The Bus Stop

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**The Bus Stop**

*Ryan Sharp*

The cold shaves closely against my cheek and digs deep into my exposed skin as if it is desperately trying to find cover from the wind as a gust pulls its wagon full of dead leaves and litter past the bus stop. I step out into the middle of the street and peer through the top of my lenses longingly toward Dekum. I stare as if it makes a difference. As if, by some sheer will of my own, some sort of telepathy or ESP or Super-Human ability, I alone could summon the #9 if I could just focus hard enough. I squint my eyes, clinch my fist and I try to center my chi or gather my mana and what not. White knuckles blaze from my jacket sleeves and a vein pops out on my forehead, but I start to get a headache and there is still no sign of the bus.

*I fumble around in my backpack for my Corticosteroid Inhaler to recover from the brief exposure to the Bench Beast’s nicotine cloud, and the wino’s conversation suddenly begins to escalate and he starts to shout obscenities at his invisible friend now turned foe. I decide to give up on the #9 and figure that the #10 should be coming soon and it’s only up Ainsworth a little. I finally unsheathe my inhaler from my back pack and wield it around like a sword and, by the Powers of Grey Skull, I try to transform the VW Bug that’s parked down the street into my faithful Tri-Met, like He-Man did Cringer. But it’s all in vain. It is all in vain. I saunter across 27th and make my way down Ainsworth toward the #10 and take a hit from the inhaler and let it rest in my mouth like the cigarette in the Bench Beast’s mouth. I make it about two blocks when I hear the screech of brakes behind me. I whip around. The #9! I break into a dead sprint, my left arm pumping as hard as it can while the other arm tries to hail the bus while my lips desperately try to grip my inhaler while still managing the gusts of oxygen I try to suck down as I instantaneously begin to hyperventilate.*

*Maybe the mutagen doesn’t work in the cold?*

I start to make my way back to the bus stop and out of the corner of my eye I notice the wino by the bus sign mumbling gibberish to his partner next to him that he himself only can see. His skin is leather and his shoes are worn bare so that his toes touch the ground. He pushes his life in a stolen Safeway shopping cart. From ten yards away I can tell he smells like dirty, stale alcohol and ammonia. He catches me sneaking a peek at him so he covers his mouth with his gloved hand so that I cannot decipher what he is rambling to his imaginary friend. He giggles and rolls his eyes as if there is something that I don’t know, then turns to continue his top-secret conversation.

*I wish I was The Flash.*

As I round the corner up 27th my right shoe flies off. The wino looks up from his self-imposed headlock to snicker at me, and I realize...there is really no way to look cool while running after the bus.