

RAILROADNYC

Written by

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INT APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rundown railroad apartment, beat-up furniture, bad, vandalized PAINTING on wall, ugly LAMPS. A BASEBALL BAT leans against the corner.

We hear the muffled sound of exaggerated sexual MOANING from a woman offscreen. BRENT - a lanky man in his early 30s with an institutional haircut and sunken eyes - sits upright in a HARD WOODEN CHAIR with back to wall, hands on knees. He stares into space for a long beat. Soon stomping feet and voices approach o.s.

The front door opens, letting us more clearly hear the moaning from the floor below. FRANK and FINN (both mid 20s) walk in. They are drunk. The moaning goes back to muffled when door closes.

FINN

Busy night downstairs for the phone sex professionals...

FRANK

At least someone's having fun. That party sucked.

FINN

Alright enough. D'ya have that weed?

Frank digs in both front pockets and pulls out a small nickel BAGGIE OF WEED & throws it to Finn.

CLOSE on the MINUSCULE BAG OF WEED in Finn's hand.

Frank then plops down on the couch and sighs. Finn looks around.

FINN (CONT'D)

Shit, is everything moved around here?

Finn looks around then exits LEFT.

Brent hasn't budged or reacted to either man. There is a long silence as Frank looks at Brent...

FRANK
 (Slowly tilting head
 back, looking at ceiling,
 exasperated)
 How's it going, BRENT?

After an awkward beat, Brent turns and looks at Frank.

BRENT
 Going, or tuning?

FRANK
 Huh?

BRENT
 Tuning in. If I have to ask you
 don't know...

FRANK
 Wow...far out, wisdom dude.

BRENT
 Tuning into the lie. It's clear
 that this...
 (twirls finger in air)
 ...is an illusion, a simulation.

Frank looks around.

INSERTS - shot of something depressing in apt, dented
 LAMPSHADE, etc.

FRANK
 Not a very good one, is it?

FINN
 (o.s.)
 Why is stuff moved around in my
 room?

BRENT
 The system controls us in the
 environment and we're just
 participants. Up to now that is.

Frank leans to one side a bit, and curiously stares at the
 wall behind Brent.

FRANK
 Yeah, maybe...how long you been up?

BRENT
 More than maybe. Very, very high
 probability.

Finn stomps back in with the WEED and the BONG, looking around, slamming drawers, clearly agitated. As he passes, Brent turns to him.

BRENT (CONT'D)

All of this is a simulation and we're just actors.

FINN

Who gives a shit...
(examining weed)
Where did you get this weed?

FRANK

Washington Square.

FINN

Well it's—
(flicks a pea-sized blob
of dirt)
half-mud. Maybe check next time.
(opening, slamming
drawers)
Where's a lighter,
matches—anything! Everything's
moved around here!

FRANK

(stands up, leaning,
looking)
Speaking of moved Brent, something
just did. Behind your head. And I'm
afraid to look...

Brent doesn't react. Finn looks at Frank, then leans over to look behind Brent. He reflexively pulls back.

FINN

Oh Jesus Christ!
(does a double-take)
That is the biggest fucking roach
I've ever seen in my life. It's
like a...turtle!

FRANK

Why is he sticking on the wall?
Don't they usually run for cover?

BRENT

(indignant)
Maybe he got good and goddamned
tired of running.

FRANK

Whatever man, kill it quick. Brent hit it with something!

BRENT

(waving finger)
No, no.

FRANK

What's the problem?

BRENT

I've developed a sort of, Kafka-
esque symbiosis with them.

FINN

With the roaches?

BRENT

(turns to Finn)
Yes with the roaches. You fail to grasp the essence of things, just surface perception. A cute ladybug would be OK, correct?

FINN

That big? No. It would die.

FRANK

Anyhow it's not a ladybug, its a roach! They spread disease!

BRENT

Don't we all...

FINN

Move. I'll kill it. Move!

Brent reluctantly gets up and moves the chair. The BIG ROACH sits chest-high on the wall.

Finn reaches to unlace his BOOT.

FINN (CONT'D)

This is gonna crunch. Loud.

BRENT

Loudly. And it's not bothering you.

FINN

Yes it is. OK? It's bothering the shit out of me. Look, I can't take my eyes off it and I'm gonna have nightmares about it!

FRANK
 Wait wait wait...
 (snaps fingers)
 ...we have Raid.

FINN
 Even better!

FRANK
 Might be for ants though.

FINN
 It's all the same shit. Where is
 it?

FRANK
 Bathroom under the sink.

Finn exits/staggers left. Brent stands, stretches, coughs.

BRENT
 The Raid is not there anymore. I
 threw it out.

FRANK
 You threw out the...Raid? Why?

BRENT
 It was the right thing to do.

FRANK
 It wasn't yours to throw out!

Uncomfortable silence. Brent scrutinizes the ceiling.

FRANK (CONT'D)
 I said it wasn't yours to throw
 out!

FINN
 (O.S.)
 I can't find the Raid...

FRANK
 Brent threw it out!

Finn emerges shaking a WHITE AEROSOL CAN.

FINN
 ...so I'm using this.

BRENT
 That's my athlete's foot
 medication.

FINN
I'll get you some more.

BRENT
It's prescription.

FRANK
Will that even work?

Finn stealthily approaches the roach and aims the spray.

FINN
We're gonna find out.

Finn pushes down hard on the spray, caking the roach with white powder and creating a white cloud. The roach doesn't flinch.

BRENT
(pointing)
That's murder. That's murder right there!

FINN
Good...

More spraying.

BRENT
You're wasting my medication!

FRANK
(coughing from the spray)
Stop! The can's frosting up!
(coughing)
Stop!

Finn stops spraying, pulls his hand from the crackling can as if it's frozen in position. Shaking his hand, he stares at the roach, still on the wall and caked in white powder.

Frank approaches to take a look also. There is a beat and then the roach DROPS TO THE FLOOR. The wall retains the reverse stencil of the roach.

They slowly bend down to look.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Is it dead?

FINN
I used up the can, he has to be dead!

BRENT
That was prescription.

Just then Frank and FINN jump back.

FINN
Aaah he's still alive!

Finn grabs the baseball bat and loudly SMASHES IT ALL OVER THE FLOOR trying to catch the roach.

FRANK
(pointing)
He's leaving little white
footprints!

Finn pauses, looks around. There is BANGING from the ceiling below.

TENANT BELOW O.S.
Shut the fuck up!

FRANK
(points)
He slipped under the door!

BRENT
Godspeed, proud creature.

Finn rips the front door open and runs after the roach, leaving door open so we hear downstairs moaning again. Frank turns to Brent.

FRANK
This may be a simulation to you but
you owe me--
(counts off w fingers)
real money for the real Raid and
your real share of the real rent!

BRENT
(long beat)
I have it.

FRANK
Give it to me then.

BRENT
I'll have it tomorrow.

FRANK

OK then you don't fuckin have it!
Oh—and you owe me for the jar of
peanut butter you ate all of. I
didn't even get a spoonful of that
one. Oh--and how about the
sandwiches!

BRENT

How about them. Are there
sandwiches?

FRANK

No! There were sandwiches! That I
made for a road trip last week! I
got up at six am to leave and you
ate all of them!

BRENT

Did you ever stop to think how I
felt?

FRANK

Whaaa...

A strange expression crosses Brent's face, like he's tuning
into some mental frequency.

BRENT

I feel weird.

FRANK

What?

BRENT

(stares at Frank for a
beat)

I have some pamphlets and
literature you'll need to read.

Brent looks around and exits left.

FRANK

(wide-eyed)

Wow...

Finn enters through front door, slams it shut and drops the
bat. The moaning muffles again.

FINN

I lost him! He'll be back I bet,
the bastard. Won't be too hard to
spot!

FRANK

(quietly)

We made a bad choice with Brent for a roomie. We shouldn't have used the Voice, he's not stable. He's moving our stuff, and I think he might smother us in our sleep!

FINN

Nah.

Finn finds a LIGHTER in a kitchen drawer and fires up the bong.

FRANK

Im serious!

FINN

(exhales, coughs)

He's way too lazy for all that. Besides, we rent him a closet and he's actually paying for it.

FRANK

A nice walk-in closet.

FINN

Guy lives in a fucking closet! What human agrees to that?

FRANK

Tawny did.

FINN

Well Tawny was Tawny. And rent is rent. You want to get someone else, go for it. I'm done screening people.

Finn exits left.

FRANK

(Does double-take at o.s. kitchen, points)

I'm not cleaning the kitchen again either! One of you do it—once!

(beat)

I need a beer...

Frank goes offscreen into kitchen.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Holy God! What's that in the sink?
Is that a--Brent!