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## **BULLY ON THE BUS**

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*I think most people have had some experiences with bullies. It's not always clear what the best way is to deal with them, but in this particular incident, a simple solution presented itself (with the help of a concerned bystander).*

I thought about it and decided to write about this guy although I wouldn't normally group him with others that would more clearly fall into the category of bullies. However, he and my experience with him reminds me more easily than others that there are alternatives out there that somehow we just don't see or remember existing while we are in that very undesirable situation.

It started with getting on a bus, a short ride from downtown to the village area where I was living. I was feeling more lazy than tired and both won out in my decision not to walk home that late evening.

A few stops later a few more people got on, one of whom was a tall chubby fellow in his mid/late twenties. Peeking out of the bag he was carrying was an assortment of goodies, a big bag of potato chips, some candies, an unopened economy sized soft drink. He eagerly stepped up the stairs, dropped his coins into the windowed box and sought his seat. You could just tell that one of the first things he was going to do as soon as he stepped into his home was to pop open that bag of chips and have a good swig on that soft drink to celebrate the rest of the evening on his own. Maybe there'd be a favourite video or TV programme to accompany his junk food fiesta.

Seeing him put me in a good mood. I turned my head to look at the sights passing by my window. Another stop, another man got on. Most of the seats were empty but he decided to sit next to somebody. Me. I was tempted to point out the fact that the bus was basically empty and he could very easily make another choice but I let it go. A few more stops and I'd be back on the streets anyway.

He leaned into me, pushing his weight over and decided to breathe on me. Normally I'm not against anyone breathing, but this particular fellow packed quite a punch. I'm sure everyone on the bus would have made the obvious conclusion that this was not his first time to be stumbling about in a half-drunken stupor.

He mumbled something incomprehensible, looked at me and decided to breathe in my direction once again. I was trying to determine if eggs had once been a part of his meal before he washed it down with a couple bottles of whisky. That window started to look particularly interesting and my eyes followed my mind's advice.

He wasn't to be deterred by any inhospitable action and began to make conversation, if you could call it that. Drunk or not, he was still a person so I tried to be respectful. I answered what I thought was his question but I wasn't strongly inviting him to explore the depths of the theme. He seemed to sense my uncomfortableness and tried a new tactic.

He leaned much closer to me to achieve that special effect of personal intimacy, exhaled strongly while accentuating his words with a continued poking of me with his finger. He made the formal declaration that he decided he didn't like me and he was going to teach me a lesson or two.

Jeesh. So much for the good mood. When will that bus stop come, anyway?

He had me cornered pretty good against that window. I wasn't going to be going anywhere. As the bus moved on he picked up more confidence and continued informing me of what will happen when I got off the bus. He was going to follow me and beat the crap out of me.

I was concerned and started to consider my options of what I should do. Should I stay longer on the bus, try to talk him out of it? What?

My bus stop was the next one and as the bus pulled up to it I let him know I was getting off. Surprisingly he got up to let me pass. I didn't think he was going to. Then he followed me to the door. Before it opened a guy who had been listening to all this leaned towards me and whispered in a loud voice, "You could run, you know. You don't have to stay there with him and take it."

It was true. Actually, I don't even know why I had gotten all so worked up about it in the first place. Even a brisk walk would leave him far behind in the condition he was in. There was no need to follow that instinctive call to stand up to your aggressors and I wondered how I could have been so drawn in by it.

So I got off the bus and he was close behind. I continued walking and he yelled at me to come back. A few more curses followed and soon he was distracted by something else.

As was I.

*AFTERWORD:*

*It's funny how we catch ourselves up in our own trappings. We don't need the weaving of a spider's web spun by somebody else. We spin and accept our own. By stepping out of the situation, or rather, the limits I perceived as imposed and inevitable, I was free of that bully. Not unlike a lesson learned when encountering the Matrix. Unfortunately it is this kind of lesson I frequently find myself forgetting and having to relearn.*