

Waiting for Bardot.

“FREE BEER tomorrow,” promised a sign in the window of a bar on Cass Avenue. The sign was there every day. In front of the bar was a street light and a bus stop where a woman shuffled, her steps short as if her legs were locked at her knees. Her dress, which was white, extended to the tops of white socks in thick-soled white shoes. Her purse was white, too. Rather short, she looked to be in her mid-forties. It was dusk. Against the background of the bar and spotlighted by the street light, the woman in white radiated like a light herself.

Codell walked past the woman, startling her. She peered up at him through thick glasses, eyes narrowed. “Excuse me.” She pointed downtown. “Is this the way to the university?” She spoke through some sort of wire loop attached to her upper teeth.

Codell loomed over her. What woman would stop a shirtless man in the Cass Corridor? At any time, much less at dark? You could tell by her clean clothes and coiffured hair that, if she knew anything about the Corridor, it was from a distance, not from breathing it day in and day out. Her eyes lacked that numb, unfocused look.

She checked her watch. “I’m supposed to be at the university by now.” The wire in her mouth clicked like consonants. “Did I get off at the wrong stop?”

Codell pointed the same way she had. “That’s the way downtown, not to the university. You need to - ”

“This way?” She pointed downtown again. “This IS to the university, isn’t it?”

“No. That’s downtown.”

“Why do you smell bad? Don’t you have a shirt?”

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"It's too hot for a shirt. You need to go *that* way."

"Thank you," she said forcefully. "I'll have to get back on the bus."

"You're only a few blocks from the university. But go *that* way."

"Oh! I got turned around."

"Lady, this bus don't run much at night. If you're waiting on this bus, you'll be here a while."

"What line is this?"

"Sixteen. You're better off walking."

"That would be tedious." She adjusted her dental device and checked her watch again. "What time do you have?"

"I don't have a watch."

From Canfield, a man in red and white plaid pants and a white tee-shirt joined them.

"If you're not going to walk, take the Woodward line," Codell said.

"Which way is Woodward?"

"A block that way."

"What street is this?"

"Canfield. Look, lady - "

"What line number is Woodward?"

"Line 4. Look, lady - "

"Why is it line 4?"

"The Woodward bus isn't running," said the man in the plaid pants.

“Why wouldn’t it be running?” The woman stomped her feet. “Of course it is!”

“It’s not,” said the man in plaid. “The Cass bus isn’t running, either.”

“She just got off a Cass bus,” Codell said.

“The line’s not running.”

“I just got off!” The woman stomped her feet again, adjusted her glasses, and tried to read the schedule on the bus stop sign, but it was too small for the dim light.

“What time do you have?” she asked plaid man.

“Now,” Plaid said.

“What? That makes no sense.”

“It’s the only thing that makes sense.

“The Cass bus won’t run tonight,” added the plaid, “but surely it will tomorrow. You can wait here all night if you want. Do you know where I can get a burger? I’m hungry.”

“You shouldn’t eat red meat,” said the woman. She looked up at Codell. “You need to put a shirt on. I’ll take the Woodward bus.”

“You can wait there all night, too,” plaid man tossed at her. “Unless you get Lucky [upper case intended]. Have we met before?” He resumed walking toward Woodward.

The woman in white stutter-stepped after him. “‘Lucky’ my foot. Don’t make me pepper spray you.”

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Inspired in part by Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*.

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