

Connect To

By

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1. EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

She's a funny looking creature, clutching her belongings and looking around the way a lost tourist might. At first glance someone might think she was homeless...and in a way, WHITNEY is. The only indication that she might be a runaway is the ipod she is gripping like an I.V. while music blasts in her ears.

She pauses for a moment and stares at the road in front of her. A waterfall of cars with endless destinations. She looks at the sun as it begins to set, as if trying to read the time Crocodile Dundee style, but it only adds to the image of a lost girl with no finish line in sight.

Ahead of her a bus pulls into frame and comes to a stop beside a few expectant passengers. The doors fold open and the driver steps out. He pulls open the luggage compartment on the side of the transport and throws in their bags.

While occupied with his task, Whitney's curiosity leads her onboard the bus: an unintended stowaway, oblivious of her trespass.

The driver dusts his hands off and hoists himself back into his post, just LAURIE appears on the horizon. She's perched on her beater of a 10-speed, pedaling for all she's worth. There's no way she's going to make this bus in time. Fighting tears and clutching a suitcase with one hand, she pedals with renewed ferocity. The transport doors close and the bus shifts into gear. She hollers raggedly after it,

LAURIE

Wait!

The bus pauses - possibly the only thing that's gone right for Laurie in her whole life. The bus driver steps onto the wet sidewalk just in time to see Laurie's suitcase explode open, spilling her clothes all over the ground.

Laurie throws her bike to the ground and hastily gathers up her muddied clothes, stuffing them back into the recalcitrant suitcase. Without a second thought, she violently HEAVES the bike off the road, where it lands in the brush with a satisfying crunch. The bus driver watches impassively as she approaches.

DRIVER 1

Ticket.

She hands it to him: an at home print out online purchase. He initials it with a pen.

2. INT. BUS - DAY

Laurie steps into the cab and sees the seats are filled, except one: in the back, a window seat is open next to Whitney, who gives her a blank, bright expression, humming to herself and clutching her headphones. Next to the weirdo: perfect. Laurie clambers over Whitney, who doesn't seem to realize she's a human obstacle course. Laurie settles in, miffed.

2a The bus pulls away from the curb and disappears around the bend.

3. INT. BUS - 3AM

3A. INT. BUS - LATER

Passengers curl themselves into pretzels of sleep. One or two read in the dim lights.

3B. INT. BUS - 3AM

The dim lights of the bus is enough to keep Laurie awake. Next to her Whitney is listening to her ipod and clearly *not* sleeping, as she is quietly humming along.

A series of jump-cuts show Laurie attempting to block out the noise in vain:

1. Laurie pulls her hoodie over her face while Whitney hums Flight of the Bumble Bee

2. Laurie repositions with frustration against the window, trying to disappear. Whitney hums Mozart's Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

When Whitney moves onto the War of 1812 Overture, it's time for an intervention.

Laurie taps her on the shoulder. Whitney smiles but is undeterred, leaving her earphones in her ears, continuing to sing along.

Laurie motions for her to pull her earphones out. Whitney recoils, shaking her head vigorously.

WHITNEY

It isn't finished yet. I made this new year's resolution that I would finish everything I started. I have

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

WHITNEY (cont'd)
this big problem with switching
things all the time. Being in the
car with me would make you pull
your hair out.

LAURIE
Does a *bus* count?

Whitney missed this, engrossed in her mission. Laurie pokes her head up a little to assess the seat situation in the bus: is this really her only option? She tries again:

LAURIE (CONT'D)
I'm just trying to get some sleep.
Could you just...sing inside your
head instead of outside?

Whitney looks confused...was she talking again?

WHITNEY
Don't worry the cannons aren't
real.

LAURIE
I'm not worried, I'm tired.

WHITNEY
I sometimes like to make up words.
*"We're gonna blow up
Na-po-leon...."*

LAURIE
Please.

She brings her hands together like she is begging. Whitney looks confused and taker her head phones out.

WHITNEY
Are you okay?

LAURIE
I just wanted to get some sleep.

Whitney is incredulous.

WHITNEY
Are you kidding me?

Laurie dons her eye mask and attempts to sleep. Whitney scoffs and shakes her head. Her growing agitation is almost as distracting as the singing. After an awkward moment, Laurie sits up with a sigh.

LAURIE

Are you mad at me?

Whitney won't meet her eyes but rocks herself, cradling the ipod.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

You're mad at *me*?

WHITNEY

That song had *maybe* twenty seconds left. You couldn't have waited?

LAURIE

It's three in the morning...you've been at it for hours!

WHITNEY

Twenty seconds and I was done. I thought something was seriously wrong.

LAURIE

Something *is* seriously wrong, I need *sleep*.

WHITNEY

And *I* need to follow through on something in my life for once. It's only ...February and you just cost me my resolution.

Laurie regards her in shock, and looks around. Is anyone else hearing this crazy woman?

LAURIE

God. Can't you just...unpause it or start it where you left off?

Whitney is visibly upset. Seriously emotionally wracked. Laurie was not prepared for this onslaught and is starting to feel like a jerk.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Look...I thought it was a pretty reasonable...request.

Whitney avoids her gaze, unable to hide how upset she is.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Just start it where you left off and you'll be fine. It will be like exhaling after inhaling.

(CONTINUED)

WHITNEY

No. I turned it off. So now I have to leave it off. I'm in limbo now.

LAURIE

What? Why? You don't think that's a little childish?

WHITNEY

(in one breath)

I am following through on everything I do from now on if I turned it off then I leave it off so now I don't know how to get out of this and *no* it's *not* childish this is the most adult I've ever been in my life and you are the crazy on the bus who just took that away from me.

LAURIE

But...I mean come on...if I just broke your resolution, what does it hurt to turn it back -

WHITNEY

(cutting her off)

Is this how you lure people off their path of virtue? "Oh well gee, since I already screwed up your life, you might as well start worshiping Satan and eating kitten heads."

This is just too much in 24 hours for Laurie, who cracks.

LAURIE

You think *this* screwed up your life? Are you out of your mind? I'm so sorry that I've inconvenienced you. It's not like any of the rest of us have something we made promises about. It's not like "Til death do you part" means anything anymore...and then you find yourself leaving your bastard of a husband in the middle of the night on a ratty bus bound for who knows where, because the son of a bitch accidentally took your keys on his "golf trip." I rode my bike to the bus! It's not like the rest of us matter, is it?!

(CONTINUED)

Laurie crumples into the window of the bus, mortified to have unloaded on a perfect stranger. She pulls the tatters of her dignity around her. Whitney's brain activity slows enough to allow for empathy. A moment of silence passes between them.

WHITNEY

That sucks.

LAURIE

Yeah that sucks.

An uneasy truce is established. Whitney shares her handwipes.

Laurie can't believe she's about to do this.

LAURIE

(begins humming the end of the
1812 Overture Theme)

Whitney grins and joins in with cannon noises. Both girls finish the end of the Overture, with enthusiastic booshes from unseen cannon and a final flourish. They giggle. Across the aisle, a BUS PASSENGER has been roused from his sleep.

BUS PASSENGER

(angrily)

Shhh!

The two girls try to look appropriately chastened. Only Laurie really succeeds. Laurie pulls down her eye mask and tries to get comfy. Whitney copies her new hero.

4. EXT. GAS STOP - 4AM

The bus groans to a stop at a gas station along the deserted night highway. A few passengers stretch their legs, smoke, or make road-food purchases they will later regret. Laurie and Whitney stand in a pool of light near the pumps, their breath illuminated in the cold night air. Laurie smokes.

LAURIE

(indicating the cigarette)

First in 5 years.

A beat in the cold. Laurie savors.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

Where are you going? You seem
like...

(CONTINUED)

WHITNEY

Like I should be in a nut house?

Laurie is caught off-guard. She back pedals a little.

LAURIE

I didn't mean - you're eccentric,
but I wouldn't say...

WHITNEY

I was.

LAURIE

You were.

WHITNEY

Yeah. I ran away.

Laurie absorbs this, with a measuring look.

LAURIE

You're on the run?

WHITNEY

No, I'm going back.

LAURIE

Why?

WHITNEY

Because of my promise. My
resolution from new years that you
destroyed.

LAURIE

So...why wouldn't you just keep
running? Isn't that not following
through on, I don't know, running
away?

WHITNEY

No, it's not following through on
staying.

Whitney blows her nose. Laurie looks at her curiously.
There's something profound about what she just said and it
stirs some feelings in Laurie's chest.

LAURIE

How do you know which is stopping
and which is starting?

(CONTINUED)

Whitney looks at her for a long moment, processing the question. Laurie struggles with her composure. Whitney stirs, noticing that Laurie is emotional.

WHITNEY

Are you okay?

LAURIE

I want to follow through.

WHITNEY

On what?

LAURIE

That's just it. I don't know. My God I don't know. I don't know what's following through and what's quitting.

Whitney once again pauses to think about this....

WHITNEY

I never really thought of them as being all that different.

5. INT. BUS - LATER

Montage. The bus driver's hands guiding the wheel into the long dark road. The lights from the highway. Laurie sleeping on the window. Whitney sleeping on Laurie.

6. EXT. BUS - DAWN

The transport steadily cruises a rural road in the Spring dawn, passing frosted fields and an abandoned tractor. The sun rises.

7. INT. BUS - DAWN

Whitney is wide awake, legs swinging, energy brimming. Laurie wakes and stretches as much as she can, exhausted and sore from a weird night.

She paws through her bag to find her online print-out ticket, checking the details.

WHITNEY

Did you know receipts can give you cancer? They kill you. You die.

Laurie finds it a bit too early for Whitney's theories.

(CONTINUED)

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
They have something called BPA
which is a plastic hardliner.

Laurie wearily climbs over her and heads to the restroom in the back.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
(calling after her)
It kills you!

8. INT. BUS - LATER

A series of jump cuts in sync with Whitney's mind. Laurie largely ignores her - not that Whitney gives her time to answer anyway.

WHITNEY
What do you like better: armadillos
or ice cream?

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
Can I see your belly button?

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
How come your husband cheated on
you?

This one hits home. Laurie succumbs to the barrage.

LAURIE
I guess he lost sight of the big
picture. Or maybe he just...I have
no idea. I didn't ask.

WHITNEY
You just left?

LAURIE
Yeah. I mean...I don't know...I
wasn't even all that surprised by
it. I'm actually not even all that
mad about it.

WHITNEY
You *seemed* mad.

LAURIE
You wouldn't shut up, I was trying
to sleep.

(CONTINUED)

WHITNEY

There was only like forty five more seconds left!

LAURIE

You went through a hundred albums!

Whitney makes an irritated noise. The bus slows. The driver announces a transfer point, and they turn off the road, pulling into a rest stop. The girls peer out the window as they approach.

9. EXT. REST STOP. MORNING

Passengers stream off the bus, gathering their bags from the driver who unloads them with practiced carelessness.

Laurie grabs her bag and the two girls wander toward the benches.

LAURIE

So, why did you make that new year's resolution?

There's a shift in Whitney's manner. Her usual motor-mouth clams up. She makes an elaborate show of stretching as if she didn't hear, and slowly travels away from Laurie. Laurie watches in bemusement, not fooled.

LAURIE (CONT'D)

You don't want to *finish* the conversation?

Whitney is stunned. Her own logic used against her.

WHITNEY

I made it because I never finish anything, remember?

Still defensive, she walks toward the drinking fountain. Laurie tails her, her turn to be curious.

LAURIE

Yeah but...if you were really going all out, it would mean the next time you had a drink of water you wouldn't ever be able to stop drinking. Right?

Whitney sputters at the fountain and comes up for air with her rebuttal. Laurie helps herself to a long drink.

(CONTINUED)

WHITNEY

Wrong, because if I never stopped drinking I would die and if I die all the other stuff I started wouldn't get finished. So you have to put some things on standby and come back to them later.

LAURIE

Ha! Then why couldn't you have paused the song?

WHITNEY

It wasn't done!

Laurie sighs.

LAURIE

I don't even know what I am trying to get at.

10. INT. REST STOP RESTROOM - DAY

Laurie splashes water on her face and pats it dry with a paper towel, trying to freshen up.

WHITNEY

Why didn't you finish your marriage?

Laurie pauses, looking at her from the mirror.

LAURIE

My marriage was finished.

11. EXT. REST STOP - DAY

Whitney follows Laurie out of the bathroom and across the grass to the free coffee, relentless.

WHITNEY

Til death do you part?

LAURIE

That's real sweet but it can also be a trap.

Whitney gives her a curious look. Laurie hands her a tiny styrofoam cup of coffee and attempts an explanation.

(CONTINUED)

LAURIE (CONT'D)
What if you find out you're married
to a monster who likes to eat
kitten heads?

WHITNEY
(conspiratorially)
Or worship Satan?

Laurie nods, sips her coffee.

WHITNEY (CONT'D)
(dead serious)
It's odd to me how those two always
go together.

12. EXT. REST STOP TRANSFER POINT - DAY

A new driver checks tickets and helps load bags onto the transfer coach. Whitney stands next to Laurie, who brandishes her ticket and suitcase at the ready. Whitney realizes that something is not right with her situation. She starts stalling, shooing others ahead of her in line.

Laurie looks at her oddly. Understanding dawns.

LAURIE
Do you have a ticket?

Whitney's face tells the whole story.

13. EXT. REST STOP TRANSFER POINT - A MOMENT LATER

Laurie is screaming and dancing about, shouting that she has a spider on her. Passerby's stare at the outrageous display, jaws hanging open.

LAURIE
It's in my shirt! It's in my shirt!
it's out! It's out its out! Oh my
god!

In the confusion, Whitney steals onto the bus, holding a branch in front of her face, a sort of disguise that makes sense to only her. The bus driver grumpily helps Laurie reclaim her belongings.

LAURIE (CONT'D)
Oh thank you! Thank you, thank you.

14. INT. BUS - A MOMENT LATER

Laurie takes her seat next to Whitney, who has just wiped it with handiwipes. They grin. Laurie's still feeling the rush - she's never done anything like that before.

Whitney hands Laurie the ipod reverently, placing it in her hands and folding them over it. Laurie gives her a puzzled look.

WHITNEY

It's my secret Laurie. I want you to have it.

LAURIE

What's the secret.

WHITNEY

It's on repeat *all*.

Laurie doesn't get it. She waits for further explanation, touched by the gesture but confused.

WHITNEY

(*simply*)

There is no starting or stopping.

It's a moment of clarity for Laurie. She looks at the ipod and beams a smile. Whitney beams one back. The two friends regard each other.

15. EXT. I-90 BRIDGE. DAY

The bus rolls down the long highway as the sun continues its never ending circuit in the sky. Not starting, not stopping.