Autobiography of My Hungers

González, Rigoberto

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I noticed the guy sketching even before I sat down, but it was not a strategic decision at all. When I have a choice I sit facing the eye candy, and this guy was not even close to handsome. But it was the only available chair in the coffee shop, so I ended up facing the sketcher, who kept to his task throughout my stay. I sipped my cappuccino, read a few chapters of a novel, scribbled in my notebook—the usual New York City java house pastimes that allowed me to tune out the surrounding noise.

And then I got the “feeling.” It was that intuitive feeling that someone was looking at me, checking me out. I looked up and the sketcher looked down at his drawing. I looked away. That feeling again. I looked up, and once again the sketcher looked down. Yes, the sketcher was checking me out, which didn’t flatter me, he so plain and unattractive.

I looked down again. From the corner of my eye I saw him look up. He was using me as a model. I became uneasy, self-conscious about what unflattering version of me the charcoal brought out. So I left soon after, making believe I had my fill of the coffeehouse vibe. I went about my day, expecting never to see him again.

The following week I saw the sketcher, his sketches on display along the wall near the Union Square subway. And
sure enough there I was, on sale for $5. I stood in front of it, expecting to be recognized, but no one did. In fact, I hardly recognized myself, looking so forlorn as if I were the forgotten mug, its smell of coffee going faint, its ceramic body growing cold, its handle longing for touch.