



At the Bus Stop

John Brixter Tino¹

I stand where the bench has worn its green paint down to bare metal,
cold against the backs of my thighs. A woman folds her newspaper
into smaller and smaller squares until it becomes a thing she can hold
in one fist. The wind lifts a receipt from the gutter— it catches against
my shoe, a stranger's groceries: milk, bread, six limes. I have waited here
before in rain that fell so fine it seemed less water than intention, less sky
than breath released. The diesel smell arrives before the bus does. Always.
I know the order of things— first the bitter air, then the sound like a throat
clearing, then the great blue body rounding the corner. A child beside me
counts the cracks in the sidewalk, her lips moving. Her mother watches
traffic with the stillness of a woman who has memorized departure.
I watch my reflection in the shelter's scratched glass— transparent, layered
over advertisements for teeth whitening, for cruises to places I will never go.
The bus opens its doors. We step forward together, strangers practicing
the same brief trust—that the floor will hold, that there is a seat,
that the driver knows the way.

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