

sugar, just looks at me with her eyebrows raised when I spoon it into my coffee. She's beautiful when she raises her eyebrows, her blue-grey eyes open wider, briefly.

"Sure, do you want anything?" she says, walking back into the kitchen.

"Nope. I'm fine. Let's go eat Thai for dinner." I hear her dropping the crushed Diet Coke (only for Diet Coke) cans into the paper bags. The recycling is only picked up once a week, on Mondays.

"Whenever you read or watch anything about Thailand you want to go eat Thai food, Miriam." Louise doesn't really like Thai food it's too spicy, she says. But she eats it anyway, always getting a sweet vegetarian curry. I eat something different each time. I like the spiciness.

The opening sequence to the documentary is coming on and there are Buddhist Thai monks in saffron-colored robes walking across the screen. I hope this isn't going to be an expose on how the monks really live homoerotic lives. I wonder if the monks know they are being broadcast in the U.S., or if PBS film-makers just shot them, without permission. Our futon cover is smooth, saffron velvet; the monks' robes are coarse, thin cotton.

"See you later."

The door clicks shut before I can say good-bye.

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we met at my friend pilar's house. we found each other on her front steps. i usually spend most of pilar's parties on her front steps, even when it's really too cold to be outside. i feel visibly awkward talking to people i don't know and somehow the steps are my solution. like i could be out there to smoke because pilar won't let anyone smoke in her house. even though i don't smoke.

louise came outside with

(My) Sensual Geography

by tyrell haberkorn

karl, pilar's boyfriend, to look at her windowboxes. wow, nice flowers for the city. such brilliant purples and vibrant oranges. she had four boxes full of petunias. karl went inside and louise stayed outside. she sat down next to me.

i still felt too big or small for my body and was forced, when she asked me if i wanted a cigarette to say (too quickly) i didn't smoke. i found myself telling her that my father grew up in wilmette and that's why i came to chicago when i graduated from college. because my father left my mother and me when i was fourteen, going on fifteen. she didn't leave. and instead she nodded and i noticed her shorts were the same color red-brown as her hair. almost sepia.

she liked my earrings (because they were green, like my eyes) and i liked her nail polish (because i always wanted to wear nail polish but felt foolish doing it) and it seemed so unlikely, two femmes (i was trying to be butch, even then). with equally high voices. both liking to be sexy, and sexy meant something different every day. but maybe it makes sense. you know, they say lesbians are very narcissistic.

when she put her left hand on my right thigh it stuck to it. like there was something sticky on it. she'd been eating watermelon. by the time she touched my face her hands weren't sticky anymore, even though it was august.

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We eat at Thai Diner 201 mostly because it's cheap and we can walk there, but also because I love the purple and orange vinyl tablecloths. It's unclear where they came

from - I don't think they're Thai, but maybe they are.

"How's your curry?"

"It's really good. It's very un-spicy. You want some? The sweet potatoes are tender but not stringy." Because I know she would rather be eating somewhere else, I feel responsible for Louise liking what she eats. Which is silly -- we probably eat Thai at least once every two weeks. Plus, if she really didn't want to come, she could say so. I still feel responsible.

"Um, not of the curry. But I'd love some of your rice." My phad-thai is spicy.

She puts three spoonfuls of her rice onto the edge of my plate. She's very precise. "Is that enough?"

"Yeah. So what does your week look like? Are you on any nights? I can't remember." Louise works at a low-budget women's shelter she helped found. The seven women who started the shelter alternate staying there nights. Even though Louise and I have lived together for eight months, I still can't figure out how they decide who stays overnight when. There seems to be no order to it.

She's still chewing a mouthful of rice. She puts her fork down and says, "Wednesday night I stay overnight, I think. I actually need to check the calendar tomorrow. By the way, how was that PBS documentary? Did it piss you off the way the Italian one did?"

Three weeks ago the "lesbian and gay interest" (the TV schedule's words) documentary was on lesbians in Italy. The entire documentary was about two nuns who left their Carmelite convent to live in Venice together. I know there are other lesbians in Italy-- god there's a very active lesbian cultural scene, especially in Florence-- and PBS focused solely on two nuns. Whatever.

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mangos and half-and-half. after we