

# Touch

By

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Cast: Sue, late twenties.

May, late thirties/early forties.

U.K. Version

Set: Underground Station Platform.

May is standing on the edge of the platform looking very disconsolate. She looks down at the rails, looks along the track, pauses then steps back from the edge. She gets out a magazine and attempts to read it, but is really just looking at it.

Enter Sue, looking a bit harassed, she hesitates, then goes up to May, who doesn't look very friendly.

SUE S'cuse me. [May looks up from her paper.] Is this the right line for Archway?

MAY Sorry?

SUE Only, I was on the wrong branch before, I want to make sure I got it right this time.

MAY Archway. Yes, you're on the right platform.

SUE Sorry to interrupt, only it's confusing.

MAY Yes, yes it is.

SUE Do you get confused?

MAY What?

SUE About the train.

MAY No. I use this line every day. I'm used to it.

SUE The signs are confusing - God! Did you see what I just saw?

MAY What?

SUE [Pointing at the track.] There. Look, there's another one.

MAY Oh, the mice.

SUE Oh look, there's a really fat one. Oh God, they're climbing in and out of that hole.

MAY I expect it's where they live.

SUE Bit noisy, wouldn't you think? Living in the underground.

MAY No cats.

SUE S'ppose not. [Pause.] D'you think they like it?

MAY I don't know.

SUE You'd think they'd get scared. When a train comes through.

MAY I expect they're used to it.

SUE Yeah, s'ppose they are. Sorry I interrupted you.

MAY That's okay. [Pause.] D'you know something?

SUE What?

MAY I've been travelling this line for, oh must be, three years now and you're the first person who's spoken to me.

SUE Never!

MAY No. It's true.

SUE Really?

MAY The first.

SUE [Looking round.] Unfriendly bunch, aren't they. [Pause.] Maybe it's because you're reading.

MAY I don't always read. But it gets so boring I usually end up reading something.

SUE They're probably shy. Me, sometimes I can't stop talking. I talk a lot when I get nervous, can't help it.

MAY It's okay.

SUE You don't mind?

MAY No. No.

SUE I'm on my way to an interview. That's why I'm nervous.

MAY I see.

SUE Don't you hate interviews?

MAY Yes.

SUE They're so . . . false.

MAY Hmm.

SUE I hope I'm not late. I hate being late. It makes you all sweaty, don't want to go in there all sweaty, first thing they'll think is, oh oh, we've got a sweater here, don't want her sweating all over the office, off putting, don't you think?

MAY I suppose so.

SUE So I always leave plenty of time. But then I had so much time on hand I said to myself, You're going to be too early, you'll have to hang around, getting nervous, the longer you hang around the more nervous you get, you'll start to sweat. So I thought, I know, I'll stop off for a coffee, kill some time on the way, got tons of time, so I did. But then I got lost so now I'm late, and I'm starting to sweat anyway. Does it show?

MAY No.

SUE Good. That's a relief. This jacket covers a multitude of sins. [Pause.] You can't win, can you, whatever you do. Whatever you do they got you.

MAY What's the job?

SUE Reception, phones, that kind of thing. I'm good with people, I'm a people person. It's a skill.

MAY I'm sure it is.

SUE A skill all of its own.

MAY Do you want the job?

SUE 'Course I do. Need the money. I mean, I'm not gonna die, or anything, if I don't get it, but it would be very handy: I need the money. That's what it's all about isn't it, 'Bringing home the bacon'.

MAY Yes.

SUE Funny phrase that, don't you think? 'Bringing home the bacon'.

MAY Yes. Now you mention it I suppose it is.

SUE D'you know where it comes from?

MAY No.

SUE It's old, see. In the old days people in a village, those that could afford it, would have shares in a pig, and at the beginning of the winter, they kill the pig and share it out among themselves, and that was bringing home the bacon. Literal, see. Interesting, isn't it.

MAY Yes.

SUE I've got a mind full of useless information. I collect it, sort of, just by accident, I'm not obsessed or anything, I just remember those kind of things. I'm red hot at trivial pursuit.

MAY I can imagine.

SUE [Pause.] D'you mind me saying something?

MAY What?

SUE An observation.

MAY Yes?

SUE You look sad.

MAY Do I?

SUE Yes, you do. Are you sad?

MAY I suppose so. I suppose I am.

SUE Don't you just hate it when people try and cheer you up?

MAY Yes.

SUE Irritating bastards!

MAY Yes.

SUE As if people haven't got a right to feel sad.

MAY True.

SUE You know that film?

MAY What?

SUE That film. Oh God, what's it called . . . um . . . um . . . don't tell me I'll get it.

MAY I don't know.

SUE Got a funny title. I'll get it in a minute. I've got a good memory . . . er . . . er . . . It's on the tip of my tongue. Er . . . er . . . It's – No, it's gone.

MAY What's it about?

SUE Well, it's about this angel who gets fed up being an angel and wants to come down to earth and be human.

MAY Why?

SUE Well, bored, I s'ppose. Thing is, and this is the good bit, thing is the angels see, they spend their time observing what the humans, us, what we're up to. They move among us but we don't see them. There could be one here, right now.

MAY [Looks around.]

SUE You can't see them, silly. So they like watching people and that's why this angel, forget his name, wants to be one of us. Anyway, there's this really good bit where the angels listen to the thoughts of the people. They can hear the thoughts goin' round inside your head. And they're on the train and they can hear all these awful anxious

thoughts, all the upset people, worrying, depressed, all the unhappiness, and they, you know, feel sorry for them, and what they do, they touch them, just lightly, [Sue rests her hand on May's shoulder.] like that, and it makes them feel better and all these awful thoughts, guilt, sadness, suicide, all these horrible thoughts torturing these people go away and they start thinking more positive, that's my favourite bit.

MAY It sounds lovely.

SUE Great film, you should see it. It's a bit long, but good.

MAY And this angel?

SUE Yeah?

MAY What happens to the angel? Does he get his wish to be human?

SUE Yeah. He hands in his wings, you can't go back, once you've done it, see.

MAY And how –

SUE Wings! That's it. The title: 'Wings of Desire'. You should see it. Good film. Big mistake that, not seeing 'Wings of Desire'.

MAY So how does he get on?

SUE The angel? Well, you know, it's difficult at first, but he gets on all right, he likes it, he's got what he wants: feelings, that's what he wants, feelings.

MAY [Laughs.] People are trying to get away from their feelings most of the time. D'you want to know something? When you came up and spoke

to me, d'you know what I was thinking about?

SUE No. Something sad I bet.

MAY Yes, something sad.

SUE What was it then?

MAY I was thinking. I wonder if I'll have the courage, when the next train comes in, to jump in front of it.

SUE [Pause.] Never.

MAY Yes.

SUE You weren't.

MAY I was.

SUE Messy.

MAY What?

SUE Very messy.

MAY Yes, I suppose so. I wasn't really thinking about the mess.

SUE Painful.

MAY Probably. But they couldn't say, "It was a cry for help", could they.

SUE No. Probably not.

MAY Final. No turning back. It'd be final.

SUE S'ppose so. [Pause.] You won't will you?

MAY I don't know. I often think about it. Every day I feel more and more hollowed out. Sometimes I think the only thing holding me up is my clothes. Standing here. Day in day out. Standing here. Getting nowhere. Going nowhere. The same old places. Same old things.



Standing on the edge, it can seem very inviting, as I hear the train approach and the wind rushes through the tunnel, swept along in front of it. I think, I want to be that air in front of the train.

SUE You're not gonna do it are you?

MAY No.

SUE Whew. That's a relief. I'd be really late for my interview then.

MAY [Laughs.] You'd have a very good excuse.

SUE Yeah. S'ppose I would. [Sound of train approaching.]

MAY Here's one coming now.

SUE [Looking nervous.] Hang on to me.

MAY Good luck with the interview. You're right, you know, you are good with people. [Sound of the train coming into the station.]

END.