It's hot in the subway. Since my T-Rex body is larger than everyone else's, this is an issue. Being a different colour also helps because most people shrink away from me. That's why I'm a down-scaled *Tyrannosaurus rex*. It helps me to stay under the radar. Because people look away.

Most people, that is. That little girl across from me is the exception to the general cold-shoulder.

She stares openly, legs kicking. Don't kids read dinosaur books anymore? I did, long ago. She waves and smiles. I could smile back, but my teeth are pretty fierce. For some reason, I don't want to scare her. I could wave, but my stumpy forearms are embarrassing.

I choose embarrassment. Turns out, she takes it as encouragement. I should look away from her. But she's flanked by my targets, and I don't want them to notice me.

I'm a pink robot assassin. Somehow the pink makes people think I'm cute and harmless, although the law requires me to state my profession on my tag. And I'm shaped like a T-Rex. You'd think that would give people a clue, no?

But here I am, stuck across from a friendly child on the long subway ride. I can't undo my mistake. I have to continue the fake friendliness. It's a mystery how this little girl interprets my unmoving (and also T-Rex shaped) face as friendly. It's incapable of expressing any kind of emotion.

When they rehoused my brain in a robot body, the choices were mammal or dinosaur. I chose dinosaur, not realizing they only had the one model. I would have preferred to be a Triceratops. I regretted it until a new person joined robot assassin class. She wore a meerkat. Apparently, that was the only mammal choice in apparel. Imagine having to go through life as a meerkat. Small, fearful, stepped-on, everyone's prey.

Except right now would've been better in a little, easy-to-hide meerkat body. I suppose they picked me because I'm the kind of girl who holds grudges. Assassination feels like revenge for high school and life in general.

Okay, that doesn't make me a nice person, but I never claimed that. As old people show their character in every etched-in wrinkle, I show my character in the pink T-Rex choice. Not ashamed of it. Or maybe just a little. Revenge gets old. Assassination gets older even quicker. It's just a job, you know. Who wants to fraternize with a giant pink dinosaur? I'll let you guess the answer.

Except, apparently, little girls with kicky legs and curious eyes. She isn't even that cute, a bit chubby, cheap clothes, limp hair. She could have been me. And yet she's beautiful. Because she's young and fearless, there's a glow about her. Maybe only subcutaneous fat and oversized facial features, the trick that makes mammals care for their young, but by golly does it work. And I'm not even a mammal, like a meerkat. I'm a reptile.

I smile before I can stop myself.

She shrieks. I twitch all over, ready to run or...
kill everyone in the subway car. But then she
launches herself at me and feels up my teeth.
She touches every single tooth, molar and
bicuspoid or what the hell else these things are
called in T-Rexes.

“I wanna be a tiger dentist when I grow up,”
she says. “And for crocodiles.” She’s awesome.

She plants a sticky kiss on my steel cheek.
I know it’s sticky not because I have sensors
there, but because my cheekbone camera
shows the saliva in gruesome detail.

A ping to remind of my goal. As if I need
that. Target 1 is a dumpy preoccupied woman
peering at her iPhone, the other a skinny
harassed-looking youngish man intent on
picking his nose. Well, I don’t have to like my
job. I just have to do it, for the next 98.9 years,
until my contract’s been paid off. Let me give
you a little bit of advice: just stay dead. It isn’t
worth it.

But back to the assassination. I position my
wrist guns just so, ready to fire, when Miss
Giggles hurls herself at Target 1 and kisses the
woman’s annoyed face. The mother angles her
phone so she can keep looking at it.

I almost kill the mum out of sheer rage at
this treatment of her amazing child. But then I
cool down, because we robots don’t have rage,
just the memory of the thing. I contemplate an
unheard-of option. Maybe I don’t want to kill
tiger-dentist’s mum?

I haven’t had a moment that I didn’t want
to kill everyone around me since I became a
robot. Maybe I’ll just kill the dad. I move my
wrist gun a fraction of an inch. Just the dad.
And maybe the person on the other side of
him, so I can be absolutely sure to miss Giggles.

My wrist shakes. It never shakes. It’s made
of a titanium steel alloy with superconductor
nerves. I have no emotions. My wrists never
shake, my shots never miss.

Giggles sits stock-still on her mother’s lap.
Her quivering lip tell me she’s glommed onto
the badness. But how?

Her feelings don’t matter to me. It’s my own
life, the miserable slivers of pleasure that are
still left to me that matter. But my wrist gun
doesn’t fire.

At the next stop, Giggles and her parents
get out. I stare straight ahead, paralysed by
my own actions. In passing, a sticky hand rests
briefly on my pink titanium knee.

I decide that I will lacquer the handprint and
never ever steam-clean it. I should have picked
the meerkat body. I’m a total loss as a dinosaur
assassin.

Bo Balder lives and works close to
Amsterdam. She is the first Dutch author to
have been published in F&SF, Clarkesworld
and Analog. For more about her work, you can
visit her website (www.boukjebalder.nl) or find
her on Facebook.