

I couldn't sleep-I had too much anxiety from the horrible, emotional day. I was lying in bed awake, staring into the dark. ALARM! I startled vertical.

"Code white, code white on the south hall. Code white."

I rushed through the black, fumbling for the door knob. Patients stood outside their doors wondering what was going on. Cheryl came over and stood next to me.

"What's code white?" I asked her.

"Violent patient," she answered.

The motionless bodies stood staring in silence. There were only a few lamps lit along the phone tables and it felt like dusk. Around the nurse's station there was chaos as everybody searched for something to do.

"Do you know who it is?" I asked.

"No, no idea," she answered, as she kept staring ahead at the commotion around the nurse's station.

I couldn't stand it any longer, so I made my way down the hall. I stood at the counter, the fluorescent lights in that little office glared like science fiction, it fucked me up. I waited to ask somebody what was going on, but nobody seemed to see me. Then Bev went racing by. I grabbed her arm.

"Bev, what's going on?" She pulled her arm loose.

"Go back to your room Andie. Tell everybody to go *back* to their rooms." She took off again.

Then, the main door onto the ward burst open and three paramedics came storming in with a stretcher.

The voice came on the intercom again.

“Code white, code white on the south hall, code white.”

I heard screaming coming from below. I went to the top of the south hall entry way and held tight to the door frame, straining forward to try and see what was going on. The nurse’s had gathered outside the women’s washroom, they separated as the paramedics made their way through. A heavy groan of the door as they forced it open and a rush of light from inside. My heart was pounding and my eyes burned, but I had to find out what was going on.

I couldn’t stop myself- it was like I was being dragged down that hall. As I was getting closer to the washroom Bev looked up and, though I couldn’t see them, our eyes met.

“Andrea, back to your room now,” she yelled at me, pointing up the hall.

I went back to the entry way and held on again.

The washroom door swung opened. Light. The nurse’s stepped back to make room for the paramedics as they backed out, but I couldn’t see who was on the stretcher. The door swung shut again. Dark. Then-my heart dropped as I saw her blonde hair. The altar cracked and she fell from grace.

“Elissa,” I screamed and I ran towards her.

Her face was so pale I could have traced her veins, her eyes were red and swollen, she was barely conscious. Her white nightgown clung to her tiny body, weighted down by a mass of scarlet blood, and there was a bulky white bandage wrapped around her forearm.

“Elissa, are you okay?” Stupid fucking question Andrea!

“Miss, you’re going to have to step away,” a paramedic ordered.

They walked to the door, forcing me back as they went.

“We better hurry,” one said to another.

I caught hold of the stretcher and pulled myself into her.

“Elissa,” was all I could say.

She looked at me with lifeless eyes, and tried to smile.

“I didn’t mean it. I’m sorry,” she said.

My eyes fell to the bandage, and the blood was soaking through in a thick, vertical line. I knew she was lying, she had meant it. She had been cutting herself for years, she knew how. She had told me before that if you’re trying to kill yourself you cut up stream. Jesus Christ, why had she told me that?

A paramedic pushed open the door with his back, and she was gone. I couldn’t believe it. Where am I? I thought.

Kayla came running down the hall and stopped cold when she saw my face.

“Elissa,” I whispered, and fell to the floor and wept.