

# 86th & First

*By Grace Marcus*

I linger in the doorway of the apartment building where a boy I loved very much lived, remembering the mottled glossy brown paint halfway up the hallway walls, his hand on my ass as we walked up the three flights, pausing on the landings to press into each other and feel him already hard against me, his mouth wet and warm and sucking; the scent of meat cooking, the gamy odor presaging the salty smell of damp bodies and milky semen; the New York night sounds of sirens, truck rumble and the radiators ticking, ticking, as his heart was ticking, too, on the way to winding down so we never got beyond these three flights and those urgent couplings with him silky hard, all bone and muscle and wordless breath, because he dies, my first love, on a subway car one morning after lovemaking and a long lingering flight down the stairs, his palm on my neck on the way down on the way out of this life to the underground where his heart stopped.

So we never had the chance to grow up, to grow old, to grow closer or farther apart and it probably wouldn't have lasted anyway, but what if it had?

Then we'd be standing here together now, our bodies remembering together, our memories darkening our hair, plumping our flesh, pumping our hearts and the nether parts that brought us together in the first place—this place—the apartment building where a boy I loved very much lived.

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