

Zoe Canner

compromised threshold

a gross man described a vagina he saw as gross and then ruffled my head and said *she's a cute one* to the nice woman i was talking to i grimaced and said nothing he then said *wow, nothing? no 'thank you' or anything? i can take it back you know?* and i said nothing, my head tilted mouth slightly, only slightly, agape, and i wasn't even mad about it

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i didn't know him but our mutual friend had just died, he was murdered violently, and therefore my threshold for misogyny, for grossness for inappropriate boundary-crossing diminutive touch, for centering his experience of women, over my life, for excuses, for crass criticism and dividing the feminine, the good ones and the gross ones, right, right, right?

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because that's the pact/them's the breaks if you don't agree to the bad ones, the whiney ones, the slutty ones, the less human or fully inhuman ones, we won't even give you any good ones, get it? you can be a good one (for now—for *right* now

if you don't fuck it up) so long as that
relinquishes your right to stand up
against us naming the bad ones, the
OTHER ones as gross ————was
compromised

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this was the ugliest grossest man and
yes i was tired after a busy weekend
and yes i was compromised because
a person died who i knew in a way
that is personal is political with race
and bodies and blackness and man-
ness and cruelty and dehumanization.

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and yes my stepson found out and i
had tried to protect him and he burst
into tears and fell apart and then that
broke something open in me. and yes
i was slightly buzzed on beer and
faces i hadn't seen in nearly two full
decades

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and so i saw this gross man and could
not place him and then thought oh
my god it's remus's rapist, oh my god
it's kenny's rapist, that's why he's so
horrible! but he was not mike's rapist,
he was just some other horrible
person, ugly and horrible. a different
year than thom's rapist and had
graduated, unlike matt's rapist who
had been kicked out for raping

walker.

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but for the thirty seconds I thought it was {manbff}'s rapist, i reprimanded myself and started to blush for not doing anything, for how easy it is to just look cute and do nothing in this fucking life

* * *

i overheard him say he was fifty i overheard him say he'd been doing massage for thirty years, but i didn't defend the magnificent woman whose body he was bashing and i didn't yell at him or scare him, saying *don't you fucking touch me* i didn't knee him in the groin or break his glasses

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i didn't even walk away i just calmly stood there wishing him away and within a minute and a half he was gone