Transfer

Mike Kurdhill believed in the value of a dollar. One day, he got off the 3rd Ave. express at the wrong stop, and on his way out the door, asked the driver, a wheezing refrigerator of a man, for an extra transfer. "Owing to your negligence," Mike explained. "Negligence of what?" asked the driver, jerking the already stopped vehicle to a more profound stop by squeezing the last inches between the brake pad and floor with his untied, brand new, imitation-leather, tan work boots.

Mike scratched his head. The same finger, crooked, ran down the side of his head and into his shirt collar like a raindrop. There, it sniffed around like a confused puppy that in a previous life was a clothes hanger. "You should have told me this bus was an express."

"That'd speed it right up."

"How long could it take?" Kurdhill quipped.

"To every rider?" asked the driver. "Be honest. 'Fore you opened yer mouth, thought you'd need it least."

Mike hesitated. "And now?" he invited, as one invites fuses to light themselves as the match approaches.

"Now I'd say you holdin' up the bus." Several riders agreed, murmuring ethical coercions for Mike to disembark.

He held his ground, reasoning form a deep mental fortress that already he was fifteen blocks from his original destination, so what would another fifteen matter? After all, fifteen blocks sealed the tragedy as much as thirty would.

Kurdhill was buried, and no more abundant filling in of his grave would worsen his position.

"I was supposed to meet a client," he reassessed. It was an awkward moment, symbolized too clearly in its condescension by Kurdhill's towering over a sitting interlocutor. He decided to reason on a more appropriate, and he guessed comprehensible, level. "My dollar ought to be worth a second bus transfer anyway."

The driver shrugged, gazing through the wide windshield at the moving traffic along Third Avenue. He ran his tongue within his upper lip. He ran it the other direction, again within his upper lip. Half grumbling and half-dismissing, he peeled a thin sliver of paper from a stack as tall as a new phone book.

"Here's yer transfer," he said, extending his arm. The bus was moving before Kurdhill's second foot touched solid earth.

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