



The Empty Bus Stop at Dawn

There is a bus stop down the street from my house that I have walked past hundreds of times, without giving it a second thought. In the daytime, it is just part of the sidewalk. It is a piece of metal for a pole, a bench with paint almost all peeled off, and a shelter made of glass that has been touched so much that it is almost completely smeared over. People wait at the bus stop, looking at their phones or shifting their weight from foot to foot while anxiously awaiting the bus to arrive. Nobody cares what the bus stop looks like. Nobody even looks at it.

One morning, I could not sleep, so I went outside. The sky was dark, but not the heavy dark of night. It was early gray, where you can tell the day is coming, but not yet. The streets were eerily quiet, too quiet, like the city had been erased. I walked, not even thinking about where I was headed, and then, suddenly, I was there, at the bus stop, under the last blinking streetlight still on down the road.

It had a different feel at that time. The dew had made the bench wet, with drops glistening in whatever light there was. The glass of the shelter was misted over, foggy enough to where you could draw shapes with your finger. Someone had scratched a name into the panel. The letters were jagged and not straight, but they had survived rain and wind. The whole thing felt like it had been forgotten, but not abandoned. Just waiting.

I took a seat, and while I didn't enjoy feeling cold wetness seep through my jeans, I let it go. The air was cold enough to bite but felt fresh, almost like the night had cleansed everything. I could see my breath in your little clouds. There was no sound of people or engines, only the slight



rustling of leaves and the odd drip of water from somewhere. Every sound seemed amplified; my shoes scraping the concrete, the creaking of the bench as I shifted.

The world seemed very still to me. The windows of the houses across the street were still dark. One single cat walked along the curb, flicked its tail, and slipped below a parked car. Birds were starting to stir in the nearest tree, calling each other tentatively, like they were testing the air. I could hear a truck that seemed far away, a sound far away enough that it was unreal.

Bus stops are meant to be about waiting, but today, having to wait felt like there was nothing to wait for. No scheduled time, no pressing need to leave. Just time creeping forward slowly and unnoticed. I saw things to which I'm oblivious most days: the worn curled edges of the contents of my faded map, the way the metal pole had small nicks and dents left by who knows what, the smell of cold damp concrete. Even the graffiti scrawled in the shelter bore witness to a faint history of someone waiting with pure curiosity and leaving a mark as proof of their previous existence in that place.

The sky's hue gradually transitioned from gray to a lighter version. The streetlights clicked off one by one, briefly ceding to the sun. The air warmed slightly, so I pulled my jacket closer. Briefly, the bus stop felt like a bubble where the city's frenetic energy had been stripped away. I lingered until the sky turned a pale blue and the first car rolled by, its tires hissing on the damp asphalt. The pause felt broken, but not abruptly.

No bus came. None needed to. I stayed until the sky turned pale blue and the first car rolled past, its tires hissing against the damp road. The spell broke, but in a gentle way. I stood, swept the



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water off my legs, and walked home. The stop was once again just another bus stop. Behind me, the stop looked ordinary again, just another piece of the street. Yet I carried with me the quiet it had given, like a secret only that hour could share.

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