

Bus Stop

A Ten-Minute Play
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BUS STOP: A Ten-Minute Play

Characters (*Note - these characters can be any gender or race):

MAL: A mysterious person - wears dark colors. Any age up until 40s.

JORDAN: Defensive, not very confident. A “loser.” 20s-30s.

AT RISE: Bus stop, night. The yellow glow of a streetlamp illuminates the glass/Plexiglas shelter (optional), and the electronic bus schedule on the wall is blank. MAL sits SL at the far end of the long bench, legs crossed with arms resting on knees, Zen-style. Faint (but actually quite loud) screamo can be heard through MAL's headphones. MAL wears dark sunglasses and a hood. JORDAN enters from SR and sits slouched dead center on the bench, waiting. After a bit...

JORDAN: Excuse me? *Excuse me...* HELLO! (*JORDAN waves a hand at MAL.*) Could you - could you turn that down or something? Um... (*JORDAN gets up and walks toward MAL, hesitant.*) Hello?

JORDAN pokes MAL gently on the foot, who, startled, leaps up with a karate pose at the ready.

MAL: Hah!

JORDAN: Whoa there!

MAL: Oh, jeez. What the hell, man? (*Relaxes, pops out an earbud.*)

JORDAN: I could ask the same! Were you... sleeping?

MAL: Hey, what do you want, anyway?

JORDAN: Well, I just, um... was wondering... if you knew what time the next bus comes... and if you could turn your music down? I mean - not that it's bothersome, but, well, it *is* - but it's pretty loud and it would suck if you went deaf or something... uh - yeah. Heh. (*Unconvincing sheepish grin.*)

MAL: (*Looks at JORDAN like he said the sun was made of spaghetti.*) I don't think my auricular well-being is any of your concern, punk.

MAL sits on bench with legs crossed, arms Zen-style. The screamo continues. JORDAN stares indignantly, turns to sit down on the opposite end, and suddenly turns back.

JORDAN: Wait a second, hold up! Punk? Did you call *me* a punk? If anything, you're the punk here, with your hood and your shades and your... (*Searching for the word*) shouty-music. Also, in case you didn't notice, it's *night-time*! Or maybe you're blind, too! That would explain the sunglasses. (*Beat.*) Hello? (*A groan born of frustration.*) Ugh!

JORDAN stamps to the opposite end of the bench SR, turned away from MAL. A pause.

MAL: (*Unmoving*) I *can* hear you, you know.

JORDAN whips head around.

JORDAN: What?! Oh, well... good. Because... -- I'm sorry. I shouldn't have... said those things. I was just joking. You're not blind... right?

MAL turns head towards JORDAN, maintaining the Zen position.

MAL: (*Sighs.*) It's okay, punk. Apology accepted. I forgive you.

MAL turns back.

JORDAN: Thanks...? I guess? (*Pause.*) So... what's your name? I'm Jordan.

MAL: Mal.

JORDAN: Mal. Is that short for something? Malcolm? (*Beat.*) Mallory? (*Note: if the actor is male, say Malcolm then Mallory. If the actor is female, say Mallory then Malcolm.*)

MAL: Nope, just Mal.

JORDAN: Mmmkay... Oh yeah, what time is the next bus?

MAL: I don't know, do I? The board is busted.

JORDAN: Yeah, but I thought that maybe you... never mind.

Silence, except for the faint screamo. Comfortable for MAL, uncomfortable for JORDAN.

JORDAN (cont.): It's pretty dark out, huh?

MAL nods curtly.

JORDAN: Probably darker for you – heh. (*Points to own eyes, the joke falls flat.*) How long have you been sitting there?

MAL: A few hours at least. I got nowhere to be, figured I'd chill here, listen to some music, let the world go by for a little while. It's quite peaceful, actually. Except when you're interrupted by some punk with sensitive hearing. But it's been nice up until then.

JORDAN: A few HOURS? And no bus? Shit. Aw man.

MAL: Why, you got somewhere to be?

JORDAN: Um, yeah! I got places to go, people to see!

MAL: Oh really, at... (*Checks time on iPod.*) 10:27pm?

JORDAN: As a matter of fact, I do!

MAL: Do tell. (*Skeptical look from JORDAN.*) Seriously, I'm dying to hear of your magnificent plans.

JORDAN: (*Caught in a lie.*) Well, I'm gonna... go home, and... eat dinner. Call my mother. Maybe watch some Netflix. Important stuff, am I right?! (*The joke falls flat again.*)

MAL: Mmm. The great and glorious Jordan embarking on a grand adventure. Just as I suspected. If that's all you're going to do, then what's the rush? Who knows when the bus will come? Better yet, who cares? Just look around you - you've got this huge city. Buildings stacked so high you can't get but a few minutes of sunshine a day. Tattoo parlors, offices, festivals, parks, students, concerts. Burritos. Endless gridded miles of concrete playground. And you've got quite a while, my friend, I assure you.

JORDAN: So what, you think I should go get a tattoo and eat a burrito while doing so? It's too late for that. I have to get home and... (*sigh*) nothing. Maybe you're right. I am kinda hungry.

MAL: That's the spirit!

JORDAN: Except I don't have any money on me's the problem. Welp, that's that with that, I suppose.

MAL: Wow. That was so easy. For you to give up, that is.

JORDAN: I'm not gonna go rob the taco place! Are you crazy?

MAL: Maybe I am, maybe I'm not. All I'm saying is that there's always *something* to do. You've got the night at your fingertips and all you want to do is go home and veg? Oh, and call Mommy - she's *got* to be asleep by now, though. C'mon, there are better things to do. Look at those hazy, swirling clouds, backlit by the moon. Go lie in a park and watch them! That's free. Ride the elevator to the top of the tallest building, see what's out there! You've got all night. Hey, what do you have going on tomorrow? You could learn to fly a plane, apply for a job, go for a run. Low-cost boredom-smashers. Seriously, what are you doing tomorrow?

JORDAN: Uh, nothing really. I was gonna... aw *hell*, I DON'T KNOW! I never do anything! Video games are more my style. Kick a little butt, pop open a bag of chips... that's the stuff. You talk about exploring - and clouds, and burritos - like it's the easiest thing ever to just get up and... *do* stuff! Well it isn't! I *want* to, sometimes, but I - I just... can't. I've tried! Oh boy, have I! You said about getting a job; one time I typed up a résumé and everything - even printed it out - but all I could do was just sit there and read it and reread it and think how terrible it was, and how terrible *I* was, and how no one would ever dream of hiring *me*. So I ripped it up and spent the day playing Mortal Destiny and surfing the Internet.

MAL: What, no friends to hang with either?

JORDAN: I... really don't have any... and I certainly never go for burritos with them. I'm not the type to just... go meet people.

MAL: You're talking to me, aren't you?

JORDAN: I guess so. And to answer your question, no. I don't have anything going on tomorrow.

Awkward pause.

MAL: You know? I think you're afraid of failure. You're terrified that if you do something bold it won't be accepted, that people will reject you. And your remedy for that? Not even trying. That just won't fly, friend. *(Beat.)* You know what you need? Here.

MAL takes the earbuds out one at a time, almost reverently. The music is still blasting quietly. MAL gets up, walks to JORDAN, and hands over the iPod.

MAL (cont.): Keep it. You need it more than me.

JORDAN: *(Flabbergasted.)* Mal, I couldn't possibly... This is so... nice? I mean, you're giving me... an iPod? *(Beat, browsing the songs.)* I don't even like screamo.

MAL: Just... listen.

JORDAN slowly inserts the earbuds, and looks around - then up at MAL - with a pained expression, as if waiting for something magical to happen. MAL nods encouragingly. JORDAN relaxes and closes his/her eyes.

MAL (cont.): Punk.

MAL smiles and exits SL. After a few moments...

JORDAN: *(Loudly)* Hey, this isn't so bad after all. You kind of get... enveloped in it. Like an angst-y cocoon.

JORDAN's eyes open.

JORDAN (cont.): Mal? Hello!? MAL! *(JORDAN is alone.)* Huh. Weird.

JORDAN's eyes close once again as he/she assumes the Zen-style position that MAL had used. A few seconds pass, and we hear the screeching rumble of a bus as it pulls up in front of the bus stop. JORDAN doesn't hear it, and stays put, listening with eyes closed. We hear the bus hiss and rumble away again.

END