

Darker By The Minute

by
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Across a dark screen:

"I'd like to be able to leave this world with sunshine and light. But it's a big place, and it grows darker by the minute..."

FADE IN:

1 INT. CHARLOTTE'S BEDROOM -- MORNING (FLASHBACK)

Beautiful and surreal. Blown out from the morning light. The calmness of a warm bed. She's lays there on top of the sheets -- her bare arm casually making it's way across a male figure's bare chest. He slowly comes to. She stares into his eyes. Then Smiles.

THEN, REALITY:

2 INT. FARM HOUSE / LIVING ROOM -- DAY

MOTION -- flat out -- it's PAUL -- he's rushing to open capsules of penicillin -- breathing hurried -- blood on his hands... FRANTIC.

PAUL
(out of breath)
Shit. Shit! Shit! Shit! COME ON!

His brother KIRK lays on the floor in the other room. He doesn't look good. Whatever it is, it hurts. He closes his eyes.

A MEMORY:

3 EXT. THE FARM -- DAY

It's quiet. It's calm. It's Texas.

An abundance of sun. Scattered trees and broke down farming equipment bask in the early morning aubade.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

We're getting the sixty second tour: the weathered barn -- the tall grass -- the dusty water's edge that hugs the natural curves of the grazing lands. It's faint and hushed. But it can't last.

BACK TO:

4 INT. FARM HOUSE / LIVING ROOM -- DAY

KIRK the floor, holding his shoulder.

KIRK

It hurts.

PAUL

I know, buddy - you gotta stay with me, though... come on...

Paul takes the penicillin and pours the powder directly into the wound

KIRK

Fuuuuuuuuuck.

PAUL

Give it a minute.

Paul retrieves a scalpel. Then, some thread. Then A needle. He threads it and begins stitching up his brother's wound.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. THE FARM -- HIDE AND SEEK -- DAY (FLASHBACK)

A much younger Paul and Kirk race through the trees. Winded and smiling -- the innocence of dirty knees and childhood games.

-- Paul tags Kirk on the back as they race down the hill.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

-- *The brothers weave in and out of the barn. Serpentine and resolute.*

-- *Kirk CRASHES into Paul from behind. They fall to the dirt. They CHUCKLE.*

BACK TO:

6 INT. FARM HOUSE / LIVING ROOM -- LATER

A SHOTGUN rests on the coffee table and a chair has been jimmed against the front door's handle. The sun has gone down.

The living room is dim and fuzzy -- an eerie silence hangs over it.

Kirk sleeps on the couch. Paul is seated across from him - - close by, but far enough should any evasive maneuvers be deemed necessary.

Kirk's eyes flutter open.

The two of them study one another. A long beat. Kirk stretches his hand out to examine his wound. It's been wrapped tight in white gauze; blood is starting to seep through.

KIRK

How bad is it?

Paul doesn't say anything. Kirk struggles to sit up.

KIRK

They still out there?

PAUL

Moving on. Maybe a few in the trees, yet.

(CONTINUED)

6 CONTINUED:

Kirk slowly brings himself to his feet -- almost painful to watch -- and steps to the window, to see --

7 EXT. THE FARM -- NIGHT

Shadowy FIGURES staggered behind the trees like statues. Their eyes seem to glow in the darkness. BREATHING in the moonlight -- could be human, could be animal...

8 INT. FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT (HALLUCINATION)

Kirk stands back from the window. He glances back towards Paul, when suddenly --

Paul is lunging for him -- The GUN in his grip -- the force of Paul's body knocks them both to the floor, HARD.

Teeth grinding -- veins exploding -- they struggle for the gun -- Paul wields it like a trophy -- Kirk's hands stay with him, but he's pinned there -- four hands, one gun and --

Still grappling -- breaking Paul's head lock, until -- the gun knocked away. It skittles across the floor.

Finally their hands locked into each other's throats. This is as real and up close as it gets. Until, Paul finally holds dead weight in his hands. His eyes are fixed into his brother's. Staring...

THEN:

9 INT. FARM HOUSE -- NIGHT

Kirk jumping back. Confusion all over his face. A hallucination. A messy one -- revulsion sinking in.

Paul still seated as he was before --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PAUL
Hallucination?

Kirk doesn't answer, he nods -- yes.

Paul watches as his brother wanders over to the shelving unit. Kirk's eyes scan the trinkets and two generations of family memories that sit upon the wooden rack.

KIRK
(teary eyed)
How long do I have?

PAUL
It's hard to say.

KIRK
(insisting)
How long?

PAUL
Six hours.
(painful to admit)
Give or take.

Body blows. Kirk takes the news and absorbs it like medicine. It permeates through his furrowed brow.

Kirk turns his attention back to the shelves -- there's a bright orange baseball cap there. He runs his fingers across the brim.

FLASHBACK -- EXT. THE WOODS -- JUST BEFORE DAWN

Sun lifts the fog. The boys' FATHER steadies a rifle at the level of his eye as he carefully STEPS through the tall grass.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

He moves forward ever so slowly -- hunting -- watching -- wearing the orange baseball cap upon his head.

CUT TO:

11 INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

KIRK

It was his.

Kirk holds the hat in his hands. Almost as if he's committing each ripple of it to memory.

PAUL

I used to think that this was the ugliest hat I'd ever seen. I still do.

KIRK

He started wearing it after mom left.

Kirk turns to Paul, hanging on every word as if he's never heard this story before.

PAUL

I don't think I'd ever seen it before then, can't remember a time when he didn't have it with him.

Kirk's fingers dance around the hat as we:

FLASH TO:

12 INT. DINING ROOM TABLE -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sullen and quiet. A young Paul and Kirk sit eating supper with their Father. The orange hat rests on the kitchen counter top. The occasional CLANK of metal silverware SCRAPING upon porcelain. The silence of broken, as --

PAUL

Do you think she's coming back?

(CONTINUED)

FATHER

(offers nothing)

Eat your food.

PAUL

We were gonna make signs and take them into town...

FATHER

She isn't a dog.

PAUL

But if someone sees her picture they might know where she is.

The SLAM of their Father's foot KICKING the belly of the table.

FATHER

Nobody is making any signs and nobody is taking anything into town. Got it?

KIRK

But, we just thought she --

And here it is --

FATHER

Your mother doesn't care about you anymore than she cares about me.

(beat)

There aint nothing more to say. Finish your meal and get ready for bed. Signs or no signs...

(choking back)

She made her choice.

Tears form in the boys' eyes. Their Father looks down and continues to eat in silence.

BACK TO:

13 INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

PAUL

We were raised on cartoons and TV dinners.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOSET -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

KIRK (O.C.)

He was terrible with words.

A younger Paul and Kirk cower inside of a coat closet. They tremble in fear. Paul protects his younger brother by shielding his ears with the palms of his hands.

PAUL (O.C.)

But he always found a way to make them stick.

Their FATHER'S angry VOICE can be heard from beyond the walls. He's YELLING at them, tossing furniture around. A glass SHATTERS.

CUT TO:

14 INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

PAUL

One time, he beat me so hard he busted the broom stick across my shoulder blades.

KIRK

You stopped coming home.

PAUL

And it forced him off the bottle.
(sighs)

Paul looks at his brother. He's not gonna make it.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

A year later, Mom shows up again -
unannounced.

CUT TO:

15 EXT. FRONT STEPS -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The boy's Father stands on the top step of the porch. Their MOTHER stands before him with a suitcase in her hand. She's pretty, but worn -- almost the definition of faded beauty. Tears in her eyes.

PAUL (O.C.)

Like nothing had ever happened.

KIRK (O.C.)

7 I don't remember her face.

They embrace, but it's hollow.

Her eyes connect with Paul's as he secretly watches them hug from the living room window. No emotion on the teenager's confused face.

BACK TO:

16 INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

PAUL

She was a ghost. Disappearing and
the reappearing every six months -
give or take. For a while there,
I was convinced neither of them
wanted to have anything to do with
either of us.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BATHROOM - A SUICIDE ATTEMPT (FLASHBACK)

Bare feet upon the seat of a wooden stool.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

A bottle of pills spilling open on the counter.

The shower head suddenly turning on.

THEN:

17 INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

Kirk nods, then takes the hat and stumbles back over to the couch. He sits in pain. The truth:

KIRK

I tried to kill myself three times.

INT. THE BATHROOM - A SUICIDE ATTEMPT (FLASHBACK)

The DROP of rope.

A pill on the tongue.

A razor blade at the wrist.

CUT TO:

18 INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

KIRK

It didn't take.

PAUL

Severe lack of sleep. Self-esteem issues. Depression.

KIRK

Suicidal tendencies trump insomnia.

Kirk finally puts on the hat.

(CONTINUED)

After a quick beat --

PAUL

Take it off.

KIRK

He's already dead. Mom's dead too.
What difference does it make? It's
all in the past..

Paul stares at him in silence. He's raging inside to rip
the hat off Kirk's head.

PAUL

Stop messing around, Kirk. Take it
off.

KIRK

Look at me. I'm not gonna recover
from this. Am I?
(off Paul's silence)
Am I, Paul?

PAUL

(offers nothing)
No. You're not.

Kirk sits back. He eyes the rest of the room in silence,
then --

KIRK

Just when I finally figured out
how to talk to girls.

Paul can't help but crack a smile. Kirk LAUGHS. It's a
much needed break in conversation.

PAUL

You never were good with timing.

KIRK

Charlotte. You remember her, don't
you?

18 CONTINUED: (2)

PAUL
How could I forget?

CUT TO:

19 INT. CHARLOTTE'S BEDROOM -- AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK)

Charlotte faces a window on the edge of her bed. Kirk lays opposite her. She's striking. The kind of beauty in her eyes that school boys dream about. Kirk is anxious, his hands fidget with the bedspread.

Soft music plays, as Charlotte unbuttons her blouse, and lets it drop to the floor.

CHARLOTTE
*You know my father hates you,
right?*

KIRK
(smiles)
Yeah...

She climbs over to Kirk, and onto his chest.

CHARLOTTE
*And He'd probably disown me if he
knew you were up here right now.*

She begins to unbutton his shirt.

KIRK
You don't hate me, do you?

CHARLOTTE
(smiles)
Obviously not.
(reassuring)
*He only hates you because of your
parents. Because of what everyone
says about them.*

KIRK
What exactly are people saying?

(CONTINUED)

CHARLOTTE

*That they're crazy. That your mom
ran out on you and your brother
and that your dad drinks too much.
Stuff like that.*

(off Kirk's silence)

*Just because they're saying it
doesn't make it true...*

KIRK

But it is.

*She looks at him differently now, almost sympathetic. His
shyness fades.*

CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry.

KIRK

*Don't be. My lack of parental
supervision is the only reason I'm
able to sit here with you right
now.*

CHARLOTTE

The only reason?

*She moves in closer to him, he leans back momentarily --
out of instinct.*

KIRK

It's late.

*She doesn't respond. Instead, she places her soft lips on
his and keeps them there for a long beat. Eyes closed --
Kirk takes it in before she pulls away --*

CUT TO:

INT. FARM HOUSE -- CONTINUED

*Kirk's smile fades a bit. He's turning sick now and
begins to sweat.*

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

You look pale.

KIRK

I feel pale.

PAUL

So, how was it?

KIRK

The kiss.

Paul nods -- yes. Kirk's smile fades a bit. He's turning more pale now. A flop sweat.

KIRK

(lost in memory)

It was sweet. It was something
I'll remember for a long time.

But he won't. Paul feels the weight of that statement, frowns. Kirk's smile goes from fading, to nonexistent.

Kirk lays down on his side. He's crosses his arms and rests his weary head on the arm rest. The blood from his wound has completely soaked through the gauze now.

KIRK

Just say it already.

PAUL

Say what?

KIRK

That I don't have much time left.

PAUL

No.

KIRK

It kinda feels good. It kinda
feels like... coming home. Like
walking down hill.

(CONTINUED)

Paul stands and takes the blanket off the back of the couch and places it over the shivering body of his brother.

PAUL

You should get some sleep.

KIRK

(fading now)

It's cold.

PAUL

You want me to bring the heater in here or something?

KIRK

(eyes closed)

I don't think it'll matter.

Kirk uses the little energy he has left to grin at his brother --

KIRK

We were gonna make signs, huh?

PAUL

(half-grin)

Yeah. We had photos of her and everything.

KIRK

(as if dreaming)

It was a good plan. It could've worked...

PAUL

Maybe.

Paul reaches down to remove the hat from Kirk's head --

KIRK

Leave it.

(soft)

We're the same.

(softer)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED: (3)

KIRK (CONT'D)

We're the same...

(falls asleep, limp)

Paul nods. He scoops up the shotgun and places his hand on Kirk's cheek. A silent and somber moment. Kirk is now out cold.

Paul looks down. Kirk's hand is wrapped within his. He sees the contrast in skin color. Kirk is turning blue.

CUT TO:

21 INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Paul places his hand on the closet doorknob -- turns --- and walks inside. Once inside, he locks the door behind him.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

22 PAUL'S DREAM VISION -- EXT. FIELD -- DAY

Vibrant and still. The sun beams down. It's a lush landscape with a vast backdrop.

Paul and Kirk sit on the hood of some car. They split a six pack of beer. Kirk touts a rifle. They're watching the tree line, already in mid-conversation --

KIRK

They're already dead.

PAUL

Exactly my point. That's why you have to destroy the only organ keeping them alive.

KIRK

The brain?

(CONTINUED)

PAUL

(nods)

The brain.

KIRK

Okay, here's one -- what about a crowbar to the head?

PAUL

That works.

KIRK

Or how about if you drop, like, an Egyptian obelisk on their head?

PAUL

That's good, somewhat difficult to do, but good.

Kirk's arm is no longer bandaged and the wound from earlier has healed. All that remains is a scar.

KIRK

I still want to light one of them on fire.

PAUL

I told you, the flame isn't hot enough to liquefy its brain.

KIRK

(shrugs)

That, or catch one in like a pit of wet concrete.

PAUL

That won't kill it either. It'll just be trapped there.

KIRK

Yeah, but it seems like a fun game to play with your friends.

(laughs)

If we had any friends left.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

A ZOMBIE emerges from the treeline. Yes, a Zombie. This is where we learn Kirk's fate. It's far in the distance, and it's head is cocked to one side like a dog hearing a whistle. It MOANS. Blue lips and shirtless.

PAUL

Another customer.

KIRK

I'm on it.

Kirk hands his beer to Paul and holds the rifle up to his eye. He aims -- fires...

CUT TO:

23 EXT. QUICK FLASHES -- THE ATTACK

Jolted streams of light -- SIRENS -- pattered feet -- hands RIPPING -- GUNFIRE -- What's going on?

CUT TO:

24 MONTAGE: A BARAGE OF IMAGES - NO TIME TO REACT:

YOUNGER PAUL HOLDING A BABY.

HIDE AND SEEK IN THE WOODS.

THEIR MOTHER, YOUNGER, SMILING.

KIRK. NORMAL. CANDID. SWIMMING IN THE LAKE.

CHARLOTTE'S FACE. JUST AFTER A GOOD CRY.

A RAGING BON FIRE.

THE ATTACK, AGAIN.

WALKING THROUGH THE TALL TEXAS GRASS.

HIDE AND SEEK. AGAIN.

HUNTING WITH THEIR FATHER.

KIRK'S HALLUCINATION.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

THEIR MOTHER. SCREAMING.

CHARLOTTE. SOMETHING FIERCE.

A BEATING FROM THEIR FATHER.

KIRK ON THE FLOOR, BLEEDING.

TRYING TO OPEN A SERIES OF PILL BOTTLES. IT'S NOT WORKING.

KIRK'S FACE. COLD. BLUE. SHIVERING. HELPLESS.

THE ZOMBIE TAKES A HIT. HE FALLS.

CUT TO:

25 INT. HALLWAY CLOSET -- DAY

Paul ERUPTS from his sleep. He'd been dreaming and the realization shocks him to his feet.

CUT TO:

26 INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

The closet door creaks open. The barrel of the shotgun peaks out first, followed by Paul.

CUT TO:

27 INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Kirk's body is gone. Paul stands over the couch -- his hands examine the place where his brother slept the night before.

Paul pauses. His face is blank. Paul is finally pulling back. Realizing this is goodbye...

His eyes move to the front door. It's been ripped open and there's a bloody hand print along the frame.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

Paul is bailing.

Exfil procedure, but this is a heartbroken exfil.

CUT TO:

28 INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A duffel open. Paul's main stash.

Paul is going through the contents. Setting aside some clothing -- other things he needs. But he also has to separate.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. THE FARM -- DAY

Paul steps into the light. His eyes squint -- it's blinding and warm.

He searches for signs of life. The barn -- the grass -- the tree line. All is quiet. The sort of peace that only comes from loneliness. It's like waking up from a bad dream, just to be assured everything is fine.

He walks towards the road with the shotgun in his hand and the duffel strewn over his shoulder.

We hear the CRUNCH of gravel under his feet as he walks along the edge of the road. The house and barn beginning to shrink in the distance. He doesn't dare look back, until --

Paul hears a NOISE behind him. Turning to find --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A zombie menacing in the opposite direction. Stumbling. Shirtless. It wears the same hideous orange hat Kirk was wearing the night before.

Paul focuses in. The zombie's shoulder is wrapped in stained, clotted and bloody gauze. This is Kirk.

Kirk, in zombie form, stops suddenly. His head cocks around in the open air like a dog hearing a whistle. Kirk begins to turn his head back to see Paul, but before he can --

Paul turns his face in the other direction. He doesn't want to see what his brother has become, but there's a moment of regret in his eyes.

PAUL
Forgive me, brother.

Paul moves forward even though he looks as if he wants to break down. There's nothing with him now but the sound of the ever present wind. The whoosh past your ear, the scream through the dried body of cactus.

FADE OUT.

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