



The Mercury
The Student Art &
Literary Magazine
of Gettysburg
College

Volume 2020

Article 14

2020

Leave That Nervous Shit at Home

Timothy Black
Gettysburg College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#), and the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

Recommended Citation

Black, Timothy (2020) "Leave That Nervous Shit at Home," *The Mercury*. Year 2020, Article 14.
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/mercury/vol2020/iss1/14>

This open access nonfiction is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Leave That Nervous Shit at Home

Author Bio

Timothy Black is a senior Political Science major with a Spanish and Writing minor. He is also the Poetry Editor for the Mercury.

Leave That Nervous Shit at Home

TIMOTHY BLACK

I leave with more than an hour to get there. Too much time, but that's fine with me. My thoughts race with all the possible yet ridiculous scenarios that could occur. A first meeting is always the hardest and this one was prefaced by four months of waiting. Waiting. I hate waiting, but I am chronically early. Normally this is a helpful quirk that dissuades episodes of anxiety, and anything that can combat the constant fear of irrational things that arises from simply existing is a wonderful trait in my book, especially after the last three hours. Three hours ago, I was woken up by a cat kneading my chest. After removing the creature, with more than a few complaints from him, I walked gracefully to the bathroom and promptly vomited into the toilet. A few heaves and the dread and anxiety were temporarily gone, a relatively good start to my day. With that issue out of the way, I finished my morning routine. I forced myself to eat, and then spent an hour listening to a histrionic cacophony of edgelord bands meant for thirteen-year-olds whose moms said no in a desperate attempt to not vomit again.

I still feel ready to vomit. Lancaster, Pennsylvania is not a town I am familiar with, so needless to say I am one minor inconvenience from throwing myself into a woodchipper. I stand in front of the Prince Street Café, a small yet bougie place, and wait. Every person walking by could be him, even though I know what he looks like. I check BBC, Twitter, and Snapchat and when all is said and done, I've burned about two minutes. I keep shifting from side to side, looking down the street both ways. I go back to the news. Maybe others' misfortunes will dampen my melodrama. I check the streets again and a vaguely familiar form has appeared. Over six feet tall, long curly black hair and all legs. A good concept art of a black Waluigi.

"Hi." He raises his hand as if to wave, but then hesitates and puts it back down.

"Hi." I interlock my hands together in front of my chest.

"I hope you weren't waiting long."

"No. Not at all. I was just reading about the Venezuelan debt crisis." *The Venezuelan debt crisis. That's what you have to say?*

"Sounds cool." A punctuating pause. *He thinks you're fucking*

crazy. Great. "Follow me."

Back one alley and then another, I accompany him. Without warning he turns around and embraces me. He breathes in deep, and then releases the breath, but not me.

"It's been a long day." It comes out like a confession. "I fucked up my visa application."

I don't say a word, simply let him hold me. I squeeze him just a little. I squeeze him so he knows that I heard. I squeeze him so I can pull him closer. I squeeze him because maybe this will make up for the fact that I said nothing. We simply stand there, embracing in between a dumpster and a shop selling knickknacks that only rich white people would want. He smells like weed and body spray that I can't place.

He sighs and releases me. "That's enough of that."

We travel back through the alleys, but not to the Prince Street Café. We descend into a little coffee shop a few blocks away. We settle into a couch, at the far side of the shop. Behind it hangs a map of Middle Earth.

"So, you're going to London? Sounds cool." I ask hoping to start something.

"I guess... Are you studying abroad?"

"Probably not. Do you have any plans for the summer?"

"Um... Yeah. I'm doing research. I'm hopefully volunteering too." He talks quietly making you lean into him to hear like someone out of a Fitzgerald novel. He whispers and mumbles as if at anytime we'll be found out and taken, as if silencing his words could maintain the fragile fantastical reality in which he is just a boy and I am just a boy. With a hesitant air to his speech that comes from a lifetime of fighting accents in language after language. Voice gentle as if raising it by one decibel would scare away what is there. "What about you?"

"I'm hoping to do research too. I'm trying to get a fellowship to study fascism during the Spanish Civil War. It's actually really interesting because it's so different from everywhere else... Sorry, that was a lot." *Did you really just bring up Falangism?*

"You're cute when you blush." Eyes dancing between anxiety and politeness. I know he's anxious somewhere, but there's not a true physical sign. If I only could will away the red from my cheeks, to allow myself to surpass adolescent idiocy and be calm for once.

"Stop." *I'm a man dammit. I'm not cute.*

"Why?" He takes a sip of his French press yet seems unsatisfied. "Bitter."

"It's just weird."

"It's cute, though." He gives a playful grin, and I sigh.

“Yes, because looking like a candy cane is the epitome of cuteness.”

“It can be... Do you wanna leave?”

“Um... Sure.”

He walks in a rushed yet casual way that comes from years of living in towns and cities much larger than this one. He has little time for those around him, but I bump into him and he seems momentarily startled, his eyes losing an apathetic glaze. His body tenses. His face softens as he looks at me.

“How ya doing?” The code of the introvert.

“I wanna get out of here.” I want to leave the streets. I want to be somewhere where I don’t have to throw energy around like hyper-inflated money.

“Then let’s go.”

I’ll lay in bed later sleeping in my clothes because they smell like him and my teenage girl emotions overtake my logic, but before that we’ll traipse the streets and make fun of *Color Me Mine*. He’ll get annoyed at an intoxicated Latina slumped over a counter in a Dollar Store yelling “¡Mi bebe!” over and over again for no particularly good reason. I’ll accidentally run a red light. Then we’ll make my shirt smell like him, kissing and whispering in the front bench seat of a car older than both of us. Then he’ll kiss me good night and it won’t hit me until I’m out of town. Maybe as he walked home, he began thinking of other things: his visa application, which documentary to watch tonight or why he had even decided to meet me in the first place, but my only thoughts were of the sealing kiss. That stupid cat will be on my bed when I get home. He’ll smell me once and run off. He hates the smell of weed.

“Don’t like him? I do.”