

The Incident at Saint Mariah's
Part one: New Worker
3/21-3/28/2014

Allison shivered due to the chill in the women's staff area, the gazelle's mud-brown pelt not used to such a pervasive chill.

She sighed. "First day on the job and I'm already late. Geez..."

She affixed her name badge to her nurse's scrubs...pale white top and light blue pants...and took a deep breath.

"Okay...I can do this..." she breathed softly.

Yeah. You just moved away from your friends and family to take a job in some godforsaken part of the state, her brain quipped. No real pressure.

Gee, thanks, Allison thought...then shivered again.

"Why is this place so freaking cold anyway?" the gazelle mused, shutting and locking her locker door.

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"Ah...Miss Cousins, is it?"

Allison turned...and nodded, a slight smile crossing her face.

"Yes...um..." She peeked at the name badge the grey coyote who had addressed her was sporting. "Doctor Michelsen?"

The grey coyote nodded, adjusting his wire-rimmed glasses.

"Now, this tardiness is not going to be common, is it

Miss Cousins?" the coyote asked coyly.

"I hope not, Doctor," the gazelle admitted, chuckling nervously.

To her surprise, the coyote chuckled as well.

"Relax, Nurse Cousins. Just a little teasing for the new staff member," Doctor Michelsen commented. "Best to get it out of the way now, so that you're already used to it."

Allison chuckled a bit...and also blushed a bit.

"Thank you, Doctor," she stated.

He nodded, then looked down at a few papers on a clipboard he was carrying.

"First in your class at Jesuit school...good...worked part-time at St Samantha's Hospital..."

She watched as Doctor Michelsen sighed. "Such a shame that they had to close down. That was such a good hospital."

Allison nodded, feeling more at ease, despite the chilly temperature in the corridor.

"...so...the question becomes this..."

She watched...as the grey coyote looked up at her, a steeled look in his cold blue eyes.

"...why here, of all places, Nurse Cousins?" he asked.

The gazelle blinked, a bit surprised.

"Well, you had an opening..." she began.

"True...but that opening has been available for almost two years, Nurse Cousins," Doctor Michelsen commented.

Allison blinked, stunned. "Two YEARS?"

The coyote nodded...and turned around, walking

down the corridor, forcing Allison to scamper to catch up.

"Yes...we had to let go one staff member due to improper conduct around that time," the coyote went on.

"However...the position you are filling...well..."

Allison watched as the coyote turned to look at her, his face downcast, fur wrinkling a bit.

"...this position was vacant due to a death," the coyote stated.

Allison's hooves went to her mouth, a soft gasp leaving her throat.

The coyote nodded. "Yes...we have some very dangerous patients here, Nurse Cousins. Psychotics, schizophrenics, severe bipolar patients...most of whom can be quite dangerous, even when calm and lucid."

He affixed her with a stern gaze. "This place is their last hope for something resembling care and treatment...but, the sad reality is that...few of our patients leave our care."

He sighed, turning away from her. "Most of our patients have been here for so long that their families have stopped coming. We are the lone ones who seem to care about a number of them."

Allison padded alongside Doctor Michelsen, the faint squeaking of her soft-soled shoes echoing in the silence that filled the corridor.

"Doctor?" she asked after a few solid-steel doors were passed.

The coyote looked up at her.

"Why is it so cold here?" the gazelle asked.

He chuckled. "Oh...unfortunately, our furnace seems

to be out of order...and, sadly, a repair-person has not come out here yet." The coyote chuckled again. "They said, "Oh, we will send someone out immediately"...that was a week ago."

Allison walked beside the doctor, suddenly very concerned.

What kind of place have I gotten into? she asked herself.

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"And now, this should be our final stop," Doctor Michelsen stated, stopping outside a simple steel door with a small window at eye-level.

Allison felt an ear twitch against her head. "Why here? This looks like every other door."

She looked up...and felt embarrassed by the gaze the doctor gave her.

"Examine the door, Nurse Cousins," he said.

The gazelle turned her gaze back to the door...and studied it.

"No dents...no gouges...this door looks...almost new," she stated...then looked up.

Doctor Michelsen nodded. "What else do you notice?"

She turned back to the door...then her eyes went wide.

Nestled above the door handle...were a set of three heavy-duty locks, all key-based.

"Three locks?" she asked, stunned. "Is this patient that dangerous?"

The coyote chuckled, drawing her gaze.

"No...those were installed at her request," Doctor Michelsen stated.

Allison felt her eyes widen. "Her request?"

To her surprise, the coyote nodded.

"Miss Bastille...is our sole voluntary patient," he commented. "As a result, she does get some special attention..."

She watched as he looked at her, a smile crossing his muzzle.

"...YOUR attention," he finished. "Miss Bastille is your primary patient, Nurse Cousins."

Allison felt her ears twitch in confusion.

"My...primary patient, Doctor?"

The coyote nodded. "Yes. You will have the standard duties any nurse would...but, since Miss Bastille is a special case, I feel that it's best to have one person look in on her, make sure she isn't...slipping."

The gazelle stood up, feeling very puzzled.

"Slipping? I'm afraid I don't understand...is she psychotic?"

The coyote opened his mouth to answer...then slowly closed it.

"I will give you her file. It's almost required reading at this point anyway," the coyote stated, turning away from the door and proceeding to the nearby nurse's station.

Allison looked at the door, puzzled for a bit longer...then slowly followed.

What HAVE I gotten myself into? she asked herself, again.

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Allison watched...as the coyote pulled out a worn manilla folder from the cabinet at the nurse's station, one filled with a large number of papers...

...then he turned and gave the bundle to her.

"That is Miss Bastille's file," he stated, calmly.

"You'll need at least a couple of days to go through everything there, so you are off rotations for now."

Allison took the file, feeling her arms sag slightly from the weight of the file. "But..."

The coyote raised a paw. "Don't worry. You will still be paid." He flashed a sad smile at her. "After all, you are preparing to do good work here at Saint Mariah's..."

Doctor Michelsen extended his paw toward her. "And, in case I forgot to say it earlier...welcome to Saint Mariah's, Nurse Cousins."

Allison slipped the file into the crook of her left arm...then delicately shook the offered paw.

"Thank you, Doctor Michelsen," she replied.

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Allison sipped a small cup of ancient coffee...then winced at the potent tang of the liquid.

Then, she stared at the manilla file folder in front of her.

It was definitely well-used...had a couple of spots patched with clear tape...a crease in the upper right flap...what appeared to be a coffee stain near the bottom.

"Hey...oooooh...lookit the new girl?"

Allison blinked, jarred from her thoughts...then

looked up...

...at a wiry doberman, dressed in an outfit very similar to hers, making silly faces at her.

"New meat for the looney bin! Nice to meet you, new meat!" the doberman said, giggling a bit.

"Okay...who spiked Terry's coffee again?" a calm male voice asked.

The gazelle looked up...as a lean silver-furred wolf escorted the doberman away.

"Renee, can you get him a small dose of Ritalin and put him in the quiet room for a little bit?" the wolf asked a tan and white feline.

The feline sighed, nodded, and took the hyperactive doberman's arm. "C'mon Terry...time to come down."

"Ooooooh! Shiny! Bright light! Bright light!" Allison heard the doberman squeak as he was shuffled out of the lounge.

She let out a soft giggle...then blinked.

The silver-furred wolf was sitting across from her, smiling at her.

"Sorry about that," he stated calmly. "Some people like to spike Terry's coffee from time to time, so he can get a little hyperactive at times." The wolf laced his fingers behind his head. "Does make things a bit lighter here, though."

Allison chuckled softly. "So long as he doesn't hurt anyone...or hurt himself, anyway," she commented.

The wolf nodded...then looked at her. "You are new here, right? I'm Corey, one of the senior nurses here."

"Allison...and yes, I am," she replied, a slight smile

crossing her face.

He smiled back...then looked down...and spotted the file folder.

Allison watched as the wolf's face changed, the smile replaced by a deep frown.

"So...you're her new handler, huh?" Corey asked, his tone having become a bit colder.

Slowly, Allison nodded. "Yes, according to Doctor Michelsen."

The gazelle watched as the wolf looked up at her, his expression suddenly very cold.

"My advice would be to pass that job to someone else. Fast," Corey stated. "That one is nothing but trouble."

Allison blinked. "Why? I mean, I haven't read the file yet, but if..."

"You'll understand, once you read that...once you meet her," the wolf said, very coldly...then abruptly got up and left, storming out of the lounge.

Allison felt an ear twitch in confusion...then looked down at the file folder.

Delicately, she opened the flap...and was greeted with a plain data sheet.

"Tara Bastille...37...born not far from me...lived about two hours away..." the gazelle muttered as she examined the data sheet...then spotted a picture of the patient...

...and stared, shocked.

Displayed there was the face of a red and white-furred vixen with warm green eyes, a smile on her face and a

cheerful expression radiating from the picture.

"Wow..." Allison breathed. "She's..."

Focus...she's a patient, not your next lesbian life-partner, her brain scolded her.

Allison shook her head clear...then turned the picture over.

"Taken...three years ago," the gazelle muttered, finding a date scrawled on the lower right rear of the picture...then turning it back over.

She really is a hottie...

The gazelle sighed....then turned over the data sheet...

...and felt her stomach twist.

Another picture was there, this one of the same vixen, bleeding from wounds on her neck and head, her fur disheveled, her green eyes radiating shock and anger.

"Police photo from an attack on T Bastille, dated two years ago..." she read, then looked at the accompanying report. "Victim suffered lacerations to the scalp and torso, as well as two deep puncture wounds to the carotid artery, spread about an inch apart. Victim says that..."

Allison swallowed, not believing the words that were on the page.

"...victim says that...she was attacked...by a vampire," the gazelle read, softly. "Needed to be heavily sedated at the emergency room. Took..."

Allison's eyes went wide.

"Took three times the normal dosage of sedatives to finally calm her down after the attack," she read...then

exhaled. "My God..."

Allison took a swig of the coffee, the potent swill suddenly very calming...then leafed through a couple more pages of the police report...

...then stared at the admission form for Saint Mariah's.

"Patient Tara Bastille...voluntary admission...dated almost a year ago," the gazelle read. "Claimed she had been attacked by a vampire...gave all the paperwork from the police report as well as her own research into her deteriorating state..."

Allison felt a shudder pass through her body.

"...claimed she wanted a safe place to continue research into her "condition", but a place where she could be isolated from other people as well, to minimize potential harm to others..."

Allison took another sip of the coffee, feeling the liquid slowly warm her insides.

"...patient report, three weeks later...patient rarely sleeps, often going days without rest...obsessed with her research...wears a simple piece of cloth around her neck...does allow changing of the dressing on her neck..."

Allison turned the page over, continuing to read.

"...report from two months later...patient's neck wounds gone. Patient seems to have a diminished appetite. Periods of sleeplessness are growing longer, stretching to almost a full week without rest..."

She flipped another page over.

"Incident report, dated four months ago..." she read

softly. "Orderly P Rilies attempted to force himself on patient T Bastille. Orderly Rilies..."

Allison felt a chill slither along her spine as she read.

"...Orderly Rilies was found two days later, naked, out in the woods behind the institution. Apparently, Orderly Rilies had removed..."

The gazelle swallowed, the coffee threatening to come back up.

"...Orderly Rilies had...removed his own genitalia with pruning shears, all the while confessing to staff that he had sinned," she read, the fur on her pelt starting to rise.

"Orderly Rilies later confessed to attempting to rape patient T Bastille...attached is patient's statement of the incident."

Allison flipped to the next page.

"Statement of T Bastille, regarding the allegations of rape by Orderly P Rilies...see accompanying video footage of interview..."

Allison paused. "Video? There's no video here..."

The gazelle resumed reading.

"..."I remember getting ready for bed, as normal. The orderly...Paul, I think it was...strapped me in as normal...I remember him making sure I was secured in bed, a little tighter than normal...then I remember him grinning...sliding himself on top of me..."..."

The gazelle shuddered...and kept reading.

"..."then, there was this feeling in my head...then it was morning. He was gone and I was free from the restraints. I...I don't remember anything else..."..."

Allison felt a small bit of relief fill her...then kept

reading.

"Patient report dated two weeks ago...patient has become very isolated and anti-social...focused solely on her research...only drinks water, refusing food...allows little light into the room...possible eating disorder developing..."

Allison sighed, flipping to the last page...
...and wanting to recoil.

Laying there was a recent picture of the same vixen, her fur very disheveled and messy, her eyes vacant and piercing in their intensity, her face slightly gaunt and angular...

...and Allison felt her heart wince with sympathy.
"I want to help you," the gazelle said softly.

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"Doctor Michelsen?"

The grey coyote looked up from the papers on his desk...then rubbed his eyes, trying to coax them into working properly again.

"Yes, Nurse Cousins. What can I do for you?" he asked.

The slender brown gazelle slipped into the lone chair on the other side of the desk, still holding the large manilla file folder she had been given hours earlier.

"The files say...there's a video of Miss Bastille's statement...about the incident with Orderly Rilies..." the gazelle stated.

Doctor Michelsen sighed, resting his face in his paws.

"Yes...there is," the coyote stated. "I doubt it will be

of any real use to you though."

"I'd still like to see it," Nurse Cousins stated politely.
"After all..."

The coyote looked up, looking at the gazelle.

"...I need to know all I can if I'm to provide care to this patient," she finished, a slight smile crossing her face.

The coyote stared at her for a bit...then nodded.

"Very true, Nurse Cousins," Doctor Michelsen admitted, sliding open a drawer...and pulling out a single VHS tape.

"An actual videotape?" the gazelle asked, surprised.

"Our equipment here isn't state of the art, like at other hospitals, Nurse Cousins," the coyote snapped, a bit harshly. "We are lucky to be able to stay open, honestly."

The coyote sighed...then pushed the tape over to the gazelle.

"There's a staff room three doors down," he commented. "You can view that there."

The gazelle cautiously picked up the tape...then edged out of the chair, leaving the office...

...and Doctor Michelsen sighed again.

...

"O-kay...let's see if I remember how to use one of these..."

Allison frowned as she stared at the face of the VCR...then slipped the tape inside it.

She heard a faint whirring...then the screen of the television above it flared to life.

"Oh...got it," the gazelle stated, sitting down.

" "Videotaped statement of patient T Bastille, regarding incident with orderly P Rilies," " came from the television...and Allison frowned.

That's Doctor Michelsen's voice...

" "Now, Miss Bastille...please tell us what happened," " the voice asked.

The camera panned to the right...

...and Allison gasped.

Sitting there was the same red vixen from the pictures...only looking incredibly haggard and gaunt, her fur dull and lifeless, her green eyes staring out of two very tired-looking eye sockets.

" "I already gave you my statement," " the red vixen said softly. " "You're keeping me from my research..." "

Allison watched...as the vixen began to caress a simple navy blue scarf that was around her neck...and folded her paws under her muzzle.

" "Now, Miss Bastille...we just want this stated, to make sure everything is accurate," " she heard Doctor Michelsen state, professionally.

Allison watched...as the red vixen sighed.

" "Fine." " The red vixen folded its paws into its lap, straightening up...

...and Allison marveled at the dignity and regality the vixen displayed, despite the situation.

" "Orderly Rilies came into my room, at the designated time for sleep," " the vixen stated, her tone very formal and analytical, causing Allison some discomfort.

" "He escorted me to my bed...proceeded to restrain

me per my request, to prevent any nocturnal wanderings...I commented that the restraints were a bit tighter than normal...then he smiled...and shut the door, keeping himself in the room with me..." "

Allison watched, as the vixen took a deep breath.

" "He proceeded to slide on top of me, in a sexual manner...I told him to stop, that it wasn't right, wasn't safe..." "

" "Wasn't safe?" " Allison heard Doctor Michelsen ask...then watched as the vixen nodded.

" "I had been noticing an...well, periods of lost time, recently...which is why I asked that the restraints be put on every time I sleep," " the vixen said calmly. " "I...I don't know what goes on during those times...but I've found myself...in places other than my room..." "

Allison frowned. "Sleepwalking. Makes sense."

Then, she watched..as the vixen shuddered.

" "I...I think...I'm sleep-hunting," " the vixen said softly.

" "How does this relate to what happened to Orderly Rilies?" " Doctor Michelsen asked.

Allison watched...as the vixen sighed.

" "He was on top of me...and the next thing I know, it's morning...and I'm out of the restraints...and Orderly Rilies is gone," " the vixen stated. " "My clothes were exactly as they were when I went to sleep...nothing on my body or anything...but I can't remember anything from the time after Orderly Rilies got on top of me until I "woke up"...and that bothers me." "

" "Bothers you?" " Allison heard Doctor Michelsen ask.

The gazelle watched as the vixen nodded.

" "I'm worried...that something bad happened to Orderly Rilies," " the red vixen stated. " "That...what he was about to do...triggered something..." "

Allison watched...as the red vixen looked up, looking right into the camera.

" "I'm worried...that I did something to him," " the vixen stated. " "Something...really bad..." "

The video stopped...and Allison exhaled deeply.

"I'd say...he got what he deserved," the gazelle said softly...then ejected the tape.

"Of course you would say that."

The gazelle jumped, startled...

...then spotted the silver-furred wolf, leaning against the wall near the door.

"I was the one who found Paul...Orderly Rilies..." Corey stated.

Allison set the tape down on top of the VCR, then looked at him.

"Paul was a nice guy...one of the few people here who actually WAS a nice person..." Corey went on. "Then, I find him out in the woods behind this place...his balls and dick laid out in front of him, bloody shears next to him...and all he can say, over and over again is, "Please forgive me, for I have sinned." "

The wolf looked up, and Allison felt the anger in his gaze surge over her.

"It took five doses of tranquilizer to get him lucid," the wolf stated...then sat down in a chair near the door. "He was still asking for forgiveness...so, as an ordained minister, I offered to hear his confession."

Allison frowned. "I shouldn't hear this. The Confessional is..."

"You NEED to hear this," Corey snapped...then sighed. "The Confessional is sacred, yes...but Paul is dead."

Allison watched as the large wolf sighed, his body sagging.

"He asked me to bless him...almost like he knew he was going to die soon...and I asked him to confess his sins..." Corey took a breath. "He confessed...that he had given in to the temptations of the flesh...that he had attempted to force himself on a patient here."

Corey looked up.

"He confessed that he had attempted to rape that..." the wolf gestured to the VCR...then affixed a steely gaze on the gazelle.

Allison fidgeted, very uncomfortable in that gaze. "So he got what he deserved, then," the gazelle stated, her voice shaking a bit.

Corey let out a soft growl.

"You think he got what he deserved, huh?" the wolf rumbled. "After he told me what he did...he then told me...what that THING did to him."

Allison swallowed, feeling anger radiate off of the wolf.

"He said...then she told him to look into her

eyes...and he said her voice was that of a seductress...it caused him to obey...and he was told to let her out of the restraints," Corey went on. "He was powerless under that thing's influence...he let it free from the restraints...and then it told him that he was bad for doing what he was doing...and to go perform an act of penance for what he had done."

Allison sat back down in the chair, staying far away from the agitated wolf.

"So he went out of her room, fully aware of everything that was going on...his body went to the maintenance area...he actually WATCHED as his hands grabbed the shears..." Corey's voice began to break. "He told me he watched as his body sat there and began cutting..."

Allison watched...as the wolf's body shook for a few seconds...then he looked up...

...and Allison saw both hatred in his eyes...and concern.

"That...thing...isn't even a person anymore," the wolf stated. "That thing caused him to cut off his own balls and dick, while he was aware of it all."

Allison fought off a shudder of revulsion...then shut her eyes.

"Corey...he tried to rape her," she began.

"And she TOLD him to cut off his parts in penance," Corey snapped.

Allison sighed.

"You said yourself...that it took five times the normal dosage of tranquilizer to get him to calm down," the gazelle stated. "It's possible that he was hallucinating...or trying to

cover up for his actions. Make himself not responsible..."

To her surprise, the wolf chuckled softly.

"You sound just like Doctor Michelsen and everyone else here," Corey stated. "None of them believe she had anything to do with what happened either...except for myself...and that thing, apparently."

Allison watched as the wolf got up out of the chair...then headed for the door.

"I will pray for your soul, Nurse Cousins...you will need it," the wolf said, then slipped out the door, closing it behind him.

Allison let out a breath that she never knew she was holding...and looked from the closed door...

...to the VCR...and the black tape on top of it.

"What the hell is going on here?" she asked the room.

No reply came to her ears...nor did she expect one.

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