*A journey from Bucharest to Tulcea — and what we learn when someone chooses not to be understood*

May 11, 2025.
10:00 AM.

Departure from Ibis Styles Bucharest Airport, Otopeni. Destination: Hotel City, Tulcea. Nearly 300 kilometers. More than four hours on the road.

The driver was a young Romanian man. He greeted me with a simple “good morning” and a direct question:

— Is this your first time in this region?

I said it was.

— Then sit in the front — he said. — The landscape is very beautiful.

I thanked him, but explained I needed to work during the journey. I preferred the back seat, with my laptop. We agreed to stop halfway for coffee, and that afterwards I would move to the front.

He accepted without insisting. Opened the door. And drove.

For the first hours, he said nothing. He simply drove, with a kind of discretion that is increasingly rare — as if he understood that respect is also measured by silence.

We stopped halfway, as agreed. A brief coffee. A quick phone call home. Nothing more. But I kept my word: when we returned to the car, I sat in the front.

That is when it began.

He asked what I did. I told him: university professor. He asked what I taught. Management, organizational studies, entrepreneurship.

There was a brief silence. Then he said:

— People believe they will succeed. But everything is already set up for them to fail. And then they blame themselves.

He said it without drama.

— Why do you think that? — I asked.

He spoke about companies that start well and disappear shortly after. Everything seems to grow — until it doesn’t. And when it fails, it fails completely.

I told him that I often disagree with how entrepreneurship is taught. You can teach someone to pitch in a semester — but that’s like teaching a parrot to speak. It repeats. It doesn’t understand.

Entrepreneurship is not technique. It is experience, context, the ability to read what is not written.
And that does not come quickly.

He looked at me. And immediately agreed.

— Yes — he said. — Because those are not the real conversations. And everything is set up for people to fail.

From that moment on, he spoke more.

He told me that when he was with his girlfriend and other couples, he avoided showing what he really thought. He had learned it wasn’t worth it.

— People don’t understand. And then they make fun of you. They think you believe in conspiracy theories.

He paused.

— It’s easier to talk about simple things. The weather. Football.

He preferred that.

He preferred to be readable.

He preferred to be just the driver.

The *driver*.

Not as a limitation. As a choice.

After that, silence returned. A different kind of silence — not the initial one, but the kind that follows when something essential has already been said.

We arrived in Tulcea. I thanked him. He nodded, without extending the moment.

I never saw him again. I don’t know his name.

But the landscape he offered me was not the road.

It was something else — something you cannot see through the window.
Some encounters explain nothing. But they rearrange everything.



Tulcea. End of the journey.