

The Incident at Saint Mariah's
Part 5: Clashes
6/9, 12/30/2014

(two days later...8:54am)

...

Allison shut off the ignition on her sedan...and sank back into the seat, sighing.

“Ugh....what a drive...” the gazelle muttered...then rubbed at her eyes.

Slowly, she opened her eyes...

...and saw Saint Mariah's Hospital looming ahead of her, the building's weathered grey concrete exterior dotted with windows, each getting smaller as one's gaze wandered higher up on the building.

The four-story institution towered over her, demanding obedience and abandonment of hope, like a stern guardian...

...and yet, the gazelle smiled, slipping her keys out of the ignition.

“Time to go to work,” Allison stated, still smiling as she opened her door.

...

“Good Morning, Miss Cousins,” a gruff voice stated as the gazelle approached the security desk.

“Morning, Andre,” the gazelle replied, placing her purse in front of the mud-brown marten.

Andre gave the bag a cursory sweep with his metal detector...then nodded.

“You're good to go,” he replied, almost mechanically.

Allison smiled as she slipped past the security checkpoint, picking her purse up as she walked past the standing metal detector.

“Thanks, Andre,” she called back, padding toward the nurse's lockers.

The marten gave a slight nod, then let out a soft huff...
...causing Allison to chuckle to herself.

Poor Andre...he really needs to lighten up.

Allison slipped into the nurse's lounge, still smiling.

...

The gazelle padded down the hall of the hospital, checking the doors as she passed.

This is supposed to be minimum security...she thought, noting a lot of rather-new locks on the grey metal doors. Just observation and temporary holding spots.

Allison sighed.

But...too often, they become patient rooms..cause their families don't care enough to come get them...

She rounded a corner...and felt a frown form.

Nickie was seated at the nurse's station in Southwest...the calico looking at an ever-present health magazine.

Okay...need to start acting, Allison thought...and screwed a smile onto her face as she rounded the corner of the nurse's station.

“Morning, Nickie,” Allison chirped cheerfully, slipping past the calico's chair.

“Morning Allison,” the calico replied, her gaze not leaving the magazine she was reading.

The gazelle reached the key rack...then deftly plucked a large metal keyring with three keys on it down, smiling coyly.

“Care to join me in the vampire's lair?” Allison teased, slipping back past the calico's chair with the keys.

“Ugh...no thanks,” Nickie replied, her fur bristling.

Allison chuckled softly, padding down the hallway a few doors...then stopping in front of a large grey door with three locks on it.

The gazelle paused for a bit...then closed her eyes.

Tara? Are you awake? she asked mentally.

Allison felt a light touch in her head, like someone gave her brain a light caress...then smiled.

I guess so, she thought again, easing the first key into the lock and turning it.

She felt the lock slide open...and eased the key back out.

She shifted to the second key and slipped it in, her brow furrowing a little bit as the lock stubbornly impeded the key's progress for a bit before finally accepting it.

Allison placed both hands on this key...and turned it slowly.

*Good morning, Allison...*she heard in her head.

The gazelle smiled. *Morning, Tara. Sleep well?*

She felt the lock finally give...and pulled the key out, the lock seemingly eager to disgorge the key now...and slipped the third key into its lock.

As well as I could, came the reply. *We do need to talk though.*

Allison felt her left ear twitch at that. *Anything serious?* she asked, turning the key in the lock.

No reply popped into her head...and the gazelle frowned a bit.

Quickly, she turned the key in the lock, then pulled it out and tugged the door open.

She slipped inside...and left the door open just a crack...then turned around.

The red vixen was still in bed, arms and legs secured by heavy restraints...

...and Allison saw an image of her nestling against that vixen, teasing her as she laid there in those restraints.

“See...that's what we need to talk about,” a soft voice

stated.

The gazelle shook her head, shaking those images out of her head...then blushed.

“Sorry...my mind kinda...wanders...” the gazelle admitted, padding closer to the vixen's bed.

“So I have noticed,” Tara replied calmly, waiting patiently as the gazelle freed her legs, then slid up the bed to her arms.

Allison blushed a bit more, an image of the gazelle locking herself into those heavy restraints and letting the vixen slide over her popping into her head...

“Allison...” she heard the vixen state, a faint hint of annoyance creeping into the vixen's voice.

The gazelle's ears went flat...and she silently released the vixen's arms from the restraints...then backed away, very embarrassed.

“I'm s-sorry...” Allison stammered, feeling her cheeks heat up from blushing. “It's just...”

“You really are every bit the Catholic schoolgirl, aren't you?” the soft voice asked.

Allison looked up...and saw the vixen looking at her, a slight smile on its muzzle as it slowly sat upright.

The gazelle swallowed...sighed...then slowly sat on the bed next to the vixen's feet.

“Yes,” she stated softly. “I...I even have...the outfit still...”

Then her ears shot up...at a soft chuckle.

She turned to look at the vixen, who was now leaning against the wall next to the bed, smiling.

“You do realize that thoughts like that are not helping matters, right?” the vixen commented, still smiling.

The gazelle felt herself blush....and looked away.

“I...I...” she began.

“After all, I am relying on you for some stability...”

Allison looked up at the vixen...and noted the now-somber face of the red-furred vixen, the green eyes seeming more subdued.

“And, if that starts to slip...well...” Tara began...then trailed off...

...and Allison saw an image pop into her head, of the vixen lightly nuzzling at her neck, taking in her scent...

...then, as Allison watched...the vixen slowly began to lick at the side of her neck...then gently sank her fangs into her neck...

...and Allison let out a soft moan at the scene, the seductiveness, the intimacy of it making her aroused.

“Or...” she heard the vixen state, her soft voice coming from miles away...

...and Allison watched...as the image abruptly changed.

The scene went from something soft and tender...to the gazelle and several other members of the staff, shackled to beds in the institution, a couple gagged very tightly.

Allison looked around, confused by the abrupt shift...

...then heard a wet gurgling sound...followed by a sound that chilled her to the very core.

The sound...of someone lapping up dribbling fluid.

She slowly looked to her right...and her eyes went wide.

The vixen slowly straightened up, its back to her...and she saw a small stream of red falling from the table in front of it.

Then, it turned toward her...

...and Allison recoiled, her eyes wide.

Where the vixen's once-gentle countenance had been...was now a very sharp, angular face, the green eyes replaced by blood-red glaring eyes...the vixen's white cheekfur stained red with blood.

Allison wanted to scream, to howl for help...but her muzzle wouldn't let any sound out as the vixen padded closer to her, drops of red falling from its muzzle, a very hungry look in the vixen's searing red eyes.

Allison shut her eyes, willing that image to go away...pleading for the image to go away.

“See?” she heard a soft voice say.

Allison slowly opened her eyes...and saw that she was back in the vixen's room in the institution...and that nothing had changed.

No intimate scene...no abattoir...nothing out of the ordinary.

Slowly, she looked toward the head of the bed...and the red vixen, casually leaning there.

“How...what...?” Allison stammered.

She watched...as Tara slowly sighed, the simple action seeming to require some effort.

“Allison...what you saw...what I sent you...” the vixen began, “those are the urges I fight every single day. The urge to be close to someone...the urge...no, the NEED...to feed off of someone...”

The vixen looked up at her, her green eyes seeming very tired.

“...I fight that every single day...and it is hard to do that when the person who is supposed to be helping me is fueling those urges with some...well, erotic...scenes,” Tara finished, closing her eyes.

Allison swallowed, still a bit shaken by the imagery...
...then it hit her.

Shit...all of those fantasies I've been having...have I been broadcasting without meaning to? Allison thought.

Yes. You have, came a soft reply.

Allison blinked, genuinely puzzled. *Tara?*

The vixen nodded, not saying a single word.

But...I thought... the gazelle thought.

We do need to practice talking like this, the vixen stated.

And I need to drive this point home, too.

Allison felt herself flush. *You're scolding me*, she thought.

Yes, came the vixen's reply. *You need to know exactly what you are doing and what it is causing to happen.*

Allison shut her eyes.

I'm causing you...to have to fight harder, the gazelle stated mentally.

She heard a sigh...and felt one inside her head.

You are causing me to use more resources, yes, Tara commented. *That is making me become fatigued faster. So far, it has not affected my self-control...but...*

...but it could, if you have a bad day, Allison finished, nodding silently.

Exactly, the vixen replied. *So, you focus on trying to keep those naughty thoughts in check...and I will try to dim my reception of your thoughts when you're around.*

Allison felt an ear twitch. *But...you just said we need to practice?*

We do...but there is a time for practice and a time for privacy, Tara replied. *When you start wandering into kinkier times, I will turn down my end of the link...*

...so that you can focus on maintaining where you are at, psychologically, Allison finished, nodding curtly. *Good idea.*

She heard the vixen sigh...and shook her head to clear it.

“Wow...that was...” Allison began...then chuckled softly.

You know...I will still have those thoughts, Allison commented mentally.

Now is not the time, Tara replied curtly.

Why not? Allison asked.

Cht-hunk!

Allison blinked...then turned around...

...and saw the door to the vixen's room slowly slide

open...revealing the familiar grey-furred coyote stepped into the room, his wire-rimmed glasses scanning the room.

“Doctor Michelsen,” Tara stated calmly. “To what do I owe this pleasure?”

Allison scampered up off of the vixen's bed, blushing and fixing her uniform.

“Nurse Cousins...could you please wait outside,” the coyote stated calmly.

Allison felt herself blush. *Shit...I'm gonna get reamed for something.*

Possibly. He wants to talk to me though, Tara replied in her head. *I will keep you apprised.*

Slowly, Allison slid out of the room...and exhaled softly.

Dammit...I need some coffee...the gazelle thought, padding toward the staff lounge.

...

Doctor Michelsen watched as the red vixen slowly stood up and padded over to the desk in the room.

“So, Doctor...what did you want to discuss?” the vixen asked calmly.

He adjusted the fit of his glasses, the slight pinching feeling helping him focus.

“I simply wanted to see how your research is going,” the coyote stated.

He watched as the vixen sat down in the single chair in the room, in front of the desk...

...then, it turned to look at him, its green eyes studying him. Scanning him.

In a flash, he felt like a piece of meat being studied by a shopper, checking for how much fat was on the cut...and swallowed.

“Well...not much progress has been made on my own case,” the vixen stated calmly, folding its paws in its lap. “My blood

seems to be highly contaminated...but Nurse Cousins has a theory that plasmocentesis might be able to alleviate some of the symptoms...or possibly delay the onset further.”

“Plasmo...yes...” Doctor Michelsen nodded. “That would make sense if your...condition...is indeed a blood-borne pathogen.” *And could make it very easy to acquire a pure sample*, he noted mentally.

“However...”

He paused in his ruminations...and looked up at the vixen.

“I seem to be at an impasse,” the vixen stated calmly, “and, as a result, I am suspending my research for the near future.”

...

Allison sipped a cup of the archaic coffee that was in the coffee pot...and shuddered as the vile swill slithered into her stomach.

Gawdammit! Can't anybody make a decent pot of coffee in this place! She cursed mentally...then sighed.

Ah well...it does it's job, she added, frowning.

“So...here you are, thrall,” a menacing voice stated from behind her.

She spun around...and saw Corey standing behind her, resting against the other table in the room.

“Thrall? What are you talking about?” Allison snapped, sliding out of the chair.

The wolf stared at her, his cold blue eyes glaring at her.

“I think you know exactly what I mean,” the wolf stated. “Tell me...has she made you drink her blood yet. Thrall?”

Allison started to feel something surge inside her. An emotion.

Anger.

Anger that he thought Tara would hurt her.

Anger that he thought she was like Tara.

And then, she felt something.

She **KNEW** something.

And...she smiled.

“Now, how would you know something like that, hmm Corey?” the gazelle stated.

The wolf blinked, his eyes losing a bit of their coldness.

“That would only be something a person who is actively monitoring MY patient would know,” Allison stated calmly, the sly smile still on her muzzle.

The gazelle crossed her arms...then gently reached behind her and picked up the coffee cup.

Okay...he wanted to pump me for info, Allison thought.

Let's see exactly what he knows...and what I can learn.

“Now, since the camera in my patient's room appears to still be on the fritz...” Allison stated professionally, “...that would mean...that you have been in to peek on my patient.”

She looked up...and saw Corey flinch just a tiny bit.

No...but he has looked in, Allison mused.

“...and, while I do appreciate the extra set of eyes, I doubt Doctor Michelsen would,” Allison finished.

To her surprise, the wolf scoffed.

“Michelsen...all he does is sit in his office all day,” Corey declared...then smiled coldly. “I really run Saint Mariah's, Miss Cousins...and, yes, I do know all about you and your...patient.”

Bingo, Allison smiled mentally.

“Well then...I'd like to requisition some items then, since you're the one that runs this place,” Allison stated calmly.

Corey blinked, and his left ear twitched.

“I'm going to need three rolls of gauze...a heavy-duty Sharp's box...and a dozen syringes...each week,” Allison stated. “Be a dear and make that happen for me, won't you Corey?”

She watched as the wolf's eyes narrowed.

“You are working with that...that abomination...” he growled.

“No. I am working with my PATIENT,” Allison snapped back, the harshness in her tone even catching her by surprise. “And if you interfere with that work in any way, I WILL have a conversation with Doctor Michelsen...and with the Cardinal as well.”

She watched as Corey swallowed, that last phrase catching him off-guard.

“And, if I do that...I am certain that Cardinal Leroux will want to know every. Little. DETAIL,” Allison stated, clipping the last few words. “Especially about your relationship with Nickie...since priests are supposed to be chaste.”

He flinched...and looked away, his ears drooping.

Score. Oh boy...you just gave a lot away, Allison thought smugly.

...

“Impasse? What do you mean?” Doctor Michelsen stated, surprise making his voice light.

The vixen pointed up above her head...

...and the coyote saw the exposed camera above her head.

“I have this suspicion...that someone is using that camera...to spy on my research,” the vixen stated clinically.

Doctor Michelsen adjusted his glasses again, purposely digging the nose guards into his nose, the little jolt of pain helping him think.

She knows that I am examining her research each day! She KNOWS!

“So that is why you moved your desk,” Doctor Michelsen commented calmly, trying to hide his shock.

The vixen nodded. “Indeed. After all, my research has progressed quite far...and, to be honest, it could easily be corrupted.”

The coyote watched...as the vixen leaned back in her chair.

“I know that this work can help not only people...well, people like me,” the vixen went on. “But it can also help leukemia patients, AIDS patients...it could cure them with a nice, cheap cure...”

The vixen fixed her green eyes on him...and Doctor Michelsen again had that feeling of being a piece of meat wash over him.

“...or....someone could take all of that research...and turn it into a bioweapon. Infect millions with an incurable plague,” the vixen stated calmly.

Doctor Michelsen swallowed.

I've seen her research on that screen...she is exactly right. Her research could very easily...

“...thus, that is why I have adjusted my living arrangements,” she went on. “To minimize the likelihood of prying eyes stealing my work.”

The coyote swallowed again...then nodded.

“Miss Bastille...I want you to know that I have no intention of using your research for illegal ends,” he stated...then sighed. “I want to help people, just like you do.”

He looked up, his eyes going wide.

Wait...did I just...

To his utter amazement, the vixen nodded.

“I want that as well, Doctor Michelsen,” the vixen stated. “I do not want anyone to have to deal with what I am facing...or any other blood-borne illness.”

Slowly, Doctor Michelsen nodded. “Your research...it could cure so many diseases...”

The vixen nodded...then looked at him.

“Sadly, like I said...I am at an impasse,” the vixen stated. “I am at a point in said research where I need access to some

supplies that will be...difficult...to ask for.”

“Difficult?” the coyote asked, a bank ledger popping into his head...and lots of red ink dripping from it.

The vixen nodded.

“Not so much for the financial end...but more...”

Doctor Michelsen watched...as the vixen sighed.

“I need a small amount of blood,” the vixen stated.

The coyote swallowed. “Miss Bastille, I...”

“I am not not asking for a large amount,” the vixen stated.

“It would only be a few drops...to see how my blood reacts when uncontaminated blood is introduced to it.”

The vixen looked up at him.

“I need three cc's of blood...and not from a live donor,” the vixen stated.

...

Allison watched...as Corey's face darkened, a frown crossing the wolf's muzzle.

“If you go to the Cardinal, I will have to do so as well,” the wolf stated. “How would you enjoy being excommunicated, I wonder?”

The gazelle smiled, then took a sip of the archaic coffee.

“Probably better than this coffee,” she stated, still smirking. “And likely more than you will, being defrocked AND excommunicated.”

The wolf flinched, as if a physical blow had been struck...and Allison smiled, almost predatorially.

“Imagine the scandal...” the gazelle pressed. “An ordained priest...subverting an entire mental institution...bedding a subordinate...spying on all of the patients...” The gazelle chuckled. “You would be LUCKY if they just excommunicated you.”

She watched as Corey's eyes narrowed...and she drank the last of the coffee.

“So...here's the deal, if you want me to keep quiet...” the gazelle offered, setting the empty cup on the table behind her. “You stop spying on my patient...stop sending videotapes of her to whoever you're reporting to...”

Allison noticed that Corey's eyes went wide at that...and smiled. *Oooh...that had to sting.*

“...and you get me whatever medical supplies I need,” Allison finished. “In exchange, I not only keep quiet about your actions to the Cardinal...but to Doctor Michelsen as well. AND the medical board.”

Allison smiled, watching the silver-furred wolf scowl and glare at her.

“That last little bit was just to let you know that there are other agencies besides the Church that you need to worry about, Corey,” the gazelle stated coyly.

Corey took a step toward her...and Allison saw him clench his right paw into a fist.

Oh crap...maybe he's gonna...

Then, slowly...the wolf sighed, turning away.

“May God have mercy on your soul, Miss Cousins,” he stated, walking away from her and slipping out of the lounge.

Allison watched him leave...then exhaled deeply, wiping at her forehead.

“Damn...that was intense...” she stated.

Then, her ears went up.

Wait...how did I DO that? She thought. I've never been that confident before, especially with chewing someone out. The Fathers always said that was my weakness...

She swallowed.

Did...did I REALLY say all of that?

...

“Excuse me?” Doctor Michelsen stated, caught completely

off guard.

The vixen looked at him...and this time he did not get that “piece of meat” feeling.

Instead, she looked at him with a look he had not gotten in a long while.

A look...of a colleague.

A look...of an equal.

It made him feel at-ease...and it made him feel respected.

“I need a small amount of blood. Three cc's. Not from a live donor,” the vixen stated. “I need to take that sample...and add a few drops of my blood to it and study the effects.”

Doctor Michelsen's brain began to race.

She is already at the point where she is willing to test her blood. If she is this far...

The coyote nodded absently, his mind still racing.

That means...there would be a viable sample of her blood...something to send out for analysis...

“That....could be doable...” the coyote mused. “We have quite a bit of blood in storage for transfusions...”

“Doctor?”

The coyote shook his head, then looked at the vixen.

“That would likely result in the rest of the bag having to be discarded,” the vixen stated. “It would be contaminated due to the withdrawal.”

“Nonsense,” Doctor Michelsen stated. “We can simply remove the amount needed without damaging the integrity of the bag as a whole. One would simply...be a bit lower, that is all.”

The coyote nodded. “I will designate that bag as research materials...and make it available for your use.”

The coyote saw the vixen nod...and felt a small surge of pride in his chest.

Yes...and in exchange, I will get a sample of your blood for

my use, he thought.

“I would also need access to a small centrifuge,” the vixen added. “That way, for future tests, I can attempt a small-scale filtering...as well as begin introducing reagents to see what happens to my blood in each sample.”

The coyote's eyes went wide. “Reagents?”

The vixen nodded. “To see if something can slow the corruption of pure blood once my blood is introduced to a pure sample,” she stated clinically.

Doctor Michelsen watched...as the vixen leaned back in the chair.

“That way...I can see if I can find a cure. A DEFINITIVE cure,” the vixen stated.

The coyote's muzzle opened, his eyes widening.

“You...you're that close?” he stammered.

Slowly, the vixen nodded...and smiled.

“I can be that close...with your help,” she stated. “And of course, you would get a research credit on the published reports, should it work...and there be no side-effects...”

Doctor Michelsen exhaled, stunned.

She...she would include me...as a research partner? I would be included in the published findings?

“Miss...” he began, swallowed...then cleared his throat.

“Thank you, Miss Bastille...I am honored by such an offer...”

The vixen chuckled softly. “Well, you have been hosting me and my research for quite a while...been helping with supplies...” She smiled at him. “It is only fair that you be included in the finished product as a supporter and contributor to my research, is it not?”

Slowly, Doctor Michelsen nodded....then adjusted his glasses again, the slight pinch helping him to focus yet again.

“Miss Bastille...I...thank you...” he stated, genuinely appreciative of the honor he was receiving.

The vixen nodded...and smiled at him.

“Thank you, Doctor Michelsen,” she stated. “None of this would have been possible without your help.”

The coyote felt his chest swell with a bit more pride...then he smiled at the red vixen.

“I will get to work on the forms for the requisition of those supplies,” he stated. “I believe there is an old blood separator in the basement. I will have Terrence check it and see if it still works, then have him bring it up to you.”

He turned and walked to the door...then stopped and looked back at the red vixen.

“Your research...will help so many people,” he stated. “Never forget that, Miss Bastille.”

The red vixen nodded. “I know.”

The coyote opened the door and slipped out of the vixen's room, resting against the door for a little bit.

It will help me too...and Saint Mariah's as well, he added mentally.

Then, the doctor composed himself, straightening out his lab coat...and took a step down the hall...

...and collided with someone, the person reacting with a loud “Oof.”

“Oh, I'm terribly sorry, I...” Doctor Michelsen began...then paused.

The gazelle he had assigned to monitor Miss Bastille was standing there, adjusting her scrubs to make them pristine again.

...

“Are you all right, Doctor Michelsen?” Allison asked, checking her scrubs again.

The coyote nodded. “Undamaged. You?”

She chuckled softly. “The same,” she replied...then slipped past him. “Excuse me...I need to check on my patient.”

“Of course,” Doctor Michelsen stated, moving down the hallway away from the room.

Allison watched as the coyote walked down the hall...then blinked.

Did...did he skip a little? She asked herself...then shook her head. *Nah...just my imagination.*

The gazelle opened the heavy metal door and slipped inside, closing it behind her.

“So...how was your talk with Doctor Michelsen?” Allison asked, padding over to the bed and sitting down.

She heard the vixen sigh...and looked up.

“Well, he confirmed that he has been watching the recordings,” Tara stated. “And he is very eager to help with my research...possibly TOO eager.”

“How can you know?” the gazelle asked, her curiosity piqued.

The vixen crossed her arms. “He seems very eager to help people...plus I think he plans to use my research to help keep the institution going.”

Allison felt an ear twitch. “You got all of that from your talk?”

Slowly, the vixen nodded. “His body language when I asked for supplies seemed to indicate money was becoming an issue...and he was very enthusiastic when I told him he would get a research credit when my research is published,” Tara stated.

Allison leaned forward. “Wow...but...my paychecks always clear...the Institution is still paying its staff...”

Tara nodded slowly. “The Institution may be floating by...but the good doctor might not be.”

Slowly, Allison nodded...then sank back against the wall of the room.

“Corey confronted me. In the lounge,” the gazelle stated.

She felt a weight suddenly appear on the bed next to her...and her eyes opened...

...then they went wide, the red vixen sitting next to her, a concerned look on its face.

“Did he...are you okay?” Tara asked, a paw reaching out to her.

Allison blinked. *Jesus, you are fast! And quiet!*

“I'm okay,” she replied, a bit of surprise creeping into her voice. “And it looks like you were right...”

She looked at the vixen.

“Corey is spying on you,” the gazelle stated.

She watched...as the vixen slid back a little bit...then went on.

“He may also be banging Nickie too,” Allison went on.

“Wait...what?” Tara asked...and Allison smiled a bit at the genuine surprise that crossed the vixen's face. “You mean...he and the girl at the desk are...”

“Maybe,” Allison replied. “He got kinda twitchy when I mentioned her name...so...”

Tara nodded absently...and Allison could see and feel the gears in the vixen's head turning.

“I got him to back off of you...and he'll help get us supplies too,” Allison finished.

The vixen's eyes went wide. “How?”

The gazelle crossed her arms, a bit of pride leading her to smile.

“I told him that I'd go to Doctor Michelsen...report the spying...” she stated...then the smile became a coy smirk. “Then, I added that I'd also talk to the local Cardinal about it...and his “relationship” with a subordinate...as well as the medical board...”

Tara stared at her for a bit...then chuckled softly.

“Damn...you are cold, girl,” the vixen stated.

Allison chuckled...then looked at her.

“That's just it though...” she stated. “Doing something like that...being confident, even confrontational...I had never been able to do something like that before.”

She watched as the vixen's face took on a more serious demeanor.

“Well...maybe I have not been all that bad an influence on you then,” the vixen stated...then winked at her.

Allison smiled...then lightly punched the vixen's arm.

“You're a horrible influence on me,” Allison joked. “Corey practically thinks I'm your thrall or something.”

She glanced over at the vixen...and let her chuckling fade.

The vixen had a thoughtful expression on her muzzle...and a paw was lightly rubbing the underside of its muzzle.

“Hmm....that gives us something...” Tara mused softly...then looked up, a sly smile crossing the vixen's muzzle.

“Okay...what are you plotting?” Allison asked.

“Well...if Corey believes that you are my thrall...” the vixen stated, “that gives us something we can potentially use to our advantage.”

“How?” Allison asked.

The vixen tapped her head.

“If he thinks you are my thrall...that means, wherever you are...”

“...he'll think you're seeing what I see...” Allison finished.

“...and reporting it all back to me,” Tara continued.

Allison chuckled. “Oh man...that has SO much potential...”

Tara nodded. “Indeed,” the vixen stated...then sighed.

“Sadly, I am pretty fatigued right now. I could use some rest.”

Allison nodded and got up off of the bed. “Did you want the restraints on or no?”

“Please,” Tara replied, easing herself into the bed. “Just

because my mind is fatigued does not mean my body is.”

Allison nodded...and expertly secured the vixen's arms and legs with the restraints...then smiled at the vixen.

“You know I'll be fantasizing about this all day, right?” the gazelle stated.

“I know. But just do not do it around me, okay?” the vixen replied.

Allison nodded, then lightly patted the vixen's head.

“Pleasant dreams,” the gazelle said, then turned to leave.

“I don't have those anymore.”

Allison blinked...then turned back toward the vixen.

“I don't even dream anymore,” the vixen stated.

The gazelle padded back over to the bed. “Then what do you do when you're asleep?”

The vixen shrugged as much as it could.

“I do not know. It's like I just...shut off. Like a robot,” Tara stated. “Yet, somehow...I'm still aware of everything around me...but it's like I'm feeling or seeing it all from a great distance.”

Tara sighed...then looked up at the gazelle.

“Dream well...for both of us. Okay, Allison?” the vixen asked, very softly.

Slowly, Allison nodded. “I will. I promise.”

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