STRANGER THINGS:

EPISODE 2A:
DISCONTENT

BY
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(StrangerThings.tv)

DIRECTED BY ALEX TRAYWICK

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
(V0)
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 cell phone. 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