

Brought to you by a creative writing prompt and some sadness:

I never knew you. Not really. But I like to think that I did. I like to think that all those mornings of waiting at the same bus stop forged some kind of bond between us. We had only ever spoken a couple of times, but nothing really needed to be said.

You would always get there before me, and when I walked up you would smile, and I would smile back, and that would be the end of it. The seats we usually sat in weren't even near each other. But somehow you weren't a stranger to me. I grew fond of our brief morning interactions, and I was always a bit sad to see you get off the bus one stop before mine.

At one point I moved. Not far, but enough to warrant a different travel route to my workplace. Yet somehow, I felt like I would be betraying you in some way if I didn't continue to take our usual bus. So, I decided to set aside some extra time in the morning so I would be able to walk to the old bus stop further away. I made sure to still approach from the same direction, though. If you'd noticed I came from somewhere else one day I surely would have been embarrassed.

But a couple years later, on a rainy Wednesday morning, I noticed that you weren't there. I almost dismissed it. After all, you could've been sick. Maybe you slept in by mistake and were running late, or took a day off from work. But it just didn't sit right with me. The entire day, I couldn't stop thinking about it. As I was pouring my coffee for the morning, I was wondering where you could have been, why you wouldn't show up. The coffee overflowed and I quickly cleaned it up and brought the cup back to my desk, but I didn't touch it the entire day. I believe I may have gotten a couple of odd looks, but I wasn't really paying attention. When you weren't there the following day, either, I grew even more worried. So much so that I decided to take the day off from work, but I took the bus anyway.

Only this time, I got off a stop early. The bus driver gave me a questioning glance, an eyebrow raised, but shrugged, and I was on my way. I went inside the building you used to work at, meaning to ask about you, only to realize that I had never learned your name. My heart sank, though, as I realized I did not need to. A missing poster plastered to the wall on the right reached out and grabbed my heart in a cold, vice-like grip. It wore your face.

Two months later was your funeral. I had learned your name by this point, but as I was listening to the speech a relative gave about your life, listing off all the little parts of your personality, I couldn't help but feel irritated. None of it mattered. None of it was important. I

now know that you enjoyed tea but never really liked coffee, and that you had a habit of always bringing an umbrella with you whether or not it rained.

I wish I could forget it. None of that was you. You were the bright smile I saw on the way to work every morning, and the only reason I looked forward to getting up at such an ungodly hour. That was all. That was all you needed to be.

I no longer take our old bus. It was far too inefficient time-wise. Besides, I prefer to spend my mornings on other things. This is the 87th day I've come to visit your grave, but the first that I've mustered up the courage to give you this letter. It's quite likely that the cemetery attendant will come across this letter and throw it away for the sake of not littering. That's fine. I know you won't be able to read this anyway. But he can. So screw you, Dan, stop sticking your nose into other peoples' business.