

EXT. AGNES R. KATZ PLAZA - DAY

EMILY, late 20s, near a tree-lined plaza near the heart of downtown Pittsburgh, taking her mid-day break. Brown bag lunch from home in hand, standing in front of a newspaper vending machine, unable to find enough loose change to buy the Post Gazette...

She scans the crowd of passers-by, looking for an approachable stranger...

Emily spies HENRY, early 30s, across the street. Henry is having his lunch on a park bench. Emily approaches, wearing a wide, bright smile, dollar bill in extended hand to indicate that she's harmless.

EMILY

Excuse me. Hate to bother you. Do you happen to have change for the paper? I never have enough coins on me, and my desk is 40 floors up.

A mouthful of hoagie, Henry nods, wordlessly searching his pockets. Finds three quarters and a small polished seashell. Tries to swallow and choke out a response.

HENRY

I'm a little short.

Emily wrinkles her nose. What is that, a button?

EMILY

Oh. That's fine. I'll trade you the 75 cents for a dollar. You can keep the rock.

Henry drains the last drops of his cola, washing down a bite of sub sandwich with a loud SLURP.

HENRY

(Winking)

Take it. It's not a rock. It's a tiny seashell. You like seashells, yes?

EMILY

I do!

Henry gives the contents of his hand to Emily. She looks. It is a seashell. She eyes Henry suspiciously.

EMILY (CONT'D)

How did you know I like seashells?

Henry taps his temple with an index finger.

HENRY
I'm a mind reader.

Emily's a little freaked out. She *really* loves seashells. Henry tries to reassure her.

HENRY (CONT'D)
And who doesn't like seashells?

She smiles politely. She leaves Henry, gets her paper. She returns to the plaza and sets herself up at an adjacent bench. Flips to the crossword, but doesn't start it.

Instead, Emily fingers the smoothly polished seashell.

She folds up her paper and approaches Henry.

EMILY
What am I thinking right now?

Henry closes his eyes and concentrates.

HENRY
You're thinking about the elevator ride back to your desk. 40 floors, give or take, depending on whether or not they count lucky 13.

Emily is game to play along.

EMILY
Am I? What about it?

HENRY
You're bothered by the close button.

EMILY
The close button?

HENRY
There is no such thing. Of course, there's a button that says close, two equilateral triangles, point to point, but it's not wired to anything.

EMILY
It's not?

HENRY

The doors close of their own volition. The close button is simply for show, it does not close the doors any faster.

EMILY

What's it there for then?

HENRY

The button is there to address your insecurity. It's an illusion of control. You see the button, and you think, I can change things. I can influence the speed of my departure. But you can't. The elevator has its own schedule. You're just a passenger.

EMILY

You're quite a character, aren't you? But sorry, I was thinking about Neanderthal Man.

Emily grunts like a caveman to illustrate.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Early humans survived on persistent hunting. They would chase around faster animals that could sprint but couldn't run for distance and they'd eventually overheat and die, the animals, not the humans. There was an article in yesterday's Gazette; that's what I was thinking about.

HENRY

Strange you say that. In fact, that's how I make new friends. I chase them...

EMILY

...and eventually they die.

HENRY

Exactly.

Beat.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Okay, the jig is up. I can't really read minds.

EMILY

Good. I feel better now. I'm going to keep the seashell.

Emily extends her hand.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm Emily. Mind if I join you?

HENRY

Hello Emily. It's a free country.

They shake.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Henry.

Emily takes a seat, puts the crossword away. Tentatively digs into a plastic container of noodles and vegetables with a plastic fork.

EMILY

You work around here?

HENRY

I don't work one place in particular. I compose and arrange music. I come here at lunch for inspiration.

EMILY

Why here?

HENRY

It's a perfect people watching station this time of day. All the worker bees buzzing about.

EMILY

You write music? Really? Wow, impressive. Like jingles, symphonies, reggae, techno...? Tell me when I'm getting warm.

HENRY

I compose and arrange orchestral arrangements.

EMILY

People pay you for that?

HENRY

No. But I do it anyway. I enjoy it. It's kind of side-thing at the moment.

EMILY

What do you do for money?

HENRY

That's sounds very sinister. *What do you do for money?* Not much I do for money.

EMILY

Ah. Independently wealthy. I hate you.

Henry laughs.

HENRY

It's more of a case of a low standard of living. What do you do on the 40th floor?

EMILY

I'm just a temp. At a law firm. I do what I'm told.

HENRY

Also sinister. *I just follow orders.*

EMILY

I'm the least sinister person you've ever met.

Emily crosses her heart.

HENRY

I believe you. I'm infrequently sinister myself.

EMILY

That's good to know. Is there a reason you don't have a day job, the music-side-thing notwithstanding?

Emily stops herself.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh, I'm totally being nosy. None of my business. You don't have to answer.

Beat.

EMILY (CONT'D)
But it's kind of suspicious.

Emily waits for an answer.

HENRY
I have a condition. Makes it hard
to hold down a steady nine to five.

EMILY
I'm sorry to hear that. What's
your condition?

Henry runs his fingers through his hair, looks Emily straight
in the eye, letting some suspense build...

HENRY
(quietly, like a secret)
I'm forgettable.

Emily throws her hands up. Of course. It's just banter.

EMILY
You're forgettable?

HENRY
Chronically, *magically*,
forgettable.

Emily swoons in a playful, mock gesture of empathy.

EMILY
Ew. Sounds awful.

HENRY
It is. I leave the impression of a
warm hand on cool glass. I fade.
You're not going to remember me
five minutes after we part.

EMILY
Magically, you said?

HENRY
It's more of a curse.

EMILY
Of course it is. Well, I have to
confess Henry, I don't believe you.
That mind-reading lie kind of blew
your credibility.

HENRY

I'll tell you one thing, kiddo, people will believe what they want to believe -- no matter if it's perfectly logical or completely outlandish. So I can't make you believe me.

EMILY

But you really believe you're forgettable?

HENRY

Eminently. Don't get me wrong. It's not all doom and gloom. There's a flip side. I can insult people with impunity; they won't remember.

EMILY

Really?

HENRY

You stink, Emily. You're a real jerk.

EMILY

Hey, that's not nice.

Emily punches Henry in the arm.

HENRY

You don't really stink, I'm just making a point. You won't remember any of this.

EMILY

I doubt that. I'm a revenge-served-ice-cold kind of grudge-holder. And after all, this is your affliction, not mine.

HENRY

It's the effect I have on everyone.

EMILY

Maybe I'm special.

HENRY

You're not. I mean, maybe you are in other ways, like maybe you can walk through walls or bend spoons with your mind...

EMILY

I do bend the occasional spoon,
never really thought that made me
special. You're an odd duck,
Henry.

HENRY

Do you like it?

EMILY

Bending spoons?

HENRY

Temping.

EMILY

Heavens no. It's demeaning. By
wont of not being eleven years old,
I'm vastly overqualified. And...

HENRY

...And?

EMILY

I don't want to say. It's a little
embarrassing.

HENRY

I told you I'm for all intents and
purposes rendered invisible in the
grand scheme of things. I think
we're sharing here.

EMILY

Okay. I'll share.
(sheepishly)
They call me... *The Tempt.*

HENRY

You? But you're hideously ugly.

Emily smiles, her self-consciousness defused.

EMILY

Ha-ha. They do. That's what they
call me. Behind my back, if you
can imagine.

HENRY

They sound not so nice.

EMILY

They are not. Attract some unwanted attention from a few oily suits, and I'm the one that ends up with the reputation. Does that sound fair? I'm very professional.

HENRY

Life is not fair.

EMILY

You think your condition might rub off on me? Some days I'd like to disappear.

HENRY

I don't physically disappear. And it's not contagious. Why don't you quit?

EMILY

Unlike you Daddy Warbucks, I need the money. And no single moment of it is unendurable. I'm a Temp. Temporarily.

HENRY

What do you want to do permanently?

EMILY

The truth?

HENRY

Or make something up. Either way.

EMILY

I want to sing, professionally. Ooh! Maybe you can compose something for me.

HENRY

I could, but be warned, I only write swan songs.

EMILY

Ah, my favorite, the myth of the Mute Swan...

HENRY

The Mute Swan born with one beautiful song, living it's entire life in silence, it sings its song as prelude to dying...

EMILY

So if you write me a swan song...

HENRY

...curtains for you.

EMILY

That's terribly inconvenient. You couldn't branch out? Just once? Could I have a theme song instead?

HENRY

Swan songs are kind of my niche.

RINGING BELLS signal the changing of the hour.

EMILY

Oh no. Sorry Henry. That's my cue. Emily, exit stage right.

HENRY

Do you have to go?

EMILY

Henry, *The Tempt* is the catalyst in an entirely different story.

HENRY

One that takes place on the 40th floor?

EMILY

Yes. And if I don't go, there's an entire *noir* story-line that would just peter out.

HENRY

Noir, is it?

EMILY

Oh yes!

(Animated gesturing)

Heaving bosoms, hard-drinking men. A double cross. A gun from the shadows. Sex! Violence! Booze! Blood!...

A MOTHER and CHILD pass by, the mother covering the kindergartner's delicate ears. If looks could kill.

HENRY

(loudly)

...and that's the day the Teddy Bears have their picnic!

Emily shrinks in embarrassment.

EMILY

I think I've scarred that little boy.

HENRY

Nah, I saved it.

A comfortable silence between them. Just enjoying one another's company.

EMILY

Well Henry, this was the most enjoyable lunch I've had in as long as I can remember.

Henry touches Emily's arm. She's flushed, feeling exposed in this public place.

HENRY

(seriously)

What if you didn't go?

An ice cream truck plays MUSIC as it passes. Emily perks her ears.

EMILY

That's our swan song, Henry.

Henry lets her go.

HENRY

Is it? Could very well be.

EMILY

Maybe I'll see you around.

Despite a weak smile, the sadness coursing through Henry is palpable.

HENRY

I'm here all the time.

EMILY

Getting inspired.

HENRY

Some days more than others.

Emily blushes.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's not out of the realm of possibility we'll meet again.

EMILY

But I won't remember you.

HENRY

No, I don't think you will.

EMILY

Well, I'll believe what I want to believe and you do the same. Shall we leave it to fate?

Henry nods. Okay, to fate it is.

Emily rises, but can't yet muster that first step to leave.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Hey Henry?

HENRY

Yes Emily?

EMILY

I really do love seashells. They remind me of my childhood.

HENRY

I know.

Emily walks away, smiling, Henry growing more distant in the background. She turns a corner and stops, deciding that we make our own fate.

Pulling a receipt from her pocket and a pen from her purse, jots down her telephone number, signing it Emily, dotting the "i" with a smiley face. She returns to the plaza.

Henry sits on the bench, feeding the pigeons with the last crumbs of his sandwich bread. Emily approaches.

She hesitates, a cloud of confusing setting upon her. Her smile fades as she struggles with the last grasps of memory. She walks right past Henry. Henry watches her pass by, longing for any hint of recognition. But he knows.

She looks at the scrap of paper in her hand. Puzzled, she sticks it in her pocket.

Looking at her watch, late to return from lunch, she wonders where the time goes...