

The Bus to Vegas

by

Jackie Marx

All rights reserved.

Copyright 2010 Jackie Marx

Contact: [jmarx.writer@gmail.com](mailto:jmarx.writer@gmail.com) for permissions.

*CLARISE: A middle-aged woman, modestly dressed.*

*LOLLY: Her middle-aged friend, flashy.*

The Scene

*A February morning on a southern California beach off the Pacific Coast Highway. As the SCENE OPENS, LOLLY watches for the bus while CLARISE cleans the seagull stained bench with her newspaper.*

CLARISE

Glad I brought a paper. (*noticing that LOLLY has walked toward the road*) Lolly, what are you doing?

LOLLY

Watching for the bus.

CLARISE

We'll hear the engine.

*LOLLY returns.*

LOLLY

Above the waves?

CLARISE

We always do--did. If not, the driver will see us down here on the beach. He'll wait. Sit. Watch out for seagull poop.

LOLLY

*(glancing back as she sits)*

Maybe it's not coming.

CLARISE

You checked. Right?

LOLLY

I called, sure. But it has been two years. Maybe it stops at a different place along the PCH now. I didn't ask. I just assumed.

CLARISE

Well, maybe it's not meant to be.

LOLLY

Maybe. *(pause)* That's what Sam thought, too.

CLARISE

My Sam?

LOLLY

Not technically.

CLARISE

Excuse me? I was married to him for twenty years. *(pause)* So, when did my husband have this epiphany?

*LOLLY'S cell phone RINGS. She checks the ID, but doesn't answer.*

LOLLY

My last session.

CLARISE

Aren't you going to answer that?

LOLLY

I won't be able to hear, above the waves.

*LOLLY slips phone into her pocket.*  
THEY watch the waves. LOLLY glances back every so often.

LOLLY (CONT'D)

So, if the bus comes, this should be a nice weekend. Relaxing, eating at the buffets. Gambling. Just like old times.

CLARISE

Just like old times?

LOLLY

Well, before it happened, yes.

CLARISE

If the bus comes.

*LOLLY'S phone RINGS again. LOLLY checks ID. SHE answers, keeping it private.*

LOLLY

Hello...(conspiratorially) It's not a good time...Fine, so far...No not yet. It's late...Yes, right next to me...

*CLARISE leans in.*

LOLLY

So, thank you for the information, ma'am. We'll watch for it.

*LOLLY ends the call and places her phone on her travel bag.*

CLARISE

Very conscientious.

LOLLY

Me?

CLARISE

No, the lady at the bus company. (pause) So, what did she say?

LOLLY

The bus to Vegas is running late.

CLARISE

But it is coming.

LOLLY

I assume.

CLARISE

Should have brought our beach mats.

LOLLY

We didn't know we'd have to wait.

CLARISE

So, here we sit, two marital rejects waiting for a bus on a poop bench.

LOLLY

I was not rejected. Phillip loved me. I left *him*. Remember?

CLARISE

Mr. Manipulator got half of all *your* money. Remember? (*pause*)  
Don't you just love California law?

LOLLY

He contributed.

CLARISE

Right.

LOLLY

He did.

CLARISE

I know. You said. (*looking at her watch*) So, how long do we plan  
to wait?

LOLLY

It's only eight-fifteen.

CLARISE

So, if the bus *doesn't* come, what will we do instead? We need a  
Plan B. We do have the entire weekend to ourselves.

LOLLY

We have our entire *lives* to ourselves.

CLARISE

That's true. (*to herself*) Where's a razor blade when you need  
one?

LOLLY

That's not funny.

CLARISE

I'm sorry.

LOLLY

I'm sorry I suggested this trip. I thought enough time had gone  
by.

CLARISE

I didn't mean that, about the razor blade. (*pause*) It would be  
much easier to walk into the ocean.

*CLARISE gets up and walks DS. LOLLY walks DS but hangs back a bit.*

CLARISE (CONT'D)

Disappear into the salty sea.

LOLLY

Like you never existed.

*CLARISE walks back to the bench. LOLLY walks toward the water's edge.*

CLARISE

Suicide's not the answer. (*touching the scar on her wrist*) I know that now.

LOLLY

I think it depends on the question.

*After another moment or two, LOLLY joins CLARISE.*

CLARISE

This does feel strange, without my mother here.

LOLLY

Look, Clarise, if you don't think we should go, we won't?

CLARISE

No, you were right. I can't avoid this forever.

*Beat.*

LOLLY

What did you mean before? That 'Mr. Manipulator' crack about Phillip.

CLARISE

My mouth got ahead of my brain.

LOLLY

*I left him.*

CLARISE

Look, Lolly...you married him and now you're divorced. You made a judgment error and you're paying, dearly. Let's just leave it at that. Okay?

LOLLY

And you married Sam, he left you, and now you're divorced.

CLARISE

And, somewhere in the mix, my mother died, in case you've forgotten. Can we stop now? (*slipping out of her jacket as she changes the subject*) Can you believe it's February? So warm--almost hot. Feels more like June.

LOLLY

As if I could ever forget what happened!

CLARISE

I know. I'm sorry. It's that mouth/brain thing again. (*pause*)  
Forgive me?

*LOLLY pats CLARISE'S leg, gets up and walks US. CLARISE peruses the newspaper pages. LOLLY'S cell phone RINGS. LOLLY hurries back as CLARISE peeks over at the caller id.*

CLARISE

Hmmmm.

*LOLLY picks up her phone, checks id, disconnects call, and slips the phone into her pocket.*

CLARISE (CONT'D)

Aren't you going to answer that? Might be important.

LOLLY

It was an 800 number. (*pause*) Hmmmm what?

CLARISE

Hmmmm nothing. (*reading pages*) Might as well read the morning rag while we wait. (*handing LOLLY a page*) Here, check out our horoscopes.

LOLLY

Hmmmm, what?

CLARISE

It was just something interesting that caught my eye.

LOLLY

Like what?

CLARISE

Something caught my eye, piqued my curiosity, but--at the moment--it slips my mind.

LOLLY

Who are you kidding? You have a memory like an elephant.

CLARISE

Nice visual. Thanks a lot!

LOLLY

You're welcome. (*searching the page*) This is an Albertson's ad.

CLARISE

Well, check out the sales, then. You're on a tight budget now. Double coupons through Wednesday.

LOLLY

Always about saving money with you. You go to Vegas--you don't gamble. You clip coupons--you don't have to. Pinch every damn penny. (*pause*) That drove Sam crazy.

CLARISE

And how would *you* know what drove Sam crazy?

LOLLY

We talk.

CLARISE

Oh?

LOLLY

It's not what you think.

CLARISE

What is it, then?

LOLLY

He *is* my psychiatrist. Or have you forgotten?

CLARISE

A shrink that talks about his wife with his patient.

LOLLY

Ex wife. (pause) With his friend.

CLARISE

In your sessions?

LOLLY

Yes.

CLARISE

Only in your sessions, or off the clock, too? (pause) One ringy dingy...two ringy dingy...

*LOLLY grabs the handle of travel bag.*

LOLLY

This was a stupid idea. I don't know what I was thinking.

CLARISE

Lolly, wait. Please.

*LOLLY stops.*

CLARISE (CONT'D)

I know Sam's helped you a lot. I guess I'm just a little jealous.

LOLLY

Well, I can't help that.

CLARISE

Yeah, I know. I know. (beat) What's going on with you? There's something else. What's up?

LOLLY

Nothing. Not a thing. I'm fine. Hunky dory.

CLARISE

You can tell me. (pause) Tell me, Lolly. Please, you can trust me.

*Long beat.*

LOLLY

I did something. (pause) Something terrible. (pause) But, I didn't mean for it to happen.

CLARISE

What? When?

LOLLY

It came up in last week's session.

*Beat.*

CLARISE

What came up?

LOLLY

It's just too horrible, though it didn't start out that way. You have to believe me.

CLARISE

How *did* it start out?

LOLLY

As a flirtation. (*beat*) I can't bring myself to confess. Especially to you.

CLARISE

This was a stupid idea. (*starts pulling her travel bag US*)

LOLLY

Wait! I'm trying to tell you something, Clarise.

CLARISE

(*coming back*)

Look, I can barely deal with the flashbacks. Just the thought of getting on that bus is almost more than I can endure, but for you I was willing to try. (*pause*) Don't pile *this*, whatever it is, on top of *that*.

LOLLY

I can't live with this anymore!

CLARISE

No true confessions, Lolly. Please. I beg of you. Not now.

LOLLY

(*blurting*)

I told Sam it might ruin our friendship, but he said I should try. And then hope we can heal, all of us, and get past it. But-

CLARISE

You bitch! (*stopping short of slapping, shaking (your choice) LOLLY*) You know how much I love Sam. How could you sleep with him? (*exiting US, pulling her bag*) I hate you!

LOLLY

What in the hell?

CLARISE

(*calling back*)

I thought you were my friend.

LOLLY

No, wait. (*pause*) No. NO! CLARISE! It's not what you think. Come back.

CLARISE

Then what? (*turning back*) WHAT?

LOLLY

I was-- (*pause*) I was flirting with--

CLARISE

Sam!

LOLLY

No, not Sam. The bus driver.

CLARISE

(*walking toward LOLLY*)

What bus driver?

LOLLY

On the bus to Vegas. That last trip.

CLARISE

When my mother--

LOLLY

Yes, *that* trip.

*LOLLY sits and shares.*

LOLLY (CONT'D)

He was watching me in the rearview mirror. The driver was. I started acting out... you know, licking my lips, squirming in my seat like I was... like I wanted him, wanted to have sex with him. Playacting. What could it hurt?

CLARISE

What are you--

LOLLY

You and your mother were busy watching that stupid movie, all cozy together. I was way past bored. (*pause*) And yes, I'll admit it, I was horny...

CLARISE

You were still married to Phillip.

LOLLY

(*stepping on 'married'*)

...He was getting all hot and bothered...couldn't keep his eyes off me. I could see him, in the mirror. (*empowered*) I had the power. Maybe not with my husband, but with this pot-bellied, greasy-haired bus driver I did. (*even bolder*) This poor slob with the frayed collar knew *nothing* about my money. Nothing! He wanted *me*! I had the power to make him crazy with desire.

*Beat.*

LOLLY (CONT'D)

He was watching *me* instead of the road.

CLARISE

What are you saying?

LOLLY

I stopped--when I realized what was happening--that the bus was heading for the shoulder, but he *didn't*. He *couldn't*. It was too late. The bus was careening...

(*realizing the consequence of her actions*)

I took twelve innocent souls with my foolishness. And I'm trying to live with that.

CLAIRSE

Foolishness? Foolishness? You murdered my mother!

LOLLY

I didn't murder her. No! And I didn't mean to hurt anyone. I didn't...I just--

CLARISE

Oh my God, Lolly. Oh my God. (*coldly, after a beat*) You're dead to me. Dead to me. (*exiting US with bag, then turning back*) I hope you burn in Hell!

*CLARISE exits. Long beat.*

LOLLY

But, I never felt such power before, Clarise. You have to understand. I had him right where I wanted him. On that sticky edge.

*We hear the Bus to Vegas pull onto the shoulder. LOLLY gets up.*

LOLLY (CONT'D)

I unbuttoned my blouse. Just two buttons, so he could see what he'd get if he played his cards right...later...

*The driver taps the horn twice.*

LOLLY (CONT'D)

*(walking toward the water)*

...in his room on the strip, in his dirty little bed...

*The BUS pulls away.*

LOLLY (CONT'D)

...while you grazed at the buffet, and your mother fed quarters to the one-armed bandits.

*Long beat. LOLLY stands at the water's edge, pulling her sweater around her as she looks out at the waves in desolate contemplation.*

LOLLY (CONT'D)

But, I--I never, ever meant to hurt anyone.

*LIGHTS FADE as LOLLY steps out of her shoes and walks into the sea. BLACKOUT.*

*END OF PLAY*