

Finding The Man On The Subway.

by Andrew Thomson

A time honoured, ripe, oak wood desk that had been unremittingly skidded from place to place across my NYC loft floor had finally found its home. Perched near the high, ceiling to floor sweeping windows. Every time I walk the floors I stumble upon the harsh scrape marks left by me moving the desk constantly, searching for a new environment for my creativity to prosper.

As you now may have guessed, I, am an author. A word scribbler, spending hours upon hours moving my desk, a nobody in the world I try to thrive in. My friends always ask me, "Why move the desk so relentlessly all the time?" Well, gazing at a blank, white brick wall seems to produce a bundle of nothing in my mind. No good for someone who needs creativity to make a living. So, I move the desk to find ideas, creativity blooming... That's when words write themselves.

My eyes follow the wandering automobiles, I take the subway more often than land transportation. It smells, it's irriuous and it's stale, but seeing the different faces come and go gives me ideas. I yearn to know their story. Yet I try to figure it out myself, their facial features, body language and persona hand me an inkling of what their souls have traversed.

At the first sight of morningtide, I make my way down to the main lobby of my residence. As I make my way through the lobby I exclaim, "The same old hags are still smoking in the lobby! Every morning this room smells like a firefighters nightmares." The ashy, hard smoke seeps into my lungs, clashing with fresh oxygen. Being a 78 year old man in these circumstances I struggle to breathe.

I cross the street towards the subway entrance, I always find revolting items on the steps into the underground railway system. Usually food left out for the over sized rats that survive under New York. A tall, slender man sweeps by me. He dons a tailored suit finished off with a pink polka dot tie. He yells at his phone "Siri! Tell me where I can get a taxi! I'm late for work." I swipe my card on the pad and make my way through the revolving metal bars. An official watches sharply to make sure I am not carrying anything that shouldn't be this close to a majorly populated area. The subway is filled with all sorts of people. I always glance around for new faces, new stories to tell in my books. Today it's exactly what you would expect. Business men and women, the homeless and the strange, all doing what they did the day before. It's the same routine, wake up, subway, work, subway, home, eat, sleep. It doesn't change. I like to keep my daily life interesting, that's partially why I am a writer.

The subway rolls into position, the sweeping metal doors open and let weary passengers on. I make my way into a crowd. I take my seat next to an elderly asian man, he flashes a smile, yellow and crooked while saying what I believe was hello in Mandarin.

I return a smile back to him, and say "How do you do?" in Mandarin. I used to travel around China looking for ways to spark my creativity and hone in my writing capabilities.

He looks relieved, realizing I speak his language. He starts a conversation, "It's been awhile since I've found someone who speaks Mandarin in this city."

"Do you live in China Town? I've visited the restaurants there quite a bit, great chinese food if I do say so myself!"

“Well I do, yet I arrived here from Chengdu just last August to start a new life here with my family. We were broke and surviving off of scraps, our home was under a tarp in a busy market place. I carried my old, sagging fishing rod down to the river every morning, and came home with a few good sized Yangtze Sturgeon. I sold them for 500 Yuan, which set us up for the next few weeks.

right there... It is who I have been searching for, I can tell he's gone through hardships. His clothes tattered and stained, his shoes have holes where his toes seek the outdoors, his nails crusted with dirt. I get off at the next station and make my way back up to the streets of New York, It's a short walk home, hastily making my way through busy streets. Everyone hustling from work trying to get home to their loved ones. A taxi skims my backpack and I yelled out “Gosh darn it you nearly killed me!” Happy that I am still standing, I make my way home.

I set some paper on my desk, words are starting to come to mind. The man on the subway intrigued me so, I knew my writing would be at peak performance after this story. Hours and hours of sitting at that desk, staring out at the busy NYC streets. Taxi's blared their horns and road ragers screamed curses and honked.

The next morning I seeked a publisher, I wanted this story out and available to the public to show how one man can make a difference. Simon & Schuster Inc accepted my request and began distributing the book all around New York, eventually I began seeing people read it at cafes, I saw it in bookstores and The New York Times did an article on it. I knew I had accomplished what I wanted, now people know how one person can make a difference.