

things to know about the people parked along the road that runs through Humboldt Park: part 20

by Michael Seidel

The woman who broke my window was younger than you'd expect looking at her or hearing her loose-wound screams. She threw her purse—filled with buffet shrimp, compacts, and a bundle of unknowable keys—through the left side window, the driver's side in a normal vehicle, but in my jeep, issued by the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works, is a just rubber tread floor where my sandwiches usually get warmed by the heat I keep on high. The cheese is always a perfect goo by noon.

They never fix things quick in this city, so I'm here before my shift this morning with my wool toque pulled down, wearing my half gloves. I have a pen in my hand and am writing different tickets to the people in my life.

- Guy Manmamma gets **Parked in no parking zone** for the way he went so fat in the living room he refused to pay any money toward each month. His skin grew into the sofa I'd bought and hauled up myself. He'd yell out for me at dawn, saying, *I need to see all your topaz jewelry and your sweet little ass and to feel your palm against where time has rubbed my hair down to flesh.*
- **Parked in fire lane** goes to a woman I'll only call Janet. I traced the vein that rose in her temple when she got angry

all the way along her body until it ached out varicosely on her smooth calf.

- Howie Rapp, my dad, gets **Parked in the roadway**. On my third birthday, he went away on business. When he came back I was twelve. He had a tattoo of a suspension bridge across his brow and was yammering about how one side of the bridge represented who I was and the other side was who he knew I could be. The drop off the bridge was a sheer, sure death in eyes and nose and lips, all of which were woven onto me as well, just the same as his. A lightbulb of blood shattered in him when I was only a quarter way along that bridge (he had marks of progress gunned into his flesh each year), a senior in junior college, attractive but not pretty, lipstick and coffee equally staining my teeth. I'm another quarter along now, but there aren't markings anywhere to prove the distance I've come.
- Sophie, Sophie, Sophie, the girl I was given years ago, is **Blocking another vehicle**. While still so young, she went stiff as a board, living rigor mortis, and refused to grow. She's a tiny shelf for clothes and scents and make-up, cheaply made, and costing next to nothing to buy. One day, I'm sure, her muscles will give up and go gummy and she'll run away like I've longed for so long, but for the law.
- Earl Parcival Scott's sarcasm gets him **Parking in unauthorized lot**, the way he'd cuss over the fence each time I had guests over and was in the middle telling them about this dream I had once where hummingbirds covered my body. They were needling in and pulling out nectar the color of orange juice. A man in beekeeping gear came along, grabbed each little bird, and placed it in a burlap coffee sack from Panama. I woke up laughing, I told my visitors over Earl's lawnmower-like *fuckfuckfuck*, but had to pee so so bad. I kept laughing, more, more, until I dribbled just a bit out and onto the mattress and I said, *Janet, I think you'll never know anyone as filled as sweetness as me*. Then we

stayed in bed all day watching court shows on the TV we had mounted on the ceiling.

Soon my shift will start. I'll submit these tickets I'm writing at the end of the day in a stack with all the tickets for the vehicles I find, numbered and insentient, poised illegally. People will return to these vehicles and take the tickets in their hands, never realizing how wrong they've been.

