

IN THE BEFORE

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(C) 2025

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY BUS STOP - NIGHT

Everything is spotless, even the glass is streak free.

No cars, no people. Just silence.

FRANK, 30s, zombie, slouches on the bench. His office clothes hang in tatters, tie limp around his neck.

The shuffle of slow, dragging footsteps.

LUCY, 20s, zombie, appears. Torn cardigan. Faded skirt. She stops, taking in Frank, the bench, the sterile night around them.

Behind her, a glowing bus shelter ad: "ONE FACE, ONE FUTURE."

LUCY
Bus come yet?

Frank shakes his head.

FRANK
Always late.

Lucy steps closer, then stops. She looks at the bench.

LUCY
It's so clean.

FRANK
Too clean.

Lucy nods. She sits on the opposite end of the bench.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Bench used to be a mess. Gum stuck under it, names carved with pocketknives. Half-Jaw Hank. Whistle Mary. Eyeball Eddie. Like a roll call of the undead. Sit too long, and something always clung to ya, a tooth, maybe even an eyeball.

Lucy smiles, wistful, almost tender.

LUCY
Whistle Mary, I remember her. Couldn't sneak up on anyone, no matter how hard she tried.

FRANK

You from this side of town?

LUCY

Other side of the river. I used to come downtown for the roller derby, bone Crushers verses the dead rollers. Remember those?

FRANK

The good old days!

She gestures to the clean sidewalk.

LUCY

Now it all smells like a hospital.

FRANK

They bleached the city.

Lucy closes her eyes, inhales. Makes a face.

LUCY

And the people too.

Frank glances at the route sign. The display reads: 22 - DOWNTOWN - DUE 10:15.

An electronic tick bumps it forward to 10:20.

FRANK

Haven't seen another one of us in weeks. Thought I was the last.

LUCY

Same.

FRANK

You got a name?

LUCY

Lucy. I think.

FRANK

Frank. Pretty sure.

LUCY

Were you somebody?

FRANK

Everybody was somebody. I wore a tie. I brought lunch.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
If I forgot my keys, the doorman
knew my name. You?

LUCY
I worked mornings. Coffee shop. The
one with the pink mugs.

Frank smiles.

FRANK
You wrote people's names on the
lids with little hearts.

Lucy blinks. Surprised.

LUCY
You saw that?

FRANK
I saw a lot of hearts. You were
generous.

LUCY
You stood outside sometimes.
Counting change. You always over
counted, and then gave it to me
like a tip.

FRANK
My fingers couldn't stop on the
dot. Too Shaky.

The display updates: 10:25.

LUCY
Do you think it'll come?

FRANK
All we can do is wait.

LUCY
I'm good at that.

A pair of headlights sweep the far end of the street. A
government sedan slows as it passes.

Behind the wheel, a man in a suit, eyes lock on them as he
passes.

LUCY (CONT'D)
They stare like we're the last
roaches.

FRANK

No. Like we're still ourselves.
That's what scares 'em. You notice?
They all got the same damn face.

LUCY

Do you ever want to be like 'em?

FRANK

They call it Trauma Removal.
ClearMind, if you like the shiny
brochure. Sounds fuckin' great. But
it don't just take the pain. It
takes everything. The ones I saw
looked right through me. Didn't
know me. Didn't even know
themselves. Just suits with a
schedule now.

LUCY

Everyone just does what they're
told.

FRANK

They call us zombies, but they're
the walking dead.

Lucy traces a small circle on the bench with her thumb.

LUCY

I had a brother. He said people are
meant to be a little broken. Like a
favorite sweater.

FRANK

I like that. He still around?

She shakes her head.

LUCY

He went to a clinic. Our neighbor
brought muffins.

FRANK

Blueberry?

She nods.

A MAN passes on the sidewalk. Same face as the driver, only
this one's in jogging clothes. He doesn't look at them.

Doesn't break stride. Lucy watches him disappear into the
dark.

LUCY

If my brother walked by, I wouldn't recognize him. And he wouldn't remember me.

Frank Nods.

FRANK

I had someone. We didn't marry. We kept a busted meat fridge in the kitchen. Never worked right, stank to hell, ice building up inside. We used to laugh about it.

LUCY

What happened?

FRANK

She took the cure. Didn't remember the fridge. Didn't remember me. Just another face like everyone else, walking past without a second look.

The display flickers. 10:35.

LUCY

What if we are the last two?

Frank's head drops.

LUCY (CONT'D)

We need to blend in. Talk and look like the cured do.

FRANK

Look at us. We stink. Our skin's like wet, torn paper bags, eyes like ashtrays. We could recite the weather report all day, and they'd still smell us coming.

LUCY

We still need to try. I don't want the cure.

FRANK

Yeah. Sure. "Clear skies, chance of showers." Meanwhile, the whole place points shot guns at us.

Another pair of HEADLIGHTS, another government sedan.

The car slows, different clothes, a different person behind

the wheel, but the same blank face. The car idles for a beat then moves on.

LUCY

They're everywhere now. Clinics.
Patrol cars. Signs that just say
"SELF-REPORT." I read the fine
print once, after the first of the
month, if you haven't, they can
knock on your door or just pull you
off the street.

FRANK

Doesn't take much. Wrong look,
wrong smell, and they've got you.
Keep going like this and the only
way to last is to vanish, hide in
some attic, whisper like the walls
are listening.

She shivers. He notices. He takes off his jacket and offers it.

She hesitates, but takes it and tucks her hands inside the sleeves.

LUCY

Thank you.

FRANK

It's not much.

LUCY

I like that it's not clean. Means
it's not theirs.

A long silence.

FRANK

Tell me something you loved. In the
before.

LUCY

The alleys at night. Trash fires.
Shadows on brick walls moving like
dancers.

FRANK

The sound of teeth clicking and
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
falling out when we laughed too
hard. Ugly, but it was ours.

LUCY
What else?

FRANK
The smell of rain on rot. Made
everything feel alive, even us.

Lucy smiles. Frank nods, like she's fixed something in him.

The display ticks to 10:45. A faint distant rumble? Maybe the
bus?

LUCY
What if it comes and it's full of
them?

FRANK
Then we let it pass.

LUCY
And if it comes and they're like
us?

FRANK
Then we get on.

LUCY
Simple.

FRANK
It can be. It used to be.

LUCY
If it doesn't come do you want to
watch the sunrise with me?

FRANK
Sunrise?

LUCY
It still happens no matter what we
do. They can't take that from us.

He smiles.

FRANK
I'd like that.

Headlights. A bus rounds the corner. Too quiet. Cleaner than

a bus has any right to be. It slows. Hisses to a stop.
The doors stay shut. For a beat, it just looks at them.
Frank and Lucy don't move.

LUCY
Do you hear it?

Frank shakes his head.

LUCY (CONT'D)
It's just memories.

The doors open. Empty. No driver. No one inside.

The route sign above the windshield shifts: 22 - DOWNTOWN to HOME.

Frank and Lucy look at each other.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I don't wanna be cured.

FRANK
Me neither.

LUCY
I just wanna remember how it used
to be. With someone.

FRANK
So do I.

He extends his hand. She slips her sleeve-hidden fingers into his.

FRANK (CONT'D)
We could let it pass.

LUCY
We could.

FRANK
Or we could ride 'til the sun finds
the windows.

Lucy swallows. No tears, there isn't enough water left in her.

LUCY
Will you say my name on the way?

FRANK
Lucy.

LUCY
Again.

FRANK
Lucy.

The way he says it, it sounds like a vow.

They step forward. Frank pauses, glances back at the immaculate sidewalk, the spotless bench, the glass with no fingerprints.

He pulls a bus card from his pocket, sets it face up on the bench.

FRANK (CONT'D)
For whoever's next.

Lucy squeezes his hand.

They climb aboard. Sit halfway back by the window.

The doors shut.

The bus rolls away without a sound.

The digital display blinks 11:00 - DELAYED then goes dark.

In the distance, the bus rolls down the street.

No headlights now, just a faint glow within.

On the horizon, the sun begins to rise.

FADE OUT