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Laurel Scoresby is leading Nina Dallas and Bradley Shanks through a set of doors within the Anatomy and Physiology labs.

She's wheeling a gurney in, a heavy white linen cloth stretched overtop an indistinct lump on the steel slab, strapped down with thick lashings of leather and fabric.

One of the fabric restraints is patterned a pale paisley.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

...and if either of you need to step out into the hallway, there's no shame in that.

Nina half raises her hand to her mouth, as if she wants to chew on her nails- but lowers them, encased in blue plastic as they are. Her voice is faint.

**NINA DALLAS**

Of course, Dr. Scoresby...

Bradley is strutting confidently forwards, one hand resting on the side rail of the gurney.

**BRADLEY SHANKS**

Not that I'll need to.

Nina rolls her eyes, muttering under her breath.

**NINA DALLAS**

Sure you won't...

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

You never quite know how you'll handle these sorts of things, until you've actually faced being the one wielding the scalpel. Don't be silly.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

I'd rather you sit down on the floor so you don't crack your skulls open from fainting, and scurry out the door on your hands and knees, than make more of a bloody mess in my lab.

As Laurel chides the two, she wheels the gurney into place.

Laurel kicks at the brakes of each of the wheels, locking it into place.

A heavy light overhead, not dissimilar to those used in dentist offices, is lowered into position.

Nina squints, eyes watering a little behind her goggles as she tries to adjust to the new floodlight beaming down over the group.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

Girls and boys, do I have your undivided attention?

Laurel phrases this more like a statement, than a question- voice firm. She doesn't wait for an answer, before she's whipping the sheets off- unsnapping a few buckles in fluid, practiced movements.

Nina gasps, before staggering backwards- Bradley catching her, as he takes a few uneasy steps backwards.

Laurel only looks at them expectantly, then pointedly towards the door- and Bradley is hauling Nina off awkwardly, holding her by the armpits and dragging her more than a proper carry.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

Children. Always so eager to get involved in what they don't understand.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

To have that unearned confidence again..

She shakes her head a little, chuckling to herself- as she hears the suctioning sound of a pair of interior doors unlocking and the decontamination showers starting, the muffled frantic chatter and babbling of Bradley and Nina as they're blasted with soap and hot water.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

But youth is spent well on the young. I'm sure you'd agree.

Laurel directs this comment to the thrashing figure beneath her- as she makes the first incision, following the curve of the orbital socket, bright arterial blood gushing up to the surface and pooling across tense skin.

Bright white teeth flash as the body arches its back, contorted in a silent scream- ringing around the lab as Laurel digs her fingers into the socket, palpating the thick metal cords attaching a strange metal device to ensure their clasps are digging into the correct configuration. She seems satisfied about their placement.

Laurel twiddles with the adjustment knobs on the side, bringing bright metal rings in tighter, the arms of the device scraping along the inside of the socket. A soft whirring begins to emanate from it.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

I don't relish this part of the job, you know- but it's simply protocol.

Laurel talks to herself, voice as composed as if she were discussing the latest batch of star charts from U.R.S.A's livetime recordings.

She pulls her fingers out of the socket with a wet slurp of flesh attempting to slide back into place.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

We can't record any meaningful brain activity for Research and Development if you're sedated.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

If it makes you feel any better- you'll be a lovely addition, it's been awhile since we had someone so skilled at picking out the nuances of colour.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

Engineering- they'll especially appreciate it.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

And I imagine Tom would love to use the new upgrade to pick out *just* the right shade of Prussian Blue for his fountain pens.

Her gloved hand strokes over the person's shoulder, before a loud buzzing and clicking emanates from the device squelching around the inside of their eye socket.

A robotic countdown drones from a tinny set of speakers- and when zero has come and gone, their agonal breathing evens out to a placid stillness.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

Thank you for all you're to do. You've work cut out for you yet.

Her voice is oddly soft, as she strokes the other eyelid closed. Laurel dips her finger into a rivulet of blood streaming down a fluted cheekbone- and thumbs a cross over their forehead, a near mockery of Ash Wednesday.

**LAUREL SCORESBY**

Rest in peace.

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