

THE BUS RIDE

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FADE IN:

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

MATTSON, early 30s, tidy, plain, waits in a long line of PASSENGERS for the bus. He's lost in thought.

He wears a SHOULDER BAG with a small, realistic DINOSAUR FIGURE hanging from a cord at its side.

PREPPY TEEN and SPORTY TEEN stand behind him in line.

A passing car HONKS and Mattson grimaces as if in pain. He strokes the dinosaur figure with his thumb a couple times, as if to comfort himself.

MATTSON
(to himself)
It's not like I'm totally out of
shape.

The BUS pulls up and the line in front of Mattson starts to move, but he doesn't notice. He stares at the ground.

PREPPY TEEN
(to Mattson)
It's here.

Mattson spins around, startled by the interaction.

PREPPY TEEN (CONT'D)
(pointing)
It's here.

Mattson turns back to the bus.

MATTSON
(softly)
Sorry.

He starts moving.

INT. CITY BUS - MOMENTS LATER

Mattson steps onto the bus, holds his BUS PASS to the sensor until it BEEPS.

LUGGAGE dominates the storage platform by the bus door. As Mattson starts down the aisle, the cord for his dinosaur figure snags on a suitcase handle, jerking him back.

He lets out a little YELP and swivels his head in alarm.

Sporty Teen uses a finger to dislodge the dinosaur.

MATTSON

Thanks.

The snap attachment for the dinosaur's cord has come open, but no one notices.

Mattson heads down the aisle and sits near the back of the mostly full bus, next to the window, an empty seat beside him. Clutching his shoulder bag on his lap, he watches more Passengers boarding.

HANNAH, early 30s, tidy, humbly chic, moves down the aisle.

She has short, straight hair, a little barrette, tortoise-shell glasses, a black raincoat over a long dress.

Mattson gathers his bag closer to himself.

She's going to pass by. No. She settles down beside him, her BAG in her lap.

She eyes his dinosaur and smiles, but he doesn't notice.

She takes out a BOOK and starts reading. Mattson glances at the title: *Mesozoic Majesty*. His eyes widen.

INT. CITY BUS (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

Mattson and Hannah's arms rest inches apart. The bus jostles and her arm brushes his. His eyes dart sideways.

Mattson turns his head slightly toward her. He glimpses her profile, her flawless skin, her earnest, alert expression as she reads.

Preppy Teen bursts into LAUGHTER across the aisle. Mattson looks over, only for the chance to see Hannah, up close, just for a second. The sleek swoop of her straight hair.

Someone signals a stop -- BING -- and the bus pulls over to allow Passengers off and on, then moves again.

MATTSON'S POV -

Outside, on a beach, PEOPLE picnic, toss a football, generally enjoy each other's company.

BACK TO SCENE

Mattson's eyes drift again to Hannah's book.

A tiny smile curves his lips and crinkles his eyes. He turns 45 degrees toward Hannah, and his mouth forms the start of a word. But no. Nothing comes out. He turns back to the window.

Desolation contorts his face as he watches the beach go past.

His eyes unfocus. He's lost in reverie.

MATTSON'S IMAGINATION -

INT. CONDO - NIGHT

At the table in his small, tidy dining room, Mattson builds an intricate WOODEN MODEL OF A DINOSAUR.

MATTSON

It's not like I'm totally out of shape.

He looks up, toward the door leading to the rest of the apartment.

MATTSON (CONT'D)

It's not like I'm totally out of shape.

He returns to his build.

A few seconds later, Hannah appears. She leans in the door frame, infinite patience on her face.

MATTSON (CONT'D)

I'm not totally out of shape.

HANNAH

Still thinking about the hike?

He's loose, relaxed, comfortable.

MATTSON

It's just strange that they didn't invite me.

She squeezes his shoulder as she sits across the table.

MATTSON (CONT'D)

I don't know what the problem is. I've been reading those books. I'm not interrupting. Not much. Less than before.

HANNAH

You're doing great.

MATTSON

You can't talk much when you're hiking, anyway.

HANNAH

True.

MATTSON

I thought things were going to get better.

HANNAH

Most of the time people don't even think about who's invited to things. Someone's standing at the copier and he's like, "I need to get out for a hike," and someone else is walking by, like, "A hike? I'd love to do a hike!" And then they're waiting for the meeting to start and the next guy comes in and he's like, "What are you guys up to on the weekend?" And they're like, "Maybe a hike. Want to join?"

(beat)

It's not planned.

Mattson delicately places a tiny piece of the model.

MATTSON

I wanted to talk about my models. They said I already told them. I explained that I have a new one, stegosaurus, 287 pieces, not easy.

HANNAH

I think maybe you've told them enough about your models.

MATTSON

But it's a new one. Totally different species.

HANNAH

Maybe for them that's not enough to talk about it again.

Hannah tilts her head slightly and smiles, radiating acceptance and love.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

There are other things to talk about. Think about...

MATTSON
 (interrupting)
 Think about what interests them. I
 know.

He returns to the model. His eyes brim with tears.

MATTSON (CONT'D)
 I'm a nice person.

HANNAH
 You are a nice person.

She moves to a closer chair and puts her hands on his cheeks.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 You're an amazing person. And I
 love you. Exactly the way you are.

MATTSON
 Can we just never leave the
 apartment? I just want to be here
 with you.

HANNAH
 I know. Think of me when you're
 anxious. Remember you'll come home
 and I'll be here and we can talk.

MATTSON
 That's the only thing that gets me
 through some days.

HANNAH
 Me too.

She jumps up.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
 Hey. I got you the new *Scientific
 American*.

She disappears through the door.

HANNAH(O.S.) (CONT'D)
 It's got something about
 trilobites.

BACK TO SCENE ON THE BUS

BING - a stop.

Mattson sits forward. Hannah gathers up her bag, ready to
 move to let him out.

He turns toward the aisle, and he can look at her for a couple seconds. Soft brown eyes. Delicate brows.

His mouth forms a word.

He's going to speak.

She turns, and in a sweet, pleasant voice -

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Getting out?

Without looking at her -

MATTSON
Thanks.

She swivels her legs into the aisle. As the bus stops, he steps awkwardly past her into the flow of disembarking Passengers.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Mattson steps out of the bus and it pulls away.

As he walks down the sidewalk, he reaches instinctively for his dinosaur.

It's gone!

He yanks the bag off his shoulder, scans it. Nothing.

He checks the sidewalk - no luck. Paralyzed with anxiety, he peers at the bus proceeding down the street.

MOMENTS LATER

Mattson looks like he's lost a best friend.

He stares again at the retreating bus, until movement on the sidewalk catches his eye. Hannah speeds down the sidewalk, holding the dinosaur above her head.

She steps up to him, breathing heavily.

HANNAH
Your dinosaur!

He looks her in the eye only for a second.

MATTSON

Thank you!
(beat)
It's a...

MATTSON/HANNAH

Stegosaurus.

His eyebrows shoot up.

HANNAH

One of my favorites.

MATTSON

It's a herbivorous quadruped.

Hannah looks at her watch.

HANNAH

It sure is.

MATTSON

Will you be late now? You got off
your bus.

HANNAH

I'm not in a hurry. Except to get
some coffee. Have a great day.

She starts to leave.

MATTSON

(hesitantly)
Excuse me?

She turns back.

MATTSON (CONT'D)

Could I please buy you a coffee?

HANNAH

Oh, no, it's okay.

MATTSON

To say thank you. If you're not too
busy.

She scrunches up her mouth, thinking.

HANNAH

Sure. That sounds nice.

His face brightens.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

I know a good place two minutes
from here.

MATTSON

Great.

They start off.

HANNAH

(pointing to the figure)

Do they still think the dorsal
plates are to regulate their body
temperature?

They walk on.

FADE OUT.