"EMBRACING THE STRANGER"

by

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FADE IN:

INT. HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

A MAN (40s), neatly combs his hair. He HUMS to the sounds of yesteryear, which buoyantly WAFT from an old record player.

He sets down his comb next to a set of pink rollers and an antique hairbrush.

The man flips up his collar, looks around with perplexity.

    MAN
    (calls out)
    Barbara... have you seen my bow-tie?

Nothing.

The man reaches into his pocket, pulls out a pocket-watch, looks at it.

INSERT - THE POCKET-WATCH, which reads:

    "2:45pm"

BACK TO SCENE

The man furrows his brows. He shakes the watch, looks at it again. Same exact time.

He turns off the music.

    MAN (CONT'D)
    (calls out)
    Barbara... you were supposed to get my watch fixed!

Dead silence.

The man heads for the doorway. He cups his mouth with his hands, calls out loudly:

    MAN (CONT'D)
    Barbara! Where are you?

The frazzled man exits the bedroom.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The man wanders aimlessly throughout the spacious home. His vintage attire in sharp contrast to his modern surroundings.

    MAN
    (to himself)
    She does this to me all the time!
He proceeds from one room to another. His anxiety builds with each grueling second.

He reaches for a phone, begins to dial a number, then inexplicably curtails his momentum.

He ponders briefly, gently sets the phone back down.

A HISsing sound gradually builds behind him. The man glances over his shoulder into the:

KITCHEN

A pot of water is boiling over.

The man scrambles to control the pot of water, burns himself in the process.

    MAN (CONT'D)
    Gosh, darn it!

He dumps the pot into the sink, circles the room in a state of panic.

He stops, breathes heavily. He holds his head in disbelief.

    MAN (CONT'D)
    Oh, no. Something is terribly wrong!

He clenches his fists, YELLS out:

    MAN (CONT'D)
    BARBARA!!

INT. HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The bewildered man grabs a coat and hat. He looks around, then pats himself down.

    MAN
    Damn keys!

He gives up the search, exits the home with purpose.

EXT. HOUSE - TIME LAPSE

The day evolves into night. TWEETING birds are replaced by CHIRPING crickets.

INT. HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

The man returns home to find a television BLARING in the background. He breathes a sigh of relief, removes his coat and hat.
MAN
Thank heavens!

INT. HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The man enters.
The T.V. and lights are on. The chairs are empty. He looks around.

MAN
Barbara, where are you?

A haunting SHADOW emerges from behind.

MAN (CONT'D)
I've been --

EVAN (O.S.)
Looking for these?

The man quickly turns around.

EVAN (30s), stands behind him - keys dangling from his fingertips.

EVAN (CONT'D)
You left them in the front door.

The frightened man steps back, arms out in front of him.

MAN
Mister... I don't want any trouble here!

The man stumbles backward into a piece of furniture, raises his hands in surrender.

MAN (CONT'D)
I only have a few dollars.

The man reaches into his pocket, pulls out a money clip. He tosses it Evan's way.

MAN (CONT'D)
It's all yours.

Evan calmly sets the keys down.

EVAN
Look... you've gotta be more careful. We could have been robbed.
MAN

What do you mean "we?" This is my house!

Evan cracks a weak smile.

EVAN

Well, true. But it's also my house.

Evan picks up a piece of mail, shows it to the man.

INSERT - THE ENVELOPE, which reads:

"EVAN FRANKLIN, 886 CUMMINGS LANE,
LOS ANGELES, CA 90025"

BACK TO SCENE

EVAN (CONT'D)

That's me.

The man appears confused. Evan sets the envelope back down.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

MAN

I went for a walk.

Evan mutes the television.

EVAN

She's not out there, ya' know.

MAN

What have you done with her?!

Evan shakes his head, SIGHS heavily. He heads into the:

KITCHEN

Evan pours a bowl of cereal. The man keeps his distance, but is somewhat intrigued by Evan.

EVAN

Have you eaten yet?

The man pulls out his pocket-watch, looks at it.

INSERT - THE POCKET-WATCH, which reads:

"6:05pm"
BACK TO SCENE

MAN
Cereal... at supper time?

EVAN
Come on! You've never eaten cereal for dinner?

MAN
Well... no.

Evan curiously examines the box while MUNCHING on a spoonful.

EVAN
 Doesn't say you can't.
  (looks at man)
  What's the worst that can happen?

The man ponders. Evan waits patiently for an answer.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Exactly! Tell you what. Tomorrow, we'll have chicken for breakfast. Switch it up a little.

The man grimaces at the idea. Evan CHUCKLES, then focuses his attention to the man's head.

EVAN (CONT'D)
You have a hair out of place.
  (reaches for it)
  Let me --

The man quickly smoothes out his hair.

MAN
I don't like people touching my hair.

INT. HOUSE - BILLIARD ROOM - LATER

Evan cracks open a beer, takes a swig. He sets it down.

The man stands in the shadows - watching - waiting - fidgeting.

Evan racks a set of balls on a billiard table.

EVAN
Wanna play?

MAN
I'm not very good.

Evan points to a set of proudly displayed trophies.
EVAN
You may wanna take a look at one of those.

The man picks up a trophy, gazes at it with faint familiarity.

**INSERT - THE TROPHY, which reads:**

"FIRST PLACE. 24TH ANNUAL BILLIARDS CHAMPIONSHIP."

**BACK TO SCENE**

EVAN (CONT'D)
I can take the credit if you want me to, but you earned 'em... not me.

Evan forcefully BREAKS the set of balls with his cue.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Look, uh... I've been doing some thinking. We should probably start looking for a home.

The man is taken aback.

**MAN**
What do you mean? This is my home!

Evan sets the cue down on the table. He covers his face with his hands, shakes his head somberly.

**EVAN**
The thing is... I just can't do this anymore.

**MAN**
It's all geometry. You give up too easy.

**EVAN**
That's not what I mean! Come here, please. I need to show you something.

The man musters up the courage, inches his way closer.

Evan gently puts his arm around the uncertain man, escorts him to a nearby mirror.

**EVAN (CONT'D)**
I want you to look into that mirror, and tell me what you see.

**INSERT - THE MIRROR**
Evan stands alongside a frail, OLD MAN. The old man brings his trembling hands to his face.

MAN
What happened to me? I look so --

BACK TO SCENE

EVAN
You're eighty-two years old, Dad. Mom died twelve years ago.

MAN
That's impossible! I just saw her this morning. What's going on?

EVAN
Your name is Harold Franklin. You have mid-stage Alzheimer's disease. Your memory will only get worse. I'm so sorry.

A glossy-eyed HAROLD FRANKLIN (82), stands in disbelief. Evan fights back the tears.

EVAN (CONT'D)
I love you, Dad, but this... this routine is killing me. Uncle Jerry told me about a special facility, just for Alzheimer's patients. You'll be much happier there.

Harold reaches into his pocket, pulls out a photograph.

INSERT - THE PHOTOGRAPH

A black-and-white picture of Harold and Barbara years prior.

BACK TO SCENE

HAROLD
What if she comes home?

Evan places his hand over Harold's heart.

EVAN
She's already home, Dad.

Evan and Harold unite in a heartfelt and tearful embrace.

FADE OUT.