

The city smells of rotten chicken carcasses and cinnamon buns. On a sticky sweet day, the town would emit a sour smell that lingered at bus stops, radio stations and even at outdoor public pools. Anytime I come back here, the odd combination would remind me that I was never home here. One afternoon I rode the bus, it was a sad story of transportation but at least it was cheaper than driving. The midnight blue cheap graffiti-covered seats were uncomfortable and not meant for long-distance travel. The transit authority's windows were stickered with broken warnings, informing the passengers to only open the windows in the event of an emergency. I never could invoke what kind of emergency in reality but in my head, due to the putrid stench, the ideas were there. Junkies spilling their junk in their puffy arms, a wailing neglected colicky baby with a tireless mother seething over her eye makeup running, or someone doubling over and tripping up and onto the steps of the bus. Their contents, once in their arms, are scattered all over the floor. An aviator sunglasses-wearing man apologizes constantly as he collects the wayward items as if they were chicken feathers being thrown from a roof. Rolling my eyes, I then focus back on the trek I reluctantly agreed to make in the hot summer sun. No one talks. The bus arrives at the next stop, yet like the last lost marble under a seat, only to roll out of plain view occasionally, we roll on. The doors screech as they open, and the hot humid sun causes more stink to enter our noses. I remember a friend's suggestion, "Focus on the cinnamon buns smell", she'd say confidently. "...the yeast will give your taste buds a break and hopefully it'll distract you while going through this shitty overpriced city." Her advice seemed almost impossible today. I could see the bun in my mind temporarily tempting my empty stomach. But some days, like today, the avian stretch was much too powerful. Eventually, I became like her skeptical partner in crime, with missing teeth like children who miss summer when they are in the middle of spring. "No one eats cinnamon buns in summer." he would craw back and inhale a long drag of his cigarette. Good point. But what was the point of being here? I simply, could not remember and missed my stop while daydreaming. More importantly, was I chicken or a cinnamon bun?



stephanie@watterson.ca