You're riding the bus and it's about the rain outside but it probably won't. You read the writing on the wall of the bus. It says, "Hey, you look great. Have you been going Metro?"

Even public transportation has propaganda, you think. As you and your fellow passengers rattle down the street, you see a billboard on either side of the wide, congested street. Propaganda for a racist, ableist, ageist, homophobic kingdom.

You had plans today to jog. Maybe get lunch. But now you're getting ready to stop off at the paint store. You try to imagine that space behind the couch as it actually exists. Yes. There are still two stencils there.

After purchasing a can of black and a can of red you're heading back home. You change into something inconspicuous. You walk a good distance from home, checking street conditions, keeping eyes peeled for cop frequency, headphones moving your feet easily.

You take them off when you're ready. Pull out the first stencil and the red. Look both ways. Lay out the anti-oppressive art and make it on the sidewalk. You don't waste more than a second checking your work. You can't roll up the stencil so you've got to be quick now. At the next spot a couple comes around the corner mid-spray. You've no choice. You look them directly in the eye and grin mischievously. The guy winks. The girl echoes your grin. Safe this time.

Even in the middle of a city, surrounded by eyes and ears, one can be invisible. You hit a couple more spots before the stencil starts to give. Find a trash can. Crumple and dispose.

On to the next one. Black this time. Things are going smoothly now. You're moving quickly. Then of course you're on the one you promise to yourself will be the last for today, already telling yourself job well done and planning lunch, when you feel eyes on you. You stand up and focus on a man in uniform. He's just wearing a suit, but still, if he's a civil servant, you may be out of luck. Without taking his eyes off you, he takes his phone to his ear.

Run. Nearest trash can, ditch the stencil. Turn corners randomly. Go anywhere. Nowhere planned. Just get away from the hot spots. You're getting that jog in now and you turn another corner SLAM into an officer. He doesn't know what you've been up to. Not this one. Smile nervously. Apologize. But as he's helping you up he hears the rattling of paint cans in your bag. No way out of it. You're caught.

You're cuffed and stuffed into a back seat with no handles on the doors. You're unloaded for booking. You're sitting a room and you'll be there a while so you play out a scenario in your head. It goes like:

You're sitting in a dark room with one shitty lightbulb above a table. Your on one side, you're judge on the other.

He asks, patronizingly, "Do you know what you did?"

You're not in the mood to be smart, you want to figure this guy out. You say, "Vandalism."

"Yes, very good. And do you know why that's wrong?"

"Because it's going to cost good law abiding, tax paying citizens money to fix." You can't help being a little smart. And then you find yourself angered by your own statement.

"But the art isn't the thing that's broken, it's this system." You realize you're giving yourself away and flip it. "What's the difference between us?" You ask.

He sighs. "I suppose you want to point out our common humanity?"

"No. I mean... Try to imagine you're me. Why do you think I did it?"

He supposes, "You've lived a life that is unfair and have witnessed injustice, so you started to call out exploitation when you saw it, then realized it's everywhere all the time. You want
to change that but it’s hard to change such a big thing when you’re just one person, so you made ‘art’ to reflect back to society its issues, hoping to awaken the consciousness of at least one other person.”

You become aware of the look of stupidity on your face. Not the response you were expecting, though exactly the one you hoped for. “Okay then, why me and not you?”

He repeats your question from earlier. “What’s the difference between us?”

“What would you stand to lose if you did this?” You ask.

He answers thoughtfully, “I’m married now. I have kids, two girls, in grade school. I have my reputation with them. And somewhere along the line I found the best compromise (where I could advocate change and uphold the law all the same) to be judging. So I have my job at stake, and that’s not only my living, but my family’s as well. I have our house, our vehicles, all of the capital we’ve worked for years to accumulate. I could go on. I have a lot of responsibilities.”

“No. That’s it.” You nod. “I’ve intentionally not accumulated anything. That’s the difference between us. They’ve got you. Or you have trapped yourself. Either way, we both know what I’m doing is beyond good. It’s necessary. You just can’t let me get away with it because you have more to lose.”

The daydream ends when a woman comes with keys to release you. Since you’re under eighteen and white they let you go with a slip that has your court date on it. You’ll get community service. You leave angry. It’s unfair.