

THE SORROW OF THE SMALL MAN

by

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FADE IN:

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - DAY

CLARA, a beaming young bride, and the REVEREND, bible in hand, hurry down a long corridor, toward the elevator.

JAY (V.O.)

My father had a saying
about life ... you buys
your ticket and you takes
your chances.

CUE TITLE MUSIC

TITLE OVERLAY - "The Sorrow of the Small Man"

Clara and the Reverend enter the elevator.

JAY (V.O.)

And for Clara Miller, that
ticket was an invitation to
a fairytale happy ending.
The magical day that every
girl dreams of.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Passing floor after floor. Clara is giddy with excitement, barely able to keep still. The Reverend whistles, sighs, fiddles with his bible. Still the elevator ascends.

JAY (V.O.)

But I was not to be a part
of that day.

BLACKSCREEN

OVERLAY: "Earlier that week"

INT. HOMELAND SECURITY OUTPOST - DAY

The door plaque reads "Homeland Security - Upper Mississippi Sector". A cluttered box of an office. JAY, late thirties, neat and tidy, sits at his desk reading the paper and glancing at computer monitors.

Scan room over following:

JAY (V.O.)

I used to think my career
would be the gateway to a
fulfilling, rewarding life.

A radar blip floats up a map of the Mississippi river displayed on a computer screen.

JAY (V.O.)

After all, if we can't
control our borders, how
can we secure the blessings
of liberty for ourselves?
And if I can't do my part
to help millions of people
make their American dream
come true, how can I be
happy in my own life?

Jay flips the paper over. The phone RINGS.

JAY (V.O.)

These were my thoughts the
day Clara called me. At
work.

Jay answers the phone.

JAY

Station five three two see,
Agent -

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

CLARA, in street clothes, cell phone in hand, tromps along.

CLARA

Jay, we need to talk.

JAY

Clara, you shouldn't be calling this number.

CLARA

Jay, this isn't working.

JAY

How did you get this number?

CLARA

How do you think? I saved it on my cell phone when you called me.

JAY

Damn. That's a security breach, I'll need to file a report.

CLARA

Well while you're filing your report, why don't you file your ass. Under L.

JAY

L? But my last name is --

CLARA

For looo-serrrrr. I've had it, Jay.

JAY

I don't understand. I thought you enjoyed the field trip.

CLARA

To the County Records Depository? Are you outta your mind?

JAY

I was hoping you'd take an interest in how your local government works with your neighborhood organizations to --

CLARA

Jay, hello? Are you
listening to yourself?
Where's the romance?
Where's the fun?

JAY

Fun?

CLARA

Argh, I -- dammit I missed
my bus.

Down the street, a bus pulls away from the curb.

JAY

There'll be another one.

CLARA

Crap, not for an hour. I'll
have to take the bridge.
Now I'm gonna miss my
shows.

INSERT - COMPUTER MONITOR - A blip begins moving down
the screen, following the path of the river.

JAY

Well be careful.

CLARA

Yeah, whatever. Good bye,
Jay.

Clara hangs up.

INT. HOMELAND SECURITY OUTPOST - DAY

JAY

Clara? Hello?

Jay hangs up, dejected. Picks up his paper.

JAY (V.O.)

It's possible Clara wasn't
the one for me. She didn't
share my passion for
municipal policy meetings
and the occasional Federal
Reserve open house.

INSERT - CROSSWORD PUZZLE - Jay writes in "CLARA" on a
four letter word space. Scratches it out.

JAY (V.O.)

But still.

An ALARM sounds. Jay jumps.

Jay checks the monitor, hits a few buttons.

JAY

Holy Cow. Oh my God!

Jay picks up his phone, dials three numbers.

JAY

This is station five three
two see. We've got a bogie
headed south from Boom
Island. Maybe you can get a
visual from the lock
towers. I don't know where
it came from, you tell me.
Right. What do you mean?
Why aren't the cameras up?
Well --

Jay looks at the monitors again.

JAY

Oh no ...

Jay takes out his cell, hits speed dial.

JAY

(into desk phone)
It's headed for the bridge.
I'm going in ... Forget it,
you can monitor it from
your location.

Jay hangs up the desk phone, waits on the cell.

JAY

Come on, come on ...

EXT. STONE ARCH BRIDGE - DAY

Clara walks along, grumpy. Her cell phone RINGS. She looks at it.

CLARA

Get a life, Jay. *Then* you
can call me.

It continues to RING.

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CLARA

Oh for --

Clara answers.

CLARA

What is it?

JAY (V.O. FILTER)

Clara, get off the bridge!

CLARA

Jay, leave me alone. I
gotta find a real man. Not
a simpering little
government drone.

JAY (V.O. FILTER)

I'm telling you, you're in
trouble.

CLARA

What the hell are you
talking about little man?

JAY

Little ma --

CLARA

You're small, you live in a
small world. A small, small
--

JAY

Clara, plea --

CLARA

I'm gonna find me a big
man, I'm gonna find me the
biggest man in the whole --

Clara stops in her tracks, looks up. Screams.

EXT. STONE ARCH BRIDGE WEST BANK - DAY

Jay is getting out of his car, cell phone to his ear.

He looks up, sees what Clara is screaming at.

Breaks into a run.

STONE ARCH BRIDGE MIDDLE

Clara is looking up.

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CLARA

Oh my god, you're so,
you're so --

CAMERA TILT up and up.

It's PAUL BUNYAN, an animated figure. He looks Clara over. Bends down.

INSERT - Clara's cell phone drops to the ground.

INSERT - Clara's feet both leave the ground.

Clara ascends, cupped in Paul's hand.

CLARA

You know, I'm kind of
seeing someone, I'm not
really looking to -- oh
hell, who am I kidding!

Jay sprints along the bridge. He comes to the cell phone. Picks it up.

Paul Bunyan walks away, upriver.

CLARA (O.S.)

You know, I've never been
to Bemidji, do they have a
Starbuck's?

Jay watches them go. Turns and walks away.

JAY (V.O.)

I failed. I failed to
detect the intruder quickly
enough to prevent disaster.
I failed to fulfill my duty
to my country. I failed to
win the heart of a girl
because she found me. She
found me ... small.

EXT. UNIVERSITY CAMPUS MOOS TOWER - DAY

Clara and the Reverend emerge atop Moos Tower. Paul Bunyan lumbers up, bowtie and hat added to his wardrobe. The Reverend opens his Bible.

INT. HOMELAND SECURITY STATION - DAY

Jay watches an onscreen radar blip on his monitor.

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His phone RINGS. He picks after a few rings.

JAY

Yeah? ... no, it's nothing.
Yes it's him. It's ... it's
his wedding day ... just
him, the Reverend and C –
the bride. Who's she? ...
no one I know. That's it.
Just the three of them. A
small ceremony. Right. Bye.

He sighs, pulls his coat off a chair, exits.

FADE OUT