

Claustrophobia – With Contrast

By

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FADE IN ON:

INT. RADIOLOGY CONTROL ROOM - DAY

LORI (30s) stares through a window. A paper hospital gown hangs to her knees, gaping open in the back. In the next room: a gurney and HUGE WHITE CYLINDER. RUMBLES echo through the pane.

Lori puts a shaking hand on the glass.

LORI

Looks like a big coffin to me.

The TWO TECHS next to her exchange glances. SARAH (30s) says nothing. MIKE (20s, Korean) pats Lori's shoulder.

MIKE

It's just an MRI. Trust me, their bark is worse than their bite.

Lori jerks away from Mike's touch, and fumbles to close the flap exposing her behind. Sarah glances at Mike: "I'll take it from here," and laces up Lori's gown.

SARAH

Trust us. MRI's don't hurt at all. It's just like a big massage. Some people even fall asleep.

LORI

Did I mention I'm claustrophobic?

Mike reaches for the door.

MIKE

We'll be gentle. Come this way.

INT. MRI CHAMBER

Lori lies down on the gurney, and stares up at the ceiling. Sarah fits headphones on Lori's ears. Mike approaches with an IV. Lori flinches away.

LORI

What's that?

MIKE

Didn't your doctor tell you? He ordered a scan with contrast.

Lori's voice rises - panic bubbling at the edges.

LORI

What *is* it with this place? You cancelled my appointment last week, and now you forget to tell me about this! If you're this disorganized, maybe I should -

Sarah strokes Lori's hair.

SARAH

Shhh... It'll be okay.

Mike inserts the needle. Lori fidgets, making it difficult to keep in place.

SARAH

You have to be still for a full thirty minutes. Otherwise, we'll have to do this all again.

Mike consults Lori's chart.

MIKE

No contra-indications. Let's just add a sedative.

He rummages on a tray - injects liquid into the IV.

MIKE

This'll take a second. Count backwards from twenty.

He straps down Lori's head and arms. Rests a RUBBER BULB in her hand.

MIKE

That's your panic button. Squeeze this if you feel afraid. We'll come in right away.

He and Sarah slide Lori's gurney into the machine. Her legs stick out from the knee. They head back towards the control room. Sarah whispers in Mike's ear.

SARAH

Did you have to strap her down?

MIKE

I think this one's a wiggler. If I didn't, we'll never get out of here.

INTERCUT CONTROL ROOM AND MRI CYLINDER

Lori stares up at the machine's curved inner walls. There's only one inch of space. A plastic shield in front of her eyes provides a window to nowhere.

She tries to move. The straps have her pinned. Mike's voice echoes through the headphones, in her ear.

MIKE

What kind of music you like?

LORI

Um, classical.

MIKE

We can do that. Hold on.

A WALTZ pipes in through tin speakers. Lori blinks and looks woozy. The sedative's kicking in.

LORI

You know, I didn't want to do this. But my neurologist said it was important to rule out alternatives. I've been getting dizzy. Seeing things. But he thinks it's just my migraines...

Sarah's voice cuts in.

SARAH

We're going to start in a few minutes, Ms. Rodney. Do your best to relax. The machine's going to make lots of noise.

The MRI RUMBLES. Lori YELPS.

Mike stage-whispers to Sarah - his voice audible through Lori's speakers.

MIKE

Told you she's going to be a handful. Good thing she doesn't know what happened last Tuesday.

SARAH

That chick with the brain hemorrhage - that was *this* machine?

MIKE

Yeah, it took them until today to get the cylinder completely clean...

Lori's eyes widen. But the drugs are taking effect. She lets out a small, strangled PEEP.

An awkward moment of silence on the technician's end.

MIKE

...uh, is this microphone still on?

Mike and Sarah scramble for the controls. Sarah cranks the music louder. Both techs pretend nothing was said.

INT. MRI CYLINDER

The RUMBLINGS increase. Lori's heart POUNDS in her ears. Her eyes dart left and right.

LORI

Thirty minutes. I can't!

She grabs for the squeeze bulb. It rolls off her chest, to the side. She fumbles on the gurney. Can't reach it.

Something SCRATCHES through the classical music. A static sound. Garbled. It sounds like a FEMALE VOICE - heard through a mouthful of wet sand.

FEMALE VOICE

It's so dark. So dark in here. No-one can see you.

(sing-song)

But I can.

Lori GULPS. Her lips move... there's no sound. The voice HISSES in her ear.

FEMALE VOICE

You can't move now, can you? That's such a vulnerable feeling. I could reach out and touch you. And you can't do anything.

Little black SPECKS swarm in the corner of Lori's eyes. Fast moving spiders, or ants. Dots run into Lori's hair. Others flow down the neck of her gown. Up the sides of her face.

Lori lets out a STRANGLED SCREAM. Twists her head from side to side.

The Classical Music cuts off. Mike's voice in her ears.

MIKE

Try not to move. You're doing fine. Only twenty more minutes to go.

SARAH

You okay in there? Squeeze the bulb if
there's a problem.

Lori's fingers graze the alarm bulb. She looks down - the
ants are gone.

LORI

(whispers to herself)

It's the migraines. Doctor Valentine said
I might see things..

She drops her hand away. Breathes deeply, and stays calm.

LORI

Just twenty minutes. I'll be okay.

The MUSIC starts up again. As does the ROAR of the
machine. Lori closes her eyes, but can't relax. She opens
them again, and stares up at the glass pane.

LORI

Pretend it's the ocean.

The reflections in the glass shift. A WOMAN WITH BLOODY
EYES stares back at her.

Lori tries to SCREAM. CHOKES instead. The straps keep her
from flailing. The alarm squeeze bulb rolls off the
table. It dangles inside the machine, near the floor.

SARAH

You okay in there, Ms. Rodney?

Lori tries to move her arms. They're paralyzed. Instead,
she twitches her big toe.

INT. RADIOLOGY CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Mike notices the movement, and points.

MIKE

There. She signaled. It's fine.

INT. MRI CYLINDER

The machine ROARS in Lori's ears. Devilishly loud. Close
to insane. The Bloody Woman looms closer. Lori GASPS. The
woman smiles.

FEMALE VOICE

That's what I looked like, too. So scared. By the time they realized something was wrong, it was too late. I've been so alone since then. But now I have company...

Blood pours onto the glass from nowhere. It seeps around the crevices of the shield and SPLATTERS into Lori's face. She opens her mouth to cry out. A torrent of blood pours down her throat.

The MRI drowns out her screams...

INT. RADIOLOGY CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Lori's big toe stops twitching. Mike smiles and glances at his watch.

MIKE

There. See? She calmed down. Told you sedatives would help.

Sarah bends over the mike.

SARAH

You're going great, Ms. Rodney. Two more minutes, and we'll be done.

Blood drips down the alarm bulb. Drops PATTER onto the floor. The angle's low: the techs don't see.

CUT TO BLACK:

The MRI stops RUMBLING. The MUSIC stops. Sarah's voice clear now in the headphones.

SARAH

Ms. Rodney? You made it. We're all done.

MIKE

See? It wasn't so bad after all.

No response. Sarah TAPS on the mike.

SARAH

Ms. Rodney, are you awake? Please respond.

TAP TAP TAP. A loud sound in a silent room...

FINAL FADE OUT