

The Last Bus Stop on River Road

The bus stop sits at the edge of River Road like it forgot to leave when everything else moved on. A metal bench leans toward the ditch, one bolt missing, the seat dipping slightly in the middle. The shelter's plastic wall has turned cloudy over time, its surface scratched with names that no longer mean much to anyone.

Cars pass without slowing. Most of them do not even signal anymore. The stop exists anyway.

I come here in the late afternoon, when the light starts losing its edge. Sun hits the road at an angle that makes the asphalt look thin, almost brittle. Heat rises in soft waves, warping the white line near the curb. A paper cup rolls a few feet, then settles again. The air smells faintly of dust and cut grass from a field down the road. Nothing announces itself. The place waits.

The bench feels colder than expected. Metal presses through denim and stays there. The sound of traffic comes in short bursts, engines flaring, then fading. Between those bursts, the road empties. In that space, smaller sounds surface. Wind drags dry leaves across the concrete. A bird lands on the shelter roof, shifts once, then takes off again. The plastic wall creaks as it expands under the sun.

The bus stop was not built for lingering. Schedules are posted, though no one checks them anymore. The print has faded enough to blur the times together. Once, people stood here every evening. Shoes lined up along the curb. Conversations filled the space, then cut off as the bus arrived. That rhythm no longer exists, but traces remain. A worn patch on the ground marks where feet used to wait. A dent in the shelter frame shows where someone leaned too hard.

I watch the road instead. Cars pass close enough to stir the air. Tires hiss against the pavement. One truck rattles loose gravel into the ditch. Another driver slows, glances over, then speeds up again. The bus never appears, yet the habit of waiting stays intact. Time stretches here, measured in passing vehicles rather than minutes.

Light shifts again. Shadows from the shelter lengthen and cross the bench. The plastic wall catches the sun and turns milky white, then dull. The smell of grass fades, replaced by warm asphalt. A breeze cuts through, brief and sharp, then disappears. The road hums quietly, like it always does.

Standing up feels louder than it should. The bench scrapes once as I step away. For a moment, the stop looks occupied again. Then it returns to itself. The road keeps moving. The shelter holds its place. The bus stop stays behind, waiting without expectation, fixed in a routine that no longer needs an ending.