

THE THINGS WE SEE

by Merry Pool

They rush onto the subway, sitting almost simultaneously. Their seats face the aisle so that he can stretch out his legs. His tendons are a little tight. She pulls her legs in closer, crossing and tucking her feet under the bench. Both concentrate on their phones.

She wears the emerald earrings he gave her a month ago for her birthday. Waiting at their corner, he noticed this as she adjusted her scarf while paying for her cab ride. Throughout the evening, she said nothing to draw his attention to her adornment. Wearing them was sign of her approval.

He had seen them and imagined how they would look with her green eyes, accentuated by her cropped hair, now since she'd stopped dying it, a silver-bronze. This was what he was supposed to do in these situations, he reasoned to himself after charging \$495 to his company's credit card (because his own was a joint account).

She liked to wear deep reds, off-kilter skirts, jewelry made from leaves preserved in resin; emeralds, diamonds, all the classic gems were too ostentatious, too tacky for her taste. But

they were not at the stage where she could interject herself into his fantasy of her. She wore the earrings when they went out.

Conversation at the bar, never fluid without alcohol, stayed on the week ahead: his family trip to Michigan, her plans to revamp her bedroom with 20 x 40 inch photos of the warehouses that she'd shot the past summer, while in a phase characterized by starkness and metal. Their martinis were strong.

Now, sitting across from each other, blind to the train's late-night grime, they reread their text messages: his to her, hers to him. Then, press erase.