

The Wandering Bus

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FADE IN:

EXT. LARGE HOUSE - NIGHT

Heavy rain batters against the house. Thunder rumbles through the sky and streaks of lightning flash behind the dark clouds.

SUPER: 1927

A bus waits nearby.

Five young REVELLERS, three men and two women, leave the house in high spirits. Singing and swaying around, dressed to the nines.

One of the ladies, MARCELLA, dark hair and pretty, pops open an umbrella and races towards the bus.

A lanky man, DEAN, runs after her, using his jacket to shield the rain.

CHARLES, a brawny man who holds tightly onto an old case, hurries after them, sprinting through the puddles.

CLAUDE, good looking and laid back, carries a bag and takes his time, not caring about the rain. HILDA, bubbly and loud is the last to reach the bus. All of them smile and laugh despite the weather.

MARCELLA

What a night.

The bus door opens and the BUS DRIVER, stout and grumpy beckons them all in.

INT. BUS

They slump down on the seats. There's no other passengers.

Claude, brushes back his soaked hair as he places a bag onto the seat next to him.

HILDA

What a shame it's all over.

EXT. LARGE HOUSE

The bus roars down the road.

INT. BUS

Charles opens his case and takes out a trumpet. The others cheer and laugh.

He plays a jazzy tune. Hilda jumps off her seat and dances. Marcella shakes her head with a smile.

Claude then opens his bag and takes out a bottle of wine.

CLAUDE

Let's continue the party shall we?

The bus driver glances over at them and sighs. He doesn't approve.

EXT. WINDING ROAD

A quiet road surrounded by rocks and trees.

The rain gets heavier. The bus slides about.

INT. BUS

Claude takes a sip from the bottle and passes it over to Dean who gulps it down.

He then passes it on to Marcella.

MARCELLA

May this night last forever.

CLAUDE

Here here to that.

EXT. WINDING ROAD

A car battles towards them. The bus driver strains his eyes, struggling to drive through the storm.

Another streak of lightning flashes above them.

INT. BUS

SCREECH. The bus driver swerves sharply.

The passengers scream.

INT. MODERN HOUSE - JENNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

It's now present day. JENNA (17), dressed casually, sweater and jeans, opens a backpack and crams in some clothes.

Yelling can be heard in the background. Her MOTHER AND FATHER have a heated argument.

FATHER (O.S)

Calm down, it was nothing.

MOTHER (O.S)

Nothing? Get the hell out of here.

FATHER (O.S)

You're overreacting.

MOTHER (O.S)

Don't talk to me like that.

A glass shatters. A door is slammed.

Jenna zips up her bag and slings it around her shoulders. She stares at the door and sighs. She's had enough. She throws open the window, braces herself and jumps out into the front garden.

EXT. FRONT GARDEN

She grabs her bike that's against the wall. She hops on and cycles away.

EXT. COBBLED STREET

She zooms down the street, dodging anyone strolling by.

EXT. WINDING ROAD

After cycling for hours, she stops and catches her breath. She looks around and twists her face. She's lost in the middle of nowhere.

Further ahead is a bench, almost hidden in the shadows. With her last surge of energy she cycles towards it.

As she nears the bench, it becomes clearer. A lady, OLIVIA (late 60's), straggly hair and dated fashion, sits with her eyes closed.

Jenna jumps off her bike and places it against the bench. With tentative steps, she approaches the lady.

JENNA

Excuse me...are you alright?

Olivia's eyes flash open. She takes a deep breath as if she's just come up from the ocean.

OLIVIA

Where am -

Olivia straightens up and looks around. Her eyes well up a little as she gazes into the distance. The road is quiet.

OLIVIA

I don't think it will come back for me.

Jenna frowns, puzzled.

JENNA

Do you need any help? Are you lost?

OLIVIA

No, no I'm fine. Run away have you?

Jenna looks away, slightly embarrassed.

JENNA

Is it that obvious?

Olivia smiles and pats the bench, summoning Jenna to sit beside her.

OLIVIA

Let's have a little chat. I was once like you.

Jenna bites her nails, nervous. She slowly sits down on the bench.

OLIVIA

So what happened?

JENNA

It's...hard. I don't like being home. My parents fight all the time and they just forget about me. I got tired of it all.

OLIVIA
Oh my, no wonder you flew away.
It's all so familiar too.

JENNA
You also ran from home?

OLIVIA
Yes...when I was your age.

JENNA
Did you regret it?

Olivia smiles, reminiscing.

OLIVIA
I was so down that day, I wished it
all would end but then...

EXT. WINDING ROAD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: 1969

Fog smothers the area. Birds caw as they fly above the trees.

A young Olivia storms down the edge of the road. Arms crossed and tears flowing. A strong breeze brushes her hair.

A MIDDLE AGED MAN hurries through the mist towards her. His eyes wide and wild, a face full of panic. He grabs Olivia's shoulder.

She jumps back, startled.

MIDDLE AGED MAN
Here take this...you look like you
need it.

The man thrusts a piece of paper into her palm. He laughs madly then runs away.

Olivia watches him fade out of sight then looks at the paper.

It's a ticket. It reads: "The wandering bus. Join us for some fun."

She shrugs and puts it into her pocket.

As she continues to walk, she spots something lurking in the mist. Two headlights shine through, tempting her over.

She moves forward. Parked in front of her is a 1920's bus. Old and shabby. She ambles towards the front.

The door swings open. She flinches and looks in.

Sat on the driver's seat is the 1920's bus driver. He stares at her.

BUS DRIVER

You got a ticket?

Olivia is speechless, her eyes glazed. She nods her head, remembering the ticket. She fumbles about and takes it out her pocket. The bus driver nods and beckons her in.

A man then steps towards the door. It's Claude. He brushes back his sleek hair and grins. He stretches out his hand.

CLAUDE

Delighted to meet you. Come on in.

She grabs his hand and he helps her up.

INT. BUS

Claude brings her to the seats. Hilda twirls and tosses her hair.

HILDA

Welcome. What's your name?

OLIVIA

Em...Olivia.

HILDA

Well, Olivia, it's time to forget
all your troubles and spoil
yourself with fun and cheer.

Hilda places a gentle arm around her shoulders and pulls her further in.

Charles stands up and plays the trumpet. Marcella and Dean clap and laugh along.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Olivia giggles as she remembers. Jenna listens, unsure if it's true or not.

OLIVIA

They were so Charming, especially
Claude. What a gentleman he was.
Everything was so magical at first.

JENNA

Who were they?

OLIVIA

I don't think I'll ever know. I'll
probably never see them again...but
maybe that's for the best.

JENNA

How come?

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The bus drives through the mist. Laughter and music can be
heard coming from inside.

INT. BUS

Olivia sits, tense. She smiles nervously, watching Hilda
sway about to the music. Claude leans over the back of his
seat.

CLAUDE

Why don't you dance?

OLIVIA

Oh I can't...I move like a giraffe.

Claude chuckles.

MARCELLA

Here have some of this.

Marcella holds out a bottle of wine. Olivia slowly takes it
from her. She brings it towards her lips.

Everyone watches with intense gazes.

CLAUDE

Drink. It's good for you.

MARCELLA

Drink away your sorrows.

Charles keeps playing the trumpet which gets louder,
drowning out the sounds of the others cheering her on. Dean
drums against his suitcase, adding a beat to the tune.

She takes a sip.

The revellers all glance at each other, there's something sinister about their smiles.

HILDA

Now forget all those bad memories.
Forget all the pain.

She keeps drinking, enjoying every drop.

HILDA

Throw away the past.

Olivia gulps down the last of the drink and laughs. Claude smiles with a glint in his eyes.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Olivia heaves a sigh. The music still rings in her ears but it slowly fades away.

OLIVIA

I enjoyed myself so much that I
forgot who I was. Every memory was
erased.

JENNA

Then how did you get away?

OLIVIA

It all happened so fast. One day, I
rummaged into my pocket...

INT. BUS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Olivia and Hilda dance to the music. Claude joins in and gives Olivia a twirl.

The bus driver glances over, tapping his fingers on the wheel.

After dancing till her feet hurt, Olivia drops onto a seat, exhausted.

Claude slumps down beside her.

CLAUDE

If that's how a giraffe moves then
I wish I was one.

Olivia laughs and tucks her hands into her pockets. She feels something...

It's the ticket.

Her eyes widen. Slowly she removes the ticket from her pocket and examines it.

Claude notices and looks at her with a disappointed face.

OLIVIA
Who am I? Wait...

She brings the ticket closer to her eyes.

The music stops. Everyone stares.

OLIVIA
...I remember.

CLAUDE
You should not have done that.

OLIVIA
How long have I been here?

She looks out of the window. Everything is black. She turns to look at Claude...

A skeleton sits in his place. She stares into his black, hollow eyes and screams.

She jumps to her feet, scared. The bus is covered in rust and weeds and everyone else has turned to bone. She rushes to the door. It's stuck. She kicks and rams it. Eventually it breaks open.

She leaps out.

EXT. DITCH - DAY

She falls onto the ground. The bus lies tangled in branches and covered in mud. Undiscovered.

She panics and climbs out of the ditch.

EXT. HILL - DAY

She hauls herself onto the grass and cries. She stares at her hands. They're old and wrinkled. She's now in her 60's. The wind blows her grey hair in front of her eyes.

She breaths in the air.

EXT. WINDING ROAD - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Olivia stands up and stares longingly at the road.

OLIVIA

I had been in there for decades. I returned not knowing what to do. But I had to move on.

JENNA

What was that bus?

OLIVIA

Have you not heard of it? It appears to you when you're at your lowest and it takes you away.

JENNA

Just sounds like a fairytale to me. I like it though.

Olivia smiles. She grabs Jenna's hand and places the ticket onto her palm.

OLIVIA

Then I hope you have as much fun as I did.

She's about to walk away but she stops and looks at her.

OLIVIA

Just don't forget who you are.

Jenna watches her stroll into the distance. She looks down onto the ticket and studies it closely.

An engine purrs nearby.

She lifts up her head. A bus rolls slowly towards her. It stops, inches away.

The door swings open. The bus driver looks at her and grumbles.

Claude steps into view.

She stares, slightly shaken.

He reaches out his hand.

CLAUDE

Delighted to meet you. Come on in.

FADE OUT.