

Strange Times

By

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INT. ALICE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wind vents through the open window. There are red satin ribbons attached to it; it gives it a hazy, windy day sort of sensation as they waver lackadaisically back and forth. Birds chirp. We can hear kitchen sounds nearby: someone is brewing a pot of coffee. ALICE, a 20-something in bold black and red clothes, rushes around her bedroom trying to get things together, shoving them into her bag without paying much mind to what they are. We see snatches of her room here and there and there is something macabre about it, but neither Alice nor the camera really dwells on it. With a worried look at the clock we can see that Alice is always the type to wake up about 15 minutes before she has to be someplace 20 minutes away and, as such, cannot remember a moment in her life when she wasn't in a hurry. It must have happened, some time, long ago, but the point is that she can't remember it.

She grabs a knife--not quite a switchblade but close, as a matter of fact the same knife the Joker uses in *The Dark Knight*--which she keeps next to some Joker cards she has, framed elegantly and carefully. She hits the button on the handle. The blade comes out quickly and smoothly. She stalks out of her room and into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. - ALICE & EM'S KITCHEN - DAY

A huge knife comes at us. There's nothing else to look at. It is only the knife, plunging forbiddingly toward something. The edges of the blade don't really look that sharp and yet somehow the thing still looks frightening even though in the end it's not a particularly great knife. It's ominous to watch.

Then we see the knife meet its mate--an apple, bright green, the kind that looks so ridiculously tart it couldn't possibly be actually eaten. Then we see Alice trying to cut the thing with her substandard switchblade, but it's too much of a pain in the ass with that particular knife so she decides to throw in the towel. She crudely spears the apple several times, taking out some weird kind of fruit-induced rage. She leaves the knife on the kitchen counter as she moves about the kitchen.

It turns out Alice is not the one brewing the coffee. Turns out it's her roommate EM, a 20-something girl you might expect to be extremely nice and constantly dress in pinks and feminine tones. When Em walks in the room and toward the coffee, they greet each other with head nods and

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gestures more than with words; Em seems more relaxed, probably because she has more time than Alice does before she has to leave.

All this time Alice is cooking a frozen waffle in the microwave, which she grabs in a hurry and stuffs in her mouth so both her hands are free as she waves goodbye and attempts a muffled farewell to Em and departs.

CUT TO:

EXT. - ALICE & EM'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Alice hurries out the front door and to her bicycle, which she doesn't ride particularly well but tries. She has a brief conflict where she tries to decide whether to ditch the waffle or ditch the bike; she forfeits the waffle sadly, jumps off the bike, and takes off down the road with some difficulty, wobbling and wavering uncertainly. She grows smaller and smaller as she moves further and further away, until we can't even really see her anymore.

FADE TO:

EXT. - ALICE & EM'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Alice is riding her bicycle home in the dusk. There isn't really anybody else on the road; the silence is almost post-apocalyptic. A dog barks somewhere. There is one PASSERBY, but Alice isn't really interested so she doesn't get a good look at him. She sees a red ribbon like the ones on her window wave in his hand; she turns around to get a look but it's too late, and he's already rounding the corner.

Alice arrives in the same way that she left, looking somewhat more exhausted. She slowly parks her bike outside the house; the porch light is already on and the front door is open. Through the windows we can see signs of life; lights on, the glow of a TV set.

CUT TO:

INT. - ALICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Em is sprawled out awkwardly on the rug in the middle of the room, dead. Blood drips from her onto the rug; this is the only motion we see, and the only sound we can really hear very well above the whir of the ceiling fan. Outside cars pass and even a couple of birds chirp, bizarre considering the hour as we look around the room.

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For some reason something seems wrong with this picture. Em doesn't look as if she really belongs here; her lighter clothes and feminine look contrast sharply with the darker and deeper tones of the room, heavy burgundies and crisp blacks, almost like blood in and of itself.

As we look around we see the relics of some terrible crime--blood staining the walls in all kinds of patterns, red yarn tracing the source of the spatter. It almost looks like a crime scene until we zoom out and see what it really is--bizarre decor, red paint-spatter on canvas, a *Dexter* poster to match it, the adoration of a darker and strangely humorous theme that almost amounts to Dexter idolatry. There are Joker cards framed around her room, and a *Hannibal* poster.

All the while there are footsteps approaching as ALICE makes her way through the house--the door opens and she calls out a greeting, weaving around various objects blocking her path to her room. We see her walk in and out of sight as she circles a counter blocking the direct path to her bedroom from the front door.

Em just does not look like the kind of girl who would idolize Dexter, her heels and pink shirt and skirt flowing...no, as we look back and forth, we see this girl doesn't really belong here at all.

INT. - ALICE & EM'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Em isn't anywhere to be found. Alice doesn't really suspect anything wrong is afoot until she finds a Joker card, one we saw at the beginning in a frame, on the floor. It's bizarre; who took it out? How did it get here? She picks it up and gives it a weird glance, feeling suddenly suspicious. Without really looking she puts her hand where she recalls leaving the knife earlier, but it isn't there. She approaches her room with growing confusion.

INT. - ALICE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Enter Alice.

At first Alice doesn't notice. She drops her bag on the floor and her keys on the table she keeps by the door and flips the light switch. Finally she sees Em and, in shock, drops the only other thing she was carrying--her battered copy of *Dearly Devoted Dexter*. Just like her room, she is wearing a bolder red and black, a coat and boots, looking more like she's preparing herself to slay vampires than study. Yes, this is definitely where Alice belongs, and so why is someone else dead in her bedroom?

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Petrified, Alice can't really figure out how to react. She waits for her heart to re-adjust and go back to its normal speed and as the immediate terror subsides she starts to look more curious than concerned. She kneels to the ground and examines Em closely in some kind of wonder. On the top of her chest is the switchblade from the beginning with a red ribbon tied around it: someone has left this here as a gift. There is a note written on the other side of the Joker card she has picked up: "For You."

Alice puts her hand over her lips, rubbing and tapping them anxiously as she tries to put something together, trying to decide what to feel. She checks Em for any signs of life; no breath, no pulse, and her hand falls to the ground like a stone. She picks up the knife and turns it over.

Finally, it clicks. For some reason, despite all the various emotions Alice can't seem to prioritize, this excites her. It makes her giddy. Someone has left this here for her as part of some dark game, and she wants to play.

She stands up holding the knife. There's just a bit of blood on it. She's plastering fingerprints all over it and she doesn't care.

Close-up on the red ribbon. Then,

CUT TO BLACK.