



**The runner-up entry for SNAP:
Student New Angle Prize 2017**

The Casual Observer

by

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The next train departing from platform one is the 1300 service to London Liverpool Street, calling at Diss, Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford and London Liverpool Street. This service is made up of eight carriages. A café counter service offering a selection of hot and cold snacks is available at the front of the train. Please assist staff in the prompt departure of this service by ensuring all windows and doors are closed behind you.

I feel a warm kiss of musty air touch my cheek as I embark the train. I find a suitable window seat, delay and sink into the worn blue upholstery. The springs squeak and sigh as I manoeuvre into a more comfortable position. Passengers enter the carriage, shuffling past, talking amongst themselves as they make their way through the carriage to their seats.

This journey I've taken endless times yet each experience is different to the next. I am witness to the seasons' change from the window view, accompanied by a variety of faces, all delivering new experiences to capture my attention. I am a curious soul, observant and inquisitive and these journeys I find myself watchful of different events playing out.

On this day the automatic door has malfunctioned. I find it hypnotic watching it hammer and pound the frame, jerking back and forth. While I am mesmerized by the oscillation, a woman enters the carriage. Startled by the obstreperous door, eventually passing through to be seated. Her expression is telling that her day has already cooked up an antagonising menu and she is not partial to dessert.

As the train departs the ricocheting door continues in motion, I feel it is grating on this woman passenger. I glance around at the other commuters, most are oblivious, lost in the sound playing through their earphones. I notice the woman stand and with deliberation march toward the door.

At this point I am witness to a battle quite like no other, between two travelling warriors, the woman and the door tug and wrestle, until eventually the woman is victorious. With a restyle of the hair, more shabby than chic, she returns to her seat exhaling in relief. There is calm in the carriage... until the train meets with Diss and a passenger passes through, provoking the door's capricious movements once more.

I glance over in the direction of the woman whose face is turning a vibrant red hue. She wins round two of the sparring match with the door and is rewarded with ten minutes of cessation.

I gather my things ready to depart. I know I am close when the train reaches the bridge in Bramford, passing the derelict factory and fields of horses and dog walkers. The train cruises the tracks as the scenery changes from rural to urban. I make my way to the end of the carriage passing through the door. I hear a crash and her shout words I shall not repeat as I can still hear them echo.

Our next station stop is Ipswich, please remember to take all personal belongings with you and close all doors and windows when leaving the train. Thank you for travelling with us and we hope you have had a pleasant journey.

