

STRANGER THINGS:

EPISODE 2A:
DISCONTENT

BY
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(StrangerThings.tv)

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This file contains additional director's notes  concerning the evolution of the script from page to frame.

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FADE UP TEXT:



"Discontent is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation."

Beat.

FADE UP ADDITIONAL TEXT:

"- A Random Fortune Cookie -"

INT. A MARRIAGE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE

CARL sits on a sofa with his wife, JANE. Carl is just a little of everything: just a little balding, just a little pudgy, just a little man overall.

Janet looks fierce, like an eagle. She's thin - downright skinny - and her features can vacillate between fury and kitten-like purring in a moment.

CARL

I want to be in love with her like
I used to be, but it's like she
won't let anyone, not even herself,
be happy.

COUNSELOR

Janet, do you want to respond to
that?

JANET

(hasn't been paying
attention)
Respond to what?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Carl opens his eyes, and despite a good night's sleep, he looks tired.

He's sleeping on the sofa. And by the looks of the pillows, blankets, and sheets he has around him, this isn't his first night.

He lurches to his feet.

AT THE TABLE

Carl enters, showered and dressed in a suit. Ready for the day.

JANET

I made your favorite breakfast.

CARL

Thank you!

He goes to kiss her, but she swerves to avoid him, setting a plate full of eggs on the table.

JANET

Do you have to go right to work?

Carl sits down and digs in.

CARL

Not right away...what did you have in mind?

JANET

I really think we should go ahead and clone Mother.

Carl's forkful of eggs freezes. It looks decidedly less appealing.

CARL

This really isn't breakfast conversation, Janet.

JANET

We can afford it, Carl! I know it's expensive but we can afford it! Mom could be here by tomorrow morning!

CARL

It's wrong.

JANET

It's wrong to see my mother?!

CARL

Janet, she was an old woman and she died of natural causes. Some things are divine intervention.

Janet turns on him.

JANET

Divine INTERVENTION?

Carl takes his unfinished plate to the sink.

CARL

I said divinely intentioned. God decided it was her time. Are you going to choose your mother over God?

JANET

Are you going to choose God over ME?!

On his way out the door, Carl pauses.

CARL

I don't think there's a right answer to that question.

JANET

Believe me, there is.

She waits for his response but Carl has given up fighting.

CARL

I'll be home tonight.

The front door closes. With a SCREAM, Janet rips open the freezer, snatches out a box, and SLAMS it on the table.

CARL

(VO)

When she gives me that look, I can't tell if she's adding up my net worth or deciding how best to kill me.

INT. MARRIAGE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Carl now sits alone.

He takes his glasses off and looks at them. We begin to see just how heartbroken he really is.

CARL

(contd)

Probably both. She wants me to pay for this new cloning thing - to bring her mother back. I think she just wants someone else in the house that hates me as much as she does.

COUNSELOR

Do you still love your wife, Carl?

Carl fidgets.

COUNSELOR

Because it doesn't seem like she loves you anymore.

CARL

I did. In the beginning.

COUNSELOR

I don't usually say this, but: have you considered divorce?

CARL

She wanted to get one. When she found out she wouldn't get the house she changed her mind.



COUNSELOR

So what are you going to do?

Carl seems to emotionally fold in.

CARL

I still love her.

INT. MEDICAL OFFICE - DAY

SALESMAN

The first thing is, a clone is not exactly a person. It'll still be your mother-in-law, but there are some differences.

Carl sits dutifully in a doctor's office, perusing a tri-fold brochure while the salesman talks.

SALESMAN

Legally, they can't sign documents or own property. Those rights died with the original entity. And there are some genetic differences. By law, we have to modify a few things - eliminate disease, remove any possibility of psychosis or schizophrenia, just safety stuff.

CARL

...You change the people?

SALESMAN

It's not really changing, and we don't like to spread it around, but ... yes, genetically, we can control some predispositions.

CARL

Could you make her a nicer person?

SALESMAN

Hah hah! Well, all our products tend to be pretty nice people, but -

CARL

No, really. I mean it.

Carl's cellphone begins ringing. He flips it open.

CARL

Hey Janet -

Something stops him.

CARL

It's only four-thirty. Yes, I'm on the way home.

We can hear the screaming on the other end. Embarrassed, Carl raises a finger and stands in the corner of the room. Like he's being punished. The salesman watches.

CARL

No - no...no, I'm on the way -

The screaming resumes. He is being emasculated via cellphone. He's stuttering and trembling with frustration.

CARL

I am not with a woman.

He is almost near tears, and the Salesman is watching all of it.

CARL

Come on.

This is really, really embarrassing for everyone.

He hangs up - or rather, is hung up on. He approaches the Salesman.

SALESMAN

Was that your wife?

CARL
Yeah...um...forget it. I...

He shakes his head, the words dying on his lips.

SALESMAN
She sounded...ah...

CARL
Yeah.

SALESMAN
Is that why you're looking into
this?

CARL
It doesn't matter. If I don't do
it, she'll be angry. And if I do
do it, they'll both gang up on me
and it's just as bad.

Carl looks at the Salesman.

CARL
You said you could change people?

SALESMAN
I wish I could help you... does
anyone in the family have a history
of mental illness? A serious
genetic disorder?

Carl racks his brain.

CARL
I'm allergic to shrimp.



SALESMAN
That won't work.

CARL
It was pretty serious. I almost
died.

SALESMAN
Right. But it has to be on her
side of the family. We're not
cloning you.

CARL
Oh.
(thinks)
No.

SALESMAN

That's a problem. Yes, we can change behavior. But we don't want to be in the business of custom-building people, you understand? We need a legal reason to do it.

The Salesman gives Carl a card.

SALESMAN

By the time you come back, I'll have thought of something.

Carl, dumbfounded, takes the card.

SALESMAN

Oh, and I forgot one thing. Before you sign the papers, you might want to remind your wife: when we clone her mother...even if we weren't going to change anything...she's going to be like a new person. Your wife - and you - will have to start your relationship with her all over again. It may not be like it was before.

CARL

We can only hope so.

INT. CARL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Janet is cooking over a big pot. Carl walks in, looking pleased with himself.

JANET

Hey.

CARL

Hey.

He sits down at the table. He has to hold his hands together to keep them from bouncing.

CARL

How was your day?

JANET

Bad. I ran out of credit on that damned card you gave me, I had to put half my groceries back. Why don't you just give me access to the checking account?

CARL

It's not me, honey, it's the bank.
Do you want to know what I did
today?

Janet brings in a big stew.

JANET

Truthfully? No.

Her candor stings him, and it shows on his face.

JANET

I'm just tired, Carl. I'm tired of
all the fighting and the
squabbling. Over money. Over
Mother.

He ladles out some stew and begins eating. Janet just sits
there.

JANET

Why should you get to say what we
do with all the money? I mean, if
you were to die, it'd be mine
anyway.



He coughs for a second, stops chewing.

CARL

What?

He starts coughing more.

JANET

I don't want to wait till you're
dead, Carl.

CARL

What's in this?

JANET

I'm going to bed.

Carl jerks upward, stumbling backwards over his chair and
crashing into the floor. His voice has stopped being words
and become a high, wheezing panic.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM

Janet closes the door and goes to the bathroom.

INT. DINING ROOM

Carl's throat and tongue are terribly red. He tears at his shirt collar to help him breathe.

But in his eyes, not fear, not anger: confusion. Surprise. He truly did not expect this.

INT. MASTER BATHROOM

Janet calmly washes her face with a soft washcloth.

She presses a pill into her mouth and takes a sip of water, looking placidly at her guiltless mirror reflection.

INT. DINING ROOM

Carl staggers up, goes to the bedroom door -

It's locked.

He bangs on the door.

JANET

Lies sleeping in bed. She doesn't blink.

AT THE DOOR

Carl has used all his energy. He stumbles backwards, crashing into a

TRASH BIN

in the kitchen. The bin tips over, scattering garbage everywhere. Surrounding him, in fact, in a very specific kind of garbage.

Shrimp tails.

Dozens and dozens of shrimp tails.

His eyes widen.

INT. BATHROOM

Carl half-crawls into the bathroom. Under the sink, in a plastic case: "FIRST AID". He takes out a syringe and injects himself.

Slowly...slowly...slowly, his breathing returns to normal.

KEY HOOK

Carl pulls a key off the hook.

INT. BEDROOM

The door softly swings open. Carl stands, silhouetted, staring at his wife. The only sound is the ragged, whispering whistles of his gasping breath.

She is asleep.

He doesn't move, and there's no way to tell what he's thinking, until we realize:

He's mourning.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Carl storms through the kitchen, past a huge rack of knives.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Carl plunges his hand into a desk drawer, shifting aside a chaos of office supplies, and draws out a pistol.

But he stops. He's seen something else, and has an idea.

He sets the pistol gently on the desk, and pulls out something else from the desk.

A VERY wicked set of scissors.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carl returns to the doorway.

JANET'S SHEETS

The eerie shadow of scissor blades creep their way along the topography of her body, going slowly higher, higher...

SNIP!

A lock of her hair comes away.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Janet awakens. Birds are singing. This is the most beautiful day of her life.

Janet is free.

She goes into the living room.

JANET

Oh Carl! It's time to go out,
dear! ..with the trash.

She grabs a big plastic garbage bag, walks into the living room.

JANET

Carl, honey -

Her voice catches in her throat.

CARL

He is terribly, terribly alive. He's putting a blanket around something on the sofa.

CARL

It's okay to talk. They said she
wouldn't wake up for a couple more
hours.

JANET

Carl!

She notices the figure on the sofa.

JANET

Is that...

She steps forward.

JANET

..Mother?

She goes to the sofa, and what she sees makes her stop dead.

She's staring at a copy of herself.

CARL
No, it's you, honey.

Janet DASHES for the kitchen phone.

JANET
I'm calling the police! You're
going to jail!"

CARL
(following her)
Why?

JANET
You think I don't watch the news!
It's illegal to clone a living
person! They never would have done
it for you.

CARL
But they did.

JANET
How?

CARL
I told them you were dead.

Carl clamps a rag over her mouth.

EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

A big garbage can, suspiciously full, sits on the curb. The mechanical arms of a garbage truck lift it up and dump the mysterious contents of the can into the back, and then it trundles along.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Clone Janet - or rather, JANE - stirs on the sofa. Her eyes open.

JANE
Hi.

CARL
Hi.

Jane is like Janet in face only. Her smile is warm and she is delightful.

JANE
I'm Jane.

CARL
I'm Carl.

She smiles, he smiles.

JANE
Do we know each other?

CARL
Not yet.

THE END