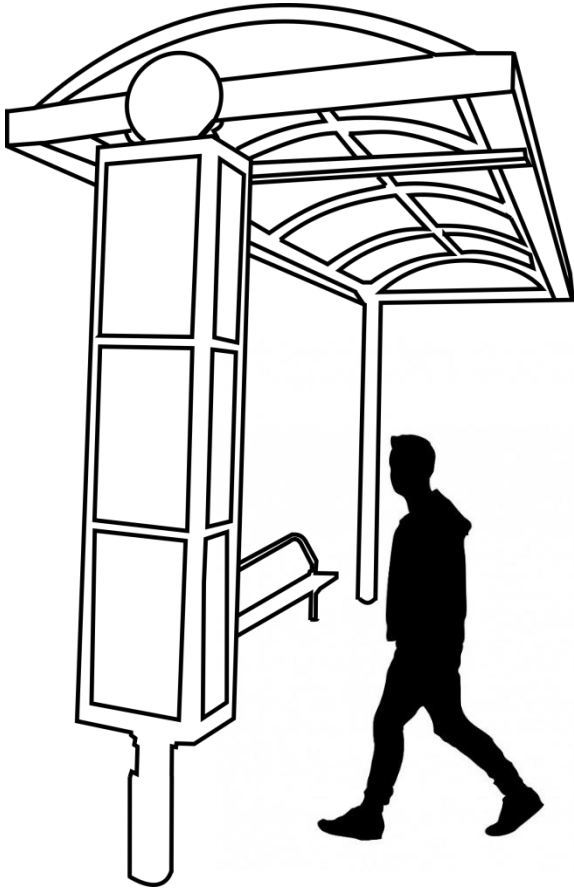


Metro 44 East (The Bus Stop)



A Short Story

Eileen Smith

Terry J. Walters

Metro 44 East
(THE BUS STOP)

On behalf of Eileen and Terry, greetings from Central Florida.

This short story was originally a play written and performed for their retirement community. It's a great place to live with over 2500 homes. Terry has been a performer, producer, writer and director. Eileen has previously written several plays for the community and her church, as well and performer, director, writer and producer in both. Both of them have participated in numerous variety shows here.

They started out with each writing an act. In the end they added to each other's stories.

They then decided to do an Audio book version. The play was divided into 10 chapters and verbiage modifications to allow for non-visual communication. Parts of the original play were deleted from the script to avoid conflict with copyright laws.

Both the Audio book version and the play are available upon request.

They were having so much fun that they decided to turn it into a short story.

It's been a challenge, it's been great fun.
They hope you like it.

A special thanks to Marcie Walters (wife extraordinaire) for the cover composition and all the editing.

Eileen Smith's – e-mail – Smithme736@gmail.com
Terry Walters – e-mail – terryland@yahoo.com

METRO 44 EAST was published and performed in January 2017.
Audio book and short story published 2019
This work is in the public domain.

CHAPTER 1

It was a Friday afternoon at the offices at ON THE TOWN Magazine. Our weekly periodical was, for the most part, a positive flow variety format which featured highlights and events deemed to be attractive to the city at large by the editorial staff.

We, the regular staff and reporters, had returned from our customary late Friday lunch. We noted that our assignments were posted. Under my name (Kevin Durey) was simply the entry “4PM”. That was when I was scheduled to meet with my editor to receive my assignment for the coming week. I had a regular feature article entitled “A Day In The Life”, where I would observe and record people and activities from a given location.

So, at precisely 4 o’clock, I entered the office, grabbed a seat as Thomas Sutton looked across his desk, smiled, and said “This coming week, as usual, I have all of your material gathering for your next column consolidated into one day. This one, however, will be a pre-dawn to post sunset day. I would like for you to capture the every-day activities of people who use the bus. I’m interested in hearing what people say and do, where they’re going, and what they do when they return. I have made arrangements with the shop owners to help conceal your purpose in being at this location. The name of the bus stop is “Metro 44 East”. It is one of the most popular stops in the Metro line. I know you know what you’re looking for so, hey, have a great weekend. We’ll compensate you somehow for the long day.”

It was right after the meeting that I left the office for a typical “chill and thrill” weekend. I found my alarm clock ringing its usual tune on Monday morning. It was going off earlier than usual as I prepared for work. I had managed to make contact on Saturday with some of the shop owners at the rear of the bus stop to try to minimize what could be my conspicuous presence. These were folks known to me from previous assignments. I managed a quickie breakfast and coffee before I made my way from apartment to car in what was still the pitch black of night.

It was a pleasant weather time, but was forecast for hotter for the balance of the day. I pulled into a nearly empty large parking lot at the rear of the

buildings and made my way towards the front. The only light was from the street lamps and building security lights. There was no one there except for early preparatory employees working window displays, fixing foods and conducting inventories. I slid into a walled-in area that was near a news stand. It allowed reasonable concealment but gave me a clear view of the area and within voice range. A newspaper vendor made his way to the stand. Shortly after his arrival, there was a man who appeared to be of the “bum” variety. He staggered his way to one of the benches which was well in back of the bus stop and in an area situated between the fronts of two stores. While not inconspicuous, it was out of the path of foot traffic.

Life was beginning to happen. The sun was working on brightening the sky and it was obvious that day had arrived. People were beginning to pass by my location. Those who were walking in pairs were in speaking in subdued tones. As the traffic volume increased, so did the voices. I checked my voice recording device to insure it was working.

The paper vendor was now issuing his morning message. “Paper-get your morning paper...oh hey, Frank, how ya doing? Ya know, you have always appeared to be a bit indecisive...but now, you look even less sure of yourself.”

Frank responded- “Yeah, I know...all I know is I’m going over to the bus bench, sit down, and wait for the bus.” The conversations proceeded in the following manner, a man named Tom arrived at the stand.

Vendor- “OK folks, come and get the headlines for today-Tom, how goes the war of life with you? How was your weekend?”...

Tom- “Oh hey man, great...how about your weekend?...”

Vendor- “Well, apparently better than Frank’s...for him, just another bad sunrise.”

Tom- “Well, I’m going to head over to the bench and see what’s up with him.”

Vendor- “ Yeah , well, good luck with that.”

Tom made his way to the bench and sat next to Frank.

Tom- “Hey, Frank, how goes it? Did you have a pleasant weekend?”

Frank - "Oh yeah, I'm living the dream...let's see...I mowed the lawn and washed the car, listened to my wife complain...ya know, she has complaining down to an absolute science. She could qualify for her Doctorate degree in Advanced Irritation techniques. And then, there was the neighbor's party that went all night long...I did not have a vicarious good time. But the highlight- the absolute highlight, was getting a phone call from my boss on a Sunday afternoon, telling me I have a 9 o'clock appointment today with the corporate President. Have I told you that Mondays and vacuum cleaners have something in common? They both suck out loud!"

Tom- "Wow...sorry to hear that. Hey, at least we got to see the football game on TV."

Frank- "Oh, did I fail to mention the fact that the mutant gardener cut the cable that feeds our cable tv? There's something pathetic about watching a football game on the radio."

Tom- "Hey- the game wasn't all that good anyway. Besides, we won't be going to the finals, unless they turn the standings upside down. But at least we have a firm hold on last place."

Frank- " Oh no, here comes Harry...the one- man political machine is coming our way- just keep staring straight ahead...maybe he'll just pass us by...or not."

Harry approached the duet.

Harry- "Good morning, gentlemen...allow me to introduce myself. My name is Harry Helpin, and I'm running for Councilman, 5th District. Just know that a vote for me is a vote for you. I'm known to be conservatively liberal from both the left and right and I'm right more that I'm wrong, usually. So, please remember me on election day."

There was a brief silence until Harry was out of ear shot. It was then that conversation resumed.

Frank- "Spoken like a true politician, eh? So, anyway, just what did you do that was so exhilarating and uplifting with your two days of freedom?"

Tom- “Let’s see...Friday night, there was dinner and dancing. My wife and I had a really great time. We did some shopping Saturday morning. Saturday night, there was this party we went to over on Beacon Street, and Sunday, there was...”

Frank- “Uh, where on Beacon Street?”

Tom- “It’s over at the house of this guy that I work with. His name is Jeff Benson- he’s the Vice President of...”

Frank- “Yeah...I know him...that was the party that kept me up half the night. Boy, when I see him, I intend to...”

Tom- “So, uh, hey, how’s that son of yours doing?”

Frank- “So far, he’s the highlight of the family happenings. Did I tell you- this year he managed to lose nearly 200 pounds of ugly fat?”

Tom- “No kidding? How in the world did he do that?”

Frank- “He got a divorce. (pause) She was pure FSU.”

Tom- “She went to Florida State University?”

Frank- “No...FSU- Fat, stupid and ugly.”

Tom- “Ooooo...sorry to hear that. But, I’m sure he’ll find someone that’s just right for him.”

Frank- “You really are the eternal optimist, aren’t you?”

Tom- “Well, I guess I’ve been blessed with a great job, a great wife and a great life going. I don’t have to go to work...I get to go to work!”

Frank- “There’s a cure for that- it’s called time. All that you just mentioned? You’ll get over it.”

Tom- “Hey look...one of the highlights of the bus stop- a street performer...and wow, we have advanced seating...I hear she sings really good. And, she’s cute to boot!”

The singer, a tall, thin long-haired female, who appeared to be of college age, performed a song while accompanied by her guitar, that apparently was appreciated by all, judging from the cluster of folks who surrounded her. She

managed to do three songs before packing her guitar. Her tip-jar was filled with paper bills...no coins. There was something both sweet and soft and positively energizing.

CHAPTER 2

I had to believe that the crowd of people watching this singer were not only impressed with the performance, but empathetic towards her apparent means of living. I looked back on the duo who were fascinated with the seemingly impromptu concert given by the lady. The crowd resumed their activities as the entertainer walked away.

Frank- “A street musician- now, maybe she has the job to have. You’re doing what you want to do, when you want to do it. No clock, no boss, no garbage.”

Tom- “Yeah, she does really enjoy what she’s doing, but there are some drawbacks. You can’t call in sick and get paid, and you can’t count on a steady income. If people don’t like what you do, you run the risk of going home hungry. And try getting a bank loan as a street performer. Being truly self-sufficient is virtually impossible. These are the trade outs. Me, I’m supporting me and a wife.”

Frank- “Who knows? Maybe after this meeting I’m going to this morning, I’ll have to learn how to play a musical instrument.”

Tom- “Has it always been like this for you at work?”

Frank- “No, not at all. I started working for these folks...let’s see...uh... 16 years ago. I was entry level and worked my way up the ladder. But the higher you go, the ladder gets shaky and unstable. For the past year, the top brass has been on me like a cheap carnival ride.”

Tom- “Hey, trust me, things will get better.”

Frank- “Trust me- no they won’t.”

The bum at the bench sat up, looked around and rose up. He slowly made his way to the news stand where, when the vendor wasn’t looking, proceeded to lift the paper and began walking away.

Tom- “Hey, newsman-headline- that bum just took one of your newspapers without paying for it.”

Vendor- “Hey, thanks, man...hey, Dude...you know, I asked God to give me a bike, but I knew He didn’t work that way. So I stole a bike and asked forgiveness. If you return the paper, I’ll forgive you.”

Bum... "Uh, yeah, uh, OK."

The bum worked his way back to his bench.

Frank- (short pause)- "I don't know about the bum, but these two ladies coming this way aren't particularly visually unappealing."

The duet had approached each other from two directions, called to each other by name and were immediately engaged in greeting each other with a hug, and walking towards the bus stop bench.

Tom- "Good morning ladies, won't you have a seat?"

Ladies- "Thank you."

Tom- "Hey, Frank, why don't we see if we can grab a quick cup of coffee before the bus gets here."

Frank- "Great idea- nice having a restaurant right here...now that was a sound business decision, eh- maybe I should get a job application while we're here."

Tom- "I don't know about that but hey, I'm buying."

Frank- Your on- let's go."

CHAPTER 3

The two women immediately began recapping their activities from the night before.

Susan- “So, Debby, what did you think about the party last night?”

Debby- “Oh Susan...my head says I must have had a good time, because I’m paying for it now. I think it was that last brandy alexander I had...whew...after that, things get real foggy. Did I do anything that would have been...uh...newsworthy?”

Susan- “Not to the best of my recollection. Then again, my recall is on stall also. I’ve got a marching band drum beating in my head- I can feel the mallets hitting my skull.”

Debby- “Yeah, but there were some items of interest I noticed.”

Susan- “Such as Tim and Tina?”

Debby- “Yeah...I never thought of them as an item. But, Tina was holding on to him like a life preserver.”

Susan- “Oh yeah. And her wardrobe. She must have confused her skirt for a shirt. That wasn’t long enough to cover her...uh...”

Debby- “Gotcha. And her sweater didn’t cover her other gotchas very well either!”

Susan- “Not to be confused with that blouse Karen was wearing. That thing needed a volume control knob.”

Debby- “So, what did you think of the dinner?”

Susan- “It wasn’t bad, I guess. Except for the salad. The vinegar and oil dressing was nasty- it tasted more like Black Flag.”

Debby- “Oh...then maybe those weren’t raisins in the salad? And by the way, did you try the filet minion?”

Susan- “Yes, and it was, how do you say...nasty. It tasted like monkey crap.”

Debby- “Oh, you’ve got me there. I can’t compare that to anything I’ve ever had. I have never eaten monkey crap!”

Susan- “Oh, gimme a break.”

Debby- “The only problem I noticed was the desert. I had the sponge cake. I think it was made with real kitchen sponges. No taste whatsoever. I was going to take some home to use when washing dishes. Which reminds me- the kitchen was sorta...well...dirty.”

Susan- “Oh...and speaking of Lenny- he was hitting on every female there. But last night, his batting average was 0-for-3. Even Carla turned him down, and she’s not known for rejecting anyone.”

Debby- “Well, the lamp shade on his head didn’t increase his chances. It didn’t match any of his wardrobe.”

Susan- “Well, it’s going to be a while before I party again.”

Debby- “I hear ya.”

As she spoke, she noticed the two men who surrendered their seats for them returning.

“Oh, here’s those guys who gave us our seat- hey, fellas, thanks again.”

The two positioned themselves behind the bench where the ladies sat and simply remained standing.

Tom- “Oh , hey- no problem, ladies.”

Frank- “So, how is our bench bum doing over there- he looks like he’s sleeping well.”

Tom- “Conscious and breathing...I guess. Funny thing- it seems as though he comes here for a week or so, then moves on. I wonder what his story is.”

Frank- “Tom, meet the man of mystery. We named him “Daryl the Derelict”- his real name is unknown. All I can say is that, for a bum, he doesn’t smell that bad- at least from here. “

Tom- “Yeah...if I were a bum, I wouldn’t mind being here.”

Frank- “Sure- one can sleep in the open, do a little dumpster diving for a meal, maybe steal a billfold for life’s little extras. And, if he’s caught, he goes to jail where he gets three hots and a cot. Hey- maybe he’s got an approach to life we’ve overlooked.”

Tom- “I’m sure he has a story to tell. Hard times usually produce an appreciation for the little things in life.”

Frank- “Yep, you really are the eternal optimist.” He was briefly distracted by a man who had been waiting for a period of time, wanting the news vendor’s attention. Frank yelled over to the vendor. “Hey, newsman, I think you’ve got a customer.

Vendor- “Hey, dude, whatcha need?”

Customer- “Excuse me but my watch has stopped. Can you tell me what time it is? (pause) Sir- can you tell me what it is?”

Vendor- “Time? Sure. Time is a system of measuring periods of duration. There’s daytime, night time, twine time, Louis Louis time, or time to buy a new watch. Or, you could look right above your head and see the fifty-five-foot clock which might address your need!”

Customer- “Oh, gee, I’m sorry...oh, yeah, well, thanks.”

CHAPTER 4

I felt compelled to find another location, so I walked over to the far side of the complex where the “Café 44” was located. This was actually a combination of eatery and night club with operating hours from 6 AM to midnight. I stayed outside on the patio extension in front, complete with umbrella fitted tables. This was fine with me, as it truly was heating up outside. I grabbed a cup of coffee, and proceeded to a table. One table over, a couple was simultaneously grabbing a coffee and a seat. I re-checked my equipment to insure I was recording whatever events occurred. From where I was sitting, I could observe their actions without being totally obvious. The duo greeted each other by name- Sarah and Jeff.

Sarah- “Today’s the day. We’ve worked together for years, and now we are in head-to-head competition for the same promotion. You and I have been wanting this position for a long time.”

Jeff- “Yes, it appears it will all come down to this today. I’ve worked long and hard on this presentation. I guess I’m banking on my ability to have been part of that cluster deal from last year that landed our branch its highest profit moves in its history, which was the only thing that kept our branch open.”

Sarah- “Yes, that was quite impressive. But I have the better over-all annual reviews for the last three years running.”

Jeff- “Regarding your evaluation, wasn’t your cousin Kevin the head of the committee all three years? And as far as profit was concerned, we couldn’t have predicted the market fluctuations that occurred.”

Sarah- “But isn’t that something that a true manager would have considered in any successful presentation?”

Jeff- “I suppose you’re going to tell me that you would have seen the market falling?”

Sarah- “I would have provided more padding in the numbers, thinking this would happen.”

Jeff- “That is what I believe they call an assumption. And when you assume, that makes...”

Sarah- "Yeah, yeah, yeah...look...each of us will do our presentation and let the committee decide, eh? And careful...you may be working for me real soon. Maybe we should ask our friend the fortune teller at her cubicle over there."

Jeff- "Or maybe not."

In the distance, sitting at her own booth, was a fortune teller. One of her friends stood next to her, overhearing the entire conversation.

Friend- "Well, what do you think of this?"

Fortune teller- "As a fortune teller, I couldn't help but appraise their situation. I can sense their problem. I should tell them that I see things are going to be interesting for them shortly...yes, shortly, but I'm going to wait."

CHAPTER 5

As noon approached, I began an arbitrary stroll. In passing, I noted a man whose face had been recently in one of our feature articles. The corporation that owned the buildings behind the bus stop had recently hired a new chief of security. His name was Edward Porter. I was watching him as he observed one of the guards- a middle aged man in his security uniform. I observed Porter looking at notes and comparing a photograph to the guard. It was obvious that the two had never met. As he began his approach, I began recording.

Edward- “Hi...you must be Arnold.”

Arnold- “Uh, yes sir, I am.”

Edward- “Looks like you’re doing a fine job securing our facility.”

Arnold- “Why, thank you, sir.”

Edward- “Let’s see...according to my notes, you’ve been here for 3 years.”

Arnold- “Yes sir, that is correct.”

Edward- “So, where are you from?”

Arnold- “Well, originally, I was from Kentucky.”

Edward- “ I’ve heard of Kentucky. In fact, I’ve been to the race track at Louisville. Is that where you’re from?”

Arnold- “No, sir, I’m from Crab Orchard.”

Edward- “Oh...(pause) sounds like squirrel hunting country...are you by chance a banjo player (chuckles).”

Arnold- “Why, yes- how could you guess?”

Edward- “Intuition, I suppose. I’m sure you miss log cabins, eh? (laughs) Well, uh, you’ve been somewhere I’ve never been before. We all gotta be from somewhere, right? At any rate, that’s a good job you’re doing.”

Arnold- “Why, thanks again. With new leadership, are we going to see any real changes here?”

Edward- “Well, as a matter of fact, yes we are. As you look directly at the center of the building frontage, you’ll notice at the center, there is a huge wall that connects each of the two sides of what appears to be a continuous run with 8 store fronts to each side. The bus stop here is centered on the sidewalk and is also centered on the wall. We are thinking about asking the owners of the building about eliminating the wall. That way, we can have easier access for the parking lot behind the building. Folks can walk from the rear parking directly to the bus stop.”

Arnold- “Uh, sir, can I mention something?”

Edward- “Uh, well, yeah, sure.”

Arnold- “22 years ago, when this building was being constructed, that wall was added in such a way as to trick city code personnel into thinking there was structural integrity between the two halves, when in fact, it is a facade. Removal of the wall would compromise the existing independent structures, inviting collapse.”

Edward- “How in the world would you know that?”

Arnold- “Research is one of my hobbies. I really enjoy that. Also, there is another area of concern.”

Edward- “What’s that?”

Arnold- “As you know, there are a lot of people who pass and gather here on a daily basis, primarily as a result of the bus stop. There is also a constant flow of folks who utilize the businesses here. As you know, sociologists call this type of area “People generators”. As such, there are opportunities for common crimes such as purse snatching and pickpocketing. If that area behind the wall is opened, this increases the potential for criminal activity, especially after hours. Limited sight perception from potential witnesses is greatly increased. Therefore, the need for additional security personnel and/or precautions such as upgraded surveillance devices, to wit: video and audio recording devices. And, even with this in place, there is an increase in liability which may or may not be covered by insurance.”

Edward- “What in the world are you doing in entry level security?”

Arnold- “When my wife and I moved here, it was a position I was qualified for.”

Edward- “Was previous management aware of your research skills?”

Arnold- “They never asked.”

Edward- “Obviously, you never told them.”

Arnold- “Well, sir, at the time it was the only position open and I needed the job.”

Edward- “So, obviously we have a man who can perform skills beyond twisting door knobs. Tomorrow morning, report to my office, and bring a resume.”

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

