

Stopped at the Trolley - Memoir Benchmark

Like many other weekends, I hang out with my friends. And because I'm from Philly and live in the city, I take public transportation. This is all a part of me, how I live, and my identity. But one of the biggest parts of my identity is being a young girl or woman. Going about life as a young woman is far more different than going about life as a man. There are many examples of how much harder and difficult it is but one from my own perspective and experience is one of the times I was stopped downtown.

I'm talking about this one time because this is the one that stuck with me the most. It stuck with me not because it was the worst time, or it was the most recent, it just stuck. What happened on this day was normal for my life it seemed and so much less than I thought it would come to be. Another part of my identity is being a teenager and with that, I hang out with my friends from school. That is exactly what I did that weekend, and this being a normal occurrence I got ready and went on the bus. It was about one or two in the afternoon and I was excited. At this time even though I'd seen my friends just the day before, I was still going to be delighted to see them again. A couple of minutes later, I get off and I get on the trolley. On almost all occasions like this, I'm listening to music not paying very close attention but still being aware. About 15 minutes later I hear my stop being called so I get off just like the bus just like every time before, but this time is a little different.

As I'm walking to the stairs to get off the platform of the trolley station a man stops me. A little annoying but normal for almost all people in the city. He simply asks,

“Where's the direction to the nearest CVS.”

He probably said something else but he was still asking for direction just like any other person. I take out my earphones and ask him to say it again. But in my head, I just want to meet up with my friends, and get on with my day because I hate being bothered with questions like that. But of course, I'm not going to say that to his face so I just give him the answer once he asks again. So as I'm trying to direct him to where he wants to go he's clearly not paying attention. I'm standing there, taking time out of my day to give him direction and he's not even paying attention. But it's not like he's just looking at my face and not getting a word I'm saying, He's looking at my body. When I say my body I don't just mean my elbows, he was looking at my boobies. At the time I just give him the direction and going on my way never talking to him again but still thinking,

"God, why do men always have to look at my body? Like just ask your question and go on with your life. What's the point of it all?"

But brushing the thought off and trying to not think about it but still thinking about it.

Being a woman you're expected to expect men to treat you in this way of disrespect because "that's what men do" "they can't control themselves" and then when they do it and you're supposed to take it on the chin. But I was raised to speak up for myself and never let anyone disrespect me, and I stand by that. But being the introvert that I am, I hate confrontation and sometimes that leads to rolling on my back and letting people treat me with disrespect. Not something I'm proud of but something that happens to women everywhere. So having men of all different age groups objectify me is of course, upsetting, but a recurrence. So after this one moment at the trolley stop, I decided that I will never let a man get away with objectifying me ever again. This pledge was something that I wanted to do and stick by for a long time but never did, but this was the end. It wasn't that I was finally sick of it because I had been sick of it for years but this was the point when I finally said I'll put it into action