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about 400 words

## The Doppler Effect

by Dylan Kinnett

In bed, in an apartment, on an avenue, in the center of a city, I sleep through the sound of a siren. I don't wake to wonder about the cause of the siren or its destination. As the siren approaches, it reaches a pitch and then it is no longer approaching. I have an awareness of it but continue sleeping. The siren stops.

Moments later, a helicopter hovers overhead. There is light, spinning in circles. Spotlights focus from overhead.

I wake up.

Outside the apartment, vehicles have converged: an ambulance, a fire engine, a ladder truck and police cars. Radio voices and static blend in the air with questions from the neighbors and smoke. A ladder ascends toward the top of the building across the street. Officers carry axes, stretchers, flares. The smoke and lights make changes to the sky. Heat makes the paint seem to melt. A van arrives; the van has a logo from the news. A door slides open on the side of the van and its crew disembarks, carrying cameras, microphones, lights.

One of the neighbors exclaims, "Oh! Well! That's a relief!" The sound of her voice announces her presence, on the sidewalk, near the stairs. She exclaims again, "oh!"

She says, "None of this is *real!*"

I reply, "What the hell! The heat, the smoke, the soot, the water... Wake up, lady!"

She laughs and says "No, because, look at those cameras. Look at those microphones. Look at that man over there getting his makeup adjusted. They've even got spotlights on the scene. This is a movie, so nope. Definitely not. I'm going home. This doesn't matter."

Before she can walk away, I turn to face her, intercepting her path. I point, to the fire. She keeps her eyes on me. I say, "Fine, go home. When you get there, turn on the news. All this will be on the news. Then will this be real?"