

## **Flash Faction 2308**

### **Real Life Series - Short Stories by Terry Miles**

#### **Underground Journey 2308**

The term, London Underground network is somewhat misleading because much of it is over-ground as was this section that Terry took on that particular day. Later, his friend, Peter Googled it and the figure given for the over-ground section was 55%. “That’s less than I thought,” Terry responded, “I thought it was more like 70%.”

Terry was on his way home from work, he had gone to a second-hand bookshop to see if they had any books by Denton Welch, which they didn’t. He back tracked to the crossing he had crossed from the E3 bus stop across the road and walked on to Turnham Green Underground Station. He called out for assistance before trying to find the Help Point. A member of staff foot stepped towards him, “Where are you going?” he asked. “Hammersmith,” Terry replied.

“What’s your name in case they can’t find you?”

Terry thought about his name and why his mother had him Christened Terry. His mother really liked Terry’s chocolates. He thought back to when he was at school and how he didn’t like his forename but later on, how grateful he was to her for not preferring a Kit Kat. Suddenly, he realized the underground operative, was waiting for a reply and a second later said, “Blind, queer, Terry.”

“I can’t say that to be announced on the Tannoy. But thank you,” he said as he shook Terry’s hand. Terry wondered why the member of staff had shook his hand and thanked him. After all, looking for a Terry would not be that helpful other than being expected to be a male of whatever age. At least looking for a man with a white cane might help. And although

Terry wasn't effeminate in anyway whatsoever there might be a gesture or something about him that might indicate a little queerness.

The member of staff went into the office to contact the controller at Hammersmith or to put on his hi vi. Within a minute the member of staff came out struggling to put on his Hi Vi jacket to make him, you've got it, highly visible. He was also carrying his iPad on which he had to contact the controller at Hammersmith. This took some superfluous man-power and time, Terry thought. He only wanted to get to his destination as quickly as possible.

"Are you exiting the station?" "I'd like to be guided to the bus information office. And I want to be put on the second carriage at the end of the train, just before the waiting room," Terry informed him.

"Let's go," the member of staff said as he took hold of his elbow

A train was entering the station just as Terry had five steps to navigate with of course, the member of staff's help. He had to be careful of the last step because he had tripped over it once. That was months ago but the member of staff was so concerned and almost shaking, indeed he might have been by the sound of his voice. "You're in a worse state than I am and I'm the one who tripped over," Terry had said.

The member of staff got Terry on the train and he wondered if he had been a little too flippant, when the member of staff could really have been in a worse state than he was. Terry thought back to the present and listened to the member of staff's voice as he guided him onto the train and requested a seat for him. Terry was offered a seat and said, "Thank you," twice.

A couple of journeys earlier he had been waiting for a train which had been delayed and was therefore crowded. He heard a woman get on with a walking stick and called out to her, "Are you in need of a seat?" There was no reply and by the sound of the stick and footsteps he was convinced that she was elderly. He called out again, "Can anyone offer their seat to a lady using a walking stick." He wondered if he should have used the word, woman instead of lady. Would the word lady have put someone off from offering their seat! He didn't have to worry, a gentleman requested that someone should vacate their seat which they did.

Terry only had three stations to go so he stood and thought why the member of staff at Turnham Green had shook his hand and thanked him for calling himself, "Blind, queer, Terry." The only conclusion he could come to, was that the guy was gay and wanted to be equally strident , perhaps that's a bit strong a word, perhaps assertive in his queerness would be a better way of putting it. At that point the train was pulling into the station and Terry had to think of exiting the carriage without crashing into someone or falling down the gap between the train and platform. Mind the gap used to be a phrase he often heard but that was some time ago when he used the deep Underground sections, more often. After all, the underground network used to follow the streets wherever possible because if it went under private land, the company had to pay the Land Lord. A member of staff was soon at Terry's side to escort him to the bus information office, from where he could find his own way to the bus stop.

**The End.**

**Flash response 1981 - 2023.**

Terry had been working.

Lost track of time he had.

Typical.

Around lunchtime it was.

He wanted company.

Male company.

There was a gay bar

just two streets away

He walked as quickly as he could.

He approached the door.

A young man was just leaving.

“You’re too late for a beer,” he said.

“I’m not here for the beer.

Would you like to come back with me?

I live, only two streets away.”

“Why not!”

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