

Zosia Ochla

The Time of the Tram Driver

My alarm went off at 5.20 in the morning. I reached my hand out and smacked it in order to prevent the sound from carrying on any longer than those horrifying 7 seconds it had already lasted. Suddenly the headache from last night hit me hard, modestly reminding me of the 0.4 I managed to chug to forget my worries. I threw the covers off and headed for the desk and proceeded to empty the bottle sitting on it. "A great start for the day" I thought to myself. I picked up my uniform, the smell wasn't so striking, it'll do another couple of days. No need to wash it.

No time left for breakfast. I picked up my backpack and ran out the door as usually late for my bus. I waited 20 minutes under the shabby structure one would call a bus stop when finally my godsend came strolling by. The doors creaked open and I pushed myself inside. We drove off and another 30 minutes were sacred for my imagination to thrive on the various imaginary scenarios of my salvation, namely having the bus run into a ditch. A lifesaver if I may say so. All my problems and agonies would simply drift off, leaving my empty soul alone.

I might as well have stayed at home that day rather than expedite on this long monotonous trip to work. No sooner had I entered than I was yelled at and came in for criticism for my repeated late being. Comments like "do I have to spell your timetable out to you?" became the norm.

I threw my backpack in my locker and pursued to begin today's job. My hands slid into my office jumper as I proceeded to zip it up. It was about as much use as a chocolate teapot if I were honest. The weather was filthy and the trams didn't really provide any warmth nor did the jumper.

My legs carried me towards the depot and let me enter the tram that would be serving me today. As usual, an inherent part of turning it on was a malfunction. The engine was utterly frozen. I was forced to grab my phone and dial my boss's number expecting the same as usual. A groan, a murmur of some sort and, an inherent part, a menace of me losing my position. He directed me to get a grip and hung up.

Fortunately I still had 15 minutes left until my departure. I turned on the room's heating system and transferred myself to the passenger section. The inside could do with a good clean. Windows were covered in graffiti while a spiderweb was hanging under two passenger seats. Due to a snowstorm the other day, some trams returned drowned in snow. The seats were still drenched from yesterday. Mustiness filled the air. I headed for the windows and slid down as many as I could, trying my best to get rid of the hideous odor.

Minutes passed and I finally completed my tram's preparation for today's ride. The gears were set in motion. The tram rolled out of its depot. Its' wheels passed through snow drifts with ease. The snow hadn't ceased yet so I found myself staring at a dull white landscape. After some time I caught sight of the first stop. A herd of grumpy businessmen, the elderly and school children proceeded to enter my vehicle and make themselves comfortable. None of them were accompanied by a smile on their face.

I remember how a couple years ago, before computers or the internet era, people really seemed to enjoy their life. No matter if it was 5am or 11pm, they carried on their life trying to make the most out of it. Mothers held conversations with foreign children and the youth

helped the elderly. People enjoyed their journeys, talked with each other and communicated. But they ceased to be the sole users. Currently being replaced by gray characters, with no expression other than disgust. The only time they said a word was when one of my dreary fellow travelers had a grudge against another one. Commonly, a whole argument bloomed out of one comment. But my job was to sit still and listen, listen to their complaints and feel the tense atmosphere, rising with each minute.

This is how most of the day goes by, with each hour passing by, the drive gets more monotonous and I get more fed up. the same repeated track each and every time. The same stops, the same people, the same affairs. But what should a human want more? There's nothing new, nothing that would come out of the blue and knock you out. Surprises are loathed to be. Living a plain, monotonous life has its ups and downs, but I will not complain.

By 3 pm I finished my shift and found myself at home near 6pm. My dinner consisted of 2 slices of bread, some cheese and butter. I devoured them as quickly as I had made them. I washed them down with a beer, finishing it off with a loud burp. There wasn't much left for me to do. I made myself comfortable in front of the TV and began staring at the moving frames shown on screen. My jumper once again ended up on the floor.

At midnight I made my way to the bed. I finished another bottle of beer and added it to my collection. My head then rested on my pillow and once again melancholy and regret became my bedfellows.