

It is 4:30 PM on an express train from Strathfield to Gosford, all the ordinary folk are returning home from their big day out in the city and are ready to go home and relax. There's Grandpa and Grandma with their eyes hanging out of their heads as we pass the Hawkesbury River, their brood of grandchildren screaming at the top of their lungs, the couple making out in the corner in the rays of the afternoon sun unaware of the uncomfortable people around them... and then there was Lillian Denness sitting alone with the carriage occupants staring at her as she gazed out the window in the overbearing silence of ostracism.

Lillian sighed in exhaustion as the day's events finally took their toll on her weary body. She had been out all day dressed to impress and for the most part, she had had a wild and marvelous time with her friends, but alas they had to separate and go home. Now on her own, she sits waiting in silence for the train to arrive at Gosford so she can get off and avoid the looks of ridicule thrown by other passengers. She is quite a sight in her odd puffy pink dress with purple polka dots and black lace trims, zany in her bright pink curled wig with giant candy pieces and a strawberry pinned to her head, Lillian is the embodiment of freak.

But despite this, I still walk up and sit across from her because I am what she is, a freak. Lillian smiles as I introduce myself and we chat about what we both have in common - the Animedia Festival. She describes the fun and cool people who attended this event with such passion, the Otaku who love all the things we do such as the Japanese anime and manga, gaming and much more.

"So" I asked "When did you first come to Animedia?" Lillian tells me her first experience of the event was when she "...was about 12. Around 3 years ago." She then launches into a story about her father who "...came home from work one day and told me about this anime convention that was near where he worked. When he promised he would take me before work the next day I was really excited"

The material of her dress glosses over with light as we exit a tunnel; I really want to know why she had dressed like that but am too afraid to ask. Fortunately she puts me out of my misery by elaborating on her love of cosplaying which she now enthusiastically describes as "...a form of dressing up in costumes and roleplaying as that character..." she really gets into it and even shows me an impression of her character "...the vocaloid Miku Hatsune wearing her special dress from the 'Full Course for Candy Addicts' music video."

So, what got Lillian into this crazy world of anime heroes and video game villains? She answers and I am somewhat taken aback, there is a quality in her reply that I still fail to associate with younger people, melancholy. She speaks with nostalgia and tells me she had "...always liked it," ever since she "...was a little girl around the age of five, I would always wake up and watch my daily 'Pokemon' episode on cheese TV."

The other passengers on the train continue to stare and say absolutely nothing as we carry on with our conversation. Suddenly, sensing the eyes on her, Lillian wraps her arms about herself and holds on tight, Clearly, she doesn't like the negative attention she is receiving for her stance on Otaku. She answers quietly but with absolute honesty when I ask her if she is an Otaku. "In a way, but it really depends on how you look at yourself as an individual." Do you find the term 'Otaku' derogatory? I ask. "That

depends on the individual since there are all different types of Otaku. You've got Hardcore, Softcore, Japanese loving or casual Otaku, I believe I'm the casual type myself. It really does just depend on the individual."

An announcement broke through the speakers in a voice devoid of emotion, her purely mechanical tones announcing the next three stations, {station name}, {station name} Gosford. Lillian smiles tiredly as she pulls the zany wig from her head letting dark wavy hair cascade down her back giving me a better look at the ordinary girl beneath. She still looks zany in that dress but it's fascinating to finally get a glimpse of the ordinary girl behind the craziness and the freakishness that she associates with herself.

Whilst wrapping up that bright crazy wig in a net and stuffing it in her enormous shoulder bag, I ask "What she liked best about Animania today?" She expressed her joy of "...meeting the loads of people that attend this event. I was amazed at how friendly and accommodating these people can be, I got really excited and they made me feel so happy."

Finally the train began to slow when passed by the rocky stern faces of weathered resilient cliffs and the ragged remnants of the old and sickly trees, with the station in sight we both pushed to the front of the carriage and watched the strong and sturdy cement of the station pass slowly through the tiny window until our locomotive stopped. Spilling out onto the station with the other milling passengers I ask her my final question as we mount the stations stairs.

"What part of the Animania Festival do you find most important?" I ask. Lillian answered brightly with a big smile, her response was unselfish and very grown up. "I believe the most important part about Animania is the gracious people you meet. They all have the same interests and because everyone is there for the same thing they all have a really great time and each and every one of the kind natured people that you meet make you can talk too instantly without there being any awkwardness and they always make you feel like you belong. It was just so great to see everyone getting along; I can't wait to do it again."