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A comparatively minor episode in light of its packed premiere "Tricks and Treats" still managed to be everything both wonderful and frustrating about AMERICAN HORROR STORY: ASYLUM. The second outing sought to fit an exorcism, a blackout, revealing kinks, additional bare behinds, more clumsily delivered exposition/social commentary and best of all, begin its slow reveal that Lily Rabe is, in fact, the Kate Mara of this season. That is to say, the main reason for watching.

AMERICAN HORROR STORY is a series with an astounding push/pull between fantastic pulp and head-shaking goofiness. Creators Ryan Murphy & Brad Falchuk, and their stable of writers and directors, are *not* subtle. In an endlessly vibrant house of horrors, there's no reason they should be, except in the case of back story and social parallels they've been unable to get through aside from stumbling drunkenly out of actors' mouths. "Tricks and Treats" saw Zachary Quinto's Dr. Oliver Thredson reference the (still) outdated mainstream religious and conservative response to homosexuality and Chloë Sevigny's nymphomaniac Shelley expound on the double standards of promiscuity held for men and women. Both remain relevant, of course, but the execution of such scenes is merely lacking Murphy appearing on screen to make sure his audience understands. Show, not tell, is a gift of filmmaking and seeing the anguish of Clea Duvall's catch 22 in light of her sexual preference last episode, spoke volumes more.

As did Dr. Arthur Arden's home exploits. Sure, his hurling of "whore" and "slut" at Shelley was harsh, but where his hypocrisy was harder hitting (both in creepiness and point-delivering) was his jaunt with a prostitute who he'd planned to be on the receiving end of some violently sexual scenarios; while dressed like Lily Rabe's Sister Mary Eunice, no less! Not to mention, his AMERICAN PSYCHO-esque deal with Chopin.

And hey, speaking of references, AMERICAN HORROR STORY continued its parade of horror history with an exorcism, seemingly only to bring up penises and attempt to provide a little insight into Sister Jude. The exorcism was a mess of over-stylized silliness, where you can, again, practically hear Murphy on the side of the camera. “THE EXORCIST mentioned cocks. Say 53 cocks!” If the exorcism’s point was to continue painting religious threat as a farce, it certainly worked when juxtaposed with the successfully scary bit of electro-shock therapy performed on Sarah Paulson’s Lana Winters earlier in the episode. Truthfully though, it probably just comes down to a lack of obvious reference point, and that Sarah Paulson is a fantastic performer.

Also a fantastic performer is the aforementioned Lily Rabe. Much like Evan Peters, Rabe is being given the gift of a complete 180 from her tortured motherly ghost of season one and is already doing plenty to prove she won’t just be a mousy nun this go-round. The last lingering effect of the exorcism was that the demon has found a new home and Sister Mary Eunice found a new way to wear the cloth. This is perhaps the most exciting development of the episode as we now have two rough and tumble sisters on the scene, and maybe ASYLUM can spill over into the full scale nunsploitation it threatens to.

Next week, a Nor’easter rolls into Briarcliff. Will it bring more Boston accents and a new note for Chloë Sevigny to play, with it?