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about 800 words

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Subject: Premonition

by Robert Wilcox

Doctor Janaki walked up to the line on the floor and took a deep breath, her hands rattled as she took a breath to compose herself. Just beyond this point and behind a solid steel door, a gray and withered entity sits alone in a room, awaiting her arrival.

A voice booms from the intercom, “January 19th, 2015. Doctor Janaki, please proceed with the interrogation.”

A buzzer sounds and the door hisses before opening. Inside the room is a single folding table and two metal chairs. Sitting in one is an entity draped in black cloth from head to toe, its arms chained behind its back.

The Doctor masks her anxiety with a deadpan expression, taking a seat and calmly placing a folder on the table.

Doing her best to speak in a clinical tone, the Doctor states, “I’m going to show you a series of four images and you’re going to describe each one, understood?”

The entity remains motionless. An eerie silence lingers in the air for a few moments before Doctor Janaki pierces it with a cough.

The Doctor nods and places her hand on the folder. The folder is labeled “FBI Department of Abnormalities. Subject: Premonition,” and inside is a bundle of 4 photographs.

She unclips and places down the first image. Written across the bottom is the date “May 7th, 1915.” It depicts an embracing couple on the deck of a luxurious ship. In the background, a familiar robed figure gazes off into the waters below.

Awaiting a response, the Doctor leans back and looks up towards the entity.

“I see... a tragedy,” the entity says, motionless.

The Doctor pauses, pressuring the entity to continue it’s response, but it doesn’t give.

Trying a different approach, the Doctor asks a question, “So, did you intend to stop the incident on the RMS Lusitania?”

“No.”

The Doctor’s face shifts in tone, very small flares of anger arc across her face, quickly snuffed out by her professionalism.

Masking her anger, she moves on and places the second image on the table. “December 7th, 1941,” it depicts the same distinct robed figure standing on a dock, illuminated by the moon and it’s reflection on the still water below.

“And this one?” the Doctor asks.

“I see no difference,” the entity affirms.

The Doctor pauses, before making a second inquiry, “And your purpose for being there?”

The entity gives no response.

With mounting impatience, the Doctor reaches for the third image in the stack. Her nostrils flare as she grasps the image in her hands.

It depicts an unmistakable robed figure looking up to the sky in a New York street. The photo is dated “September 11th, 2001.”

With a fading sense of professionalism, she snaps, “And what about this one? Just another tragedy?”

The entity moves slightly, its rags moving like shadows.

“My condolences,” the entity says, “but when consumed by war, a human can become blind to the consequences of their actions.”

Somewhat bewildered by the response, Janaki blurts out another question.

“Why didn’t you stop it, if you knew it was coming?”

The entity lowers its head, sighing, “It is not my purpose to prevent these events from transpiring, I only forewarn their occurrence.”

“What purpose? What use does anyone have for knowing they’re about to die?”

The entity says nothing, motioning its head towards the fourth and final image in the stack.

Glancing down at the photo, a chill races up Janaki’s spine.

Quickly, she begins to gather the images back into the folder, her hands shaking.

“I, uh, I’m so sorry, but we’re out of time for this discussion, I must get go-”

With a sickening snap of metal, the entity places its large mangled hands on the table, broken chains dangling off its wrists. “I am sorry,” the entity sighs, pushing itself up out of its seat, “but my responsibility here is complete.”

Janaki trips back into her chair, and the folder flies out of her hands, spilling its contents out all over the table. Right in the middle, the final image sits face up.

It is a screenshot of security footage taken from a camera at the entrance hallway of the facility. The robed figure stands, pointing at the camera. A date is printed on the bottom; January 19th, 2015.

Today's date.

After a brief moment, a wave of nausea overtakes Janaki and she tumbles out of her seat onto the cold tile below. An alarm sounds in harmony with the ringing in her ears.

"I wish you luck, Miss Janaki."

The sound of heavy footsteps and shattering glass fill her last waking moments as her body goes limp, spiraling deep into unconsciousness...