

TWO STRANGERS, ONE TRAIN

SETTING: Train that's heading into Boston

TIME: Present Day

CHARACTERS:

Woman/Lydia, woman in early to mid twenties

Man/Carter, man in early to mid twenties

Woman on train, woman anywhere in her fifties and sixties
sitting near Carter and Lydia on train

AT RISE: Scene opens with a man getting on a train and sitting a couple seats down from a woman. We see that she is doing something in her sketchbook but drops her pencil and it rolls in front of the man. Both of them reach for it at the same time, their hands touch.

MAN

Oh, I can get that for you.--

WOMAN

--thank you so much.

MAN

Sorry, I didn't mean to--

WOMAN

--oh it's ok, thank you.

MAN

No problem. (Beat). I've never seen you take this train before,
are you new to the city?

WOMAN

Yeah, actually, is it that obvious?

MAN

No no not at all, I just take this train almost everyday and
I've never seen you around.

WOMAN

Oh gotcha. But yeah, I'm visiting a friend from college who
lives in the city and I thought I'd come early while she's at
work to walk around and explore.

MAN

Oh nice, sounds fun!

WOMAN

Yeah I'm excited to see her! Plus I love traveling.

MAN

Yeah, you'll love Boston. Have you seen anything or been anywhere yet?

WOMAN

No not yet, I've been on the train like all morning. I live in Maine.

MAN

Oh so you're a little ways away, huh?

WOMAN

Yeah just a little. (*Both of them laugh about this*). So, what's your story? Do you live in Boston or close to it?

MAN

I live in the greater Boston area in a town called Belmont. I come into Boston for work.

WOMAN

Oh where do you work? Like what do you do?

MAN

I work at an accounting office. So, this may come as a shock to you, but I'm an accountant.

WOMAN

Oh wow, fancy.

MAN

What about you? I'm guessing it has something to do with whatever you're doing in that sketchbook of yours?

WOMAN

That would be a good guess, but no actually.

MAN

Oh then what is it?

WOMAN

What I'm doing in the sketchbook or what I do for work?

MAN

Too much to ask for both?

WOMAN

(*She smiles*). For work, I'm just a plain old receptionist at a plain old dental office. As for the notebook...promise you won't think it's stupid?

MAN

Pinky promise. (*They pinky promise*).

WOMAN

Ok...to put it simply, I love to draw. Art has always been a huge passion of mine, but my parents said going to art school and becoming an artist was stupid and that I would be unemployed

for all my life and I should expect to never make any good money. *(Says this as if she's mocking them)*. So I went to a regular old college and graduated with a business degree and absolutely hated it. But I never stopped drawing.

MAN

Wow.

WOMAN

Yeah sorry, that was a lot to lay on you and probably not the answer you were expecting or even wanted.

MAN

(Gets up to stand in front of her, leaning against the pole and grabbing it. He faces her). No that's not it.

WOMAN

Oh?

MAN

I just am confused at why you never still pursued art. Like I'm trying to grasp how you managed to stick it out through *four* years of business school just because it's what your *parents* wanted.

WOMAN

I mean they're my parents, I love them. They had a vision for me and I couldn't let them down.

MAN

Yeah but it's your life not theirs. Plus I'm sure they would have loved you no matter what you chose to do with your life.

WOMAN

You don't know my parents. Besides, they meant well. They were looking out for me. They didn't want me to be unemployed, they wanted me to have a good life, they wanted to make sure I would be able to provide for myself.

MAN

But are you *happy*? Do you have a good life?

She seems taken aback by this question.

MAN

I'm sorry if that was overstepping.

WOMAN

No no it wasn't. I just never thought about it before. And maybe because I didn't want to realize the answer.

MAN

So is the answer no?

WOMAN

I mean not exactly, I do love my family and have amazing friends
and my job doesn't completely suck...

MAN

...but you'd rather be an artist?

WOMAN

Bingo.

MAN

(Sits down next to her). It's not too late!

WOMAN

What?

MAN

You can still become an artist! You can apply to art school or
something.

WOMAN

(Laughs). Are you crazy? My parents would have an aneurysm if
they found out. Besides I don't even know if I'm any good.

MAN

I highly doubt that's true. Here, lemme see what you have in
your sketchbook.

WOMAN

(Jokingly). Ok now that's overstepping.

MAN

Oh come on.

WOMAN

It's not finished though, wouldn't you rather see the final
product?

MAN

Excuses excuses.

WOMAN

Wow, you're relentless.

MAN

I'm going to take that as a compliment. *(They smile).* Ok but
seriously, I would genuinely love to see it, finished or
unfinished. *(They gaze at each other smiling for a few seconds,
almost like a staring contest, until she finally looks down at
her notebook).*

WOMAN

(Sighs, giving in). Alright. You win.

The woman shows the man her sketchbook page. It shows a portrait of a woman who appears to be a woman sitting on the train across from them. Her blemishes and imperfections are accentuated. The man is speechless.

MAN

Wow.

WOMAN

That bad huh?

MAN

You're kidding me right?

WOMAN

What?

MAN

It's amazing, i- it- it's incredible.

WOMAN

Well I wouldn't go that far.

MAN

Again, you're kidding me right?

WOMAN

You're sweet.

MAN

No, I'm just honest.

WOMAN

Well thank you.

MAN

What's your inspiration?

WOMAN

I love observing real people. Like people as they are, living their life, doing what they always do. Nothing posed or fabricated, just...real, ya know? Which is also why her blemishes are emphasized, because I believe it's what makes us human. We have insecurities, we have imperfections, we have flaws, but I see that as what makes us beautiful.

MAN

Wow.

WOMAN

You say that a lot.

MAN

(Chuckles). Only when I mean it.

WOMAN

But yeah, it's probably really stupid. *(She looks down).*

MAN

No. It's not. *(He puts his arm on her shoulder and looks at her).* It's amazing.

WOMAN

Do you really think so?

MAN

I do. *(Takes his hand away).* In fact, so amazing, that you could and should definitely still become an artist.

WOMAN

Ok then. Let's speak hypothetically. Say I did try, I wouldn't even know where to start.

MAN

There are so many good art schools in Boston you could apply to!

WOMAN

Yeah I guess.

MAN

How come you seem so turned off by the idea of trying to become an artist now? I thought you loved it.

WOMAN

I do.

MAN

So what's stopping you?

WOMAN

I don't know.

MAN

Are you just worried about what your parents will think?

WOMAN

I don't know. Yes, I guess.

MAN

But it's your life. You should live it how you want to live it.

WOMAN

I know ok but what if they're right!

MAN

Right about what?

WOMAN

Being unemployed my whole life. Never making enough money to live comfortably. Living paycheck to paycheck. Being looked at as someone who never did anything practical with her life.

There's a pause. Both of them look at each other.

MAN

You can't live in fear or else you'll never get what you want in life. Plus, if you want it as bad as I can tell you do, that won't happen.

She looks at him intently. He pulls out a notepad.

WOMAN

What are you doing?

MAN

Can I borrow your pencil?

WOMAN

Not if you don't tell me what you're doing first.

MAN

Just trust me. I'll tell you after.

WOMAN

Ok fine. *(She hands him her pencil).*

We see the man write a list of art colleges in Boston. The woman seems to look over her shoulder at it. He notices her doing this.

MAN

No peeking.

WOMAN

I'm not, I'm not. *(Smirks).*

He circles Massachusetts College of Art and Design. He hands her the paper when he's done writing.

WOMAN

What's this?

MAN

Some good art schools in Boston.

WOMAN

And?..

MAN

You should check them out. Seriously.

WOMAN

Ah, I see. Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

MAN

No problem. *(Beat)*.

WOMAN

Alright, enough about me, what about you?

MAN

What *about* me?

WOMAN

Well, no offense, but I feel like no kid thinks to themself "I want to be an accountant when I grow up." You had to have had some sort of big dream.

MAN

Ouch.

WOMAN

Oh my god was that too mean--

MAN

(Laughing). No no it's okay--

WOMAN

Because an accountant is a great job I didn't mean to be disrespectful--

MAN

I was just teasing it's okay!

WOMAN

Okay. *(Laughs)*. But seriously, did you have a dream? You know, other than being the best accountant in the world?

MAN

Well for a good while I did want to become a doctor but med school was just too expensive and I didn't have the money.

WOMAN

Oh gotcha. So what made you decide accounting instead?

MAN

Uhh nothing specific really. I've just always been a big numbers guy and I took a few business classes in high school and figured it would be a good fit.

WOMAN

Interesting.

MAN

You don't have to lie. I know I'm boring.

WOMAN

Oh my god no not at all.

MAN

Well I mean compared to you, yeah, my life is pretty boring. Plus you're over here being extremely creative and talented and creating amazing art work and all I do is prepare accounts and tax returns and audit financial information.

WOMAN

I mean that sounds pretty thrilling to me. I don't know what you're talking about.

MAN

You're too kind.

WOMAN

Nope, just honest. *(They smile at each other. There's a pause).*

MAN

So, do you know yet where you're going to go in Boston? Like where you'll go explore?

WOMAN

Not really. But who knows maybe I'll see some of those schools you're so persistent in having me check out. Do you have any recommendations though, like where I should go?

MAN

Definitely Faneuil Hall, the North End, Boston Commons, Boston Gardens, Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of Science, oo, the New England Aquarium, Prudential Center...

WOMAN

Jesus I guess a better question would have been where shouldn't I visit. I'm only here for two days, not a lifetime.

MAN

Oh you could definitely see all those places in two days if you tried.

WOMAN

Okay, then I will definitely try.

We hear over the intercom that the train is about to come to a stop.

WOMAN

Well, uh, this is my stop. *(She stands up).*

MAN

(He stands up with her). Oh. Already?

WOMAN

I know right, that went by fast. But, it was really nice meeting you and talking to you.

MAN

Yeah, it was really nice meeting you too. *(They do an awkward "should we shake hands, or hug" situation until they eventually shake hands).*

WOMAN

Maybe I'll see you around the city. *(She holds up and gestures to the piece of paper with the list of art schools on it).*

MAN

Yeah maybe.

WOMAN

Well, bye.

MAN

Bye.

She walks out of the train doors until out of sight. He follows her with his gaze, longingly. The same woman that the girl drew earlier looks at him.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

Go after her.

MAN

Excuse me?

WOMAN ON TRAIN

Go after her.

MAN

I can't.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

And why is that?

MAN

She already left. Plus, I don't even know her name...

WOMAN ON TRAIN

...so go find out.

MAN

I have no way of finding her though.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

Excuses excuses.

The man smiles and looks out at the doors for a bit more. Right as he starts to head for the doors the doors begin to close and he picks up his pace but it's too late. The doors close.

MAN

No no no no no. Damnit!

WOMAN ON TRAIN

It will be ok! Try the next stop.

MAN

It's pointless at this point. I'm never going to find her.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

I saw the way you were looking at her. I saw the connection you both had.

MAN

Yeah but Boston is huge, and I have no idea where she's even going. She could be anywhere at this point.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

If you want her as bad as I can tell you do, you'll find her. *(The man looks at her intently)*. Son, you can't be afraid to go after what you want because if you let fear rule your life, you'll never be happy. *(Beat)*. Besides, you have to return that to her. *(Gestures her head to the pencil in his hand that belongs to the woman)*.

He looks at the pencil in his hand and his eyes widen but then he starts to smile. He sits, waiting for the next stop. A few minutes later the intercom announces that it's coming to its next stop. The train stops and the doors open.

MAN

(Looks at woman) Thank you. *(She smiles and nods her head. He rushes out the door)*.

WOMAN ON TRAIN

Good luck.

We see the man run throughout the train station and into the city. He stops and thinks of any place she could potentially be. He then remembers something she said earlier about seeing him around the city and gestured to the list of schools he made her. He begins running again. After a bit of running, he comes up to

the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and sees her walking up to the door. He runs to her. They stand facing each other.

MAN

Hi.

WOMAN

Hi.

MAN

You forgot this. *(Gives her the pencil).*

WOMAN

(She's in shock, but smiling). Thanks.

MAN

I also seemed to forget to ask your name.

WOMAN

(She chuckles). Lydia.

MAN

Carter.

LYDIA

Nice to meet you Carter.

CARTER

Nice to meet you Lydia. *(Beat).* Would you like to walk around Boston a little bit?

LYDIA

What about your accounting job? Who's gonna audit that financial information?

CARTER

I think the accounting can wait.

LYDIA

(She smiles) Then, in that case I would love to.

He reaches his hand out for her, she takes it and we see them walk off together, holding hands.

THE END