded by the stranger's blatant crass toward a man whose name—whose story—he doesn't know. The man orders and waits for his drink among the rest, minding his business, simply enjoying the atmosphere, not allowing the assumptions of others to dwindle his day. The stranger, on the other hand, stands wholly perturbed by the man in feminine wear, incapable of glimpsing elsewhere, his entirety consumed by the man. Orders are called. The stranger, gone in a huff. As if unable to breathe in the same room as the man. I scoff and grab my order. We make brief eye contact. We smile at each other, pick up our designated coffees, and leave.