

"Bus Ride"

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Bus Ride

(Lights up. An UNNAMED WOMAN sits on a train, knitting something quietly and humming to herself.)

BENJAMIN enters the bus, holding a bouquet of flowers with a note tied to them and a backpack on his back.)

BENJAMIN

(cheerily, to bus driver)

Good morning! Cold day, isn't it?

(No one answers him. He walks to the seat next to where the WOMAN is sitting.)

Is it alright if I sit here?

WOMAN

Hmm? Oh, sure, go ahead.

(he sits.)

(after a moment)

Those are pretty flowers.

BENJAMIN

Oh, thank you. They're a little wilted, it was hard to find nice flowers this time of the year.

WOMAN

(nodding) I can imagine. A Christmas gift?

BENJAMIN

Oh, no, I actually don't celebrate Christmas.

WOMAN

Ah, Jewish then, are you?

BENJAMIN

Nope, not that, either. I just...don't celebrate it.

WOMAN

Interesting.

(BENJAMIN smiles politely and looks to his phone, trying to distract himself.)

WOMAN

(reading note attached to flowers) Ben.

BENJAMIN

(a bit startled) Hmm?

WOMAN

Well that's your name, isn't it? It says so on that note there. "Happy Birthday darling, I love you to the moon and back. Love, Benjamin." Your name is Ben. (she smiles) You know, I have a nephew called Ben. He's five years old. Ben's such a lovely name.

BENJAMIN

(turning the note away from the WOMAN) Oh--it's actually just Benjamin. I've never really been one for nicknames.

WOMAN

Ah.

(a long pause)

WOMAN

Congratulations, by the way.

BENJAMIN

(visibly annoyed now at the woman's remarks)
Sorry?

WOMAN

Congratulations.

(a pause)

On, y'know, your marriage. (she points to a ring on BENJAMIN's ring finger)

BENJAMIN

Oh. (he chuckles awkwardly) Actually, we--

WOMAN

Must be a fresh marriage if you're still in the flower-buying stage. I remember when my husband was all sweet with me. Unfortunately, it was short-lived, but a girl can dream, right?

BENJAMIN

We're not married.

WOMAN

(folding her arms over her chest) You're not?

BENJAMIN

No. No, um, actually...

(he bites his lip and sighs)

...we're just engaged.

WOMAN

I see. Perhaps a bit...uncouth of you to wear your wedding band before the wedding though, isn't it?

BENJAMIN

It's...yeah, perhaps.

(he fiddles with his ring and the WOMAN stares at him for a long moment)

WOMAN

What's in the backpack?

BENJAMIN

Oh, it's a picnic.

WOMAN

A picnic?

BENJAMIN

Yeah. I've got a blanket, some turkey sandwiches, and some freshly baked chocolate chip cookies.

WOMAN

A birthday...picnic...date?

BENJAMIN

You could call it that, yes.

WOMAN

I see.

BENJAMIN

I, um, I actually have a few extra cookies if you'd like one.
(he reaches into his bag)

WOMAN

I'm gluten free.

BENJAMIN

Mmm. Of course you are.
(a pause)

WOMAN

Bit cold for a picnic, isn't it? Looks like it might snow.

BENJAMIN

Oh, I hope it doesn't. But a blizzard right now is just my luck.
I can't really reschedule this, I'm not on this side of town
very often.

WOMAN

Where do you live?

BENJAMIN

Upstate. A few hours from here.

WOMAN

And you're coming all the way down here for a birthday picnic? Kids these days and their long distance relationships. You think that you'll be fine with your "Facetime" and "InstaSnap" and you never spend any real time with each other because you think you don't need to. I'll bet you don't even know how to properly address a letter, do you? And why on earth would you come all the way down here just to have a *picnic*? In *December*? It's people like you who make me miss the good old days when men weren't such rascals. What happened to taking your lady out to a nice dinner, in a nice restaurant instead of on a soggy piece of grass?

BENJAMIN

(chuckling humorlessly) Oh, you think--

WOMAN

What happened to picking her up for a date in your own car, or asking her father for his blessing? I bet you didn't even ask her father for his blessing before you proposed, did you?

BENJAMIN

I...I wasn't the one who did the proposing.

WOMAN

You're saying...she proposed to you?

BENJAMIN

Yeah.

(beat)

He did.

WOMAN

(quietly)

Oh.

(beat)

I'm sorry for--

BENJAMIN

It's fine.

BUS DRIVER (offstage)

Anyone getting off at Stetson?

BENJAMIN

(standing up)

Yup, that's me.

WOMAN

Oh, no no sweetheart, this isn't your stop.

BENJAMIN

Yeah, I think it is.

WOMAN

Really? You and your...male friend are having your picnic *here*?

BENJAMIN

Yes, ma'am.

WOMAN

But...but having a picnic at a *cemetery* seems a little morbid, wouldn't you say?

BENJAMIN

Yeah. (he looks down at his flowers and sighs) Maybe. Happy Holidays, miss.

(Lights out.)