



Sleepwalker, card in hand. The constant beeping of the turnstiles has become the *song of the sparrows* in this ecosystem of metal, plastic and glass. So recognisable, so identifiable... "Young/retired pass: two beeps; normal pass: long one." I hear two beeps to my right. The woman looks at me sideways, she has realised that I am aware of her trickery. She blushes. I bow to her with my hand: my respects. From the top of the escalators, the other passengers look like fleas scurrying about senselessly. "Welcome to underground Madrid!"

Rheums on my eyelashes, rows of fluorescent lights with cold light draw elusive gleams on the yellow tiles... "Is this how L. Frank Baum saw the world?"

"Curved station, be careful not to put your foot between the carriage and the platform when exiting." Three transfers, a pickpocket and a false prophet spewing his rehearsed spiel in front of the mirror later, two trains run away under my nose. I look at the screens: "Next train in 7 minutes." I look at my watch. I look at the screens: fade to black, red diamond. "Shit! Bad signal." I look at my watch. "Fuck...!" I lean against the condom vending machine, banging it with all my weight as an escape valve for my despair. "I can't afford to be another day late," I think to myself as I lean my forehead against its peeling blue surface. My fists clenched, hidden in the soft velvet lining of my pockets.

The loudspeaker system intermingles with the music in my headphones, overlapping the lyrics of *Never thought that I could die*: "For reasons beyond Metro's control, the service on line ten between Nuevos Ministerios and Gregorio Marañón stations is suspended for an estimated time of one hour. We apologise for any inconvenience." My brain deciphers the message as if it were an Enigma machine: "Another suicide..."

I take out my mobile phone and look for an alternative route as I mingle with a herd of people climbing stairs, walking up and down corridors and *bleating* expletives until I end up on the platform of the only line available. Hundreds of users waiting impatiently on the platform versus a throng anxious to leave the carriage. In my headphones? *Heavy is the crown* blaring.

The doors open, the *Normandy landing* takes place. Two opposing forces slamming into each other; the Yin Yang symbol cracking at the sides. Some are trying to get in, others to get out. The loudspeaker intercedes: "Let passengers off before boarding." I hold my composure, enduring a *tsunami* of flesh and bones. The *charge of the 300* at the Battle of Thermopylae is nothing compared to the epicness of the moment.

"Will you get off me," one verbally spits at me. Another slams her elbow into my side. Withering glances... A crowd of people enraged to leave the carriage surrounds me; another, desperate to get on, precedes me.

"I'm not going to lose another train. Let me through!"

The music clouds my thoughts: it emboldens me; the situation absorbs me: it's *me* against the world. I raise my fists until they cover my face. Suddenly, a *yank* pulls me completely out of my "catatonic state". My soul unravels: the warrior of the Greek epopee becomes a cracking shell, an envelope from which I am ejected backwards. Now, *only* I am left... "Someone grabbed my backpack and pulled me away from the door, allowing the crowd to disembark." I look at him angrily. I look at him confused. I look at him regretfully. Is it... Jorge?

From my perspective, accompanied by the music, the scene was legendary. In the eyes of the rest, I was *just another asshole* to deal with.

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