

## **Mundane sadness**

The blood splatter on the floor along with nasty bile makes me feeling sick to my stomach.

The woman I am forced to hold on violently at the treatment couch is about my age. She is screaming, cursing, jolting and vomiting, all at the same time. That might sound impossible but it's actually not. She is acting out of naked fear and instinct because she hates needles.

And hospitals.

And me because I am the one who's keeping her fixated.

"Just a second, Ash!" my brother calls out while he is filling the syringe. Then he hastens towards us.

Ella stiffens under me. She is still highly alert though, like a predator who's ready to jump and run. I keep my knee on her hip because I do not want to risk her escaping. I feel like a cruel monster for doing this to her. Her body is disturbingly thin due to the different kinds of eating disorders she has been suffering from for over a decade.

Now she is sobbing desperately, begging me to let go of her. My hands around her wrists start trembling. I swallow and bite my lip, all of a sudden very close to break out in tears myself.

"Relax. It's almost done. Just relax," Bill murmurs soothingly as he injects the sedative. I don't know if he's talking only to Ella or also to me. Perhaps he is trying to calm both of us.

Within seconds, the blonde young woman becomes limp and quiet.

And my heart turns awfully heavy.

The other nursing staff finally enters the room, long after I've called them. I cast them a glare, wanting to scream at them for being that late. However, I am not articulating my anger, as always. I rise from the floor and let them take further care of Ella.

She's getting restrained.

And when she's going to wake, she will be forced to take even stronger medication than she was already taking before.

I know the drugs are meant to prevent another attack.

I also know about their risk. Considering all antidepressants as being known for having serious side effects like suicidal thoughts, it is worth the question if some drugs perhaps rather increase mental diseases instead of lowering them.

"Don't forget the conference, Ash," my brother reminds me as I turn to leave the room. "It starts in five minutes."

I heave a sigh, feeling irritated.

Actually, I did forget.

It's very uncommon for me to get invited to a closeting at the beginning of the week. Usually I don't attend to anything else than the monthly Friday informal meetings.

I just nod briefly to Bill and then hasten along the corridor until I reach my office. There's blood on my pants and bile on my shirt, and on my shoes too. I gulp at the disgusting smell. After disinfecting my hands I rip the wardrobe door open and pull out a fresh pullover. I always keep a second pair of clothes at hand for good reasons. There is literally no body fluid I haven't been covered with during the last two years.

If that was the only issue, I could probably deal with this job.

Unfortunately, there is a lot more that's been bothering me about working in a psychiatry.

Besides the fact that I'm wary as to some treatments, I have to witness the frightening depths of the human mind on a daily basis, and it's slowly but surely messing me up myself.

I've been thinking of quitting for quite a while now, but it's not that easy.

It's not only a job.

It's literally a family destiny.

My great-grandfather is the founder of the Catell-Mental-Hospital here in Vegas, and it's well-known even outside the U.S. for being specialized in extreme cases. Now Dad owns it, and he is super proud that both his children are following in his footsteps as well as tradition.

Bill is 28 years old, he is studying medicine. He wants to be a psychiatrist like Dad and our grandfathers. I'm 25, and I just finished my training as a psychiatric nurse.

Sadly I don't like it.

In fact, I hate it.

It even scares me, on top of it.

I used to work as a physiotherapist until Mum died. She was a psychiatric nurse herself and very passionate about it, although she didn't have an easy time. She worked very close with Dad and Bill, and when she passed away, our whole world was tearing apart.

It was an awful time, the most awful in my life.

Aside from that, my father could never stand the fact that I'd chosen NOT to work at the hospital, and when Mum was dead, he increased the pressure on me to make me change my mind.

He told me how wonderful it would be if I could replace her in the institution. I was still uncertain, but he encouraged me over and over, so that I finally decided to give it a try. For him, and especially for Mum.

The door opens and Bill comes in. Of course he is doing it without knocking.

"It's about time, sis", he informs me impatiently.

"I'm going to change first", I mutter and get rid of my smelly shirt. "What in all hell did take Jeff and Annabelle so long?" I complain and quickly pull the fresh piece of fabric over my head. "We told them almost one hour ago about the issues with Ella. If they'd been there in time, her attack would have most likely not gotten that bad."

My brother frowns. "Even though that might be true, it isn't freeing us from doing our job."

I give him a dark glance. "Don't you get my point? I had to cause her unnecessary pain! She is so petite, she hardly weighs anything. I truly feared I would break her tiny wrists."

"She already hurt herself beforehand," Bill says unemotionally. "She's been doing that for the most part of her life, and now she simply has to deal with the consequences if she wants to break the cycle. All we're doing is trying to help her. Also, just because you don't like fixating patients doesn't mean you can leave that to others."

I press my lips together in silent anger.

He knows that I'm having problems with some treatments concepts.

He has no clue about my aversion towards this work in the first place, though.

No one knows about it, actually.

"Anyways, let's go now," he hurries while I'm awkwardly slipping into new pants. I don't have a second pair of shoes though, therefore I must put the dirty ones back on.

Grabbing my ID-card, I finally follow my brother out of the room.

While we're moving along the hallway, I watch him from the side. He's heading forwards with long steps and an unreadable face. We step into the elevator, and as we're riding downward he suddenly clears his throat and locks his brown eyes with my green ones.

"Ash," he starts in a serious voice, "what Dad is about to tell you, is most important for our institution. And it means a lot to him personally as well. So please, don't make it more difficult for him than it already is, and please, cooperate with us."

I blink in mild shock and puzzlement. With 'us'?

"What do you mean?" I query warily. "Do you already know some details?"

Bill doesn't answer me, and as the elevator opens, he quickly steps out of it.

I can already see Dad awaiting us in front of his office. My heart makes a painful leap. He was recently diagnosed with leukemia and he's been constantly losing weight.

His cheeks are hollow, and his skin looks greyish.

It hurts so much to see him like that.

"Come in," he says with a tired smile. I notice that the lines around his eyes and mouth have increased. It seems like they're getting deeper every day.

I force a happy expression on myself as I pass him, and he briefly caresses my back with a wink. He doesn't like seeing me worry about his health so I try to hide it. However, it's natural that I'm doing it anyway. He is my father after all, and I love him to death. After Mum died, he and Bill are the only family I am left with.

We enter the air-conditioned room. To my surprise there is Mitch Henderson sitting at the glass table. He's a lawyer and a friend of Dad.

On the seat next to him I eye a middle-aged and stern looking woman with quite a lot of make-up on her face. I've never seen her in the hospital before.

"I want to thank everyone for coming," Dad begins to speak after we sit down. "Ashley, you already know Mitch. He is present to make sure everything that's being said will stay inside these walls."

My eyes widen. I turn my head to look at Bill, but he is avoiding my gaze.

I'm wondering what is about to come.