

LUCIDITY

by

Dustin Chandler

Auggie Heschmeyer - Director

fheschme@artist.uncsa.edu
(330) 647-4600

Char-Lay Douglas - Producer

cdouglas@artist.uncsa.edu
(828) 466-4098

Dustin Chandler - Writer

chandler.dl@artist.uncsa.edu
(828) 446-8164

Jeremiah Cullen - 1st AD

jcullen1@artist.uncsa.edu
(336) 486-8537

Taylor George - Director of Photography

tgeorgel@artist.uncsa.edu
(919) 208-9093

Chiara von der Goltz - Production Designer

cvonder@artist.uncsa.edu
(336) 681-5151

Mark Diaz - Editor

mdiaz1@artist.uncsa.edu
(347) 525-7179

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"I am one of those who is most sensible of the power of imagination: every one is jostled by it, but some are overthrown by it." - Michel De Montaigne

*

1 BLACK AMBIGUOUS SPACE

1

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JULIAN, 26 and clean shaven in a black tuxedo, walks alone in the dark background as slow JAZZ MUSIC plays.

*

*

The heavy sound of a switch alerts him. A spotlight centers on JANICE, 25 and beautiful in a scarlet red dress. Her dress twirls as she dances sensually and methodically by herself.

*

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*

Deeply mesmerized, he approaches her. Instantly, the spotlight shuts off, blending her into the darkness.

*

*

Behind him, the sound of the spotlight reemerges, as does Janice. His determination does not let up, as he goes after her again, quicker than the last time.

*

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*

Once again, the spotlight shuts off, as Janice vanishes.

*

Julian's eyes frantically search around the darkness before the heavy sound finally returns and Janice, basked in the spot light, appears dancing behind him as he whips around.

*

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*

He sprints into action and runs after Janice, getting closer and closer. He makes it towards the light and throws his arm around her before, at long last, Janice vanishes.

*

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*

Julian stands in the spotlight, with an empty space between his arms, as the JAZZ MUSIC echoes into the background.

*

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2 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

2

*

Laying in bed, Julian, now adorned in unkempt hair, patchy stubble and a wife beater, lets out heavy breaths. He snaps his eyes open and jolts up, half asleep.

After a few seconds, he finally becomes aware of his surroundings: a lifeless, empty bedroom, the walls only decorated by playful photos of Julian and Janice.

*

Bottles of prescription medicine rest on his night stand, next to an origami dove and framed picture of himself and Janice.

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*

He grabs one of the bottles and unscrews the lid, popping a pill in his mouth before falling back on the bed.

*

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3

INT. SHELLY'S DINER (REALITY) - DAY

3

Small and almost empty. Very few customers are scattered throughout the diner.

Julian, in a ruffled flannel shirt and jeans, hunches over the diner counter with a plate of eggs and bacon in the shape of a smiley face. Fork in hand, he just picks at the eggs.

The front door opens and KURT MEISER, 46, in a grey coat and an equally grey beard, walks through. Julian turns his head to see this, but turns back, uninterested.

Kurt approaches the diner counter, pulls a seat next to Julian, and picks up a menu, eyeing it casually. Julian continues to ignore him.

KURT
(looking at the menu)
How are you holding up, Julian?

Julian looks up at him.

JULIAN
Do I know you?

Kurt puts the menu down and extends his hand.

KURT
Kurt Meiser. I was the mortician
for your wife.

JULIAN
(hesitantly shaking his
hand)
Janice?

KURT
Janice - right, right.

He looks over at Julian's plate and sees him picking at it with his fork.

KURT (CONT'D)
Lost your appetite, kid?

JULIAN
It happens from time to time.

He continues to pick around with his food. Kurt eyes Julian up and down, taking notice of his thin, pale physique, before-

-

KURT
 Come with me. I think I have
 something that can help you.

JULIAN
 I appreciate the offer, but I don't
 think visiting a funeral home is
 the best--

KURT
 No, no, nothing like that. What I
 have helps on a more...personal
 level.

Julian listens, taking in Kurt's words.

KURT (CONT'D)
 Scout's honor.

He pulls out a business card, with the words "MEISER FAMILY
 FUNERAL SERVICE" finely embroidered on the front.

Julian mulls this over for a few seconds, before he finally
 shrugs, drawing Kurt's enthusiasm.

4 INT. MEISER FUNERAL HOME - LATER 4

The clicking sounds of a KEY going into a lock, before the
 front door opens and Julian and Kurt walk inside. The
 atmosphere is pristine and clean, with angel doves and
 crucifixes hanging on the wall.

Kurt motions Julian past a table full of votive candles
 towards a door in the corner of the room. He opens the door
 as Julian follows, leading into the

5 CREMATORIUM. 5

Pitch black.

A flip of the light switch reveals the dank, murky interior,
 illuminated by flickering lights. A leather reclining chair
 rests in the center of the room.

Kurt and Julian press on forward. The walls are lined with
 furnaces and rusted gurneys.

Kurt escapes to the back of the room, immersed in shadow.
 Julian watches on in confusion as SQUEAKY WHEELS catch his
 attention.

Kurt reemerges with a metallic box on four wheels, with multicolored lights attached on the front and a pair of metal prongs clipped on the side. *

JULIAN
What is this? *

KURT
This, my friend, is "Lucy". *

JULIAN
What does it-- *

KURT
She. Don't objectify her. *

JULIAN
...Okay. What does "she" do? *

KURT
Well, if you wanna be blunt about it, this girl can make you relieve one of your best moments with Janice. *

JULIAN
Are we talking, like, a time machine, here? *

KURT
Not exactly. Think of it as an interactive window to the past. A mirage. You can see anything, but you can't change it. *

JULIAN
How many people have you tried this on? *

KURT
I've lost count by this point. Just can't stand watching people suffer. *

JULIAN
And what happened to them? *

KURT
I can't say they were all successful. Some of them left and had storybook endings, while others...well, it just wasn't for them. *

JULIAN

But why me, Kurt? What separates me
from everyone else?

KURT

(sighs)

My line of work makes you numb to
certain things, kid. But you, in
the shape your in with this Janice
girl, it actually gets to me.

Julian walks over to "Lucy". He circles around it, keenly
observing every inch of it.

KURT (CONT'D)

Just give it a try. I can't promise
something enormous like your
wedding day, but maybe something a
bit smaller and intimate.

Julian pauses and runs this through his mind. He occasionally
glances back at "Lucy", biting his lip in deliberation. He
finally relents, extending his hand.

JULIAN

I'll do it.

Kurt, beaming with some amount of joy, shakes Julian's hand.

6 INT. CREMATORIUM - LATER

6

Julian leans back in the leather chair, next to "Lucy".

A long cord runs from "Lucy" to an obvious, outdated box
computer and keyboard resting on a gurney.

Standing by the keyboard, Kurt types away before turning back
to Julian. He pulls the metal prongs off "Lucy" and positions
them.

Julian takes a cautionary breath. The metal prongs touch the
sides of his face; his face twitches as

7 BEGIN JULIAN'S DREAM ENVIRONMENT

7

Vast, blank.

Julian opens his eyes and finds himself in the middle of
absolute whiteness. He walks aimlessly, quizzically taking in
his lack of surrounding. His FOOTSTEPS ECHO as he walks.

Pressing on through the empty dream environment, he walks closer and closer to a DOOR FRAME increasingly fading into existence. He stands face to face with the door. *

He hesitates for a moment, contemplative of what's behind the door. He turns the doorknob and enters an exact replica of

8 SHELLY'S DINER (DREAM), 8

Down to the last bar stool, menu, and waitress, except the atmosphere this time is more vibrant and colorful, with three times as many customers lined up at the counter with drinks. A jukebox in the corner plays popping '50s jazz. *

Julian enters closer into the diner and starts eyeing the customers around him. A mishmash of color and clothing. *

Julian finally locks onto one woman sitting in a booth across the room: Janice, dressed in an oversized sweater, jeans, and ponytail, reading a leather bound book with a basket of french fries and ketchup. *

Julian quivers, taken aback by this sight and unsure of what action to make. He finally calms down again to regain a relaxed composure.

The instant he relaxes, his appearance changes from an unshaven, unkempt attire to clean shaven with neat, spotless clothing. This surprises him briefly, but presses on. *

He walks across the room to approach Janice's booth, putting on his best faux masculine demeanor.

JULIAN

Hey.

Janice looks up from her book and sees Julian. She returns a rather ecstatic look.

JANICE

Hey!

Julian does not move. He stands frozen in front of Janice, taking in the significance of this moment. *

JANICE (CONT'D)

(giggling)

Sit down, I've been waiting for you. *

Julian moves in closer to Janice and sits across from her in the booth.

He tries to say something, anything to Janice, but almost stumbles on his words. He notices her book, being a little caught off guard by it, and finally comes out with something.

JULIAN

So, um...you've got a new book?

JANICE

What? Oh yeah, don't even bother with this. It's just a ruse.

*
*

JULIAN

A what?

*

JANICE

Y'know, a charade. I only kept this out when you weren't here so guys wouldn't hit on me.

*
*

JULIAN

Is that right?

JANICE

Yep. So far, my record is three for today, a little lower than yesterday.

*
*
*

JULIAN

I'll bet.

*
*

He grabs a french fry out of her basket and takes a bite. Janice watches and smirks.

*
*

JANICE

There's a menu right next to you and you still steal my food?

*
*
*

JULIAN

I'm sorry, but the opportunity was there and I took it. Besides, the walk over here made me really hungry.

*
*
*
*
*

JANICE

You live two blocks away from here.

*
*

JULIAN

I still worked up a sweat.

*
*

He takes another fry. This gets another laugh out of her.

*

JANICE

Manners, boy - use 'em!

*
*

JULIAN

Right, right. Let me try that again.

(clears throat)

"Hey, babycakes, can I have some of your fries?"

*
*
*
*
*

JANICE

(snickering)

"Babycakes"? Honey, if that's your idea of a compliment, you have a long way to go to understand women.

Both Janice and Julian start to chuckle for a few seconds before settling down.

*

A brief pause before a small piece of paper suddenly appears before Janice. She takes no real consideration at this and begins to fold it in half.

*
*

JULIAN

What are you doing?

Janice doesn't look up, her eyes centered directly on the paper. She continues to fold it into halves as she speaks.

JANICE

Origami. This looked so much easier online.

*
*

Julian leans in, intrigued by Janice's handwork.

JULIAN

Nice. Can you try a dove?

*

JANICE

I'll try, but I make no promises.

*

Janice's hands move with rather quick intensity, folding each corner and crevice rapidly, yet still refolding when she makes a mistake.

The paper starts to appear increasingly more organic, into an actual design, before she completely stops to look at Julian.

*
*

JANICE (CONT'D)

Sweetie, you're bleeding.

*
*

Julian pats around his face and feels a line of blood under his nose. Suddenly, everything in Julian's sight, the diner, the booth, Janice, suddenly CUTS into

*
*
*

A sharp pain hits him as he throws his hands to his forehead, grasping at it. He almost rolls out of bed by the sheer intensity of the pain.

The pain finally subsides as he hunches over the side of the bed, trying to catch a breath. He rubs the sides of his face, caught off guard by the recent pain. *

He grabs one of the prescription bottles from his night stand and pops a pill in his mouth. *

Without hesitation, a quick flash of Janice's silhouette appears in front of him, reading the same book from earlier. *

He lifts his head up quickly, but sees no silhouette. He cautiously looks around the entire room; no silhouette. He turns back around and massages the side of his head again. *

He starts to lay the bottle back on the night stand and sees Kurt's business card laying next to the other bottles. *

He flips it over and reads the lettering over and over to himself. *

11 INT. SHELLY'S DINER (DREAM) - DAY

11

*

Julian and Janice sit face to face at a two person table, as Julian gazes at her. Laying next to Janice is a half finished origami, which Janice keeps her attention on before noticing Julian's gazing.

JANICE

Why are you looking at me like that?

JULIAN

I don't know, it's just, you work well with your hands. *

JANICE

I'm sure that's what every woman wants to hear. *

JULIAN

It's better than "babycakes", you gotta give me that. *

JANICE

To be honest, I'm starting to warm up to the whole "babycakes" moniker. It's kinda cute. *

JULIAN

Really? After that whole thing
about not understanding women?

JANICE

Well, I mean, you can't really call
a girl "babycakes" on the first
date - hell, even the second.
Instant mood killer. Now, on the
fourth, maybe you'll get somewhere.

JULIAN

Ballpark guess, how often were you
ever called that on the fourth
date?

JANICE

Hardly ever, and you know why?

Julian shrugs.

JANICE (CONT'D)

Cause they couldn't make it past
the first.

JULIAN

I never called you "babycakes" on
the first date.

JANICE

And look where you're at now.

Julian smiles as Janice resumes to her origami. He motions
his hands towards it before--

JANICE (CONT'D)

Not yet, not yet. You gotta wait.

JULIAN

Not the first time I've heard that.

A WAITRESS taps Julian on the shoulder.

WAITRESS

Can I get you anything, honey?

Julian turns to face the waitress. Janice continues to work
on the origami.

JULIAN

I'll have the ribeye steak and
fries. What do you--

Julian turns back to face an empty seat. Janice, as well as everyone else in the diner, is gone. Julian freezes.

His eyes search the entire diner before he immediately coughs uncontrollably, covering his mouth with his hands.

12 INT. CREMATORIUM - DAY

12

Julian, eyes closed and coughing furiously with blood emerging from his mouth, attempts to snap up in the leather seat, opening his eyes. Kurt has his hands on Julian's shoulders, holding him down.

KURT

Easy, easy, easy!

Julian finally subsides as Kurt loosens up.

JULIAN

What happened? That felt shorter than last time.

KURT

I had to pull you out. There shouldn't be this much blood.

Julian takes a quick sniff, then runs his fingers around his lips, feeling the immense blood on his fingertips.

JULIAN

Oh, shit.

KURT

I think we need to call this off. This is getting too dangerous.

JULIAN

What? No, no - I'm okay, Kurt. See, I'm breathing, I'm healthy.

KURT

No, no more. Look at yourself - you can't handle it.

Julian pats under his nose again and feels the blood underneath. He considers Kurt's words for a few seconds, before--

JULIAN

(nodding)

You're right.

He sighs and lays back on the leather seat.

13

INT. SHELLY'S DINER (REALITY) - DAY

13

Julian sits at a booth at the corner of the room as CASUAL CHATTER fills the air. A bowl of fresh oatmeal sits in front of him. *

He unwraps his silverware and prepares himself to eat. Within a mere second, Janice appears across from Julian in the booth, quietly eating her own bowl of oatmeal. *

Julian drops his silverware on the table, appearing visibly shaken. He looks at his surroundings, almost in doubt. Janice continues to eat, paying him no attention. *

JULIAN

Janice? *

Janice doesn't look up, wiping her mouth with a napkin. Julian rubs his forehead, hit with a tinge of pain, but continues to seek her attention. *

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Janice, honey, it's me. *

Again, Janice does not look up. The pain increases as Julian grabs at his head, looking down at the table. He lifts his head again and, to his surprise, Janice has vanished.

He looks to his left and right, searching for Janice; no avail. He finally finds her sitting at the bar, reading her book. *

Julian gets out the booth and walks over to Janice at the bar; she pays no attention to him, which draws his ire. He tries to keep his voice down. CASUAL CHATTER CONTINUES.

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Talk to me, please. Don't just-- *

He can't even finish his sentence before he turns and sees that Janice, once again, has vanished.

He looks to his left; Janice appears at a two person table sitting by herself, folding a piece of origami.

The hysteria continues: Julian, anxiety growing by the second, looks to his right. Janice appears at the booth he was originally at, eating the same bowl of oatmeal. *

Julian panics as these images begin to fade in and fade out at increasing speed: Janice reading at the bar, Janice folding origami at the table, and Janice eating at the booth.

The pain comes back as he grabs at his head, more intensely than before and tries to approach each of the images of Janice that flash before him.

*
*

The images continue to grow faster, and the pain doesn't let up as a line of blood trickles down his nose. Hands still cradling his head, he let's out a loud, resounding--

JULIAN (CONT'D)

Why can't you just talk to me?!

*

The images are gone, and the CASUAL CHATTER HALTS. Nothing but silence, as every customer in the diner looks at Julian.

*

Julian catches on to the customers' stares, calming down in the process. He finally runs to the exit.

*

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14 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

14

*

Julian, at his most visibly torn and exhausted, stirs and shakes in bed. He curls up in a fetal-like position between the sheets before finally slipping off to the side of the bed.

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*

*

*

He grabs one of the prescription bottles off his night stand and opens it up. No pills.

*

*

He throws the bottle to the floor and grabs another bottle. He does the same. No pills.

*

*

Another bottle, then another, becoming violently impatient. He throws his hand across his night stand, knocking the remaining bottles to the floor.

*

*

*

Julian starts to simmer down, taking in deep breaths. He looks back at his night stand and sees, next to the origami dove, the framed picture of himself and Janice.

*

*

*

It catches his attention, drawing him in before he finally picks it up. He inspects it, caressing Janice's face with his thumb, trapped in his own thoughts.

*

*

*

15 INT. CREMATORIUM - DAY

15

*

Julian lays in the leather seat, as Kurt, weariness in his eyes, stands by with the metal prongs in his hands.

*

*

KURT

*

Are you sure?

*

Julian looks up at Kurt. Confident. Self-assured.

*

JULIAN

I'm ready.

Kurt takes in the seriousness of Julian's tone before finally nodding.

Julian closes his eyes.

16 INT. SHELLY'S DINER (DREAM) - DAY

16

A clean shaven Julian sits next to Janice in a booth, his arm around her as she is currently in the middle of ferociously folding a piece of paper.

The napkin begins to turn more and more animal-like before Janice finally halts and holds it up with overwhelming pride: it resembles a white dove; imperfect, but nonetheless a dove.

She hands it to Julian as he inspects it with high investment. He motions the origami towards Janice as if he were handing it back, before immediately pulling back and playfully holding it in the air.

She tries to grab for it, but he makes it farther and farther out of her reach. Delicate laughter ensues as she continues, before Julian leans in and sneaks a soft, slow kiss.

17 INT. CREMATORIUM - CONTINUOUS

17

Laying next to "Lucy" in the leather reclining chair is the pale, shockingly diluted body of Julian, his face covered in blood from his nose to his mouth, which forms a half crooked smile.

18 INT. MEISER FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

18

Kurt emerges out of the crematorium and approaches the table of votive candles, all but the center have been lit. He pulls a lighter out of his pocket and lights the center candle.

He starts to walk off as the flames of each candle flicker collectively.

CUT TO BLACK.