

Triage

By

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FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Typical waiting room--a few RIGHT ANGLE CHAIRS, END TABLES with MAGAZINES, and a PILE OF OLD TOYS in one corner. A COFFEEPOT in another.

Beyond the threshold, the hospital is ticking along. NURSES and DOCTORS walk to and fro, literally to and fro, in the hallway near the waiting room. MARGUERITE MENENDEZ (60), a Cuban grandmother, sits watching. She clutches her PURSE on her lap. A NURSE, carrying a CHILD (6), enters the room.

NURSE

Okay, kiddo. You can hang out here and play, okay?

She sets the kid down. Very heavy.

NURSE (cont'd)

(to Marguerite)

Hi.

MARGUERITE

Hello.

(to kid)

And hello there.

No response from either of them. The nurse leaves. Marguerite watches the young one explore the toy section.

EXT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The DOUBLE DOORS of the emergency room smash open. JEREMY bursts through the threshold carrying CARLA. She is red.

JEREMY

Help me! Somebody help my wife!

Every single body in thirty feet freezes. A NURSE and a DOCTOR break out of the frozen crowd and run towards Jeremy.

DOCTOR

Gurney! Crash cart! Clear OR Two!

The nurse changes course, grabbing a VACANT GURNEY in the hallway. Jeremy collapses, still holding his wife. The doctor slides next to him, pulling on GLOVES.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR (cont'd)
Set her down. I need to see her.

He pulls Jeremy's hands away. The doctor begins checking vitals, breathing and wounds. The gurney appears next to them.

NURSE
What happened?

JEREMY
(hyperventilation)
A car. From nowhere. Didn't stop. She spun. Flew. Smashed into a tree. Her head.

DOCTOR
On three.

The nurse positions herself to lift Carla onto the gurney.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
Two, three.

They lift together. Jeremy stays on his knees. The nurse helps him up and they all take off with the gurney.

DOCTOR (cont'd)
Cranial fracture. Bad scalp laceration and hematoma right-parital-temporal. Left dilated. Call neuro consult. Possible rib fracture, contusions, left side.

NURSE
(with clipboard, starting a chart)
What's her name?

JEREMY
Carla. Her name is
Carla. Burnham.

NURSE
Yours?

JEREMY
Jeremy Burnham.

NURSE
Does she have any medical allergies? Penicillin? Lidocaine? Fentanyl?

(CONTINUED)

JEREMY

No, no, nothing. She's always been healthy.

This statement shatters him. They've arrived at OR 2.

INT. OR TWO - NIGHT

There are more NURSES here. Everyone is moving around the room, gathering medical supplies. The doctor is near Carla's head, holding an intubation tube.

JEREMY

What is that?

DOCTOR

I have to intubate.
(to nurse with chart)
He can't be here for this.

NURSE

(to Jeremy)
Come on. Let them work.

JEREMY

No.

He hardens.

NURSE

Jeremy.

Jeremy hears her through a tunnel.

NURSE

Jeremy, let them work.

She guides him out of the room.

INT. WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

Marguerite watches Jeremy and the nurse appear in the threshold.

NURSE

I'll be back in a few minutes to finish this, okay? There's coffee over there.

(CONTINUED)

She points to the pot. Jeremy stares at it. She disappears. He settles into a chair. He looks down at his HANDS, covered in Carla's blood. A PACKET OF TISSUES appears in his field of vision. They are attached to Marguerite's hand. She is leaning over, holding them out. He takes them.

JEREMY

Thank you.

Marguerite nods the acknowledgement away. Jeremy wipes his hands. Breathes. Focuses. Wipes his face.

JEREMY (cont'd)

How long has that coffee been there?

MARGUERITE

All two hours I have been.

JEREMY

I figured.

They are quiet. The kid plays with the toys. Jeremy takes the BLOODSTAINED TISSUES to the TRASHCAN under the coffeepot. He sits back down and returns the tissues.

MARGUERITE

No, dear. You keep them. I have more.

She pulls out another packet.

JEREMY

You're very prepared.

MARGUERITE

Not everything can be prepared for but I try hard anyway.

She pats her purse. It RATTLES. Jeremy smiles, aching.

JEREMY

Well. Thank you.

CHILD

Vrroom!

A TOY CAR comes careening towards Jeremy's foot. He stops. Stares. Tears up. Carla wants kids.

JEREMY
(heavy words)
Fast car.

CHILD
(retrieving it)
Yeah. Super fast!

Back to the corner Child goes. Marguerite watches.

MARGUERITE
I have three.

JEREMY
Kids?

MARGUERITE
(nods, reaching into her
purse)
They are my sunshine and my
stars. Miguel, he is oldest. A
strong boy. Carlos is next. He is
like his father, very
stubborn. Then, Andraya. Our
daughter. She is protected by her
older brothers. She is their joy,
too. And Antonio.

She hands Jeremy a WALLET PICTURE. It is her family.

JEREMY
Antonio is your husband.

MARGUERITE
(to picture)
Si.

JEREMY
Where are you from?

MARGUERITE
Ah, we are *Cubanos*. We came before
Castro.

JEREMY
We were in Havana, once.

MARGUERITE
Yes?

JEREMY
It was like going back in
time. But the beach, and the sun,
it was beautiful.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)

It was our honeymoon. Mexico and Cuba. Have you been back?

MARGUERITE

No. Antonio and I do not look back.

A RATTLE OF BLOCKS from the corner. They've spilled into the room.

CHILD

Uh oh.

Jeremy comes over to the kid. He pushes the blocks back towards the corner.

JEREMY

What are you building?

CHILD

I'm building a big house for my grandma.

JEREMY

Your grandma?

CHILD

Yeah, so she can stay there. And there will be a room for doctors so she can stay home.

Jeremy looks to Marguerite. Marguerite looks to Jeremy.

MARGUERITE

We should all have a big house with doctors.

JEREMY

You're right.

(to kid)

Can I help you?

CHILD

Yeah.

Jeremy picks up a few blocks. Marguerite watches.

JEREMY

I'm Jeremy. What's your name?

The kid looks at him and goes back to playing.

(CONTINUED)

MARGUERITE

No name? Very sad. I don't know what it would be like to not have a name. Marguerite. That is my name.

JEREMY

Well, hello, Marguerite. Would you like to play, too?

MARGUERITE

No, no, no! But you could build a house for me, too.

JEREMY

That sounds like a good idea. We could build lots of houses for people. And all of them will have rooms for doctors so people can stay home when they are sick.

The kid nods in approval, still not looking at Jeremy. The doctor appears with another DOCTOR at the threshold.

ANOTHER DOCTOR

Ms. Menendez?

MARGUERITE

Yes? Yes, I am Marguerite Menendez.

She begins to stand. The other doctor comes over and guides her to the chair farthest from Jeremy and the kid. Jeremy stands up when he sees Carla's doctor.

JEREMY

Is she okay?

DOCTOR

She's stabilized. The bleeding's stopped, and there's still some cranial swelling but--

ANOTHER DOCTOR

Mrs. Menendez. Your husband's operation took longer than expected. There were some complications, and the bypass was unsuccessful. Antonio went into cardiac arrest, and the doctors immediately did what they could...but he has passed away, Ms. Menendez.

(CONTINUED)

Jeremy watches the news hit Marguerite.

DOCTOR

She'll be okay for now. You can
see her in a few minutes. A nurse
will come by.

Both doctors leave. Jeremy stands. Marguerite sits. They
stare at each other. The child continues playing.

END