**Train (An Exhibitionist Vignette)**

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I feel nervous excitement as I board. I've taken this train a thousand times, but today is special. Today the train journey, at its end, becomes a trip into my wildest fantasies.

I can back out any time that I want to. I want to. I want this to be a journey like any other, to sit half asleep, scrolling through Instagram on my phone, headphones on, pretending I don't notice guys checking me out, annoyed when they do, annoyed when they don't. I want to get off the train as another face on the platform, disappear into the station, make for home.

I want to do that.

I don't want to do that.

I don't want to chicken out and regret another missed opportunity.

I want my fantasy to become reality.

It's busy in the train carriage. I wonder how long it will be busy for? Too busy, and I won't be able to go through with it. But there are many stops before mine, as the train takes us further and further out of the city, so I'm not worried.

I'm worried.

I'm worried that after I told my friend Andrea that today was the day, I've picked a bad time. I worry that the crowd won't thin, that I'll be too observed. I spend the journey in a state of heightened anxiety, counting the passengers as they get off, mulling over whether to switch seats or carriages, whether that will draw more attention to me.

Gradually, a few at each stop, they start to leave the carriages.

I will myself to relax.

It's bright. The sun was hot today, and it flares through the scratched Perspex windows of the carriage. It makes reaching into my bag for sunglasses, unfolding them, putting them on, a natural gesture. I feel safer behind them, more anonymous.

We're getting close to my stop now. Maybe ten minutes. There are two more stops to go. I'm almost on my own in my little space. One empty seat next to me, two opposite. Across the aisle from me, another woman, in the same position.

We stop again. She gets up. She goes to the doors. She gets out of the carriage.

There are other people in the carriage. I crane my neck, I count a dozen, maybe fifteen. But I'm unobserved now in my little space. I'm not in anyone's natural line of sight. They'd have to be trying hard to see me to see me.

My chest feels tight. It's time now. Time to start.

I don't want to.

I want to.

I wriggle in my seat. My cotton dress is loose, I reach up under the skirt with both my hands. I find my panties, find the tight elastic hem against my thighs. I slide my thumbs beneath it, working my hands to the sides. I make fists, the fabric of my panties bunched in my small hands. I lift my butt off the seat, I pull, the panties come down. They're round my legs, then my knees, then leaning forward I pull them to my ankles, work my feet through the leg holes and then sit back.

I remember to breathe then.

I look around. Nobody has noticed.

I smooth the skirt of my dress back down. My face must be red already. My heart is pounding.

My panties are balled up in my fist. I discard them, stuffing them between myself and the wall of the carriage.

I'm not wearing any panties. I part my legs cautiously, the brush of the fabric of my dress directly against my skin a confirmation to my body that, yes, this is happening.

But I could still stop if I wanted to.

I don't want to.

Now comes the tricky part.

I look around again to make sure I'm not observed. I'm not. I lean forward. I reach up behind my back, arm bending. I find the clasp of my bra, easily accessible beneath my light cotton dress. I unhook it, feeling the tension vanish in the straps as everything loosens.

Then comes the ballet, the dance called 'woman removing her bra beneath her top'. A piece of performance all women get the knack of, either from modesty or laziness. Arms slide through fabric, through straps and out again.

I'm midway through this routine when the train pulls into a station.

I freeze, my bra half-pulled out of my dress.

Two passengers get up from their seats.

One ignores me. The other, a man, glances in my direction.

How must I look? A young brunette in a cotton dress and sunglasses, blatantly removing her bra from underneath her dress while sitting in a train carriage.

His brain figures out what his eyes are seeing. He does a perfect double-take. He stares.

I can do nothing.

I smile, a guilty, caught smile.

He stares.

Then the doors open, and still staring at me, he gets off the train.

I'm still frozen.

The doors close. The train rumbles into life. The train begins to pull away from the station.

I unfreeze.

My bra makes the rest of its way out of my dress. I stuff it down where my panties are. Reflexively I adjust myself beneath my dress. My breasts are just a little too big to go bra-less, especially in a dress like this. They look strange in their liberated state.

My nipples are hard in spite of the heat of the carriage, pushing against the cotton of the dress.

I pause, trying to calm my racing pulse, my ragged nerves. I take a cautious look out and down the carriage. I can't see to head count now, but there seem to be still a dozen folks riding the train with me. Mine isn't the last stop.

But it is the next stop.

I've maybe four minutes.

My stomach turns butterflies, my chest tightens.

I can still stop if I want to.

I don't want to.

I take the hem of my dress in my hands. I chose to do the dress last, hence the rigmarole with my underwear. But the dress is all I have left.

I extend my arms, lifting, feeling the dress lift from my body. I am blindfolded by the cotton as I pull it over my head, vulnerable, unknowing. I don't want to prolong that state but the only thing I can do now is keep going, take the dress off.

Then my dress is off. It's in my hands, and then it's lying on the seat next to me.

I'm naked.

I'm completely naked.

I'm a 26-year-old woman and I'm sitting completely naked in a train carriage.

I'm breathing hard, my chest rising and falling. I try not to look at myself but I can't help it. I look down, at my bare breasts, my terracotta nipples, the fold of my belly, the neat patch of dark brown hair between my legs.

I'm naked.

I feel naked. I feel the rough fibres of the train seat against my back, my butt, my thighs. I feel the heat of the carriage on my skin, feel the warmth of the sunlight through the window playing across my body.

It's almost too much.

Familiar landscape passes by me. Almost home. Two and a half minutes, maybe.

I have a decision to make.

Two minutes.

I make my decision. I reach over. I take the handles of my hemp tote bag in my hand, I shoulder it.

I stand up.

I'm naked.

My legs are shaking. I feel faint.

People can see me.

People in the train carriage can see me now that I'm stood up. They can see that I'm naked.

I stare straight ahead. I try not to look at them, try not to count who can see me and who hasn't noticed yet.

I put one foot in front of the other. I walk. I walk naked through the train carriage.

They must all be able to see me now. I catch glances as I go. Most are simply staring in disbelief.

I reach the door of the train, and I stand in front of it. I stand there completely fucking naked in full view of at least eighty per cent of the people sharing the train carriage with me, my only concession to any kind of modesty the slight screen of my tote bag on my shoulder, which hides the top half of me on one side.

I stand there and I wait for the train to pull into the station.

I try to stare ahead, at the scenery racing by through the Perspex window in the train's double doors. I try to ignore the people, ignore the hubbub of their voices, tune out what they are saying, to each other, to me. It's impossible.

The phones are out now. Pointed at me, doubtless photographing or filming me. Someone will upload it. It'll be on the internet tonight; "girl naked on train". Years from now, my future husband (whoever he may be) will be surreptitiously browsing some porn site he thinks I don't know and would mind that he's looking at, and he'll see a video of me standing naked in a train carriage, holding on to the rail, waiting for my train to arrive at the station.

I don't care.

I love it.

I wanted this.

I love it.

I feel high, I feel holy. Woman sacred, natural, nude and powerful. They don't know who I am, they don't know anything about me, except that I'm naked in public, and that I'll soon be vanishing from their lives. Their glimpse of the true me will be just that, a glimpse; their photos and videos the only proof I ever did this.

Nobody approaches me. I am thankful for that, thankful I don't have to stammer out an explanation, a refusal of advances, an assurance that I'm fine. I just want to stand here naked and let them see me and let them know my body, and then disappear.

The train is slowing. The open air gives way to the yards and then the beginnings of the platform. The train slows to a crawl and then stops.

Nobody else is standing. Of all the people in this carriage, I alone am getting off at this stop.

The doors hiss open. The platform is before me.

My clothes, my dress, my underwear, are still lying on my seat in the carriage. I have only my bag, my sandals, my sunglasses and my nakedness.

I step forward, step down off the train. I feel the fresh but still warm air on my skin.

I'm on the platform now. Other people are getting off the train, people who weren't in my carriage. Some of them aren't looking in my direction, but some are, seeing that I am naked, seeing that I am a woman and young and good looking and I'm completely naked.

I love it.

I begin walking, dizzy with the thrill. I begin walking along the platform, towards the exit. People ahead of me don't see me, they're already focussed on the journey home. But those behind me have a clear view, a clear view of my naked butt as I walk ahead.

My body moves differently walking naked. I'm aware of its movement more. The thrill is increased.

I'm away from the platform now, descending the stairs. I laugh at my own jiggling as I descend the steps.

A man is coming the other way, he gets the full show. He stares in delighted disbelief at what he can see. I smile and keep walking.

The station concourse is ahead, the ticket barriers. I know there are cameras here, capturing my naked walk. I don't care. I'll be gone before anyone can react, stop me, detain me, demand an explanation.

I'm unopposed, my only obstacle ahead the ticket barrier. With practised motion I have my travel card from my bag, scan it, barely breaking my stride to give the barrier time to open and then I'm through.

Station workers are here, waiting to help people who get into difficulty with the barrier, waiting to stop those who have not paid. They stare at naked me, eyes following as I go. I feel them looking as much as see them. I smile and keep walking.

Fifty yards, past people who stare and people who just do not see, and then I'm at the doors, the big glass doors, sliding open automatically for me, no more obstacles, just the world beyond.

I step through, the heat of summer evening hitting my face and body.

For the first time since the train pulled into the station, I'm nervous. Where will she be? Will I find her quickly? Will she be there at all? Could something have happened to hold her up, is she stuck in traffic right now? Has she perhaps even had an attack of meanness, and decided to leave me to my fate.

I allow myself to stop. I stand naked on the sidewalk outside the train station with people milling around nearby, doubtless starting to notice me, and take stock of my surroundings. I scan the cars, searching.

There it is, a blue Toyota. I walk towards it, breathing a sigh of relief as I see the face of my best friend in the whole world, Andrea, looking through the windshield, sitting at the wheel.

She sees me, and her face splits into a wide grin. I can't hear her laughing but I know she is.

There are friends, and then there are the people who will agree to collect you in their car from the station because you want to strip on a train and walk out naked, leaving your clothes behind, because it's been your sexual fantasy since the first day you started commuting to and from work, and you've finally summoned up the courage to do it.

Andrea is the best.

I reach the car. I open the passenger door. I slide my naked self inside, sitting my bare butt on the cool upholstery, the A/C a shock after the heat of day. I close the door, as Andrea exclaims excitement and enthusiasm that I've actually done it, wanting every detail, wanting to know how it felt, what happened, I can't believe you actually did it?

I'll tell it all to her. I'll put on the clothes she's got in the back for me, we'll go to a bar and I'll buy her many drinks to pay her back for this as I describe every aching, thrilling detail. But right now I just want to sit here, naked in my friend's car as she threads her way through traffic, willing my body down from this heightened, beautiful state that I wish could never end.