

The lady sauntered onto the bus, flashing a blinding smile with perfect white teeth at the bus driver, as she paid for her ticket. She slid her debit card into her crocodile-skin handbag, and walked regally to her throne - the plush leather seat at the rear of the bus. She elegantly sat down, before sliding her phone out of her pocket with elaborately manicured hands. She plugged in her earphones and settled down for the yawningly exciting journey to her job at the superstore.

The woman took a last glance back at the small settlement she called home, before focusing on loading luggage onto the inflatable boat. They were leaving; looking for a place to live, a place where guns didn't rule and bombs didn't trap them in explosive fear. Her family climbed onto the boat, making it wobble and shake in the small bay. More people got onto the bus - friends, people she had passed on the small mud trail on the way to collect water. The little engine on the back of the boat was turned on, and the driver threw the boat forward, heading away. The woman settled herself against the rigid edge of their escape vessel and thought about the uncertain future that lay before her.

The bus was loud - the engine rumbled angrily, and every time it flew over a pothole, the vibrations coursed through the lady as she sat. She was over the moon - she had a date for tonight, and she was catching up on the social lives of her friends; who liked who, who despised who. She lived for the gossip which enveloped her, the social media posts which lured her in. She knew what her goals were in life - these included a titanic number of piercings and tattoos. Her bank account was satisfied - her job paid an adequate amount, improved by her constant modelling and advertisement. She felt secure, in control, and excited for her future, as she gazed out of the window at the bustling city surrounding her.

Once the last speck of land had faded sadly from the boat's occupants mournful eyes, the woman engaged her wandering mind. She knew what her aims were - find a suitable home, get a job, earn money to afford food. She stored some savings away (although she had doubts that the currency would be suitable), raised by hours upon hours of cooking and cleaning, washing and mending. She felt eased by her thoughts, which convinced her that this ambitious plan was going to work. She felt in control, as she stared, her eyes wandering over the endless blue which surrounded her, supporting their only way of escape.

The baby in the row in front of her had woken up. His last meal had been hours ago, and this hunger exploded out in a raucous cry, a wail which flooded the bus as it continued its journey. The lady had tried to drown out the noise by dramatically increasing the volume of her rock music, but without any success. She removed her earphones, and groaned emphatically as she realised how slow the journey was progressing. She wished it would pick up the pace, so that she could start stacking shelves, scanning items. She deserved more than such a traumatic experience she was encountering. There wasn't enough room for everyone on this bus. All the seats were taken, and people were stood awkwardly next to her, managing not to maintain eye contact when she glared at them, her mascara coated eyes fiery. She felt claustrophobic, and this meant that her cheeks became flushed, ruining her perfect image. This was a disaster.

The child on the bow of the vessel started crying, and the moment she looked at him, she could tell why. The child was starving. You could easily count all his ribs, and his face was drawn and tired. His clothes hung awkwardly on him, a few sizes too big, looking grubby and uncared for, with an abundance of rips. His lips were bone-dry and his eyes were red and glazed over, like he was in a trance. His yell sounded eerie, almost unearthly. But the woman was used to it. It was a rare occurrence when a child reached the grand age of 5, as so many had lost the fight to the attack of life. The woman had been lucky, she knew that. The child's crying had woken up the members of the boat, and with a sickening flood of realisation,

almost like the nausea that was consuming her, the woman noticed how little room there was. Everyone was packed together like sardines and now the woman couldn't see the child, through the wall of escapees. She felt alarmingly claustrophobic, trapped on this island in a sea of nothing. She knew if she cried, people would think of her as weak and she would lose any kind of authority she held in this patriarchal society. But the emotions were building up, spilling over. This was a disaster.

With a sudden jolt, the engine coughed and cut out, leaving the bus in an eerie silence. The lady suspected that it was just a temporary glitch, until the ancient, unsteady bus driver stumbled out of his seat to announce proudly that the bus had broken down. A universal groan erupted through the bus, loudest from the lady, who had reached her threshold for this journey. Her boss had threatened to fire her weekly, because of her constant lousiness and lack of empathy for 'The rest of humanity!' as he had said just last week, a vein bulging menacingly on his forehead. She wasn't scared of him though. The lady gladly snapped back to reality as the driver, 'Bob' his nametag said, called the pick up service angrily. She changed her position, facing away from the confused, annoyed faces surrounding her, and traced a raindrop as it chose a path down the bus window.

The moment the woman felt water seeping gradually through the material of the vessel, she knew they were in trouble. A universal cry of terror exploded from the boat's occupants, as the water calmly rose, stopping for nothing. It carried all of the food, packed in steel paper bags, all of their precious personal belongings; the only things left that reminded them of home, bar the scarred memories that kept them all up at night. With a snap, she crashed into the moment, where adults were throwing water out of the boat haphazardly using cups and bowls, and children made desperate cries for their teddies and blankets. With a final hiss which mimicked a satanic snake, the boat gave up the fight, threw in the towel, and deflated, releasing the air which had held them up for this long. The combined weight of the people in the boat caused a rapid surge of water, which rocked the now lifeless boat, and threw the majority of people gracefully into the water. The woman watched, frozen, as one by one her friends disappeared under the bubbling surface of the water, sucked into the enticing hell of freedom. The woman was petrified, as the water planned its final attack, a last ditch attempt to pull her into its arms. She gave in. She collided with the concrete surface and submerged. Despite the shock, she tried to think of her parents, her brave little sister, who were just 5 metres away, but it may as well have been a million. She opened her exhausted eyes, ignoring the sting of the salt which pierced her eyeball, and followed an air bubble, as it rose, not a care in the world, up to meet the rest of its friends in the sky.

The lady woke up, yawned, and realised with relief that the bus was moving, albeit slowly, inching closer to the bus stop next to the shop where she worked. She felt better, much better. The hour or so that she had slept had removed dark wrinkles from her eyes and flooded her with a renewed energy. She quickly checked her phone, just by habit, using the reflection to make sure that her expensive makeup hadn't smudged. She thought gladly of when she would get to work, where her crowd of supporters would hold lovingly onto every word she uttered as she emotionally retold this horrific bus journey. They would be amazed. She would be the talk of the town. Her phone lit up with a notification, and she frantically pressed in the digits for her password, hoping to look at what would be a dramatic, gossip filled rant from her mate. Instead, a news report. She thought she had blocked these alerts.

"A migrant boat carrying 50 refugees had crashed near the coast of Cyprus. Only one survivor." "Wow, that must have been bad" she thought, distracted, as she reapplied her concealer.