

STRANGERS

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1 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

A light layer of snow covers the deserted park. Bare trees line the main path. Skyscrapers stand in the background.

2 INT. OFFICE BUILDING - LOBBY - 8:55 AM

Several PEOPLE wait for the elevator to take them to their jobs. Among them are two starving artists, SAM, 26, a working-class white guy, and JAE, 24, a black woman raised in the projects.

Neither seems focused on the day job they're headed to. Instead, Jae, a ballerina, practices the five foot positions. Pen in hand, Sam edits the hardcopy of a poem.

Jae's clothes are a bit worn, but she has a pleasant, cool demeanor.

Nervous and shy, Sam glances indirectly at Jae. Receptive, she looks straight at him.

He looks down, avoiding her eyes. He walks around a bit, taps the wall anxiously with his shoe.

The elevator comes and everyone gets on.

3 INT. ELEVATOR CAR - CONTINUOUS

Nobody looks at anyone else.

Sam watches Jae get off on the third floor. She heads for her job's double doors.

On the fifth floor, Sam exits, makes his way to the office where he works.

4 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

Sam joins the others, minus Jae, at his customary spot.

He subtly scans the lobby and building's entrance for Jae.

Not seeing her, he frowns imperceptibly, lightly taps the wall with his shoe.

The elevator arrives. He again surveys the entrance and lobby for Jae, but doesn't see her.

Disappointed, he enters the elevator. The doors close.

5 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

The gang's all here--except for Sam.

When the elevator doors open, Jae holds them, quickly looks at the building's entrance, hoping to see Sam enter. But he doesn't. Noting a MALE PASSENGER's annoyed frown, she lets go of the doors, joins the others inside.

6 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

The usual crowd, including Jae and Sam, gets ready to be transported to their jobs. Today there's also a MAN IN A WHEELCHAIR. When the elevator arrives, Jae and Sam hold the opposing doors, and the Man in the Wheelchair wheels himself in.

7 INT. ELEVATOR CAR - CONTINUOUS

Standing on either side of the Man in the Wheelchair, Jae and Sam exchange smiles--Sam's shy and brief, Jae's forward and sustained. Neither speaks. Sam looks on as Jae departs at the third floor.

8 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

As everyone waits for the elevator, Sam finally finds the courage to talk to Jae.

SAM
(nervous, awkward)
Do you know what time it is?

Jae points matter-of-factly, pleasantly at the phone Sam holds which, like all phones, displays the time.

Sam, embarrassed by his pathetic attempt to start a conversation, vows to never try talking to her again.

They step into the waiting car.

9 INT. ELEVATOR CAR - CONTINUOUS

No one, including Jae and Sam, looks at or speaks to anyone else.

Sam's studies Jae as she exits on the third floor. He continues upward.

10 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

It's spring, the trees budding. People wear light jackets.

11 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

Jae and several others await the elevator. She notes Sam's absence.

The elevator's on the tenth floor, so Jae scours every part of the lobby for Sam.

But he's nowhere to be found.

Back at the elevator, Jae holds the doors, looks at the building's entrance. Still no Sam.

MALE PASSENGER

(irritated)

Come on, some of us need to get to work. You'll see whoever it is later.

Jae lets go of the doors, boards the elevator.

12 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

As Sam waits for the elevator, he's joined by only one other person. And that person is not Jae.

With the elevator on the twelfth floor, Sam quickly tours the lobby, discreetly looking for Jae.

He returns empty-handed, angry at himself for not seizing his opportunities to connect with her.

Entering the car, he sadly realizes he may never see her again.

13 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

A beautiful summer day.

14 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

Standing beside a few regulars, Jae waits for the elevator. She doesn't look around for Sam, having lost all hope of ever seeing him again.

15 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

The park's foliage is ablaze with fall colors. People briskly make their way along the main path.

16 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

Somewhat apart from the others, Sam lightly kicks the wall. He makes no attempt to scan the lobby or check the building's entrance for Jae. He knows that, because of his shyness, he's blown his chances.

17 EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Skyscrapers overlook the snow-covered park.

18 INT. ELEVATOR BANK - 8:55 AM

Jae waits with the others. There's no Sam.

The elevator reaches the ground floor. The doors open.

It's been a year since Jae's seen Sam. But in a last act of hope, before boarding, she glances at the front doors.

She sees Sam enter.

Jae throws her arm between the closing elevator doors, and they re-open.

She holds the doors, waves at Sam.

He sees her and hurries.

MALE PASSENGER
LET GO OF THE DOORS!

Sam joins her. They enter the elevator.

JAE
(to Male Passenger)
Sorry.

Male Passenger frowns angrily. The elevator starts upward.

19 INT. ELEVATOR CAR - CONTINUOUS

Sam looks indirectly at Jae.

SAM
(whispering)
Thanks.

Then he looks down.

Knowing how shy and self-conscious he is, Jae whispers back:

JAE
You're welcome.

Only a few moments remain till they arrive at her floor.

But Sam can't look at her directly, or utter any words.

The elevator stops at the third floor.

Jae smiles at him.

JAE
(hopeful, supportive)
This is my stop.

She walks out of the car. Sam remains frozen in place.

As the doors are about to shut, Sam thrusts his arm between them, jumps off.

MALE PASSENGER
(fed up)
Get a room!

The doors re-close. The elevator ascends.

20 INT. THIRD-FLOOR ELEVATOR BANK - CONTINUOUS

Sam stands there, tongue-tied, still unable to look straight at her, or speak.

JAE
Good to see you again.

SAM
(jabbering nervously)
My agency sent me out of town for another assignment--the few times I was back here they put me on the night shift.

JAE
What kind of work do you do?

SAM
I'm a writer slash word processor.

JAE
Dancer slash assistant.

SAM
(beating himself up)
I should have come and found you.

JAE
It's okay, you're here now.

Her encouragement makes him a bit less nervous. He smiles and, for the first time, locks eyes with her.

JAE
(extends her hand)
I'm Jae.

SAM
(shaking her hand)
S-S-S-am.

Jae smiles.

JAE
(gentle, warm)
S-S-S-am?

SAM
I'm nervous.

JAE
Don't be. I don't bite.

She feigns a playful bite in his direction.

Jae's affectionate lightheartedness helps keep him smiling and locking eyes with her.

SAM
Can I walk you to your office?

JAE
Sure.

Jae and Sam head to her job's double doors.

We slowly pull back, beyond earshot, as Sam nervously takes out his phone.

Though we can't hear them, we see him ask for her number.

She gives it to him, and he puts it in his contacts.

He thanks her, heads back to catch the next elevator.

He glances behind him, sees her eying him.

She smiles.

He presses the elevator button, beaming brightly.

THE END