

JUDGEMENT TRAIN

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. A SMALL TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - DAY

A WOMAN stands absorbed by the book she is reading as she waits for a train. She is early to mid-thirties, mildly attractive, petite...a typical commuter in her smart suit and soft leather bag. There's another two commuters at the other end of the platform, but no-one else within fifty yards of the woman. A MAN approaches. He is in his forties, dressed casually in jeans, a polo-shirt and corduroy jacket. He pulls a small suitcase. His hairline is receding and he wears gold-rimmed spectacles. Despite the emptiness of the platform he stands near the woman. He glances at his watch.

MAN

In precisely five minutes and thirty five seconds the Portsmouth train will pass through this station.

The woman looks up at the man. He stares back at her, a friendly, relaxed smile on his face. She peers around trying to find the person he's addressing - it's obviously her.

WOMAN

I'm sorry, I didn't....what did you say?

MAN

In precisely five minutes and thirty-five....

He glances at his watch

MAN

....twenty-six seconds, the Portsmouth train will pass through this station.

He smiles again in his friendly way.

WOMAN

(Confused)  
Right, I see.

MAN

It doesn't stop....

He sweeps his arm through the air.

MAN

....just goes sailing through.

The woman nods and smiles a feeble smile. He leans towards her.

MAN

That last bit's quite important you see....to you and me.

WOMAN

I'm sorry, but I'm catching the seven....

MAN

....oh-five. Yes, I guessed that.

The Woman shakes her head as she says:

WOMAN

So the Portsmouth train doesn't mean much to me you see.

MAN

No, not usually, but it will today.

WOMAN

(More assertively)

Look, I'm really not sure what you're talking about....

MAN

Let me explain....it's important *today*, because you will determine whether I throw myself in front of it.

He smiles his friendly smile. The words take a moment to sink into the woman's brain and then....she shakes her head, her eyes wide with shock.

WOMAN

What?

MAN

You will determine whether I throw myself in front of it.

She looks around the platform for help. Her eyes fix on the two commuters fifty yards away. She returns her stare to the man.

WOMAN

I'm not sure what you're talking about, but you need some help.

She signals with her hand towards the other commuters.

WOMAN

I'll get someone.

MAN

(Calmly, but  
firmly)

No, no. You're the one. You need to  
decide.

WOMAN

Decide? No, look I'll get someone.

She tries to make off, but the man catches her arm. His eyes  
fix on hers. He's in pain, but determined.

MAN

If you walk off, I'll jump. By the  
time you find someone it'll be too  
late. It's up to you. Go now and be  
responsible for my death, or listen  
to my story and decide whether to  
save my wretched soul.

(Beat)

Your choice.

The woman looks horrified. She looks around again and then  
back at the man. He tries to smile, but just looks sad. The  
woman swallows.

WOMAN

I don't know who you are, but I  
don't want you to jump, okay?  
Please?

MAN

You don't know that. You haven't  
heard the facts, so you don't know.

WOMAN

It doesn't matter.

MAN

Oh, but I think it does. So I need  
to tell you this....

He looks at his watch again.

MAN

.... and I need to do it fast. At  
the end: you decide.

The woman looks fearful, but hesitantly nods.

MAN

It's the first time I've done it.

He appears about to break down, but gathers himself.

MAN

I've had....yearnings before. But this is the first time.

WOMAN

What?

MAN

The first time I've molested a child.

The woman gasps and puts her hand over her mouth. The man looks away from her for a second, horrified by his own admission.

MAN

I know.... I disgust myself. I'm revolting. If it was down to me then in a couple of minutes I'll be dead.

He hangs his head. The woman removes her hand from her mouth and steadies herself.

WOMAN

What's her name?

He looks up at her.

MAN

It's not a girl - even more disgusting.

WOMAN

How old?

MAN

He's nine-years old.

The Woman takes a shocked in-take of breath.

MAN

I didn't hurt him....not physically, but....

Pause as they stare at each other. He sighs and turns away.

MAN

Why am I doing this....we both know I should die.

PLATFORM ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The next train at Platform One will not be stopping at this station. Please keep behind the yellow line.

She looks intently at him, holding his stare.

WOMAN

How could you do that to a little boy?

MAN

I have no excuse...mitigating circumstances maybe.

WOMAN

Go on.

MAN

Someone did it to me. I was six....it's a cycle

Silence as they stare at each other.

WOMAN

I'm a parent. I have a nine-year old daughter. I need to know something.

In the distance a fast train approaches.

MAN

What?

Noise of train approaching fast. He looks at the train and then at the woman.

WOMAN

Can you stop yourself?

Train is coming nearer.

MAN

(Genuinely,  
quietly)

Yes.

He turns away from her towards the tracks ready to jump. He lets go of his suitcase. The train is seconds from racing by. She puts her hand on his arm.

WOMAN

Don't jump.

The train flies past them, the man's jacket and the woman's hair moving with the rush of air. The train's gone. Silence. They stare at each other.

MAN

Thank you.

WOMAN

You need help. You need professional help.

PLATFORM ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

The next train to arrive at  
Platform One will be the seven-o-  
five to London Paddington.

MAN

I know. I'll get it. I promise.

A train pulls in and the woman boards it. She closes the door behind her and then pulls down the window to talk to the man.

WOMAN

Don't try to do this by yourself.  
Get help.

The train begins to pull away. The man nods and then says....

MAN

Your daughter, Sophie, tell her I'm  
sorry.

She looks confused. The train pulls away, the distance between them grows.

WOMAN

My Sophie? How do you know her  
name?

He's shouting now so she can hear him.

MAN

There was no boy: only Sophie. Tell  
her I didn't mean to hurt her.

The train has gathered speed. The woman looks horrified with realization.

MAN

(Quietly and to  
himself)  
And thank you. Thank you for your  
absolution.

He smiles his friendly smile, grabs his suitcase and then walks quickly away.

EXT. A DIFFERENT TRAIN STATION PLATFORM - DAY

The man is talking to a SECOND WOMAN. No-one else is around. There's the sound of a train approaching fast. He turns away from her towards the tracks, ready to jump.

MAN

I'll never do it again. I promise  
you.

The Second Woman grabs his arm.

SECOND WOMAN  
Please stop. Don't....

The man turns to her, smiling a tortured thank-you. His face changes - shock and fear in his eyes. Someone's arm and hand appear and push the man into the path of the onrushing train. The arm and hand belong to the woman. She addresses the Second Woman who looks traumatized by what she's just witnessed.

WOMAN  
I'm sorry, I have some very bad  
news for you.

FADE OUT:

THE END