

PODCAST

by

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FADE IN

INT. MARION'S HOUSE -KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

ANA, 32, tidies the kitchen, periodically glancing out the windows and at the sofa, with its dried blood streaks. A distinct CREAK pierces the quiet.

Across the living room a DOOR along the hall hovers open. As she heads for it the phone RINGS.

She hastily shuts the door, then jogs off to answer the phone. As she chats the doorknob slowly TURNS.

ANA

I'm downstairs cleaning, getting
the rest of her stuff.

MARK (V.O.)

Did you get a feeling she was...on
something?

Ana's eyes sweep the house's tranquil expanse, coming back to the bloodied sofa.

ANA

You mean drugs? No. Why?

MARK (V.O.)

Because nothing she said made
sense? Maybe she took something and
hallucinated, you know?

The door quietly swings open in the hall behind her.

ANA

That's not like Marion. I know she
was having nightmares but...

She said someone was trying to
scare her.

MARK (V.O.)

She was scared alright but there's more to it. Maybe she'll tell us more when she's ready.
You almost done?

Ana digs into her bag and pulls out an iPad.

ANA

Yeah. I came with her mom so soon as she gets back we're packing up and leaving.

MARK (V.O.)

Well I'll be there tomorrow at lunch. See you then?

ANA

Most likely. Bye, Mark.

She opens a playlist on the iPad. A soothing voice resumes mid-sentence about meditation. It skips to the next file without warning.

A male PODCAST VOICE fills the air, velvety and cajoling, laced with subtly menacing undertones.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

Learn to deal with the fear. It's all around you. If you can't confront fear, it overcomes-

She grimaces, goes back to the first audio.

BANG!

She jumps up. The door slams and swings with a sudden wind.

As she nears it the momentum slows to a stop.

Inside the room is a study; a desk, bookcase and furniture. Everything is still. She presses the lock on the door and shuts it.

LATER

The shadows on the wall are longer. A meditation podcast's gentle music breaks the quiet as Ana stacks books and miscellaneous objects in a box. She dials a number on her phone.

ANA

Hi Margaret, it's Ana. I'm almost done. Call me when you get this.
Bye.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

-telling stories of fear would cure them. But share them with the right people. I helped them share-

Ana halts at the fridge. The voice drones on about using nightmares as a tool.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

...but Sally gave to it her sister.
Bad mistake.
(chuckles)
Wrong person receiving the fear has terrible consequence-

Ana swipes back to her meditation audio, frowning. She stares at the blood on the sofa opposite her.

MOMENTS LATER

A dark blue sheet billows as she drapes it across the soiled sofa.

She finishes her drink and resumes packing. Behind her, the door sneaks open soundlessly.

NIGHT

Soft lights illuminate the kitchen and living room. MOONLIGHT SONATA fills the air. Ana reclines on an uncovered sofa.

She consults her watch then begins stacking boxes at the front door.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

We regaled you with Sally's story
to warn of the fear. Now it's
yours.
What will you do with it?
My new terror tale from Crestpoint
tells-

Rushing over, she shuts off the podcast.

CREEEE-E-E-AK

The door opens wide. A light is on inside.

ANA

What the hell?

INT. MARION'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Ana scrutinizes the room, checks the windows. The desk catches her attention.

An aged red folder lays noticeable among contemporary material. The phone rings from the living room. After brief hesitation she takes the folder.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MARGARET (V.O.)

I'm so sorry Ana. My car broke
down. I'll be there as soon as I
can, okay?

ANA

Oh. Sure, it's fine.

She hangs up, drops on the sofa. She opens the frail folder.

Cream pages and yellowed newspaper clippings slide out. She selects one; a patient report. The header reads, "CRESTPOINT ASYLUM".

On the coffee table, the iPad's screen blinks on. A silent video of a derelict radio control room plays. In it DR HARLOWE, innocently clad in eighties attire, adjusts outdated equipment.

On the sofa Ana scans the report, oblivious.

INSERT - LINE OF REPORT

Sally Donohue was diagnosed by Dr.
Harlowe, originally warded on March
19th, 1984

BACK TO SCENE

An accompanying picture shows a dark-haired woman, her face tense and haunted.

A headline from a newspaper clipping reads, "Controversial Doctor is a Hit with Viewers".

ON THE IPAD Dr Harlowe looks into the camera. The screen flickers off, then on again.

A live feed of Ana plays. On the screen she sits sifting through the file's contents. Behind her, Dr Harlowe lurches into view and halts, observing her, unseen.

Back on the sofa she reads aloud.

ANA

"The doctor's program is under
scrutiny as viewers report unusual
reactions to his broadcasts on
patients...
...rumours of nervous breakdowns,
constant nightmares-"

A muted RUSTLE disrupts her focus. She looks up.

The sheet slides up and off the top of the bloodied sofa. The iPad screen is dark.

She wavers, then encircles the sofa. The blue sheet lies in a pile on the floor.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)
 ...once that special person
 receives the fear, it never leaves.
 It feeds. Spreads.

Ana hastens back to the table, sees the video of Dr Harlowe
 in the control room. He speaks into the microphone.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)
 Fear travels far, to places beyond
 your reach. It's how I live on.
 Others live on too, like-

The screen blinks off and with it, the voice. Her cell phone
 rings.

ANA
 Hello?

MARK
 Ana? You okay? You sound-

ANA
 Yeah, I'm fine. Just a little edgy.
 I'm still at Marion's.

MARK
 You remember David? He did the
 tours with us. You remember that
 old radio station we visited? Radio
 85.

ANA
 The radio station. Yeah. Why?

MARK
 I just talked to him on the phone.
 He's in the hospital. Bad accident.
 He sounds just like Marion. Said he
 saw something in the backseat.

ANA
 What? Wait a minute-

MARK

Listen to this. He took something when we left. A log book about their programs or something. He said it was full of personal stuff. About asylum patients... Did Marion know about that?

ANA

I...don't know. Asylum patients? They had a show about that?

MARK

Who knows but that station was famous for weird stuff. David said they-

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

(replacing Mark's voice)

-forgot their patients. Ignored their fears. Just like this woman. She's alone now, desperate to delay the fear.

Ana looks at the phone.

ANA

Mark! You there? Hello?

A low battery warning flashes before it shuts off.

She checks the her iPad playlist. "CRESTPOINT RADIO 85" is listed. She deletes it and picks up a cordless handset.

On an office table behind her, a computer screen comes to life with a video of the radio control room. Dr Harlowe's voice sputters from the speakers.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

Back to our story. She's wondering about her progress.

Ana whirls around.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

Was it her own doing? Or... Was
someone else helping her?

On the video Dr Harlowe pauses to consult files, humming a gentle tune.

Her gaze shifts beneath the table. All cords are unplugged. The screen abruptly shuts off.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

She's been different since she
visited us. No more terrors of her
past. What did she take with her?

The sinister voice blares from her iPad again. "Crestpoint Radio 85" displays on the playlist as before. She deletes it again. The voice falls silent.

On the handset, her call goes unanswered. She tosses it, finds a charger and plugs in her mobile phone.

BANG!

The noise comes from above. A CREAK floats down.

She tiptoes to the foot of the stairs. Light from an open door reflects on the dim wall.

ANA

Is- Margaret? Is that you?

An eruption of static answers her. A voice drifts down.

PODCAST VOICE (O.S.)

Fleeing is her instinct. Truth
isn't attractive when it exposes
the fear.

All doubt disappears. She turns and flees.

FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ana fumbles with the lock, flings it open.

Outside, someone stands completely draped in the blue sheet like a ghost.

She gasps and slams the door, locks it.

LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN

She scrambles for her phone.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

Her friends took something, she took something. Does she know?

The voice emits from the iPad again. Looking at it, she backs up to the kitchen area.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

The hidden parts now show themselves.

A shadow disturbs the light on a wall as it swiftly crosses the window outside. She spins around. Nothing.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

When they visited I detected her angst. And so did something else.

ANA

Who is this? Who's there?

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

Now she's better. But can she confront the dark side of the cure?

The iPad bursts into a live feed of the room. On it, Dr Harlowe stands behind her, his face as derelict as the control room, preserved with the visage of a ghoul.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

I taught them to manage the fear. To employ it where appropriate.

Ana peers through a window, sees nothing but the night surroundings. A silent flash of lightning illuminates her reflection in the glass.

Another flash- but she's gone. She glimpses the spectre of SALLY DONOHUE in her place. She is ghoulish as Dr Harlowe, with a haunting look in her eyes.

Sally disappears. Ana sees herself. She begins to back up, breathing harshly.

Another flash of lightning and Dr Harlowe is beside her.

He clamps her mouth to quell her scream. His spiky fingers dig into the sides of her mouth.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

New patients must learn this.
Everyday.

The live feed runs on Ana's iPad. Ana and Dr Harlowe appear one moment, Sally and Dr Harlowe the next.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Murmured speech fades as a doctor and a pair of people exit. Ana lays on the bed. As the door shuts, her eyes open.

Her arms bear claw-like cuts. Bandages cover wounds at the her mouth.

She turns and reaches for her iPod on the night table. She positions the earpieces and switches it on.

PODCAST VOICE (V.O.)

Tonight we learn to use someone's
terror to your benefit.
But can you handle their fear? If
you're not the right person...

FADE OUT.