

Erasure

By

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INT. - ALEX WILLIAMS' LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Sitting in his living room, we see ALEX WILLIAMS. He's sitting back, reading a newspaper with the television on in the background.

We hear a knock at the door. Alex puts the newspaper down and goes to the door to answer it.

As he opens the door, we see CASSIDY DRAKE, his fiancée. She looks badly shaken by something.

ALEX
Cassidy! What's up?

CASSIDY
Hi, Alex. May I come in?

ALEX
Sure. What's the matter?

Cassidy comes in, and Alex shuts the door behind her.

CASSIDY
Well... You remember I wrote the Army about my dad's disappearance?

ALEX
Yeah, sure.

CASSIDY
Well, I just got a letter back from them. They don't have any record of him!

ALEX
They misplaced his records?

CASSIDY
If that was it, I wouldn't be so worried about it. They said they have no record of his serial number ever being issued!

ALEX
That's weird. You're sure you gave them the right one?

CASSIDY
Yes! I wrote it down in my diary after he was deployed to Iraq, in case I ever needed it. I even double-checked it after I read the letter.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Have you asked your mom about this?

CASSIDY

That's why I wanted to come talk to you. Her attitude seems awfully... well, nonchalant.

ALEX

How so?

CASSIDY

Well, I called her on the phone to tell her about all this, and she was kind of like, "Well, I wish I could help you, Honey, but I'm just a grocery clerk. You're the private investigator in the family."

ALEX

Well, she's right as far as that goes.

CASSIDY

It's not that she has the facts wrong. You know how high-strung she can be. She went into histrionics when I got the measles. She's just not acting like the man she was married to for thirty-two years just disappeared.

ALEX

Thirty-two years?

CASSIDY

Yes! You knew that! You went with me to their thirtieth-anniversary party!

ALEX

I did?

CASSIDY

You can't have forgotten that! You drove me all the way up to Hood River, we stayed at the Holiday Inn--

ALEX

Was that the one just a couple of weeks before I proposed?

CASSIDY

Right!

ALEX

Oh, that party! I guess I never really realized it was for your parents.

CASSIDY

That was the whole point of the party!

ALEX

It's funny that we went to it for that, but I never met him.

CASSIDY

But you did! You and he and my uncle Steve stood in the kitchen for an hour and a half talking about the Seahawks!

ALEX

Hm. Is Steve the skinny guy with the walrus mustache?

CASSIDY

Yes! You remember him, but not my dad?

ALEX

That does seem kind of weird.

Cassidy sits down, deflated.

CASSIDY

I had come over here for your opinion as a psychiatrist about my mother's behavior, but now I'm wondering if I shouldn't ask one about yours.

Alex sits down next to her.

ALEX

I'm sorry, Cassidy. I don't know why I'm not remembering this.

CASSIDY

If it was any one thing, it'd just be "kind of weird," like you say. I just don't understand why it's all happening like this. The Army's

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CASSIDY (cont'd)
records are gone, Mom's acting like
it's nothing serious, you seem to
have forgotten all about him... at
least there's still Social
Security. Maybe they'll have
something.

ALEX
I'm sure they'd have a record of
him, but would it be anything
useful?

CASSIDY
I'm not sure. At least I'd have
something to show that, yes, he's
in the system somewhere.

She gets up and starts toward the door.

CASSIDY
Maybe I'd better go to my office
for a while and see what I can hunt
down on the Internet.

ALEX
That's probably not a bad idea. I
wish I could have been more help,
Cassidy.

CASSIDY
Don't worry about it too much,
Alex.

ALEX
I feel like I've just made things
worse.

CASSIDY
It's not your fault if you just
don't remember.

ALEX
I'll tell you what. I'll look
through some of my texts to find
out if there's something that could
cause something like what you
describe in your mother.

He opens the door for her, and she steps outside.

CASSIDY

That would be great. Thanks, Alex.

ALEX

I'm glad to help however I can. You take care, OK?

CASSIDY

I will.

She turns and leaves; he shuts the door behind her.

FADE TO:

INT. - CASSIDY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Cassidy is here alone, sitting at her computer. She's used Google to look up her father, Michael Xavier Drake.

CASSIDY

This is not possible! Dozens of Michael Drakes in the US, but not one Michael Xavier Drake.

Suddenly, across the room, she sees a MYSTERIOUS MAN. There is no hint of him coming or going; he's just abruptly there.

He is not menacing in his demeanor; in fact, he seems quite gentle, and perhaps even genuinely concerned for Cassidy.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

You won't find him, Miss Drake.

CASSIDY

What? Where did you come from?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Stop looking.

CASSIDY

How did you get in here?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Never mind that. You've never seen it before, and you'll never see it again.

CASSIDY

I didn't even see it this time!

(CONTINUED)

MYSTERIOUS MAN

I'm only here to warn you to stop looking for your father.

CASSIDY

Just like that? Stop, just because some stranger says so?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Just before he disappeared, he told you he was investigating something big. Am I right?

CASSIDY

(Surprised.)

That's right! I'd forgotten all about that.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

You were supposed to forget it. You were supposed to forget everything about him.

CASSIDY

"Supposed to"? According to whom?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

It's best if you don't know. I only know the slightest hint of who they are, myself -- just enough to know that something's going on, but not enough to face Erasure.

CASSIDY

"Erasure"? Is that's what they're calling murder now?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

There's more to it than that. It's not just what happened to your mother. It's what happened to all of his family and friends -- everyone who ever met him, except for you. And it happened because he was digging where he shouldn't have been -- just like you are.

CASSIDY

Why am I the exception? Why do I remember him?

(CONTINUED)

MYSTERIOUS MAN

I really have no idea. But since you can't be forced to forget, I'm here to warn you to forget him on your own.

CASSIDY

Warn me? What happens if I don't?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Erasure.

CASSIDY

Is that a threat?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

No. A "threat" would imply that I have some control over the situation. I don't. My control in this is limited to this warning.

CASSIDY

Leave it off or die -- is that it?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Actually, I don't know what happens to Erased people. I'm pretty sure I don't want to know. And the less you know, the better it'll be for you. Trust me on that.

CASSIDY

Trust you? You tell me that your friends just "Erased" my father--

MYSTERIOUS MAN

They're not my friends. They actually have me in a very... uncomfortable position. Given the choice, I'd much rather "Erase" them -- and they're well aware of that fact.

CASSIDY

You should tell them I don't scare off easily.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Actually, they told me that. I'm the one who insisted on giving you warning. But I can see that you still don't believe me. Take a look at that photo on your desk.

(CONTINUED)

She looks at the photo he indicates. It shows her standing in a park, smiling.

CASSIDY

What about it?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

When that photo was actually taken, your father was standing next to you.

CASSIDY

No, that one's always been just me.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

It was the last time you saw your father in person. He and your mother drove down from Hood River, just to visit. Your mother took the photo because your father insisted on it. Not that she'll remember things that way, of course.

CASSIDY

(Confused.)

It... No, it... But...

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Clearly, the job they did on you was partially successful -- but only partially.

The Mysterious Man turns and goes toward the exit door.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

You should be aware of this, Miss Drake: this isn't like you see on television, where the gutsy P.I. is warned off a case, but pursues it anyway and finds the truth, and it all works out in the end. This isn't like that. It only ends one of two ways: you stop, or you get Erased.

He opens the door and starts to leave.

CASSIDY

Wait a minute! Do you have a name?

He considers his response.

(CONTINUED)

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Yes. Yes, I do.

He leaves, shutting the door behind him.

CASSIDY

Wait a minute!

She gets up, runs to the door, throws it open, and looks outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. - OUTSIDE CASSIDY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Cassidy steps out through her open door and looks around.

The Mysterious Man is nowhere to be seen, nor is there any sign that he was ever there.

FADE TO:

EXT. - CHINTIMINI PARK - DAY

Alex and Cassidy are having a picnic lunch at one of the outdoor tables.

(Optionally, Unit 91 -- first described in a later scene -- may also be somewhere in the background.)

ALEX

That is very weird, Cassidy.

CASSIDY

He was right about one thing, though. That is a pretty tired TV cliché, and it's one that's always bothered me.

ALEX

That being beside the point, of course.

CASSIDY

Of course.

ALEX

I don't see how it could be done, though. I mean, making someone disappear? Sure. That happens all the time. Wiping out all official

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ALEX (cont'd)
records? That's pretty unlikely,
but I suppose it's theoretically
possible. Altering every photo he's
ever been in? Also unlikely, but
possible. But wiping the memories
of everyone who's ever met him? I
can't see that. The brain just
doesn't work that way.

CASSIDY
What do you mean?

ALEX
It's not like the filing system on
your computer. The brain doesn't
store facts and figures and things
in neat little compartments like
that. Everything's built up in
associations. The shape of your
father's face would be in one part
of your brain, his voice in
another, the color of his eyes in
another, his scent and cologne in
another, the things he told you and
taught you in another... you get
the idea.

CASSIDY
About halfway through that list,
yeah.

ALEX
That's another thing TV gets wrong
a lot. The general belief used to
be that maybe someone could do a
bit of brain surgery, remove a few
thousand cells, and take out a bad
memory or something. That was the
best we men of science knew at the
middle of the twentieth century,
and writers picked up on it as a
plot idea. We've learned otherwise;
the writers just haven't caught up.

CASSIDY
So, you think it was an empty
threat -- or warning, or whatever?

ALEX
What I think is that you're a very
good P.I., and you'll find a way to
figure out the truth.

(CONTINUED)

Cassidy is still disturbed by the question.

CASSIDY

I don't suppose "Erasure" means they erased my father from time, could it?

ALEX

That's kind of a "science-fictiony" theory, isn't it? A little Doctor Who-ish?

CASSIDY

Maybe, but... well, this whole thing is "science-fictiony."

ALEX

Okay, seriously, then. I'm no physicist, but I don't think time actually works that way. Even if it does, it would raise the question of why your memory wasn't affected.

CASSIDY

That's true. But then again, I can't think of any explanation that doesn't.

ALEX

Good point. But, like I say, you're a very good P.I. -- with a very good imagination, I should add -- so you'll work it out.

WIPE TO:

EXT. - CASSIDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassidy is returning from her picnic with Alex. She walks to the door, takes out her key, and opens it.

Suddenly the Mysterious Man is standing right behind her. When he speaks, she startles.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Your father wouldn't listen, either.

CASSIDY

Don't sneak up on a person like that!

She enters, and he follows. She doesn't try to stop him.

(CONTINUED)

MYSTERIOUS MAN
I didn't. But that's not what's
important right now.

CUT TO:

INT. - CASSIDY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cassidy enters, goes to her desk, and sits. The Mysterious Man follows, closing the door behind him, but comes no further in then he needs to.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
You need to understand that what
you're digging into is much bigger
than you can imagine.

CASSIDY
I'm not digging. I had other cases
going on this morning. I've hardly
touched my father's situation since
you came here last night.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
What about the conversation in the
park?

CASSIDY
(With a mixture of shock and
offense.)
You were listening in on that?

MYSTERIOUS MAN
They know about it. I found out
about it from them.

CASSIDY
Well... that wasn't really digging.
I'm just trying to make sense out
of how all this is possible.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
Don't. I can't, and I know more
about this than I hope you ever
will.

CASSIDY
Can't you tell me anything? I'm not
looking for something to tell the
whole world. I just want closure,
so I know what's happened.

(CONTINUED)

MYSTERIOUS MAN

The only thing I can tell you about this is that you'll regret knowing more than you do right now.

CASSIDY

You can't even tell me which of our theories about what's going on is closer to the truth?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

I don't even know that myself. Even if I did, and told you, you'd keep trying to figure it out. That would not be a good thing. Please believe me: the less you know, the safer you are.

Cassidy considers, and looks over at the stack of unopened mail on her desk.

CASSIDY

I'll tell you what. I won't start any new lines of investigation. If the ones I have going right now die out, I'll let it go. How does that--

As she turns back to regard the Mysterious Man again, she finds that he's gone.

CASSIDY

This just gets weirder and weirder.

She picks up a notepad and, preparing to write on it, starts leafing through the pages for a blank one.

As she's leafing through, she sees one with two words scrawled in large letters of a masculine script: HEART SOFTWARE.

Surprised to see this, she picks it up to look at it closely.

CASSIDY

Dad?

FADE TO:

EXT. - CLINIC PARKING LOT - DAY

It's some time after 5:00, and people in the clinic are going home from work.

One of them is Alex.

Cassidy meets him at the door, clearly excited and shaken. She holds the notepad from the previous scene.

CASSIDY

This just keeps getting crazier!

ALEX

It's great to see you, too,
Cassidy.

CASSIDY

Sorry. Hi. Good day?

ALEX

Nothing exciting. Now let's hear
about yours.

CASSIDY

I had another visit from that
Mysterious Man. He caught up to me
as I was going into my office.

ALEX

(Casually, with less interest
in the details than before.)
What did he say this time?

CASSIDY

He knew about our conversation at
the park. They knew.

ALEX

"They"?

CASSIDY

The people he works for! Or
against, or whatever. The people
he's warning me against.

ALEX

Well, the park is a public place.

CASSIDY

And we were in the middle of it, a
long way from anyone who could be
listening in.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Good point.

Cassidy starts leafing through the notepad, after the right page.

CASSIDY

He'd actually almost convinced me to leave off my investigation. Then I found this.

She finds the page she's looking for, and holds it up for Alex to see. (We don't see the page right yet.)

ALEX

"Heart Software"?

Cassidy lowers the notepad, but doesn't look directly at the page.

CASSIDY

Hearts don't run on software, obviously, so it's probably the name of a company,

ALEX

It is. I've heard of them. They have a small office downtown, on Third Street.

CASSIDY

Really! That's helpful. I think that's what my dad was investigating just before he disappeared.

ALEX

It could be anything. You use that notepad for things regarding your investigations.

CASSIDY

But it's in my dad's handwriting!

ALEX

Cassidy, that's in your handwriting.

Cassidy looks at the page, and is about to voice an objection but stops cold.

As we see now, the two words -- though identical in all other respects -- are indeed in her handwriting.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIDY

What? It wasn't, earlier! It... I swear, when I saw this before, it was my dad's handwriting!

ALEX

Cassidy, listen. I did look into what you asked about. The kind of selective memory erasure you were talking about just isn't scientifically possible.

CASSIDY

But it's obviously happened!

ALEX

Are you sure it's not your memory and perception that's been altered?

CASSIDY

But why would someone do that?

ALEX

I don't think they would. But you are showing signs of paranoid schizophrenia.

CASSIDY

I'm not crazy!

ALEX

(Annoyed.)

You know better than that, Cassidy. The psychiatric profession does not recognize the word "crazy." It's a derogative word for people with mental illness, when that illness is through no fault of their own.

CASSIDY

But... schizophrenia?

ALEX

You've talked about your father as a person in your life since we met, but your mother only met him the one time. There's no physical record of him. You're seeing this Mysterious Man who suddenly appears and disappears. He's connected with some vast, powerful conspiracy. Now you've scrawled a note that you said was written by your father.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIDY

I didn't write this! I swear!

ALEX

Cassidy, you need help -- the kind you can only get from one of my colleagues.

CASSIDY

It's not in my head! It's...

(Getting an idea.)

I know! The guy was outside, so he should be on the security camera! That should prove it to you!

ALEX

If "They" can change the handwriting on that paper, and the photo of you and "your father," don't you think "They" could alter security footage?

CASSIDY

(Reluctantly.)

You're right. It... I...

ALEX

Look, Cassidy... I think you should sleep on it, and then call first thing tomorrow to set up an appointment. Something like this can be pretty hard to take. But trust me -- most people with this kind of thing can lead full and happy lives. It can be a bit more challenging than for the rest of us, but it doesn't mean that the wedding's off. We can--

Cassidy, who has become increasingly upset over the preceding, turns and runs away.

ALEX

Well... I tried.

FADE TO:

INT. - CASSIDY'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Cassidy comes in, her notepad still in hand. She sits down in the nearest chair (not necessarily at her desk), very dejected. She looks again at the notepad, just to make sure that the page with "HEART SOFTWARE" is still there.

It is -- and the handwriting is still her own.

For now, this seems like a devastating blow, but she is not to be completely deterred.

She works at her computer until a video window comes up. It's the security camera outside her office. The timestamp shows just before 1:00 pm.

The footage shows Cassidy approaching her door, jumping at something nearby, speaking briefly, and then going inside -- essentially the earlier scene with the Mysterious Man, but without his presence.

She's disappointed at this, but hardly surprised.

CASSIDY

Well... Alex was right.

Then she gets an idea.

CASSIDY

Why change this? Why didn't they just remove it altogether?

She considers, thinking aloud.

CASSIDY

For that matter, why would there be anything for Dad to find? Why not just remove the evidence wherever he looks?

She thinks again for a moment, and looks carefully at the notepad.

CASSIDY

Or wherever I look?

She considers a bit more. Then she gets up, goes to her desk, and starts working on the computer. When she speaks, it's as much for the benefit of "Them" as it is more thinking aloud.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIDY

All right. If nothing of interest is at Heart Software, I'll drop this -- completely and forever. If this doesn't work, nothing else will, so it's over anyway.

She gets up and heads toward her door.

WIPE TO:

INT. - HEART SOFTWARE - NIGHT

This is a small suite of offices.

A man, whom we shall call UNIT 91, is just getting ready to leave. The door is open, and he's been working on the alarm keypad next to it, but has just given up with it.

Exasperated, he pulls a walkie-talking from his pocket and calls on it.

UNIT 91

This is Unit 91 reporting.

The VOICE OF "THEM" comes over the walkie. Besides the low-quality nature of the transmissions, it has the sound of being heavily disguised electronically.

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

Report, Unit 91.

UNIT 91

I'm at the Heart Software office. The alarm system here's on the fritz again.

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

Acknowledged. We shall arrange for repairs. The conventional door lock will have to suffice until they can be affected.

UNIT 91

Roger that. Unit 91 out.

He puts away his walkie-talkie, and leaves, locking the door on his way out.

On a still shot of the door, we hear his footsteps recede, a car start and drive away, and other footsteps -- Cassidy's -- approach. Then the knob jiggles, and the door opens.

(CONTINUED)

Carefully, Cassidy walks in, having just picked the lock.

She comes in stealthily, and quietly closes the door.

She looks around, trying to figure out where to go next. She crosses to the middle of this outer room, looks around for an idea, and then settles on a door near the reception desk.

She goes to that door, tries the knob, finds it unlocked, and proceeds beyond.

CUT TO:

INT. - STAIRWELL

We start at the top of the stairs. The door there is noticeably different from the one we just saw Cassidy open, though it moves the same direction.

Cassidy opens the door, then pauses and stares at it for a moment, puzzled.

CASSIDY

How on Earth...?

She looks behind herself. Though we don't get a specific view to underscore the fact, she sees only what's actually beyond the door in the location shot (which should be different from the location in the preceding scene).

CASSIDY

Nothing to do but go forward, I guess.

She proceeds to the bottom of the stairs; we follow her complete progress. At the bottom, she opens the door and goes through.

CUT TO:

INT. - BASEMENT CORRIDOR

This is a long corridor, featureless except for a row of doors on each side. Each door has a small sign indicating its number and function.

Cassidy opens one of the doors and comes out. Again, this door is not quite like the one she just walked through, though this time she does no more than a brief double-take on it.

(CONTINUED)

Slowly and carefully, staying alert for security guards, she walks along the corridor, looking at the signs along the way.

She stops at one whose function is posted as "ACTIVE RECORDS." She again tries the knob, this time finding it locked. She produces her lockpick and sets to work on it.

CUT TO:

INT. - ACTIVE RECORDS ROOM

This is a room with nothing but file cabinets.

We hear the clickity-clack of Cassidy picking the lock to the door. Soon it opens. She comes in quietly, pocketing the lockpick and closing the door behind her.

Again, the door is noticeably different than before, though this time Cassidy hardly takes notice.

She first looks at the file cabinet nearest the door.

The top drawer is marked "RECENT ERASURES."

CASSIDY

It can't be this easy.

She tests the drawer; it's unlocked. She opens it.

She then rifles through the files within, seeing a series of names on the tabs, until she comes to one marked "DRAKE, MICHAEL X." She pulls it out.

CASSIDY

This is it! He wasn't just my imagination!

She opens it, and looks at the first page within.

CASSIDY

Oh, my--! That's not possible!
They're... real?!?

We get a sudden POV shot of someone -- or something -- rapidly coming at Cassidy from behind. She turns and gasps.

Then everything goes black.

FADE TO:

EXT. - CLINIC PARKING LOT - DAY

People are entering the building, for some the start of the work day and for others meeting some of the day's early appointments.

First, we focus on Unit 91, who is talking with another person as he enters.

UNIT 91

I saw something in the paper about another break-in downtown last night. Nothing taken, no sign of anybody. Probably just kids.

As he moves on, we see Alex talking cheerfully on his cell phone.

ALEX

No, really, it's okay. It's great to hear from you again.

(Brief pause.)

No, no, seriously. I haven't had a girlfriend since pre-med.

As he moves on, we see the Mysterious Man standing and watching the goings-on.

His cell phone rings, and he answers it.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

You did it.

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

We had to.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

She didn't suspect?

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

There was no other way. But you did try to warn her. You were right to do that.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

How much longer does this have to go on?

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

We don't know.

(CONTINUED)

MYSTERIOUS MAN

It can't go on forever. One of these times you'll miss someone you can't Erase.

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

Hopefully, by then, it will no longer be necessary.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Does it really have to be "necessary" even now?

VOICE OF "THEM" (VO)

If it helps, we also wish it could be otherwise.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

It doesn't.

He hangs up -- not so much because the conversation has ended, but rather as an act of deliberate rudeness -- and pockets his cell phone.

A truck passes between him and the camera, and when it's past, he's gone.

FADE TO:

CLOSE CREDITS