

## Second beat

Marianne Holloway was supposed to be buried. Her heart wasn't supposed to beat again.

Marianne Holloway was pronounced dead at exactly 4:44 am, following a botched lobotomy at Blackridge Neurological Institute. A quiet, private institution that's nestled in a deep and dark area where it has no one could recognize. A writer that was one very vibrant, Marianne, slipped into madness after losing her child. It started off with her tearing pages out from books and her speech being nonsensical to her claiming she could hear voices and pleading cries around her. Two months ago, she was admitted for treatment-resistant schizoaffective disorder. Her hallucinations were getting violent and she often spoke about things that were hard to make out. These were some of the signs that show psychotic break.

After multiple failed treatments and medication, the lead physician, Dr. Jensen Grey, signed her off on an outdated and controversial procedure, a transorbital lobotomy.

It was meant to calm her. But instead she flatlined.

Everything was recorded. The time, day, and month of her death. There, the staff stood in silence.

And then, 30 minutes later, as the mortuary technician was preparing the body, something unusual for a patient who passed. Marianne let out a gasp.

She returned back to life with what the doctors assumed it was autoresuscitation. It was extremely rare, so rare it was poorly understood. Sure she was alive but something felt wrong. The science was unclear since just around 30 minutes ago her heartbeat vanished. Now she is breathing. She was alive.

But she changed.

She is not the same person.

She was immediately brought back for tests. As they ran the test they found her brain activity was most definitely abnormal but active. Despite all the damage from the lobotomy, she was responsive, more than anyone expected.

But she was too responsive.

She spoke calmly.

Coherently.

Almost too coherently.

She didn't ask what had happened.

She didn't ask where she's been.

As she rose up she simply just asked, "How long have I been gone?"

Dr. Grey couldn't say anything, he couldn't explain it, too stunned to speak, too shocked to move. Neurologically, she should have been reduced to a vegetative state. But instead, she started to name and point along the way at every nurse that was in the operating room previously. Even the ones who left early and weren't listed on the report. She started to explain the tools, the smell, and the conversation. It was all unsettling. All abnormal

"That's impossible, you were unconscious!" One of the nurses spoke up.

Marianne just looked at her with blank, dead eyes. "I wasn't. Not entirely."

She was kept for longer to facilitate additional observations. But the longer she was kept, the stranger the details became, and it began to stack up more. Nothing was connecting right. She slept with her eyes open. She sat motionless for hours, just staring in the corner. The birds chirped around her outside by her window, but stopped singing after she passed. The following day, the staff found the same birds that were chirping around Marianne's room gone. They found the birds all bloodied and lifeless. But the strange thing was, there was no evidence of what killed them, no fur, no DNA, no tracks, no nothing.

As time passed, life went on until one night, an attending nurse saw a figure in front of Marianne's room. Exactly at 4:44 a.m., no shoes, no sounds. As the nurse approached, she noticed something. Under the flickering light, she noticed that it was Marianne. The nurse quickly reported to the original physician, Dr. Jensen Grey, who stood there with guilt, confusion, and fascination about her recovery. He quickly asked:

"Do you remember dying?"

Marianne paused and turned to face him. With the same look they last saw in her big, wide eyes. Then answered slowly. "There's something you don't understand about death. It's not an end, and it's certainly not like sleeping. It's just quiet. A kind of quiet waiting."

"And when you come back?" He asked.

For the first time after a while, she smiled faintly.

"You don't come back alone."

Dr. Grey was confused. He was about to question her, but shortly after, a humanoid, tall, slim, dark, pale figure appeared behind her and stared at the doctor with hollow, bloody eyes. Dr. Grey quickly ran to the security room, hoping for protection. As he sat in the cold room filled with various wires and monitors, he kept his eyes on a specific monitor, the one pointed directly at Marianne's room. He noticed they disappeared. He was confused. He grabbed a nearby taser and stepped outside the room, walking back to the same abandoned floor he had left Marianne and that figure just to find that they had completely vanished. There was no trace of where they could've gone or how they left. He looked down at her watch, and the time was now 4:57 a.m. He quickly went back to the security room. As he sat back down, he rewinded the video tape to the time he left. His suspicions were soon confirmed as both figures disappeared from the screen after a static in the monitor. He went back again, but the same thing happened. He left the office fearing for his life, and soon after, he developed insomnia and also he withdrew himself from the whole case, never practicing that procedure again. Marianne Holloway was never seen again after no one could find her. Every investigation failed trying to find the slightest bit of information.

Six months later, Dr. Jensen Grey disappeared, and only a note was found in his empty home:

"Her heart stopped once. It should never have started again."

The footage and documents of Blackridge were mysteriously lost, and even the hospital itself vanished. But every hospital around that area reported that at 4:44 a.m., a mysterious lady in a hospital gown, followed by a tall figure behind, was always seen, and the patients who flatlined at that same time were found in the same state as Marianne.

Dead eyes.

Flickering lights.

And wrong.