

## Recap: "AMERICAN HORROR STORY 207, Dark Cousin"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
Thursday, 29 November 2012 10:43

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Following a harrowing ordeal at the hands of Bloody Face, and a car crash immediately after, Lana Winters—back on a bed in Briarcliff—looks at Sister Mary Eunice and pleads, “He can’t know I’m here.”

“No one knows that you’re here,” A reply in which Lana, nor we, find any comfort at all.

Two weeks after Kit, Lana and Shelley found their ways out to no solace whatsoever, AMERICAN HORROR STORY and guest star Frances Conroy (season one’s Moira) posit peace is only attainable through death for the outcasts, misfits, put-upon and occasionally, actually insane. Last week, in the severely lackluster “The Origins of Monstrosity”, Lana’s time in the Bloody Face basement was juxtaposed with the arrival of a killer kid at the asylum. The otherwise well-behaved Jenny Reynolds had a loving mother, who tended to her child’s unusual ways. Jenny, it seemed, was just plain evil. Oftentimes, that’s the way it should be.

While Jenny met Sister Jude, Lana met the real Dr. Thredson who proved killers can be psychologically damaged as much as they can be inherently bad. Of course, such damage came in the most eye-rolling form available. So, while the holiday is over, I’m already 2013 thankful we probably won’t have to hear any more “take care of me mom, you’re the one” speak from Bloody Face.



The unsettling affection may be over, but there’s still sexual assault. In one of this season’s more shuddering scenes, we find Lana mid-rape, an experience which prompts her to meet the Angel of Death, on a tour of visiting ASYLUM’s characters who all seem to be at the end of their rope. The Angel, or Dark Cousin of the title, met with three of the series’ main ensemble, who deep within their soul called to end their suffering. “Dark Cousin’s” opening concerned Grace, then Lana and finally Jude. The Angel and Sister Mary also had a brief *tête-à-tête*—one of the episode’s best scenes—but, as far as human characters go, the first to meet the Angel

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found herself deceased upon episode's end. Judging by the general content of ASYLUM, it looks that few (if anyone) will find anything resembling a happy ending. Do the Angel's visits tell us who will definitely be moving on?

If Sister Jude is, in fact, leaving us by the end of ASYLUM, Jessica Lange has wrangled yet another fine performance out of this series. Her back-and-forth with the bottle, as well as severe guilt, isn't anything new in drama, but the woman is powerful and her decision to visit the parents of her hit-and-run victim was one of the most suspenseful scenarios she's been written yet. Of course, we find that young Missy was alive and well, a revelation meant to echo the Angel of Death's assertion that her life-changing auto accident was God's way of putting Sister Jude on the path to Briarcliff.

And of course, it's totally natural of AMERICAN HORROR STORY to feature two path-altering car collisions; one powerful, one wholly cheap. Two instances this episode saw goofy, contrived scenes play out just so characters could get where they needed to go. Upon Lana's escape, she frantically hops into the car of a man (LOST's William Mapother)—very KISS ME DEADLY-style—who in a sign of the times, takes out his own female frustrations on the scared, tired and distressed Lana. The scene is a bit much, especially when Mapother goes for the gold and blows his head off, but it seems writer Tim Minear, as well as creators Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk just needed Lana back in Briarcliff.

The second such instance saw Kit escape police custody to find Grace. Upon escaping back into the asylum via the underground tunnel, he's followed by one of Dr. Arden's mutant experiments. Until now, not one of these creatures has dared venture back inside, but much like Mapother, was seemingly needed to play out a standoff in which Grace sacrifices her own life for Kit's. As a whole, this scenario played much less overwrought than the car, with the appropriately gross mutant nastily dispatching a nun. It was a brief, grisly diversion that makes me wonder if it was a purely pawn move, or if at any point, the Briarcliff may find itself overrun with Dr. Arden's bastard creations?

Finally, and disregarding the larger questions of Satan, the Angel of Death (and by proxy, God) and aliens co-existing, the possession of Mary Eunice is the best thing about ASYLUM. Wicked from head to toe, Lily Rabe remains fantastic, from last week's private sing-a-long, to the continued mind games of "Dark Cousin," including her fantastic display of power over Dr. Arden, I am on board with whatever her end game is.

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Next week, Ian McShane comes to Briarcliff for a bit of holiday horror!