

Arrêt 5

Librairie L'Euguélonne

Written by Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch

Oh the winter was keeping us down but when we burst forth from Beaudry, the balls are swaying, pink, yellow, orange, blue, the gays are walking, hand in hand, pretending traffic from the side streets doesn't exist. The warmth puts a spring in our steps and tucked away, just off the street, is gay nerd heaven, L'Euguélonne, where I pretend I won't spend more than I planned. Capitalism might be a trap but if I'm gonna spend these hard earned government dollars on anything, it might as well be words, etched into new book smell, that I'll put on my shelves, not to be read for weeks. Who am I kidding? Months. Do you have the latest Robinson? Yes. The latest Neon Yang novella? Yes. The latest Plett? Yes yes yes.

Sitting on the stoop, waiting for the reading to start, waiting for my turn to stand in front of the mic, a stage that is not a stage, chairs lined up in front of me, Trish's launch. A space you know will be mostly queers, unlike any other reading. The space is white, the walls are white, the people white. A few friendly faces, though all your friends, all people you asked to come. It's not just the village, Montreal is inundated with white.

And there's just something about the foldable chairs that makes you ache. Is it the lower back missing? How close your feet are to the ground? Is it how close they are stacked, no space for bodies as big as yours, as tightly wound as yours. You try to move your legs around or they'll ache and end up smashing the queer beside you. *Sorry, thank you, please, sorry thank you*, avoid shoving your ass into someone's face on the way to the bathroom. You try to lean against the stacks but that's not the solution either.

Back on stage, another reader is deep in a lesbian trans sex scene and the crowd is immersed. No one says anything weird, no one does a double take. The Q&A is still like, *is this based on real life?* but she's a little less annoyed, answering, *nope, next*. We're all drinking wine or sparkling water, we're all pleased to see each other. The queers in the corner are flirting, the queers in the corner are arguing. Time to close and we're spilling out into the streets. *Wanna head to the roof of Sky Bar?* they ask. *I've never been. I barely come down to the village. Omg, then we really have to check it out, let's go!*