

The Crimson Room

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Lights flicker on from darkness spelling out the title letters 'THE CRIMSON ROOM' like a storefront window

SCENE 1**INT HOSPITAL - DAY****JOHN, ELLIE, OBSTETRICIAN**

Fade from black on the familiar image of an ultra sound screen, the obscure shapes seen twisting around are apparently an unborn baby.

Obstetrician

It looks like baby doesn't want to play today

A young couple JOHN and ELLIE look on as the OBSTETRICIAN tries to get a better view of the unborn child.

Obstetrician

Nope, as you can see, baby is completely turned around. I would be too if I had a strange man trying to take photos of me in my sleep!

ELLIE laughs and stares at the screen - she looks beautiful.

Ellie

Oh my god John

JOHN stares at the screen, his face is impossible to read at the best of times. ELLIE looks up at him.

Ellie

Oh my god

ELLIE marvels at the human being inside her, tears well in her eyes.

We linger on the obstetrician a moment too long as he watches the happy couple, there is something unsettling about his smile.

SCENE 2**CAR - DAY****JOHN, ELLIE**

A 1980s model passes through a tunnel out into the glare of daylight. The day is a bleak depressing grey - probably a Sunday.

Ellie looks out the window lost in thought.

ELLIE

So where do you want to go for breakfast?

JOHN

I don't mind, where do you want to go?

ELLIE

I asked you

JOHN

I don't mind

ELLIE

Neither do I!

JOHN

Well then just pick somewhere

ELLIE

Oh my god you're stubborn (very light-hearted) Ok what about that juice place we went to last time?

JOHN

Ok

ELLIE

Yeah? Cool, we'll go to the juice place

A moment passes

ELLIE

You don't want to go to the juice place do you?

JOHN

I'm happy wherever you are

ELLIE

I love you

JOHN

I love you too

JOHN takes his eyes off the road for a moment to kiss ELLIE. They are very much in love.

Beat.

JOHN

Actually to be honest I hate that juice place

ELLIE

I knew it!

JOHN

They're all so pretentious there, the waiters make me feel like I've done something wrong

ELLIE

Well you told me to pick somewhere

ELLIE laughs

ELLIE

Actually no, too late. We're going to the juice place!

JOHN

Ok

ELLIE

... And I'm going to look in some shops afterwards

JOHN is silent

ELLIE

What?!

JOHN

I didn't say anything

ELLIE

You think we can't afford it

JOHN

Well we cant

ELLIE

I know. I wont buy anything.

JOHN says nothing

ELLIE

You hate shopping don't you?

JOHN

Yes.

SCENE 3

EXT LANEWAY / CAFE - DAY

JOHN, ELLIE, WAITRESS

The laneway cafes buzz with life as JOHN and ELLIE make their way into the café (adjust)

They take their seats amongst a busy café full of hipsters

A waitress covered in tattoos arrives and the table, she's extremely cold, her voice like a slap in the face.

WAITRESS

You guys ready to order?

ELLIE

Yeah thanks, I'll just get the... Sunrise juice

WAITRESS

Yup

The WAITRESS turns to JOHN

JOHN

Ah, is there any cheese in the number 3 sandwich?

WAITRESS

Um... No, no there's not

The WAITRESS has no idea

JOHN

Ok... Cool, and a latte. With two sugars please

WAITRESS

With two sugars?? (patronising)

JOHN

Yeah?

WAITRESS

Well the sugars are on the table (pointed. bitchy)

JOHN stares at her, could be rage, could be indifference

JOHN

...Ok

ELLIE is turned away from the conversation looking at a MOTHER behind her talking to her little girl.

The MOTHER looks up and catches ELLIE looking at her; ELLIE smiles a very open smile. The MOTHER smiles back.

The WAITRESS stalks passed and slaps down JOHNS sandwich on the table, it has a large chunk of cheese hanging out the side.

SCENE 4 SHOPPING ARCADE / THE CRIMSON ROOM - DAY

JOHN, ELLIE, ANDROGYNOUS MAN

ELLIE and JOHN make their way through a busy arcade while ELLIE scans the shop windows.

ELLIE comes upon a very kooky store, we see the familiar lights of the store front: THE CRIMSON ROOM.

In the window there is a plethora of multi coloured vintage clothes and jewellery amongst other strange paraphernalia

ELLIE

Oh my god, we have to go in here

JOHN looks at the store. It's not his cup of tea

ELLIE gives him a cheeky smile before moving back towards THE CRIMSON ROOM

SCENE 5 INT THE CRIMSON ROOM - DAY

JOHN, ELLIE, ANDROGYNOUS MAN, N/S KOOKY EXTRAS

Moving through the doorway of THE CRIMSON ROOM feels like moving into another world. Psychedelic music pulses as JOHN and ELLIE make their way inside.

Animal heads in sunglasses and lavish mirrors adorn the walls. It is a very cramped little store and eccentric shopper's push their way between the racks which seem only intended for one way traffic. Clothes bulge from the walls as if the racks are not enough to contain them all.

ELLIE rushes off excitedly into the chaos, drawn to some item or other in the corner. JOHN moves to follow her but is caught up amongst same shoppers headed towards him. JOHN is visibly uncomfortable.

Behind the counter a bizarre looking ANDROGYNOUS MAN is folding a garment, his eyes on the store. There is something bird like about the ANDROGYNOUS MAN, his sharp eyes dart around the store, he seems on edge and self conscious; a complex looking individual.

JOHN eyes the androgynous man, he doesn't particularly like him.

ELLIE emerges from behind some racks wearing a pair of fairly funky glasses and holding a colourful dress.

ELLIE

I'm just going to try this on

JOHN says nothing, yet says everything

ELLIE

I know we can't afford it

JOHN looks at ELLIE, it is apparent that they need few words to communicate

ELLIE

I know. I'll only be a minute.

JOHN follows ELLIE towards the back of the store. The fitting room is actually just a gold curtain(adjust)on a rail in the corner. ELLIE gives JOHN a kiss on the lips along with her handbag and pulls the curtain shut.

Separated by a curtain, JOHN feels even more uncomfortable, alone in the store without ELLIE to hold onto.

JOHN now has time to take in the surroundings. The music seems to be louder than when they arrived. The shoppers from this store are far too trendy, and come from a world alien to JOHN.

JOHN finds himself a bit vulnerable, standing in the bizarre place holding ELLIES handbag.

He looks behind him to find a small - almost novelty sized - gold seat. It looks like something out of Alice in Wonderland

JOHN squats down and takes a seat on the ridiculous chair and immediately regrets it, the image of a grown man sitting on such a small chair is immediately comical. But committed to the chair JOHN stays put.

JOHN looks up at the ANDROGYNOUS MAN mincing about behind the counter almost as if examining a strange creature at the zoo.

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN feels he is being watched and sharply looks in JOHNS direction. JOHN quickly looks away.

A wide shot reveals the store is nearly empty, a pair of shoppers make their way out leaving JOHN alone on his throne in awkward proximity to the ANDROGYNOUS MAN who is not someone JOHN feels comfortable striking up a conversation with.

The track changes on the CD leaving the store in silence for a minute before another dreamlike track fills the space.

JOHN is starting to sweat. This time it is JOHN who feels eyes on him and looks up to catch the ANDROGYNOUS MANS eyes dart away.

On John: the walls feel like they are closing in, he cannot explain it but he would really *really* like to get out of this store. JOHN checks his watch; what is she doing in there?

JOHN leans towards the curtain

JOHN

(Whispered) Ellie!

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN looks in JOHNS direction who self consciously resumes sitting.

JOHN is beginning to get angry now - his face not so inscrutable any more.

JOHN

(Louder) Ellie??

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN looks up dramatically.

JOHN is passed caring and folds his arms with a bemused chuckle.

A small jump later the CD ends and the ANDROGYNOUS MAN moves off to the front of the store.

JOHN takes the opportunity to lean over to the curtain

JOHN

What are you doing in there??

There is no response.

JOHN

Ellie?

Silence.

JOHN feels something wrong.

JOHN

Ellie are you ok?

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN looks back over his shoulder at JOHN who is no longer self conscious.

JOHN stands up from the novelty chair

JOHN

ELLIE?

JOHNS face is frozen in panic, something is definitely not right. He reaches over to the curtain -

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Excuse me sir -

JOHN rips back the curtain and looks in to find, nothing. The reveal feels something of a Houdini act as the space behind the curtain is completely empty.

JOHN is baffled. He stands frozen for a moment, not sure what to do.

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Is everything alright sir?

JOHN is snapped out of it by the unpleasant voice and stares at the ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Without bothering to say anything to him JOHN moves back through the store; it is a tiny space and ELLIE would be visible from any angle. JOHN moves to the door, stops and walks back to the ANDROGYNOUS MAN

JOHN

(Urgent) Did you see me wife? Did you see her leave the store?

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN is taken aback by JOHNS tone

JOHN

My wife that was in the change room, did she leave the store?

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

I'm sorry sir it's been a very busy day I don't remember (seeing your wife)

JOHN

She was in the change room for 15 minutes. I have been sitting over there for 15 minutes.

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

I -

JOHN

You saw me sitting there? On that chair?

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Yes I-

JOHN

Did you see my wife walk out of this store?

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

I'm really not sure there's (been so many people in here)

JOHN feels borderline violent towards this man but turns away and makes his way out into the arcade.

SCENE 6

EXT ARCADE - DAY

JOHN

He looks left, then right... No sign of Ellie.

JOHN takes out his phone and calls ELLIE, only a moment goes by before her phone lights up in her handbag that JOHN is holding. Shit.

JOHN walks back out into the chaos of the laneway strip. There's people everywhere. He walks further down the laneway and stops.

JOHN thinks for a moment. This doesn't make sense.

SCENE 7
DAY

INT THE CRIMSON ROOM -

JOHN, ANDROGYNOUS MAN

JOHN bursts back into AVANTE GARDE and makes his way to the change room. The ANDROGYNOUS MAN jumps in shock.

JOHN scans the inside of the change room; just a wall of patterned wallpaper, no way she could have left any other way.

JOHN pushes at the wall as if maybe there were a hinged door he was unaware of, and then gives the wall a few good shoves.

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Excuse me sir -

JOHN

Is there a... Is there some kind of um, hinged door?

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

I'm sorry?

JOHN

Is there a back panel that can... You know some sort of back exit out of the change room there??

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN smirks a little

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

No sir...

JOHN walks right passed the ANDROGYNOUS MAN back out into the arcade.

SCENE 8

EXT ARCADE - DAY

JOHN

JOHN walks out, short of breath. He needs to think clearly. He looks left and then goes right.

JOHN makes his way along the arcade and out into an alley, he turns right again making his way towards what should be the back of THE CRIMSON ROOM.

SCENE 9

EXT BACK ALLEY - DAY

JOHN

The alley contains a few dumpsters, a lot of graffiti - and not much else. There are no doors. Only concrete walls and some vents a little higher up.

JOHN stands bewildered. He has no clue what to do now.

- JUMP

JOHN in the middle of a phone call

JOHN

And she's not with you?... Well no... No I can't, no she left her phone with me too...

SCENE 9B

EXT CAR PARK

JOHN, CAR PARK ATTENDANT

JOHN stands bent over talking to CAR PARK ATTENDANT in the booth.

JOHN

Yes... Yes heavily pregnant. No? You haven't seen her?

The PARKING ATTENDANT shakes his head

SCENE 10

EXT CITY STREET

JOHN, NS WOMAN, NS POLICE OFFICERS

The sun is now beginning to set, it's the eerie twilight that underlines the feeling that he should be at home with ELLIE.

Everything seems a little louder. A little harsher. The reality burns into JOHN

People buzz passed as john reaches out unsurely to a passer buy

JOHN

Have you seen my wife... around here?... Um, she's pregnant?

WOMAN

No, sorry

JOHN

She was wearing a black dress (adjust)...

JOHN stands in the middle of the footpath clutching onto ELLIES handbag as a sea of commuters rush by. A couple of KIDS laugh at the sight of a man holding a ladies handbag.

Two POLICE OFFICERS walk in JOHN's direction, he looks after them... What can he say?

SCENE 11

ARCADE - DAY

JOHN, ANDROGYNOUS MAN, FRIEND, VOICES

The ADROGYNOUS MAN is locking up outside Avante Garde indulging in vapid flirtatious chit chat with a FRIEND.

JOHN runs up behind them just as they are leaving

JOHN

(desperate) Excuse me

The ANDRGYNOUS MAN turns around and looks at JOHN like he is slightly dangerous.

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Yes?

JOHN

You must have seen my wife before. She went into the change room and I was sitting waiting for her for nearly 20 minutes - you were 5 feet away from me??

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

Sir, like I said (it's a very busy)

JOHN

Bulls**t! How could you not have seen her? She was pregnant, she um... She tried on some of your sunglasses... She was wearing a black dress.

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

I don't remember seeing a pregnant lady

JOHN

Well you saw me?

Pause

JOHN

Outside the change room? You were looking at me?

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN stares

ANDROGYNOUS MAN

I'm sorry sir I really don't remember

JOHN has tears in his eyes and lunges forward in anger shoving The ANDROGYNOUS MAN and his FRIEND who squeals and puts his hands up.

JOHN

Thats *Bullshit*

FRIEND

Piss off, leave him alone

JOHN stares at them panting.

FRIEND

Fuck off or we'll call the police

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN and FRIEND scamper out of the alley into the dusk light.

JOHN is left shaken, angry and conflicted with emotions. He is on the verge of tears.

SCENE 11A**BASEMENT CARPARK - NIGHT****JOHN, DRIVER**

JOHN walks down the winding ramp towards the basement of the carpark. It is late and desolate, the hum of the fluorescent lights is unrelenting.

A car speeds up the ramp forcing JOHN over to one side

DRIVER

Watch it dickhead

JOHN's car is the only one left. A heavy pang of dread hits JOHN as he approaches the car: alone.

JOHN slams the car door shut which echoes through the empty space. He sits behind the wheel unable to move.

On the car: we see JOHN break down inside, possibly screaming. It's hard to tell because all we can hear is the deafening hum of the fluorescent lights.

FADE TO BLACK

In the darkness we hear voices

POLICE OFFICER

Like I said sir, the best thing to do is go home and wait by the phone in case she comes home.

FEMALE VOICE

Are you sure she didn't meet up with another one of her friends?

MALE VOICE

Had you been fighting? Did she seem... I don't know - distant in any way?

We glide passed JOHN sitting behind the wheel of the car, silently breaking down in frustrated tears.

ANSWERING MACHINE

Hey John, man, I heard about what's going on... I just, I really don't know what to say. If you need to talk in here, anytime man, honestly. I hope they find her

POLICE OFFICER

We'd like you to come in and answer a few more questions,
down at the station.

A flash of the ANDROGYNOUS MAN in the dark.

FEMALE VOICE

John, please call me back, we're all really worried about
you

FEMALE VOICE

John its Tess again... I haven't heard from you in weeks,
Steve and I thought you might want to come over to our
place for dinner next week? But if you're not up to it I
understand...

SCENE 12

INT APPARTMENT - NIGHT

JOHN

In the foreground we see an obscured woman's face in the
dark, staring directly to camera.

In the background we hear a gasping for breath, then
footsteps moving closer.

A light flicks on and we see the woman's face is a black
and white photo of ELLIE with "Have you seen this woman"
written in large print below.

JOHN enters frame and we follow him away from the poster
passed a table full of similar posters. He looks
exhausted and from the wiry beard he is cultivating we
understand ELLIE has been missing for months.

JOHN has woken up from a nightmare and stands at the sink
short of breath. He takes a drink of water and we follow
him back to his bedroom where gets back into the large
empty bed and turns off the lamp.

Very quiet sobbing is heard.

SCENE 13

DREAM SPACE / THE CRIMSON

ROOM

JOHN, ELLIE

DARKNESS

An eerie soundscape floats around us.

From the darkness, the store front of The Crimson Room flickers to life only this time it is in no arcade, surrounded by no other shops. It stands alone in a dark dreamscape.

We move forwards towards The Crimson Room and as we approach the familiar pulsing music is heard.

Passing through the doorway we find JOHN standing alone in the middle of the store; it's as if he has woken up and not sure how he got here. JOHN looks around confused.

In this dream there is no ANDROGYNOUS MAN

ELLIE

John?

JOHN whirls around at ELLIE's voice. The voice appears to have come from behind the curtain

ELLIE's familiar laugh is heard playfully from behind the velvet curtain

JOHN moves towards the curtain and pull its back. Nothing.

ELLIE laughs again

JOHN

Ellie??

JOHN looks back around the store

JOHN

Where are you?

Pause

ELLIE

I'm right here

JOHN stops. This time ELLIE's voice appears to be coming from directly behind the wall of the change room.

JOHN begins pushing on the wall, hoping it will move. It doesn't

JOHN

Ellie?

ELLIE laughs playfully.

ELLIE

Its ok babe I'm safe

JOHN begins clawing at wall, hitting it, scratching it punching it when suddenly he throws a punch directly to the centre of the wall and his fist protrudes right through.

JOHN freezes, astonished.

From the other side we see a beam of light pierce the darkness where JOHN's fist has come through the wall

JOHN rips his hand downwards and the wallpaper tears easily open, as if there is no plaster behind it.

JOHNS heart is racing, he can hardly breathe.

JOHN

Ellie?

JOHN tears away the wallpaper like a footballer running through the banner and looks through into gaping darkness.

JOHN steps through into the darkness, its cold - walls either side, its some kind of extremely narrow corridor.

JOHN

ELLIE?

His voice echoes off down the hallway and JOHN swears he hears a distant giggle coming from down the end.

JOHN begins walking quickly through the darkness. He can only hear the sound of his breath. The music coming from The Crimson Room becomes increasingly distant as a heavy silence envelopes the space.

JOHN

ELLIE? ARE YOU DOWN HERE?

ELLIES voice is very distant but peaceful.

ELLIE

(Distant) John?...

JOHN begins running towards the voice. He can hardly see a thing in the darkness.

JOHN

Ellie?? Where are you?

The corridor seems to be getting narrower, it's only wide enough to contain JOHN and doesn't feel designed for human traffic (if designed at all) almost an accidental gap between two very close buildings.

We hear panting, desperate footsteps racing in the dark.

We see flashes of feet, hands feeling their way down the walls. Frenetic, terrified. How long has JOHN been running for?

JOHN is scared and close to tears, he lets out an emotional

JOHN

Ellie!

As the hallway appears to curve around and come to a stop.

JOHN slows down his running so as not to hit the dead end.

On JOHN, illuminated by a dull light.

We see that in fact it is not a dead end, but a doorway - only as wide as the edges off the hallway two meters tall. From the bottom of the door is a small crack of light that is shining through. It almost looks like natural light.

ELLIE

John!

JOHN moves towards the door and places his hand on the knob. He turns the handle and the door easily clicks open.

JOHN slowly opens the door as we follow from behind and are washed out by the light.

A shot from the other side: a normal looking door, in a brick wall. The door slowly opens revealing JOHN squinting through the... daylight?

We pull back from the door - still only able to see JOHN emerging, we cannot see whats in front of him - either side of the doorway are two potted lemon trees and a grey statue of a naked woman.

JOHN walks out into the light and we hear the peaceful sounds of birds chirping in the daylight.

Push in on JOHNS face as his eyes adjust and he sees what's in front of him, a dawning realisation melts into an understanding look, then -

SCENE 14**INT APPARTMENT - DAY**

JOHN, ELLIE

JOHN snaps out of his dream, his heart racing.

The sound of birds can still be heard, but this time they are from outside johns window as the sun is beginning to rise.

SCENE 16**ARCADE / INT AVAN GARDE - DAY**

JOHN, ANDROGYNOUS MAN, SECURITY GUARD #1, SECURITY GUARD #2

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN is alone in the store - it looks like it has just opened. He minces about, possibly singing to himself under his breath.

Hold on him a moment too long before JOHN bursts into the store - still wearing his pyjama pants - he knocks over some racks in his urgency

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN squeals and backs away.

JOHN pays him no notice and heads straight for the change room. JOHN rips back the curtain. He looks at the patterned wallpaper for a moment and begins punching at it and trying to tear it away with his finger nails.

The ANDROGYNOUS MAN shrieks and runs out of the store.

JOHN continues to bash at the wall desperately, but the wall appears to be solid. He reaches to the top of the wall and tries ripping off the whole sheet off wall paper.

From behind we hear voices

SECURITY GUARD #1

Hey! Sir, is everything ok?

JOHN is pulling the wallpaper off the wall in large strips, revealing only plaster and no hallway

JOHN

Come on!

SECURITY GUARD #1

Woah, sir, you need to stop that.

JOHN breaks down in tears and begins punching the wall and clawing desperately at it with his hands

On the SECURITY GAURD with the ANDROGYNOUS MAN standing in the background watching on in horror. A second SECURITY GUARD joins them.

JOHN falls to his knees in despair punching at the wall through his tears

The SECURITY GAURDS Move in and pull JOHN up to his feet, dragging him away from the wall. They are not thugs, but JOHN appears to need some sort of help.

We follow the SECURITY GUARDS and JOHN out into the arcade, as JOHN tries to walk and his half dragged along.

JOHN gets to his feet and can't look the SECURITY GUARDS in the eye as they begin to question him. We can't hear what they say but they are genuinely concerned for JOHN as well as the safety of those around.

We slowly pull back from this scene, leaving JOHN crying broken man and back down the arcade towards AVANT GUARD.

We track back in through the doorway and slowly make our way through the store one more time.

We move in towards the ANDROGYNOUS MAN who is behind the counter once more looking downwards, folding a garment as normal, but tensions on his face from this mornings unpleasantness.

We move passed the shredded change room and tight on the ANGRODGYNOUS MAN who folds his clothes... He waits a moment and looks up at the doorway.

BEAT

Slowly a very unpleasant and knowing smile spreads across the ANDROGYNOUS MANS face... It's chilling..

And as we fade to black, we may or may not notice the small framed picture on the wall behind the AGDROGYNOUS

MAN is a painting, of a doorway, with two lemons trees
either side, and a grey statue of a naked lady..

FADE TO BLACK