

Junior Division, Prose

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Unseen (an excerpt)

The train I haunt is crowded in the mornings. The hustle and bustle of the new day dawning fills compartment 2A with all kinds of people: women in elegant scarves and trench coats, men in tank tops with gym bags slung over their shoulders, teenagers with hunched shoulders and headphones jammed over their ears. So many different faces, so many different lives. Each one has their own loves, their own heartbreaks, their own secrets, their own people who make them laugh their hardest, and their own people who make them cry inconsolably. Each has their own universe.

Except me.

I've never spoken a word to a single one of them, and none of them have ever spoken a word to me. I sit on my hard plastic seat all day, watching people get on and off the train. No one makes small talk with me — the kind that teenagers seem so afraid of. No one gives me the admiration the man in the tank top craves. No one holds a door open for me like the men sprint to do for the posh lady. Instead, I am overlooked, like they all fear they will be.

I am invisible.

My home consists of red plastic seats, chartreuse straps dangling from the ceiling, faded advertisements for beauty cream and the superhero movie coming to cinemas, and cold metal poles shining in the flickering fluorescent lighting. My mattress is a row of three red seats, my pillow is a collection of balled-up, outdated newspapers, and my blanket is the faded brown trench coat a man once left on the back of a seat. I watched to see if he would return and I could slip it onto the seat next to him, but he never came back. So eventually, the coat became mine. It is my most prized possession — its fleecy lining has probably saved my life many a dreary winter and it is my one comfort.