

PASSENGER

(from a student's notebook)

The whole day I spent on my feet, and even in high-heeled boots. The mass of things that I managed to do and the mass of things that awaited me on my return were left outside the wagon window. Four hours of travelling awaited me. Four hours of peace.

I closed my eyes with pleasure.

The train was leaving at 10 p.m. We had eight minutes to go.

I sat in the standard wagon, by the window and watched the snow powdered passengers running around outside.

I was wearing a demi-seasonal coat, inappropriate for this weather, into which I was buried up to my ears.

Winter came without any warning - it just snowed in the evening and that was it.

The carriage was almost empty and therefore cosy. I wanted to take a nap.

The carriage door slammed and after it, like a cracker, a sharp voice "shot": "Musya! Don't pick it up! I'll do it myself!" The timbre of the voice could be attributed to a tenor, but it was very unpleasant one.

"God, I wish they'd just pass by!" - I thoughtfully prayed, and my premonition did not deceive me.

I'm one of the unlucky ones.

"What places do you have here? Huh, girl? Well, before you sat down, you fell asleep already? Ha-ha!" - a tenor joked ringingly.

The owner of this rousing voice was a very short, overweight and, as it turned out later, bald man. His vigorous cheeks, pink from the snow, resembled the ruddy buttocks of naked women from Rubens' canvases. Behind him stomped a fat woman with a sleepy face, covered with snow. She reminded me of a snow-covered haystack.

The train moved on. In the carriage a piercing light was switched on.

The man fussily placed the suitcases, then spent a long time sweeping the snow off his companion, saying something and giggling incessantly. And after each good joke, that he thought he had made he turned to me and asked:

"Am I saying that right? Eh, girl?"

At last the "woman-stack" was cleaned and seated. After that she instantly fell asleep.

When business with the wife was "finished", the passenger turned to me.

"What's that coat you're wearing? Are you not cold?" he inquired, mouthing the words into his nose.

Musya, who filled the whole corner by herself, raised her eyelids and mumbled angrily: "Of course she's cold!"

"Why do you young people dress like that? All fancying!" - my neighbour continued to entertain himself.

"Maybe you're a student?"

I smiled indefinitely in response.



So we travelled for some time, under the non-stop chatter of my neighbour. Suddenly the train slowed down, jerked convulsively several times and stopped. The owner of the tenor leapt from his seat. Having flattened his nose against the window glass, he began to stare into the darkness with falcon's eye. Outside the window, the falling snow was moving like something huge and alive. "This isn't a station!" - The 'little tenor' blurted out in an exposing tone. 'I don't understand anything! I don't understand anything! Where are we?! I don't understand anything!.....' 'Something's wrong!' - he blurted out in an accusatory voice. Small and fidgety, he was flapping like a bird at the snow-covered window. Musya was snoring nonchalantly in the corner. The sound of the tenor made goosebumps run from my shoulder blades to the back of my neck. Even when the train started, my neighbour could not calm down for a long time. He excitedly speculated about the reasons for the stoppage, told in detail about three cases when the train had derailed, as well as about an aeroplane accident. And also about how a fisherman had fallen into an ice hole..... He went on and on...

I glanced at my watch. "I'll be out in about an hour and a half," I cheered myself. The tenor was already saying that "health" is the best fashion, that when he was young he had not thought of any fashion, but dressed simply and warmly, and now he had no rheumatism! I kept waiting for the right moment to close my eyes and not open them until my station. After all, the lisping tenor wouldn't converse with himself. From the too bright light in the carriage and from the "shooting" voice of my neighbour, my temples were throbbing. The solo tenor was already talking about our foreign policy. At first, for a while, escaping from his prehensile gaze, I looked out of the window, where I could see nothing but my reflection. Then, smoothly, I shifted my gaze to the plastic table, on which I read a scrawled unquotable word, yawned eloquently several times, and finally, I closed my eyelids. The tenor sounded for a while, but when he was convinced that I wouldn't open my eyes, it went silent. It became quiet and good. The carriage swayed, squeaked softly, and the wheels rhythmically said: "That's it, that's it..." From fatigue and warmth I dozed off. I was awakened by some noise. Through my lashes, I glanced at my neighbour. He had one knee on the table and was reaching for the radio above the window with his short hand. He was sniffing loudly from the strain. At that moment, the little man seemed to me an indestructible monster. He turned the radio switch. But the radio did not "sing"! Flushed and disappointed, the tenor owner sat down and got bored. But he didn't sit like that for long....

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At that time, I had not yet read the thick book 'A Course in Miracles' and did not know that I had to learn to forgive everything without exception. So that night, in my mind, I periodically 'dressed' this situation to the plot of 'Othello', where the 'little tenor' was assigned the role of Desdemona.....