

A Walk in the Park

CAST

A Man

A Woman

It is dusk. Rain might fall.

He is standing at a close mouth next to a cafe. Inside the cafe is quite busy. He stares ahead, watching for the woman. A bus is passing. he gazes after that. His attention now wanders to the cafe. He looks sideways, into the cafe. A couple, male and female, sit in a window seat, His gaze lingers on them a moment. Now he sees her approach. He moves out from the close and to her, but is almost hesitant, half smiling. This meeting is illicit. Both are in other relationships.

He steps forward to meet her, but in an almost casual manner. His approach is guarded. She also gives a sense of this. She is glad to see him but like the man, is never quite comfortable being “seen in public”. But they are lovers. He takes her by the elbow and they smile at each other. He whispers

Man

How are ye?

Woman

Oh I'm fine, how are you?

He shrugs, smiles, they continue along the road. A few yards on she glances at him, expecting him to say something. He knows she expects this but says nothing, walking beside her. She looks again at him, then accepts it. They continue in silence. They approach the entrance gates into a park. He nods at the entrance.

Man

Fancy?

Woman

Yeh

They enter. There is the sense of the trees, the vegetation, and rain is someplace around. There is a noticeable change now that they are inside the park. Occasionally somebody will glance at the sky in that expectation.

Woman half smiles

I wondered if ye werent talking?

Man frowns as though he doesnt know what she means. Woman shrugs.

Man defensively
Not at all

Woman nods, but says nothing. Now there is a silence, a gap in the conversation. The man frowns slightly

Man
No

Woman nods
I thought there was

Man
I'm just no feeling very talkative, to be honest

Woman smiles
I dont believe ye

Man stops walking, looking at her. She stops also.

Man
Is that a fact?

Woman gazes at him, but she is tired, and there is a weariness. The man smiles and grasps both of her hands, gently

Woman smile
I dont really believe ye

Man
Well it's quite straightforward.

He is about to say something but doesnt; they stare at each other and now he smooths the hair at the side of her head. She continues to stare at him while he does this.

Now he grins. But she doesnt. She is waiting for him to say something. Now he shrugs, and is self conscious, and he moves on a pace. She looks after him. He half turns to her and sighs

Man
I dont have any cash by the way

Woman smiles
Oh.

Man
Aye oh.

Woman
So what are we going to do?

Man
I dont know.

Woman
Did something happen?

Man
Happen? What d'ye mean?

Woman just looks at him.

Man, defensively, but also irritated

Man
Nothing happened. I'm just skint. People are skint these days ye know

Woman
Why are ye being sarcastic?

Man rubs his forehead, genuinely apologetic

Woman
ye do it a lot

Man
Oh fuck sorry, I really am

Woman
And now you're swearing.

Man turns from her, agitation showing

Woman touches his sleeve, showing concern

Woman
Are ye worried about your son?

Man quickly
Naw.

Woman
Did the doctor come?

Man, sarcastically
Doctor... hh

Man shakes his head, sticks his hands into his pockets, and saunters a couple of steps forward. He glances back to her

Man

Doctors dont come these days, that's how they sell invalid chairs with fucking castor wheels on them!

Woman just stares at him

Man

Sorry...!

Man now shuts his eyes, irritation again showing.

Woman

What's wrong?

Man

Nothing. I just... Nothing

Man shakes his head. Woman walks to him

Woman

Ye seem angry

Man mutters

Yeh...

He shakes his head slightly, controlling himself. He turns from her again, pauses, staring down towards the river. He still has his hands in his pockets; now he brings out his left hands and rubs his brow and left eye.

Woman comes to stand beside him, looking down towards the river. They stare down at the water, the current is quite fast. Man sighs, he puts his arm round her shoulders and she sighs, relaxing

Woman murmurs

Thanks

Man barely hears her

Man

I'm just no in a cheery mood these days. I dont know what it is. Too much on my plate I suppose

Woman nods and is suddenly withdrawn

Man smiles

You too

Woman sighs. They both look about, slowly

Man
Where can we go?

Woman softly
I dont know.

Man
A walk?

Woman shrugs, without enthusiasm, gazing towards the river. Man looks to her for a moment then away. He has no alternative suggestions

Woman
We could go into town

Man
Into town?

Woman
Just take a bus [SMILES] Look at the shops...!

Man frowns, not quite bewildered. Woman shakes her head

Woman
Never mind.

Man grins, but not for long, and he walks a pace.

Woman
At least it's something.

Man sighs, not listening

Woman
What is it?

Man
Ach nothing

Woman is now slightly suspicious

Woman
Is something wrong?

Man responds as though it is out of the question

Man
Wrong! naw

Woman studies him.

Man

I mean if you really want to go up the town

Woman

No

Man

It's fine if ye do

Woman

It was only a suggestion.

Man

A good yin, it was a good yin

Woman just looks at him. Man grins. She ignores him

Man

Honest!

Woman shakes her head slightly, not looking at him. She walks in his direction but about three yards to the side, her attention to the trees down by the river.

The man watches her. He is not smiling. Now he gazes in the other direction, scratches the side of his head.

Woman is standing, staring to the river. The man hesitates then walks to her, stands beside her. They stand together, gazing at the water.

Man absently

Yeh...

Woman smiles at him, but wondering what he is thinking. He glances at her but says nothing.

Woman

What...

Man slowly

Economics enters everything

Woman frowns

Man quietly

It does

Woman

What are ye thinking of?

Man
Och... [SHRUGS]

Now the man puts his hands into his pockets again, seeing if he might find something.

Man smiles
I might find a fiver. Ye never know

Woman
Dont worry

Man
No,

Woman watches him for a moment. He continues checking his pockets. She loses attention, returns her gaze to the river. He glances at her, almost surreptitiously. He is also wondering if she has any cash, he continues studying her. She is oblivious.

His manner alters. He relaxes and murmurs

Man
People

Woman
What?

Man
Aw nothing

Woman
Thinking about yer son?

Man shrugs

Woman
Dont worry

Man
Do you want to go up the town? Eh?

Woman
No.

Man nods. He smiles and touches her arm.

Man
Give us a smile.

Woman cannot smile. Man is suddenly remorseful

Man

Oh God I'm sorry, really...I'm just...ahh!

He shakes his head. He rubs his hands together and blows out sharply, glancing at the sky, shivering slightly. Woman is concerned, but also irritated

Woman

Ye arent wearing enough clothes

Man pauses before replying

Man

Time we were moving

Woman stands where she is, studying him. He is uncomfortable because of her look. After a moment he turns from her

Woman

Did the man that owes you the money let you down?

Man smiles briefly. Woman sighs

Man

He never turned up.

Woman shakes her head, irritated

Man defensively

I thought he would.

Woman does not believe him

Man

I did

Woman gives him a knowing look, sarcastic, she turns from him

Man

Now it's you that's being sarcastic.

Woman comes to him

Oh sorry, sorry

Woman reaches to kiss him on the mouth, she thrust her tongue inside and he returns the kiss passionately, the lust between them immediate. Then they break, the woman glancing sideways as though she might have been seen. He also looks sideways. There are passers-by, but none is interested, not even curious. They are silent for several moments

Man quietly

What about your pal's house?

Woman does not respond

Man

Eh... Could we no go there?

Woman still does not respond

Man shrugs

Bit of privacy...

He looks at her a moment longer then realises she is not going to agree, turns from her.

Woman

I just dont like to.

Man smiles

Yeh...

He steps to her, puts his arm round her shoulders, shakes his head, very tender towards her. She notices this and frowns slightly

Woman

Okay?

Man withdraws his arm from her shoulders

Man

Yeh

Woman

You're in quite a jaggy mood.

Man nods then frowns, but with humour

Man

What does that mean? Jaggy?

Woman

Edgy

Man

Oh

Woman

I know ye've a lot on yer plate

Man is quietly urgent

I just want to put my arms round ye, I just want to gie ye a cuddle.

Woman makes a face at him, not quite poking out her tongue at him, but nearly. The man grins. Woman gives him a knowing look then starts walking, points ahead, away from the river

Woman
Come on we'll walk

Man is smiling. Woman returns his smile. He walks to her, she takes his arm. They continue on.

They exit the park up at the highest level, where the view looks from the east and can take in just about the rest of the Clyde Valley, from the Renfrew Hills to the Old Kilpatricks, the University in between.

The couple are strolling arm in arm still. This is only ten minutes on from the river scene. The man is talking, indicating the classy tenement buildings and commenting on them, pointing upwards

Man
They were built in Queen Victoria's time. Probably they've got about three or four bedrooms plus lounge, dining room, kitchen and bathroom. Probably with an extension out the back. Maybe even with an attic

Woman grins
An attic!

Man
Yeh, some of them

Woman
Imagine an attic!

Man
Yeh...

Woman
Kids would love it

Man
Yeh, even going to bed would be exciting, a big adventure. One of my wife's aunties lived in a big house.

Woman glances at him

Man
Not a great big house but big enough to get a bit of privacy. Wee rooms to go and sit in; empty spaces, fireplaces and standard lamps, you could just sit there... [SHRUGS], read a book - whatever; the sort of place ye would dream about owning

Woman
Yeh

Man
Not tripping over one another; you could keep cats if you wanted,

Woman smiles

Man
I'm serious. Cats and dogs. All the pets ye wanted... [PAUSE

Woman looks at him. He is in his own thoughts. They continue in silence for a few paces. The woman breaks the silence. She speaks without turning her head to him:

Woman
Was your wife down at the weekend?

Man
She was, aye.

Woman
Did you see her?

Man shrugs
Well I had to - to give over the boy.

Woman
Of course

The man shivers a little. Woman notices this

Man
No cold?

Woman sighs and fingers his jacket

Woman
This is a summer jacket...

Man chuckles
I'm a summer kind of guy

Woman smiles

Man puts his arm round her shoulders and does a pretence of his chattering. They both laugh. Man gestures at the tenement buildings

Man

See when I grow up! I'm gony get one of these, the entire damn building, and I'll fill it with servants. To hell with the social conscience.

Woman grins

Man
Honest, I'm sick of it.

Man does a grasping gesture with his hand

Man
Give me give me give me. Capitalism, I love ye. I'm no kidding ye

Man shakes his fist at the sky and does a wee capering dance. Woman laughs and goes to him, takes his arm.

An elderly woman is walking towards them, heading for the park. She is leading two small terrier dogs on leashes. Both dogs have tartan jackets tucked round the their wee bodies. Woman chuckles quietly,

Woman quietly
Who's pulling who!

Man grins in answer. The road goes round the side of the park here and there is a junction so that they could walk a different route. The woman with the dogs enters the park. Man points along the street

Man
Will we go the long way round? [PAUSE] Will we?

Woman
What...?

Man
Will we go round the long way?

Woman
I dont care.

Man
What do ye want to go the short way?

Woman
I'm no bothering.

Man looks at her, then looks away. He has his hands in his trouser pockets. Woman interlocks her arm with his. She peers at him

Woman

I thought I smelled tobacco on your breath earlier

Man

Wish to God ye had! that would mean I was a cheery smoker

Woman

A cheery dier of cancer! [PAUSE] Have ye been smoking?

Man

I had a couple.

Woman

Mm.

Man

That's all

Woman

Good...

Man

It's bloody hard but know what I mean?

Woman just looks at him. as they walk

Man sighs suddenly.

You'll have to go back soon

Woman

Not for a wee while

Man

It's hellish

Woman reaches to kiss his cheek, then she smiles

Woman

I once smoked you know and it was in a park.

Man is astounded

Woman

I did

Man

My God!

Woman

Whiteinch Park.

Man

I cannay believe it! What age were ye?

Woman

Thirteen; we were over watching the boys play football. D'you know where the pitches are there?

Man

No.

Woman

They're behind the pond. You walk towards your left, if you're coming from the dressing rooms it's your right.

Man

From the dressing rooms?

Woman

Where they played football. They got changed in there to play.

Man

Aw aye. Did you watch to see if you could see anything when they were changing!

Woman

As if!

Man laughs

Woman smiling

We werenay that bad

Man

So did the smoking make ye sick?

Woman surprised

Yeh!

Man laughs. Woman steps away from him, places her hands on her hips

Man

I might've known. Yous women, yez cannay handle it!

Woman

I know, we're no macho enough!

Man

That's right!

Woman shakes her head

It was bloody awful but, we had two cigarettes and we smoked them one after the other, taking draws each.

Man
You and the boys?

Woman gives him a look

Man
Only kidding

Woman
It was disgusting and soggy

Man
Soggy!

Woman
Awful.

Man
Huh!

Woman
I think somebody stole them off their dad.

Man
Thieving as well! What next! Dont tell me - with all these boys about!

Woman glances at him

Man
Sorry

Woman smiles. They continue along. She puts her arm round his waist.

Woman
Dont worry

Man nods

Woman
Things arent as bad as that

Man sighs
If I wasnt staying with my mother... If I had a place... I just cant afford to move into a flat...

Woman
I know

Man

I just dont have the cash.

Woman

I know. [PAUSE] It's alright.

Woman grips his hand

Woman

We'll just walk

The couple continue along the road.