

*The Green Line*

August 28, 2022

Aatiq walked home from wherever they'd been last. They always found themselves crossing their arms as they walked, even though it was entirely uncomfortable. Aatiq would realize they were doing it and uncross their arms, thinking that it was an inauthentic way to behave if they didn't enjoy the action. Yet a couple hours later, they'd find themselves with their arms wrapped around again. Aatiq would think heavily on whether or not they meant to. To cross their arms or not. Was the current, conscious wanting-to-uncross an unnecessary stress they'd created? Should they just accept their unconfident, awkward stance that so naturally happened, yet impeded their movement? Or would that be submitting to their inferior version of self? And if they so easily submitted to their inferiority..? Aatiq began to cry, but no one on the sidewalk paid them any mind.

Where Aatiq was going and coming from mattered little to them. Those were the necessary steps to afford a roof, to restock the fridge, to let their burdensome body live. No one had ever asked Aatiq where they were going, but they'd practice in the mirror nonetheless.

"I feel the weight of my mind heavily today, so I'm going to try and distract myself from it. But distraction isn't healthy I suppose." They furrowed their brows. "I'm not distracting myself; I'll practice presence. I'll just move my presence elsewhere. Where my presence is not defined by me, but by them."

So Aatiq rode on the T until it reached the end of its stops. Then they got off and walked up and down the nearby neighborhoods they've gotten to know so well. They came back to the stop, and rode the T all the way back. On the train, all their thoughts were validated by the presence of others. All their doubts of God and life were okay- and not at all blasphemous or suicidal- if there was a drunk man pissing on the other side of the glass. Aatiq could watch a mother yell at her child, obviously too young to understand. Could see the student fall asleep against the handrail and miss his stop. If Aatiq pushed their eyes to the side, they could see the man sitting next to them scrolling through the settings of his phone. What a pathetic way to live, Aatiq would think. They wished they could grab him by his shoulders and shout. Aatiq wasn't sure what they'd say, but they were sure if they practiced in the mirror they could come up with something.

But Aatiq never said anything. They'd only observe the strangers, coming and going, watching as they'd unknowingly sit in the sweaty imprints of the last.