

Expiry Date

By Ethan Radomski

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Overhead of a dining room table. The table is ornately decorated with a finely patterned white table cloth, lit candles, and various meats and side dishes. Classical music fills the room with violin, cello and piano strings.

The front door and windows are hastily boarded shut with jagged nails and misshapen planks of wood. From the windows the sounds of rioting are faintly heard.

JERRY (33) and NORAH (30) are seated at the table eating their dinners. Jerry is clean shaven, wearing a crisp black suit with a black tie. By traditional standards he is average looking, but tonight he appears handsome and put together. Norah is wearing a red evening gown and a full face of makeup. Normally she is beautiful, but her posture is slumped and tired. Jerry is stuffing his face with food while Norah is sheepishly moving food around on her plate.

JERRY

I mean, in the grand scheme of it all, we weren't really that important anyways. The Earth is what? 4 billion years old? And human beings have only been around for about 200,000 of those years. Hell, you know how old the universe is?

Norah looks up from her plate at Jerry, says nothing, and returns her gaze to her meal.

JERRY (CONT'D)

13 Billion years old. 13 god damn billion years old. Do you know what that makes us? A blink. A sneeze. A tick. We are the inconsequential and erratic bodily function of the universe. Meaningless, really. But what a success story we were! We rose to the top through our minds. We ventured beyond this planet. Went from prey to predator. How many species can say that?

Norah buries her head between her hands and begins to weep. Jerry grows serious, slowly walks towards her, and comforts her in a hushed voice.

JERRY (CONT'D)

I know it's scary. And I know it's sad. But we have to be strong.

Norah, whose eyes are now running from the mascara, breaks from her tears, rises from her chair, and walks away from the dining table. Jerry follows.

NORAH

Why? Why is strength what's important right now?

JERRY

It's not. I don't mean - Look. It's just you, and it's just me. That's what's important. That's all I ever cared about. We only have a couple hours left, and I just want to make sure we took advantage of that.

NORAH

You don't get it.

JERRY

Of course I do! You don't think I'm as terrified as you? I'm trying to remain calm. Someone has to.

NORAH

No one has to! None of it matters anymore! Your tranquility will stop nothing. No words can change what will happen to us.

JERRY

Then shouldn't we at least make the most of what we have?

NORAH

And what is it that we have?

JERRY

Each other.

NORAH

But "each other" won't exist anymore. You don't seem to understand, it's not what we have that excites me. It's not what we own, or the places we've been that fill me with pride. It's the places we will go. The experiences we will have. And now we can't.

JERRY

You can't look at it like that.
You're just being over dramatic.

NORAH

Over dramatic?

JERRY

Well, that's not exactly what I--

NORAH (INTERRUPTING ANGRILY)

Maybe one of us needs to be
dramatic! Maybe one of us needs to
worry and regret and question
things, instead of always acting
like everything's fucking okay!
Listen to me, Jerry. I am not okay.
This is not alright. And nothing
you can tell me will change that.
I've wasted it all.

Norah slumps down on a nearby sofa, defeated. Jerry remains standing.

JERRY

You've wasted nothing.

NORAH

Thirty years of futility. Thirty
years of listening to someone else
speak when I could have. Or
watching someone else do the things
I wanted to do. "You'll have more
time," they would say, and I would
listen and believe. Now we're
nothing but two milk cartons with
expiry dates plastered on the side
of us.

JERRY

We all have regrets, Norah.

NORAH

They don't seem like regrets. They
feel like mistakes.

Jerry sits down beside Norah on the sofa.

JERRY

What were your mistakes?

NORAH

My entire life I've followed
instructions.

(MORE)

NORAH (CONT'D)

I did what we're all told to do. I went to school because I was told to. I studied something I didn't care about to get a job I didn't like to pay for things that don't matter. I don't know, I just think that maybe I could have lived differently. Maybe I could have done something.

JERRY

It's easy to look back and regret things we haven't done. The hard part is finding satisfaction in the things we have done, and the happiness we have achieved.

NORAH

We can't all be like that, or like you. I don't understand how you can seem almost grateful for this.

JERRY

I'm not grateful. Just accepting.

NORAH

How?

JERRY

Do you remember how many times you said no when I first asked you out?

NORAH

What does that matter?

JERRY

It had to be at least ten times. Usually, I would have backed off after the first or second time, but you were different. I hated the rejection in your eyes so much, I would risk it again and again to change your answer. And then one day, you shrugged your shoulders, and said yes. I changed that look in your eyes.

NORAH

You wouldn't have left me alone otherwise.

JERRY

Yes, but don't you see, chance, or fate, whatever you may call it,

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)
 compelled you to finally say yes.
 Had you said no, maybe I would have
 given up. I might have met someone
 else and led a completely different
 life. Chance put you at a dinner
 table alongside me ten years later.
 So how can I be mad when chance
 sends a rock hurdling towards us?

Outside their home, the angry calls of desperate men and women seem closer and more present. The shattering of glass and fracturing of doors rings through the dining room, reminding Jerry and Norah of the imminent danger.

NORAH
 I don't want to die.

JERRY
 I know.

NORAH
 What if there's nothing? What if
 it's just darkness?

JERRY
 Then the darkness will envelop you.
 But you won't be alone.

Jerry grabs her hand reassuringly. Norah looks into his eyes for answers, and the two embrace. They are interrupted by

the sound of banging on their door. Norah looks around frantically.

NORAH
 What do we do?

The sounds outside their home is growing increasingly louder. Men and women are attempting to break in. Violent yells can be heard. Jerry calmly walks towards the record player and swaps on a new record. Slow jazz begins to play. He walks back to the Norah and puts his hand out for her to grab. Reluctantly, she grabs his hand. They dance until the windows are shattered.

FADE OUT

TITLE CARD: EXPIRY DATE