

A LONE RIDE HOME

Created and Written

by

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"What if a heavenly guardian talked with you today?
And they heard you?"

- The Players -

Beth

Peter the Bus Driver

Francis Lancaster the Elderly Man

Lavonia Lancaster the Elderly Woman

NEW ORLEANS MOVING PICTURES Co.

FIRST DRAFT - WHITE
12-21-2015

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A LONE RIDE HOME

EXT. BUS STOP NUMBER 1 - DAY

A bright, sunny day, it is Christmas time in the land. The country town land U.S.A. Not small, yet not big enough.

BETH, (mid-30's), dressed a little out of place, by tell her wardrobe, her make-up, her hair style. A little dark. A little pale. Right at home.

Our bus ride pulls up, gears shifting, brakes rubbing. Beth, our happy rider to board.

BETH
Hiya, Peter!

PETER, (mid-50's), immaculately uniformed in his bus attire, with a country smile. Dashboard Jesus hitches a ride.

PETER
Hello there, Miss Beth. Merry Christmas!

BETH
Merry Christmas, Peter!
(tipping an imaginary hat)
Always on-duty.

PETER
Ah, it's just my job. You know it's just my job, Miss Beth.

BETH
(patting on his shoulder)
An important one that is.

PETER
Why, yes. Yes it is.

Beth merrily strolls down the aisle as Peter pulls us away from the curb. Sits alone against the window light. Solitude fills the bus. Thoughts fill her with smiles, her face lit by the warm winter sun flashes flying by.

EXT. BUS STOP NUMBER 2 - DAY

Peter pulls us up to his next duly-assigned stop. FRANCIS LANCASTER, (mid-70's), dressed in his Sunday best, cowboy boots, southern drawl, hesitates coming aboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Hello, Mister Lancaster.

FRANCIS

(pausing at the door)
Well, hello there Pete. Great weather for a ride.

PETER

Why, yes. Yes, it is. Merry Christmas.

(pauses)

Come aboard.

FRANCIS

Merry Christmas, Pete.

Francis carefully steps up and aboard, hands fidgeting, hesitantly walks down the aisle, and sits next to Beth on a fully empty bus.

They do not notice or touch each other. Beth talks to Francis. Francis talks to himself.

BETH

(turns to Francis)

Hi! My name is Elizabeth. My friends call me Beth.

FRANCIS

(to himself)

Well, hello Miss Beth. My name is Francis. Francis Lancaster.

BETH

How is the day treating you?

FRANCIS

Oh, The day is...

(pauses, smiles)

Going to see my daughter. Yes.

BETH

Do you see her a lot?

FRANCIS

Well, guess you could say. Come to visit her... Once a year. Before Christmas.

BETH

Do you talk to her? Often?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANCIS

When... Can find the words. The
right words. Could never
understand... Her. That is.

BETH

Maybe she wants to talk with you.
Find the right words. Find out why
you don't talk to her more often.
Hear your voice. She would love to
hear your voice.

FRANCIS

Guess. Can never... Could never
find a way to talk to her. Can
never...

BETH

(interrupting, excited)
Never is too late! I bet if you sat
down and asked about her day, she
would love that. I should know. I
love today!

FRANCIS

Always end up in some dang
argument, pardon me, over
something. Her mom. Me.

BETH

Maybe. I would love to talk about
what makes you happy, than argue.
Agreement is not always a win.

FRANCIS

(muted laugh)
Don't agree about much. Not much.

BETH

Maybe if you talked with her about
how your life was, when you were
growing up, I bet she would listen.
We always want to know where we
came from. Where we're going in
life.

FRANCIS

Guess.

BETH

I wouldn't guess! I would just
talk. Talk about something you
love.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BETH (cont'd)

I wished I knew my parents better.
Where they came from. Where... What
they did as kids.

FRANCIS

Don't think much about that. Don't
think I...

(sad pause)

Was a good kid. She wouldn't think
it much.

BETH

Oh, you just might be mistaken. I
would love to hear about my dad.
What he was looking for in life.
What makes him happy. Makes him
sad. Why he thinks he's here on
this Big Blue Marble.

FRANCIS

Well... Guess it might be... Never
really thought about such things
with her.

BETH

Oh! You must! Just sit with her one
day. Today. It's Christmas! The
littlest things could be fun. Try
it. I promise she'll want to.

FRANCIS

(teary)

I...

(another sad pause)

Do love her so. Wished... Could be
a better father. Could have been.

BETH

You are.

(turns to window)

That... You are.

Beth amazed at the warm window light on her face. Soaks it
in. Sun flashes on her face. A smile. (Again.)

EXT. BUS STOP NUMBER 3 - DAY

Peter performs his duty and another bus stop appears.
LAVONIA LANCASTER, (mid-70's), dressed in her Sunday best,
hat, gloves, hesitates coming aboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Hello, Miss Lavonia.

LAVONIA

Oh, Mister Pete, it is so good to see you again this year.

PETER

Come aboard. Merry Christmas!

LAVONIA

Merry Christmas to you Pete.

PETER

Merry. Why, yes. Yes it is.

Lavonia steps up and aboard, hesitantly walks down the aisle, and sits next to Beth on an empty bus. Solitude.

They do not notice or touch each other. Beth talks to Lavonia. Lavonia talks to herself.

BETH

(turns to Lavonia)

Hi! My name is Elizabeth. My friends call me Beth.

LAVONIA

(to herself)

Hello, Beth. My name is Lavonia. Pleased to meet you.

BETH

How is the day treating you?

LAVONIA

Oh... The day is...

(pauses, smiles)

I'm going to see my daughter.

BETH

Do you see her a lot?

LAVONIA

See her at Christmas every year. I... We...

BETH

(interrupting)

Do you talk to her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LAVONIA

Yes... No. Not for long. We end up in arguments. Seems I can't find a way to talk to her... With her.

BETH

I bet if you told her about yourself, she would listen.

LAVONIA

(nervously)

I'm not much to talk about.

BETH

She would listen! Argument is not a loss. You can laugh together. Not have so much to disagree on. She would love to hear about your childhood.

LAVONIA

Not much there. Divorced parents. Not a very happy time... For me.

BETH

Sometimes sadness is better spoken to understand each other. What makes you sad, makes her sad. If you don't live sadness, happiness, together, you might not connect with her before she goes. Yes, connect.

LAVONIA

She's always judging me. My life. I... We...

BETH

(interrupting)

I think she really wants to know what made you the person you are today. It can be sad. Sometimes. Sometimes, it is liberating! Holding all that pain... Inside. It eats at you. Eats at her. Pain within.

LAVONIA

I wished she would listen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BETH

She hears.
 (turns to window)
 You, she hears.

Beth, carefree child, woman, amazed at the warmer window light. Sun flashes on her face. A smile. (Again.)

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

Our bus arrives where it was going. A cemetery. On Christmas Day. Francis and Lavonia step off, arm in arm, flowers in-hand, not looking back at Peter.

Time and history has graced them with a saunter, a walk to a small grave site.

As they look, we see, too...

ELIZABETH LANCASTER

Beloved Daughter

April 24, 1981 - April 24, 2015

FRANCIS
 (choking-up)
 Hi, Beth. How's...

LAVONIA
 (finishing)
 How's the day treating you?

INT. SAINT PETER'S BUS - DUSK

Looking over his shoulder, Peter gets a much needed nod of approval from Beth. Tips his hat. Lingers the bus away. Slowly.

Francis and Lavonia sit at their daughter's grave site with flowers in hand, and tears in eyes.

Talking. Maybe listening. No. Listening. The silence that is.

MONTAGE: LAVONIA. FRANCIS. BETH. Mom. Dad. Daughter.

Beth turns back to the great, warm window light. Sun flashes on her face. A smile. (Again.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETH (V.O.)

People spend an entire lifetime talking. Not saying anything. Christmas, around this Big Blue Marble, there are those who cry in silence. Cry because of what they could have had. Could have done. Could have spoken about. Never really saying anything. Agreement is not always a win. Argument is not always a loss. A lifetime of grudges held against your own, just kills you... A little more everyday. Slowly. Eats a soul from within. If we don't realize there are only so many breaths, so many heartbeats, so many tears, so many laughs in our lives, sooner or later a lost soul boards A Lone Ride Home.

Saint Peter rides away down the road. Job well-done.
(Again.)

Sun flashes on her face. Beth's apparition, smiles, fades away in the warm, winter window. A smile. One last time.

FADE OUT.

- THE END -