

RESERVATIONS

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EXT. TRAIN TRACKS- DAY

The clattering hiss of invisible cicadas.

An OLD MAN, mid-60's, striking features, bustles down a long stretch of train track in solitude. His designer suit reduced to rags, face speckled with dirt and debris, holes in his shoes. A stripped tie dangles around his dusty, once-white collar. His left arm dangles at his side, holding in a loose clutch the green neck of a bottle of J&B Scotch Whiskey. The near empty cask rattles at his side with each step, the remaining spit of brown liquid swirling 'round the bottom.

He breaths heavy, and picks up pace with each step. The orange August sun weighs on him like a lead vest, adding extra bumble to his already lumbering gait.

His squinting green eyes are fixed on the horizon. His face grows closer. His handsome features twist ugly.

YOUNG WOMAN (O.S.)

Are you sure this is what you want?

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A modern apartment with an old-school flare. Bookshelves, carpeting, non-overhead lighting. A TV sits watching the room in a far corner. A YOUNG MAN, 20's, dapper, still in the suit he wore to work this morning, sits at a table set for dinner. The crimson red table cloth dons a matching set of plates, glasses and cutlery, a bread basket, a gravy boat and twin candelabras. Near the middle of the table, just about a shoulders reach away from the Young Man, sits an open bottle of J&B scotch. An old Victrola spins a slow song, 50's. Maybe earlier. Judy Garland?

YOUNG MAN

Mm.

A typewriter sits on the tables edge, the metallic clanging of keys reverberates through the room. He types incessantly. At his elbow, a rocks glass, beading with condensation. Mostly melted ice cubes rest like bergs in the shallow brown puddle left resting at the bottom of the glass.

Scurrying back and forth from the attached kitchen, we see the out-of-focus figure of a YOUNG WOMAN, his wife, 20's, hurriedly setting the table. We see her from the neck down, wearing a flowing, white dress.

The table now set in perfect symmetry, we see a plate from above being loaded with an ornate display of roasted chicken, decadent mashed potatoes, an array of greens and freshly baked corn bread. Steam radiates from the plate.

INT. APARTMENT- CONTINUOUS

The Young Man's plate, obscured from view by his shadowy frame, in front of him.

She takes her place at the opposite end of the table, now out of focus, and begins to eat.

The Young Man reaches for his utensils. We hear the unmistakable sound of metal on ceramic as he cuts himself a bite.

He raises his hand, revealing a forkful of pages with handwritten notes, typed-out copy and similarly printed graphs as the ones on his screen.

He takes a bite from his fork, chews, swallows, and dabs his mouth dry, all the while never taking his eyes off the screen.

YOUNG MAN

Mm.

He goes in for another bite. We see the plate now from above: notebooks, files, folders, binders. He takes another cut. Chew, swallow, type, scroll.

O.S.: we hear the shrieking of a newborn. The blurry silhouette across the table rises to tend to the child.

EXT. HILL- DAY

Cicadas whirr.

The Old Man walks down a hill, away from the train tracks. He is sweatier and dirtier than before. He loosens his tie as he gasps for air. Stumbling along, he reaches into his pocket to find a dirty, ripped paper. Never ceasing his motion, he squints to read the tainted document: "Springwood Park. 126 Atkins Ave.

He keeps walking.

INT. APARTMENT- MORNING

A bright, technicolor commercial of blues and oranges beams from an ominous television set, gleaming static light into the otherwise bleak living room.

The Young Man wakes up to the rigid clanks of the hokey PITCH MAN's endorsement of a local coffee shop.

He sits slouched at the dinner table from the night before, same clothes, glasses in disarray. His face is buried in his sprawled out work. He lifts his face from the avalanche of paperwork to acknowledge the screen. A swirling, colorful spiral surrounds the Pitch Man. Maybe coffee beans rain from the sky. His eyes cut through the screen.

PITCH MAN

... is the only locally brewed  
coffee that can help you...

We hear the Young Woman rattling from behind the Young Man. High heels bounce across the floor. We see her pacing from the shoulders down as the flashing light of the television bounces off the Young Man's face. The sound of keys clanging, clips clicking and zippers zipping. The baby coos in her arms, swaddled.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'm heading out. There's coffee on  
the counter. Fix it however you  
want.

She leans in to kiss the top of his head. Only her red lips enter our frame.

The Young Man stretches his cramped shoulders and rises to his feet, shifting his folders back into his briefcase as his wife makes for the door behind him.

He never turns around.

She exits.

The Young Man approaches the counter. A pot of coffee sits still next to an empty paper coffee cup, a small glass mason jar of milk and a large sugar dispenser.

He opens the lid of the coffee cup. We see that it's empty. He reaches for the sugar dispenser and pours. We see now that the dispenser is pouring sand. He pours until his cup is completely full. He grabs a wooden stirrer and, mixes his drink as he heads for the door. He takes a sip and coughs.

The Door closes hard.

He unsnaps the deadbolt and pulls the heavy door open. We see the now empty apartment, slowly pushing in on what's been left behind. His briefcase sits on the table as the television commercial plays, still flickering the color across the room.

The man on the television takes a sip of coffee.

TELEVISION

Mm! Now that's a taste of-

INT. TRAIN STATION- DAY

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

...Asbury Park! Now boarding to  
Asbury Park!

The Young Man stands at the train platform as commuters rush to-and-fro around him. He makes his way towards the train.

INT. TRAIN CAR- DAY

The Young Man hands his ticket to the CONDUCTOR. We recognize him immediately as the man from the coffee commercial. The Young Man, does not.

The Conductor smiles and accepts the ticket. The Young Man makes his way to his seat, slouches, and lets out a sigh of relief. He sips his drink. Coughs.

He sits looking out the window as the train begins to roll.

A beat.

He reaches at his feet nonchalantly to snatch his briefcase. It's not there.

He scrambles around, looking frantically under his seat and behind him.

He attempts to stand up, looking behind him at his seat, and knocks into the ready-waiting Conductor, who stands smiling, holding his briefcase. The conductor hands him his bag calmly. He accepts.

YOUNG MAN

Am I going to be late?

CONDUCTOR

(smiling)

You're never late. Have a seat.

The young man takes his seat again, unlatches his case and pulls out a small slip of paper, rather new and uncreased, reading: "Springwood Park. 126 Atkins Ave." He takes a sip of his coffee. He coughs.

EXT. ATKINS AVE.- DAY

The old man continues his trek. His shoes wear thin and drips of blood trail him on the sidewalk. He is downtrodden but energized. He stumbles passed a street sign: "SPRINGWOOD AVE."

EXT. SPRINGWOOD PARK

The young man arrives at the intersection of Springwood and Atkins. He stands in the street, the two converging sidewalks meeting at a point directly in front of him, then extending out into the horizon for what looks like eternity.

He clears his throat.

On the leftward path, a long table is set for dinner. Crimson red table cloth, a matching set of plates, glasses and cutlery, a bread basket, a gravy boat and twin candelabras. Big silver domes hide the meals.

The Old Man sits at the far end of the table. He smiles at the Young Man, A scorpion hides behind his teeth.

A WAITER (same as the the Conductor and Pitch Man), presides over the table setting, standing near an empty chair.

The Old Man gestures. The waiter removes the silver dome, revealing the glorious dinner the wife had made the night before, now rotted and spoiled. Flys swarm.

YOUNG MAN

Am I late?

OLD MAN

You're always late. Come eat.

The Young Man takes a step towards the table.

The sound of a baby crying comes from the opposite sidewalk. The Young Man turns over his shoulder and catches a glimpse of a woman he can't quite make out. She wears a flowing dress and holds a baby. He squints. He coughs. She turns away from him.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Take a seat.

The Young Man looks back, his eyes are wide with trepidation.  
He steps towards the table.

The crying intensifies. He looks back towards the woman and baby.

The waiter pulls the Young Man's chair out for him,  
screeching the metal legs across the concrete.

WAITER

Have a seat.

The crying gets louder. His coughs become more intense.

The Old Man pounds his fist against the table.

OLD MAN

Eat!

The baby is hysterical. The woman is walking away.

The Young Man drops his coffee cup. It spills its sugar  
across the asphalt.

Finally, his coughing stops. The woman is nearly out of  
sight.

YOUNG MAN

(to the Old Man)

And then what?

OLD MAN

And then you'll eat some more.

The Young Man looks at his briefcase. He thinks.

A cacophony of sights and sounds:

Crying.

Buzzing.

Chewing.

Sizzling.

The Young Man.

The Old Man.

The waiter.

The table and it's spread.

The glowing silhouette of the woman and the baby.

The Old Man's eyes.

The Young Man's eyes.

INT. APARTMENT- MORNING

Through the chaos, we see the Young Man as he was earlier leaving the apartment, only now, the image is in reverse. He walks backwards into the apartment. He takes his seat and watches the door.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD PARK- DAY

The Young Man snaps to attention, aiming his sight down the right sidewalk, towards the woman and baby.

He tosses his briefcase to the Old Man.

INT. APARTMENT- MORNING

The sequence continues to play in reverse, though altered this time and from the Young Man's new perspective. The Young Woman reenters the apartment backwards holding the baby. Her back is to the Young Man as a smile starts to grow across his face. She does all of her actions backwards now, emptying her purse instead of filling it, until finally, she turns, facing him now.

The reversal stops.

EXT. SPRINGWOOD PARK- DAY

The Old Man and the wait look on as The Young Man runs after the Young Woman and the baby. He struggles at first, then picks up speed. The screen grows brighter and brighter as he gains on them.

INT. APARTMENT- MORNING

The Young Woman turns and faces the Young Man.

For the first time, we see her glowing face.

TITLE CARD.