

Honey, we Have Demons

a short story by Megan Fleming

“How is this normal, Dan?” Rachel hissed to her husband as they wheeled a shopping cart full of five dogs around their neighborhood in the middle of the night, trying to be as discreet as one could possibly be while wheeling around a shopping cart full of dogs in the middle of the night.

It was quiet, the modest two story homes along the hedged boulevard were all dark, save a few porch lights here and there. A cute brown pomeranian by the name of Truffles, who belonged to their next door neighbor Cheryl, looked up at Rachel from the mess of panting dogs in the cart. He yipped quietly, as if to back Rachel up, as if to say *‘Yeah Dan, how is it normal to wake up at three in the morning to find five neighbor dogs in your home? How is it normal to check the footage from the two GoPros you strapped to you and your wife to discover you both broke into multiple houses to steal said dogs? How is it possibly normal for both you and your wife to sleepwalk- kidnap so many dogs, huh?’*

Dan’s left hand was wrapped in bloody toilet paper, haphazardly taped up with duct tape. Dan used his right hand to unzip his fanny pack, reaching in to grab a handful of Cheerios. He threw them into the cart, trying to keep the dogs distracted. Truffles ducked back into the fold of fur to grab some for himself, finagling himself under the leg of Chad the Springer Spaniel.

“Truffles agrees this is not normal.”

“Truffles doesn’t even understand the situation,” Dan whispered, as he wiped a bead of sweat off his brow. His Liverpool accent made Truffles sound like *Troofles*. Normally, Rachel would think this was cute, but she was too annoyed with Dan at the moment.

“*We don’t either, Dan.*”

“We will, there has to be a logical explanation!”

“Honey, we have demons. Just admit it.”

“I will do no such thing!” Dan wheeled the cart into a curb in front of a small suburban home and assessed the dogs, who all had their attention fixed on his fanny pack, tails wagging eagerly. “Which one is the Mohans’?”

Rachel reached into the cart and pulled out a small, shaking white maltese with a red bow clip in her hair. “This one.”

“You’re sure? I thought it was the other white one” he nodded to a blind old fluffy maltese mix, who seemed to be either unaware of or perhaps even enjoying the night’s adventures, his little tongue furiously licking the plastic bin of the shopping cart.

“No, that’s the Ramirez’ dog, Piña Colada.”

“Ok, just as long as you’re sure.”

“I wrote them down but want to play back the footage again?”

“No, no, I trust you.”

Rachel handed him the dog with the bow. He held the dog out in front of him like a dirty napkin. Dan didn't like dogs. *He can be so dull sometimes*, Rachel thought.

Dan looked at Rachel, over his thick brown tortoise shell glasses that had begun to slide down his sweat spattered nose, “Ok just wait here, I'll leave him in the backyard.”

“Good luck.”

Dan tiptoed around the perimeter of the lawn, careful not to activate any floodlights, and disappeared around the back.

Rachel attempted to sink into the nearby hedges. She looked down at her left hand, where a human shaped bite mark glared back up at her through dried blood. She took a deep breath, remembering what her therapist said to do when she feels anxious. It only made her want to disappear more.

How did it come to this, she thought.

It came to this three days ago. But it all started much earlier than that.

* * *

Much earlier than that.

“Rachel?!”

Rachel was dreaming about playing catch with a klutzy baby panda, when she heard someone call out to her, pulling her back into reality. Her dad stood before her, soaking wet and grasping her shoulders.

“Rachel, what the hell are you doing?!”

I was having a good dream, she thought. But as she came to, she found that she was knee deep in the Atlantic, rain pounding her head and shoulders.

That was the first time Rachel sleepwalked. She was just ten years old, enjoying her annual vacation with her parents in Provincetown. The only reason she didn't get whisked into the sea was her dad's drinking habit; he was at the fridge getting another beer when he saw her walking into the ocean.

A week later, Rachel woke up staring down the piercing headlights of a yellow taxi cab. She was back in Queens, in the middle of a busy street. She took one look at her new surroundings, peed her pants, then started to bawl. The taxi driver managed to calm her slightly and she was able to point at landmarks to get back home, a daunting three blocks away and twelve floors up. Her parents put a lock on her door, but somehow, on multiple occasions she woke up riding the F train towards Grand Central Station.

Her parents were worried. Raising a teen in Queens was already tough, but a teen with a tendency to sleep-surf the subway was even harder. When Rachel turned 14, her dad was offered a better accounting job in a quiet suburban town outside of Albany, and they jumped at the opportunity to get her away from the city. There were no subways in the suburbs of Albany. Rachel hated it there. She had fully entered into her angsty teenage phase by that time. The product of moving away from her friends, acne, eavesdropping on her parent's hushed arguments about their increasingly worrying financial situation and her dad's simultaneously increasing whiskey consumption. The sleepwalking got worse, as did her waking behavior. She and her

sleepwalking alter-ego began to alternate jail-breaking out of her home – to smoke weed with the group of renegades she hung out with, or to do whatever Rachel got up to while sleepwalking.

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After high school, both Rachel and her sleepwalking mellowed out. She went to college on a pre-med track to become a nurse. She met her first ever best friend the first day of her freshman year, an unapologetically gay and spiritual guy named Carl, who taught her to be comfortable in her own skin and always helped her out when she was in a sleepwalking rut, be it with a ride home or a sleepover. Her dad quit drinking and gradually, his relationship with Rachel began to mend. She still found herself waking up in the hallway of her dorm at 3 AM from time to time but she learned tools to make it more manageable. Proper sleep schedule, anxiety medication, exercise, and her self-crafted failsafe – a jerry-rigged alarm system in her dorm to wake her up if she tried walking out the door.

After nursing school she landed a job at a hospital in Harlem.

And there, she met Dan.

One night, Rachel was on a cigarette break outside, when she spotted a lone, lanky man walking along 122nd Street barefoot in pajamas, shuffling his feet as if in a trance. There were a lot of unhoused people in the area, and she thought that she could give him some shoes from the lost and found, as she had done a couple times before. As she made her way over to him to chat, he didn't stop at the intersection. He didn't even look both ways. She realized his eyes were fully closed seconds too late – a Subaru got to him before she did, clipping his knees and sending him flying back onto the hood. As Rachel rushed over to him, he propped himself up from the hood of the car and yawned, as if he was about to get out of bed. His bleary hazel eyes connected with hers, and he smiled a tired, dimpled smile.

Rachel melted.

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Dan thought he had died and gone to heaven, which was surprising because he definitely didn't believe in heaven. But if there was no heaven, then why was he looking up at an angel? She had fiery red hair, delicate, thin red lips, and she was ringed with a soft white light, a milky halo. Pink and white stars twinkled and swirled behind her. He gazed into her eyes, two deep brown wells beckoning him to jump in, and he found himself grinning from ear to ear. Which was also confusing because he didn't do much of that. It was then that a dull pain from somewhere below ebbed into his consciousness, and he realized that his maybe-maybe-not-an-angel's brows were furrowed in a look of concern.

Someone else stepped into the light above him, a short mustached man with a Yankees cap on, his brows similarly furrowed. This definitely-not-an-angel Yankee called out, "Are you fuckin' crazy man? You're good, right?"

Dan's eyes flitted back to the beautiful woman. He saw that the halo was actually just a fluorescent street lamp directly behind her. He reluctantly peeled his eyes away from her, assessing his surroundings. He was on the hood of a small, green SUV, at 122nd & Morningside Ave. Not quite heaven. And definitely not his bed, either. *I sleepwalked? I haven't done that since university.* Nor had it gone so disastrously since his first time sleepwalking at the age of twelve, when he managed to board a freight ship destined for Boston at the pier

near his family's vacation cottage in Plymouth, a quaint maritime city in Devon. Thankfully he was found by a deckhand before departure.

He tried to move but a sharp pain from his right knee stopped him.

A small hand gently landed on his left shoulder. "Hey, don't move. I'm a nurse at a hospital nearby, help is on the way." He looked up from his leg at the red haired woman who was clasping his shoulder. Dan looked at her clothes, she was indeed in mint green scrubs. He realized this woman had just witnessed him walk into the road and get hit by a car, and a wave of embarrassment hit him harder than the metal that just crashed into his legs.

"I'm sorry, I think I was sleepwalking, I usually look both ways at zebras."

The woman smiled, "I've done my fair share of waking up in the middle of the road. I'm Rachel. What's your name?"

"Dan."

"And do you know the date, Dan?"

Oh, Dan thought, *she's checking for a concussion*. But he didn't have a concussion. Because he remembered that yesterday was Monday, June 21st, and it was one of the worst days of his life.

Dan had gotten fired from his engineering job working at a cybersecurity company, all because he spoke out against his boss, who was cutting some dangerous corners, screwing clients out of important safety measures just to save a few bucks. Coward. After he attempted to contact the clients, he was escorted out by four security personnel in front of the entire company, a measure he's sure his boss had arranged to further embarrass him. From a cafe across the street, he facetimed his mother back in Liverpool to tell her the news, and watched as her face fell in disapproval. "You shouldn't have stood up to him, it never works that way, love."

"Easy for you to say, mum," he fired back. He was shocked he said that to her, but enraged, he dug in further, "You never stood up for yourself a day in your life, especially when Dad was around." That was the nail in the coffin. She wasn't mad. She was broken. Quietly, she told him goodbye and hung up.

Dan had 60 days to find another job or return to England and face his mother. He had decided that was tomorrow's problem. He went to the nearest corner store, bought a bottle of cheap whiskey, drank himself into a stupor, then woke up here, with Rachel the not-angel.

He looked back up to her worried face. "It's June 22nd. I'm 31, Biden is your presid—" Before Dan could finish, he vomited all over Rachel's scrubs. Turns out he did have a concussion.

Rachel helped the paramedics wheel him down the street to the hospital entrance. Dan had a mild concussion and a broken leg, a great outcome all things considered. After the doctors had gone, Rachel lingered, her eyes canvassing him as if hoping to unlock something.

Dan found himself doing the same, and he suddenly found his mouth moving, "Would you like to go on a date with me?"

Rachel looked surprised. Dan was even more surprised. He just blurted it out, he'd never been so brazen in his life. Well in his love life, anyway. "When?" Rachel asked.

"Now?"

"I'm working and you're concussed."

“Fair. Tomorrow? 7pm, at the pizza joint on the corner where I almost died?”

“Ok.” Rachel smiled, and Dan almost fainted again. He tried to play it smooth, head held high as he walked out the door. “Oh and Dan,” Dan turned to Rachel, who had a pair of shabby crocs in her hands. “Here are some shoes.”

Dan proposed to Rachel a year to the day after that.

* * *

three days before the dognapping.

Rachel was exhausted from her long shift at the hospital and had just changed into pajamas to sleep when Dan walked into the bedroom holding a notebook and an old cam recorder that had been sitting in their ‘donate/recycle’ pile for the last three years. They had moved from the city to an idyllic town in Connecticut four years ago and yet the box had traveled with them here without ever seeing the light of a donation or recycling bin.

“Are we making a sex tape?” Rachel’s stomach did a panicked, excited little backflip. She was so tired and hadn’t showered today... but then again, they hadn’t had sex in over a year.

Dan looked confused, stuttering, “What? No, this- this is to record us sleeping.”

Rachel recovered, momentarily stung, “I was joking. Are you joking? I can never tell.”

“We’ve had stuff go missing lately.” Dan read from the notebook “Your paint supply, the two tubs of peanut butter *I swore* we just got from Costco, two packages of chicken, our hammer and one garden shovel.” He looked up at Rachel, “Maybe one of us has been sleepwalking.” He went to the bookshelf across from their bed and plugged the charging cord in, then propped the camera up on a shelf.

“I haven’t done that in ages.” She scrunched up her face, “And I think we’d feel the effects of peanut butter and raw chicken in the morning,” Rachel said, to a shrug from Dan. “I guess if you record it, we can put it on Tik Tok like that girl who sleep-makes and eats charcuterie boards. A couple who both sleepwalk. People would eat that shit up.”

Dan continued to tinker with the camera. “This is just for us, honey.”

“That was also a joke. Unless we’re a sensation. Then we’re definitely monetizing this.”

Dan stacked a couple books and placed the camera upon them gently. “Tik Tok doesn’t even pay that well, Youtube is where the money is.”

“Ok Dan, we can Youtube it... What do you think we’ll get up to?”

Satisfied with the framing, Dan hit the record button. “I’m not sure. That’s why we’re doing this.”

Rachel sighed. She could hardly get anything out of Dan these days, an engaging conversation or a laugh. It seemed he spent every waking hour working or thinking about work, pent up in his home office. After he got fired from his big security job six years ago, he managed to pocket a handful of clients and struck out on his own. He had just brought in several big new contracts and thought that the weight of the world’s cyber security rested on his bony shoulders, something she always reminded him absolutely did not. She could practically hear his brain wheels turning as he crawled into bed. “Well, night night. Don’t let the sleepwalkers bite.”

Dan reached over and pulled her into a hug. No matter how distant they felt, he always grasped her tightly each night.

Sometimes, his arms felt like their only tether.

* * *

The next morning, Rachel awoke to Dan lightly shaking her shoulder, perched by her side of the bed. She looked at the alarm clock next to him. 7:02 AM. "I have today off," she growled.

"You're gonna wanna see this."

Moments later, they were at Dan's desk, Rachel standing with her arms crossed, peering over his shoulder. Dan tapped the mouse, and grainy green night vision footage began to play.

The time code read 2:10 AM. Rachel and Dan were peacefully asleep, until moments later when Dan stood up, eyes still closed and slowly trudged over to Rachel's side of the bed, feet dragging on the carpet. He turned to face her, wobbling slightly as he did, and stood there, rigid. His eyes were closed but Rachel could feel him from here as she watched the footage, staring down at her sleeping form in bed. She shifted her weight uncomfortably as Dan fast forwarded the footage. He continued to stand there, *staring*.

As she watched a whole hour and a half speed by on the time code, Rachel looked down to Dan. "That's some Paranormal Activity shit there."

Dan stared intensely at his sleepwalking self, "Just wait."

Rachel focused back onto the monitor and Dan stopped fast forwarding to the 3:34 AM mark. Sleepwalking Rachel slowly got up, and sort of wobble shuffled over to Dan, who stiffly opened his arms to her. Rachel stumbled into his chest, and brought her arms around his torso in a way that an 82 year old with arthritis might.

Rachel tilted her head. "That's kinda cute."

Dan fast-forwarded again. This part made him the most uncomfortable watching the first time around. For an entire fifteen minutes, the two held their embrace, Rachel wrapped deep in Dan's chest while Dan's face, visible to the camera, held a look of utter tranquility. Once more, Dan stared at his own grainy face, so smooth and at peace. It made him... jealous. He could feel Rachel's eyes on his back as he began to play the footage again, just as the two separated from each other, each stepping backward at the same time.

And then, they started to dance.

Unlike the robotic motions before, sleepwalking Dan and Rachel made the dance feel effortless and fluid, like they had done this 100 times before. Dan led Rachel confidently around the room, and swung Rachel over a chair that was in their way with ease. They stepped into each other, hopped, clapped their hands together and then circled each other, smiling, repeating the choreography over and over for several minutes. They stepped away from each other once more, and started to dance a new pattern. This time, it seemed, Rachel took the lead, stepping into Dan and guiding him around the room. At several points, Rachel lifted Dan up by his torso, supporting him with ease as he threw his hands in the air in circular motions. After several more minutes, the dance ended. The two parted, and they *curtsied* to each other. Then, Rachel held her hand out to Dan, she took it daintily, and they walked out of the room together.

Awake-Dan paused and swung his office chair around to look up at awake-Rachel. She was silent, jaw agape. Rachel usually had everything to say, but it seemed like she was at a loss currently. The silence made Dan shift in his seat, and he prodded lightly, "It's certainly Youtubable."

Rachel continued to look at the monitor, "Dan, we don't know how to dance like that. What even was that, we looked like we came out of a Jane Austen book."

"I know, I usually have no rhythm. Did you see my curtsy?"

"How is this possible?"

"I've been researching. It could be something we saw and retained from a movie, or maybe a routine you did as a kid?"

"My parents said I wasn't coordinated enough for dance classes. You hate period dramas."

Dan was more amused than rattled, but he sensed Rachel's apprehension and took her hand. "All I'm saying is it's weird, yes, but not unexplainable."

Rachel looked back into the grainy footage of the empty bedroom, and another question came to mind. "Where did we go?"

* * *

Dan and Rachel answered that question the next morning, as they sat once more facing grainy footage on Dan's computer screen, this time from footage captured by security cameras Dan installed in the living room, the kitchen, the backyard and the front yard. Perplexed, Dan watched on as he and Rachel went into the backyard, moved the coffee table, and rolled back the outdoor rug together, revealing what looked to be a pentagram within a circle under it. It appeared that small square holes had been dug in the center of each star segment. Dan reached into one of the holes and started to dig out more dirt.

"I spent ages laying that brick!" Dan yelled at the screen.

As they ogled, sleepwalking Rachel looped around the corner of the house and came back holding a bucket of paint bottles and paint brushes. "That's my paint!"

Sleepwalking Rachel began to paint around the circle, her arm moving confidently, although the footage was too grainy to tell what she was painting. Dan walked back into the house, into the line of sight of the kitchen camera. He started to open cabinets as if he was looking for something, leaving cabinets open behind him. At the utensil drawer, he pulled out a steak knife, closing the drawer, satisfied. He then walked into the living room and out the front door, past the camera in the front yard.

Dan and Rachel stared dumbfounded at the empty yard, as sleepwalking Rachel continued to paint in the backyard footage in the frame below. Dan felt himself begin to sweat. He did that excessively whenever he was anxious.

"Why do you have a knife, Dan?"

"I don't know!" Dan exclaimed, as Rachel pulled him out of the chair and started to inspect his skin and pajamas. "What are you doing?" Dan giggled slightly as Rachel lifted his shirt and inspected his back. He was painfully ticklish.

"Looking for blood!"

“We don’t know what I did, it could be like... maybe my conscience was subliminally protecting myself with all the break ins around the neighborhood lately.”

They both froze and looked at each other, eyes widening.

“Naw,” they both said together.

Dan laughed, “I think I would have woken up if I was throwing a brick into a window.”

“Yeah, I mean I’ve never heard of a sleeping robber before,” Rachel said with an amused smile, but Dan could see the worry in the back of her eyes.

They looked back at the footage. Rachel continued to paint. She looked tranquil. Dan used to love watching Rachel paint in her studio he’d set up for her in the garage. He could spend hours watching Rachel’s face, focused and serene, as she’d paint his portrait or a still life of the garden. Rachel had started painting again recently, finally inspired to pick up the paintbrush, but he never watched her anymore. Too busy. He shook off the memory and fast forwarded the footage, focusing on the front and backyard cameras. Rachel wrapped up painting, leaving behind several indiscernible figures as she put the paint back around the corner. About twenty minutes later, Dan came back holding some flowers and what appeared to be grass.

Relief flooded Dan, “See, I was just... weed picking?” He looked over his shoulder to a skeptical Rachel. Dan pressed play again and they watched as Dan walked to the backyard, giving the weeds to Rachel and watching as she tore and sprinkled them around the area she had just painted. Then, Rachel and Dan rolled the carpet back over the painting, got up, and went back to bed.

Dan fast forwarded the footage once more, but they didn’t get up again. He took his glasses off and rubbed his eyes. Rachel turned around wordlessly and headed out the door.

“Where are you going?” Dan called after her.

Moments later, they were in the backyard, and Dan was helping Rachel move the coffee table and roll up the carpet, revealing the pentagram. Rachel squatted down and ran her finger along a large spiral symbol painted on the tip of the star. Within two of the five holes in the brick, there was rotting raw chicken and a *dead rat* in one and heaps of peanut butter in another. The smell reached Dan’s nose and he gagged, dry heaving.

Rachel didn’t flinch. Dan never got used to how used to death she was.

“D’you recognize any of these symbols?” Rachel asked.

Dan looked around. There was a painting of what looked to be a goat’s head, an X with a circle on top, a Z with a couple horizontal lines running through it, and a circle divided into four equal slices.

He pointed to that one, “Pie chart.”

Rachel pulled out her phone and snapped a picture of the star. “I’m sending this to Carl.”

Dan groaned. Carl was Rachel’s eccentric friend, a self proclaimed clairvoyant who was into Wicca, astrology and non-QAnon related conspiracy theories, like the one about Denver airport being home to the Illuminati. He was admittedly a great friend, welcoming Dan into the friend group with open arms and, despite Dan’s protests, a full astrology reading. Rachel and Carl had been drifting apart for a few years, since the move to Connecticut, but life does that sometimes. Dan really did like Carl but he did not want him to

come careening into their lives with his wacky spiritual reader shit. “Rachel please don’t bring Carl into this, I’d rather read a thousand TikTok comments than get Carl involved.”

“I can’t explain this, and I know you can’t either!” She snapped.

“We can–”.

Rachel threw her hands up to the sky, “No, no, we can’t. How can you explain us doing all of this with our eyes closed? The dancing? The symbols? This isn’t normal sleepwalking!”

“We know very little about the human brain!”

“Shut up! Sometimes it pisses me off when you think so binary...ly!”

“Binarily.”

Rachel shook her fists, “That’s what I said!”

“I’m a computer engineer!”

“Can’t you just accept what you don’t know for *one second*?”

Dan found himself getting defensive, “Accept we’re being, what – possessed?”

“That something is happening that is *beyond your control*!”

Dan gestured to the pentagram, “This is reaching.”

“It’s not just this! You don’t go out with your friends anymore because you always start to argue about baseball RPGs–”

“–*RBI*s–”

“You refuse to go to Christmas service with your mom even though it makes her happy!”

“But you’re Jewish! That’s so you don’t have to go!”

“It’s two hours in a church, I’m not gonna combust! And I like the cute play the kids put on!”

At the word ‘kids’, Dan flinched but recovered quickly, hoping Rachel wouldn’t notice. She was busy staring at the dead rat in its open grave.

He sighed. It was a fight he could not win, best to humor her. He could be stubborn but Rachel was something else entirely. He actually really loved that about her.

“You’re right.” He nodded to the pentagram, “Let’s figure this out. Let’s call Carl.”

* * *

Rachel had spent most of her shift chugging coffee and buying energy drinks from the vending machines and chugging those too, despite feeling the heartbeat of every fiber of her being. Dan promised to do more research after work but she didn’t know how seriously he’d take that task, so she spent her breaks pouring over her phone, googling the various symbols. So far she found that the spiral could mean *fertility* in Wicca. She frowned at the sight of the word and put down her phone.

As she absentmindedly cleaned an elderly patient with a warm cloth, she spiraled further into worry. Carl wasn’t answering her phone calls or texts and it had been almost eight hours. Maybe he didn’t care to speak to her, it had been ages since they talked. That was her fault. He was a clairvoyant after all. But to not even pick up her calls, that wasn’t like Carl.

Rachel’s phone buzzed mid thought. She dropped the towel and looked up to the elderly woman staring vacantly out the window. “At ease, Gail,” Rachel said to her as she answered her phone.

A breathy, shrill voice sounded from the other end. “Rachel? You OK? I’m sorry, I’m in Australia, I was asleep.”

A flood of emotions hit Rachel, and she started to tear up. “It’s so good to hear your voice.”

“What’s up babe? You sound scared.”

“No, it’s... well... look at the pictures I sent.” Rachel spent the next several minutes filling Carl in on the last few days’ events as he listened quietly. When she was finished, she had to check to see if he was still there, “Umm, hello?”

Carl cleared his throat, “I’m here. These runes appear to be a part of some sort of ritual, I don’t know what kind though. There’s a rune for sleep, a rune for the solstice, a rune for fertility. I’m not sure about the others, I’m rusty on my witchcraft.”

“I thought you practiced?” Rachel asked.

Carl’s voice flattened, “I work in finance now. Look, I’m back stateside tomorrow. I’ll drive up to you in the evening, help you figure this out. Just... do what you have to do to not sleepwalk tonight.”

A flood of relief, and excitement for seeing her friend again, filled Rachel. “Thank you so much, Carl. I’ll make Dan make you a great dinner.”

After they said their goodbyes, Rachel texted Dan the news.

He texted back a thumbs up emoji.

* * *

That night around 2 AM, Rachel and Dan became desperate for sleep, despite the caffeine they’d both pounded the entire day. A trigger alarm hung taped to their bedroom door, her old college solution. She had just finished chaining Dan and herself to the bedpost with a couple pairs of handcuffs she nicked from the hospital. Dan said this was absurd but didn’t fight it much further, which led Rachel to believe he was still slightly shaken from his moonlit gardening. He even purchased two go-pros, which were now strapped to both his and her heads, just in case they got out. Rachel sat back into bed and looked at Dan, chained to the post with the Go-Pro on his head, and she couldn’t help but laugh.

They both looked insane. Maybe they were.

Dan glared at her, but then started to laugh too, his eyes crinkling in that way that made Rachel’s heart flutter.

“We look like BDSM minions,” Rachel pointed to her handcuffs and go-pro as Dan guffawed.

“Come here,” he said, maneuvering himself as close as he could, pulling her into his chest, “We’re gonna be fine... We’ve been through worse.”

Rachel looked up at him, expectant. Maybe he’d want to talk this time. But his eyes were already closed, and Rachel decided not to push.

Instead, she nuzzled into him further, focusing on the soft *ba dump* of his heartbeat, letting it lull her to sleep.

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Dan woke to a dazzling pain in his hand. A cacophony of barking, a relentless odor of blood and mud, and an intense overhead light assaulted him all at once, and he instinctively put his hands on his ears before he was able to process anything else.

He began to take it all in.

He was in his kitchen, standing over the sink, where an angry medium sized dog covered in blood stood barking at him furiously. A knife spattered with blood sat right by the sink, teetering precariously off the edge, angled right towards his foot. He quickly grabbed the knife and moved it away from the sink. He looked at his right hand, in the area between his thumb and pointer finger were two puncture wounds, slowly oozing blood. He looked back at the dog's bloody maw, and the dog lept out of the sink, continuing his barking on the floor. Other barks rang out to Dan's right, and he swiveled his head to find a shopping cart covered in a dark green blanket next to the kitchen island. Several figures moved underneath. He slowly crept towards the cart and pulled back the blanket, finding four small dogs. Three of them yipped ferociously up at him, though a small white one slept peacefully in the back.

Dan looked once more at his surroundings, he caught a glimpse of himself in the window reflection, go-pro still strapped to his head, covered in mud and blood.

Where is Rachel? Dan's alertness intensified at this thought. "Rachel?" he called out, to no response. He noticed a soft flickering light behind the curtains leading to the backyard. and ran to the door.

Dan raced out onto the patio and an even weirder site greeted him. Rachel's wet, muddy hair was draped in front of her. Dan could see the bottom of her face, she was mouthing words but no sound came out. She circled around a small fire at the top of the pentagram, throwing flowers and what looked to be Dan and Rachel's socks into it.

He shut the back door so that the neighbors, hopefully, would not hear the barks from inside. He crept down the stairs, keeping to the darkness. He watched Rachel as she began to dance around the fire, body moving sensually. He felt something deep within churn hungrily, primal.

Rachel stopped, facing Dan. Her eyes were closed but he could tell she could see him. She began to dance towards him, caressing his face and pulling him into a deep kiss. Dan let her. Something about it felt wrong, but he returned her kiss, harder. He moaned softly.

Rachel pulled away suddenly, her eyes still closed but Dan could trace the emotions on her dimly lit face, surprise and then anger, almost as if she *knew* that Dan was awake.

She lunged, tackling him so hard they both slammed into the patio table, crushing it.

They landed with a thud amongst the splinters and Rachel clawed at him, a madwoman unleashed.

"Rachel! Wake up!" Dan desperately shouted as he tried to stave off her attacks.

Rachel grabbed his hair with both hands and brought his head up and then down hard onto the brick. Dan's vision swirled. He managed to reach behind him and grab one of her arms and took it with both hands to his mouth, biting down as hard as he could.

"ARRRGH!" Rachel cried out from above.

The attacks stopped. The amber fire illuminated Rachel's now open eyes as they swiveled across the backyard, making her look even more deranged and menacing. But Dan pulled her down into a hug.

“Get off me!” Rachel yelled as she squirmed away.

Dan let go and stayed on the ground. “It’s me, it’s Dan! You’re ok, Rach!”

Rachel looked at Dan, his bloodied hand, her bloodied hand. She looked at the steps to the kitchen, where a small maltese stood on the mat, panting happily.

Then, she fainted.

* * *

The inviting yellow light of dawn slowly filled the kitchen as Dan and Rachel sipped their coffees silently on their stools, still in the same clothes and disarray from hours before.

They had put out the fire, returned each dog to its rightful home, and cleaned up the kitchen and the backyard all in four hours, without, mercifully, any neighbor noticing.

Safe suburbs my ass, Rachel thought to herself, watching as Dan stared at the same knot in the wooden counter he’d looked at for the last fifteen minutes.

Rachel could tell Dan felt her eyes on him, and soon he croaked, “I don’t wanna talk about it yet.”

Rachel got up and found the remote to the kitchen TV, mounted above a couch to the side of the island. She collapsed onto the couch.

“Carl comes in ten hours,” she said, throwing back the rest of her coffee, flipping through channels.

Finally, Dan peeled his eyes away from the knot and Rachel made room for him on the couch, shoulder’s touching only just so. Together, they watched *Vanderpump Rules* for ten hours.

* * *

Dan splashed water on his face in the bathroom mirror as he heard Rachel open the front door and welcome Carl inside.

He was freshly showered and changed, his hair still dropping beads of water onto his Springsteen tee. He threw one last splash of water on his face, dried off, and opened the door.

Dan turned the corner to find Carl and Rachel on the living room couch, clutching each other’s hands. Momentarily, he observed them there, unnoticed. In place of the large, flamboyant man who always wore a cross earring and denim on denim that Dan used to know, sat Carl the businessman. He wore a buttoned up shirt and trousers, both creased and sweat stained, and Dan realized he must not have even changed from his business trip.

Rachel was whispering to Carl, “...Dan was about to kill five dogs, Carl. *Five*.” Carl murmured something back to her, Dan caught the word “sacrifice.”

Dan sighed to himself and walked into the room. Carl saw Dan approach and looked up at him lightly. There was no judgment in his eyes, not even pity. Just the concern of a very good friend. Dan reached out for a handshake and Carl pulled him into a hug. Dan, for once, didn’t mind one bit.

They parted and Carl clutched Dan’s shoulders gently, “How do you feel?”

Dan felt as if he swallowed a brick or ten from the patio. But to Carl, he said “Great.”

Carl dropped his hands, “Still Dan, I see.”

“Who else would I be?” Dan said in a flash of annoyed self defense, though there was no judgment in Carl’s tone.

“We should get started,” Rachel said, standing up. Off Dan’s confused look, “Carl wants to do a seance.”

Dan sighed. Of course he does. This was another one of those fights that he would not win. “Let’s do a seance.”

* * *

“So my working theories are you are either possessed by a demon, possessed by a ghost or you are both schizophrenic,” Carl said as Dan and Rachel put the finishing touches on the table, Dan with Rachel’s favorite dish of homemade pizza, and Rachel with assorted lit candles from Bath & Body Works, Williams & Sonoma and boy smells. The clashing aromas of cedar, santal, peach, ocean mist, evergreen, slow burn by Kasey Musgraves and pumpkin spice made Rachel’s head spin.

Carl had come with a tall black candle of his own, which stood in the center of the table.

It was nighttime now, and all the lights were turned off, save for the candles and the chandelier above the table, set on dim.

Rachel looked over to Dan for his reaction. Before they set up, she had told Dan to just listen and do what Carl tells him to do. He held his tongue, though she could tell it took everything in him to not say something snide. Good boy.

Carl reached into his backpack on the stool over and pulled out the tiny cross earring he always wore, putting it in his left ear. Rachel could tell it made him feel more himself, despite his corporate garb. His posture relaxed and he looked at Dan and Rachel, now sitting across the round table from him. “Now I can *definitely* feel a presence, something *is* here. But we won’t know *what* or *who* it is until we begin. And by that time, if it happens to be a demon, then we’re all fucked and it’ll be too late to do anything about it. I’m extremely unqualified when it comes to demons, and there is a chance I accidentally unleash it, killing us all.”

Rachel felt a panic bubble to the surface, she looked across the table and Dan seemed to be somewhere else, focusing on a moth who found its way to the chandelier above them. She kicked him under the table, he glared at her and started to pretend to listen.

Carl continued, “But, I *think* that it’s a ghost, because the pentagram is Wiccan. A demon doesn’t need witchcraft to achieve its nefarious purposes. People do.”

Dan sighed, “Ok so if we’re not just a statistical sleepwalking anomaly, and it *is* a ghost, hopefully, what do we do then?”

Carl looked at him “If it’s a ghost I’ll invite they/she/him to talk through me. I’m just the middle man for the other side. You two will ask who it is and try to reason with it. Maybe gently persuade it to piss off. If that doesn’t work, we exercise it.”

Dan smiled dryly, “Negotiating with ghosts, how fun.”

Rachel shot him a look, she could hear the dripping sarcasm. Dan looked at her and straightened up, “Where do you want us Carl?”

“All of us join hands,” Carl lit the black candle and spread out his palms for Rachel and Dan’s hands. Dan’s hands were dry, like always, he refused to wear lotion, it was too foo foo for him. Carl’s were soft and buttery, and he gave her a reassuring squeeze.

“Ok. Now I’m going to call out. Do not break this circle, under any circumstances. Is that clear?”

Rachel and Dan both nodded.

Carl closed his eyes and then spoke softly, “If there is anyone there, please make yourself known.”

Rachel looked around. The moth still flitted around the chandelier, hoping to eat the light or whatever it was moths wanted to do, but otherwise, everything was still.

“If there is anyone there, I invite you to step into me. Use me as your voice.”

The black candle caught Rachel’s eye, it rippled and its flame grew, first an inch and then two. Dan saw it too. Dan looked at Rachel, mouthing the word *draft*. She rolled her eyes and concentrated on the flame.

“I invite you once more to use me as your voice.”

The flame went out, as if someone snuffed it.

Rachel looked up at Carl. His eyes were closed but Rachel could feel his gaze.

“You are too late,” Carl spoke in a monotone British voice, at least several octaves lower than his usual. “You cannot get rid of us.”

Dan looked to Carl then to Rachel, he nodded towards Carl as if to say *you’re up*.

Rachel released a flood of breathless questions. “Who are you? What do you mean *us*? What do you mean too late?”

Rachel looked to Dan who mouthed *you’re doing great*.

Carl spoke out, this time, in a British accent an octave higher than his usual voice, “We are the two who brought you together. Did you think it was actual love that bound you?”

Shocked, Rachel looked over to Dan. He seemed taken aback too, glaring over to Carl, “That’s a low blow, mate.”

Carl’s attention snapped to him, and when he spoke next, Rachel could hear two voices, the lower register and the higher one, speaking at once, “**You are puppets.**”

Rachel looked at Dan, she could tell he heard both voices too and for the fourth time in the span of their relationship, Rachel saw that he looked scared shitless.

Carl’s voice dropped lower and he swiveled his head toward Dan, “I found you where my body was laid to rest in a cold tomb.” He turned back to Rachel, shifting pitch again, “And I found you on the shore near where my skeleton lies, disintegrating in the ocean.”

“You’re saying you’ve been with us... since we were kids?” Rachel asked.

Carl nodded.

Rachel looked over to Dan, her mind reeling. Thinking back to every sleepwalking escapade. The ocean. The subway towards union station. Not a meaningless, benign meander, but an intentional, determined march towards... Dan.

The lower voice rang out once more, “We are lovers. Destined to be together but ripped from each other in cruel life. Fate brought your malleable minds to us and we brought you together. Brought *us* together.”

“Why were you ripped from each other?” Rachel asked, genuinely curious and extremely freaked out.

The higher pitch one spoke, “I am a princess. She was my lady in waiting.”

Dan glanced at Rachel, slowly mouthing *she* in amazement.

Carl's voice slipped lower, then, "She was forced to marry a prince. We wished to run away together." His octave changed again, "They caught us. My father the King promised he would not kill her, that she would instead live out her days in the colonies." His voice switched, harshening, "He lied. His men killed me and threw me overboard as we were about to reach the port. But I knew death was certain. In my confines, I completed a ritual to bind us to the mortal world until we found each other again. No matter where we were, in life or death, we would find each other once more." The higher voice came back with equal vitriol, "It was not long after that I overheard my father talking about her death. I plunged a knife into his heart, and then my own."

"Yikes," said Dan.

The lower voice came back, "Now, we are in two bodies we can love each other wholly in, without fear of retribution."

Dan chimed in, fully invested, "I mean the gays are doing great now—"

Rachel interrupted, "Other than the hate crimes and republicans trying to restrict their rights."

Dan nodded, "Well yeah. But gay marriage is still legal! You could easily move into two women!"

"We wish to bear children."

Rachel laughed dryly, "Jokes on you, I'm impotent."

Rachel noticed Dan wince. He never wanted to talk about those other three times he had been scared shitless. They moved to the suburbs to have a kid, leaving behind their lives and friends, including Carl, to focus on trying to have a baby. Then they tried IVF three times, resulting in three miscarriages. She thought back to the last one, as she lay shaking on the bathroom floor, Dan clutching her. She found herself looking at her and Dan's reflection in the full length mirror. Her face was numb, a void. But Dan... He wasn't scared shitless like it was moments earlier. His face was serene. Relieved. After they cleaned everything up, she never asked him about that moment. Too afraid of what it would mean for their relationship.

Carl spoke in the deeper voice, interrupting Rachel's memory, "Our ritual will reverse that."

Dan looked up at Carl, paling. "Impossible."

Carl turned to face him, "For you."

Dan glared at him. He resumed his sarcastic tone, voice slightly wavering this time around, "Ok, so what's the plan? You take over our bodies at night, have a kid or ten, then jump to another body when we kick the bucket?"

"Almost correct. At the solstice tonight, we complete the ritual. Then, we will have control of you always," Carl said serenely, in the high pitched voice.

"And that's non negotiable?" Dan asked.

"Correct," Carl said flatly, Rachel couldn't tell which ghost said it.

Dan sighed and looked to Rachel, "There you have it. Shall we offer them a trade? Maybe the house and two of the neighbor dogs for our freedom? Sacrificial virgins?"

Rage boiled in Rachel's throat, "How is this still a joke to you? You heard those voices."

"It could be a recording!"

“Youuuuu *bellend!*” Rachel threw out his favorite British curse word, one he reserved for the dumbest of dumb people. She wanted to throw her hands up, but she resisted the urge to break the circle.

Carl’s head pivoted back and forth between Rachel and Dan as they yelled, seemingly amused.

Dan shook his head, “It’s clearly Carl running us about for being terrible friends! Sorry we couldn’t go to a rave in SoHo, Carl, we were dealing with the trauma of three miscarriages!”

Rachel laughed, “*I* was dealing with the trauma of three miscarriages. *You* never dealt with it!”

Dan faltered, then raised his voice, “I’ve got my way of grieving and you have yours! You don’t always have to make me feel like absolute shit about not being as in touch with my feelings as you.”

From the side of her vision, Rachel could see a dark smile grow on Carl’s face. She was too furious at Dan to care. Too exhausted. Too terrified. Too preoccupied with wondering if she ever actually loved him in the first place.

“Oooh spare me,” Rachel started to imitate Dan’s accent, to the best of her abilities, which was not great, “I’m Daniel, forgive me for hiding under the excuse that I can’t feel because I’m a manly British man whose father left him. It’s the British way, God Save the Queen!”

“PISS OFF!” Dan raged, standing and throwing Rachel and Carl’s hands down as he did.

Everything went black.

* * *

Carl

Carl’s head throbbed like it never had before when he came to. He’d done a lot of seances back in the day but nothing ever felt like this. As his vision swirled, he thought of what his partner Lee said when he told them he was going straight to Connecticut to help Rachel. “She shut you out of her life and now she wants you to brave suburbia for an exorcism?” Carl was running on fumes but he defended himself, “It’s a lot more complicated than that, and you know it.” More complicated indeed.

He groaned and looked across the table, his vision splotchy as his eyes adjusted to the darkness. The chandelier was off but the assorted candles still flickered. Rachel and Dan sat across the table, smiling at him as shadows danced off their cheeks. Rachel was gently caressing the top of Dan’s hand with her thumb. Carl returned their smile excitedly, “Did it work? Was it a ghost?”

Dan and Rachel continued to smile at him, unblinking. Carl shifted uncomfortably, and as he did, felt a rope digging into his shoulders. He looked down. He was tied to the chair, his hands handcuffed. He tried to break them, to wriggle out, to no avail. He looked back up at Dan and Rachel who continued to smile at him.

Carl started to hyperventilate. “Oh my god, you’re a demon aren’t you?! The power of Christ compels you! The power of Christ compels you!” He turned his ear with his cross earring towards them as he chanted.

Dan and Rachel looked at each other, amused, then both stood up and approached him. Carl started to scream. “HEL—”

Rachel shoved a napkin deep into his mouth.

Shit, Carl thought to himself, *how’s the ol’ Carl gonna get out of this one.*

Dan grabbed the pizza pan, cold pizza sliding off onto the floor. He raised it above his head and brought it down on Carl's.

* * *

For the second time today, Carl woke up with the worst headache of his life. Bleary, he looked around and saw that he was outside in the backyard. At one of the points of the pentagram, a bonfire crackled. Carl was still tied to the chair, which was now at the edge of the pentagram, parallel to the fire. It looked like demon Rachel and Dan had put the finishing touches on their ritual while he was out, Rachel was grinding something up in a bowl and Dan was sharpening a knife. Dan looked up at the sky and Carl followed suit. A beautiful, soft rose dusted full moon shone above him. Carl swallowed. *A strawberry moon on summer solstice. Incredibly rare. Spiritually powerful. I'm dead.*

Dan spoke out in a light singsong voice, "It is almost time, my love."

Rachel stood up and clasped his hands, "We are ready, my sweet." *Was that a British accent? Why is her voice so low?*

Carl tried the handcuffs once more but they were locked tight.

Ok, think, Carl, think. This is a ghost. A witch ghost. Wait, two witch ghosts. Dan and Rachel must have broken the circle, damn them! It was probably Dan. Fucking Dan! Ok what do I do?... If I scream for help they'll probably kill me and then kill the neighbors... I've gotta talk my way out of this.

Carl finagled the napkin around his tongue and he started to push it out. It fell to the ground. Rachel and Dan didn't notice, they were too preoccupied with staring into each other's eyes.

"I mean you no harm," Carl said, in as even keeled a voice as he could muster.

Rachel and Dan looked at him angrily and started to move towards him.

"I'm not gonna call for help!! I can help you! I can help you cross over. I'm a medium!" Carl hoped he was convincing.

Rachel and Dan stopped moving towards him.

"Please, tell me your name," Carl said softly.

Dan's posture straightened, "I am Princess Helena Augustus the 1st."

Rachel spoke in her husky British voice, "Anne of Cardiff."

"Ok. Cool. Cool. Carl of Brooklyn... By way of Madison, Wisconsin. *Go badgers!*" Off their confused looks, Carl continued, rushing, "I guess I'll just flat out ask, um, who hurt you?"

Dan – Princess Helena – growled, brandishing the knife, "Enough with the formalities, peasant."

Princess Helena-Dan started to move towards him and Carl changed strategy, "Wait! You're a Princess and you're, I presume, her star crossed lady lover. That's great, I'm a raging homosexual too!"

Princess - Dan moved closer, "You are but a human sacrifice."

Anne - Rachel moved towards the princess, grabbing the arm holding the knife, "My liege, you've shed too much blood in your lifetime. Allow me to do this." Princess - Dan nodded gratefully and gave her the blade.

"How nice of you! You know, Rachel who's body you're in, she's nice too. Matter of fact she's the kindest person I know. And I know that she's still in there somewhere, listening to me, her best friend since day

one of freshman orientation, when she was so hungover that she threw up in a trash can and I held her hair and gave her my gatorade.” For a fleeting moment, Rachel stopped, eyes blinking rapidly, then she resumed her march towards Carl. “And Rachel knows that even though we don’t talk much anymore, I don’t blame her for falling off the map after everything that happened to them, even though I know she hates herself for it.”

“Please cease this ruckus, we’re running out of time” Princess - Dan pointed up at the moon, almost at its highest.

“You’re gonna kill me so let me speak! Rachel is my best fucking friend and I’d do anything for her.” Carl nodded to the Princess, “And you, you cocky bitch, you know who you remind me of? Dan, who’s body you’re in. He can be an asshole at times, but he’s a sucker. This guy remembered every single tidbit of my life I told him about, and would always ask for updates on my dating life and let me read his charts. He hates parties but he’d always help me clean up after everyone left. He would without fail, bring Rachel lunch and a handwritten love letter every day when she worked in Harlem. He’s a big romantic sucker who loves Rachel more than anything in the world. ”

Anne-Rachel was close now, an arms length away from Carl. She stopped and her eyes blinked furiously.

The knife slowly fell from her hand and clattered onto the brick patio.

* * *

Rachel blinked once more, looking at her friend Carl, sweating, scared shitless in front of her. Unlike the sleepwalking sessions, she heard everything. Saw everything. As if she was in the passenger’s seat of a car while Anne the ghost drove. She was about to lose hope, scared it would go on like that forever. But Carl got her out. She smiled at him, “I love you, bitch.”

The Princess’s eyes widened, realizing Rachel was back in control. “Enough! I’ll kill the peasant and do the ritual myself!”

Rachel turned to face her. She was tired and mad and confused and she was pretty sure she just started her period, so she was angry, “You’re not gonna touch him.”

The Princess walked towards her, arms folded gently, “You actually believe that you are in love with this man? We were the only reason you ended up together. Your squabbling is exhausting and your fornication is stale. Step back and watch real love.”

“I felt your love for each other. And I felt your pain. And grief. And anger. And I’ve felt all that too. You know I have, you were with me when I was in the hospital after each miscarriage, because I would sleepwalk each night and Dan would have to guide me back to my bed. You were there when Dan closed off, sunk himself into work and started to sleepwalk every night for a year. He can be a goddamn shit sometimes but that does not mean I don’t want to pinch his stupid little dimpled cheeks and laugh at his jokes even though sometimes I don’t understand his accent. At least we’re trying. But you, you’re just like your dumb bully dad King.” Rachel was surprised that all came out so well. She lost a bit of steam at the end there.

The Princess’s eyes slanted angrily, “Take that back!”

“Suck it, Helen!” Carl shouted from behind.

Rachel reached down to the ground for the knife and pointed it at him shakily. Impulsively, she turned it on herself. “If you kill Carl, I’m taking her down with me before she takes me over.”

She felt a flash of Anne’s fear somewhere in the fringes of her conscience.

The Princess looked up at the sky. The moon had moved from its highest point, dropping to her knees. “It’s too late anyway,” she said softly.

“Good! Now let’s exercise these bitches!” Carl yelled.

Rachel could picture Princess Helena in Dan’s place. A sad, scared young woman. She looked up at Rachel, tears streaming down her face, then fell face forward to the ground.

Rachel rushed over and found herself looking into Dan’s clear hazel eyes.

* * *

Dan blinked. He was face to face with Rachel, her brown eyes just as deep and bright as the moment he laid eyes on her. He was somehow squeezed at the back of his mind that whole time, but he felt and remembered everything. Every unexplainable thing.

Wordlessly, Rachel laid on her back and stared up at the pink moon. She looked numb. Dan thought back to that moment they held each other on their bathroom floor. They should both feel relieved that they weren’t going to be possessed by gay ghosts for eternity. But Dan felt heavier than ever before.

He lowered himself to his back, head near Rachel’s, and looked up at the moon with her.

“I haven’t been honest with you.” The words tasted uncomfortable in his mouth but he forced himself to continue. “I wanted a family with you. So badly. So fucking badly. But after the third... I let myself accept the truth. That I would have been an absolute *shit* father. How could I possibly be a good one when I’m a walking version of my own dad? So I just buried myself into stuff I knew that I was good at. Working. Being there for you. Being hard on myself.” He could feel Rachel staring at him now. He was too afraid to look over, and fresh tears, his own, not Helena’s, came to his eyes. “I’m sorry. I’m sorry to you for shutting myself off. For not being present. For hiding behind my self righteousness. I think, mostly, I’m sorry to myself for looking in the mirror and hating what was looking back at me.”

Rachel folded herself into him, wrapping her arm around his torso and squeezing him tightly. They stayed like that for what seemed like hours, until a soft cough rang out nearby.

Oh shit, Carl was still chained to the post –“That was so brave and I love your love but can you uncuff me now so we can get rid of these gals for good?”

Dan and Rachel untangled and Dan moved towards Carl, remembering Helena put the keys in his front pocket. He uncuffed Carl who nodded appreciatively, then looked back to Rachel.

“Maybe we don’t have to get rid of them,” Dan said to Rachel. He felt Helena’s shock somewhere deep down. Dan could tell Rachel knew what he was implying. What he was believing.

Carl seemed to catch on too. “Nooo no no. This is dangerous. How can you trust them?”

Rachel spoke up, approaching Dan. “Let me talk to Helena.”

Dan nodded and found it was easy to let go of the reins. Helena came rushing back in.

* * *

As Rachel looked at Dan, she could tell it was Helena now. She wore a confused and frightened look on her face. “If you give us a baby. If we let you stay. If we let you be with each other. Would you swear to do us no harm? You guys loved your oaths back in the day.”

Helena answered, unwavering, “We swear.”

“We could alternate. You guys get a couple days in the sun. Maybe alternate weeks. We can figure it out, Dan is better with the logistics stuff than I am.”

“Anne is better with that as well,” Helena said, giving a small smile.

Rachel reached her hand out to her, and Helena reached for it.

The gravelly voice of Dan came back, “So... we have ghosts?”

A smile spread on Rachel’s face. Dan kissed her. It was a strange feeling but Rachel felt Anne and Helena kiss too.

Carl cautiously applauded, “This is weird!”

Rachel smiled over at him, he would come to understand.

She turned back to Dan. And to Helena. She felt Anne’s euphoria within her.

Rachel’s smile slowly began to fade.

How did it come to this, she wondered.