

The Missed Train

I watched the train doors slide shut as I reached the platform, my hand still gripping my ticket. The conductor didn't look at me. The train didn't slow. It pulled away, carrying my carefully planned future with it.

I had mapped everything out, every transfer, every minute. This was my first solo trip, a weekend conference I'd convinced myself would change everything. Missing the train wasn't just an inconvenience; it felt like proof that I wasn't capable of doing things on my own.

I stood there longer than necessary, pretending to reread the departure board so no one would notice how embarrassed I felt. Around me, people rushed past with confidence, like they belonged in motion. I didn't.

Eventually, I sat on a cold metal bench and opened my phone. No service. I laughed once, quietly. Of course.

With nothing else to do, I paid attention. A mother teaching her son how to read the signs. An elderly man offering directions to a stranger. A busker playing off-key but smiling anyway. Life wasn't paused just because I was.

I finally found the ticket counter and asked about alternatives, expecting annoyance. Instead, the woman smiled and said, "Happens all the time." She rerouted me through a different city. Longer trip. Cheaper ticket. Unexpected layover.

That detour changed everything. I met people I wouldn't have otherwise. I arrived late, yes but calmer, more present. The conference wasn't transformative in the dramatic way I'd imagined. But something else was.

Missing that train taught me that control is often an illusion. Plans fail. Timing slips. And sometimes the mistake you think defines you becomes the moment you realize you can adapt.

I still plan obsessively. But now I leave room for delays and for myself.