stranger than fiction

a review by heidi garcia

any questions or comments should be directed to:

heidi garcia

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you may notice that throughout this review, there are references and conversation surrounding the movie Stranger Than Fiction written by zach helm. If anyone gives you a copy of this review without the DVD, please yell at whoever gave the review to you then call heidi garcia to request one. we’re serious. thank you.

FADE IN:

Whiteness. A single cursor blinks into view on the top left corner. We hear a light TAP TAP TAP noise but no words appear. We hear a deep SIGH. Then there is silence for several seconds.

As the scene pans out, the screen shows fingers tapping thoughtfully on a faded black Logitech keyboard.

The fingers begin to type.

INT. UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY – MIDAFTERNOON

The hoodie cloaked student adjusts her ponytail and reads the brief paragraph on the screen.

We gear a female NARRARATOR speak (V.O.):

This is the story of a girl

named Heidi Garcia…

She begins typing again.

NARRARATOR (V.O) (CONT’D)

And her writing of a review

for ENGL137.

HEIDI stops to smile at a PATRON, indistinct talking and gesturing to the library search catalogue ensues. The PATRON nods and leaves happily.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

For the past 14,688 hours, or 1 year, 4

months, and 5 days, Heidi would tap

thoughtfully on the Logitech keyboard. It

had sticky keys and a poor connection. The

monitor would look on encouragingly

as she completed one paper after another.

Heidi compares notes from a nearby notebook, striking out a bullet point on her list, rapping her knuckles against the marble desk as she stares at the list, thoughtfully.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The difference with this paper

was that it was late. In an

uncharacteristic twist of fate

Heidi had written down the wrong

date in her planner. So it was

with a certain amount of stress that

she typed out her missive on the rainy

Friday afternoon in April. The

monitor looks on in sympathy.

CO-WORKER

(Walking past and looking

at Heidi’s monitor)

Are you writing a screenplay?

HEIDI

Sort of? It’s kind of a review.

CO-WORKER

Huh. Cool.

Heidi returns to her document.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As a rule, Heidi did not like movies.

She found them superfluous and distracting.

A noisy medium that often detracted from her

enjoyment of a story. Seeing words spelled

out was comforting to Heidi. When she was younger

and trying to learn to cope with being on “the

Spectrum”-- she refused to label herself with the

actual name—she had internally spelled incessantly.

Sometimes finding she had spelled the same word in

her head over and over for an entire hour.

INT. BREAK ROOM

HEIDI and CAIT are eating lunch.

Heidi stabs a noodle of her baked ziti.

HEIDI

There are just so many things that

can pull you out of the story in a

movie. Maybe they’re a bad actor,

maybe you can only picture them in a

different role, or maybe the effects

are just really, really bad. Like,

doesn’t it ruin it a bit if you’re

reminded it’s a story?

CAIT

I guess it depends how you look at

it. The act of holding a book could

also pull you out of the story, yeah?

HEIDI

(dubiously)

I suppose so.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Heidi didn’t suppose so. The only way

she enjoyed movies was if she could mostly

ignore them by drawing during the duration.

Which was why she hadn’t been excited when her

ENGL137 class announced they would be watching

a movie, especially one starring Will Ferrell-

who she was still mad at for his portrayal of

Sherlock Holmes, her literary hero.

INT. STUDY ROOM – LATER

Heidi is surrounded by books about screenplays, glancing between them and her document.

NARRARATOR (V.O.)

But this movie had been different.

Usually, when she heard things, she had

to stop herself from spelling them out in her

mind. And in a whole movie of words circulating,

it could get overwhelming. That was part of

the reason she didn’t watch movies. Though

she had improved greatly in her coping and

control, she was simply out of the habit of

being a movie consumer. Which was why finding

a movie she liked was special.

She liked that Stranger Than Fiction wasn’t so

...predictable. Harold Crick

had been incredibly awkward but also

heartwarming. It didn’t feel like Will

Ferrell was portraying a character. Heidi

had felt, for once, like she was immersed

in a movie.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE – EARLIER THAT WEEK

WALMART EMPLOYEE

Sorry we didn’t have this movie in

the store when you came the first time.

The older ones aren’t as popular to

buy.

Heidi slides her card into the pinpad and smiles.

HEIDI

Kind of sad how they can get forgotten

huh? I’m glad I got introduced to it

anyway.

INT. HEIDI’S PARENT’s HOUSE – EARLIER THAT WEEK

HEIDI’S MOM

You don’t usually like movies.

What makes this one special?

Suzel picks up the DVD and reads the back.

HEIDI

I think I like that it shows how fiction

affects us. It’s abstract and doesn’t

beat you over the head with it, or anything.

But the message is still there. Like...I

don’t know, like telling us to appreciate the

little things but also the bigger things aren’t

as out of our control as we think. They’re

connected kind of.

MOM

The big things and the little things?

HEIDI

Yeah.

NARRARATOR (V.O.)

And it did. Heidi appreciated the

unlikeliness of Harold and Ana, she liked

to see someone cope by using numbers, the

way she had used letters, and it made her

happy to see another find an organic and

fulfilling alternative in the same way she

had.

MOM

Well, I’m sure your dad and I will

love it. Thanks for letting us borrow

it.

HEIDI

Sure.

INT. UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY BREAK ROOM

CAIT

Did you decide how to write your review?

HEIDI

I think I’m going to write a screenplay.

CAIT

Oh, that’s cool! Have you ever

written a screenplay?

HEIDI

Not exactly...

NARRARATOR (V.O.)

And she hadn’t but she found, as she sat

in the Undergraduate Library later that

day that she had genuinely enjoyed it.

Perhaps there would have been more direct ways

of communicating her enjoyment, the personal

resonance, and the cleverness of the film

and its’ message. But she also felt that, in

telling the story of her reaction, in the

first form she had experienced the story in,

was a type of beautiful tribute to the

heart of the concept and her class.

We pan out to the monitor, looking on happily as Heidi types her final sentences. Through the plethora of words, and tabs open on the desktop, we come to rest on these words:

The End.