

CONTINUUM

Episode #23

"The Patient"

by
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"The Patient"

TEASER

BLACK

Under which WE HEAR nothing. Several seconds of total silence. Then the VOICE of the NARRATOR is HEARD.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Existence is a path with a
beginning...

A point of light appears left of frame in the lower third of the screen. It pulses ever so slightly.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
...and an end.

A second point of light appears right of frame, directly across from the first. It also pulses slightly.

A line of light emanates from within the first point of light, slowly moving across the screen toward the second point.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Life is the journey along this
path.

The line of light continues its slow pace across the screen.
(**NOTE: THE PACE OF THIS LINE WILL VARY DEPENDING UPON THE
TIME LINE OF EACH EPISODE**)

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Life is a continuum.

The TITLE "CONTINUUM" FADES IN above the line of light, center screen. Its appearance is identical to that of the points and line. After two beats the TITLE GLOWS BRIGHTER, THEN DIMS AND SLOWLY FADES AWAY.

The line of light moves horizontally across the first quarter of the screen, then slows and stops. ANOTHER TITLE FADES IN at its end. The title reads simply "The Country."

After a beat, the TITLE FADES OUT and the point of light begins moving again on a steady rise until it once again slows and stops, this time one third of the way across the screen. A LAST TITLE FADES IN at its end reading "The City, 9 months later."

Lingering for a moment, the title, points and line of light all FADE AWAY SIMULTANEOUSLY and we are plunged into black again.

For a long beat we are simply met with black. And silence.

Silence that slowly ebbs away, yielding to a faint hint of AMBIENT NOISE, not much more than an indecipherable mix of voices and sounds of activity at first.

The AMBIENT NOISE BUILDS QUICKLY, RISING IN VOLUME. It becomes more identifiable.

Clipped voices. Mechanical sounds. Tapping. Metal on metal. Hard wheels rolling on cold linoleum. Oddly mechanical, more like a machine, a process, lacking personality.

The AMBIENT NOISE CONTINUES TO RISE, almost becoming painfully LOUD. At its loudest point, the black that has consumed the screen is suddenly ripped away from left to right.

Not by a visual effect of any kind but instead by a human hand. A hand that is grasping a black cloth curtain hanging on hooks.

The hand belongs to an ADMITTING NURSE. Short, pudgy, 50's. Hard features. Dyed auburn hair pulled back haphazardly with a rubber band. Wearing one of those overly cute circus animal nurse's outfits.

With the curtain pulled aside, a window frame view of our environment is revealed. A hallway of sorts parallels this now open space, which is some sort of a room. Nothing much visible at this point. The hallway itself is the source of the ambient noise heard earlier.

Gurneys with patients. Rolling hospital beds. Metal. Rolling wheels. Orderlies. Nurses. Doctors. Techs. Administrators. Many typing on laptop computers resting atop strange, rolling pedestals. Family members in various emotional states.

The flow is continuous, sometimes light, sometimes heavy, but never stopping. The observant viewer may notice in some of the gaps that across this hallway is a large glass room, occupied with various people. The words "PATIENT WAITING ROOM" are clearly visible on its glass door.

(**NOTE: DEPENDING ON LOGISTICS OF THE SET, THE WAITING ROOM MAY INSTEAD BECOME AN ADMITTING DESK. THIS CHANGE, IF IMPLEMENTED, WILL NOT AFFECT THE SCENES INVOLVING THE WAITING ROOM.**)

Our environment is now established.

We are in a hospital.

The admitting nurse shifts her focus quickly from the curtain down the hallway.

ADMITTING NURSE
Bring her into 1208.

The admitting nurse steps to one side of what is now clearly an admitting room to clear the way for a hospital bed, which emerges from the hallway traffic, driven by TWO LARGE MALE ORDERLIES. The bed's occupant is obviously an EXPECTANT MOTHER as is evidenced by her very large stomach that is covered by a thin white cotton sheet. A simple shawl rests atop the sheet by her feet.

We do not see her face, but her hair is visible. Soft brown/blond, almost angelic, long and flowing. Her skin is white, lightly tanned.

(**NOTE TO THE READER: IT IS IMPORTANT TO MENTION AT THIS POINT IN OUR STORY THAT THE EXPECTANT MOTHER'S FACE WILL NEVER BE FULLY REVEALED UNTIL THE END OF THIS EPISODE. HER FACE WILL BE OBSCURED BY HOSPITAL PERSONNEL, EQUIPMENT, PASSERS BY, ETC., GIVING ONLY THE BRIEFEST OF HINTS AS TO HER AGE, ETHNICITY, ETC. **)

The bed is rolled into position, facing outward to the hallway. Once it stops, the expectant mother's head has passed CAMERA and now we see her from her stomach outward to the hallway.

The admitting nurse walks OUT OF FRAME, then quickly RETURNS TO FRAME with one of those computer/rolling pedestal setups noted earlier. ORDERLY #1 pulls a blood pressure/heart monitor INTO FRAME from the back of the room and positions it next to the bed. He busies himself with hooking the woman up the monitor.

ORDERLY #2 steps back to speak with the admitting room nurse.

ORDERLY #2
So we've got...

ADMITTING NURSE
(tersely)
Just a minute. I've got to boot up
and log on.

Clearly the technology is just one more source of aggravation for the admitting room nurse.

She is focused not on the patient, or the orderly, or anything else of a remotely human nature, but instead on the cold glowing screen of the computer. She types roughly, uncomfortably, with her fingers stiffly hyperextended above the keyboard.

ADMITTING NURSE (CONT'D)
 (never looking up from the
 screen)
 Okay, go ahead.

ORDERLY #2
 Late 20's, expectant, probably
 early labor. A few ticks away from
 having the kid. She just walked
 into the main entrance and told the
 information desk she would like to
 have her baby here today.

The admitting nurse stops typing. Slowly turns her head to the orderly, registering an odd mix of irritation and shock.

ADMITTING NURSE
 Really?

Orderly #2 nods. The admitting nurse shifts her attention to the expectant mother.

ADMITTING NURSE (CONT'D)
 Is that so?

EXPECTANT MOTHER
 Yes it is.

Her voice is soft, calming. Frankly wonderful to the ear. Like a soft, cool breeze. You can't touch it, or see it, but you feel it.

The expectant mother lightly caresses her stomach with her right hand.

EXPECTANT MOTHER (CONT'D)
 My name is...

ADMITTING NURSE
 (cutting her off)
 Ma'am. Please.--
 (she returns her attention
 to the computer screen)
 --The system will have all of your
 admitting information.

The screen suddenly freezes and the admitting nurse's eyes go red.

ADMITTING NURSE (CONT'D)
 Shi... I can't log on. Again.
 This is a joke.

EXPECTANT MOTHER
 I'm sorry, may I have a glass of
 water? I'm a little thirsty.

The admitting nurse holds up her left hand toward the expectant mother while repeatedly stabbing the "enter" key with her right middle finger.

ADMITTING NURSE
 Reboot? Reboot? Reboot? Password
 error?

One last hard punch of the "enter" key and she gives up in frustration. Stepping back, the admitting nurse yells down the hallway.

ADMITTING NURSE (CONT'D)
 Sheila? Janet? Any frigging body?
 I can't get in again!

No answer.

ADMITTING NURSE (CONT'D)
 Goddammit, anyone?

Crickets.

ORDERLY #2
 We have to go. There are five more
 just like her lined up downstairs.

The admitting nurse disconnects from the computer screen and looks not at the orderly but at the expectant mother.

ADMITTING NURSE
 Insurance.

Pause. Uncomfortable. Hangs in the air.

ORDERLY #2
 (smirking)
 You're kidding, right?

The admitting room nurse's features harden with disdain.

Orderly #2 looks at Orderly #1.

ORDERLY #2 (CONT'D)
 Let's go.

The orderlies exit and the admitting nurse coldly grasps the black curtain in her hand.

ADMITTING NURSE

God.

She rips the black curtain across the screen and once again the room is sealed off from the rest of the world.

The expectant mother rests her hands on her stomach, on the life she carries within her. They tremble ever so slightly.

After a long, painful beat, CAMERA FOLLOWS her hands as they slowly move off of her stomach, toward her, momentarily DISAPPEARING FROM FRAME.

The AMBIENT NOISE of the hallway is now all that we hear. Until one new sound is added.

The sound of the expectant mother SOFTLY SOBBING.

THE CAMERA STOPS on the face of the expectant mother. A face buried in her hands as we

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER