

# ***Distractions***

by David Speranza

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## DISTRACTIONS

*CURTAIN UP. A PARK BENCH in autumn.*

*A MAN—late 20s/early 30s—sits reading the newspaper.*

*After a few moments, a young WOMAN (early-mid 20s) enters, sitting down a bit closer than she needs to. The man casually notes this as she pulls books from a backpack and begins to study.*

*Several moments pass as the woman 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?

*The boldness of her response surprises him.*

MAN: Well, you don't *have* to...

WOMAN: *(softening slightly)* 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: No. 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, that's why I asked.

MAN: Oh. I'm 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 prone to get into? Trouble?

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

MAN: Is that what I'm doing? 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 around the word "perfume." He smiles, amused.*

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, isn't that sort of the hallmark of one-night stands?

WOMAN: It wasn't a one-night stand. I mean, I didn't sleep with him. 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, that's right. An old friend came to visit in June.

WOMAN: Was it good?

MAN: *(taken by surprise)* 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 that new Ashley Judd movie..."

WOMAN: *(laughs)* Maybe that's it.

*They exchange glances.*

WOMAN: 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's a little better, anyway. 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: (*warily*) 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, maybe a touch disappointed.*

MAN: 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 their 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.

MAN: To some degree it's true. Some guys—and I'm still not sure why—seem to have almost a contempt for women who sleep with them too quickly.

WOMAN: I guess...

MAN: As for the long-term lack of interest, well, that seems more about familiarity than contempt. But what do I know?

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.*

WOMAN: 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: I find that hard 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.

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WOMAN: You seem to be doing all right.

MAN: I told you, these kinds of 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: There's a lash—

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

MAN: 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: 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, huh?

MAN: The closest I ever came was a first date where we both got so drunk I had to take her back to my place because she couldn't get home by herself. The

problem was, 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 touch 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 ol' repertoire. *(tapping the side 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?

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MAN: I don't know, sometimes these things just pop into my head. Like your sister's boyfriend. I can never use them, though, because I'd feel like a poser, but this one really suggested a lot of 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: "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 or when to say it, but... *(savoring the sound of it)* "I want to fall asleep inside you."

WOMAN: Aaron...

MAN: 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 listens to the sound of her name.*

MAN: 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: I wouldn't think that. Anyway, 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, you've got the wrong 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: I could never say that.

WOMAN: I know...

*She gazes at him, touching his cheek. He takes her hand, puts it to his lips. She closes her eyes, momentarily weakening. Then she opens them again and, gathering herself, withdraws her hand.*

WOMAN: And now, if you'll excuse me, I have something I need to go home and take care of.

*She turns and quickly exits. Aaron stares after her, fixing her image into his brain.*

MAN: Yeah. *(beat)* Me too—

*With sudden urgency, he exits in the opposite direction.*

CURTAIN.