

A NIGHT IN THE MADHOUSE

written by

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EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT

An isolated gravel road running through a densely wooded area. Bent and broken trees encroach on all sides.

A chorus of cicadas fills the night air.

A PAIR OF HEADLIGHTS slowly come into view as a vehicle rounds the corner.

The headlights belong to a beat up PICKUP TRUCK that looks like it's being held together by hopes and dreams. Paint peeling, missing side mirrors, dented fenders.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

DARREN, 22, looks like he missed out on being in Green Day, drives.

Riding shotgun is MAX, 21, dressed in a black hoodie that's too big for him.

He fusses around with a CAMERA. A large backpack sits at his feet.

Max points the camera at Darren. Full of boundless energy.

MAX

All right, Darren, where are we heading?

Darren theatrically gestures out the windshield.

DARREN

To the one and only Lewis County Sanitarium. Home of the best crazies this great state has to offer.

MAX

And why are we going?

DARREN

To spend the night and hopefully capture some paranormal activity.

MAX

Would you like to explain the story for anyone at home who isn't already familiar with it?

DARREN

If you don't know the story, shame on you. It's a good one. Supposedly, the place opened in the nineteen twenties. It was where they sent the people who were beyond help -- the ones they knew they could ship off and no one would care.

MAX

Then what happened?

DARREN

It was in operation until the late seventies, when people started looking into the stuff that went down. They found patients running up and down the halls naked, trying to climb the walls, playing with their own shit. Negligence charges were filed against the place and it was shut down. It's remained closed to this day.

Max zooms in on Darren's face, moving the camera left and right dramatically.

MAX

Creepy...

DARREN

Over the years, people got up the nerve to check the place out. They claim to have seen ghosts, shapes, beams of light, heard noises... a few people have reportedly gone missing.

Darren turns to face the camera. Brings his face close to the lens.

DARREN

Never to be seen again. And you guys are coming along for the ride.

MAX

Do you believe it's really haunted?

DARREN

Myself, no? But you guys know me, I'm a skeptic.

(MORE)

DARREN (CONT'D)
Who knows, maybe I'll be proven
wrong.

Max laughs this off. Turns the camera on himself. He extends his arm, assuming his vlogging pose.

MAX
I think it's for real.

DARREN
Seriously? After all the places
we've been and found absolutely
nothing, you're gonna buy this
junk?

MAX
What can I say, I'm a believer.
That's why this works so well. The
skeptic and the believer.

Max turns the camera on the backseat: two large backpacks and a pair of sleeping bags.

MAX
So what did you bring for the
trip, Darren?

DARREN
Just the essentials. Sleeping bag,
change of clothes, some snacks,
and toilet paper.

MAX
You brought toilet paper?

DARREN
Yeah, dude. You wanna wipe your
ass on the floor like a dog?

Max thinks this over, nodding.

MAX
Good point. I hadn't thought of
that.

DARREN
That's why I'm the brains.

MAX
You may be the brains, but I'm the
looks.

DARREN
Nope. That's me too.

MAX
Then what the hell am I?

DARREN
You're the annoying comic relief.

Darren laughs at his own joke.

MAX
That wasn't funny.

DARREN
Yes it was. I think we're here...

Darren pulls the car to a stop, looking at the window at --

A LARGE VICTORIAN STYLE BUILDING behind a wrought iron gate. Ivy growing up the walls, windows missing, paint peeling, shutters missing.

Graffiti has been tagged on the sign: ONLY MANIACS MAY ENTER.

Max stares, mouth agape, as he takes in the sanitarium. He makes sure to keep the camera steady, focusing it directly on the sign.

Max points at the sign.

MAX
Guess we're maniacs?

DARREN
Looks like it.

Darren kills the engine. He opens his door and moves around to the backseat to grab his stuff.

DARREN
You coming?

MAX
I guess.

EXT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - NIGHT

Backpacks on, flashlights in hand, Darren and Max squeeze their way through the gate.

They stop, taking in the building from a closer prospective.

MAX
Okay, this place is fucking
creepy.

DARREN

We just got here. You can't freak out already.

MAX

Why not?

Darren shakes his head. He continues forward, shining his flashlight through the tall grass, making sure he doesn't step on something.

MAX

I swear we're gonna get tetanus.

DARREN

Will you calm down? Come on.

Max sighs, then follows Darren through the weeds toward the sanitarium's entrance.

A CHAIN is set up, binding the two doors shut. The windows have been boarded up, the only glass left on the second floor.

Max looks relieved at the sight of the chain.

MAX

Too bad, it's chained up. Guess we have to leave.

Darren rolls his eyes. Drops his backpack, unzips it, and beginning rifling through it. He pulls out a pair of BOLT CUTTERS.

MAX

You just thought of everything, didn't you?

Darren CUTS THE CHAIN.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - LOBBY - NIGHT

The place has gone to hell. There's little furniture left. Piles of debris and trash strewn all over the floor.

Darren and Max stand by the front desk, shining their lights around the darkened, cobweb and dust covered interior.

Max frantically shines his flashlight down one of the hallways.

MAX

Okay, if it wasn't creepy before, it's definitely creepy now.

DARREN
Looks like any other quote,
unquote haunted place we've seen.

MAX
I'm sure that's what everyone
who's ever gone missing has said.

DARREN
So... should we split up?

MAX
Hell no! Don't you watch horror
movies? If we split up, something
bad is guaranteed to happen.

DARREN
Do you need a hug?

MAX
Yes.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Darren and Max inch their way forward, trying to avoid tripping
over piles of rubble.

Max glances behind them, almost sure something will be there.

DARREN
You wanna sleep downstairs, or
upstairs?

Max looks around. Pokes his head into an empty room that looks
just as bad -- if not worse -- than the hallway.

MAX
Upstairs.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Darren swats away cobwebs as he reaches the top of the stairs.

DARREN
I know one thing: this is the
nastiest place we've ever stayed.

Darren spot the only door with a stenciled number still visible
on it: 24.

A graffitied DEVIL FACE has been sprayed on the door.

DARREN
Well we gotta stay here.

MAX
You would say that.

Darren pushes the door open --

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - ROOM 24 - CONTINUOUS

-- and enters the room. He takes it all in...

The mattress-less bed frame sits on its side in the corner of the room. Rusted. Several slats broken. BLOODY HAND PRINTS cover nearly every square inch of the walls, reaching up to the ceiling. The window is SMASHED.

DARREN
Holy shit...

Max enters. He almost drops the camera.

MAX
What the actual fuck? Can we go now? I think this is more than we signed up for.

DARREN
Calm down. I bet you a thousand dollars the taggers did it. They probably thought it'd be funny to freak out whoever came in next.

MAX
Well it worked.

Darren throws his sleeping bag on the floor. Sits on it, making himself at home.

MAX
You wanna sleep here?

DARREN
Yeah. Look how cool this place is. This will be awesome for the video.

MAX
Were you not hugged enough as a child, or what?

DARREN
Just sit down.

Max lays down his sleeping back parallel to Darren's. He unzips his backpack, starts fishing out various pieces of camera equipment.

MAX
If I die here, I'm gonna so
pissed.

DARREN
You need Xanax.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - ROOM 24 - LATER

Max finishes the last of a Subway sandwich as he watches Darren set up the TRIPOD in the corner of the room.

He can't help but stare at the bloody hand prints, unable to get his mind to focus on anything else.

MAX
How many people do you think
passed through this room?

Darren shrugs casually.

DARREN
I don't know. A lot. You gotta
figure this place was open for
like fifty years. There had to be
dozens of people over that time. I
don't know how long any of them
lasted if the care was as bad as
everyone says.

MAX
You think the stories about them
locking people up in the basement
is true?

DARREN
I don't know. When I was little,
my grandfather told me that he
heard the police raided this place
once and found ten patients locked
in a closet. He said they were
wearing straight jackets and
slamming their heads into the door
trying to get out.

MAX
Jesus Christ...

DARREN

He said the police couldn't believe it either. One cop threw up.

MAX

That really happened?

DARREN

According to my grandfather. Of course, there at the end, he did say that Hitler was living under the house in a fallout shelter.

Max rolls his eyes. Throws his sandwich wrapper at Darren.

MAX

Don't do that. This place is freaky enough without adding fucked up stories that aren't true.

DARREN

I'm just trying lighten the mood.

Darren finishes setting up the tripod. Cross the room to his backpack and begins routing around in it. Pulls out his CAMERA and MIC equipment.

DARREN

Bedroom's all set. You ready to roam the halls?

Darren goes to leave the room.

Max follows him.

MAX

No. But let's do this.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Darren and Max inch their way down the hall, the mounted lights from their cameras illuminating a short ways ahead of them.

DARREN

Know what's weird to think about?

MAX

What?

DARREN
How many people have walked down
this hallway.

MAX
It's a hallway. That's what people
do.

DARREN
Ha ha ha. Don't be a douche. I'm
just saying -- hundreds of mental
patients took the same steps we're
taking now. It's just weird.

MAX
You're the one that wanted to come
here. I wanted to go to that
haunted farm upstate.

DARREN
What? The one that had the one old
guy pass away?

MAX
Yeah.

DARREN
You are such a pussy.

MAX
Fuck you!

Darren laughs to himself as they continue forward. STOPS
SUDDENLY, staring straight ahead of them.

Max WALKS INTO DARREN, nearly knocking them both over.

MAX
What the hell?

Darren doesn't speak. Just shines his light on the wall
opposite them.

Another tagged message:

NO GOD OR HOPE HERE... ONLY SUFFERING!

This message doesn't look like paint. It still looks wet and
runny. LIKE BLOOD.

Darren makes sure to get this on film.

Max stands still, shining his light on each word of the
sentence.

MAX

Now do you believe this place is
haunted?

Darren looks over at Max, getting a little too much enjoyment
out of the situation.

DARREN

Chill, okay? This is just more
graffiti.

MAX

That doesn't look like graffiti to
me. It looks like the wall is
bleeding!

DARREN

You think the wall's on the rag?
That's not how that works.
Inanimate objects don't bleed.

Max jabs his camera toward the wall.

MAX

You're gonna stand there with a
straight face and tell me that
looks like paint?

DARREN

Taggers are good. Why couldn't
they make it look like blood?
Someone was probably here earlier
and it's not dry yet. Not
everything's about ghosts and
monsters.

Darren moves on down the hall.

Max looks at the wall one final time, then heads after Darren.

MAX

I'll be sure to tell your
girlfriend that after you die
here.

DARREN

If I die, I don't want you
anywhere near my girlfriend.

MAX

That hurts.

INT. LEWIS COUNTER SANITARIUM - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Darren and Max maneuver through an obstacle course of overturned filing cabinets, rusted wheelchairs and boxes of supplies.

They shine their lights ahead of them as they walk forward.

Max squints as he spots something a few yards ahead of them. Shines his light, zooming in on his camera. He still can't make it out -- it's just a DARK SHAPE on the floor beside a wall.

MAX

The hell's that?

DARREN

Only one way to find out.

Darren and Max slowly approach the shape. Both of them FREEZE IN THEIR TRACKS as they make out what it is --

A SKELETON WEARING A STRAITJACKET chained to the radiator.

Max SHRIEKS, dropping his camera -- it hits the broken tile and skids away.

Darren crouches down beside the skeleton. Films it from every angle he can.

DARREN

Holy shit...

MAX

What the fuck is this?! Why'd they just leave this here?

DARREN

This has to be fake, right?
There's no way... this place was
raided and shut down. They
wouldn't have just left a person
down here...

Darren's voice trails off. He sounds like he's trying to convince himself more than Max.

Max grabs his phone out of his pocket.

MAX

I don't know. I'm calling the
cops.

Max checks the phone -- no service.

MAX

Shit. You got bars?

Darren checks his phone. No service either.

Darren shakes his head.

DARREN

Doesn't matter. You can call 911
without service.

MAX

Oh, yeah.

Max dials 911. Waits for the call to go through --

-- but all he gets is STATIC.

It's loud. More than the usual static on a cellphone. It's a sharp and shrill as nails on a chalkboard.

Max jerks the from away from his ear.

MAX

Fuck! What the hell? I thought you
said we could call 911 without
signal.

DARREN

You're suppose to be able to!

Darren dials 911 himself. He also gets ABRASIVE STATIC. Hangs up. Dials again.

Again... STATIC...

Darren hangs up. Stows his phone in his pocket.

DARREN

Okay. That's kinda freaky.

MAX

I fucking told you. We need to get
out of here and call the cops.

DARREN

Sounds good.

Max scoops up his camera. Accesses the damage. The lens is CRACKED, but still functional.

MAX

Great.

Max looks up. His face drops.

MAX
Didn't we come down the hall this way?

Darren manages to pull his attention away from the skeleton and walks over to Max, looking in the direction he's facing.

DARREN
Yeah. Why?

Max points in front of him --

The hallway they just came down is now GONE. There's nothing in front of them except for a BRICK WALL.

Max SMACKS on the wall -- it's solid. Like it's always been there.

Darren and Max share a look, trying to figure out what the hell is going on.

DARREN
That's not possible.

BEHIND THEM:

The sound of CHAINS RATTLING.

Slowly, Darren and Max turn to see THE SKELETON GETTING TO ITS FEET. It fights against the constraints of the straitjacket. Lifts

Darren and Max stare, mouths open, at what they're seeing. Frozen in terror.

The skeleton STEPS TOWARD THEM -- is quickly stopped by the strength of the chain. It LURCHES forward, putting strain on the rusted links of the chain.

The skeleton LUNGES forward again.

DARREN
Fuck!

Darren and Max look around for an escape option. They see a hallway leading off to the left. Haul ass for it.

INT. LEWIS COUNTER SANITARIUM - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Darren and Max SPRINT toward the end of the hall, struggling to avoid the hazards in their way. Behind them, they can still hear the skeleton struggling to break its chain.

They spot a door to their right and quickly dart inside.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Darren SLAMS the door, resting his head against it. Breathing hard.

Max tries to catch his breath beside Darren, clutching a stitch in his side.

MAX
This can't be real...

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)
Will you help me?

They turn, shine their lights to see --

A LITTLE GIRL. She is bound at the wrists and feet. A harness is fixed tightly around her waist, running to a beam on the ceiling.

The Little Girl raises her head. Her skin is pale white, absent of life, dark circles around her eyes, hair greasy and matted.

LITTLE GIRL
Please... I just want you to --
(demonic voice)
-- HELP ME!

Darren and Max SCREAM. They wrench open the door and run out into the hallway.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Darren and Max emerge from the closet. They scan the hall --

The skeleton is TRUNDLING TOWARD THEM, dragging the radiator behind it. Struggling to free itself from the straitjacket.

Darren and Max SPRINT in the opposite direction.

On the walls on either side of them, WORDS SLOWLY APPEAR in what looks like BLOOD. As if being written by invisible hands.

YOU'LL DIE HERE!

COME JOIN US!

DON'T TURN AROUND...

Darren and Max keep running, heads towards the stairs.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Darren and Max ascend the stairs, taking them two-at-a-time. They're hauling it as fast as they can.

The stairs BEGIN TO SHIFT AND DISTORT, splitting into a mirror image view on the ceiling -- like an ESHER PAINTING. As Darren and Max go higher, their mirrored selves on the ceiling go lower.

Darren and Max try to focus. Disorientated and confused. Trying to get their bearings.

The stairwell continues to distort further, swaying back and forth as if under an extreme wind.

Max drops his camera as he grabs onto the railing, trying to steady himself. He WRETCHES, vomiting a BLACK, TAR-LIKE SUBSTANCE.

Darren grabs Max, letting Max use him for balance.

DARREN

Come on!

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Darren drags Max down the hall, struggling under his weight.

Max is doing everything he can to stay conscious, trying to use what little strength he has to hang on to Darren.

Max stops, braces his hands on his knees. Ready to throw up again.

Darren turns to looks at Max.

DARREN

What are you doing? Come on!

MAX

I can't. This place is making me sick. Just go.

DARREN

I'm not gonna leave you here.

MAX

There's no reason for both of us to die. Go!

Darren just rolls his eyes. He looks down the hall in the direction they came from --

Nothing in sight. It's oddly quiet.

DARREN

I'm not sure... but we might be good. It looks like that fucking thing stopped following us.

Darren turns to Max. His face drops:

MAX IS GONE.

DARREN

Max?

Darren looks in the opposite direction, seeing if maybe Max started heading that way.

The hall is EMPTY, save for Darren.

DARREN

Max?! Max?!

Darren slowly makes his way forward, his breathing echoing in the still air.

He raises his camera, using its light to guide his way.

Suddenly, the mounted light on the camera begins to SPUTTER, FLICKERING quickly.

DARREN

Come on... don't do this to me...

Darren SMACKS the light.

IT GOES OUT. Plunging him into DARKNESS.

In the dark, the sounds of Darren fighting to get the light working mix with the sounds of his labored breathing.

Finally, the light COMES BACK ON.

Darren looks relieved. He lifts the light higher, revealing someone STANDING BEHIND HIM --

THE MANGLED, ROTTING FACE OF A WOMAN. GRINNING WIDELY, EXPOSING YELLOW, CROOKED TEETH. Dressed in moldy hospital whites.

She remains still. Not moving or even blinking.

She's so still, in fact, that Darren doesn't hear her.

Darren takes a couple steps forward... STOPS... Can't shake the feeling he's being watched.

Building the courage for whatever he might find, Darren slowly turns toward the ROTTING WOMAN.

Darren FREEZES IN TERROR, unable to scream, as his light illuminates the Rotting Woman.

The Rotting Woman doesn't charge... or even move. Just keeps WIDENING HER SMILE. It stretches further and further, far beyond the limits of any human anatomy.

What's left of the skin on the Rotting Woman's cheeks TEARS APART as her smile reaches its physical limits. A BLACK, TAR-LIKE SUBSTANCE runs down her face instead of blood.

Darren's camera cuts to STATIC. His light FLICKERS, then goes out.

IN THE DARKNESS:

DARREN SCREAMS.

THE SOUND OF INCOMPREHENSIBLE SUFFERING.

INT. LEWIS COUNTY SANITARIUM - ROOM 24 - NIGHT

POV:

The TRIPOD CAMERA in the corner of the room.

Slowly, the door SQUEAKS OPEN. A DARK SILHOUETTE, human-like, massive, stands in the hall, staring directing at the tripod camera.

Beat.

The Dark Silhouette stands unnaturally still.

Beat.

The Dark Silhouette strides forward, getting closer and closer to the tripod camera.

It obscures more and more of the camera's view. Until finally nothing is left...

SMASH TO BLACK.

END.