

The Incident at Saint Mariah's
Part 6: Aggressions
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(two weeks later...)

...

Corey scowled as he stood outside the heavy metal door.

Nurse Cousins is on vacation...the thrall is not here...

The wolf felt a shudder shoot through his body, causing his fur to bristle slightly.

And Nickie says that the vampire has not moved all day...for the past two days, actually.

He sighed, his eyes closing.

Almighty God...please let your servant be safe.

Corey took a deep breath...then slowly unlocked the three locks on the metal door...and eased it open.

The metal made a soft scraping sound as it slid on the tile...

...and Corey flinched, his muscles tensing for a reaction.

Then, he slowly eased his eye to the gap between the door and the jamb.

The vixen was still sitting on the floor, cross-legged...head bowed...unmoving.

Slowly, he let out a soft sigh of relief...then eased the door open a little bit more...and slipped inside.

All right...so far, so good...

His gaze wandered about the room, taking stock of everything.

The bed...with its heavy-duty restraints.

I would feel safer if you were in those right now, Corey thought.

...the desk, with the laptop on it...

He froze, surprised.

The laptop...was still powered up.

She...she left the laptop on? Thank you Lord for smiling on me this day! Corey thought.

His gaze went from the desk...to the vixen.

The vixen was sitting in the center of the room...about four feet from the desk.

He swallowed.

Far too close...but this is an excellent opportunity...

The wolf looked up...and saw that the vixen was facing the window, the heavy navy blinds blocking almost all of the sunlight.

If I were to open that...all of my problems would be solved, he thought...then frowned. *But...then there would be no way to get at her research...*

He glanced back at the laptop.

...especially if that is password protected, he finished.

Then, the wolf stood up.

God will protect me, he thought...and padded quietly over to the laptop, tapping the touchpad with a single claw.

The display flared to life...

...and Corey cursed to himself.

Damn! It IS password protected.

The wolf huffed softly.

Well...I did watch the other footage...so I can try to guess the password...

He thought for a bit...then frowned.

What would a vampire have for their password? He asked himself. *Likely something important...*

He typed in “hemoglobin”, then hit enter.

“Invalid password,” flashed on the screen. “Two attempts remaining”.

Crap...a lockdown system, Corey griped inwardly. *Must think...*

“Can I help you with something?” a soft, feminine voice stated.

Corey froze, his eyes shooting wide...

...then he slowly turned in the direction of the sound.

The vixen was leaning against the now-closed door...not even looking at him.

Then, she lifted her gaze...

...and the vixen's emerald eyes looked upon him.

Do not meet her gaze! He chided himself, and broke eye contact.

He heard claws lightly tapping on the door...and flinched each time, fearing the vampire would lunge for him.

“Well, here we are, aren't we Corey?” she asked calmly.

He took a step back, easing closer to the wall...but looked up at the vixen.

She was still leaning back against the door, her right paw behind her back...and her left paw resting on the door, the claws on her fingers resting on the cold metal.

“I actually have been waiting for this for quite a while,” the vixen said, her eyes tracking his every step.

He swallowed. *She...she's going to kill me...unless...*

He reached up...and drew the shade back.

Sunlight illuminated the center of the room, creating a rectangle of brilliant sunlight on the floor.

Corey slipped right behind that rectangle, keeping the sunlight between himself and the vampire.

“Hmm...I guess you want to have more light,” the vampire said softly. “Can't say I blame you. The lighting in here isn't that great.”

“Enough, vampire,” Corey huffed. “Let me leave or kill me. Just be done with it.”

To his surprise, the vixen looked shocked.

“Kill you? I have no reason to do that, Corey,” the vixen stated. “I only wish to talk, that's all.”

He watched...as the vixen eased herself away from the door...and he flinched.

“Talk? Your kind do not “talk”,” he stated.

“My “kind”?” the vixen countered. “Tell me then...how many vampires have you actually MET, Corey? Hmm?”

Corey glared at the vampire, silent.

“That's what I thought,” she stated, nodding her head. “I never thought they were real either. Thought they were just works of fiction.”

He watched...as the vixen sighed.

“Guess we both know differently now, eh?” she asked...then chuckled softly.

Corey stared at the vixen, his body tensed...ready to bolt at the first move toward him the vampire made.

Dammit, Nickie! Why aren't you getting me out of this?

“So...like I said, here we are,” the vixen stated calmly. “You here, trying to steal my research...me, here, blocking your exit...”

He frowned, his mind working.

Okay...I might be able to use the sunlight and the keys to distract her enough to let me get out...but...

“So...here's a proposition for you...”

He blinked, confused. “Proposition?”

The vixen nodded.

“You and I have a little talk,” she posited. “You answer some questions I have...I answer some you have...and then, you get to walk out this door.”

He watched as the vixen lightly tapped the door with its left paw.

“If you choose not to talk...well...”

He watched...as the vampire leaned back against the door.

“...it's not like I need food or anything,” she stated calmly, a sly smile crossing her muzzle.

Damn...she's right. She could likely last for weeks...but I can't.

“Fine,” Corey huffed. “Ask.”

She smiled at him. “Good. My first question is a simple one...who are you working for?”

Corey scowled. “That is not your concern, fiend,” he snapped.

The vixen sighed. “Corey, Corey, Corey...hostility won't get you anywhere...”

The wolf watched...as the vixen slowly moved her right hand out from behind her...

...and his eyes went wide, staring at the CD-ROM contained in her paw.

“...and it most certainly will not get you this,” the vixen stated, holding up the CD. “All my research...in one neat, little package.”

He watched...as she smiled.

“And, like the game shows used to say...it could all be yours,” the vixen went on. “But...you have to play my game...and follow the rules.”

Corey stared at the disc in the vixen's right paw...then sighed.

“Damn you,” he stated softly.

“So...does that mean you will answer my questions?” the vixen asked.

He shut his eyes...and slowly nodded.

“Good. Now, who have you been funneling information to, Corey?” he heard her ask.

The wolf swallowed.

“A...a fellow priest...” he stated. “Father Lysandre...”

He looked up...and saw the vixen nod.

“Good. Now, you get to ask one,” she stated.

The wolf felt an ear twitch.

“Are you really going to let me go unharmed?” he asked.

To his utter amazement, the vixen laughed.

“See? That's the spirit!” she said gleefully. “To answer your question: yes. I am going to let you walk out of here, completely intact and unharmed.”

He let out a soft sigh of relief. *Thank you God...*

“Now...my turn...”

He looked up at the vixen, who was idly tapping the edge of the CD against her cheek.

“What do you plan on using my research for, exactly?” she asked, glancing at the disc in her paw.

“To...to get rid of your kind completely,” he stated, his gaze not leaving the vixen, in case she reacted to his words.

Slowly, the vixen nodded. “Not a surprising answer.”

“Does it bother you...to be an unholy monster?” he asked bluntly.

The vixen chuckled.

“Wow...that is a tad harsh,” she stated...then sighed. “Fair...but harsh.”

He watched as she leaned back against the door.

“I was a normal person before I became this,” she stated. “Worked in an office...had friends...”

She glanced up...and Corey saw a touch of sadness in the vixen's face.

“...even went to church,” The vixen paused a bit. “I was a baptized and confirmed Lutheran...tithed my

income...was in the choir...and now, after getting attacked...I'm...well, here.”

He watched as she gestured around the room.

“Does it bother me to be this? Yes. It does,” she stated. “I prayed for days on end, asking God what I did to deserve this...what I did not do...why it happened to me...”

He swallowed at the somber tone of the vixen's voice.

“And His reply? Nothing. No grand revelation...no explanation...no peace...nothing,” she went on.

Corey felt his body begin to relax a little bit.

She...she was a Christian before this happened...

“So I wallowed for a bit...did the whole, “Woe is me” crap...” the vixen went on...then shut her eyes. “Then, once I noticed the first symptoms...I did have a realization.”

He watched...as she looked up at him, her green eyes seeming...subdued.

“I decided...that maybe, I could make the most of this situation,” she said. “Turn a negative into a positive. That's when I began doing my research and tests...hoping to both find a cure for myself...and to try to help others, keep others from having to go through this if possible.”

He sighed, looking away...and felt ashamed.

She...she is actually trying to use this for good...

“I haven't had any blood.”

Corey looked up...as the vixen closed her eyes.

“My body does crave it...but I have not had any,” she said. “To me, that's the point of no return.”

He watched...as she took a step toward the door

handle...and he tensed.

“That's the point...when I really do become a demon,” she stated...then looked up...and chuckled softly. “Sorry. Likely a bit more than you wanted to know, but you did get your answer.”

He swallowed, his ear twitching a bit.

“So...now it's my turn again,” she stated...then smiled. “You have watched the camera logs, right?”

Slowly, cautiously...he nodded.

“Thought so,” she replied, nodding.

He fell silent for a bit...then swallowed.

“Have you...Nurse Cousins...is she...” he began, then fell silent, his throat not wanting to voice the idea.

“Have I..?” the vixen began...then he saw her eyes widen. “Oh god. No. No-no-no...I told you I haven't had any blood, Corey. Not Allison's, not anyone's. Geez. How could you think that man?”

“Because she is always in here, with you, for long periods,” Corey explained, finally beginning to relax. “Close to you...”

“Oh...my...God...” the vixen exclaimed softly. “No. No, I haven't bitten her...haven't given her any of my blood.” The vixen shuddered, the disc vibrating against her body. “God, the notion makes me sick.”

He studied the vixen, his mind very puzzled.

This is strange...she says she hasn't had blood...says the thought of biting Nurse Cousins is abhorrent to her...but then...

“How...do you stay alive?” he asked.

The vixen looked up, puzzled. “Wait...isn't it my turn?”

Corey shook his head, a slight smile crossing the wolf's muzzle.

“You asked how I could think you made Nurse Cousins your slave,” he pointed out.

The vixen blinked...then chuckled.

“Yes...I suppose I did,” the vixen admitted. “Well, as for staying alive, I can still have food and drink. It just tastes very bland to me.” The vixen chuckled. “Sucks, since I loooooove hot, spicy foods.”

Corey chuckled softly. *She seems so normal*, he thought.

*She is a **VAMPIRE**!* His brain screamed at him. *She is just lulling you into letting your guard down!*

“Okay...well, it's my turn now,” she stated...then looked at him.

He swallowed.

Gone was the jovial, relaxed manner the vixen had. In its place was a stern-looking gaze...a focused gaze.

A gaze that was now sizing him up.

A gaze that made him uneasy.

“So...for my question...how many people, aside from Nickie...are helping you get my research?” she asked coldly.

He swallowed. *She knows Nickie is involved...but I need to protect the others...*

“Just myself and Nickie,” he replied.

The vixen studied him with those intense green eyes.

“You're lying,” she stated icily.

He swallowed. "I am a priest. I am an ordained Catholic priest..."

"...who would gladly end my life if given a safe way to do so," the vixen finished. "And would do so with no hesitation either."

Corey felt his body tense on instinct.

"Yes. Yes I would," he stated.

"Even if my research would cure people like me...making it so that they did not have to become monsters like me?" she queried.

He paused, unsure.

"Corey...sometimes bad things happen to good people," she stated. "And sometimes, good things happen to bad people."

He watched...as she took a step toward him.

"You know the old saying...shit happens," she stated coldly, stepping directly opposite him now, on the other side of the illuminated rectangle.

He tensed, ready to run...

...then watched, surprised...as the vixen rolled up its left sleeve.

"Shit does indeed happen to good people," she stated, making sure the sleeve was rolled up to her bicep. "And all we can do is try to make sense of it all, right?"

Slowly, he nodded.

"Right," she said...

...then shot her left arm across the rectangle, grabbing his wrist in hers...

...and his eyes took everything in.

The vixen's fur seemed to explode into flame as it entered the sunlight, the flames licking up all of her fur in scant seconds, leaving pale flesh exposed briefly...

...then, as her paw made contact with his wrist, the vixen's flesh erupted into flame as well, the flesh peeling and crackling away...

...as the vixen's paw clamped on his right wrist, the coldness of the vixen's touch chilling him to the core...

...and his gorge rising as the muscles of the vixen's arm began to be revealed, the sinews and tendons pulsing as she held her grip on his arm...

...then those too caught on fire, turning black due to the flame.

“Let go of me!” Corey screamed, his other paw batting at the flames.

To his shock, the vixen let go...and withdrew her arm, wisps of smoke billowing from it.

He flexed his wrist, his left paw cradling it and rubbing it gently.

Good God...her touch is like a freezer...

Then, he looked up...

...and his eyes widened in horror, feeling the blood drain from his body.

The vixen had her arm up in front of her face...

...and, as Corey watched...the muscles and flesh began to regenerate...

...first the muscles sliding back along the exposed bone, slipping into place with soft, wet sounds...

...then the flesh skittering across the viscera,

covering it in fresh, pale flesh...which slowly went from translucent to opaque as each layer formed over the lower layer...

...then finally, the fur began to sprout from the flesh, rich fiery red and ebon black fur coating the vixen's arm.

To him, it seemed to take an eternity...

...and then, the vixen slowly lowered her paw, a slight smile crossing its muzzle.

“So...now you know that the sunlight can't protect you,” she stated calmly. “Care to try your luck again?”

He shook his head, horrified...still cradling his wrist in his other paw.

“Good. Get out.”

He blinked, puzzled. “But...”

“Get. Out.” the vixen stated...

...and then Corey met her gaze.

The vixen's eyes, which had previously been an emerald green...were now a very dark red.

Blood red.

Blood red...and angry.

“Now,” she stated.

Corey ran for the door, ripping it open and slamming it shut behind him after he made it through...then leaned against the far wall of the corridor, panting heavily, his gaze not leaving the door.

She...it...

He swallowed...then rubbed his wrist.

She could have easily killed me...and...

His eyes went wide.

Sunlight doesn't kill her! But...sunlight destroys vampires! Yet she...

He slid along the wall, easing himself toward the nurse's lounge...his eyes never leaving the vixen's door.

It didn't even seem to hurt her!

He slid past several closed doors, ignoring all of the thuds and sounds from the other patients...his eyes never leaving the vixen's door.

Lysandre...he needs to know...and now.

Then, he broke and ran.

...

Tara sighed as she stood there, the last wisps of smoke dissipating around her.

Then, she looked down at the blank CD in her right paw...and chuckled.

“Ah well...it was still an informative session,” she stated. “Plus I likely scared the crap out of him.”

She walked over to her desk, tail swishing a little bit.

“I got some useful information,” she stated, shutting down the laptop and placing the blank CD in a drawer of the desk. “Sadly, so did he...but it was a fair trade.”

She let out a soft huff of air.

“Lysandre...” she mused...then leaned against the desk.

“Time to start planning.”

...

“Let's see...whole wheat or rye...”

Allison frowned as she examined both loaves on the shelf.

“Maybe wheat,” she mused, an ear twitching in irritation...

...then she paused...

...as an image of a cell phone popped into her head, with a caller ID display reading “Tara” on it.

Tara? She asked mentally. *You can reach me out here?*

Apparently, came a soft reply. *It is taking effort though. Likely won't be long.*

Is something wrong? the gazelle asked, placing the loaf of wheat bread into her cart.

Corey was here. In my room.

Allison froze, her shopping list fading from her mind immediately.

Are you all right? She asked.

Yes, but I need you to pick up something, Tara stated.

What do you..? Allison began, then fell silent...

...as a single image flashed in her head: a large backpack.

If there's a camping or sporting goods store, I'd say go there, Tara commented. *It needs to be at least twenty inches wide.*

But...why? Allison asked.

To hold my laptop, Tara replied. *I think Corey and whoever he's working for will make their move soon.*

The gazelle blinked, feeling the connection break suddenly...

...then shook her head.

“Damn...” she whispered...then headed for the exit,

her groceries left behind.

...

Corey shivered, dialing a number on the cell phone.

“Come on...pick up, pick..”

“Yes?” came a gruff voice over the line.

Corey exhaled, relieved.

“Father...it is...” he began.

“What has happened?” the voice asked gruffly.

The wolf swallowed.

“The vampire attacked me...when I attempted to get her research,” he stated. “I am unharmed, but I was not able to secure her research. I am sorry Father.”

...

The large, grey wolf exhaled softly.

“Continue to watch the vampire then,” the wolf said somberly. “Update me if anything changes.”

The wolf's sole ear twitched.

“And Brother Hines? Do not forget to offer thanks to God for your safety,” the wolf stated, then shut down the phone.

The wolf let out a long sigh, his single ear twitching...

...then Father Lysandre turned around and walked to the door of his quarters.

“It is time to prepare for the fight,” the old wolf stated.

...