

## LIGHTS OUT, CAMERA, ACTION

Alexis Shrewsbury

“Get in, get out. Get in, get out,” Maya mumbled to herself as she unlocked the side door to sound stage thirteen. She hated being at the studio at night, let alone being out at night by herself in general. It was dark, cold, and the roads were wet after the rain had just poured on top of it. Her irrational fear of a horror movie-like monster hunting her down was in full swing. She pulled her coat in tighter and headed inside. “This paper better be important, Michael.”

She closed the door behind her, the rumble of the metal frame making her jump, and was swallowed in darkness. She fumbled her way through the area and flipped on a dim pair of lights over the hospital set. Bodies were sprawled all across the floor. Cherry red blood stained waves along the smooth, reflective flooring. Red paint and fake bodies, that is. Styrofoam and plastic.

Every item was left the way it should be for their cue. The wheelchair near the corner of the stage, the corridor doors closed, and the metal shelves filled with bottles of false medicine leaning on the back panels. Even the gaping void that bit a

hole through the prop wall on the left of the set was prepared to play its role.

Maya tiptoed over the fake bodies in her sneakers. She moved through the staged deceased-like booby traps in order to get behind the hospital counter at the center of the stage. Just before she could reach clear ground, she tripped on the arm of one of the last bodies she had to pass, like it was grasping for her. Kneeling down, she pushed the outstretched limb back in place next to the lifeless cadaver and continued with her chore.

All the blocky cameras were pointed at the set, almost like a pair of eyes ready to capture her every move. As the director, Michael had the entire scene envisioned in his head, but he refused to tell Maya how it would play out. Earlier that day, he and the main crew were huddled together in conversation that looked to include gestures of arguing. One would think that the lead actress would be part of crucial discussions involving planning, but Michael insisted that Maya would understand his intentions to keep her in the dark when it was time to film.

Maya walked around to the back of the desk, also noticing a knife that was nearly teetering on the edge. Paying it no mind, she crouched down in the direction the blade was pointed. She shuffled through the prop drawers and searched through

the other cubby crevasses, until she found a stray piece of paper stuffed into one of the corners. The overhead lamps assisted her vision as she took the piece of paper and read it:

~~Michael Iers - Director~~

~~Freddy Krewler - Set Designer~~

~~Norma Bateson - Producer~~

~~Chuck Keys - Stunt Coordinator~~

~~Jason Booriees - Sound Engineer~~

~~Hannah Bell - Script Supervisor~~

~~Carrie Wyatt - Wardrobe~~

Maya Lyzerman - Lead Actress

The names of the main crew members had been crossed out. All except one: *Maya Lyzerman*. She paused for a moment upon seeing her own name. Is this the list Michael was looking for?

A sudden squeak behind her tore her away from her reading. The cued wheelchair had rolled forward, its wheels lurching the metal frame forward before stopping. Maya exhaled the oxygen she had swallowed from gasping.

“Relax Maya.” She took a controlled deep breath. “You’ve been working on too many horror movies.”

Another elongated screech from behind. Maya spun around and gripped her braided hair. Now one of the prop doors from the hospital’s corridors had

creaked open, leaving a wide gap for more darkness to spill through. The rest of the doors that lead to nothingness were still shut up tight.

She looked around like she was crossing a street. No danger in sight, nothing to be afraid of, but she still cautiously approached the door.

She whispered to herself while clutching her braid, “Strange. Freddy said he had fixed the latch on this thing..”

She reached her hand out for the knob, hesitating before moving her hand too close, then sucked in another deep breath and grabbed the chilled handle, creaking the door back to a close. She exhaled and bumped her head on the front of the door.

“You’re being ridiculous, Maya.”

Metal then clanged on to cement at the opposite end of the sound stage. Maya slammed her back to the wall. The pounding of her heart knocked the breath out of her lungs. Once was a coincidence. Twice was a funny coincidence. Three times wasn’t a joke anymore.

She eyed the knife on the desk to the side of her, the blade catching the gleam of the tinted lights. Any intruder would be able to see a weapon like that clearly.

With her limbs still huddled to the wall, she

inched her way closer to the counter. The rumbling of metal was reaching closer, echoing from the dark void at the other end of the set like the sound of an air vent shivering as a frigid wind ran through it. The reverberation seemed to grow louder, almost turning into a deep growl. Maya would have to make herself visible to the maws of the darkness to grab the knife.

With a rush of adrenaline, she ran forward and gripped the handle of the lightweight blade. The abyss let out a metallic roar and she slid down in front of the counter in fright, her back pressed to the cold metal, her body shaking with every short breath. The knife was clutched close to her chest where her beating heart pounded, drumming, pumping. Pattering water in a nearby pipe replicated the pace of her heartbeat as it splattered on the inside of the metal. The throbbing clank became faster with every drop. The air turned silent. The dripping followed a rhythm.

More clashing metal, like a shelf was rattling in an earthquake, suddenly slammed behind her. She mistakenly shrieked, jumped from her spot and swung around with the blade in her hand.

“They know I’m here now.” She began to hyperventilate, stepping backwards. “They know I’m here!”

Her gaze was fixed onto the cavern of oozing darkness. The rest of the shelves were having rumbling tantrums, spitting medicine bottles onto the floor. The wheelchair was swaying back and forth. The lights were cutting off and on. Maya took a few steps back. Her heel hit the arm of a corpse and she tripped onto the cold, blood stained tile. Another shelf fell, the crashing slam slicing through the hospital. She snatched up the knife she had dropped near the pale bodies surrounding her and tried to stand on her rubbery knees. Tears built up in her eyes, which soon leaked drops of horror. Her terrified reflection was imprinted within what could be seen of the floor.

Her voice was caught in her throat, like the air had a choke-hold around her neck, squeezing tighter. "Get away!" She managed to squeak, but she regained air, fighting back. "GET AWAY!" She roared into the darkness at the top of her lungs, almost feeling some kind of courage, some freedom as she did so.

"CUT!" A deep voice shouted. A bell rang and the stage lights blared on at once like prison spotlights catching a criminal. She shielded her eyes, trying to adjust her tear-stained vision from the bright intensity to spot any nearby danger. The light was blinding. She took a few steps back, her shoes

slowly tapping on the solid ground. All that could be heard was her heavy breathing as she felt enclosed in an asylum of light with her heart pounding. Pounding. Pounding on the bars of a cage. She kept the knife pointed forward.

A bulky hand then fell upon her shoulder. With a screech, she tightened her grip on the handle, whipped around, and thrust the knife into the side of the silhouette's neck. The figure stumbled to the side, gripping the blade handle she had released. The figure then stepped forward out the saturated light for her to get a better view. Brown wavy hair, glasses, an untucked dress shirt. It was Michael, clutching the handle of the knife, and removing the retractable blade away from his neck.