



# Bus Encounter



*By Gilly Street*

I could have battled the traffic and reached work about five minutes earlier than I did this morning, but if I had, I would never have met David and Lorna and heard their beautiful story.

The bus zones change near my house. If I use a stop to the north, I can catch a limited stop, high frequency bus to work, if I use one to the south, it costs me less, but I may have to wait longer for the service. I was silently cursing when I chose the cheaper option and missed a bus by 30 seconds, only to find that my whole day was brightened through a chance encounter that I would otherwise have missed.

I could have left the elderly couple who arrived after me at the southern stop to their private world. I could have spent the wait feeling rushed and irritated. Something about their demeanour calmed me and made me feel inquisitive. I saw her put a loving and protective hand on his shoulder and I wondered if he had been unwell. Their high quality shopping trolley led me to believe that this was a regular outing for them. They commented on a high frequency bus that drove past, and I took the opportunity to submit to my curiosity and ask whether they used public transport frequently, and how they found it.

My trip was transformed from a daily commute to a journey through a touching love story. After 33 years apart and now both in their seventies, David and Lorna, had found each other just 3 months ago. They had dated all those years ago, but somehow gone separate ways. About once a year David would phone Lorna and have a polite but distant conversation, neither of them daring to ask the other whether they shared their life with anybody else. I silently wished the next bus would be late; I wanted to hear the whole story.

Three months ago, David made his annual call from a hospital bed. Somehow she gathered that he had nobody looking after him, and bravely, mischievously, flirtatiously she dared, "You should have me there with you to hold your hand."

Lorna exclaimed when she saw the driver on the bus that arrived on time. She sat near me and told me about a coach trip she'd been on years ago. "On that trip to Cairns, I met this very same bus driver and his wife. I always travelled alone, and I used to wish I had someone to share my adventures with, like the bus driver and his wife. David often came into my thoughts at those moments and I wondered if he ever travelled, and if so, who with."

"This year my kids offered me a trip to Europe for Christmas," she continued, "I told them the only travel I'll be doing are the buses around here with David. His neighbours can't believe how well he is now, and I intend keeping him that way!"

When we reached the stop where they were to alight to shop and I was to venture late into work, I was so enthralled by their joy with each other that I absent-mindedly left my big yellow bag on the bus. The friendly driver stopped and called after me, bringing the bag down the step for me. I walked into work beaming, and thought, "My day would not feel so bright if I'd driven to work".