

COMMUTE

an audio drama

by

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NARRATOR
Part one. The VENN Diagram.

Scene 1

SFX: TRAIN AMBIENCE: WHEELS CLACKING ON RAILS. A LOW MECHANICAL HUM. OCCASIONAL METALLIC CREAKS.

NARRATOR
The commuter train speeds toward downtown Los Angeles. Details of the urban landscape are visible through tinted windows as the train glides through the heart of the city. Men and women in business attire sit in neat rows, swaying gently together. Almost everyone is looking down into paperwork or glowing screens.

SFX: PEOPLE SPEAKING QUIETLY.

NARRATOR
On the left, two women stare silently into their smartphones. On the right, a man and woman whisper while pointing to a laptop screen.

Jackson, sitting near the front row, stares forward. He's dressed similarly to other passengers: sharp suit and tie, matching belt and shoes, cross-body bag at his side.

Many people, both women and men, find Jackson attractive, but he's generally unaware; a mix of humility and shyness has kept him from noticing how often he draws attention.

He's not lonely, nor inexperienced. He's dated a few

times, even been in love once. But casual flirting isn't really his thing. He's a bit of a loner, rather shy and doesn't thrive in social environments.

Jackson's world is shapes and numbers. While most young boys dream of playing baseball or flying airplanes, Jackson's dream job, he decided early on, was to be a math teacher.

As a child, he was fascinated by how shapes interconnect, weave, and merge together to form the shape of the world. The built world and its inhabitants, through Jackson's eyes, were a collection of geometric figures, a complicated tile mosaic, endlessly moving and shifting.

The mortar holding the tiles together - the social, emotional, and personal attraction that forms the elusive connective tissue that brings lovers together to start families and make babies - remained a confusing and elusive mystery to Jackson.

It was easier for Jackson to think of relationships in mathematical, geometrical terms. He thought of love connections as VENN diagrams. When two circles overlap, as in a VENN diagram, the pointed oblong shape formed between the two circles is called a lens. The lens represents the elements, characteristics, or data points that are shared between the categories within the circles being compared. The bigger the

lens, the more the circles have in common.

When two identical circles intersect in such a way that the center of each lies on the circumference on the other, the resulting lens is referred to as Vesica Piscis. To ancient Christians, Vesica Piscis represented the doorway to creation, the intersection of heaven, earth, love, femininity, and fertility.

Applying the principle to relationships, Jackson had, during his high school years, come to the unfortunate conclusion that the lens he was able to create with a human female was barely visible, a tiny sliver of overlap, impossible to understand and easily breakable. Finding Vesica Piscis seemed impossible.

That carried into his prospective relationships until, at age 24, Jackson achieved his dream of becoming a high school geometry teacher. It was then that he decided once and for all that love and relationships were not for him; he would be married to his career. A noble, if not lonely life as a teacher of young minds, was his destiny.

But human attraction and geometry can sometimes be strange bedfellows, and at this moment he was finding it difficult not to stare and ponder the shape of the young woman two rows in front of him.

SFX: ONGOING TRAIN NOISE. JACKSON CLEARING HIS THROAT. JULIA HUMMING TO HERSELF.

NARRATOR

That would be Julia, who is similarly dressed professionally, in a matching skirt and sweater, brown Coach purse on one shoulder and a less-expensive laptop bag at her feet.

Julia is undeniably pretty, with a figure that frequently draws attention. She's had many boyfriends and one girlfriend, but she's not one to jump in and out of intimacy. At 28, it's been a year since the last relationship and despite many opportunities, she's willing to wait for the right thing. She's done with the dating thing, and frankly, it's exhausting. Guys she was interested in only seemed to want the same thing.

Look, in their defense, she told herself, she was into it for a while in her younger years. Julia and her friends would go out together, dressed to the nines, to bar or out dancing, to have fun. But it was always more about looking good and being with her friends, even when she was single. Getting hit on was never really her intention, although appropriate glances when she dressed it up was flattering. And Julia knew how to dress it up and draw attention when she wanted it.

SFX: JULIA SIGHING.

Except, apparently, from Jackson.

Julia had first noticed Jackson a month ago.

SFX: SUBTLE MEMORY SOUND SHIFT, TRAIN AMBIENCE SOFTENS.

NARRATOR

She watched discretely as he offered his train seat to an elderly woman, and then helped her off the train at her stop.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Thank you, dear boy

JACKSON

Of course, it's my pleasure..

NARRATOR

Another time, she fought to conceal a chuckle when he dropped a pen and, while bending forward to pick it up, hit his head on back of the seat in front of his.

JACKSON

Son of a...

JULIA

(stifled laughter)

NARRATOR

She felt a little stalker-ish while tracking his arrival time but still, couldn't help herself, noting that he arrives at the train stop daily between 7:45 and 7:50 AM, suggesting he had achieved at least a modicum of personal management skills. Time management was important to her, and something that most of the men she had dated severely lacked.

Julia also noticed that although Jackson moved *quickly*, he didn't seem to be *rushing*. In fact once,

when he arrived out of breath having sprint-walked from his car to the train landing, during which he went out of his way to splash in a puddle, the way a child might during a walk in the rain, an out-of-town traveler with a European accent asked him for directions.

SFX: FOOT STEPS SPLASHING IN THE RAIN; JACKSON SPEAKING IN WITH EUROPEAN TRAVELER

NARRATOR

Well, not only did Jackson stop to give the guy directions, but they shook hands at the end of the nearly 10-minute exchange as if they were old friends!

Thanks to her keen observational skills, during this month-long observation process Julia surmised the following: Jackson is respectful, given his polite nature and interactions with other riders; Jackson is responsible, given he makes the same train every morning and seems to have a job; and Jackson is single, or at least not married, given he doesn't wear a wedding band.

Yes it's safe to say that Julia had become interested - very interested - in meeting Jackson. She had convinced herself that although her behavior could be perceived by *some* as stalker-ish, it was necessary as she had to be sure, given the approach she had decided to take.

Julia is sitting on the edge of her seat, putting on lipstick. In her left hand, she holds a compact mirror, and with her right hand

she applies brick-red colored lipstick. Her lips are naturally full and currently puckered, her head slightly tilted back, to assist with lipstick application. She sits up straight with her back slightly arched, which has the dual benefit of A) helping her back not feel so sore following the long commute to work, and B) showing off her hourglass figure, which is on full display under the the snug-fitting sweater gifted by her sister last Christmas.

As Jackson stares at Julia, mesmerized, her eyes shift to his and they lock momentarily.

SFX: JACKSON CLEARING HIS THROAT; JULIA MAKES AN APPROVING SOUND

NARRATOR

Jackson looks down, slightly embarrassed. When he chances another glance moments later, Julia seems to be paying no mind. He looks away again, this time to the left, where he notices three other men, staring towards Julia and her, um, sweater.

SFX: JULIA HUMMING, COMPACT MIRROR CLOSING

Julia plays it cool, finishing the lipstick application and placing the compact mirror back in her purse. She sits back in her seat nonplussed and wondering what she has to do to meet *Captain Look Away*, when the train conductor announces their arrival at Union Station.

SFX: OVERHEAD SPEAKER CRACKLES TO LIFE.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (SPEAKER)

Next stop, Union Station. Union Station, next stop. This is our last stop. All riders must disembark. Thank you for riding and have a nice day.

NARRATOR

Riders begin to pack their bags in preparation to exit the train. Some stand and crowd in front of the exit doors.

SFX: Jackson lightly clears his throat; Julia humming to herself while sifting through her bag

NARRATOR

Jackson sneaks another glance towards Julia, but she's looking down into her bag.

JACKSON (*THINKING*)

Damn. Just another failed VENN diagram. No lens. I thought she was but...no, of course not.

SFX: PHONE OPENS

NARRATOR

Jackson checks the time on his phone; it reads, 8:30AM, December 1st. He shuffles his feet out of his row and moves toward the exit.

SFX: PEOPLE EXITING THROUGH TRAIN, FEET SHUFFLING. JULIA SIGHS.

NARRATOR

Julia looks towards Jackson, but he's walking the opposite direction. She sighs deeply, and exits the train.

SFX: TRAIN NOISES AND ECHOING FADES TO SILENCE.



SCENE 2

SFX: JACKSON, VIOLENTLY INHALING WITH FEAR. WATER DRIPPING.
AN EMPTY TRAIN STATION, MARBLE FLOORS AND TILE WALLS WITH
30 FOOT CEILINGS: DEEP ECHOING.

NARRATOR

An ornate tile ceiling rotates clockwise into view as Jackson is shocked awake. He's lying on the cold marble floor of the train station, having woken up in his work clothes - and soaking wet, as if he's just climbed out of a pool.

It's cold and Jackson shivers as he struggles to regain consciousness. Jackson blinks his

eyes to help clear is vision, and slowly tilts his head to the left.

JACKSON (THINKING)

Does my neck work? Why yes it does. That's good. Do my eyes work? Barely. Blink. Blink you idiot. What is that? A coffee cart. "J & J Rosters". Never heard of it. Where the hell am I?

JACKSON

I'm dreaming.

SFX: JACKSON STANDS, FEET SHUFFLING, CLOTHES SHUFFLING. WATER DRIPPING.

NARRATOR

Jackson stands slowly, tucks in his shirt, straightens his tie. Looks around. He's standing in an immense hall, marble walls and 30 foot-high ceilings. He sees another sign, high above on the wall.

JACKSON (THINKING)

Welcome to Los Angeles Union Station. Oh good. Close to home. But...how did I get here?

NARRATOR

The station is empty, unlike typical bustling Union Station. Only one other person is there with him: a janitor, moving with a mop along the near wall. He turns to the janitor.

JACKSON

Hey, hey man. What, what time is it?

JANITOR

Be careful young man. These floors are slippery when wet.

JACKSON

Um. Thanks. You know what time it is?

JANITOR

Yep...slippery when wet.

NARRATOR

Jackson stares back at the janitor, utterly confused by his response, when he realizes the water on the floor is coming from him. He's literally soaked to the bone. He's dripping water onto Union Station's marble floor. He's so wet that water is running down his pant legs, over his shoes, to where the janitor is mopping it up.

JACKSON (*THINKING*)

That explains the janitor's response. As usual, I miss the social cue. Crap.

SFX: FLAPPING WINGS, A CROW CAWING LOUDLY

NARRATOR

Suddenly and without warning, a large crow swoops down out of nowhere nearly hits Jackson; he ducks to avoid getting struck by the bird.

JACKSON

What the...!

SFX: FLAPPING WINGS. DRAMATIC MUSIC, MINOR SCALES. DARK.

NARRATOR

The crow circles once and lands on the top of the "J & J Roasters" Coffee Cart sign, turns, and stares at Jackson as he stumbles backwards, his arms raised in

defense. The crow is like a statue, staring directly at Jackson. Staring through him.

JACKSON
What are you looking at?

SFX: CROW CAWING

CROW
Caw-caw-caw! Suit! Dead guy! Dead!
Caw-caw!

SFX: DARK MUSIC CRESCENDOS AND FADES TO DRAMATIC SILENCE.

SCENE 3

SFX: SWOOPING NOISE - A CLOCK RUNNING TOO FAST. ABRUPTLY HALTS TO SILENCE. AND THEN: TRAIN AMBIENCE. JACKSON INHALES QUICKLY, DEEPLY.

NARRATOR
Jackson snaps awake. He's back on the commuter train. Wearing a different suit and tie, but otherwise it's a similar train as before.

JACKSON
What the fu - where the hell am I?

NARRATOR
He looks at his phone anxiously; it reads 8:15AM, December 2nd. The next day. He notices a few familiar faces and finds Julia's. A moment passes and he begins to worry. He been staring at her - for how long?

JACKSON (THINKING)
I'm not staring. Definitely not staring. But oh my god, the boots. Dude stop. STOP.

NARRATOR

But he can't. It's the knee-high boots, and a knit dress that seems more appropriate for a night out than office work. She's looking down at her phone and doesn't seem to notice his gaze.

JACKSON (THINKING)

Thank goodness for small favors. Where did the time go. Ugh, my head.

SFX: SQUEALING TRAIN BRAKES, SPEAKER STATIC.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (SPEAKER)

Next stop, Union Station. Union Station, next stop. This is our last stop. All riders must disembark. Thank you for riding and have a nice day.

SFX: PEOPLE STANDING UP, LIGHTLY SHUFFLING FEET.

NARRATOR

As passengers prepare to leave the train, Jackson is on autopilot. He sleepily shuffles towards the exit and without warning finds himself standing face to face with Julia, their noses inches apart.

JULIA

Hello.

NARRATOR

And there it was. Her smile. Easy, unforced, luminous, magnetic. She smiled with the casual confidence of someone completely unaware of the effect and yet of course, she was completely aware of the effect. Julia's smile could derail perfectly rational train of thought and make even the most

confident feel light headed. When she offered it to Jackson, inches from his face and without warning, Jackson's world went a bit sideways. Every nerve of his body tingled and the speech center of his brain went dead.

JULIA

Um. Hello?

NARRATOR

Jackson will recall later that taking in her smile at full force for the first time was like receiving a frontal lobotomy, or looking at the sun. His mind was temporarily blinded.

JACKSON

"Uh..."

SFX: TRAIN BRAKES SQUEEL. DOORS OPEN. THE CROWD OF PEOPLE WALKING OUT INTO THE ECHOS OF UNION STATION.

NARRATOR

At that moment the train doors open and people flood out, a spinning hurricane of people that captures Julia and Jackson in its tendrils, simultaneously separating them and pulling them through separate train doors and out onto the train landing.

Jackson struggles to follow Julia's movement, but loses sight of her in the swarm of humanity.

SFX: TRAIN ENGINES START AGAIN AND THE TRAIN LEAVES THE STATION.

NARRATOR

The train departs and he's left alone on the landing, papers

flickering in the wind, wondering what just happened and hoping he didn't blow his only opportunity with her.

SCENE 4

SFX: ECHO OF THE TRAIN STATION. DRIPPING WATER.

NARRATOR

Jackson slowly opens his eyes and realizes he is again laying face up on the train station floor. Turns his head and reads the "J & J Roasters" sign.

SFX: FEET SHUFFLING, CLOTHES RUFFLING.

NARRATOR

He stands up, tucks in his shirt, straightens his tie. Looks around. The same janitor is mopping along the corner wall. He's about to yell to the janitor when...

SFX: CROW FLYING BY, FLAPPING WINGS

...the crow swoops from out of nowhere.

JACKSON

Jesus! Fucking bird!

NARRATOR

The crow stares menacingly at Jackson.

CROW

Caw-caw-caw! Suit! Dead-dead-dead-caw-caw-caw dead guy! Dead suuuuuit! Caw Caw!

JACKSON

Pfft. Okay crow, whatever.

NARRATOR

Jackson waves the bird off and walks towards the tunnel that connects Union Station to the train landings.

SFX: ECHOING FOOTSTEPS.

Jackson's footsteps echo throughout the empty station as he enters a long, marble-lined corridor. Numbered train landings pass as he walks through the tunnel - 2, 3, 4. Artwork commissioned long ago adorns the walls, images of travelers past and of those yet to be - 5, 6, 7. Commuters, like him, that are lost to time, or were lost here maybe?

JACKSON (THINKING)

But when and where exactly is here?

NARRATOR

Jackson pauses near the entrance to train landing number eight. He's drawn to an image of a young couple, kissing. Two young lovers, forever entwined in each others arms. He stares at the image a long time. Does he know them?

JACKSON (THINKING)

Do I know you?

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Hello?

NARRATOR

The voice startles Jackson, breaking his concentration.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Hello?

NARRATOR

The voice is familiar, but too faint and far away to tell for sure.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Hello! Hello! Is anybody here?

JACKSON, YELLING

H-Here. I'm here!

SFX: MUSIC CRESCENDOS AND FADES TO DRAMATIC SILENCE.

NARRATOR

Part 2. Vesica Piscis.

SCENE 5

SFX: SWOOPING NOISE - A CLOCK RUNNING TOO FAST. ABRUPTLY HALTS TO SILENCE. THEN: RAIN ON A CAR WINDSHIELD. CLOTHES RUFFLING.

JACKSON

AH...WHA?

NARRATOR

Jackson jerks awake in the driver's seat of his car, looks at his watch. It reads:

JACKSON (THINKING)

7:45am, December 3rd. Okay. good, I'm not late. Wait. December 3rd?

NARRATOR

Relieved but still processing the loss of time, he sits up to pull himself together...

SFX: SHUFFLING CLOTHES, CAR DOOR OPENS, RAIN BECOMES LOUDER, PUTTING JACKET ON, CAR DOOR CLOSES, QUICK STEPS ON WET PAVEMENT.

NARRATOR

...gets out of the car, grabs his bag, pulls a windbreaker over his head, and walks briskly towards the commuter train landing. Jackson's feet splash in shallow puddles in the parking lot; he absently recalls splashing in similar puddles as a child, but no time for fun and games at the moment. He barely has time to catch the morning train.

SFX: FOOTSTEPS ON METAL GRATING. THE TURNSTILE CLICKS. TAP CARD SCANNER CHIRPS CONFIRMATION. RAIN GETTING STRONGER.

NARRATOR

Jackson approaches the landing, scans his TAP card, and makes his way past other commuters towards the end of the landing. There is no cover for the rain that is coming down harder now, and his windbreaker is doing a poor job of keeping him dry. It's cold; Jackson can see people's breath as they speak. A voice catches his attention.

JULIA

You can just say hello back.

JACKSON

I'm...I'm sorry. Wa...What?

JULIA

When someone says hello to you. You can just say hello back.

NARRATOR

There it is, that smile again. He summons courage and meets her gaze, praying his knees don't buckle.

JACKSON

Oh, right. The other day. Yeah.
I'm sorry about that. I waited for
you after the train stopped.

JULIA

You did?

JACKSON

(Shivering) I did. And I was very
sorry to miss you.

NARRATOR

A pause, while Julia looks him up
and down in amusement.

JULIA

You're very wet.

JACKSON

Yeah. You noticed?

JULIA

I noticed you a long time ago.

NARRATOR

An awkward silence. This time, it
is Jackson who smiles.

JACKSON

Well, you got me there.

JULIA

Yes, I did get you there.

JACKSON

(A pause) I am glad to finally talk
with you. It's... it feels like...
Vesica Piscis.

JULIA

Vesica what?

JACKSON

(Awkward) Vesica Piscis.
Nevermind.

JULIA

Okay. Um. Listen, I don't mean to be forward, but you are getting soaked and we both fit under this umbrella. Would you like to..."

NARRATOR

Julia extends her arm and Jackson notices that Julia is indeed holding an umbrella. He had been transfixed by her smile again and didn't see it initially.

JACKSON

You're sure you don't mind?

JULIA

Not at all.

JACKSON

(Brief pause) Alright. I appreciate it. Thank you.

JULIA

Of course.

NARRATOR

The two huddle under Julia's umbrella. Jackson, being several inches taller than Julia, offers to hold the umbrella so they both fit. She obliges.

JACKSON

I'm Jackson by the way.

JULIA

I'm Julia.

JACKSON

I take this train every morning.

JULIA

I know you do. I've been trying to get your attention for a few weeks now.

JACKSON

I...I...I don't know what you mean.

JULIA

Yes you do. I noticed you noticing me. Remember, putting my lipstick on?

JACKSON

That was you?

NARRATOR

This time, Julia is caught off guard. She's taken aback momentarily, then shrugs, as if guilty.

JACKSON

I'm joking. You're sort of hard to miss.

SFX: TRAIN WHEELS FADING IN.

JULIA

(Sheepishly) Here's our train.

NARRATOR

The sign on front of the train indicates the final stop is Union Station.

SFX: RAIN AND TRAIN FADE OUT.

SCENE 6

NARRATOR

Part three. A perfect circle.

SFX: SWOOPING NOISE AND A CLOCK RUNNING TOO FAST THAT ABRUPTLY HALTS TO SILENCE.

NARRATOR

Jackson blinks himself awake on the train station floor. Turns his

head and finds the "J & J
Roasters" sign...

SFX: JACKSON STANDING UP; CLOTHES RUFFLING.

NARRATOR

...stands up, tucks in his soaked
shirt, straightens his tie. Finds
the familiar janitor mopping up
along the corner wall.

JACKSON

Hey man.

JANITOR

Be careful young man. These floors
are slippery when wet.

NARRATOR

Jackson nods knowingly and this
time, he's ready for the crow. It
swoops down,

SFX: CROW SWOOPING AN CAWING, JACKSON'S FEET SHUFFLING
LIGHTLY

NARRATOR

...but he shifts left to let it fly
by and land on the coffee cart
sign. The two stare each other
down.

CROW

Caw-Caw! Dead guy in a suit!

JACKSON

Fuck off, bird.

CROW

(Excitedly) Caw-Caw! Caw-Caw!

SFX: JACKSON'S STEPS ECHO AS THE CROW'S CAWING FADES INTO
THE DISTANCE.

NARRATOR

Jackson gives the crow The Bird,
turns, and walks down the train
landing hallway, past the numbered
landings and the pictures of
people, and stops at number eight.
He stares at the mural of the
kissing couple to wait for The
Voice.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Hello! Hello! Is anybody here?

JACKSON

Here. I'm here!

THE VOICE

(Confused) Where? I don't see you.

NARRATOR

Jackson turns towards the voice
and sees a figure at the far end
of the hallway.

JACKSON

I see you! I'm coming!

THE VOICE

I see you too!

SFX: A PAIR OF FOOTSTEPS, ONE FAMILIAR - JACKSON'S - AND
ONE NEW - THE VOICE.

NARRATOR

Jackson begins walking and then
breaks into a run. The voice is
running towards him, their
distance is closing quickly. It's
only a few seconds before they are
together and...

SFX: STEPS SLOW TO A STOP. THE ONLY SOUNDS ARE THEIR VOICES
AND THE OCCASIONAL DRIP OF WATER ON THE MARBLE FLOOR.
ROMANTIC MUSIC BEGINS TO SWELL.

JACKSON

I found you.

JULIA

No, I found you.

JACKSON

(A pause) I'm still wet.

JULIA

I think you always will be.

NARRATOR

Jackson's mind, once clouded and confused, settles into a startling, crystalline clarity. The noise that had been pressing against his thoughts, the doubt, the fear, the second-guessing, falls away as if someone has opened a window and let fresh air flood the room. For the first time, everything makes sense. Not in fragments. Not in guesses.

He understands how it happened, why it happened, and what comes next.

A slow, knowing smile spreads across his face, steady, unafraid. He has found the one he will spend eternity with.

JACKSON

Huh. J & J Coffee Roasters. That was a Starbucks when we were alive...

JULIA

Not anymore it's not.

JACKSON

...and slippery when wet. Now he tells me?

JULIA

(Tearful) I'm sorry. This is my fault.

JACKSON

(Lovingly) Maybe, maybe not. We can't change fate. We can only run from it. I'd like to think in our case, we just... sped the process up a little bit.

NARRATOR

The doomed couple press their lips together, forming a ghostly mirror image of the painting on the wall.

SFX: MUSIC SWELLS AND THEN FADES INTO DRAMATIC SILENCE.



SCENE 7

SFX: Train wheels. People chatting quietly.

NARRATOR

The living Jackson and Julia sit side by side, talking as if they've known each other for years.

JULIA

...grew up in Long Beach. My parents bought a house there they raised us there.

JACKSON

So crazy. How have we never crossed paths before now?

JULIA

We had to have at some point.

JACKSON

I don't think so. I definitely would have remembered.

JULIA

(Smiling) And done nothing about it, Mr. Shy Guy."

JACKSON

That's fair. I'm just glad it rained today.

JULIA

I am too. But you really are soaking wet.

JACKSON

I know, right? I'm literally making a puddle on the floor. I promise, that's rainwater. (Light laughter)

JULIA

Can we meet up later? After work?

SFX: LOUD TRAIN BRAKES, THE TRAIN CAR SHUDDERS AS IT BEGINS TO PULL INTO THE STATION. THE OVERHEAD SPEAKER CRACKLES.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (SPEAKER)

Next stop, Union Station. Union Station, next stop. This is our last stop. All riders must disembark. Thank you for riding and have a nice day.

JACKSON

Yes absolutely. Can I, um, have your number?

JULIA

My god. I thought you'd never ask.

SFX: Paper noise and pen writing on the paper. Simple but threatening music fades in. Discordant minor piano chords.

JULIA

Here. Don't forget to call.

JACKSON

I won't. I promise.

JULIA (THINKING)

(Exhale) I am in love with this man.

JACKSON (THINKING)

This woman is my perfect circle.

SFX: THE TRAIN STOPS AND DOORS OPEN. FEET SHUFFLING AND PEOPLE TALKING. THE STATION SPEAKERS CRACKLE AS ANOTHER TRAIN IS SECONDS FROM DEPARTURE.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (SPEAKER)

Next stop, Trade Tech College. All aboard. Doors are closing.

JULIA

Bye.

SFX: THE CROW SWOOPING AND CAWING, WINGS FLAPPING. PEOPLE SCREAMING.

JACKSON

Julia, no look out!

NARRATOR

The crow descends like a shadow, wings beating with deliberate force. He cuts across Julia's vision, a sudden eclipse. She cries out, stepping back instinctively. It's a step too far and the platform edge vanishes beneath her heel. The train's approach is a wall of noise and light, a metallic gale rushing toward them.

SFX: PEOPLE GASPING, FEET SHUFFLING, JACKSON AND JULIA GRASP FOR ONE ANOTHER, A TRAIN MOVING

Jackson moves without thinking. He reaches, commits, throws his weight toward her. The marble floor, slick with rain and grime, offers no mercy. His feet slide. Their bodies tangle. Balance gives to momentum, momentum to gravity. They pitch forward together, vanishing over the platform's lip as the train thunders over them.

SFX: TRAIN BRAKES, EMERGENCY SIRENS BLARE, PEOPLE SCREAMING FOR HELP.

NARRATOR

Julia's phone number, released from Jackson's fingers only moments ago, floats face-up in a pool of rainwater.

The crow, perched high above track eight, surveys the disaster, quietly satisfied.

THE END