

*I am in the train carving. To make sure that I don't create too much of a mess I have a paper bag between my legs. I am trying to catch the shavings in the bag. When buying the knife in the shop I also got the bag to carry it. The knife was relatively expensive I'd say. It seems very American to me. It's a Buck knife, the kind which locks when open, which I feel is a reasonable choice for carving. I am sitting in the sightseeing car. The seat faces the window. A man sat some seats further right asks me about my carving.*

*Immediately he recognizes me as an artist. I think this is funny, as, in terms of carving, I'm quite an amateur. He asks if carving was my focus or if I was doing several things. If I was a sculptor. He tells me about his grandson who attended a certain high school with an artistic focus. He (the man) used to run a trailer park. Now he is retired but still works occasionally. He was raised in California, moved to Chicago and now lives in Arizona. He tells me, it's not the first time he has met a nice german person, that this was an example that not all prejudices were true. He also says that not all people in Chicago were gangsters. He used to think that before he went there. It's a nice conversation. I try to smile a lot as I think that's part of what people consider here as kindness. He shows me his own knife and tells me it has a rasp. I could use it if I'd like. Later on there is a couple sitting between us. We haven't spoke for a while. I'm not feeling like it and reinforce this impression by very obviously using my earphones to listen to music. If someone talks to me I have to remove them, if not I don't hear. After some time, when the man passes behind he places his knife beside me. I feel slightly awkward about it. Later he tosses me a leather case. He says he has a second one and that I should keep this and the knife. I don't know how to refuse the gift in english in a friendly way, so I just say thanks and smile while continuing to obviously listen to music. The people sitting in-between us give me a glance. They leave for having dinner in the diner car. A moment before an announcement was made that dinner would now be served in the diner car. This is exclusively for people who have reserved upfront. I don't touch the knife until late, and when the man isn't there anymore I leave the sightseeing car to return to my coach seat. I actually wanted to go back to my seat, I think I felt a little observed. I feel as if I have made a french exit.*

*I kind of feel as if I should stay in touch with the man. He is nice. At the same time I'm hesitant to pay him too much attention. Thinking rationally there is no actual reason for this and we chat from time to time. Sometimes I smile at him, always in a very reserved way. No brilliance. The evening he gave me the knife I dropped it into my backpack. I didn't take it out during the train-ride. The man leaves in Needles. I know this as he told me before. Shortly before the train arrived there I saw him but didn't say good-bye. At noon when I had some ice cream he observed its traces on my face. He*

*said it was cute, but then patted me on the back buddy-like. I felt as if he had recognized that he had crossed some kind of border with that comment.*

*I showed the knife to Aarum, my host in LA. He told me it was an expensive knife. Afterwards I kept on thinking about it. The next morning I used the knife for the first time. It's much better than the one I got in the shop. Keeping on thinking about the man I feel stupid for feeling awkward about the situation in the train. I can't even remember his name. Now I think he gave me an amazing present. I think I really should carve something great. I should make it as a carver in behalf of him. Like in the movies. A giftet person is spotted by a minor character who gives an initial present to the young talent. The minor character doesn't actually appear again in the movie. Only if there is something like a back flash which sometimes happens in very cheesy ones.*