

BRIEF ENCOUNTER

by

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INT. TRAIN - MORNING

THOMAS, a young graduate with slightly unkempt hair, boards the commuter train into the big city.

He stows his small black suitcase on the shelf above the nearest unoccupied seat, and plops himself down into the aisle side, gazing out toward the window.

A LARGE MAN with a butcher's apron boards. Thomas busies himself with trying to see something of imaginary interest outside the window. He is careful not to make eye contact with the large man.

The man passes and Thomas sinks even lower into the seat, sighing heavily, and fiddling with his fingers. The train jerks violently into motion, and Thomas grasps the seat in front of him with both hands.

As the city approaches, a tall shadow, fifty stories high, falls over the train, and Thomas's squint relaxes into a heavy lidded stupor.

The train comes to a stop, and more passengers board the train. Thomas busies himself with looking out the window, and the newcomers pass him by.

Suddenly a figure stops by his seat, but he pretends not to notice. As she lifts her suitcase onto the rack above his seat, the train jerks into motion, and the YOUNG WOMAN falls back a bit, bumping her head on the vertical bar attached to his seat. In her best attempt at a French accent, she exclaims:

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh là là!

Thomas looks up suddenly, and realizing it is a beautiful young woman, his posture instantly transforms into that of a Greek statue, and he politely moves to the window seat, allowing her to sit. He promptly looks out the window and, adjusting his scraggly hair, fixes his gaze into the distance.

YOUNG WOMAN

I've heard that's how they actually use the phrase in France. It's more like a mild curse, or an expression of surprise, or for something really stupid.

Thomas looks at her in disbelief. Is she talking to him?

YOUNG WOMAN

It's not like here, where we say "Oooh Law Law," all sexy or something. That's not even a thing over there!

THOMAS

Oh, uh...

YOUNG WOMAN

Ah! where are my manners? Hi, I'm Corah.

THOMAS

Uh, Thomas.

CORAH

I guess I'm a bit of a Francophile;

Thomas stares cluelessly at Corah.

CORAH

It means I'm obsessed with French stuff. Chanel, Godard...

THOMAS

Ah, like a "hipster for France."

CORAH

(laughs) Eww, give me my dignity! I would prefer... "nerd for France" maybe?

They both laugh, and the tension eases a little.

CORAH

I suppose it must stem from my "passion for fashion."

She does "air quotes" with her fingers as she says this, Thomas smiles at her self deprecation.

THOMAS

Oh yeah? Are you like, a designer or something?

CORAH

Yeah I.... Well...

She trails off, and Thomas really looks at her for the first time.

CORAH

Technically I'm a sales rep for this crappy knockoff swimwear company, but I design my own vintage swimwear, just on my own time.

THOMAS

I think that counts. You're designing... so you're a designer!

CORAH

Thanks, I guess I just took it to heart when someone told me "you're only as good as your day job." Like

(MORE)

CORAH (cont'd)
you're not really something until
you can make a living at it.

THOMAS
Ha, if that's the case, then half
the people on this train are
frauds!

Corah pauses, and really looks at Thomas for the first time.
Thomas breaks the silence, encouraging her to continue.

THOMAS
So you were saying, vintage
swimwear? What's that, like the old
stripey barbershop quartet thing?

Corah laughs heartily and punches Thomas's shoulder.

CORAH
Ha! No, this stuff is a little
more, well... "OOOH LA LA!"

This time, her emphasis does imply the sexy meaning that
Americans use.

CORAH
Think 1940s pinup: Dorothy Lamour,
Betty Grable...

Corah puts her hands up to create a frame for the mental
image she's trying to convey. She squints through that
frame. Thomas leans in and squints too, trying to see what
she's seeing in that frame.

THOMAS
Or like, Ursula Andress in that
"Dr. No" bikini?

CORAH
Well, technically my designs aren't
bikini, because that means the rise
is below the hip... Ok never mind,
I'm getting too technical. So what
do you do?

Thomas shrinks a little and looks at his hands.

THOMAS
Oh, paralegal stuff. It's...

He is about to dive into the details, and reconsiders.

THOMAS
It's pretty dry really. I mean...
It's more "Oh Luh Luh" than
anything.

He rolls his eyes under the weight of his heavy posture. He doesn't notice that he has Corah's full attention at this point, and that she smiles at his correct usage of the phrase.

THOMAS

Anyway, I guess...

The train slows to a stop and Thomas's thoughts are interrupted as, looking up, he sees a familiar landmark.

THOMAS

Oh this is my stop, well it was good talking!

As the train comes to a stop, Thomas is up and out of his seat, passing Corah without really looking at her. He reaches up and quickly grabs his suitcase and gives a half hearted wave as he exits the train. Corah watches him, and as the train leaves the station, she looks back once, and then faces forward. Her mouth forms a gentle smile, which punctuates her fiercely knitted brows.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Thomas scrambles into the courtroom, suitcase in hand. A well dressed LAWYER, with an incongruous combover and five o'clock shadow, turns and waves Thomas over to his table before the still empty judge's bench.

LAWYER

Ah, there you are. I hope there wasn't any trouble typing up the briefs? They're crucial to this case.

The Lawyer begins peeling his banana as Thomas sets the case on the table.

THOMAS

No sir! Your dictation was very straightforward, I...

Thomas pauses as he looks into the briefcase, and is surprised to see it is full of bikinis of all colors. He looks around in panic, wondering what went wrong.

LAWYER

Something wrong?

Thomas slams the case shut.

THOMAS

I... I... Well, it seems I have the wrong... briefs.

The lawyer pulls the case toward him.

LAWYER

Let's see what we have here.

He opens the case and pulls out a hot pink bikini bottom. It dangles delicately by the side-tie string, pinched between his thumb and forefinger. His gaze is fixed firmly on Thomas.

LAWYER

You got taste, kid. But yeah.
Definitely not the right briefs.

He lets the bikini bottom drop back into the case. All traces of humor disappear from his face.

LAWYER

Fix it.

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Thomas exits the building and slams the suitcase down on the stone ledge by the steps. He paces a few times, then has an idea. He opens the case and begins digging through the brightly colored swimsuits. He finds a manilla folder and opens it. Inside, among various papers and purchase order forms, is a business card paper clipped to the folder. It reads:

Corah St. Margaret
Sales Representative
Attention Swimwear
555-5555

Thomas takes the card out, and pulls out his phone.

THOMAS

Ok, let's see...

He dials the number, and places his phone to his ear.

After a few seconds, he hears a ringtone, but not through his phone. Looking around, he realizes the ringtone is coming from the suitcase itself.

Digging through the swimsuits, he finds something, and pulls out a ringing phone. He looks at it in dismay, then turns to his own phone and ends the call.

THOMAS

Great.

He looks to the courthouse, then to the card, and finally picks up his phone again. He punches three numbers, and listens as the phone rings. Someone picks up.

THOMAS

Hi, yes. I'd like the phone number
and address for Attention Swimwear?

He feels his pockets for a pen, and finding one, begins writing on his hand.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The train speeds through the city. The roar of the tracks drowns out the scene. Inside the window, Thomas is talking on the phone and gesturing to the suitcase.

INT. ATTENTION SWIMWEAR LOBBY - NOON

Thomas figets in his chair while the MIDDLE AGED RECEPTIONIST receptionist flirts with the UPS DELIVERY MAN.

Thomas looks curiously at the suitcase, and puts his thumbs on the clasps, ready to open it and take another peek, when a loud noise startles him.

He looks up to see large bubbles bursting to the top of the water cooler in the corner.

He returns his concentration to the case, when the front door flies open. He looks to the door, then stands up.

Corah has entered the front door, holding a suitcase identical to his. She rushes over and drops the suitcase on the chair next to him.

CORAH

Thanks for coming out. I got the call that you'd meet me here with the suitcase. Imagine my surprise when my suitcase was full of lawsuits instead of swimsuits!

THOMAS

Ha! My briefcase was full of briefs, instead of, well... briefs.

He hands her the case full of bikinis, then turns to pick up his own case off of the chair.

CORAH

I tried calling the lawyer's office on the letterhead, but no answer. The buyers at my sales meeting were super cool though, they rescheduled our appointment for tomorrow.

THOMAS

Well at least we figured it out. Anyway, I have to get back to the courthouse pronto.

He turns to leave, and without looking at her, starts walking toward the door. He places his hand on the door handle, then freezes. He turns and walks back to Corah. He looks straight into her eyes.

THOMAS

It was good meeting you today.

He smiles and continues to look at her face.

THOMAS

It was really good knowing you.

She smiles.

CORAH

Likewise.

Thomas steps back, still facing her.

CORAH

Au revoir!

Thomas smiles. He gestures toward her and, shaking his head, sighs in mock exasperation.

THOMAS

Oh là là!

They both laugh, and he finally turns and leaves.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - AFTERNOON

As Thomas walks along the platform, he pulls Corah's business card out of his pocket. He looks at it and smiles.

The train approaches, bringing up a gust of wind. The card flaps in his hand. He holds it tight and closes his eyes gently.

He opens them, and lets go of his grip. The card flies out of his hand.

Cut to black.