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Proving to be AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ASYLUM's most focused, unrelenting episode yet, "Nor'easter" saw two storms hit Briarcliff, and bring all manner of violent shame with them. Sister Mary Eunice, now with the Devil in her, takes command of the proceedings as the asylum prepares for some hellish weather. Everyone else, dissolved into chaos. Guilt! Shame! Sacrifice!

ASYLUM's most banal aspect once again opened an episode as the present day-newlyweds got (seemingly) dead when it was revealed some costumed thugs apparently like to dress as Bloody Face and run around the ruined Briarcliff. Are they copycats? They have to be some sort of psychotic, since there's nothing to burgle in the abandoned asylum except O.R. equipment. It doesn't seem we'll find out, anyway because in true double fake out fashion, the real Bloody Face appeared. Thankfully, that was that.

Back in 1964, the demon/Devil continues his long con on Sister Jude through Mary Eunice, and the head games are much more fun, and certainly creepier, than the tired vulgarspeak and clunky exposition from last week's exorcism. 1949 newspapers, phone calls and shadowy figures, not to mention Sister Mary's scandalous attitude, proceed to bring Sister Jude to her knees with guilt over her hit-and-run and past indiscretions. This drives her to the cantor, filling her head with wine, and leading to a fantastic bit of insanity as she introduces Cecil B. DeMille's THE SIGN OF THE CROSS at movie night.

Meanwhile, Dr. Arden (who it looks like is being set up as some sort of WWII mad scientist) makes sure everyone around him feels the wrath of his private shame, partly revealed to be an embarrassingly small penis. This resulted in an incredibly un-femme friendly hour as Sister Mary, Shelley and an inanimate statue of Holy Mary, mother of God got wind of his penchant for saying “whore” and swinging fists. Shelley found herself caught in the worst of it, sacrificing her well-being so Lana, Kit and Grace may escape, running directly into Dr. Arden’s tirade. Clipping her “wings,” Arden takes Shelley’s source and hope for freedom and liberation; the legs she uses to run and is so viciously accused of spreading.

Knowing the end results of many a Dr. Arden experiment, it seems Shelley’s ordeal isn’t over. Speaking of which, we finally got a good look at the cannibals in the woods when “Nor’easter” reached its final 20 minutes or so and the episode spilled over into the series’ M.O. of all the things at once. The unveiling was disappointing to say the least, as the cannibals amount to not much more than new millennium fast zombies. Plus, it’s tough to be unsettled while James Cromwell is fighting a statue and Jessica Lange is face-to-face with alien. Also disappointing was the constant referring to a patient as “The Mexican,” who also happens to be the horror stock character of “Devout Catholic Hispanic lady.” Unacknowledged until now, and really only to fantastically get a pair of scissors to the throat, The Mexican’s fate makes it hard to say if AMERICAN HORROR STORY is using genre trope as red shirts (Possessed boy / aforementioned devout Hispanic), or really trying to hammer home the intolerance of the early 60s.

What isn’t hard to glean is that the first half of “Nor’easter” was much stronger. Its smorgasbord of sin is fun, but AMERICAN HORROR STORY can find success in focus.