

Pakistan- A 24 hour nightmare.

We took a bus from the border to Lahore where we purchased tickets to Peshawa at one American dollar each (*This dollar, 70cents Aus in 1973, each took us from one side of the country to the other*). At 8pm we watched the train arrive. We were used to crowded trains but this train was even more crowded. We literally had to fight to get aboard.

The carriages were divided into male and female and a man who had earlier befriended us promised to help us get seats. He turned out to be some kind of sexual freak. As Heather struggled to get aboard the ladies carriage he grabbed her in the push and shove, and immobilized her movement. I found out later he grabbed her and began a copulating action against her back!

Meanwhile I was fighting not to be left behind. We did not want to be split apart by one being left behind. My carriage was full of soldiers and every square inch including the toilets were full. As the train pulled out I was standing between two of them, in a cramped and uncomfortable position. Then it began. So subtle at first, just a leg brushing against mine, I took no notice until the 'brushing ' became more noticeable and energetic. I moved a little, but now it was starting on my arm! I couldn't believe it. What would this trip turn out to be? How could I better my position? Where was Heather? Was she in a similar position? We came to a station somewhere in the middle of the night. Some people got off and luggage was thrown through the windows. I ran to Heather's carriage to see how she was, she said she was ok. Back in my carriage I managed to get on a seat for four with seven men on it. I prayed the lights would stay on.

It began again. A foot moved to stroke mine. A finger touched me under my arm. I felt sick. I know now how women can feel.

Heather meanwhile was in the process of being robbed as she half-dozed. What is more a child in the luggage rack above her excreted on her! Stopping at a station the man who earlier had grabbed her, leered through the window. She had an orange peel which she threw full force into his face. He came back with a bucket of water and heaved it through the window drenching everyone inside.

By midnight I was mad with anger. I began to bodily remove the hand which began ceaselessly to caress me. Later I managed to forcefully evacuate a seat and lay down lengthways, eyes open for queers. One sleeps on eastern trains if one has a bed, and one has a bed if one is able to keep it, else others take over.

At seven am we arrived at Peshawar, a town at the end of the rail road and on the western side of Pakistan. We got down relieved we had both survived and not been thrown out the carriage window. We walked to the inevitable bus station and bought chai while waiting. The bus finally arrived and after one rupee we were taken along the road which led to the Kyber pass. We passed countless fortifications some which looked ancient and others cement, and more recent. All were built solidly from stone and mud and all faced to the east.

The landscape had changed dramatically overnight. Now instead of heavily populated countryside with villages trees and watered fields there was now almost no vegetation or

people except for a single black totally covered woman standing against a wall of a fort.

The bus was beginning to labour, we were climbing up into the pass. Here many tribal peoples still live and their fighting strength determines ownership of land.

Finally we arrived at a tiny village at the top of the pass. The bus stopped, everyone got out including the driver and we were left sitting. What were we to do, this was not the border. After climbing out and walking a little this way and that we found from sheer luck a truck which we should climb onto to go to the actual border. The more people the cheaper. For this leg of the journey we sat on the roof and literally flew down the mountainside. On reaching the bottom we were at the border. There were little Afghani restaurants here by the dozen so we sat amongst the flies and ordered kabab bread and chai. We had our exit stamps and so walked to the next border office to enter Afghanistan.