

Weird Object MAP ROULETTE :: JAMAICA QUEENS NY SEAN BELL WAY
Kristen Gallagher

For the March task, we were sent an appendix in the form of a link. The link appeared as a surprisingly long string of words with plus-signs between them that read like clean prose. I click on it. A few results. I click "images." No results. Then "maps," where I get the following curious result: Sean Bell Way. Jamaica, Queens, NY, near an LIRR stop.

I could be standing where that letter B is in 30 minutes if I leave my house immediately 3:30 pm Monday April 1 2013. Forecast: RAIN.

I tell Chris what's up and he comes over. He did not realize his task could lead to a place on the map. We decide to go.

This weird object is the task itself, the link, this map. What does the weird object know about the map? The map knows partially how to deal with the weird object. It understands B is the end.

Sean Bell Way. Why is this thing sending me to Sean Bell Way. It takes on a tone when a weird link leads by accident or grace to Sean Bell.

Chris insists he knows nothing about how this happened and says he never considered that the link would lead to anything. He says he searched and found it came up with a few things, nothing special he said, and that wasn't the point. He had never even considered clicking "map." That, of course, is my first impulse. Map.

The Sean Bell shooting incident took place in the New York City borough of Queens on November 25, 2006, when three men were shot-at fifty times by a team of both plainclothes and undercover NYPD officers, killing one of the men, Sean Bell, on the morning before his wedding, and severely wounding two of his friends, Trent Benefield and Joseph Guzman. The incident drew comparisons to the 1999 killing of Amadou Diallo. Three of the five detectives involved in the shooting went to trial on charges ranging from manslaughter to reckless endangerment, and all were found not guilty.

We arrive.

In the back of the train station, a fenced-in lot. No one around. Across the street, a beige block of concrete we find out later is the New York State Department of Finance. The beige concrete cube occupies the whole block from 94th to 95th from Sutphin to Sean Bell Way. Sean Bell Way has this beige block as one of its entire sides.

Sean Bell Way is strangely near the Sheriff's Office and is not where he was shot at all, but only by the Sheriff's Office, a Sheriff's Office housed inside a New York State Department of Finance.

As we move to snap a pic of the Sean Bell Way street sign and it's proximity to the words Liverpool, chickens, and piano keys, confused feelings of being a tourist. We are not tourists.

Though it should be noted there is no Google street view of Sean Bell Way. The Google street view van does not come here.

To the north, the train station blocks everything.

The other side of Sean Bell Way begins with the live poultry place, no sign of actual chickens though, and no sounds of murder, we listened for it. And a small row of houses too close and intimate to photograph. Tiny homes with tiny boxed-in porches, all of them so close to the street they're practically on the street. We were in a concrete and stucco nowhere then suddenly stumbling into a private world tucked into an edge-zone between the beige block, the abandoned lot feeling of the wild back side of the train station, and the eight lanes of train tracks past that. Why is Sean Bell Way here?

Three teens in black youth fashions enter the scene, from behind I can feel their slight stumble as they round the corner, they're surprised to see us, then one of them sees what we're photographing and hesitates, points up to where we're pointing. Walking, walking fast, already past us, he says something as if he's saying it to his friends, but he's facing away from them, and only half-hearted, and half walking backward, his enthusiasm directed toward us for a moment but then he hesitates further, and turns back around. Soon they are a block ahead on the other side of the street.

A man and woman on a white wrap-around porch sit facing each other and doing something with sticks, maybe bundling sticks. White porch and chairs on a tiny mint-green house.