

PITY

Written by

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EXT. ABANDONED HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Mist lays a shroud over decaying bricks. A long-dead building towers, smothered by neglect.

Two figures approach: one small, the other large. Thanks to rain-slicked ponchos, they look identical in this dark.

A female voice rises over howling wind.

ALANA (V.O.)

Public transportation - always fun.
It's been raining cats and dogs for
hours. Through a bus transfer, and
a twelve block walk, it never
stops. But finally we've arrived.
Here it is: the famous Pitie Satre
Hospital... before my very eyes!

She raises her hooded face to a faded sign which declares:

"Pitie Satre Hospital". Underneath: "Trespassing prohibited
by city ordinance. Egalement trouve dan ces entrees!"

ALANA (V.O.)

Not as pretty as I pictured it. But
still history. Pretty sweet.

Her larger companion approaches the spiked, rusty gate. From
his raincoat, he removes:

A wicked looking PRY BAR: heavy enough to use as a weapon.
And "bad" deeds, too.

ALANA (V.O.)

Anyone's world can twist in a
heartbeat, n'est pas? Take me, for
example. One week ago, I was just
your average history student... one
with passion but modest grades.
Reading books, writing essays and
surfing Instagram absorbed my days.
Until my Women's Studies Professor
mentioned in passing during a
lecture - the Pitie had once and
for all been condemned.

(laughs)

To make way for a Starbucks - how
ludicrous! Call me ideological, but
I believe there are landmarks which
should be saved forever. Or we
should at least make *some* effort to
salvage what remains inside before
they tear those memories down.

(beat)
 Someone's gotta take the risk. If
 that effort makes me criminal, I'll
 accept that label. Let it be.

SNAP. Alana's "friend" breaks off the gate's padlock. Then
 sets to work on a bulky metal chain.

Alana watches him apply muscle. This B&E takes work.

ALANA (V.O.)
 Whether humans or institutions:
 time and necessity changes us all.
 Take the Pitie, for example.

The chain CRACKS. The gate swings open - CREAK. The two walk
 across a sprawling lawn towards the building.

ALANA (V.O.)
 Once a factory for gunpowder, the
 Pitie - or Pity as it's known in
 some circles - was transformed into
 a women's asylum in 1700. "Under
 new management". They used that
 phrase, even way back then. Funny
 word, "asylum": that implies
 healing and a safe environment
 designed for rest. None of which
 applies accurately to Pity's track
 record. According to my linguist-
 majoring amies, "Prison" is a far
 more appropriate term. A place
 where the disenfranchised and their
 suffering are silenced forever.
 Swallowing words that should be
 heard, but never are.

They reach the door. Once ornate, it's now rotted. A hole
 beckons over the knob.

Alana's companion reaches in, fumbles blindly with a latch.
 Alana flinches - will anything inside bite?

Fortunately... no. The lock CLICKS. Her companion pushes
 gently on the door. Hinges slide.

ALANA (V.O.)
 Which brings us to today. No matter
 one's final goals, that's
 undeniably centuries too late.
 Leaving me to walk through the very
 same door that "welcomed
 undesirable women" of many
 generations. Thieves. Prostitutes.

The mentally ill. And now...
harmless, modest me.

The two walk in. Darkness swallows their forms in one gulp.
Wind shoves the door shut behind them. SLAM.

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Alana whirls around. Her poncho hood falls. Revealing:

A sweet face to the voice. ALANA (20s): petite, dark wet hair
frame her features. Almond eyes reveal her soul. Innocent:
despite her mature actions and words.

ALANA
Perry, careful. Don't lock us in!

Her companion laughs, a deep male voice.

Reopening the door a crack, he holds a FLASHLIGHT under his
chin - creates a ghoulish, campy look.

PERRY (20s): rough and ready, with a feral smile.

PERRY
No way. That door's more broken
than your campus curfew. You scared
already, Alana? Some criminal
mastermind you turned out to be!

ALANA
I'm being careful. You should, too.

PERRY
We're not even past the lobby. You
said, the Pitie's got four floors.
Take 'em slow, we'll be fine.

He sweeps his flashlight across the room. Illuminating: moldy
marble tiles. An ANGEL STATUE in one corner. Elegant once...

PERRY
(mutters)
Creepy as Hell.

Alana pulls an iPad from her poncho. Glowing almost magically
in the dark, the device displays ANTIQUATED MAPS.

ALANA
We're not here for the guided tour.
The library's on the top floor.
Like the admin offices: far away
from inmate cells.

We go there, dig up patient records. Then get out before the cops arrive!

Alana points towards a twisting stairwell. Steps jut from it like twisted vertebrae.

PERRY

You're the smart one here. Lead on.

INT. STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

In the dark, it's hard to even see one's feet. The two trudge up creaky stairs.

Alana scrolls through pictures of Pitie inmates on her iPad. Monotone and creepy - as "ye olde" pictures always are.

ALANA

Here's some names to look for.

Onscreen: the photo of one woman (SUZETTE) - 30s, clad in an elegant ballroom dress.

ALANA

Suzette Tateman.

PERRY

(whistles)

Nice.

ALANA

Definitely a woman of means, sure. Institutionalized in 1750, she left behind a young son she never laid eyes on again. And a dowry worth millions. So I hear.

PERRY

Why'd they lock her up? She don't look nuts to me.

ALANA

When they shut the Pitie down, they found her diary buried under floorboards in her room. Based on the entries, it's theorized Suzette had epilepsy. In other words, not crazy. But they were stigmatized like that, way back then...

They reach Floor Two, keep climbing.

A plank CRACKS. Perry pulls Alana towards him. They bump chests, *almost "meet cute."*

Intent on her tablet, Alana flips to the next image:

LIZZY (30s) poses on the sidewalk. A shabby summer dress exposes far more leg than Suzette's. Perry squints at scabs on Liz's face.

PERRY

Lemme guess. That one's a wh -

ALANA

Let's say, "Woman of the night". Lizzy D'Aleitre owned a brothel in downtown Paris. A very successful business venture. Word was, Lizzy didn't trust banks and invested all her profit in jewelry instead. Until she was arrested in a 1748 morals sweep. Whatever happened to her wealth, she never saw it - or freedom - again.

PERRY

She died in here?

ALANA

As did most.
(squints at Lizzy's face)
According to scandal newspapers of the time, it's syphilis that formally did her in.

They approach the third landing.

Light from the iPad illuminates paintings on the walls. Lush rich artwork: torn to shreds by rats and time.

Alana peers over the railing. Blinks.

ALANA

Which probably still beats falling.

PERRY

(laughs)
Yeah. That'd hurt. Good thing they built this place sturdy, right?

On cue, the stairwell shakes. Alana hugs the wall, her face white. Nervous, she flips to the next photo on her tablet.

RACHEL (20s): African-Franco heritage. A flawless cafe au lait complexion. Extremely pregnant, too.

ALANA

Here's a picture of Rachel Morse.
Word is, a Pitie guard named Jean
was the father of her child.
Hospital records say she
"miscarried" in 1751... then Jean
took off. Rachel died months later
from complications, loneliness and
grief. Refusing to eat probably
hastened the process, too. "Fun"
footnote for the books: Jean was
spotted with a multi-racial son
years later, in Normandy. But he
never married. Which could mean...

PERRY

The guy liked his chicks exotic?

ALANA

(sighs)

Perhaps. The truth's lost to time.

The fourth floor landing looms. Shelves of books cast shadows
on the steps.

Alana zooms into one more photo.

BETSY (30s): confined to a wheelchair, Betsy's... different.
A raised lobotomy scar creases skin between her eyes. Which
burn with a haunted, 1000 mile stare.

PERRY

Damn, that one's freaky!

Alana slaps a hand over the image.

ALANA

Show respect. She had a name: Betsy
Suplande.

PERRY

So, what's "Betsy's" problem?

ALANA

You... don't wanna know.

Suddenly: shadows on the stairs shift. Vaguely human shaped,
they pass *through* Alana.

She shivers as images assault her mind:

MONTAGE

- A guard (JEAN) presses Rachel against a wall. Whispers heated nothings in her ear.

- Suzette stands alone in a cell. From her POV: walls around her warp and distort. She cries out and reaches for a NURSE. The woman backs away. Suzette falls.

- Liz throws food - or worse - at GUARDS and howl. They pile on her like quarterbacks. For them, it's fun.

- Betsy languishes in her wheelchair. A CHESS BOARD sits besides her. Rather than play, she drools.

END MONTAGE

INT. LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

Darkness. Alana groans, opens her eyes.

She's greeted with a wide view of the ceiling, now concealed by cobwebs and grime.

Perry fans an old FILE FOLDER in her face. Dust puffs. Alana coughs, bolts upright quick.

PERRY

You alive? Good news. If you'd had a heart attack, I'd be explaining this for years in jail.

ALANA

What... what happened?

PERRY

Dunno. One minute you're playing show and tell. Then you stare across the room, say weird stuff. Almost like you're sleep walking. You almost stepped off the edge! But I caught you, just in time...

He waits for thanks. Instead, Alana grabs the folder. Stares.

ALANA

Is this -

She flips pages: grins ear to ear.

ALANA

Patient files? Jackpot! Where'd you find this? Are there more?

Perry lumbers over to a SAFE, points to a BOX on the floor.

PERRY
Lots. In there.

Alana runs over and rifles through the file folder.

ALANA
Almost a year's worth of intake files! Perry, you're brilliant. Once the council sees all this, they'll save the Pitie as a historical landmark! How'd they miss all this before?

Tucking her tablet under an arm, Alana attempt to move the box. Oof! It's far too heavy. Plan B: she whirls around.

ALANA
The rain's almost over. Carry this home, I'll pay you more...

CRACK! Perry busts the safe open with his crowbar.

Inside: JEWELS glimmer. Old and quite valuable. Behind those, several STACKS OF BILLS.

Perry war-whoops and grabs loot. Alana darts over, confused.

ALANA
What are you doing?

PERRY
Getting paid. Consider yourself off the hook!

ALANA
You can't do that. It's stealing.

PERRY
You're the one who hired me to B&E. Why enforce stupid rules now?

Perry stuffs his poncho pockets 'til they bulge. Alana blocks his way and glares.

ALANA
That belongs to history. Put it back!

PERRY
Back off, Honor Student. Museums are for dead folks. I can use it.
(points to her iPad)
Those chicks you care about can't!

Perry waves his crowbar, a warning. It WHOOSHES through the air. Alana ducks under – grabs his arm.

Perry shoves her. Alana stumbles and whacks her head against the safe's corner. And collapses; it's a lethal blow.

Blood trickles towards her fallen iPad. Images on the gadget distort. Static hisses. Circuits fry.

Not the outcome Perry planned. Grabbing a few extra jewels, he whispers to Alana's body, horrified:

PERRY

I'm sorry. This is your fault!

Heart racing, Perry turns and flees down the stairs.

Four twisted, long flights.

Filled with dark, shifting shadows. As he descends, images assault Perry's mind.

MONTAGE

- A chained Liz screams, abused by a GUARD.
- Pre-lobotomy Betsy makes a brilliant chess move. She looks up, flips a NURSE the bird. Grins.
- Alana jumps in Perry's face. He shoves her back. She hits the safe. Bones CRUNCH. Black-out.

END MONTAGE

Roaring, Perry shakes his head and forges on. Beelines for the exit on the ground floor.

...but finds it blocked. By shadowy female forms.

- Ghost Lizzy: a mass of festering scabs, head to toe.
- Betsy drools in her wheelchair. Twitching, her mind gone.
- Suzette and Rachel cradle long KNITTING NEEDLES in their arms like long-lost, beloved infants...

Between them: Alana. Blood trickles from her crushed skull, between vengeful intense eyes.

ALANA (V.O.)

Within the walls of the Pitie,
those who had the power to save the
disenfranchised and oppressed
failed to listen, years ago.

But one can't suffer in silence
forever. Given enough time, words
and truth will inevitably "out".
That's a lesson students of history
know acutely well. Whether one's
audience is captive... or not.

The apparitions pile on Perry. Just like the guards did to
Liz before. Through the half-open door, wind and rain drown
his screams out.

FINAL FADE OUT: