

# Fear

by Ioana Bâldea Constantinescu

The crowd gushes in streams flooding the station with people. A warm avalanche of embraced breaths. What if our fingers unclasp. What if you are left behind. On the other side of the door. What if they separate us. What if we are taken to different stations. What if we cannot find each other anymore. What if I am lost. What if you are lost.

I can still hear the soundtrack of the show. All of these people, coming out of the theatre halls, carry their soundtracks and they mingle, they become noise. A silent wall of sound. What if I cannot climb to the other side. What if my music is silenced. What if you let me go. What do I do if you let me go. Why are they so many. Have you ever seen so many people before. They are all heading in the same direction. Where is that. What if they take me along. What if they take you. What if they separate us.

The drums fluff up in my ear and the rhythm heightens. Do you remember when you used to call this "the sound of danger", when we were watching movies. There is a sea full of people here. Each of them is alone with their music. Nobody hears anybody. So much loneliness at the very heart of the sound. And then you tell me I am here. I cannot hear you, I cannot hear you because of the people. This wave of people. I see your lips moving and I feel the words in the air, but they do not reach me. Are they really there. Between us. Did you really say that or did I just imagine. It is hard to find your words when there are so many people. Everything is harder in a crowd. Our backs are pressed against the wall. We are waiting for the surge of people to disperse. What if they take us with them. What if, what if. What if they crush us. Like the wildbeest running over Mufasa. Simba is so small, holed up in the cliff. Powerless. This is how the wildbeest draw closer, drumming. Can you hear it. I cannot hear you either, but I can see you moving your lips. I will not let go of you. Don't let go of me, Ok. Don't let them separate us. What if we get carried away by the crowd. What if we cannot find each other anymore. What do I do if we cannot find each other anymore. How do I get back. What do I do without you. I can hear my heart. Can you hear yours. It is louder than the entire orchestra and I can feel it in my fingers and in my knees, and in my throat, and in the back of my head and on the other side of the rail, far away. Can you hear my heart. Do not let go. Do not let go.

This crowd rushing like a tsunami in the subway train makes my stomach ache and my ears go deaf. The drums are now inside me. Simba is small and soon he will be alone in the world. All the colours melt into one single shade. All sounds become one sound pouring out of my eyes. I haven't seen so many people in a very long time. I think I have never seen so many people. I haven't taken the subway in a very long time either. A very long time. But no. There have never been so many people. Ever. My fingers would like to sink into your hand. Do not let go. Do you hear. Do you hear your heart beating inside of your throat. Can you hear mine.



Fear. Illustration by Daniel Ivaşcu

We don't move. The trains pass us by one after the other. I do not know there are tears running down my cheek until you wipe them off. I have to cling to something. One of your hands is on my chest, blocking the stream of people. Shield. My heart is a percussion instrument astray from the orchestra. I can hear it in your eyes. I cling to it. I cling to you. Don't let them separate us. Don't let me get lost. I don't want to take the subway ever again. I don't want to go the theatre ever again. I don't want us to get caught in the crowd ever again. Ever.

It's over.

It's over, now. I breathe and everything falls back into their places. The strings, the woodwinds, the brass, all of them. Only words are lost. Maybe they are in my pocket. Maybe they got lost on the platform we left behind. Maybe.

It's over. I am on my seat, in the almost empty train and you are bent over me, carressing me. And you are saying something, something I cannot hear, in a rhythm that rocks me to sleep. I think my ears are clogged. Were you afraid of the wildbeest when you were a little girl. Or of trains. Crowds. Separation. Afraid to get lost from your mother. Were you. Afraid. Forgive for not having known this. My heart is the apple of your eye. Mothers never let go.