

Becoming the Impossible

“How are you feeling today?” Dana asked the smaller woman, who was still getting over the surprise of waking up to find that she occupied a hospital bed. And that she now wore arm and leg restraints.

“Dana, what the hell’s going on?!” Kasey demanded of the leggy blonde. “Why have you done this?”

“Do you remember our conversation last night?”

“Yes, most of it anyway. You were asking me questions about the party at the lake house,” the short brunette replied with an angry frown. “And not answering any of the questions as to how I came to be shackled to this bed. What does that have to do with anything?”

“As I said then, all you have to do is remember and everything will become clear to you. And at that point I’ll explain everything you missed as well as the parts that might not make a lot of sense,” Dana replied.

The other woman still looked sad to Kasey. And that worried her.

“You kept saying that last night,” the restrained woman stated, looking over the taller woman carefully. To her eyes, it didn’t appear that Dana had been sleeping well. Nor had Kasey for that matter. Her dreams had been strange, filled with peculiar imagery. Scenes and shapes and smells had haunted her sleep. Dreams like nothing she’d ever experienced. Perhaps it was a side effect of the drugs. But for some odd reason, Kasey didn’t really believe that.

“Yes,” Dana agreed with a quiet smile that turned grim. “I did. You remembered a lot. More than your delicate little mind could take. Today you’ll remember all that again and then some. We’re going to stretch the boundaries of the world you live in to the breaking point. Literally. Either your mind will snap or you’re going to learn that this world of ours is a lot bigger and lot scarier than you ever believed.”

“What are you talking about?” the dark-haired student demanded almost desperately.

Dana turned her head slightly sideways and gave the other woman a long look that sent chills down Kasey’s spine. “You felt that, didn’t you?” Dana whispered. “Yes, I can see you did. Start remembering. No matter how strange, don’t let your mind stray from the truth. Do this as though your life depended on it. Remember from the point at which the bear attacked our party. Recall how Martha had been upset that he was there. Remember how she referred to the bear as though he were a person. Then look back on the rest of the evening. I’ll come back around lunch time. When I do, I expect you to tell me everything that happened that night.” There was more than a hint of threat in her voice.

“Dana...” The door closed behind the blonde, leaving Kasey all alone. With an experimental tug, she tested the strength of the restraints. The prone woman then gave it a more serious effort. It didn’t matter. She wasn’t going anywhere until someone released her. With a sigh, Kasey lay back and tried to force herself to relax.

Almost in spite of her situation, a building curiosity slowly grew within her. Maybe Dana was right. Maybe all the answers truly did lay within her. And she did want to know.

The bear. A shiver ran through her at the very thought. Frowning at herself, the injured young woman became angry with herself. She wasn’t some cream puff to be frightened away by a simple memory! ...Even if it the memory hadn’t been so simple. And even if the shiver might have very well been warranted. Mad at what she saw as the weakness within herself,

Kasey very deliberately forced her memories into the forefront of her mind.

Sticks had been hurt by the bear. She'd seen that from Emory and Martha's cabin. The huge beast had charged into the fight Josh and Sticks had been having with Augustus and Ronny. Sticks had been knocked into a tree and the impact had bent his body oddly before he dropped to the ground. Augustus had been hurt as well. Despite his rudeness at the grill, he hadn't deserved to have his leg broken like that.

And then the bear had gotten to Ronny.

It had latched onto his side with its huge mouth and had begun swinging him around like a rag doll. But other things had begun happening by then. From her position on the floor of the cabin, she'd had a good view through the wide glass windows and door. Several of the other party goers had dropped to all fours. And whether they stood or were on the ground, they had all suddenly started sprouting hair from all over. Freaky as that was, it didn't stop there. Body parts on all those people started moving... changing.

While all this had been going on, the bear had been battering anyone who came near with Ronny as well as its huge paws. Josh had fallen down after receiving a blow to the head. And then the section of Ronny the bear held onto ripped away. Ronny had fallen to the ground and the bear had bitten his head. Kasey shuddered at the memory and couldn't help but feel a thread of queasiness shoot through her.

"That's it!" Emory had stated angrily. "Looks like we're going to have to go help sort this all out." Turning to him, Kasey noticed that his eyes had turned yellow. Startled, her gaze spun around to Martha whom she found now had yellow eyes as well. And with her gaze fixed upon the older woman, Emory bit her shoulder. Bit down hard drawing blood.

Kasey had been bitten by an old boyfriend and she'd been bitten by a dog as a child. And this was like neither experience. The bite didn't just hurt... it burned. And then Martha bit her other shoulder. Getting over the initial shock of the bite, Kasey screamed. And they had both bitten her again.

"Sorry dear," Emory told her as hair began sprouting from all over his body.

"We intended to have a long talk with you ahead of time. Give you the chance for a little mental preparation. Seems that's no longer an option. We'll explain it all later. You'll be right as apple pie in a few days. Hmm. Make that a week and a few days. I don't want to rush your change. Rushing it the first time makes you weaker. The magic works better given time. The change is more thorough. Embrace the burn and sleep dear." And with that hair had suddenly sprouted from all over Martha as well. Kasey's vision had begun blurring by the time the two hairy people, now substantially larger and not looking quite right had walked out of the cabin. Screams and roars of rage entered the cabin briefly as they exited. And that was the last memory Kasey had before waking up here in this bed yesterday.

It had to be a hallucination. Didn't it?

Sweat poured down the confused young woman's forehead as she tried to convince herself this was the case. She tried to reach up the feel her shoulders to see if there were bite marks there. Both Emory and Martha had drawn blood each time they'd bitten her. However, the restraints held her fast.

"Dana!" she screamed. "Dana!"

A few minutes later Dana ran into the room. Kasey had made herself half hysterical by this time and the beeping of the machines reflected this.

"I'm here now. Calm down! I'm here," Dana told her soothingly. "I'm here now. It's all going to be okay."

“Was it a hallucination or was it real?!” the smaller woman demanded with very round eyes.

“Tell me what you remember,” Dana commanded, holding a restraining hand against her chest while her other hand smoothed her hair. Kasey opened her mouth to reply but instead closed it. Slowly, she began calming down.

“Hair,” Kasey finally whispered once the beeping of the machines had slowed to a more normal tempo. “The people. At the party. They grew hair all over their bodies.”

“Yes they did,” Dana agreed gently. “Tell me what else you remember.”

“Emory and Martha bit me!” she replied, summoning only a little outrage. “And they really did start growing hair from all over them?”

“Yes,” Dana nodded. “That’s very good Kasey. What else do you remember?”

“Ronny...” the brunette began but allowed the sentence to end there.

“Ronny’s dead,” Dana confirmed, looking angry. “The bear bit out a large section of his abdomen and crushed his skull. Anything else?”

“My vision went blurry shortly after Martha and Emory bit me. I... I think I passed out shortly afterwards. Did I lose a lot of blood from their bites or something? Was I drugged?”

“You didn’t lose too much blood,” the blonde woman told her with a sad grin which faded away completely. “And you weren’t drugged until much later. We’ll get to that in a bit. After the bear killed Ronny, it went after those who were injured nearby.” She took a moment to swallow as a tear slid down her face. “It wanted them out of the way before help arrived. Sticks, Augustus, and I’m afraid Josh were all killed. Many others were hurt... some of them very badly, before the bear could be put down.” Kasey looked shocked. “I’m so very sorry to have to tell you this.”

“Josh?”

“I think the bear broke his neck in the initial attack. He never felt the bite that killed him,” Dana whispered.

“No,” Kasey whispered as the tempo of the mechanical beeping increased. “No,” and she emphasized her negation with a pull in the restraints. “No. No, no, no!” Her tugs became jerks, each stronger and more powerful than that last as the sounds from the machine beeping continued to speed up. “No! No! NO!” And suddenly the young woman felt something flash over and within her like heat from a nearby bonfire.

Something inside her had changed and continued changing at an increasing rate.

“Oh, no you don’t!” Dana stated emphatically, just before delivering a punch to the jaw that knocked the younger woman unconscious.

“What happened?” a groggy Kasey asked.

“You started getting out of hand. I had to knock you out to keep you from hurting yourself. Or someone else.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Kasey demanded, coming around to full consciousness.

“Rather than answer that, I’m going to start answering some of your other questions,” Dana replied seriously.

“I don’t understand,” the brunette woman told her with a scowl wishing she could reach up far enough to rub her aching jaw.

“I know. That’s why I’m going to start answering your questions. First of all, you’re

here because you needed to be. You've been here a week and a day now. For the first week you were kept in a medication-induced coma. Why, you were about to ask? Because you picked up a disease. Emory and Martha gave it to you."

"Oh my God. It's not rabies is it? I've heard the shots you have to get for that are really painful."

Dana laughed, a quick humorless bark. "No. It's not rabies." She walked over to the table and poured a tumbler of water. Kasey drank quickly when it was offered to her. "This medical facility," Dana continued, "is located in the far corner of nowhere. Deep, backwoods Tennessee. We are literally miles from anywhere surrounded by thousands upon thousands of acres of deep forest. We are here for your protection as well as the protection of those near you."

"What is it? Am I contagious?"

"Yes, you are contagious. Not for me though. I suffer from the same affliction. That's part of the reason I chose to accompany you on this little trip."

"Are we in some sort of isolation ward or something? And why haven't you said what it is I've contracted?"

Dana laughed again, this time tinged with a bit of dark humor. "This entire facility is one big isolation ward. The sole reason for it's existence is to help people newly stricken to get back on their feet again. To help them learn to live normal, active lives. Or as normal as their lives will ever be again. You'll receive an entire education on the disease we now share. You'll receive physical training as well as mental discipline."

"That sounds great but I have school to get back to. Crap! You said I've been here eight days. I've already missed five classes." She sat there blinking a moment before bursting into tears. Dana returned to her side, again soothing her hair.

"Don't worry about school," Dana told her quietly. "That's all been taken care of. Here, in this place, we'll give you the time you need to understand the disease and to recover from losing Josh. I confess, I lost four friends and I'm having trouble coping myself."

Wiping away tears from her own eyes, Dana stepped away from the bed. "Now you tell me something. What disease do you have? Do I have? What impossible answer fits with all the information you now remember? With what I told you?"

"I don't know!" Kasey declared, sniffing back tears furiously. "I've been trying to get you to answer that for the last fifteen minutes!"

"I know. And like the memories you suppressed, I believe you know the answer to this as well. The clues are there and you're well read. I told you this was going to open a whole new world up to you. I meant that literally. Now I'm going to go sit somewhere," she informed the younger woman, wiping away fresh tears from her cheeks. "I've suddenly come to the realization that I'm not as far along in the grieving process as I'd thought." And with that Dana turned and walked out of the room.

Stunned, Kasey said not a word to the departing woman.

She lay thinking a lot while. Could it possibly be.... But no, that was ridiculous. A disease for silly books and foolish movies. But the clues fit and Dana had told her that she shouldn't rule out the impossible. She'd said before that her world would expand beyond her imagination. And if it was true.... It all made a crazy sort of sense. All you had to do was release one's hold on reality and be willing to admit the impossible. And as these thoughts tumbled around in her head, there was one word that grew closer and closer to the surface of her thoughts. A disease that didn't exist. Couldn't exist.

Could it?

Shaking her head failed to dislodge the word. And with no small amount of fear, Kasey at last uttered the word that refused to leave her. That if real would change her entire outlook. Her entire world.

“Lycanthropy.”