

How The Other Half Live

written by

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EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - AFTERNOON

A CROWD stands elbow to elbow on a Subway platform. JAVIER SANTIAGO (32, thin frame, buzzed hair) stands in a worn out suit, waiting for his train. He wipes the sweat from his forehead.

Javier takes off his backpack. He places it between his legs and taps his foot. He looks to his left.

A RICH WHITE WOMAN in a tight dress stands next to him. She's wearing large noise canceling headphones and the faint sounds of Ozuna "Se Preparo" can be heard.

Javier shakes his head disapprovingly.

The RATTLES of a train approach the station. It pulls to the platform with a SCREECH of the brakes.

Javier bends to pick up his backpack. The doors open, and SUBWAY RIDERS push past, almost knocking him over.

DING DONG.

The doors begins to close. Javier shoves his way on to the crowded train car.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Javier stands, his back up against the door. He looks around the car.

A MAN in a designer suit reads an article on a smart tablet.

The rich woman sits in front of him, looking at his worn clothing judgmentally.

An automated voice comes over the train's intercom.

VOICE

This station is Wall Street.
Transfer is available to the 3
train.

The doors open, and most of the PASSENGERS file out.

Javier moves to take an empty seat. He takes his backpack off and puts it between his legs.

He looks up to see a MAN IN A TUXEDO enter the car.

Javier sizes up the man.

Tall, square jawed, immaculately combed hair. The man walks to the end of the car and sits.

Javier begins inspecting his own jacket. One of the buttons comes off and falls into his fingers.

JAVIER
It just ain't fair.

He opens his coat to put the button inside the breast pocket. Already inside is a folded up piece of paper. Javier removes it, although he remembers it word for word.

CU as the paper is unfolded

ON THE PAPER:

Mr. Santiago, we regret to inform you that AMRT has decided not to extend an offer of employment to you at this time.

BACK TO JAVIER

He crudely refolds the letter and stuffs it back in his jacket pocket.

He looks back at the man in the tuxedo.

The man shifts a small leather satchel on his shoulder. He checks his smart watch, and adjusts his right shirt sleeve cuff.

Javier shakes his head and sucks his teeth in envy.

BUZZ BUZZ

Javier shifts without taking his eyes off the man. He pulls a small smart phone with a cracked screen out from his pocket.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Hello?

On the other end of the phone comes a sweet female voice.

BABY
So! How did it go?

Javier shifts his focus. After a beat, he answers.

JAVIER
I mean, it was alright. You never know with those things. Lot of people tryna work there.

BABY

You're not a lot of people, Javier.
You're great. I'm sure you'll get
it.

He smiles, which fades quickly.

JAVIER

Hey baby, I'm on the train I might
lose you. Can I call you back?

BABY

When you gonna be home? The
landlord was lookin' for you. He
asked about the rent.

JAVIER

I'll take care of it. I love you...

BEEP BEEP BEEP.

The call cuts out.

He puts the phone back in his pocket and rests his head on
the back of the seat, closing his eyes.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Javier opens his eyes and turns his attention back to the
tuxedo wearing passenger.

The man pulls a string from his tuxedo jacket, dropping it on
the floor of the car.

Javier leans forward.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

(in a whisper)

Where the fuck you goin' in deep
Brooklyn with a tux on, fam?

More stations roll by.

Javier sits with his eyes closed, occasionally looking over
at the man in jealousy.

VOICE

This station is Sterling Street.

Javier pulls his backpack up. He begins to stand and stops.

JAVIER
(to himself)
Nah, I wanna see this.

Javier sits back down. The doors close

Javier's POV: the man in the tuxedo removes a pair of wireless headphones. He places them in his pocket, and cracks his neck.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Some rich ass, doctor mother
fucker.

The train car is almost empty now.

TWO TEEN GIRLS sit across from Javier giggling as they scroll on their phones, showing each what's on their screen.

Down the opposite end of the car, by the tuxedo man, sits an ELDERLY WOMAN eating mango's from a plastic bag.

VOICE
This station is Flatbush Avenue,
Brooklyn College.

A gruff voice comes across the speaker.

CONDUCTOR
Last stop, last stop. This train is
out of service.

SCREECH.

The doors open. Javier waits a second for the man in the tuxedo to exit.

EXT. FLATBUSH AVE - EVENING

The man comes up the subway stairs. He crosses the street and begins walking down the sidewalk.

Javier comes out of the same stair case. He stops and picks up a penny from the ground.

He follows a block behind the man in the tuxedo. They turn off the main street. Another turn. Another.

The man in the tuxedo walks down a residential street. The CLICK CLACK of his shoes echoes off the concrete.

Javier turns the corner in time to see the man walk up the driveway of a blue house.

The man pauses for a moment at the front door. A second later, and he vanishes inside the house.

Javier slowly approaches the house. He stops, looking around at all the beat up homes that line the street.

JAVIER
(to himself)
You live here?

Silence.

No other human is out on the street. The only light coming from inside the homes and one dim streetlight in the middle of the block.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Fuck it.

Javier begins walking up the driveway. He hops a small fence and walks up the side yard.

Muffled voices from inside the house, and a TV commercial.

Javier arrives in the dark backyard, illuminated partially by light from inside exiting a large window. He crouches down, placing his backpack on the ground, and slides underneath the window. Slowly, he stands up to peer inside.

Shock and horror come across his face.

INT. BLUE HOUSE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A FAT MAN and his YOUNG WIFE are bound and gagged to wooden chairs. On a worn out table sits stacks of money. Thousands upon thousands of dollars.

The fat man is bleeding and his head is hung towards his chest.

The wife is SOBBING looking at her husband.

WHISTLING is heard from the another room. The man in the tuxedo enters with a silenced pistol.

He looks at the TV Screen, standing next to the wife who continues SOBBING.

The man in the tuxedo checks his watch. He casually raises the pistol.

POP. THUD.

The fat man falls sideways to the floor. The young wife lets out a muffled YELP.

The man in the tuxedo casually turns to her.

POP.

EXT. BLUE HOUSE BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Javier falls to the ground panting. He tries taking deep breaths.

JAVIER
Shit. Shit. Oh shit.

CLICK CLACK CLICK CLACK. Footsteps inside the house moving towards the backdoor.

Javier scrambles around the corner of the house, and sits back down. His back pressed against the siding, he covers his mouth to quiet his breathing.

SQUEAK.

The back door opens. The man in the tuxedo stands outside the door for a moment.

Beat.

The man pulls a phone from his pocket, standing in the darkness of the evening.

The light of the screen illuminates his square jaw.

BERNARD
It's Bernard. It's done.

Beat.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Her as well, yes.

The other person responds.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
It's on the table. Tell your men
bring a large bag. Close to a
quarter mill.

Another beat.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
I'm late for the opera. Pleasure
doing business.

He hangs up the call and heads back to the door.

KACLICK. The door shuts.

Javier rises to his feet and takes off sprinting. Down the
block he goes, and back to Flatbush Avenue.

He keeps running, up Nostrand Avenue.

City blocks fly by before finally he stops in front of an
apartment building.

He collapses on a small stoop, gasping for air. Javier sits
up and takes off his jacket. He flings it to the ground.

Still panting. He hangs his head in his hands.

Finally, regaining his breath. Javier stands up, and grabs
his keys and blazer before heading inside the apartment
building.

INT. DINER - MORNING

A busy diner, filled with CUSTOMERS and TWO WAITRESSES
running up and down between the tiny tables.

Javier takes a seat at the lone empty two seater table in
front of a large window.

One of the waitresses approaches, placing a laminated menu in
front of Javier.

WAITRESS
Morning, sugar. Coffee?

JAVIER
Yeah, that's cool.

WAITRESS
Milk or cream?

JAVIER
Whatever. It don't matter.

WAITRESS
Dealer's choice, alright.

Javier politely smiles at the waitress as she disappears.

He rests his chin on his left hand staring out to the city streets.

A ceramic mug is slid in front of him. He turns up to smile again at the waitress, as she pours his coffee.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

I went with milk. You don't need cream, you're sweet enough.

JAVIER

That's fine, thank you. Thank you.

WAITRESS

Do you need a menu too, hun?

Javier looks confused as he turns to see Bernard, dressed in a navy blue suit and white shirt taking the seat across from him.

Bernard places Javier's backpack down on the floor between them.

Panic washes over Javier.

BERNARD

No, no just coffee is fine. We got a busy day, right Javy?

He barely musters a nod.

WAITRESS

Milk okay for you too, sweetie?

BERNARD

Sure, I'm not driving.

The waitress laughs and fills up another mug for Bernard. She begins to walk away from the table.

JAVIER

Do-Don't.

She pauses for a moment before a DING DING from the kitchen snaps her back to reality.

Silence.

Bernard takes a sip from the mug.

BERNARD

Honestly, not as shitty as I guessed.

JAVIER
I didn't see anything.

Bernard lets out a chuckle.

BERNARD
That's how you want to play this?

He lays a driver's license on the table between them.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Javier Santiago. 486 Brooklyn Ave.

JAVIER
P-Please man, c'mon. I'm not going
to...

BERNARD
Before you ruin the rest of my
coffee. Let's start over, shall we?

Bernard takes a deep breath.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
Hey Javy, how's it going? Did ya
have a good night? Sleep great next
to your girlfriend? Kiss your
daughter before you came to a diner
directly across from a police
station?

Silence.

Bernard takes another sip.

BERNARD (CONT'D)
I think you need to stop for a
moment. Just stop and smell the
coffee. I want to make sure you
really evaluate what went on. What
you saw, or uhh...or what you
didn't see.

He raises the mug up, and takes a gratifying sip.

Javier's hands tremble as he tries to wrap both around his
own mug.

JAVIER
I just...man, I saw the tuxedo an-
an-and I, like...man I got jealous.
I was just wondering where this
dude could go and why can't I be
him?

Bernard puts his mug down. He spins his mug casually.

BERNARD

I should thank you. Honestly. In my line of work, you just helped me realize...

Bernard pauses and chuckles. He folds his fingers to make a gun, which he puts to his head and makes a POW all while laughing.

Javier flinches.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Sometimes I get wrapped up in my own shit. I lose sight of blending in.

Javier raises his mug, spilling a little before taking a sip.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Look, times are tough out there. What you saw- my side gig. That's what I do to afford my lifestyle. To be able to put on that crouch-hugging awful tux. I'm not proud of it. I have to do it though. If I don't, someone will. Why should they get that money? I want it. I need it. Hell, I love to make a killing!

He waits for a laugh. Javier stares into his coffee.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

You need to lighten up, Javy. Don't take life too serious.

He reaches across the table and gently slaps Javier's shoulder.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I had this idea. Could be a little crazy. I could use some help. What do ya say?

Javier looks up.

JAVIER

What?

BERNARD

Come work along side me. You proved you can sneak around. Just need to get better at disappearing.

Javier stares as Bernard winks at him.

JAVIER

You serious? You want me to just start fuckin' kill...

Bernard cuts him off, and leans in closer.

BERNARD

Think it over. Yes, that's what I want. For you to think it over. Good money, money to buy all those things you want. Job security.

He laughs again. Bernard drains his mug, and rests it on the table.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Anywho, I wanted to return your bookbag...

He rises to his feet.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

And I wanted to talk to you, and make that offer before, ya know...

He WHISTLES and points with his thumb out of the window behind him.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

You did anything stupid.

Bernard gives a slight stretch, and a twist.

JAVIER

I know. I know your name, BERNARD. I grew up in the hood, you wanna threaten me?

Bernard laughs and starts clapping his hands together.

BERNARD

Whoa, whoa easy now. The most criminal thing you've done is park on the wrong side of the street. You live in the hood because you're broke. You know. You know, alright.

He picks up the backpack and hands it to Javier.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

I left some info in there, in case you change your mind. If not, I'll see you and your family soon. If you do though...maybe we grab coffee again tomorrow. Same time cool? I'm a morning person.

Bernard slides by Javier, patting him on the shoulder and begins to head towards the door. He stops and turns back to Javier.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Oh! Before I forget, my names not Bernard. Duh. Okay, see ya tomorrow. Right? Ahh, I hope so!

He turns and walks to the door. Bernard holds the door open for TWO COPS walking in to the diner. He does an over the top salute and the cops laugh.

Javier stares down at the backpack in his lap. He slowly opens the main zipper.

Javier's POV: inside is filled with stacks of money. On top of the money sits a smiley face crudely drawn on a post it note.

Underneath the smiley, text that reads:
COME SEE HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVE -Love, JB.

Javier looks up and stares out the window.

A police station sits across the way. NYPD cars lining the street.

Inside the backpack POV: Javier looks down at the contents of the bag. He stares.

We hear the sound of the zipper closing the bag slowly until there is no light left.

The End.