

The 400 Mile Marriage

by

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EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - MORNING

A few last PASSENGERS board the train as the PLATFORM AGENT makes sure everyone is safely aboard. He is about to give the 'all clear' sign when a YOUNG MAN and YOUNG WOMAN rush toward the train. Both are clad in heavy sweaters, hiking boots, woolen hats with heavy backpacks - the uniform of the young college European traveler.

They both hop aboard just in time.

INT. TRAIN - MORNING

SUPER: *Young Lovers*

Bright morning sunshine spills into the cabin of a passenger train. The Young Man and Young Woman toss their backpacks onto seats. Both take a window seat, facing each other.

He hoists his backpack up onto the rack above his head. He holds a hand out, a gentlemanly offer to lift hers too. A coy smile from her is a 'yes.'

The seats next to each of them remain unoccupied, and as they settle in they steal flirty smiles at each other. As she smiles, she scrunches up her nose at him, a flirty gesture. Her girlish gesture makes him grin more.

Soon the train pulls out of the station. The excitement of their trip crackles in the air between them.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - MORNING

SUPER: *Parenthood*

As the countryside speeds by, the Young Man peels an apple with his pocketknife. The Young Woman takes off her boots and puts her feet up beside him and stretches out.

He slices up the apple, and slides half of it toward her side of the tiny table that sticks out under the window. She munches on a slice.

A refreshment trolley glides by. She immediately digs out some cash, and reaches for two sodas and pays the TROLLEY ATTENDANT. Hands one to him, opens one for herself.

The Young Man is busy making something with an old apple core, an old snack label, and some used tea stirrers. It's a cute little creature with a paper jacket. He offers it to her. She beams with delight as she takes the little Apple Child. She perches it on her side of the tiny table.

Again she wrinkles her nose, trying to be cute. Before he closes his eyes for a nap, he gives her a wink.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - DAY

SUPER: *Boredom*

Both of them sit quietly and gaze out the window as the countryside speeds by. Every once in a while they steal a glance at each other. Their faces are expressionless.

They stare out the window again.

She fidgets with a gum wrapper in her hand. The noise catches his attention. She holds the package out to him. He considers for a second, then shakes his head "no."

The window once again is the only place for their eyes to land.

He picks up their Apple Child and fiddles with it. She watches him. He clears his throat. She takes a deep breath in. He gently sits the Apple Child down again.

Outside the window, the landscape is a blur of green.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - AFTERNOON

SUPER: *Troubled Waters*

The late afternoon sun slants in through the opposite window.

They are both turned and twisted in their seats, desperately trying to get comfortable and catch some sleep.

He opens his eyes, stares at her, asleep. He's tired and cranky, can't get comfortable. His eyes start to wander. A few rows down a BUSINESS WOMAN sits on the aisle. He leans his head, tries to get a better view of her. Can't see. He scans the surrounding passengers, eyeing the other ladies.

As the train goes up a slight incline, the Apple Child slides. The Young Woman's eyes snap open, and she reaches out to catch it. She puts it back on the table. She tries to fall asleep again, but a moment later the Apple Child begins to slide off again. With an exasperated huff she catches it and slams it back on the table.

The Young Man hears this, and looks. In a cranky state, she wrinkles up her nose and attempts a smile. He's not amused at her cute nose twitch anymore. He turns away from her.

Her arm hits his feet on the seat next to her. She sighs

and elbows them out of the way. He gets the hint and takes them off the seat. He stomps them back onto the floor. The noise jolts her.

The Apple Child begins to roll off the table again.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

SUPER: *The Other Woman*

The train is stopped. The Young Man eats crackers from a package. He doesn't offer any to the Young Woman. She stares out the window.

Suddenly a clean scrubbed young woman, the OTHER WOMAN, plops down next to the Young Man. She's bright-eyed and ready for her journey.

The train slowly lurches forward again.

The Young Man makes great effort to make room for the Other Woman, slides his belongings out of her foot space and puts on his best smile.

The Young Woman watches his performance. He makes sure his shirt is tucked in, and smoothes down his hair. Avoids eye contact with the Young Woman.

The Other Woman is friendly, she smiles at both of them. The Young Woman doesn't smile back. The Young Man smiles charmingly at the Other Woman, but stops cold when he sees that the Young Woman eyes him bitterly.

She kicks the Young Man's boots back over to his side.

INT. TRAIN - MOVING - NIGHT

SUPER: *Estrangement*

The Young Man and Young Woman still sit across from each other, but the distance is a million miles. No eye contact. Tension thick.

The Other Woman sits beside the Young Man, but he doesn't make any attempt at contact.

All three sit in silence as the train's steady rhythm lulls them into a quiet resignation.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

SUPER: *Custody Battle*

The train has finally stopped. The Other Woman gets up and quickly disappears into the crowded aisle.

The two travelers each pull down their own backpack. They ready themselves for the cold weather that awaits them, gather their belongings.

At the same moment they both reach for the little Apple Child. Neither lets go. Their eyes meet and lock. A gentle stare-down. Sadness, anger, fondness and regret flicker across their eyes in a brief moment. She won't let go.

With a slight nod and a sad smile, he lets go of the Apple Child. She clutches it tightly.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - NIGHT

SUPER: *A Parting of Ways*

Both stand on the platform in the cold night. Tightly bundled and ready to journey onward.

They share a warm, but slightly sad smile. She reaches out to shake his hand.

YOUNG WOMAN

It was nice to meet you.

He grabs her hand and shakes it with tenderness. He hastily flips through a book until he finds the right page. He reads from the book with very broken English.

YOUNG MAN

(reads)

Yes, pleased to meet you.

She nods politely. He fumbles for the right English words.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

You have good journey.

She nods and chuckles at his awkward use of English and backs away from him.

They wave goodbye to each other, then turn and go their separate ways. Neither of them look back.