

2 Years Ago...

The day that I was brought here I knew something was off. It wasn't because of the abandon buildings or the dark clouds that loomed over the buildings like a crown. It was something more than that. It was the people that were here that's giving me that tingling sensation to go away. These weren't necessarily ordinary people. They were much more capable than that. People were here for different types of reasons. Whether its hearing voices that whisper to you or having strange phobias that isolate you from other people, you can find them here, in the madhouse. My mother and father thought it was best for me to go to one because they didn't believe what I saw or heard. They believed that I was attempting to harm myself with bitter thoughts. They said that I was probably stressing out too much and that this was the best option for me, that they're doing this because they love me. I know the real reason why then sent me here. It was because they didn't want to be seen by other people with a psychopathic daughter. But they don't say that to my face. Instead they try to hide it with sweet lies that only fools would fall for. They can't trick me and they won't be able to.

So I played along and ended up here, to where I stand now. This building was isolated from the rest of the city. Far away so no one can hear all the constant screaming that lays within. The front gates had been worn over the years and discolored to a light bronze. The building had chipped edges and long vines, almost covering the building like a mask. The sign that was supposed to say *Delatria Mental Hospital* ended up spelling death. *How very fitting for a place like this. I feel so much better about myself. I'm totally not losing all my hope right now.* The letters must of have fallen off over time and nobody had bother to replace it or they just couldn't afford to. I was taken in by one of the nurses. She had pale blonde hair, almost as white as snow. Wrinkles form near her eyes and her laugh line. She smiled as she welcomed me. Her teeth was stained a light yellow with a few chipped edges. Her walk was slightly shaky. She must have injured her foot a few days back. She and all the nurses here wear the same white uniform that blends in with the walls. We go into the lobby area where it's not as busy as you expect it to be. Chairs are lined up against the wall for visitors that come by. In the corner there's a desk where a few nurses gave me curious looks and went back to work, filing papers or typing something into the computer. My luggage that I brought with me made a tremendous noise as it fell from my sweaty palm. I quickly picked up the luggage and ran to where the nurse was going. She led me down into a narrow hall and opened a door. She gestured me to go in. We took a right to another hall. Pictures of flowers and encouraging messages fill the walls with color. The blue tiles compliment the paintings or drawings that are hung up. The nurse gave me an encouraging smile as she used her many keys that are attached to a giant hook to open another door. Inside there's a single small bed in the far right corner, a small drawer and a desk at the other end. I took in the stale air that filled the compact room. The nurse

told me that dinner would be in a few minutes and that I should change into the clothes left on the bed. She pointed out to where the cafeteria was and left me to unpack my belongings. On the bed was a simple grey uniform. I quickly changed and left toward the cafeteria.

Inside, many people got in a line for their evening meal. I'm surprised that this hospital has only children. Most of them gaze at me for a few moments before returning to their conversations. Others don't even notice that I'm there. *Great! Just like school.* I made my way to an empty table in the far corner where no one seemed to occupy it. As I sat down a girl came up to me and asked if it was okay for her to sit. I gave her a small shrug and she called two other boys over to the table. She was light and cheery even in a place like this. She had amber hair that shifts to a slightly bright orange in the sun. Her lips were pale as were her skin. One of the boys she called over had dark hair like the night sky while the other had a pale brown. Both of them acknowledged me and gave me a small nod. The girl turned back to me and introduced herself.

"Hi. My name's Katy. That is Cliff and the other one is Drew." She pointed to the dark haired one first then the pale brown one. "You seemed lonely and I thought you might need some company. I heard you were new here. We could show you around if you'd like."

I looked at her emerald eyes. Someone actually wanted to befriend me for once. Either that or they just felt pity for me. I decided to take the chance to make some friends but I shouldn't get too overly attached. Don't know who to trust around here these days. I sucked in a breath and spoke.

"My name's Audriana. Thanks for helping me. It's... kind of overwhelming to take this all in. Glad to have someone like you around." I'm surprised how smooth my voice came out. Usually I always seem to have a cracked voice when it comes to people like this. I tried giving her my best smile but I decided to think better of it.

"No probs. I'm happy to help." She gave me a bright smile that makes me feel warm. She quickly changed her attitude to a stony grave one. I was somewhat surprised. In some way I expected it to happen. Cliff and Drew noticed the shift in mood too. They tried to stop Katy from asking but they were too late. "Why are you here?"

I stared down at my food while twirling my fork. "What do you mean why?"

"Like, why did your parents or whoever sent you here? Mine sent me here because I have this weird phobia of anything that tries to touch me. They thought they could save me here, so here I am." She drank some of her soup. This talk seemed so casual to her. It's like she's done it millions of times before. I pondered for a moment on

whether or not to tell them the truth. I found a little wedge of escape and turned to face the two boys.

“So...” I looked toward them but averted my eyes somewhere behind them. “What were you two in for? You guys barely talked and I thought maybe we could get to know each other.” I’m hoping they didn’t see that it was just a cover to get out of this conversation.

Cliff looked slightly uncomfortable, shifting in his seat every few seconds. He kept staring at Drew, who was eating like nothing ever happened. Cliff nudged Drew causing him to stop and gave him a glare. They both sighed at the same time. Cliff spoke out first. His voice was deep as a grown man’s voice.

“I was here because I have this thing with germs. They thought I took it too seriously because I started to make people vaccinate every few seconds.” He took a towel and sprayed something on it. He furiously rubbed everything around him before staring back at me again.

Drew kept his eyes on the table. He started to mutter something under his breath but Cliff made him stop. Cliff exchanged a few words to Drew before he decided to look me in the eye. I wondered what it was about. A good bet that it was something about me. He quickly looked at Katy who was finishing up her lunch.

“It’s a kind of a long story so I’ll sum it up. Basically, I was sent here because I thought that shadows would kill you. I know its crazy but these stories that my grandparents use to tell me sound so real. I started believing in them and obviously took it too far.”

His voice was nice and light. It was like a gentle breeze. Katy tapped me on the shoulder and reminded of the question. She knows that I’m trying to avoid it. *It wouldn’t hurt me to tell them my problems, would it?* I thought about it for some time until Katy snapped her fingers in front of my face, breaking my trance. I looked down and started talking the way I use to talk to my psychiatrist.

“I use to have horrible nightmares that seem so real. My parents thought they were just dreams that would eventually fade away if you give it some time. So we waited for a few months. They took me to a psychiatrist every week just in case. Things started to get worse. I would start to hear voices at night and see people, dead people. They couldn’t fix me so they sent me away... and ended up here.”

They all gave me sympathetic looks. I hate when people take pity on me for several reasons. The biggest reason is that they get glued to you and ask you the same question over and over again, ‘Are you ok?’ Sometimes I just have a strong urge to

punch them in the face but I understand why they ask that. I didn't tell them the whole truth about it though. I could only see one person and that was my long dead friend. She was the only friend I had and her name was Patricia.

I would to tell my parents all about it and they would put their stupid smile on and tell me that it was all in my head. Anger bubbled inside me with just the thought of that. Something dark lingered in my heart, seeking for revenge on those types of people. I could always hear Patricia's sweet voice calling to me at night when I'm alone in my white room. Ever since I got to the hospital she appears more and more often at night. She always beckons me to get my revenge on people at the hospital and I would always argue with her that it was not right because they were just like me. They had flaws that make them stick out with the world like I did, but something finally snapped inside of me.

Over the course of 6 months at the hospital, my nightmares were becoming so vivid. The hospital walls were a dark red. People were all running and screaming for their lives and I just stood there watching the chaos unfold. A shadow would always come and take the people away one by one. Every time I wake up I felt like a real murder had happened. That wasn't the worst part. It was like part of my nightmare came true. Nurses who use to work at the hospital were gone. Most of them were found dead in the basement. The whole hospital has been locked from inside and out. Nobody could leave, but that wasn't all. Every night there would be someone who would get brutally murdered in the cruelest way possible. Each night it gets more and more violent. Accusations rises and trust was not an option. Nobody knows who did this but we all have our suspicions.

Katy, Drew, Cliff, and I would always stick together no matter what. That was until there were only ten of us. We started to separate from that point on. We lost Drew when there were only six of us. We mourned his death but it doesn't change the fact that we still couldn't trust each other. We lost Cliff when there were four and now it's only me and Katy.

## Present Day

The killer has to be Katy. I just know it. The real question is why would she do it? What caused her to have this motive? All will be revealed tonight. I locked my door and double checked everything to make sure nothing was out of place. I go to be bed which was now moved closer toward the door. I rocked back and forth, humming to a favorite song me and Patricia use to sing. I could hear Patricia's voice in the back of my mind pulling me into a pool of dreams. I try to fight to stay conscious but failed to do so. Her sweet voice drips with malice that blends so well that you would mistake it as comfort. *Come to me. We could do what you always desired to do for a long time. Get revenge on those who thought you were pathetic. You know they deserve it. Don't try to fight it*

*Audriana. You're a shadow to them and you know it.* The words circle around my head, swarming my thoughts like dark clouds. I start to fade away from reality, going deeper into my dreams. They started out with Katy, Cliff, and Drew. We were all happy together; chatting away like nothing mattered to us. Then everything started to fall apart. Cliff and Drew were both dead. Their bodies hung from the ceiling, blood splattered the walls. Katy was at the end of the hall, holding a knife that was as drenched in blood as she was. Her head was down but I can sense her staring right into my soul. Her mouth turned upward slightly to a small grin. Her shadow grows larger becoming more and more gruesome as she comes toward me. I get cornered with no way to escape. My back touches the smooth white walls. She charges toward me. I cover my face with both my arms. The knife marks appear everywhere from my wrist to elbow. I knocked her off her feet as she was about to strike a blow towards my head. As the knife she was holding clatters to the ground, I quickly dive for it. As she tries to strike at me, I dodge and use the knife to strike back. I hit her in the rib cage and she falls back. I can hear her screaming at me, begging for me to stop. I don't stop nor do I want to stop. She caused me to have all this pain. She deserves it back. I'm covered in blood as I keep striking her. Something hits me hard behind the head and I wake up from my nightmare. I'm lying on the blood covered floor.

Something happened and I can't remember what. Katy is next to me, her body is bloody and unmoving. I wobble to her and tried to shake her awake. She isn't breathing. I take in the scene around me. There's a knife that lies next to where I had just woken up. This can't be real. This had to be another nightmare. I tried to pinch myself awake but it doesn't work. I can feel all the pain. I look at my arms and see the wounds that were inflicted on me from Katy. I was the killer this whole time and I didn't know it. How could I even do this when I don't remember any of it? Patricia's words linger in the air in front me. *This is who you are, who you were meant you were meant to be.* I choke back the bitter taste of my tears. The killer inside me takes this all in with pleasure. I curl into a ball and start to hum the song over and over again.