

RENT-A-PERSON

A Short Musical

by

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A CLOCK

ticks away on the wall of a...

MEN'S ROOM IN A FANCY RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

And the following unfolds as a musical number, in time with the clock ticks:

THREE MEN IN SUITS lined up at the urinals piss in 3/4 time. MEN defecating in nearby STALLS provide the downbeat:

PLOP-piss-piss, PLOP-piss-piss, PLOP-piss-piss...

A MUSTACHED GENTLEMAN washes his hands at the sink. He's handed a washcloth by...

The spectacled RESTROOM ATTENDANT.
His name tag reads: "COLEMAN".
This is JAMES COLEMAN. Our hero.

MUSTACHE

You married, James?

JAMES

Uh, no. I don't meet many women in this line of work, so, you know...

Our pissing MEN IN SUITS indicate James as they sing while urinating, like a Barbershop Quartet:

MEN

This is the story of a man
Who can't get laid
'Cause he spends all his time
In a men's room to get paid...

A quick MONTAGE of James at work as they sing:

Handing out washcloths.
Dusting lint off of suit jackets.
Shining shoes.
Tossing out mints and and spritzes of cologne.
Tips are placed in his basket.

MEN (CONT'D)

His life's passing by
Here in this room
Which smells like ass
He's filled with gloom
Time, time, time
He's pissing away time, time, time
Dumping away time, time, time
Flushing away time...

Several FLUSHES go off. The song calms down:

AT THE END OF THE NIGHT

James counts his money, alone.

JAMES
(singing)
No cash
Can't date...

INT. DRUGSTORE -- DAY

James stares at the PICTURE FRAMES for sale.
Gazes longingly at the model "happy couples" sitting in the
picture frames. The song continues:

JAMES
(singing)
It puts me in
Such a state...

INT. JAMES' APARTMENT -- NIGHT

James sits on his couch, staring wistfully at...

The picture frames lining his room. On the walls. Propped up.
And they're filled with the original "happy couples" photos
from the store. The song continues:

JAMES
(singing)
One day it'll be
Too late
To find
A mate...

INT. THE RESTROOM -- NIGHT

James stands at his post. The song continues:

JAMES
(singing)
I watch old men defecate
It's lonely in the restroom...

MEN
He's lonely in the restroom...

INT. JAMES' CAR - DRIVING ON THE FREEWAY -- DAY

James sits, stopped dead in gridlock traffic.
James and the surrounding stopped DRIVERS sing together as

the song builds to a rousing climax:

JAMES AND DRIVERS

...Time, time, time...
 Pissing away time, time, time...
 Passing us by, time, time, time...
 Leaving us behind...

Cars with couples fly by in the CARPOOL LANE, passing in the blink of an eye, leaving them all in the dust. James just shakes his head, watching.

Traffic slowly starts to move -- but James' CAR has stalled. He tries the ignition. The car's hood bursts into a cloud of SMOKE. It's dead. The song tails out.

INT. CITY BUS -- DAY

James rides the bus alone. Staring into space.
 A British NARRATOR is heard:

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the
 incredible story of James W. Coleman, a
 lonely men's room attendant with no car -
 - whose life is about to change forever:

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

James walks along the sidewalk, approaching a gridlocked-freeway entrance ramp.

BMW MAN (O.S.)

Buddy! Buddy!

A well-dressed MAN in a BMW, waiting to get onto the gridlocked freeway, yells for James' attention.

JAMES

Me?

BMW MAN

I'll give you \$100 bucks if you'll get in my car!

JAMES

I'm not into that kinda stuff, Mister.

BMW MAN

Please, I've got to get to the meeting of my life! I'll make it \$200! Just get in my car so I can take the carpool lane! Please! I'm running out of time!

Time. The magic word. James stops.
Looks at the BMW Man. Looks at the CARPOOL ENTRANCE LANE sign.
Looks at the \$200 in cash being offered him.

INT. THE BMW - DRIVING IN CARPOOL LANE -- DAY

James sits in the passenger seat of the BMW.
They're driving at high speed down the CARPOOL LANE. Flying
by a mass of stopped cars. The well-dressed MAN is all
smiles. Relief.

JAMES

This is a very nice car, sir. You have
any mints?

BMW MAN

Uh...no. Sorry.

JAMES

You should really get mints. And cologne
spritzers. Towelettes would be good too.

Beat.

BMW MAN

You free at this time tomorrow?

EXT. FREEWAY ENTRANCE -- DAY

The next day. James gets into the BMW again.

INT. BMW - DRIVING IN CARPOOL LANE -- DAY

James rides along again. He's more relaxed today:
He reads a newspaper and drinks his morning coffee.
And he has an assortment of mints, colognes and towelettes
laid out on the dashboard.

BMW MAN

You are a life saver, buddy. If only
there were more of you, huh?

A lightbulb comes on James' head.
He looks out the window at all the stopped cars they are passing.
Looks down at the \$100's in his hand. Then back out the window.
A lightbulb comes on. He sings:

JAMES

(sings)
With cash
I could date
And no more watch men urinate

DREAM SEQUENCE:

-- James, tuxedo clad, with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN on his arm.
James tips the doorman as they enter an ELEGANT
RESTAURANT in slow motion.

The Barbershop Quartet is present, crooning a love song.

-- James and the Beautiful Woman kiss, backlit AT NIGHT by a
beautiful water fountain. Slow motion. Poetry.

Back to:

JAMES

Smiling. He's got it.

INT. FIRST NATIONAL BANK -- DAY

James sits across a desk from a BANK MANAGER.
Shakes hands excitedly in a deal.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY

James hands a STUBBY MAN IN A SUIT a stack of CASH.
They shake hands. Stubby rips the "FOR LEASE" sign off the
front of the building.

LATER

A sign is hoisted up onto the building: "RENT-A-PERSON"

James looks at the sign. Gives a thumbs-up.
Turns and thinks.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)

In order for his scheme to work, James
needed a work force -- a staff of people
like himself -- with no money and no
life.

JAMES

I need people with no money and no life.

And with that, James is approached by a HOMELESS MAN:

HOMELESS MAN

Spare any change, man?

James looks at him. A lightbulb goes on in his head.

EXT. VARIOUS CITY STREETS -- DAY

James walks quickly through the streets, pointing at HOMELESS PEOPLE, huddled in corners.

JAMES

You! You! You! C'mon, get up! We're gonna make some money.

INT. JAMES' OLD RESTROOM -- DAY

James cleans up the Homeless People.
Brushing their coats. Shining their shoes.
Handing them towels. Mints.
Spritizes them with cologne.
Utilizes all his old skills to get them in shape.

EXT. VARIOUS FREEWAY ENTRANCES -- DAY

Clusters of newly cleaned-up HOMELESS PEOPLE stand at the mouth of various freeway entrances, holding signs which read:

"RENT-A-PERSON"
-- SAVE TIME AND TAKE THE CARPOOL LANE --

Car after car stops to hire them.

EXT. VARIOUS CARS IN CARPOOL LANES -- DAY

Cleaned-up Homeless People sit in various cars, which zoom down the carpool lanes. One HOMELESS PERSON offers a DRIVER:

HOMELESS PERSON
Would you like a mint, ma'am?

And with that:

A MONTAGE OF MAGAZINE COVERS:

-- "Rent-A-Person: Saving Time in the Computer Age."
-- TIME Magazine: "The Time Saver: James W. Coleman."
-- FORTUNE Magazine: "James W. Coleman: Taking America's Homeless off the Streets."
-- "Rent-A-Person: Sweeping the Nation."

A MAP OF THE UNITED STATES

Rent-A-Person LOGOS slowly pop up all over the map, spreading across the U.S.

JAMES IN A TELEVISION INTERVIEW

He is now dressed in an immaculate suit, with his hair slicked back like the new corporate tycoon that he is:

JAMES

Seriously, Larry, it's all about time.
We all only have a small amount of time.
And we offer you quality for that time.
Would you like a mint, Larry?

INTERVIEWER

(accepting it)
Yes, thank you very much.

JAMES

Probably need a towelette too, keep the
chocolate off your fingers. Here you go.

INTERVIEWER

Now, what about the quality of your own
time? Is there a woman in your life yet?

James freezes. He has no answer for that.

INTERVIEWER (CONT'D)

Because you certainly have the money to
treat a woman right at this point in your
life.

Quiet. A song begins:

JAMES

(singing)
Well, I tell ya, Larry
I'd really like to marry
I thought when I was very
Loaded I'd have what's necessary
But now I've...

INT. CHIC RESTAURANT -- NIGHT

James is on a date with not one, but THREE overly made-up
perfectly-figured BARBIE DOLL WOMEN. They laugh at his jokes and
fawn over him like Caesar. But James looks forlorn, singing:

JAMES

...Got cash
Got some dates
But the girls are
All fake
Allow me to demonstrate

James pushes the breasts of one of the women.
It doesn't move. A rubbery sound-effect accompanies.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Silicone
Inflates
They just want the bread I make...

BARBIE DOLL WOMEN

We just want the bread he makes...

INT. JAMES' PALATIAL BEDROOM -- DAY

James, well-dressed, walks alone through his palatial bedroom eating mints and wiping his hands with a towelette. As with his old apartment, it is filled with picture frames sporting the original "Happy Couples" photos they came with.

James stares at them longingly as he continues singing:

JAMES

It's lonely at the top too...

The Barbershop Quartet Men appear in his bedroom, singing:

MEN

He's lonely at the top too...

James sees them, startled:

JAMES

What the hell are you doing in my
bedroom?

MEN

We're singing, we just...

JAMES

Get out! Security!

The Barbershop Quartet runs like hell for the exits.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)

And then one day -- the end came:

INT. RENT-A-PERSON HEADQUARTERS -- DAY

A large group of HOMELESS PEOPLE stands before James.
A SPOKESMAN reads from a prepared statement:

SPOKESMAN

We, the members of Homeless Rental People
Local 718, demand a daily per diem, meal
(MORE)

SPOKESMAN
penalties for longer rides, extra pay for
traffic delay, bus money for return rides
if necessary...

JAMES
(cutting him off)
This is ridiculous. You know I can't
give you any of these things. If I do,
we'll be out of business in a week.

SPOKESMAN
Looks like we got a problem, then.

EXT. RENT-A-PERSON HEADQUARTERS -- DAY

The Homeless Union marches in a circle in front of the building.
On strike. James watches from the window, forlorn.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)
And just like that, it was over.

JAMES
It's over.

Dissolve:

The Homeless Group disappears.
(Actually, they just start sleeping in cardboard boxes around
the building again, but they're no longer organized.)
The "Rent-A-Person" sign also vanishes.

Finally, a "FOR LEASE" sign re-appears on the building.

A MAP OF THE UNITED STATES

is seen again. Slowly, the Rent-A-Person LOGOS disappear
everywhere across the country. Dead silence.

BLACK. Come up on:

INT. JAMES' OLD RESTROOM -- NIGHT

James is back working as a men's room attendant.
Everything has come full circle. It's quiet. No one sings.

A MAN approaches the sink. Washes his hands.
James hands him a towel; he takes it.
Then, slowly, he recognizes James. Gives him a once over:

MAN
Excuse me -- are you James W. Coleman?

JAMES
Um...yes, yes, I am.

MAN
You founded Rent-A-Person?

JAMES
Uh, yes. Yes, I did. A long time ago.

The Man takes James' hand. Shakes it.
James checks to make sure it's clean.

JAMES
Here, why don't you use a towelette?

MAN
(so excited, he ignores the
comment)
My name's Fred Lawrence. Would you come
with me? I want to introduce you to
someone.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DINING AREA -- NIGHT

James follows Fred to the dining area...

To a table where a LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN is seated.
An INFANT in a stroller is at her side.

FRED
James, this is my wife, Marilyn. We owe
everything to you. We met through Rent-A-
Person. St. Louis chapter. I was
homeless, and you gave me a new start.
Marilyn rented me to ride in her car
and...the rest is history. And this our
daughter, Sarah. We can't thank you
enough.

MARILYN
(shakes his hand)
Nice to meet you. Thank you so much.

James is blown away.

JAMES
Ma'am.

YOUNG LADY (O.S.)
Excuse me, ma'am, you left this in the
restroom.

At that moment, James whirls around to see:

A YOUNG LADY. About his age. Dressed in his exact same outfit.
The Ladies' Room Attendant.

She hands Marilyn a diaper bag, who accepts it graciously.

But then, the Young Lady and James lock eyes. Freeze.
Everything becomes heavily backlit and quiet. Hushed.
It's love at first sight.

They just stand there. Neither is able to move.

BRITISH NARRATOR (V.O.)

They had worked 20 feet away from each
other for years, but they had never met.

INT. JAMES' RESTROOM -- NIGHT

James watches as the Men's Room door opens. The Ladies' Room
door across the hall swings open at the same time...

And James locks eyes with Ladies' Room Attendant.
A passionate glance is exchanged in slow motion -- then
broken, as the doors close.

LATER THAT NIGHT

The restroom is empty. James collects his money.
Takes a deep breath. Opens the door, crosses the hall, and
enters...

THE LADIES' ROOM

Women using the stalls gasp in surprise that a man has
entered. But James pays no attention. He holds the gaze of
the Ladies' Room Attendant. Walks to her.

JAMES

I'm James.

LADIES' ROOM ATTENDANT

I'm Wendy.

Beat. They just look at each other. Mesmerized.

WENDY

Would you like a mint?

James nods. She gives; he takes.

JAMES

Can I give you a ride home?

WENDY

Sure.

Beat.

JAMES
I don't have a car.

WENDY
Me neither.

INT. CITY BUS -- NIGHT

James and Wendy ride the bus.
Talking. Laughing. Flirting.
The Barbershop Quartet sits a couple rows behind them,
crooning a love song.

Suddenly, CLICK!!!

James and Wendy notice a MAN WITH A CAMERA has just snapped a
picture of them. He stands and approaches them.

MAN WITH A CAMERA
Pardon me, folks -- sorry to interrupt --
you're a beautiful couple.

They blush, not sure how to respond.

MAN WITH A CAMERA (CONT'D)
Are you models?

JAMES
(looks at Wendy)
Uh, no. No, we're not.

MAN WITH A CAMERA
Would you like to be?

INT. DRUGSTORE -- DAY

A shipment of PICTURE FRAMES is placed on the shelves.
Only now -- JAMES and WENDY are the "Happy Couple" photo
being sold in the picture frames. Their faces smile down
from every corner of the rack.

EXT. PARKING LOT -- DAY

Images:

-- A KEY-CHAIN ALARM BUTTON is depressed. Chirp-chirp.
-- Car locks pop up.

James opens the passenger door of a brand new HONDA for
Wendy. She hops in. He climbs into the driver's seat.
And hits the gas.

The Barbershop Quartet sings nearby:

MEN
Time, time, time
They've got all the time, time, time
In the world...

EXT. FREEWAY ENTRANCE -- DAY

The Honda turns a corner onto a busy freeway ramp.
Bypasses the traffic.

And James & Wendy drive off together in the CARPOOL LANE.

THE END