

SEDUCTION ARCANA

by Matthew Floyd

1 BLACKNESS

As the titles display in blackness, the sound of a TRAIN is heard: we hear its movement, picking up speed, and growing farther and farther away.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. DINKY TRAIN STATION / MID-LATE DAY

The blackness dissolves to show empty train tracks, looking down on them from an unnamed train platform.

3 An unnamed train station platform. Filling the frame in a WIDE SHOT, slightly tilted, angled toward the ground, and facing the train tracks from behind the platform, are three benches. A soft piano melody begins to play... growing slowly louder.

DISSOLVE to a MEDIUM SHOT of one of the benches, where the back of a young woman's head is clearly visible slightly off-center to the right. She is sitting at the edge of the bench, with a BAG resting next to her to the right of the frame. The music continues to play.

DISSOLVE to a CLOSE-UP of the woman's hands, looking up at them, holding two small, white pieces of paper in the palms, seen from the back. The woman takes one of her hands and brings it up to her face.

4 With her entire body now in a slightly-profile position, filling the frame, she adjusts an earphone in her ear as it becomes clear that the music is a piece she is listening. This is THE GIRL. She's in her early twenties, white, attractive, and solemn. She is a college student who has just arrived at the train station by an unseen train and seems to be waiting. She is dressed in ordinary clothing but dressed well. Right now, she is sitting straight up against the bench with misty eyes as if she has been crying but is trying to force a smile.

As the music reaches a slight pause, a light buzzing is heard, and The Girl jerks out of her melancholic state, turns off the music, and turns her attention to her cell phone.

THE GIRL

(softly)

Hey... no, I just got in... yeah, it was early...

CUT to show The Girl in profile with the other benches seen behind her profile face, now including two other figures, slightly out of focus, sighting on the bench adjacent to The Girl. She continues to look down as she speaks to an unseen caller.

THE GIRL

Okay, so you'll come get me... yeah, I'll see you in a few... is everyone there already...

CUT to show The Girl, in MEDIUM SHOT, who hears something over the phone that causes her to bring her hand to her lips and breath heavily, seemingly holding back tears.

THE GIRL

Dad... it's been four years... I don't think there'll ever be a time when we won't miss her...

CUT to show THE PHOTOS in The Girl's hands that she had been looking at previously. There are two. The first photo is of a small girl together with a small dog, together being cuddled by an older woman, rendered in black-and-white. The second photo is of a slightly older girl sitting on a couch and smiling with the same older woman and an older man. This second photo is in color. The older people are clearly the young girl's parents.

THE GIRL

Yeah... okay... I'll see you soon... you too... bye...

The Girl sets the two photos on her left knee as she brings her right hand, still holding the cell phone, up to her lips and breathes in deeply through her nose. She closes her eyes as a single tear trickles down her right cheek as the camera PUSHES IN on her face. After a few seconds, she opens her eyes again and breathes out heavily, forcing a smile. The Girl's eyes shift from looking forward past the camera to looking downward. Instantly, her expression shifts from one of solemnity to one of bewilderment and confusion.

5 The camera cuts to show the first photo in The Girl's hand as she slowly lifts it up towards the camera. Miraculously, the photo has changed completely from black-and-white to color.

CUT to show The Girl in profile to camera left with the photo held out facing her at camera right. Behind her profile, again, are the other benches along with two other figures. Now, however, the FOCUS shifts to show the two figures.

The image, still holding The Girl at the left of the frame, pans to highlight the figure closest to The Girl. This is THE MAGICIAN. He is in his mid-to-late twenties, good-looking and clean-shaven but with a slight 5:00 shadow on his face. He is fairly well-dressed, wearing a top hat on his head, white gloves, and a medium-sized black cape draped around his back, covering a modestly dressy blue shirt. He is a well-read, moderately talented magician whose career has only just slightly picked up after years of

drifting. He is propped up on the bench, holding an apple in his right hand and a newspaper in his left. He is

THE MAGICIAN

(smiling, charming manner)

What?

THE GIRL

Did you...

THE MAGICIAN

Me... I haven't done a decent trick in months...

6 The Magician is still talking charmingly and wittily, but as he looks down at his newspaper and looks up again at The Girl, an expression of unexpected sadness seems to come over him as he watches The Girl trying to compose herself but continuing to breathe heavily.

THE MAGICIAN

Or do you not see magic in life?

There is a silence as The Girl looks up at The Magician and then back at the photo. She brushes her hair back and then quickly tries to put the photos back into her purse, trying to hide her emotions. The Magician understands what she's saying by not denying his question and nods silently to himself and sighs. Next to The Magician, a third, older man, SUITED MAN, wearing a suit glances in The Magician's direction at his expression and rolls his eyes.

THE MAGICIAN

I don't mean to pry, but... I've been there before... my spark for life's charms disappeared for a long time...

As The Magician says these words, he makes the apple, which he had been holding previously, disappear within his own hand.

THE MAGICIAN

But in truth all it takes is that one special moment... the right trick... that will help you get it... back.

The Magician makes the apple reappear in his hand, smiles and looks over in The Girl's direction, but quickly this smile turns to one of solemnity, not unlike The Girl's expression earlier.

CUT to the The Girl, who has seemingly ignored The Magician, sitting on the bench from the Magician's P.O.V. looking down at her phone. Suited Man again looks in The Magician's direction and verbally sniggers under his breath.

CUT to The Magician, whose look continues to be one of sadness. The image shifts to show the Magician in a profile, a reverse shot of The Girl's profile, now with the Magician in the foreground and The Girl in the background.

THE MAGICIAN

I'm sorry... I shouldn't have changed the photo...

THE GIRL

Forget it... it's fine...

The Magician looks to his right at where The Girl is sitting, and the image shifts to follow The Magician as he stands up.

THE MAGICIAN

No... no, you deserve better than that.

7 The camera follows the Magician as he bends down quickly to open his SUITCASE on wheels resting against the bench. The Magician bows gently and removes his hat from his head with his right hand. Afterward, he waves his left hand. However, nothing happens and The Magician stands up, letting his hat dangle in his right hand.

The camera follows The Girl's P.O.V. as she spots a squib of water tucked gently into The Magician's hat. The Magician bows again and The Girl quickly looks away, with an expression of uncertainty as to why she would be interested in The Magician's trick.

The Magician again waves his left hand, and the camera follows his hand as he produces a brass goblet from within his robes. The Magician breathes a sigh of a relief and then quasi-gracefully pours water from his hat, filling the goblet. The camera briefly CUTS back to The Girl, who hides a small smile as she recognizes where the trick came from.

The Magician puts his hat back on his head and then with his right hand produces a flower, seemingly from thin air, and places it in the goblet. The Girl briefly looks at The Magician's completed trick but then looks back to her phone.

After The Magician gently places the flower-in-a-goblet on the far side of the bench The Girl is sitting on, the camera CUTS to Suited Man, who is now laughing under his breath and shaking his head. The camera CUTS back to show The Magician, whose eyes glance to Suited Man as he sighs.

CUT to the flower-in-a-goblet and ZOOM IN on it. At the same time, the camera also ZOOMS IN on The Magician's face, who, after looking downward for a few moments, looks up in the direction of The Girl and smiles.

8 Gracefully and almost as if it was in slow-motion, The Magician turns around and allows his cape to fall downward and catch on his left hand. He bends down to the ground as he spins the cape in a circular motion. The camera CUTS to The Girl, as she begins to glance more frequently in The Magician's direction, and then CUTS to a CLOSE-UP on the spinning cape.

The Magician then quickly pulls up the cape from the floor and, magically, in its place is a small, cuddly DOG – the exact same breed that was in The Girl's originally-black-and-white photo. The camera follows the Dog in MEDIUM SHOT along the ground as it wags its tail and wanders over to where The Girl is sitting.

Though the camera CUTS to show The Girl's initial expression is one of shock (even more so than when her photo "changed"), as the shot settles on the expressions between her and the Dog, she begins to start laughing. She can't hold back her glee and kneels down to the ground pet the Dog, laughing so much that she's almost crying.

The Magician, looking from a distance, turns to look at the Suited Man, who has a look of utter perplexity on his face. He then walks over to The Girl and the Dog and kneels down to The Girl's level across from the Dog. The camera follows him to fit The Girl, The Dog, and The Magician in a MEDIUM SHOT from camera left to camera right.

9 The Magician whistles once and the Dog wanders back and disappears behind The Magician's suitcase. For a moment, The Girl looks back toward the Dog but then looks at The Magician and finally smiles for real. The Magician smiles back and slowly removes his hat from his head and places it on the ground between him and The Girl. The camera TILTS up from the ground to The Magician's body as he smiles calmly and extends his left hand so that it is aligned with the midpoint of the hat.

The Girl pauses for a moment and then, in a way that is briefly hesitant but sure, slowly extends her hand back to The Magician's, who gently cups hers and touches the hat. The Magician does something off-screen with his right hand and then, as if literally by magic, music begins to play softly from the hat – the same soft music that played in The Girl's earphones.

The Girl and The Magician sit there together for a few moments, both of them with feelings of peace on their faces, but are then interrupted by the recurring sound of a TRAIN again, this time approaching them. However, the music from the hat doesn't fade away, instead beginning to play softly in the background, as if it has now been internalized into The Girl and The Magician. The camera focuses on The Girl and then The Magician, as the train pulls into the station in the background, slightly unfocused, behind The Magician's head in the frame.

The Suited Man, with a look of utter bewilderment on his face (as if the air just turned into wood), stands up from his seat and walks toward the train, past The Girl and The

Magician. With the camera focused on the hat, the Magician's right hand slowly tilts up from behind the hat to reveal The Girl's original photo.

The Girl seems happily surprised. Her large smile slowly turns to a look of appreciation and thankfulness as she realizes how much The Magician did just to bring a smile to her face.

THE MAGICIAN

Like I said... some of the special things in our lives can come back...

(pause)

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (V.O.)

All aboard!

The Magician looks one more time into the eyes of The Girl, now with a smile as big as hers. He then nods to her and gently places the original photo into her left hand, now holding her left hand with both of his hands.

THE MAGICIAN

Until next time...

10 The Magician stands and walks toward his suitcase, the camera first following The Girl's P.O.V. The camera then CUTS to follow The Magician's feet as they reach the suitcase, after which the Dog pokes its head out of the suitcase and barks happily. The Magician, still smiling, drags his suitcase toward the train as the camera CUTS to show The Girl, who looks forward at The Magician, then to her left, and then behind her.

The camera now CUTS to The Magician, walking toward the camera but slightly off-center, toward the train. Then, from a MEDIUM-WIDE SHOT, the camera CUTS to show the Suited Man meet the Magician in the door of the train and point back toward where the camera now is. The camera tilts downward to show the Magician's hat still sitting on the ground.

The Magician, with the camera following his feet, walks back toward his hat and then looks up, as the camera CUTS to an over-the-shoulder shot from The Magician's P.O.V. to show a car door closing and then driving away. The camera pans to follow it and then CUTS to show The Magician's face as he looks downward and sighs softly, recognizing that the moment is over in all probability.

The Magician places the hat back on his head and the camera moves with him as he walks toward the camera (and thus the train). However, after a few moments, he stops and removes the hat again, feeling something brushing along his head. The camera CUTS to the same type of shot that revealed The Girl's photos as a piece of paper is revealed sitting inside the hat.

The camera briefly CUTS to show Suited Man in CLOSE-UP, standing in the train's doorway and looking toward The Magician, seemingly hooked on discovering how the story is going to end.

The camera shows The Magician, who drops the hat and then reads the piece of paper. Within seconds, he turns around quickly and smiles in amazement with the same glee on his face that the Girl had when she first saw the Dog. He looks down at the paper again as the camera CUTS to show the right side of the bench, where he had originally left the flower-in-a-goblet. Nothing is there.

The Magician nods once more and smiles as the camera pans downward to show the piece of paper and ZOOMS IN on its wording. It reads:

NICE TRICK

658-103-1038 :)

As the music, which has been playing in the background since The Magician's "turned on" the hat, reaches one last crescendo, the image fades into black on these final papery words.

THE END