

Pitch and I'll Come To You

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE, UNIVERSITY - DAY

Pristine white A4 paper is printed, collated, and then bound into scripts, before being piled into A4 boxes.

TITLE CARD: Pitch... and I'll come to you

INT. LECTURER COMMON ROOM, UNIVERSITY - DAY

The film department's common room is part of a wider sixties concrete block. At the room's centre is a low Formica table littered with journals, surrounded by metal leather-effect plastic chairs.

DANNI, a dully-dressed late-20s postgraduate, is struggling to carry a tray of coffees to her colleagues. Finally she sets it down and gingerly hands them out. Cheered by her success she tries to make conversation.

DANNI

Professor Straight, I suppose
you'll be getting away from it all
now, since term is over.

PROFESSOR DARREN STRAIGHT sips his coffee inappreciatively. He's a thin, pursed-lipped man in his 40s, wearing a neat jumper, shirt and black trouser combo.

DARREN

Well, Danni - I intend to go to
Southstow on the east coast for
some quality reading time.

He nods to some A4 boxes, full of scripts and essays.

DANNI

Oh, that'll be nice. Are you going
to the beach where the end sequence
of 'Shakespeare in Love' was
filmed?

DARREN

(Sighs)

No, Danni, I am not! The sequence
you refer to was shot in Holkham,
on the North Norfolk coast.
Southstow is where a number of
scenes from 'Iris' were shot, and
is on the North Suffolk coast. An
entirely different location, and an
entirely different film.

DANNI

Oh. Sorry.

CAROLINE COOPER-CHARLES has been listening to this conversation with great amusement. She's a mid-40s, horsey and curvy film academic - clearly more media savvy than Darren. She looks up from her Blackberry.

CAROLINE

Really Darren! You shouldn't talk to Danni like that, she's not one of your students anymore. Come to think of it - you shouldn't talk to THEM like that, either.

Darren shakes his head. His hands occasionally flutters about to make sure his pen, paper and coffee are just so.

DARREN

I don't know what you're referring to, Doctor.

CAROLINE

Come now - Professor - the way you launched into those poor students who were pitching this afternoon. You should have seen it Danni!

Danni smiles nervously.

DARREN

They're going to have to learn sometime - they cannot get away with such poorly written and badly constructed nonsense in the real world.

Darren flicks through the pitch documents in front of him until he finds the one he's after.

DARREN (CONT'D)

This one, for instance: "'The Test' is a dark, psychological...

(he raises an eyebrow)

...drama about a withdrawn office worker's accidental discovery of his wife's infidelity..."

Inexplicably this event "triggers his waiting to happen mental collapse"... I don't like it.

Explain to me why he would do that?

Why does "The Test" suddenly make him record other people? Who does that I ask you? Not a true reaction. Not at all.

CAROLINE

Well. Yes. I agree. Wouldn't he just steal her credit card receipts and save us all the bother?

DANNI
 (Half-laughing)
 Or hack into his wife's e-mail?!?

Darren and Caroline stare Danni down, her smile disappears.

MOMENTS LATER

Darren P.O.V.: He stares at the browbeaten Danni and the disinterested Caroline. Both are trying to avoid his gaze.

DARREN
 (occasional words;
 echoing)
 Cause and effect! ... What's wrong
 with pure cause and effect? ... But
 all my students keep bring me is
 unconnected non-events and/or
 supernatural nonsense ... Cause and
 effect! ... Cause. And. Effect.

Darren P.O.V.: His speech is increasingly intercut and drowned out by the echoes of a discordant GHOSTLY WALTZ, that no one else can hear.

Confused, he stops ranting. The music abruptly ceases.

DARREN (CONT'D)
 (Perplexed)
 Did you hear that? The frankly
 quite unnecessary ghostly film
 music!?

Caroline and Danni don't reply, they switched off long ago.

Darren is clearly ruffled.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAR PARK - LATER

Darren leaves with a box of scripts, absent-mindedly HUMMING the ghostly waltz. He heads towards his car.

His car has been keyed.

DARREN
 An accident! Yes, an accident.

He unlocks the car, places the box carefully in the boot, gets into the car, checks the mirrors, fiddles with his seat - before finally closing the driver's door.

EXT. SOUTHSTOW STREET - LATER

Darren's car door opens.

He's parked along a backstreet of the small, old fashioned coastal town. A GHOSTLY WIND sounds.

Darren tries to ignore it and gingerly heads to the boot...

The source of the disturbance becomes clear - a TOOTHY CHILD blows over the top of a milk bottle. She stops and grins widely at Darren, before running off.

Still ill at ease Darren takes the box of scripts from the boot.

As he approaches the large B&B he forces his natural arrogance to return: he smiles and shakes his head. He takes a moment to breathe in the sea air.

DARREN
(to himself)
Silly, silly. It makes no sense, no sense at all. Where's the connection? Ridiculous!

INT. FOYER, B&B - CONTINUOUS

Silence. Darren approaches the unmanned reception and slaps the metal bell on the desk. The RING of the bell ECHOES.

Black.

INT. BEDROOM, B&B - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens and Darren walks in, box first.

The room is clean and quite bare - save for an old fashioned bed with brass headboard, bedside table and a desk.

He makes a bee-line to the desk.

His actions are deliberate and methodical. He gets out his pen and hardback notepad. He opens it and carefully smooths down the pages. He curtly grabs a script from the box.

With a slight flourish he sits down to work - happy.

DARREN
(mutters cheerfully)
Tut tut. Ridiculous.

NIGHT

The room is now dark, partially lit by pools of lamp light.

DARREN looks over another script - it is littered with red pen mark.

DARREN
Nonsense! Preposterous nonsense!

Suddenly the age-old windows blow open sending his papers flying everywhere, and Darren into action. From the outside raging WIND the GHOSTLY WALTZ rises up again.

Darren battles with the window until he manages to close it. The WIND and GHOSTLY WALTZ immediately die down.

All is quiet again. He rests against the window, shocked.

LATER

Darren prepares to go out: fastidiously and obsessively arranging his hair, shirt collar and scarf.

He looks back, focusing briefly on the boxes of scripts.

DARREN
A good day's work. Yes.

He turns off the light.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Darren enters into the main bar, struggling to close the door behind him against the outside raging (seemingly tuneful) WIND.

Once safely inside he seems out of place and uncertain, like a troubled schoolboy, awkwardly HUMMING to himself.

An ATTRACTIVE SERIOUS WOMAN (early 40s and classically dressed, with short 1920s-style haircut) looks up towards him, seemingly openly inviting him to approach.

Darren nervously walks towards her, continuing to HUM to himself. But he deviates at the last moment and goes to another end of the bar.

He waits, sadly and quietly, to be served.

LATER

Darren slowly sups a half pint of bitter as he sits uncomfortably on a small table by himself.

The Attractive Serious Woman is still alone in the background.

Darren shoots furtive glances, but does nothing. He HUMS and gesticulates to himself, as if practising his opening lines to her.

A BARMAN brings over his dinner. Darren stares at the dinner as if trying to make sense of it. The Barman leaves.

DARREN

Ah! Dinner.

Darren eats alone, gesticulating to himself as he does so, waving a tomato around on his fork.

INT. BEDROOM, B&B - LATER

Darren, in pyjamas, sits up in his rickety old-fashioned bed, blank-eyed, staring out at nothing. Silence.

Darren P.O.V.: His view pans across the dimly lit and near empty room. It is somehow foreboding in its solitude.

Darren sighs and leans over to turn off the bedside lamp. All is dark, save for the moonlight. He brings the covers tight around him and stares out fearfully before closing his eyes.

The GHOSTLY WALTZ sounds from somewhere - growing in intensity. Darren tries to get comfortable, shuffling around his bed to avoid the music. But it is no use.

Darren tries to turn the bedside lamp to his left back on - but the bulb dies. Frantically he tries the lamp on the right side of the bed.

The light returns and the MUSIC stops dead. There is no sign of the source. He sighs, tired and flabbergasted. He reaches over and picks up a book to read, sits up in bed and settles in for the long haul of a sleepless night.

INT. DINING ROOM, B&B - DAY

Darren munches his breakfast. He is his arrogant self again.

On a nearby table is a fellow guest, FORSYTH, a Colonel-like figure, also eating breakfast.

FORSYTH

Yes... I suppose you could be right, old boy! I never looked at it that way before... Perhaps I don't actually believe in God...

LATER

A brief lull in the conversation. Darren smiles to himself.

FORSYTH

So you're not one for "spooky" things then eh, Darren? The supernatural I mean.

DARREN

By "spooky" I take it you mean ghost or ghouls. Now that's the Effect. But where's the Cause, hmmm?

(To Waitress; curtly)
Grapefruit. Please.

MOMENTS LATER

Darren cheerfully attacks his half grapefruit with a spoon and messily devours it while talking...

DARREN

Why would a departed spirit hang around to bother people with no previous connection to it? What would be the point, the pay off? No, no... I don't see the point in believing in the unexplainable - the stupid - the unbelievable plot devices of life...

FORSYTH

(a bit dumbfounded)
I think I see your point. But surely we don't want to explain away everything?

DARREN

Ah! That old argument. I prefer the reverse angle on that particular point - A way to explain everything, isn't that exactly what we all want, surely? What Man has set out to discover since the beginning of time? Yes? Without an explanation - a coherent plan and meaning - there's just mess and confusion.

Darren is especially pleased by this last comment.

DARREN (CONT'D)

(mutters to himself)
Ha... Explain away everything! No, no - A way to explain everything!

Forsyth looks over at him, slightly worried. Darren continues to grin idiotically to himself.

EXT. OUTSIDE B&B - LATER

Darren and Forsyth exit the B&B onto an old street.

Darren rubs his hands together.

DARREN

A trudge will clear my head of the stress of work I think!

Darren trudges off, accidentally WHISTLING the ghostly waltz tune. He quickly stops himself, and walks all the quicker to "escape" it.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

The CRACK of a twig as Darren's foot lands on it.

He strides through a spooky desolate wintry wood. He's overly cheerful, like he's pretending a little too hard.

Darren continues, but ECHOES of GHOSTLY WALTZ appear in the CALLING of the crows overhead and in the CRACKS of the twigs and RUSTLE of leaves underfoot.

Darren repeatedly shakes his head and forces a manic "this is not really happening" grin.

DARREN

Stuff and nonsense. Spooky? No sense. Nonsense.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

A dazed and confused Darren stumbles out near the beach. He jumps down onto the beach from a natural ledge. The SMASH of pebbles and shingle underfoot greets him, but no music, much to his relief.

He breathes in the sea air, allows himself a brief real smile and starts to walk loudly along the pebbled beach.

His ease, however, is short lived - he looks around him.

The tide is low. The broad sweep of the bleak, epic and wintry desolate beach with just black weathered groynes to break it up. The sea and sky stretches out before him.

The GHOSTLY WALTZ rears up again. He trudges all the quicker, but the rhythm of his shoes HITTING the pebbles only seems to increase the intensity of the phantom music.

The music starts to actively suggest that he is being chased. He looks back over his shoulder. There is nobody there. Yet the music insistently "chases" him.

He shakes his head sadly.

DARREN

Shoddy. There's nothing even there!

The lonely figure of Darren scampers off away from us. The MUSIC and the SOUND of the sea rear up unbearably loud.

INT. LANDING, B&B - LATER

Sudden quiet.

Darren ascends the stairs humming to himself and is mildly surprised to find the shrew-like female MANAGER and an attractive young CLEANER by his door.

DARREN

Ah. Oh. Umm... Hello.

MANAGER

Do you want it cleared up?

DARREN

"Cleared... up"? Yes - what?
Cleared UP?

MANAGER

The papers - they're strewn across
the room.

DARREN

"Strewn"! ... Strewn?

BEDROOM

Inside Darren's room the A4 papers are strewn everywhere.

DARREN

(Dismissive)

Well I didn't move them. Somebody
ELSE must have.

MANAGER

Nobody but us two have the key. And
WE didn't do it.

DARREN

Wind.... Wind, maybe?

Darren shoos them aside. The Cleaner giggles as they leave.

Darren sets about re-ordering his papers.

DARREN (CONT'D)

Wind. Yes, wind...

INT. LOUNGE, B&B - LATER

Darren sits in an armchair trying to read a script, but cannot get comfortable.

He tries various positions: hunching over the material; resting his face on his fists. He cannot concentrate.

NIGHT

The fire burns in the hearth.

Darren uncharacteristically lollops with tiredness in the armchair. Yet he forces himself to continue reading a book. He is trying to avoid sleep. Or at least avoid his room.

INT. BATHROOM, B&B - LATER

HIGH ANGLE SHOT: The taps running at full pelt into the old fashioned standalone bath. The ROAR is almost deafening.

Darren turns the taps off. He pulls off his under t-shirt over his head, leaving his hair ruffled. He is bewildered and confused, mouthing arguments to himself. He gets into the bath, sinks into it and closes his eyes.

INT. BEDROOM, B&B - LATE NIGHT

Darren is in bed, lit only by a shaft of moonlight, the sheets drawn very close to him. He is trying unsuccessfully to force himself to sleep. He closes his eyes.

[INTERCUT
WITH:]

EXT. BEACH - DAY - VISION

The desolate beach, coupled with ECHOES of the now overblown GHOSTLY WALTZ (complete with musical saw).

INT. BEDROOM, B&B - CONTINUOUS

Darren quickly opens his eyes. He looks around, confused and fearful. Beat. He closes his eyes again.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - VISION

The desolate beach, plus the GHOSTLY WALTZ.

INT. BEDROOM, B&B - CONTINUOUS

Darren suddenly opens his eyes. Despite his obvious terror and the sweat on his brow, he cannot resist the temptation to try again. He closes his eyes hard.

EXT. BEACH - DAY - DREAM

The desolate beach. The GHOSTLY WALTZ springs into life. The vision intensifies and becomes a fully fledged "dream".

Darren is breathlessly running from some (unseen) foe. He repeatedly looks over his shoulder, stricken with fear by the invisible but audible predator - the GHOSTLY WALTZ.

Just as the MUSIC seems to be on top of him he scrambles over a weathered Groyne and lands harshly on the other side. Despite his fear he's far too tired to continue. He desperately peers back over the top of the Groyne.

At first we see nothing. But then there is something in the near distance. A poorly animated, ill-defined yet ODDLY TERRIFYING AND UNGODLY COLLECTION OF BLANK A4 PAPER flutters towards him/us at unnatural speed.

SLOW MOTION: Darren wails in terror...

INT. BEDROOM, B&B - LATE NIGHT

...Darren wakes up GASPING in the dark, sweat pouring from him. Silence.

Then: the GHOSTLY WALTZ rages up, accompanied this time by the sound of sheets of paper RUSTLING in the room. Darren cannot bring himself to look at the source.

Finally, utterly terrified, Darren turns towards the source of the RUSTLING and MUSIC. He looks straight through us - panic and shock on his face.

REVERSE ANGLE reveals that the A4 SHEETS OF PAPER (from the boxes of scripts in the corner) have formed a god forsaken and almost recognisably humanoid shape, and are dancing weirdly to the music.

Darren stumbles out of his bed and stands before the dancing scripts. One slaps him in the face.

DARREN
(disgust; wails in slow
motion)
Noooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Forsyth (in a dressing gown) sudden bursts into the room.

FORSYTH
Good God man! What's all the
racket? Is it a burglary?

Forsyth turns on the light - only to find Darren in his pyjamas covered in motionless A4 script papers, BABBLING.

Forsyth looks pityingly at Darren, and rather embarrassedly helps him to sit on the edge of the bed, as he goes back to tidy up the papers.

Darren sits alone on the edge of the bed, crazy-eyed.

DARREN

Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. Oh no. Tha...
that would never happen. Oh no.
Totally - unbelievable. Oh no.
Where's - where's the cause? Oh no.
(Beat)
No.

FREEZE FRAME on this. Darren is a broken man.

FADE OUT.