INTAKE

Written by

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INT. GLENDALE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The conference room is stark and clinical, with a battered wooden desk at the center. Two security cameras, aimed at the desk, leer from opposite corners. No windows are present. There is a single door.

HOFFMAN, mid-30s, an athletic Psychiatrist, is clad in a white doctor’s coat and horn rimmed glasses. He hunches in front of a camera fiddling with settings, his tongue sticking out of the corner of his mouth.

HOFFMAN (V.O.)
This is Doctor A. Hoffman, from Glendale Psychiatric Hospital, physician code 1041-S7, performing the intake interview for patient 1046-1024, Sidney Cole Austin.

Hoffman stands and steps away.

HOFFMAN (V.O.)
Ms. Austin, age 23, has just transferred to our facility via Brookstone General Hospital.

He passes in front of the camera. Repositions the wooden chair opposite. He looks toward the door. He walks to it.

HOFFMAN (V.O.)
While there, she was in the care of a Doctor P. Glasston, who abruptly terminated her treatment, and was thus transferred to me.

SIDNEY, early 20s, a pale and diminutive woman dressed in a white hospital gown, is patiently led to the chair by Hoffman and sat down.

HOFFMAN (V.O.)
Under Doctor Glasston’s care she presented extreme insomnia, with microsleep bursts, anxiety, and unusual dementia accompanied by speech impairments.

Hoffman walks around the desk and takes his seat in a clear plastic chair. He pulls down a folder from the pile. Flips it open. Produces a pen from his pocket. CLICK.

HOFFMAN
Hello Sidney. I’m Doctor Hoffman. I am your new psychiatrist.
Sidney fidgets in her chair. She turns and looks into the corner behind her.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Sidney? Are you with me?

Sidney swivels to face Hoffman.

SIDNEY
W-w-who?

HOFFMAN
Sidney.

SIDNEY
Is that me?

HOFFMAN
Yes, your name is Sidney Cole Austin. Did you forget?

SIDNEY
Oh.

Sidney drops her gaze.

HOFFMAN
Sidney?

SIDNEY
I’m here.

HOFFMAN
Wonderful. As I said, my name is Doctor Hoffman. I will be your attending Psychiatrist. You were transferred. Do you understand?

SIDNEY
I think so.

HOFFMAN
Very good. I was just going over your case history. I see here you have lost words, is that correct?

SIDNEY
I think so.

HOFFMAN
You aren’t sure?

SIDNEY
They escape from time to time.
HOFFMAN
Do they ever come back?

Sidney shakes her head.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
I see. Well, can you give me a few words off the top of your head?

SIDNEY

HOFFMAN
Ah yes. You noticed the camera. Very good.

Hoffman gestures towards the camera.

SIDNEY
S-S-Smelled it.

HOFFMAN
Oh? What does it smell like?

SIDNEY
Old p-p-p-memories.

Hoffman scribbles on a paper within the folder.

HOFFMAN
Interesting. I am going to move on, okay Sidney?

Sidney nods her head. Glances at Hoffman’s face. At the paper. Face. Paper.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
In the notes I read that you have trouble sleeping, correct?

Sidney nods again.

The light overhead FLICKERS.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
I also read that you feel like you are being ‘led away by shadows’

SIDNEY
Feeders.

HOFFMAN
I’m sorry?
SIDNEY
They’re feeders.

HOFFMAN
Why do you call them that?

SIDNEY
They feed off fear. Leeches.

HOFFMAN
And these feeders lead you away?

SIDNEY
They guide me. I have no compass. They were comforting.

HOFFMAN
Were?

Sidney nods. She looks over her shoulder into the corner.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Why are they no longer comforting?

Sidney turns back to face Hoffman, but keeps her gaze down.

SIDNEY
I may not return. Something else will take up residence.

Hoffman writes on the pad.

SIDNEY (CONT’D)
Time is killing me while I sleep. I watch it happen in my dreams.

HOFFMAN
So you are afraid of vanishing?

SIDNEY
Y-y-y-

Sidney nods.

SIDNEY (CONT’D)
Fear is the catalyst of movement.

HOFFMAN
Fear?

SIDNEY
Motivation through fear is human. It’s engrained in us.
HOFFMAN
So you still feel human?

SIDNEY
Y-y-for now.

Sidney looks into the corner. Hoffman writes notes.

HOFFMAN
Let’s get back to these shadows. These feeders. Do you see them?

SIDNEY
Sometimes.

HOFFMAN
Do you see them now?

Sidney’s eyes dart toward the corner.

The camera screen DISTORTS.

SIDNEY
No. Yet they’re close. Walk softly.

HOFFMAN
What happens if they come?

SIDNEY
They feed. Poor Doctor Glasston.

Sidney drops her gaze.

HOFFMAN
You’re suggesting these feeders did something to Doctor Glasston?

Sidney nods.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Well, what happened then?

Sidney shakes her head, her eyes dart to the corner.

The light FLICKERS. Hoffman glances up at the light.

A SHADOW moves in the corner. Sidney quickly looks away.

Hoffman looks at Sidney.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
You can’t say?

Sidney nods.
HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
I see. Well, not to worry. I’ve helped lots of people, Sidney. I can help you too.

Hoffman scribbles notes.

SIDNEY
Just like Antoinette?

Hoffman jerks, causing his pen to streak across the page.

A SHADOW darts in front of the camera.

HOFFMAN
What did you say?

Sidney meets his gaze.

SIDNEY
Don’t you find it queer that our symptoms match so closely? She was so young, so fragile, so s-s-sweet.

HOFFMAN
How do you know about my sister?

SIDNEY
They know. They can s-smell the fear permeating off you, Anton.

A SHADOW darts from the corner behind Sidney’s shoulder. Hoffman lurches.

SIDNEY (CONT’D)
Every life you try to fix is kindred to her’s. With every failure, your fear grows.

The light and camera FLICKER.

A SHADOW darts in front of the camera.

Hoffman jerks his head and looks behind the camera.

SIDNEY (CONT’D)
Even when you have failed and I’m gone, those empty voids will remain. You can't run forever. They’re coming.

Turning around, Hoffman wipes his face and runs his fingers through his hair.
HOFFMAN
Sidney, you must know that these feeders aren’t real.

Sidney drops her gaze. Hoffman adjusts himself.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Well, everything here can be explained. These are simply manifestations of a bigger issue.

Hoffman flips over a new sheet of paper and writes.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Let’s do a sleep study for the insomnia, blood work and an MRI to address the dementia, anxiety, and —

Hoffman glances up at Sidney and continues to write.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Shadows. Can’t forget those.

Sidney drops her gaze and pulls her knees up to her chest.

SIDNEY
There’s so much chatter in my head, but so little being said.

The lightbulb overhead BLOWS plunging the room into darkness.

HOFFMAN
You’ve got to be kidding me. Sidney are you okay?

No response.

Hoffman reaches back and fumbles with the camera. It tips over. CRASH. He falls on top of it.

He struggles with the camera. He gets it off the tripod. Switches to night vision mode. Looks through the view finder.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Sidney?

He pops up over the desk. Sidney’s chair is vacant.

HOFFMAN (CONT’D)
Where are you?

HOFFMAN (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Hoffman hears Sidney WHISPERING from the corner. He turns and cautiously follows the sound.

Hoffman approaches. Hears WHISPERED CONVERSATION between Sidney and someone else.

HOFFMAN (CONT'D)

Sidney?

Sidney crouches in the corner facing the wall amid a group of shadowy figures.

She snaps her head around to face him.

The figures turn their heads to face him.

HOFFMAN (CONT'D)

What the hell are those?

SIDNEY

Good news, Doctor.

Sidney stands.

SIDNEY (CONT'D)

I’m not afraid anymore.

She lunges out of the darkness. Hoffman SCREAMS.

INT. GREEN MEADOW PSYCHIATRY - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The conference room is light and bright, desk in the center.

ABRAMS, 50s, a large man dressed in a doctor’s coat, sits silhouetted.

ABRAMS (V.O.)

This is Doctor P. Abrams conducting the intake interview for Ms. Sidney Cole Austin-

Abrams shifts in his seat revealing Sidney sitting in a white sundress looking down.

ABRAMS (V.O.)

Who transferred to us from Glendale Psychiatric Hospital-

The camera screen FLICKERS.