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## Not Again!

by Stuart Carruthers

Rush hour at Bangkok's main train station should be avoided at all cost unless accompanied by someone who actually knows what they are doing. This wasn't a good idea.

It was evident by the tone of their conversation that they had been arguing all night. The taxi driver smiled as he caught a glimpse of the couple in the back seat debating the merits of catching the rush hour train to the northern city of Chiang Rai. It wasn't the first time he'd heard this discussion and to avoid being dragged into yet another needless conversation, he increased the volume on his radio and stared straight ahead.

Despite stopping under the station's large canopy roof, the temperature was already well above average for this time of year and the young couple were felling it. Gareth collected their rucksacks, while Kate bartered with the driver over a £3 fair.

"We need water and something to eat" suggested Kate, as she tied her hair into a bun and wiped the sweat from her forehead.

"Why don't we wait until the crowds have disappeared?" Gareth suggested, "It's not as if we are in a rush to get to our destination"

But she wasn't listening "It will be fine, I'll get water and food for the journey, why don't you get the tickets"?

Looking up at the departures board, their train left in 30min, but Gareth wasn't going to tell Kate. Experience told him she would use up every minute of the 30min's

shopping for useless items that they didn't need and more worryingly get lost within the morning rush hour crowd.

"You have 20min's Kate, I just want water please, no food, they will have stuff on the train. Platform 4, front 2 carriages, that's over there" said Gareth pointing in the direction of the platform.

"Ok see you then".

He knew she wasn't listening, so he repeated his directions again but before he could finish she was gone, leaving Gareth to carry the heavy rucksacks in the sweltering morning heat.

Kate is the kind of person you lose easily and this situation had disaster written all over it and Gareth knew it. .

Two 1<sup>st</sup> class tickets and a private cabin for the price of one stop on the underground, Gareth was feeling pleased with himself as he made his way to the platform gate. Dropping the bags to the floor he positioned himself so he could see the shops and the direction in which she would be walking.

"Excuse me Sir, are you travelling on the 0845 train" said the smartly dressed man, who appeared out of nowhere.

"Sorry,,, yes,, I'm just waiting on my girlfriend"

"No problem, can I see your tickets please"

Removing the sweat soaked tickets from his t-shirt breast pocket, the well-spoken porter checked them over carefully and clipped a neat circular hole in the top corner and beckoned his assistant over.

"My colleague will place your bags in your cabin Sir, would you like to follow him please and enjoy your journey"

"I need to wait on my girlfriend" said Gareth pointing in the direction of the shops.

"Not to worry Sir, your cabin is just there, you'll be able to see her and we will insure she gets safely to the door" said the well-spoken attendant with near perfect English.

The air chilled cabin was perfect and slumping into the seat by the window, Gareth stared out onto the concourse and within no time had drifted off to sleep.

Meanwhile Kate was having a great time. With bags bulging with far more food than was needed and unaware of the time; she slowly walked in the direction of Platform 4. The queue was enormous and there was no sign of Gareth. Double checking the departure board, Kate was relieved to see her train was leaving on time.

What she didn't know was that the majority of the people in-front of her, didn't have tickets and they were in fact waiting on the next train.

It was only when the conductors whistle blew, did she panic.

Running to the gate she could see the Gareth asleep; his head slumped against the window. To the surprise of her fellow passengers, she screamed at the top of her voice for him to wake up. But it was too late.

The jolt of the moving train awoke Gareth and as looked out the window, there was Kate plastic bags in hand with a look of horror on her face. There was nothing he could do as the train exited the station.

Realising what had happened; the well-spoken porter and his assistant reassured Kate that they would get her onto the next train and radio ahead to inform the station to reassure her boyfriend.

“What time is the next train she frantically enquired”?

“Nine o clock this evening Miss.”