

Film Appreciation

by Christopher E. Hilliard

"Shane, will you turn off the lights?" Jean asked. "Film really is much better with the correct lighting."

"I believe you," Shane said while he switched off the lights, blanketing the room in complete darkness. The large TV on the wall, bright like the afternoon sun, cast its harsh light across the room.

"Okay, too dark. Please, turn it back on." Shane flipped the switch again, the overhead lights could be seen reflecting in the TV. "This is terrible. Can you dim it at all, or least turn off these two?" Jean pointed to a pair of recessed ceiling lights that reflected in the TV's surface.

After a moment's thought, Shane said, "I can tape some paper over the bulbs, will that help?"

"That could work," Jean said while Shane moved about the room gathering paper, tape, and a step stool. "You're going to love this film," Jean continued. "It's a cinematic masterpiece." Shane nodded as he taped the second sheet of paper over the other lamp.

"The direction, the cinematography, the acting, the lighting, the dialogue. I'm telling you, there isn't a better film that was ever made."

"That's kind of subjective isn't it?" Shane asked.

"Not if you know what you're talking about," Jean said.

"I see," Shane said stepping down from the step stool. "How's that?" he glanced around at the dimmer ambiance.

With a grimace on her face, Jean said, "It's not perfect, but I guess it's the best we can do. Have a seat. Not there, we need to sit in the middle. We need to be absorbed in the film. You watch films, don't you?"

"I like movies but usually just for entertainment."

Jean half-rolled her eyes and said, "When you watch this film, try to pay attention to the camera-movement. Try to hear what the actors are saying, and more importantly, what they don't say. There's always something happening, even when it seems like there isn't."

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And pay attention to the opening scene. It's extremely important for the rest of the film.”

“Okay, ready if you are,” Shane said.

“Okay,” said Jean, and she pushed the play button on the remote control.

As the opening credits rolled, Shane wondered if this was a good idea. Jean seemed cool at dinner. She was attractive, well-dressed, well-spoken, clearly educated, seemed to know what she wanted out of life, and really *really* liked movies. They shared some laughs at dinner, but when she started talking about this movie, she got real serious. He'd always heard it was a great movie, just he never got around to watching it. Until now, that is, and now he wasn't sure if he really wanted to go through with it. When the credits faded and the first scene opened, Shane felt an itch on his shin. As he glanced down to scratch it, Jean said, “Do you want to watch this film or not?”

