

Conversation



Debbie Harman

HE WAS TELLING ME ABOUT A FESTIVAL

DON'T WAIT
YOU MUST GO
NOW. I'LL HELP
YOU GET A
TUK TUK

ACTUALLY I
PREFER TO WALK

BUT ALSO
I'LL GET MY
OWN TUK TUK
IF I WANT
ONE

THANK YOU
GOODBYE
I'M GOING
TO THIS
TOILET NOW



YOU WILL NEVER
GET THE CHANCE
TO SEE SUCH
RITUALS AGAIN!

I WANTED TO
PHOTOGRAPH
THE TOILET
ENTRANCE
BECAUSE
IT WAS
A POT
GARDEN

LADIES

THE
TOILET
CARETAKER
KEPT
STANDING

UP. I
FELT SHE

MIGHT HAVE
BEEN -

CONCERNED -
ABOUT ME.



I CAN HAIL YOU A TUK TUK!

THE SECOND MAN WAS: "WALKING
BACK TO WORK", AND HE
URGED ME TO QUICKLY GET TO THE
FESTIVAL - THEN WHEN I SAID "I'LL
WALK", HE BEGAN
GUSHING ABOUT THE
COLOUR BLUE.

BLUE
WATCH!
BLUE SHIRT!
BLUE
SAPPHIRE!

HE WAS INTENSE
AND NOT EMPLOYING SOCIAL
DISTANCING...





LOOK! I HAVE
A BIG HAT,
LIKE YOU!

I WAS
REALLY!
ENJOYING THE
CONVERSATION
WITH THIS
RABBIT
UNTIL...

I KNOW
THAT IN
AUSTRALIA
YOU
CANNOT
TAKE
BACK
WOOD OR
SHELLS!

YES
THAT'S
RIGHT

BUT
YOU
CAN
TAKE
BACK
GEMS!



I DON'T LIKE
GEM-STONES! IT'S
JUST A LOAD OF
RUBBISH. THEY
ARE NOT
REALLY WORTH
ANYTHING!



THE ABRUPTNESS
AND SILENCE OF
HIS IMMEDIATE
DEPARTURE
MADE ME SAD.

I WAS REALLY
ENJOYING
TALKING
TO THE
RABBIT
WITH
THE
HAT.



Hello! Hello! Good morning.
How are you? Where are you
from? How do you like
our country?



IT WAS, (I HADN'T
NOTICED, IT HAD TO BE
POINTED OUT TO ME)
BECAUSE I LOVED TALKING
TO STRANGERS - A HABIT
I GOT FROM MY FATHER
THAT MADE ME MORE SUSCEPTIBLE...

TO DISAPPOINTMENT
(VERGING ON HEARTBREAK)
WHEN IT WASN'T
FIDELITY.



TO RAGE AT
WHY THEY
COULDN'T EARN
THEIR LIVINGS
ANOTHER WAY
(WHEN MOST SALES
PEOPLE USE LANGUAGE
TO SELL YOU SOMETHING
AT A RATE MUCH HIGHER
THAN ITS WORTH).

WHAT I WANTED WAS
NOT AVAILABLE,
SO I RANTED AND STAMPED
MY FEET. ARGGGHHH!

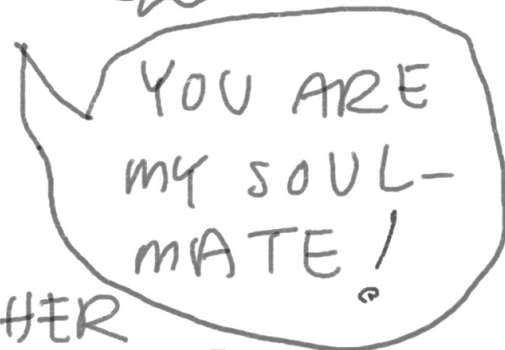
IN THE END I LEARNED TO WALK
PAST WITHOUT MAKING EYE CONTACT!
A CLEAR "NO THANKYOU" AND
DISMISSIVE WAVE OF HAND, SAVED US BOTH
TIME AND BREATH.



BUT REMOVED THE OPPORTUNITY
FOR HUMAN CONNECTION.

WE MET ON A BUS
AND I USED GOOGLE
TRANSLATE ON MY
PHONE TO CONVERSE

THEN WE WENT
TO THE TEMPLE
TOGETHER THEN...



HER SON
WAS HELPING HER
TO USE GOOGLE TRANSLATE
AND THEY WERE VIDEO-
CALLING. THEN SHE CALLED
EVERY DAY AND I DIDN'T ANSWER.

THE PHONE RANG MANY
TIMES, NIGHT AND DAY, WHEN
I WAS WALKING, WHEN I WAS
EATING, WHEN I WAS ON THE BUS



LATER I REALISED THAT PHONES
USING AI. DO OFFER RIDICULOUS
ANSWERS FOR CONVERSATIONS AND
PERHAPS THIS IS WHAT WAS
HAPPENING. HOWEVER

SHE CALLED
FOR DAYS
AND I NEVER
ANSWERED.
I FELT
BAD.

SO I
LAID
OUT
MY
TERMS.

I
DIDN'T
WANT
TO TALK
ON THE PHONE
BUT I

COULD WRITE. I WAS FEELING
PERPLEXED AND COMMUNICATION
SEEMED VERY DIFFERENT TO MY EXPERIENCE.



IT WAS SIMPLER WHEN
I WAS WALKING IN
THE GIANT BOTANICAL
GARDENS AND I'D RUN
OUT OF WATER AND WAS
KILOMETRES FROM THE SHOP

COME JOIN
US!



OH
THANK
YOU
SO
MUCH!

IT WAS
HONEST AND
GENEROUS
THEN DONE.

AND



HELLO! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

I'M GOING TO
THE FISH MARKET!

THAT'S CLOSED NOW! YOU
NEEDED TO BE THERE AT 4AM!

BUT I CAN
SHOW YOU
A TUNA
THIS

BIG!

ALSO: HE LOOKED AND SOUNDED LIKE
THE FRIENDLY OLD WOOD-CUTTER.

LOOK
TUNA!

THAT'S
NOT
TUNA!

SEE! LOOK HERE AT THIS
OLD TEMPLE! GUESS HOW
OLD IT IS!

WHY DON'T
YOU TAKE
A PHOTO?

MAYBE 50 YEARS?

NO! 150 YEARS!

I DON'T
KNOW

CONCRETE
SLABS

GOLD
PAINT...

THIS IS
STARTING
TO FEEL LIKE
A TOUR SO
I GUESS
I BETTER
DUMP THIS GUY.

POST-SCRIPT:

I WENT TO
THE FISH
MARKET
AND IT WAS
ABSOLUTELY
IN FULL
SWING!
JUST HUGE
AND
AMAZING
AND
SHOCKING.
WHAT A
LIAR
HE WAS!



AT THE BODHI TREE
PEOPLE OFFERED FOOD AND FLOWERS
THEY WERE ALL DRESSED IN WHITE
A THOUSAND PEOPLE AT LEAST
PRAYING AND CHANTING AND ME
THE TOURIST. A LADY OFFERED ME
SOME OF HER



FLOWERS

SO I

COULD PLACE THEM WITH THE
OFFERINGS. I HAD JOINED IN.

SOME OTHER PILGRIMS HAILED
ME AS I RODE PAST ON A
BICYCLE.



"HEY! WE WANT A PHOTO WITH YOU!"
(WE ALL ENJOYED THE SELFIE AND LAUGHED.)"

I CAN'T DESCRIBE TO YOU HOW
HAPPY I WAS WHEN AFTER THE TUK
TUK DRIVER POINTED OUT THE LARGE
WATER MONITOR, AND



I ESTABLISHED
THAT I

WAS
NOT
GOING
FOR
A
RIDE,
HE

CONTINUED

THE
CONVERSATION

AND WE TALKED

ABOUT A FEW DIFFERENT
THINGS FOR ABOUT 5 MINUTES.

THEN I WAS SURPRISED AND
ALSO SADDENED BY MY HAPPINESS.





BUT MY
FONDEST
MEMORY WILL
BE OF THE
SHORT EXCHANGE
I HAD AS I
WALKED BESIDE
THIS MAN, WHO
IN PARTING
SAID:

"HOW NICE
YOU MEET ME!"

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