

Flee This Room

written by

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INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

A couple - JAY and AMELIA (20s) - linger at a doorway.

Her thick brunette hair swoops over part of her face as she smooths her floral print sun dress. He wears a light blue polo and thick hipster glasses.

AMELIA

Are you ready for this?

JAY

Yeah, but I'm not really clear on what's gonna happen.

AMELIA

An experience.

JAY

Okay. Yeah. That doesn't really help me understand.

AMELIA

So just go along.

She gives him a quick peck on the cheek--the kind given in the fledgling stage of a relationship. He shifts his weight sheepishly.

AMELIA

It's very cool that you have an open mind about this.

She knocks on the apartment door.

AMELIA

Follow Jericho's lead. Embrace the eccentricities.

Footsteps from inside the apartment. Someone approaches.

AMELIA

And have fun--please, please.

The door swings open. Wiry, bearded JERICHO (20s) grins. He throws his arms around Amelia and lifts her.

JERICHO

Click-click.

AMELIA

Click-click.

Jericho lets her down and gives Jay a noncommittal, dead-fish handshake.

JERICHO
You must be Jay--Amelia's new
boyfriend.

Jay flinches/searches Amelia's face for the right response.

JAY
Jay. Yeah. That's me.

JERICHO
Hello, Jay-Yeah. C'mon in. I've
brewed some glogg.

He directs the couple into the apartment.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

One couch. No other furniture at all in the room. No pictures on the wall.

Jericho, Jay, and Amelia hold glass mugs filled with brownish glogg.

Jay sips tentatively. Jericho puts his hand on Jay's shoulder. It lays weakly, awkwardly.

JERICHO
Jay, today's experience will
combine elements of improvisation,
spirituality, self-realization,
group dynamics, kinesiology and
pseudo sorcery. Are you ready?

Jay stares. Finally...

JAY
Wow, that's a lot of words you just
said.

Jericho frowns, but Amelia cackles.

AMELIA
See, Jay's the perfect fit for us.

JERICHO
Of course.
(chugs his glogg)
Okay, Ferd and Sissy are preparing
in the bedroom.
(MORE)

JERICHO (CONT'D)

Bertram and Sid Lavender will join us midway through. We'll start after I change my socks.

Off he goes to switch his footwear.

Amelia grabs Jay's hand.

AMELIA

Gotta tell you something...a secret..

She pulls Jay close. She kisses him passionately--not at all the harmless peck in the hallway. A long, involved kiss.

Through the doorway stroll FERD and Sissy (20) - Fit, young, glassy-eyed hippies.

FERD

Whoa. Big passion in the living room.

SISSY

Click-click, lovers.

The kiss ends. Amelia smirks at Ferd. Jay sways in a post-kiss daze.

Jericho shuffles back with new red socks.

JERICHO

Okay. Let's start out by being flamingos.

He, Amelia, Ferd, and Sissy immediately lope like flamingos, flapping their arms. Sissy stands on one leg and squawks. An exercise straight out of an acting class.

After a moment, Jay--wobbly from Amelia's affection and maybe the glogg--joins in, striding awkwardly.

The flamingo parade continues until Jericho calls out--

JERICHO

Boy band.

The foursome launches into a choreographed dance routine reminiscent of New Kids on the Block. Jericho produces a cell phone and plays a generic techno beat.

They whirl in unison/lock step--all except Jay.

AMELIA

C'mon, Jay. Keep up. Have fun.

Jay spins and twists, but he's hopelessly out of step with the rest. It's like a boy band with one drunken, unrehearsed member.

After several moments, Jericho barks another order.

JERICHO

Now gorge yourself. Pudding. Pasta.

SISSY

Pies.

AMELIA

Ground beef. Sloppy Joes. Beer
battered fish sticks. Bacon grease.

Everyone snatches imaginary food from the air and stuffs it into their mouths, devouring in greedy bites, like starved people.

They smear imaginary food all over their faces and extend their tongues. A bacchanalian feast.

They bite, tear, swallow, belch, and growl with satisfaction.

Jay joins in enthusiastically--an easier exercise for him to perform.

Amelia swoops in and licks his face greedily. Then she playfully bites his cheek.

Sissy sees it and giggles.

JERICHO

You ate too much. You have stomach
aches.

Sissy, Ferd, Jericho, and Amelia clutch their stomachs and roll around the floor in mock pain.

They groan and wail and make inhuman sounds.

Jay grabs his gut, a little uncertain.

JERICHO

And now--human sacrifice.

Instantly, the group jumps up, gathers around Jay, and starts to stab him with imaginary knives.

They chant--

SISSY

Accept this sacrifice!

FERD

Accept this sacrifice!

AMELIA

Click-Click. Accept this human sacrifice.

Amelia takes her imaginary knife and slits Jay's throat.

She does not smile at all. Complete seriousness.

She thrusts out her hands to mimic Jay's shooting blood. She "sprays" it everywhere.

Jay's mouth drops open--dumbstruck by the feigned violence directed his way.

Sissy sneers at him.

SISSY

Drop to the floor, sacrificial oaf.

FERD

Drop dead.

Slowly, awkwardly, Jay obliges. He takes a knee and falls to his side.

The group whoops and cheers at his death.

Jericho holds up his arms, signaling a need for silence.

JERICHO

Okay. Time for brutal truth. I'll go first. Gather around.

The group joins hands. All eyes on Jericho.

JERICHO

The world's institutions are collapsing. The politics of resentment have conquered the spirit of cooperation. Science has been choked out. Chaos will soon descend.

The group--except Jay--responds in unison: Click-click.

JERICHO

To survive we must be nimble and improvise. We move as one and think as one. We embrace the forthcoming domains--magic, sorcery, and shadows...

JAY

Wow.

All eyes turn to him.

JAY

Wow. Wow.

JERICHO

Share your truth, Jay.

JAY

My truth?

AMELIA

He's not ready for this yet.

Jericho disregards her/proceeds.

JERICHO

Tell us something true--something
that needs to be said.

JAY

About chaos and sorcery?

SISSY

(hisses)

He has no truth.

FERD

Useless.

Amelia snaps to Jay's defense.

AMELIA

Stop. Enough. Let's leave Jay out
of this one. He's our guest.

JAY

I'll share something with you.

A long moment passes. Jay starts, falters, looks directly at
Amelia.

JAY

I don't really know what I'm doing
here...

(hopeful glance at Amelia)

But Amelia, I think I would follow
you anywhere--even though I haven't
known you for that long.

(now he stares at her)

(MORE)

JAY (CONT'D)

Maybe it's the glogg talking...or
being so close to you...

Then he blurts.

JAY

I'm in love with you.

Dead silence. One voice breaks it...

FERD

You shouldn't have drunk the glogg.

JAY

I know it's way too early to say
it, but I'm being honest.

JERICHO

Amelia. A response.

AMELIA

I can't.

JERICHO

Brutal truth.

She sighs.

AMELIA

You kiss well, Jay. You don't shove
your face into mine--you're not a
face pusher.

She sighs again.

AMELIA

But the best thing for you would be
to run out of this room now and
never come back. That's the brutal
truth.

She looks directly at him--directly at his shattering heart.

AMELIA

My love is poison.

Everyone responds in unison: Click-click.

AMELIA

And your glogg has been spiked with
hallucinogens.

JAY
 (to Amelia)
 What do you mean?

AMELIA
 That's all that needs to be said.

JAY
 You're messin' with me. This is
 some kind of introductory cult
 bullshit, right? Hazing?

SISSY
 We'll eat your soul.

AMELIA
 Shut up, Sissy.

She looks at Jay with compassion.

AMELIA
 It's not a cult, Jay. It's an
 experience. It's also preparation,
 just like Jericho stated. I see
 something in you. A willingness to
 prepare...

JAY
 So this isn't...You don't...You
 don't want...

AMELIA
 Maybe if you were prepared.

JAY
 I don't get what that means.

SISSY
 (sneers)
 Run away now, while you can.

FERD
 Go.

JAY
 I feel stupid.

JERICHO
 A brutal truth.

He laughs. Sissy laughs. Ferd laughs. Then Amelia laughs,
 too. Jay is a laughingstock.

SISSY
Stupid. Stupid.

 FERD
Dumb-ass.

A knock on the front door.

Jericho leaps with delight.

 JERICHO
That's Bertram.

He rushes to the door, opens it, and disappears into the hallway. A moment passes.

When Jericho re-enters the apartment, he carries BERTRAM--a stuffed, homemade, life-sized dummy. He wears a suit that seems crammed with towels. Bertram's face is a pillowcase with an expressionless face scrawled upon it in marker.

Everyone in the room except Jay bows down before Bertram.

 SISSY
Hail, Bertram.

Everyone chants: Hail, Hail.

Ferd points to Jay.

 FERD
Guess who's with us, Bertram. It's
stupid Jay.

 SISSY
We watched his heart break,
Bertram.

 FERD
He should run out of here, Bertram.

 SISSY
But he's too stupid.

Jay droops. He approaches Amelia. Whispers to her.

 JAY
I'm going.

She nods. Touches his chest by the heart.

 AMELIA
I'm sorry.

He walks toward the door.

FERD

Look, Bertram, he's leaving.

SISSY

The quitter. The crybaby.

Jay doesn't look back. He strides to the door. He opens it.

Standing in the door--blocking his way--is a mountain, a beast--SID LAVENDER.

Sid is a solid block of a man. He fills most of the doorway.

His face is covered with a waxy monster mask. He looks like a melted candle. Something straight out of a nightmare.

He holds a meat cleaver. It gleams dangerously.

He swings it near Jay's nose. A half-inch away.

Jay stumbles back.

Sid Lavender growls and pushes into the room. The door slams behind him.

JERICHO

Sid Lavender. Welcome.

Sid continues his pursuit of Jay, who scrambles back, stumbling.

Whoosh. His cleaver slices through the air.

Whoosh. Again. Fast. Full force.

Jay screams. Falls to the floor.

JAY

God damn.

Crack. Sid Lavender brings his cleaver down on the floor near Jay's fingers.

Jay rolls, groans, cries.

Crack. The cleaver strikes the floor near Jay's ankle.

JAY

Help!

Jay stands. Whoosh. The cleaver nearly takes off his head.

Jay scrambles. Nobody helps. They watch, fascinated.

Sid Lavender grabs Jay by the shirt and pulls him close to his melted face. Furious hot breath whooshes in and out of the nostrils.

Sid Lavender pulls back the cleaver and prepares to slam it into Jay's skull.

JERICHO

Hold on.

Sid disregards him. Rears back even more.

JERICHO

Hold on!

Sid stops.

JERICHO

Bertram has a verdict.

Jay squirms in Sid's grasp.

Jericho leans close to Bertram. Holds his ear close, as if the dummy whispers something to him.

JERICHO

Bertram says that Jay has been admitted.

Sid Lavender maintains his hold.

JERICHO

Let him go, Sid Lavender. Bertram has approved him.

A moment crawls by. Sid Lavender releases Jay, who falls to the ground. He's bawling. Tears run down his cheeks.

Jay instantly curdles into a fetal position.

Amelia rushes to Jay to comfort him.

AMELIA

Did you hear that, Jay. You've been admitted.

SISSY

A great honor.

FERD

Three cheers for Jay.

JERICHO

You are with us. Click-click.

Sid Lavender leans over ominously--and pats Jay on the shoulder. Congratulations, Jay.

Then he stomps back to the door and leaves.

SISSY

See you later, Sid Lavender.

Jericho approaches Jay.

JERICHO

You've made it Jay. You are one of us.

Jay shakes his head. No. No. No.

JERICHO

You can choose not to join, of course, but if you do that, Sid Lavender will come back to kill you when you sleep. I don't think you want that.

Jay cringes. No. No. No.

JERICHO

Then, it's best that you continue your preparation. Click-click.

Jay sits up. Dazed.

JERICHO

I think its time for a little laughter. Let's lighten the mood.

Everyone starts laughing--fake, strange, forced laughter.

They laugh and laugh and laugh.

JERICHO

Laugh, Jay.

He doesn't. He stares in a daze. The group laughs harder. Ha. Ha. Ha.

Amelia squats down next to Jay and kisses him full on the lips. Jay doesn't kiss back. Too stunned. Just a shell of himself.

Amelia kisses him all over. She licks him. She laughs. Repulsion washes over Jay's face.

The laughing continues and Jay finally joins in. It's not genuine laughter, but the crazed kind.

It sputters out of him. Slowly at first, and then more.

He cackles and crackles. He laughs. Crazy. He laughs.

What else can he do?

His experience has just begun.

FADE OUT:

The End.