

When the Doorbell Rings

By

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SYNOPSIS:

*Cadence, a young girl suffering from severe anxiety, depression, and agoraphobia, nervously gets ready to go on a date with a man she met over the phone. Cadence argues with her friend Richard who believes Cadence shouldn't leave the comfort of her apartment. Ultimately, when the doorbell rings, will Cadence bring herself to answer it?*

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN:

*CADENCE - a youthful and pretty girl who is fragile in her appearance as well as her movements, though she has moments of strength.*

*RICHARD - a sophisticated young man with a twisted sense of humor. He's a controlling, arrogant bully who speaks his mind without a filter.*

ACT IScene 1

*The interior of a nearly vacant bedroom in a studio apartment. The furniture in the apartment is old and stiff. There is a large, heavy mirror in the corner of the room, across from which there is a bed and a small, Victorian-styled vanity with makeup cluttering the top. Clothing is dispersed across the room in a haphazard manner as Cadence decides what she is going to wear on her date. Cadence puts on lipstick hesitantly. She looks in the mirror and stares at her lips. Then she takes the lipstick off and reapplies.*

CADENCE

Shit. I'm going to be late. I'm going to be late.

*Richard enters her room.*

RICHARD

What a charade.

*Cadence drops her lipstick.*

CADENCE

Shut up.

*She picks up her lipstick.*

RICHARD

Well, I didn't mean to insult you. It's quite a good-

CADENCE

I don't have time for your bullshit.

*Cadence looks for her shoes.*

RICHARD

Don't have time? Oh, my apologies, am I making you late?

CADENCE

I- I'm ignoring you. I need to find my shoes.

*Cadence continues to look for her shoes.*  
Shoes... Shoes...

RICHARD

That doorbell is going to ring - at what? Let's say seven. He seemed like a prompt fellow, don't you think?

(CONTINUED)

CADENCE

Sure. I didn't specifically think from the ten minute-

RICHARD

Yes, the ten minute conversation you had with a stranger, which your mother set up for you. And now what, you think you're in love with him?

CADENCE

I do not. I just- I think he's worth getting to know that's all.

RICHARD

Oh, Cadence... I mean do I, does our friendship mean that little to you that you're gonna blow me off for some guy you barely know.

CADENCE

I told you I'm going.

*Richard reevaluates his form of persuasion.*

RICHARD

You're not ready. You won't be ready. You can't possibly go out with him because you'll never be ready.

CADENCE

What do you mean?

RICHARD

Oh Cadence, don't be stupid. You're never going to leave this house.

CADENCE

Shut up.

RICHARD

Wow.

*Richard sarcastically claps his hands.*  
Well that was something.

CADENCE

(sarcastic)  
Sure.

RICHARD

No. Seriously, that was rather convincing. Wouldn't it be easier to cancel the show, drop the curtain? We both know there will be no date.

*Cadence becomes distracted by her reflection in the mirror, fixing her hair and flattening out her dress.*

CADENCE

(distracted)

I told you, I'm leavin' this time.

*She goes back to the mirror to reapply her lipstick.*

RICHARD

Yeah... Yeah... just sticking to your theatrics like you always do. You're really gonna waste your time pretending- putting on your makeup. When that doorbell rings do you really-

CADENCE

You don't know what I'll do when that doorbell rings. I could answer it - The doorbell rings and I open it and say, "Isn't it a lovely evening." And I will and it will be.

RICHARD

You're dreamin'.

CADENCE

I'm leavin', I am. I mean it.

*Richard walks towards the mirror. He stands behind Cadence.*

RICHARD

(whispers)

Lookin' like that? tsk, tsk, tsk.

*Cadence combs through her hair.*

CADENCE

(swallows)

I look... fine...

RICHARD

Then leave.

CADENCE

I will. I just... just... Need to find my shoes.

*Cadence looks for her shoes under her bed.*

RICHARD

You won't find them under there you know.

CADENCE

Shit.

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

You won't do it. I'm telling yah. You're not gonna do it.

CADENCE

Shut up. Stop saying that.

RICHARD

Come on, you know it's true.

CADENCE

It's not. Not for tonight...

RICHARD

Prove it.

CADENCE

Fine. I will.

RICHARD

Great. Then open the door.

*Cadence walks over to the door. She nervously reaches her hand out towards the door, as if she is about to open it, but doesn't.*

CADENCE

(beat)

Don't be ridiculous, I can't go outside without my shoes.

*Cadence stares at her hands and fidgets with her fingers.*

RICHARD

(chuckles)

Damn shit, Cadence. Damn shit.

*Richard walks over to the door.*

It's really not that hard. The doorknob is right here.

*Richard twists the doorknob.*

Just open it, Cadence. Open the goddamn fuckin' door.

CADENCE

Don't tell me what to do, please. Please, don't tell me what to do.

*Richard sits on Cadence's bed.*

RICHARD

I'm not.

CADENCE

Don't tell me what I'm gonna do.

RICHARD

But you-

CADENCE

You don't know, maybe. I might. This time.

RICHARD

Might-

CADENCE

Leave.

RICHARD

That's what you said last time. That's what you say every time.

CADENCE

Well this time is different.

RICHARD

Different, huh? Sure, different. Different how?

CADENCE

Oh, well, I don't know how. It just is, okay?

RICHARD

You think you're ready? I mean really, look at you.

CADENCE

What about the way I look?

RICHARD

Look at you.

(beat)

Your skin is sagging out of the sleeves of that damn dress.

*Cadence grabs her arms. Richard gets up from the bed.*

(beat)

Cadence, how do you suppose this date goes, huh? You get to the restaurant and -

CADENCE

And what?

RICHARD

Exactly.

(CONTINUED)

CADENCE

I mean, we'll probably order... We'll talk...

RICHARD

Yeah sure, you'll talk.

CADENCE

What? What's wrong with me talking?

RICHARD

Nothing.

CADENCE

*Richard mouths the word as Cadence says them.*  
What?

RICHARD

You're just not much of a conversationalist.

(beat)

It's nothing personal, but talking to you is like,  
like...

CADENCE

Like...

RICHARD

Like... Like your words, they fall flat much.

CADENCE

What do you mean?

RICHARD

They don't mean anything to anyone except you.

*Richard holds Cadence's face, pinching her cheeks  
and Cadence pushes her hands away.*

I guess that's what happens to introverts who lock  
themselves in dingy apartments, hiding away from the  
world...

*Cadence breaks down in tears.*  
Shit, Cadence! Shit.

*Cadence collapses in her bed crying.*  
Alright, alright I'm sorry.

(pause)

I said I'm sorry.

*Richard sits next to Cadence to comfort her.*



CADENCE

Yeah, but you don't mean it.

RICHARD

No, I do, I'm sorry. I am - I just  
(beat)

What if it happens again? In front of him, you lose control, you break down, you start crying, then what?

CADENCE

I suppose you're right, I know you're right. I mean look at me, I'm already shaking. Cadence turns towards Richard.

(Richard mouths the words as Cadence says them)

Seriously, look at me.

*Richard sits next to Cadence.*

I'm so far gone I'm shaking. So far gone that I'm nothing... I'm blank space.

RICHARD

Oh, come here.

*Cadence crawls over to Richard on her bed as he comforts her. Richard strokes Cadence's hair.*  
Alright, alright, it's okay.

*Cadence lets Richard comfort her.*

It's all going to be okay. Everything will be okay as long as we have each other- as long as we are together.

*There is a pause where Cadence lets Richard comfort her.*

CADENCE

(mutters)

Bullshit.

*Cadence is shaking.*

RICHARD

What?

CADENCE

I said bullshit.

(beat)

What part of this is okay? Huh? What part of this seems okay to you? How many times am I, how do I say it - do I explain- I'm on a beaten - a broken - What was it Thoreau said about paths and - and -

*Cadence sits up in her bed.*

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

You're really going to take advice from a pretentious transcendentalist who spent too much time in the woods?

CADENCE

Something about a path, or pathway... pathway, pathway something... Shit, what was it? No- no, that's besides the point, the point is I'm stuck-

RICHARD

(Cadence ignores Richard)

Huh, that fucking transcendentalist.

CADENCE

I'm going to decompress -decompose I mean, into my sheets - I'm turning white, no green - my sheets are green.

*Cadence touches her sheets. Then she stares at her walls.*

It's like I'm seeing yellow wallpaper- I'm her! I'm the woman trapped in the yellow wallpaper.

*Cadence gets up from her bed. She hyperventilates*  
There is too much air and I - I can't breathe - And I need to spit it out, to throw it up - I want to throw up. I need to throw up.

RICHARD

You feeling nauseous?

CADENCE

No. That's not what I meant. My life is frittered away by detail. That's what Thoreau said - he said to not fritter your life away with details. There are too many details, I don't understand who I-

RICHARD

(chuckles)

Fritter?

*Cadence gets up and paces*

CADENCE

Shut up. No. You're not listening to me. You never listen to me.

*Cadence breathes heavily and attempts to recollect her thoughts.*

RICHARD

(Mockingly)  
Fritter, fritter,  
fritter, fritter.  
Stupid bitch. Fritter?

CADENCE

This thing called  
my life. This right  
here. It's frittered  
details. That's all it  
ever was, frittered  
details. There's  
almost no life to  
fritter anymore.

*Cadence stares at herself in the mirror. She  
wipes the tears under her eyes.*

RICHARD

Fritter. Fritter.  
What's with you and  
fritter?

CADENCE

Nothing is the matter  
with me! I'm fine.  
Perfectly fine. I just  
need to de-fritter to-  
detox my life of-

*Cadence walks away from Richard.*

RICHARD

How poetic. You could be Emily Dickinson; you are  
already rotting in seclusion, now you just need to get  
writin'. Well go on

*Richard walks slowly toward Cadence.*

CADENCE

I'm sorry- I -

RICHARD

Do you hear the shit spewing out of your mouth? Who  
could make sense of that? Stop being so dramatic.

CADENCE

I was just tryin' to... to... to explain that -

*Richard corners Cadence.*

RICHARD

What? That you're losing your mind? It doesn't take  
Freud to analyze that, hon.

CADENCE

I'm not- not- I'm not.

RICHARD

Insane -

(CONTINUED)

CADENCE

(interrupts)

Crazy.

RICHARD

Yeah, that too.

CADENCE

I'm not crazy.

(beat.)

I'm telling you, I'm not crazy. I just have to leave. I have to - I mean, I'm going to... Where are my goddamn shoes! Cadence looks for her shoes.

RICHARD

Oh shit! See- you've made yourself hysterical again.

*Cadence stops looking for her shoes. She looks at Richard's reflection in the mirror.*

CADENCE

You don't understand. Don't you- won't you- you won't get it.

*Richard comforts Cadence, putting his arms around her. Cadence attempts to push Richard away.*

RICHARD

I do get it though. I get you! I understand.

*Richard walks Cadence to her bed.*

I just - I - I don't want you to get your hopes up about this guy -

*Cadence lets Richard comfort her.*

What do you need men for anyway? You got me, I'm here.

CADENCE

I'm going to- I have to.

*Cadence gets up from the bed.*

I need to -

*Cadence fiddles with her lipstick.*

It's not right... nothing is right.

*She looks at herself in the mirror.*

RICHARD

Fine, go out! See the hell if I care.

*Cadence pulls her hair back.*

(CONTINUED)

CADENCE

Isn't that better? It's better.

*She scratches her arm.*

*Richard walks up to the mirror to look at Cadence.*

RICHARD

No, Cadence. It's really not better. You still look like a spinster who is too afraid to leave her own goddamn house.

CADENCE

Don't talk to me like that - don't -

RICHARD

Be easier to put a bag over your head.

*Cadence shakes her head aggressively. Then she takes her eyeliner from the top of her dresser.*

CADENCE

No.

(pause)

You're right, perhaps, I do need more. I mean... under my eyes are too dark, and my cheeks... they're too pale.

*Cadence draw Xs on her body with eyeliner over the parts of her body she doesn't like.*

My ankles are too thin, my thighs too thick, my stomach, my fuckin' stomache.

*she turns to Richard.*

It's better, right? I know it's better.

RICHARD

(pause.)

Be easier to put a bag over your head.

CADENCE

Or my nose - how did I miss my fucking nose? It's bloated with capacity. I'm bloated with capacity. hell, I could go outside like a fucking balloon-

RICHARD

Be easier to-

CADENCE

-see the world and the stars, only I'm bloated with fat not fucking helium. Isn't it rather inconvenient?

(CONTINUED)

RICHARD

- you wouldn't leave either way.

CADENCE

Maybe I would.

RICHARD

But you can't. You can't leave me.

CADENCE

(Cadence talks over Richard)

I should dye my hair or fill in my breasts! Let the ink dig deep into my skin so when I'm dead, people will say-

RICHARD

You won't leave me.

CADENCE

- "oh what a shame - if only" - and you'll say, "oh, don't worry my love. Why, she was never all that pretty to begin with." Is that what you want?

RICHARD

You can't. You can't. You can't!

CADENCE

Shut up.

RICHARD

You won't.

CADENCE

I said shut up!

RICHARD

Oh, stop it with your pedantic tangent.

*Cadence runs towards Richard, sloppily swinging her fists.*

CADENCE

No- No- Fuck you! Fuck you! Damn it!

*Cadence bangs her fists against Richard.*

RICHARD

Here we go- again.

*Cadence lets out a tearful whine. She shakes her head and pushes Richard away.*

CADENCE

I'm going out there. I'm not going to be afraid or timid or - I'm not going to be scared.

RICHARD

(mocking)

I'm not going to be afraid or timid or scared  
(not mocking)  
Lookin' like that?

CADENCE

I always look like this.

*Cadence traces the parts of herself she covered with eyeliner. She hugs her stomach.*

RICHARD

(patronizing)

What's wrong? Cadence, you don't have to do this.

CADENCE

I want to throw up. I need to throw up!  
(pause)

Something needs to come out of me. Someone needs to pry me open -

RICHARD

It's okay.

CADENCE

(talks over Richard)

-to - to extricate my insides. There is too much going on in there.

RICHARD

It's okay.

CADENCE

(talks over Richard)

I breathed in too much air, too much poisoned, contaminated air, and - and- I can't get it out.

*Cadence is hysterical. She runs to the mirror.*

RICHARD

(seductively)

Come back to bed with me. I'll hold your hand and-

*Richard walks over to the bed.*

CADENCE

No... No...

RICHARD

When your dad died - I held you then- and you were a mess and I- I held your hand and-

CADENCE

Get out. Please, get out.

RICHARD

Be better to put a bag over your head.

CADENCE

Get out.

RICHARD

You just fall flat much.

CADENCE

I mean it. I want you-

RICHARD

Be easier to- put a bag over your damn fucking head.

CADENCE

Please!

RICHARD

Crazy!

CADENCE

Get out. Get out. Get OUT!

*The lights dim and there is a spotlight on Cadence. Cadence bangs her fists on the mirror.*

*Richard exits the stage.*

OUT! GET OUT!

*Cadence crawls back to bed, pulling herself onto it.*

Rotting in seclusion like Emily- Dickin- Emily-fuckin'.  
Come to bed with me- Emily

*Cadence pats a spot for herself on the bed.*

I said GET OUT!

*She pushes her sheets off of the bed.*

Fritter. Really, fritter?

*She stares out into the audience, into the mirror.*

*(cries)*

I'm going - I'm gonna - going to

*Cadence tries to pick herself up. She tries to get herself out of bed, gasping for air.*

(CONTINUED)



*Cadence slaps herself. She shakes her head in the mirror. She laughs.*

I'm so sick of your damn- this damn charade.

Shut up.

No one gives a shit about what you have to say.

Shut up! I said shut up!

*Cadence rubs the eyeliner on her face.*

*The doorbell rings. Cadence sinks to her knees. The doorbell rings again. Cadence sits on the floor mumbling to herself.*

LIGHTS FADE.

THE END.