

In Transit

By

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June, 2009

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EXT. BUSY TRAIN PLATFORM, INDIA- DAY

A train pulls in and thousands of Indian men and women shove and push way trying to get on and off.

A young man shouts out as he tries to sell magazines in front his news stall.

A LADY sits on a rug with two children and raises a scabby and infected hand.

LADY
Rupees, rupees, rupees.

EXT. SHOP FRONT - DAY

A small convenience store on the platform. Indian men and women queue up in a long line out the front.

INT. TELEPHONE BOOTH - DAY

NAT (AGED 20) is boxed inside a tiny glass cubicle with an old telephone clamped against his face. A large pack is fixed tightly to his back and an Indian shoulder bag is slung over his chest. He sweats profusely.

NAT
Yes! Four hours. Four fucking hours!

Nat pauses to listen.

NAT
I don't know why. The guy just said 'delayed'.
(pause)
Well I'm gonna miss it obviously, aren't I?
(longer pause)
Okay, okay I'm sorry. I'm just pissed off. You guys take the flight and I'll just get the bus there from Mumbai. Shouldn't be more than a day or two late.

Nat looks through through the glass door and sees an expressionless Indian man staring straight into his eyes.

NAT
Look I gotta go. Some fucking guy looks like he's about to kill me.

(CONTINUED)

(pause)
yeah I love you too. I'll see you
soon I promise don't worry.

Nat slams the phone down and awkwardly squeezes out of the cubicle.

He impatiently pushes his way through the crowd to get to the counter.

The SHOPKEEPER looks over at the booth Nat emerged from and raises nine fingers. Nat fishes through his shoulder bag and realizes a bottle of water has leaked right through. He pulls out a soaked 10 Rupee note and places it on the counter.

EXT. SHOP FRONT - DAY

Nat barges out the door and scans for a place to sit down. Trains rush by over a dozen or so platforms and every seat, stool or patch of ground is engulfed with bodies - not a white face to be seen. A CHAI MAN marches with a large silver urn.

CHAI MAN
Chai, Chai, Chai!...Chai, Chai,
Chai!... Chai!!...Chai!!

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Nat eventually finds a small patch of concrete against the wall.

He sets down next to a bunch of men gathered around a radio listening to the crackly commentary of the cricket.

He detaches his large pack and places it on the ground as a seat.

He then fishes out a small, damp towel from his shoulder bag and progressively places the other items on top of it to dry; a roll of toilet paper, a second bottle of water, a camera, a guide book and an iPod.

He pulls out a pouch of tobacco from his pocket and slowly rolls a cigarette.

EXT. OTHER TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Two young Indian men sit in conversation. A large rat starts chewing on one of the man's shoes. He casually kicks it off and returns to the conversation.

EXT. SHOP FRONT - DAY

The men crowded around the shop front disperse as a mother and child lay out blankets on the ground and carefully place various jewelery on the rugs.

EXT. NAT'S SEAT - DAY

Nat crushes out one cigarette and starts to roll another. A middle aged man approaches him - JULIUS (AGED 43). He is white but well disguised by a dark tan and dirt encrusted, wiry beard.

JULIUS

Room for a fellow traveler?

Nat nods and carefully shifts his whole setup as far as he can to the left. He creates only a small gap, but Julius is very thin and carries only a small bag - he just fits.

Julius extends a dirty hand.

JULIUS

Julius.

Nat looks up briefly then concentrates on rolling.

NAT

Nathaniel...Nat.

JULIUS

You heading north too?

NAT

South.

JULIUS

Ah, shit.

NAT

What?

JULIUS

I've just come from there. There's been a big strike. Three stations

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JULIUS (cont'd)
have closed already and apparently
there's more to follow. It's a
real shit fight.

NAT
Great.

JULIUS
You'd be best to just go North,
come back later. I know some great
little places not too far.

NAT
Nah I can't. My Girlfriend's
meeting me down there.

JULIUS
Ah, I see. Well I won't entice you
then.

Nat smiles politely and looks away.

JULIUS
So, where are you from Nathaniel?

NAT
Sydney...Australia. Nat is fine.

JULIUS
Ah! Great place. Beautiful.

NAT
You been there?

JULIUS
Been there? I was born there.

Nat pauses rolling and examines Julius.

NAT
You Aussie? Your accents fucked.

JULIUS
Spose I'm more Aussie than anything
else. Haven't been there in years
though.

Nat licks the paper and rolls it up.

NAT
Just livin' the dream hey?

JULIUS
(laughing)
Just livin'.

The pair sit in silence. Nat lights his cigarette and Julius whistles and scribbles in a notebook. Nat moves his possessions closer and delicately examines them. They are still wet.

JULIUS
(singing)
oh when my baby, when my baby
smiles at me i go to Rio de
Janeioro

NAT
'spose you've been there as well?

JULIUS
Of course. I had carnivale there
in 91. Crazy party! I'm still
recovering. And the girls...oh my
god the girls.

NAT
You go all round South America?

JULIUS
Pretty much. they wouldn't let me
in to Colombia for some reason, but
I every where else. Oh except
Suriname.

NAT
Where's that?

JULIUS
Exactly.

Nat takes a huge final drag and then puts out his cigarette. Once again he immediately starts to roll another.

JULIUS
May I?

Nat offers Julius the pouch and a paper.

NAT
Help yourself.

Julius and Nat both start rolling. Julius shuffles around through his bag and pulls out a small brown stick wrapped tightly in plastic. He nudges Nat.

JULIUS
Some scotch in your soda Nathaniel?

NAT
That hash?

JULIUS
It ain't Vegemite.

NAT
Won't we get in shit?

JULIUS
Nathaniel, we are in India! The
capital of bribery! Worst case I'd
say...

(pause)
...50 ruppees. Whats that in
Aussie these days? A dollar.

Nat shrugs.

Julius pinches small clumps off the edge of the stick and
drops them into the tobacco. He offers the stick to Nat.

NAT
You don't want anything for this do
you?

JULIUS
Now that's just being insulting.

Julius laces the finishing touches to his cigarette

JULIUS
Just a gift from one traveler to
another.

Nat takes the stick and copies Julius. Julius offers him a
lighter and the two light up.

NAT
Well at least the smell covers up
the B.O.

JULIUS
Just some of the many smells of
India. You'll miss them one day
you know?

NAT
Don't think so.

(CONTINUED)

The commentators voice blurts through the radio next to Julius. The group of Indian men shout and cheer in elation. Julius stands up and joins them, jumping about and conversing in Hindi. He then sits back with Nat with a cheeky smile.

NAT

What's that all about?

JULIUS

They just beat Pakistan in the Cricket.

Nat takes a long drag and slouches his bottom off the pack and onto the ground, now using it like a pillow.

NAT

So what's your go?

JULIUS

My go?

NAT

Yeah your 'go'? You just like travel for a living or something?

JULIUS

I hate that word.

NAT

What, 'travel'?

JULIUS

No, 'living'.

Julius takes a drag and slowly exhales.

JULIUS

What is a 'living'? People say, 'I do brain surgery for a living' or 'I convict criminals for a living' or 'I sell drugs for a living'. Essentially most people are simply defined by what they do for a living. Don't you think it's a little constrictive?

NAT

Guess I never thought about it that much.

JULIUS

Well what are you going to do for a living?

NAT

I don't know yet.

Nat takes a drag and runs his hand through his hair.

NAT

So given you dislike the word 'living', how about you just tell me what you do with yourself? - How you fill the days.

JULIUS

I do all kinds of different things in all kinds of different places.

NAT

(now red eyed and giggly)
Okay Julius, tell me some.

JULIUS

Well, let's see.

Julius takes a final drag then crushes out the cigarette.

JULIUS

When I was about your age I got a job in Ecuador teaching English, but after a few months the Aid organization I was working for collapsed. I didn't want to go home so I got a job washing dishes in a little restaurant. The owner was this beautiful black woman, you know big tits, fat round arse. Anyway she used to teach me Spanish at nights, but soon she started teaching me a lot more.

NAT

Good teacher hey?

JULIUS

The only one I ever listened to.

Julius laughs loudly. Nat laughs a little bit also.

JULIUS

Anyway, I'd call my friends back in Sydney and they are still going to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JULIUS (cont'd)
the same bars, fucking the same
girls. Home just didn't sound that
good you know?

NAT
So you just kept travelling?

JULIUS
To this very day, Nathaniel.

NAT
Never been home? Not once?

JULIUS
I've thought about it a million
times, I'll admit that. But,
no. Not once.

A young boy wheels a cart filled with fruit past Nat and Julius.

JULIUS
You hungry?

NAT
I'm getting there.

Julius speaks to the boy in Hindi and purchases two bananas and two mandarins. He hands Nat one of each. Nat reaches for his wallet.

JULIUS
Please Nathaniel. My shout

NAT
Cheers.

Nat peels the banana and engulfs half in one bite.

NAT
So what's the best thing you've
done. Or one of the best things at
least?

JULIUS
Well I could never choose. But
once I remember taking some acid
and floating 50 kilometers down the
Ganga in a tiny little boat on my
own. Was like the craziest dream
I've ever had, only better cos i
somehow knew it was real - like the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JULIUS (cont'd)
most subtle consciousness or
something.

NAT
What about the worst?

JULIUS
Once, in Beijing, I lived on the
streets for two months. Freezing
cold every night. I honestly
thought I would die.

NAT
Why didn't you just call home?

JULIUS
Too stubborn I guess. Didn't want
to prove the old man right.

Julius starts eating the banana.

JULIUS
Wasn't all bad I guess. I learned
a lot out there.

NAT
So how do you get the money for all
these crazy adventures?

JULIUS
I used to work jobs on and off, you
know 6 months here, 5 weeks
there. Whatever I could find.

Julius finishes off banana clumsily.

JULIUS
But eventually I realized I could
get by on other stuff?

NAT
(mouth full)
Oh yeah? like what?

JULIUS
Anything, sell jewelery, sell dope,
casual hit man...

Nat pauses, his mouth still full of banana, looks Julius in
the eye and both men erupt in childlike laughter. A train
pulls in to the platform across from theirs.

(CONTINUED)

JULIUS
(still giggling)
You like train jokes Nathaniel?

NAT
Don't think I know any.

JULIUS
Okay, well this one can start your
collection.

Julius regroups himself.

JULIUS
What is the difference between a
train carriage and a miscarriage?

NAT
I don't know.

JULIUS
You cannot eat a train carriage.

Nat bursts into laughter and Julius soon follows. Nat starts to twist and roll on the filthy floor - he can hardly contain himself.

NAT
Okay, okay..

Nat steadies himself with his hands and takes a deep breath.

NAT
I got one. What do pedophiles use
as lubricant?

JULIUS
Tell me Nathaniel.

NAT
Tears.

Julius stops laughing and frowns at Nat.

NAT
Oh...I'm sor..

Julius bursts into laughter.

JULIUS
Ha! I had you!

They both laugh hysterically. Surrounding people look at them strangely.

The laughter eventually fades. Both men lie on the ground, red eyed and slow moving.

A train pulls in to the platform and Julius listens carefully to the announcement.

JULIUS

This is me my friend.

Julius gathers his things and stands up. Nat rises and extends his hand.

NAT

Well thanks for...everything.

They shake hands and smile.

JULIUS

Wait one moment.

Julius pulls a bracelet from his wrist and hands it to Nat.

JULIUS

A beautiful lady gave this to me
the first time I was in
India. It's kept me safe and well
in this land and many others. I
think it will serve you well.

NAT

Thanks.

Nat ties the bracelet to his wrist.

NAT

Safe travels Julius.

JULIUS

And you also, Nathaniel

Julius boards the train.

Nat stands for a moment examining his new gift, then sits down again.

He inspects the towel in front of him and realizes both his camera and iPod are gone.

He sprints after the train but it has already departed.

He looks around the platform and shop front.

Near the shop he spots a woman and her child selling jewelery. On one rug he spots almost a hundred bracelets identical to the one on his wrist.

Once again he is the only white face in a sea of Indians.

Nat smiles and shakes his head

NAT
Prick. What a prick.