COVIDream #1



The nightly dreamscape has been wild of late. This series hopes to capture some of the weirdiality. Not necessarily significant. But damn….

I am on a business trip to Atlanta, sometime post-pandemic. I rent a car because I am told mass transit is impossible, and taxis are dead because Uber/Lyft killed them before they died.

I drive out to Chamblee (!) for my morning meeting. My car is stolen during the meeting, and the rental company has none to replace it. Due to so many car thefts, apparently.

My next meeting is in Decatur. So I start walking. And walking. It is hot as hell, then it rains, then it is even hotter. I finally realize it is too far to walk. I see a MARTA bus stop. I wait. When the bus arrives, I get on, fumbling for money. Dead silence falls.

I look up and everybody is staring. Everyone is dressed to the nines, and the bus is ultra-luxury. Leather seats, calm lighting. A waiter serves refreshments.

“How much to ride?”

The driver, in his very neatly pressed uniform, looks me up and down. I’m a sweaty mess, but I’m wearing a decent suit, so I guess he figures I’m sort of okay.

“You can’t ride without a swipe card. No cash allowed. There is a place downstairs in the building on the corner where you

can get one. If you can get one, you can catch the next bus. It will be here in five minutes."

I scramble to look for the card vendor. The downstairs of the building has multiple storefronts and businesses. There are no signs. I keep sticking my head into places and asking until I find the place.

Suspicious stares. I ask to buy a swipe card for a ride.

"Sorry. We don't sell single rides. Minimum one hundred dollars ride credit plus a fifty dollar card fee."

"But I don't live here. I'm just visiting."

More suspicion. Another worker picks up a phone, whispering. The woman "helping" me turns on her best customer service smile, and chirps:

"It's the best way to keep the riff raff off the bus. Keeps them nice and clean this way. It improves the customer experience."

I pay. She hands me my card.

"As soon as your background check is complete, your card will be activated. Give it 24-48 hours. And thank you for choosing MARTA. I hope you enjoy your rides."

~FIN~