

# Bandits in the Afternoon Rain

by P. H. Madore

Naomi and Nadia are outside where nothing's happening but flowers wilting on the sidewalk marking the end of the world among the shadows of pedestrian waltzing and an esoteric guitar solo. They stain cigarettes with shades of shoplifted Color Girl and say casually caustic things of passers-by. I'm on my feet, watching from the corner of my eye. Everything's too far away. This is when it begins.

Somewhere there are fires burning in oil barrels, ragged homeless men warming torn-mittened hands—one day I'll be with them. Now is my turn for fight or flight.

My weapon draws. I enter the trance of instinct. In this moment, I'm the last of the great gunslingers. John Dillinger smiles from the grave. Naomi and Nadia run interference at the door now, making out and moaning. Naomi's left breast is exposed. It's all so Warhol and spastic.

The cashier's face contorts. He shouts. I'm an android here to collect. The bills are sloppy and everywhere. There's a commotion behind me. My bullet drops a man and the room becomes silence.

"I didn't want to do that," I explain.

Here come the safe monies, the trash bag. Now the task is achieved and I'm walking on my toes.

I glance at the man I shot: crying, breathing, and very alive despite the blood pouring from his thigh. Life gets hard to explain to people like him.

We're bandits in the afternoon rain, smiling, gazing at each other's angles. Points of light devour Nadia's face, square and manic. Naomi stuffs the haul into her backpack en route to the next venue where nothing's happening.

