

1.

I am the last one off the bus. It was only half-full to begin with, of shaggy-looking young men and older ladies and one mother with two rowdy kids. The mother is the last to go before me. She yells at the older boy in Spanish and then turns around and rolls her eyes at me. I smile back without even thinking about it, sharing a moment with this woman who I've never seen before, sharing something just because we're women. Because she saw something kindred in me. My smile fades, and the kids race away from their mother towards the gas station/convenience store that serves as a bus stop in this tiny town.

I watch the drizzling rain roll down my window. This is it. I've been on the bus for hours, and I haven't had a chance to pee, and I'm starving. And if I don't get off in the next

ten minutes, the bus will start going again, and it will take me away from Grey Wood, Oregon, and on to the next town. And maybe that's where I should go, anywhere but here. Anywhere but Amy's home.

'Isn't this your stop?' says the bus driver, a burly man with a gut spilling over his eighties jeans. He wears big plastic glasses and smells like cigarettes even from back where I am, in the middle.

'Yeah,' I say.

He stands, raises his arms, and stretches, making a yowling sound like you make when you've just woken up. 'Wish we'd finally get some sun,' he says. 'It's frickin' June, right?'

I don't answer. I stand up and grab my cloth Safeway shopping bag, which contains everything I own in this world. *Come on, Chelsea*, I think. *Move*. If I stay on the bus, where will I end up? How will I live? I have no money and no identification, and I'm only sixteen years old. There's no way I could pass for older, with my mismatched old clothes and the haircut I did myself.

An old lady climbs back on the bus. The driver has to sit down in his seat to let her pass, and I know I can't wait any longer. I walk straight, past the driver, and down the steps.

'Good luck,' he says from behind me.

'Thanks,' I say. I'm shivering, and not because I'm suddenly being pelted with good old-fashioned Oregon drizzle. I walk towards the convenience store. I remember this as a 7-Eleven, but now it's something else, a 'Publik Mart'. Amy used to come here to buy candy on the days

when she went with her mom to work. As I look past the store, I can see the cross street where the post office was, where Mom worked. I wonder if she still works there, if she's there right now. But today is Sunday, so no, she wouldn't be there. She'd be at home. Assuming home is in the same place.

'Getting back on?' a voice says.

I jump. It's the lady with the two kids, who are already running up the bus stairs.

'No,' I say. 'This is my stop.'

'Ah, happy landings, then.' She smiles at me.

'Safe travels.' I try to smile back, but I'm not used to talking to people, and I'm afraid it looks more like a grimace.

'*Gracias.*' She gets on the bus.

I take a few steps away, and I watch as the doors close and the bus turns on and exhaust spits out the back. The bus driver waves at me, and then the bus huffs and puffs and pulls out of the parking lot. I'm standing here, right where Amy used to stand, and there's no going on or going back.