

KARTHIK PURUSHOTHAMAN

Cold Noodles

Although I had never held you
back before, you took so long
to get ready. I didn't control
the bus schedule, couldn't
reschedule the interview
nor could I stop the suit
who came dick in hand
as if I was the tan
gigolo he banged
behind 7-Eleven
from slamming shut
before the preface
my publishing career
*Didn't you tell him
you didn't fly all the way
from Delhi only to miss
a bus here?* you asked me
sweetly as we reconvened
at Union Square where
I saw eye-to-eye with
a Chinese guy wasting
his flute on a world
wearing headphones
outside Han Dynasty
*I don't understand
you said. Dude who
was let go for doing
blow and being blown
landing in rehab and later*

making the Booker Prize
longlist says there are no
second chances? you asked
me and I left behind a greasy
handprint on your blue jeans
leaning in to kiss you, your
mouth full of cold noodles.

Nazi Driver

Catching the train
at Hoboken Terminal
I catch the driver
wearing the armband
tossing a copy
of *Mein Kampf*
into his glovebox.
Choo-Choo, I gotta go
I tell the friend I have
been Facetiming
since earlier
I gave her a tour
of 9/11 Memorial
You're turning into
such an American
she says and I say
Thanks, I appreciate
it. Ticket please says
the conductor, a sack
of old potatoes I think
must be from Idaho
before he begins
speaking in Bangla.
He's from Newmarket
Calcutta, he says.
Popping open
a Snapple, I give him
two facts: One, did you
know I have a Bengali
friend who recently
moved to Newmarket

New Hampshire
and Two, did you
know your driver is
a Nazi who's planning
to plow right through
the Meadowlands
football stadium?
*Can Karthik
Purushothaman
save the day?*
my Facetime friend
asks, flashing me
and I hide the phone
from a family sitting
under yarmulkes.
Curly-haired baby
fist in her mouth
fogs the train window
tracing L.O.V.E.
on the glass.
Can't make this shit up
you know? If you knew
the driver was a Nazi
do you think you would
be on board? We enter
a tunnel, no light
at the end, it's all
black and white
except for this Jewish girl.
I search her green eyes.
*Can she tell what
I'm thinking?*
Will he or won't he

derail the train, this Nazi?
I'm sorry, I don't know.
I get off at the next stop.