

How to catch a bus.

CODELL WAITED respectfully with his elders at a Line 4 bus stop on Woodward inbound to downtown Detroit. The bus pulled up curbside and wheezed to halt. People started boarding at the front of the bus, their coins clinking into the fare box. Codell loitered near the rear exit doors. They whizzed open and a passenger exited. Before they closed, Codell stepped into the exit and squatted on the lowest step.

The bus wasn't crowded. A woman seated across from the exit doors watched Codell dispassionately. He held still as a bowl of fruit. The bus remained as unmoving as he was.

In a few moments, Codell was aware of a presence above him. He looked up. The bus driver's face loomed over him like a storm about to burst.

"Did you forget about the mirrors, sonny?"

"No, sir, I don't have any money, sir."

"Off the bus!" Codell put an arm over his head.

"I have to get downtown, sir." Codell lowered his arm just below his meek and pleading eyes.

The driver hesitated. "Why?"

"I have to bring my father his . . . lunch money. Sir. He forgot it."

"You just said that YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY!"

Codell jumped out the exit and ran until the bus pulled away. Sanguine, he turned around and walked back to the bus stop.

A cross-town bus stopped at the intersecting street, and a dozen riders got off and made their way to the in-bound stop where Codell waited for the next coach. It didn't take long. As the line of passengers filed on, another line of riders left through the rear exit where Codell lingered, out of sight of the driver. As soon as the last person got off, Codell again stepped into the stairwell.

This time, the bus was crowded. Several riders stood in the aisle, blocking the driver's line of sight to the rear mirror. Codell rode all the way downtown to Grand Circus. He smiled so sweetly for the glowering elders.

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