

PLACES TO BE

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Place

Present day at a small bus station in a small town in Middle America.

Time

Autumn

Cast of Characters

Pearlie - A middle aged woman with an fading beautiness about her, sits at one of the benches. She is not in any hurry and is friendly to everyone who sits beside her. She has a weary hopefulness quality about her.

Anna-Louise – A timid but very optimistic young woman. Wants more than she has, but doesn't have a lot of courage.

Madison – A very energetic young woman. Seems to know what she wants and goes after it.

Curtis – A middle aged widower, resigned to his lot in life. Not down-trodden, but going through the motions of life. Not sad or happy, just here.

ACT I

(PEARLIE IS SEATED ON A BUS STATION BENCH, CASUALLY WAITING AND READING A BOOK. ANNA-LOUISE RUSHES OVER, LOOKING AROUND ANXIOUSLY, CHECKING HER TICKET, WALKING BACK AND FORTH, ETC., SHE HAS A VERY SMALL SUITCASE AND PURSE)

(ALL BUSES ARE OFFSTAGE)

PEARLIE

Everything alright dear?

ANNA-LOUISE

Oh, I hoped I haven't missed it.

PEARLIE

Oh, I'm sure you haven't.

ANNA-LOUISE

Oh, thank goodness! Wait, how do you know?

PEARLIE

Well, this isn't my first time here. And besides, you can't be late because the busses haven't started running yet.

ANNA-LOUISE

That's a relief! I really don't like to be late. I try very hard not to be late. Oh, do you mind if I sit for a while? I really think I should sit. I'm not feeling at all well. (SLOWLY GETTING MORE AND MORE ANXIOUS) Or maybe it's just nerves? Oh, I don't know. May I sit? Or should I stand. I should probably stay standing so I can be ready when my bus arrives. I don't know how much time I have. You never know when these things are running late or early or on time -

PEARLIE

(GETS UP TO GUIDE HER TO BENCH) Why don't you have a seat, dear?

ANNA-LOUISE

(CONTINUING) Or if you're going to be ready of they are on time or early or late. Oh boy.
(PLOPS DOWN ON BENCH)

PEARLIE

There, that's better (SITS BACK DOWN)

ANNA-LOUISE

Yes, that is better, thank you.

PEARLIE

You are quite welcome. My name's Pearl, what's yours?

ANNA-LOUISE

Anna-Louise. Very glad to make your acquaintance, Pearl (EXTENDS HAND TO SHAKE)

PEARLIE

(SHAKES HER HAND) Very nice to make your acquaintance, as well. So, tell me Anna-Louise, where is that you are going to in such a hurry?

ANNA-LOUISE

I bought a ticket for Hopeville. I know it seems so far away, but I don't care. I know I can make it there.

PEARLIE

Sounds wonderful.

ANNA-LOUISE

Yes it does. I only hope I can make it there.

PEARLIE

Well, you've got your ticket and you're here now, waiting.

ANNA-LOUISE

(NERVOUS) Yes, But that doesn't necessarily mean anything. You know what?

PEARLIE

What?

ANNA-LOUISE

You know, you look familiar. Have we met somewhere before?

PEARLIE

I doubt it. I really only go here and home.

ANNA-LOUISE

Well, that's it, then! I've seen you here. I've seen you here every time I've been here before. (LOOKS OVER TO BUSES, THEN TICKET, THEN PEARLIE) That's it. So what are you doing here all the time.

PEARLIE

Oh, you know, living the dream.

(BOTH LAUGH A LITTLE, PEARLIE'S LAUGH IS A LITTLE WEARY)

ANNA-LOUISE

(LOOKS OVER TO BUSSES)

PEARLIE

Is that your bus?

ANNA-LOUISE

(A LITTLE UNEASY) No, I don't think so.

(MADISON ENTERS BRISKLY AND WITH PURPOSE, SMARTLY DRESSED WITH A BIGGER SUITCASE AND PURSE. SHE HAS HER TICKET AND IS LOOKING AROUND WITH ANTICIPATION, SEES PEARLIE AND ANNA-LOUISE)

MADISON

Hi ladies, Mind if I sit? (DOESN'T WAIT FOR RESPONSE AND SITS BESIDE ANNA-LOUISE) Thank you! It's been such a crazy day! I woke up this morning and said 'today's the day, Madison' and that was it. I have been working for this day for the last year and I AM READY! Whew. So, I'm Madison, who are you?

PEARLIE

Nice to meet you Madison, I'm Pearlle and this is Anna-Louise.

MADISON

It is so nice to see that I am not the only one getting out of this dustbowl of a town.

ANNA-LOUISE

Oh, I don't think it's a dustbowl. It can be quite pretty, especially this time of year, with all the leaves changing colors. It's even quite nice here at the bus station.

MADISON

Are you kidding me? All I see is dust, dirt, grime and gunk. What about you Pearlle? What do you see?

PEARLIE

Well, I don't see grime and gunk, but I don't necessarily notice the colors either.

MADISON

Fun! (POINTING TO THE LADIES AND HERSELF) We have one glass half full, one glass half empty and one glass possibly with liquid in it!

(ALL GIVE A LITTLE LAUGH)

MADISON

Anyway! I can't wait to get outta here! Like I said, I've been planning for this for a long time now. I have set the bar high for myself and I have every intention of making something of myself. (STANDS AND HOLDS UP TICKET EXUBERANCE) I got a one way ticket to the big time right here, and I'm not going to waste it! I am on my way to be something.

(PEARLIE AND ANNA-LOUISE, ENTHRALLED ROOT HER ON)

MADISON

Take it all in, ladies! One day you will see this face in the big time and you will say 'wow, I met her when she was nothing, and look at her now! Her dreams have come true. SHE IS SOMETHING!'

(MADISON LOOKS OVER TO BUSSES)

MADISON

Oh, there's my bus. Gotta go. Nice meeting you both. Wish me luck.

ANNA-LOUISE

Good luck!

PEARLIE

Sounds like you make your own luck, but good luck, dear.

(MADISON EXITS)

ANNA-LOUISE

Wow! I wish I could be that confident. I mean, she really knows what she wants and she is going after it! I wonder what bus she got on.

PEARLIE

I'm sure your bus will be along shortly.

ANNA-LOUISE

But, I am so nervous, I hope it takes a while to get here. But not too long. I just hope I'm ready.

PEARLIE

Well here comes another one, is that it?

ANNA-LOUISE
(LOOKS OVER TO BUSSES) No I don't think so.

(CURTIS ENTERS WITH BRIEFCASE)

PEARLIE
(NOTICES HIM, PRIMPS A LITTLE BEFORE HE SITS TO BENCH) Hi Curtis,

CURTIS
(SITTING BESIDE PEARLIE) Hiya Pearl. Back again, huh? Having a good day today?

PEARLIE
Oh, you know, Living the dream.

(THEY BOTH CHUCKLE)

PEARLIE
How are you today Curtis? You look nice today.

CURTIS
Ah, just the same old suit.. (NOTICES ANNA-LOUISE) Say now, who is this?

PEARLIE
This is my new friend Anna-Louise. Anna-Louise, this is Curtis. He's a regular about this time every day.

ANNA-LOUISE
Nice to meet you, Curtis.

CURTIS
Nice to meet you too. So, what brings you here? Are you living the dream too?

ANNA-LOUISE
Oh, I wish. I'm on my way to Hopeville. That is, if my bus ever gets here. (LOOKS OVER TO BUSSES) That might be it. I'm going to check. Wish me luck. I really need some luck today.

(PEARLIE AND CURTIS BOTH WISH HER LUCK)

PEARLIE
It's good to see you Curtis. Anything new?

CURTIS
Oh you know, Same old, same old. How about you?

PEARLIE

Well, I started a new book. (SHOWS HIM THE BOOK)

CURTIS

Now that's funny, I started a new book too. (PULLS SAME BOOK OUT OF BRIEFCASE)

(BOTH LAUGH A LITTLE)

PEARLIE

Great minds think alike.

CURTIS

Yep, they do.

PEARLIE

You know, we should start a little book club. We could go for a cup of coffee and discuss...

CURTIS

Well, I don't think I can do anything like that yet, you know. I'm just can't seem to make any plans, yet. It still feels too soon.

PEARLIE

I know what you mean. After my Charlie died, it took me forever to even get out of the house.

CURTIS

When Joanne passed, it just took the wind out of sails, you know. Dashed all of my dreams.

PEARLIE

I know. It takes a while. But little by little, it will get better. And you will want to start dreaming again.

CURTIS

Yea, little by little, I suppose. But it is nice to see you here every day.

PEARLIE

And it's nice to see you here every day too.

CURTIS

(LOOKS AT BUSSES) Well, that's me. (GETS UP) See you tomorrow, Pearlle.

PEARLIE

Same bat time, same bat channel. (MELANCHOLY LAUGH)

CURTIS
(MELANCHOLY LAUGH) Yea, yea. Tomorrow. (EXITS)

ANNA-LOUISE
(ENTERS RUNNING, PASSING CURTIS, UPSET) Oh, Pearlie. I missed it. I missed my bus!

PEARLIE
Now, now. Are you sure?

(BOTH SIT ON BENCH)

ANNA-LOUISE
Yes. Oh, I just can't believe this keeps happening. I can't believe I missed my bus AGAIN!

PEARLIE
Again? What do you mean again.

ANNA-LOUISE
What? Oh, nothing. Never mind.

PEARLIE
Wait a minute, do you mean that you've been coming here to get on the bus to Hopeville and you keep missing the bus.

ANNA-LOUISE
(CRYING) Every week, Pearlie, I come here and buy a one way ticket to Hopeville . And every time I really try to get up the nerve to get on the bus. But somehow, I just can't. I'm just too afraid. I want to get on the bus, I've even chased that bus a few times trying to get the driver to stop, but he doesn't stop. And I never get on. Oh, Pearlie. I am hopeless. What am I going to do?

PEARLIE
I'll tell you what you are going to do. You are going to keep trying. And keep trying, Because that's all any of us can do, Keep trying to reach our dreams.

ANNA-LOUISE
Will you help me?

PEARLIE
Of course I will. So you go home, get some rest and I'll be here every time you are here until we get you on that bus.

ANNA-LOUISE

Ok, but when will you be here?

PEARLIE

I'm here every day, you know, living the dream.

THE END