Tell my Story

by Unusualpairings

Summary

As Doctor Oliver Thredson arrives at Briarcliff to do the assessment of one Kit Walker, his life is forever changed by the women he meets there that will ultimately shape his future. Full of twists and turns (and lots of angsty lust-filled interactions) this story is a roller-coaster ride of emotion and mystery.

(Done along same timeline as television show, hoping to have it accompany the main story - varies only slightly for logistical purposes.)
"It's time."

Kathryn looked to the large and looming building before her, feeling the chill of the autumn air sweeping around her from the open car window. She glanced at her mother in the driver's side of the car, looking grey and solemn. The woman's lips were set in a firm line as she glanced at her daughter, face half hidden behind a curtain of dark hair. Kathryn frowned deeply before swallowing.

"You promise you won't leave me here unless I say I'm alright with it?"

"Of course not," Dorothy replied with a ghost of a smile before stepping out of the car and opening the door to Kathryn's side of the door. The young women stepped out shakily, her face going pale at the sight of the dark grounds. She felt the wind whirl around her bare knees, her skirt swirling in the breeze.

*I can't do this.*

Before she could outwardly protest, Dorothy gave Kathryn a shove towards Briarcliff. She could hear the muffled shouts that rang out of the asylum and Kathryn's dark eyes filled with tears that slipped down her cheeks like traitors. She wiped them quickly before anyone saw. This is what it had come to. An asylum. This is what her life had become. She felt a wild, frenzied panic set into her chest and she halted abruptly.

"What is it, Kathryn?"

Dorothy's eyes were steely, determined and part of Kathryn wondered if there was a silent glee hidden behind her mother's wide green eyes. Her mother looked so cold then, her entire presence giving off nothing but ice. Kathryn faltered and her mother gave her a quick shove once more, like one would to get a horse to start trotting. The two figures made their way up the steps.

"Please don't do this to me," Kathryn begged quietly as they approached the door. "Not this place. I haven't done anything wrong."

"The Monsignor is an old family friend," Dorothy insisted quietly. "I'm doing this to help you, Kathryn. I know that this is the best place for you."

"They can't help me," Kathryn insisted, her voice starting to crack as the door began to open. It sounded with a atmospheric creaking before a severe looking nun exited the building, her eyes settling on Kathryn's face moodily before flicking icily to Dorothy.

"Sister Judy?" Dorothy ventured. "We spoke on the phone earlier? We're the Hatcher's."

"Sister Jude. This way," Jude replied flatly before turning on her heel into the darkness.

Kathryn was taken aback by the cold tone of the nun. She had always thought that they were kind, patient creatures. The bitter woman before her, guiding them down a myriad of hallways was anything but. Kathryn took in the dark, dingy hallways, the smell of decay and sadness that surrounded her as she followed the woman dejectedly.

Finally after what seemed like ages they approached the top of the staircase, opening large doors and greeting a pale, nervous looking man wearing a habit. Kathryn observed that he was traditionally handsome in an innocent sort of way. Large pale eyes, ashen skin, tall and sinewy. He looked fairly
fragile for a man that commanded so much power here.

"Father Timothy," Dorothy said with a tight smile. "Or should I say Monsignor now?"

"Just Timothy is fine," Timothy replied with a shy smile. He glanced over at the young woman who stood silently beside Dorothy. "Hello Kathryn. I haven't seen you since you were much younger. I was so sorry to hear about your father. He was so beloved at our old church. I'm sure the congregation still recalls his singing fondly."

Kathryn kept silent, watching the Monsignor's face contort into embarrassment at her silence.

"The tea is in your sitting room, Father," Jude interrupted the uncomfortable silence, shooting Kathryn a dark look of resentment.

"Ah yes," Timothy continued hurriedly. "Come in, come in."

He ushered the women into the sitting room where tea and biscuits sat waiting, smelling heavenly. Kathryn's stomach jumped at the sight of food. She felt sick to her stomach being in this room, the sound of the ticking clock her only company. Dorothy glanced at her daughter before moving to help herself to some tea before settling across from Timothy. Kathryn remained at the doorway, a fixed statue looking for escape.

Sister Jude shot her a patronizing eye roll before settling herself beside Monsignor Timothy. The three of them glanced at the young woman who's pale face shone like an orb in the darkened room.

"Come sit Kathryn," Dorothy encouraged her daughter with imploring eyes, patting the seat of the chair beside her. Kathryn moved towards the large stained glass at the corner of the room, shedding what it could of the light from outside.

"I'd prefer to stand by the window if it's all the same, Mother."

Dorothy was about to protest when the Monsignor nodded: "Completely fine, Kathryn. Please do whatever puts you most at ease."

Kathryn walked to the window, letting the air leave her chest as she found her salvation. She pressed her forehead to the cool glass, letting the temperature bring down her fevered panic. She wished the windows here opened.

Kathryn's eyes were swimming with frustrated tears at the situation. She was sad. Wasn't this normal at the loss of a parent? Especially one she was so close to? She wiped the tears on the back of the arm of her sweater before glancing out the window once more. She knew that she wasn't completely like other people, but until her father's death she had done just fine. She had managed.

Suddenly a sky blue Ford Falcon moved up the driveway slowly, coming to stop at the edge of Kathryn's vision. She watched as a tall man with neat black hair and glasses got out of the car. He carried a briefcase and was impeccably dressed.

A doctor, Kathryn assumed. He had the pensive, serious look of a doctor.

A conversation was beginning in hushed tones across the room.

"She's just so impossibly sad," Dorothy whispered to the Monsignor when Kathryn was out of earshot. "She just sleeps all day. Then at night she's pacing around worried, fearful. She hasn't been the same since her father died. She lost her job at the library. She ended her engagement. Something needs to be done! I'm afraid for her health."
The two figures looked at Dorothy pityingly. The woman looked so scared for her adult daughter that they couldn’t help but be surprised at the daughter's calm exterior. With the way that Dorothy had gone on over the phone she had made it sound like the girl was start raving mad. She was a little tired-looking, most assuredly. But did she belong in Briarcliff? Timothy wasn’t so sure.

"I have seen similar cases to this," Timothy replied graciously, glancing at Kathryn a moment before focussing back on Dorothy. "Acute nerves. Hysteria. But I’m afraid our psychiatric facilities may not be the best for your daughter. Our provisions are limited."

"You must help her," Dorothy intoned darkly. "When I found out that you had taken over Briarcliff and turned it into this beacon of hope I just knew you’ll be able to help her. I just knew it."

Timothy faltered a moment, wanting to protest that he wasn’t so sure when Dorothy continued with hushed, conspiratorial tones.

"Besides, think of the publicity this would generate if you were successful! Kathryn would be the poster child for your success! Your ambitions would reach new heights."

"Ambitions?"

"Men like you aren't contented to be monsignors all their lives," Dorothy offered with a grim smile. "I've known you a long time, Timothy. I know you have your eye on becoming a pope. Let me help you with that ascension."

Timothy felt a flush rise to the back of his neck at her words, embarrassed at the truth being so boldly presented. Sister Jude sat impassively beside him, her behavior giving nothing of her perspective away from the conversation.

Before anything more could be added, a sharp knock came to the door and Sister Mary Eunice stuck her head in. Kathryn didn't even bother turning around, her mind somewhere escaping along the trees that lined the property.

Monsignor Timothy glanced up from the conversation, a polite smile on his lips. "Yes, sister?"

"Dr. Thredson is here Monsignor. I've already showed him to his office."

"Thredson?" Monsignor inquired, momentarily confused.

"Uh, yes, the court appointed psychiatrist for the..." Mary Eunice faltered a moment before cupping her hands around her mouth and whispering the next part. "..Kit Walker assessment."

"Ah, yes," Timothy nodded. "How could I forget?"

Mary Eunice shot a small smile back and closed the door behind her.

"A psychiatrist?" Dorothy perked right up, her smile wide and toothy. "Perhaps this Dr. Thredson could be of some assistance with my Kathryn?"

"I'm not so sure," Jude insisted with an irritated pursing of her lips. "Dr. Thredson is really just here for the Kit Walker assessment, I don't think."

"That will be enough Sister Jude," Timothy interrupted with a gentle hand on her arm before turning back to Dorothy. Jude fell silent, her jaw clenching in resentment. "I believe we can take your daughters case on, Dorothy. I cannot promise perfection, but I promise that within a month you shall see definite improvement."
Dorothy nearly fell over at this comment, her cheeks flushing happily. She clapped her hands together gently in muted celebration. Sister Jude watched balefully from her seat next to him, horrified at the impropriety of this ridiculous woman. She glanced over at the back of the young woman, her eyes still fixed on the scenery before her. Was she going to be a lot of work? She hoped not. She had her hands full with this Kit Walker. She looked back over at Dorothy's shining face, momentarily disgusted with the woman's elation at leaving her daughter her.

"My suggestion is that you leave immediately," Jude offered solemnly. "I have a feeling that delaying your exit will only hurt your daughter in the long run. There is no need for oversentimentality here. We will contact you to keep you informed."

"I'm afraid Sister Jude is right," Monsignor Timothy added placing a warm hand on Sister Jude's shoulder. She felt a jolt of pleasure run through her senses at the contact. "Making a dramatic exit would really serve no purpose."

He shuffled around on the table before them before producing a large piece of paper with lots of writing on it. The same paper all guardians had to sign in order to admit familial patients.

"We just need your signature here."

"Of course Monsignor," Dorothy agreed signing hurriedly wherever the man pointed, never bothering to read what she was signing. Sister Jude watched the woman carefully, wondering what kind of woman just threw her daughter into a madhouse with such little question.

"Thank you both," Dorothy whispered as she gathered her purse up onto her shoulder and cast the silhouette of her daughter one last look before rushing out the door. She closed it gently behind her, all the while praying her daughter didn't turn around.

Kathryn didn't.

With her forehead pressed against the cool glass, Lost in a world where she was still a librarian with a distinguished fiancé she didn't notice anything was amiss until she saw the image of her mother rushing down the stairs of Briarcliff through the window. She viewed the woman creeping down the steps in silent awe before her body finally stpped into action.

"Wait," she spoke aloud at the image of the woman rushing down the steps. "Is that my mother?"

Spinning around she was affronted with the horrible fact that it had not been a dream. Her mother was gone from the room. All that remained were the two strangers she'd met earlier. Timothy and Jude sat impassively watching her, the former wincing and the latter a small smirk of dark delight on her features.

"Where did my Mother go?"

"Kathryn," Timothy began before being interrupted by Sister Jude. She stood sharply, drawing over to the girl and giving her a dark look of intimidation.

"It was best that your mother leave. She didn't want to upset you further."

Kathryn winced, backing into the window and feeling its cool touch against her back. "No. No she promised."

Kathryn whirled back to the window, her hands balled into angry fists that she pounded against the glass hoping to catch her mother's attention. The woman never turned back and Kathryn felt the first cool blood run through her veins as she saw the car speed off into the afternoon light. Within
moments the car was gone and Kathryn was truly, officially alone here.

She had been abandoned here.

"Now, let's get you to intake," Jude said with a sardonic smile as she stood, walking slowly to Kathryn.

Kathryn turned to face her angrily, her teeth bared in defense. "I'm leaving."

"Your mother knew that this was the best course of action for you, Miss Hatcher. Please calm yourself."

"I'm a grown woman," Kathryn spat, slowly inching towards the door. "I'm in charge of my own body. I'm leaving her immediately."

Timothy stood, walking towards Kathryn in step with Jude. The two of them were so imposing, so dark and dreary in their black habits and muted faces. Timothy was looking to her with a sorrowful glance.

"Since you are not within your right mind and you are unmarried I'm afraid your mother is your sole guardian," Timothy offered in a soft, dulcet tone. "She has signed over authority for we here at Briarcliff to do everything within our power to get you back to your old, healthy self."

"My father would never have let this happen to me," Kathryn insisted, her face flushing with anger as she backed away from the two advancing monsters in front of her. "He'd never let me be admitted into a nuthouse!"

"We want to help you, Kathryn."

"Well, I'm not staying."

Without warning Kathryn dashed out of the office, her breath catching in her throat as she opened the door with a flourish, bumping into Sister Jude before Timothy could shut it. Disoriented, Kathryn rushed to the first set of stairs she could find to her left. She could hear the sound of Timothy and Jude shouting behind her and their quick footsteps trailing on her.

She rounded the hallway, her eyes searching for an exit. There was nothing.

No no no.

She could hear the hoots of patients urging her on, telling her to run like the wind. She couldn't see them but they cried out from all corners. The darkness enveloped her as she pressed against the brick on the side of the corridor. She covered her mouth with her hand as she heard Jude and Timothy rush by her, their voices pitched in furious frustration.

"Not even five minutes and already a hassle," Jude was muttering.

Kathryn waited until they had been gone several moments before she continued her descent down the black hallway in front of her, trying her best to be stealthy. She groped blindly in front of her before dashing into a full on sprint. She saw the light from the hallway at her right and followed it, breathing heavily through her nose. She glanced backwards for any sign of Sister Jude or Timothy.

Nothing.

She almost smiled in victory when she ran into something very tall and very hard. She fell back onto
her tailbone, scratching her elbow as she landed. She glanced up to see the Doctor from outside, his
dark brows knitted in confusion. He leaned down, his large hand on her shoulder, momentarily
stunning her. Her eyes scanned all of his face, taking him in as she tried to stand.

"Are you alight?"

"Stop her!" came a booming voice of an attendant who had been let in on Kathryn's escape plan.
"She's a runner."

Kathryn tried to move past the doctor quickly, but the hand on her shoulder was biting into her flesh
as he deftly reached down to pull her to a standing position. She fought against his grip, crying out in
anger and trying her best to kick him. He seemed nonplussed, holding the girl by the wrists up
against him, making sure she had no opportunity to kick. This was fairly typical of high-risk patients
and he was unfazed.

The orderly advanced, a large needle glinting in the dark light. Kathryn looked over her shoulder and
moaned lowly in her throat at the sight of it and tried in vain to move past the doctor.

"Is that really necessary?" The Doctor was asking in a dark baritone as he held the shaking Kathryn
against him, feeling her fight turn to fear.

She didn't want to be any closer to him. She wanted his horribly large hands off of her. But she was
terrified of what the needle behind her meant, for she knew it could be nothing good. She still tried to
wrench herself from the Doctor's grip, but couldn't help but inadvertently push herself up against his
body. She was trembling against him, her teeth clenched together.

"Sister Jude's orders," the orderly insisted, grabbing Kathryn's arm harshly. "Gotta administer this so
she's calm."

Kathryn yelped at the contact and looked to the Doctor in complete and utter desperation.

"Please help me."

Kathryn cried out as the needle bit into her bare forearm and the last thing she saw before she
crumbled to the ground was the sight of two dark brown eyes watching her as she fell into
unconsciousness.
He'd only been here five minutes and already Sister Mary Eunice was uncomfortable around him. She didn't like the way his dark eyes were hidden behind those fashionable glasses. She didn't like how he wandered the expanse of Briarcliff as soon as he entered as if he knew it. She didn't enjoy that he seemed unnervingly calm despite what he was there to complete. Bloody Face; the murderer.

"Dr. Oliver Thredson," he offered with a thin smile that didn't completely touch his dark eyes. She surreptitiously looked him over. Tall, clean looking, tailored suit and glasses that gave him an air of sophistication and academia. He held out a hand and she shook it absently before realizing he was waiting for an introduction.

"Sister Mary Eunice," she replied.

She had no use for psychiatrists. Quacks. Headshrinkers as Sister Jude called them.

"Pleased to meet you. I'm here for-"

"Kit Walker," Sister Mary Eunice interrupted with a saccharine smile to cover her thoughts. "Hasn't arrived yet I'm afraid. They're a bit behind schedule. He's expected later this afternoon. I'll show you to the office."

"Office?"

"Yes, the Monsignor insisted you have your own office to do your assessment."

Oliver followed the young nun down the corridor to the left. She walked quickly with purpose, humming gently to herself as they made their way through the labyrinth of rooms. But Oliver's ears were attuned to the sound of cries and whimpers through closed doors as they walked. He could see many of them were in old and shabby clothing. Some looked like they hadn't brushed their teeth or hair in decades. Others cried out to him to help them.

Horrible.

The treatment of these individuals was disgusting, demoralizing and completely unacceptable. The orderlies stood by boredly making sure that nothing serious happened. Not one of them offered a word of comfort or engaged with the patients of Briarcliff. Oliver watched the frame of the young nun walk in front of him before she came to an abrupt halt near the end of the corridor.

"This is you," she offered with the same false cheer, opening the door to reveal quite a large space. "I'll let them know you've arrived."

Oliver stepped through the door, surprised at how dark it was inside. All that lay in the large room were a sofa, a desk as well as a chair. Everything looked old and dusty. He was about to inquire on when he could meet the Monsignor when the door slammed shut behind him, leaving him to his own devices. He walked to the desk, observing that it had a manila folder, black phone and blue glass ashtray perched upon it.

Absently he reached for his packet of cigarettes inside his breast suit pocket popping one into his mouth and lighting it deftly. The smoke curled around his full mouth as he slowly exhaled, the smoke fogging up his vision slightly. He cocked his head slightly to the left, realizing that he was completely alone down this part of the building. Despite the light of the day he shivered slightly.
It was so quiet in here. Almost silent. He wished he had a martini.

His eyes wandered back to his desk and the folder that lay atop, crisp and smooth and waiting for him to discover its inside contents. He could feel his fingers aching in anticipation of what lay inside. The police records that had been forwarded to Briarcliff. He could barely breathe.

**Bloody Face.**

His fingers traced the folder gently before finally opening the file on his desk. Images of murder and depravity looked back at him and he winced slightly at the bloodshed. Despite his hand in this he couldn't help but feel disappointed when he viewed the clippings. Every skinned face that stared back at him just reminded him of his own acute failures. She was never the right one.

**Enough of that.**

Oliver shrugged off his jacket, smoothing it over his chair and settling into place. He was here for a mission and it needed to be completed. First step was to prepare the documents that would seal the fate of this Kit Walker.

**Time to begin.**

He opened his briefcase, grabbing a slip of crisp paper and placing it into the roll of the typewriter when he heard the distinct sound of feet against cement. It sounded like frantic running coming in this direction. He rose quickly, rushing to the door and pulling it open with a flourish. He walked into the corridor to enquire about the noise when a figure rushed headlong into him, bouncing back onto the floor.

Oliver winced at the blow of her body against his own and stared down at the woman on the ground. He was stunned to see a visitor. If he was to guess he would have pinned her at her late twenties, her dark eyes looking up at him through thick bangs with a look of absolute panic. She was wearing plain street clothes and looked completely lost. Was she a guest that had gotten lost? Oliver kneeled down until they were eye-level. The woman was still breathing deeply, her lips quivering. He brought a heavy hand to her shoulder, his grip gentle and soothing.

"Are you alright?"

He felt her flinch at his touch and the woman's lips parted to speak when all of a sudden a tall orderly rushed down the hallway, his voice booming in the quiet of the corridor startling them both.

"Stop her! She's a runner!"

Oliver watched as the woman tried to skirt past him, her shoulder still within his grasp.

"She was a patient?"

Why was she wearing street clothes? He gripped the woman firmly by the shoulder and brought her to a standing position, peering into her face and confused at the lucidity in her gaze.

She tried in vain to wrench from his grasp as his hands slid down around her wrists. She attempted to kick his kneecaps and he couldn't help but smirk at her pluck.

*A lot of fight in this one.*

He gripped her wrists so tightly it shocked her and he pulled her body roughly to his to stop her
kicks. He wasn't one for such physical reprimand but the woman was strong and he knew she would escape by any means necessary. She smelled of lavender soap and sweat he observed detachedly. As he held her in his grasp his forefinger ran over the the skin of her wrists absently. He was surprised to find it was smooth and soft.

Her skin. Not motherly, too young... but beautiful in its own way.

He had to stop that train of thought.

Oliver's attention was drawn back to the orderly who had produced a large needle. The woman saw the surprise in the Doctor's eyes and turned to look over her shoulder. At the sight of the needle she cried out in fear, her body trembling against him. His pulse quickened at the contact.

"Is that really necessary?" Oliver offered with a dark tone of disapproval, his voice a silken baritone that didn't reflect the emotions that swirled within him.

He felt the girl burrow tighter against him, desperate to escape the needle.

"Sister Jude's orders. Gotta administer this so she's calm."

Oliver looked down into the girl's pale face, seeing the panic that etched it's way around her eyes. The orderly had grabbed her arm and was pumping the drug into her arm carelessly. Oliver observed the sloppy way he did so and frowned before the girl's voice reached out to him, slurring softly.

"Please help me."

Without warning the girl's eyes slammed shut and her body went limp in his arms, the sedative having worked its magic. Oliver felt the girl's body falling backwards and moved to grab her when the orderly intercepted and swooped her up into his arms, tossing her roughly over his shoulder. Her head and arms hung down his back like a large rag doll, her hair a fountain of deep brown. The orderly turned to Oliver with a pinched smile of thanks.

"Thanks for the help, Mister."

"Doctor Thredson," Oliver replied evenly. He didn't love how that altercation had gone. The Orderly had been sloppy in his administering of the needle. The girl had seemed terrified. Something was very strange here.

"I'm Carl," the orderly replied, hefting the girl further up his shoulder. "You're here for the Bloody Face guy, right? I've heard talk."

"I am."

"Well, I gotta get this one into delousing," Carl nodded his head at the unconscious girl on his shoulders. "Nice to meet ya."

With that, Carl was stalking down the hallway roughly, his broad arms carrying the girl as if she were an irritating child. Oliver watched their figures diminish down into the darkness before retiring to his office once more.

An exciting place to work, he thought darkly.

Oliver had been writing a half hour when the door to his office flew open and in stepped a tall, slender man who looked at Oliver benevolently. His eyes were light and dreamlike and his body ensconced in a dark habit. Rosary beads lingered at the side of his hip.
"Ah, Dr. Thredson a pleasure!" Monsignor Timothy offered slowly as drew over to the desk and shook the man's hand emphatically. "I trust you're finding yourself comfortable here?"

"Yes, quite," Oliver smiled gently. Timothy smiled back before looking rather awkward, his fingers steeped together as he spoke. "I appreciate the sizable office. Most outfit me with a modified closet for assessments."

"But of course," Timothy smiled graciously. He faltered a moment, his body language betraying his discomfort with his next inquiry. "Perhaps you could repay me in a similar kindness doctor?"

Oliver quirked an eyebrow in surprise. "Oh?"

"I know you are here for the Kit Walker assessment, but I was wondering if you might see to another patient while you are here and if time permits, offer some sort of treatment? We'd be happy to cover any additional costs provided they don't border on excessive."

Oliver frowned before shaking his head from side to side. He knew why he was here. He had on mission and it needed to be completed. As much as he wanted to help all the poor souls in this hell-hole, he knew that he had to stay focussed.

"I really have only been assigned to the one case-"

"I know," Timothy interrupted, his eyes pleading. "But due to budget constraints our psychiatric services are in shambles at the moment and she is the daughter of an old friend. You have a few hours before Mr. Walker's arrival and I would be indebted to you."

Oliver pursed his lips thoughtfully staring at the pale man before him. He noticed how predatory the man's eyes were. A man who could be ruthless if necessary, Oliver wagered. Better play along or he'll find another shrink to take your place.

Oliver knew that his placement on this case was tenuous at best. When he'd called the asylum to inform them of his arrival they hadn't been surprised. A court mandated psychiatrist? Of course. They hadn't even questioned why he hadn't met Kit in prison. All he had to say was his title and people fell all over themselves.

But now looking at Timothy, Oliver realized he could only rock the boat so far. He smiled wanly at the Monsignor before nodding. What could it hurt anyway? The Monsignor was right - he had a lot of time on his hands.

"What has she been admitted for?"

"Acute nerves. Hysteria."

Oliver's dark eyes flashed as he produced a small pad of paper and pencil from his suit pocket. He wrote something hurriedly onto the pad before glancing up at Timothy.

"Such a diagnosis is no longer diagnostically accurate."

Timothy looked taken aback at the man's tone but continued on unfettered. "According to the mother: Depression, anxiety and suicidal tendencies."

Oliver nodded, scribbling quickly onto his small pad of paper.

"The name of the patient?"
"Kathryn Hatcher," Timothy motioned for the doctor to follow him. "This way."

Oliver slipped the pad into his breast pocket before he followed the tall, slender man down the corridors. Oliver couldn't help but smile kindly at every lost soul who shambled by him, their eyes either dead and glazed or frightened and wounded. Oliver could cry for all the abandoned souls here. He knew too well how harsh life could be to the unloved and uncared for. He walked down the spiral staircase, following the Monsignor who was babbling on about the hospital's bakery.

Finally they drew to a large door in the middle of the hallway. A large steel door stood in front of them, a small glass window their only view in or out. Oliver glanced into the darkened room, only just making out the figure who lay inside. Inside lay Kathryn in forced slumber. Her hair in waves on the pillow, her hands. She had been outfitted in Briarcliff's customary blue dress, socks and tennis shoes. Her chest rose softly as she slept, her face free of worry. Her hands lay at her sides, giving her a trapped look.

Oliver's eyes stayed on those hands and wrists. Now he could see the pale expanse of her arms. He recalled the feel of her skin on his fingertips. The smooth, softness that caused his stomach to swirl and churn. Oliver was taken aback at the sight of her and his brows furrowed. Timothy noticed and raised his own quizzical brow.

"You know her?"

"I ran into her earlier today," Oliver offered gently, his eyes still fixed on the figure sleeping on the bed. "Before she was formally admitted."

Timothy noted that the Doctor looked most uncomfortable. Likely uncomfortable with taking on an additional workload during his stay here. But if the county was paying for his time he might as well make good use of it! Oliver dragged his eyes from the girl and to the door handle.

Timothy was anxiously looking to him, wondering when the man would speak next. Would this Doctor refuse him? Surely not. Timothy had great aspirations for himself and Kathryn Hatcher's improvement was an integral part of that.

"I feel she could truly benefit from your counsel," Timothy continued in a urgent whisper "She is quick witted and open to treatment. I am sure you would see miraculous change."

Oliver's eyes were on the floor before him, his body stilled. Timothy could feel the panic raising in his voice as he spoke next. "So will you do it, Doctor?" Oliver was stoic a moment, his eyes dragging from the room back to the face of the Monsignor before nodding gently.

"Bring her to my office tomorrow morning."
Getting Cured

Inside the halls of Briarcliff a new individual had been admitted, though not with her permission or even knowledge. Lana Winters woke up blearily, her eyes and head stinging as Sister Jude's face swam into view. Behind the woman was a dark and dreary cell. Lana groaned at the heavy feeling in her limbs, realizing with slow horror that she was restrained to the cot underneath her. Jude's dark smile quirked at the edge of her lips as she saw Lana struggle.

"You're awake. I'm so relieved."

_How did I get here?_

Lana's mind whirred as she recalled what had brought her to Briarcliff. The Bloody Face murderer was being admitted. Kit Walker. She had wanted the first interview - to scoop the rest of the reporters and secure her space as a credible journalist.

But upon arrival her motives had become clear and her cover up of an interest in their bakery was blown. She hadn't even had the chance to break the scoop on Kit Walker. Then when she'd smuggled herself back down the tunnel under the Hospital she had heard something. She was almost certain it was a young man crying out in pain. Were they doing experiments here? All she remembered was something grabbing her down there... and now she was here.

And it was all because of this miserable crone, Sister Jude, that looked down at Lana with such condescension. Lana's throat was dry, her voice cracking as she spoke.

"What's going on?"

"You had an accident."

Lana knew she was lying. She had been attacked by something down in the depths of Briarcliff and this woman knew it. She also knew that after a few minutes of speaking with her and explaining suck that, Sister Jude's eyes had grown flinty and cold. Despite Lana's protests that something attacked her Sister Jude ignored her. Instead she explained her visit to see Wendy. And as Jude detailed her lover's deception in remanding her to Jude's custody, Lana could feel her eyes filling with angry tears.

_She's lying. Wendy would never do that._

Jude spoke openly of their homosexual relationship, her mouth turning into a frown at the term.

"We're gonna slay that monster together you and I," Jude said passionately as she moved towards the door of the cell. "Morning devotionals are at 6 am sharp, no exceptions."

"No!" Lana's heart raced, her voice hoarse. "Let me out of here! Come back here, you bitch!"

Lana had never spoken to someone of the cloth that way, but her terror had taken over everything.

"Chin up," Jude said, her hand on the cell door. "We're gonna get you cured."

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The next morning, after a restless sleep Lana heard the sound of movement down the hallway. Her temples and wrists ached from their previous restraints. Her body itched from the delousing. The last
ten hours had been a veritable hellhole. Lana looked around the small cell before she viewed a piece
of paper left behind by Jude laying discarded on the floor. Lana stood shakily before grasping it in
her hands.

_There has to be a pencil around here somewhere._

Lana got down on her knees, her hands searching around the corner of the cell for anything that
would work as a mark maker. As if a sign from the gods above, Lana felt under the mattress of her
cot, her desperate hands coming upon a small nub of graphite.

_Thank goodness._

Lana's mind raced. She had to get down what was happening to her, she simply had to while it was
still fresh in her mind. She didn't know how long she was going to be in here. She hurriedly wrote,
her hands shaking.

'October 28th. Strip searched and deloused.Denied phone call.'

Before she could add anything more a large voice boomed from outside her cell.

"EVERYBODY UP AND OUT NOW."

Before she could think she shoved the paper and pencil into her pillowcase, praying that they would
not be found before laying her body down, her ears attuned to the footsteps that were hurriedly
making their way down to her. The door of her cell opened suddenly.

A short guard came in, his eye impassive watching the woman who looked as if she had just
awoken.

"Come on," he said, ushering her out. "Stay down the hall."

Female patients of all ages and abilities littered the now crowded hallway, mumbling to themselves
as Jude swept down the corridor.

_What's going on?_

"Room search, Miss Winters," Jude spoke, reading Lana's thoughts."We find it keeps our charges
honest."

Lana watched as she spoke to two of the women of the ward, her tone warm but her words cruel.
She saddled up to Lana, her eyes drifting into the woman's cell.

"Find anything Frank?"

"Nope," Frank replied, lifting Lana's mattress before dropping it. "Looks clean to me."

"Check the pillowcase," Jude replied.

Lana felt her stomach drop as the older man's hands searched her pillowcase, sighing thickly as she
was discovered. Jude's eyes slithered onto Lana's face, a look of dark victory on her aged features as
Frank spoke next.

"Aha," Frank replied, producing the note from the case. "Here we are."

Jude read the note, her eyes filling with merciless glee as she spoke aloud.
"October 28th. Strip searched and deloused. Denied phone call. And just who would you like to call Miss Winters? The American Civil Lesbians union?"

Frank snickered darkly beside her and Lana cringed.

"My editor knows that I came here to write this story," Lana lied, her cheeks hot. "And boy do I have a great scoop for him now."

Jude turned a dark smile on before mocking Lana's ambitions before pocketing the note and preparing to head on.

"I don't need those sister," Lana spat out angrily, regretting it almost instantly. "I have an excellent memory."

"Yeah?" Jude replied without turning around, her stride determined. "We'll see about that."
Kit Walker Assessment.

*Patient is 24 years old. Completed grades K through 12, no higher education. Patient is believed responsible for the murders of multiple women including his wife. Victims' bodies were discovered in a remote field drained of blood, decapitated. The murders may have started as a purging of racial guilt at what his conditioning would have viewed as an illicit coupling. Patient is manipulative. Diagnosis: Acute Clinical Insanity.*

Oliver sat back at his desk, his face calm as he raised a cigarette to his mouth, puffing gently as he re-read what’d he’d written, satisfied at its accuracy. The meeting with Kit Walker had proved illuminating as well as tedious at points. The boy was obviously disturbed. The stories of little green men from outer space were easy enough to identify as the onset of some sort of psychosis. And he'd obviously murdered his own wife because of it.

He sighed aloud, wondering where along the way the young man's mind had snapped. It was always fascinating to discover the inner workings of each madman he encountered. He tapped his cigarette out before going to stand at the window behind his desk, looking out into the placid courtyard. A boy like that shouldn't be left on the streets free to do more damage.

*But you should? After all you've done?*

A dark voice in the back of his head spoke, chastising him and Oliver frowned. He was a compassionate man. He knew that his actions were a rash compulsion over years of familial abandonment...but still. The feeling of those women's skin brought a comfort that he had long been searching for. This Kit Walker's murder was nothing more than a psychotic break, unable to be contained for long. He wondered what Kit had done with head. Had he buried it? Kept it as a souvenir somewhere? What had become of the skin?

*The skin.*

At that thought, Oliver let his eyes fall closed, his body leaning back into the chair and a shiver running through his body. The office of Briarcliff was dark but his thoughts were much darker.

It had begun to rain and small drops slipped down the window like grey tears. Sighing at the dismal way the day had turned out Oliver lit a new cigarette, enjoying the rich taste that the tobacco brought before a sharp knock sounded at his door accompanied by some shuffling and murmured irritation.

Oliver turned, his eyebrows raised in surprise as Frank peered around the corner of the door into the room looking embarrassed at having bothered him.

"Doctor Thredson, I got a girl here. Monsignor said you had an appointment to see her? A Miss Hatcher?"

Oliver's mind whirred a moment in confusion, his lips pursing a moment before he recalled. Ah yes, the dark haired runaway. He nodded, motioning for Frank to bring the girl in. With a lot of commotion the girl was dragged into the office by Frank who looked completely unimpressed with the whole situation. She cried out, trying to kick Frank and do everything to evade his clutches.

"I told you I don't need to be here," Kathryn spat, trying to shrug away from a disinterested Frank. Oliver viewed that the woman's hands were bound behind her, leaving her looking quite helpless.
"The cuffs aren't necessary," Oliver commented.

"She's bit two orderlies so far," Frank said flatly. "We had to cuff her. Either that or sedation. She chose cuffs."

Oliver looked to the girl in surprise. She didn't seem the type to act out in such a manner. In the light of the morning he could see her much clearer. A pale face with full lips. Dark bangs hung in her eyes and her hair past her shoulders in errant waves. She looked like any other young woman in 1964. But her eyes held fast to his face, dark and full of anger and Oliver felt an inadvertent thrill go through his body at the sight. No one looked at him like that.

He drew his tall frame into the chair behind his desk and motioned for the girl to take a seat opposite him.

"Take a seat."

Hands still clasped behind her the girl took a deep sigh and sat down, her eyes never leaving Oliver's face. She took in the calm demeanor of the shrink. Knowing full well that he was the main reason he had been caught yesterday. He was the reason she had been deloused and strip searched and subjected to a disgusting ritual of listening to Domínique on the record player of the common room on repeat.

She took in his face, noting the pale almost haunted look to him. His dark hair was in stark contrast to the pale complexion. His eyes stared back at her through stylish glasses. He was very well put together. His tailored suit, the part in his hair a sharp and straight line. His mouth sensually parted as smoke curled around his lips. He pressed his cigarette into the ashtray before speaking.

"If we remove the cuffs I trust you'll be a bit more respectful?"

The girl said nothing that would indicate she was listening, but Oliver knew she was. He gave a small nod to Frank, watching as he uncuffed the girl, glancing at her face. Kathryn remained passive, drawing her hands into her lap and now looking to the floor. Oliver placed his cigarette on the ashtray absently, his face tranquil. Satisfied, Frank headed out the door of the office.

"I'll be just outside the door, Doc. If you need me just call."

Oliver nodded, his eyes never leaving the young woman in front of him. She looked impossibly miserable and very cognisant of what was going on. Most of the individuals here had the lazy, glazed look about them, slugging in movements from their medication. But she looked alert and awake.

"Miss Hatcher? I'm Dr. Oliver Thredson," Oliver leaned over and reached a hand across the desk for her to shake.

It was a customary action. One he replicated with all his patients. But with her he could almost feel the desperation in his body, urging her to touch him. To place those soft fingers around his. The feel of her silken wrist in the forefront of his mind. He could feel his hands all but twitching at the suppressed desire to have her hand on his. For that sweet skin-to-skin contact that he constantly craved.

Kathryn glanced at the light, tapered fingers before her eyes glanced back at the cigarette still smouldering on the ashtray. He retracted his hand and noticed her glancing at his cigarette. Hoping to win some modicum of trust he produced a package from the breast pocket of his suit, motioning to the proffered cigarette in his fingertips with his eyes.

"Would you care for a cigarette?"
She didn't reply, instead crossing her arms in front of her with distaste, those same dark, angry eyes were on his face once more, taking him aback. He could feel the animosity coming off of her in waves. It was surprising to have someone dislike him this much without knowing him first. He'd most definitely felt that gaze from women before. Most notably when he had them around the throat in his basement. But this girl didn't know anything about him and yet she was looking at him as if she could read his very thoughts.

"I'm surprised at your rather vitriolic attitude towards me Miss Hatcher," Oliver said as he placed the cigarettes back into his suit pocket. "When I met you just yesterday you were asking for my help."

That got a rise out of her. She became instantly alive, her knuckles turned white as she gripped the arms of her chair almost leaping out of her seat.

"I asked for your help because I was being sedated against my will," She all but snarled. "I thought you might see that I was being falsely imprisoned. Then I realized you were just as bad as the rest of them, wanting to lock me up. Then I realized I was better off not wasting my time with you. But they made me come anyway. So here I am."

She straightened up as she spoke, looking to him with a dark grimace. Oliver was surprised at the girl's bravado in a place like Briarcliff. She had a supercilious attitude that told him even without words how she felt about him. He knew he couldn't let her see she was getting a rise out of him. Instead he shot her a close-lipped smile, looking down at his files as if he had something very important written down.

"I understand from the Monsignor that you may be suffering from some emotional disorders," Oliver continued as if she hadn't spoken. "While I'm here I'd love to help you all I can."

"I'll take a rain check," Kathryn replied with a lazy drawl, her eyes on the window, watching the rain come down lazily. Oliver leaned back in his chair, hearing it creak under his weight as he surveyed her.

"And why is that, Miss Hatcher?"

"Because you can't help me. Why you would agree to see me in the first place is beyond me. I only have to be here a month then I am being released."

"Is that so?"

"Yes," Kathryn sniffed. "The Monsignor assured me."

"He did," Oliver quirked a mocking eyebrow in her direction. "The same Monsignor that asked you to be seen by me?"

Oliver let his words hang there a moment in stiff silence, seeing as the girl's doubts flashed across her face momentarily. Kathryn knew the weight of his words.

Play ball. If she didn't do what the Monsignor had prescribed she could be here for months if not years.

She sighed darkly before settling back into her seat, her entire air of confidence having leaked out of her like a deflated balloon. Her shoulders were slumped and her eyes were suddenly wet. Oliver felt a pang of guilt for taking pleasure in taking her down a peg. That wasn't kind of him and it wasn't professional.

"I want to help you," Oliver offered gently, his voice low and soothing. "I've made it my profession
to help others. But you need to meet me halfway."

Kathryn's hands balled into angry fists at the situation. She hated that she was here, stuck with this condescending man. He wanted to fix her?

"Fine."

Kathryn's head whipped up, her lips thinned in frustration.

"You want to know all about my life Dr. Thredson? Here it is. I was born March 9th, 1936. I grew up with a father who loved his job and a mother who was very socially connected. I was home a lot by myself and I enjoyed the solitude. No brothers or sisters. One dog, a border collie, named Maxine who died when I was seven. I had a normal childhood full of family vacations and Sunday night dinners and I grew up loving to read. So I went to college to become a librarian and so that I could explore the world on my own."

Oliver wrote quickly as she spoke, trying his best to keep his notes brief and his attention on the girl.

*Patient is 28 years old. Completed grades K through 12. Completed college. Patient is believed to be suffering from acute depression and anxiety. Patient has idealized version of her childhood when it is apparent she was a latchkey child with minimal parental influence during formative years.*

"Tell me more about what brought you to Briarcliff currently."

"My mother abandoned me here."

"I was a reference librarian," Kathryn answered with a sigh. "Living on my own. Engaged to an English Professor. My father died a year ago suddenly and my world ended. I couldn't cope. As the months went on I lost my job and my apartment."

"I'm sorry to hear of your loss," Oliver offered solemnly. Kathryn continued, her voice steady and unflinchingly cold.

"When I got sick my fiancé left and took the ring with him. My mother was worried about me so she moved me back home. I didn't have any fight left in me to refuse. She was embarrassed by me. Unmarried, sick. A spinster. She wanted me to see someone; a therapist like you. But she wanted it to be through a religious institution. I tried a few counsellors at the church but they were little help. Then she read in the paper about Monsignor taking over Briarcliff she brought me here. Now I'm here, against my will, talking to you. A stranger who turned me in."

"You must understand from my perspective that you -"

"Are a patient here against my own will. Here for something as ridiculously plain as being sad and anxious. How would you feel if your father died and your Mother didn't want you around? Wouldn't you feel abandoned? Unwanted?"

Oliver's lips thinned slightly at her words, his jaw clenching tightly. Kathryn observed the change in the man before her, the coolness that had crept into his warm facade.

"I can empathize that you must be feeling anguished. Forgotten. But from your admittance I gather you also dabbled in suicidal ideation?"

Kathryn winced at his words, her mouth curving into an displeased line."Once. Sleeping pills. It was
a mistake."

"May I ask what prompted this decision to take your life?"

Kathryn looked slowly into the face of the man opposite her. His eyes were warm and yet offered nothing of invitation. His lips seemed soft, yet his mouth was set in grim determination. It was if he were a creature that had studied how to look kind and welcoming and even trained his voice to have an even, soothing texture. But a creature that was nothing like that on the inside. He wanted information from her.

And while she wanted dearly to fight him and to tell him that he was the reason that she was locked up, she didn't. Because as Kathryn Heather looked into the gaze of Oliver Thredson, she realized that even a person who would listen to her only because he was getting paid was better than having no outlet at all. And so she softened, her jaw unclenching and her tone growing calmer.

"Do you want to know the real reason I'm here, doctor?"

The girl's body language had changed. She drew her legs up until they were crossed in front of her on the chair, her elbows on her bare knees as her skirt rode up. She balanced her chin on her hands and looked anywhere but at Thredson as she spoke. He leaned forward slightly, his hands folding on the desk in front of him.

"I'm here because my mother never wanted me," she saw his surprised glance. "Oh, she'll tell you otherwise, but my Mother views me as a blight. A useless embarrassment that she never wanted in the first place. Did you know that she wanted to abort me before my Father found out? Was that in your files?"

Oliver blanched slightly at the girl's words, the horror of her situation unfolding in front of him. He heard the hitch in the girl's voice before she continued.

"I didn't think so. Found that piece of news out when I was helping clean up after my father's death. A bunch of diaries in the attic. I thought it would be fun to read. Never told her I found them," Kathryn straightened a bit, her gaze levelling Oliver's. "So you see it was only my father who loved me. Never her. My father wanted to keep me. So when he died last year I felt like I was an orphan. Then Michael decided our engagement was too much work. So now I have no one left in the world who actually cared for me. And now I've been abandoned here and I'm even more alone than I ever thought possible."

"I know that feeling."

Oliver felt his gaze drawn to the girl's reddening cheeks, her voice growing quiet as she lowered her face into her hands. He knew she was trying her best not to cry. He could feel the pain she was feeling acutely for he had gone through the same his entire life. He could almost remember being that young boy the other children mocked. Mocking him for his glasses and his keen mind and the fact that he was an orphan.

And while Oliver could have been comforted at the thought that he had been put into foster care for some valid reason, to have it confirmed that one's existence had never been wanted was too harsh a blow for anyone to be dealt with, especially a sweet and soulful creature like the one sitting across from him looking near tears.

Without thinking he had reached across the desk, placing a comforting hand on the girl's shoulder.

Immediately she pulled from his touch, looking like a frightened animal, her eyes were wet and fixed
on his face. Oliver brought his hand back quickly, sitting sharply on the chair and looking curiously into her face. How strange. He had always craved the physical contact he had been so denied. And now she was sitting here, a similar position of abandonment and his touch had upset her.

Interesting.

"I apologize if that upset you. I simply find your reaction to comfort to be surprising," Oliver replied keenly aware of the girl's discomfort.

"Intimacy has never been my strong suit," Kathryn said without emotion, her eyes drying as her eyes drew distractedly to the floor. "It's probably why Michael left."

"Michael?"

"My fiancé," Kathryn replied darkly. "He was an English professor. We met at work when he was doing some research. We used to listen to records and go to the theatre together. He was so fun at the start. But when my Father died he had little interest in being there for me. Too much work, I guess."

"How often were you two intimate?" Oliver inquired, his pencil raised and ready to jot down a number. When he was greeted with silence he glanced up to see the girl's pale face growing quite red.

"We weren't married."

"It's 1964 Miss Hatcher," Oliver smiled gently. "I'm not old fashioned enough to think that men and women don't know each other sexually before marriage."

Kathryn felt the hot sting of humiliation crossing her features, her hands fiddling awkwardly in her lap. Why was any of this necessary to know?

"Why does it matter?"

"I'm just trying to assess where your levels of comfort are around intimacy," Oliver replied stoically. "My motives are sincere and professional, I assure you, here in my office is not a place of judgement."

"I grew up in the church, Dr. Thredson," Kathryn finally replied quickly and quietly. "We were never intimate. It... It just wasn't done. Michael was always trying but I just couldn't. Something always made me stop. I don't really want to talk about this anymore."

Patient bears much guilt in terms of religious preference. This is likely where her discomfort with Briarcliff is rooted. Intimacy and anxiety are closely linked. The death of her father has caused the patient to withdraw into herself.

Oliver lowered the pencil gently, looking back to the girl with a look of genuine interest. "Do you believe you're sick, Miss Hatcher?"

"No," Kathryn replied honestly. "I think I'm just sad and maybe that I need to talk about my problems sometimes. I enjoyed talking with you until..." she trailed off, not wanting to mention the issue of intimacy.

Finally the ice began to break from her exterior, Oliver observed. This was quite common in patients coming in with such trauma. A hard front that covered a soft and desperately wounded interior. He could see the girl's posture had relaxed, her gaze now drawing to his own without challenge.
"Would you be willing to participate in treatment on your issues of depression, anxiety and intimacy?"

"What sort of treatment?" Kathryn asked warily, her face growing concerned.

"Exposure therapy, perhaps medication and above all talking just like we're doing here."

"What's exposure therapy?"

"It's a technique we use in behavioral therapy to treat anxiety. You are exposed to the thing that you fear without any danger associated. For example, say you feared rats. We would put you in a room with a rat in a cage until you were comfortable and so on and so on until by the end your anxiety of being in close proximity with the rat had depleted."

Kathryn could barely follow what he was saying but the Doctor was looking at her with a look that was almost comforting. Still something nagged at the back of Kathryn's head that something wasn't quite right.

"Are you reporting everything to Monsignor?"

"No," Oliver replied truthfully. "All patient files are kept confidential."

He saw the girl didn't look quite convinced and so he continued.

"Miss Hatcher, the only way that Monsignor can keep you in here is if they have a current diagnosis. If we can make some headway into combating your illness, I can convince the him that you should be released. He'll have no choice but to comply."

"I don't know," Kathryn replied with a shrug, feeling her chest clench tightly at the thought of this exposure therapy and more talking about awful subjects. "It seems a bit...extreme. I don't know that I could do that."

"It's completely your choice of course," Oliver replied quickly, lighting a new cigarette and puffing. "I would never force a patient to do anything they were uncomfortable with. I will say however, that the longer you delay treatment, the less time we have to work together. I don't know how long I'll be stationed here."

From behind her thick bangs Kathryn peered into the face of Oliver, her gaze distrustful. Why was this man even attempting to care about her situation? If the rumors were true he wasn't even assigned to her case.

"You'd take me on as a patient?"

"I would."

"Why do you care?"

"I care for the health of all my patients," Oliver lied.

He obviously couldn't admit to her that her case had drawn a special interest in him. If she had been anyone else he would have administered some drugs as a band aid solution and sent her skipping back to Monsignor. But with her stories, her life... he knew there was something more there. He could see the indecision on the girl's face and knew he would have to be aggressive.

"I see that this may not be right for you and that is completely fine," Oliver put out his cigarette,
calling out to the closed door. "Frank? I believe the patient and I are done."

Frank entered into the room boredly making his way to Kathryn, the cuffs swinging from his right hip. Kathryn licked her lips in indecision, her gaze going from Frank and then back to Oliver.

"Alright," she murmured to Oliver. "I'll do it."

Oliver smiled, standing as Frank approached. He looked to Kathryn who rose slowly to her feet, her body rigid, wondering if she had made the right decision. Oliver held a kind hand out to her once more. A test of sorts to see her willingness to try.

"A pleasure to meet you Miss Hatcher," Oliver smiled. "I'll see you tomorrow at nine a.m. for our next appointment."

Kathryn looked to the pale hand in front of her, thinking a moment and taking a deep breath before slowly slipping her right hand into his grip. She was surprised to find that despite its cool temperature that it was quite fine to have his hand around her own. It was the large, smooth hand of a scholar. Oliver felt a shiver go through him at the feel of her skin, relishing in its warmth, comfort and above all its softness.

But the moment was soon broken as Frank grabbed her wrist, pulling her from Oliver's grasp, guiding her out the door and back into the madness of Briarcliff.
The Exorcism

*Dominique* played in the background as Lana stared out the barred window of the common room. Her mind felt frazzled after the morning's ECT treatment. She couldn't believe how Jude just looked down at her, letting it happen for no good reason. She was the real monster.

*Remember everything.*

Lana glanced around the common room, despising every lost soul she encountered the gaze of. Her eyes were drawn to the visage of a young woman at the piano, plunking out a sad tune with a forefinger looking terribly depressed. She looked over at Lana, her dark hair and eyes making her look like an inkblot. Lana wondered what she was in for. She didn't look like the rest of the forgotten here. She looked well scrubbed, alert and non medicated.

A guard was watching over her closely and Lana could only assume she was a high risk individual.

The girl, feeling as if she were being watched glanced over at Lana, seeing the burns at the woman's temple and nodding gently in mutual sympathy. Embarrassed, Lana touched the scorch marks at her temples before struggling to recall the last 24 hours, her hands scribbling the notes down on her scrap of paper.

'Don't forget. Burning flesh. Sister Jude's face.'

The door to the common room opened and in walked Bloody Face. Although he was known to others as Kit Walker. He shot her a look before joining Grace behind her smoking on the sofa. Lana could hear the the nearly muted whispers from Grace

"I can't do it," Kit whispered urgently. "I can't fake crazy. What I need to do is escape this place now before he files that report and I'm screwed."

Monster. Get out so he could kill more innocent young women?

Lana's mind drifted back to the conversation behind her. They were discussing the bakery and escaping that way. Lana scribbled hurriedly on her scrap of paper before she forgot.

'Bloody Face. Psychopath.'

*****

Oliver sighed as he entered into Briarcliff the next morning. The entire night had left him feeling restless and confused. Briarcliff was like a strange dream of which he could not wake. Soft hands and dark eyes had haunted his sleep and he had woken irritable and exhausted.

*Kathryn Hatcher.*

He tried not to think of her as anything but his patient. It wouldn't be professional to think of her any other way. He tried to make his mind focus on something else. Kit Walker and the boy's trial as he combed his dark hair into a perfect part that morning. But now, entering into those darkened hallways once more and making his way to his office Oliver couldn't think of anyone else.

It had been what she said. That feeling of abandonment so acutely worded that he had barely been able to think of anything else. His attention was caught by an older nun that he hadn't run into yet.
"Sister Jude?" Oliver fell in step with the aged nun at his side who wore a sour expression of disinterest.

"Ahhh, Doctor Thredson, the court appointed psychiatrist. Seeing our killer of women I trust? So what's it going to be? Spare the tax payers the expense of a trial or will I have a bed opening up?"

Oliver could barely believe the cavalier attitude this woman held at the life of another. Her cynicism pervaded every word punctuated with her drawling accent that made Doctor come out 'doc-tah'.

"Might we speak privately about the conditions here?" he inquired, opening the door to the main corridor.

"Conditions? What conditions might those be?"

As Oliver recounted the appalling abuse and malpractice he'd seen in his short time there, Jude's face grew more puckered with irritation.

"It's a madhouse Doctor," she grimaced. "What did you expect?"

Oliver could feel his face contorting into barely suppressed fury. Who did this woman think she was to care so little for her charges? To think that this was somehow acceptable behavior? He thought of poor Kathryn Hatcher being thrown around like a rag doll. Of the manhandling of Kit as he was brought in for his initial assessment or of the poor woman crying out against her mouth gag as volts of electricity shot through her brain that he'd seen in one of the cell's.

"I expected some form of treatment," he ground out angrily. "Therapy."

He continued on, his voice rising slightly as Jude glared down at him from a few steps up the spiraling staircase. The woman looked down at him with a look of unending frustrating and disgust. Men like Thredson were weak, in her opinion. Weak-willed and weak-minded. They were soft and unsure and scared to do anything that might get their precious hands dirty. She knew he couldn't care less about the souls within these stone walls.

"You know what Doctor Thredson? Lemme remind you. You're job is here is to write a recommendation to the court regarding the sanity of one patient," she raised a crooked finger and wagged in his face. "So I suggest you do your job and let me do mine."

Oliver frowned wanting to say more when Jude's attention was drawn upstairs.

"Now if you'll excuse me," she continued on as if the conversation had been remotely civil. "There's another unfortunate family who requires our care."

***********

Lana watched Grace from her tub across the room. The two of them had been brought in for bathing. Lana wondered how often this luxury would occur. She had tried not to be humiliated when she was lowered into the scalding water before they tied the large tarp over her. She watched as they did the same to Grace before leaving them along with nothing but the sound of water to entertain them. Lana watched as Grace fiddled with something under her tarp.

It moved up and down quickly as she cut herself from her ties in the bath. Lana felt claustrophobic and far too hot in hers. And as Grace stepped her lean frame out of the tub and undid Lana's ties, she couldn't help but feel that familiar twinge of lust at the girl's naked form. Wendy. Lana shook her from her mind, her heart hard.
Grace looked forlornly out into the bleak day, her frame lean and taut. She had seemed knowledgeable when talking to Kit. Maybe she would know of some way to escape?

Can I trust her?

"Do you ever dream of escaping?" Lana finally offered breathlessly. She could feel the steam being let out at the cool air touched her frame.

"All you new people," Grace offered with a humorless laugh. "There is no way out."

"What if I said I knew a way?" Lana offered, suddenly desperate for the girl's attention. She threw the bath wrap off of her shoulders.

Grace looked over her shoulder with a bored and irritated expression.

"I'd say you were full of shit."

"There's a tunnel," Lana said, raising herself from the tub and walking over to where Grace stood against the pipes looking casually at her. "It's real. I came in through it. I need someone to help me pull of an escape but nobody else can know."

"You have to take Kit," Grace offered, not as a suggestion but as a command. Her thoughts were clear and her voice betrayed nothing but dark confidence.

"Absolutely not," Lana replied shaking her head roughly. "He's a vicious murderer. They can make you believe anything."

Grace eyed Lana with large green orbs, almost entrancing as she spoke.

"There have been a lot of murderers here," she said lowly, never breaking eye contact. "Kit's not one of them."

*********

Oliver walked into Sister Jude's office, still feeling the sting of irritation from when she'd rebuffed speaking with him earlier. How could she be alright with the monstrosities taking place here at Briarcliff? Why was no one doing anything about it?

A middle aged couple, the Potters, glanced back at him looking pale and peaked. He felt immediately that something sinister was going on and he thrust himself into the room.

"I'm sorry," Oliver offered to the room walking to the desk in the center. "I didn't mean to interrupt. We haven't finished our conversation Sister Jude, I didn't realize you had company."

Jude eyed him in irritation as he turned to face the Potters.

"I'm Doctor Thredson," Oliver offered, shaking their hands. "The psychiatrist here. I'm at your service."

"You need to leave, Doctor." Jude's voice was thick with meaning as she rose to a standing position.

The Potters protested, insisting that a doctor may be of use. Oliver tried to conceal the smirk directed at Jude that was playing on his lips before glancing back at the Potters.

"How can I help?"
A seventeen year old boy. He saw things. Heard things. All these things Oliver could have been prepared for. The eating of a live cow's heart however, was a shock.

Seeing the boy tied to the bed of a cell made him appear weak and fragile. As he called out for his mother Oliver wondered if perhaps this had been a giant overreaction to a young man's mental illness. But when the young man attempted to bite Oliver as he tried to administer a general exam Oliver saw the danger he presented.

But an exorcism?

He'd tried to refuse. He had an appointment with Miss Hatcher that afternoon. He didn't have time for silly games like this.

They'd forced him to cancel and Oliver felt the cold sting of irritation. But what could he do? He couldn't leave this poor young man, Jed, under the complete control of these religious lunatics! Oliver could barely believe it had been approved! By Timothy himself! Bringing in some type of specialist, Father Malachi to aid in it? Oliver couldn't believe as a licensed physician he would have to be party to this lunacy.

He thought then how he would relish aiding in the closing down of Briarcliff as soon as possible. Oliver made his way shakily into the room seeing the young boy frightened as he was restrained to the bed. The room was warm and sticky already. Oliver walked over, preparing to assist with the restraints. He needed this experience to be over.

"You're hurting me," Jed cried out pathetically. "Please stop."

Oliver's hands momentarily stilled on the restraints, his conscience getting the better of him.

"Don't listen to it," Malachi barked. "The demon is a liar. If it speaks to you don't answer it, just do your job."

Oliver placed a finger against the boy's wrist feeling for a heartbeat. It was there dimly but faint.

"My God this boys pulse is almost non-existant."

Without warning the boy flailed upwards, raising the bed with him. And so the exorcism began. Jed laughed gutturally as sister Jude was asked to leave. But then he began to twist and moan crying out in Latin.

_Schizophrenia_, Oliver thought resolutely as he grabbed the stethoscope from his briefcase, thrusting it against the boy's chest and checking his vitals.

"Heart increasing, blood pressure rising," he called out to anyone who would listen.

The boy grew still, his voice calm. "Oliver."

Without thinking, Oliver glanced up at the boy's voice and saw a face which was now covered in ugly black veins. The teeth blackened and the eyes alight with some sinister force within. What could have caused this coloring? The boy had been fine on hours before. Was it something neurological that was manifesting into something physical?

"Look at you," Jed whispered to him in that same low yet feminine tone. "I see what you've become and I'm glad I gave you up."

Oliver felt his pulse jump as he pulled the stethoscope plugs from his ears, his eyes wide and
unblinking as he backed away from the bed. How did this monster know? How could he possibly know about his mother?

"Don't listen to it, Doctor" Father Malachi at his left implored.

Oliver threw himself back from the scene, his heart hammering at the words.

I'm glad I gave you up.

How did he know he was an orphan? The boy was raving and raving in Latin on the bed, his voice ghastly and out-worldly. Oliver watched in mute horror as the bible in the priest's hand went flying past him and against the wall soon followed by the priest himself. Oliver and Timothy rushed to the man's side, pulling him up and out of the room.

When he was safely out Timothy rushed down the staircase demanding Jude join them upstairs. Oliver watched wordlessly as she walked into the room fearlessly, closing the door behind her. And for a moment he thought he felt a twinge of respect for her.

"Now do you believe, Doctor?" Timothy panted, his face slick with sweat. "That there are things in this world that cannot be explained away by science?"

Oliver said nothing, his body feeling keyed up at the entire exchange. Everything that was happening went against what he was trained. Schizophrenia could do many things to a person but it couldn't throw a man from a wheelchair. The sound of Jude's screams drew his attention and he threw the door open to see her shaking the young man violently. Timothy and Oliver threw themselves through the door, Timothy pulling her off of him roughly as Oliver tended to the young man, pressing his frantic frame back against the bed.

"Protect your whore!" The young boy shouted at Timothy and Jude as the door slammed behind them. Oliver watched them go.

Eerie silence settled over the two figures in the room and finally, he forced himself to glance down at the young man, seeing the features contorted into an ugly grin as he stared unblinking back up at him.

"Ahhhhhhhhhh," the boy sighed, almost contentedly. "Now that we're alone we can really chat. I love your work, Bloody Face."

Oliver backed away slowly, removing his hands from the man's chest. This was a strange and fascination thing happening. Something that he couldn't quite name. He felt the stone of the wall against his fingertips and he wished he had a cigarette. The voice came back to him ominous and foreboding.

"I see you're amassing quite the collection Oliver. Well done. No mother yet though."

Oliver was silent, his eyes wide and his heart began to hammer uncomfortably loudly within his chest. Oliver knew what Jed was talking about. But how on earth could he know about his collection? How could he know about the mask? He remained silent, knowing that to admit anything would only fuel the young monster's desire as well as incriminate him.

This is a parlour trick. Think of something calm and peaceful. Don't let him get into your head. Don't show him your fear.

Without forethought his mind turned to Kathryn. Her dark eyes and her soft hands. A sense of calm flooded through him. There was something about that girl that stuck to his insides. A feeling of
knowing and being known. The boy on the bed was looking over, seeing as Oliver clenched his eyes tightly.

"Don't you just love her flesh, Oliver? Wouldn't you just love to wear it?"

Oliver's eyes opened rapidly at the words, his upper lip dotted with perspiration. Was this boy a psychic to know his thoughts? Was that even possible? He felt unwound and confused and wanted nothing more than to leave the room. Where was Timothy?

"Oh don't worry about him, Oliver. This is about you and me and your newest interest," Jed rasped. "Hmmmmmmmm... She doesn't know what she's in for. You want something different from her. Different from the rest."

Oliver was silent but the voice droned on.

"You don't want her for a Mommy. You want to fix her. You think that'll make up for all the mistakes you've made in the past."

"There is a rational explanation for your behavior," Oliver finally managed to speak, wanting to regain control of the situation. He stepped forward slightly, his hands up in civil surrender. "If you would simply co-operate I would be more than happy-"

The lights flickered angrily.

"Does she know?" the boy interrupted with a blackened smile. "That you touched yourself thinking of her soft hands last night Doctor? That you want them wrapped around your cock? That doesn't seem very professional does it? She is your patient after all."

Oliver blanched at the ugliness of the words but his mind flitted back to last night in his home, under the sheets, sweaty and moaning-

"You're thinking of her right now aren't you?" that cruel disembodied voice broke into his thoughts. Oliver was silent, his cheeks reddening slightly. He clenched his fists at his sides, his breathing attempting to become regulated. Whatever was happening was a trick of the brain, not some other-worldly happening.

Regain control.

"We're not so different," the boy whispered menacingly as he saw the reaction caused in Oliver. "We both know what we want and we go for it. There's no shame in that. Only what you want doesn't exist. She can't give it to you. No one can. You'll never be normal, Oliver."

Oliver knew that speaking was pointless. Instead he closed his eyes, trying to push the words from around him. He could feel the sweat dripping down his chest, soaking the front of his button down. He wanted to leave the room but knew it to be impossible. He couldn't legally leave this young man alone when in such a state.

"She'll abandon you, Oliver," the voice of the Potter boy rasped hatefully, the eyes glowing with an inhuman light."She'll never understand. And when you finally tell her she'll leave you just like your own mother did."

Oliver pressed further into the wall at the corner of the room, his body tensed for the next verbal onslaught when Timothy barged into the room. Oliver gazed at the man as Timothy raised a crucifix and began the exorcism once more. The boy howled and the lights in the room and the rest of Briarcliff began to sputter and flicker. The holy water burned against the boy's face, causing him to
flail like a fish out of water.

The boy was going to die.

This fact affronted him radically. Oliver felt the clinician in him step forward and he grasped the needle in the stand nearby.

"There's no more time for prayers Monsignor," Oliver finally sputtered, pulling the medication into the needle. "His heart can't handle it. I need to sedate him!"

Oliver pressed the needle into the young man's side and at once the bulb at his head burnt out angrily.

"He's in cardiac arrest," Oliver observed hurriedly performing the CPR necessary. His hands folded atop the boy's chest, trying to revive him. The boy's mouth was quickly foaming and although he continued he knew it was fruitless. Without warning the boy darted up, his eyes lost in the darkness as he stared ahead of him a split second before collapsing once more onto the bed. Oliver felt for a pulse.

"He's dead."

At his words the crucifix fell from the wall onto the floor and without warning Sister Mary Eunice who had scrambled behind Sister Jude at the door fell backwards to the floor.

******

A red light flashed angrily from outside her cell, waking Lana. She rubbed her eyes in surprise, seeing that the door to her cell was slowly being opened independently. Lana rushed from her cot into the mass of individuals wandering from their rooms into the hallway. She spotted Grace looking confused as she exited her own room, looking around in a daze.

"What's happening?" she offered in her clipped French accent.

"I don't know... Power failure? This is our chance."

Boldly Lana reached out and grabbed the young woman's wrist, guiding her down the hallway. Feeling emboldened at the decision she rushed through the people, careful not to let her bare footsteps make too much noise. They came upon the door to the tunnel quickly, their bodies moving quickly.

They were so close to freedom.

Lana felt a smile cracking her lips as she thought of Wendy. Even her anger was dissipating at the thought of a reunion with her. Out of the darkness of Briarcliff.

"Grace!"

A male voice called out behind them breaking her thoughts. Lana cringed as Kit made his way over to them looking nervous and frightened. Lana looked from one individual to another. Had she betrayed her so easily? Lana felt the cold anger begin to wash through her.

"Come on," Grace finally muttered. "Lana knows a way out."

"No, he can't come with us," Lana insisted angrily before turning her attention on Kit. "Stay away from us."
"I'm not a killer or a psychopath!" Kit exclaimed, his gaze appearing wounded. He was quite the actor.

"You're a liar," Lana spat. "Get away from us."

"Stop," Grace insisted, pulling her wrist from Lana's grasp. "I'm not leaving without him."

The two of them joined hands in front of her and began their decent to the tunnel. Lana watched in mute horror as Bloody Face himself made his way to precious freedom, free to kill again. It was either freedom for all or for none.

And so she made her choice.

"HELP!" She shrieked loudly, much to the surprise of Kit and Grace who motioned for her to quiet down. "HE'S ESCAPING! THE KILLER IS ESCAPING! HELP ME! IN THE HALLWAY HE'S TRYING TO GET OUT!"

She saw the desperation on Kit's face as the guards came from behind Lana and apprehended the two patients. Lana watched as they brutally tossed Kit and Grace around like rag dolls, their faces angry and their hands in fists. They pummelled Kit relentlessly as the young man stood passively by.

Why wasn't he fighting back?

Without warning Lana saw Frank raise a nightstick angrily above his head and bash him repeatedly in the face. Blood spurted like an angry fountain from Kit's nose and the young man lay immobile on the cement floor. Grace called out to him and screamed at Lana, her eyes full of vitriolic hatred.

Lana felt the tears fall down her face as she realized that she may have been terribly wrong.
Oliver groaned as his alarm next to his bed went off. Seven a.m. had arrived so quickly and he felt quite weary from yesterday's events. Jed's horrific face and voice had haunted him all evening with his dark taunts and cruel words.

_I see what you've become and I'm glad I gave you up._

Oliver turned on his side, his body taut with tight muscles. He rubbed his eyes several times harshly. He had to focus on bigger things today. Every day that slipped by was a day not productive. Oliver rose from the bed, discarding his pajamas into the hamper before jumping into the shower, letting the warm water saturate his every pore. He washed his hair slowly, his mind turning to what awaited him when he arrived at Briarcliff. A meeting with Mr. Walker and then a meeting with Miss Hatcher.

_Do you know that you touched yourself thinking of her soft hands last night Doctor?_

Oliver turned the water icy at that memory, jumping as it pelted down on his shoulders like small needles. When he could take no more he leapt from the shower, drying himself and continuing his morning routine. With every stroke of his toothbrush and button of his shirt he told himself not to think of last night's experience.

"I am a professional," he unblinkingly told his reflection in the mirror as he did the last loop of his dark tie. "I have nothing but the best interest for my clients."

Oliver smirked a bit at that last comment as he thought of Kit Walker taking the rap for his crimes. In Oliver's mind it seemed completely fair. The boy was disturbed and needed to be put away. Whereas jeopardizing his own career and life would make no sense. Oliver did a lot for his community - contributing many hours of free counselling for the less fortunate in his community. He was an upstanding citizen and to see him taken out of such a community would be to their detriment. Kit Walker was a gas station attendant, easily missed.

_She'll abandon you, Oliver._

Why did that monstrous voice keep interrupting his thoughts? Turning them to _her_. Kathryn Hatcher. A uniquely fascinating case. But not someone who could fill the gap his mother's abandonment had left within him. He frowned darkly at that thought, wondering who ever could?

The journalist could.

_He'd overheard her outside Briarcliff the morning of Kit's induction. She had been a very maternal figure, pretty and trim. She had a gentle, kind voice. She was ambitious that much was evident by her back and forth with one of the detectives awaiting Kit's arrival. She deflected his sexist remarks about her columns urging him to give her some piece of information on Bloody Face, insisting she was the right woman for the job._

"A woman's touch eh?" the detective offered with a rudes laugh.

“Yes. Exactly,” Lana replied haughtily. “That's what's been missing from this story. You think this mook's just some monster. But no monsters starts out this way. He was somebody's precious baby, crying out for his mommy."

And in that moment Oliver knew he'd have to know more about her.
She was the first person to understand that part of the problem.

Monsters weren't born monsters.

He had been created through years of abuse and neglect.

And now this woman, this motherly figure seemed to understand.

He had read her file along with Kits and Kathryn's upon finding out she had been admitted.

*Lana Winters 33, a journalist and homosexual.*

Interesting. No other man or child in her life to detract attention away from him, should the need arise.

Oliver took the dark tube of Brylcreem from the drawer in his bathroom, rubbing it through his hair slowly as he gazed into his pale reflection in the mirror. Handsome, professional, sensitive. He looked like any other man on the outside. He idly wondered what the world would be like if people were viewed for their inner worlds and thoughts. Would people run from him?

Is that what had made his mother leave? She had been able to tell at his birth that something wasn't quite right with him? At times he would admit that this quiet desperation upset him. This need for something that seemed so elusive and illusory that it made him frustrated and at times furious. Why wasn't he like the other men who drank and fucked and lived the life they wanted without recourse?

Then another part of him would speak up. The part of him that recalled his Mother's abandonment. The raising in an orphanage that refused affection and let him know the harsh sting of a riding crop when disobedient.

But how could one rectify those feelings of abandonment and move forward? Perhaps Miss Hatcher herself held the answer to this inquiry as they began their foray into her psyche. Oliver made the silent resolution to ensure that his meeting with Kathryn this morning went successfully.

Oliver smoothed his dark and now glossy hair, combing it neatly into his respectable style ensuring the part on the right was perfectly straight before slipping on his glasses and heading out the door.

*Lana walked into the common room on shaky legs to see the residents of Briarcliff engaged in a variety of activity. Some masturbating furiously. Some absently doing a puzzle. The same dark haired young woman sitting by the window now, looking upset. She drew over to the girl, watching as she glanced up at her approaching figure.*

"Hi," Lana offered with a kind smile. "I'm Lana."

"Nice to meet you," the girl nodded in lieu of a handshake, her dark eyes looking lost and haunted. "I'm Kathryn. Aren't you a writer? I think I've read your columns before."

"A few," Lana nodded, unsure of how much information to share. She drew to the lip of the window, sitting on it across from the dark haired girl. "I'm here again my will."

"Step in line," Kathryn offered with a dry laugh.

Lana was about to reply when she saw Kit and Grace in a heated discussion over by the chess set. Deciding to slip by them and avoid a fight she left Kathryn, preparing to charge through the doors. It
was no use, it was only seconds before Grace viewed Lana and rushed at her in fury.

"You ruined our chance of getting out of this place," she spat at an unimpressed Lana.

"I'd do it again if it means I can stop him from killing anymore," Lana replied passionately. She felt the hot anger running through her veins as Grace looked at her with such anger. It was Grace who had conspired against her with Kit! It was Grace who had foiled their own planned escape! It was this stupid French bitch who had ruined their entire undertaking and now she had the gall to get furious with Lana?

Kit appeared at Grace's shoulder, giving Lana a look of complete understanding. She was surprised to see such tenderness in the face of a man she had caused so much pain in. The last time she had seen him he had been thrust over Sister Jude's desk getting the lashing of his life. And yet, he still looked at her with that unflinching kindness.

"I can't say I blame ya," Kit replied to her, his eyes soft."I'd have done the same if I believed what you believe. But I'm innocent."

As he spoke the words, for the first time Lana believed him. She knew she shouldn't but a part of her believed the earnest boy in front of her.

"Walker," A guard interrupted, motioning for Kit to follow. "Dr. Arden wants to see you."

Kit cast one last hopeful look at Lana before following the guard out the door. As Lana watched his sorrowful frame exit the room she wondered idly if she had misjudged Kit Walker completely.

Sister Jude punched the dough in front of her angrily. This entire morning had been a fiasco. First the pinhead had been found hoarding more and more food under her bed despite the constant warning of rats. The poor girl never seemed to get the message and Jude had to admit she had a soft spot for her. The kitchen was silent and she worked vigorously to shake off the horrors of yesterday and the Potter boy. The things he had said to her.... Jude shivered at the memory.

And then this morning, by some sick chance the mail had been dropped off. And inside the article from her hit and run. In 1949. The poor girl she'd killed. Who's sick idea of a joke was this? She felt tears starting at the back of her eyes, her hands drawing to her face. She was still lost in thought when Dr. Thredson walked in casually, his dark eyes scanning her suspiciously through his glasses.

"Everything alright sister?"

She jumped at the sound of his voice behind her. He walked around the island in the kitchen until he was standing in front of her.

"Inclement weather," She replied thickly, her attention on the dough."Always upsets the natives. They're fragile souls."

"That's why you should stop using corporal punishment," Oliver replied plainly, his face peering into her own. "At our meeting yesterday Mr. Walker couldn't even sit down."

Ah, yes. Mr. Walker. Bloody Face. Found along with the Axe Murderer trying to escape, turned in by the Lesbian.

Jude smirked at the memory of Lana's face as she had to watch the others get paddled within an inch of their lives. Jude idly wondered if it was truly wrong to enjoy that punishment. She was doing it for
their own good but was she supposed to delight in it so much?

Oliver was droning on and on in front of her about her lack of compassion and she finally snapped her neck up to face him fully.

"Me? I am a beacon of compassion," she replied furiously. "In fact I spent all morning on the phone with St. Angela parish to borrow their movie projector. I thought a movie could distract our charges when the storm hits."

Oliver was surprised at this admission. He hadn't pegged Jude for a cinephile and he told her so, offering his help if she needed it.

"Oh yes," Oliver added as he prepared to leave the kitchen. "As attending physician of Jed Potter I'll need his autopsy report for my files"

He needed so such thing. He had no one who would need to see it, but he did want to go over the case himself in the luxury of his home. The boys case had been a bizarre and fascinating one and one that Oliver couldn't seem to wrap his head around even now in the cold light of day.

"I'm very busy Doctor," Jude replied, her eyes on the dough in front of her. "But I'll try to locate it."

"I'll bet it said he died of natural causes," Oliver bated.

"If it's natural for a 17-year-old boy to die of a heart attack," Jude bit back.

"You have quite a suspicious mind Sister, bordering on delusional." Oliver retorted, irritated at the woman's constant desire to undermine him. "Or maybe it's just a form of projection? A defense to protect your own guilty conscience."

Jude gazed up into the haughty face of Dr. Thredson and felt her heart stammer. This creature in front of her - it had been him. It had to be. He hated her and this was his way of slowly torturing her. "It was you, wasn't it?" Oliver looked confusedly at Sister Jude. She looked frightened of him. But why?

"The newspaper," she whispered, her body growing still. "Where did you get it?"

Oliver wrinkled his nose in confusion. "What newspaper?"

"That office we gave you. I need it back," Jude said after faltering a moment. "You've had more than enough time to advise the courts. You've got two weeks and then you're out."

She punctuated the last word by slamming the dough onto the counter, causing Oliver to flinch before he headed out the door, unable to say anything more to her. He had been given his deadline and he had to comply.

Two weeks, he thought miserably as he considered all the lost souls within Briarcliff who would benefit from his counsel. Who could he truly help in two weeks?

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Kathryn watched as Oliver entered into the common room, his back straight and his figure lean. He looked in command, his body language fixated on what needed to be accomplished. Kathryn looked up from her novel, Rabbit Run. She loved to escape into worlds that were so unlike her own. And a novel dealing with a loveless marriage was so far away from the institute she was currently station at that she had leapt at the chance to re-read it.
She noted as she peered over her novel that he was focussed on talking with two of the handy men. It looked as if they were preparing to set up some sort of screen. *So the rumors of a movie night tomorrow are true,* Kathryn observed detachedly before her attention was fixated back on Dr Thredson. He had his back to her and didn't notice her frame snugly against the window.

"Our meeting," she thought absently glancing up at the clock on the other side of the room. Not for another hour. She felt a twist in her stomach as she thought of their meeting and what it would entail. She knew she was going to have to open up about some very ugly, cruel things. She was going to have to face her fear of intimacy. All things that caused her feel lightheaded and slightly nauseated.

Doctor Thredson said something that amused the workers and they laughed loudly before making their way up the ladder to hang the screen for the picture show. Dr. Thredson stared up at them, his gaze fixated on any adjustment that needed to be made. She realized she enjoyed watching him from this vantage point, not knowing he was being watched. For once she had the upper hand with this Oliver Thredson. He seemed more at ease, his movements more fluid when he didn't know he was being watched.

He had his arms crossed, casually smoking his cigarette. She saw the straight part in his hair, the suit perfectly fitted to his tall frame. No wedding ring and an unending level of patience.

"I hear he's a homosexual," Shelley purred, pulled a seat next to Kathryn. "A shame. He's quite easy on the eyes isn't he?"

Kathryn glanced over her shoulder at the girl, alarmed by the brightness of the woman's eyes and the closeness of her proximity. She had heard rumors of the girl's history involving sailors and judging by her way of talk and severity of punishments, this was accurate.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Kathryn replied primly, her attention being drawn back to her novel.

"Sure you do," Shelley chuckled darkly, parting her knees as she leaned forward. "You're looking at that tall hunk of sex right there thinking about it just like every other woman in here. Its natural. Biological even. Women need sex just as much as men but they never admit it."

Kathryn ducked her head, her cheeks enflamed at the girl's words. She'd never heard anyone speak so plainly about sex before. It was titillating as well as humiliating. She couldn't help but let her gaze drift back up to Dr. Thredson. He was tilting his head slightly, trying to see the best angle for the white screen.

"A little lower on the right there," Oliver offered helpfully as the men righted the screen, his voice silken. They did as instructed. "Perfect, thank you gentlemen."

She watched as he walked to where the nurses had left out a pitcher of water and some glasses. Lana saw him, her attention piqued. This was the therapist she had heard so much about from Shelley. The one who defied Sister Jude and seemed to be much more aware than the rest of the monsters working here..stubbing her cigarette out she rushed over to the tall man.

Kathryn watched as Lana approached Oliver, her body flighty with nerves. They conversed conspiratorially between one another, and Kathryn noted that Oliver's gaze was very intense, almost predatory.

Lana tentatively held out a piece of paper a moment, looking as if she were urging the man to take it. Oliver grasped it quickly after a moment of indecision, surprising the woman as he put it in his breast pocket. He gave Lana a meaningful look before walking away, towards the doors. He had a strange
smirk on his face as he headed to the doors and Lana looked as if she were prepared to jump for joy.

Thredson walked through the common room, his eyes alight before they landed on Kathryn, huddled at the corner of the room. Kathryn stiffened under his gaze, unsure of how to react. Had he heard Shelley's comments? If he had, he gave no indication. Instead he flashed her a warm smile and a quick nod of the head before heading out the doors and into the hallway.

Kathryn felt her cheeks redden as she felt Shelley's eyes on her.

"It's all right," Shelly whispered into the girl's ear before she got up to leave. "It's just biology."

*****

He couldn't believe it. Oliver was gobsmacked as he headed back into his office, the address of a Wendy Peyser in his breast pocket and his heart thudding with possibility. The maternal woman from that day at Briarcliff. She was here. She was perfect. Not too old or young. Her eyes were kind and her body looked soft and motherly. She had come to him! It was she who had initiated contact!

She had smiled at him - looked at him as if she were indebted to him. He could barely believe his good luck. Now, how to insinuate himself into her world? Therapy of course! Her homosexuality proved the perfect stepping stone to gaining trust! But two weeks. He had a lot to get done in two weeks. Suddenly there was a small rap at his door interrupting his thoughts.

"Come in."

Kathryn entered the room slowly, wearing a bulky sweater over her blue uniformed dress. She looked nervous to see him, her eyes darting around the office. She closed the door gently behind her, leaving a large space between them as she spoke.

"I'm sorry if I'm a bit late," Kathryn said gently, looking almost embarrassed. "I finished my book slower than expected."

In truth she had tried to get out of seeing the doctor by faking cramps but Sister Jude had seen right through it. While she may not have enjoyed the tiresome Dr. Thredson, she would not allow any of her charges to go against his orders. In a most severe tone she had given Kathryn two options - Dr. Thredson or the paddle. Kathryn had decided quite quickly that Dr. Thredson was slightly less frightening than a bladed paddle to the rear.

"Not a problem at all," Oliver replied, smiling a bit too widely. "Please come in, Miss Hatcher."

Oliver found it hard to maintain composure around the girl today. He was so keyed up with his run in with Lana Winters that he could barely contain his glee. Yet he managed a facade of professional detachment as she moved to sit across from him.

"I see we're no longer in cuffs," Oliver observed cordially folding his hands on the desk between them.

"Nope," Kathryn smirked shyly holding her free wrists up for him to see. "Good behavior will do that."

Oliver smiled briefly at that before opening his file on Kathryn. His eyes scanned what he had read as if he hadn't already memorized every word. He tapped a tapered forefinger along some words before nodding as if silently agreeing with something.

"Now in our last session we ended on the subject of intimacy."
"Yes," Kathryn nodded uncomfortably. "I was hoping we could put that subject off...just a bit."

"Well," Oliver weighed her words. "The problem is that intimacy and your anxiety and depression are quite wrapped up in one another. It's not a matter of extrapolation as much as it is an issue of finding the core root of the problem. It may be intimacy it may be something entirely different but we need to unearth that together. What I'm asking is that you trust me, Miss Hatcher."

"But how can I trust you?" Kathryn implored earnestly, feeling desperation bubble within her chest. "I've only known you for two days. It's hard to be open with someone who's practically a stranger."

"Very astute observation," Oliver nodded, closing the file gently, letting his eyes linger on the girl's face a moment too long before looking out the window in mock concentration. "Well then. What would you like to know about me?"

Kathryn looked taken aback at this. In all her counselling through the church none of them had ever offered any background on their own life. It seemed strange to have this grown man looking at her, lighting a new cigarette and waiting expectantly for her to quiz him on his life.

"I don't understand."

"You said moments ago that it was hard to share your life with a stranger. I completely agree. I'm asking quite a lot of you. Unfortunately as of this morning I have two weeks to complete my findings with the Kit Walker case before I am unceremoniously turned from the building," Oliver took a long drag from his cigarette, blowing the smoke slowly as he continued."So in order to expedite the process of bonding and trust, I suggest you ask me some hard questions yourself and we can hopefully move on from there. What do you think?" Kathryn blinked at his response, her mind flipping a moment.

What did she want to ask him? She recalled him starting with her childhood and so she began there, taking on an air of authority as she quizzed him.

"Were you an only child?"

"As far as I know, yes."

There was a small pause on her end. "You were adopted?"

"I grew up in an orphanage."

Kathryn could sense the cold seeping into his features. The dark brown eyes that had once been so warm were now growing flinty and unresponsive. His left hand had inadvertently started to turn into a fist, the knuckles turning a deathly shade of white. She immediately felt poorly for bringing up that which was obviously a hurtful topic.

"I'm sorry," Kathryn said softly, determined to change the subject to something safe. "Favorite color?"

"Red."

"Mine too," Kathryn offered with a shy chuckle, joyful to have found a connection between them regardless of how tenuous. "Did you always want to be a psychiatrist?"

"I always knew I wanted to help people," Oliver replied evenly, his small smile beginning to warm now. "And becoming a psychiatrist seemed like the natural next step. The more I learned about people the more I wanted to learn."
"Favorite pastime?"

"Making furniture. I find it relaxing to work with my hands."

"Are you married? Children?"

"No and no."

"Never married?"

"Never."

"Are you a whoopsie, Doctor Thredson?"

Oliver's lips quirked at the side at her inquiry. "What makes you say that?"

Kathryn ducked her hair in embarrassment. Obviously she had been incorrect. Damn Shelley and her big mouth. She felt like she wanted the earth to swallow her entirely at that moment, her face growing hot.

"I overheard some of the girl's in the common room saying..." Kathryn trailed off looking absolutely dejected now. She couldn't believe she had spoken the words aloud. She continued, unable to stop. "And you're always dressed so nice and no wife and, well, it doesn't matter and I'm done asking questions now so let's move onto the next subject if that's alright."

Kathryn looked at her hands placed in her lap, trying not to choke on the hot humiliation that was crawling up her face. She heard a low chuckle from across the table, watching as Oliver smiled broadly at her before schooling his features.

"No, Miss Hatcher. I am not a whoopsie. I am just a man with a very busy schedule."

Kathryn didn't know what else to say and so Oliver continued on, his lips still kinked in a small smirk glancing at her before looking back to his notes.
The storm hits

The morning of the storm began like any other. It was grey and misty and a bit windy but nothing out of the ordinary. By the afternoon it had picked up to a gale-force wind and Kit noted nervously that the light in Doctor Thredson's office kept flickering, threatening to extinguish altogether. Oliver was in a poor mood, looking exhausted and distracted. Kit wondered why he was even here in the first place.

Dr. Thredson was looking through something on his desk, a smoke hanging between his lips and his eyes ringed with fatigue.

"Looks like it's gonna be an awful big storm," Kit offered by way of making conversation.

Oliver glanced up from his notes distractedly, his eyebrows knitted in confusion before glancing out the window and looking at the blustery day.

Of course, the storm. In his rush to leave the house today Oliver had completely forgotten. He hoped that he'd be able to leave before this evening when it got worse. The storms in this city had been especially bad the last few years.

"I apologize Kit," Oliver said, removing his glasses and rubbing his eyes harshly. "I've had quite the caseload and its left me feeling rather depleted, I'm afraid."

What he had actually done last night was far more sinister than casework. He had gone to the home of Wendy Peyser and stabbed her repeatedly until she had been drained of life. He'd tried to keep her face in fair condition for Lana's sake. Then he'd heaved her into his car and then into his home. It was strange having her in one piece, kept on ice in his deepfreeze in the basement.

He'd never kept one alive intact before and it kept him up all night. A strange childlike part of him was fearful she would rise from her cold coffin and come for him. He knew it was a dark fear but still, it had caused his sleep to be restless and his body trembled until dawn.

"I wanted to speak more about Alma and the men from outer space," Thredson finally continued, readjusting his glasses on the bridge of his nose. "I want you to tell me everything you believed to have happened, step by step."

And so Kit recounted the same story almost word for word as his prior confession. Oliver frowned as the boy continued, believing his own falsehoods. He could barely believe that Kit could sit there, looking him straight in the face and tell these bombastic lies!

Oliver nodded as Kit spoke, writing down notes here and there but mostly his mind drifted to Kathryn and their meeting yesterday. It was she who had inadvertently convinced him to act on his plan of taking out Wendy last night. He hadn't wanted to kill Wendy at first, instead just lock her up in the basement until Lana's arrival. A sort of welcome present of sorts.

But Kathryn had sat there asking if he was a whoopsie. At first Oliver had been amused at the thought, even finding her embarrassment endearing. But as their session wore on her words continued to crowd his head. A whoopsie. Did she think him non-masculine? He felt his bravado falter as their session wore on and he had questioned her further on her family life.

Not much had been discovered there. A child left home with her imagination and freedom. Scholastically excelling and building a few close relationships. Nothing had stuck out as particularly sinister. They had parted promising to resume work the next evening before the movie started. But
the day's events had still unsettled him. Jeb Potter. The things the boy had said. The warning that she would abandon him. The entire experience with the Potter boy had left him slightly unhinged.

He had been in sour spirits when Kathryn left and he had rushed home after her session to ready himself for that evening's exploits.

Wendy hadn't been prepared. Listening to a record and dressed in pajamas she looked remarkably fine for having turned her lover over to an asylum. Oliver decided that she had to die then. He had killed before. Many times. His mask was a trophy that proved just that. But the fury behind his slashes were directly attributed to Kathryn's assumption of his masculinity and sexuality. It cut him to the core though he would never admit it.

Why did he care what she thought? She wasn't to be his mother. She was too young for the part and besides he had Lana for that (if she would go willingly and if not he'd find someone else.) And the only connection they had was their mutual abandonment issues. So then why was she still at the forefront of his mind most nights?

"Doctor Thredson?"

Oliver snapped back from his reverie as Kit's voice broke through his thoughts. The young boy's face was drawn in confusion and concern at the doctors sudden silence. Oliver straightened in his seat, pretending to be pondering over what the young man had been saying.

"Thank you for coming in today," Oliver said gently closing the file and standing, guiding Kit to the door of his office. Two orderlies waited outside, arms crossed. "It proved quite illuminating."

"I'm no murderer, Doc," Kit implored desperately. "You gotta see that. Don't you?"

Oliver said nothing, opting instead to open the door and watch as Kit was taken from his office, the door closing quietly behind him as if he had never been there at all.

* * * * * * * * *

Lana sat in the common room smoking furiously. After her short interlude with Doctor Thredson yesterday she was a bundle of excited nerves. She hoped she would see him tonight. She hoped there would be good news. There had to be. Lana's attention was drawn to the double doors that swung open loudly as Mary Eunice stepped into the room, her habit swishing dramatically behind her as she moved, surveying the scene of quiet chaos before her.

Everyone was quiet with the storm approaching as if all of them knew of its preparation to engulf Briarcliff. The constant patter of rain on the roof have proven to have a soothing, almost numbing effect on most of them.

Lana frowned at the nun as she smiled mirthlessly at the unfortunate souls. Lana had noticed a change in the woman since her arrival. When she'd snuck Lana into Briarcliff she had been shaking, terrified. Now she wandered the halls with an easy gaze, her movements powerful. As if feeling her gaze Mary Eunice turned and viewed Lana, drawing over to her conspiratorially.

"Enjoying the day Miss Winters?" Mary Eunice offered with a grin. Was she serious?

"Could be better," Lana replied warily, inhaling slowly.

Mary Eunice offered a snort of laughter before nodding, continuing her way to talk with the rest of the residents. Lana glanced over her shoulder when she heard the quiet voice of Kathryn behind her.
"I don't know what you're talking about," Kathryn was saying forcefully, her eyes alight on the face of Sister Mary Eunice.

She had her left hand on the white piano keys, the rest of her body turned away from the piano on the bench seat. Lana turned her body to face the scene. Some of the other residents had grown quiet, watching on in interest. Sister looked down at Kathryn, her back to Lana as she spoke quietly to the girl. No one could quite catch it. Whatever she had said upset the girl greatly because the normally demure Kathryn was on her feet, her face blotchy with anger.

"How dare you say that?"

Without warning Kathryn had reached her hand to strike Mary Eunice's cheek, shocked as the woman's small hand came up to block her at the last second. Kathryn winced as the woman dug her hands into the girl's wrist.

"You're hurting me. Let go."

And only because Lana was listening intently did she hear the nun's cruel murmured words.

"You don't enjoy that, do you Kathryn? Not unless its Thredson doing the touching."

Kathryn wrenched out of the woman's grasp, her eyes wide and filling with angry tears as she held her bruised wrist. She looked as if she were about to murder the woman in front of her and Lana wondered why Kathryn was in Briarcliff in the first place.

"Frank?" the nun inquired casually, watching with mirth as Kathryn was approached by Frank, his head shaking slowly as he slapped the cuffs onto her wrists. She was still, her jaw clenched as she glared at Sister Mary Eunice.

"Stay away from me," she hissed lowly. "I know what you are."

Sister Mary Eunice rolled her eyes dramatically before turning back to the rest of the group, informing them that the night's movie was to be a good one. Kathryn was rushed from the room by Frank, her hands cuffed behind her back. Lana frowned to herself before turning back to the sofa she was sitting on. Grace had entered into the room along with Kit who looked rather upset. She ignored them as they sat a few feet away near the piano.

"He doesn't believe me," Kit was saying with a choked voice. "He's going to turn that paper into the courts and I'm screwed. I'll either be here for life or fry at the chair."

"You cannot think like that," Grace said, her French accent clipped and comforting. She placed a hand on the boy's kneecap, looking up at him with her large green eyes. "You must keep your chin up."

"How can I do that, Grace? They think I killed my wife. They don't believe me about the aliens. What else can I do?"

Kit threw himself into the back of the chair, covering his eyes with his hands quickly. He didn't want to cry in this room of people. He just wanted to be home, to be able to bury his wife and mourn her in peace. Grace was silent, her face drawn and thoughtful. Lana gasped slightly as her large eyes darted over to where she sat. She sneered openly at Lana, her bottom teeth bared in muted fury.

"What are you looking at?"

Lana turned to face the other way on the couch, her cheeks red and her heart racing from the
altercation. Despite her sweet looks and diminutive stature that Grace girl was frightening. She could hear Grace mutter something quietly about her being a traitor before continuing.

"During the movie tonight," she whispered to Kit excitedly. "I excuse myself to go to the bathroom. While I'm doing that you sidle out of the room. We meet in the hallway and go to the boiler room. From there out the tunnel. We have to bring Shelley. She doesn't belong here either."

"It'd never work."

"It's something, Kit."

There was a moment of silence from the young man's end before Lana heard him sigh.

"Alright, let's do it."
Exposure Therapy

Oliver glanced up from his notes as Kathryn entered his office. She still had that shy way about her, so unlike their first session.

"Good evening Miss Hatcher," Oliver smiled as she entered. "I promise to have you out of session before the start of the film."

"Thank you," Kathryn replied with a small smile. "I've never seen The Sign of the Cross before."

"Neither have I," Oliver confessed truthfully. He didn't have a television in his home. He didn't need any more entertainment or stimulation outside of work. The girl looked rather wan, her eyes rimmed with dark circles. He noticed then that she was rubbing her wrists tenderly, wincing slightly. He was surprised to see ugly red welts forming on her wrists, obviously from prolonged exposure to the handcuffs Briarcliff loved to toss onto its patients.

"Did something happen today?"

Kathryn looked at him slightly dazed, her head swimming. They had sedated her earlier against her will. She had spent much of the day sleeping in her cell, her arms bound behind her back. Frank had unlocked them moments before pushing her into Oliver's office and heading down the hall for a smoke.

"I'm afraid I wasn't able to control my temper," Kathryn said without emotion, glancing down at her wrists. "Sister Mary Eunice said something that upset me. I tried to hit her. I wasn't thinking."

"Do you often resort to physical violence when angered?"

"Never," Kathryn replied, her eyes wide as she glanced around the room. "It's this place. Briarcliff. It sets me on edge. I'd never bit someone before or hit them. Its like I can't control my impulses in here."

Oliver nodded, knowing what she meant. Even ensconced in his little office here he felt the cool chill of madness that seeped through the brickwork despite the muggy feeling in the air from the storm.

"May I ask what she said that upset you so?"

Kathryn shook her head sharply, her eyes unable to meet his. Oliver was surprised at the girl's lack of candor. "I'd prefer not to answer."

Oliver nodded, respecting the girl's choice. "Well, today is the big day. Exposure therapy."

"Yes," Kathryn nodded. "Of course."

She felt her innards jumping at the mention. She thought back to Dr. Thredson's example of the rats. He looked rather jovial today, even upbeat despite the deluge outside. He seemed excited at the prospect of curing her and she felt an affinity for him, thankful for his help.

"I brought my portable record player," Oliver offered motioning to the item, "as well as a collection of popular records. You mentioned listening to them with Michael during some of your happier memories and I thought they may prove to be a comfort during our session. Please look through and pull out any that appeal to you."

Kathryn nodded, moving towards the record player. It was so warm in the office, the storm making everything sticky and humid. She shrugged off the sweater she was wearing, tossing it absently onto the arm of the sofa. Oliver watched her in the reflection of his glasses, his back turned to her. She was humming lowly to herself as she went through the records, producing a few and laying them on his desk before sitting at the sofa.

She had picked some of her favorite records, some older and some new. Some she had listened to with Michael and some she had just discovered on her own. She was looking forward to hearing them - after days of that blasted record in the common room she was thankful for the reprieve.

Oliver walked over to the record player, slipping the first plate onto the player. Bobby Darrin. As the needle descended Mack the Knife started to play, creating an upbeat and relaxed tone for the session. Kathryn smiled, her teeth showing for the first time Oliver had seen. They were perfect, white pearls hidden between her lips. He was shocked at how changed her face was when joyful. She seemed younger, lighter.

"Is this the exposure therapy?" Kathryn asked turning her dark eyes hopefully onto Oliver's frame. Maybe this was all it was? Listening to some records and talking? She could handle that!

Dr. Thredson smiled at her eager hope before nodding gently.

"It will be part of it, yes. But let's start off slowly with that part of your therapy," Oliver offered smoothly. "While we are under a time limit, tossing you into the deep end before you're properly prepared will only cause more harm than good. Take a seat, let's talk a bit first and ease us into the session."

Kathryn moved to the chair across from his desk, as he sat behind it. He opened a large pad of paper and poised a pencil atop it, looking to her in interest. He looked so official in his suit, his tie tightly around his neck. He looked so put together and for the first time Kathryn wondered about her appearance. She hadn't looked in a mirror since she arrived. Oliver's smile was thin lipped but welcoming as he spoke.

"When did this aversion to physical contact start occurring Miss Hatcher? Do you recall?"

"I feel like it's been all my life," Kathryn shrugged. "But when I started getting depressed and anxious it got much worse. I used to be able to shake a stranger's hands without thinking. Now it causes me to wretch. And of course I had to interact with people at my job all the time. Hand them books, stand close to them. I couldn't take it. I kept getting worse and worse. That's why I had to leave. Patrons were starting to complain."

Oliver wondered idly if she'd felt that way when they'd shaken hands not so long ago. Did his touch repulse her?

Focus. This is your patient.

"And with Michael?"

"Before I got sick it was fine to hold hands. But anything more than that and I started to get very anxious. He was very understanding at first, but he quickly grew irritated. It made me nervous to be around him after a while. I tried kissing a few times but I just never got comfortable. He thought that if we were married it would change things so he proposed and I accepted."

"Interesting. And your parents?"

"We weren't a really affectionate family," Kathryn offered, her mouth pursed in remembrance. "My
father always spoke kindly to me, but we weren't very outwardly affectionate. It's just the way it was done. But I was surprised when I saw other kids hug and kiss their parents and if I'm honest I think I was actually a little jealous."

"Did you ever tell your parents how you felt?"

Kathryn was silent, her eyes on the floor. Oliver waited a moment, knowing that silence was a therapists best friend. But when five minutes had passed and she hadn't moved or spoken he knew he would have to encourage her.

"If this treatment proves successful, we could have you out before I even leave."

Kathryn looked up at him, her dark eyes wet with unshed tears. "I tried hugging my father once."

"Keep going," Oliver said gently, his baritone lulling her into trust. Kathryn nodded sharply.

"Christmas morning when I unwrapped the book he'd bought me. Little Women. I was so happy and I wasn't thinking. I think I was eight. My mother saw us embracing and she grabbed me by the arm and started beating me with a her bare fist, crying that it was inappropriate and that I was a disgusting monster for trying it. My father tried to stop her, explaining that it was fine but I was frightened. I never tried again."

Oliver leaned back in the chair, shocked at how obvious the girl's problem was.

From a young age patient K had been taught that physical affection was something to be ashamed of. Something that was wrong and perverse. Patient has grown up with a warped perspective on intimacy and has carried this on into her adulthood. Suggestion of Exposure Therapy for intimacy to get her attitudes and behaviors towards intimacy more regulated.

Oliver glanced back up at Kathryn, his keen mind already ten steps ahead of what he was asking.

"Was there a lot of physical abuse like that at home growing up?"

Kathryn's body nearly jolted off of the chair at his words. Abuse was a very hot-button topic and issue. And inwardly at her reaction, Oliver wished he had worded it in a way that was less aggressive.

"Abuse? It was just parents punishing a misbehaving child. Its normal," Kathryn insistd. "It's what parents do. I shouldn't have hugged him. I realize that now. It was wrong."

Oliver could see through the wobbling in her chin that she didn't believe her own words. Oliver decided not to push this subject, seeing that the girl was growing agitated and he needed her calm and collected before the exposure therapy could begin.

"What if I told you that hugging one's parents is a completely natural instinct to show affection?" Oliver offered. Kathryn shook her head as if warding off some evil spirit. She looked as if she were going to be sick all over his office.

"I'd say that maybe for others it's normal, but not for me. When I think about kissing and hugging I get an ache in my stomach."

Oliver was silently regarding her, watching as she picked absently at her thumb resting on her lap. She felt very vulnerable then, feeling his gaze on her face. She wondered why she felt she could be so exposed with him. Was it simply her desire to get out of Briarcliff? Or was this man actually helping her? She looked back up at Dr. Thredson, wondering how a man like him would treat his
children. He was so professional but warm with her, she could only imagine he would be a kind father to his offspring.

"Miss Hatcher, I want you to close your eyes a moment," Oliver said soothingly. "Imagine yourself as a young girl. Place yourself in one of your happiest memories. What sticks out to you?"

Kathryn obliged, her nose wrinkling as she dove through her memories. It was hard to piece together a good memory. Life was very hectic through her life. Her parents constantly fought despite staying married until her father's death. Her mother was a very withdrawn, cold woman. Finally a long distant memory occurred to her and Kathryn let herself surrender to the emotions within.

"I remember being in the kitchen," Kathryn whispered, her lips curving into a smile at the memory making her face light up. "My mother making pancakes and my father reading the paper. He was going to work soon. We were all talking about going to the lake for the summer. We were going to rent a paddle boat."

"How do you feel in this memory?"

"Safe."

"Alright," Oliver nodded, intrigued by her choice of words, watching the girl's face as he continued. "When you think of safe, what exactly do you mean? What makes that memory safe?"

"Everything is calm," Kathryn offered almost dreamily, her eyes still closed. "No one is shouting or hitting. We're all getting along. We're a happy family."

Oliver nodded, looking at Kathryn with a new gaze. One of complete understanding. He could see how a child brought up in such discord would long for a safe, calm and happy home. He understood it better than anyone. He had been subjected to the brutality of corporal punishment.

The smacking and beatings he received when acting out of line. It had fostered in him an unspoken hostility to anyone who abused power. He thought back to Kathryn's frightened face when she had run into him in the hall that first day. Being abandoned by her cold and distant mother. How hard it must have been to be betrayed by her own protector and abuser. The mix of emotions she must have been feeling when he turned her over to Carl.

"That's why Briarcliff is so awful," Kathryn added soberly as her eyes slowly opened. "Everything is so loud and frightening. Nothing is calm. And I know that when I get out no one is waiting for me that cares. There is no happy family at the end of all this. Just loneliness and pain."

Oliver nodded, understanding perfectly. Even now their session was occasionally punctuated with the distant sound of screaming or weeping from the patients on the upper floors.

"And that's why this therapy is so important," Oliver emphasized. "The sooner we get you to a stable level, the sooner you can leave. The sooner you'll realize that you don't need anyone on the outside but yourself."

"Easy for you to say," Kathryn sighed. "You're successful. You see crazy people every day and help them. You make a difference in the world. I bet so many people love you."

"I try to make a difference," Oliver nodded, ignoring her comment on being loved. "But I'm not always successful."

"Well, you've made a difference in my life," Kathryn offered shyly.
Oliver was taken aback by the girl's candor and found that he couldn't quite reply. He'd had many patients before but they had never really focussed on his end of therapy. They took what he said to heart, they thanked him for his time, but none had told him that he made a true difference in their lives. He and Kathryn lapsed into a short silence before he finally stood, absently straightening his tie before coming to stand beside her.

"You've done remarkably," he said looking down at her from behind his glasses. "Now if you're feeling ready I'd like to bring in someone who will be aiding in your therapy."

"What?" Kathryn stood, suddenly looking like a frightened doe, the trust slowly evaporating between them as he spoke.

"Please be calm," Oliver insisted, motioning for her to remain on the sofa, his movements slow and careful. "This is part of the Exposure Therapy we were talking about. I have found a volunteer who agreed to assist you. This is a completely safe and supervised experience, Miss Hatcher. Please relax as much as you can. I know this is an assault of the senses but I truly believe it will help you."

Oliver rushed from the room before she could reply. She sat a moment in mute shock before she walked over to the record player, replacing the record and sitting back on the aged sofa to await what fresh horrors were to come.

\textit{I have to trust Dr. Thredson. He wouldn't hurt me.}

When Oliver and a tall boy Kathryn recognized from the common room came into the office she tried to keep her features schooled, but she felt completely overwhelmed. Oliver shut the door behind him gently, guiding the man-child over to where Kathryn sat. The young man was tall and rather beautiful. Definitely not something she was used to seeing in the dingy grey of Briarcliff.

"This is Daniel," Oliver introduced them awkwardly as neither made eye contact. "Daniel is here to help with your therapy. He comes recommended from the Monsignor himself."

Kathryn looked up at Oliver from her seat then slowly over to Daniel who looked dazed.

"How on earth is he supposed to help me?"

"With exposure to intimacy," Oliver said as if it were obvious. "Physical touch."

"Are you insane?" Kathryn leapt up from the sofa, preparing to leave the room. "I can't do that!"

There was a second of silence before \textquote{A Teenager in Love} by Dion and the Belmonts began to play, making the hideous experience seem surreal. The cheery upbeat tune was so starkly different from the three drawn figures in the room it seemed like something out of a dream. As a young man crooned over being a teenager in love, Kathryn eyed the tall boy before walking to the office door, her fingertips on the doorknob.

"You wanted to be released, correct?" Oliver called after her receding frame. He saw her still.

"I have to show them empirical evidence that says you are of right mind and body," Oliver continued. "If you're still afraid to shake hands and meet new people they'll send you back and you know it. If you can do this just think of the possibilities. Your anxiety could possibly be managed. Your life would go back to normal and your depression would cease entirely. You could even reconnect with Michael."

Kathryn lowered her fingertips from the doorknob, his words ringing true. If she left now she was basically signing her own death warrant. She turned slowly and licked her lips absenty, not noticing
as Oliver shifted uncomfortably at the desk. Kathryn knew that a reconciliation with Michael was not only out of the question it was no longer something she desired. But to be released from Briarcliff was incentive enough to try this.

"Alright, Doctor."

Oliver breathed a silent sigh of relief. If she'd rushed from the room he didn't know what he would have done. He waited until Kathryn was seated on the couch once more before he resumed speaking.

"Now, you've been exposed to Daniel just in the room with you now. How are you feeling?"

"Uncomfortable," Kathryn replied quickly, her arms folded over her chest. She still hadn't been able to make eye contact with the young man. "But I'll work through it. It's just like the rats, right?"

"Exactly," Oliver smiled warmly at her response. "Now when you're comfortable with it, please sit next to him on the sofa."

Kathryn took a deep breath, glancing at the young man then back to Oliver before lowering herself beside Daniel. The boy in his blue uniform looked innocently around the room, his full lips pursed in thought that no one was privy to. They sat on either end of the sofa, with Kathryn staring the entire time at Oliver. He could feel himself growing disconcerted by her even gaze on him and he cleared his throat awkwardly.

"Look at Daniel, Miss Hatcher."

Kathryn glanced over at the boy, gulping as he met her gaze with clear blue eyes. He was quite beautiful from an artistic point of view. She could admit that. Too beautiful for this world, she supposed.

"Now, when you're ready, inch closer to him on the sofa. Can you do that?"

Kathryn eyed the boy who was now sitting and staring blankly to the other side of the room before taking a deep breath. Everything in her urged her to run in the other direction but she steeled herself and shifted closer by an inch.

"How do you feel now?"

"A little nervous because I know something worse is coming."

Oliver nodded. "Completely normal. I find that your emotional responses to proximity are completely average. From observation I'd say that its physical touch that seems to upset you. So let's start with a minor touch. Just a simple gesture. I want you to place your hand on Daniel's shoulder. Complete innocuous. You're in complete control. Can you do that?"

Kathryn's eyes widened before she nodded, raising a shaky hand to the shoulder of the tall boy. He was looking through her, his mind elsewhere. Somehow it made it easier. Like interacting with a ghost. She lowered her hand slowly onto his shoulder, noting that he didn't move as she did. They stood like this for five minutes until Oliver's voice broke the awkward silence.

"Good."

Kathryn nodded, her upper lip beginning to sweat. The warmth of the room, the thing she was doing mixed with the music was making the entire moment feel sweltering and exhausting.

"Feelings, Miss Hatcher?"
"Fine," Kathryn replied shakily.

"Excellent," Oliver looked over at the scene, feeling a mix of emotions at the girl initiating contact with the young man.

Why was he suddenly so upset? He watched those soft hands gently caress the boy's shoulder and he realized to his amusement that he was feeling jealousy. How childish. He pushed his feelings to the back of his mind as they continued like this for a half an hour, slowly moving from one spot to the next.

First they sat directly beside one another. Then she touched his hand. Felt his forehead with the back of her hand. They ended with her grasping his hand in her own, holding it tightly for five minutes until her nerves passed. When Oliver thought this sufficient he made a small note and then came over to them.

"Now we begin the second phase."

"We're not finished?" Kathryn gasped, her forehead shiny with sweat. The entire exercise had felt so strange and foreign to her she could barely believe that there was any time left. This time had stretched into what felt like eternity.

"Phase two is amplified. Remember it was just being near the rats? Now you need that rat to come to you. He will touch you, Miss Hatcher."

Kathryn's heart stopped at this and she pulled back from the man, looking to Oliver nervously. She couldn't do this.

As if on cue the lights in the office turned off. The storm raged wildly on outside and Daniel started to howl frightened. He began to thrash on the couch, his body bumping angrily into Kathryn.

"Ow!"

"Are you alright?"

"Yes," Kathryn said, moving away from the flailing figure to the other side of the room.

"He's afraid of the dark," Oliver shouted over the howls before grasping Daniel by the arm and ushering the boy into the hall. Kathryn heard their receding voices and footsteps down the hall until there was nothing but silence. Fear gripped her then as she glanced around the empty office. She didn't much care for the dark either.

Sister Mary Eunice's voice snuck into her mind then. Their horrible altercation this morning in the common room.

Kathryn had simply been absenty tapping on the piano, trying to make a tune that was anything but Dominique. The nun had come out of nowhere, her eyes fixated on the young woman. Her voice was low, seductive.

"How is therapy going Kathryn?"

Kathryn had glanced up in surprise. She had barely met Sister Mary Eunice before today, instead just seeing her rush around the halls looking on the verge of tears. Now she had appeared calm, almost predatory.

"Fine thank you, Sister. I think I'm making progress."
"You know what would help progress things even faster don't you?" Mary Eunice had offered, crouching beside the girl conspiratorially. Kathryn had looked at the woman in curiosity. Was she willing to help Kathryn as well. Kathryn turned her full attention onto the nun.

"No, what?"

"If you gave some special attention to Doctor Thredson. I think you'd find he'd be happy to write whatever you wanted."

Kathryn's mouth had gone dry at the implication spilling from the nun's cruel lips. She had shaken her head, her hands dropping from the piano keys. She saw that Lana woman glancing over at them and suddenly felt very vulnerable. There were no other people here besides the guards and they couldn't like her less.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh sure you do," Sister Mary Eunice had laughed darkly. "You know he only wants this meeting so he can fuck you over his desk, don't you? He doesn't actually want to help. He just wants his c-"

Kathryn had jumped off of the seat, her mind suddenly coming to the conclusion that what crouched before her was not human. She had grown up in church long enough to know a evil when she saw it. Her voice had raised loudly, hoping to make the woman stop her actions.

"How dare you say that?"

Now the entire common room was staring at them, but Kathryn didn't care. She couldn't let poor Dr. Thredson's name get dragged through the mud like this. As Sister Mary Eunice smiled Kathryn could feel the pent up fury she had been feeling bubble over. Without thinking she had raised a hand and brought it to the nun's cheek. Quick as a flash Mary Eunice's hand had stopped her, grasping her wrist and holding it inches from her own face, her eyes never leaving Kathryn's.

"You're hurting me" Kathryn had cried out, pulling on her arm. "Let go!"

"You don't enjoy that, do you Kathryn?" the nun whispered with a dark smirk, her grip burning into Kathryn's flesh. "Not unless its Thredson doing the touching."

Kathryn had finally wrenched her wrist free and was rubbing it tenderly, her eyes wide with shock.

"Stay away from me," she had hissed lowly. "I know what you are."

"Oh this is going to be fun to watch," Sister Mary Eunice whispered with a wink before turning around to call Frank.

Kathryn felt the cool chill that came from nowhere and a voice, low and hissing sounded from around her, enveloping her in fear.

Run little rabbit, run.

Kathryn's heart slammed against her ribcage painfully and she gathered her sweater up into her arms, preparing to leave.

The lights flickered back on and as she approached the door Oliver ducked back in, surprised to see her eager to leave.

"Where are you going, Miss Hatcher? We still have thirty minutes left in our appointment."
"He's gone," Kathryn replied hoarsely. "Daniel left. I thought maybe that meant that our experiment was over for today."

"All this means is that we need a new subject to work with," Oliver offered calmly.

"No," Kathryn shook her head. "No more strangers, please. I can't take it. I couldn't even stomach the thought of Daniel touching me after a half hour of continuously touching him. It won't work. Please there has to be another way."

"Interesting," Oliver noted the girls desperation, jotting down some more notes into his notepad and looking at her thoughtfully. "Is there someone you might feel more comfortable conducting this exposure therapy with? A connection you may have made since you arrived?"

"None, Doctor. I don't make friends easily."

Oliver pursed his lips in thought, tapping his pencil absently against his mouth. Kathryn knew he would have no other volunteers. There would be no more options and she would be stuck here at Briarcliff until her mother decided she had tortured her enough. That thought shook her to her core and she spoke out in desperation.

"Can you just do it, Doctor Thredson?"

There was a hideous silence before Thredson turned to face her, his face looking confused.

"Pardon me?"

The girl looked so remarkably upset that it physically pained Oliver to behold. He had to stop a compulsion that ran through him to reach out and touch her.

_I see you. He wanted to shout.  _I see you and I understand. _

Their reactions to being restricted from affection had simply morphed in completely different ways. She had gone into herself, finding all she needed within. He had searched externally, hoping others could fill this longing. Yet both of them were there in the same boat. Alone and sorrowful.

"You're the only person I think I could do this therapy with," Kathryn finally offered, her face flushing with embarrassment. "I don't even know if it will work, but I can try. We'd just have to go slow."

_Please let me get out of this place. Please agree to this._

When Oliver realized what the girl was suggesting his mouth parted momentarily in shock before he regained his composure.

"I'm your psychiatrist, Miss Hatcher. The ethical implications of what you're suggestion are tantamount to me having my license stripped from me right this second."

"I would never tell," Kathryn insisted earnestly, her hands clasping in a silent prayer. "Please. You'd be doing me such a favor. You'd be fixing me. I'd be able to go home, move into my own apartment once more. I'd have my life back!"

Thredson moved to sit on the edge of the desk, his eyes never leaving her face. He seemed unsure of what to say.

"I know you're desperate to leave this place," he finally spoke, his eyes deep with understanding.
"But you need to understand that I cannot in good conscience do this next level of therapy with a patient. It goes against all my ethics."

"It's not like you'd be doing it for fun," Kathryn insisted, stepping closer to him, closing the distance between them. "You'd be saving my life. Think of it - in five years I could be standing in front of you with a husband and a little baby thanking you for this experiment of yours."

Kathryn saw him blink rapidly in surprise as she spoke that last sentence, his eyebrow raising in question before clearing his throat.

"Would you really want that? A husband and...a child?"

Did she? She thought momentarily of a life so unlike her own currently. With a house, and a husband and a child. Of a life so unflinchingly normal it didn't seem possible. A life of security and joy and love. A life that she had never thought possible.

"Yes," she admitted gently. "Despite my fears and my sadness I think part of me would. I think part of me yearns to be a mother."

Although she couldn't at this moment imagine being a wife let alone a mother, the thought of cradling a newborn of my own had an innate appeal. Thredson continued to look at her without speaking, his arms crossed in front of his chest. His face was so unreadable and she was convinced he was going to turn her down.

"Please," she whispered, unable to meet his eyes. Tears began to well within her lids and she closed them gently, afraid to sob and scare him off this path. "Fix me."

There was so much silence within his office that she felt she would choke on it.

"This would be purely clinical," he offered finally, breaking the silence and moving from the desk towards Kathryn. "If things get out of hand or you feel uncomfortable at all that will be the end of it."

The feeling of joy swept through her and she smiled widely, nodding emphatically before sitting on the sofa daintily. she smoothed her dress and forced a brave smile gingerly up at him, afraid to do anything that would make him change his mind.

*Complete this therapy. Get out of Briarcliff. Then leave Mother's house. Get a new job. You can do this. Be strong.*

The clarity that had been missing this last long year was suddenly present and for the first time in a long time Kathryn knew what she wanted.

"I'm ready."

Thredson took a deep breath, exhaling quietly before shrugging off his suit jacket and placing it gently over his chair. He swallowed thickly as he loosened his tie, turning his attention to the record player.

"Should we continue with this record?" he inquired stiffly.

"A new one, please," Kathryn replied quietly. She knew she was just trying to buy time but she didn't care. Just because she was alright with this didn't mean she was eager to dive in head first. Oliver nodded going over to the record player and placing in one of the records from the girl's collection. He lifted the needle with trembling fingers that Kathryn did not see, placing it along the record slowly.
The needle scratched loudly, startling them both before the smooth crooning of Phil Phillips and the Twilights' *Sea of Love* began to play, soulful and entrancing. Kathryn inwardly wished she'd chosen slightly less intimate records for him to play. She hadn't been thinking.

Oliver put his hands in his pockets, facing away from Kathryn a moment as he clenched his eyes and jaw tightly. He took a few shallow breaths to calm his nerves as the song played around them.

He was the doctor. She the patient. This shouldn't be strange. He had done exposure therapy with a myriad of his clients to great success. But never like this.

*Be clinical. Detached.*

He turned with a wan smile in the girl's direction. She looked most uncomfortable. He seemed suddenly shy and unsure of himself. She had only ever seen him in control and commanding as he walked the halls of Briarcliff, determined to fix the individuals within it. Now as she looked at him he looked so ashen, his forehead dotted with perspiration. He drew beside her on the couch, their shoulders almost touching.

"We need to make sure that you are completely at ease," Thredson offered gently, his face so close she could feel his hot breath on her face. He smelled of mints and cigarettes and something else she couldn't quite place. "For this session we'll begin by taking things slow. Start here. Put your hand in mine."

He reached out a hand, palm up. Kathryn looked to him expectantly before slipping her hand into it. Absently Oliver let his thumb run over her knuckles and immediately a swirling in Kathryn's stomach began. Different than that of working with Daniel. Dr. Thredson kept her gaze in his, calming her with its depths.

"How do you feel?" his voice was a low and silken baritone.

"I'm fine," Kathryn lied shakily.

"I'm going to do everything step-by-step," Oliver continued, placing her hand back in her lap gently. "You will know exactly what is going to occur. If at any time you want to stop you simply have to say the word. You have all the power here."

Kathryn nodded, her eyes on his mouth as he spoke, not believing a word he said. She could barely concentrate when he was this close to her.

"Next I am going to ask that you place your hand upon my shoulder, as you did with Daniel."

Kathryn nodded, doing it quickly, her heart jumping with every touch. His shoulder was broad under her fingers, his suit silken under her touch. It was even harder doing this with Doctor Thredson. But why? Why did she feel so strange when she touched him. Shouldn't she be running in the other direction. Why then did she feel so at ease with him here?

*You know he only wants this meeting so he can fuck you over his desk, don't you?*

Kathryn pulled her hand from Thredson as if she had been pricked. He looked to her surprised at her sudden reticence.

"Are you alright?"

"Yes," Kathryn lied, her eyes on the floor. "Just wanting to move onto the next step."
Oliver nodded, clearing his throat adroitly before turning to face her more head on. She did the same until their knees were almost touching on the sofa. The tentative touches continued on for a few moments, moving from his shoulder to his cheek to his forehead and then back to his hands. All the time Oliver sat stoically watching her, seeing the expression of focus on her features. Witnessing as the girl's hands trembled with every new plane of his body they explored.

*I can do this,* Kathryn thought silently. *I can do this and he can tell them that I'm cured.*

"Now we'll try something we didn't get to try with Daniel," Oliver breathed, his eyes heavy lidded as he spoke to her. "I'd like you to embrace me. Specifically putting your arms around my neck and placing your cheek against my own. I won't move at all. It's all within your control."

"A hug."

"Correct," Oliver nodded. "Something very common place. People do it all the time. You should be able to as well."

Kathryn's eyes widened a moment in shock at his words before she nodded, preparing to lean forward then realizing the angle was awkward. Oliver noticed this immediately, drawing himself up and looking down at her.

"We should stand."

They both winced as the sound of thunder clashed outside the window, causing Kathryn to topple a moment before righting herself. They looked at each other from across the room awkwardly, neither sure of what to do next. As if on cue, the record turned to the next song. "Put your head on my shoulder" blared from the record player, causing both Kathryn and Oliver to laugh aloud gently to one another at the absurdity of the tune and its poor timing.

"A horrible choice of music," Kathryn smiled.

"Agreed."

Using the break in tension to her advantage, Kathryn stepped closer to Oliver, watching as his gaze followed her like a snake watching its prey. His eyes never left her face as she slowly drew her body close to his, attempting to close the distance and initiate the embrace. The top of her head barely cleared his nose and she stood on her tiptoes so that she could reach his cheek.

Paul Anka wailed from the record player; 'Put your lips next to mine deeeear.'

Oliver gave into the feeling of her arms around him, her cheek against his. He leaned slightly over, feeling as she more easily wrapped her arms around his neck. He sensed her gentle pull, making sure her cheek was firmly planted against his.

_Do it just as he said. Be calm. He's a Psychiatrist; this is what they do._

She felt the stubble from his cheek and she melted into him, closing her eyes. His neck smelled divine, of Old Spice aftershave if she was correct. The cinnamon and cedarwood notes floated up, heady. Oliver tensed his hands at his sides, his eyes falling shut at the contact. She felt so soft and so welcoming. His hands clenched and unclenched over and over at his sides.

_This feels so right. _He thought. _So impossibly safe._

Safe. That word she'd used.
One that he'd never considered himself. She was still against him, her arms still wound against his neck and her cheek soft against his. She smelled of soap and sweat. Her arms were warm and comforting around his neck. When was the last time he had been embraced by a woman like this?

Never.

He never let them get this close. And the one's he brought home for 'testing' never initiated the contact, preferring instead to scurry around his basement, screaming out in fear. Now he had this woman, this creature holding him and by the feel of her relaxing muscles she was enjoying it. He could feel the gentle puff of her breath against his ear. His arms and hands itched to be around her. He tried to remain stoic but a greedy impulse in him cried out for more.

"Do you want to go further?" His voice rumbled beside her.

"Yes," Kathryn breathed against his cheek without thinking, stepping back so that she could look into his unreadable eyes. At this rate there was no way that he could deny she was improving! Her smile grew wide at the thought of early release.

"A part of humanity is the desire for skin-to-skin contact," Oliver offered clinically, his tone steady as he removed his tie "This is something that you seem to have evolved without due to your childhood trauma."

"So I'm not human," Kathryn offered with a humorless grin, watching as Oliver tossed the tie behind him without breaking their eye contact. It fluttered to the floor soundlessly.

"Not that at all," Thredson shook his head, horrified at the thought. "It's just something we have to train your brain into recognizing as something safe."

"Alright. How do we do that?"

Oliver regarded her a moment before he stepped towards her, closing the distance between them. The record skipped a moment before landing on the next song in the compilation. "When a Man loves a woman" came soulfully through the player, fading into the background as Oliver made his way to Kathryn. She looked up at him with wide eyes, her face even paler than usual.

A part of him told him it was inappropriate to be doing this with her. She was his patient. That even if Daniel had been standing here in front of her under his instruction, he never would have suggested what he did next.

"Try to unbutton these," Oliver said his voice just above a whisper.

She could see the trembling of his hands as he directed her gaze to the top button of his dress shirt.

"You're shaking," she observed in subtle awe of his reaction, breaking the tension as she slowly moved her hands to the top button. She herself felt more in command as she had this task to complete. She never let her eyes look up from her job of unbuttoning his shirt, watching his chest rise and fall under her ministrations. He gazed down at her face, watching as she worked.

"This is a unique situation," he replied with a shy, boyish smile. "One I feel rather unprepared for."

She glanced up his eyes, seeing herself momentarily reflected in his glasses. She fell silent as she continued her downward descent, finishing with the last of his buttons. Thredson watched her from under hooded lids, his face unreadable. The dress shirt opened to expose his undershirt, under which she could see a hard chest that was moving along with his slightly hitched breath. At this point she felt the first stings of panic. The chest she was affronted with was nothing like she had ever known
She and Michael had never even reached this point in their long relationship. Now she was in a room with a man she wasn't married to and she was undressing him. She felt her lips tremble a moment at what was before her.

"We can stop at any time," Oliver reminded her tilting his head to the side to meet her eyes.

She shook her head, exhaling loudly before brushing her hair back from her face and shaking her head to refocus. This was a necessary step. She had to think of it detached, like Doctor Thredson. Something that she needed to do strictly for the purpose of getting released.

And perhaps something more.

"What's next?"

Thredson licked his lips absently, looking into her face with an intensity that was starting to unnerve her.

"It's been documented that small animals when parted too early from their mothers have found comfort in the simulation of a heartbeat. A clock wrapped in a towel or something similar. Perhaps a heartbeat would serve to calm you?"

"Alright," Kathryn shrugged noncommittally.

She stared at his chest a moment before closing the distance between them once more. Slowly her hands fell on either side of his pectorals before she leaned her ear and cheek against his chest. She could feel his chest hair under her fingertips, surprised at how much softer it felt than looked. His hands remained at his sides, making sure to know that she was in control.

"Are you feeling safe?"

She nodded, hearing the steady heartbeat within him and as he spoke she could hear it rumbling through his chest. She felt his sudden intake of breath, the shiver that went through him and she wondered if he was cold.

"Try closing your eyes, Miss Hatcher. Do this until you're feeling comfortable with this position."

She did as he asked and felt herself being lulled at the sound of his heartbeat. The even thump, thump, thump. Whatever they were outside we were the same within. A steadily beating heart, blood within their veins. Within minutes she had pressed herself fully against his chest, her body beginning to feel at ease with him. Her hands were still on either side of her head on his chest, looking like a child about to fall asleep.

Without thinking the two figures began to shift slightly in time with the music. The haunting tune of soulful love enveloped the cold office of Dr. Thredson, making it come alive however shortlived. Their eyes were closed, their bodies in sync. All too soon the song ended with a slow fade, breaking the spell. Oliver immediately stilled, feeling drowsy. He glanced down at the girl to see her still relaxed against his chest.

"For the next step I'm going to place my hand on your back," he said from above. "Is this alright?"

"Yes," she murmured absently. She felt the sudden warmth of his large, left hand on her back, holding her against him gently. She could hear his heartbeat speed up and felt a momentary sense of pity for him. This entire situation must be as horrendous for him. She settled into his grip on her
body, confused at her lack of fear.

Why was this suddenly becoming tolerable? Was it truly the rectifying of childhood fears of abandonment and shame at physical contact? Was Dr. Thredson truly fixing her?

A sense of gratitude so large overcame her that she found she couldn't breathe. She felt a tear slip down her cheek at the contact of him. The soft, warm welcoming safety of his arms.

Safety.

"Are you alright?" Oliver had noticed her tears, wetting the front of his undershirt. He was terrified he'd done something wrong. He had been so intent on his grasp of her that he hadn't taken into account she may still be unprepared.

"I'm sorry," Kathryn replied, wiping her eyes with the back of her hand and stepping backwards. "I'm fine. I'm just overwhelmed."


A moment passed where Kathryn sniffled gently, wiping away the tears that seemed intent on slipping down her cheek.

"Miss Hatcher, I want to suggest something, but I don't want you to react negatively." She stiffened opposite him, he could see her body go rigid as he spoke and he regretted it immediately. Her voice was quiet, afraid.

"What is it?"

"I feel as if we should continue in this vein," Thredson offered with his best neutral doctor voice. "Since you seem to be doing so well."

"Meaning?"

Oliver knew there was no coming back from it now. He'd mentioned it and now he was going to have to go through with it. A small part of him internally chastised himself for his unprofessional decorum.

"A kiss," he said rushedly. "It is a form of positive intimacy that negates genital contact. What are your thoughts?"

She froze, taking another step back from him inadvertently. All the warmth and comfort that she had felt was replaced with that sickening horror at his words. A kiss was such a large undertaking. It would be bad enough to try it in real life, but in this strange situation with all this pressure? It seemed impossible.

"I can't do it."

"I understand," Thredson nodded, removing his arms from her shoulder, looking past her and saying nothing more. "You tried so hard Miss Hatcher. I respect that about you."

She went to say something more when she took in the blush on his cheeks. The way he fumbled doing up his buttons, looking everywhere but her face. She didn't know why but she felt she could continue with him.

"Wait," she insisted, placing a tentative hand on his to stop him. "Let's try it. Please let me go slow."
Oliver nearly yelped out in delighted surprise at the feel of her hands on his, but his outward appearance was that of calm indifference. A scientific curiosity at best. He nodded at the girl, watching her exhale slowly.

"Of course."

Awkwardly she licked her lips, her hands coming to rest on his chest for balance. As she leaned in she could see the fullness of his lips, the shadow of a bear starting on his chin and cheeks. He smelled of Brylcreem. That floral, musky odor she had forever associated with professors from my college. His gaze never left hers, making the moment too intimate.

"Please close your eyes," she asked him and he acquiesced immediately.

She took a deep breath before leaning forward and--- found herself stopping. She tried again to move to his lips but something was stopping her. What was it? Thredson opened his eyes to see Kathryn's frightened face inches from his own. "Is there a problem?" his voice was thick and low.

"I'm frozen," she whispered, closing her eyes tightly. "I can't move. I'm too scared."

"Scared of what, exactly? Be specific."

"Scared of the action," she insisted, her lips beginning to tremor. "Scared of... I don't know. It feels wrong."

"I understand," came the low rumble of Thredson. There was a pause and she could feel his mind whirring as if it were a machine in front of her. "Maybe there's another way?"

She opened her eyes in question, her hope leaping. The record changed to the next song, a French one she didn't recognize.

"Perhaps if I were the one to instigate the contact? Perhaps that would lessen the feelings of shame you associate with physical intimacy?"

She swallowed thickly at this suggestion, her eyes falling to his sensual mouth and then back to his eyes. There was a kindness there. An understanding that what she was experiencing he wanted to help her through. She nodded before closing her eyes once more.

She felt both arms come to encircle her waist, his hands flat on the curve of her back, pulling her into him. She felt a flutter of panic before tilting her head up, her eyes wet and her body anticipating the contact. She felt the movement of his neck, allowing his face to meet hers. She felt the tentative touch of his lips on hers and attempted to pull away on instinct. She felt like a bird trying to fly its way out of a cage.

"Don't resist," Thredson whispered against her mouth, his hands tightening around her waist. "Fight through it."

She felt a tremble slip traitorously through her abdomen before she nodded and felt as his mouth pressed firmly against her own. Her eyes fell closed and her head tilted to better accept his mouth on her own. Deftly his lips began to work against hers, soft and yet firm, almost yielding.

Kathryn felt Oliver's arms as he supported her, her palms resting on the upper part of his arms for balance. She could feel the coiled muscles under his button down, surprised at how taut his frame was. He was lean and tall when he walked, but his arms were solid and warm. She felt his chest against her own, feeling confused at the calm she was experiencing. Her nails dug into his shirt, the tactile experience overwhelming her.
Shouldn't she be afraid? This contact was strictly verboten. So then why was she kissing him back?

Oliver could barely believe what was happening. He had her in his arms and she was grasping onto him, her lips starting to respond to his own almost hungrily. He felt her hips shift, tentatively brushing against his own. Without thinking or asking, Oliver's hands grasped her tighter and she gasped against him, her hands travelling up his chest until they wrapped around his neck, deepening the kiss and causing her brain to snap back into reality.

*What am I doing?*

"You're doing such good work," Thredson whispered as they pulled apart breathing heavily and searching her face with his gaze. "Shall we continue? Can you do that?"

"My legs are a bit tired," she offered. Truthfully she could barely stand. This entire exercise had sent her body for a loop and she felt weak all over. Thredson nodded and motioned towards the couch at the corner of his office.

"Is this acceptable?"

It was daunting, seeing that sofa and knowing what was to continue.

_You know you have to do this. You need to get out of Briarcliff. And you need to explore this new feeling. This is him helping you. There is a chance to be cured. Just think - a normal life!_

"We can stop at any time," Thredson reminded her once more, his lips swollen from their previous coupling. His hair was ruffled, his shirt still open and strangely he looked even more intimidating than when he was all put together. Suddenly a feeling almost foreign to her began to worm its way through her. Seeing him there, looking up at her with what she could only imagine was desire was causing something strange to happen.

_She wanted_ to be touched.

She wanted his hands on her. This man that looked at her with such curiosity. How is it he could bring this out in her? She nodded, unable to speak as she sat beside him on the couch stiffly. The springs creaked as her frame settled onto it. Thredson was glancing furtively at her behind his glasses almost at a loss of what to do next. It was as if they were two sweethearts out on a date for the first time and despite what had just occurred she felt distant from the experience. Strange and foreign.

Finally he cleared his throat loudly, causing her to start. "Shall we begin?"

His tone was firm, brusque. She appreciated the detached professionalism. At least someone was in control here. She felt silly for the rush of passion that was starting to go through her. No wonder patients formed such attachments with their therapists.

But he was bringing out this new part in her. This part she found she liked quite a bit.

She shifted until she was facing him on the couch. She looked into his face, so close to her own. She could see the soft curve of his lips, the dark eyes that seemed to hypnotize her. All of a sudden he wasn't just Dr. Thredson. He was a man. A man who was looking at her with a look that set her alight. Could she do this?

_STOP over thinking, Kathryn. That's your whole problem. Go with your feeling._

Something within grabbed a hold of her and before she could over think it, she launched her mouth against his, surprising him. He made a small sound in his throat before letting his eyes fall closed.
She let her lips trail along the corner of his mouth before surrendering herself to the experiment. A strange sensation had started within her core, confusing her.

Her hands went to the collar of his dress shirt and she could feel as his hands cupped her soft cheeks, pulling her mouth eagerly to his. For a moment it didn't feel like they were patient and doctor. It felt like the desire two lonely people could share and she let herself give in. For the first time in her life her body was not on guard and she allowed him passage. She let her arms fall to either side of her body and let him dominate her form.

*He understands me.*

She didn't know where the thought came from, but it coursed through her. It was if he understood her pain as unlikely as that was. She was confused at this sensation he was beginning to draw out of her. He seemed to grow bolder with each passing second, his lips becoming more hungry for her own. Slowly he pressed into her, guiding her to lay flat on the sofa. His arms on either side of Kathryn, her arms laying weakly at her sides. Oliver could feel himself slowly unravelling as his mouth claimed Kathryn's. His hips were beginning to press against hers, feeling the sweet apex of her thighs. The song continued on in the background, breathy and erotic.

"Touch me," he breathed as he continued to kiss her. Kathryn obeyed happily, her hands coming to rest in his thick hair, feeling the glossy smoothness. She could feel his erection at her inner thigh through his slacks, thick and warm and she felt the heat begin to pool at her groin. They continued kissing, the movement of their mouths the only sound in the room as the record had now concluded.

"Here," Oliver whispered against her lips, pulling her hand from his hair and placing it over his clothed groin.

Kathryn shivered, her hands slowly massaging him through his slacks, watching as the Doctor's face above her went from wonton desire to intense arousal. His eyes were shut tightly and he hissed between his teeth lowly. She couldn't believe she was causing this reaction in him. And for that matter she couldn't believe the sensations that were swirling through her, that this man was causing her body to respond this way. He groaned lowly into the curve of her neck and the sofa creaked under her as he pressed himself further against her body.

Kathryn shivered as he moved his down her jaw line and to her neck. A new ripple of pleasure went through her as he kissed her neck softly. His hands beginning to travel from her collar downwards...

Suddenly there was a rap at the door and their hearts jumped.

Tilting her head back Kathryn could see the shadow of someone's feet at the crack of the door. Thredson was stiff against her, his eyes were wide and staring at the door.

"Doc? You in there?"

Thredson pulled back from Kathryn as if she were on fire. His left hand gripped the cushion beside her for balance, the other on the back of the sofa to keep himself from lying completely on top of the frightened girl. The entire situation became remarkably stark as his patient started up at him with the most unreadable expression in her chocolate brown eyes. He had crossed a line. A very very strict line.

"Yes?" Thredson offered with a strangled voice. "What is it, Carl?"

"Sister Mary Eunice wants a word. She's in her office, wants you to come up."

"Just a moment," Thredson managed to speak evenly then, his voice betraying nothing of what had
just been going on, his body still firmly against Kathryn's, his erection still nestled comfortably between her clothed thighs. He glanced from the door to her face as he spoke next. "I'm just finishing up with a patient."

"Sounds good, Doc. I'll tell her to expect you."

Slowly his footsteps ceased and the two figures stared down at one another a moment, unsure what to do. Eventually it was Kathryn who pushed herself away from Thredson on the couch, her face blanching and her heart moving erratically within her chest at what had just happened. What have I done? The sofa creaked angrily under her protestations as Thredson hopped up from the sofa gracefully, glancing down at her worriedly and running a hand through his hair anxiously. She had never seen him like this, out of sorts like this.

And suddenly she realized that Mary Eunice had been right. He didn't want to help her. He wanted her for sex. How demeaning.

"This was a bad idea," he insisted, unable to meet her eyes. "Completely unprofessional. You should go."

Kathryn stood quickly, grabbing her sweater and pulling it on as she prepared to leave his office, tears flowing freely down her cheeks. Her body had betrayed her and now this had happened. How was she to ever trust anyone? She was at the door when she felt his arms around her shoulders, spinning her to face him. "You've done nothing wrong," Oliver whispered urgently, needing her to believe him.

"I've never had anything like this happen with a patient. I don't know what's come over me. Please be assured that you are completely in the right here. It's I who acted inappropriately."

Kathryn's dark eyes were alight with that all-too-familair fire from their first session. All the trust they had built together came smashing down. He looked at her mussed hair and swollen lips and wanted desperately to press her against the door and continue. He wanted to bury himself within her and have her cry out his name. He was shocked when he felt the harsh slap of her hand against his cheek, causing him to step back in surprise, loosening his grip on her.

"Sister Mary Eunice was right," Kathryn muttered under her breath before wrenching harshly from Oliver's grasp and running into the night, leaving Oliver looking after the girl in total confusion.
Oliver knocked on Sister Jude's office door before walking in. Sister Mary Eunice sat on the large, looming desk, her eyes taking him in as he entered, closing the door behind him. She looked rather well which was a shock.

"You're looking much better Sister," Oliver observed clinically.

The woman seemed much recovered after her fainting spell at the Potter exorcism. If anything the woman looked more alert, more confident. He was surprised to see such a change.

"Thank you, Doctor."

Sister Mary Eunice looked at him predatorily, her gaze taking in the swollen lips, the flushed cheeks, the slightly crooked tie. She had never seen Dr. Thredson look like this before. Oliver nodded awkwardly, uncomfortable under the woman's watchful gaze, his hands in his pocket as he spoke.

"You needed to see me?"

Sister Mary Eunice smiled, nodding slowly before nodding towards the empty chair in front of her.

"Please take a seat, Doctor Thredson"

Oliver did as instructed, feeling strange as he did so. He absently brought a hand to his head, smoothing his hair. He wondered if he looked askew. He wondered if he'd straightened his tie enough, or fixed his hair. It had been quite mussed.

"You seem out of sorts, Doctor."

\textit{Can she see it on me? The look of guilt?}

Images of Kathryn moaning against his mouth, her hands on his skin were causing him to grow uncomfortable. God how he'd wanted to continue. His palms itched then, wanting so badly to be on her body. When she'd slapped him he'd grown immediately hard, wanting to fuck her roughly against the door until she came with a force unlike he'd ever witnessed. But he couldn't. It wasn't like that. She was his patient. She trusted him. So he'd watched her run off, his cheek stinging from her hand.

And now he sat here with Sister Mary Eunice, trying his best not to appear aroused. He picked a piece of imaginary lint from the kneecap of his pants, trying to appear as bored as possible.

"Not at all," Oliver smiled wanly in the nun's direction. "Just a long day."

"Of course," Sister Mary Eunice said in a voice that betrayed she didn't believe him one bit. She grinned wolfishly, almost as if she were reading his thoughts. "Speaking of which Doctor, I understand that we have a bit of a...problem."

"Problem?"

"Yes, a problem." Mary Eunice swung down from the desk, slowly walking circles around Oliver's chair as she spoke, her smile saccharine. Her fingertips trailed the top of the chair, making Oliver twitch inadvertently. "It's come to my attention that you have far too many patients and too little time to give them the quality attention they deserve."
Oliver glanced over at her in surprise. How forward thinking of her to acknowledge this. He most certainly hadn't seen that comment coming. He gaped at her as she continued speaking.

"Now if I recall you were here for the Kit Walker case. But if the rumors are true, and let's face it-" Sister Mary Eunice gave a conspiratorial wink, "they usually are, then you've also taken into your care a certain Miss Hatcher?"

"Yes."

"A spirited one that Hatcher," Sister Mary Eunice said with a chuckle and a flick of her wrist. "But a case that can be easily passed along to one of the nuns here. She no longer requires your assistance, Doctor."

Oliver went cold at those words, unsure of how to protest in a way that was professional when Mary Eunice continued passionately, interrupting him.

"But there's someone else I'd love for you to take a look at. A certain Miss Winters. She would really benefit from your council."

Oliver felt his body grow stiff as she spoke the name aloud. He looked up at her to see her giving him a knowing look. It was the same look the Potter boy had given him as he intoned about his collection. Oliver felt a subtle shiver run through his body as Sister Mary Eunice tilted her head to the left playfully. She was baiting him. Making him make a choice between Kathryn and Lana. He knew what this was, this decision in front of him.

"So, what do you say, Doctor?"

********

Kathryn groaned at the sound of someone knocking on her cell door. She had been in here only a few moments, hoping to escape the hideous evening that she'd had. Between Sister Mary Eunice and that horrible way she'd been treated at the end of her session Kathryn wanted nothing more than to sleep. She raised herself up on her elbows, looking over her shoulder to see Carl the orderly looking at her with a menacing scowl.

"It's movie night in the common room," Carl boomed, whipping the sheets off her bed. Kathryn winced, bringing herself to a seated position on the bed. She glanced up at Carl, his pockmarked face glaring down at her.

"I'm tired," Kathryn bit back, rubbing her eyes tiredly and wishing he would just leave. "I don't want to watch it. I just want to sleep."

"Well this is mandatory," Carl muttered irritated, pulling the girl out of her bed harshly by her elbow. "So get up."

Kathryn drew herself hurriedly from his grasp before she sighed darkly and pulled on a sweater. Following the man out of her cell she cast a wayward glance back at her bed. It may not be much but at least it had been some sort of reprieve from the day she'd had.

She couldn't stop thinking of Dr. Thredson's hands all over her body. How he'd let her explore every inch of him, encouraging her to touch his... She felt herself reddening at the memory. It seemed so faint and fuzzy as if it had never truly happened.

"Hurry up, patient," Carl called over to her shuffling form. Kathryn did as she was told, her eyes glancing in every crook and cranny they passed, her heart in her throat at the prospect of seeing a
glint of glasses or the scent of Old Spice aftershave. She didn't think she could handle seeing him right now. Not when she was feeling so strange.

She followed Carl dejectedly, into the crowded common room where people were talking loudly about the film. Some laughing, some moaning. Others were sitting stunned and dazed from the medication. Pepper sat up happily, her hands clasped together in excitement. Sister Jude was winding her way up to the front of the room, the white screen making her look even darker.

"Welcome one and all to Briarcliff Manor's inaugural movie night," Sister Jude said as she veered down the makeshift aisle, the world appearing warped and wild to her. "Whether this evening marks the start of a beloved tradition or just another bitter disappointment is entirely up to you!"

Kathryn couldn't help but observe that Sister Jude looked strange though. Teetering as she spoke and excessively emotional. Kathryn took a quick glance around the crowded room to see if a familiar face occupied one of the seats.

No sign of Thredson.

Kathryn felt herself sigh in relief at that.

Carl ushered her to the front of the room, sitting her in the front row of the film. Two seats over a half-asleep Latino woman gazed up at Jude in disinterest.

Jude was still rambling at the front. Kathryn kept her eyes on Jude, trying not to smirk at the woman's bizarre behavior. She seemed drunk! But nun's didn't drink, did they? Kathryn watched on as this trainwreck of a speech concluded with Sister Jude calling Charles Laughton a whoopsie.

As the thunder struck, Kathryn did her best to keep her laughter concealed behind her hands.

*******

Oliver walked slowly into the common room, seeing that the movie was about to start. After his bizarre meeting with Sister Mary Eunice he was eager to see Lana. It felt strange having the nun's blessing to continue contact with Lana - encouraging him to start treatment with her. He saw her a few rows up from the front, a seat empty next to her. He licked his lips absently as he drew beside it.

She glanced up at him as he lowered himself into the seat next to her, giving her hand an absent pat of comfort. He couldn't believe he'd done it.

There there, mother he thought with an inward grin.

He felt her gaze on him at the contact, but his attention was on the familiar head of Kathryn Hatcher. She sat at the front of the room, her arms crossed and her attention elsewhere. Oliver felt his breath catch in his throat. How was he going to get through this evening with Kathryn sitting mere rows away from him? Suddenly Jude had become emotional. Staggering her way down the middle aisle they'd made with the chairs.

"Don't be afraid of the dark. At the end of a storm is a golden sky and the bright silver song of a lark. Walk on through the wind, walk on through the rain. Though your dreams may be tossed and blown, walk on. Walk on with hope in your heart.” At this point Sister Jude's voice started to crack and her eyes became blurry.

Oliver glanced at her as did everyone else as she passed. But his gaze drew over to Kathryn to see her watching Sister Jude's bizarre act. She was smiling at the woman's antics before she felt the gaze of Dr. Thredson upon her. Her dark eyes flickered to his face and she blanched. He was unsure what
to do or how to proceed so he gave a short nod in her direction. She scowled immediately at him before whipping around to face the screen.

"You'll never walk alone. Never walk...but she was alone. Tiny little fragile thing. Out in the world...." Jude was mumbling to herself now and her words incomprehensible. "It was not rain and it was not wind. It was something altogether else."

Thunder clapped loudly again causing everyone to shudder and some of the patients to cry out in terror. Jude suddenly stopped, wiping the tears from her face.

"Lights!" she crowed before exiting the room.

"What was that all about?" Oliver asked distractedly as Sister Mary Eunice entered as if on cue, marching her way to front row of seats, pushing one of the patients roughly. Oliver's gaze glanced over to Kathryn, seeing as the girl across the aisle grew nervous, wrapping her arms around herself. Oliver was crestfallen, but his mood greatly increased as Lana spoke to him in hushed tones.

"Oh she's bats, or haven't you noticed?" Lana intoned darkly before looking at Oliver hopefully. "Did you speak to Wendy?"

Oliver dragged his gaze from the back of Kathryn's head over to Lana once more. He didn't know how to word what had happened. He had to appear solemn. He always enjoyed this part of the game. The acting. It was always a challenge that he found to be a rather creative pursuit. He wondered if in another life people would have been watching him up there on the movie screen.

"What?" Lana inquired at his gaze.

"I tried to phone," Oliver whispered. "But there was no answer so I went to check on her. I rang the bell but the door was unlocked so I let myself in. Miss Winters, I know how alarming this is but I'm afraid that something might have happened to your friend."

"What do you mean?" Lana's voice was catching in her throat, her eyes wide with terror.

"There were certain similarities between Miss Peyser's disappearance and some of the other victims."

"Other victims?" Lana could feel the world getting swirly before her eyes, blinking rapidly to remain focussed on Dr. Thredson's pale face illuminated by the glow of the picture playing before them.

"What are you saying?"

Oliver glanced over at Kit meaningfully. Lana followed his gaze. Bloody face. It wasn't Kit. She felt a stab of cold regret worm its way down her chest. She had been so wrong about the boy. She had foiled her only chance at escape thinking it was Kit.

"That I have some concerns-

"SHHHHH!" came the rough hiss of Sister Mary Eunice, trying to enjoy the film. Oliver lowered his voice, causing Lana to lean in. "That I have some concerns. Concerns which I've related to the police but unfortunately they're so invested in the idea that they've already caught their maniac that they won't even entertain the idea that maybe they haven't."

Lana was looking into his face with absolute devastation and internally Oliver thought he should be in the very pictures they were watching. He could act better than any of these clowns.

"But they have caught him, haven't they?" Lana urged. "Haven't they?"
"To be honest I'm not so sure," Oliver replied, trying to look concerned.

The movie continued on in front of them, but Oliver's gaze was caught by that of Sister Mary Eunice who observed the two sitting together and gave Oliver a surreptitious wink before turning back to face the screen. Oliver tried his best to be engaged with the film but it was tedious. Half naked women danced along the screen having bath's. He felt himself searching for something to say to Lana, anything to get their conversation to continue.

"It's really not appropriate for me to be seeing this," Lana whispered all of a sudden motioning to the women on screen. "Considering my condition. Sister Jude will understand. I'm going to the ladies."

Oliver faltered, not knowing how to keep her attention and instead watching as she moved past him in the aisle, rushing out the door to the hallway. She slipped through his grasp so easily. He looked back to the movie dejectedly, trying to be engaged but feeling the entire time as if his gaze was being pulled downwards and to the left. Miss Hatcher. She was trying her best to keep calm in the current circumstance.

She glanced at Sister Mary Eunice a moment in fear before turning back to the screen. She was openly not glancing over at him and he found himself upset by this. He glanced over absently to see that Kit and Grace's chairs were deserted. His gaze glancing over to the now empty seat to his right and the connections were suddenly made.

They were gone. Escaping.

He felt a cold hand wrap around his heart and he rushed over to Frank at the projector. Without Lana this would never work. His plan simply couldn't work without her.

"Excuse me," Oliver whispered to Frank.

The man didn't even glance at him, his eyes fixated upon the titillation on the screen.

"What?"

"There appear to be some patients missing," Oliver said loudly, irritated at the man's distraction. "Were you aware of that?"

Frank suddenly broke his attention from the titillation on screen and swept the room with a gaze before wincing and standing.

"Oh shit."

He rushed over to Sister Mary Eunice, rousing her from her chair and telling her of the situation. She fled from the room, seeming irritated at the interruption. She glanced over at Oliver with an unreadable look before exiting the room completely.

Oliver exhaled lowly, hoping that he had alerted the staff in enough time to recover at least Miss Winters. He was so eager to continue his time with her, his fingertips nearly electric with the thought of their time together. She would make such a wonderful mother, he just knew it. But without her physical figure here, he could feel his attention drifting to the woman who sat in the front row, alone and now more at ease.

*I need to focus on Miss Winters.*

But even as he thought it, his legs were moving in the direction of Kathryn Hatcher. Before she could protest, he took the seat beside her, the rest of the room blind to his actions. They were all
fixated on the film and all the individuals in charge were gone, except for Frank who was glued back to the picture.

Oliver's shoulder bumped against hers and he inhaled gently that same heady scent of lavender and soap. She didn't move an inch, instead keeping her gaze on the projected image before her. He had to make amends with her. He had crossed the very strict line between patient and physician. He felt her trembling slightly against him and he felt a rush of hot shame invade him.

"I don't know how to properly apologize for my actions," Oliver whispered, his eyes focussed on the screen. To anyone else they would look as if they were just watching the film side-by-side. "Please understand that this has never happened to me before."

Kathryn was silent, her hands folded on her lap. She held her gaze up at the bright movie in front of her, watching absently as the Christians were eaten. She was upset by the imagery and wanted to leave but felt she was stuck. She could feel Dr. Thredson's warm arm against hers and she did not pull away. She found to her dismay that she was comforted by it. She was ashamed to admit that their tryst in the office had done something to her. Something inside her that had been broken was being mended and it was because of him. It was because of his methods and teaching.

"I've been instructed that I can no longer work with you," Oliver continued lowly, his voice a silken purr. "I thought that may bring you some comfort."

He felt her grow rigid beside him, her gaze slowly turning onto his face. She spoke softly trying not to draw attention.

"Why?"

"The Sister simply wants me to turn my attention to those who need my help more. And after our altercation today, frankly I thought you would be relieved."

The girl fell silent beside him and it wasn't until he heard the softly hitched breath at his side that he looked down at her. She was sobbing gently into her chest, her eyes shut tightly and tears slipping down her cheeks at an alarming rate. She spoke in a soft hiccup, her shoulders quaking with every shaken intake of breath.

"But I need you, Dr. Thredson."

Oliver was shocked at this admission and he gaped down at her. After their horrible experience today he had just assumed that she would be thankful to have him thrust from her life. He wanted to comfort her then, to gather her up into his arms like she'd been in his office. But they were in such a public place. Instead he snaked his left hand from its place on his kneecap over to her hands which lay in her lap. He felt the warmth of her fingertips upon him and he felt his breath leave him. She clasped her fingers around his left hand tightly, her hiccups slowing.

Oliver felt an illicit thrill from their actions. He knew they could be caught at any moment and yet the contentment he felt with her skin against his was almost like a drug. He couldn't stop. Instead his thumb traced a small circle within the smooth palm of her hand, lulling her into a state of calm.

"Don't give up on me," she whispered suddenly, her eyes on the screen.

Oliver felt his chest swell at those words and despite Mary Eunice's suggestion, he knew he could never abandon Kathryn Hatcher like everybody else had in this world. He kept his eyes on the screen but his voice was thick with meaning.

"Never."
The doors to the common room banged open with a clunk and the two immediately broke apart from one another, trying to look as natural as possible.

Sister Jude was screaming at Frank about letting the patients escape and turning the lights on. The patients started to complain, informing her that the film wasn't over yet.

Oliver stood sharply, walking over to Sister Jude who was ranting now that movie night was over and that all the characters died. The patients moaned and groaned as they headed back to their cells - their first hours of entertainment in a decade completely ruined.

As Oliver made his way down the aisle he couldn't help but be shocked by the appearance of Lana, Grace and Kit all sitting beside one another, shivering and wet. The patients were complaining as they shuffled from the room and the three fugitives looked shakily from one to another before standing and worming their way into the zombie-like crowd. Oliver smirked a bit as he drew to the back of the room, his arms crossed in front of him as he surveyed the chaotic scene before him.

Things could continue according to plan.
The Rock

Lana walked slowly to the office of Dr. Thredson, her body alight with hope. She had been brought her directly after breakfast by an unnamed orderly. She entered the room boldly, her eyes falling on the familiar frame of Dr. Thredson.

"Ah, Lana. Welcome."

He stood, offering a hand that she shook before sitting down at the chair opposite his desk. He smiled warmly, smoothing down his tie as he sat.

"So," he opened the file on his desk with a flourish. "It appears that you attempted an escape last night."

Lana said nothing, wondering if there was a strange form of punishment in store for her. She had thought Dr. Thredson to be a kind man, but perhaps he was just as bad as the rest of them. He raised a cigarette to his lips, inhaling slowly, almost seductively. She frowned, wishing she had one herself.

"Here's the thing Lana," Dr. Thredson said to the woman who sat across from him, drawn and pale. Smoke curled from the edge of his lips as he exhaled, his cigarette in hand. "You don't belong in here. You're not a danger to society. You were right to try to escape."

Lana looked at him a moment before snickering darkly, shaking her head at his words, surprising him.

"You headshrinkers are all the same. According to your Bible, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, I'm sick. I have an illness."

"I believe I can help you," Oliver replied, the smoke blurring her from his sight a moment. "I'd like to try if you'll let me."

Lana blinked slowly. "But I'm not even your patient."

"I see myself in you," Dr. Thredson replied with a strange and cryptic smile. "Your thoughtful and intelligent. You have something to offer the world and they can't keep you in here if they don't have a current diagnosis. If I can convince them that I've cured you they'll be forced to release you."

Lana felt herself bristling as he spoke, her eyes growing dim and her hands clenching at her sides.

"Doctor I have been this way since...since I can remember," she spoke slowly and irritated. "There is no cure."

Oliver felt a flash of irritation course through him at her stubborn attitude. Here he was offering her salvation and she wasn't even prepared to try? What kind of mother would she make?

"Your choice," he replied coolly, closing her file firmly. "I'm not like Sister Jude, I won't force you to do anything. But I also won't be here very much longer. Another week if we're lucky. So if you want help getting out of this shit-hole we better jump in."

Lana gulped thickly, her nerves suddenly fraying at his words. She looked across the desk at the man's eyes, their almost menacing ferocity. He was her only hope. But she couldn't imagine what he could hope to cure her with.
"You're a fish out of water Lana, gasping for life. It won't end well." Oliver leaned forward on the desk, his face imploring. "Trust me."

*****

Kit glanced over at the girl with the dark hair and eyes, his own face contorted in sympathy. Out of everyone here she had seemed the most alone. Despite what seemed like a very active mind (he'd noticed she'd gone through six books since he'd first seen her) she seemed completely shut off from the rest of the world.

She had her knees drawn up, her arms around them and she was looking out the window with a look of such acute sorrow that Kit felt tears spring to his eyes.

"You're too soft," Grace said lowly, watching the exchange and moving her pawn to take Kit's rook. The two sat across from one another at the chess board, trying to ignore the fact that many of the pieces were missing.

"She's fine."

"She doesn't look fine," he replied with a head shake, moving his pawn up a space absently. "She looks so alone there. So scared."

"Everyone is scared here, Kit."

Kit looked back to Grace, his hand coming to rest on the girl's forearm a moment before the guards shouted hands off. He removed his grip, his eyes still glued to her face.

"But at least we have a plan for escaping," Kit replied confidently. "And we got each other. What's she got?"

"She has Doctor Thredson," Grace replied, knocking his bishop over. "I've seen the way he looks at her. She's his pet project."

"Whadda ya mean, Grace?" Kit inquired, suddenly unsure. Dr. Thredson seemed like a nice enough guy, but as Doctor Arden's own special pet himself, Kit felt a stab of fear go through him at the thought of this poor girl being someone else's guinea pig. Grace exhaled dramatically through her lips, looking at Kit with a bored expression.

"What I mean is that I have been here a long time. I have seen a lot of shrinks in my day. And the way he was looking at her at the movie last night was anything but professional."

Kit opened his eyes wide in surprise. Would a doctor really do that with his own patient? Kit leapt up, preparing to talk to the girl to see the scoop when he felt Grace's arm on his sweater, pulling him back to a seated position.

"Are you insane? Leave the girl alone."

"But I gotta warn her," Kit replied in earnest, confused at Grace shaking her head.

"No."

"Why?"

"Because Kit," Grace replied sternly, her hands finally loosening from his sweater as a guard neared them. "I think she likes it."
Oliver sat back in his chair, glancing up at the tiles on the ceiling before standing and stretching. He felt as if he'd been at his desk for hours. First Lana, then Kit. Kit had been the real challenge. Oliver had tried to be understanding, to help the boy come to some sort of closure. Empathising why he must have killed Alma because of societal pressures. He'd even walked him through the experience - how he must have done it step by step. Joanna Burton. Alison Rydell. But Kit had been firm. Arguing against the kindness that Oliver was trying to bestow on him.

Did he really think that he was going to fall for the spaceman routine?

Of course he hadn't killed the women Oliver had - but surely he had done in Alma. Then Lana bursting into his office hours later, insisting that she was ready for treatment. It had gone abysmally. But that was to be expected. He had to look like he was making some sort of attempt with her. The therapy with she and Daniel had gone just as expected - the retching into the bucket was even better than he'd anticipated after she'd touched the young man's genitals. Daniel had been upset - confused that this was not the same woman he had helped before. But he was always confused and so he went along with it.

Oliver had a plan from the start. Putting her in the horrible situation and then bringing her out again, safe on the other side. Why, he'd even 'smuggled' in the photo of her beloved Wendy. slipping it to her in the common room.

"They'll never let keep this," Lana had offered with a sorrowful headshake up at him.

"You only have to hide it until the end of the week," Oliver had replied, a small smile falling over his lips. "I'm leaving here on Friday and I am taking you with me. I don't know how yet, but I will not leave you in this place, Lana. That's a promise."

He had seen the happy tears slipping down her cheeks, and he had felt that sweet thrill of victory. Of a plan coming together.

But how to smuggle her out? That would be tough. He didn't want to be seen leaving the building with her. But how else to get her out? He frowned at that puzzle, turning to the window and looking into the grey day below. He saw the various figures walking around, most notably Pepper, skipping around the courtyard with a childlike energy that Oliver couldn't help but smile at. One of the nun's called out for her to calm down and help with the flowers.

Oliver had seen that some of the wards had been granted outdoor privileges in the last week and that pleased him even if it was Mary Eunice's doing. They needed the fresh air. He lit a new cigarette, tasting the sweet tobacco on his tongue before glancing out at a figure to the right of the field. She was leaning against a large, thick tree, her nose in the large book in her hands.

Oliver did a double take when he realized it was none other than Miss Hatcher. From his vantage he could see her outline clearly, the swell of her breasts under her blue inform, the dark hair falling into her eyes. He felt himself growing hard at the sight as he recalled their clandestine tryst the day before. Without thinking, he had unbuckled his slacks, slipping a pale hand beneath the waistband and grasped his hardening member.

Kathryn continued reading, unaware of the tall man that looked down at her from his office. She was enjoying the breeze of the day, biting her lips as she scanned the page, turning them quickly. She leaned against the tree bark, feeling its rough texture on her back. She crooked her left knee, resting the sole of her foot on the tree behind her. Oliver focussed on her hands, the smooth white fingertips, pumping his shaft as she continued. He could almost imagine it was her touching him here in his
office. He leaned his left hand on the wall for support, his eyes still trained on Kathryn.

She brought a pale fingertip to her mouth and licked it absently before using it to turn the page.

"Jesus," Oliver groaned lowly in his throat at that sight, his movements becoming more jerky as he watched her. He could feel himself coming close to release and he grew slightly dizzy from the diverted blood flow.

When would he see her again? He had been so wrapped up in his plan with Lana that Kathryn had been pushed to the back of his mind that day. He could also admit that he was nervous to approach her. Last night at the movies all seemed forgiven. But she had strode right by him this morning, her eyes downcast and her body language signaling she didn't wish to interact with him.

He was about to think further when out of the corner of his eyes he saw a figure slinking towards Kathryn with a predatory glare. His hands slipped from their ministrations and he buckled his pants. There was something going on here, something wrong and he could feel it. He leaned his head against the cool pane of glass at the window, peering as best he could to see what was going on. A young woman Dr. Thredson didn't recognize from behind advanced slowly on Kathryn from around the tree, her movements slow and silent.

"Look up, Kathryn," Oliver quietly urged under his breath, his eyes fixed on her unknowing form. "See her."

But she didn't. Her eyes were firmly glued to the book in front of her. She looked completely content, a small smile upon her lips. Without forethought, Oliver raised his fists and began to bang on the window, calling out her name. Of course she heard nothing at the distance and didn't even notice when the girl was upon her, a rock poised.

Oliver could almost hear the crack of the rock against her skull from his office. He didn't even see her crumple to the ground before he was down the hallway in a mad sprint, his cigarette long forgotten behind him. He dashed down the corridors, bumping hurriedly into figures left and right.

"Get out of the way!"

He rushed down the steps down to the courtyard, his heart hammering in his chest. A few nuns were circled around the fallen Kathryn, the phantom girl with the rock was nowhere to be seen. He pushed himself through the crowd of patients who were growing upset with the distraction. He came upon her suddenly, her hands on either side of her, her book forgotten in the tall grass. Oliver grimaced at the sight of the girl lying there. For the first time since he arrived Sister Jude looked relieved to see him.

"Doctor Thredson," she offered motioning to the prostrate young woman. Without thinking of how it looked, Oliver leaned down and turned her into his arms, jaw clenched tightly. Her face was pale and smooth in unconsciousness, some dirt smudged on her cheeks.

"I'm taking her to the infirmary," Oliver told Sister Jude quickly turning to rush up the stairs. He looked up just in enough time to see Mary Eunice fixing him with a small smile and a shake of her head at the door.

"Amazing," Mary Eunice whispered in a voice only he could hear. "You arrived so quickly, Doctor. Miraculous that you would be here."

He ignored her hissed comments, gathering the girl even closer to his chest and brushing past a very unimpressed Sister Mary Eunice.
Thredson carried the young woman swiftly up the corridor and down the stairs to the infirmary. She was still deeply unconscious and Oliver could feel a tremor of panic go through his form. The infirmary was empty as usual, save for the young nun-in-training who sat silently next to one of the beds, her head bowed in prayer. Oliver placed Kathryn onto the nearest bed quickly, his eyes wild as he turned to the young nun.

"I need a basin of warm water and a cloth, quickly!"

The girl nodded, scurrying away down the hall and leaving Oliver alone with Kathryn's sleeping form. Her arms and legs were askew on the mattress, her head tilted to the side a strange angle. He grasped her shoulders tightly, his voice catching as he called out to her.

"Miss Hatcher," Oliver shouted into the sleeping girl's face. "Can you hear me? Wake up!" He shook her gently, hoping to see a reaction.

Nothing.

She lay with her lips slightly parted, her face smooth of worry. Was she breathing? He couldn't quite see, his glasses fogged from his exertion. He threw them from his face onto the bed, his face inches from her own. He couldn't hear or see breathing. He placed a trembling hand to her forehead, the other forefinger lifted her chin. He placed his cheek against her chin, listening intently... and then a flood of relief washed over him. She was indeed breathing.

He straightened her legs out, pulling off her tennis shoes and slipping her form under the wool blanket provided. He gathered her under the neck and pulled her until her head was sitting comfortably atop the pillow.

As he pulled back something caught Oliver's eye and he glanced down at his arm to see blood drying slowly on his shirt. She was bleeding from the head. He searched her thick hair, coming upon a large gash that was slowly trickling blood. He quickly rolled up his sleeves as the nun-in-training was back with the basin and cloth. She rushed back out of the room as he barked at her to grab a nylon bandage to wrap the girl's head with. He quickly washed his hands before gently cleaning Kathryn's wound of dirt. He tried to steady his breathing before pressing the clean cloth to the wound firmly.

The girl groaned a moment and Oliver nearly cried out in relief. But she didn't open her eyes. He stared at her placid face, her dark lashes against her pale cheeks. She was breathing lowly, her chest rising and falling shallowly. He was relieved to note the bleeding hadn't soaked through the cloth.

"Wake up, Kathryn."

He didn't care that he was using her first name. All he cared was that she could open her eyes once more. To look up at him in that way she did. His guilt was enormous. If he'd kept her safe, if he hadn't scared her yesterday she may have been in his office this morning. Minutes later he could see that the wound had stopped bleeding and the nun-in-training had returned with what he'd asked for. He was thankful that Kathryn wouldn't need stitches. The young girl watched him as he wound the bandage around Kathryn's head, silent and interested.

"You can leave," Oliver told her over his shoulder without looking up. She nodded, exiting quietly.

Oliver finished his bandaging, his job done and felt immediately exhausted. He had been going on so much adrenaline that suddenly he felt he would fall asleep right there. He glanced to his right, seeing a chair and pulled it to the side of the bed. Kathryn's breathing was still even. He pulled one of her arms out from under the blanket, placing it on top and feeling for her pulse. It was still there, even and dim, but it was there.
He sighed gently in relief, finally collapsing onto the chair. He held her hand tightly in his, running an absent finger over her smooth flesh. She didn't stir. For once he didn't care that he had such ease of access to her body. All he wanted was for her to wake up. He lowered his head to the mattress, his hand still clutching hers as he fell into a deep sleep.

He didn't know how much time had passed but he felt the gentle tap of someone's hand on his shoulder. He flinched, sitting up abruptly. He realized he was still holding Kathryn's hand and quickly released it. Sister Mary Eunice and a tall, thin bald man with a goatee were looking down at him blurrily.

"Are you alright, Doctor Thredson?" Sister Mary Eunice was looking down at him with a mixture of humor and concern.

"Quite alright," Oliver said, clearing his throat and standing. "Just ensuring that Miss Hatcher didn't take a turn for the worse."

"Oh, how caring of you. Well, Dr. Arden will take over for now," Sister Mary Eunice insisted with a grim smile as she drew over to him, watching the panic slide over Oliver's face. "It's time you went home for the night. Got some real sleep. You've had a long day."

"Oh it's not a problem," Oliver insisted, rubbing his eyes sleepily. "I'm fine to stay here. I'm sure Dr. Arden has better things to do."

"I insist," Mary Eunice emphasized, gripping his shoulder tightly and leading him from the bed. "Dr. Arden is the best doctor in the entire state. He'll be sure to take good care of Kathryn."

"I assure you I'll do all within my power," Dr. Arden offered solemnly. Oliver tensed, not wanting to leave the girl's side but also not wanting to cause such a fuss that they was obviously found out for their indiscretion. If he was tossed from the hospital there was no telling when they would release Kathryn.

"Wonderful," he offered through clenched teeth, forcing a dark smile. "I'll be heading off then."

"You forgot these," Sister Mary Eunice drawled, plucking his glasses from the end of Kathryn's bed. She almost laughed as he took them from her, shoving them onto his face and rushing out the door. She glanced back over at Dr. Arden who was looking the girl over skeptically.

"So what do you think doctor? Do you think she qualifies for the surgery?"
Kathryn awoke with a gasp, her eyes wide and her breathing sharp. She felt like she couldn't breathe and so she coughed thickly, her hands balling into small fists at her side. A tall man she didn't recognize came rushing over, his face drawn with concern. He wore a white goatee and a bald head. His lab coat was starched white to match his facial hair and his hands were covered in veins and scratches.

"Miss Hatcher, how are you feeling?"

"Where am I? Who are you?"

Kathryn tried to raise herself up on her elbows but felt a stabbing pain take over her. She fell back onto the pillow, groaning and holding her head.

"I am Doctor Arden," the man replied, looking at her kindly. "I've been ordered to oversee you recovery. You're in the infirmary of Briarcliff. Do you remember why you're here?"

Kathryn blinked rapidly, her mind still whirring. Her vision was alternating with very clear to very blurry. She closed her eyes tightly, her body aching with a stabbing pain she'd never known.

"No. What happened?"

"No one saw exactly," Arden offered with a shrug. "But if I were to guess I'd say someone bopped you on the head with a rock."

Kathryn winced at the thought, her mind a blank. Why would someone do that to me?

"The last thing I remember was reading outside by a tree," Kathryn offered groggily. "How did I get here? Did you bring me here?"

"No, a Doctor Thredson I believe."

Kathryn stilled, making sure she gave nothing away with her body language. Dr. Thredson had brought her here? The thought of being in his arms was giving her a strange sensation. She pulled the blanket up to her chin, staring at the ceiling.

"Well, in my personal opinion you require a lot of rest and recovery," Dr. Arden continued. "Please try your best to sleep and I'll come in to check on you in a few hours. Sister Chastity here will be overseeing your progress until I return."

A young girl, a nun-in-waiting called Sister Chastity came over with a small cup of water.

"Here," she said handing the cup to Kathryn who drank it greedily before passing the empty glass back. Sister Chastity took the seat next to Kathryn, her bible opening to a passage she began to mutter quietly. Kathryn thanked her gently, already feeling the warm embrace of slumber tickling at her eyelids. She dozed off almost immediately, unaware of the chaos that was going on around her.

"I don't see why you couldn't use her," Sister Mary Eunice hissed from the other side of the Infirmary with Dr Arden. "She's young and healthy."

"Precisely," Arden replied hastily, his head shaking lowly at the woman he once admired. "To perform on her would be completely unethical. She has no physical ailment."
"You doctors are too much," Sister Mary Eunice laughed darkly in her chest. "Unethical? You? Is this a joke?"

"I don't appreciate your tone," Doctor Arden replied coolly, making sure Sister Chastity couldn't hear. "And I have other patients to deal with. Real patients. If you'll excuse me."

With that he was gone, sweeping from the room dramatically as Sister Mary Eunice glanced over at the sleeping Kathryn. She drew over to the figure, disgusted at her purity and innocence. She couldn't believe that Thredson was spending so much time with her when he could be dabbling in much darker pursuits.

Lana Winters was a perfect victim. She was the perfect figure for Thredson to corrupt further and Sister Mary Eunice had given him every opportunity. And he was spending time with the goodie two shoes in the bed? She shook her head in frustration. When was the drama going to start? The sweet, sweet sinful chaos that she craved? She needed someone to go under Arden's knife and quick. If not this little brat in the bed, someone else. Sister Chastity glanced up at Mary Eunice, an unreadable look on her young features.

"Seems I have to do everything myself," Mary Eunice muttered to herself before rushing from the room.

******

Kit and Grace stood on opposite sides of the wall, their voice echoing in the small spaces. Grace could hear Kit's soft weeping and she blamed herself for it. She had encouraged him. She had wrapped his arms around her body and she had wanted him to fuck her on the kitchen counter. And he had. And he had done well. If only they hadn't been caught by that stupid guard. Now they were stuck in these cells, close and yet so far from one another.

Jude's punishment? Sterilization.

Grace was horrified as was Kit. They were so young to have such a basic right stripped from them. And worse of all Kit had found out her lies. That she had killed her family, not some deranged monster. She had explained the sexual abuse. She had explained it all and it had hurt. But he hadn't been repulsed by her. He had loved her despite it all.

"Are you afraid?" Kit asked when the cries had stopped and their fate seemed sealed.

"No," Grace lied.

"I don't believe you," Kit replied, closing his eyes and imagining her in the cell with him. "Alma and I always wanted kids. We always talked about having two or three. Always tomorrow."

"Now they'll be no tomorrow," Grace whispered to herself.

A sudden movement at Kit's cell made him pause, looking up to see Sister Mary Eunice. She opened the cell door swiftly, looking at Kit with a look of benevolence. She and Kit spoke a moment in hushed tones before Grace could hear them more clearly.

"Sister Jude changed her mind," Sister Mary Eunice said gently, her eyes full of mercy. "She said you showed signs of true redemption. You're being released from solitary. Yay."

"What about Grace?"

"Oh, I haven't forgotten about her." Kit gave a wary glance at Sister Mary Eunice before he scurried
off to grab dinner.

Grace felt the immense relief flood through her and she rushed to the small window of the cell, seeing Sister Mary Eunice making her way over.

"I can't believe I'm saying this but I actually miss the food from the kitchen," Grace offered hopefully, her body pressed against the cell door.

"Oh you won't be eating tonight," the nun replied sharply. "No food for...12 hours before the procedure."

"You said Sister Jude changed her mind," Grace replied shakily, her eyes wide with terror.

"For Kit," the nun replied with a sardonic grin. She leaned forward, causing Grace to take a step backwards into the cell.

"Now rest up dear, you go under the knife in the morning."

**********

Oliver approached Kathryn's bed slowly, his face twisted in silent pain. He hated seeing her here with this large bandage around her head. He hated seeing her in this state. He wanted her awake and lively again. He wanted to bury his hands in her hair and have her kiss him with that ferocity of days ago.

"Wake up," he said softly, sighing darkly when she did not stir.

He walked the length of her bed, watching her from all angles. He dragged a tired forefinger down the girl's arm, resting on her pulse and waiting until he felt the comforting thump of her heart. Oliver was starting to feel something very strange for the girl in the bed. Nothing like this strange dark desire that had driven him since his infancy. This was something different, something he wished he could explain. It's a feeling of homecoming. Of safety.

*Something neither of us has ever known.*

She moaned softly in her sleep, curving into the fetal position and wincing slightly as she continued to sleep. She looked so vulnerable lying there that Oliver could almost shed at a tear at the sight of it. He wanted nothing more than to gather her into his arms.

Without thinking he had lowered himself onto the bed beside her. The scratch of the wool was felt through his suit as he brought his body parallel to her own. He could hear the girl's breathing and he slowly lowered his arm until it was wrapped around her middle. He curled himself until he mirrored her fetal position and he pulled her back against his chest, sighing in contentment at the feel of his arm wrapped around her warm frame.

It felt natural to hold her like this. Calming even. He could see a strand of hair on her cheek, moving slightly as he breathed. He brushed it gently from her cheek, enjoying how she did not pull away in sleep. He closed his eyes a moment, reveling in how this felt with her. He buried his head in her hair, smelling the soapy scent he would forever associate with her. She shivered in her sleep.

*I need to stop.*

He quickly tossed himself out of the bed, straightening his tie and shaking his head at his foolhardy behavior. What on earth was going on with him?
He smoothed the blankets around her once more and sat alongside Kathryn's bed, glancing up at her with a wounded look as he brought out the book from under his arm to read to her. He spoke to her in quiet steady tones as if she were his student and he were explaining something to her quite matter-of-factly.

"I always thought I would enjoy having a mother read stories to me when I was sick in bed," Oliver explained to her sleeping form, feeling brave enough to share this vulnerability when he knew she couldn't hear him. "I'm halfway done this book. Hopefully you'll enjoy it too."

He cracked the book open to where his leather bookmark lay. He placed the book on the bed, glancing up at her sleeping face once more before beginning where he had left off last night.

"It's despair at the lack of feeling, of love, of reason in the world. It's despair that anyone can even contemplate the idea of dropping a bomb or ordering that it should be dropped. It's despair that so few of us care. It's despair that there's so much brutality and callousness in the world. It's despair that perfectly normal young men can be made vicious and evil because they've won a lot of money. And then do what you've done to -"

"Oh."

Oliver stopped mid sentence, his head whipping around to see the young nun from last night looking at him in shock. She was holding a glass of water and a small tray of food from the kitchen. Oliver dropped the book on the bed, suddenly thankful that he hadn't been holding the girl's hand.

"I was reading to her," Oliver said rather stupidly before straightening up and hurriedly talking. "Studies have proven that reading to someone unconscious have a multitude of positive effects."

Sister Chastity nodded emphatically, unsure of what to say. She watched as the Doctor slipped an uncomfortable hand through his hair.

"Has she woken up yet?"

"She has," the nun replied gently, her eyes taking in the handsome man before her and noting his relief at her words. "But Dr. Arden insisted she get more sleep. She's been asleep two hours now. I was just about to wake her to see if she could eat some lunch."

Oliver nodded, a book in his hands. Sister Chastity read the title: *The Collector*. She could see that the Doctor was uncomfortable, embarrassed even at having been caught reading to her. He glanced back down at Kathryn once more before turning to Sister Chastity.

"Very well," he nodded and without so much as a goodbye Oliver Thredson had fled the room.
Kathryn watched sleepily as Lana crossed over the room to where this 'Anne Frank' sat. She had been raving all morning about Hans Gruper and how she had escaped. Kathryn had been too tired to speak with her, her head still aching at times. Lana looked even worse than usual, puffing on a cigarette and looking near tears. She was telling Anne to put away her pen and paper, but the girl wasn't listening.

"I hope you like pain," Lana had muttered before standing and walking over to the couches. She caught Kathryn's eyes giving the girl a ghost of a smile. "Kathryn right? I heard you were in the infirmary."

"Just got released this morning," Kathryn replied tiredly. "I'm still tired but feeling better. I don't even know what happened. I think someone hit me with a rock? Still not sure who."

Lana shook her head slowly, frustrated. She opened her mouth to say something when Dr. Arden stepped into the room. He gave Kathryn a small smile and nod. She nodded back gently. Dr. Arden had taken wonderful care of her during her two day reprieve from the Briarcliff madness. She had been treated to food, company and above all quiet.

A part of her admitted that she had been hurt that Dr. Thredson hadn't come to visit, but she suspected that was just the way of things. He was a busy man and she was not his only patient.

She was about to say something more to Lana when all of a sudden the Anne Frank woman jolted out of her seat at Arden screaming "NAZI" over and over again. Dr. Arden looked shaken and ran from the room as the orderlies grabbed the woman and yanked her from the Common Room. The two women stared after the scene in shock a moment before everything went back to normal. Sights like that were becoming terribly commonplace around Briarcliff.

Lana looked exhausted and keyed up. Kathryn glanced at her from under her bangs, wondering why a woman as sweet as Lana would be in here.

"Do you smoke?" Lana offered her a cigarette.

"Never could stomach them," Kathryn replied with a shake of her head. "But thank you."

Lana nodded before standing with a groan and shuffling off to the far end of the common room. She looked so dejected.

Kathryn turned back to the book on her lap, turning her attention away from her newest 'friend'.

Lana glanced out the window at the brightness of day, her eyes closing as she felt the warmth of the sun on her cheeks. Despite his promise she hadn't seen much of Dr. Thredson lately. He had been busy with Kit, working on his confession she assumed. Poor Kit had been dazed and confused unsure of what was up or down.

At the feeling of someone's arm on her shoulder she started, turning wide eyed to see the aforementioned Doctor looking down at her hard.

"We're leaving right after dinner," Oliver whispered under his breath, glancing furtively around as he continued. "Meet me by the front staircase at 6:00."

Lana could feel the emotion welling up behind her eyelids as she started into the warm and
comforting face of Oliver Thredson.

"Is this real?" she breathed, frightened that this was all some hallucination from the pills they forced her to take.

Oliver gave a little nod and smile. His eyes searched her own for some deeper meaning. "Don't be late," he intoned before turning from her. Lana watched him stride towards the other side of the common room, her heart leaping into her throat before she turned back to the window, afraid the guards might see her grateful smile.

Oliver was almost skipping out the door, preparing to head to the Infirmary when he spotted Kathryn. He felt his mouth go slack at the sight of her and his legs as if in control by someone else began their quick descent over to her.

She was awake.

He hadn't been back to the Infirmary after that humiliating experience when he'd been caught reading to her. She was proving to be a very dangerous distraction.

Her back was to him and the book had her engrossed. She didn't even feel his approach. Without warning a shadowy figure appeared at Oliver's elbow, turning him sharply in the other direction. He looked over in surprise at the strength of the woman.

"This way," Sister Mary Eunice tutted, shaking her head and guiding Oliver by the arm out into the corridor. He allowed himself to be carried along, giving one last glance to Kathryn before the doors closed behind them. When they were ensconced in the hallway Olive jerked his arm out of her reach. She stepped back, looking at him with a level gaze.

"What do you think you're doing, Sister?"

"I'm sorry to divert your Dr. Thredson," Sister Mary Eunice said as they walked down the corridor together. "But Kit Walker is waiting for you in your office. I believe you had an appointment?"

"Not until four this afternoon."

"I moved it up," Sister Mary Eunice said with a flat tone. "He had quite a busy schedule this afternoon. I'm sure you don't mind do you? No other patients on your roster today?"

Oliver frowned at her words, his brow furrowing. She gave him a knowing look as they continued walking. No matter, he would be quick with Kit and make his way back to the common room to see Kathryn before he left with Lana tonight.

Nice and simple.

"Well then, you'd better hurry," Sister Mary Eunice added with a small smirk. "Kit will be waiting."

Oliver started to walk quicker, eager to be out of the company of the increasingly sinister Sister Mary Eunice. He frowned in irritation as he entered the room. Kit looked so tired and worn out but full of nervous energy like a drug addict.

Kit was biting his fingernails when Oliver entered, but when he saw the Doctor he jolted in his seat, looking like he had just been shot with a thousand volts of electricity. Considering his fate, Oliver smirked a bit at the apt observation.

"Kit," Oliver nodded at him, rushing to put his materials on the desk. "I'm sorry to keep you
The young man had been all over him, his eyes wide with terror and his body language that of someone crazed. "Doc," Kit had jumped up from his seat.

"You gotta help Grace. Jude's gonna sterilize her. It's not right."

"Grace isn't my patient, Kit," he replied opening his briefcase and unloading the recording equipment much to Kit's dismay. "You are. So who don't we just concentrate on you and then I'll see what I can do about Grace. Deal?"

Kit nodded, sitting across from Dr. Thredson as the older man pressed various buttons, his attention eventually drawing back to the withdrawn young man sitting across from him. Oliver labelled the large tape, knowing that it was imperative he keep track of the recording. Kit was looking cagey, his eyes all over the room before coming to rest on Oliver's very serious and very sincere face.

"You need to give yourself permission to remember," Oliver continued, trying his best not be irritated at the boys lack of focus in regards to the murders. "I think one way to do that is to hear it in your own words."

And so, when the tapes began to roll, Kit repeated the story he knew Oliver wanted to hear and what he believed would seal his fate as a long term survivor at Briarcliff. He described what he thought happened.

"My name is Kit Walker, and I murdered my wife..."

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Kathryn couldn't believe how alone she felt. She pushed around the cornbread on her plate until one of the nun's had come over to remind her that there were starving children all over and she should be thankful she had something to eat at all. She popped it into her mouth and chewed resentfully, staring up at the woman the entire time before excusing herself early. She missed him.

How foolish.

She missed Dr. Thredson like a young girl with a crush. She felt so silly and childish. He was her medical professional for goodness sake. This train of thought had been working its way around her head again and again leaving her in awful spirits. When she arrived back at her cell after dinner she was surprised to see Sister Jude at her cell, looking tired and irritable.

"You're up for the bath's tonight Miss Hatcher," she said wearily guiding her to the large communal room. "Doctor Arden's orders."

The room was empty much to Kathryn's relief. She could hear the tapping of the water as it hit the full tub. She watched as Sister Jude motioned towards a tub near the side of the room. She was confused to see all the large claw foot tubs were covered in some sort of grey canvas.

"Are you going to tie me in there?" She whispered in fear, her heart hammering. Was that even allowed?

"It's perfectly safe," Jude retorted tiredly, shoving the girl towards the tub. "Now hurry up, I haven't got all day. I have a meeting in my office as we speak and Sister Mary Eunice is out on an errand as per usual."

Kathryn felt her cheeks go red as Sister Jude instructed her to disrobe. She tried her best to hide
herself but Jude didn't seem to care. She rushed into the bathtub, embarrassed as Jude began tossed her the soap and instructed she clean herself. She did so hurriedly, her eyes stinging with humiliated tears. The water was scalding on her cool skin and for once she wished she was out in the common room where it was light and loud. Here it was too quiet and without the afternoon light it was dark and frightening. She felt as Sister Jude poured something over her head, mentioning something about avoiding lice.

She scrubbed it into the girl's head and forcefully held her down until it was rinsed out. Whatever it was stung Kathryn's head and she tried to clamor out of the tub, coughing thickly. Her hair was pushed back from her face and as Jude looked down at her she appeared so young and frightened looking up at her with those sad, dark eyes. Jude felt a pang of sympathy before she realized the girl was trying to rise out of the bathtub.

"Now lie here," Sister Jude insisted, pushing the girl back down by her shoulder until she was laying in the bathtub, stiff like a statue. She watched as Sister Jude tied the sides of the canvas together until she was secured, her voice cracking as she spoke.

"Please don't leave me like this," she begged gently. "I'm scared."

"You're a grown woman," Jude replied with a sneer. "It's just a bath. I'll return shortly. If you're scared just repeat the beatitudes."

She strode from the room leaving Kathryn shaking in the tub despite the warmth of the water. She was terrified at this moment. She had never felt so vulnerable. What if the person who had attacked her with a rock came back to finish the job? She couldn't even move in this thing.

"Calm down," she said aloud to herself.

She glanced around the expanse of the room, her voice echoing off the stone walls. The only sound was her breathing and the water as she shifted. The steam was being let out and it fogged the room slightly. She thought she heard something to her right and she closed her eyes tightly. She needed some way to distract herself. She needed to not have frightening thoughts soaring through her very vulnerable mind.

She thought back to the office with Dr. Thredson. The records he had brought. She remembered one of the tunes idly in the back of her mind, singing softly to herself in the quiet of the room and praying she would survive.

******

Oliver glanced down at his watch.

5:15 pm.

He had forty-five minutes before he was to meet Lana and he still hadn't found Kathryn. He'd searched for her after his long but eventful meeting with Kit, the boy's confession hidden safely within his briefcase. He needed to make sure that she was doing alright. He had already written up a recommendation for her early release. By the time that he arrived back at Briarcliff tomorrow Kathryn would be released and he would be taking her with him.

He already had a plan formulated in his mind. He was going to buy her an apartment nearby. Fix it up just how she wanted it. He was going to get her her job back at the library and he was going to help her back on her feet. But why? He knew the answer. It was fairly obvious but he didn't quite want to admit it to himself yet.
"Do you remember the times we met
That's a day I knew I won't forget
I wanna tell you how much I love you"

Oliver stilled as the song reached out to him in the darkness. He felt something click in his mind at the familiar tune. He walked along the darkened corridor, realizing it was coming from the bath's. He heard the slight splashing of one of the patients as the song carried on. He went to continue on his way when he heard a small and familiar voice coming from the other side of the heavy door.

"Don't be scared. Dr. Thredson would tell you that this is a manifestation of your anxiety and nothing real."

It was her.

Without thinking he threw open the door. Her head was poking out of a canvas hole over the tub, her normally pale cheeks rosy from the hot water. She looked shocked to see him standing there, tall and surprised.

"Dr. Thredson?"

Oliver strode over to her, looking down at the draconian way they had tied her into the bathtub. She looked freshly scrubbed, her face shining up at him for once not hidden behind a wall of thick hair.

"I'm so glad you're here," she admitted with a self conscious look downwards. "I was frightened in here by myself. This place is terrifying."

"Anyone would be," he observed starting to untie the canvas at the lip of the tub. "This is barbaric."

"No, you can't do that," Kathryn hissed, her shoulders shuffling as he undid the ties. "Sister Jude will find out and I'll get in terrible trouble."

"I can't leave you like this," Oliver insisted, his tone firm. He was about to say something more when the girl's chin began to tremble and he stopped, his hands stilled and his gaze on her face. She spoke gently, almost above a whisper.

"Why didn't you visit me?"

He glanced at her with a confused look, his eyes clouded with confusion behind his glasses which were starting to fog. He pulled them off, slipping them into his pocket.

"What do you mean?"

"In the infirmary," Kathryn continued, momentarily startled to see him without his glasses. He looked so different. "When I woke up I thought...."

She trailed off. Oliver kneeled beside her, his hand coming to cup her warm cheek. He watched in fascination as she leaned her face into his touch, her eyes closing slowly before opening again sleepily.

"I thought you might care for me," she whispered. "As more than a patient. But when you didn't come to see me I realized I was mistaken. I bet that happens with your patients all the time, huh? You're so nice to everyone. How embarrassing."

He watched as a tear slipped down her cheek. He was always so disconcerted when the girl cried.
She always seemed so strong, so willful that to see her tears was always something that unnerved him.

"Kathryn," he whispered, his face nearing hers. She shook her head interrupting him. "I did visit you. You were just asleep."

"Really?" She looked hopefully up at him and then shook her head. "It's fine really. I realized it was stupid of me. Even if you had come to visit me. I'm a patient. You're a doctor. I realize how silly this all is. I know I probably only feel this way because I've unloaded all my secrets on you. I was reading about it the other day, it's called transference. I'm sorry I put you in such awful situations."

Oliver stiffened slightly. **Awful situations?** That's what she thought of their sessions? He felt his jaw clenching in disappointment. How had he been so wrong about her? Had that moment at the movie meant nothing?

*She'll abandon you, Oliver.*

He felt ashamed then at his poor judgement. She hadn't wanted him at all. She hadn't seen him any different than any woman ever would. She hadn't understood him in the way he thought. A feeling went through him then and his movements became mechanical. She watched as he stood and removed his suit jacket, placing it over one of the empty tubs along with his briefcase. Next he rolled up his dress sleeves until they were at his elbow. He was drawn back to the tub, kneeling as he began to untie the knots, his dextrous fingers working quickly.

Kathryn watched him silently, her brow furrowing a bit as he undid a few at her side, stopping at the knots at above her waist. Before she could protest she watched as he slid his left hand between the canvas and tub and into the water. Her lips were parted as she felt his hand land gently on her kneecap, tickling her. She began to breath raggedly, her eyes on the canvas, imagining where his hand may be headed. Slowly his fingertips began to walk their way up her thigh. His mouth was set in a firm line as he stared at her, his face cold and his movements no longer gentle.

He leaned forward in his crouched position, his hand slipping between the apex of her thighs in one quick movement. Kathryn gasped at the feeling of his fingertips against her bare entrance. She felt her heart fluttering in her chest, her pulse racing as he drew lazy circles on her inner thigh. The water slowed his movements, making it feel drowsy and dreamlike. With her arms still bound she was powerless to resist his movement.

"Was my touch so awful, Kathryn?" He asked in a sonorous tone, his eyes flinty. "You didn't seem to think so on my sofa."

He slipped his forefinger against her slit, smiling gently as he heard her intake of breath. She didn't struggle against him. Her eyes were wide as he worked his fingers up and down slowly against her. Slowly his finger began to probe deeper, eliciting a small moan from Kathryn. She was looking to him with a look that was unmistakably lust and shaking her head.

"I can stop at anytime," Oliver groaned, echoing their previous session.

With her small moans and sighs she was eliciting a sensation within him that had him rock hard within seconds. He could hear the water beginning to rock against the sides of the tub as she moved her hips, trying desperately to meet his touch.

"Tell me how you felt in my office," Oliver groaned, his fingers still masterfully working her as she groaned. "Tell me the truth."
He felt her tentative hand on his under the water, guiding him gently further in. He looked at her eyes never leaving his. He acquiesced with a smirk, sliding his finger in, surprised at her visceral reaction. She was hissing through clenched teeth and he realized with a hidden delight that she was aching for more.

"I wanted you," she finally breathed, biting her lower lip harshly as he found a sweet spot within her, tantalizing her. "Like I want you now. But I was scared. I've never felt like this before. I thought you were using me."

There was no hesitation in her as he slid a finger over her sweet bud of nerve endings and she cried out in pleasure. He was doing things to her that she could never have imagined. The same and the fear were gone and were being replaced by something warm and exciting that started in her lower abdomen.

"Dr. Thredson," she whimpered, her hips beginning to match in time with his fingers. "Please don't stop."

"Oliver," he urged, feeling his erection straining against his slacks almost painfully. He wished that she were on her knees in front of him so that she could reciprocate. But for now, watching her delight in the touches he was bestowing was almost better. Her head tilted back as she rocked against his palm and he saw the pale expanse of her throat. He reached forward with his free hand, stroking it gently. She made a small sound of delight in the back of her throat, her eyes swimming back into focus as she spoke.

"Please don't stop, Oliver."

At the sound of his name on her lips he began to stroke harshly against her, watching with a face of fascination as she began to climax, her cheeks growing more and more pink with every moment. He could feel her body trembling with desire that almost knocked him to his knees. And then suddenly he felt her thighs clench around his hand, holding him in place as she bucked wildly, her cries sounding out loudly. Without thinking he launched himself at her mouth, stifling her cries and kissing her deeply.

When he heard her last cry of pleasure he stilled his lips against hers, pulling back and breathing heavily. The two of them looked at each other, silently regarding one another in the now silent room. Neither was sure how to react.

"Was that exposure therapy?" Kathryn finally asked breathing heavily and looking up at him with wide eyes. His fingers ceased their movements, his body stiff. Did she think that's all this was? Therapy? He removed his hands from the soapy water quickly, shaking his head.

"No, that wasn't exposure therapy."

He was taken aback as she smiled up at him, her eyes closing in contentment as she leaned her head back.

"Good."
The Escape

Oh where is he?

Lana pulled herself even deeper into the darkness of under the stairwell, her heart stopping every time someone walked by, not seeing her. She'd been waiting for five minutes, her eyes glued to the clock. A dark part of her worried that he was never going to show. That they would notice her missing at roll call and she would be paddled within an inch of her life.

Suddenly a tall figure emerged from the darkness of the corridor and Lana could have wept for delight at the sight of him. Oliver rushed down the hallway, clutching a small cardboard box to his chest. It was filled with his person affects that he was taking him with him. His time at Briarcliff had concluded and he was more than happy to put this chapter behind him.

Lana watched him approach from under the stairwell hidden in shadows. His gaze washed over her with a tentative smile.

"Are you ready?"

"What's the plan? How do we do this?" Lana was trembling, her gaze everywhere but his face.

"We walk out the door," Oliver said pulling his long jacket from the cardboard box. He slipped it on over her shoulders as he continued. "We walk straight to my car. Do you understand?"

"What do you mean? How do we get past the guards?"

Lana shrugged on the jacket, confused as he thrust the box into her arms. She noticed he looked strange. Flustered, not quite himself. He seemed almost breathless as he continued.

"Like I said. Walk," Oliver offered in a stern tone, before righting himself.

Lana observed that he nearly towered over her and for a moment felt a flutter of panic at his dark gaze. He pushed her from out underneath the stairwell, walking alongside her as they exited. Lana nearly yelped when the rounded the corner and one of the guards sat there impassively, trying to light his cigarette.

For a moment Lana hated Thredson for his flimsy plan and his detached sense of interest.

What are we doing? We're as good as dead.

She breathed shallowly, her gaze fixed on the door ahead of her. She needed to get out of this place. Oliver glanced over to the man, Jimmy who was still struggling to light his cigarette.

Taking advantage, Oliver intercepted his attention, pushing Lana gently out the door as he lit the young man's cigarette. Jimmy accepted the flame gratefully, taking a long drag and smiling up at the Doctor.

"Night Jimmy," Oliver offered with a nod before heading out the door.

He didn't hear Frank calling him until he had settled Lana into the front seat of the car, going around the side to load the trunk. She heard Frank call Oliver's name and she shuffled down into the front seat, her heart hammering loudly in her chest. They were still going to be found out.

"Dr. Thredson! Sister Jude is asking for ya," Frank shouted, walking slowly towards the car as
Oliver stood at the trunk. "Anne Frank or whoever she is - her husband brought her back."

Oliver slammed the trunk of the car loudly, causing Lana to wince slightly, burrowing herself lower into the front seat.

"I don't work here anymore Frank," Oliver offered noncommittally, eager to be alone with Lana. "As a matter of fact I never did. You can tell her I said that."

Oliver gave Frank a ghost of a smirk before he headed to the driver's seat of the car. Frank shook his head before heading back into Briarcliff. Lana watched as Oliver stretched his lean frame into the car, shutting the door beside him and speeding off. He didn't speak to her for the entire length of the drive, his thoughts seemingly somewhere else. Lana didn't mind. She rolled down the window a crack, letting the breeze float along her forehead and cheeks as she smiled thankfully.

They had done it. They had escaped.

"Thank you," she whispered, her eyes still closed tightly. She felt so warm and finally at ease sitting there. Before she knew it she was asleep, her body finally giving up the fight. Oliver glanced over and gave a small smile before continuing his drive.

It was almost a half an hour before they pulled into his driveway, his small suburban home greeting them with its stucco siding and white picket fence. He roused Lana gently, touching her shoulder with the softest of touches. She started, her eyes blinking rapidly before she glanced up at the home in front of her. It looked like the all-American home that Lana had always heard about.

"Wait," she whispered groggily. "Where are we?"

"My home," Oliver replied with a thin smile. "Follow me."

She wondered idly why a man with no family should need such a large home, but it quickly flew from her head as he escorted her up the stairs to the front door. He opened the door with a quick turn of his keys, entering and flicking on a light beside her.

"Make yourself at home," Oliver said, hoisting the box from his shoulder and down to the ground. Lana entered with trepidation and was affronted with a very stylish if bland living room.

"Dr. Thredson," Lana started, interrupted by the kind man's sweet smile.

"Oliver."

"Oliver," she corrected, her eyes searching his as he helped her shrug off his jacket. "I really everything you've done. I think I want to go to my house."

Oliver tried not to be offended at that. Of course she would want to go home where it was comfortable. But she should try to be a bit more grateful.

"Lana, once they discover you missing the first place they'll look is there," Oliver offered with a condescending tone. "You're much safer here, at least for the night."

Lana looked askance at her feet, her lips set firmly. She knew he was right but boy was she uncomfortable in this situation. She had so much she wanted to do, so many people she wanted to contact.

"First thing in the morning we go to the police," Oliver reassured her. "I already have an appointment set up with Detective Spears. I trust him implicitly. We present the evidence together
then we shut down Briarcliff."

His words elicited a large smile from Lana, one he hadn't seen cross her features since he'd met her. It was like the sun breaking through the clouds and he couldn't help but return in.

"Relax," he said, allowing his hands to rest on her shoulders and feeling the small thrill that went through his fingertips. "That place is behind you. Please, come in, have a seat. You've had an incredibly stressful day. I'm going to prescribe a little something to take the edge off."

"I-I don't want any medicine," Lana stuttered, her head shaking.

"A big delicious glass of wine," he offered with a playful look on his normally stern features.

"Well that doesn't sound half bad," Lana had to admit with a smile.

"White or Red?"

"Red."

My favorite color.

Oliver nodded, taking in her form once more before entering the kitchen. She was the consummate lady - a motherly voice to go along with a face that any child would adore. He was preparing two wine glasses in the kitchen when he heard her tentative footsteps, the sound of the phone being released from its cradle.

He rounded the corner, seeing her back to him as his forefinger smoothly coming to rest on the receiver, severing her call. Lana whipped around to see him, her eyes wide with confusion.

"No calls," he said in a gentle and almost amused tone.

"I was just trying to contact my friend Lois," Lana explained as he approached her. "She might have heard something about Wendy."

"Lana, you have to realize that I am at risk as well here," Oliver said firmly, walking back over to the sofas with Lana trailing behind like a whipped dog. "I broke you out of a medical institution. I can't afford to let anyone know where you are. Not until we go public tomorrow."

He stood, offering her a seat with the casual tilt of his hand. She accepted slowly, lowering herself onto his uncomfortably modern seat. Her smile wan and not touching her eyes. He was looked down at her with an unreadable expression.

"You're going to write about this," Oliver said, his voice a gentle whisper. "You're going to win a Pulitzer prize. I just know it, Lana. You're the person to tell my story."

Lana's smile slowly died on her face at his words.

"Your story?"

Oliver felt himself blanch. He had gone too far and revealed far too much too early. She had lulled him into a false state of calm. Lana diverted his attention by grasping the large wine glass in her grip, raising in a small signal of celebration.

"Here's to taking down Briarcliff," she offered, watching as Oliver's smile quirked on his lips. He raised his glass in response.
"Here here."

Oliver took a deep sip before turning on the lamp beside Lana. He wanted to better see her features as he sat in the sofa across from her. Maybe she hadn't really noticed his verbal slip up earlier. Lana glanced over at the shade, noticing it was giving off a very soft light. She felt her breath hitch in her chest as she viewed what looked like... No. She shook her head. Impossible. She turned back, noticing as Oliver was looking at her very strangely.

He was glancing up and down her body before looking back over to his coffee table. He pushed forward a bone colored bowl in her direction. She glanced down, viewing with dawning horror that it was not a bowl. No, it was the top of a skull made to look like one. She looked at the mints sitting innocuously within it, her heart starting to beat harshly against her chest.

"Mint?" Oliver offered, grabbing one and tossing it into his mouth. The sound it made as he chewed it caused Lana's stomach to turn. His gaze had turned icy and all semblance of warmth had fled his features as he stared at her.

Keep calm, Lana. Don't let him know you know.

Lana thought of her prison within Briarcliff. That same cool headed, lack of rash behavior that had kept her safe. She needed to do the same here.

"Boy," she offered when she felt she could keep her voice calm. "That wine, um, went straight to my head. Would you mind if I used your restroom?"

"Sure," Oliver replied, never blinking as he motioned towards the right side of the house. "It's right down the hall."

"Thank you," Lana smiled, making sure not to walk too quickly.

Make sure you appear calm.

If she could find his bathroom she could find a window to climb out of. But there were so many doors here. So many were locked and so many were hidden in darkness. She found one and pushed her way inside.

Oliver watched on as Lana headed down his hallway, her feet padding softly on the carpet. He knew what had to be done. The woman's face had been that of barely suppressed horror. He had to act quickly. But it still pained him.

He hated this part.

He removed his glasses slowly, placing them with a sigh on the coffee table in front of him. He stood, walking quietly to the room where he heard Lana scuffling around blindly inside. He gave one more gentle sigh before he flicked on the light, watching as she whirled around to face him.

Oliver leaned casually against the doorframe, blocking her exit. His glasses were removed and without them his gaze was more sinister, more direct. He was still holding his wineglass casually as he glanced at her.

"I think I made a wrong turn," Lana laughed thinly, trying to appear calm. Oliver was not fooled. He nodded slowly as he glanced around the room.

"I see you've found my little...hobby."
Lana took a moment to fully take in her surroundings and it was then that the reality of the situation dawned on her. The knives, the utensils used for making chairs and lamps. But she knew it wasn't that. It was the fabric that wrinkled on the table, puckered and dry. At the far left a human skull sat, looking almost unreal.

_Thump thump thump._ She was sure Oliver could hear her heartbeat.

"You make furniture?" Lana inquired, hoping against hope that she could convince him that she had no idea what he was up to. He didn't look convinced.

"Lamps mainly," Oliver offered almost conversationally. "I make the shades myself."

"Really?" Lana breathed, her voice betraying her fear now but she needed to ask. "What kind of material do you use?"

Oliver smiled a dark and deep smile before leaning his forearm to the right, pressing a button as he spoke. A trapdoor opened up underneath her and she screamed as she fell into the inky pool of black, Oliver's final word still in her mind.

"Skin."
Mommy

Lana stretched like a jungle cat, her eyes opening slowly. She viewed the photo of Wendy on her side table, the luxurious comfort of the bed underneath her. After her weeks at Briarcliff it felt sinfully wonderful to be in a real bed. She smiled into the pillow, holding it close to her body. She rolled over, the scent of something delicious cooking rousing her awake.

"Is there anything more heavenly than waking from a nap to the smell of Croque Monsieur?"

Something dug into her ankle and she winced at the pain, the horror of her surroundings suddenly coming back to her as she sat up slowly, taking in the tall frame of Oliver Thredson across the room.

She was in Bloody Face's lair. He had brought down a bed and furniture to make it seem like this makeshift prison was her own little home. He stood in slacks and an undershirt making her something on the little hotplate.

He stood casually, his glasses nowhere to be found and without them she thought he looked more sinister.

Lana felt her stomach curdle at the thought of her last 12 hours alone with Dr. Thredson. He had forced her to kiss Wendy's cold, dead corpse last night calling it therapy. He had enjoyed how she sobbed. He had told her of his murdering Wendy. He had shown her his horrifying mask of human flesh with her beloved Wendy’s teeth stitched to the outside. And now he was standing there, trying to make it seem like everything was normal as he tossed something with the flipper.

"I bet this is what your mother made you after school on a rainy day."

Lana screamed as loudly as she could then, startling and irritating Oliver immensely. She had only known him as quiet, calm Dr. Thredson and so she was taken quite aback when he screamed back at her, his voice guttural and dark and bouncing off the walls.

"You can scream all you want," Oliver hissed at her furiously. "No one will hear you. Obviously the basement is soundproof. Girls with bigger sets of lungs than yours have tried before."

Lana watched as he continued to cook, seeing now that she was outfitted in some strange blue nightgown. She pulled the blankets up to her chest, her eyes never leaving Oliver's frame.

"Where's Wendy?" she asked as tears slipped down her cheeks. "Where did you put her body?"

"I put her somewhere where she'll never be found," Oliver said simply. "Wouldn't do to have her body pop up now that Kit walker has confessed to all those horrendous murders."

He smiled at that last bit and Lana felt her heart sink. Kit. Poor Kit was going to be implicated for Thredson's murders. If she hadn't already been crying her tears would have begun then for the fate of the poor boy. Oliver told her something about nutmeg before he placed the sandwich on the plate, bringing it over to her with a shy smile.

"Croque Monsieur and tomato soup," He said as he placed the tray on the bed between them. He sat down on the edge of the mattress, his eyes deadly. "The perfect Mommy snack."

Lana balked at that term, looking confusedly at him as he continued.

"Only I didn't have a mother to make this for me. I mean, of course I had a mother but, I never knew
"You grew up in an orphanage?" Lana asked, her journalistic instincts taking over. She needed to find out as much as possible about Oliver Thredson before he decided that keeping her around was no longer beneficial.

"The system," Oliver nodded. "Where all my basic needs were met. Food, water...A rudimentary education. And with the help of a leather crop, learning the difference between right and wrong. They followed all the rules, especially the rules about affection and any unnecessary bodily contact. Because touch ... Would certainly spoil the child."

He whispered the last sentence, watching as Lana grasped the sandwich, taking a large bite. She couldn't help it - the gnawing at her stomach had taken over her senses and the food smelled heavenly.

"This is good," she said, tapping the crust of the bread and smiling shakily. "I'm not trying to patronize you Oliver. I just want you to know how much I appreciate this act of kindness. I know what it's like to be abandoned. That's how I felt at Briarcliff."

She saw how his movements slowed, his eyes keenly on her face. He was listening to her. She watched as his strong facade melted away and he smiled gently, swinging his entire body onto the bed. He sat cross-legged across from her at the end of it, his smile growing slowly.

"I was right about you. You're the one," Oliver chuckled, covering his mouth with his hands like an excited child. He covered his eyes quickly, looking as if he were laughing and sobbing all at once before straightening. Lana watched him with large, wet eyes as he continued, his voice low and soothing.

"Lana I've always been self-aware," he began, his eyes looking dreamy. "I knew I was different from the other kids. I was smarter. But I was also more afflicted. It's what led me to study psychiatry, to better understand my disorder. It wasn't until medical school that I had my first breakthrough though..."

And with dawning horror at his words Lana listened as he recounted his horrifying transition from medical student to monster. How the woman on the slab could have been his long lost mother. How he held her cold corpse, realizing that he had been missing all along was something as simple and nurturing as skin-to-skin contact. He had been searching for the perfect motherly figure and he had found it in her. She couldn't help herself.

As he admitted to the atrocities he had committed she couldn't help but sob. The tears ran down her cheeks like small rivers from her eyes and it took as she could not to flinch from his cold palm on her chin, raising her face to meet his.

"No no no no no," Oliver tutted, his eyes sorrowful as he wiped away her tears.

He stroked her hair from her face, his body relaxing into an errie calm. He looked into Lana's face and he saw the possibility of his life. A life with Kathryn at his side and Lana as his mother. They would have a true, loving family. The one that they all desired. The one they all deserved.

"It's okay," Oliver insisted with a sinister smile. "It's okay because now that you're here all of that work is behind me...Mommy."

Kathryn paced back and forth within her cell that morning. She'd risen before sunrise, her body
alight with an internal fire she couldn't tame. Thoughts of Oliver's hands on her body last night in the bath's hadn't stopped running through her mind all evening. She had barely slept.

He had rushed from her last night. Watching her smile up at him and he had taken off, his tall frame being swallowed up into the darkness outside the doors. Kathryn had been ushered back to her room by a frustrated Sister Jude and tossed and turned all evening.

And now she could barely wait to see him. She felt her heart singing as she thought of his face, his lips, his smile, his body. Oliver Thredson. He had told her to call him Oliver. Doctors didn't do that with their patients. She could tell she meant something to him and this thought caused her an indescribable joy.

She couldn't wait to talk with him about this breakthrough. She felt a smile widely stretch across her face. She could be released. She could be released and she had to see him outside of Briarcliff. She couldn't not see him.

She imagined a moment a life in which Oliver was her boyfriend. Her lover. She felt a shudder go through her core, raising goosebumps all over her body. She had to speak with him, to discover what last night had meant.

An hour or so later Sister Jude opened the cell door demanding Frank search the girl's room. Kathryn didn't even mind. She swooned out of the cell door into the hall, glancing around the hallway to see if she viewed the usual suspects.

She was surprised when she noticed she didn't see Lana there with her trademark look of dejected disapproval aimed at Sister Jude. Speaking of which, Sister Jude seemed more upset than usual. Her scowl deeper and her eyes rimmed red. She ordered the women loudly from their cells, furious at everyone who dared to look at her. Kathryn listened as Frank went through the other girl's cells, stopping suddenly at Lana's. He opened it loudly calling for her to exit.

"Sister Jude? We got a problem here."

Jude sighed dramatically before flinging herself into the open cell. She was affronted with a lumpy figure in the bed. She was about to ask Frank why he had bothered calling her over when she realized the lump wasn't breathing. She tore off the blankets, her hand coming to her mouth in horror as she saw the pillows situated together. Anyone passing by would have viewed it as Lana asleep in her bed.

"Who did the rounds last night?"

"I dunno. Jimmy?"

Jude was ashen, her eyes wide as she backed into the bustling hallway. The women chattered amongst themselves. Kathryn glanced up to see Sister Jude exiting Lana's room looking as if she may faint. Where was Lana? Sister Jude slowly turned, a sickening look on her face. She looked as if she were going to vomit. Kathryn watched her, surprised as she walked past the women, ignoring their whispers. Normally she demanded silence as she graced the halls.

"I wanna see the shrink," one of the patients behind Kathryn cried out. She threw herself to the hem of sister Jude's habit. "I hear he can really help people. I want him to help me!"

"Well too bad Bernadette," Sister Jude muttered angrily, nudging the woman off of her with a sharp kick. "He's not here anymore."

Kathryn felt her entire body grow cold at the words, her eyes searching Jude's face to see if she was
lying. The woman gave her a pointed look before she strode by her and continued down the hallway.

"Morning Prayers start in fifteen minutes," she called out from over her shoulder before slamming the door at the far end behind her.

Kathryn stared after her, immobile as the women around her walked past, bumping into her. She didn't move; all she could do was stare as she realized her only salvation was gone.
Oliver whirled into the gates of Briarcliff with a smooth and casual wave at the guard who admitted him. He looked up at the gruesome coral building, his mind on the figure who awaited him inside. He smiled gently at the simplicity of his plan. All he would do was bring the referral from his desk downstairs up to the Monsignor. He would insist that the girl was ready to be released and then offer to drive her home himself.

He was a trustworthy Doctor and the girl would readily agree. He pulled into a parking spot, closing the door behind him and walking with a confident stride up the stairs of Briarcliff Manor.

The wind swept over his cheeks, causing his hair to ruffle slightly. He smoothed it down with an absent hand before stepping through the doors. He glanced over at one of the guards giving a small nod before making his way up the staircase, his eyes on the large window at the top of the building. It gave in such a peaceful light. Oliver couldn't help but be in a wonderful mood. He had his mother and now he would have Kathryn. Her reaction in the bath had sealed it.

The way she had looked at him with those dark lust-filled eyes as he brought her to climax. He could feel his groin starting to ache uncomfortably and he turned his attention back to the matter at hand. He found the door marked Monsignor and knocked gently.

A voice beckoned him in and he was surprised to see Timothy already seated at his desk looking at Oliver with a kind smile.

"Ah, Doctor Thredson," he said as the man approached, holding out a hand to shake. "I was wondering if I would see you before you left."

Before Oliver could answer, Sister Mary Eunice had approached from the doorway, her eyes unreadable as she went to Timothy's side, a handful of mail and some notes in her hands. She dropped them on his desk, her eyes never leaving Oliver's face.

"Where is Sister Jude?" Oliver inquired, surprised to see Sister Mary Eunice at Timothy's side. Normally that was a spot reserved for the miserable, but senior Sister Jude.

"Sister Jude's talents were more than we at Briarcliff deserved," Timothy offered with a grim smile. "We thought it best she use those talents to serve elsewhere."

Oliver nodded in delighted surprise. He completely agreed with Timothy and told him so. Without Jude's miserable facade and backwards beliefs there was a chance that Briarcliff could be brought into the 20th century.

"What can we do for you, Doctor Thredson? I was under the impression that your time with us had come to an end?"

"I forgot my paycheck," Oliver said smoothly, ignoring the small smirk on Sister Mary Eunice's pale face. "Just came by to pick it up. I thought it would be easier than having you mail it."

Sister Mary Eunice stepped towards Oliver a glint of something foreboding in her eyes.

"Follow me Doctor, it's in my new office."

Oliver nodded, giving a short nod back to Timothy before following Sister Mary Eunice out into the hallway. They walked alongside each other in silence, Oliver's eyes gently searching every face they
passed for those familiar dark eyes.

"It's so good to see you, Doctor Thredson," the nun murmured. He tensed slightly, watching her out of the corner of his eye as she spoke. "You made quite an impact on so many of the patients here at Briarcliff."

"Thank you, Sister."

"In fact, I'm sure several of them would love to say goodbye before you leave for good."

Oliver could have hugged her for that ease of transition. She was looking at him with a clear, alert gaze. Was she trying to help him? Did she know of his feelings for Kathryn Hatcher? They stopped in front of Sister Jude's old office, the sounds of patient's chattering becoming a low din.

"I'd be happy to say goodbye."

"Wonderful," Sister Mary Eunice baited, her eyes narrowed into predatory slits. Oliver tried to look as if he was thinking. She grasped the envelope with his final cheque in her hands, passing it to him covertly. "Perhaps you could start with Miss Hatcher?"

Oliver felt his hand falter a moment before he grasped the envelope and slipped it into his pocket. He tried to look as nonplussed as possible, glancing down at his watch before looking back into her face.

"Yes, I believe I have time."

"Wonderful." She looked as if she was about to lead Oliver from the room when she stopped suddenly, a look of regret crossing her pretty features.

"Oh that's right," Sister Mary Eunice bopped her forehead in a slapstick fashion as if she had just remembered something. She walked back over to Oliver her smile wide and innocent as his stomach sank. "I'd completely forgotten. That can't happen. She's been released."

Released?

Oliver felt his mouth go dry as the nun reached over to the top of her desk, picking a piece of paper from the top of the pile. She handed it to him with a flourish. Oliver recognized it instantly as his referral for Kathryn's release. He had it on his desk last night. How had she found it? His gaze came back up to rest on Mary Eunice's face. She tilted her head playfully as she spoke.

"Her mother came to retrieve her last night."

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Oliver rushed home, his cheeks hot and furious. He whipped the suit jacket and button down from his body in frustration the minute he slammed his front door behind him. He felt as if he was going to jump out of his skin. He could still see Mary Eunice's smirk as he paled, leaving Briarcliff in a hurry.

She was gone.

Gone to her Mother's house.

She had been released the night before and she had made no attempts to contact him. He punched the wall to his right harshly, smashing the plaster and paint chips off the wall in a burst. He wanted to cry, but he knew he couldn't. His plan was failing.

He had come so far and now it was starting to unravel. It wouldn't work without Kathryn.
He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself. He went to the top of the stairs to his basement, retrieving the plates and tray he had forgotten earlier. He glanced around the corner to see Lana napping again. Her blue nightgown was askew and her face was smooth with sleep and this made Oliver feel calmer. After his feeding last night she was feeling even more like the mother he had always wanted.

At least he had her.

He had planned on bringing Kathryn home today. To her apartment he'd purchased a few blocks away. It had been beautiful and modern. Already decorated. And now it would stand empty because she was at her mother's home. She hadn't even attempted to call him and he knew he was the only Doctor Thredson in the phone book.

Oliver felt his groin pulling, his fury taking his senses over as he bounded down the stairs.

He needed some form of release.

Lana was awake now, looking flustered as he approached the bed with a look of flat disinterest.

"What's wrong, baby?" Lana whispered, her voice trembling.

She knew that Oliver was upset when he looked like that. She had to calm him. But he looked furious. Not necessarily at her but at the world. She watched in slow panic as he had unbuckled his slacks, removed his clothing and was now on top of her. He didn't say anything.

She didn't resist.

Instead she looked at the ceiling in surrender as he slowly entered her. It felt wild and strange and amazing for Oliver. He had never done this before and he wanted to take his time. If he didn't look at Lana's face he could imagine it was her; Kathryn.

He could imagine her face looking up at him, joyful and loving.

_I wanted you. Like I want you now._

He glanced to the left side of the bed, thrusting deeply into the body underneath him. He could almost smell Kathryn's soapy smell, feel her thick dark hair around his hands as he continued to bury himself between Lana's legs.

She didn't want him. She had left him. She had left Briarcliff and made no attempts to contact him. Worse yet she had been gathered up by her mother. The monster that had caused her incarceration in the first place.

He felt the hot anger of the situation going through his veins, causing his body to tense further. He didn't know who he was more furious with; Kathryn or Briarcliff. Lana watched as Oliver's mind completely flew from his body, his actions unconnected to herself. He wasn't paying attention to her - his mind was elsewhere. She tried to deaden her physical form and join his pursuit of exiting her body.

Oliver forced himself deeper, surprised at how good it felt to be doing this. This sensation of being surrounded by a silken hand that caused the most delightful friction with every thrust of his hips. His clinical detached self couldn't help but observe the biological benefits to having this type of release. All the frustration and anger he had built up during the day seemed to be lessening with every thrust.
Don't stop, Oliver.

His hips began bucking wildly, causing the bed to creak rapidly. He could almost hear Kathryn's moans as he climaxed, groaning over and over as he shuddered his release into the very stoic Lana. Her eyes were still fixated on the ceiling above, her body limp under his own.

She wanted to die.

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Oliver took a long drag from his cigarette as he drove out the next morning. He felt completely strange and out of sorts with himself. Yesterday afternoon with Lana had been a mistake. He knew it and she did too. As soon as he had pulled out of her and looked down at her deadened gaze he knew he had ruined it. He had ruined their tentative bond.

So now he was forced to get Kathryn. He needed her to fix things. With her in his life he wouldn't have to do...that to Lana again.

That reassured him and he smiled gently, his eyes focussed on the winding road ahead. After a long shower and sleep he had awoken this morning reenergized. A plan had come into his mind so rapidly that by the time he had finished his morning routine he had already formulated exactly what to do. And so he had thrown on his best suit, made sure his hair was combed perfectly and his glasses slipped onto the bridge of his nose before he started down the long highway to the Hatcher's home.

Her address had been simple enough to find in her admission file. She was in the affluent part of town. A large colonial home greeted him when he finally pulled into the driveway, a file under his arm. He glanced up at the top bedroom window as he walked up the stairs in the golden morning light, his heart leaping at the thought of Kathryn sitting there. He wondered if she could see him as he approached.

He knocked swiftly on the front door, his pulse racing as it opened and an older woman of about sixty answered. She looked him up and down in confusion.

"Hello, Mrs. Hatcher?" Oliver offered with a smile and a hand out to shake. "I'm from Briarcliff."

"Ah yes," Dorothy nodded with a sharp smile after a moment of regarding him. She stood to the side and allowing Oliver to enter the home. "You must be Doctor Thredson. The Monsignor told me all about your good work. Won't you please come in?"

Dorothy glanced the tall man over, her green eyes taking the handsome Doctor in. He seemed calm and well put together and he strode into the room with ease. He followed her down the hallway until they reached the sitting room. Everything in the home was expensive and perfectly suited to each room that he saw. He viewed her collection of porcelain figures; woman in a variety of ornate dresses. Oliver could appreciate the beauty and refinement in nice thing for he too liked to collect things that piqued his interest.

"Can I get you something to drink, Doctor?" Oliver shook his head at the offer graciously, winning her over with his cheerful smile and calm demeanor.

"Thank you, but this won't take long. I simply wanted to speak with you about Kathryn," Oliver said, his eyes dancing around the room.

He'd hoped she would have heard his voice and come out - but no matter. What he really needed to deal with was Dorothy first.
"What about Kathryn?" The woman asked him warily, wondering what exactly Kathryn had done at Briarcliff to ensure a Doctor's house call in the middle of the day. She sat on the chair opposite him, her large eyes dancing along his face.

"I'd heard so much about you from Kathryn during our sessions," Oliver offered, trying to set the woman at ease. "She speaks of you with such respect, which is why I knew I had to come and speak with you in person about additional treatment."

Dorothy seemed more at ease as he said that. She liked to think of herself as a benevolent figure and so she nodded at the solemn man. He seemed like he knew what he was doing with her daughter.

"Go on."

"Kathryn has come leaps and bounds from when she was first admitted to Briarcliff," Oliver said smoothly, his gaze benevolent. "And I think it would be good for her to enter back into the real world as soon as possible."

"I agree," Dorothy nodded, folding her hands in her lap. Suddenly she was becoming uncomfortable under the man's stifling gaze.

Oliver noted the suit she wore was expensive and the hairstyle she wore was fresh from the salon. Hadn't she admitted Kathryn to Briarcliff because they couldn't afford a therapist? He shook his head.

"I think Kathryn would benefit specifically from living on her own," Oliver continued. "Getting her old job back and having her own apartment. To readjust into society."

"Well, we'll discuss that," Dorothy sniffed, looking uncomfortable at the personal nature of the conversation. "Kathryn may seem strong Doctor, but she is a very sensitive soul. She may need to stay with me a while before she finds herself an apartment."

Oliver was confused by the woman's comment. She was a strange woman. So cold and yet she didn't want her daughter to leave her sight. A thought occurred to Oliver then, one which had entered into his mind when he had talked with Kathryn. He was frustrated with the woman's suspicion of him. She wasn't giving in as easily as all the other patients did. She had something he wanted and he would get it by any means possible.

"Mrs. Hatcher may I ask you something?"

"You may."

"How long did the abuse go on?"

Dorothy blanched at his words, her hands gripping the side of her chair for balance as he spoke. Oliver didn't move, instead he leaned forward in his chair, balancing on his knees. Dorothy wanted to slap the all-knowing smirk off of his face.

"Excuse me?"

"I assume it was your father, judging by your treatment of Kathryn," Oliver continued, his voice mechanical and his gaze unflinching. "Did he come to you in the night? Touch you? Is that why you didn't want Kathryn to know fatherly affection? Did it frighten you that it would happen to her to?"

Dorothy's eyes grew wet, her lips trembling. The man's words had cut through her. Things she had long suppressed began to bubble to the surface.
"I don't know what you're talking about," she uttered, her voice low and frightened.

"I think you do," Oliver pushed, his gaze level with hers. "I think that's why you threw her away to Briarcliff. You thought at least there she would be safe."

"I wanted her to be well," Dorothy whispered, her eyes drawing to the floor in shame. "I knew the Monsignor would be able to help her."

"Only your behavior did the opposite," Oliver continued. "With all your fear-mongering you made your daughter sick. Sick when all she wanted was to be held and loved. You raised her to fear affection. And when her father died she felt like she was alone."

Dorothy's face began to crumple and she brought her hands to her face, sobbing suddenly into them as Oliver watched her. She had been so easy to read. He had been completely accurate in his diagnosis.

"I didn't know what to do," Dorothy sobbed, her voice thick with tears. "After it happened to me I was sure that was all men wanted. Even my husband, the saint that he was. I was sure that he would do it to Kathryn."

"But he didn't."

"No," Dorothy shook her head, her shoulder still racking with sobs. "But what could I do? I didn't know. I didn't want her to get hurt."

Oliver wanted to smack the woman in front of him. He wanted to shake her by the shoulders and scream that he had hurt Kathryn deeper than any physical wounds could. But his clinical side pitied her as she sat there, sobbing openly in front of him. Her body had curled over into itself and her sobs lessened.

"Mrs. Hatcher," Oliver spoke softly, subdued. "Thank you for admitting this."

Dorothy shook her head from her lap, slowly straightening up until she was looking at him. She rubbed her eyes with the back of her hand, smudging her perfectly applied makeup dreadfully.

"I can see why Kathryn does so well with you," Dorothy offered with a small hiccup. "You're very good."

"Thank you. I think she would benefit from some additional counselling as well," Oliver offered, his forearms balanced on his knees as he spoke.

"Well you can do whatever you like," Dorothy offered with a shrug, confused as to why he had driven all the way down here to tell her this. Oliver nodded with a small smile.

"And I do truly believe she needs her own apartment, Mrs. Hatcher. You need to trust that my suggestion is for her well being. She needs to live her own life now. Free from your fears."

Mrs Hatcher nodded slowly, wiping her nose with a handkerchief before speaking.

"Alright Doctor. I trust your judgement," Dorothy agreed gently. "And when Kathryn gets home from Briarcliff we'll work on getting her old apartment back."

"Excuse me?" Oliver inquired, confused at the woman's wording. He had stopped rising midway from his chair, his eyebrows knitted in completely confusion. "When what?"
"I said that we will work on getting her old apartment back," Dorothy repeated with a sniff, her hands folding back onto her lap. "When Kathryn gets released from Briarcliff next month."
Lana's Escape

Lana looked into the pale face of the angel above her. She still didn't know if it were real or a dream. She had called to her as Oliver violated her. She had called to the sweet siren call of death and it looked as if she would be granted this final wish. She had been locked down here for longer than she could fathom.

Her days were melting into one another and she was confused and horrified. Oliver hadn't tried...that... again. A small mercy in this hellish experience. He had been quite horrified afterwards, rushing from the room and leaving her alone for several days.

And he had been in a horrible mood this last week. She could hear him rant and rave when he came down the stairs, usually sulking and needing nothing but a feeding and perhaps a story to calm his nerves. Lana could tell that something was upsetting him - something wasn't going to his plan. He kept muttering about Briarcliff but refused to say anything further. And now she would die.

"Death would be better," Lana whispered through tears as the seraph leaned forward, her milky skin partially hidden between the dark mesh of her hat. She brought a pillow under Lana's head gently, her eyes a pool of kindness and compassion. Lana watched as the angel pulled up the blanket, tucking her in like a parent would for a child.

"I used to be scared of it," Lana whispered, her voice dazed."But I'm not afraid anymore."

"Just let go," came the sweet refrain of the Angel of Death. "I'm right here with you."

Lana watched in awe as dark wings sprouted from the spirit's back - looking like the most beautiful inky black wings of an exotic bird. Her pale face leaned down towards Lana, her ruby lips beckoning for the girl to surrender. And yet a voice echoed into her mind as the face drew nearer to hers. A panicked and enraged voice that stilled her.

You have to fight.

Lana stilled the woman's downward decent, her lips falling on the lips of the creature in front of her. She realized she wasn't done yet. Oliver Thredson could not get away with what he had done. He had ruined too many lives and she would not succumb. She knew what she had to do.

"No," Lana whispered. "Not yet."

Oliver came into the house with a miserable expression. He shrugged off his jacket and in a fit of anger threw his glasses across the room. Despite his continual calls to Briarcliff he hadn't had a single one returned.

It had been almost two weeks and he still hadn't been able to get in contact with Kathryn. With Kit's confession already submitted his business at Briarcliff had come to an end. He had no reason to return and he knew he would not be welcomed back.

After the meeting with her Mother last week he had realized the horrible and gut-wrenching truth. Sister Mary Eunice had lied to him. Kathryn had never been released and without his help she would likely be there for far longer than necessary. She was still stuck in that hell-hole Briarcliff and he was here with Lana.
Lana.

His mouth curved into a displeased frown. Lana wasn't working out at all. She wasn't tender or affectionate and after that horrible experience last week he had realized everything had changed. Not only was she frightened of him, but now she was disgusted by him as well.

Despite how she tried to hide it he could feel it coming off of her in waves. Every time she looked and him and cooed 'baby' he could see the repulsion creep into her expression. That wasn't motherly at all. It made him feel like a disease. He had tried. He really had. He had given her every single opportunity to be the mother he wanted. The mother he deserved. But she hadn't come through. Like all the rest of them she had failed. She had failed and she had made him feel badly in the process.

So she would have to go.

He opened the door to the basement, closing it tightly behind him as he ventured down. He sighed deeply before opening the second door to the room, allowing some light to filter into the basement.

"Lana? Are you decent?"

She didn't reply and wondered if she was even awake. With his hands in his pockets he made his way down the stone steps, glancing over to see her trembling and awake. She was pressed up against her headboard looking at him with that look he absolutely despised. She feared him. What mother feared their own child?

"I think we need to have a little talk, don't you?" he asked with irritation.

"If that's what you want," she answered, trying to appease him.

"It is," he said, raising a distressed hand to the bridge of his nose before turning back to her with a sigh. "First of all I want you to know that I'm not angry. What happened before was wrong, it was very wrong. And I don't blame you. It was my fault. Truth is I probably shouldn't have brought you here in the first place."

She could see he was getting worked up. He was starting to pace around the small space with that strange, slightly deranged look on his face.

"What do you mean?"

"If there's one thing you should know about me, Lana it's that I'm tenacious," Oliver started ranting, looking deadly as he spoke. "I don't like to give up. And that kind of stick-to-it-tiveness has served me and my patients very well. But sometimes it also prevents me from acknowledging when I've met an impasse, like the one I think we've reached here."

Lana felt a jolt of fear strike her heart at his words.

"An impasse?"

Oliver saw the tremble in her chin and the flood of tears that poured down her face as she asked him that. And he wanted to laugh at the true hideousness of the moment. He raised the back of his hand to cover his eyes a moment, feeling as if he were going to be sick. This wasn't like the other girls. Lana had been the one he'd confided the most in. She had been so close that the thought of killing her was like killing his own mother.

"Don't look so frightened okay? I don't want to hurt you. I want this to be as painless for you as possible. So I will give you a choice. I can either cut your throat or I can strangle you. I don't believe
in guns."

The absurdity of his last statement didn’t even register with Lana. She had already collapsed into a weeping mess on the bed, soaking the blanket with her tears.

"Oh God," she uttered through sobs. Oliver stared at her a moment, his face contorting into that of a man full of regret.

"Oh Christ," he said in anger to himself. "What am I saying?"

Lana looked up in hope just in time to see him cross the room to his cupboard on the other side of the room. He had retrieved something from the drawer- Lana saw with dawning horror that it was a syringe.

"It doesn't matter how we do it," Oliver continued. "Well put you out. You won't feel a thing."

He had meant it to be comforting - to bring her a bit of peace in this moment of her impending doom. But she hadn't taken it that way. Instead she had started wriggling on the bed, shaking her head and trying to back away from him as he approached.

"No no, please no!"

Oliver snaked out a hand, gripping her ankle and pulling her until she was laying flat on the bed. Still she protested, her cries becoming low moans of horror as his left hand grasped her throat, holding her in place.

"STOP fighting," he yelled into her face, his left leg swinging over her pelvis. He settled on top of her, looking down at her with a look of disappointment. He raised the syringe, his eyes stuck on hers. He wanted to go out calmly but she wasn't participating. Even as he gripped her she struggled.

"You'll be reunited with Wendy," he uttered, turning her neck to face the framed photo he'd brought down. It would be the last thing she would see in this world. "You remember Wendy don't you?"

Her attention was on the photo and in this he saw his chance. He lowered the syringe towards her exposed neck, never expecting that Lana would bring the photo crashing onto his head. Pain exploded in his head like a flash of red light and he fell backwards off of her. Blood began to trickle down from his temple, a sharp stinging startling him and diverting his attention. He and Lana fought for the syringe, both gasping as they struggled for it.

They fell off the bed in a furious ball with Lana perched atop of him as they landed. With the blood in Oliver's eyes and Lana's desperation she had him pinned and before he could do anything more she had plunged the syringe deep into his thigh. He cried out in pain and Lana quickly jumped off of him, wrapping the chain still around her leg around the neck of Oliver. He gaped, trying his best to escape from her grasp but failing. He flailed around like a fish out of water, his face turning an ugly shade of puce.

He finally lost his air, momentarily dazed and unable to move. Lana quickly took the keys from his pocket, undoing her chains just as Oliver regained his mobility. She ran to the stairs, her body thrumming with adrenaline. She could hear him behind her, struggling to get up. She was halfway up when she felt his horrible clamping grip around her ankle.

*No no no I'm so close.*

With a fury she didn't know she possessed Lana kicked him squarely in the chest.
His lack of balance and positioning sent him flying through the air onto one of his work tables below. He landed with a crash, his body growing still. Lana rushed up the stairs and through his apartment. She didn't even register how insane she must look as she ran out the door and into the suburban neighborhood that he Oliver resided in. It was empty and dark and she panicked. Then she saw the woods at the end of the street. It lead down to a highway.

Quickly she rushed through the underbrush, ignoring the stinging of the rocks on the bottom of her bare feet. She winced as the branches scratched her arms and legs as she continued to run furiously. Without warning her foot caught a root and she was sent rolling down the dirt hill.

Don't you dare stop now.

She picked herself up, rushing into the street and into the light. She turned as she heard the squealing of tires, her stomach knocked as a car came to a stop directly in front of her. Without warning she rushed into the passenger's seat.

"Drive," she bellowed to the confused man. "Go! Please, please, drive away! PLEASE!"

The man did as he was asked, his gaze confused as the woman beside him heaved, her body trembling and her face shining with perspiration. She was dressed in a nightgown and seemed absolutely insane.

"Thank you," she finally breathed with a soft smile. "You saved my life."

"You didn't give me much of a choice. You jumped in the car," the man replied, his face unimpressed.

"I'm sorry," Lana replied, still breathing heavily. "I had to get away from him."

"Did you have a fight with your boyfriend?" The man asked poisonously. "What'd you do to him?"

Lana went quiet, her eyes drawing to the face of the man. He looked like he was barely suppressing his fury as he spoke to her.

"Nothing," she finally uttered. "What makes you think it was my fault? He almost killed me. And he's not my boyfriend."

"Yeah," the man offered with a humorless laugh. "Of course it wasn't your fault. Woman are always the victims."

At that comment Lana felt a pulsing anger start in her belly. After all she had been through she couldn't believe this man.

"Could you please just take me to the police?"

As if a switch had been turned on, the man's eyes were suddenly alight with an anger that seemed to come out of nowhere. He began to rant and rave about her inconveniencing him. Of her ordering him around. And when Lana asked to be let out he refused, telling her to jump out going 50 miles an hour. Lana was shaking now.

"Why are you doing this to me?" she asked him, but in reality she was asking the universe.

"Why did she take ten years of marriage and flush it down the toilet?" he replied, his grip on the wheel tightening. "Why did I catch another man screwing my wife in my own bed? I didn't do anything to you. You brought this on yourself."
He produced a small handgun as he spoke, causing Lana's stomach to heave. She thought she could see the Angel of Death in the backseat, looking sorrowful. No. Not after everything I've been through.

"I can't take it. All the lies," the man was raging. "Betrayal, the cheating. It's all gonna end."

Without provocation the man had thrust the barrel of the gun into his mouth and pulled the trigger. Warm blood splashed all over Lana and as the man's car veered off the road Lana thought she could see the Angel leaning forward to give him a small kiss on the cheek.

*Lana groaned lowly in her throat, her eyes slowly opening. A familiar looking face glanced down at her. Sister Mary Eunice. Lana was confused. Was she hallucinating?*

"Try not to move," she whispered to Lana urgently. "You'll be in terrible pain."

Lana realized she was right as she tried to move her head. It ached and a low throb had started in her back. Mary Eunice's pale face was still looking to her with such concern.

"You've had quite the adventure," She continued watching as Lana struggled to talk. "The police said the car accident was quite horrific, I'm afraid it was fatal for the driver."

It all came back to Lana then. Escaping Thredson's dungeon. Making her way to the highway. The angry driver. Mary Eunice's sweet voice was almost grating as she said her next words, causing an involuntary scream to die in Lana's throat.

"But you're safe now. Back to Briarcliff where you belong."
Christmas Eve

It was Christmas at Briarcliff. The weather had a distinct chill to it. The air of chatter amongst the staff turned to that of Christmas traditions, trees and baking. Kathryn had no presents. No cards. Nothing under the Christmas tree except for her shattered dreams and crushed hopes.

And in the tree hung a lock of her hair with a bright red bow.

Sister Mary Eunice had insisted they all share of themselves to make the tree special. She absently went to the back of her head, feeling where the lock had been shorn. She sighed. There was festive music all the week leading up to tonight.

Even the residents of Briarcliff who were normally morose and moping looked joyful and even, dare she assume, happy? But not even the contagious spirit of Christmas could stop her sorrow.

She looked out the window of her cell every day, much as she had on her first day searching for the tall man in glasses. But he never came. There was no Lana. No Grace. No Kit. No...Oliver. All the people she had come to watch and interact with were gone in one foul swoop leaving her no one to talk to. She had withdrawn into herself, finding each day more impossible than the next.

The progress she had been experiencing started to backslide. When people touched her she screamed. When they stood too close she would shudder and walk away.

Whenever she was around Sister Mary Eunice she was worse. She was convinced that the woman was other-worldly. Convinced that one night she would come to slit her throat. But every morning she woke up alive but still terrified for the day's events. She hadn't heard from her Mother. Despite the fact it had been almost two months since her admittance she had not heard of any release date. When she tried to inquire with Timothy he waved her off, telling her that they knew what was best.

This last month had been particularly bad. Kathryn had been moved several times in the course of the month she had been here without Dr. Thredson. No one cell becoming comfortable before she was sequestered somewhere else. Each room was smaller and darker and she felt she was being taken further and further away from any light. She had grown angry. Resentful. She wouldn't speak with anyone. So this morning they had informed her that solitary confinement was what she needed, hoping it would loosen her tongue.

Without warning she was shoved into a solitary hallway where only her cell resided. The cell was small and cramped and almost pitch black. She was alone and away from everyone. She had her meals delivered and she waited for any sounds of passersby. It was so achingly lonely here. It caused her to sob silently to herself as she went to sleep.

And when Frank had come to wish her a Merry Christmas on moments ago and pass her along a cookie from the party she had wept with gratitude for the kindness. Now she lay in her cell, her eyes stuck on the ceiling above, singing a song to herself that reminded her of the joys she once felt during this time of year. But in her heart of hearts, Kathryn felt that joy was an emotion she would never be privy to again.

And as she glanced to the side of the room she was sure she could see a pale figure with blackened wings.

*****

Oliver crept through tunnel of Briarcliff, his suit freshly pressed and his face clean shaven. He would
appear most put together if someone stumbled across him. He would simply inform them that he had an appointment with Lana.

He knew who he was here for.

And it wasn't that bitch Lana Winters. The monster who had turned his affection into fodder for escape. Who had seduced him with her attentiveness until he had given himself to her. A part of himself she didn't deserve - a part he had been saving for someone special. Lana had been the perfect alibi to get back into Briarcliff. Her accident had been all over the papers and it hadn't taken him long to devise a plan.

He would come back under the guise of counselling Lana, ensure Kathryn's release and the rest would be history. Lana would rot away here. He made his way through the boiler room, ducking down behind one of the furnaces as he heard the voice of two orderlies. They were smoking and talking back and forth about Christmas shopping. Oliver waited a few moments for their conversation to dissipate. Soon they were on the move and so was he.

He rounded down the hallway in the women's section. The doors were all open at this time of night. He knew which door she was behind and his heart hammered in his chest. Kathryn Hatcher. Her sweet face and dark eyes swam into his mind and he couldn't help but be overjoyed at the prospect of her hands on his body. Of her mouth against his. Slowly the door came into view and he waited for any sound of a passing guard. Silence. He rounded the corner, straightening his tie nervously.

He wondered what she would say when she saw him. Would she throw herself into his arms? Would she sob with joy? He never got to see the answer to that question because when he rounded the corner and through the door he viewed that the room was completely barren. And not just emptied for the hour. The linens, the bed, even the small dresser was gone from the room. It looked completely gutted. He was still staring into the blank space when he heard a voice from behind him.

"Dr. Thredson, what a surprise."

Oliver whirled around, his mouth parted in surprise as Sister Mary Eunice stepped forward from the shadows. She looked so vampire-ic then, her pale visage and her sharp smile as she drew nearer. He took an unconscious step backwards as she advanced.

"I can only assume you're here to check on your favorite charge, Miss Hatcher."

Oliver said nothing, watching as the woman looked at him sadly, her head shaking slowly and heavily.

"Unfortunately that won't be possible."

"She needs to be released," Oliver insisted, pushing the frames of his glasses back up his nose. "She's better. You can't force her to stay here. She has to go home and truly live. She'll die locked up in this place."

"Too late for that, I'm afraid."

Oliver felt his legs wobble slightly as she said those words before taking a deep breath.

"What?"

"She's dead," Sister Mary Eunice offered flatly, watching Oliver's pale face contort. "She never fully recovered from the accident. She slipped into a coma a few days after you left and poof. She was gone. It was terribly tragic."
"You're lying," he whispered, his voice thick with indecision. "Just like you lied about her release."

He clenched his fists at his side, his brows furrowed in furious frustration. He was always so close and yet so far with Kathryn. But Mary Eunice looked sincere as she stepped closer to him, her voice taking on that same hissing tone as Jed Potter.

"She died of a broken heart, Oliver." Eunice whispered. "She cried your name over and over until finally she realized you weren't coming back and she gave up. Arden tried CPR and everything else but it was no good. She was gone. But I took a token for you. I knew you'd want it."

She placed the small lock of brown hair into Thredson's hand. The bow crisp and vivid against his pale palm. He brought the hair to his face, closing his eyes and inhaling gently. Lavender and soap.

"No."

She watched as the Doctor crumpled to his knees, bringing a hand to his mouth and shaking. His tears dotted the cement floor below him and the nun looked down with a grin before composing herself.

"I can't imagine the pain you're in," Sister Mary Eunice continued. "The anguish you must be feeling."

Oliver continued to weep silently, his shoulders shaking and his face in his hands. He could feel his heart shattering into a million pieces. The life he had imagined for them was gone as quickly as it had begun and that realization was like a heavy weight upon his chest.

"But Oliver, don't let her death be a waste," Sister Mary Eunice whispered into his ear.

Oliver silenced his tears, glancing up at the nun in confusion. Oliver realized then that something had happened to Sister Mary Eunice. Something sinister and dark and for once he could not explain it. But her words, what she said had rung true. Oliver paused a moment, wiping his eyes with the back of his hands. He knew who he had to blame for this. The same woman who had ruined everything, all his plans.

Lana Winters.

*******

Lana had realized a few days after confessing to Mary Eunice what had happened that no one was coming for her. The nun obviously hadn't believed her confession of Oliver Thredson's misdeeds. She had talked to Kit who was also back at Briarcliff - he had come back from escaping custody to save Grace. But it had ended poorly and now Grace was dead. The despair was palpable. But as she looked down at Kit's pale face in the moonlight, Lana couldn't help but view him as almost a son.

A motherly instinct took over and her determination grew. She could not let Kit die at the hands of the electric chair and she could not spend the rest of her days here at Briarcliff.

*I will never stop fighting.*

And so she snuck down the hall of Briarcliff, wincing at every sound she heard. Everyone thought she and Kit were asleep in the Infirmary and she needed to keep it that way. But she managed to sneak through the darkened hallways, thankful for the distraction of the Christmas party.

She pushed open the first door she could find. It was a small office. She could have screamed for joy as she viewed the shining black rotary phone sitting there. She rushed over to it, the darkness
cloaking her as she dialed.

Nothing.

No ring.

It was at that moment that she felt the first tingles of horror creep up her spine. The door behind her shut quietly.

She wasn't alone in here.

She whirled around and felt all her nightmares come to life. There stood Oliver Thredson looking no worse for wear save for a few scratches at his temple. He looked at her impassively, all the previous compassion drained from his form.

"Hope you're not planning on making a toll call."

Lana was silent, regarding him with quiet terror before she spoke.

"How did you find me?"

He stepped out of the darkness slowly, as if emerging from a dark bath.

"Well, you were in a car accident Lana," he uttered gently, his eyes dead. "And the details were in all the papers. Escaped Mental Patient returned to Ward."

"You'll never get away with it," Lana insisted, her eyes wet with angry tears. "Not as long as I have a voice."

"Oh, is that what you were doing on the phone? You were going to call the police?" She saw the arrogance creep into his pale features and she flinched as he spoke.

"You know what I've been doing since you left me? I've been in mourning. You made me kill Bloody Face," Oliver spoke evenly and slowly, letting his words sink in. "I've been through every inch of my house with a toothbrush cleaning up. No bone, no skin. No drop of blood escaped my scrutiny and the furnace has been burning red hot, believe me."

Lana felt the blood drain from her face as he spoke, realizing her tenuous grasp on the situation. How else would she prove Oliver Thredson's guilt? Who would take her word over his?

"You haven't made me disappear, I'm a witness."

"To the courts?" Oliver began to wind the string from his pocket around his knuckles. "An unreliable one at best. In fact, I was just going to let you talk. With no hard evidence who do you think they'll believe? The Doctor or the patient?"

_Lana didn't know what to say. She watched as Oliver's gaze turned cold. Think of how she ruined your plans, Oliver. She kept you from helping Kathryn. She used you._

"But then I thought about how you betrayed me," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "I opened my heart to you. I told you my story. And you used it to confuse me. You made me give you my intimacy and that is a wrong that I need to make right."

He banged his fist above her shoulder on the brick behind her. She flinched and that pleased him.

"You're insane," Lana laughed darkly. "Everyone is going to be able to see that."
Oliver faltered a moment, his mind a swirl of thought and emotion. As he looked into Lana's features he found all his anger dissipating. Instead all he could think of was Kathryn crying for him in bed, asking for him to return and him letting her down with every day that passed.

He felt weak and numb and entirely awful. He was lost and no one was left to understand him but Lana.

"I've lost so much recently, I feel like I've been let adrift in the open sea," Oliver intoned lowly, his hand coming to tentatively touch her shoulder. "But now that you're here so close to me again, well, I feel like I've been found."

A voice that sounded eerily similar to Sister Mary Eunice started to whirl around his head, momentarily distracting him.

*Let Kathryn's death bring forth new life. Let it bring Bloody Face back in a new form and let his good work continue.*

Lana tried to rush past him, caught in the grip of the wire and his arms. She grunted with excursion trying her best to free herself from his grasp. But he wrestled her with ease, pulling her against his chest and resting a cheek to her forehead. He covered her mouth as she tried to scream.

*Yes. I have a purpose.*

"Do you believe in fate, Lana?" He spun her to face him, his hands still on her mouth. "We've been drawn together like magnets and I must admit I didn't fully understand why until now. It's like the phoenix who had to turn to ashes. Bloody Face had to burn so that he could be born again."

Images of Kathryn went through his mind as he looked at Lana. The same dark eyes and hair. The same warmth and exuded kindness. The sweet skin. He could almost feel her sweet, soft skin under his fingertips now and with that brought a sudden realization.

Yes, the skin.

"Your skin will be the start of a whole new Bloody Face."

With that he had whirled Lana around, his hand still on her mouth as he dragged her from the room, preparing to take her down to his office. He had just flung open the door behind him when he was unceremoniously knocked unconscious by none other than Kit Walker.
Lana stepped into Mary Eunice's office with her arms crossed in front of her. This was the woman who had let Oliver Thredson go free. Who had sent Kit and she into the Infirmary to keep them quiet. And as she sat there at Sister Jude's old desk, blonde and angelic, Lana felt a lump of bile rise in her throat.

She made an offhand comment comparing her to Sister Jude as she sat down.

"Awfully sassy for a girl in your condition," the nun grinned, looking to the haunted eyes of Lana Winters. She could see that the woman had no idea. Lana looked confusedly at Sister Mary Eunice.

"What condition is that?"

"Well, the good news is you seem to have conquered your sexual perversion," Sister Mary Eunice offered, tapping her desk for emphasis as she next spoke. "The bad news is; the rabbit died. If I were my Aunt Celeste I would offer you a Drain-o margarita."

The nun's words finally hit Lana like a punch to the gut.

"A what?"

"You add half a cup of Drain-o for every two weeks you've been pregnant to a margarita," The nun continued, rising to stand and walk over to Lana. "It's what she gave my slutty cousin Molly when she got preggers by Billy Porter."

Lana looked dazed into the distance, the words coming unbidden.

"I'm pregnant?"

After the meeting with Sister Mary Eunice and a quick fainting spell Lana was determined to see Kit. When she had a chance she snuck down to the Infirmary. Kit pretended to sleep as the footsteps approached. He re-hooked his IV into his arm instead of letting it drain into the basin on the floor.

"It's me."

He opened his eyes to see Lana there, looking peaked and exhausted. The rings around her eyes were deep and dark.

"What are you doin' here? Oh shit did they find him? Are you okay you look terrible?"

The him they spoke of was Dr. Oliver Thredson, tied up and hidden in an old storage supply closet. His cries were muffled by the tie around his mouth and the mattresses they had used to buttress him in. But it would only hold him for so long.
"Kit," Lana continued breathlessly. "We have to kill him."

"What?"

"We should have done it when we had the chance," Lana continued passionately. "They're gonna find him and then he's going to be free to kill again and we cannot wait for that to happen."

"We're not going to," Kit replied. "Lana he's the only thing standing between me and the Death House. We have to get him to confess."

They decided the best plan was sodium pentothal. Truth Serum. But Lana wasn't so sure. It would be deemed inadmissible if he were drugged. But Kit was desperate.

"I need Thredson to talk."

Lana thought of the child growing within her womb as she spoke.

"I think I might know how."

******

Oliver groaned at the pain his body and his pride were in. How had he been outsmarted by two insane inmates at Briarcliff? It was almost comical. His wrists and legs were bound tightly and he grimaced at the feeling. At least he had given Lana some slack in her chains. Suddenly she appeared with a cup of water, her eyes dark and full of loathing. She gave him a sip of water which he took greedily, agreeing not to shout for help. He looked at her with equal amounts of anger and disappointment as he gasped for air.

"You'd like to kill me right now, Oliver. Wouldn't you?"

He didn't reply, instead scanning the piece of paper she produced from her pocket and held up for him to see.

"This might change your mind."

His eyes scanned the medical document further, his head swimming with fatigue and confusion. Why was she showing him a medical document? Was she sick? What did he care?

"What is this?"

"It's the ultimate cosmic joke," Lana replied spitefully. "You got me pregnant."

Oliver felt a jolt go through him at her words. His body growing warm and cold at the same time. A strange sensation was flowing through him. He had gotten her pregnant? She was going to have a baby? His baby?

"I'm going to be a father," he said to himself, looking at the paper.

His attention was diverted by Lana who crumpled the paper and put it back into her pocket.

"No, Oliver, you're not going to be a father."

Fear gripped his insides as he struggled in his restraints.

"What do you mean?" his eyes were wide with horror and he toppled to his side. His voice grew in pitch and intensity with every second. "No, no Lana please. Please, please don't give him away! I
know what it's like to be raised in the system, it-

"Oliver STOP," Lana yelled, her hands in fists at her sides. "This monster you planted in me? I'm getting rid of it. And since I'm stuck here, I'm gonna have to get creative."

From her other pocket she produced a coat hanger and the ugly truth of her words became clear.

Oliver could feel the searing pain of injustice and true cruelty coursing through his body. His baby would be aborted. His son or daughter would never see the light of day. And she was going to do it right in front of him. He began to flail, begging her to change her mind. He didn't care that he sounded pitiful, all he wanted was for the child to live.

He promised to change. No more bloody face. No more killing. He could do it. He could try at least. He could be honest and true. A wonderful father. Wouldn't she give him a chance? Please? Her eyes were cold and her mouth set in a cruel smile.

"You're a sociopath," Lana said. "You can't be honest with anyone."

"I can," Oliver promised through gasps as he struggled to right himself. "I can be, honest, I can. Please help me."

He looked so pathetic there, worming on the ground that Lana, against her better judgement, grabbed him by the shoulders and righted him so that they were eye-to-eye.

"Okay," she said, giving him a chance. "Donna Burton. Why did you choose her?"

The name of Bloody Face's victim drew his attention and he realized what she wanted. She wanted the truth. The reasoning. He breathed heavily, realizing that admitting the words aloud were going to be hard. Doing the acts were brutal enough - speaking them aloud made them real and it pained him.

"I saw her at the library a couple of nights."

"What did you like about her?"

Oliver faltered, looking shy and then disgusted with himself.

"Her skin...was fuzzy like a peach. And I wanted to feel it."

"So you skinned her alive."

Oliver nodded gently, but seeing that it wasn't good enough he muttered a soft: "Yes."

"And Alison Rydell?"

Oliver flinched at that name. Alison had been a particularly hard death on him.

"She was a secretary at my dentist's office," he breathed raggedly. "I always liked her. I put her to sleep first but she kept talking to me. I was so confused."

He looked like he was in pain but Lana couldn't tell if it was sincere or an act. She felt her tears brimming as she asked the next name. 

And what about Wendy?"

At this his gaze was back on her face and it was cold.
"She never loved you. She locked you away."

He smiled victoriously at that, seeing Lana's tears that now slipped down her cheeks.

'*Her skin...was fuzzy like a peach. And I wanted to feel it'*

Oliver frowned confused at the sound. It was his voice sounding out but- Kit threw back the curtain as Oliver's recorded voice droned on about his murders. He had recorded it with Oliver's old device.

"I think we got it," Kit smiled.

"Hide that tape," Lana insisted before turning back to Oliver. "I'm not finished here."

"You bitch," Oliver ground out angrily, his arms straining against the ropes that dug into him. "So it was all an act huh? You were never pregnant."

"No, that part was true," Lana said with a dark smile before standing. "Was. Sadly your beloved baby died last night. It started as a trickle but within an hour it was a bloody mess."

"No," Oliver moaned lowly as he thought of the life she had taken from him.

"It really wasn't that bad actually," Lana insisted with a grim smile.

"God you're a monster," Oliver cried out, trying to free himself from the ropes in devastated anger. "You are worse than I am. You killed an innocent child."

He didn't get to say any more because Lana had covered his mouth, pulling the tie back up and effectively gagging him. She was over him, her eyes dead set on his face.

"I've got bakery duty later, and after knife count I'm gonna pocket one," Lana promised. "And I'm gonna come back and slit your throat nice and easy. I always wanted to know what it was like inside the mind of a killer. Now I know."

******

He was here with her. His sweet voice and his gentle hands. He was holding her and stroking her hair and telling her that it was alright. That she would be home soon.

*Home.*

She smiled. She went to nuzzle into him when she realized he didn't smell like himself. He didn't smell of Old Spice and Brylcreem.

When she opened her eyes it wasn't Oliver. It was the pale woman from the side of the room. The one with the dark wings and the blood red lips.

She looked into the eyes of the woman, partially hidden between a dark caged veil. The eyes were endless pools of compassion and sweet comfort. They were the eternal resting place.

"Why hasn't he come for me?" she whispered, her eyes filling with tears. "Why has no one come for me?"

She allowed the woman to hold her, rocking her gently like an infant. She didn't pull away, even if she could. She was weak, her body and mind slowly deteriorating with every horrible day that went by.
She began to weep softly then, weeping for every day she had been in Briarcliff. A tear for every hour gone by that Oliver had left her here.

"Shhhh," the woman cooed, brushing an errant strand of hair from the girl's dark eyes. The girl looked so vulnerable then, her face drawn in a caricature of pain and abandonment.

She had been abandoned again.

By the only other person she had let her guard down for. He had left without a goodbye and he had left without so much as a hint of when he'd be back. As it turns out he was never to return. When she realized who the figure was that held her she gently moaned in her throat, realizing she was looking death in the face.

She was confused by its sweet embrace, its gentle touches on her face. But her other choice was this existence- not even a life.

"I'm scared," Kathryn whispered, her lips trembling as she spoke. "I'm so alone."

"Hush sweet child," came the woman's sweet voice as her mouth drew toward Kathryn's. "I'm here now."

Oliver woke up, realizing that someone was speaking to him. He groaned softly, his back aching from his position on the ground.

He realized it was Sister Mary Eunice speaking, her hands working furiously to untie the slipknots around his wrists.

"You need to get up," she hissed urgently. "They'll be back at any moment."

Oliver didn't move, his entire body heavy with sorrow. His baby was dead. The only woman who had ever understood his pain was dead. So what was the point in going on? He looked off into the distance, thinking that prison may be as good an option as any.

"Don't be weak," the nun was saying, trying to pull him to a standing position.

He pulled back from her angrily, stretching his sore limbs a moment before his eyes darted up to her face, his gaze malevolent.

"What's the point? Everything I have ever loved is dead thanks to this shit-hole," he ground out. "So what if they come back? So what if they turn me in? I don't care anymore. Kathryn is dead. My future child is dead. I'm dead. It's over."

"Oh stop being so dramatic," the nun said with a shake of her head. "You're better than this, Bloody Face."

"Bloody Face is dead," Oliver insisted, his jaw clenching as placed his head heavily into his hands, realizing he was finished. "And I'm turning myself in."

Sister Mary Eunice looked at the man in disappointment. All her hard work and this is what was going to happen? No fun and games with Lana Winters? No framing Kit Walker?

Perhaps she had been wrong about taking away all his hope when she told him Kathryn was dead. She had hoped it would have encouraged him to work harder, to fight angrier, but all it had
done was send him into a moping depression.

And that was just no fun. Bloody Face had to continue! He just had to! It was too much wonderful sin wasted if he just went to jail to rot.

The nun looked at him in fury for a moment before her features grew placid once more.

She kneeled down beside Oliver until they were eye level and she spoke to him in a soft and pleasant tone.

"What if I told you I had some good news?"

**********

The Angel's lips descended slowly, coming just inches from the girl's parted lips when she stopped at the sound of someone on the other side of the cell door.

"Kathryn Hatcher?"

Kathryn blinked and she was alone in the bed. There was no Angel of death, no warm embrace. Only she on top of her scratchy blanket in a cell barely larger than she was. Kathryn's eyes squeezed tightly as the door to her cell opened. She blinked furiously, the light aching her eyes which had become accustomed to the darkness. She could see a blurry figure stepping into the cell, closing the door behind her. Kathryn sat up on the hard cot, her body protesting in aching pain. She blinked again, her eyes becoming adjusted to the minimal light. She took in the figure before her and she started, backing up against the wall behind her cot clumsily. This was it. She was going to die.

"Please don't hurt me," she whispered.

"Calm yourself," Sister Mary Eunice offered, pulling up a chair alongside the bed. She motioned for Kathryn to resume sitting and the girl did, shakily, but never taking her eyes off the monster in front of her.

"Kathryn I have some exciting news for you," the nun said as if they were old friends. "You're going home tonight."

"What?"

Kathryn didn't know what to do or say to that. She didn't trust a word that came out of that monster's mouth.

"And on top of that good news," Sister Mary Eunice continued unfettered, "I have someone who would very much like to see you waiting just outside. A sort of going-away present if you will."

Kathryn shook her head, horrified at the thought of who could be behind the door of her cell.

"No."

"No?" the nun feigned surprise. "Why ever not?"

"I don't trust you," Kathryn replied coolly, deciding if she was going to die she might as well do it with dignity. She brought herself to a standing position inches away from the nun. "Leave me alone."

"In any other situation I would applaud your discernment," the nun said with a small smirk. "But today is your lucky day because I am on my best behavior."
Sister Mary Eunice stood then, going to the cell door with a flourish. Despite her bravado Kathryn could feel her knees starting to buckle. She regulated her breathing and turned her head to the side, shutting her eyes tightly and bracing herself. Kathryn shuddered as the cell door opened and footsteps walked tentatively forward. She didn't want to see what horrors awaited her.

She didn't want to see the madman that the nun had brought to murder her. Or the weapon she had chosen to do the job herself.

"You're alive."

Kathryn was afraid to open her eyes then, for the voice could only belong to one person. But what if it were a trick? She trembled then, afraid that this would all disappear when she opened her eyes. And so she stood, her body braced for combat.

She felt a slow and gentle hand on her cheek, cupping her face and she felt herself leaning into it. Could it be him?

Slowly her eyes opened and she took him in. His face inches from her own. His face looking bruised and cut. His breathing was heavy and his clothes dishevelled. He wasn't wearing his glasses and so she could see his thick dark lashes clumping together with fresh tears.

And before she could say anything to him, Kathryn Hatched had fainted into Oliver Thredson's arms.
The Offer

Oliver watched as the girl came to on his old office's sofa, her eyes blinking and her voice a low moan. She didn't recognize where she was. Where was her small cell and uncomfortable cot?

"Where am I?"

Her eyes opened wildly as Oliver's face swam into view.

Oliver.

Without warning she had straightened up and pulled him by the neck into a warm hug. Oliver felt his fears and sorrow melting away with every second that her skin was on his. He buried his head in her neck, both of them oblivious to Sister Mary Eunice rolling her eyes from across the room.

"You're really here?"

Oliver pulled back so that he could look into her face. Her beautiful, sweet and adoring face. He brushed his hands through her hair, inhaling the sweet scent of lavender and soap and feeling his heart filling to the brim.

"Yes," he said with a grin. "And I'm taking you home. Now. With me."

Kathryn could feel the tears fighting to be released from behind her eyes and she smiled so broadly Oliver thought he felt his heart explode. He brushed back the hair from her face.

"I'm going to live with you?"

"Yes," Oliver nodded, pressing his forehead to hers. It felt so right, this sweet skin on his. "I've cleaned house just for your arrival."

With all of his Bloody Face memorabilia gone from his home, he was free to have the girl around his home. She would be there when he slept and when he awoke. He had set up her own room for her in case she was nervous about sleeping alongside him. He would take things as slowly as she needed for as long as she needed. He was just so happy she was coming with him.

"Would you like that?" he asked gently, suddenly shy about his offer. The girl was staring at him with something akin to awe. He looked down at his hands, his cheeks flushing. She slipped her hands into his, her face inches from his.

"Yes," she finally breathed, her cheeks turning a delightful shade of pink. "I'd love to."

He pressed his lips gently to hers then, kissing her so sweetly she could feel her heart melting. Her hands were at his shoulder, pressing her mouth against his in desire.

Mary Eunice offered a sharp cough then, surprising Kathryn who thought they were alone. They broke from the kiss hurriedly, Kathryn settling herself closer to Oliver on the couch. She was still wary of nun who looked at them with that predatory gaze.

"We'd love to offer you a full time position here at Briarcliff Doctor Thredson," Sister Mary Eunice said. "Starting immediately. We think you'd be wonderful for some of our patients here."

Kathryn looked over to Oliver to see his reaction. He was shaking his head, his hands tensing around Kathryn's shoulders. She was surprised at his behavior. As far as she knew he loved to help others at
"I appreciate the offer," Oliver said standing and bringing Kathryn up with him. She snuggled happily into the crook of his arm. "But I have different plans."

They headed for the door as Mary Eunice's voice reached out to them.

"It wasn't really an offer, Oliver," the nun said coolly. "More a statement."

Oliver stilled, his back to the nun. He felt his heart beginning to race as Kathryn looked up at him in confusion. He smiled down at her giving her a reassuring kiss on the forehead before gently motioning towards the office door.

"Do you mind waiting just outside the door? I'll be two minutes. I want to speak to Sister in private."

Kathryn nodded sleepily, unsure of what was going on but so damn excited she was leaving that she almost skipped out the door. She shut it gently behind her, leaving it open just a crack so that she could still hear him. She was afraid to close it all the way. Frightened that to sever that simple tie she would be sequestered to Briarcliff forever.

"You promised," Oliver was saying gently through the door, his back to her. "You promised to bring me to her and that I could take her home. I promised to keep my end of the bargain at home with my hobbies. You never mentioned any job."

"I changed my mind," Sister Mary Eunice said with a smile. She was sitting at his old desk, her feet propped up on the top of it looking casually up at him. "It happens every once in a while."

"Well too bad," Oliver bit back, exhausted and wanting nothing more than to leave with Kathryn. "We're leaving."

"I don't think you are," the nun replied evenly, her eyes becoming as icy as her tone. "I think you'll do exactly what I say."

Kathryn watched the scene from outside with confusion. Why didn't Oliver just leave? Why was he listening to her? What deal? What hobbies? "I think I'll do whatever I want," Oliver replied, trying to look dignified despite looking like he had just been in a bar brawl.

"And what I want to do is leave."

"Don't you think you should be honest with Miss Hatcher?" Sister Mary Eunice replied, her head tilting playfully. "The cornerstone to any healthy relationship is honesty, wouldn't you say Doctor?"

"Since when do you care about anyone?" Oliver responded bitterly.

"I just think the girl should know what she's getting into," the nun said. "Just like Lana should have known what she was getting into when you broke her out of Briarcliff."

There was a sickening moment of silence and the back of Oliver's neck flushed a deep red.

"Keep your voice down," Oliver whispered angrily.

Kathryn stilled, her body growing cold at those words. Was that why Oliver had left? Because he had been shacked up with Lana Winters for the last month? That was why she had been stuck here? So he could fool around and she'd be stuck here none-the-wiser? Ready for him to pick up when he got bored with Lana?
"Have you told her about the baby?" Sister Mary Eunice inquired out of nowhere, looking innocently to Oliver as he glared up at her. "The one with Lana Winters? Something tells me that she would want to know about that, given her trust issues..."

"Kathryn can never know about that," Oliver hissed, his posture stiff.

Mary Eunice glanced to the crack in the door, giving Kathryn a small conspiratorial wink.

"I think it may be a bit late for that."

Oliver's eyes went wide as he whirled around to see the door opening slowly and Kathryn's face wet with fresh tears. The pain in her eyes was excruciating and it knocked the wind out of him. She was shaking her head, her lips trembling as she spoke to him.

"It's not true," she whimpered, her hands shaking as she wrapped them around herself. "You didn't. You wouldn't. Not after... Not after everything."

She trailed off, her eyes searching his for any sign that this was a trick by the cruel nun behind him. She was smirking at the whole scene, looking very pleased with herself. But to her dismay she saw as Oliver's eyes closed tightly in surrender to the truth.

"You got some other patient pregnant," Kathryn said aloud, her eyes wide with disbelief. "I was just something to play around with. Pass the time... What was I thinking?"

Oliver felt his stomach flipping at her words, his body yearning to gather her into a warm embrace and tell her it was a lie.

"Kathryn, let me explain-"

His hands were reaching out to her in gentle desperation. She recoiled from him, her face contorting into frightened disgust. She didn't know Oliver Thredson. She thought she did because of the stories he told and how he kissed her. But she realized she knew nothing about him and what she was starting to discover was that he was just as bad as everyone else.

"Stay away from me."

She turned quickly then, the door slamming behind her and before he could move to follow Sister Mary Eunice had stepped between he and it.

"Why?" Oliver intoned darkly, his head shaking in disbelief. "Why on earth would you tell her? You promised I could take her home and I would go back to my hobbies. That was the deal."

"I promised you she was alive and that you were free to take her home," Sister Mary Eunice replied. "I didn't promise not to tell her about your indiscretion. However I am sure we can come to some sort of an arrangement. Your talents would be put to good use here. Dr. Arden is losing his touch."

"Why would I want to work here?" Oliver asked, throwing his hands up in frustration. "I want to leave this place as soon as possible. I want to start a life with the woman you just broke the heart of. And now you've ruined it. You've ruined everything."

"Oh she'll get over it," the nun said with an off-hand shrug. "And I know you'll take the job because there is something here at Briarcliff that you don't have waiting for you at home."

Oliver sighed, tired of the games she was playing. He rubbed his face in tired exhaustion.
"And what's that?"

"A child," Sister Mary Eunice said with a gentle clap of her hands. "I was going to surprise you with the news tomorrow but considering the little soap opera that just went on here I decided now was a better time to bring it up."

Oliver frowned at her sick sense of humor. "What are you talking about? I know what Lana did."

"The abortion didn't take," the nun replied with a sickening grin. "Your son is a fighter. Still growing in Lana Winters as we speak."

Oliver felt the world spin a bit at her words, his left hand coming to rest on the back of a nearby chair.

"My son?"

"Oh, I'm sorry to spoil the surprise," the blonde monster replied with a fake look of concern. "I just thought you'd want to know that you'd have a son to carry on the Thredson name...and perhaps the Thredson business."

Oliver was silent, his world turning on its axis.

"Besides, you may need to stick around and warm Kathryn Hatcher back to the idea of leaving with you," Mary Eunice offered with a small smile. "She didn't seem so taken with you just now."

An hour ago Oliver had no child and no Kathryn and now he had both. Tentatively of course, but he was a hard worker. He was persistent and soon Kathryn would be back in his warm embrace and they would be the family he had always imagined. Visions of he, Kathryn and a dark haired baby suddenly swam into his mind. He smiled darkly at the realization that everything he had been wanting would be his.

"When do I start?"
He was gone.

Oliver Thredson was gone and Lana realized she was directly back at square one. She was stuck in Briarcliff with no way of escape. A sense of hopelessness had settled upon her as she sat in the common room, listening as Sister Mary Eunice introduced the latest inductee to Briarcliff, Sister Jude. Also known as Judy Martin.

"That's your name?" Lana inquired gently, watching as the formerly put together nun sat across from her, looking disheveled and smoking furiously. "Judy Martin?"

"Not anymore," came her defeated voice. "We're all just numbers here."

Jude stood rapidly, leaving Lana feeling even more hopeless than before. Despite all that Jude had done to her, she couldn't help but feel sorry for her. Lana looked up to see Kit entering the common room, bumping into Jude and frowning.

He gave her a strange look before rushing over to Lana, enveloping her into a tight hug. The new jukebox crooned "I put a spell on you" loudly from the other side of the room. The two of them broke apart, both their eyes haunted and damp.

"C'mon," Lana whispered, grasping the young man and leading him over to some empty sofas at the side of the bustling room. "We need to talk."

A dark haired orderly watched them with an impassive gaze, his arms crossed over his chest as he stared at them. "Something's happened," Lana said. She saw Kit nod, his gaze fixated on the door of the common room.

"Thredson's loose," Kit growled. Lana was taken aback at his response.

"How do you know that?"

Kit nodded to the doorway of the common room. As the sultry sounds of music rang through the air, Oliver Thredson strolled into the room with a look of contemptuous victory etched across his features.

He glanced around the room, his eyes settling on Lana and Kit before he strode over to the dark haired orderly that had been staring at them this whole time.

"Bring Kathryn Hatcher to my office please," he muttered before slowly turning to face the two allies sitting on the couch, open-mouthed and terrified.

"Well well well well well well," he teased, taking a seat across from the couple. He held a smoke casually, his smile wolf-life. "Isn't this pleasant? The three of us sitting around like civilized people."

Lana glanced down at the heavy ashtray between them on the coffee table. Before she could act, Oliver had spun it closer to him, out of her immediate reach, and put out his cigarette.

"That was a wise move," she offered darkly. "I was about to bash your face in."
Oliver gave a small chuckle under his breath before leaning back in his chair, fixing her with a dark gaze.

"I know you were. I admire your pluck, it's a quality I hope you pass onto our child." Oliver noticed the confused look that passed on Kit's brow. "Oh she didn't tell you either? Her attempts to self-abort proved fruitless. Our baby's strong; a survivor. He's the only thing that's keeping you alive right now. As long as he's growing inside of your womb you're safe."

Lana scowled at him. She felt bolder here surrounded by the patients and Kit. "Then what happens? You murder me?"

"Oh no," Oliver scoffed. "We'll have to keep you around to breastfeed that baby for at least the first year. The health benefits are immediate."

"You are one, sick twist." Kit ground out, his palms itching to be around the throat of the pompous shrink in front of him. Oliver broke his gaze from Lana to look to Kit with a smirk. He knew what the boy wanted.

He wanted to be turned into the police so his illegally procured confession could go along with him. Oliver was no fool.

"We can discuss that and...other issues tomorrow when we resume your treatment," Oliver said, watching as the two of them looked horrified at one another.

"That's right," Oliver could barely contain the smirk that stole across his features as he stood. He began to button his blazer. "Sister Mary Eunice has offered me a full-time position here at Briarcliff. She's a remarkably forward thinking administrator for a nun."

The two pale faces glanced up at him as he continued, his voice a low rumble.

"And remarkably adept at untying slipknots."

******

"Get off of me!"

Kathryn fought against the orderly - Kevin, she thought his name was. She was exhausted from the previous night's ordeal, but still she tried to pull from the dark haired man's grip. He pulled her impassively along the hall towards Thredson's old office. Kathryn wanted to vomit- her eyes filling with frustrated tears. She never wanted to see Oliver Thredson again.

"Let me go!"

Still the orderly dragged her down the hall, shoving her in front of him boredly. With every step towards Oliver's office, Kathryn could feel her stomach churning and she winced as the door to the psychiatrist's office was thrown open.

There he stood.

Doctor Oliver Thredson.

His tall frame resplendent in his customary dark tailored suit. The crisp white of his button-down bright against the slender inky black of his tie. His hair was styled back, the part as sharp as a razor. She could smell the Old Spice aftershave from where she stood. He had just lit a cigarette and as he
turned to face the door, the smoke trailed from his parted lips like a dragon. His dark eyes were alight at the sight of her and his mouth turned into a slow smile. Everything felt like it was happening in slow motion and she thought she heard herself whimper at the sight of him. He was beautiful.

Kevin pushed her into the room, sitting her on the sofa by pushing her harshly down by the shoulders. She wrenched from his grasp, her shackles tinkling against one another as she glared up at him. Oliver surveyed the scene before stepping forward, placing a tender hand on Kathryn's shaking shoulder.

"The cuffs aren't necessary," Oliver said gently, taken aback as Kathryn shook his arm off her shoulder furiously.

"Leave them," she barked at the surprised orderly whose hands had descended towards the girl's wrists. "For his safety I suggest you keep them on."

Oliver sighed softly before nodding at the orderly to leave. He did so quickly, closing the door behind him almost silently before stalking down the hall for a smoke. Kathryn sat back down slowly, her cuffed hands in her lap and a steady gaze up at Oliver on her pale face. He looked her over a moment in silence, his dark eyes warm and tender.

"I'm so happy to see you."

Kathryn didn't reply, instead chose to look out the window into the grey day. She'd rather look anywhere in this dark and depressing office than Oliver's lying face. He leaned against the edge of his desk, looking down at her with a slight tilt of his head. Oliver bit his lower lip absently, silently wishing for the girl to turn that gaze of hers on his own. His fingers twitched on the edge of the desk. He had to fight for them not to go to her, to pull her against him.

"Where did you go last night Kathryn?"

"Back to my cell," Kathryn ground out angrily, her voice low. "Where I want to be right now."

"You're just going to stay here?" Oliver's eyes glanced around the ceiling. "Here at Briarcliff? You'd rather be in that...that hole of a cell than here with me?"

Oliver's face was pained, his lean frame stepping towards her. He stopped when he saw her inching away from him, her disgust and fury plain on her face.

"I'd rather be anywhere than here with you," she replied. "After what you've done I can't believe you'd think I'd want to go anywhere with you. You lied to me. You betrayed me. You got another woman pregnant and now what? I'm supposed to jump into your arms? Until you get bored with me and move onto someone else? I trusted you."

"Kathryn-"

"You abandoned me here, Oliver," Kathryn shouted suddenly, tears springing to her eyes and her voice wobbling. "You left me! You left me and broke another woman out of here for what? Fun and games?"

"I tried to get to you," Oliver replied, his voice deep with sorrow. "I tried so many ways to find you. They told me you'd been released so I went to your Mother's home. Then I found out from her that you'd never been released at all. I had to sneak back into Briarcliff to get you and even then they told me you were dead. I've gone through hell to get to you, Kathryn."

Kathryn was quiet, her eyes staring at the floor as he spoke. When he finished, her eyes slowly
dragged up his legs, his chest and came to rest on his eyes. Her voice wobbled when she spoke to him.

"You went to my Mother's?"

Oliver nodded, slowly coming towards her. When he saw she didn't pull back he lowered himself next to her on the sofa. Their thighs almost touching, Oliver continued, his face so close to her face she could feel his warm breath on her forehead.

"I confronted her about what she'd done to you," Oliver said gently, his hands itching to wrap themselves around her trembling body. Instead he gripped the side of the cushion beneath him. "She admitted that she'd done everything wrong, that she'd done it in response to her own childhood trauma."

Kathryn was silent, listening to Oliver as he explained his meeting with Dorothy; what she'd confided in him, how he'd told her Kathryn was ready for release from Briarcliff, how his plan had always involved her release.

"She never came for me," Kathryn finally uttered, looking to her bound hands.

"Sister Mary Eunice's doing no doubt," Oliver frowned, leaning forward on his arms, his gaze imploring as he searched her downturned face. She was so close, he could reach out a hand and stroke that soft cheek of hers. "So you see I didn't abandon you?"

"I see how you think you're free of guilt," Kathryn replied. "But I think you're leaving out the why. Why did you leave with Lana Winters? Why did you...."

She trailed off, unable to continue her questions, her hands turned palms up in confused surrender. Part of her didn't want to know the answers. Oliver looked to her face, seeing her lips set in a thin line of displeasure. He knew he had to act quickly. He licked his lips, his mind already ten steps ahead.

"I broke Lana Winters out of Briarcliff because I needed her testimony," Oliver finally said, his tone clipped and his lips tense. "Much like you she was there under false pretenses. I brought her to my home because I knew they would be looking for her at her place. We were going to go to the police the next day, to get a tape delivered to the police that proved that Kit Walker was Bloody Face. Kit had confessed to Lana about his involvement in the murders and she was my only other witness. With her confession and the tape we had enough to send Kit to the electric chair."

Kathryn listened, seeing the rationale behind his words. But there was something he was leaving out. Something truly upsetting. She swallowed gently as he finished, her body stilled.

"And what about....what about the.." She couldn't force herself to say the words.

The ugliness.

"I was drunk," Oliver replied, his eyes on the floor before him. "So drunk I couldn't even make it to my own bed. I was on the couch. I had just found out you'd been released and I was a mess. I thought I was dreaming. But then I woke up and she was....she was on top of me. I tried to fight her off but.... it was too late."

Oliver took the appropriate pauses to indicate his shame and horror at the situation. He wondered if she was buying it. Kathryn looked at him and saw the tears that had started at the corner of his dark eyes.
"And now I'm here Kathryn," he said with a small hopeful smile in her direction. He wrapped his hands in hers, pulling his face even closer to her own. "I came back for you. Come home with me. Let me take you away from here. We can start a new life together."

His eyes were boring into her, causing her breathing to become shallow and rapid. She could feel a fluttering in her chest as a tapered finger came to move a dark strand of hair from her cheek. His gaze was fixed upon her mouth and without realizing it she surrendered. She closed her eyes as he leaned forward, pressing his lips gently against her own. She felt his full mouth press more deeply, his hands wrapping themselves around her waist and pulling her body against his own. Kathryn felt her heart race, her mouth responding hungrily to his lips. She heard him sigh gently against her and suddenly she broke away.

Oliver brought a hand to his suddenly wet cheek, realizing she had been silently crying. She was looking to him now through wet eyes, grimacing in internal pain. Every time she looked at Oliver all she could see was the betrayal. The abandonment. Despite his words she had spent so long turning her heart against him in his absence that to have him do this felt foreign and invasive.

"I can't do this," Kathryn shook her head, pulling back from him.

"Kathryn," Oliver pleaded, pressing his lips to the corner of her mouth before she pulled back.

His body felt immediately cold as she disentangled herself from his grasp. She wiped the tears from her cheeks with her handcuffed hands angrily, forcing herself to stand. She looked as if she wanted to say something more to him, her mouth parting a moment as she looked down at him. Oliver locked his gaze on hers, internally willing her not to leave.

"Goodbye Doctor Thredson."

She pushed him from her and opening the door to his office. She let the orderly guide her down the corridor, never bothering to glance backwards as she left. Oliver watched her leave, his chest sinking. He looked as if he may dissolve into tears before stopping himself, his eyes widening with realization.

"I'm tenacious. When I want something, I get it," Oliver muttered to the empty room, his mouth curving into a small smile. "I'll see you again soon, Miss Hatcher."

Chapter End Notes

What do you think? Should Kathryn give him another chance?
The Plan

Oliver lay awake for hours that night, his eyes stuck on his blank white ceiling.

He was on his back, his hands folded over his chest in a casual folded manner. Anyone looking at him and his inherent stillness might think him dead. How was he going to get Kathryn Hatcher subdued? Perhaps subduing her was pointless? Perhaps force was necessary. He didn't want to force her, but what choice did he have? She wasn't listening to reason and this was for her own good.

He sighed briefly, his eyes falling shut as he pictured her there in his office, chained and furious with him. He didn't want to admit that the image of her there before him; angry, her cheeks flushed and her eyes bright did something strange to him in the pit of his belly.

He groaned, not allowing his mind to stay crystallized in that moment. Instead he had more pressing things to focus on. What was he going to do to get that confession tape back from Lana and Kit? There was no luck in that department unless they was coerced.

Murder? He didn't wish to do something so sloppy, but neither were giving him much of a choice. Besides that wouldn't work - he needed his child to live.

*Sodium Pentathol.*

A veritable truth serum. Perfect.

If it didn't work, then he would truly be out of luck. He couldn't administer it to Lana for fear of the baby, but Kit - Kit was weak. He would easily crumble. But the best part was there was no rush. They were secluded to Briarcliff and he had all the time in the world.

He rolled over onto his side, a small smile curling on his lips before sleep finally engulfed him.

****

The frost was on the ground and all of Briarcliff was a cold, dank nightmare. Kathryn lay curled up under her blanket, shivering from the chill that swept into the air. She hadn't left her cell at all yesterday.

Her meals were brought to her and she ate them sullenly, her thoughts always on the pale face with the glasses. She thought of the life he had offered her. To live with him, to love him. To start something new with him and she felt her chin wobbling. So much promise had been shattered so easily and so quickly.

*I could forgive him,* she thought earnestly. *I could love him.*

*Think of what he did,* another voice sounded, dark and logical. *He got another woman pregnant. He broke her out of here before he came for you.*

*He was assaulted,* Kathryn rationalized. *And he did it to make sure Bloody Face was being put away for good. He did it for the betterment of the world!*

*Do you really believe that?*

*I don't know.*

Kathryn sobbed without abandon then, her eyes becoming red rimmed and swollen from the past
two days' experiences. Too much had happened to her emotions and she felt as if she were on a rollercoaster she desperately wanted to escape from. She looked around her dingy prison and she shook her head at her own rash stupidity.

*Have I made a terrible mistake?*

Perhaps she should have just left with Oliver? Even if she didn't want to stay with him after all that had happened, she could easily escape his home. She would be the next town over before he noticed. She would still be free.

Yes. That was what she would do. She would convinced Oliver to release her from Briarcliff and then she would leave, off into the world to start over herself. Her mind tangled as she closed her eyes to sleep once more, hugging her body for warmth and trying to stop the chill that went through her bones.

She thought of their last altercation, how she had stormed from his office without a care in the world. She could still see the pain in his dark brown eyes, peering after her as she left.

How was she going to convince him to give her another chance?

"Have Kit Walker brought to my office at three o'clock today," Oliver said to Carl as they trod down the hallway, his dark brown suit blending into the dark interior.

"Yes Doctor."

Oliver examined his notes, trying to appear busy. In reality he wanted Carl to show him to Arden's office and be off. He knew the Doctor would have something he needed.

"Oh, and I think for this session we'll want to secure him in a straightjacket."

Oliver tried not to smile as he realized that Kit was under his every whim. He could feel a particular little thrill go through him when he realized he truly was getting everything he wanted. Nothing could stop him.

"Will do," Carl replied before pointing down the hallway. "That's Doctor Arden's office around the corner."

"Thank you, Carl," Oliver said, handing the clipboard to Carl. "I can take it from here."

The man left as Oliver rounded the corner and came upon the office door. He wondered if the man would be agreeable to lending him some supplies? Sister Mary Eunice had mentioned that the man was slowly outgrowing his usefulness.

"Doctor Arden? Is Oliver Thredson, are you in?" Oliver tapped on the door and was greeted with silence."Doctor Arden?"

When there was no answer he pushed the door open slowly, peering around to see a completely quiet and dark office. It was similar to his, only with less windows and an air of something solemn in the air. He opened the door fully, letting himself in and entering quietly.

"Now," Oliver said to himself, scanning the room. "Where would you keep your Sodium Pentathol?"
He walked over to medicine cabinet quickly, paranoid that he may be caught. The glasses of medication tinkled quietly as he sorted through him. His attention was broken when a large scream sounded from the closed room to the right of him. He glanced up, furrowing his brow and walked towards the door.

"Doctor Arden?"

Slowly he pushed open the door with an ominous creak and was greeted with a long and blackened hallway. Without hesitation he drew towards it, hearing the far off groans of pain at the other end. He reached a final door, barely seen in the dim light.

He opened it quickly, surprised to see a very lit operating room. He had never come across it before. But he was even more astounded to see Grace, very much alive and apparently giving birth on the operating table. Before he could do anything, Pepper - the pinhead, with a look of complete authority and cognisance stood from behind the blanket, looking to Oliver with detached interest.

"She's crowning."

Acting on instinct, Oliver threw off his jacket and tie, coming to the end of the table and seeing that yes indeed she was crowning. He couldn't understand. The rumors were that she had died in the bakery shoot out. What was going on? He didn't have time to think, for the baby was already pushing its way out, its pale head bulging out as Grace screamed.

Oliver acted quickly, delivering the baby - a baby boy- with relative ease. Oliver held the child against his body a moment, confused at the size of the child. It looked completely to term, its pale body heavy with healthy weight, its cheeks flush with life. It gurgled against Oliver and against his better judgement he felt a flash of exhilaration at this new life.

This is what it would be for him in a few months, holding a son of his own.

Grace whimpered as the child mewed gently in Oliver's arms, her body soaking with sweat. Pepper dabbed her forehead with a cold towel before coming to take the infant into her arms. In a daze, he allowed her, watching open mouthed as Pepper tended to the baby as any expert nurse would. Oliver finished with Grace, slipping the sheet back over her legs and stumbling backwards.

"What's going on?" Oliver finally uttered, his gaze back on Grace as she struggled to sit up and see her child."You were dead. How on earth were you pregnant? According to Kit's files the altercation with him was no more than a month ago?"

"It's Kit's child," she breathed, her eyes closing in exhaustion. "He's the father."

He could tell she was too tired to speak and so he encouraged her to rest a bit. He would see that she got some clean clothes and could hide out in his office. She looked grateful.

Dr. Arden, Oliver thought, his head shaking gently in disbelief. What had he been up to in the lab? Bringing a woman back from the dead? Able to make her nine months pregnant? What on earth was that man capable of? He drew over to Pepper who was bouncing the baby in her arms, cooing and looking at Thredson warily.

As Oliver looked down at the face of Kit Walker's son he realized he had a plan.
Oliver stumbled down the hall to his office, changing into a fresh button down that he kept there. He pulled on his blazer and dark maroon tie before sighing with effort and falling into his desk chair. What had just happened had been something of a revelation.

He could barely believe what was going on. Grace and the baby. The plan that was slowly formulating within his mind. It was simple really. A father would do anything for his child. He leaned back in his chair, a small smile playing on his lips.

He lit a celebratory cigarette, inhaling deeply and closing his eyes. Despite all that was going right, he couldn't help but feel a bit...letdown. At the end of the day he couldn't force Kathryn Hatcher to come with him.

Well, he could, but then what would be the point in that?

He frowned lightly, his eyes still closed. He had had such hopes for them. And while his plan of becoming a father was right on track, there was little hope that there would be the woman at his side that he desired.

No matter. Being a single father wouldn't be the end of the world. He glanced out the window and into the frost covered property of Briarcliff. It was quite chilly in here and he idly wondered how Kathryn was faring in her little cell.

Even if she didn't want him any longer, she didn't deserve to suffer.

She had shown him a kind of affection and care that he had never known from anyone. And for that he would always be grateful. It gave him hope.

He stood sharply, his concern palpable. He exited the office, smiling at the various individuals he passed. They loved having him here. The Doctor Thredson that was kind and quiet and gentle. Oliver walked to the quiet kitchen and poured a large cup of coffee into a mug. Then he made his way into one of the linen closets, pulling one of the larger blankets off the top shelf, folding it over his arm and heading down the stairs two at a time, his cigarette smoke billowing behind him as he descended.

He came to the door of her tiny cell, realizing that they had likely moved her here at the whim to Sister Mary Eunice. She had hated the girl and for that he couldn't understand why.

He was nervous. He knew that. He sighed gently, putting the cigarette out under his shoe before knocking gently at her cell door. When she didn't answer he peered into the small window, seeing as she shivered, still asleep. He dug into his pockets, producing the chain of keys he'd been given on his first day of full-time employment.

He opened the lock jerkily, his eyes still stuck on her face before he opened the door. She stirred gently, her head lifting from the flat pillow before jerking awake at the sight of him.
He nodded, concerned at how cold the room was. He unfurled the blanket, wrapping it around her. She was still, watching him from under her dark bangs. He waited until she was sitting up completely before he placed the mug into her cold palms. She took it gratefully, sipping gently and basking in the warmth, her eyes falling shut in momentary bliss.

"Thank you."

Oliver said nothing, moving to sit on the end of her narrow cot. She was looking better already, the color coming back to her pale cheeks. He wished he could hold her. She could feel his warm presence beside her and she felt calmed. She knew he was looking at her and she felt her stomach tie in knots at the thought. She gulped the rest of the coffee without a thought, like a woman who had just found water after being lost in the desert for days. She finally opened her eyes once more and looked over at Oliver.

"Tell me the truth," Kathryn demanded gently. "Why have you come back for me?"

Oliver pursed his lips a moment, his gaze never leaving hers. He looked torn and Kathryn paused as he stood, his tall figure coming to kneel before her, taking her hands in his own.

"I wanted you," he said simply, his eyes scanning her face as he clutched her hands in his own. "You're the first person who ever showed me...true affection and kindness."

Kathryn was confused by this. He was so handsome and gentle and kind. How was that possible? She looked at the beautiful man before her, his eyes suddenly not just tender, but she realized they were full of pain. He was damaged just as she was and for the first time she was seeing it. The thought made her physically ache. This was not the man she had put on a pedestal. He was human.

Oliver winced as she pulled her right hand from his grasp, slowly averting his eyes. She was going to insist he leave. He was surprised when he felt the gentle lifting of his glasses from his face. He glanced up, seeing as she removed them timidly, placing them beside her on the bed as she searched his face. He felt naked then, unable to hide behind the glass that separated him from the rest of the world. She was looking at him as if she were seeing him for the first time.

"Tell me everything," she said lowly, her face kind.

He felt it was hard to breathe, his chest constricting as he moved to sit next to her on the cot. He didn't know how to speak. His voice felt lost. He was surprised when she encouraged him to lay backwards onto her lap. He did so tentatively, his sense on guard as he looked up at her. But when he felt her hands begin to lightly rub his forehead, he felt himself calming. She was looking down at him with a look that was something he'd never seen in another human being.

And so he told her.

"I was raised in an orphanage that was very strict about physical affection," Oliver began, his frame leaning into Kathryn's warm body. She had covered them both with the blankets and for the first time in so long he felt that feeling he'd been chasing. That feeling of safety.

"I grew up thinking that physical affection was a burden," he continued. "But oh, how I craved it. When I was eighteen I began college. I found due to my upbringing I was better focussed, better accustomed to the strict guidelines of a higher education. I was different from the rest of my peers who wanted to party and flirt. I wanted to better understand myself and each psychology class I took brought me closer and closer to that. I succeeded through hard work with scholarships and good
grades. Then I went on to do my Masters and before I knew it, my Doctorate. In all this time I had never known much of a life outside of school. I had never been popular, always slightly outside the circle of close-knit friends. I was there to work, not to socialize. I loved working with my patients, but day-to-day conversations were a challenge."

Kathryn continued to stroke his head, watching as he looked to the ceiling, his face alight as he spoke as he recalled his life.

"In the middle of completing my Doctorate I found out some information about my Mother. She had been thirty-three when she abandoned me. Not a young teen who had no other choice but to give me up. This was a grown woman, established who had decided I wasn't worth her time. I never found out why she left me."

The tears slipped down his temples as he spoke, and he felt ashamed. He went to pull away, to straighten up when he felt the gentle lips of Kathryn on his own. She kissed him sweetly, causing his tears to cease. He kissed her back gently, his hand going to the back of her head to deepen the kiss. After a moment she pulled back gently, looking down to him with a face of mercy.

"Keep going, Oliver."

He nodded slowly, his eyes still damp. "I was upset when I found that out. A month later in my gross anatomy class there was a young woman of thirty three on the slab; one of our cadavers to practice on. And even though I knew it wasn't my Mother, I thought in some strange surreal world it could be. It broke me. I was never the same, but it made me realize what I had been missing and craving. That unending love and compassion, that skin-to-skin contact I had been so denied."

"There were never other women?" Kathryn asked, her face contorted into confusion. How was that possible?

"The odd date," Oliver said with an embarrassed shrug. "They never went anywhere. I was too busy and they were always too...cold. They never felt right. They never understood."

He glanced back into her face, curling his body upright and positioning himself next to her on the cot. She was still wrapped in the blankets, but under his gaze she shivered.

"But when we spoke in my office I realized you understood," Oliver insisted, his mouth turning into a small grin. "You were just the same. You grew up unable to express physical affection. But you had developed quite differently; shying from the contact instead of running to it as I had. I wanted to study you. And then when we kissed..."

He paused, looking to his hands and a light blush settling onto his cheeks. Kathryn could feel herself growing warm at the memory of the sofa in his office, his hands all over her.

"It changed something in me," Oliver finished. "I wanted you like I've never wanted anyone else in the entirety of my life."

Kathryn stood then, the blankets wrapped around her shoulders. She wanted to stretch and she needed to comprehend all that he was saying to her. She walked to the far side of the cell, her hand coming to rest on one of the cold bricks.

"You wanted me," Kathryn ventured quietly. "Just to study?"

"To have," Oliver corrected her, striding over to her, his tall frame almost against her back. "To protect. To show affection to. To love."
She felt his hand on her arm, gently trailing down to her wrist. She trembled as he slowly turned her to face him, dropping her wrist gently as she did. She glanced up at him, realizing he was telling her the truth.

"To love?"

Kathryn's eyes filled with tears and she shut her eyes as his mouth claimed hers, sweetly and gently at first. His hands came up to the blankets, pulling them from her and wrapping her into his arms. She felt so warm and alive in his grip. Her body was against his chest and he could feel himself responding to her as she wrapped her arms around his neck, deepening the kiss. He backed her against the wall with his hips, his hands coming to cup her cheeks on either side of her face. She was standing on her tip toes, her hands on his waist, pulling him closer to her.

He was kissing her with a furious frenzy. She sighed a moment as his lips moved from her mouth to her jaw and then to her neck. He was urgent in his movements and she wanted him to continue. She felt the cold brick behind her back, and the warmth of his body on her front. As he kissed her, his hands began to slide from her neck, down to her collar. His hands came to cup her breasts through the dress, feeling as he nipples pebbled underneath his touch. Her hands moved to his button down, deftly undoing each button quickly. She pulled it out from his slacks, urging him silently to take it off completely.

"Are you sure?" he breathed gently, his breath warm on her cheek. He looked to Kathryn, seeing her flushed face and her lips parted.

As he spoke, she realized she had forgiven him. No matter what happened next she was his. She bent forward, kissing him gently as her hand moved to the belt at his slacks. She heard the sharp intake of breath as she unbuckled it, grazing his member as she unzipped the front of his slacks. She trembled slightly as she lowered his pants and felt his erection pressing into her thigh.

"We can stop at any time," he whispered shakily, his eyes heavy with longing.

He kissed her cheek, his voice saying things much differently than his body. She felt her own body responding, her hips swaying against his. She was looking up at him with a look that clearly encouraged his movements. With an unsure hand, she slid her blue uniform up above her thighs, never breaking the eye contact. Oliver smirked gently as he brought his fingers to the band of her cotton panties, pulling her into him.

She let out a surprised, "Oh" as her body pressed against his harshly. He pressed his forehead against her own, his fingers travelling down the front of her undergarment and watching as she bit her lip as he made the first contact. The feeling was like nothing she had ever experienced. It was like there was a thick and heavy heartbeat in her groin and Doctor Thredson was doing everything to release the pressure.

His fingers gently slid down the slit of her entrance, his eyes still locked on her face. His lips parted in concentration as he watched Kathryn's head fall back at his movements. She was so wet already, he noted. So different from Lana. He shook his head at the thought of Lana, his attention drawn back to the creature in front of him who was sighing loudly, her hands on the brick wall behind her.

Her sighs were turning to soft moans, her eyes squeezing tightly in ecstasy. He was momentarily startled when he felt her leg snake around his own, urging him on. Oliver felt himself quaking at the sight, recalling their time in the hydrotherapy room. How he'd felt her climax around him. And now she was there in front of him, wanting him desperately.

Without thinking he had lowered his briefs and replaced his hand with his cock. He didn't even
bother removing his blazer or button down, he was so intent on being inside her. She hissed at the full feeling of him entering her, her eyes opening and locking with Oliver's. Her legs spread absently, wanting to take as much of him in as she could manage. She wrapped her arms around him, feeling as he pinned her between himself and the wall. He had wanted to be tender, slow, but he felt himself slowly enter into her all rational thoughts had left him.

He began thrusting into her, harshly, encouraged by her soft whimpers of "Yes, yes". His hands were on either side of her against the brick wall as he continued. Her feet weren't even touching the cement floor anymore, instead they were wrapped around his waist as he slid his cock into her. He drew it out a moment before burying himself within her and she cried out at the feeling.

"Fuck," he whispered, shocking her at the curse word. "You feel amazing."

She never wanted it to stop. She felt as his hands came to cup her bottom, pulling her even more into him. She could see the perspiration on his forehead, a strand of hair coming undone from his usual precise hairstyle. She didn't care that the brick was biting into her bare flesh, she didn't care that they could be caught at any moment, all she cared about was Oliver Thredson fucking her against the wall in a frenzy that had them both crying out from the pleasure. He felt her tighten around him, crying out in rapture and he couldn't stop.

It felt so right. She came loudly, her cries echoing within the small space before his mouth was over top of her own, silencing her. He followed quickly afterward, burying his face in her neck as he moaned her name over and over. He shivered a moment inside her before slowly withdrawing, lowering her to the floor. They stood on shaking limbs a moment, their heavy breathing the only sound in the room. Oliver felt his heart fluttering within his chest. He had never done anything like that.

And he had loved it.

The feeling of being inside her was something he could only describe as akin to perfection. He looked down at her, seeing her tongue darting out to wet her lips nervously. He realized idly that she had been a virgin, and he wondered if she had regretted this transgression. He should have done it differently. Roses and wine, nice music and a beautiful bed. Not fucking against the wall like lust-crazed animals.

He wondered if this was her goodbye to him and the thought caused him to close his eyes tightly. He went over to the cot, retrieving his glasses and putting them on hurriedly. He could feel Kathryn watching him as he put his belt back on, smoothing his hair absently. She drew over to him, her eyes sleepy and a contented grin on her face. He loved it when she smiled and in here it was such a rarity. He felt his breath catch in his throat when she finally spoke.

"When do we go home?"

"Home?" Oliver whispered, unable to believe it.

"To your house," Kathryn continued, suddenly paranoid that he'd changed his mind. She hadn't intended on doing this with him. She had intended on seducing him into releasing her, but it had all gone sideways. She felt immense relief as Oliver grinned before kissing her forcefully on the mouth.

Oliver walked quickly to his office, a private smile splayed across his face. He realized how it must look and focussed his features into a look of determined grimace as he rounded the corner, seeing ahead as Carl brought Kit, clad in a straightjacket, right to his office door.

"Three o'clock right on time," Oliver observed happily.

Kit struggled against the restraints, going like a scared and wild horse when he heard Oliver's voice.

"You want me to stick around?" Carl asked, gripping Kit tightly by the arms. "He's got some attitude today."

"Well be just fine Carl, thank you."

When Carl was out of earshot, Kit glared openly up at Oliver.

"There's nothing you can do to make me tell you where that tape's at," Kit promised angrily.

"Oh, I'm well aware of that," Oliver said almost playfully. "I diagnosed you long ago, Kit. I know you'd rather die than give me what I want." All of a sudden an arm jerked out and Oliver grasped Kit harshly by the neck. Kit winced as Oliver continued, dragging him towards the office. "But there's an impulse in you that runs even deeper than your murder complex and that's your savior complex. Particularly when it comes to women, and one would assume... children."

Oliver opened the door to his office with a creak; showcasing Grace sitting in the room with an infant in her arms. Pepper stood behind her as a sort of nurse, looking down at the two of them with kindness before looking to the open door. Grace glanced up from her precious newborn, her eyes filling with joyous tears as she took Kit in.

"Kit."

"Grace," Kit replied in quiet awe. He had seen her killed in the kitchen. He had witnessed it. How was it that she was sitting there before him, alive and holding a baby? He took a tentative step forward before Oliver gripped his shoulder angrily.

"No, that's close enough."

The baby gurgled gently, alert in his mother's arms.

"That's not possible," Kit whispered, shaking his head lightly. "You were..."

"Dead?" Oliver finished for him, his gaze on the young man's profile. "At least according to Doctor Arden's post-mortem report. Now given Grace's condition one would have to either a.) judge Arden as guilty of one of the most egregious misdiagnosis in the history of modern medicine.... Or conclude that he's been up to something quite extraordinary in that laboratory of his."

Kit didn't reply, irritating Oliver with his silence.

"Grace says that's your son," Oliver whispered furiously, knocking the boy to his knees."What are we to make of that?"

Kit glanced at the child, seeing for the first time up close its small perfect hands. His rosebud mouth and his long, pale eyelashes. He wanted desperately to hold the small cooing creature in Grace's
"Is it true?" Kit whispered to her. Grace nodded gently as their son continued to gurgle happily to himself.

"It's true."

And in his heart he believed her. Even though it was impossible, as Kit looked down at his son he realized it was true. "You believe her, don't you Kit?" Oliver's voice broke in between them. Kit felt his jaw clench before he looked up at Oliver with a muted fury.

"What are you gonna do?" Kit asked the psychotic psychiatrist who looked down at him with casual indifference. The man was like a vampire, feasting on the living's joy and happiness. His dark eyes seemed dead, reptilian to Kit as he spoke.

"That's entirely up to you," Oliver said slowly. "Tell me where the tape is."

Kit winced, looking back to Grace's concerned face and into the sweet slumbering face of his newborn child. This was the trade. His child's life for the tapes. He knew Lana would be betrayed by Oliver had diagnosed him correctly. He couldn't leave this innocent lamb to be led to slaughter or whatever other dark idea Oliver had for it.

"The hydrotherapy room," Kit whispered, hanging his head in shame. "Under the right hand tub at the back."

Oliver smirked and nodded before leaving the reunited family together a moment. He rushed down the hallway to the hydrotherapy room, his movements fluid and his heart alight at the realization that everything was coming to plan. He drew to the room, seeing it was empty and fell to one knee. He glanced to the left of the tubs before gripping the one to his right. He leaned his head down, his tie touching the cold cement.

There it was. Wrapped in an old white towel. He stood as he felt the weight of the tape and he grinned as he wrenched it from its hiding spot, opening it like an eager child at Christmas...

Except it wasn't the tape. It was a book. "See Spot Jump" to be exact.

"What?"

As the towel fell gently to the floor Oliver gaped at the book confused. He opened the pages, flipping through them in disbelief. The boy had lied.

"I don't wanna ruin it for you," came a dark voice from across the room. "But Spot jumps."

Oliver whirled around, his heart beating wildly in his chest. Lana stood at the door of the tubs, her eyes full of malicious glee as she looked to him.

"Where is the tape, you bitch?"

All the tender feelings he had felt for Lana had dissipated. Instead he looked to her as if she were garbage.

"Oliver," Lana admonished. "Is that any way to speak to the mother of your unborn child?"

Without thinking he raised the book in his hand, wanting desperately to bash her smug face in with it. Lana couldn't believe her good luck. The joy she was feeling as she looked at Oliver Thredson,
for once at a total loss of what to say or do.

"I'm the only one who knows where it is now," Lana smiled sweetly. "Kit's not going to find out. And if you do anything to him, anything at all or anyone else for that matter I'll find a way to get it to the police."

Oliver slowly lowered his arm, feeling defeated.

"You know I can do it Oliver," Lana continued without flinching. "I'm goddam plucky, remember?"

Oliver watched as she left the room, his hand still clutching the book idiotically. His mind snapped into action. How was he possibly going to be able to fix this one? He strode back up to his office, his hands in tight fists at his sides. He threw the door open to reveal Kit, still restrained but looking into his son's eyes with an unparalleled joy. For a moment Oliver was deeply jealous and resentful of the scene. How did a murderer with no ambition like Kit have a child? And he, Oliver Thredson, had to fight every day to ensure that his own child made it to term? He flung himself across the room, grabbing Kit by the shoulder's and hoisting him up to a standing position.

"Hey," Kit cried out, confusion clouding his features. "I told you where it was."

"Turns out our dear Miss Winters has relocated it elsewhere," Oliver said through ground teeth. "And until I get it in my hands, you don't see your son."

"That's not fair," Grace called out from her seat in the center of the room. Oliver shot her a dark look that caused her to wince.

"Fair? I suppose a fair compromise would be reporting all of this to the Monsignor so you can have your child stripped from your arms," Oliver said in a dark rumble, his gaze travelling to Kit's anguished face. "Would you prefer that?"

Kit gazed back at his child and shook his head lowly.

"I thought so," Oliver replied before urging the boy into the hallway and taking him to segregation.

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Monsignor walked down the halls of Briarcliff, his long robes sweeping the floor below him. He felt dazed and confused after all that had happened. He had done it. He had done as Sister Jude had blurrily insisted. He knew she had been correct. He had to kill the possessed nun. She had raped him earlier. He had lost his virginity to a monstrous beast in nun's clothing. He felt repulsed with his actions, his stomach dry heaving as he walked down the corridor, his mind drawing back to the horrible moment. He had cornered her on the stairwell of the upper level. She stilled her descent up the steps, turning with a glare as he spoke forcefully to her.

"I will cast you out and return Sister Mary Eunice to her state of grace," Timothy promised darkly, his gaze locked with the monster in front of him. Before he could react, the nun had grasped him by the shoulders and pushed him harshly into the railing. He cried out in pain, the cuts on his body still fresh.

"I gave you a chance, Timothy," Sister Mary Eunice said, her eyes growing dark. "But you've just pissed it away. I'm done with you and with your sweet nun. I'm about to devour the last morsel of her soul."

At this her voice raised, turning inhuman and her mouth gaping open like the monstrous demon she was. But in seconds her eyes were filled with tears that slipped down her pale cheeks. Her grip
slightly loosening on Timothy's shirt front.

"I'm sorry Monsignor," came the small, quaking voice of the true Mary Eunice. "I'm tired of fighting. I want to let go."

Timothy felt his own eyes fill as he looked to the poor and innocent nun before him, knowing the inner battle that must be continually going on within her. He nodded benevolently.

"Then let go of me, sister."

He gave her a knowing look and as she trembled, she nodded understanding. She released her hands from his shirt front, raising them in front of her. She nodded to him one last time in understanding before she felt his grip around her middle and she was flung off the side of the railing. He watched as she fell to the ground level, her eyes unfocussed before she hit the floor, silently dying for all to see.

He had killed the demon. But in the process he had also taken Mary Eunice's life.

He could barely stand the pain in his chest at his sin.

He could hear soft weeping from one of the more isolated cells and he drew near to it, his brow furrowed. His pale eyes finally spied the door it was coming from. He peered into the window, seeing as Kathryn Hatcher sobbed heavily into her hands. For the first time he realized how negligent he had been in his duties.

When had he last seen Kathryn Hatcher? A month ago? Sister Mary Eunice had bewitched him. The lot of them and he had let her. He had allowed her temptation of her promise of his ascension to turn a blind eye to her torments of the patients. He had ignored the whispers of her punishments. And now as he saw the squalor that she had subjected Kathryn to living in, he understood the true depths of her depravity.

The girl's shoulders were shaking and Timothy opened the door to her cell with a flourish. He stepped inside, drawing to the side of the girl's cot.

"Miss Hatcher," Kathryn stilled, wiping the tears from her eyes. She was startled to see him and she pulled the coarse blanket around her shoulders.

"Monsignor?" Timothy nodded, kneeling beside her bed and looking up into the girl's pale face. She glanced her dark eyes out at him from behind her wall of hair, her features contorted into a look of confusion.

"What are you doing here?" She asked him gently.

"I heard your tears," Timothy said, his eyes looking haunted. "I came to apologize."

"Apologize?"

"And to tell you that we will be moving you back to the main cells starting immediately."

"But Sister Mary Eunice put me here," Kathryn said, her lips trembling as she said the woman's name. "She'll be furious."

"Sister Mary Eunice is no longer in charge of the day-to-day operations here at Briarcliff," Timothy continued. "You will have a warm bed and space to yourself, not this hovel. We'll also see that you get time in the common room and adequate room for exercise."
"My own cell?" Kathryn looked confusedly to him, shaking her head rapidly back and forth. "No. No that's won't be necessary, I'm leaving tonight."

"Oh my sweet child," Timothy nodded, the tears at the corner of his eyes as he realized the poor girl was delusional. "I have let so much fall apart under my nose. And seeing you here, so sick and so alone I feel unbelievably guilty. Your mother entrusted you to us, to make you healthy again and that's what I must do."

"You don't understand," Kathryn insisted, her eyes getting a wild look. "Dr. Thredson said I'm cured. He said he filled out a release form."

"I haven't seen any release form," Timothy insisted, his voice caring if not pitying.

"Sister Mary Eunice must have taken it," Kathryn insisted, her dark eyes alight with an internal fire. "You need to let me out. It's not right to keep me here."

"No Miss Hatcher, we will keep you here until you are well," Timothy spoke slowly as if she were dim. "I will oversee your progress myself and we will have you ready to leave by the new year. You will return to the world energized and overjoyed."

"The new year?" Kathryn gasped, her voice becoming shrill as she spoke. "I'm leaving tonight. I don't deserve to be here. Dr. Thredson-"

"Dr. Thredson does not run Briarcliff Manor," Monsignor interrupted, his head starting to ache at the girl's arguing. Didn't she see he was trying to help her? "And when I say you are well enough to leave, Miss Hatcher then you will go and not a minute sooner. There's no point in having you released early only for you to relapse and land yourself right back here. Dr. Thredson would agree."

Kathryn clamped her mouth shut, her arms crossed in silent anger over her chest. She couldn't believe what was happening. How was Oliver going to find her? How on earth was she going to manage an escape now? She felt the tears starting to slip from her eyes as Timothy glanced back at the sobbing girl.

"Now please gather your things and I'll lead you to your new room, Miss Hatcher."
Oliver nearly skipped down the hallway towards Kathryn's cell. He was in a strange mood. Irritated at Lana's belligerence but calmed knowing that Kathryn awaited him. Her beautiful mouth and her soft hands were ready to leave with him from this hell-hole and that brought him immense joy.

He thought back to the stolen moments with Kathryn this morning. Her body tensed against his own as he pounded into her against the cold brick wall. He felt his neck flush as he recalled her moans, her eyes shut tightly as she hissed between her teeth. He couldn't believe the warmth he had felt with her skin against his, the amazing warmth within her.

But all too soon this vivid imagery was clouded over with thoughts of a harpy named Lana Winters. The thought of this afternoon made his mouth go painfully dry.

Between the Grace miracle and his inability to locate the tapes he had been quite upset. Protecting Grace and Pepper in his office had been magnanimous, but truthfully it would have been too much work. Besides, Lana was stuck in Briarcliff for the foreseeable future - what power did she really have?

He hummed gently to himself, turning the corner to Kathryn's cell and stopping suddenly. The door to her cell was wide open and as he glanced inside he could see it was empty. He felt his throat constrict as he walked backwards, trying to appear calm as he sauntered into the entryway.

Where the fuck was she?

Several nuns passed him by, including the young woman from the infirmary. She gave him a short nod and a quick smile before she walked into the opposing corridor. He barely even took note of her as he walked towards the guard at the door, Clint, an easy-going guard who seemed far too joyful to be working in a place as depraved as Briarcliff.

He looked up from his coffee to see Oliver approach, looking slightly flustered, a cigarette hanging from his lips. He glanced through his checklist quickly, seeing no pen marks.

"Evening Clint," Oliver said with a smile that didn't reach his eyes. "Have any patients been released today?"

"None that I can see, doctor," Clint replied with a toothy smile.

"I see, just making sure."

Oliver gave a wan smile before puffing his cigarette quickly and rushing down the corridor. His forehead was dotted with perspiration and for the second time today Oliver Thredson found himself at a loss.

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Kathryn walked into the quiet common room, her eyes on the floor. She didn't know what she was still doing here. As she glanced at the clock she could see that it was quarter past six. Oliver hadn't come for her. Would he even know where to look? She sighed thickly, running a hand through her mass of hair before plunking herself in front of the piano.

She tapped on the 'C' key a few times, her head heavy. She had been sequestered in her new room until now. She hadn't even bothered eating the garbage they left for her in her room. She felt like she
was going crazy in that room, her head aching with frustration.

She stretched her legs over the side of the bench, her mind distracted as more and more patients shuffled into the room. As if on cue Lana Winters strolled into the room, a smoke hanging from her fingertips as she looked around the room. Her eyes settled on Kathryn briefly before she sought out a seat on the sofa across the room. Kathryn didn't notice her, her back to the door as she continued to plunk out a tune on the piano.

Oliver walked through the doors of the common room, his desperation evident. And by some horrible timing he saw the two major women of his life on either side of the room. He saw that Kathryn hadn't noticed Lana yet - because if she had, he was dead in the water.

Oliver strode into the room confidently, his stance not revealing the quiet terror that was zooming through his veins. He whispered something to the orderly before making his way over to the sofa's, shielding her from Kathryn's gaze and noting as Lana glared up at him. He pretended not to notice. Kathryn felt the firm hand of one of the orderlies at her right, pulling her to a standing position.

"What now?"

She looked at him dispassionately, not even noticing as Oliver stood blocking Lana from her view. She sighed, her stance defeated.

"You've been ordered to go back to your room," the guard said emotionless, motioning for her to walk through the door. Her tennis shoes squeaked against the linoleum as she walked, suddenly stopping and turning to face him.

"I just got here," Kathryn retorted, irritated at having been moved from place to place so often. "Why do I have to go back?"

"Just following orders," he said emotionless before as he dragged her out the door. "Let's go."

She struggled against his grasp, unseen by most of the patients. She wanted to cry at the injustice but knew that there was no point in even bothering. Still something within her screamed out inside as he shoved her into the cell, slamming the door behind her resolutely.

"Let me out of here!" she screamed, bashing her fists against the door.

"Quiet down in there," the orderly barked before stalking off down the hallway.

Kathryn threw herself against the cell door screaming herself ragged. She slipped down the door, her body shaking from the sobs. She allowed herself to be shut up back in her cell and she sobbed openly. For the first time today she was crying in fear. Earlier her tears had been shed in joy and now only hours later she cried in pain at the loss of her freedom.

She bashed her hands against the cell as she screamed and sobbed. She did so until her knuckles were cracked and bleeding and thudding with pain. The ground below was dotted with her tears and blood.

She didn't know how long it was before she felt the door behind her being opened. She scrambled over to her bed, sitting on the edge with her eyes wide in anticipation. Oliver slipped into the room, his eyes wide and lip upper lip slick with sweat. She felt her mouth curve into a trembling smile at the sight of him.

"You came for me," she laughed through her tears. "You didn't leave me."
Oliver's face softened, his mouth pursing into a small grin.

"Never."

He strode over to her, cupping her soft cheek in his palm. His thumb traced over her lower lip and she sighed in contentment. Even in this pathetic room, through all the suffering, she felt his skin on hers and she felt immediately calmed. Oliver felt himself flushing as his skin made contact with hers. She was so warm and so alive. She was looking up at him with those deep dark eyes of his and he found himself growing weak in the knees.

He kneeled between her parted legs, pulling her mouth against his and kissing her deeply. She allowed herself to be gathered into his arms, feeling the sinewy muscle beneath her fingertips. Already she could feel the familiar heat rushing to her groin. Obviously he did as well because he pulled back gently, his face flushed.

"We need to get you out of here," Oliver said lowly.

"How are we going to leave?" Kathryn whispered against his cheek. "Timothy won't release me."

"I assumed as much" Oliver nodded, "When I saw you were gone from the previous cell I knew he'd had a hand in it. Likely thinks he's helping you. But you needn't fret because I have a plan."

He went over to the door and opened his bag producing a small vial of something, speaking urgently to Kathryn as he fumbled with a syringe from his pocket.

"This medication is called Tetrodotoxin," Oliver said as he drew the serum into the syringe. "It's a neurotoxin. When injected it will start to slow down your heartbeat and lower your core temperature. You will fall unconscious. To anyone else it will appear as if you are dead. This can last for 24-48 hours. You'll be pronounced dead and I will get you out of here."

"You can't just sneak me out?"

"It's too risky to just leave," Oliver said shaking his head. "Timothy is on the warpath. He has guards everywhere. I thought it through and this is the best course of action because this leaves no loose strings. Briarcliff won't come looking for you if they think you're dead."

Kathryn nodded gently looking at the syringe and biting her lower lip so harshly she drew blood.

"What will he tell my Mother?"

"I'll take care of your mother," Oliver replied evenly, his eyes locked on hers. "You can decide if you want her to know the truth."

Kathryn thought about this a moment, realizing that in her death she could have true life. Away from her Mother's domineering gaze she could truly live. She could live a life with Oliver. She could become a completely different person. The thought thrilled her as well as left her breathless. Was she strong enough to do that? She had to think about that.

"Can I die from it?" Kathryn whispered, feeling the first pangs of panic as he discussed the plan. She was going to appear dead for two days? How was he sure she wasn't going to be sent to the morgue?

"Not when I'm the one administering it," Oliver replied confidently, giving her a quick smile. He saw the panic in her features and pressed a quick kiss to her mouth before his attention was drawn back to the needle. "Trust me, Kathryn. This is the only way."
He quickly produced the syringe from his doctor's bag, bending down and removing her socks and shoes of her right foot. Kathryn watched confusedly as he did this, her mouth hanging open slightly as he prepared the needle.

"What are you doing?"

"They won't think to look for marks here," Oliver replied, spreading her first and second toe apart. Kathryn sat on the edge of the bed, her body tensing up. Oliver glanced up at her, flashing her a reassuring smile.

"This is going to feel strange," Oliver insisted, his eyes fixed on her face. Kathryn nodded before feeling a slight pinch between the webbing of her toes. Almost immediately she felt a strange numbness flow through her body. She watched detached as Oliver quickly slid back on her socks and shoe.

"Oliverrrrrrrrrr," she groaned before the blackness consumed her.

She slumped forward her forehead landing harshly on his shoulder. He winced a moment before slowly lowering her to the floor. He positioned her body in a way that appeared she had crumpled to the ground of her own accord. He looked down at her a moment, his eyes soft before he realized he had to act quickly or the entire thing would be no use.

Oliver grabbed his medical bag and rushed back to his office. He stuffed all the incriminating evidence under his desk before opening a random file on his desk, flipping through it and trying to appear busy. He drummed his fingertips on the desk, his eyes going to his watch. It had already been five minutes and there was nothing. No alarms, no screams. Nothing.

Where were they?

As in on cue he heard the sound of rapid footsteps rushing down to his office. Carl threw open the door, looking immediately grateful to see Oliver sitting there.

"Doctor Thredson we need you," he panted, looking stressed. "We can't find Dr. Arden and we need a doctor."

Oliver stood, pretending to be confused "What's the problem?"

"It's one of the patients," Carl panted, rushing out the door with Oliver on his heels. "She's collapsed. No heartbeat."

Oliver nodded, pretending to be shocked as they came upon Kathryn's cell door. Oliver flung open the door, seeing as Monsignor Timothy stood over the girl, holding her wrist in his hand, feeling for a heartbeat. His eyes were damp and he moved out of the was as Oliver knelt beside the girl. He lifted her head gently in his palm, his heart beating despite the plan set in motion. He opened his back at his left, producing his stethoscope and putting it into his ears.

He lowered Kathryn's blue uniform slightly and pressed it to the girl's cold chest. Nothing. No heartbeat. Wait... if he listened very carefully he could barely make it out. He pretended to look concerned, trying for her heartbeat on her back. Nothing.

He flipped her back over onto her back, opening her left eye and shining a flashlight. No dilation of the pupils. Then grasping her cooling wrist in his hands he felt for a pulse before shaking his head and looking up at Timothy. Carl and one of the young nurses were glancing into the cell, their eyes frightened for what was to come next.
"I'm so sorry," Oliver said gently. "She's gone."

Timothy let out a small moan of defeat before falling to his knees beside Kathryn, his shoulders shaking heavily as he spoke.

"I failed her. I failed her and I failed her mother," Timothy sobbed, his eyes bright from tears. "She left Kathryn in my charge and now look what's happened to her. How could this have happened Doctor?"

"I'm a psychiatrist, not a medical doctor. But from what I saw was she was in a cell with a terrible draft suffering from major anxiety," Oliver offered with a calming hand on the man's shoulder. "It appears that her heart gave out. And we both know this is Mary Eunice's doing, not yours."

Timothy could not be reassured. He began to cry loudly, bashing the cement floor below him.

"So much death," he cried out. "So much blood on my hands."

Oliver righted the man until he was standing, grasping him by both shoulders and shaking gently. Timothy's head bobbed back and forth like a newborn.

"You can't blame yourself entirely," Oliver insisted. "Now, I'm going to take the girl to the county hospital where a medical doctor will officially pronounce her dead. Then I will call Mrs. Hatcher and inform her of her daughter's passing. In the meantime I suggest you keep this information from the residents and the rest of the staff. The last thing we need is a hysterical incident here."

Timothy looked to Oliver in a daze. "You would do that?"

"You're in no position to do it," Oliver said, giving the man a sympathetic nod. "Let me take care of this for you. For Briarcliff. Go get some sleep, Timothy. You're not looking well. I'll give you a full report in the morning."

Timothy still seemed shocked and out of it but he allowed himself to be led away by the young nun outside the door. She spoke to him in calm, soothing tones as she led him down the corridor and into the night. Oliver glanced down at the pale girl on the floor, looking like a real life sleeping beauty.

"You want me to help you get her to the car, Doctor?" Carl asked from the corner of the room. "I'll get a stretcher."

Without a moment's hesitation, Oliver gathered the girl up into his arms. She was so cool against his chest and for a moment he grew concerned. He had given her the right amount of the sedative hadn't he? No matter, he had to be calm now. He turned his dark eyes on the shaken orderly.

"That won't be necessary Carl, I don't want to alarm the rest of the patients. I can take it from here."

With that, Oliver gathered the girl up into his arms and carried her down the corridors of Briarcliff for the last time. Her head fell over his arm and her left arm splayed out from her body as he held her in a bridal carry. She truly looked dead in his arms and the thought unnerved him. He headed out the front doors, the steps steep under his shoes. He walked quickly, shifting the girl more into his chest and hoping that his body heat would warm her.

When they got to his car he shifted her slightly over his shoulder before placing her in the back seat and for added effect, covering her with a sheet from his backseat. He was about to get into the driver's seat when he heard his name being called and Carl came rushing out of the building.

Panic suddenly gripped Oliver as he imagined all his hard work going to pot. He was getting caught.
They had found out somehow, but how? Had they clued in about his intentions with the girl? He felt his back become drenched with sweat as Carl came upon him, producing Oliver's bag.

"You forgot your briefcase," Carl said, jogging over to the car and handing Oliver his medical case. Oliver nodded, the sweat gathering at his hairline before the orderly nodded back and jogged back into the building.

When he was safely ensconced in the cold, chilled air he let out a sigh of relief before he got into the car, started the engine and prepared for the drive home.
Kathryn awoke with bleary eyes to the face of Oliver Thredson looking down at her with concern. She felt a cold compress on her forehead and she sighed gently as she gradually grew more cognisant.

"Where am I?" she muttered groggily, her voice thick with sleep.

"You're in my home," Oliver replied, looking relieved to see her doing so well. She was much more alert than he thought she'd be. "How are you feeling?"

"Tired," Kathryn replied, pulling herself to a sitting position.

She realized she was in a very luxurious looking bed with crisp white sheets and a dark brown duvet. The light was streaming in from the windows and she was still a bit foggy on how everything had happened. Then it came back to her. The sedative. Being unconscious. Oliver taking her home. He looked so serious and somber there, sitting in a chair at the side of her bed looking dishevelled. His tie was loosened and his blazer on the back of the chair. She wondered how long he had been sitting there watching her.

"I made sure your respiratory system remained clear," Oliver explained. "After hour eight I was able to relax a bit."

"How long was I asleep for?" Kathryn asked softly, her eyes blinking at the light. She felt as if she had been underground for days and any light was intrusive. Oliver noted this and went to the window, closing the blinds and then sitting at the chair by her bed once more.

"Only half a day," Oliver replied, a small smile on his lips as he picked up the glass of water from her side table. "I called the Monsignor to inform him of your official passing earlier this morning."

"And my mother?"

"I wanted to speak with you first," Oliver replied, handing her the glass. "It's completely your choice on how you want to proceed."

There was no judgement in his voice, only concern Kathryn realized.

"I think I would like her to know I'm alive," Kathryn said slowly, her thoughts jumbled. "But I don't want to see her. I want to start a new life. One where I'm in charge."

Oliver nodded with a small smile watching as Kathryn took a deep gulp of the cool water. She smiled gently at the clean taste, overjoyed that she could drink and eat and sleep whenever she wanted to. There would be no more bellowing to get up. No more hot baths where she would be tied in.

Kathryn took note of her surroundings. Of the beautiful furniture and the luxury of it all. She had a small portable television across from her. The bed was so comfortable she could barely believe it. When she looked to her right she could see a large closet filled with beautiful clothing. She felt like she had been transported into a dream world. She looked in awe back at Oliver who was staring at her with a look akin to desire.

"You did all this for me?"
"I wanted you to be comfortable," Oliver replied with a small smile, taking her hand in his. "I want you to feel at home."

"Thank you," Kathryn breathed, barely able to comprehend this kindness. "Thank you so much for doing this. You saved my life."

"Well, in a way you saved mine as well," Oliver replied, pushing his glasses up his nose a bit absently. He looked embarrassed as he said this, looking to the ground with a blush spreading over his cheeks.

Kathryn found him so darling then that she couldn't help but lean forward and brush her hand against his smooth cheek. He closed his eyes, appreciating the contact before he stood reluctantly. "I was hoping you'd be up a little earlier," he said pulling on his blazer.

"Unfortunately I have to go back into work for a few hours or they'll get suspicious."

"I understand," Kathryn said with a small smile up at him as she reclined into the soft pillows behind her head. "Don't let me keep you. I think I'll just sleep for a little longer if that's alright."

"That sounds just fine to me," Oliver said with a quick grin. "I've left some lunch for you in the fridge if you're feeling up to it. I should be home by six or seven at the latest."

Kathryn smiled weakly up at him, already feeling the fatigue drawing her back into sleep. She felt as he pressed a warm kiss to her temple before heading out the door, locking it securely behind him.

Oliver couldn't believe his good fortune. It was if the world was smiling down upon him. Sister Mary Eunice was dead. Sister Jude gone. Timothy was a walking shell of a man. Now all he had to do was take care of that loathsome Lana and Kit and the missing tapes and everything was smooth sailing. Perhaps Bloody Face wouldn't need to make a re-appearance after all. He walked into Briarcliff an hour later, looking merrily to the various occupants that passed him by.

He wondered if he would stay at Briarcliff after the entire bloody face fiasco was finished. These people could truly benefit from his expertise. He walked to solitary, his step jaunty and his smile evident as he drew to Kit Walker's cell. The young man had been placed here last night at Oliver's instruction to Carl. Kit was still sleeping as he and the orderly walked into the cell, opening it with a creak.

"Rise and shine," Oliver sang out. There was a bit of movement from the young man.

"What time is it?" He saw the boy blearily blink, confused as Oliver opened the door.

"Well it's time for you to spend some quality time with your baby," Oliver replied almost kindly. "Papa."

"What have you done with him?" Kit demanded, rolling around in his straightjacket like a loon. He struggled to stand, his fury evident. "He received his smallpox inoculation and he's scheduled for circumcision later today," Oliver explained methodically, watching the young man struggle to stand. "Carl do you want to help Kit up? He looks a little weak in the knees. Let's get him cleaned up."

"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HIM?" Kit screamed, his eyes wild. "What's your endgame Thredson? Just tell me now."

All Kit could see was the glint from the man's glasses in the shadows. Oliver slowly stepped towards
Kit, fixing him with a level stare as Carl held the boy upright.

"Kit you have a very limited understanding of me," Oliver replied evenly. "If there's anything in this world I hold sacred it's a child's need for love and protection. You and I would both move heaven and earth for our children."

A half an hour later Oliver had seen that Kit was washed up and ready for visiting with a very concerned Grace who sat in the middle of the common room with Pepper fending off the patients who wanted to touch the sweet, innocent child in Grace's arms. Why Thredson had thought this a good place for a family reunion was beyond her, but she was willing to do whatever he said at this point.

Grace rocked her son gently, cooing at him and smiling gently. Kit walked into the common room flanked by Thredson and Carl on either side behind him. He drew over to Grace immediately, his eyes softening as he took in the view of his lover and son. Kit drew next to the rocking chair, looking into Grace's large eyes.

"I'm naming him Thomas," she whispered. "After my grandfather."

Kit nodded, laughing a bit at the sight. He still couldn't quite believe what was going on. Oliver watched from a few feet away, unable to hide the small smile on his lips. Seeing Grace with that perfect infant in her arms had Oliver inwardly doing flips. When he finally had his son from Lana he knew that he and Kathryn would make the perfect family of three. He could almost picture her sitting there, rocking their son gently to sleep.

"Yeah," Kit smiled at Grace. "I like that."

Oliver drew over to them then, placing an almost comforting hand on Kit's shoulder to remind him just who was in charge.

"How's your milk production, Grace?" Oliver broke in, startling the two of them.

"I know everything you're up to," Pepper suddenly said angrily, pointing a warped finger at Thredson. "You don't fool me for one second."

Oliver clenched his jaw a moment, irritated at the pinhead for shaking up this gentle moment. Then a gruesome smile splayed across his features.

"Carl," he said lazily, never breaking eye contact with the pinhead. "Pepper seems a bit agitated. Why don't we take her for a quiet soak in the hydrotherapy room? And turn up the temperature ten degrees, see if that helps with her nerves."

Carl shuffled Pepper out of the room and she went willingly, her eyes boring holes into the doctor's skull. He smirked before turning his attention back to the room.

"Everyone else we'll have a group therapy session in the cafeteria where we'll all have a chance to share our feelings about the new baby," Oliver drew his attention back to Grace and Kit. "You two, enjoy your precious miracle."

Kit and Grace exchanged a nervous look between them as Oliver stalked off out of the common room. He stopped just outside the room, peering in through the windows. He saw Kit and Grace talking reverently, their eyes filling with tears as they spoke for several minutes, Grace cradling Thomas tightly to her chest. When she passed him over to Kit to hold and Oliver saw the look of extreme love that passed through his features he looked up and gave a nod to of his head to Monsignor Timothy and several nuns in white garbs walked past him into the common room.
Right on schedule.

Oliver watched from the shadows as they told the young man and woman that their child was being taken from them. Away to St. Ursula's home for Lost Children. Oliver could see the panic setting into both of their faces and watched as the child was ripped from Kit's arms. This is when Oliver made his entrance, like a serpent sidling up to the crowd. He smiled gently to himself, his hands in his pockets as he affected a truly sorrowful tone.

"Kit I am so sorry," Oliver said gently, watching the wailing child disappear from the room. "I can only imagine the heartache of having your only son ripped from your arms."

He looked down at Kit meaningfully, currently being held at bay by one of the orderlies. Kit looked at him with vengeance, pausing only as Oliver spoke next:

"Maybe I can help?"

******

Oliver could barely keep his pulse under control as he parked in his driveway that evening. In one hand he held a bouquet of flowers and in the other a small bottle of wine. He wasn't sure if Kathryn was a wine drinker, but he knew she'd love the flowers. Calla Lilies - pale and fragile and beautiful, just like her. He went to open the door when he saw it was already unlocked.

Strange, he was certain he had locked it behind him.

Perhaps in his excitement he'd forgotten. He stepped inside the darkened house, smiling gently as he imagined Kathryn waiting in the guest room. He had been so frightened last night, unsure if she'd make it through the night. Her breathing had been labored and it had only been at four this morning that he could calm himself and catch a few hours sleep at her side, curling his body against his own, his hand on her chest prepared for any decline in her health.

But she had rallied as he knew she would. And when she had awoken this afternoon she was like something out of a dream. He still couldn't believe that she was here with him. All his. He shrugged off his blazer, putting the wine in the fridge and putting the lilies into a small vase he kept under the sink. When he found them arranged to his liking he headed to the guest room.

It was empty. He was startled at the silent and empty room.

The flowers faltered in his grip before he shook himself out of his shock. He placed them on her nightstand before going to her wardrobe. Sure enough several items were missing - undergarments, a dress and shoes. He felt a panic rise in his throat as he imagined every impossible scenario. No no. She was simply exploring the house. He rushed down to the basement, thinking that perhaps she was there. But no, she wasn't. It was still white and sterile and empty. He rushed around the house then, calling her name like a madman but knowing all the time the horrible and impossible truth.

She was gone.
Oliver flung the flowers angrily across the room, his eyes filling with angry tears. Used and abused AGAIN. Would he ever learn? He angrily punched one of the pillows on the couch before collapsing into a nearby dining chair.

*I told you she’d leave you Oliver.*

"No!" he shouted out loud, covering his ears frustratedly.

He felt the tears start at the corner of his eyes as the mocking voice of Jed Potter invaded his mind, echoing with its hideous laughter. Kathryn Hatcher had used him to escape Briarcliff and now she was gone. Away from him.

*Why did I trust her?*

He stood, pacing the room and considering his options. He could go in his car and try to find her and force her back here. He could call her Mother and enquire about her whereabouts. He could-

Suddenly there was a rattling at the front door and Oliver glanced over at the door to see a very timid Kathryn was making her way inside. Dressed in one of the frocks Oliver had bought for her and carrying a brown paper bag, she looked healthy and well rested. He was momentarily stunned to see her awake and looking so well. It was also slightly unreal have her standing on the doorstep of his home.

She peeked around the door to see Oliver, breathing heavily and red faced as well as the scattering of flowers lying on the carpet of the living room.

"What happened?" she drew forward, glancing at the strewn petals and then back into the confused face of Oliver.

"You came back," he whispered gently, his eyes fixated on her face.

"Of course I came back," Kathryn offered with a ghost of a chuckle "I just wanted to go for a short walk."

"A walk?"

Kathryn nodded, holding up the brown paper bag and retreating to her bedroom quickly. He heard slight shuffling inside her room before she re-appeared in front of him in the living room, looking sweet and disarming. Oliver felt completely flummoxed at the extreme swings of emotions he’d just experienced. She bent over and began to pick up the flowers, gathering the petals into one hand. She looked rather sad to see them strewn about the floor.

"Thank you very much for the clothes," she said shyly looking down at her floral print dress. "They're all so beautiful. I hope you didn't spend too much on them."

"You were out walking?" Oliver repeated, not quite believing what was happening and ignoring her clothing comment. He had been so convinced she had left him, just like every other woman in his life. Seeing her now was almost unreal.
"Yes," Kathryn replied primly, placing the petals and stems onto the dining room table. "I've been locked inside of an asylum for almost three months. I just wanted a bit of fresh air."

Oliver felt a relieved laugh bubble out from between his lips, startling them both before he crossed the room, closing the distance between them and gathering her into his arms. His joy was palpable, as was the lust that coursed through him at the sight of her. He pressed a rough kiss against her mouth which she responded to hungrily. Her arms were around his neck and he was guiding her to the bedroom, his hands around her waist.

"I want you," he rasped against her mouth before claiming her lips once more. "Now."

She nodded wordlessly, her hands sliding down the collar of his blazer. He couldn't believe she was here, in his arms willingly. Her sweetly scented skin against his own, her body warm in his arms. Within moments they were in the room he had prepared for her. They stood at the end of her bed and he turned her gently until her back was facing him. Deftly his hands came to the zipper at the back of her dress.

He pulled it down slowly, kissing the back of her neck as he did so. She shivered slightly, delighted at the contact. He pulled the dress from her shoulders, watching as it pooled at her feet. She turned, clad in her matching lace undergarments he had picked out for her. They had seemed sophisticated and innocent all at once; much like she was to him. He trailed his hands down her shoulders and down to her forearms. Her skin was luxuriously soft and the hair on her forearms were like a soft peach. She felt divine.

"I want to see you," he murmured behind her, his hand coming to the clasp of her brassiere. "All of you."

He felt her tremble at his words and he was sure to move slowly. It made a small snapping sound under his fingertips before it slowly came apart. She held the bra against her chest, her body thrumming with fear as well as pure lust. Oliver lowered his hands to her hips, slowly removing the undergarments from around her, lowering them gently as she stepped out of them. Still she faced away from him, her pale form trembling slightly before him.

The anticipation of seeing her completely bared before him made his hands shake. Taking a deep breath, Kathryn smiled gently up at him as she turned to face him before she settled on the edge of the bed. He kneeled before her on the floor, his eyes locked on hers as he slowly removed the thin fabric from her arms. She resisted a moment before she released the fabric and her breasts were freed. She blushed nervously, feeling more exposed than she ever had before. The sky was darkening outside but she felt as if there were a spotlight directly on her naked form. This was such a strange position to be in.

Never had she let a man look at her like this, let alone do what he was surely planning to do next. The strangest part was that she wanted it so desperately she could cry.

Oliver was ravishing her simply with his gaze. His dark eyes flickered behind his glasses as he examined every inch of her, his gaze finding its way to any and all exposed flesh. He was enjoying the view of her newly bared breasts at present. Beautiful and porcelain with pale pink nipples that hardened under his gaze. She sighed softly as his mouth found one and began to gently nibble. She hissed at the electricity that shot through her at that touch. She buried her hands in his thick hair, absently rocking against his wonton mouth.

"Oliver," she moaned gently, the sensation causing her to fall backwards onto the bed, her legs still dangling off the edge. He smiled at the sight of her so overcome as he kneeled there, balancing on his knees, his hands on either side of her thighs. He looked ravenously up her body, his dark eyes
were almost black and she could feel her heart hammering in her chest.

"I've wanted this for so long," Oliver whispered, his voice a low rumble. "I've wanted you for so long, Kathryn."

And she knew he didn't just mean her body. She felt as he slowly parted her tightly touching knees. She hesitated a moment before opening herself up to him. She felt so vulnerable as he kneeled there between her legs, pressing gentle kisses against the inside of her thigh. She found herself quite overcome then and she spoke shakily.

"I-I want you inside me," she whispered breathlessly as his kisses continued. He slowly made his way up, kissing her stomach gently and relishing as it twitched in delight under his lips. Then around the soft globes of her breasts, up to her collar and then to her neck. Oliver crawled onto the bed, leaning himself over her and balancing on his forearms. They gazed into one another's eyes a moment before kissing gently, their heartbeats in synch as he positioned himself at her entrance.

"Are you sure?" he whispered, his eyes searching hers. Despite everything they'd done at Briarcliff this felt different. This felt more meaningful then carnal necessity. As he gazed into her eyes he realized this felt like something akin to their wedding night. This wasn't fucking, it was making love and as Oliver lay there in the bed with Kathryn, he suddenly realized the difference.

Kathryn nodded happily, her cheeks flushing in a way that made her look most attractive. He was overcome with joy at the sight of it and so he Oliver smiled for the first time that Kathryn could recall, a large toothy smile of completely joy and abandonment. She realized how he was almost beautiful with a mix of delicate and masculinity rolled into one.

"I love your smile," she whispered to him, unsure why she was whispering.

"I love your skin," he replied, nuzzling against her cheek. "It's so soft."

He kissed her gently on the temple before he felt him gently entering her. He was slow this time, his movements precise. He gradually slid into her, letting her get comfortable with him as he continued. He felt her body trembling with need as he pushed himself entirely into her. She gasped a bit, her body tensing as he continued. She rocked against him slowly, her hips coming up to meet his.

He groaned lowly against her neck, the vibrations tickling her slightly. He felt so good inside her; he made her feel full and warm and good. He withdrew himself completely before leisurely pressing the entire length of his cock within her once more. With every withdrawal and eventual deep thrust, Kathryn felt something within her awaken. And as his hips began to slowly pick up speed, a feeling of a fire being lit in her abdomen began.

"I love how your skin feels against mine," she breathed against his ear. Oliver felt his pulse spike at those words, his hips growing faster. He felt her legs come to wrap around his waist, pulling him as deeply as he could go. He felt his body trembling against Kathryn's, her forehead slick with sweat. He couldn't believe how wet the girl was, making his desire to keep things gentle an impossibility. He thrust deeply into her, his thighs coming into contact with her own harshly.

She moaned lowly and clawed at the sheets beneath her. Oliver watched as with each thrust her breasts heaved deliciously, her head thrown back in erotic joy. He couldn't believe how different it felt to do this with Kathryn than with Lana. Lana had been so passive and weak and dry and cold. Kathryn on the other hand was so alive; her body matching his tempo like an eager student desiring to learn.

"Oh, oh, yes." Kathryn began to moan in a high-pitched tone, her breathing fast and her eyes shut
Oliver could feel himself on the edge as she moaned his name, his lips parted in anticipation. Slowly her thighs began to quake around him, her entire body twitching with an internal spasm. Oliver watched all of this in quiet awe, he had never seen anything like it before. Still he could see she was fighting something within her. Something was holding her back.

"Surrender to it," he whispered. He saw her open her eyes gently at his voice. He smiled gently before lowering his mouth to her breast, sucking gently on her pebbled nipple. He could feel her hips thrusting against his once more, her body aching for release. She arched her back suddenly, her groans becoming loud cries of pleasure. This time Oliver did nothing to lessen her cries. If anything they urged him on as he continued to frantically thrust his engorged cock into her over and over until he stilled, his entire groin alight with a pleasure that made his vision go temporarily blurry as he spilled himself within her.

He cried out at the sensation, his entire body turning to rubber the moment it had ended. He looked down at Kathryn from under hooded eyes, his breath hot on her cheek. She looked up at him with a strange, small smile on her face before she wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled his face to hers. He kissed her deeply before lowering himself beside her. He pulled her sweaty frame against his, both breathing heavily against one another.

Kathryn smiled, looking over at him and wrapping an arm around his chest. She let her hands dance lightly through the dark chest hair that stood out so much on his pale flesh, giving him a rugged and sexy look. One she never could have envisioned under his button down and suits. He reached into the pocket of his blazer and pulled out a cigarette, lighting it quickly and then coming back to rest against the pillows, his arm still around her.

"I've never experienced anything like that," Oliver said, absently drawing lazy circles against her arm. He took a long drag from his cigarette before looking up at the ceiling in an almost clinical manner."That felt..."

"Perfect," Kathryn finished for him, snuggling into the crook of his arm. She inhaled the deep scent of his cologne and Brylcreem.

Oliver smiled down at her, watching as she pressed herself up against him. He brushed a strand of hair out of her eyes. Was this really happening? Was he actually getting his happy ending? He could barely believe it. He could scarcely conceive how something so innocuous as going to Briarcliff had yielded such perfect results.

"What are you thinking about?" Kathryn teased, looking up at him under her mass of unruly hair. "You're somewhere else."

"Just thinking how happy I am," Oliver replied honestly. "And worried its all a dream."

"It's not a dream," Kathryn said with a laugh, giving him a soft pinch at the side of his hip. "See?"

Oliver chuckled lowly in his chest, pulling her into a tight squeeze. Kathryn could feel his member growing hard once more against her lower abdomen and she looked up at him, pretending to be horrified, but secretly delighted.

"Why Doctor Thredson! Again already?"

He smiled good naturedly, his hips shifting to find hers once more. He lifted himself up a little higher on the bed, his hands slipping under her pillow a moment absently. Something caught the edge of his
hand and he stilled, his eyes darting to the pillow.

"What's under your pillow?"

"Nothing," Kathryn kissed his mouth eager to distract him. "Keep going."

"What is this?" Oliver darted up in the bed, his eyes wild as he drew out the paper bag from under Kathryn's pillow. "Kathryn, why are you hiding this under your pillow?"

Kathryn slowly sat up, bringing the blankets up around her chest. She looked ashamedly at the bed, her eyes glued to the bed frame. She couldn't even watch as Oliver slowly removed the gun from the bag, his eyes wide with fright and confusion.

"Why do you have a gun here?"

"I didn't want to tell you," Kathryn replied, her cheeks reddening. "I didn't think you'd understand."

"I don't believe in guns," Oliver murmured, looking to her distressed. "I'm sorry," Kathryn nodded, understanding his concern.

"I'm just afraid... I'm afraid they'll come for me. Sister Mary Eunice."

Kathryn dissolved into tears then, covering her eyes as the tears slipped like traitors down her cheeks. Oliver softened immediately, understanding that the terror she had faced in Briarcliff were not logically going to disappear. He would have to do some serious counselling with her to help her get over this fear of hers.

"Kathryn," Oliver said, his thumb coming to wipe away her tears with the pad of his thumb. "Mary Eunice is dead."

Kathryn's eyes were suddenly upon him, imploring and confused.

"What?"

"She died last night," Oliver continued. "We found out about it this morning. She had a terrible fall from the top of staircase. When they got to her she was already dead."

"I don't believe it," Kathryn said, her lower lip trembling. "I know she's out there in some form or another. Waiting for me. Waiting to ruin everything. She hates me."

"She's dead Kathryn," Oliver replied, his eyes warm as he realized the girl's concern. "I saw her corpse myself. She was cremated. I assure you she's not coming back for you."

Kathryn was quiet, drawing her knees up in front of her chest and hugging them to her. She looked up at Oliver with dark, baleful eyes.

"Please let me keep it," Kathryn begged quietly. "It makes me feel safe. When you were gone today I was so scared that something terrible was going to happen."

"Nothing terrible is going to happen," Oliver replied with an easy smile. "I promise."

"Please," Kathryn begged lowly, her eyes still wet. "I'll never ask you for anything ever again. Just let me keep this."

Oliver sighed darkly a moment, looking over at the woman he adored and saw the pain in her form. The terror in her eyes as she spoke to him. She had been damaged by Briarcliff and he hated it for
doing that to her. He slowly handed her the gun, feeling its weight as he placed it into her palm. She looked up at him with a look of thanks.

"Thank you."

"I don't want to see it again," he said in a warning tone. "It's fine if you want to keep it, I just don't want to have to see it. Deal?"

Kathryn brightened immediately, putting it back into the paper bag and quickly stuffing it under the bed.

"Deal."

She pulled herself to a sitting position on the bed once more, her entire countenance relaxed and joyful once more. She saw as Oliver's eyes hungrily took in her frame and she let the blanket fall from her chest, revealing her swelling breasts once more. She slowly started to crawl to him at the end of the bed, her body swaying delightfully.

"Can we go again?" she asked playfully, coming to a stop in front of him. "Except this time you wear your suit, Doctor Thredson?"

Oliver chuckled lowly, he could feel himself growing hard just at the thought of it. Her body was there before him, willing and waiting. He removed the cigarette from his mouth, putting it out in the water glass next to her bed.

"I thought you were never going to ask me for anything else?" he teased, his arms snaking out to pull her against him. Kathryn sighed against him, so contented and joyful to be in his arms. She smiled broadly up at him in response.

"I suppose I lied."

Chapter End Notes

Folks- we are nearing the end of our story and part of me just wants to end it here - with Oliver and Kathryn happy. But we all know that it cannot be that way, right? Bad people have to pay for their crimes and Oliver Thredson, although charming and handsome, is at the end of the day - not a good guy. But I hope you enjoyed this chapter anyway!
This is killing me. I know that he has to get his come-uppance but I just need to give them a bit of joy before the end, right? Or am I too sappy?

Oliver woke the next morning with the strangest feeling fluttering within him. For a moment, he forgot where he was and when he woke up in the guest room with the warm body of Kathryn snuggled up against him, he was momentarily thrown.

He jerked up in the bed, resting on his forearms. He blinked wildly, groping blindly for his glasses on the side table. He thrust them onto his face, yawning slightly as he glanced down at the sleeping form of Kathryn, asleep and calm. She breathed softly, her dark hair a pool under her head. He listened to the rhythmic sound of her breathing and he slowly lowered his head to his pillow, a small smile curling onto his lips.

His arms wrapped around her stomach, pulling her against him. She sighed in her sleep, moving her back further against his chest.

"I love you," he whispered to her, knowing she was asleep.

It was true. This is what love was and he was sure of it. When he was with her he didn't even think of Bloody Face. He didn't think of how he was unwanted and abandoned because with Kathryn in his arms he no longer felt those things. He felt beloved, understood and appreciated. When they made love last night he had seen into her, he had felt her affection for him and it had quelled the constant uncertainty within him.

He lay there as the sun slowly crept into the bedroom, bathing them both in soft golden light. He enjoyed watching the serenity of her sleeping form, the way the blanket had ridden down to expose her soft skin. Without warning the alarm clock sounded out next to him and Oliver sighed at the quiet now broken.

Kathryn stirred a moment, herself seeming uncertain of where she was when she finally opened her eyes. She glanced over her shoulder to see Oliver looking at her with an unreadable look on his face.

"Sleep well?"

"Very," Kathryn replied with a broad smile. She stretched languorously before yawning. "Its so strange. Everything that's happened...all of it. It feels like a dream."

"Agreed," Oliver nodded as he rolled over onto his back, placing a hand behind his head as he looked up at the ceiling. Kathryn grinned at him once more before sliding out of the bed, pulling on a nearby robe and scurrying to the bathroom. Oliver heard the sound of water rushing and he smiled as he mused aloud: "A most wonderful dream."

Lana saw Kit as he entered into the common room looking broken and defeated. His eyes were red and he looked as if he'd been sobbing for hours. Lana rushed over to him, enveloping him into a tight
hug. "What's happened now?" Kit let out a cracked sob before he spoke. He told her of Grace and the baby. Of the aliens and Dr. Thredson's cruelty. He told her of Alma and the racist monsters who lived near him. He spilled his heart and story out to her without fear of reproach.

And strangest of all was that in some small way Lana believed him.

He held him against her, rocking him as if he were a small child. The sobs continued to flow out of him, hacking and rough. She rubbed his back with her hand before one of the orderlies came over and told them to break apart. They did so quickly, Kit rubbing his eyes harshly with his fists.

"I need to get my baby back," Kit whispered. "And Thredson won't help me unless I get him those tapes."

"We can't do that Kit," Lana implored, the guilt and the fear overwhelming her. "Without those tapes, Thredson walks."

Jude sat across the common room, her hair dishevelled and her gaze unfocused as she looked over to the two figures she knew so well. She saw the Lana girl. The girl she had gotten locked up in here and she felt a pang of sympathy. She was the reason the girl was stuck here.

She saw Lana speaking with Kit, saw those large brown eyes of hers fixated on the floor. she was fiddling with her hands and Jude saw that the fingernails were bitten down to the quick. *Filthy habit.*

Jude knew she had to do something though. She had to be redeemed in some form after all the torture she’d put the young girl through. Her thoughts turned to Mother Superior. Would she help?

"Without those tapes Thredson is walking," Kit insisted; his voice an angry whisper. "He's out there and we're stuck in here Lana. Just how do you figure we win?"

Lana fell silent, feeling the burning gaze of Kit's hatred for her choice.

"I don't know."

*************

"I think I should take you on a proper date this evening," Oliver said suddenly to Kathryn over breakfast. "We've skipped over so many of the rudimentary phases of courtship that its only right I try to amend that."

"I agree wholeheartedly," Kathryn replied gleefully before taking a sip of her warm coffee. It tasted delicious. Everything outside of Briarcliff seemed new and beautiful and flavorful. Even colors seemed brighter away from that prison masquerading as a mental health ward. They were sitting at Oliver's dining table, a delicious spread of fruits and pastries set out before her.

Oliver had prepared it as she got ready this morning, excited to present it to her when she emerged. He looked so darling then, sitting across from her in his striped pyjamas and robe. He looked so ordinary that for a second he seemed like a different person. He felt her gaze and smiled up at her from behind his glasses, a small smile on his lips.

"So where do you suggest?" Oliver inquired, his tone playful. "The roller skating rink? The bowling alley?"
"Somehow I can't see you at either," Kathryn laughed, trying to picture Dr. Oliver Thredson trying his best to roller skate around with her. She paused a moment, trying to think of something appropriate. Where would Dr. Thredson fit in?

"How about the movies?" Kathryn finally suggested, her eyes alight. "Together in the dark? Popcorn and soda?"

"That sounds promising," Oliver nodded in agreement, flipping through the newspaper decisively before landing on the page he was looking for. Kathryn sauntered over to him, placing herself on one of his knees and leaning forward on the table to look through the paper with him. Oliver wrapped his right arm around her waist, holding her gently.

"Ah, here's the picture on tonight;" he said, his left pointer finger coming to land on the printed article. "*Paris when it Sizzles*. What do you think?"

"Sounds romantic," Kathryn said with a grin, leaning back into his lap and pretending to look confused. "Are you sure you want to see a sappy love story?"

"Always," Oliver smiled, tilting her head to face him and kissing her deeply.

Kathryn sighed, melting into him as his tongue slowly slipped between her lips, tasting her and pulling her further into him. She turned to face him on the chair, straddling him as his hands explored her body.

"Let's go back to bed," Kathryn whispered as his lips moved to her neck, his arms on her hips. She could feel his growing excitement between her legs and she was very disappointed when he pulled back, a dark lock of hair in his eyes.

"I have to go to work," Oliver panted, his face flushed. "Don't make this harder than it has to be."

"You started it," Kathryn insisted primly, rising up and taking her seat across from him at the table. She munched merrily on a croissant as she viewed Oliver trying to calm himself. After a moment Oliver composed himself, excusing himself to get ready for the day. Kathryn could hear him showering and getting dressed.

She sighed gently to her, still not quite believing that this was real. When she looked back on it, the entire enterprise had been strange from the get-go.

Forced into that horrible Briarcliff. Meeting Oliver. Being his patient. Falling so quickly for him. Falling into bed with him. She still couldn't quite believe that part. She felt a bit ashamed if she was honest because even now she craved the feeling of him between her legs. Her mother would be horrified.

Her mother.

She puzzled then what to do about her Mother. Should she phone her? Should she take Oliver up on his offer to tell her that she was dead? What would be the best course of action for the woman who so readily abandoned her? This reverie was broken as Oliver stepped back into the living room, his face freshly shaved and smelling delightful.

He took a quick sip of his coffee as he straightened his tie. He looked over at Kathryn gazing up at him with a mixture of adoration and lust and he could barely comprehend that she was all his. *Willingly.*
"I'll be home at five," he whispered against her cheek. "Be ready."

He pressed a deep kiss to her before he headed out the door, the taste of her sweet lips still on his mouth.
Kathryn showered slowly, enjoying the feeling of the water dancing along her skin. She could barely believe that she and Oliver were going to have their first official date tonight. She smiled dreamily, thinking back to his sweet face this morning. He thought he had been so sneaky, whispering a soft ‘I love you’ to her, believing she was asleep. But she'd heard the whole thing.

A warmth ran the length of her body, recalling their moments since her arrival. The love-making, the sweet words, the feeling of absolute trust and comfort in each other's arms.

She dressed quickly, pulling on her undergarments and a lovely black cocktail dress that Oliver had purchased for her. He had a real eye for women's clothing and sizing - everything from the dresses to the shoes in her closet fit her perfectly. She twirled around in her latest outfit and smiled widely. She felt sophisticated like Audrey Hepburn in it and she posed a moment in front of the long mirror before she dried her dark hair quickly, relishing in the luxury of being able to see herself in a mirror and brush the tangles from her thick hair.

When she stepped back she was happy with what she saw. The color was coming back to her cheeks, her smile seemed genuine and her heart was full.

*I feel normal.*

She walked quickly to the kitchen, her bare feet padding along the carpet. She had decided she would make Oliver something lovely for dinner tonight. She glanced into his fridge seeing lots of supplies. Pot Roast and potatoes. Perfect! She smiled gently to herself before pulling on a nearby apron and opening the fridge door. She was just about to pull the pot-roast from the fridge when she heard a noise and paused.

It sounded like tapping at the front door.

She held her breath, sure that she was imagining it. But no, the tapping came again, this time more insistent. Kathryn's heart was instantly in her throat.

*Sister Mary Eunice.*

Kathryn rushed to her bedroom, retrieving the gun quickly and slipping into her apron pocket. She drew to the door, her chin wobbling with every rap on the door. This wasn't happening. She and Oliver were happy. Sister Mary Eunice was dead. Then why was she so terrified?

Kathryn gulped lowly as she came upon the door, her fingertips resting on the smooth wood as she peered into the peep-hole. Outside stood a woman of about seventy with a look of concern on her wizened face. Kathryn closed her eyes a moment, catching her breath before opening the door slowly. She peered around the corner, giving the woman a shaky smile.

"Good evening."

"Hello there, is Doctor Thredson home?"

Kathryn faltered a moment, her eyes as wide as saucers as she tried to compose herself. How did this woman know Doctor Thredson?
"He's at work," she finally muttered, the smile on her face frozen. "Who may I ask is visiting?"

"I'm Mrs. Goodrowe," the woman said with a small grin. "I live down the street. Dr. Thredson usually brings me a dozen eggs on Thursday's when he gets back from grocery shopping."

"He does?"

"Yes," the woman nodded with a smile that crinkled at her eyes. "But I didn't hear from him this week and I wanted to make sure he was alright."

"Oh," Kathryn nodded, realizing that there was even more to Oliver Thredson than she realized. "He's completely fine. A bit busy at work is all."

"Yes, he's such a lovely young man." The elderly woman looked at Kathryn a bit surprised to see her. "Are you family visiting?"

"Yes," Kathryn replied with a curt nod, thankful for the lie. "Visiting from out of town. I'll tell Oliver that you stopped by."

"Oh no, don't worry about that, dear. I just wanted to make sure that he was alright."

With that the woman turned on an aged heel and walked back down the driveway and out of sight. Kathryn closed the door slowly, slipping to her knees as it clicked shut. Her heart had been hammering the entire time Mrs. Goodrowe was here. She had been convinced it was that demonic Mary Eunice coming to finish her off.

She felt the heavy weight of the gun against her hip in pocket of her apron. She pulled it out, looking at it impassively when something occurred to her; She had to have the gun more accessible. Kathryn glanced around the room, realizing that rushing to the bedroom would be too time consuming if something had intended on attacking her. No, she needed it somewhere here in the main room. Somewhere it could be easily reached.

She glanced around the expanse of the room, seeing that Oliver had it decorated fairly straight forward. Sofa, chairs, a lovely fireplace separating the living and dining areas. The only thing that she could think of was the small makeshift bar that Oliver had at the edge of the room. Martini glasses and bottles of expensive alcohol lined the glass shelves. He had enjoyed the odd drink since they'd arrived and Kathryn had noticed the drawers in the expensive looking unit.

Kathryn rushed over there, pulling one of the drawers out and stuffing the gun inside beside some swizzle sticks. She would explain everything to Oliver when he got back tonight. She would explain that she had it there to feel safe. Surely he would understand. She was about to go back to the dinner she was planning when the phone rang. She paused a moment, looking to the sleek black receiver. Oliver hadn't explicitly told her not to use the phone, but it felt wrong to do so now without him here. It rang harshly again, interrupting the silence angrily. Finally she lifted the receiver, not saying anything.

"Stop whatever you're doing," Oliver's voice was thick with intensity and Kathryn furrowed her brow at his tone. "Then go to the kitchen."

"Is everything alright?"

Oliver continued, unfettered by her response. "There's a small pantry there. Hide in it until I come home and get you and no matter what, don't answer the door, Kathryn."
"Oliver what's going on?"

"Please don't question me further. Just do it. I'll be home within the hour."

"Alright," Kathryn nodded hanging up the phone just before she thought she heard Oliver say something.

She glanced around the room momentarily disoriented at what was happening. All her fears were suddenly bubbling up and it was causing her to become dizzy and nauseated. She rushed into the kitchen, turning off the oven and scrambling into the pantry.

She shut the door behind her quickly, her heart beating erratically within her chest. It was making her breathless. All that she could see in the blackness of the pantry was a sliver of light from the crack in between the doors. She could just see the kitchen, a slit that allowed her to see the stove and fridge. She heard the soft tapping of the sink as it dripped gently into the enamel sink.

She didn't know how long she'd been sitting there, knees against her chest, her eyes wet with fear when all of a sudden there was a sound at the front door, startling her. It sounded like a door handle jiggling and then silence as someone let themselves inside. They didn't sound like Oliver however. He always had a distinct tinkling of his keys when he entered and his shoes sounded different on the carpet.

Whoever had just come in wasn't Oliver.

*I never locked the door.*

Kathryn realized with sickening horror that she'd never locked up after altercation with Mrs. Goodrowe. She had been so fixated on the gun that she'd completely lost her train of thought.

*I'm going to die.*

She shuddered in the pantry, her ears searching for any clue as to who was in the house. She heard the tentative sound of someone approaching the kitchen. The heel of their shoes clacked along the linoleum as they stepped into the kitchen.

Kathryn saw with muted horror, the silver gun that they held protectively in front of them as if warding off any impending attack. Kathryn covered her mouth with her hand, silencing the hurried breaths that were escaping her lungs. She couldn't believe the figure with the gun was real and standing there in a lovely suit and perfectly coifed hair.

It was none other than Lana Winters.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for all your lovely messages, kudos and comments! They have brightened my days! I was on vacation this last week (much needed!) and so this is the third-to-last installment of this story and it's becoming so hard to finish. I want to give them a happy ending but I know its not possible.

Since this fic is coming to an end shortly and if you're enjoying the character of Oliver Thredson, I highly recommend a new one I've been following here on AOON- 'The Life and Death of Sister Frances':
Lana stared at the nun whispering to her covertly behind the wall of fresh baking. The woman's eyes were shining with sympathy. Mother Claudia she had said her name was. She was going to break Lana out of Briarcliff. Lana hadn't believed her, but she had insisted. Saying that Sister Jude had insisted she be broken out.

*Sister Jude set this up?*

Intrigued but not quite believing it, Lana listened to the nun as she produced a large folder thick with papers.

"Your patient file," Sister Claudia explained handing the folder to Lana. "Documentation of every foul thing that was done to you here."

Images of Thredson on top of, grunting angrily as he climaxed flashed within Lana's head, causing her to curl her lip angrily.

"Trust me when I tell you it can't possibly all be in that file," Lana replied flatly.

"Which is why you'll need it for your exposé," Claudia insisted. "Its Irrefutable proof that you were here. When your story comes out there will be those that try to deny even that."

"You want this place shut down," Lana said, the truth dawning on her as she looked to the furious nun before her.

"I want it pulled down and the earth salted."

Lana felt a small smirk crossing her features as the woman spoke. She realized that the woman was speaking the truth and she listened as the woman told her where to find her clothing, how to leave and that a taxi-cab was on its way to Briarcliff that would take her wherever she wanted to go.

"Alright," Lana nodded before grasping a pair of scissors. "Hang on."

She rushed to one of the large sacks of rice, piercing it with scissors and digging around until she produced the large tape of Thredson's confession, wrapped tightly in plastic. She turned and handed it to the nun.

"That goes with me."

****

Oliver put out the cigarette in the ashtray on his desk, leaning back. While his lovely Kathryn was at home waiting for their date, he was here dealing with a most troublesome annoyance. As soon as he had this dealt with he and Kathryn were going for a long vacation.

He almost smiled at the thought of he and Kathryn somewhere like the Poconos, calm and happy and normal. But all too soon his attention was brought back to the dreary office in which he sat with Kit Walker. He looked at the pale boy with calm indifference.

"You know why I've brought you here, Kit?"

"I do," Kit replied with a shaky nod.
"So? What do you have for me?"

The two of them were sitting in Oliver's office looking like casual acquaintances catching up to anyone passing by. Kit's jaw clenched angrily as he looked into the cool and confidence face of Oliver Thredson.

"She won't tell me nothin'," Kit replied angrily. "You know she won't."

"I need that tape, Kit," Oliver said gently, his mouth twitching into an impatient smirk. "You know that it's the only way to get your son back."

"You know I can't do that."

"I'm sure you can," Oliver replied before glancing at his wristwatch and standing. They had been speaking for several moments and Oliver realized he was late for his new group session in the common room. Kit followed slowly, his frame desperate as they walked down the hall. Oliver didn't need him restrained - all he had to do was utter the name Thomas and Kit was as gentle as a kitten. Kit tried a different approach as they entered into the foyer.

"We both know if I get you that tape I'm done for," Kit said evenly. "You won't really do anything to help."

They reached the bottom of the staircase and Oliver turned to face Kit, his face serious.

"You're wrong," Oliver replied passionately. "Kit, get me that tape I will not only see to it that your son is not swallowed by the system but I will also do everything in my power to secure your freedom so you can be with him again."

Kit faltered a moment, his dark eyes trained on the ground below. Was it possible? Could Thredson really do that?

"You and Grace together as a family," Oliver continued, seeing that he was getting to the boy. "I mean it."

With that he turned, preparing to head up the stairs when he heard Kit's furious anger behind him, causing him to turn and face the boy.

"Well how do you figure to do that?"

Oliver was irritated, but he knew he had to play his hand appropriately.

"Well for one, the police are going to need a new criminal suspect for the Bloody Face Killings."

"I've got one for 'em," Kit said meaningfully.

"So do I," Oliver continued, ignoring the young man's implication. As Oliver spoke, Kit's eyes travelled from Oliver's face over to the figure who was slowly coming down the stairs, her body stiff and straight. She was dressed in a lovely dress and her hair and her face partially covered by a scarf. She held in her arms a large purse and when his gaze landed on her face he saw it was Lana.

"Doctor Arthur Arden," Oliver continued, his attention rapt on the young man. "He's come under suspicion a number of times already and with his sudden disappearance his guilt is plausible."

Kit looked at Lana, confused at her outfit and saw as she gently shook her head to silence him. She was breaking out. His attention was drawn back to Oliver who had finished and was about to turn
back to go up the stairs. Kit realized with a sickening feeling that Oliver would run directly into Lana if he let him go. Kit's eyes drew back rapidly to Oliver and without thinking he grasped the man's shoulder, whirring him around to face him and away from Lana.

"But Lana," Kit offered desperately. "She uh, she'll never tell me where that tape's at. I made her swear not to."

Lana's palms were sweating furiously, her heart pounding so thickly in her ears she could barely think. She saw Oliver turn back to face Kit, his irritation obviously shown in his tall frame.

"Well just talk to her," Oliver said. "Try to get her to see reason."

Again he turned to leave, pressed for time and again felt the desperate grip of Kit's hand on his shoulder. He sighed in frustration before turning to face Kit once more, wrenching his shoulder out of the young man's grip.

"Well what if she won't?" He urged. "I mean, she can be pretty stubborn when she wants."

Kit spoke, moving to his right. Thredson positioned his body to face the boy, not wanting to be wrenched on again. His back was completely to Lana and she moved past him quickly on the steps. She glanced up at the back of his head as he spoke.

"She's a spirited girl," Oliver agreed. "If anyone can reach her, it's you."

Kit nodded, his gaze intensely trained on Oliver before he felt the tap of an orderly on his left shoulder.

"Okay. I'll try."

Kit followed the orderly but not before giving a passing look to the door as Lana exited Briarcliff. Oliver saw this and drew his attention to the door in just enough time to see Lana's frame as the door closed behind her.

Lana rushed down the steps of Briarcliff, her eyes falling on the taxi that pulled up like a bright yellow beacon of hope. She smiled at Sister Claudia as the nun passed her the papers and tape before settling into the back of the taxi. Oliver rushed out of the building just as Lana crawled into the taxi with Sister Claudia closing the door behind her.

She said something to the driver before her gaze was drawn back to the steps of Briarcliff. Oliver walked down the steps in a furious daze, his attention on the small nun that was walking past him slowly back up the stairs. What had happened? How had Lana Winters escaped?

He felt his chest becoming constricted as he looked into the cab and saw Lana shooting him a victorious smirk.

Lana looked at him in his crisp grey suit and his perfectly combed hair and for the first time she saw true fear in his dark eyes.

You lose, Oliver.

She brought the tape up off her lap and pressed it against the window of the cab.

She could see the blood drain from Oliver's face as he realized his confession was on its way out of his sight. His eyes narrowed in complete fury and a small part of Lana was terrified while the other part was elated at his reaction. As a final goodbye she raised her right hand defiantly and gave him
the finger. It felt amazing to do and know he could do nothing about it.

He moved to the door and Lana felt the cab begin to pull away, leaving Oliver Thredson a small, sad shape in the rear-view mirror.

She was safe.
Oliver watched as Lana's taxi took off down the long driveway of Briarcliff, his eyes narrowed in fury and his body racing with adrenaline.

He was caught.

He looked once more to the aged nun that strolled her way back up the steps, looking quite pleased with herself. He wanted to strangle the old crone until her eyeballs budged out of her head. Her wrinkled skin would make a nice lamp. No time for those thoughts now. He had to act quickly.

Oliver raced up the steps and through the crowded foyer of Briarcliff, seeing Kit at the window with a smile on his face. Oliver grasped the boy by his shoulder, causing Kit to cry out. None of the orderlies standing by did anything to stop it.

"You'd better hope she doesn't turn that tape in," Oliver growled under his breath. "For your son's sake."

Kit said nothing, choosing to stare at Oliver darkly before wrenching from his grasp. Oliver knew exactly where Lana would go - she would undoubtedly go to the police with his taped confession before going to his own home to gather whatever meagre evidence she could find.

At this latter though, his heart pounded. He had to flee. He had to take his car and drive to Mexico or somewhere equally lenient. He needed to disguise himself to avoid the chair. He was already formulating how he would get across the border when a pale face swam into view.

Kathryn.

The ultimate choice faced him. Either he could make his way unscathed to Mexico or perhaps even Canada and avoid retribution of the law or he could take the chance and go back to his home, gather up Kathryn and they could run off together. Already his feet were moving to his office.

His heart pounding and his palms sweating as his decision affronted him. A life without Kathryn wasn't much of a life worth living. Oliver dashed from the foyer down the maze of hallways until he came upon his small office. He dashed in, his fingers trembling as he dialed home on the sleek black phone that sat perched innocuously on his desk. The phone rang twice and Oliver felt the sweat drip down his spine. Finally he heard her tentative voice at the other end of the line. Before she could even speak he had launched into his speech.

"Stop whatever you're doing then go to the kitchen."

"Is everything alright?"
He could hear the fear in the girl's voice and he hated himself for scaring her. He wanted to bundle her up into his arms and soothe her, tell her everything would be fine. But there wasn't time for that. He needed to be adroit now - it would pay off later when they were long gone and Lana would never find them.

"There's a small pantry there. Hide in it until I come home and get you and no matter what, don't answer the door, Kathryn."

"Oliver what's going on?"

Oliver winced at the terror in her voice, hating himself for ever bringing her into this horrifying equation. He closed his eyes, feeling as the tears started at the corners. He had never felt regret like this. Pain at the sound of another in distress. Still he kept his voice even; stern even. He had to for her.

"Please don't question me further. Just do it. I'll be home within the hour."

"Alright." He could hear the wobble in her voice and despite wanting to maintain his composure, Oliver couldn't help as he spoke next in warming, dulcet tones.

"I love you, Kathryn."

He wasn't sure if she'd heard his last words, seconds later he heard the tone that indicated she'd hung up. He pulled on his jacket and grasped his briefcase before rushing down the hallways and out to his waiting car.

****

Kathryn watched as Lana walked around the kitchen looking surly. She glanced around and saw the mess Kathryn had made trying to start dinner. Kathryn looked at the gun in Lana's hand and felt her body tremble. Why was she here? Why did she want to hurt Oliver? Lana sighed gently, glancing at her wristwatch before walking back to the living room.

Kathryn couldn't see her, but she could hear as the woman lowered herself into one of Oliver's chairs. Kathryn watched as she switched off the lights, blanketing the entire home in darkness.

I need to do something.

Before she could act, Kathryn heard the familiar jingle of Oliver's keys and heard the front door slam. His footsteps fell onto the carpet and Kathryn wanted to sob as a mix of emotions went through her. Relief that Oliver was home. Fear that he would be killed. Anger at Lana Winters for trying to ruin their lives once more after all she'd done. Oliver rushed towards the kitchen, his focus entirely on Kathryn.

He didn't even notice that all the lights were off despite the girl's insistence that they leave them on at all times after her ordeal at Briarcliff.

"In a hurry Oliver? Quick trip out of town?"

The voice behind him made him still and finally stop. That sickening saccharine sweetness. He sighed before turning into the inky darkness. He heard the click of his lights go on and there was Lana bathed in the soft glow. She looked done up and confident as she sat there, legs crossed and a gun pointed at him.

"Good," Oliver said, trying to think on his feet. He had to remain calm and in control. "You're here.
Saves me the trouble of having to look for you. Did you come here just to bring me the tape?"

He knew that Lana had already turned it in. He knew it as soon as he'd seen her. He knew that she had likely called the police and he knew that his minutes for precious freedom were fleeting. He had to stop himself from looking to the kitchen lest Lana catch on that what really mattered to him was currently hiding in the pantry.

Kathryn could barely make out their voices from her crouched position in the pantry but she could hear their voices low and congenial. Despite Oliver's warning she knew she had to do something and so she slowly pushed the pantry door open. It made a small creak that went unnoticed as the voices continued outside in the living room. Slowly she crawled on all fours across the linoleum of the kitchen, hearing snippets of what Oliver was saying.

"Relieved.... living with secrets...."

She continued to crawl, her knees aching from the positioning until she was at the swinging door of the kitchen. It was open halfway and she glanced around it slowly until she could see the soft illuminated figure of Oliver, clad in his long coat. His hands were trembling as he clutched the side of the fireplace. Her heart melted at the sight of him. His tall, lean frame drawing to the fireplace. She could almost smell his cologne and Brylcreem. She wanted to reach out to him, to hold him and tell him that she would do anything to save him.

And then the words came from Oliver that she never expected. Words that crushed her the moment they were uttered in that silken baritone of his.

"I was right Lana. I knew you were the one."

Oliver knew he was grasping at straws pretending like Lana's behavior pleased him. He had to buy some more time. All he could hope was that Kathryn had listened to what he said and was safely sequestered in the pantry, her ears covered and her eyes closed.

Kathryn felt numb at first. After all of this he still wanted Lana. Kathryn would forever be the second choice. She suddenly felt the excruciating pain of defeat and loss at this realization and it buckled her. She had been a patsy.

Kathryn's eyes filled with tears, her ears deaf to whatever Lana said in response. She felt the extreme weight of the betrayal and her heart hung heavily in her chest, weighing her down until she thought she might melt into the floor below.

"I am the one who is going to put your ass in that electric chair," Lana spat out derisively. "You're gonna pay for every sick thing you did to me, to Wendy and to every other woman you murdered."

Oliver felt his pulse race at her words, feeling suddenly burdened with her presence. He glanced askance around the room, fearful that Kathryn may have heard her. He saw that the kitchen door had been left halfway open. He had to divert the situation and so he pulled off his jacket before making his way over to his bar, deterring Lana form her previous monologue. She looked angrily to him.

"Where do you think you're going?"

Kathryn wiped the tears from her eyes at the alarm in Lana's voice. She glanced around the corner of the door and saw Oliver's tall frame head over to the bar intent on pouring a martini. Silently she willed him to read her thoughts.

_The gun._
Despite everything she wanted him to live. The realization of this hit her like a ton of bricks, leaving her breathless. No matter what had happened, no matter who he chose, she wanted him alive. She still wanted him. From her position on the ground she could see Lana's frame through the open pit of the fireplace and Lana looked furious at Oliver's carefree attitude.

"Sit down," Lana yelled, standing and raising the gun at eye level.

"There is no alcohol where I'm going," Oliver sighed dramatically. "I'm not going to let you take away my last chance to have a martini."

His voice was low and guttural and angry. He wanted to slice her throat open for doing this. For upsetting the world he was creating with Kathryn. For taking away the one chance they both had for a normal, functional life.

Kathryn watched in rapt focus as Oliver pulled open the drawer for the swizzle sticks, her heart jumping. He had to see the gun nestled in there. He simply had to. Kathryn tried to make out what Lana was saying but the woman's voice was a low sneering jab.

Oliver glanced down as he grasped a metal swizzle stick to stir his martini, his eyes widenning a moment as he took in the familiar revolver of Kathryn's. He had told the girl to hide it and this is where she had chosen? He wanted to laugh out loud. How perfect of her. He smiled gently down at it, his mind lost in thoughts of Kathryn.

Kathryn glanced up to the profile of Oliver, seeing with a sudden delight as the man's lips curled into a small smirk of triumph. He had seen the gun. Yet he made no move for it, puzzling Kathryn. Instead he moved to the fireplace as Lana drew nearer to him. She was saying something about a schoolteacher and Kathryn leaned forward slightly to try to catch what she was saying.

Without warning Oliver turned on the fireplace, the flames shooting out and causing Kathryn to jump back slowly, fearful she may be seen from her hiding place behind the kitchen door.

The gun awaited him and he felt his hands growing itchy to grasp it. But he needed to bide his time. He wanted to make Lana Winters pay. Then he would shoot her brains out and Kathryn and he would make a hasty exit. Oliver warmed his left hand a moment against the open flames before looking up at Lana with fury clear on his face. She wanted to know what happened to her precious Wendy.

The truth was that after he brought Wendy Peyser to Lana he had chopped the Sapphic woman into bits that were unrecognizable before throwing remains into a river two towns over, weighing the bag down with rocks. They still hadn't been found. But that wasn't cruel enough a story. He wanted to hurt Lana. He wanted to make the woman before him cry with fear and sorrow. She would pay for ruining this part of his life. For making Kathryn afraid. Finally his gaze was on Lana's face.

"Are you sure you want to hear all the details?" Oliver finally asked, trying not to appear too gleeful.

"I want to hear everything," Lana replied.

Kathryn leaned forward slightly, able to hear as the two of them spoke now. What were they talking about? She saw Lana standing in the centre of the room, the gun pointed at Oliver. From where she sat Kathryn could see the back of Oliver's frame; he was sitting on the fireplace and taking a sip of his drink. Why didn't he have the gun? Why was Lana trying to kill him in the first place? She was so confused. And her confusion only grew as Oliver spoke next.
"She was the first body I had that remained intact. I put her on ice just for you. I was going to dispose of the body but once I realized how well things were going with us I thought she could come in handy for practice, you know?"

Kathryn felt the tears prick her eyes at what Oliver was saying. What was happening here? What body? Practice? She was so confused and unsettled although something in the back of her mind was crying out that she truly knew nothing of Oliver Thredson. He was an enigma.

"It was awkward at first, every approach I made felt false. Artificial," Oliver continued. "It felt like she was watching me; being judgemental. I must confess I couldn't do it. I thought about plucking out her eyes but then I thought 'That's not real. I need to make this work.' and so I turned her around."

Oliver tried his best to look engrossed in his own story, trying to believe these words. The thought of coming together with a corpse did nothing to arouse him, if anything it made him sick. And so he forced himself to turn his mind to something he did find arousing; Kathryn laying underneath him.

Her pale flesh reddening under his hands. Her cheeks flushing as he kissed her neck and her parted lips as she groaned against him. Oliver felt an involuntary tingling in his groin and a smile come to his lips as he continued, seeing Lana's face blanch at his reaction.

"And finally it happened. More than once," Oliver felt his eyes shut as he recalled Kathryn's voice calling out his name. The same thrill that went through him as he caused her to climax in the hydrotherapy room. He could almost hear her calling out his name and his next words were spoken almost reverentially at the memory. "It was a triumph. Better than I ever thought possible."

He slowly opened his eyes and paused, seeing the gun trembling in Lana's hands. He had her on the edge of anger and disgust. He had to make sure to drive this horrendous story home. He had to hit her where it hurt.

"Lana, Wendy allowed us to create this life you have growing inside of you. It's a little miracle if you think about it."

"Where's her body goddam it?" Lana whispered angrily, her entire body shaking internally. The disgust she felt for this monster in front of her was palpable.

"Well after you left me I had to dispose of all the evidence," Oliver continued, warming his hand once more on the fire, trying to appear calm despite the perspiration that dotted his upper lip. "So what I couldn't burn I cut up. There are pieces of her scattered from Plymouth to Springfield. But you know what, Lana? We'll always have Paris."

Oliver glanced down at his emptied drink, his body alight with an internal fire. He looked back up at Lana, appearing calm and collected. He could hear the far away sirens of the police as they approached. No matter, he knew so many back ways out of this home, not including the expansive forest that butted against his backyard. He and Kathryn would be fine. But he had to act now.

"Time for a refill."

Kathryn sat numbly in the kitchen, not bothering to move. She could hear the distant wails of the police sirens and realized that Oliver was indeed the sick man Lana thought he was. He was a murderer. He was a killer of women and he had fooled her. She could hear him moving to the bar and she glanced around the corner of the door.

"They're here," Lana said gleefully as the sirens drew near watching as Oliver poured his drink. She
couldn't suppress the smile that spread across her lips. "Drink up. This is your last taste of alcohol."

Oliver glanced at Lana as he poured his drink, coming to the realization that to murder her would be
to murder his unborn son. This gave him pause and he mulled this over for a moment.

"Now that you're out of Briarcliff you'll never keep that baby will you?"

"Not a chance in hell," Lana spat, the gun poised in both her hands and ready to shoot.

"So I shouldn't expect a little Oliver to come visit every few months?"

"Oh, even if I had this thing you'd never see it," Lana promised. "You're gonna fry in that chair."

Oliver nodded to himself a moment, realizing what had to be done. What a waste Lana had turned
to be. A tiresome bore who he'd wasted affection on. He decided he'd play with her a bit. The
bitch deserved it after all.

"I hardly think so Lana," he said as he sipped his drink. "I'm clearly insane. No, I'll be
institutionalized at the very worst I'll live a long life in prison. Maybe I'll even start some therapy
groups, God knows there are some disturbed individuals behind bars." He took another long sip of
his drink before turning back to look at her with a dark look.

"As for you, I have no use for you anymore," Oliver said with a grimace as he reached into the
drawer where the gun lay waiting. "At best you should be known as my last victim."

Just as he bent to grasp the gun Oliver saw something out of the corner of his eyes in the kitchen and
his eyes darted over to the swinging door. To his horror he saw Kathryn standing there, half hidden
behind the door, tears slipping down her cheeks as she looked to him completely dejected. Oliver felt
his heart jump at the realization that she had heard everything he'd said.

No.

Before he could do anything further Lana had pulled the trigger behind him and watched in
satisfaction as she blew a hole clean through Oliver Thredson's head. Blood splattered all over the
bar and the man crumpled to the ground in an undignified heap.

"Prison's too good for you," Lana whispered angrily.

She held the gun out in front of her, convinced that like some undead boogieman Oliver would rise
from the ground and continue to come for her. But he didn't. His body lay prostrate on the floor, a
crimson pool starting under his head. The back of his head was blown off, but from the front he
looked asleep. His glasses were off his face and near the fireplace. Lana slowly lowered the gun,
looking down at Oliver's form and breathing heavily. She was about to run from the room, to tell the
police everything that had happened when there came a creak from the kitchen.

Lana glanced up in fear, confused as to who it may be. She raised the gun slowly coming around the
fireplace to see Kathryn Hatcher from Briarcliff stumble into the living room, her eyes on Oliver's
dead frame. She was dressed in a sleek black dress, her hair in shining waves and her face made up
gorgeously. She looked nothing like the shell of a person she had been at Briarcliff aside from the
deadened look in the girl's dark eyes.

"Kathryn?"

Kathryn looked dazed, ignoring Lana as she walked over near the fireplace and retrieved Oliver's
fallen glasses. Lana watched in mute fascination as she crouched over Oliver's body and repositioned
the glasses until they sat on the bridge of his nose once more. Lana could see the tears that slipped
down the girl's face as she completed this action almost tenderly. Finally she leaned over and pressed
a kiss to the madman's still warm lips before standing shakily and walking over to the bar.

"What are you doing?" Lana finally croaked, watching as Kathryn reached into the drawer. There lay
a small revolver. She brought it out slowly and Lana watched as Kathryn kneeled beside Oliver's
body, her eyes bright and fixated on Lana's face. She held the gun in her hands a moment, feeling the
weight of the weapon in her grip before she spoke.

Before Lana could react, Kathryn had grasped the revolver and brought it up to her temple. The girl
had tears slipping down her face in rivers, her eyes wide in shock and disbelief. Lana wanted to say
or do something but before she could do anything, the young woman was speaking.

"You weren't his final victim," Kathryn uttered with a deadened expression. "I was."

And with that, she pulled the trigger.

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