

Excerpt from DAMON and DEBRA

(Damon, a 20-something African-American male, and Debra, a 40-something Italian American woman, meet on a stalled subway shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Their encounter moves from immediate circumstances to race, relationships and personal revelations that pave the way for a provocative ending.

DEBRA

You got a girlfriend?

(DAMON looks at her as though she's demented)

DAMON

Damn, you nosy!

(He gets up and begins pacing around)

DEBRA

I'm nosy? I just revealed intimate facts about the death of my marriage, at your request, I might add, and you're calling me nosy?

DAMON

Well, some folks more private than you--don't want their business blown all over the street, especially when it ain't none of your business!

DEBRA

I'm only asking because the young girls where I work--

DAMON

Oh, fuck them young girls where you work! Bunch of dancing fools can't speak English? They the ones you talking about?

DEBRA

I was going to say that they'd take one look at you and eat you up alive.

DAMON

What? They cannibals or something?

DEBRA

Look, you must know you're a very good-looking kid--

DAMON

First off, I ain't no kid--

(He breaks off, watching her as if beginning to see the light. He begins slowly backing away from her)

DAMON (Continued)

Maybe--maybe you better lay off that bottle now. Settle down and read your book or—or something.

DEBRA

What? You think I'm drunk? It happens I'm not, but so what if I--

(She looks at him, understanding dawns, and she bursts into laughter. She laughs and laughs, as he watches, warily. Finally she regains control)

DEBRA (Continued)

Oh, dear God--what, you think I'm trying to seduce you? On the fucking B train at three o'clock in the afternoon? Relax--it ain't gonna happen.

(She begins laughing again. DAMON is mildly insulted)

DAMON

Well, what I'm supposed to think? All that talk about dancing, then you start drinking, now you want to know if I'm hooked up--

DEBRA

I'm making conversation! You're the only one here, for Christ sake! If you don't want to answer, don't answer! Jesus!

DAMON

Don't act like you so--

DEBRA

God, this is absolutely perfect! On today, of all days!

DAMON

Hey, it ain't like women don't--

DEBRA

I'm sure those hospital wenchers are dropping like flies every time you transport somebody down a hallway, or into the elevator--

DAMON

Hey, fuck you, alright?

DEBRA

I thought we'd already vetoed that option. And besides, cancer doesn't make me feel very sexy.

(several beats)

(DAMON stares her)

DAMON

What you talking about?

DEBRA

Especially breast cancer. Maybe if it was the right ear, or the left toe, I'd be in a more seductive mood, but given the--the primary site, as the medical community refers to it--

(She gives up her attempt at sarcasm, covers her face with her hands, and begins crying. DAMON stares at her, uncertainly)

DAMON

So, what you saying? You have--

(DEBRA continues to cry. DAMON takes the tissues out of his pocket and holds them out to her. She takes them and blows her nose)

DAMON (continued)

How long you--I mean, when you find this out?

DEBRA

Today.

DAMON

Today!? What you mean, today?

DEBRA

Today, at 1:03 p.m. I was coming from an appointment at Columbia Presbyterian.

DAMON

And all this time you been drinking wine, making jokes--

DEBRA

What the hell was I supposed to do!

DAMON

You could have--

DEBRA

I barely know you! I don't even know your name!

DAMON

It's Damon.

DEBRA

I'm Debra. Pleased to meet you.

(They both smile at the absurdity of this. DAMON sits back down on the long seat closest to where DEBRA is sitting)