

HER

by

Mark Walker

SCENE 1: DENIAL

Waiting on a train.

What could possibly go wrong?

Will someone die? No.

Will someone get hurt? Maybe.

Will it haunt you if you stay passive? Yes.

Will you spend an unapologetically long time overthinking what would've happened if you did it? For sure.

Will you hate yourself once again for being just a spectator of your own life? Yes.

Seems I have no other option than to do it, and yet, it is so hard. Knowing what is right and still struggling to take action has to be the worst feeling in the world. Here she stands, next to me. Reading a book. I can smell her perfume. Fresh and young. Bold and mysterious. She smells like a never-ending story, an adventure of a lifetime, an irresistible gift from the gods. Her pale skin and blonde hair are in absolute contrast to her style. Her dark clothes, leather jacket, and sharp, black makeup with purple shadows. There's something about that contrast. It tells a story. She's no basic girl, she has to have layers of personalities, fighting each other to become the dominant one. It's the kind, innocent girl versus the dreamer, with her head constantly in the sky, versus the goth bitch seeing meaning only in self-destruction. It's like looking into a mirror. So many different personalities, incompatible with each other, and yet forced to live inside one head.

I can imagine loving her for the rest of my life. *No. Stop it!* I can't have these thoughts. I don't even know her name. But I can easily find out. I only have to say something, anything. But do I really want to? By speaking to her, I grant her such power over me. To give love a chance, control has to be sacrificed. I don't know if I'm strong enough. *No, shut up!* I'm doing it again. For once in my life. Let it flow.

To both God and the Devil, I ask you for help, for your powers as I'm too mad to do it on my own. Right now, it would be much easier for me to fight a man for my life, than to speak to this cute little creature. Nature is

a twisted thing. The way we see threats is so different for each of us. I can't waste this opportunity. Not again. But what shall I say? *Hi. you're cute*—No that's too basic. *I read books too*—Bullshit. *Where're you going?*—Nah, too creepy. What about...

"Don't know this one, what is it about?"

She lifted her dark eyes from her book and looked at me—"This? Nothing special, just a generic love story."

Her voice supplements perfectly her appearance. Tender with a glimpse of arrogance in it.

"Got one with me too, Fitzgerald."

"I see, I see. You've got a taste"—said with a slight smirk.

She's got that smile. Her lilac lips tell you everything you need to know. She's a heartbreaker. But, after all, maybe that is what my heart needs. A little bit of breaking.

"Going home, or from home?"

"Home. I was visiting a friend of mine. You?"

"From home. Have some business out of the city."

"Hmm, busy man. I'm Katy by the way."

"Theo."

"Nice to meet you, Theo."

"The pleasure is mine."

"Just so you know that I'm no basic bitch, I usually don't read books like these, it's just a good way to take a break from harder literature and keep reading."

"Understood. Do you read a lot?"

"Always! It's my escape. Anytime I don't like this world, I grab a book and escape to some other, more beautiful, and poetic place."

"Yeah, everyone needs something that lets us escape, that gives us comfort."

"What gives you comfort?"

"Good question..."

What answer to choose? The basic one, the interesting one, the real one?

"...meditation."

"Cool. Are you into Buddhism and stuff like that?"

"I read a few, but not many, I'm more into the practicality of it."

"I see. I also gave it a try to cope with my stress lately, but I don't see myself sitting in one place for a prolonged time, I'm too hyperactive for that."

"What is stressing you? If it isn't too inappropriate to ask."

"Entrance exams."

"Where to?"

"Everywhere, almost. Got some to philosophy, psychology, law, chemistry, even pedagogy."

"You've got quite a range."

"Yeah, I guess so. I think it is better to have multiple interests and invest in all of them. It makes me feel like I'm at least a little unique, and not quite like everyone else."

She's perfect. Fuck... I'm doing it again. Falling too fast. Don't let your loneliness get you into a place you don't want to be. Don't give up your control.

"Fascinating. I see you talking, but my words are coming out of your mouth."

"Cool. What is your *range* then?"—said piercing my soul with her sight.

Don't overthink, don't exaggerate. If I want to get anything from this interaction, I have to be me. No thin white lies. Stop thinking for a moment. Flow.

"The world wants me to be a computer scientist, I see nothing particularly wrong about it, but there are other things I feel interested in. Writing, sports, philosophy..."

"Who is your favorite philosopher? The answer can reveal a lot about a person. So many people are saying Kant, it's an easy answer, but usually, when you start asking questions, you realize that people don't even know what he was about. They just say it 'cause he's a big and popular name. Please tell me Kant isn't your favorite philosopher?"

"Hmm. I don't think I ever asked myself this question. I like stoicism but then again, it seems pretty casual in this day and age that I'm not quite sure to call it an actual philosophy."

"Why of course it is an actual philosophy. It is casual though. But still better than Kant. Stoicism is Aurelius, Seneca, and people like this am I right?"

"You're absolutely right. Guess you're a lot into philosophy huh?"

“Well, it’s been part of my life since twelve so I’ve got quite some time to learn.”

“I’m jealous of that, as I only found interest in it a little while ago.”

“That’s fine, you’re still young. You have all the life to learn.”

I want to learn from her. I want her to teach me. I know I shouldn’t, but I want her. I know that in a moment, I will probably never see her again and it will hurt, but I just can’t stop. Was it really worth it approaching her? Wouldn’t it be better to not know what treasure hides behind all this mysterious facade?

For a moment, we stayed silent. Then she decided to break this solitude that two people can create by simply not speaking.

“It’s a strange world we live in.”

“What do you mean?”

“If I met you on a different occasion, we could’ve fallen in love. But now, I will probably never see you again.”

What? How could she possibly say that? Why would she say that? Does she have that sadistic mind? That’s what happens when you lose control. You get hurt. The train is here. It’s all over. I need to keep my cool, at least on the outside.

“Well, that’s life. ‘Twas nice talking to you. Maybe we’ll meet again. Bye.”

“Bye, for now.”—she said it with a little smirk. Like she knew more than I know.

All this happened too fast. It’s not fair. When is my time to be happy? I don’t need another fucking test. Another character development arch. Didn’t I have enough of these? What was this lecture about? I don’t understand.

SCENE 2: ANGER

Arriving at Theo's seat on a train.

Fourty-seven. Fourty-nine. Fifty-one. Fifty-three there we go. The seat next to me is still free. Maybe I'll be lucky and the person who bought this seat won't be able to make it so I'll have this space all for myself. It's good. I need to think all this through. I need to find the meaning and the lesson. Time of calm solitude awaits, or...

Katy is approaching my seat with a devious smile—"You must be kidding me we got seats next to each other!"

"Katy?"

"What a coincidence."

Well here goes my solitude. Now I will have to fight this angel of a being to not fall for her even more.

"Seems like fate knew we have more to talk about."

"You believe in fate?"

"Kinda."

"That's cute. I also believed in fate once, but everything seems a little too cruel to be a part of some bigger plan"

What does she mean by cute? Am I a joke to her?

"So, what do you believe in?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing? *Nothing can come of nothing.*"

She chuckles—"I see where you're going. When I say nothing, I mean that there's no logical reason to be alive. It is our job to invent some artificial goals to keep going."

"What makes you keep going then?"

"Right now? The hope for new interesting experiences in college and"—chuckles—"a ton shit of medication."

"A little hedonistic ain't it?"

"Maybe. But still better than lying every day in bed, wanting to never wake up."

"Why's that?"

“Some demons from the past. I’m not quite comfortable speaking about them yet.”

“I respect that. How do you imagine your college life to be?”

“This feels like a fuckin’ interview.”—said teasingly with a smirk—“You’re asking questions, I’m answering. And I still know no shit about this cute Theo sitting right next to me. So let me now, ask you a question. What’s it like being you right now?”

“Maybe it’s better not to know.”

“To you for sure, but not for me. What it’s like being you huh?”

Now, you’re at a crossroads. You either close yourself, and give up any chance of getting close to her, or you open your heart and lose a little control. She’s too good to choose the first option.

“It’s weird. I *killed the me I used to be*. At this moment in time, I’m no one. It’s not that long ago when I was living my life with blank acceptance of my fate. The fate that was chosen for me by my parents, and society. And yet, I’ve realized that there has to be *something more, life’s worth living for*. And that’s what I’m trying to find right now.”

“How’s that going for you so far?”

“It’s stressful. But what keeps me going is the fact that I’ve decided myself to go through the pain. ‘Twas my decision to take control, to live my life. I’ve lost many friends for that, and I’ll probably lose some more. They think I’ve lost my mind. But I don’t care. *I’d rather be a freak than somebody’s puppet*.”

“You really like quoting stuff do you?”

“Yep, I feel like it is sometimes the best way to express one’s thoughts. Through the words of someone wiser, or more poetic.”

She looked me in the eyes again and said with a mocking smile—“Or you’re too cowardly to think for yourself.”—chuckles.

“Maybe...”

How does she know? We barely know each other and yet—in some way—she already realized some things about me not even my closest friends found in years. The shallowness of my thoughts. And insecurity I hide behind my *intellectual* quotes.

“Oh come on. I’m just teasing you. I’m quoting stuff constantly as well.”

“No. I think you got to something. No one ever presented me with an opinion like this. It’s good to be challenged from time to time and I feel it’s very rare for me to be challenged in my current social circle. All my friends pretty much agree with everything I say. No matter how stupid it may be. It’s like they can’t even think for themselves.”

“Shame on them. I hate agreeable people. They’re boring as fuck.”

“I agree... And hope I don’t sound like too agreeable person to you now.”—chuckles.

“Nah, you’re cool. You’re awake. Maybe not too long yet, but still. And that is all that matters.”

“How in the hell you’re real? *I never met a girl like you before.*”

“Maybe I’m not real. Who knows?”

“Yeah, maybe nothing is real.”

“What is your biggest fear, Theo?”

“Huh, you’re pretty straightforward.”—I paused, as my face lost its slight smile because Katy just opened my Pandora’s box—“Probably not being able to do, what I want. To be passive all my life. In a place that was pre-decided to me, alone as being unable to approach anyone. To die without knowing what is to love, and be loved.”

Katy, still with a smile on her face, putting her hand over my shoulder—“Well, you approached me. Did you? Right? And as you can see, it went all right. *No one died. No one got hurt. It won’t haunt you for a long time.*”

“Wait, what are you saying?”

“*You won’t hate yourself for just being a spectator in life. You approached the girl, reading a book. With fresh and young perfume...*”

“No! No, no, no! Stop please, stop!”

“Then speak to me!”—She screams like we are alone, like there’s no one around. Because there’s no one around. We are all alone. In my head.

SCENE 3: DEPRESSION AND ACCEPTANCE

Waking up from a dream.

Wake up! Wake up! See where your mind can take you? See what can happen? This girl can be the love of your life. And you're idle. For what? Safety? What life is that of safety? *It's NO better to be safe than sorry.* Do you remember?

Come on, you can't leave it like this. You went too far. Girls like these exist only in your head and do you know why? Because that's the only place you speak to them. How in the seven Hells could you find the girl of your dreams if you never speak to any? Huh? You can't. Do you really think that someday, somebody, somehow will just know who you are, what are you about, and fall in love with you? Just like that, without your initiation? You know that's bullshit. People can't read minds. You have to go and show them your mind yourself.

Breathe in, breathe out. You can waste no more time. The girl next to you can make your life either Heaven or Hell. The interaction can be either good or bad. It can be long or short. You can see her for five minutes and then never again, or she can become a partner for the rest of your life. You can never know. And you will only find out by taking action. The only other option is to do nothing. And you already know too damn well that *Nothing can come of nothing.* Breathe in, breathe out...

"Don't know this one, what is it about..."