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**A Close Call**

The clanging of tires, awful 90’s music, and high-school students rambling out profanities filled my ears as I sat on the school bus on that fateful day in sixth grade. The whole day had been off—as if fate was waiting to strike its evil upon me.

The bus was filled to the brim; students were bursting out of their seats waiting to depart from the school. One girl in particular stood out due to her loud mouth screeching vile words all the way to the back of the bus. Her voice filled the bus with a horrid ghetto intonation.

“*Ohhmygawd* YES I saw that! I wanted to go up and rip her hair out!” Her wicked voice made my ears ring as she burst into unnecessary laughter to one of her pals a few rows away. Her sounds turned to giggles while her body shook and dropped to the seat.

A kid who seemed about the same age as my sixth-grade-self was having extreme difficulty finding a place to sit for the short duration of the ride home. The bus driver turned and reprimanded all of us students to scoot over so the child could take a seat. I felt justified in staying exactly where I was; I was already sitting next to a random person who I didn’t know and I *sure* wasn’t about to cram in another.

“Uhh, *that* girl can scoot over,” a familiar ghetto voice rang out as a finger with chipped nail polish stuck out and pointed straight at me.

I was a shy kid. I barely ever stood up for myself—even to my friends. I’ve always found it easier to give in and make everyone happy, even if it made me uncomfortable. Maybe it was the thought of being in close quarters with strangers; maybe it was just the fact that that scary high-school girl thought she could boss me around, but it wasn’t happening this time. I spoke up.

“No,” I said. It was as simple as that.

I thought that she would turn her pimply face to her next conquest, but what happened was the complete opposite. Her face curled up in disgust. I could see the spark in her eyes as she realized I had just challenged her. In the moment, I didn’t care. She could scoot over just as easily as I could have—so why wouldn’t she?

“*Excuse me?* What did you just say?” She gave me a chance to change my mind and spare my life.

“I said I’m not moving. He can sit with you,” my big mouth rambled on, not knowing when to stop. The other occupants on the bus started to realize that something terrible was about to happen to me, and it was entirely my fault. Whispers from all around me filled my ears with their growing concern.

“…does she know who that is…”

“…about to be a fight…”

“…that girl is scary…”

“…what is she thinking…”

The onlookers were surprised when the bus driver decided that she had enough of the whole situation and told my attacker to scoot over; she was the high-schooler, she should be mature. Although that was clearly not the case, she sat down and slid towards her seat partner to allow the smallest sliver of the seat to the child with a roll of the eyes. That was when her story changed drastically.

“Oh I had a headache, that’s why I didn’t want you to sit here. Yeah, my head just hurts,” she told the frail child who looked terrified to be sitting so close to her after she nearly tore my head off. I’ll praise her for having the decency to let the boy know that the bickering was not his fault. Sure, he had needed a seat but it was my stubbornness that had started the drama.

Throughout the whole ordeal, only one question rang through my mind: *shouldn’t she have a driver’s license?*