

**THE BEAR:
AN ALLEGORY**

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Acknowledgments

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Part One

On The Road

Somewhere in the world, under an endless, wide blue sky, there appears a wide open, beautiful green landscape. As one looks at the land from the sky, it seems flat at first glance, but it begins to get hillier and hillier when it is viewed descending to a lower point. There is a narrow road that cuts right through the middle of the land. The road begins straight as it is yet too far from the mountain, but gets curvier and curvier as it gets closer and closer to it. The road begins nowhere and disappears deep into the wooded mountain.

There is only one vehicle on the road, heading from the flat side toward the mountainside. It is a very high-tech motorized home. From now on, we'll call it the BUS.

A woman in her early 40s, who is the mother of two and a wife, is driving the BUS. Her name is Jessica. Her husband (Jack), a few years older, is sitting on the passenger side and deeply studying a map. On the couch a boy, about eight, is bored, playing his digital game. Next to him, a fourteen-year old girl has fallen into a deep sleep, innocently, on a big, padded home-style armchair.

A radio is playing popular old country music. The BUS is reaching the mountainside part of the road. The mountain is very high; and it is covered by a deep wild forest, a reminder of the rainforest in Brazil.

The BUS starts climbing up and up. Its automatic transmission noticeably shifts gears from low to high. Its tires

are turning slowly with each row of the treads being pressed between the weight of the BUS and the old asphalt road, until released, and then again the next row of treads is pressed and released.

Inside the BUS, it is relaxed, and music from the radio is playing. Jessica is driving, and she looks like the happiest one in the group, moving her body, while singing a song. She's wearing a casually striped light blue blouse, a pair of jeans, and a pair of large dark sunglasses.

Jack is in his mid - 40s. His gray hair has started to grow gray. He's wearing a pair of bifocals. He's also wearing a casually striped men's dark gray, short-sleeve shirt, with the collar unbuttoned. It looks like he has just taken his tie off. He is not paying attention to the music.

His jeans and white sneakers seem comfortable to him while he's deeply studying the map. Johnny, the boy, is very deep into his digital game. He's wearing a striped sunset-blue shirt with, short sleeves as well. Like Jack, his collar is unbuttoned, and he's wearing short blue jeans and white sneakers.

And Katie, the girl, is wearing a striped light pink blouse, with dark purple shorts, and wearing a pair of white sneakers. She has fallen to sleep deeply.

The BUS is continuing its climb higher and higher up the mountain and deeper and deeper into the woods.

The sky is cloudy. The mountain is high, and the forest is deep. The air is smoggy, hot and humid. And the BUS wipers are moving back and forth.

A town appears. It is old and small. The road then enters the town.

As the BUS gets closer to the center of the town, the houses get closer and closer and tighter, until they become attached. Rows of houses and businesses appear on both sides of the road. An intersection appears. This is the only intersection in the town. The traffic light is off. A policeman in a striped uniform is guiding the traffic. He's wearing a pair of dark sunglasses. He's in his 50s, with a big stomach.

He is standing right in the middle of the intersection. His behavior is unchangeable, and he directs each side of the traffic intersection one at a time. He starts from the north side, where an old sedan and a pickup truck are waiting for the right to go. An old delivery van, and behind it, an old sedan, are also waiting for the policeman to give them the right to go, on the opposite side. On the west side, an old small bus, painted in dark brown, with no windows on its sides, except for the driver's, and some small lettering on both sides, is waiting behind an old cargo van. Behind it, an old sedan is waiting for the policeman to give them all the right to pass the intersection.

On the east side, there is a bicycle rider. Behind it, an old school bus and an old sedan which are also waiting for the policeman to give the signal to go.

An eyeglass shop can be seen from the intersection as well as the post office, the sheriff's office, a grocery store, a hardware store, and an electronic repair shop. A law office and a veterinary hospital also can be seen.

What catches the eye, however is an old - style "country café" at the intersection. A small motel is located farther on, and a few cars are parked in front of it, allowing enough room for the BUS to park.

The sidewalks are quiet. A man with a lifeless face is standing in front of his shop. He's wearing a striped blue suit, wearing a pair of thick eyeglasses, and a striped hat. He looks bored, and his eyes are staring deeply toward the road. It seems he's waiting for someone to come, or something to happen, while he is smoking his cigarette. An old couple with lifeless faces, dressed in old - fashioned striped suits, is passing in front of him, cheering each other up senselessly with a slight smile while slightly bending their necks.

A mailwoman in a striped post office uniform, with a lifeless face, is dropping off envelopes and small packages at each store and office on the sidewalk. Her behavior is also noticeably unchangeable. Her lips are moving at each stop where she drops off the mail, but nothing else is heard. Then she goes to the next door, doing the same job over and over, walking between the stops the same way, with the same distance.

A young man wearing an old striped dark gray suit, a striped cap, and eyeglasses, on the other side of the street, is distributing the town's daily newspaper. His meaningful eyes are looking far into the distance, while he's dropping the papers at each door.

A man dressed in an old striped gray suit is pushing a cart loaded with unknown things, covered by a striped orange blanket. No one else is on the sidewalk.

Jessica, the mother, is driving slowly. Jack, the husband, has stopped looking at the map. Nevertheless, the map is still in his hand. Johnny, conversely, has the game in his hand, looking outside through the windshield of the BUS.

Katie has woken up and is also looking outside through the windshield.

Johnny

Are we there?

Katie

I don't think so. Should we be?

Jessica

Where are we, Jack?

Jack

I don't know. This place is not on the map.

Katie

Can we stop anyway, mom?

Jessica

I guess. What do you think, Jack?

Jack

I don't see why not. We are not going anywhere anyway.

Johnny

Yeah, journey to nowhere. Does anyone know when we left home? I stink, man, and I need to take a shower, mom.....

Katie

He's right mom, we stink. We need to find some place with real people, a real place to stay, and a real place to eat and take a shower. This looks like a real town, mom. Can we please stop?

Jessica

What do you think, Jack?

Jack

Well, I guess if we find a decent place to stay, we can try.

Johnny

Look, mom! There is a motel there, right after the light.

Jack (to Jessica)

See if you can pull in front of it. I'll go to check.

Jessica

Okay.

The BUS stops at the intersection, and the traffic light is off. The policeman is guiding the traffic. His lifeless, unchangeable movements are attracting the attention of the four in the BUS.

Johnny

Is the power off in this town?

Jessica

Why?

Johnny

Look, the light is off. I don't see any other light on anywhere else.

Jack

It's daylight, genius.

Katie

Traffic lights are on 7/24, jackass.

They are all laughing. The BUS crosses the intersection and stops in front of the motel. It passes the front door and stops.

Jessica

Mister.....

Jack

What?

Jessica

Check.....

Jack

Check what?

Johnny

For a vacancy, genius.

Katie

Hurry up, Jack.

Jack

Do you guys think there is no vacancy in this place? C'mon guys. Get out.

Jessica

But check its general condition, please.....

Jack

I thought you were the boss.

Jessica

I'll let you take over this time.

Katie

Come on, lieutenant.

Jack

Okay, I'll go.

Jack leaves the BUS and comes back shortly.

Jack

Great.....

Jessica

What?

Jack

Dead.....

Johnny

What is great about dead?

Katie

Who's dead?

Jessica

Is there any vacancy, Jack?

Jack

Any?

Jessica

Yes.

Jack

What do you think? Ask if there is any occupancy. Each of us can have four rooms.

Johnny

So sixteen rooms are available?

Jack

I don't know, maybe more.

Katie

Then let's go in.

Jessica

How about the shower?

Jack

Well, as you will notice, the power is shut down, but they'll provide us with lanterns, and candles. Also, the water is hot; it has nothing to do with electricity. There is an old grandpa's coal heater but no pump, so we can take a shower in the daytime.

Jessica

Ok. ok. ok. I think we can do it, right kids?

Katie

Yes, sounds like fun.

Johnny

Yes, sounds like fun. I can recharge my game batteries with coal and kerosene.

Jessica

Move, guys.

They enter the lobby. The lobby is old and dark. A woman is behind the counter. She is dressed in striped blue and has a housekeeper's cap on. She has just finished a cigarette. The air is smoky, hot and humid. Her movements are minimal. Her face is lifeless, and she talks in very short sentences.

A lantern is lighted on the counter. Some other lanterns are spread around the lobby. They take the key and go up the stairs.

An Hour Later

The room with two king-size beds is very old in design, and it has a minimum of furniture.

They have taken a shower, but have had little rest. Katie has fallen to sleep very innocently. Johnny is playing with his digital game. Jessica and Jack are organizing their belongings. The room is hot, and the window is open.

Jack

Now.....?

Jessica

I guess we stay at least a day or two.

Johnny

How about a year or two?

Jack

What? Do you like it, or don't like it?

Johnny

Did I say anything?

Jessica (to her husband)

Why don't you go downstairs and find out where we can eat and do some shopping.

Jack

Yes, M'am. I will, I guess.

Johnny

And where we can buy some new batteries!

Jack

Yes, sir.

Jack returns.

Jack

Well, this is not nowhere. This is everywhere.

Jessica

Tell me about it.

Jack

Okay. First of all, there are people living in this town.

Johnny

Wow, great discovery.

Jessica

Okay.....

Jack

Then, there is an active restaurant across the street.

Johnny

Do they serve food there?

Jack

No, they just play video games.

Johnny

Do they do it with coal or kerosene?

Jessica

Okay, what else?

Jack

There is also a grocery store.

Jessica

Cool.

Johnny

How about a battery and gas and diesel?

Jack

Everything is available for all occasions.

Jessica

Wake up your sister. We'll check.

They cross the street toward the restaurant. The same people are on the sidewalk. The same policeman and the same vehicles are in the intersection.

Jack enters the restaurant first. Jessica, Katie and Johnny follow.

A very young woman (Cindy), dressed in a striped old fashioned server's dress, welcomes them.

She gives them a booth. The restaurant is designed in a country, rustic style and everything looks old. Another