

In The Before

(c) 2025

EXT. CITY BUS STOP - NIGHT

Everything is spotless, even the glass is streak free.

No cars, no people. Just silence.

FRANK, 30s, zombie, slouches on the bench. His office clothes hang in tatters, tie limp around his neck.

The shuffle of slow, dragging footsteps.

LUCY, 20s, zombie, appears. Torn cardigan. Faded skirt. She stops, taking in Frank, the bench, the sterile night around them.

Behind her, a glowing bus shelter ad: "ONE FACE, ONE FUTURE."

LUCY

Bus come yet?

Frank shakes his head.

FRANK

Always late.

Lucy steps closer, then stops. She looks at the bench.

LUCY

It's so clean.

FRANK

Too clean.

Lucy nods. She sits on the opposite end of the bench.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Bench used to be a mess. Gum stuck under it, names carved with pocketknives. Half-Jaw Hank. Whistle Mary. Eyeball Eddie. Like a roll call of the undead. Sit too long, and something always clung to ya, a tooth, maybe even an eyeball.

Lucy smiles, wistful, almost tender.

LUCY

Whistle Mary, I remember her. Couldn't sneak up on anyone, no matter how hard she tried.

FRANK
You from this side of town?

LUCY
Other side of the river. I used to
come downtown for the roller derby,
bone Crushers verses the dead rollers.
Remember those?

FRANK
The good old days!

She gestures to the clean sidewalk.

LUCY
Now it all smells like a hospital.

FRANK
They bleached the city.

Lucy closes her eyes, inhales. Makes a face.

LUCY
And the people too.

Frank glances at the route sign. The display reads: 22 -
DOWNTOWN - DUE 10:15.

An electronic tick bumps it forward to 10:20.

FRANK
Haven't seen another one of us in
weeks. Thought I was the last.

LUCY
Same.

FRANK
You got a name?

LUCY
Lucy. I think.

FRANK
Frank. Pretty sure.

LUCY
Were you somebody?

FRANK
Everybody was somebody. I wore a tie.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

I brought lunch. If I forgot my keys,
the doorman knew my name. You?

LUCY

I worked mornings. Coffee shop. The
one with the pink mugs.

Frank smiles.

FRANK

You wrote people's names on the lids
with little hearts.

Lucy blinks. Surprised.

LUCY

You saw that?

FRANK

I saw a lot of hearts. You were
generous.

LUCY

You stood outside sometimes. Counting
change. You always over counted, and
then gave it to me like a tip.

FRANK

My fingers couldn't stop on the dot.
Too Shaky.

The display updates: 10:25.

LUCY

Do you think it'll come?

FRANK

All we can do is wait.

LUCY

I'm good at that.

A pair of headlights sweep the far end of the street. A
government sedan slows as it passes.

Behind the wheel, a man in a suit, eyes lock on them as he
passes.

LUCY (CONT'D)

They stare like we're the last

(MORE)

LUCY (CONT'D)
roaches.

FRANK
No. Like we're still ourselves. That's what scares 'em. You notice? They all got the same damn face.

LUCY
Do you ever want to be like 'em?

FRANK
They call it Trauma Removal. ClearMind, if you like the shiny brochure. Sounds fuckin' great. But it don't just take the pain. It takes everything. The ones I saw looked right through me. Didn't know me. Didn't even know themselves. Just suits with a schedule now.

LUCY
Everyone just does what they're told.

FRANK
They call us zombies, but they're the walking dead.

Lucy traces a small circle on the bench with her thumb.

LUCY
I had a brother. He said people are meant to be a little broken. Like a favorite sweater.

FRANK
I like that. He still around?

She shakes her head.

LUCY
He went to a clinic. Our neighbor brought muffins.

FRANK
Blueberry?

She nods.

A MAN passes on the sidewalk. Same face as the driver, only this one's in jogging clothes. He doesn't look at them.

Doesn't break stride. Lucy watches him disappear into the dark.

LUCY

If my brother walked by, I wouldn't recognize him. And he wouldn't remember me.

Frank Nods.

FRANK

I had someone. We didn't marry. We kept a busted meat fridge in the kitchen. Never worked right, stank to hell, ice building up inside. We used to laugh about it.

LUCY

What happened?

FRANK

She took the cure. Didn't remember the fridge. Didn't remember me. Just another face like everyone else, walking past without a second look.

The display flickers. 10:35.

LUCY

What if we are the last two?

Frank's head drops.

LUCY (CONT'D)

We need to blend in. Talk and look like the cured do.

FRANK

Look at us. We stink. Our skin's like wet, torn paper bags, eyes like ashtrays. We could recite the weather report all day, and they'd still smell us coming.

LUCY

We still need to try. I don't want the cure.

FRANK

Yeah. Sure. "Clear skies, chance of showers." Meanwhile, the whole place
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
points shot guns at us.

Another pair of HEADLIGHTS, another government sedan.

The car slows, different clothes, a different person behind the wheel, but the same blank face. The car idles for a beat then moves on.

LUCY
They're everywhere now. Clinics.
Patrol cars. Signs that just say
"SELF-REPORT." I read the fine print
once, after the first of the month, if
you haven't, they can knock on your
door or just pull you off the street.

FRANK
Doesn't take much. Wrong look, wrong
smell, and they've got you. Keep going
like this and the only way to last is
to vanish, hide in some attic, whisper
like the walls are listening.

She shivers. He notices. He takes off his jacket and offers it. She hesitates, but takes it and tucks her hand inside the long sleeves.

LUCY
Thank you.

FRANK
It's not much.

LUCY
I like that it's not clean. Means it's
not theirs.

A long silence.

FRANK
Tell me something you loved. In the
before.

LUCY
The alleys at night. Trash fires.
Shadows on brick walls moving like
dancers.

FRANK
The sound of teeth clicking and
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
falling out when we laughed too hard.
Ugly, but it was ours.

LUCY
What else?

FRANK
The smell of rain on rot. Made
everything feel alive, even us.

Lucy smiles. Frank nods, like she's fixed something in him.

The display ticks to 10:45. A faint distant rumble? Maybe the bus?

LUCY
What if it comes and it's full of
them?

FRANK
Then we let it pass.

LUCY
And if it comes and it's like us?

FRANK
Then we get on.

LUCY
Simple.

FRANK
It can be. It used to be.

LUCY
If it doesn't come do you want to
watch the sunrise with me?

FRANK
Sunrise?

LUCY
It still happens no matter what we do.
They can't take that from us.

He smiles.

FRANK
I'd like that.

Headlights. A bus rounds the corner. Too quiet. Cleaner than a bus has any right to be. It slows. Hisses to a stop.

The doors stay shut. For a beat, it just looks at them.

Frank and Lucy don't move.

LUCY
Do you hear it?

Frank shakes his head.

LUCY (CONT'D)
It's just memories.

The doors open. Empty. No driver. No one inside.

The route sign above the windshield shifts: 22 - DOWNTOWN to HOME.

Frank and Lucy look at each other.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I don't wanna be cured.

FRANK
Me neither.

LUCY
I just wanna remember how it used to be. With someone.

FRANK
So do I.

He extends his hand. She slips her sleeve-hidden fingers into his.

FRANK (CONT'D)
We could let it pass.

LUCY
We could.

FRANK
Or we could ride 'til the sun finds the windows.

Lucy swallows. No tears, there isn't enough water left in her.

LUCY
Will you say my name on the way?

FRANK
Lucy.

LUCY
Again.

FRANK
Lucy.

The way he says it, it sounds like a vow.

They step forward. Frank pauses, glances back at the immaculate sidewalk, the spotless bench, the glass with no fingerprints.

He pulls a bus card from his pocket, sets it face up on the bench.

FRANK (CONT'D)
For whoever's next.

Lucy squeezes his hand.

They climb aboard. Sit halfway back by the window.

The doors shut.

The bus rolls away without a sound.

EXT. CITY BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

The digital display blinks 11:00 - DELAYED then goes dark.

In the distance, the bus rolls down the street. No headlights now, just a faint glow within.

On the horizon, the sun begins to rise.

FADE OUT.