

Distractions

by David Speranza

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FADE IN.

EXT. A PARK BENCH - AUTUMN - DAY

A MAN--late 20s/early 30s--sits reading a newspaper.

A YOUNG WOMAN (early-mid 20s) enters, seating herself a bit closer than necessary. The man casually notes this as she pulls books from a backpack and begins to study.

Several moments pass as the girl completely ignores him. He takes the occasional surreptitious glance, at one point seeming to sniff the air.

Then:

MAN

I'm sorry, but you've got to tell me what that perfume is.

WOMAN

(turning to him)

Do I?

He is slightly taken aback.

MAN

Well, you don't have to...

WOMAN

(smiling)

Don't you like it?

MAN

I love it. It's just...distracting me from my box scores.

WOMAN

(smiling)

It's Coco Chanel.

MAN

Hm. The good stuff.

WOMAN

Did you think it would be the cheap stuff?

MAN

I'm just glad it's not *Eau de Wal-Mart*, or something like that. My nose has better taste than I thought.

She laughs, then points to his newspaper.

WOMAN

You like reading the Post?

MAN

It gives me my daily dose of baseball and gossip. The rest of it I try to ignore.

WOMAN

I do freelance work for them.

MAN

Oh. Sorry to hear that.

She sees he's teasing her, but she takes it in stride.

WOMAN

A woman's got to earn a living.

MAN

I was sure you were a student.

WOMAN

I'm that too. Freelancer by day, classes by night. Keeps me out of trouble.

MAN

Is that something you're liable to get into? Trouble?

WOMAN

Maybe. What about you? Do you make a habit of picking up girls on park benches?

MAN

I could have sworn it was the other way around.

WOMAN

How do you figure?

MAN

Well, you sat down next to me--and much closer than you had to.

WOMAN

It was the only empty spot. The rest of it had some weird stain on it.

MAN

And that bench right over there?

WOMAN

Too bright. The sun reflecting off the pages hurts my eyes.

MAN

So, your sitting a foot away from me was completely innocent?

WOMAN

Not completely. I looked before I sat. You seemed all right.

MAN

You mean like someone who maybe wouldn't bother you?

WOMAN

Maybe. Or if you did, I wouldn't mind so much.

MAN

No?

WOMAN

I could always use the distraction. It's too nice a day for studying.

MAN

So is that my role here? Distraction?

WOMAN

You were the one who couldn't read because of my "perfume."

She makes air quotes on "perfume," causing him some amusement.

MAN

The truth is, if I'm out here reading the Post, it's because I couldn't find anything better to do.

WOMAN

Like picking up strange girls on park benches?

MAN

I'm still not sure that's what I'm doing.

WOMAN

I'm pretty sure.

MAN

Honestly, I wouldn't know. It's not one of my tricks.

WOMAN

Tricks?

MAN

There are a lot of things I'm good at, but picking up women in public places is not one of them.

WOMAN

I find that hard to believe.

MAN

You think I'd lie about that?

WOMAN

I don't know what you'd lie about. After all, I don't know you.

MAN

Well, one thing I can tell you about me, with total honesty, is that I never lie.

WOMAN

Now there's a paradox waiting to happen.

MAN

Only if you're of a cynical frame of mind.

WOMAN

(thinks about this)

Lately I'm feeling very cynical.

MAN

Why is that?

WOMAN

I don't know... I just... I mean, look around: It's a beautiful day, the city's filled with people, we're sitting here talking, but... I feel really lonely. Friday night I was home by myself; tonight I'll be home by myself. It's just so depressing.

MAN

And what did you do last night?

WOMAN

Last night I went home with some guy I met.

MAN

Oh.

WOMAN

I felt really lonely afterwards, though.

MAN

Well, doesn't that sort of go with one-night stands?

WOMAN

It wasn't a one-night stand. I mean, I didn't sleep with him.

(pause)

We did... other things.

MAN

Other things?

WOMAN

He got off, okay? Isn't that all guys want? I didn't want to leave him hanging. But we didn't have sex.

MAN

You're not that kind of girl?

WOMAN

Is that supposed to be sarcastic?

MAN

Just a question.

WOMAN

I haven't been that kind of girl for almost a year. I mean, I've gone home with guys, but I haven't had sex with them. I'm trying celibacy, for a change. To tell you the truth, it's making me a little crazy.

MAN

I know the feeling.

WOMAN

You too?

MAN

Not a year.

WOMAN

How long?

MAN

I don't know... Five months? No, three. An old friend came to visit in June.

WOMAN

Was it good?

Her curiosity surprises him. He smiles.

MAN

You want details?

WOMAN

Not really.

MAN

It was pretty good. We have a history together, which makes it fun. Familiar, you know?

WOMAN

Do you guys talk when you're doing it?

MAN

You do want details.

WOMAN

No I don't. I just think it's really hot to talk during sex.

MAN

What kind of talk? Dirty talk?

WOMAN

It doesn't have to be. Just some form of verbal communication. I don't know why, I just find it really sexy.

MAN

I think I know what you mean. It's like you're both pretending that the sex is just incidental to the conversation, that it's not really the main event. "Dum dee dum, we're just here fucking while we talk about the new Harry Potter movie..."

WOMAN

(laughs)

Maybe that's it.

They exchange glances, both recognizing a new level of intimacy.

WOMAN (cont.)

I can't believe I'm talking about this stuff with a total stranger. I think it's like one of those airplane meetings, you know? Where you can say anything you want because you know you'll never see that person again?

MAN

Don't tell me we won't ever see each other again...?

WOMAN

I don't think so. Not after this.

MAN

And here I thought, when two people established a rapport together, it was a good thing.

WOMAN

This isn't a rapport.

MAN

Then what is it?

WOMAN

I don't know what it is. I think it's me just feeling depressed and pathetic and lonely, and using you to help me forget that little fact.

MAN

So when you're done with me you'll just toss me in the trash with all your other men?

WOMAN

(smiling)

Something like that.

MAN

Not even the recycle bin, so I can be undeleted if the mood strikes?

WOMAN

(laughs)

Maybe the recycle bin.

MAN

That I can live with. I'd hate to be deleted permanently. Things like this happen to me so rarely, I might take it personally.

WOMAN

Oh, I'm sure this never happens.

MAN

I told you, I'm not... I've never had a one-night stand in my entire life.

WOMAN

Never? Why do you think that is?

MAN

I'm just not good at putting on the moves--making that killer first impression. I'm much better once you get to know me. Also, I like to know the person I'm sleeping with.

WOMAN

So if I asked you right now to come home with me, you wouldn't go?

MAN

(surprised but wary)
I don't think you're asking me.

WOMAN

But if I did? You wouldn't go?

MAN

I don't know if I would. I mean, I'm sure it would be nice--we've got this--

(gesturing

to the

two of them)

--and I'm certainly, you know...

(pause)

But since I don't think you really mean it, it's not really a proper test.

She looks at him, perhaps a touch disappointed.

MAN (cont.)

Anyway, if anything were to happen between us, it'd be more fun if we knew each other better first.

WOMAN

I don't know...there's something about being with a total stranger, someone you can just tear their clothes off and be completely uninhibited with and not think about emotions but just express yourself on a completely physical, animal level.

MAN

Sure. But then you wake up the next morning and you feel depressed and lonely and you never hear from the person again.

She looks at him, growing thoughtful.

WOMAN

I don't think the guy last night is going to call me. You know, he didn't even walk me outside afterwards to get a cab.

MAN

Sounds like you're not picking up the right guys.

WOMAN

I didn't--
(beat; changing tactics)
Do you think it's true, that guys lose interest once they've slept with you?

MAN

You mean after a one-night stand, or after three years living together?

WOMAN

I don't know. Both. Either.

MAN

It's probably true. Some guys--I'm not sure why--seem to almost have contempt for women who sleep with them too quickly.

WOMAN

I guess...

MAN

Completely insane, if you ask me. As for the long-term lack of interest, well, that seems more about familiarity than contempt. But what do I know? Every time I sleep with a woman, it's like Christmas.

WOMAN

(smiling thoughtfully)
Not to get too familiar, but...
What's your name?

MAN

Aaron.

WOMAN

Aaron...

MAN

What about you?

WOMAN

Amanda.

MAN

Nice to meet you, Amanda.

WOMAN

You too, Aaron.

She smiles, seeming to take pleasure in this sudden introduction of formalities.

WOMAN (cont.)

I think people like to hear their names spoken, don't you? It's reassuring somehow, like proof that they're really here. I'm sometimes not sure.

MAN

That you're really here?

WOMAN

I sometimes feel so invisible.

MAN

That's hard for me to believe. I mean, a woman like you walking around this park, this city--I can't imagine you'd feel invisible for long. Try being an average-looking guy: Forget about it, I'm the original Invisible Man.

WOMAN

You seem to be doing all right.

MAN

I told you, these things don't usually happen to me.

She takes a moment to look at him. He notices she has something on her cheek.

MAN

I'm sorry, you have a--

He reaches forward, tentatively, with one finger.

MAN (cont.)

There's a lash--

She brushes it from her cheek, her eyes remaining on his.

MAN (cont.)

Okay, yeah...

WOMAN

(looking at him still)

You have very pretty eyes.

MAN

Thank you. You have very pretty... everything.

WOMAN

I should try to set you up with my sister.

MAN

Your sister?

WOMAN

We're twins, actually.

MAN

Twins...

WOMAN

Uh-huh, identical. But we're very different in temperament.

MAN

And why would you set me up with your...?

(beat)

Is she single?

WOMAN

She lives with her boyfriend.

MAN

Wouldn't he have something to say about it?

WOMAN

(shrugs)

I've never liked him. He's always saying strange things to me. My sister and I have such different tastes. The other night I was masturbating, and suddenly he popped into my head and I had to stop. It was really annoying. I don't know how he got in there, anyway.

MAN

(trying to take this
in stride)

So, did you...finish?

WOMAN

What?

MAN

You know, masturbating.

WOMAN

(laughs)

Oh--yeah, I got through it.

(beat)

You've really never had a one-night stand?

MAN

The closest I ever came was a first date where we got so drunk I had to take her back to my place because she couldn't get home by herself. For some reason I promised I wouldn't try to sleep with her once we got back. But...I was drunk, I was horny... So I ate her out instead.

WOMAN

Ew, that's such a gross way of putting it.

MAN

What, "ate her out?" What do you prefer, "Went down on her?"

WOMAN

That's better.

MAN

Okay, I went down on her.

WOMAN

Was she awake?

MAN

Of course she was awake. She wasn't moving a whole lot, but she told me the next day she really enjoyed it.

WOMAN

You like doing that?

MAN

Going down on women? Definitely.

WOMAN

Why?

MAN

I like seeing them experience so much pleasure. All that writhing and moaning... It gets me hot knowing how good it makes them feel.

She squirms a little, her legs shifting slightly as they brush against his.

WOMAN

It gets you hot?

MAN

(smiling)

Yeah, it gets me really hot.

WOMAN

Aaron... I'm getting a little hot myself. I may need to go home and... take care of some things.

MAN

I wouldn't mind taking care of some things, myself.

WOMAN

Oh, really?

MAN

Sure. I'll just add you to the old repertoire...

side (taps the
of his head)
I mean, since we won't be seeing each other again.

WOMAN

And since you don't go home with strange women...

They regard each other a moment, contemplating the possibilities.

MAN

On my way to the park today, I was thinking about the most erotic thing a man could say to a woman--

WOMAN

Why were you thinking that?

MAN

I don't know, sometimes these things just pop into my head. Like your sister's boyfriend. I can never use them because I'd feel like a poser, but this one really suggested some erotic and emotional possibilities.

WOMAN

And?

MAN

You want to hear it?

WOMAN

After that build-up?

MAN

Okay. But I'm only telling you because our level of discourse has reached a certain...level...that would allow it. I mean, it's pretty strong.

WOMAN

So tell me already.

MAN

Okay. Ready?

He gathers himself, takes a deep breath.

MAN (cont.)

"I want to fall asleep inside you."

A long pause while she turns this over in her head. It clearly has an effect on her.

WOMAN

Wow. Aaron, that's...

She can't complete her thought.

MAN

I know. I wouldn't have a clue how to use it--it's like handing a grenade to a six-year-old--but...
(savoring the sound of it)
"I want to fall asleep inside you."

WOMAN

Aaron...

MAN

Powerful, right? When I thought of it, I had to sit down and catch my breath.

WOMAN

I think...
(coming to a decision)
I have to go.

MAN

Now?

WOMAN

(standing)

It really has been a nice
distraction, but... I wish you luck
with...well, your life, everything...

She holds out her hand. He rises to take it. They stand
facing each other.

MAN

Amanda.

He holds onto her hand as she absorbs the sound of her name.

MAN (cont.)

Amanda... Is there any way I can see
you again? Let me give you my
number--you can call me.

WOMAN

(shaking her head)

You already know too much about me.
If I ever called, I'd be afraid you'd
think it was only because I was
desperate and pathetic and lonely.

He laughs, letting go of her hand as she smiles, embarrassed.

MAN

Are you kidding? I'd probably be
feeling the same way.

WOMAN

I don't know...

He takes a card from his wallet, hands it to her.

MAN

Well, think about it.

WOMAN

(taking card)

I'll think about it.

(smiling)

Or maybe I'll just come out to this
same bench next weekend to see who
else you try to pick up.

MAN

I'm telling you, that's some other
guy.

WOMAN

Maybe.

MAN

Then you'll just have to come and
see. How else can I clear my name?

WOMAN

I'm not sure I want you to...

She starts to move away. He grabs her arm, stopping her.

MAN

What does that mean?

WOMAN

Nothing. But if you want to tell a
girl you'd like to fall asleep inside
her, then that's what you should tell
her. Even if she doesn't ask you to
go home with her first.

MAN

Just ask her?

WOMAN

What's the worst that could happen?

MAN

Rejection. Failure. Shame.

WOMAN

But think of the potential rewards.

MAN

I don't know...

WOMAN

Does it scare you?

She regards him sympathetically, touches his cheek. He puts
her hand to his lips. She closes her eyes, momentarily
weakening. Then, gathering herself, she takes back her hand.

WOMAN

Aaron, if you'll excuse me, I have
something I need to go home and take
care of.

She turns abruptly and walks off. Aaron watches her go.

MAN

Yeah...
(beat)
Me too.

He continues staring after her, not moving. Frozen.

CUT TO BLACK.