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## Riding the Bus

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# Riding the Bus



Davey Erekson

**D**  
AY 1

The bus was silent. I leaned back in the uncomfortably small seats and breathed deeply. Long day. The hour commute from school to home seemed painfully long as the bus stopped and flipped its doors open every two minutes. I thought of all the homework that needed to be done and let my backpack sit on the floor to the left of me. My thoughts wandered through the events of the day, moved to my dreams of becoming an influential thinker of the future, fell back to a good-looking girl I

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had seen at work that day, remembered the discomfort the seats caused. I saw a man walk onto the bus and sit down in a seat near the front, his hat resting on top of his head like an alert cat. He fascinated me.

So I found a pastime: people watching.

### DAY 2

Everyone was silent again, the bumps on the road clunking under the tires and the screaming of the air conditioner creating all the noise in the vehicle.

There were three others there. The first was a large man in dark slacks. His patterned socks clashed with his brown shoes—a man who thought he dressed nicely. He wore a golf shirt with “Toys Я Us” printed across the left pocket. His head looked awkward, a large melon on a stick, and his hands were too big for his arms. His breath came with effort, each blast of air ruffling the whiskers of his upper lip.

The other two were married. They sat side by side, the man slender and kind looking. The woman was the kind of person you know is young but has the features of a fifty-year-old. A hardened fifty-year-old. Side by side they sat, silent.

Everyone stared forward, rejecting any involvement with the other bus riders beyond the shared blue space.

### DAY 5

He was talking about men and women. I watched him, the man with a full beard and baseball cap. His voice whined.

“Well, all I’m saying is that men are inherently worse than women.”

The bus driver answered.

“Huh.”

“I mean, men are users and liars, and they care only about physical beauty, whereas women look deeper. They care more about the kind of guy, and men are just losers.”

The woman next to him began.

“Well, I don’t agree. There are good people in—”

“You have to admit though, that women are naturally better.”

The driver mumbled.

“University Mall, transfer point.”

“Don’t you think women are naturally just better than men?”

I couldn’t hear the driver’s reply and watched as the bearded man stepped off the bus.

### DAY 13

“Now don’t be mad if I break this.” I watched him take a pencil out of my backpack and asked, “What?”

The thin wood snapped under his fingers. He grabbed three more pencils and I thought, *what do you mean, “don’t be mad if I break this”?* Those are my only—snap, snap, snap. The three pencils were in his hands in six pieces.

He looked down at my human anatomy book, my backpack lying open to assault on the floor.

“I want to take that class. Want to know why?”

I grunted neutrally.

“I want to learn to dissect humans.”

And he smiled what I swear was the most evil smile I have ever seen in my life. I decided to scoot over a bit.

“You know what I want for Christmas?”

Annoyed at the complete uselessness of the question, I answered.

“No.”

“Five hundred dollars.”

He paused to let this sink in.

“Do you know why?”

I paused, contemplated the question, and replied the best I could.

“No.”

“For a piece of machinery.”

I pulled a book out of my bag and began reading intently, while he took my pen and shoved it in his pocket.

### DAY 15

An empty bus. Just the driver and me. I let my mind wander again, let my thoughts find an interest to lock on to. We jumped

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along the road, air straining through the roaring air conditioner, me shivering in the back seat.

I thought about the ride, the accidental gathering of people who don't know each other, forced into close quarters. I guess everyone has to ride a bus sometime.

I wonder what kind of rider I was.