

She hated the bus ride, *silently*. She used to read a book in the morning, a final escape before her workday began. But she had run out of fresh books to read from her shelves a long time ago. It was rare for her to find a new book that truly captured

her imagination and surprised her. The fantasies that played in her mind always seemed more magical to her anyway. Also, she began to notice that the more difficult books, the ones she had loved to be challenged by in college, now went over her head. This was most obvious with one of her favorite plays, *Romeo and Juliet*. A paperback copy of it still resided in her purse, a memory of dreams and past study just slightly out of reach. She didn't like feeling stupid; it added to the inadequacy she was feeling in her life, and the day she had realized she didn't have the energy to give the text the necessary concentration, she felt like she had lost a battle with the person that she once was. So, for the time being, it was easier just to give up on the practice of reading on the bus. That is why the tale of the fated lovers only resided in her purse, waiting.

It all was the same anyway, she believed, all the books blending into one in her head over time. The same. Everything was the same throughout her life. Megan couldn't escape that fact. Somehow life had come to a halt for her. The mornings, the showers, the clothes, the food, the car rides, the bus rides ... again and again. It kept going on and on, never changing as her days flew by faster and faster through the years. Years. Yes, it had been that long. Time was beginning to lose meaning. Everything was just part of her weekly countdown to the weekend, and then the weekend countdown back to the weekday. That's all time was for her, a means to count down to the inevitable "what's next."

It was the same for the other people on the bus. Megan could always be assured that she wasn't the only person stuck going down this slow drain. She wasn't the only lost soul. There were dozens of nameless, gray faces she could bring to her mind's eye to convince herself of that. The only difference was that some of the people on the bus tried to hide that feeling of loss through continuous talk. Rarely did they really listen to each other; the conversations were more to silence a part of their own minds—at least that is how Megan liked to think of it. The strongest basis for that belief was the sheer lack of imagination in what they talked about. See, when people spoke on

the bus, the conversation usually revolved around the same topics:

Weather—It was either too cold or too warm, too wet or too dry. It was as if weather was a daily curse, something to complain about. Why did it have to be cold today? What did we do to deserve this? The rare perfect day only brought silence after the usual “Isn’t this nice?” or “We could use a few more days like this.” Nothing more needed to be said on those days.

News—This is the one subject Megan hated the most. The news discussed on the bus was always tainted with the speakers’ own political and religious views. She hated hearing about God and politics. It was always the people with the strongest religious and political views that wanted to speak the most, as if to find someone that would help solidify what they already believed, or to convince themselves of what they said they believed. Throughout her life, Megan had rarely held strong feelings either way on those topics; the gray bus-people only emphasized to her how little everything really mattered. Nothing truly affected her world. So whenever God or an aggressive political view seemed to sneak into a discussion of the economy or the latest crisis, she always had to resist letting out a little sigh of boredom and a roll of her eyes.

The Countdown—Megan knew this one all too well already. She didn’t need to hear someone point out that it was a Wednesday or a Thursday, and announce how many days remained until the supposed freedom of the approaching weekend. But they did it—they did it everyday.

Family—There were a few people on the bus who acted as if they were friends to one another. Well, they didn’t sound like friends to Megan. They traded family stories as if in a contest. The more scandals the better. The more happy achievements, the better. Megan couldn’t imagine them actually speaking like this outside of the journey to work. It was all a strange competition to justify something Megan couldn’t quite put her finger on.

Work—This would sometimes capture her ear. This was a topic she could relate to! There was no God, or political mission, or nameless weather front involved. A bad work story was one she could definitely identify with. The sad fact was, the majority of the stories were the same. Everyone wanted change, growth, and a new chance to make a difference. It was just rare that someone would actually do it. Change became that nameless horizon. The one only slightly out of reach, and one of these days... one of these days...

If she were mentally strong on a given morning she could cut the people out of her notice. She learned to concentrate on other noises, and some she found quite soothing, like the sound of the bus tires on the pavement. Karump karump karump karump karump... the occasional “gwmup” of a bump in the road. For a time, Megan had liked how they would break the monotony—until she began to get used to when they occurred.

Together, all of these things are what haunted her mornings, each and every one of her weekday mornings. When she tried to put her finger on what they represented to her, she always fell back on the idea of distraction. Distractions—that’s all everything really was to her—the car, the apartment, the job, everything. But distractions from what? Well, of that Megan wasn’t certain. She hated it when she started asking questions like that of herself. No, no deep thoughts today—ever. It was easier just to accept, go through the day like she had the hundreds before.

Do what needs be done:

Every month pay the bills.

Every month pay the rent.

Follow the set path.

Strangely, following this path was all based on an idea, a myth really, hardly a truth. A myth that many on the bus, in her office, and Megan herself all had to believe, a myth that hung to every worker unhappy or uninspired in their low- to middle-level paying job—that everything they did was done

for a goal that someday they would know, and, in the end, their lives would be better. There was a meaning to it all, there must be.

It was a myth that millions around the world believed. It dwelled alongside the dream that sooner or later they would become rich, sooner or later they would find happiness, sooner or later they would find the key to their dreams. But until that day of awareness, they will wait.

They will all wait, *silently*.

That is what everyone on that bus, including Megan, was doing every day. They were simply waiting, marking time through the confined repetition and the growing older everyday.

Age. Megan had been feeling her age more the last year than she had in years past. Ever since turning thirty-two, she had allowed herself to notice the time. The occasional new wrinkle, the few strands of gray (which she would pull out or dye if she had the energy), the haircut she knew was not as modern as it once was, the clothes that she had worked in since she had gotten the job six years ago. The only thing moving forward in her rut was her age and she knew it.

But she could stand the aging, because she had something the other gray bus-riders didn't have. This was the one physical fact that Megan could truly rely on to make her life feel more important. It was ridiculous, she knew, but as she looked around at them, it still made her feel important and she would mentally whisper it to herself from time to time. It gave her a sad and false feeling of physical superiority.

She was thinner than all of them. Thinner than all of them.

Ever since she was a teenager she could eat whatever she wanted without getting fat. God, what a gift! She was chosen to be thin and that made her feel a little better than the overweight people who always talked about that future diet or that workout that would change everything, if they just had the time or energy to do it. She didn't need that. That part of her life was taken care of. Fine.

But what Megan never liked to admit is that she could understand why so many were so fat. Food gave them comfort. It stirred those mental waves that brought a sense of peace, happiness. Megan saw that, and if her body had been like theirs, she would have been fat too. No, no, best not to think about that.

Whatever the case, this fact, that she could eat and not become overweight like many of the people around her, only confirmed her belief that she had a purpose, a destiny. Something was going to happen someday and because she was thin, she would be ready ...

A silly thought. Megan had many silly thoughts every day. She had always possessed a rich imagination, and since her childhood she had used it to escape boredom, long periods of work (or school when she was a child), and sad times. This was her first and most powerful dream and it would sneak into her daily life. The dream of this job, of this other life, was more special, more important to her than anything else she could think of. It was not to be shared. The dream was that of illustrating and writing children's fantasy adventures. In her mind she became that storyteller; in her mind she became that hero. (... *a new adventure by Megan Wane.*)

Her favorite stories always revolved around a world that she had made up as a young child. It was called Prosperity and even at age thirty-two she would be embarrassed to admit how much comfort that world gave to her. To put it simply, Prosperity gave her life some meaning on days when she couldn't find it in her real world.

And in Prosperity Megan was a princess.

