

Butterfly Ep. 1: Dissonance

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FADE IN:

EXT. BENCH - OUTSIDE FILM BUILDING - COLLEGE CAMPUS - MIDDAY

SPENCER (Young man, dark-skinned) glues his eyes forward, restless. He nudges his arm with the wind, matching the flow.

A few STUDENTS stroll by. Spencer barely notices.

An ARTSY STUDENT in a painfully performative outfit with a nearly empty cup of matcha strolls in front of Spencer.

They, with classic Apple earbuds in, toss the cup toward the trash but it SPLASHES onto Spencer instead.

SPENCER

What th--Hey!

They continue on without looking back.

Spencer scurries to wipe his clothes. He cautiously sniffs them and recoils.

Pulling out his phone, he looks for the time.

SPENCER (CONT'D)

Shit...

Spencer slings on his bag and stands up. He takes another scroll through his phone.

ON HIS PHONE: His screen's lit up with LinkedIn job notifications, most telling him "It's not too late to apply!"

He slumps his shoulders and shoves his phone away.

Spencer walks into the building in front. As the door closes, the wind shifts the fallen matcha cup under the bench.

INT. FILM LECTURE HALL THEATER - MIDDAY

In the massive, dimly lit room, around a few dozen students already seated, turn to look at Spencer opening the door.

He paces to a back row seat.

FILM PROFESSOR

(Addressing the class)

--Remember, this project is worth 30% of your grade, so please, pay attention to the film--

--Spencer's eyes close but he SNAPS himself awake.

Now the film starts. Spencer wobbles his head forward to concentrate.

A Student next to him opens up TikTok, and scrolls.

Spencer double-takes, but looks forward. His eyes begin to close again, he tries to resist but...

...He SNAPS himself awake and whips out his phone.

It's been 30 minutes...

...Spencer looks to a few students gossiping in front of him.

His breathing picks up pace.

A sudden raspy, wet cough bellows out from beside him.

His breathing increases again and he covers his nose with his shirt.

Spencer's still fighting to keep his eyes open...

...SNAP. He blinks himself awake and shuffles for his phone:

It's been an hour...

...He looks to the other side of him to the sound of chattering:

PRETENTIOUS STUDENT 1

(Whispering)

Yeah, I just don't understand the point of dialogue.

PRETENTIOUS STUDENT 2

(Whispering)

That's what I'm saying. Sometimes, watching a silent film, just hits.

PRETENTIOUS STUDENT 1

Rightttt, rightttt. Honestly, I wish all films were silent.

PRETENTIOUS STUDENT 2

Oh my god--that would be crazy...

Spencer can't even believe the words he's hearing.

Spencer hyperventilates. The TikTok, the coughing, the gossiping, everything--

--He blinks as if to wake himself from a bad dream.  
Nothing... Not until--

**\*TICK\* \*TICK\***

The screen flickers, shutters, then--

--The screen **\*CLICKS\*** off.

The Film Professor shoots up, pressing her remote. Nothing.

FILM PROFESSOR

Sorry everyone, this happens a lot.  
Let's take a break. Everyone, let's  
be back here in 5 minutes, okay?

The room disperses.

Spencer calms himself, packing up his stuff.

He spots the Film Professor on her way out and rushes over.

He shuffles past a group of Film Students and overhears their conversation:

FILM STUDENT 3

Yeah, that film was so boring I  
can't even lie.

FILM STUDENT 4

Oh my God, yeah. The plot was so,  
meh. The dialogue was decent  
though.

Spencer slows down.

FILM STUDENT 5

Nah nah, the DP'ing slapped but  
that's literally it. Likeee, the  
writing though?

They all give each other side eyes.

FILM STUDENT 3

It was sooo not it.

FILM STUDENT 4

Yeah, that was just sad...

Spencer butts in.

SPENCER

I've seen the film before. The story gets better when you get more context, you know, watch it again, and it's like the best film you've ever seen I swear.

The students look him up and down.

Spencer waits for a reaction.

FILM STUDENT 3

Okay...

They side eye each other again.

SPENCER

Whatever. Sorry...

Spencer brushes past them.

FILM STUDENT 5

(Behind his back)

I hope he's not a writer...

FILM STUDENT 1

Yeah, if he is, that's even more embarrassing...

Spencer overhears, speeding up and out as they laugh it up.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FILM BUILDING

The Film Professor steps outside and pulls out her phone. Spencer approaches from behind her.

SPENCER

Hi--

FILM PROFESSOR

(Startled)

Holy Jesus!

SPENCER

Oh--I--Sorry!

FILM PROFESSOR

Oh, no, it's--quite all right, what did you need?

SPENCER

(Leaning in)

Hey, yeah, I just wanted to apologize for my unprofessionalism recently, you know, the emailing, the scripts, I'm gonna get it together I promise you that--

FILM PROFESSOR

--Spencer, is it?

SPENCER

Yes?

FILM PROFESSOR

Look, it's your choice to respond to my emails but the weeks of late work and no notes during our group work or about screenings? It's your choice to show up for this class, otherwise, I question why you've even decided to take it.

A few Film Students eye Spencer as they walk by.

Spencer turns her near the bench he sat by earlier.

SPENCER

Yeah, yeah, look, I care about this class, okay--

FILM PROFESSOR

--No, I want you to care about *more* than this class. You're a good writer, and you're in your final year here, you need to take these things more seriously...

Spencer struggles to respond.

FILM PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

And look, I'm sorry to hear about what happened to your Dad--

SPENCER

Mother--

FILM PROFESSOR

--Mother, yes, sorry, but, you're a graduating senior, anything I can handle, you can handle. And I've had my fair share of loss and strife. You got this.

She bumps his shoulder.

Spencer glares at her.

A few film Students walk back inside.

The Film Professor follows, then stops, turning back.

FILM PROFESSOR (CONT'D)  
Spencer? How old are you?

SPENCER  
(Thrown off)  
Uhm--24.

FILM PROFESSOR  
You live off campus?

SPENCER  
Yeah. Like a 20 minute walk--it's  
not that bad really--

FILM PROFESSOR  
--You live alone?

SPENCER  
No. I uh, I have a few roommates.

FILM PROFESSOR  
You talk to them?

Spencer's face contorts and he taps his leg fast in rhythm.

FILM PROFESSOR (CONT'D)  
Do you have anyone you can talk to  
in your life right now?

SPENCER  
What?

FILM PROFESSOR  
Look, I'm not a social worker or  
anything but if you need to talk to  
someone I may be able to lend you  
the number of our school's therapy  
services, maybe even the protective  
services, okay?

Spencer's face goes blank.

FILM PROFESSOR (CONT'D)  
You're not alone in this. I just  
hope you're doing alright.

The Film Professor smiles, and leaves to go back inside.

Spencer's still.

He drops his head, stomach rumbling.

His hand twitches and he FLICKS it backwards like an anxious tic. Behind him, the Matcha cup moves as if pushed by the wind.

SPENCER  
(to himself)  
Like you care...

EXT. EMPTY CROSSWALK - LATER

Spencer, at an intersection, waits for the signal to cross.

Across the street stands A WOMAN IN A TRENCH COAT.

Spencer watches her like a hawk.

She taps her foot against the ground, glancing at the light and back to the crosswalk.

Spencer looks at the grocery store across the street, looks back to the Woman.

She PUNCHES the crosswalk signal, and clutches her hand, dancing in pain. The signal's light flickers.

As he stares, she locks eyes with him.

He studies her.

She glares back.

The light turns green and they're off, walking towards one another.

Spencer furrows his gaze.

She sours hers.

They get closer.

SPENCER  
Are you oka--

WOMAN IN THE TRENCH COAT  
--Weirdo.

She speeds straight into him, throwing him off balance.

He catches himself, looks back with hatred in his eyes, and lets out a weak breath.

EXT. OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE STREET - SAME

Walking to the grocery store, Spencer's phone rings.

Picking out his phone, he stares at the screen, blank face. It's his ROOMMATE, the call ID reads: Roommate (Asshole).

INT. GROCERY STORE - AROUND THE AISLE - A BIT LATER

On the phone, groceries strung over one arm, Spencer lets his Roommate drone on:

ROOMMATE (V.O.)

--And I was like, yo, who the fuck does she think she is? Shouldn't she be making us drinks not making fun of ours? Like, I can drink whatever the fuck I want, bitch.

Spencer stops his search, fixated on a HANDSOME WORKER ahead, mingling with two YOUNG WOMEN down the aisle.

Spencer's face goes blank as he leans, poking around an aisle.

CUSTOMERS look while they walk past, but he doesn't budge.

ROOMMATE (V.O.)

--Fuck these girls bro. I swear, they're all the same, you know? Stupid nobodies who think our parties aren't the fuckin' bomb, bro.

Ignoring him, Spencer moves his hand out toward the Handsome Worker.

The two Young Women the Handsome Worker's talking to seem stuck in his trance as they mingle.

Spencer leans in again, like a predator to prey.

The Handsome Worker leans an arm on the side of a few packs of stacked up groceries.

With Spencer's Roommate still rambling, Spencer jerks his hand forward--

**\*CRASHHH\***

--The Handsome Worker TUMBLES down over the stacked groceries. The Young Women rush to help him.

Spencer recoils, alarmed, until--

--**OOF**--he's SHOVED to the floor.

RUDE CUSTOMER  
Woah, watch it, bud!

The RUDE CUSTOMER whips their cart past Spencer on the ground.

Spencer gets up, brushes off, and ponders what just happened.

INT. THE REGISTER - SAME

Spencer rings up his food with the CASHIER. He stares off at the empty location where the Handsome Worker was.

ROOMMATE (V.O.)  
--And yo bro, there's this lit ass party tomorrow, Imma hit that shit up with the boys back at our place. That shit's gonna be lit!! hella bitches there too--

SPENCER  
(To Roommate on the phone)  
--You wanna know something I've never told anyone?

ROOMMATE  
(Dismissive)  
What?

SPENCER  
I've always thought if I had any superpower, it would be telekinesis...

ROOMMATE  
...Alright bro? That's fuckin' weird. Yo like, if I'm around, or with the boys, never say some cringe ass shit like that again bro. Oh yeah, or your mom. Nobody wants to hear that sad shit.

Spencer's breathing accelerates.

ROOMMATE (CONT'D)  
Anyways, your rent is due so--

SPENCER

--What? I thought I paid you already?

ROOMMATE

Nah bro, shit didn't go through. Look, don't make us kick you out again... Just pay up, aight. I'm out bro, peace--

He hangs up.

Spencer's face darkens, almost blank, hands twitching--

CASHIER

--Will that be Cash or Card?

Spencer SNAPS himself forward.

SPENCER

Uhm, card.

Spencer takes out and scans his card. It fails.

The Cashier pretends not to notice.

Spencer scans it again. Nothing.

He opens his bank account to see:

No money left. He checks his transactions. One payment of \$1,350 paid to ROOMMATE (ASSHOLE).

SPENCER (CONT'D)

(Under his breath)

The fuck?

CASHIER

What's up?

SPENCER

(Agitated)

Nothing. I'll just pay with cash.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE GROCERY STORE

Spencer walks with his groceries and spaces out.

He BUMPS into a group of THREE DUDES hanging around.

SPENCER

Watch it.





The TV, left open on the home page of Roku, lights up the apartment. In the dimness, Spencer turns to the kitchen.

He eyes the water filter on the counter.

He wheezes. Then narrows his teary eyes.

His face goes blank. He reaches a shaking arm toward the water filter a few feet away.

His face quivers, but he doesn't blink. His empty hand tightens as if he's grabbing something. He PULLS his hand back and--

**\*CRASH\***

He's pulled the water filter off the table...

FADE OUT.