

MYSTERY SHORT STORY BY ABHISHEK INDORIA

?

Ed

Summary: A lecturer finds himself spellbound by a haunting story told by a raggedy roadside traveler about his life as he waits for the next bus in a small town in a foreign country.

dangling

I don't know where he is or when.

I cursed as I swatted another mosquito from my neck, moving swiftly towards the window to see if I got the bastard. I'd been bitten by more mosquitoes in the past hour than in the entirety of year, which included trips to various countries. [Just an hour or more, I told myself.]?

I was a lecturer in history and mythology and I had just disembarked from a long journey from Glasgow. Our college had a small yet prestigious staff and a solid reputation producing fine students in history. Last week, a university in western India requested a lecture. They were paying handsomely, and so it fell upon me out of our rotating staff of four to go out and give this lecture in Diu.

The beautiful sunset I'd been told about

I looked at the bleary sky through the window. Clouds were forming towards the west and the usual beautiful sunset [you get to hear so much about] was nowhere to be seen. I currently stayed in a guest room at a house, er...a mansion of a prominent priest in the town of Amreli.

I had to reach Diu before nine in the morning, [at best] quarter past nine. I was still beating myself up for the fact that I missed a bus by ten minutes which led directly to Diu. If I called the bus-station earlier I could have changed the reservation to pick me up here instead of routing through Somnath, which added a few extra hours to my journey. The bus left at 10:50 PM. It was currently 9:00 PM.

- watch your verb tenses
- how many thousand times has the man told this story?
- where does the story actually start?
- I like the actual scene

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If I had told the priest, I am pretty sure he would have gotten me to Diu somehow. Hell, he could have paid for my fare and lodgings too! He even offered to lend me a car for the time period but I declined out of politeness. Foolish, I muttered.

I packed light, only a small bag. I went to the corner of the road, where a sign said "BUS STOP" on a rusty plate. There were no chairs, just a few stone boulders. I set my bag on one and sat on the other, sighing. I wished I would not end up at the lecture with dozens of mosquito bites and a heatstroke. Coincidentally, I could smell the storm which was about to rain down on me.

"Namaskar!" I heard behind my back. I turned and saw a thin, scrawny man with round glasses and wild black hair. He stopped when he saw me, hesitated, and then pointed at my bag.

"Mind if I sit down?" he said with a thick accent.

"Of course." I took the bag and carefully placed it between my knees.

"Where are you off to, sir?" he asked preemptively.

"Diu," I mumbled. "I am waiting for the 10:50 to Somnath, then taking the bus to Diu."

"Aaaah!" He smiled broadly. "Do you have a reservation?"

"Made one this morning."

"You made a mistake then." He spoke, squinting at the sky, "It's getting quite... How do you say... Stormy? And there was a bus which went directly to Diu. I'm afraid you missed it."

"That I know," I said, smiling half-heartedly. "I didn't know much about the buses here you see. It's sort of hard."

"I can see that," he said, looking at me. "You'll reach there soon enough, there's another bus. It's a matter of a few kilometers. All you'll lose is time and money."

I sighed. "I think I've earned that much."

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Suddenly there was a flash of light on the right side of the road and I jumped up. "Do I have to give him a hand or does the bus stop here regularly?"

He squinted towards the set of lights for a bit and then relaxed. "It's okay, sit down, it's just a car," he said, "There are two buses, one goes at 9:30, but it is very slow and stops frequently. It'll take you there even later than the bus ^{that} which comes at 10:50. It doesn't stop anywhere else."

The lights just crossed in front of me. Car. I was surprised how accurately he had been able to tell what ^{kind of} vehicle it was.

"Have you been outside of India?" I asked, curious.

"No," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"You speak good English."

He laughed. "And Portuguese, and Hindi, and Bangla. I make do." Shrugging, he pulled a waterskin out of his bag and took a long swig. "I have been around. I don't have a particular place I belong to. I don't even know where my parents were from, and what language they spoke."

"How so?" I asked with a bit of hesitation.

"Ah, it's an old story." He stretched his feet. "A long time ago, approximately fifty-two years back there was an accident at this Amreli-Somnath road. I don't think," he paused, his eyes scanning my face, "Yes, I don't think you were born back then."

"Anyway! You should really travel here during the daytime. It is one of the most beautiful routes in all of India. There are plains, coast, mountains and there are a lot of animals you get to see in the farms. It's even more excellent when it's raining," he said, nodding towards the storm.

"You were talking about an accident," I reminded him.

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“Oh, yes, yes, approximately fifty-two years ago there was an accident. The road takes a dangerous U-turn halfway to Somnath. That’s where it happened.”

There was another set of lights on the route and I looked up, curious.

“Truck,” He grunted.

“I am sorry,” I stammered. “Please, go on.”

“It was a bus overflowing with people. More than the guy should have taken in, but that’s India for you. Well, no one knows what exactly happened, but I am going to make a guess and say that the driver couldn’t turn it properly at that U-turn. There was an ~~about~~ ^{fast} 2000-foot drop right next to the road.”

I grimaced.

He nodded. “The bus was on fire before it even ^{why?} [reached the surface] [?] Everyone burned to death. No one survived.” He made a face. “No one but a child of about a year and a half.”

I looked up at him, surprised. I heard a loud sound and turned in time to see that the vehicle was in fact, a truck.

^{that's} “It’s a surprise. Was he injured?”

“No, not injured. Not even a concussion. It was ^{the} talk of all the village.”

“It was strange. There was one explanation many have contemplated. There is a flowery tree near the road. Well, not one, but there are many trees scattered around this road of that kind. It was possible that the child was reaching out of the window for the flowers ^{and} it was a strange coincidence that he grabbed a branch as soon as the bus lurched towards the drop.”

“When the villagers heard the sound of the explosion, they hurried towards the bus. It was then they found the child hanging from the tree. Judging from the clothes of the child, it seemed as if he was from a rich family. He could, however, say absolutely nothing except

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“mom” and “dad”. It was hard to find out who he was exactly. The police were trying to search the bus for anything that might belong to the child but they could not find anything.” He paused. “This is a truck as well.”

“What happened to the child?” I asked.

“The next day the newspapers had every single detail about the explosion as well as a big picture of the child. However even after several days, there was nothing. Nobody came to claim the child. Yes, several people, villagers in fact, came forward to adopt the child, however they could not because of a legal issue. The problem was, the child had to be completely abandoned for him to be eligible for adoption. Nobody knew if anyone would come in the future claiming the child as theirs. Hence the magistrate ruled that the child was to be sent to an orphanage.”

As the truck passed in front of my eyes, I started to wonder what kind of man could identify vehicles at night, and from such a distance.

Who says this? “Do you know who the child was?”

I looked at him, realisation dawning on me.

“Ah, yes.” He took out a small picture from a wallet and handed it to me. “This was me at the time of the accident.” *do these people carry wallets?* *what does the photo look like?*

“Did...you find out something else?” *anything*

“No, I could not. I lived in the orphanage for about six years before I ran away. It wasn’t a good orphanage. The owners beat us, and they made us beg for food. They made us steal. If anybody refused they would stick hot iron rods on our hands.” He said showing me his scarred hands. “That one, is a bus.”

Susan

MYSTERY SHORT STORY BY ABHISHEK INDORIA

Summary: As he waits for the next bus in a small town in a foreign country, a lecturer finds himself spellbound by a haunting story told by a raggedy roadside traveler's haunting story, about his life as he waits for the next bus in a small town in a foreign country.

I cursed as I swatted another mosquito from my neck, moving swiftly towards the window to see if I got the bastard. I'd been bitten by more mosquitoes in the past hour than in the entirety of the year, which included trips to various countries. Just an hour or more, I told myself.

Comment [s1]: I think this is a good beginning, but I don't understand why moving toward the window is going to help him figure out if he got the mosquito.

I was a lecturer in history and mythology and I had just disembarked in Diu from a long long bus journey from Glasgow. Our college had a small, yet prestigious, staff of four, and a solid reputation for producing fine students in history. Last week, at the university in western India had requested a lecture, and as they were paying handsomely, and so it fell upon me out of our rotating staff of four to go out and give this lecture in Diu to present the lecture.

Comment [s2]: Think of better adjective

Comment [s3]: Why you? Elaborate (1 sentence is fine)

I walked...took a taxi etc to the town of Amreli, where I had checked in. I looked at the bleary sky through the window into the mansion of a prominent priest. After settling in, I ambled to the window and peered at the bleary sky. Clouds were forming towards the west, and the usual beautiful sunset you get to hear I'd heard so much about was nowhere to be seen. I currently stayed in a guest room at a house, er...a mansion of a prominent priest in the town of Amreli.

Comment [s4]: Hadn't you just disembarked? I thought you were getting off the bus, but it turns out you're in a hotel room. Need to make that transition clear. You were on the bus, you disembarked, you got to the mansion, checked in, went to your room, then looked out the window. I made some changes here to try to incorporate some of this.

I had to reach Diu before nine in the morning, at best quarter past nine; it was currently 9PM. I was still beating myself up for the fact that I had missed a bus by ten minutes which led

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directly to Diu. If I ~~had~~ called the bus-station earlier, I could have changed the reservation to pick me up here instead of rerouting through Somnath, which added a few extra hours to my journey. The bus left at 10:50 PM. ~~It was currently 9:00 PM.~~

Comment [s5]: I'm a little confused. We can talk about the logistics of this paragraph during the filming session.

If I had told the priest ~~that I had to reroute through Somnath~~, I'm pretty sure he would've ~~have~~ gotten me to Diu somehow. Hell, he could ~~have've~~ paid for my fare and lodgings, too! He'd even offered to lend me a car for the time period, but I declined out of politeness.

Comment [s6]: Why was it the priest's responsibility to pay for your fare and lodgings?

Foolish, I muttered.

I packed ~~light, only a small~~ compact bag and headed ~~for~~ to the corner of the road, where a sign ~~said~~ read "BUS STOP" on a rusty plate. There were no chairs, just a few stone boulders. I set my bag on one and sat on the other, ~~sighing~~. I ~~wished I would not~~ hoping I ~~wouldn't~~ end up at the lecture with dozens of mosquito bites and a ~~heatstroke~~. Coincidentally, I could smell the storm which was about to rain down on me.

Comment [s7]: So are the rest of your things still at the mansion, or you'd packed light from your trip from Glasgow?

→ remind us it's dark outside

Comment [s8]: Probably wouldn't have heatstroke and a rainstorm together but I could be wrong.

Start here →

"Namaskar!" I heard ~~behind my back~~ from behind. I turned and saw a thin, scrawny man with round glasses and wild black hair. He stopped when he saw me, hesitated, and then pointed at my bag.

Comment [s9]: Age?

"Mind if I sit down ~~here~~?" he said with a thick accent.

"Of course." I took the bag and ~~carefully~~ placed it between my knees.

"Where are you off to, ~~S~~ sir?" he asked preemptively.

"Diu." I mumbled. "I'm waiting for the 10:50 to Somnath, then taking the bus to Diu."

"Aaaah!" He smiled broadly. "Do you have a reservation?"

"Made one this morning."

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“You made a mistake then.” He spoke, squinting at the sky, “It’s getting quite... How do you say... Stormy? And there was a bus which went directly to Diu, but I’m afraid you missed it. The bus that’s coming is going to Somnath first.”

“That I know,” I said, smiling half-heartedly. “I didn’t know much about the buses here you see. It’s sort of hard.”

“I can see that,” he said, looking at me. “You’ll reach there soon enough, there’s another bus; it’s a matter of a few kilometers. All you’ll lose is time and money.”

I sighed. “I think I’ve earned that much.”

Suddenly there was a flash of light on the right side of the road, and I jumped up, eager to leave. “Do I have to give him a hand or does the bus stop here regularly?”

He squinted towards the set of lights for a bit and then relaxed. “It’s okay, sit down, it’s just a car,” he said, “There are two buses, one goes at 9:30, but it is very slow and stops frequently. It’ll take you there even later than the bus which comes at 10:50. It doesn’t stop anywhere else. I recommend getting comfortable and waiting for the second bus.”

The lights just crossed in front of me. Car. It was a car, after all. I was surprised how accurately he had been able to tell what vehicle it was.

“Have you been outside of India?” I asked, curious.

“No,” he said. “Why do you ask?”

“You speak good English.”

He laughed. “And Portuguese, and Hindi, and Bangla. I make do.” Shrugging, he pulled a waterskin out of his bag and took a long swig. “I have been around. I don’t have a particular place I belong to. I don’t even know where my parents were from, and what language they spoke.”

Comment [s10]: Wave him down, maybe?

maybe okay to keep -
I just wasn't
familiar w/ this
expression.

Comment [s11]: Why?

→ make it clear the car is
too far away to identify

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“How so?” I asked, with a bit of hesitation.

Comment [s12]: Why hesitation?

“Ah, it’s an old story.” ~~he~~ He stretched his feet. “A long time ago, approximately fifty-two years bac~~k~~ there was an accident at this Amreli-Somnath road. I don’t think,” he paused, his eyes scanning my face, “~~Yes~~yes, I don’t think you were born back then.

“Anyway~~!~~, ~~y~~You should really travel here during the daytime. It is one of the most beautiful routes in all of India. There are plains, coast, mountains, and ~~there are a lots~~ of ~~farmland~~animals you get to see in the farms. It’s even more excellent when it’s raining,” he said, nodding towards the storm.

Comment [s13]: It’s not daytime?

“You were talking about an accident.” I reminded him.

“Oh, yes, yes, approximately fifty-two years ago, there was an accident. The road takes a dangerous U-turn halfway to Somnath. That’s where it happened.”

~~There was a~~nother set of lights ~~on the route~~appeared and I looked up, curious.

Comment [s14]: He was obviously looking up he would’ve seen the lights.

“Truck.” He grunted.

“I~~-am~~ sorry.” I stammered. “Please, go on.”

“It was a bus, overflowing with people. More than the ~~guy~~driver should’ve taken in, but that’s India for you. Well, no one knows what exactly happened, but I~~-am~~ going to make a guess and say that the driver couldn’t turn it properly at that U-turn. There was an about 2,000-foot drop right next to the road.”

I grimaced.

He nodded. “The bus was on fire before it even reached the surface. Everyone burned to death. No one survived.” He made a face. “No one but a child of about a year and a half. ~~Not a~~scratch on him.”

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I looked up at him, surprised. I heard a loud sound and turned in time to see that the vehicle was, in fact, a truck.

~~"It's a surprise. Was he injured Really?"~~

"No, ~~not injured. N~~ot even a concussion. It was the talk of ~~all~~ the village.

"It was strange. There was one explanation many have contemplated. There is a flowery tree near the road. Well, not one, but there are many trees scattered around this road of that kind.

It was possible that the child was reaching out of the window for the flowers ~~___ and it was a~~ strange coincidence that he grabbed a branch as soon as the bus lurched towards the drop.

"When the villagers heard the sound of the explosion, they hurried towards the bus. It was then they found the child ~~hanging-grasping a branch off from~~ the tree. Judging from the clothes of the child, it seemed as if he was from a rich family. He could, however, say absolutely nothing except "mom" and "dad". It was hard to find out who he was exactly. The police were trying to search the bus for anything that might belong to the child, but they could not find anything." He paused, looking down the road. "This is a truck as well."

"What happened to the child?" I asked.

"The next day, the newspapers ~~had printed every single detail about regarding~~ the explosion, as well as a big full-page picture of the child. ~~However even a~~fter several days, though, there was nothing. Nobody came to claim the child. ~~Yes, s~~everal people ~~___,~~ villagers in fact ~~___,~~ came forward to adopt the child, however they could not ~~because of a legal issue~~. The problem was, the child had to be completely abandoned for him to be eligible for adoption. Nobody knew if anyone would come in the future claiming the child as theirs. Hence the magistrate ruled that the child was to be sent to an orphanage. ~~___~~

Comment [s15]: Do you want to change these to contractions instead (e.g., couldn't)? It would sound more natural, but it depends on whether or not he speaks with them

Comment [s16]: No longer noticing the traffic

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As the truck passed in front of my eyes, I started to wonder what kind of man could identify vehicles at night, and from such a distance.

Comment [s17]: Need to make it obvious at the beginning that it's night.

"Do you know who the child was?"

I looked at him, realisation dawning on me.

"Ah, yes." He took out a ~~small~~ picture from a wallet and handed it to me. "This was me at the time of the accident." → does the lecturer see something strange in the photo

"Did...you find out something else?" — meaning?

"No, I could not. I lived in the orphanage for about six years before I ran away. It wasn't a good orphanage. The owners beat us, and they made us beg for food. They made us steal. If

anybody any of us refused, they would stick hot iron rods on our hands." He said

showingshowed me his scarred hands. "That one, is a bus."

main character: I think we need to feel more for him; I ~~can't get enough of a~~ don't have a good feel for what he's really like. There's barely any mention of his personal life. Is he happy to be traveling? Running away from something? Give us a hint as to what his personal life is like so that we can connect with him. Does he have to travel because he'll lose his job otherwise? Is he going through a divorce, and relieved to be away? Is he worried about losing his job? Raise the stakes.

JULIE

MYSTERY SHORT STORY BY ABHISHEK INDORIA

Summary: A lecturer finds himself spellbound by a haunting story told by a raggedy roadside traveler about his life as he waits for the next bus in a small town in a foreign country.

You use "I" a lot.

I cursed as I swatted another mosquito from my neck, moving swiftly towards the window to see if I got the bastard. I ^{had been} bitten by more mosquitoes in the past hour than in the entirety of ^{a/the} year, which included trips to various countries. Just an hour or more, I told myself.

I was a lecturer in history and mythology and I had just disembarked from a long journey from Glasgow. Our college had a small yet prestigious staff and a solid reputation ^{for} producing fine students in history. Last week, a university in western India requested a lecture. They were ^{antedecede} paying handsomely, and so it fell upon me out of our rotating staff of four to go out and give this ^{reward} lecture in Diu.

I looked at the bleary sky through the window. Clouds were forming towards ^{the} west and the usual beautiful sunset you ^{get} to hear so much about was nowhere to be seen. I currently stayed in a guest room at a house, ^{rather} or...a mansion of a prominent priest in the town of Amreli.

I had to reach Diu before nine in the morning, at best quarter past nine. I was still beating myself up ^{over} for the fact that I missed a bus by ten minutes which ^{went} led directly to Diu. If I ^{had} called the bus-station earlier I could have changed the reservation to pick me up here instead of rerouting through Somnath, which added a few extra hours to my journey. The bus left at 10:50 PM. It was currently 9:00 PM.

DESCRIBE THE BUS STOP.
DID THE MOSQUITOES PERSIST THERE?
WHAT WAS THE TEMPERATURE?
WAS THERE ARTIFICIAL LIGHT ILLUMINATING THE ROAD?
OR MOONLIGHT?

JULIE

MYSTERY SHORT STORY BY ABHISHEK INDORIA

So, why doesn't he?

If I had told the priest, I am pretty sure he would have gotten me to Diu somehow. Hell, he could have paid for my fare and lodgings, too! He even offered to lend me a car for the time period but I declined out of politeness. Foolish, I muttered.

I packed light, only a small bag. I went to the corner of the road, where a sign said "BUS STOP" on a rusty plate. There were no chairs, just a few stone boulders. I set my bag on one and sat on the other, sighing. I ^{hoped} wished I would not end up at the lecture with dozens of mosquito bites and a heatstroke. Coincidentally, I could smell the storm which was about to rain down on me.

coincidental to what? Translates: "Hello" in Hindi.

I recognized the Hindi greeting/version of "Hello" redundant

"Namaskar!" I heard behind my back. I turned and saw a thin, scrawny man with round glasses and wild black hair. He stopped when he saw me, hesitated, and then pointed at my bag.

(... not I don't mind please)

"Mind if I sit down?" he ^{asked} said with a thick accent.

Where did the stranger come from? wood road

"Of course," I ^{not} took the bag and carefully placed it between my knees.

"Where are you off to, sir?" he asked preemptively.

"Diu," I mumbled. "I am waiting for the 10:50 to Somnath, then taking the bus to Diu."

"Aaaah!" He smiled broadly. "Do you have a reservation?"

"Made one this morning."

"You made a mistake then." He spoke, squinting at the sky, "It's getting quite... How do you say... Stormy? And there was a bus which went directly to Diu. I'm afraid you missed it."

"That I know," I said, smiling half-heartedly. "I didn't know much about the buses here, you see. It's sort of hard."

What is?

"I can see that," he said, looking at me. "You'll reach there soon enough, there's another bus. It's a matter of a few kilometers. All you'll lose is time and money."

I sighed. "I think I've earned that much."

JULIE

MYSTERY SHORT STORY BY ABHISHEK INDORIA

Suddenly there was a flash of light on the right side of the road and I jumped up. "Do I have to give him a ^{signal} hand or does the bus stop here regularly?"

He squinted towards the set of lights for a bit and then relaxed. "It's okay, ^{sit down} ~~it's~~ just a car," he said, "There are two buses, ^{one} goes at 9:30, but it is very slow and stops frequently. It'll take you there even later than the bus which comes at 10:50. ^{that one} It doesn't stop anywhere else."

How does
have see
& keep
sense
hexri
Blind

The lights just crossed in front of me. Car. I was surprised how accurately he had been able to tell what vehicle it was.

"Have you been outside of India?" I asked, curious.

"No," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"You speak good English."

He laughed. "And Portuguese, and Hindi, and Bangla. I make do." Shrugging, he pulled a waterskin out of his bag and took a long swig. "I have been around. I don't have a particular place I belong to. I don't even know where my parents were from, and what language they spoke."

"How so?" I asked with a bit of hesitation.

"Ah, it's an old story." he stretched his feet. "A long time ago, ^{so} approximately fifty-two years back there was an accident at this Amreli-Somnath road. I don't think," he paused, his eyes scanning my face, "Yes, I don't think you were born back then."

"Anyway! You should really travel here during the daytime. [#] It is one of the most beautiful routes in all of India. ^{He digressed} There are plains, coast, mountains and there are a lot of animals you get to see in the farms. It's even more excellent when it's raining," he said, nodding towards the storm.

"You were talking about an accident," I reminded him.

Why?

JULIE

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2nd mention
↓ so
“Oh, yes yes, approximately fifty-two years ago there was an accident. The road takes a dangerous U-turn halfway to Somnath. That’s where it happened.”

There was another set of lights on the route and I looked up, curious.

“Truck,” He grunted,

disturbed that I was so easily distracted & wasn't riveted

“I am sorry,” I stammered. “Please, go on.”

“It was a bus overflowing with people. More than the ^{driver} ~~guy~~ should have taken in, but that’s India for you. Well, no one knows what exactly happened, but I am going to ~~make a guess and say~~ that the driver couldn’t turn it properly at that U-turn. There was an about 2000-foot drop right next to the road.”

I grimaced.

redundant
He nodded. “The bus was on fire before it even reached the surface. Everyone burned to death. No one survived.” He made a face. “No one but a child of about a year and a half.”

x2
I looked up at him, surprised. I heard a loud sound and turned in time to see that the vehicle was in fact, a truck.

“It’s a surprise. Was he injured?”

“No, not ~~injured~~. Not even a concussion. It was talk of all the village.”

“It was strange. There was one explanation many have contemplated. There is a flowery tree near the road. Well, not one, but there are many trees scattered around this road of that kind. It was possible that the child was reaching out of the window for the flowers and it was a strange coincidence that he grabbed a branch as soon as the bus lurched towards the drop.

wrenched out window?
“When the villagers heard the sound of the explosion, they hurried towards the bus. It was then they found the child hanging from the tree. Judging from the clothes of the child, it seemed as if he was from a rich family. He could, however, say absolutely nothing except

JULIE

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for what language?
"mom" and "dad". It was hard to find out who he was exactly. The police were trying to search the bus for anything that might belong to the child but they could not find anything." He paused.

"This is a truck as well."

"What happened to the child?" I asked.

"The next day the newspapers had every single detail about the explosion as well as a big picture of the child. However even after several days, there was nothing. Nobody came to claim the child. Yes, several people, villagers in fact, came forward to adopt the child, however they could not because of a legal issue. The problem was, the child had to be completely abandoned for him to be eligible for adoption. Nobody knew if anyone would come in the future claiming the child as theirs. Hence, the magistrate ruled that the child was to be sent to an orphanage."

As the truck passed in front of my eyes I started to wonder what kind of man could identify vehicles at night, and from such a distance.

"Do you know who the child was?"

2?
or British?
I looked at him, realisation dawning on me.

"Ah yes." He took out a small picture from a wallet and handed it to me. "This was me at the time of the accident."

"Did...you find out something else?"

"No, I could not. I lived in the orphanage for about six years before I ran away. It wasn't a good orphanage. The owners beat us, and they made us beg for food. They made us steal. If anybody refused they would stick hot iron rods on our hands." He said showing me his scarred

hands. "That one, is a bus."

Where did he get photo?
ALL YOU NEED IS A CAMPFIRE, AND YOU'RE SETTING UP A GOOD SCARY STORY.
REMINDS ME OF "THE MONKEY'S POW" (W.W. JACOBS) OR "THE OPEN WINDOW" (SAKI H.H. MUN)
DO TELL IF THE PROFESSOR IS GIVING THE SAME LECTURE IN DIU AS HE DID IN GLASGOW. MIGHT BE REVIEWING HIS NOTES TO PASS THE TIME AT BUS STOP, WOULDN'T THE STRANGER BE EVEN THE LEAST BIT CURIOUS ABOUT HIM? DID MORE PEOPLE COME TO THE BUS STOP AS 10:50 APPROACHED? DOES THE STRANGER JOIN HIM ON THE LONG BUS RIDE? OR DO THEY PART WAYS?

Jen's Comments

MYSTERY SHORT STORY BY ABHISHEK INDORIA

Summary: *As a lecturer waits for the next bus in a small town in a foreign country, he finds himself spellbound by a haunting story told by a raggedy roadside traveler about his life.*

I cursed as I swatted another mosquito from my neck, moving swiftly towards the window to see if I got the bastard. I'd been bitten by more mosquitoes in the past hour than in the entirety of year, which included trips to various countries. Just an hour or more, I told myself.

I was a lecturer in history and mythology, and I had just disembarked from a long journey from Glasgow. Our college had a small yet prestigious staff and a solid reputation of producing fine students in history. Last week, a university in western India requested a lecture. They were paying handsomely, and so it fell upon me, out of our rotating staff of four, to go out and give this lecture in Diu.

I looked at the bleary sky through the window. Clouds were forming in the bleary sky towards the west, and blocked the usual beautiful sunset you get to hear about so much, about was nowhere to be seen. I currently stayed in a guest room at a house, er...a mansion of a prominent priest in the town of Amreli.

I had to reach Diu before nine in the morning, at best quarter past nine. I was still beating myself up for the fact that I missed a bus by ten minutes which led directly to Diu. If I called the bus-station earlier I could have changed the reservation to pick me up here instead of rerouting

Comment [PHS IS1]: Vary your paragraph and sentence starters. *starters*

Comment [PHS IS2]: This is a misplaced modifier. The way it's written "moving swiftly" modifies "neck" when you mean it to say the main character moved swiftly. Also find a stronger verb to replace "moving swiftly" (eg: striding)

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Comment [PHS IS3]: Try to avoid "I looked" "I heard" "I saw" etc.

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Comment [PHS IS4]: Where is "here"? At the mansion in Amreli?

had

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through Somnath, which added a few extra hours to my journey. ~~The next~~ bus left at 10:50 PM. It was currently 9:00 PM.

If I had told the priest, I am ~~pretty~~ sure he would have gotten me to Diu somehow. Hell, he ~~ew~~ould have paid for my fare and lodgings, too! He even offered to lend me a car for the time period, but I declined out of politeness. Foolish... ~~I muttered.~~

I packed light, only a small bag. I ~~went~~^{trudge} to the corner of the road, where a sign said, "BUS STOP" on a rusty plate. There were no chairs, just a few ~~stone~~ boulders. I set my bag on one and sat on the other, sighing. I ~~hoped~~wished I would not end up at the lecture with dozens of mosquito bites and a heatstroke. Coincidentally, I could smell the storm which was about to rain down on me.

"Namaskar!" I heard behind my back. ~~I turned and saw a~~ thin, scrawny man with round glasses and wild black hair. ~~He~~ stopped when he saw me, hesitated, and then pointed at my bag.

"Mind if I sit down?" he said with a thick accent.

"Of course." I took ~~my~~the bag and ~~carefully~~ placed it between my knees.

"Where are you off to, sir?" he asked ~~preemptively~~.

"Diu..." I mumbled. "I am waiting for the 10:50 to Somnath, then taking the bus to Diu..."

"Aaaah!" He ~~grinned~~smiled broadly. "Do you have a reservation?"

"Made one this morning."

"You made a mistake then." He spoke, squinting at the sky, "It's getting quite... How do you say... Stormy? And there was a bus which went directly to Diu. I'm afraid you missed it."

"That I know," I said, smiling half-heartedly. "I didn't know much about the buses here you see. It's sort of hard."

Comment [PHS IS5]: How long is the ride from Amreli to Diu?

Why is he staying so far away from the lecture?

Comment [PHS IS6]: Your story starts here. Everything before this is backstory and unnecessary. Cut it or at least shorten it.

Comment [PHS IS7]: Stone boulders is redundant. All boulders are stone.

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"I can see that," he said, ~~looking at me~~. "You'll reach there soon enough, there's another bus. It's a matter of a few kilometers. All you'll lose is time and money."

I sighed. "I think I've earned that much."

~~Suddenly there was a~~ A flash of light flashed on the right side of the road, and I jumped up. "Do I have to give him a hand or does the bus stop here regularly?"

He squinted towards the set of lights for a bit and then relaxed. "It's okay, sit down, it's just a car," he said, "There are two buses, one goes at 9:30, but it is very slow and stops frequently. It'll take you there even later than the bus which comes at 10:50. ^{that one} ~~It~~ doesn't stop anywhere else."

The lights just crossed in front of me. Car. I was surprised how accurately he had been able to tell what vehicle it was.

"Have you been outside of India?" I asked, ~~curious~~.

"No," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"You speak good English."

He laughed. "And Portuguese, and Hindi, and Bangla. I make do." Shrugging, he pulled a ~~waterskin~~ water skin out of his bag and took a long swig. "I have been around. I don't have a particular place I belong to. I don't even know where my parents were from, and what language they spoke."

"How so?" I asked with a bit of hesitation.

"Ah, it's an old story." ~~He~~ He stretched his feet. "A long time ago, approximately fifty-two years back, there was an accident at this Amreli-Somnath road. I don't think," he paused, his eyes scanning my face, "Yes, I don't think you were born back then."

Is he barefoot?

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“Anyway! You should really travel here during the daytime. It is one of the most beautiful routes in all of India. There are plains, coast, mountains and there are a lot of animals ~~you get to see~~ in the farms. It’s even more excellent when it’s raining,” he said, nodding towards the storm.

“You were talking about an accident.” I reminded him.

“Oh, yes yes, approximately fifty-two years ago there was an accident. The road takes a dangerous U-turn halfway to Somnath. That’s where it happened.”

~~There was another~~ set of lights on the route, ~~and I looked up, curious.~~

“Truck.” ~~He~~ grunted.

“I am sorry.” I stammered. “Please, go on.”

“It was a bus overflowing with people. More than the guy should have taken in, but that’s India for you. Well, no one knows what exactly happened, but I am going to make a guess and say that the driver couldn’t turn it properly at that U-turn. There was an about 2000-foot drop right next to the road.”

I grimaced.

He nodded. “The bus was on fire before it even reached the surface. Everyone burned to death. No one survived.” He made a face. “No one but a ~~boychild~~ of about a year and a half.”

I looked up at him, surprised. ~~I heard a~~ ~~The sound of a~~ loud ~~engine approached.~~ ~~sound and~~ ~~turned in time to see that the vehicle-~~ ~~It~~ was in fact, a truck.

“~~It’s a surprise~~ ~~Surprising~~. Was he injured?”

“No, not injured. Not even a concussion. It was talk of ~~all the~~ ~~the entire~~ village.

“It was ~~indeed~~ strange. ~~There was one explanation m~~ Many have contemplated ~~one~~ ~~explanation~~. ~~There is a~~ ~~A~~ flowery tree ~~grows~~ near the road. Well, not one, but ~~there are~~ many

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trees ~~of that kind are~~ scattered around this road ~~of that kind~~. It was possible that the child was reaching out of the window for the flowers, and it was a strange coincidence that he grabbed a branch as soon as the bus lurched towards the drop.

“When the villagers heard ~~the sound of~~ the explosion, they hurried towards the bus. It was then they found the child hanging from the tree. Judging from ~~his~~the clothes ~~of the child~~, it seemed as if he was from a rich family. He could, however, say absolutely nothing except

“~~m~~Mom” and “~~d~~Dad”. It was hard to find out who he was exactly. The police ~~were trying to~~ searched the bus for anything that might belong to the child, but they ~~could not find anything~~. Sounded nothing. He paused. “This is a truck as well.”

“What happened to the child?” I asked.

“The next day the newspapers had every single detail about the explosion as well as a ~~big~~ picture of the child. However even after several days, there was nothing. Nobody came to claim the child. Yes, several people, villagers in fact, came forward to adopt ~~him~~the child, ~~however but~~ they could not because of a legal issue. The problem was, the child had to be completely abandoned for him to be eligible for adoption. Nobody knew if anyone would come in the future ~~to claiming~~ the child as theirs. Hence the magistrate ruled that the child was to be sent to an orphanage.”

As the truck passed in front of my eyes I started to wonder what kind of man could identify vehicles at night, and from such a distance.

“Do you know who the child was?”

I looked at him, realisation dawning on me.

“Ah yes.” He took out a small picture from a wallet and handed it to me. “This was me at the time of the accident.”

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“Did...you ever find out anything something else?”

“No, I could not. I lived in the orphanage for about six years before I ran away. It wasn't a good orphanage. The owners beat us, and they made us beg for food. They made us steal. If anybody refused they would stick hot iron rods on our hands.” Hhe said showing me his scarred hands.

(Have him make a gesture of some kind before he identifies the bus.)

“That one, is a bus.”

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Abhishek-

I enjoyed the bit of travel trivia and experience in India. Very different travel experience from anything I've had to endure.

This has potential to be quite an eye-opening story. Unfortunately, we stop just short of a revelation that would keep us reading. Of course, there's interest in the traveller and his miraculous story of survival, but to keep the reader interested, there has to be more than what we have here. I guess you need to feed us more of the hook. Who is this guy? How did he really survive, or was this just a story strangers tell in passing? An Indian version of the Canterbury Tales.

As soon as the stranger begins his story, the reader will anticipate that the sole survivor is the stranger. You could bring this forward and dispense with most of the missed connections and busses and trucks that didn't stop, unless his unusual ability to identify the vehicles has some other purpose.

If the story is about the sole survivor, you can use that as a launching point and condense the story.

I'm interested in the outcome, but you can easily rid the story of extraneous material. Short stories are like poems. Not an extra word or phrase..

The phrasing during the narration of this story is convincingly English as a second language in a pleasant way.

Good luck with this.

Dave

Summary: A lecturer finds himself spellbound by a haunting story told by a raggedy roadside traveler about his life as he waits for the next bus in a small town in a foreign country.

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I was(*am?*) a lecturer in history and mythology and I had just disembarked from a long journey from Glasgow. Our college had a small yet prestigious staff and a solid reputation producing fine students in (*of?*) history. Last week, a university in western India requested a

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lecture. They were paying handsomely, and so it fell upon me out of our rotating staff of four to go out ~~and~~ *to Diu to* give this lecture ~~in Diu~~.

I looked at the bleary sky through the window. Clouds were forming towards the west and the usual beautiful sunset you get to hear so much about was nowhere to be seen. I currently stayed in a guest room at a house, er...a mansion of a prominent priest in the town of Amreli. (delete)

I had to reach Diu before nine in the morning, at best quarter past nine. I was still beating myself up for the fact that I missed a bus by ten minutes which led directly to Diu. If I called the bus-station earlier I could have changed the reservation to pick me up here instead of rerouting through Somnath, which added a few extra hours to my journey. The bus left at 10:50 PM. It was currently 9:00 PM.

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I packed ~~light~~, only a small bag. I *and* went to the corner of the road, where a sign said "BUS STOP" on a rusty plate. There were no chairs, just a few stone boulders. I set my bag on one and sat on the other, sighing. I wished I would not end up at the lecture with dozens of mosquito bites and a heatstroke. Coincidentally, I could smell the storm which was about to rain down on me.

"Namaskar!" I heard behind my back. I turned and saw a **thin, scrawny** *(both say the same thing)* man with round glasses and wild black hair. He stopped when he saw me, hesitated, and then pointed at my bag. *(What does Namaskar mean?)*

"Mind if I sit down?" he said with a thick accent. *(An accent from where?)*

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“Of course.” I took the bag and carefully placed it between my knees.

“Where are you off to, sir?” he asked ~~preemptively~~.

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“You were talking about an accident.(.)” I reminded him.

“Oh, yes(.) yes.(.) ~~approximately~~ *Approximately*, fifty-two years ago there was an accident. The road takes a dangerous U-turn halfway to Somnath. That’s where it happened.”

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He nodded. “The bus was on fire before it even reached the **surface** (*bottom?*). Everyone burned to death. No one survived.” He made a face. “No one but a child of about a year and a half.”

I looked up at him, surprised. I heard a loud sound and turned in time to see that the vehicle was in fact, a truck.

“It’s a surprise. Was he injured?”

“No, not injured. Not even a concussion. It was talk of all the village.

“It was strange. There was one explanation many have contemplated. There is a flowery tree near the road. Well, not one, but **there are many trees scattered around this road of that kind.** (*Awkward phrasing.*) It was possible that the child was reaching out of the window for the flowers and it was a strange coincidence that he grabbed a branch as soon as the bus lurched *towards the drop* (*off the road?*).

“When the villagers heard the sound of the explosion, they hurried towards the bus. It was then they found the child hanging from the tree. Judging from the clothes of the child, it seemed as if he was from a rich family. He could, however, say absolutely nothing except “mom” and “dad”. It was hard to find out who he was exactly. The police were trying to search the bus for anything that might belong to the child but they could not find anything.” He paused. “This is a truck as well.”

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“**Did...you find out something else?**” *(This seems to be an odd question. Very leading.)*

“No, I could not. I lived in the orphanage for about six years before I ran away. It wasn't a good orphanage. The owners beat us, and they made us beg for food. They made us steal. If anybody refused they would stick hot iron rods on our hands.” He said showing me his scarred hands. “That one, is a bus.”