



PHOTO: STAR

RIDING CLUTCH

ASIF AYON

Method of Transport: Laguna
Destination: Gulshan-2
Time: 6.35 pm
Choice of seat: Shotgun, the front.

Why? Because I never rode shotgun on public transport before. But what did I get?

I did not intend for this. I wanted the wind in my face but what I got instead, was a gaping hole between my legs. I did not worry too much. It's just how things are. But that's when it started - the relentless shaking of my body. Not focusing on the core issues, I decided to look straight ahead instead. "The country is in rot", the bald man to my left wailed as we found ourselves inevitably stuck in traffic. It was humid even more so because of my positioning on the vehicle. So I wasn't too keen on replying. He would not let up though, his gripe was with the traffic, and my gripe, were with my tights. The space between the seats just seemed to widen

and I could feel my vision splitting from not knowing which way to look.

All in all, along with the jerking of the vehicle, I found myself in a state of perpetual PTSD of bumper cars. Yes! Bumper Cars, similar bumps but with outlets I can channel my anger through; wish I could bump off the guy beside me and take his spot. My daydreaming had led us to our first stop and thus I realised the real reason why this seat was so infamous, there was no way you could really catch a break, especially when the car braked.

I wondered what the wind tasted like. Then I remembered its summer, so I stopped caring about it entirely. But the gap between my legs just seemed to widen, I felt as if I was going to fall. But lo and behold the balding man got out but before I could swing left, a man twice my size, as if that was possible, decided to jump in. His name tag read Chacchu, why I do not know. He is to become the apt antihero of this tale.

"First time?" I understood that he could comprehend my discomfort to

which I said, "Yes."

"I remember when I was a boy..." I dozed off and his long pauses only yielded a reluctant "Yes." from my end every time.

"Mind the gap!" he wailed before the driver drove headfirst into a pothole.

Yet, I felt none of it, as if I was floating almost.

But his enormous weight which took up almost two-thirds of the space meant I had to carry my weight almost entirely on one leg which was a blessing in disguise, because otherwise, that pothole would have taken its toll on my essentials; my phone, my keys, all of it. I was packing extra that night.

This was it, Chacchu's out and I could feel my muscles flexing unlike ever before. I did not even bother to swipe left because my stop was coming up but I wish I had. I wish I really had. Because in came the brigadier of the 43rd battalion of titles I was too tired to remember. But I knew he was probably someone who thinks he is important.

Middle seats of all vehicles tend to be

claustrophobic and fuming with the collective smell of all of its passengers but this was not the case with this automobile. The gap had become seemingly infinite at this point, and Mr. Important's incessant questioning of my job, my whereabouts, and my moustache did not seem to bridge any gaps between us at all. I hate inquisition in tight spots. Hindsight is 20/20 and if I knew that I would be living a rerun of The Interview then I would not have dared to ride shotgun.

Destination reached in approximately 45 minutes. Valuables, unscathed. Faith in myself, fragile but intact. Experience +35. Wish I could visit a trauma centre right about now. But now I can't walk proper, not after riding clutch.

Asif Ayon's favorite color is a particular shade of ash but he tells everyone that his favorite color is blue. The alliteration in his name bothers him a lot too. To inquire more about what else keeps him up at night, hit him up at asifayon@live.com