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Love Is Half an Argument on a Pace Bus

Louisa Parzyk

“Now approaching Burbank,” says the bus and Burbank is my stop and I don’t get off. Because I can walk. And I can’t miss this.

Because this girl in front of me is in the middle of a screaming match over the phone. Normally those aren’t terribly interesting to me but the content and intensity of this one is intriguing. It appears to be about drugs but I’m not sure yet.

“You’re not listening to me. You’re not listening to me, Steve.”

Stupid Steve keeps on not listening. The bus waits with bated breath.

“Steve. Shut the hell up and calm the hell down. The secret to the mushrooms is to get the whole thing real hot. Real hot.”

Yep. Drugs. Definitely talking about shrooms here.

“No, Steve! You gotta get it hot. God you’re such an asshole.”

Pauses. I can hear Steve explaining himself. It gives the whole bus time to soak up the conversation thus far. A homeless lady with her garbage bag sits with mouth agape, staring at this girl. A business man up in front looks uncomfortable and a little kid is giggling behind me. The bus driver runs a red light listening to this and no one seems to care about that right now.

“I don’t care that high heat nearly killed you from smoke inhalation and then almost burned down your house. You’re hypurbuhlizin’.”

A short pause and then, “High-PUR-buh-li-zin’! High-PUR-buh-li-zin’! It means ex-AGH-a-ray-tin’. Get a damn dictionary.”

She waits for him to reply and gasps. “YOU get a life. And stay outta mine, buttmunch. We are so through.”

Pause.

“I mean it this time, Steve,” as she begins to sob. “And buttmunch is so a word and you are one.”

Apologetic muttering on the other line.

“I told you high heat. High heat. But you didn’t listen. You nevah listen.”

A vulgar two word reply from Steve is audible. But she goes on about whatever high heat is, saying, “High heat will cook it just right. That’s what Julia Child did.”

Poor Steve says something that really gets her going.

“No! Oh no you didn’t! That’s it. It’s OM-uh-let,” she says. “Not omelette,” she hisses.

Steve is faintly heard whining on the other line.

“Look if you don’t know how to say OM-uh-let then you ain’t got no business cookin’ OM-uh-let, yah hear?”

Lady, I think to myself in awe, the whole bus hears. You and Steve. Breaking up over an argument about how to properly cook an OM-uh-let.

“No no no. And then you have to pump your arm like this.” And even though she’s on the phone and Steve can’t see, she pumps that arm. It’s a jerky,

stabbing motion just about going into the neck of the old man sitting in front of her.

I can't hear much of what Steve says next but it must be pretty offensive because she screams, louder than ever, "Well you can choke on your fucking omelette is what you can do." She's about to hang up but Steve is talking frantically now. She listens for a long, long time.

She sighs.

"I love you, Baby. I love you, Steve. I'll eat your OM-uh-let. I'll-" She begins to cry again. Harder and higher and haltingly like what a guinea pig's cry might sound like. If guinea pigs cry that is. But I suppose that's an argument for another idiot couple on another Pace bus. Now if you'll excuse me, I have sixteen blocks to walk to Burbank and to contemplate what love is.

Wanted Ad: Looking to Share

Kelli O'Dwyer

Need help with the rent of the studio I just moved into,
and help with this city.

One room with the slim luxury of a
suck-in-before-you-walk-in closet,
but okay with extra baggage.

And if *you* don't mind, you can unzip it,
to let it out of its worn out bag,
and put into the old tried and true washing machine.

No dryer, but I'll have a clothes line we can share,
to air it out and let them drip dry,
and I'm okay if my shirt's shoulder's wet.

The fridge is the only appliance right now.
I haven't been staying in my new place yet,
been running on fast food between interviews,
just for the time being,

But if you move in, make yourself at home,
don't just become a money providing fixture,
to accompany the fridge;

The fridge doesn't need your company.
Soon I'll buy a microwave, when I have time,
and we'll move on up to tv dinners.

Friend, when you move in,
make sure you close the window,
to keep the unwanted city out,
and the warmth in the room,
so it's cozy like the old country.