

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Episode 2.12

"Asymmetry"

Written by

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128. Prison door buzzes, unlocks, and opens. Fetch enters, chained. Guard follows.

THOMAS
Hi, Mackenna.

FETCH
Thomas.

THOMAS
Have a seat.

FETCH
I know how this works.

Chair slides out. She sits. Her chains are locked to the table.

THOMAS
Thank you. I'm fine with her. You can just wait outside.

Guard leaves, closing the door.

FETCH
You haven't visited for some time.

THOMAS
I'm sorry I haven't visited as regularly as I would like. A few weeks ago, we had...something really big to deal with. But it's over now. We're trying to move on.

FETCH
I've enjoyed your absence.

THOMAS
I see. Would you rather I didn't come?

FETCH
What you do is of no concern to me.

THOMAS
Well, I guess maybe I'll stop visiting you.

FETCH

I call your bluff.

THOMAS

(beat)

Yeah, okay, I'll still visit.

FETCH

You lack conviction. This is only one of your weaknesses.

THOMAS

You say "conviction," but all I hear is "stubbornness." I'm not so prideful that I'll never visit you again for calling my bluff.

FETCH

You know nothing.

THOMAS

Actually, I know a lot about stubbornness. I grew up with your sister.

FETCH

She is not my sister. We share no relation.

THOMAS

The other Mackenna, then. But you know, I'm your brother, and I'm her brother. Doesn't that sound related to you?

FETCH

No. It sounds stupid. You sound stupid.

THOMAS

Sometimes the resemblance is uncanny.

FETCH

We are nothing alike. She is not my sister.

THOMAS

Okay, okay.

(beat)

Your voice sounds a bit different. I think you're losing your accent. Or picking up ours. I'm not sure how that works.

FETCH

I do what I must to not attract unnecessary attention.

THOMAS

Right.

(beat)

What have you been up to in here? How's your therapy?

FETCH

Therapy is for the weak. I spin lies for the doctor. I cannot tell him the truth. About Arcadia, the Hidden People. I cannot tell him that an evil copy of me that you call my sister killed my adoptive father with a giant bell. So I lie. According to him, honesty is the key to successful therapy.

THOMAS

I can see where that part would be hard. What else are you doing? Have you read any other books?

FETCH

I have begun reading Moby Dick. I appreciate Ahab.

THOMAS

Yeah, that tracks.

FETCH

I have also begun to watch television.

THOMAS

I thought you didn't like television.

FETCH

I found it strange at first. Confusing. My eyes jump around the apartments so quickly.

THOMAS

Eyes? Apartments? Do you mean when the camera cuts to another angle?

FETCH

Perhaps.

THOMAS

What apartments?

FETCH

Monica's and Rachel's. Chandler's and Joey's. Occasionally Ross's.

THOMAS

You're watching Friends?

FETCH

(to an idiot child)

I'm watching te-le-vi-sion.

THOMAS

Yes. Okay. Friends is a show on television. Do you watch anything else?

FETCH

Once I have watched Phoebe's apartment. And frequently I watch the café known as Central Perk.

THOMAS

That's all still Friends.

FETCH

I do not think you understand television.

THOMAS

Well, I've also seen Friends. It's a good show, isn't it?

FETCH

I do enjoy watching them. I would not call them my friends, though. You are friends with them?

THOMAS

I mean, they're not actually my friends but...sometimes, I guess if the show is good enough, you kind of imagine what it would be like to know those people.

FETCH

I do know them. I watch them frequently.

THOMAS

Y'know what? I feel like the explanation isn't worth it. I'm glad you know them and enjoy watching them.

FETCH

I like Monica. She is direct and ruthless and keeps things tidy.

THOMAS

Really? That's...I've never actually imagined you watching Friends, so I guess I never thought about which characters you would like.

FETCH

Chandler is stupid. He is weak and tries to compensate with humor. Which is foolish. Humor is a terrible weapon and a stupid pastime.

THOMAS

At some later date, I will explain the irony of that statement.

FETCH

Joey is one of the Hidden People.

THOMAS

Huh?

FETCH

Joey. He is one of the Hidden People.

THOMAS

I don't follow.

FETCH

He has the powers of the Hidden. He commands the minds of the weak.

THOMAS

Joey? From Friends?

FETCH

He speaks magic words and works his will.

THOMAS

Magic words.

FETCH

"How you doin?"

THOMAS

(suppressing laughter)

Oh.

FETCH

Weak-willed women then submit to him for carnal pleasures. Just like the Hidden People.

THOMAS

(laughter then hard cut)

That's actually really disturbing.

FETCH

What is?

THOMAS

Maybe...maybe talk to your therapist about that? Just don't mention the Hidden People directly.

FETCH

I maintain their secrets in this place. I'm sure it will not save me forever. Were the Magister still alive, he would have had me killed by now.

THOMAS

That's not going to happen. You're safe in here.

FETCH

The reach of the Hidden People extends far into your world. Many humans are under their sway without even knowing it. Money. Power. Sex. Humans have simple desires. The Hidden People exploit them. Like Joey.

THOMAS

Well, the Magister is gone. You don't have anything to worry about.

FETCH

I don't worry.

THOMAS

What else have you been doing?

FETCH

I have a job.

THOMAS

Really?

FETCH

I work in the kitchen.

THOMAS

You can cook?

FETCH

I can. I mostly clean after, though. But it makes me useful. Unlike my new cellmate, I earn my food. My books. My television.

THOMAS

You have a new cellmate?

FETCH

Cassandra. She goes by Cassie. Which is a baby's name.

THOMAS

Is she nice?

FETCH

She is weak. She cries every night. She cannot fight.

THOMAS

Please don't tell me you've fought her.

FETCH

I do not fight. It is against the rules. I have only needed to defend myself once. After that, no one wishes to fight me.

THOMAS

So who is Cassie fighting?

FETCH

Cassandra could not fight a wall. She is being beaten for sport by other inmates.

THOMAS

That's not good. You should talk to her, try to make her feel better. Maybe ask the other ladies to back off.

FETCH

Why?

THOMAS

Because that's what people do. We help each other. We have empathy.

FETCH

She is weak. She cannot help herself. How is that my responsibility?

THOMAS

You are stronger than her. With that strength comes responsibility to help those weaker than yourself.

FETCH

You are a fool.

THOMAS

After Moby Dick, maybe see if they have any Spider-Man.

FETCH

Spiders are spies for the Hidden People.

THOMAS

They...they are?

FETCH

(cackling)

No, but you were very scared.

THOMAS

Did you just...did you just make a joke?

FETCH

(suddenly serious)

No. Humor is a stupid pastime.

THOMAS

Yes, you did. You made a joke!

FETCH

I am done with this visit. Guard!

THOMAS

Oh, don't be sore. I thought it was really funny.

Door opens.

FETCH

I would like to return to my cell, please.

THOMAS

Okay, okay. I'm sorry I laughed. I'll try to visit in a couple weeks. I hope that's all right. Bye, Mackenna.

FETCH

(beat)

Goodbye, Thomas.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

129. Fetch's cell.

CASSIE

(sobs)

FETCH

(long beat)

Enough. I am attempting to read. Your infantile sobbing distracts me.

CASSIE

I'm sorry. I don't mean to be a problem for you, too.

(cries harder)

FETCH

This is ridiculous. Stop crying.

(beat)

Stop crying!

CASSIE

(clams up, meek)

Sorry.

FETCH

Stop apologizing. I just want to read. I have no interest in your demands for forgiveness.

CASSIE

Sorry. I mean...you know.

FETCH

I know that I will kill you if continue to disturb me. That is what I know.

Some silence.

CASSIE
What are you reading?

FETCH
Moby Dick.

CASSIE
I love Moby Dick.

FETCH
You have read it?

CASSIE
I've taught it.

FETCH
You taught it what?

CASSIE
No, I mean that I taught it in school.
I'm an English teacher. I mean, I was
an English teacher.
(sniffles)

FETCH
If you start crying again, I will break
your legs so they need to put you in a
cell on the ground level.

CASSIE
I don't mean to be a pain. This is
really hard for me.

FETCH
Perhaps you should have trained harder.

CASSIE
Trained? Like at the gym?

FETCH
Trained. To fight. To survive. How did
you spend your childhood?

CASSIE

Um, like a normal kid? In school? With friends?

FETCH

I fought for everything I've ever had. And now I am rewarded. I am provided food, shelter, books, Monica and her companions...

CASSIE

Wait, you think prison is a reward?

FETCH

We fight for nothing here, so long as the wolves know you are not a sheep. Please, Cassandra, explain to me what your utopia looks like.

CASSIE

Well, it's certainly not prison. This isn't a perfect place. It's more like some YA dystopian horror show.

FETCH

A lie you tell yourself because you are weak.

CASSIE

I am not weak. Just because I never learned how to punch someone. Just because I don't want to hurt anybody. Those things don't make me weak.

FETCH

Look around you. This place is filled with warriors. If you cannot fight, you do not belong.

CASSIE

Yeah, well, tell that to my jury.

FETCH

What do you mean?

CASSIE

Well, I was convicted, wasn't I? That's why I'm in here and not at home making lesson plans.

FETCH

Did you not do what they accused you of? Are you held here against your will?

CASSIE

This is prison. Everyone is here against their will.

FETCH

That is not true.

CASSIE

Uh, have you spoken to anyone else in here?

FETCH

No. The extent of my communication with the other inmates was sending six of them to the infirmary when they attacked me in my first week.

CASSIE

Wait, you really don't talk to anyone? You don't have any friends in here?

FETCH

You all throw that word around like it should mean something. What is a friend? A person you willingly allow to betray you? Where were your friends when you were put in here?

CASSIE

Some of them turned on me during the trial, but some of them are still my friends. They stayed loyal to me. And honestly, I don't blame the others. I don't know if I would believe my story, either.

FETCH

I do not care to hear your story of woe and weakness.

CASSIE

I shot my husband to death.

FETCH

I murdered my parents and tried to murder my brother and the impos--my... sister.

CASSIE

Are...are you trying to compete with me?

FETCH

No. I have already won.

CASSIE

Did they...um, deserve it?

FETCH

They abandoned and replaced me. Supposedly. I am uncertain as to who has been lying to me. Probably everyone.

CASSIE

Alan deserved it. That was my husband. He hit me. Hit our son. He was a high-functioning alcoholic.

FETCH

You allowed him to strike you before killing him?

CASSIE

He beat me for years.

FETCH

And you finally retaliated, which resulted in his death.

CASSIE

Yes.

Fetch drops from top bunk.

FETCH

Look at me, Cassandra. You cry over your actions and their consequences. You mourn your old life. But you must understand something.

(beat)

You are weak. You are nothing. You allowed someone to abuse you for years without defending yourself. You had years to plan your reclamation, and yet you stupidly shot him and were immediately caught. You don't even deserve this place and its amenities. If I were allowed, I would take your life now to spare your son the continued shame of having such a sad and pathetic mother. So cry over your fate. Cry over your child. Cry over the inmates who beat you like Alan did. But do it quietly. Because I want to read.

Fetch climbs back into bed.

CASSIE

(softly cries)

MUSICAL TRANSITION

130. Soft, generic elevator-style music plays from a feeble, bass-less speaker in the therapist's office.

DOCTOR

Have you thought any further about what we discussed last time?

FETCH

No.

DOCTOR

But you realize that we're trying to find a way to help you. To move forward through your anger.

FETCH

I do not care.

DOCTOR

I think if you were able to let go of some of that anger, you might understand how much better you could feel.

FETCH

My anger does not control me. I am very content in this place.

DOCTOR

Most people don't acclimate so quickly to this kind of life.

FETCH

I do not know why everyone is so confused by me.

DOCTOR

I wouldn't say confused. I'm glad you don't feel so angry, at the least.

(beat)

Who else has been confused by your feelings?

FETCH

Cassandra. My new cellmate.

DOCTOR

She doesn't share your contentment?

FETCH

She is weak and a terrible person with whom to live.

DOCTOR

You sound angry. I thought you were happier.

FETCH

I am only angry because of her.

DOCTOR

Why is that? What about her makes you so angry? Has she done something to you?

FETCH

No. She does nothing. Nothing but cry. She weeps over her judgment. She sobs that her life is not fair. Cry, cry, cry.

DOCTOR

And that makes you angry?

FETCH

Very.

DOCTOR

Why would that be?

FETCH

She is weak. Is that not enough reason?

DOCTOR

Your definition of weakness seems quite broad. I imagine many people you meet would seem weak to you. Do they all infuriate you?

FETCH

Not like she does.

DOCTOR

So what makes her different?

FETCH

I...do not know.

DOCTOR

I think this is important. Let's go deeper. When was the last time she angered you?

FETCH

Yesterday. I was trying to read. She was crying.

DOCTOR

So was it the distraction that angered you?

FETCH

Yes, but that was a mild irritation. The prison is filled with many distracting noises. I became more angry when she explained her story.

DOCTOR

Her story of what she did that brought her here?

FETCH

Yes. She killed her abusive husband.

DOCTOR

And you found that enraging? That her husband was abusive?

FETCH

No. Her weakness is enraging. Her husband abused her because she was weak, because she allowed him to. And she allows the inmates to abuse her, too.

DOCTOR

Just because someone is abused doesn't mean it is their fault for being unable to fight back.

FETCH

You are wrong.

DOCTOR

It is not the victim's fault for being the target of a crime. It is the criminal's fault for perpetrating it.

FETCH

What do you know of it?

DOCTOR

I'm a therapist. I'm kind of the expert in blame and fault.

FETCH

If someone threatens you, you strike them back. If someone strikes you, you kill them back. These are simple rules.

DOCTOR

Those aren't the rules, though. If someone threatens or strikes you, you call the police. Escalating the situation is how people end up in here.

FETCH

So you would have others solve your problems.

DOCTOR

Not always. But with these sorts of problems? Yes. Fighting back was what got her here.

FETCH

So you would advocate that a woman not fight back when she is attacked.

DOCTOR

Well, no, that's not what I'm saying.

FETCH

Then what are you saying, doctor?

DOCTOR

I just mean that this is clearly something for the police to assist with.

FETCH

When? During the beating? After? Would you advocate curling into a ball to minimize damage, hope the attacker does not kill you, and then crawl to the police when they leave?

DOCTOR

I'm not...I just...what do you think?

FETCH

This is your pattern. You tell me how wrong I am. I present the flaws in your logic. You turn it back on me to answer. You answer me, doctor. You have all the answers about what I do wrong. So tell me. How is this situation to be handled?

DOCTOR

You make a good point. I apologize for dodging the question because it was difficult.

FETCH

I do not need your apology. I am accustomed to winning.

DOCTOR

Right.

(beat)

This is a highly sensitive topic. I certainly believe that anyone, women included, have the right to defend themselves. I also believe that we should not take the law into our own hands. I imagine your cellmate's case lies somewhere on that spectrum.

FETCH

On this imaginary spectrum of strong to weak? Yes. It does lie there. In weakness.

DOCTOR

So not fighting back is weakness?

FETCH

Of course.

DOCTOR

So you have always fought back? Never had to endure anything you didn't want to?

FETCH

At times...I suppose I have, yes.

DOCTOR

So why does it make you so angry when it is about her? Are you thinking of the times when you couldn't fight back, too?

FETCH

(beat)

Perhaps.

DOCTOR

Is your anger really directed toward her or toward those who have hurt you? Perhaps even toward yourself?

FETCH

I...do not trick me. She is the cause of my anger.

DOCTOR

I think what you're experiencing is empathy. You're feeling her pain, and it is reminding you of your own.

FETCH

Thomas also spoke of empathy.

DOCTOR

Your brother?

FETCH

Yes. He spoke of it as if it were normal. Yet I know nothing of empathy.

DOCTOR

Whether you think you understand it or not, I believe you're feeling it with your cellmate.

FETCH

She is nothing like me.

DOCTOR

Yet you've both been mistreated and unable to stop it. You're remembering how bad that felt, and you're realizing that she felt that, too. What would you do if you were there when her husband attacked her?

FETCH

Nothing.

DOCTOR

I don't believe you. You know what it feels like to be a victim.

FETCH

It would be for her to stop it.

DOCTOR

But what if she can't? No matter the reason. Would you watch a helpless person be harmed if you could do something?

FETCH

I...I do not know. Helplessness is weakness.

DOCTOR

And weakness deserves nothing?

FETCH

I do not wish to speak any longer.

DOCTOR

We still have time.

FETCH

Then spend it listening to your terrible music.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

131. Fetch's cell.

CASSIE

Are you reading?

FETCH

Yes.

CASSIE

Still Moby Dick?

FETCH

No. I am now reading The Dark Half.

CASSIE

Stephen King? That's a big jump from Melville.

FETCH

This one spoke to me.

CASSIE

That's cool. I always liked Stephen King.

FETCH

He has other books?

CASSIE

(sarcastic)

Just a couple.

(serious)

Wait, you're serious? You don't know Stephen King?

FETCH

I do not. You know him?

CASSIE

I mean, not personally. But, um, he's written dozens of bestsellers. You're not familiar with him?

FETCH

I am new to novels. I learned to read with...other things.

CASSIE

Oh. Well, if you like that one, I can recommend some more like it.

FETCH

Do not try to be kind to me, Cassandra.

CASSIE

Sorry. I mean, I'm not sorry like it's my fault or something. I guess I say that a lot. And can you please call me Cassie?

FETCH

Everyone choosing inferior names as if the ones they were given are somehow inadequate. A name is precious.

CASSIE

I guess I've always just associated my name with--

FETCH

I do not care.

CASSIE

Sorry.

FETCH

(sigh)

That's it.

Fetch jumps from top bunk.

FETCH (CONT'D)

Your apologies are just another sign of your weakness. Who gave you those bruises?

CASSIE

What bruises?

FETCH

The ones on your back and sides. You can't cover them in the showers.

CASSIE

Nobody.

Open-handed slap.

CASSIE (CONT'D)

Ow!

FETCH

Who gave you those bruises?

CASSIE

Crystal.

FETCH

I know Crystal. She works in the kitchen with me.

(beat)

Did you fight back?

CASSIE

No. I told you, I don't want to fight.

FETCH

But you must. How else will you end these beatings?

CASSIE

I don't know. You know her. Maybe you could say something to her.

FETCH

Say what? "Please cease your attacks on this helpless victim?"

CASSIE

Well, yeah, but maybe a little less mean.

FETCH

I will help you, Cassandra. Do not make me regret it.

CASSIE

So you'll talk to Crystal?

FETCH

No.

Open-handed slap.

CASSIE

Ow! How is that helping?

FETCH

Block.

Open-handed slap.

CASSIE

Ow! Stop!

FETCH

So block it.

Open-handed slap.

CASSIE

Shit. Stop hitting me.

FETCH

Stop me.

Strike is blocked.

FETCH (CONT'D)

Good.

Punch to the stomach.

CASSIE

(oof)

FETCH

Stand straight. A punch to the stomach should not keep you down for long.

CASSIE

Stop hitting me!

FETCH

Yes. Get angry. Feel that. Remember how it feels when Crystal hits you. Remember how it felt when Alan hit you.

CASSIE

Shut up.

FETCH

Yes. You are done being weak and sad.
Remember how it felt to fight back. To
stop his abuse.

CASSIE

Don't say that.

Open-handed slap.

FETCH

Remember!

CASSIE

(yells)

Small scuffle.

FETCH

Good. You have heart after all.

CASSIE

I'm sorry. I don't want to hurt you. Or
anyone.

FETCH

Fighting is not about want. It is about
survival. I will train you. As I was
trained. It will hurt. But Crystal will
no longer hurt you.

CASSIE

Is that a good trade?

FETCH

Yes. Because the next Crystal will not
hurt you, either.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

132. Sounds of a large kitchen with multiple workers.

FETCH

Crystal?

CRYSTAL

Yeah?

Fetch slams Crystal against a wall, dislodging pans and cookware to clatter to the ground.

FETCH

I recommend you no longer seek out and harm Cassandra.

CRYSTAL

Who?

FETCH

(beat, growl)

Cassie. She is now under my tutelage. If you come at her again, you will not find her so easy a target. And if you do so when I'm having a bad day, I may beat you to death with a rolling pin.

CRYSTAL

You wouldn't.

FETCH

I am already in prison for murdering my parents. Where would they send me next? Prisoner prison? You've been cautioned. Feel free to ignore it.

(beat)

Now leave. I shall clean the rest on my own.

Fetch releases Crystal. Crystal leaves. Fetch commences cleaning up. Three assassins approach.

ASSASSIN

She is alone.

FETCH

I'm cleaning. The kitchen is closed.

ASSASSIN

The guards have been distracted. Stand and face us, fetch.

FETCH

I've been waiting for this. I did not expect the Court to send constructs to assassinate me. That displays poor strategy. The Magister would have had me killed in a prison yard fight or dead in an accident. His successors send three constructs built just to kill me.

ASSASSIN

We have our orders.

FETCH

You aren't even changelings. Just automatons. Little more than barghest.

ASSASSIN

You will find us more difficult to command. Will you face us?

Fetch steps forward.

FETCH

Do you know that they offered me multiple jobs here? I could have done laundry. Made crafts to sell. Distributed books. I chose this job. Do you know why? Cast iron skillets.

ASSASSIN

Do you know how much force it would take to kill us with a blunt skillet?

FETCH

I have two.

ASSASSIN

Do you really think we would stand still long enough for you to beat us? It doesn't matter whether you have one or one in each hand.

FETCH

Come, then. Come at me.

Assassins approach.

ASSASSIN
Goodbye, fetch.

FETCH
I learned this from my sister.

Skillets clang together.

ASSASSINS
(scream)

Skillet smashes against an assassin's head. Construct explodes.

FETCH
If you're listening, Alders, know this:

Skillet smashes against an assassin's head. Construct explodes.

FETCH (CONT'D)
I am no longer your pawn. I am inmate
14999.

Skillets repeatedly smash against an assassin. Construct explodes.

FETCH (CONT'D)
I am Mackenna Thorne.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

133. Prison door buzzes, unlocks, and opens. Fetch enters, chained. Guard follows.

THOMAS
Hi, Mackenna.

FETCH
Thomas.

Chair slides out. She sits. Her chains are locked to the table.

THOMAS
Thanks. You can wait outside.

Guard leaves, closing the door.

FETCH

You returned as promised.

THOMAS

On time, even. How've you been?

FETCH

I am now a good person.

THOMAS

You...uh, what?

FETCH

Like Phoebe. I am a good person.

THOMAS

I really don't follow.

FETCH

You know Phoebe. She is friends with Monica. Phoebe often helps others. She taught music to children.

THOMAS

Yeah, that's kind of what happened.

FETCH

I am like Phoebe now. I am good.

THOMAS

Well...okay. That's great. I'm glad that you're trying to be a better person.

FETCH

I do not try. I am good.

THOMAS

What good things have you been doing?

FETCH

I have taught Cassandra to defend herself by repeatedly striking her until she successfully parries.

THOMAS

Um, okay. So while I appreciate the motivation, I don't think repeatedly striking someone is a good act.

FETCH

I also threatened to kill the inmate who bullies her.

THOMAS

I think maybe we need to go over the definition of good.

FETCH

My therapist says this is empathy.

THOMAS

If you're doing it to help Cassie, then yes, you're feeling empathy for her.

FETCH

I had not realized the important connection between empathy and violence. I now appreciate empathy much more.

THOMAS

Baby steps, I guess. This is mostly progress.

Some silence.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

So--

FETCH

How have you been?

THOMAS

(long beat)

Did you just...what?

FETCH

I asked how you have been.

THOMAS

(beat)

I'm...actually doing pretty well right now. Thank you for asking. I really appreciate it. I've been thinking about what I'll do for a job going forward, and I've been--

FETCH

I asked how you are doing, not what you are doing. I don't care to hear you prattle on about your weird hobbies. Don't be such a Ross.

THOMAS

(sigh)

Baby steps.

FETCH

I'm bored. Come back tomorrow with more to discuss. Read Moby Dick.

THOMAS

You want me to come back tomorrow?

FETCH

Or next month. I do not care.

THOMAS

No, no, I'll come tomorrow. I'll see how much Moby Dick I can read by then.

FETCH

You read slowly like a small child.

THOMAS

Yes. I suppose I do.

(beat)

Bye, Mackenna.

FETCH

Goodbye. Brother.

THE END