

Linda Vs. Sound

by Elizabeth Kate Switaj

Normally, after her shift, Linda would make herself a latte, untie her apron, and study at one of the tables. That evening, however, KEXP kept playing songs with grating guitar riffs, and loud laughs were everywhere. She chugged her coffee, burning her tongue. Then, she dashed out the door and down Olive Way.

Once downtown, she marched straight to the library. The bottom floors buzzed with schoolchildren and the un(der)employed, but Linda had planned for that. She knew she had to take the escalators past the glass encasing the bookstacks and make her way to the top floor with its glorious views of the Sound and the lights. More important, to her, was the reading room. For fifteen perfect minutes, she had it to herself. Then came the announcement: the library was closing.

Fucking budget cuts.

Where else could she find quiet? Her roommates would be home by now. Then she remembered that the Pike Place Market would be closing. She ran down Pine and across the brick road. She squatted on concrete that reeked of lavender and salmon. As she was about to take out her books, she heard the rhythmic clunk of traffic on the Alaska Way Viaduct, which some asshole poet years before had taken for "Puget Sound sounds".

I give up.

She trudged up Pike to the Bartell Drugs and bought earplugs. Thus fortified, Linda survived a bus ride home beside a teenager with Lady Gaga leaking from his headphones.

