

THE BLEACH PROJECT

by

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The Pitch

The Bleach Project aims to create a romantic short film telling the story of a blossoming, then broken, then repaired romance between a pair of young people. The male lead, Alexander (Alex), is a writer suffering from lack of inspiration and loneliness. The female lead, Jessica (Jess), is a student who moves into a house near his. They meet when Jessica arrives, and accidentally confuses Alexander's house for the place she is to stay. During their initial meeting they briefly chat and sparks flare, but nothing is pursued.

Alexander finds that Jessica has stirred something inside him and so he seeks her out and they form a friendship, learning about each other's interests and desires. Jessica confides that she wishes one day to travel abroad and teach, spurred by a love of learning. Alexander confides that he lost his muse years prior after a successful novel was published, and that he has been searching for "some to write about, someone to write too" ever since.

Eventually they become lovers, and Alexander's first novel is optioned for a movie (which his agent details). Jessica finds out that she has been accepted as a teacher for a year internationally, but finds it hard to tell Alexander. Eventually, they have a romantic dinner during which they both share their news, which results in Alexander becoming angry and feeling abandoned, whereas Jessica flees in tears. ("It's only for a year" "Only she says!" "I'll write to you!" "Well maybe I won't fucking write back!")

The film resumes a year later, with Jessica returning to her friend's house (where she lived) to see Alexander on the television, talking about the movie coming out. He is asked about a future novel and he says that he has instead written a volume of poetry, which when he is asked about he talks of how they are all written "to" someone, and that the collection is called 'letters to jessica'.

At this point Jessica hurries to Alexander's house, but he is not there. A proof copy of *letters* is there and she flips through it, curled up on the couch, and falls asleep. In the darkness, Alexander returns and finds her there with the book in her hands. He makes two cups of tea and leaves one, with a candle, beside her. She wakes and finds it there, takes it to the porch where she and Alexander used to sit and finds him sitting there. She sits beside him, and turns to him, saying "you said you wouldn't write to me". He smiles, and says "No, I didn't - I said I might not."

Kiss, pan, and credits roll..

A film based on 'bleach', or at least on the concept of alexander and jessica.

Alex is a lonely writer with a history of heartbreak suffering horrendous writer's block. Jessica's a student moved into the area, studying languages. They meet when she is looking for the home of

her friend she'll be boarding with, he gives her directions, helps her move her bags back to her car, etc.

They encounter each other a few more times - he might take a present over as a 'housewarming' gift, clumsy, etc. As we see them together we'll intercut with scenes of him starting to write again, them developing a relationship, etc, etc. A few scenes cut between with Jessica applying to study abroad, teach internationally, etc, things she will have mentioned as long term goals.

Needs to be a scene where Alex tells Jessica the spare key is kept under the doormat out the back.

Increase the romantic plot and the obviousness of them falling for each other, until we have a romantic candlelit dinner, where Alex and Jess both have something they want to tell each other. They both agree to go together - Alex says "I think I love", Jessica says "I'm moving to Japan."

Alex is hurt, betrayed, etc. "It's only for a year" "Only she says!" "I'll write to you!" "Well maybe I won't fucking write back!"

Jessica leaves, crying, and Alex sits at the table with his head in his hands.

ONE YEAR LATER.

Darkened house. We see Jessica enter, putting down a travel bag, and say hi to her friend. Hug, how was the trip, etc, etc. So good to see you! - Oh yes, a parcel came for you today.

Today?

Yes, did you order something? Tell someone when you'd be home?

No? Opens parcel, it's a copy of a book - "letters to Jessica", a volume Alex wrote while she was away Tears up at the thought that he did write to her after all. Pulls out mobile phone.

Cut to Alex having dinner with his agent, talking about signing a publishing deal. His phone

rings but he misses the call, unknown number. Cut to Jessica putting down the phone, and hugging the book, crying. Cuts back to Alex, who shrugs, finishes meal, goes home.

Slips into house, the doormat has been lifted up. Enters through the backdoor and sees a handbag on the table, looks about and finds Jessica asleep on the couch. He looks at her for a few minutes then goes down to the kitchen. Fade back a few minutes later to him returning, with a plate of food, and he sets it down, then lights a candle, and closes the door. Jessica wakes to see the candle flickering then grabs her plate and heads to the front porch where she first saw Alex. He's there, eating, and she sits beside him in the doorway and the camera pans away slowly. They share a glance, and she smiles at him.

"You said you wouldn't write back"

"I only said maybe," he replies and leans over and kisses her. Camera zooms out and left, fades to black, FIN.

Opening scene has Alex lying on a balcony reading, when the doorbell rings. He'll answer it, a woman lost (Jessica) asking if this is 'the blah's' house. Tells her no, redirects her, etc. Smiles, thanks. As she leaves, he calls out:

"Wait

Yes?

I'm Alex.

It was nice to meet you, Alex. -- girl turns, walks down drive, smiling. A few seconds

And you?

Me?

Yes. You.

<smile> Jessica

Bleach

*flowers bloom with
birdcalls gracing
nectar touched
beetips*

* * * *

The row of micropipettes stood in the centre of the bench, upright on the support rack; maroon, pink, blue and green. She frowned, reached over and moved the pink pipette from between the maroon and green to between the blue and green, then straightened it until it was perpendicular to the bench top.

"I love watching that," she heard a voice, and turned. He was standing beside her, an eyebrow raised with an amused grin on his face.

"What?"

"You. You're always fixing, fiddling, lining things up in straight rows. It's cute."

She laughed. "You mean obsessed!"

"That too!"

With another grin, he turned back to his own, snapping a new tip onto his pipette and drawing out a buffer sample, preparing a new set of eppendorf tubes. Putting down the buffer, he reached for his plasmid samples and added them as well. She watched for a few minutes, then lifted a tube from the nearby ice bath and handed it to him.

"Ligation mix."

A guilty expression crossed his face, and he laughed. "Thanks. Always forgetting the essentials!"

"I would have loved to see the look on the marker's face when you tried to explain why nothing had happened," she grinned. "Ah well. That's what I'm for, right?"

"Hell yes!" he smiled back, then gently swirled the tube and wandered over to the water baths under the windows, the bright sunlight throwing moving shadows onto his pure white lab coat.

"How does he keep himself so clean?" she wondered aloud, looking down at her own stained and patterned coat. "Look at me! Texta, sulfur, who knows what else... the stains never wash out!"

"It's easy, Jess. You happen to be a compulsive who loves sorting things until they are perfect. I'm obsessed with cleanliness, so I avoid all the nasty staining crap. Oh yes – I also use bleach!"

"You weren't supposed to be listening, Alex! Eavesdropping isn't nice!" Jessica shot back, but was unable to hide her smile.

"Each to their own!" Alex said, his face affable as he stripped off his coat, folded it neatly and placed it on his desk. "An hour to kill until the incubation's done. Think I'll get a coffee. You coming?"

"I hate coffee."

"How about a hot chocolate then?"

"Suppose. I'll be out after I finish prepping these tubes."

"Sure."

* * * *

*brownskinned dancing
with playful sandcastles
under hammerstruck
light*

* * * *

He swung his legs over the edge of the jetty, and grimaced at the squawking of the seagulls perched a few metres away, begging for food. Taking a chip out of the bag on his lap, he chewed it thoughtfully, looking up at the cloudy sky. The wind ruffled his hair and he shivered, pulling his blue windbreaker more tightly around himself to ward the sudden chill.

"Late again," he muttered, eating some more chips. "I swear, one day she'll be on time and I'll die from surprise."

He closed his eyes and lay back on the wooden jetty, feeling the warmth from the bag of chips on his lap, slowly cooling in the fresh summer breeze. His nose ached, cold, and he reached up, cupping the tip with his palm and blowing hot air from his mouth.

"You have no idea how ridiculous you look," he heard her say, and he started, half slipping off the edge of the pier as he grabbed the pylon next to him for support.

"Miss me?" Jessica asked and laughed, reaching forward and tousling his hair, before sitting down beside him, swinging her legs over the edge of the jetty.

"Always," Alex replied, flippancy recovered, as he curled his arm around her shoulders and squeezed. "I'm going to start showing up fifteen minutes later than we agree on, means I'll only have to wait five minutes for you."

Jess laughed, and reached into the bag of chips. "Had to duck by the lab this morning, since you so gallantly decided to sleep in late."

"A thousand apologies, beautiful maiden," Alex declared, his eyebrows drooping in line with his pouting mouth, "I resolve to be less troublesome in the future!" He winked.

Jess laughed, and leaned in against his shoulder, copper curls waving slightly against the blue backdrop. "It's still lovely here. Not as hot as it was last week."

"Mm."

"Are you even listening, Alex?"

"Always. Listening, feeling, thinking. You know me. Man of many talents."

Jess hit him, hand slapping lightly on his shoulder. "Modesty, thy name is Alexander!"

"You know you love it."

* * * *

*fading leaf-litters
the aging brown
cobblestoned ice-frozen
earth*

* * * *

The wind scattered leaves in through the open window, waving the fronds of ferns sitting beside the door. Alex quickly swung the glass shut, shivering in the chill air of the kitchen, before moving over to the stove. A saucepan of milk was slowly boiling, and into it he tossed a small slab of butter, some cheese and some diced bacon, then turned the heat down, letting the sauce simmer.

"I wonder if she'll come," he mumbled, reaching into a cupboard and pulling out a packet of fettuccine, placing it on the bench top. Half filling a pot with water, he placed it on the other stove burner, igniting it as he did so, the heat from the flaming gas warming his chilled fingers. Slowly, the sauce began to boil as the water heated, and he added several spices and stirred until it slowly thickened. Satisfied, Alex turned the first burner off and left the sauce to sit, then stared at the water in the pot.

"You know it won't boil if you watch it," he heard a voice say, and he turned. She was standing in the doorway, a scarf and coat wrapped tight around her.

"Jess. Hi."

"Hello Alex. Don't you ever use a heater in here?"

"Sometimes."

The water was boiling now, and he turned away and tossed the fettuccine into the pot, turning the heat down slightly and placing the lid on top.

"It'll be about five minutes or so."

"I'm early?"

The ghost of a smile crossed his face. "In a manner of speaking."

Jessica walked to the table near the kitchen and pulled out a chair, then sat down.

"You're still angry, aren't you?"

"Would you be?"

"Maybe, I guess... I don't know."

Alex turned the first burner back on to heat the sauce, then pulled a colander out of a draw, and took the pot of pasta off the heat. Draining the noodles, he placed them back into the pot and took out two plates.

"You left the stove on."

He grimaced, and turned off the stove, stirring the warmed sauce and then poured it into the pot with the pasta and mixed them together quickly, then served the carbonara onto the plates. Picking them up, he took a pair of chopsticks and a fork from another draw, then carried the cutlery and the food to the table, handing Jess a plate and the chopsticks.

Jess took the chopsticks, looked at them and sighed.

"You're still angry."

Alex shrugged. "Might as well get some practice in before you go."

"I was going to tell you. You know that."

Around a forkful of pasta, Alex growled back. "When, after you'd already booked the flight? Perhaps on the way to the airport?"

"It's not for that long. Only two years."

"Ha. Only! Only two years, she says," Alex told the room, then went back to his food, face stony.

Jess picked up a mouthful of pasta with her chopsticks and placed it in her mouth. She smiled, her eyes overly bright.

"It's good."

"You taught me the recipe."

"I can still teach you others, when I come back," she smiled, timidly.

Alex sighed. "Promise?"

* * * *

*sky falling snowflakes
are echoing traces
of arctic-touched
love*

* * * *

The rain beat gently at the train window as she watched the dreary cityscape slide past. She swallowed, her hands worrying at the strap of her bag, chilled inside her gloves. The tip of her phone protruded from the side pocket, but she ignored it, her fingers passing it by in their twitching.

He won't come, she thought, he's too upset. He won't be there. I should have called, I should have-

"Train wi... arriv... ation... four... utes" the intercom crackled, and she began to breathe deeply.

"I should have said something earlier," she whispered, "I should have told him before."

The train slowed and pulled into the station, and she stood, making her way out onto the platform and through the doors beyond. She looked around and saw him, leaning against a brick wall near the car park, hands in the pockets of his black coat.

Alex.

She swallowed again, then walked up to him, nervous, her hands gripping the strap of her bag like a vice. He saw her, and nodded, a half smile touching his lips before he gestured her to follow, then he turned and walked away. Following him, she walked to his car and climbed in the passenger side, pulling the door closed after her.

He climbed in and put the keys in the ignition, staring straight ahead.

"Alex, I-"

"Shh." he smiled then, his face gentle, and he turned towards her, and raised an eyebrow.

"Coffee?"

* * * *

*Winter is melting
through bittersweet
fragrance of warming
spring rain, scented
clean, fresh;*

bleached.

Bleach

*flowers bloom with
birdcalls gracing
nectar touched
beetips,*

*brownskinned dancing
with playful sandcastles
under hammerstruck
light,*

*fading leaf-litters
the aging brown
cobblestoned ice-frozen
earth,*

*sky falling snowflakes
are echoing traces
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