

Kristian Davidsen

2015

### Alice

I swore I'd never speak of what happened at that place. But now there is no one left to stop me from telling, from letting the world know. They need to know about Alice.

I remember the day she came into my care. It had only been a few weeks since I started work at St. Anthony's Mental Ward. Because I was new, I had no patients. My main jobs consisted of sorting documents and finding medicine, hardly work befitting of a doctor. Shortly after I arrived to start that day's shift, I got a call from the front desk. I brushed off any snow still on me and made my way up. When I got there I saw a sight that would forever be ingrained into my memory. The chief doctor had with him a young girl. Her long blond hair and stuffed rabbit would have made her look the ideal adorable child. Unfortunately her fancy clothes were tattered and her small body was covered in cuts and bruises. The thing that I noticed most however, and still to this day cannot get out of my head, was her piercing green eyes and the cold long stare she gave me. Back then I could never have imagined the horrors this small child would bring upon world.

The chief doctor's words broke me out of my stupor. He told me that I was to be in charge of this nameless child. They must not of believed her to be of any importance if they passed her on to me. I didn't mind though. I was happy just to have a patient, even it was one small child. I was handed the girls file and room key, and then the two of, the child and me, made our way to her new residence.

As we walked I checked over the information I was given. The girl had been the daughter of a wealthy family in the area. I say had because the moment a sign of mental illness emerged, her mother disowned her and sent her off to the asylum. After I finished reading her file, I tried striking up a conversation. I began by introducing myself to which there was no response. This continued no matter what information I gave or what questions I presented. The child remained stoic and unblinking all the way up to when I said good night and closed the door to her room.

My early sessions with the child went in a similar manner to my first encounter with her. I would try many different ways of communicating with her. Speaking, sign language, pictures; I tried all of these things and more but none of them brought about a response. Other than her quietness, there was nothing wrong that seemed wrong with her. According to the files her illness involved hallucinations and hearing voices, but she exhibited no signs of either. She would silently go about her day eating, reading, playing with her toy, and then sleeping.

After a while, the other patients became interested in the young girl. The ones that were allowed out of their rooms would regularly visit with her. At first they tried talking to her same as I, but after a while they gave up and just started talking to her. Perhaps they liked having someone to listen to. They would talk to her about all sorts of things. Their hopes and dreams, past and present, and some would even talk about their problems and hallucinations. After a few of these listening sessions, the girl showed her first sign of emotion. The nurse in charge of watching her told me that she seemed frightened during a

mid-day nap. This small change in her emotions wound up being the start of the problems at St. Anthony's.

The troubles began around two months after the girl was brought in. The snow was starting to melt and we started having the patients go outside a little each day. I received a letter in my mailbox that morning that stated some poor news. The young girl's parents had died. The deaths were quite gruesome. The father looked as though he'd been stabbed a dozen times or so, and the mother had been ripped apart, as if killed by a beast. As terrible as the news was, the part that confused me the most came from a session I had with the girl's parents shortly after she was admitted. The point of the session was to determine whether or not the girl's illness stemmed from her parents. During the course of the session I learned that her father would have nightmares about the war, about being assaulted upon by soldiers with bayonets. The mother also mentioned a fear from when she was younger, a fear of dogs. At the time there was no proven connection between their fears and their deaths, but looking back I'm positive that they were indeed related.

When I gave the girl the news I didn't get the response I expected. Instead I got the same thing I always did, no reaction. The death of her parents didn't even faze her. No sadness, no joy, no nothing. I would have understood her being happy since her mother hated her so and her father barely cared, but this absolute unmoving face, as if stuck in an eternal game of cards, unnerved me to my core. Even after all this time I could not grasp at what this girl was thinking. I found myself wondering what the purpose was of this unsolvable puzzle.

Alice. That was the name that the girl was given. Her look combined with her supposed symptoms of hallucinations reminded one of the nurses of a book she had recently read. The book was apparently about a child who went on an adventure in a mysterious world full of odd creatures. I found this ironic as the girl here was certainly no adventurer, but nonetheless the name stuck. She would come when called, and she responded to it in her usual way; neither enthusiastically nor lethargically. The other patients also began to refer to her this way. They would call her over for a listening session and talk for over an hour before a doctor came for one of them.

A few weeks after the death of Alice's parents, St. Anthony's became the grounds of one of the oddest things any mental ward had ever experienced. Patients became cured one after another as if by some miracle. This was good news for the patients of course, but the doctors were losing customers and money, so they kept trying to come up with new problems and illnesses, but one after another they were cured. I didn't particularly care about this practice as I still only had one charge that didn't seem to be getting any better, Alice. In fact, she seemed to be getting worse. Her nightmares worsened and she would talk in her sleep. "Please stop. No more," she would say. This didn't stop the remaining patients from calling her over to have her listen to their stories. Over time a pattern emerged. Those who told Alice about themselves would soon be leaving. The patients called her an angel sent by God to answer their prayers. The medical staff thought this was

all hogwash and this relationship was merely a coincidence, just like the death of Alice's parents.

It all started with Mr. Hekins who had a fear of water. After his dismissal from St. Anthony's, he was found dead through asphyxiation. Ms. Smith, who couldn't sleep for nights after watching "The Birds" was found with her eyes pecked out. Other cases similar to these began to pop up, and all of them had two things in common. The victims were released from St. Anthony's, and they all talked to Alice multiple time since her admission. These deaths would raise an alarm to any sane man, but alas St. Anthony's was full of the insane. Patients continued to poor their hearts and minds into Alice, and in turn would wind up dead shortly after their release. Many of the staff began to fear for their lives and quit. Doctors, nurses, and even janitors up and left the ward, but this did not save them. While Dr. Germain's death wasn't tied to anything, it was no less gruesome than the others. Crushed by a falling piano in an almost cartoon style fashion.

After a while the government got involved. No more patients were admitted to St. Anthony's. At this point I was the only one seeing Alice. All of the nurses had either left or been killed. Only a few left over patients, including Alice, and a few brave doctors remained. The remaining patients, still unable to accomplish basic pattern recognition, still talked to Alice despite the doctors forbidding it. They to, soon left and died. By now, we were done. I don't know why I did it, but I continued to put one foot in front of the other and dutifully watched over Alice each day long after the remaining doctors left. It was only yesterday that I received a letter stating the death of the final staff member of St.

Anthony's, the head doctor, Dr. Goodman. And it was then that I decided to write this letter. Now that no one can stop me, I wanted to warn the world about Alice. But I am not done, there is still more to tell. I will write as fast as I can, for I hear footsteps coming to my door, but I won't stop.

"You can't."

I must finish.

"Please stop"

The world must know.

"I beg of you, no more!"

I won't...