

CONNECTIONS

FADE IN:

INT. BUS TERMINAL – DAY

THE DRIFTER, a man who could be anywhere in age from his late 40s to his early 60s – a hard life is scrawled on his wind- and wine-scorched face – sits on a bench amidst the station bustle, a worn satchel in his lap. He stares ahead, intermittently dozing, as DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL ANNOUNCEMENTS echo around him. The announcements periodically rouse him, but he shows no interest in their content.

NEW ANGLE on the Drifter with the schedule of departures and arrivals board in the b.g. (D.P.: Rack focus from the schedule board to the Drifter?) The information on the board changes, to which the Drifter pays no notice, drifting asleep again.

EXT. BUS TERMINAL – CONTINUOUS

THE BOY, eight years old, steps off a bus and wanders down a row of gates. He stops at an empty gate and stares at the vacant space where a bus should be. He consults a piece of paper in his hand then, a few moments later, begins to cry. He turns and enters the terminal.

INT. BUS TERMINAL – CONTINUOUS

THE BOY

wanders through the weave of bodies, the paper held in his hand like a compass. OTHER BUS PASSENGERS ignore him, some talking on cell phones, others averting their eyes. The Boy makes his way to the Drifter's bench and sits.

THE DRIFTER

awakens at the sound of the Boy sobbing and sniffing next to him.

THE DRIFTER

Hey, now. What's this all about then?

The Boy sobs more loudly. The Drifter notices the paper in the Boy's hand and gestures as if asking permission to see it. The Boy hands it to him. The Drifter reads the paper and eyes the gates ahead of him and the schedule board behind him.

THE DRIFTER

Hmm. See you got yourself a bit of a situation here. You all by your lonesome?

The Boy nods.

THE DRIFTER

What's your name then?

The Boy starts to speak but suddenly clams up, as if remembering some lesson about talking to strangers.

THE DRIFTER

Ah. Hmm. Well. Look. My name's Manny. Manny Lovece – rhymes with "You betcha."

(beat to see if his quip registers with the Boy, which it does not)

Okay, so here's what I propose we do. Let's go into that diner across the way there.

THE DINER

is attached to the bus terminal.

THE DRIFTER

We'll sit down with the nice people in there and see if we can't get this sorted out. Whattaya say?

The Boy stares ahead, as if ignoring the Drifter.

THE DRIFTER

Well, suit yourself then. That's where I'm going. You're welcome to tag along. But if you've got other plans...

The Drifter rises and walks toward the diner. The Boy, after hesitating a few moments, rises and follows him.

INT. BUS TERMINAL DINER – CONTINUOUS

The Drifter and the Boy take two stools at the counter.

A WAITRESS, in her 40s, sees them come in and makes her way over to them.

WAITRESS

What can I get you, gentlemen?

She smiles at the Boy, who spins around on his stool to face away from her.

THE DRIFTER

Maybe a Coke for my partner here. Cup of coffee for me.

The Waitress takes down the order, eyes her customers warily, and walks away.

THE DRIFTER

Just wondering something here. Wondering if there's someone I could call for you. You know – and I know you don't like talking to strangers, can't blame you there – but I'm thinking...what I'm thinking is, if I knew where you were headed, say...

The Boy spins around on his stool, faces the man, inspects him up and down, and keeps spinning until he's facing away again.

The Waitress returns with their drinks, flips her chin at the Boy, and regards the man.

WAITRESS

He yours?

THE DRIFTER

Nah. Partner, here, seems to have missed his connecting bus.

The Boy looks down suddenly, dejected, as if he might cry.

THE DRIFTER

(brightly, as if to assuage the Boy's fear)
Which isn't, you know, a problem at all, missing a connecting bus. No, sir. Happens every day.

(MORE)

THE DRIFTER (CONT.)
(in a whisper, to the Waitress)
Where are the cops around here?

WAITRESS
(softly)
There's just the one, most days. And when he comes on, he usually stops here first.

The Boy turns to the Waitress.

THE WAITRESS
You know where you're going, hon?

The Boy eyes the two adults with suspicion and turns on his stool again, turns away from the strangers.

THE DRIFTER
Doesn't much want to talk about it just yet.
Maybe that cop'll show soon.

WAITRESS
(pouting)
Poor thing. Who'd put you on a bus all alone?

She eyes the Drifter, taking note of his threadbare clothing, his road-wizened skin. A BELL rings.

FRY COOK (OS)
Order up!

The Waitress walks away.

The Boy and the Drifter sit at the counter in silence for a while. Seeing the Boy hunched over his Coke, the Drifter almost tells him to sit up straight, but, catching himself, he merely corrects his own posture. When, a few moments later, the Boy starts blowing bubbles in his Coke, the Drifter almost tells him to stop. Again, he refrains, and instead just smiles at the Boy, as if reminded of some young boy in his past.

The Drifter sips his coffee and glances down the counter, which is cluttered with DIRTY DISHES, and back into the kitchen, where a DISHWASHER, a kid in his teens or early twenties, plays air-guitar to whatever is running through the wires plugged into his ears.

The Drifter looks down at his HANDS, calloused and hard.
Bus BRAKES SIGH behind the Drifter and the Boy.

THE DRIFTER
You ever take the bus before?

The Boy nods, lifts a straw full of Coke from his glass,
one fingertip covering the top opening.

THE DRIFTER
All by your lonesome?

The Boy shakes his head.

THE DRIFTER
No, I don't expect so.

THE BOY
I'm supposed to go to Lennox.
(He releases the shaft of amber liquid by
removing his finger from the straw.)
But my bus got a flat. We changed to a different
bus. And now my bus...

The Boy's LIP starts to quiver.

The Drifter slides the Coke glass toward him.

THE DRIFTER
Lennox? Well, hell, I know Lennox. Now we're
getting somewhere.

THE BOY
I'm going to see my Uncle Pete.

The Boy looks up quickly and fixes the man with a stare, as
if testing him.

THE DRIFTER
Uncle Pete? Uncle Pete what?

THE BOY
Garfield.

THE DRIFTER
So, it's old Pete Garfield, then, is it?

The Boy watches the Drifter now, hopeful.

THE DRIFTER

Well, what do you say we give old Pete Garfield
in Lennox a call?

The Drifter rises, shoulders his satchel, nods to the
waitress, and gestures toward the Boy.

WAITRESS

snaps her gum, regards the Boy, and nods back.

As the Drifter is walking out of the diner, he eyes TIPS
left on the diner counter. He pauses, as if contemplating
swiping the money, but, seeing the Boy sipping his Coke and
the Waitress helping another customer, he keeps moving
along.

INT. BUS TERMINAL — ROW OF PAYPHONES — CONTINUOUS

The Drifter punches the ZERO on the phone.

THE DRIFTER

Uh, yes, I need to make a collect call to...ah...

THE DRIFTER'S HANDS tremble as he struggles to speak. He
is perspiring, anxious, and torn.

THE DRIFTER

Uh...it's a call to...

The Drifter is anguished, his eye falling on his worn
SATCHEL, which bears a worn address and phone number on the
flap.

MONTAGE -- THE OTHER BOY -- (FLASHBACK)

A) THE OTHER BOY, 8, his face obscured, throws a baseball

B) The Other Boy's legs running

C) The Other boy being swept up in the arms of THE YOUNGER
DRIFTER, his face partially obscured

BACK TO SCENE

The Drifter closes his eyes and takes a deep breath, as if collecting himself.

THE DRIFTER

(eyes still closed)

Ah, here it is, it's a...

(opening his eyes)

...a Pete Garfield. That's a residence, in Lenox, Massachusetts. Garfield. Pete.

(beat)

Tell him it's...uh...the Boy Who Is Supposed to Be on the Bus.

(beat)

Right. The Boy Who Is Supposed to Be on the Bus.

(beat)

Thank you.

(long pause)

Uh, yes, hello. Is this Pete Garfield?

(beat)

Name's Manny. Yeah, listen, the boy, your nephew...

(beat)

He's fine, sir. He's just fine. That's what I'm trying...

(beat)

I'm in Albany. We're in Albany. I...he came up to me, looking lost. Told me his bus got a flat, so he'd been transferred.

(beat)

This is just what he told me. He's sitting right over there in the terminal diner, having a Coke.

(beat)

I can see him from here. He's just fine. Just a little nervous about being lost, is all. Anyway, he's safe, and he's fine, and he's here in Albany.

(beat)

What's that?

(beat)

We're expecting an officer to come by here momentarily. Meantime...

(beat)

The waitress says...

MONTAGE -- THE OTHER BOY'S MOTHER -- (FLASHBACK)

A) THE OTHER BOY'S MOTHER, late 20s, being carried across the yard of a small home in the arms of The Younger Drifter

B) The Other Boy's Mother sitting at a table in the trailer, her face obscured as she buries her head in her hands, The Younger Drifter's hands visible in the f.g.

C) The Other Boy's Mother blocking the trailer door, her face obscured, hands on her hips

D) The Other Boy peering out from the trailer behind The Other Boy's Mother

BACK TO SCENE

THE DRIFTER

She says...the cop'll be right along.

(beat)

Sorry?

(beat)

Well, of course, go on ahead and do that if it'll make you feel more comfortable about the situation. I haven't called them because, like I said, waitress and I are expecting an officer to drop by here any sec--

(beat)

Manny. Manny Lovece. Rhymes with "You betcha." And, like I said, the boy's fine. He just came up to me. Picked me out of the crowd, seemed like.

(beat)

Well, so, then fine. Call the cops if that'll calm you down, and we'll be right here waiting for you. Uncle Pete.

(to himself, holding the phone back at the sound of a CLICK on the other end of the line)

Uncle Pete the Prick.

He hangs up the phone.

INT. BUS TERMINAL DINER — CONTINUOUS

The Drifter returns to the stool next to the Boy.

THE DRIFTER

Spoke to your Pete Garfield, there, in Lenox. Says he'll be here in an hour.

THE BOY

I lost my suitcase, you know.

THE DRIFTER

No, you didn't, there.

The Drifter looks away.

AN OLDER MAN

takes a stool down the way, pushing a dirty plate and glass aside with a look of disgust.

THE DRIFTER

It'll turn up, your suitcase. Uncle Pete's on his way. On his way to save the day. When you tell him what happened, he'll get right to work on it.

The Waitress arrives, a pad of checks in her hand.

THE WAITRESS

How we doing here?

THE DRIFTER

(eyeing the check pad)

Uh, I was hoping you and I could discuss that, seeing as how you're a little backed up at the moment.

The Drifter gestures down the counter, where the plates have multiplied, dirty napkins blossoming from the countertop here and there. Then he gestures back into the kitchen, where the Dishwasher is entertaining an imaginary crowd with an imaginary guitar solo. The Waitress sighs and taps her leg with her pad. Regarding the Boy for a moment, she draws a slash through the check on top.

THE WAITRESS

(gesturing to the Boy)

What about him?

THE DRIFTER

Uncle should be here in an hour, maybe an hour and a quarter.

The Waitress gestures to the clock on the wall behind her, between the menu boards.

THE WAITRESS

Going to get busy in here in about an hour.

She turns to the Boy then back to the man.

THE WAITRESS

I can help keep an eye on him.

THE DRIFTER

Can you give us a little while?

The Waitress watches the man's UNSTEADY HAND raise his coffee cup, but as he drinks, she looks into his eyes, perhaps seeing the gentleness there. The man sets his coffee down and gives her a faintly pleading look.

THE WAITRESS

You've got a half hour.

(with a gesture toward the kitchen)

Kid'll bus. Something to keep his brain occupied.

You can wash.

THE DRIFTER

Yes, I can. Not a problem.

The Waitress walks away.

THE DRIFTER

(to the Boy)

Let me ask you something, *señor*, since you're so well traveled. Have you been to the Grand Canyon?

THE BOY

(shaking his head)

But we read about it in school.

THE DRIFTER

But you've never seen it with your own eyes?

THE BOY

Not yet.

THE DRIFTER

Well, I hope you get the chance. But don't be disappointed if your brain won't let you believe

(MORE)

THE DRIFTER (CONT.)

...that something so beautiful is even real.

(sips his coffee)

Ever seen a car roll uphill?

The Boy shakes his head but smiles, seeming more intrigued by this line of discussion.

THE DRIFTER

Vermont. I know an old logging road in Northfield, Vermont, where cars actually roll uphill. I've been there. Have seen it my very own self.

The Boy seems more impressed.

THE DRIFTER

I've seen quite a number of things, I have. And, if you don't mind, I'd like to tell you about one or two.

The Boy nods.

THE BOY

Have you been to my town?

THE DRIFTER

Where'd you say you were from, *señor*?

The Waitress refills his coffee and lingers.

THE BOY

What's *señor*?

THE DRIFTER

It's a Spanish word. It means mister.

THE BOY

Are you Spanish?

THE DRIFTER

A little. One-eighth or so.

(beat as the Drifter watches the Boy calculating)

You remember the last time you ate pizza?

The Boy nods.

THE DRIFTER

Well, take one slice of that pizza and put it on your plate. That's how much Spanish I am.

The Boy laughs.

THE DRIFTER

Where is it you're from, *señor*?

THE BOY

Jamestown.

THE DRIFTER

That right? Jamestown, New York?

THE BOY

(nodding)

Have you ever been there?

THE DRIFTER

They have railroad tracks in Jamestown, New York? Highways? We know they've got a bus station.

THE BOY

Yes.

The Boy sits up straight and grips the counter edge, as if knowing, in the way of boys this boy's age, that it's time to hear a story.

THE DRIFTER

(with a smile)

Well, then, I believe I have been there.

(sips from his coffee cup)

If there's a way to get in and out of Jamestown, New York, the answer is *sí, señor*.

FADE OUT.