

THE QUARRY

In Your Head

Anneliese Downer

Thursday December 21st, 2017, 5:00pm UTC-04:00, Atlanta, Georgia

Jet lag was a bitch.

Colby's shoulder twinged as she took a seat on the hotel bed. Instinctively, she rubbed the spot through her clothes and let out a long yawn. Thank God she would get to her sister's house the next day to sleep on a more comfortable bed. Right now, she was too tired to contemplate finding a way there. Seeing as her sister had a newborn and was probably just as tired, Colby had insisted a hotel was fine.

If it wasn't for the fact she'd promised to Skype Sienna when she arrived, Colby would have already crawled under the covers to sleep. Instead, she dug out her laptop. Finding Sienna's icon once it was all connected, she noticed it said she was away but tried to call

anyway. No answer. What time was it in Australia again? Colby had already forgotten. Her girlfriend was a nurse though, maybe she'd gotten caught up at work.

Closing Skype, she headed to the Facebook homepage instead. Colby had yet to sort out her phone, so she figured a Facebook message would just have to do for now. Clicking on Sienna's name in her inbox, she typed a quick message.

Hi babe!

Am safe in my hotel and am about to take a nap.

Talk to you later! Can't wait for you to get here too!

Love, Colbs.

Sienna had barely been able to wrangle time away from work and was due to fly out in three days. She'd barely make it in time for Christmas and that was her being lucky. Colby was about to close the window when she realised she should maybe make a general status update to let everyone know she had landed safely. When she loaded her newsfeed, a headline in the sidebar caught her attention.

International Intervention in Australia Leads to Quarantine at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital

Fear gripped Colby for a moment; that was where Sienna worked. Maybe she'd been made busier by it all though—surely she wasn't quarantined? Her mouse flew so quickly to the link that it froze for a moment before the page finally loaded.

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN AUSTRALIA LEADS TO QUARANTINE AT ROYAL PRINCE ALFRED HOSPITAL

Thursday 21st December 2017, 8pm UTC+11:00

Thomas Dasher

Australia has been rocked by news of a virus that has spread rapidly through the Emergency Department at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Scrambling to organise a reaction, Australia's lack of a National Centre for Disease Control has no doubt hindered efforts to contain the virus. Sources tell us that along with patient zero, three nurses and two doctors are thought to be infected and anyone else who has been in contact with patient zero or the other infected have been quarantined, causing a whole department to be closed off.

Specialists from the US and China have been flown in to study this as yet unrecognised virus. All we do know about it so far is that it causes periods of psychosis, in which the infected are prone to attack, bite and scratch those around them. If you are worried about someone you know, authorities encourage you to call the number listed below.

Thursday 21st December 2017, 7:45am UTC+11:00, Sydney, Australia

Colby roused from her sleep when she felt the bed dip slightly behind her, followed shortly by a hand brushing through her hair. Forcing her eyes open, she yawned before smiling sleepily up at Sienna, who returned the gesture with a different kind of exhaustion. The nurse had just come off a twelve-hour shift and had obviously been run off her feet since 7pm the night before. Colby rolled over and then sat up against the headboard to wrap an arm around her girlfriend, who leaned in eagerly.

‘Big night?’

‘It was crazy, Colbs. We had a man admitted who must have been on a cocktail of drugs. He was thrashing and trying to bite everyone. It took six of us to strap him down to a bed.’

‘Jesus,’ Colby muttered, now brushing her fingers through Sienna’s ginger hair. ‘I don’t know how you do it. I couldn’t be a nurse, you see all the crazy shit.’

‘Truthfully, I rethink it every day,’ Sienna admitted. Her fingers idly traced a cut along her arm and Colby zeroed in on it.

‘Babe, what happened?’ The blonde carefully took hold of her girlfriend’s wrist to tug it over and inspect the angry scab.

‘It was that patient, I didn’t realise until after we’d managed to get him strapped down and sedated that he’d scratched me. Figured it was better not to cause a fuss so I disinfected it and kept on going. You know what administration is like about injuries.’

Huffing, Colby started to slide off the bed and tugged Sienna with her. She knew all about the issues with hospital administrations reluctance to take responsibility for nurse

injury. Even though she gave a playful whine, Sienna still followed her into the bathroom. Colby dimmed the lights and started running a bath, making sure to pick Sienna's favourite scent before stealing a short kiss.

'Sounds like you deserve some pampering.'

A small grin crossed the redhead's face and Colby reached out for the hem of her shirt, slowly guiding it up and over her head. Once her girlfriend's pale torso was exposed, she ghosted her fingers over the freckles that had even painted Sienna's waist. Making quick work of the buttons on her jeans, Colby quickly had them off and tossed into the corner of the bathroom.

She couldn't help a soft chuckle at the sight of Sienna, wearing a matching bra and panties set even though she'd been on a twelve-hour shift.

'You just have to match, don't you?' Colby traced lightly over her girlfriend's collarbone, enjoying the blush that spread over her freckled cheeks. Sienna just nodded, but the dimples that indented her cheeks gave away the smile she was fighting. Colby smoothed her fingers over the silky material until she reached the clasp which she expertly unclipped and tugged away. A few short seconds later, Sienna was completely nude and Colby could tell she was fighting that adorable but shy urge to cover herself.

'You're beautiful.'

Sienna's blush darkened and instead of replying, she decided to return the favour. It took less time to strip Colby of the satin nightdress she'd been sleeping in, baring her tan skin free of any undergarments. Impulsively, Sienna reached out and slapped Colby's generous ass, making her girlfriend laugh softly.

'Sorry, can't help myself.'

'I wouldn't want you to,' Colby assured warmly. Linking her fingers with Sienna's she tugged her over to the tub, twisting the taps off before the two of them sank down into the warm water.

'How long do we have before you have to go?' Sienna asked, leaning back into Colby and humming with pleasure as her girlfriend's hands slowly trailed down her body.

'About an hour. And I'm all packed so all I need to do is spend that hour focusing on you. We might only be apart for a few days but I'm going to miss you so I plan to indulge.' She nibbled on Sienna's neck, making her giggle.

‘What am I going to do without your cheese?’

Colby hushed her, capturing one nipple between her thumb and forefinger before squeezing. It made Sienna gasp, pressing against the blonde, who responded by easing her fingers between the nurse’s legs.

An expert in reading Sienna’s body language, it wasn’t long before Colby felt her squirming with the build-up of pleasure. Only today, instead of crying out, Sienna bit down on the blonde’s shoulder as her orgasm rushed through her. Colby winced as her teeth broke the skin but kept working her through it, leaving the both of them panting when the moment ended.

‘Shit, Colbs—you’re bleeding! I’m so sorry!’ Sienna rinsed the mark with a handful of water, flinching when Colby winced again. The blonde responded by pressing a kiss to Sienna’s forehead.

‘Relax babe, it’s okay. It was pretty hot, though maybe next time you could avoid breaking the skin.’

‘I’d better put something on it.’ Sienna fretted and before Colby could stop her, she was standing up. Not that the blonde didn’t appreciate the view, eyes lingering on her girlfriend’s shapely behind for a moment before she too rose up out of the water.

‘I was supposed to be pampering you,’ Colby reminded her as Sienna wrapped her up in a towel and made her sit on the closed toilet. This time, she gritted her teeth as Sienna dabbed at the wound with some kind of antibacterial ointment and carefully taped some gauze over it. Once the nurse was satisfied she’d done a good enough job, Colby scooped her up to carry her playfully back into the bedroom.

Somehow Colby had managed to tear herself away from the gorgeous red-head in order to make it to the airport in time to check in for her flight. Knowing Sienna had probably fallen asleep while Colby was on her way there, she messaged her sister to let her know she was waiting for her flight and killed some time on her phone. She wouldn’t have it for a little while once she landed in America.

Her seatmate was a handsome guy who looked a little too dressy for the occasion. For the life of her, Colby couldn't understand why he would wear a suit for the almost fourteen-hour flight. They were only about an hour in when he'd stuffed his suit jacket up in the overhead locker and another hour later he'd unbuttoned his sleeves and rolled them up, smiling sheepishly at her.

'I'm Alex,' he introduced himself. 'Headed to LA on business, but probably should have reconsidered the business-wear on a long-haul flight. Not so comfortable. Is it too obvious I'm new at this?'

'Colby,' she answered with a chuckle, taking the hand he offered and shaking it, 'Only stopping briefly in LA on the way to Atlanta. First-time Aunt, visiting her nephew. A suit wouldn't have been my choice for such a long flight but hopefully you'll make it through.'

Considering they were going to be stuck with one another for quite a few hours more, Colby was relieved to find they had enough in common to get along. The in-flight dinner had just been packed up when the turbulence started and even though she wasn't the most nervous of flyers it soon saw her anxiously ripping at her nails with her teeth. The plane jolted sharply and one hand flew out to grab Alex's wrist tightly, ragged nails tearing through his skin along the way.

It was another moment before she could even gather herself enough to apologise, unlocking her fingers and realising that she'd injured him. 'Sorry!' Was all she got out before the plane jerked slightly again and made her go green. Alex jabbed the flight attendant button and requested a sick bag for Colby, pulling out a tissue to dab at the scratch beading with blood.

'Don't worry about it. Can't blame you for being antsy with this kind of turbulence. Lean over now, just focus on breathing.' He soothed, even rubbing her back. Count on a long flight to turn strangers into friends.

Fortunately, the flight had evened out again soon after that and Colby managed to sneak in a nap before landing in LA. After exchanging their Australian numbers, she and Alex went their separate ways. Finding her flight lounge, she now turned to a book to kill the hour and a half before her next flight to Atlanta.

Thursday December 21st, 2017, 5:10pm UTC-04:00, Atlanta, Georgia

Colby's heart pounded hard as she stared at the computer screen, white noise fizzing in her ears. What if Sienna was one of the infected nurses? She scrambled for her phone before remembering it was currently useless. Her shoulder twinged in pain again, objecting to the lunge across the bed and she remembered.

The bite.

Yanking her shirt off, she ran into the bathroom and ripped away the gauze with a shaking hand. Her breath fogged up the mirror as she panted in fear, leaning in to study the bite mark as though it would show her an exact answer. The skin around the small teeth shaped scabs was red and swollen. Suddenly it felt hot and she thought it seemed to be giving a pulsating throb, as though it had taken on a life of its own but Colby couldn't tell if that was paranoia.

Sweat broke out on Colby's forehead and instinctively she lifted her hand to her mouth, about to anxiously chew on her fingernails when she remembered Alex. Oh no. She'd scratched him on the flight. Suddenly she couldn't remember if scratching someone would be sufficient enough to pass on the virus, nails were dead matter, weren't they? But she'd been chewing them, maybe her saliva still gave it a chance of spreading. Standing there staring at her own reflection, tears streaking down cheeks too numb to feel them; panic clouded her mind and she struggled to come up with any answers to the questions it just kept repeating.

Did she call someone? But who was she supposed to call? God her neck was so itchy. Colby's fingers grasped at the edge of the sink, squeezing tight as she sucked in a deep breath. It didn't help. Was Sienna in quarantine? Was Sienna infected? Had she infected Colby? Had Colby infected Alex? Was it even possible for her to infect him through a scratch?

And what the hell did she do now?