

### **Tram, Savska, Zagreb, August 29th**

A woman in her late forties is standing next to me, right behind the driver. She is carefully spruced up, has a neat hairdo with blond highlights, sunglasses on the top of her head, a tight light dress and high heeled sandals. There is a very small bag, hanging on a short strap from her shoulder, that has a pattern made up of some logo and it is the same color as the woman's sandals. She picks a cell phone from her bag and calls someone. I actually notice her the moment she starts talking because she speaks in a rather high pitched voice and sounds like a little girl:

- Hi, it's me.
- What are you doing?
- Do you want me to pick you up so we can go for a drink?
- I'm in the tram number seventeen. I'm going home so I could pick you up and we could go to... that place... what's its name... yes.
- Is dad at home?
- Huh.
- Well I need at least twenty minutes to get home and then...
- So I'll give you a ring and you can come down, huh?
- I'll just give you a short call.
- Ok.
- And don't tell dad.

### **Subway towards Rudow, Berlin, July 12<sup>th</sup>**

It is early morning and I am going towards the airport. A very thin young man wearing jeans and a denim jacket gets in at Mehringdamm carrying an open beer bottle and sits to the right across the aisle from me. He puts the bottle on his lap and holds it upright with his hands. As the train starts his head drops and he seems to have fallen asleep. At the next station, a plump man comes in and sits right in front of me. He looks around in a strange way and I am not sure if he has problems with his sight or is he on something. He gazes at his surroundings, which seems to be difficult because he puckers a bit but then he closes his eyes and his face relaxes. We are riding a couple of stations in a rather empty train when the skinny man starts to fidget and look at signs at every stop. Just before Hermannplatz, he gets up, staggers as the train shakes and looks at the man sitting in front of me. Suddenly, he grabs his shoulder, leans over, almost touching his face, and shouts at the top of his voice: "Hey!" I am convinced they will get into a

fight and draw my legs in. The plump man startles, opens his eyes and again doesn't really seem to see the world around him, but a few seconds later he manages to focus on the man with the beer. He throws himself at him I soon realize they are not fighting but are glad to see each other.

### **Subway towards Anhalter Bahnhof, Berlin July 3<sup>rd</sup>**

There is a smallish, older man on the train. He speaks bad German and shouts terribly. He wants to talk to everyone on the train. He is standing next to a young man in a green t-shirt, with blond dreadlocks that is rolling his eyes and trying to move away, but he is not very successful since he is sitting next to the window. The older man is saying something I don't understand but every now and then he shouts out that he is also a man. The young man nods and says: "Yes, you are also a man". The older man gives up on the boy and addresses in Turkish another young man that is sitting close by. He throws himself at him and kisses him. The boy is moving his head away but is also laughing. Then the older man, shouting loudly, stands next to the glass partition next to the door and shouts in German: "Do you want me to break this? Do you? Huh?" The young man is laughing and says that he does. The old man still inquires if he is sure because it will then be his fault when the glass breaks. He then starts hitting the glass with his head as hard as he can. Surprisingly the glass resists. A few of us watch on worriedly. Most people are laughing and the man is walking up and down the train hitting each glass on his way.

### **Gesundbrunnen station, Berlin, July 3<sup>rd</sup>**

I am waiting for a train that will not come in another twelve minutes, so I'm carefully looking at chocolates in a vending machine. After a while I realize that the train in the other direction is standing for a while already and not leaving. I see a plump woman in a railroad company uniform with bright red hair, crouching in front of an open carriage door that is somehow askew. A man with an afghan hat and a beard is crouching in the train opposite her. They are using a torch to light the spot where the door and the floor meet and are both looking carefully. The woman stands up and quietly says into a radio station she is holding in her hand: "a bottle got stuck and if you close the doors, he will remove it." The red lights above the doors are lit, the sound announcing the train leaving is heard and the doors move. The man in the train takes the bottle out, throws it through

the closing door, smiles and gives a thumbs-up sign. The red haired woman catches the bottle with one hand and slowly waddles down the platform.

### **Subway near Landstraße, Vienna, June 20th**

I am looking at a man sitting in front of me. He seems to be frowning but then I realize he is sleepy. His head is inclined to the right and his right eye is closed. He is looking with his left eye. After a while his head sinks a bit more and he closes his left eye as well. I am wondering if his right eye is injured. We are arriving at the station. The man lifts his head and opens both eyes normally.

### **Tram O, Vienna, June 17<sup>th</sup>**

A woman is sitting to the right in front of me. I can only see her back. I cannot guess her age. She is wearing jeans and a denim shirt but has a lady's handbag on her shoulder and a hairdo as a somewhat older woman. She is talking on her cell phone and I don't hear what she is saying. Suddenly she says loudly in Croatian: "You bore!" and, after a short pause, in the same tone: "You are so boring!" She then becomes silent and after a while she says: "I feel the same about you and what can we do about it..." Afterwards, because of the noise of the tram, I don't hear the conversation any more. The woman keeps on talking and when I am leaving the train, the conversation sound quite friendly but businesslike.

### **Subway towards Queens, New York, May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

A man in his mid thirties is sitting to the left of me on the other side of the aisle. He is smallish, darkish and looks Latino. He is wearing a t-shirt that says: "A. Eagle". He is looking at his cell phone and seems to be reading something while eating a snack out of a bag. He is sneezing at regular intervals of some ten seconds and, every time he sneezes, he lifts both of his legs straight in front of him.

### **Subway towards Tegel airport, Berlin, March 19<sup>th</sup>**

It is 7.30 a.m. and a man in his early forties is sitting next to me. He is wearing a grey coat and a scarf that look like something that would go with a suit but he is wearing jeans and black, leather, dirty shoes. He is talking on his cell phone and looks as if he doesn't want anybody to hear him. If someone looks at him, he nervously tries to turn the other way but he is not very successful since he is sitting in a corner facing the aisle. A

woman's voice can be heard, talking constantly from his phone. It seems she is speaking English. Maybe German after all. I don't understand what she is saying. The man is silent most of the time but every now and then he says something in English:

- That's the way you see it, but perhaps I see it differently.
- Yes
- Yes
- Hm
- But I might see it differently.

At a certain point he picks up some prints of internet Berlin maps from his bag. He gets up still listening and looks at the subway map near the entrance to the carriage. He comes back. The voice from the telephone is audible all the time.

- Listen I have a headache now and...
- Yes, yes
- You are obviously not happy and I...

Every time he speaks longer, his voice is getting quieter and quieter.

- I am also not happy with the situation and I would like to spend more time with you and that's why I came in the first place.
- Listen, I have to look at the map now...
- I am also not happy to have to go on a Saturday morning...

At that moment I am leaving the train.

### **Subway towards Mitte, Berlin, June 4th**

I am sitting next to the window and looking outside. My legs are stretched out in front of me. A spruced up woman in her late fifties gets in at Potsdamer Platz and sits in front of me. I pull my feet in and smile at her. She smiles back and tells me my feet don't disturb her. She sits down and says she got tired. I don't feel like talking so I smile noncommittingly and look through the window into the darkness. A young man in his twenties gets in at the next stop with a dog and sits down next to the woman in front of me. The dog is quiet and sits peacefully in front of his master. The woman's eyes are now wide open and every time the dog moves she raises her arms in front of her as if defending herself. Nobody is taking any notice except me, looking at her reflection in the window.

### **Airport, Munich, July 30<sup>th</sup>**

I am waiting for a plane that is late. The pilot has come to give an announcement about the delay and some passengers are now shouting at him. The pilot seems annoyed but is not getting into a fight. Two women are the loudest. They are dressed in clothes that are at the same time conservative and modern and are telling everybody that they have no time to wait. A man in a suit joins them and nods approvingly but doesn't seem excited. Most people are speaking on their phones and telling someone that we are late. The reason for the delay is funny. The plane has a flat tire. One woman is sitting peacefully and smiling. She is looking around and, just like me, looking at other passengers. No one is talking to her for a while and then a plump man next to her finishes his phone conversation and says something to her. I cannot discern what he just said but it seems to have been some passing grumble. The woman's smile gets wider, her head sinks while she is still looking at the man from below and she says something I don't understand but can hear a very high pitched voice. The man startles almost non visibly as he hears her voice. The woman is still talking. Something in the way she talks seems a bit crazy and I cannot point it down. The very high pitched voice? The hung head and the piercing stare? The wide smile that doesn't seem to be caused by anything? The man nods nervously, puts his cell phone into his bag, gets up and leaves for the bar. The woman remains smiling alone into the void.

#### **Subway towards Mitte, Berlin, April 4<sup>th</sup>**

I am sitting next to the aisle, looking straight at a middle aged man in front of me who seems to be smallish and chubby. He is wearing jeans and a buttoned up denim jacket. His blond hair is cut into a soccer player hairdo and he is asleep sitting completely upright. A homeless man gets in at Friedrichstrasse, walks down the aisle and is trying to sell the "Strassenfeger" magazine about the homeless. The man in front of me doesn't move his head but slowly opens his eyes and is now following the homeless man that is approaching. As he gets quite close, the man in front of me takes a package of pills from his breast pocket. He breaks off a bar, puts the rest back to his pocket and tucks a line of pills into the homeless man's hand as he passes by. The passing man takes the pills, pats the other man on the shoulder and he, in return, shortly squeezes the other man's hand on his shoulder.

#### **Subway towards Erdberg, Vienna, March 28<sup>th</sup>**

A couple in their late twenties gets in at Volkstheater. The woman is dressed in an Austrian Airlines stewardess uniform and the man is wearing jeans and an ordinary navy jacket. He is carrying a chair. Both are silent. I notice tears running down her cheeks and her eyes are as red as her uniform. The man is staring at the ground. The woman sobs, the man starts and says something quietly. She is still crying and speaking louder than the man although I don't hear what she is saying. We are riding a couple of stations as she is talking and he is silent while holding with one hand on to the rail and the other to the chair that he has brought in. A bit before Rochusgasse station, the man says something shortly. The woman opens her eyes widely and continues to talk a bit more quickly. At the station, the man lifts the chair and gets out of the train. The woman stops talking. She is silent, looking in front of her and still crying.

### **Bus towards Grunewald, Berlin, May 29<sup>th</sup>**

I get onto the bus at the Neue Nationalgalerie and sit down on an empty place. An old woman in a colorful summer dress and an equally colorful wide brimmed hat is sitting in front of me. She has heavy make up and wears a lot of gold jewelry with some precious stones. To me, she seems to be around eighty. She is glancing towards the driver and at one point she says with a strong British accent: "Darling, have you managed?" I realize she is looking at a man in his thirties that is stamping some tickets. He is wearing jeans, a freshly ironed white shirt and polished shoes and, soon enough, joins the woman in front of me. As he sits down, he casually strikes her hand and I think he must be her son. The woman leans on to him and is looking out of the window. As we are riding, she is stroking his thigh, getting higher on the inner side, until she firmly grabs him between his legs.

### **Subway towards Warschauerstrasse, Berlin, October 3<sup>rd</sup>**

It is past midnight and there are not many people waiting for the subway. A young woman with green hair stuck into firm points and I get into a rather full carriage. I realize most of the people in the carriage are one group of teenagers. They seem to be very drunk, are walking up and down the train and pouring vodka from a bottle into some plastic cups they are holding in their hands. After a while I realize there are two older darker men among them that are also pushing cups towards the bottle but the young men are pushing them back. The boy holding the bottle is spluttering and shouting he will give them vodka if they pay for it, but not just like that. The older man is saying he

will give him hashish in return. The boy is shouting that he is not interested in drugs but wants five euro. The older man says in indignation that it is too much and that he has good hashish. We arrive at the next station and the young woman with green hair leaves the carriage. The train continues and I realize she is still on the train but has moved to the next carriage,

### **Berlin airport, bus for the plane, November 13<sup>th</sup>**

I am sitting on a chair. There should be nineteen of us on the plane to Warsaw but there are only fifteen of us on the bus. I am wondering where the other four are. A girl with very long completely bleached hair and big sunglasses is standing next to the door. She is crying loudly and a boy, that seems a couple of years younger, is consoling her. I am wondering why her crying seems insincere to me.

### **Subway at Kottbusser Tor, Berlin, January 13<sup>th</sup>**

It is snowing outside and the subway is rather crowded although it is close to midnight. A man gets in at Kottbusser Tor. It is difficult to tell his age because his clothes are all muddy and his face and clothes are covered in blood. He is staggering so badly that the fact he got on the train seems like a success. He gets hold of the rail in the middle, the train starts and not one of the passengers is looking at him. Across the aisle from me a man and a woman in their mid thirties are talking quietly. The man with the blood covered face suddenly, without any visible reason, loses his balance, staggers down the train and falls onto the woman in front of me. The woman, wide-eyedly, gets up straight away, moves her hands away from the man, but asks him in a calm voice: "Sir, would you like to sit down?" and lets him have her seat.