Clairvoyance – a dialogue-less short film

We open with a close up of a crystal ball as it is placed delicately on a silk-covered table by a pair of wrinkled feminine hands. As the ball meets the table, Goblin’s theme from Dario Argento’s Suspira starts (non-diegetic) and builds throughout the scene. We track 180 degrees around the ball as the hands caress it, stop, and continue upwards as the woman raises her hands and hobbles away.

We follow her, distractedly tracking between her actions – from behind and blurred in the background – and scanning visual aspects of the setting, which appears to be a psychic’s salon. The space is dark and shrouded by an ominous blue light that seemingly sources from every angle. The woman lights faint candles, places religious icons on tables and drapes wooden necklaces and jewelry over well-worn furniture. We continue to track until we briefly settle on a shelf, on which sits a flaking gold placard that reads “Property of Mrs. Maya Lubinski”, and then we continue onwards.

Intercut within this whole tracking sequence are silent close-up inserts of the clairvoyant sitting: her eyes, ears, fingers tapping on a table, her mouth, apparently speaking. Coupled with the inserts are corresponding shots, filmed in low Dutch angles, of the faces of her patrons, a colorful collection of men and women of all ages, unsure, questioning, hopeful, sad. Her eyes dart over her subjects, analyzing buttons, shoes, watches, moles, bald spots, open palms, raised eyebrows, bitten nails. We note the marked contrast of her confident and assertive persona with the uncertain and vulnerable expressions of the patrons. The cuts end with close-ups as the clairvoyant takes payment from each customer and pulls the cash off-frame.

Once the cuts have ended, the camera catches up to the clairvoyant as she moves to the final step of her preparation for business. We scan from left to right as her finger counts in size order a set of Matryoshka dolls on a fabric covered bookcase. As she approaches the last and smallest doll “slot,” the camera pauses in arrest; the slot is empty. Just as this occurs, we hear a finger bell ring, accompanied by a lightning flash. We pull back slightly to see the clairvoyant panic and flee to the left, out of frame. We quickly spin around to follow her.

We now track her through a curtain-draped doorway into a parallel yet starkly different space, a mundane personal residence with appliances, a small dining table, a television and a few tired plants, washed in antiseptic fluorescence. It’s cramped and deteriorated.

The clairvoyant, really just a ragged old woman in this setting, frantically empties shelves, drawers, and closets. Here we see relics of a life long past: an old stuffed animal, dusty bottles of liquor with Cyrillic labels, sepia-toned family pictures, and a tarnished silver goblet. As she continues her search in the background, we focus on a stack of textbooks on human psychology, next to which stands a framed black & white photograph of two young girls alongside a pony.

The sound of rain and thunder builds, and now a steady banging noise can be heard. The finger bell rings again. We follow the woman as she turns and heads down a dark hall in the residence. As we pace forward, the banging gets louder until it is revealed to be a window, swinging on its hinge, at the end of the hall. By the window an elderly, wrinkled woman sits in a decrepit wheelchair, bell in hand. She stares vacantly toward the approaching clairvoyant as the sounds build: thunder, banging window, bell
ringing. As the clairvoyant reaches the end of the hall the seated woman points towards the window and wheels backward.

The window creaks open in the wind. The clairvoyant leans outside and peers downward. Moving at a slower, still tracking pace, we push forward as we see her silhouette turn to the side, contemplate, and then rush back past the camera. We gain speed and peer out of the window and downward. We see a dark, wet street illuminated by the reflection of neon shop lights. A train clatters past on an elevated subway track.

Deep within the shot, we can slightly make out the figure of a man, standing by a pick-up truck. Our tracking shot is finally complete. We cut to a medium close up, low angle looking up at the window on the left side of the frame from street view. We then rack focus to the right of the frame, to reveal a quarter being put into a coin meter and a figure walking by the lens. We track his footsteps sideways through the neon-lit puddles. We then intercut differing shots of his attire, adornments, and movement towards the building with shots of the clairvoyant, desperately searching for the last doll. One shot that stands out is an almost vertical overhead angle of the building’s neon sign: “CLAIRVOYANT.” We see the man pause, look up and enter the building as the rain floods the street.

The man ascends two flights of stairs, while the clairvoyant continues to look for the doll. Soon the man is inches away from the door. We see the woman stop, look down, reach into her dress pocket, and pull out the doll in relief.

We hear a loud knock on the door. The clairvoyant quickly gathers herself, puts the doll in its slot, and opens the door. The music and background noises simultaneously stop. We cut to a close-up on the diminutive, innocent face of the man. She motions for him to come in. He stands, somewhat awkwardly, while the clairvoyant settles into her velvet chair behind the crystal ball. She cups the ball emphatically, her eyes analyzing him up and down, closing, then reopening, and then closing again. He fidgets, shifting weight, looking curiously around the room, and back to her. She slowly sweeps her eyes once more from his head to his shoes, and then stands up, confidently nodding. She holds out her hands with her eyes closed, inviting him to put his hands into hers. She raises her eyebrows, as if to invite his question as to her “findings.”

He wrinkles his forehead, quizzically, and hands her a clipboard with a slip of paper attached. A close up shot of the slip reveals the letterhead “DAYTON POWER & LIGHT – STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT” with a series of numerical figures and, in bright red ink, stamped across the slip, the word “OVERDUE.”

We push in to reveal the clairvoyant open her eyes, look down at the slip, and look back up as the man waves her “good day,” turns, and awkwardly walks out. We finish on a wide static shot of the woman, standing in the room, gazing emptily out the open door as the other woman peaks her head through the curtain. The lights suddenly extinguish.

END.