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‘Schoolyards in Subways Cars’ by April Ford

They sit across from us in subway cars,
the Joans and the Tracys of our pasts,
the prissy girls who dared us to be cool,
the cool girls who didn’t know we existed
except when the Matthews and the Andrews
passed their fathers’ (sometimes mothers’) beatings onto us
during recesses and lunches,
when none of the grownups in the schoolyard
even pretended to pretend not to notice.

But we noticed.

Now those Joans and Tracys and Matthews and Andrews
across from us in subway cars are no longer mysterious;
we are no longer curious about how they turned out.
One became a lawyer,
the other cranks cock like an old-timey cash register.
And the guys:
One’s in prison, *of course*,
and the other is just some guy.

~~Me~~ married, kids, two-car garage (such a thing of the past!),

pending heart attack.

Do they miss the longing for longing of youth?

I hope one day I'll be able to look back and say....

The obliviousness to time extending beyond the age of innocence
to the age of guaranteed failure: jobs, loan applications, pregnancies,
marriages, breath alcohol tests.

Joan and Tracy, Matthew and Andrew:

You are the worst part of our pasts.

You are the ugly retro sweatshirts now back in vogue
because four-year college programs and reality tv shows

call it “fashion.”

The faces of the Tracys will live forever in subway cars,
the Joans you knew but have never known.

Now, you stare fearlessly at the Matthews and the Andrews,
will them to meet your frothy female gaze.

When they look up, you pass through a portal
to where everyone in the subway car who isn't looking up
is the grownup in the schoolyard who didn't even pretend not to
pretend.

It's your time to shine—hurry! Disassemble the past before it's your
stop

and the faces become again just faces, prissy, cool, cruel

behind sliding, closing doors.

APRIL FORD lived in the U.S. for a decade, where she taught undergraduate creative writing. She has now returned home to Montreal. Her debut novel is forthcoming spring 2020 with Inanna Publications, and her debut story collection was released by SFWP in 2015. She is the recipient of a 2016 Pushcart Prize, and her work has been featured in various journals including *Grain*, *The Lascaux Review*, and *QWF Writes*. She is Associate Publisher of SFK Press.

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