

I Remember It Being August
An Original Short Screenplay
by
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BLACK -

JERRY (V.O.)

I remember it being August for a very long time.

(pause)

It was a month after I started on my first novel, in the false hopes of getting it published. Other works of mine had been published... they were even sorting pieces for a novel of short stories, work I had done for the New Yorker.

(pause)

For ten years I waited for them to come around. Ten years of yellow, weathered rejection notices that I can still recite by heart. But nothing, no torment in my life, not even my times in war, were as agonizing as August of 1944.

INT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Seated at a table in a quaint Italian Restaurant is JERRY, who is in his mid-sixties, slightly overweight, wearing glasses and drinking a glass of wine. He is sitting alone, and the bottle at his table is almost empty. He is reading a newspaper.

ERIC (O.S.)

Jerry.

Jerry looks up and smiles over his glasses. He puts his hand out and shakes another hand coming from O.S..

A middle-aged man, ERIC, sits down at the table with Jerry. He is in a nice suit, and as he sits down, a waiter approaches with a glass of water and an empty wine glass, which he fills with what's left of the bottle.

JERRY

Eric, I'm glad you like meeting here. It's one of the few places I feel safe, out of my home.

ERIC

I know it is, Jerry.

Jerry takes his glasses off, folds the newspaper and puts them away. From underneath his chair he brings a manilla folder, bound with rubberbands. It's obvious that whatever is in there is old.

ERIC (cont'd)

Is this what you were talking about?

Jerry nods.

ERIC (cont'd)

I didn't think you were working on any new material this year, Jerry.

JERRY

I'm not. This is an older work.

ERIC

Really? In the vein of the other material? They mysteries?

JERRY

No, no. This is something completely different. This is from when I was much, much younger.

ERIC

Oh? How much younger?

JERRY

Forty years younger. And I have a lot to tell you about this novel, so let's order and I'll get on with it, because we can't publish it without clearing the air about this story.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT CENTRAL PARK - DAY - 1944

A MAN (JOHN, 20'S) is eating a sandwich and reading a well read paperback that has neither the cover nor spine.

JERRY (V.O.)

I love Central Park. Well, I loved it. It was the only place in the city that was quiet. I had a favorite spot just west of 70th street, where I would take my lunch sometimes. I would sit there for an hour or so... back then I wasn't a huge fan of the outdoors... but that hour worked wonders, especially if I was caught on something... a sentence, an end to a chapter, even the title of a story.

A shadow comes over John eating his sandwich.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

You'd be surprised how hard titles are... at least titles people won't laugh at.

JOHN

Can I help you?

The shadow is JERRY, as a young man of 20 or so.

YOUNG JERRY

No, no. This is just a favorite spot of mine and I was hoping you wouldn't mind sharing it.

JOHN

Of course... this is a big spot, sir. Sit.

JERRY (V.O.)

The 'sir' threw me off. I'm not a huge fan of outdoors or people. I tried, back then, to avoid people. I was much more comfortable on my own.

The two men make idle chitchat and people watch. John eats his sandwich, while Young Jerry unpacks a lunch he has and relaxes. John goes back to his book and every once in a while speaks to Young Jerry.

JERRY (V.O.)

We sat and watched people pass us with dogs and children. Most of them were mothers, it was a work day of course. The sun was shining and it was as hot as was to be expected. This young man, though, wore a full pant suit. It was very strange. His jacket was on the grass next to him, and his shirt sleeves were rolled as high as they could be. He also had the top two buttons of his shirt unbuttoned and his tie was completely relaxed. That was August 3rd, 1944.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A sparse apartment with hardwood floors, two uncovered windows, a desk, stove, table with a typewriter and tablet on it, a sofa, table with lamp... that's it.

Young Jerry is scooping coffee into a pot.

JERRY (V.O.)

I stayed out of the house longer than normal that day. I travelled to a place in the village, Chopsins Grocery on Morton Street... it's where I used to buy my coffee. I took a cab back from downtown, and it was then...

EXT - BUILDING - EARLY EVENING

We see Eric opening the door to an apartment building. Young Jerry is watching him enter.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

... that I noticed the young

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
man enter my building. We ended
up taking the elevator together,
but didn't say a word.

Young Jerry enters the apartment building after Eric.

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Young Jerry is scooping coffee into a pot.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
I wrote more that night than I
have ever written before. In
August of 1944 I was very excited
about the work I was doing. The
work was very autobiographical...
I had a lot on my mind back then.
I worked day and night, usually
forgetting to eat. I would have
to write in freehand after ten
because the typewriter upset
my neighbor something fierce.
I would get notes in the morning,
nasty things about how she
couldn't sleep.

INT. JERRY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jerry is sipping his coffee, and typing on his typewriter.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
The days experiences were draining,
in a way that brings out memories
of your life. I remembered
things about the war, about home,
about the hospital... and it all
came out on the typewriter...

Jerry stops typing and looks at his watch. He pushes the
typewriter aside and grabs the writing tablet and begins
writing in longhand.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
... until it came to nine o'clock,

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
and then I wrote in longhand...
and stopped at two in the morning,
my hand cramped, my mind empty
and my body ridiculously tired.

FADE TO BLACK:

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
I ended up sleeping clear through
noon.

EXT - CENTRAL PARK - DAY

The two men are sitting down on the grass, again. Both are eating, Eric is reading.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
The next time I saw the young
man, he guessed I was a writer.

YOUNG JERRY
How did you know that?

JOHN
Because you don't talk that much.

Young Jerry looks at Eric for a moment, then shrugs and goes back to eating... but he can't leave it at that.

YOUNG JERRY
Do you have something you'd
like to talk about?

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
He did something I despise. He
answered a question with a question.

JOHN
Do you?

YOUNG JERRY
How did you really know I was
a writer?

JOHN
Because I've read your work.

YOUNG JERRY

Really? How do you know who I am?

JOHN

Well...

(putting down sandwich)

... when I first moved in, Mrs. Sheckel told me that there were a lot of prominent people who lived in our building. She mentioned that there was an artist living on the eighth floor and a writer living on the sixth floor.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

I lived on the sixth floor.

YOUNG JERRY

And how did you know what I looked like?

JOHN

I saw you checking your mail and when you left I looked at your mailbox.

Young Jerry shakes his head and smiles.

JOHN (cont'd)

My name is John.

YOUNG JERRY

Sonny.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

I didn't know why I said "Sonny" at the time. Most times I introduced people by my real name... but this seemed more intimate, more friendly. No one had called me Sonny in over fifteen years.

(pause)

We didn't talk much after that. I was curious to know what he was reading. He said it was a

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
book for his studies. He was
enrolled in Columbia and was
studying a history book.

YOUNG JERRY
So, you want to be a historian.

JOHN
No, I want to be a writer.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
We ended up parting that day,
shaking hands and not making
plans for the future. I did
not know how to feel. Part of
me felt like my privacy was
being invaded. Part of me
thought it was flattering. I
honestly didn't know how to
feel. But I ended up seeing John
a number of times in August. It
was a week later...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LOBBY - DAY

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
... that I found him in the
lobby, reading his book, and
he asked me if I'd like to get
some coffee. I never went out
for coffee, I only buy the
coffee I like to drink... so
I invited him up into my
apartment.

INT - JERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

The two men are in the apartment. John is looking around.
Young Jerry is making coffee.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
I made coffee as John looked
at my sparse bookshelves. He
made no mention of the books I
had there, nor did he take any of
them down. He said he wanted his

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
coffee black.

Handing John a mug of coffee, the two men sit across from each other. John has taken some interest in some documents that are on the table, next to the typewriter.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
We sat there for about an hour.

JOHN
So, what are you working on.
Anything interesting?

YOUNG JERRY
Nothing you'd call interesting.
I'm working on a novel... it's
going fairly well, but slow.

Young Jerry takes the documents and puts them in a drawer, away from sight.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
We talked for an hour. Mainly
about himself. I steered
questions away from me... I
didn't think it was the right
time to answer personal
questions. I got to know him
in a vague sort of way...
enough to know that another
coffee session would not be
a horrible experience.

FADE TO BLACK:

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
In fact we scheduled one for
the next day, in which he would
be bringing a piece of his own
writing, even though I asked
him not to. I hate reading
people's work.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Young Jerry is walking into the building with a box of

corn in his hands.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
The next day, I did as much as
I could do to keep myself busy.
I went to the movies to see
Lifeboat with Tallulah Bankhead
and Walter Slezak. It was a
great movie... and it kept my
mind off my writing and the
young man.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens to reveal Young Jerry, still eating popcorn.
He gets out of his coat and begins shuffling around the
apartment.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
I got back a half an hour before
our meeting and made coffee so
it would be waiting when he
arrived. To my relief...

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

John has his hands empty, in a gesture of forgetfulness.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)
... he did not bring his work
with him. We sat and talked
about a number of things... and
then he posed to me a very
strange question.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

JERRY
Do you believe that people can
see the future?

Eric sits there, his mouth full of food, listening.

ERIC
Are you asking me?

JERRY

(shaking his head)

No, no. Keep this in mind,
it's 1944. They locked people
up, asking questions like that.

ERIC

So, what did you tell him?

JERRY

What did I tell him. I told
him, no. I told him I believed
in God, sometimes... when it
was convenient, but no.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

JOHN

Well, my girlfriend took me to
a show in Coney Island. I've
never been there, and we had
a fine time... but she paid to
have my palm read. This was
just last week, and the woman
said that I would have an
opportunity to change the
future.

Young Jerry nods his head, a smile on his lips.

JOHN (cont'd)

How about that, huh? If
someone said that to you,
that you could help change
the future... would you believe
them?

Young Jerry can't suppress a laugh, and he slaps his knee.

YOUNG JERRY

That's a good one, change the
future. It's impossible, is
what it is.

John sighs and shakes his head.

JOHN

This isn't going the way I planned. This isn't right at all.

(pause)

I only have a short time here, Jerry. I'm destined to leave in a few days and there is nothing I can do about it.

Young Jerry has a quirky smile on his face, but he's no longer laughing.

JOHN (cont'd)

I'm really here to talk about your novel, Jerry.

(pause)

I'm here, from the future... to talk about your novel.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Jerry pats the manila folder between the two men.

JERRY

This novel.

Eric looks worried.

ERIC

Ummmmm...

JERRY (cont'd)

I'm sixty-eight years old, Eric. Not senile.

ERIC

I'm sorry. Go on.

Jerry pours them both more wine.

JERRY

He proceeded to tell me a fantastic story about the history of this novel... what it would do to the culture of America, how it would influence young

JERRY (cont'd)
people to do rash thing. Some
would commit suicide, he said.
Some would even commit murder.

ERIC
Murder.

Jerry nods.

ERIC (cont'd)
Over a novel.

Jerry nods again.

JERRY
At this point in my life, I
was making a living from my
writing, I was living in a
nice apartment in Manhattan, I
was quite content. But the
only real joy I ever got was
from writing.

(pause)

What this young man was asking
me to do was painful, to say
the least. But I didn't want
to be responsible for the
shaping of a sub-culture. I
didn't want the blood of people
I didn't know yet on my hands...
on my families hands.

(pause)

But as a writer, I needed to
finish this work. I wasn't
writing for anyone else but
me, and I explained that to
him. He said that was fine.
It wasn't the writing of the
book that effected the future,
it was the publication of the
book. And it wasn't that the
book couldn't be published, it
was that it couldn't get published
until after December of 1980.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

YOUNG JERRY

1980?

JOHN

1980, just to be sure. We've done some projections, and to be sure that we aren't leaving anything to change, 1980 is when you can seek to get this work published.

YOUNG JERRY

I won't be alive in 1980, for godsake!

JERRY (V.O.)

I said this with utmost certainty, knowing that the odds were against me living another thirty-six years, regardless of how healthy I ate. At the time, I was only eating organic food, except when I met my son...

JOHN

Trust me, you'll be alive to publish your novel.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

... he loved to eat pizza.

The two men sit across from one another, stirring in the juices of what they just talked about.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

He didn't tell me about what, specifically would be affected in the future. He didn't name names... he didn't illustrate to me how important the task of the book not being published was. He just talked for an hour or so, declining a second cup of coffee.

JOHN

(motioning his coffee)
This is the best I've tasted,
though.

YOUNG JERRY

Glad you think so.

Young Jerry is shaking his head, he gets up to put his mug
in the sink.

JOHN

You want to know, Why you.

Young Jerry turns, looks at John and nods his head.

JOHN

To be honest, we had a list
of a number of life altering
events lined up. Too many
of them were threatening to
the way of life in the future.
We chose you because your
novel was something that was
more easily replaced. The
people who were affected by
your novel would just latch on
to something else... something
that wouldn't affect them on
such a scale. These people...
they were looking for answers
in places where there were none.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

I let him out at the end of
his talk. We shook hands and
he said he appreciated me taking
the time to hear him out. He
said that the decision was mine,
of course, and that even though
another person could 'come back'
to try and convince me, it
wouldn't happen. There was
only so much a person could do
to try and convince them to do,
seemingly, the right thing.

EXT - CENTRAL PARK - DAY

John is sitting on the grass, this time wearing clothes dated for the future.

JERRY (V.O.)

Three days later, after having written the majority of the first half of the novel, I ventured back to Central Park. I'd made my decision, having thought of innocent lives being affected by my work... thinking of my family and how they would live under a dark cloud for the rest of their days, being related to a man whos work manipulated people to kill. It wasn't an easy decision.

Young Jerry walks up to John, sits down beside him.

JERRY (V.O.) (cont'd)

This time, the young man was without his book, which made me wonder what that book was. He was also dressed very differently than anyone I'd ever seen, watching couples stroll down the newly paved paths of the park.

JOHN

I'm glad you chose not to publish, Sonny. You've saved a lot of lives.

YOUNG JERRY

Are you sure?

JOHN

I'm positive.

YOUNG JERRY

What makes you think that once it's published in 1980 that people won't get affected by

YOUNG JERRY (cont'd)
the book as they would have a
few years from now?

JOHN
Well, it will save the lives
that are worth saving.

YOUNG JERRY
All life is worth saving, John.
Don't you believe that?

JOHN
Where I'm from, that's not
true. That's not true at all.

John gets up, shakes hand with Young Jerry and walks away.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Eric is wiping his mouth. He's got that "Sheesh, what a
story!" look on his face.

JERRY
I always wondered what would
have happened had I given you
or your company this novel
before 1980... but it was more
out of respect than fear that I
did not come to you earlier
with this.

ERIC
Yeah, it's 1982, Jerry.

JERRY
(shrugging)
Yes, well, I wanted to be certain
for both of us.
(standing)
Back in a moment.

Jerry leaves the table, goes to the bathroom.

Eric drinks his wine, puts his napkin on his lap and snaps
off the rubberbands on the manila folder. He looks at the
cover page of the manuscript.

INT - BATHROOM - DAY

Jerry is washing his hands. He is looking at himself in the mirror, reflecting on that time in his life... and he shakes his head.

He wipes his face with his wet hands, dries his hands and face with the same paper towel and goes back to his seat.

INT - RESTAURANT - DAY

Jerry sits back down at his seat, goes for his wine glass.

ERIC

I love the title. The Catcher
in the Rye. Love it.

(pause)

What does it mean?

JERRY

(pause, thinking)

Honestly... I don't remember.

THE END