Subway Stairs

We are outside, on the sidewalk. A dark, gray day. In the foreground to the right is the top of a staircase. The subway stairs. F and M in orange circles. J and Z in brown circles. 4 and 5 in green circles. 9 in a pink circle. All lined up in a row, beneath where it says, in white letters, against a black background, "Stillwater St Station." The railings to the stairs are silver. A fluorescent light shines invitingly at street level over the stairs. For it to shine on you, you must descend. This is where you're being led. This is most of the picture. The title subject, it seems, at first glance. The dominant, detailed structure in the foreground.

A woman looking at her cell phone is walking up the stairs. It doesn't matter how she's dressed. She's dressed unspectacularly. Urban, but unspectacularly. There is no meaning in her clothes; the cell phone is her defining feature. Hers, everyone's.

To the left of the stairs, on the sidewalk, is another woman running towards us. She is wearing dark, skin-tight jogging gear. Long sleeves rolled up. Leggings. No cleavage, gentlemen. Hair pulled back tightly in a ponytail. White iPhone-style headphones that stand out against her dark, synthetic running shirt and the gray sky behind her, hooked up to the cell phone in her hand.

In the street, there's a bike lane, and a biker is biking towards us. No biking gear. A city-bike, for public use.

Next to him is a string of cars, headlights on, coming our way. There's just the one biker, and a whole row of cars, and yet one still imagines that the cars are all moving faster than the biker. That the biker must heed them, for they are many, and his kind are few.

There are streetlights at the corner behind the biker. A red beside a

green arrow, across from a yellow and another red. A smaller blur of red and green further down the road. Streetlights above the street. Building lights, but not all of them; it's still daytime. Just a dark day. A plane visible far off in the sky, very small, in the space the sun usually occupies in drawings by 4-year-olds.

We realize that everything is coming towards us. The woman on her cell phone, coming up the stairs. The woman wearing headphones, jogging on the sidewalk. The biker. The cars. The other side of the street is cut off. There could be more lanes. There could be a truck lane, a light rail, for all we know. Only you, the viewer, and the artist before you, only we, are facing the subway stairs.