

Echoes of Barkin

Chapter 3

By Rubberwolf 2009©

Storycodes: ff/f, ffff/f shock, bd, nc

The images, Emma decided, were still there. Just a movement out of the corner of her eye, as though someone had just walked past her and she had been busy looking elsewhere, so hadn't noticed their approach.

When she looked at the image though, she found nothing there. There was no reason that could explain this movement. There were no gusts of wind that might blow paper or other items around. She was alone. Alone in the heart of an abandoned hospital with no drafts, or flickering lights, that might explain this.

Despite this, however, Emma felt a little better than she had only a few moments ago. Although her stomach still felt queasy, it was noticeably better. Her head also felt a little clearer. But she was still unsettled and so, when she reached the end of the corridor and started down the stairs, she gripped the rail tightly, just in case she had another episode.

Episode. That was a good word for what had happened to her. She had been knocked unconscious and had the most disturbing dreams of her life. She had soiled her clothing after the last incident and was now wondering about in hospital clothing, wearing a set of pull up nappies and woolly socks. But that was not the most disturbing thing. The most disturbing thing was printed on the front of the hospital dress that she now wore. Her name and the number that she remembered from the first dream were stitched into a label above her left breast.

Emma believed that coincidences sometimes happened. But this was too much. Her name and a garment and number that she had dreamt about were very hard to explain, even for a woman who believed in occasional chance.

But she could not think about that now. All that she needed to do was get down to the bottom of the stairs and find the door indicated on the map that would get her outside and away from this awful place.

At last she was at the landing for the sub basement. Turning over the floor plan, she saw that there was another level below this, but that contained the boiler room and a maintenance workshop.

Opening the door she found she was in another reception room. This one had the same dark wood nurses station that she had seen upstairs. A large steel door dominated the area to the left of the station. But the door that she wanted was behind the nurse's station on the right.

She strode across the room and tried the door. Not surprisingly, it was locked and so she got out her keys and tried the first one in the ring. Ten minutes later and Emma felt like screaming. She had tried every key that she possessed twice and none of them fit. She

obviously had not been given the key to this door. She felt like stomping her foot in temper, but managed to check herself.

Reaching into her bag she pulled out the floor plan. If she went out of the third door, between the stairs and the cells, she could follow this corridor to the end and come up near the kitchens. This would lead her to another exit. It was frustrating, but she did not have any choice and so set off in, what she hoped, was the right direction.

The door led to another dark corridor. The musty smell of decay filled this claustrophobic space. Emma shone the torch around, but could only make out another seemingly endless series of doors. As she walked the ghost images played tricks on her and she found herself literally jumping at shadows.

If this was not bad enough she started to feel light headed again. As she travelled further down the corridor she began to find the smell of damp overpowering, suffocating. The sense of claustrophobia intensified and the sense of movement around her increased as her head span and nausea threatened to rise like bile. She staggered and began to pitch forward, dropping the torch and sending her world into darkness.

Strong hands caught her and the overhead lights momentarily blinded her.

“Don’t stop now dear, we are nearly there,” cooed the now familiar voice of nurse Jackson.

Emma tried to understand how she knew the nurses name. She could not remember having heard it in her previous episodes, but it definitely felt like the right name. Images flashed into her memory of conversations and occasions that she had no memory of until now. Had this really happened to her? Was she really an estate agent or was this a fabrication? Emma didn’t know. What she did know was that nurse Jackson and one of her colleagues had taken an elbow each and were guiding her down the corridor.

“What’s happening? Where are we going?” Emma asked, concern etching a higher pitch into her voice as she remembered her previous dealings with multiple nurses who grabbed her elbows.

“Don’t you remember dear? Your last meeting with Dr Barkin didn’t go so well. He felt that you needed more drastic measures. You agreed to the treatment.”

“More drastic measures?” Emma all but shrieked.

“Well it’s too late now dear. Anyway, it would be best if you don’t distress yourself. You know what happened the last time.”

She didn’t, but she could imagine. It probably involved some torture or bondage of some kind. Perhaps some medication that had her gibbering in a corner drooling onto her slippers? Maybe that was why she felt so strange and could not remember things. Were the drugs they gave her really safe? She didn’t know the answers and she could have cried for all of the things she wished she did know.

What she did notice was that her heart missed a beat when they eventually stopped at the door to a room about two-thirds along the length of the corridor. The door opened and

another cubicle, similar to the one upstairs presented itself. Another gurney. More straps. The same white walls and a strange machine in the corner of the room.

“Let's have you up on the trolley then,” nurse Jackson chimed.

Emma knew that it was useless to argue and whatever they were going to do, she had little say in the matter. Sitting on the gurney she allowed the nurses to ease her down onto her back. They efficiently attached padded leather straps to her ankles and wrists, which kept her arms at her sides. Other straps were passed over her knees, stomach and chest.

“Open wide dear, we need to put this in your mouth.”

Emma didn't want whatever it was in her mouth and so tried to clamp her mouth shut. This gesture of defiance was wasted on the two nurses, who had seen it all before. One pinched her nose and the other grabbed her jaw, forcing it open through sheer force. The thing was then forced between her teeth. It wasn't a gag exactly. It was more like a bar, wrapped in several layers of bandage or cloth. It was hollow and more bandages had been threaded through the middle of the tube.

Nurse Jackson pulled Emma's head up while her colleague pulled both ends of the bandage behind her head and back, crossing over itself, towards the front, where it was pulled tight. The nurse tied a bow into the material. She now had this strange bit in her mouth and could not spit it out.

“Et ee oe. Ees I ont ant iss. Eees ont urt eee. Eees,” Emma pleaded, but her cries fell on death ears.

Forcing her head back, the other nurse pulled another strap across her forehead, ensuring that she would not be going anywhere quickly. Emma noticed something else as well. She was wearing the strange material nappy again. This was like wearing a large pair of grandma knickers, but with several layers of cotton stuffed down the front and back. Not bulky, but not flattering either. Emma fretted as she considered the implications of this and of the machine that nurse Jackson was now fiddling with.

“It's not working,” nurse Jackson announced.

“Are you sure?” the other nurse enquired.

“Yes, there doesn't appear to be any power.”

“Is it plugged in?”

A flash of irritation spread momentarily across the nurse's face before she regained control and affirmed that she had already checked that. After a few moments the two women decided that they could use the machine across the corridor.

Nurse Jackson opened the door, while the other nurse stood at the head of the gurney and wheeled Emma out of the room and into the corridor.

“Park it here while we check if the machine is working,” nurse Jackson suggested.

“OK. Will she be alright here?”

“Of course, the only patients down here would be escorted. Anyway, we will only be a few moments.”

With that, both women walked down the corridor to another room, leaving Emma alone and strapped to a trolley, parked in a hospital corridor. Emma was starting to let her imagination paint lots of possible scenarios about the machine. None of them were very good.

After an eternity Emma became aware of another presence. Craning her head as best she could, she saw another woman standing staring at her. She was dressed in a white cotton dressing gown and staring with a look of shock on her face. She was, Emma guessed, in her mid to late twenties, with long brown hair that looked straggly, as though she had just gotten out of bed.

“What are you doing out of your room?” nurse Jackson demanded.

The woman just stared.

“Come on, lets get you back to your bed shall we. You know that you are not allowed here,” the nurse continued.

“What’s going on here? Who are you people?” the strange woman enquired.

“Don’t you remember dear? Not to worry. Lets get you back to your room and we will see if we can get the doctor to talk to you.”

The two nurses had moved in unison to flank the strange woman and Emma could only strain her neck so far before she lost sight of them.

“OK, I will just go back into my room.”

“That’s not your room dear. That’s a treatment room. Lets get you back down the corridor to the patient rooms.”

“What. No. I can see my room just there. Let go of me. No. Get off of me you bitch. Who the hell are you?”

The voices receded along with the sounds of scuffling. Whoever she was, she was obviously putting up a fight. Emma lay quietly as the corridor returned to quiet. After a while she heard the sound of the nurses return.

Her trolley was grabbed and she heard the sound of the parking brake being kicked off. She watched the overhead lights fly past as she was wheeled to the next room, the one with the working machine.

Emma began to panic, her breathing becoming faster and more staccato, as the two women began preparing her. A strange metal thing was placed over her head, like a set of headphones. However, rather than covering the ears, these covered her temples. She

began breathing faster and faster as the purpose of these headphones began to reveal themselves from the glimpses of the nurses preparing the machine and the occasional snatches of words that she could hear.

“Now just relax dear,” nurse Jackson soothed as she stroked Emma’s hair. “It will soon be over and then you can have a nice rest back in your room.”

Emma tried not to imagine what exactly was soon going to be over, but she had a good idea and, as both nurses moved over to the machine, Emma’s worst fears were confirmed.

A shooting pain burned itself into her brain as the lights dimmed and her body arched against the electricity that ran through her body, arching her back as much as the straps would allow. She spasmed for an eternity before her body flopped back onto the gurney. Before she could recover from this her body was rocked again by another wave of electricity that caused her to bight down onto the strange gag with all of her might.

Emma didn’t know how much of this she withstood before she passed out. But she awoke some time later, back in her cell, strapped tightly to the bed. She had wet her nappy, but she didn’t care. The thought struck her that she would go crazy now and she did. She started to laugh. She laughed and laughed until a nurse came in and stuck a needle in her arm and the world swirled and disappeared as her mind floated on a sea of drugs.

Epilogue

Tracey Palmer had been in her new flat for several weeks now. She had got it at a reasonable price and it was ideally situated to allow her to commute. This added an extra forty minutes to her journey, but meant that she could afford a reasonably large flat that would have cost a fortune in the city. She also had access to an extensive communal garden. There was also a gym in the basement.

One of the reasons for the reasonable price was the ghost stories. People had claimed to have seen ghosts walking the corridors and even heard screams in the night. Her neighbour even claimed that one part of her apartment was colder than everywhere else. She claimed that it was like walking into a cold draft.

At first, Tracey had dismissed these stories as nonsense. However, after only a few weeks she started to see ghosts herself. At first she had seen images out of the corner of her eye. Movement that, when she looked at them, had disappeared. Later she saw a woman in a strange cotton dress wandering around the corridors. Tracey had tried to talk to her, but she had just vanished. No sound, no reaction, she just disappeared in front of Tracey’s eyes.

This was disconcerting, to say the least. On another occasion, she had been walking down the corridor from the front entrance, when she had seen a nurse in 1950s style clothing hurrying down the corridor. This time she had known it was a ghost because she could see right through her. Tracey was not prone to screaming or running away. After all, ghosts were a perfectly legitimate accessory to modern homes. Usually, only people with lots of money could afford houses with ghosts. It was quite a conversation piece at work. Even so, it was hard not to find this a little unsettling.

The ghost that she was looking at now was no phantom however. She had opened her door to get her milk when she had stopped dead in her tracks. The ghost was in the corridor opposite her. At this time of the morning you do not just open the door and find a spectre staring at you.

She was so shocked that she forgot about her milk and stepped out into the corridor. Although she had a key in her dressing gown pocket, she left her door open to go and see this very real ghost.

She was a woman in her late twenties or early thirties. She had long brown hair and was wearing a hospital dress. She was also strapped down onto a medical trolley of some sort. She was gagged as well. However, the most disturbing thing was that she was straining her neck to look at her. The ghost was looking directly at her. Tracey fidgeted with her hair. She had only just gotten out of bed and she hadn't brushed it yet. The woman's intense stare was unsettling her.

"What are you doing out of your room?" a voice demanded.

Tracey just stared. Having a ghost stare at you was one thing, but now finding one talking to you. That was just weird. The ghost was not alone. There were two 1950s or 60s style uniformed nurses standing before her. It was then that Tracey noticed that the corridor had changed. It was no longer carpeted and painted in tasteful beige. There were no friendly potted plants distributed along the corridor. It was now a harsh white, complete with white tiles that only covered half of the walls height, as though the builders had run out of money. There were also more doors. Tracey knew that knocking down the adjoining walls from several other rooms had made her apartment, but she could now see where those other rooms were.

"Come on, let's get you back to your bed shall we. You know that you are not allowed here," the ghost nurse continued.

"What's going on here? Who are you people?" the Tracey enquired. If this was some sort of prank she was not happy.

"Don't you remember dear? Not to worry. Lets get you back to your room and we will see if we can get the doctor to talk to you."

The two nurses had moved in unison to flank either side of her and Tracey began to feel uncomfortable. The other ghost just stared at her from the trolley.

"OK, I will just go back into my room," Tracey found herself saying as she backed up and tried to back peddle into her room.

"That's not your room dear. That's a treatment room. Lets get you back down the corridor to the patient rooms."

The two nurses moved as one and before she knew it Tracey found that the nurses had grabbed her by her arms and were trying to move her down the corridor towards the staircase.

“What. No. I can see my room just there. Let go of me. No. Get off of me you bitch. Who the hell are you?” Tracey screamed as she struggled to free herself from the grasp of these two mad women.

It was surreal. The corridor was like a scene out of some TV hospital soap, but she could see her own apartment, just as she had left it, framed in the open doorway.

Tracey began to struggle in earnest and managed to break free of one of the nurses. She managed to land a good right hook on the other one before trying to break free of the other nurse. But she soon found herself face down on the ground while one of the nurses pinned her arm behind her back. The other one ran over to a red button on the side of the corridor wall, just outside one of the rooms and hit it.

Tracey did not hear any alarms, but in a moment another two nurses joined her and the last thing that Tracey saw as she craned her neck behind her, was a needle descending in a steady arc towards her pinned arm.

Tracey awoke in a brightly lit room. Her jaw ached and her vision was blurred for a moment and she had trouble getting her bearings, but one thing was for certain. She was not in her apartment. She tried to get up but did not find it easy. Something had pinned her arms across her chest.

Tracey found her vision clearing as she at last sat up. Realisation seemed to flood her senses in mere seconds as she took in her surroundings and situation. She was in a square room with padded material on the walls. Looking down she saw the same material underneath her. As she looked around she could just make out the padded outline of a door. She knew where she was. It was a padded cell. Looking down, the reason for her immobility was made clear.

She was wearing some sort of strange jacket. It was made of canvas and had long sleeves that ran across her chest and disappeared behind her. A single strap ran vertically across the front of the jacket, trapping her arms so that she could not raise or lower them.

Further straps ran from the bottom of the front of the jacket, under her crotch and attached to the back of the jacket. She had only seen these occasionally, on TV shows, but she never, in her wildest dreams, thought that she would end up trussed up in a straight jacket.

Looking further she saw that her ankles were secured together by a thick leather strap that wrapped around two padded leather cuffs. She was also wearing thick, woolly socks. Her underwear was also quite hot and felt quite padded. She wondered what that was about, but she would probably find out later.

She tried to call out, which is when she discovered why her jaw ached. A large rubber ball had been stuffed into her mouth and seemed to be attached by straps that ran behind her head.

“Ett eee oah. Ehho. An oo ear eee. Ett ee oah,” Tracey demanded.

Nobody responded. She struggled and tried to kick and squirm her way out of her bonds, but eventually she lay back and looked at the ceiling, exhausted and defeated.

What, she wondered, had happened to her? What was she doing here? She started to sob and eventually, defeated and exhausted, she fell asleep. She prayed, before she eventually relaxed and slumbered, that this was some weird dream and that she would wake up in her own bed, in her nice cosy apartment in the former mental asylum.

End