Neither Here Nor There

by mordelle

Summary

Sector Eight. This is where Lydia found herself, on the other side, soul suspended between life and death with no recourse to get out of her predicament. Suddenly, a face came to mind. She might have a way out, after all. Would a menacing poltergeist come to her rescue? Not without a price, certainly. *Post film w/ cartoon shoutouts. Part I/II*

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Chapter 1

I will be simultaneously posting here and on FF from now on!

-----

Chapter One Author’s Notes

Hi everyone! If there is an “everyone”. So, although I read a lot of fan fiction – a rather unhealthy amount if I do say so myself – this is only my second attempt at writing a fanfic. My first is a Naruto fic that I’ve yet to finish because I had a baby and, at that time, my muse left me and I haven’t revisited it. However, I think this one will be different.

I am a huge fan of Beetlejuice the film and I was a big fan of the cartoon when I was a kid. I much prefer the film, to be honest. I have read the original screenplay and I’ve watched the film “167 times and it keeps getting funnier every single time I see it,” so am I qualified to write a sequel? Probably not, but I’m gonna anyway!

::maniacal laugh::

I will try my damnedest to make sure this reads well. Spelling, grammar, plot points, dialogue, etc… will be checked.

All that being said, I’d also like to mention that I will not dive too deeply into explaining why things are the way they are in the story because I feel that over explaining removes the audience from the story. However, in my author's notes and post-notes, I will explain my reasoning.

There are many things that other authors try to explain within the story and I just feel like it leaves room for too many plot holes. Why? Because there where things done or not done in the film that contradicts each other. The most famous being that Adam and Barbra should be dripping wet the entire movie but aren’t because you can’t have your actors catching their actual deaths on set.

So, once again, I will reserve most of those kinds of explanations to my notes with references to the film so that we’re on the same page. I will be ignoring the cartoon with the exception of character names and maybe some more easter eggs. I will also be ignoring early drafts of the screenplay because apparently, Betelgeuse died from a botched self-hanging. He has no marks on his neck, so POOF, it’s not making it in this fic. I’ve got my own ideas that I hope you’ll like.

If I can’t convince you of a certain thing, you are welcome to call me out, but don’t be an a-hole.

Disclaimer: I own nothing. I’m making no money off this. It makes me sad.

Story Direction Disclaimer: Mature, people. It will be rated M for language, violence, and explicit sexy stuff. This is Beetlejuice and I plan to stick to his film personality.

I’ll be using the ages of the actors. Lydia was 16 (you have no idea how ecstatic I was to find out that Winona and I have the same birthday, Oct 29). Betelgeuse was 37 at the time of his death. No underage poo-poo-caca as this takes place 6 years after the film.
There may very well be explicit material. I shall warn you all in the notes!

Ever since I was a little girl, I had imagined that Beetlejuice 2 would bring Lydia to the Neitherworld like in the cartoon. The only way that I’ve always thought for that to be possible is if Lydia dies or some kind of astral projection is involved. A living body cannot enter the land of the dead. That’s just me and I’m sticking to it. So, I decided that unintended astral projection would be the way to go. Then the movie Monkeybone came out and ruined all of my dreams. But this is fanfiction and I can do whatever I want. So, if you’ve seen Monkeybone, you’ll see some similarities. I’ll try my best to stay clear of too many similarities.

ART BELOW IS BY: drakonarinka on DeviantArt

“So! Without further delay…”

Chapter One – Home


Bored. So-so-so bored.

Lydia thumped her head against the glass. With her temple pressed against the cool window in the back seat of the taxi, she let her eyes follow a small drop of rain roll down the window and watched it merge with another and another until it was out of sight, which is when her eyes would dart upwards again in search for another drop of rain. Some followed the same patterns as the ones before them and still, others seemed to purposefully and suddenly change direction as if to escape her surveillance.
She was trying desperately to ignore the driver’s off-key harmony attempt over the equally displeasing sound of Boyz II Men’s ‘I’ll Make Love to You’ currently playing on the radio.

_Torture. Complete and utter torture. For the love of fuck. Shut. Up._

Her sanity would seemingly remain intact. The song had ended. She silently praised whatever goddess she was on good terms with for the brief reprieve. She knew it wouldn’t last. That was the fourth time the song had come on.

The driver briefly looked at her through the rear-view mirror as he changed the station.

“Great song, huh?”

Lydia’s eyebrows almost disappeared into her hairline as she managed to feign a smile.

“Mhm.”

She focused again on the rain. The rain was a nice relief from the hot summer days of late in New York City, where Lydia’s 4th year of college was a great success for her studies but a complete failure for her social life. Again.

Well, maybe not a complete failure, she thought, as she started to count on one hand the few acquaintances she hung out with occasionally.

**Yep, definitely better than last year.**

Although they always introduced her to others as, ‘hey this is my friend… [Insert nickname here]’ she wasn’t that close to the tight knit group of art nerds that just refused to call her by her name. Lyddy, Lyd, and even just plain L were just a few nicknames they experimented with.

Chris, the only one of the guys in the group she could have imagined herself matched up with was the only one who called her by her name - once. His first words to her echoed in her mind now, “Lydia, huh, that’s my nana’s name.” Lydia rolled her eyes remembering the encounter.

_The one guy I find attractive and I remind him of his “nana.”_

Of course, no one called him Chris. No, outside of her dark imaginings, she called him Cooper. Just like everyone else did.

_It would just be too weird to call him Chris now. Right?_

“Chris,” she whispered as her eyes briefly closed.

Eventually, though, it was her last name that became the favorite of the group. “Deetz! Hey, Deetz. Yo, Deeets.” At least they called her something. Almost her entire college career went by without talking to another student other than her roommate, – which is another story - and the occasional tap on the shoulder in class followed by “what did the professor just say?”

It was Annabel, dubbed Bell, who approached her first in the campus darkroom.

“Nice. Dark and melancholy. I like it. I’m Bell.”

“Thanks. Lydia Deetz.“

“My friends and I are going to this new gallery that opened – Lens Flare. I think the show might be
your style. If you wanna join, just meet us out in the parking lot. You can’t miss us, four geeks and a guitar.” Chris being the guitar, of course.

A fine-looking guitar too. Ugh, since when do I use the word “fine”?

Bell was the one she was closest to if you could even call it that. It wasn’t them though. It was Lydia that found it hard to open up and find things to talk about. They thought she was mysterious, which is probably why they absorbed her into their group in the first place.

Even though she had been born in New York City and had lived there most of her life, it was obvious that her time in Connecticut had severed her from the culture.

Plus, Lydia was the only one in the group whose immediate family was out of state, so when asked about how things were like “back home,” she had a hard time making life sound remotely exciting in Winter River without mentioning the fact that her best friends where a couple of ghosts squatting in their house and that six years ago she nearly married a poltergeist.

Lydia shuddered at the memory.

That was one hell of a close call.

She hadn’t thought about it much, maybe even at all, in the past few years. Mostly because she had moved out and was determined to take as many classes as possible while working in the campus gallery. She hadn’t even gone back home for Christmas break last year, instead, her father and stepmother had come down to New York to spend the holidays with her.

Not really. More like spent it with ol’ chums and ‘potential agents.’

It may have been a memory that she could have passed off as a bad dream were it not for the daily reminder in that house that ghosts do exist and that they saved her from her fate of being hitched to Betel –

Nope. Don’t even think his name.

Not that thinking his name would do anything. She would have to say his name out loud three times for the worst to happen. But she couldn’t help wondering if thinking his name sent some kind of signal to him in the afterlife. Knowing him, he’d probably think she missed him or something.

A brief image of him being swallowed by a sandworm made her flinch. It always did.

“Ugh.” The sound of disgust was audible, which snapped her out of her thoughts just as the taxi was passing under the covered bridge.

The slight bumpiness always made her very wary. It was, after all, the place where Adam and Barbara Maitland, her ghost friends, had died.

Adam and Barbara, she missed them the most. They were like an awesome aunt and uncle.

No, second parents.

Even if they were dead, at least they were sane. While her stepmother, Delia, was the no nonsense and eccentric type, Barbara was the kind and gentle type that always listened to Lydia when she needed a motherly figure to talk to. And while her father, Charles, had a “hands off” approach to raising Lydia, Adam filled the gap with a slightly more strict approach making sure Lydia did well
in school and gave Lydia confidence to excel in everything she did. The four of them were the
oddest combo, but it worked.

Once the “misunderstanding” six years ago had been worked out, they all really did live
harmoniously – kind of. It was never boring, that’s for sure.

The anniversary of the almost exorcism/wedding was the only day that was sort of awkward. Not
because they held any grudges towards one another but because she knew it was on everyone’s
mind and that they were trying their hardest not to mention anything that could bring up the topic.

Except for Delia. She could give three shits ; the thought made her smile.

She knew it was because they didn’t want to upset her. Lydia had only been 16 after all and any
other 16-year-old would have been traumatized. Although Lydia had been shaken, it wasn’t for the
reason they all assumed. The only thing that made her stomach turn more than the thought of being
married to… him … was remembering the way Adam and Barbara had looked at her as they
wasted away before her eyes.

Taking a sharp inhale, Lydia shook the image from her mind.

The rain had stopped but a blanket of grey still covered the sky and the little rain drops on her
window had all but vanished, revealing the eerie looking house she hadn’t realized until now that
she had missed so much. She was home. And just in time too… the radio host was already
announcing his threat.

“Coming up next, Boyz II Men’s number-one hit single… “I’ll Make love to you!”

Somewhere intangible and unperceivable to the living, there is a place where the dead… wait. It is
an ageless place that has been given many names over the course of time. A place that gradually
takes the shape of what the collective souls bring with them. Yes, their memories of their once
vibrant lives make ripples into their afterlives as well. And so, it would make sense that a room, a simple waiting room, was called forth from the aether for the collective souls to, well, wait in.

*Bored. So… so… fucking bored.*

He’d been there for ages it seemed, but he knew it was only 6 years.

*Six years, four months, two weeks, three days.*

He always made sure to keep track. He needed to keep up with the times. Stay relevant. It was more important to him than his own devious shenanigans.

*And that’s pretty damn important.*

Presumably, the higher-ups at the time thought that by confining him to a grave that it would make him “come around”. That was obviously not the case.

*Well, at least I’m out of that pit. Thanks, losers.*

The Maitland’s never put him back in. He mentally thanked them and snickered, which made everyone in the room uneasy. The poltergeist had been too quiet for too long, resting his now normal sized head on a cushion behind him with his hat pulled over his closed eyes. They were expecting something. Who knew what it would be, but they knew it’d be terrifying.

He wasn’t sure why he wasn’t already back in solitary. Surely, Juno had told them they had to put him back. But here he was in the waiting room instead.

*Oh, Juno…* He thought about how she’d receive him after all these years.

Then again, no one in the afterlife felt time go by the way he did. Maybe she wouldn’t be phased, which he didn’t want to admit bothered him way too much.

Instead, he replayed his recent dealings with the land of the living. Again. His last job was almost his ticket to freedom. Temporary freedom, but freedom nonetheless. He had almost succeeded.

He would try again and again for all eternity if that’s what it took. What else was there to do?

*Servitude? Move on?* He snorted aloud, which made the other souls flinch.

*Hell-fuck-no.*

The reception window was forced open revealing Miss Argentina. She stared at the poltergeist a moment and narrowed her eyes before yelling:

“Now serving 9,998,383,750,000… Betelgeuse!”
Eyes still closed, the poltergeist grinned wickedly as his number was called. Without warning, Betelgeuse launched himself out of his seat, scaring the newbie deadski’s.

“See ya, deadbeats!” He exclaimed through clenched teeth and a menacing grin.

With a salute, he whirled around, gave Miss Argentina a wink and moonwalked towards Juno’s office.

As soon as the door slammed shut, there was a rumble that reverberated throughout the room. The new souls waited apprehensively…

…

…

They looked at one another as relieved chuckles and murmuring filled the air, but sadly it was short-lived.

A resounding CRACK resonated in the room and then a deluge of insects and business cards fell from the ceiling making everyone scramble like their afterlives depended on it.

And in the distance, a wild cackle could be heard echoing throughout the hall.

---

**Chapter One Post Notes:**
So, what did you guys think? Please leave comments, it makes me feel all gooey inside and makes me want to work faster.

As promised, here are my universe explanations:

The Astral Plane, Neitherworld, Netherworld, Purgatory, Limbo, whatever you want to call it is where souls wait. What do they wait for? They wait for their minds to wrap around the idea that their lives are over and there’s no going back. Each soul has their own reason for being there, but essentially, it’s because they’re still holding on to the past. The ultimate goal is for them to move on. Who ends up there? People who had traumatic deaths, unfinished business and suicides.

I will be sticking to the idea in the film that the dead will usually look the way they looked when they died. So, let’s go over that for a moment. Things we know:

- Ghosts can change their physical appearance including wardrobe, but usually only for a short time.
- Except for Betelgeuse who wears whatever he wants for as long as he wants. His entire wardrobe throughout the film is not from his presumed era which would be the 1300’s.
- At 59 minutes of the film, Betelgeuse has NO moss or dark circles. He’s shrouded in a bit of darkness, but if you look closely, it’s the most normal he appears in the film.
- There are freaking skeletons working as civil servants.
- Most of the time, Betelgeuse is white AF, covered in moss and he does not have sunken eyes in the film. He has dark circles around his eyes. Michael K has blue eyes. I originally wrote them as green. They are now Blue to keep with movie Beej. Blonde gross hair covered in moss. Even his clothes are covered in moss.
Chapter Two Author’s Notes

Hello dear readers! We’ve got a little more setup coming in this chapter, but hopefully, it’s entertaining enough to keep you all engaged.

Although I was around in the 90’s, it was quite some time ago, so some research was involved for the technological advances at the time. I’ll be establishing how out of place our favorite couple is feeling in their respective environments.

Disclaimer: Although I wish with all of my heart that I was somehow involved in the creation of Beetlejuice, sadly I was basically a baby when his inception came about. I own nothing. ::cue tears::

Let’s begin… ::holds out arm:: shall we?

---

Chapter 2 – The New Norm

Lydia was greeted before she even reached the door.

“Lydia!”

Lydia looked up to see Barbara practically hanging out of the window waving happily at her. Lydia laughed and waved back as the door swung open to reveal her father.

“Pumpkin! Get in, get in!” He grabbed her suitcase and Lydia followed him inside. She gave him a big hug as he closed the door.

“Hey dad.”

Adam and Barbara were rushing down the stairs as Delia called from the Kitchen. “Dinner’s almost ready!”

“She’s cooking?” Lydia eyed her father with a hint of fear.

Charles forced a smile and gritted through his teeth, “Special occasion! She’s making a Russian stew.”

Barbara and Adam laughed as they reached the first floor.

“Only time we’re grateful we’re dead,” said Adam as he went in for a hug.

A hug from a ghost was always impressionable, something you could never simply get used to. It left a tingling chill every time for minutes afterwards. Not entirely unpleasant if only a bit unsettling.
Like when legs go numb from reading on the can too long.

She giggled internally at the thought.

Barbara was slow on approaching with a brilliant smile on her face, giving Adam time to greet his honorary goddaughter.

“Oh Lydia, you look beautiful,” Barbara chimed with longing.

Lydia walked over to her godmother and gave her a long hug.

Numbness be damned.

Apparently, it wasn’t an easy task. Being corporeal enough to manage hugging a living person. It was something they had practiced and mastered just for her. And Lydia was grateful for it.

Delia screamed in the distance as a large orange glow lit up the kitchen area. There was a moment where the four of them looked at one another with wide eyes before rushing to the kitchen. They walked in on Delia throwing a smoking pot into the sink. Inside the pot was the “stew” that had basically solidified and burned.

Panting heavily, Delia looked at everyone and smiled. “Who wants Cantonese?”

Juno was sitting at her desk. Then standing. Then sitting again. She was unsure of how to receive her next visitor. It had been about 350 years since she last saw her protegee.

347 years. 7 months. 2 weeks. 4 days.

The supervisors that were left from the onset of her time in the afterlife had been breathing down her neck about Betelgeuse being let out of his cage. She had to save face, but also didn’t want to go against him. The rules for once had been on her side. She had told the Maitlands to put him back. It wasn’t her fault they didn’t put 2 and 2 together. And nobody noticed that she had left out the details on how to put him back.

They dug him up. They have to bury him. How stupid can they be?

But it didn’t matter now. The last two caseworkers that had helped entrap him, moved on 3 years ago completely forgetting all about him.

She was thankful to have been alone in her office to prepare for his visit. No one could see her like this.

Ruin my goddamn reputation.

She decided finally she’d sit. Maybe pretend to be working when he arrived. Her thoughts were racing.

I wonder if he blames me.

She had so much to tell him. So much had happened since they last saw each other. And she wasn’t sure she wanted to be around for the aftermath. She crossed her arms, then she placed both palms on her desk, then put her fists under her chin and rested her head on them, then decided she must
look like an idiot. She settled on smoking. That always made her look casual.

She decided to go through the motions entirely and slowly. She pulled her favorite matchbox and cigarette brand from the aether. As soon as she struck the match, her door shot open shattering the glass pane.

*Shit.*

Betelgeuse dramatically slid into the room and spread his arms wide.

“Here’s Chavi!”

Juno was struggling with all her might to keep a straight face. He was giving her his best showman grin and even used his old nickname she had given him in life so long ago. Seeing him now in person was making her feel all kinds of warm feelings she was not at all comfortable with.

She couldn’t hold it in anymore and actually smiled at him. Dumbstruck, the only thing she could manage was to softly say his name the way she used to.

“Bait al-Jauza.”

After eating loads of MSG filled Cantonese food with her odd family, Lydia took her small suitcase upstairs to her room to settle in.

Upon opening the door, she grew stock still.

“What the hell is that?”

“Oh right!” Adam shot up the stairs and peeked around Lydia. He adjusted his glasses and smiled with pride. “It’s a computer!”

Lydia looked at the large machine taking up the space that her favorite dresser had occupied, which was now shoved against a corner.

“I, uh, see that. When did we get a computer and why’s it in my room?”

Adam’s smile faltered a moment before answering. “Well, your dad wanted to surprise you.”

Barbara appeared next, “Delia thinks it’s hideous and wanted it out of sight. There was really nowhere else to put it.”

“How about the attic?” asked Adam with a hopeful smile.

“You wish, Honey,” Barbara said with a raised eyebrow. “Need some help unpacking, sweetie?”

“Yeah, sure.”

Adam adjusted his glasses again and the suitcase unzipped itself before Barbara could stop him.

“Adam!”

But it was too late, he had already laid out all of her clothes neatly on the bed. Including her black laced lingerie.
Mortified, Lydia covered her face with her hands and chuckled as Barbara grabbed a sputtering Adam by the collar pushed him out of sight. “Unpacking a grown woman’s suitcase, Adam, really?!"

Lydia laughed even harder and entered her room with Barbara in tow. She shut the door shaking her head. “Men. Sorry sweetie.”

“It’s okay, really. Although, I think I finally shattered the little girl image he’s been desperately hanging onto all these years.”

They sat on the bed and Barbara gave her a sad smile.

“Yeah, I think that did it. So, tell me, who are those for,” she motioned at the lingerie. Lydia blushed and caved in immediately.


Juno’s smile faltered as a distant look in her eye took over. She adjusted in her seat and lit her cigarette. After a puff she looked him up and down and changed the subject.

“It’s been a long time, Chavi. You look like shit.”

“You try being trapped in a grave for 350 years and see how glamorous you come out,” he said with a mirthless smile.

Juno sighed heavily. “So, you do blame me.”

“For what? Standing there with a stupid look on your face while Markolf and his band of morons imprisoned me,” he said with a dangerous lilt in his voice. “Nah,” he said dismissively, “you couldn’t have done nothin’ about it.”

“You cursed my name for years. Don’t think I didn't feel it.”

“Okay, okay, maybe I was little pissed for a while, but I can’t stay mad at you, you know that,” he smiled genuinely, “we go too far back.”

Juno nodded. “We do.”

“So!” He clapped his hands together and rubbed them with anticipation. “Where is the ol’ ‘Mr.Big’, anyway? I believe I owe him for that lovely vacation he sent me on,” he said with an evil grin.

Juno looked at her cigarette sullenly.

“He’s gone. I took his place about 90 years ago.”

Betelgeuse dropped his hands in his lap and narrowed his eyes at Juno.

“What do you mean… gone?” he whispered dangerously.
The subject that Juno was trying to avoid was quickly approaching.

_Here we go…_

“What do you mean ‘gone’?” Lydia whispered, horrified.

Barbara looked guilty as she tried to explain. “We needed the extra space, but don’t worry, it’s all in storage in town!”

Barbara had just told her that her entire darkroom had been cleaned out along with her cameras, her film, and even some of her clothes.

*I think I’m gonna be sick.*

“Is Delia pregnant?” Lydia demanded.

“Good God, no!” Barbara exclaimed putting a hand to her chest like the thought of that was the most horrific thing she’d ever heard. “I can’t even imagine what the hormones would do to that woman. She’s already as nuts as they come!”

Lydia couldn’t help but laugh.

“No, no, it’s just with all the technological advances now, Adam and I have been able to contribute some more. We’ve been using this amazing thing called email and chatrooms to find clients for Charles and even help Delia sell her work.”

Lydia’s eyes were bugging out of her head.

“You’re working for my parents?”

“Well, not exactly. I mean we obviously don’t get paid… but, you know once you moved out, you didn’t really need us anymore…”

“Oh, Barb…”

“No, I know, you _need_ us, but we’ve just had a lot of time on our hands. So, it’s nice having something to do. I’m even part of book club chat room.” She looked guilty.

Lydia scooted closer to her and tried to mask the hurt that had been building up inside.

“It’s okay. It’s fine, really.”

Lydia wondered what else had changed. She couldn’t help feel a little dread. Working herself so hard in school had meant infrequent visits back home. She should have expected that things would…

*Change without me.*
“He WHAT?!” Betelgeuse bellowed as he jumped out of his chair.

*That rat bastard!*

Juno had already smoked 4 cigarettes and she wasn’t planning on stopping. She tried her best to sound nonchalant.

“He moved on.”

“I heard you the first time!” He yelled as he started to pace back and forth. He suddenly spun around and slammed his hands Juno’s desk. She was proud of herself for not flinching. *Nice to know I’m still used to his temper tantrums.*

“You mean to tell me that I could have been released 90 years ago?”

“No, his paperwork was solid. Physically digging you up was the only way to get you out.”

“You could have done it!” He yelled at her. “I knew the other dipshits didn’t have the stones to do it, but you-you could’ve…!” Fully and utterly pissed he let out a snarl and started pacing again.

“I couldn’t because I was being watched.”

Betelgeuse threw his hands up in the air. “So? When the hell did you start caring so much?”

“When the last of our family moved on.”

Betelgeuse froze in mid step. He placed his foot down and slowly turned to Juno whose eyes were glistening with unshed tears. He frowned and slowly started shaking his head.

“Liar. They wouldn’t—”

“They’re gone. We’re the only ones left.”

“Bullshit!”

This time Juno shot out of her chair and slammed her own hands on her desk.

“Jacques, Ginger, the Monsters and even their fucking mutts. Gone.”

Betelgeuse was stunned into silence.

“I may have been the matriarch of our little freak family, but you…” Juno lost her steam as she continued.

“As much as you were a pain in all of our asses, you were the glue. But your obsession to continue dealing with the Physical Plane and your insistence with your ‘career change’ got you locked up. And you’re yelling at me? Take some fucking responsibly!”

Juno straightened her jacket and put out her cigarette.

Betelgeuse staggered backwards until he hit the wall behind him.

*In-fucking-credible.*

“Fuckin’ traitors.” He muttered dejectedly.
Juno rolled her eyes.

“Can you really blame them?”

Betelgeuse looked at Juno and asked his next question carefully.

“What about you, Juno?”

Juno turned away from him. She knew what he was asking.

“You got your cushiony job, playin’ nice with ‘the man’… you plannin’ on leavin’ me too?”

Juno laughed mirthlessly. “You know, I don’t know how you didn’t lose the last shreds of your sanity in that hole. Because me? My tolerance for this place has been wearing thin for centuries. The only thing that keeps me here… is that I’m scared shitless of what’s next.”

Betelgeuse let out a snort. “Who are you and where’s my Juno?”

Juno turned around and smiled weakly at him.

“Come back to work.”

“It’s like you don’t know me at all.”

“I’m serious.”

“So am I.”

“Chavi, I don’t know how much longer I can stay here.”

Betelgeuse was quickly getting angry. The betrayal was just too much. With as much venom as he could, he lashed out where he knew it’d hurt.

“I’m only here because of you in the first place.”

Juno nodded. “I know.”

The silence stretched between them until Betelgeuse could no longer stand it. “So, what happens now? You gonna to try and put me back?”

“No, the Maitland’s are the only ones who can do that now. You’re lucky they’re brainless yuppies and that I’m the only one left who knows where the paperwork is.”

At that, Juno opened her drawer and pulled out a file. She gave Betelgeuse one long look and then slid it towards him to the edge of her desk.

He eyed the file with his name on it and let out a slow deep chuckle.

---

**Chapter Two Post Notes:**

Well? Are you all still with me? Liking where this is going so far? Your opinion matters. I mean, I’ll keep going where I’m headed regardless, but your approval makes me feel good! Lol
Let’s get down to details of the universe:

In the film, Betelgeuse remarks that it’s been “600 years,” implying he hasn’t had sex in that long. That doesn’t necessarily mean he’s been dead for that long. That also doesn’t necessarily mean he’s been trapped in his grave for that long.

Now take Juno, she said he was her assistant, but then went rogue and became a “bio-exorcist.” This implies that he was acting as a civil servant with Juno, which of course means he is a suicide.

Because of these tidbits of knowledge, I decided to use the 600 years as how long he’s been dead. So, for some time he was working with Juno as a civil servant until he decided he was done with it. That gives him 250 years to wreak enough havoc in order for his superiors to sentence him to the severe punishment of confining him to a grave.

Although Juno seemed to be warning the Maitlands, she basically gave them step by step instructions on how to set him free! And she always seemed mysterious to me. She even tells them that they had to clean up their own mess and put Betelgeuse back but never explicitly tells them how. So, I decided that it was part of her plan to help Betelgeuse get out. I mean, how many times have our parents forbid us to do something, which in turn becomes the reason we do it in the first place?

Which then leads to why would Juno help him? I chose a very specific reason that will be revealed as the story goes on, but here’s the gist: They knew each other in life. Oh, but what about her clothes, you say? Well, we’ve already established they can change their clothes. It appears in the film, that Adam and Barbara are still newbs and don’t bother with that. So in here, the clothes they wear mean nothing unless it’s to give a us an idea of how they want to present themselves.

Bait al-Jauza is how Betelgeuse the star was spelled back when it was misspelled the first time back in the middle ages/renaissance.

Beetlejuice Cartoon fans, like my tie-ins so far? I’ll keep doing it throughout. It’s gonna be fun!
Chapter 3 – Topsy-turvy

A week went by and Lydia still felt like she no longer belonged in her own home. Her family fell into a rhythmic routine that no longer included her. More of a nuisance than a daughter, she always seemed to be interrupting something they were doing. It hurt like hell.

Occasionally, Barbara would sit and chat with her about Chris and try to pry more information from her, but it always led back to that infernal monstrosity sitting in her room. Apparently, they all had a rotating schedule to use the new novelty, which is why she was out now. Her room was no longer her sacred space and she needed something to do desperately.

*I don't belong in New York. I don't belong here. What is happening?*

Even Winter River looked different. Loneliness was beginning to creep in. She was actually wishing her friends would call, but she'd only been gone a week. She wasn't able to see Chris before she left for Winter River, and he still hadn't made an effort to contact her.

*It was only fooling around. Not like we're in a relationship or anything. The phone does go both ways…*

Stubbornly, she squashed down that thought, not wishing to seem desperate. They had both had a bit to drink and she was wondering what would have happened if Bell hadn't walked in on them in the empty dark room. She shuddered as she remembered his hands unbuttoning her jeans.

That was the last she had seen of either of them.

*It's only been a week.*

Lydia had gone into town to take some of her old cameras out only to find that all her film had expired. She groaned in frustration. Her mood increasingly mimicked the angry weather brewing outside. She was locking up the storage when her pager started to go off. She practically dropped her camera bag, trying to yank the beeping device from her jeans. Hoping with all of her heart that it was Chris, she held the pager up only to see the numbers "343" from Bell.

*Call back now? Uh oh.*

Lydia threw her camera bag over her shoulder and climbed onto her old bike. Her pager went off again this time reading "423" and again "911".

*Call me now. Emergency. Fuck, why did I bring my bike?*

It started to pour. Frantically, she checked her bike basket to see if there was anything she could use to shield her from the buckets of rain pelleting down from above. Rummaging through several items, she pulled out her old red spider web poncho.

*Well, it's a good thing I'm still an itty-bitty.*
She pulled it over herself and her camera bag and began to race home as quickly as her short legs would let her.

Betelgeuse had been wandering around the Astral Planes for a week and it was the biggest let down in his afterlife so far. Everything had changed since he last walked the eerie twisted streets. He recognized no one. And what was worse? No one recognized him.

After he had left Juno's office, he went straight to his old stomping grounds. Nothing was left. The souls he loosely called friends were all gone.

*Left without even giving me a second thought.*

But that wasn't remotely true. Juno had passed on each of their messages to him saying they hoped to see him someday.

*Fat chance.*

He felt betrayed. He felt forgotten. That never boded well for anyone. He had been so ecstatic to be out of that grave that he hardly knew what to do with himself when the Maitlands set him free.

*Ungrateful pricks.*

Although being trapped in the waiting room was far from what he called fun, it at least gave him the opportunity to interact with other souls. Though he felt nothing but contempt for the recently deceased that waltzed through those doors, it was a hundred times better than talking to the other personalities he had conjured up just so he could have some company.

He thought fondly of the little tea parties he'd throw with his other selves and how it always turned into a senseless fistfight at the end. Then, there was that time he had necked with "Betty" and he shuddered as the memory flashed through his mind.

*Yeah, that got real weird real quick.*

He never invited them over again after that. He settled for releasing his boredom, rage, and anxiety on the helpless insects that found their way into his grave. Hosting little parties for them, then suddenly massacring every single one all while they voiced their terror as he stomped, squished, and masticated. It was the only physical activity left available to him and it quickly became a favorite past-time. Along with self-pleasure, of course. Lots of it.

Now having spent some time outside, he quickly realized he had been losing his mind. And he would have too, had it not been for the reflective surface that the 'guide' placard hidden on the inside of his hat provided. It was the only window he had into the living world. If there was one thing he learned too late in life it was that…

*Knowledge is power.*

The old dog was able to learn a lot of new tricks while confined to his little hole looking into the world of the living. But now he was out and was at a loss for what to do.

He couldn't venture into the Physical Plane without someone invoking his name. No one could. In fact, it was a bit of an exact science that not many could figure out on their own. Invocation, proximity, and intention were all part of a proper summoning. A lot of careful planning and energy went into it.
First, he had to find the right kind of gullible dufus. Then, move through the aetherial fog and settle into a small crack of the haunts quintessence proximity. And then, get the suckers to call him. It was a process, to say the least. Crossing from manifestation to manifestation took the right kind of persistence, especially when you had to drag your grave with you, couldn't utter your own name, and were slammed with an exhumation clause.

It was no wonder it had taken him so long to get out. The sups had been clever.

*But not clever enough.*

Once he got the file with the clauses he destroyed them. Made a nice spectacle, too. Turned it all into confetti and made them combust through the air, scaring the unholy shit out of everyone nearby. He had yanked Juno out of her chair and danced with her around the office, all the while shouting his own name for the first time in centuries and not caring that she was beating the shit out of him.

"*Put me down you shit for brains!*"

He had won.

Still, they hit him where it hurt most. Solitary confinement had made him irrelevant in the afterlife. Betelgeuse was used to failure, being scorned and treated like a pariah, but what he absolutely would not stand for was to be forgotten.

He needed to make new connections and it had nothing to do with feeling lonely.

*Nope! Not at all.*

He looked around again, not knowing where he was and sighed. He felt lonely.

*I need a good fuck.*

Lydia raced to the kitchen leaving a trail of mud behind her. She fleetingly considered the distress this would bring her stepmother, but ultimately brushed it off before yanking the phone from the receiver.

"*Aw come on! Who's on the line?*" Yelled a frustrated Adam from the computer room.

Lydia dialed fervently, unconcerned. "I'm sorry! Gotta make an urgent call!"

She could hear him groan from her room. She would have laughed if she wasn't so worried. Bell picked up on the second ring.

"Hello?"

"Bell? What's wrong?"

"Deetz? Holy shit, dude!"

"What's happening? You said it was an emergency!"

"Fuck, yeah, it is! You need to get your ass back to New York. Now!"

"Why?"
"So, you know how Cooper's uncle is this big shot and knows a bunch of other big shots? He was visiting Cooper's fam and Cooper showed him your portfolio!"

"Wait, what?" **How did he get my portfolio?** Then she remembered she had left it in the darkroom after their heavy makeout session. "Okay, wow, that's cool, but-

"Cooper's uncle showed it to his friend Annie fucking Leibovitz!"

Lydia staggered and tried to brace herself with the kitchen counter. "Oh-my-fucking-god."

"Lydia, she wants to meet you!"

"I'm gonna throw up."

"Yeah, you do that, but then race your tiny little ass back here because you, my girl, might have a hookup to Rolling Stone magazine! She wanted to meet you tonight because she leaves tomorrow morning."

"Fuck!"

"Yes!"

"Okay!"

"Okay!"

"I'm on my way!"

"Go!"

Lydia slammed the phone down and slipped right onto her ass in the middle of the kitchen.

"Is that mud on my floor, Lydia Deetz!" Delia's shrill voice grounded her in her moment of excited confusion. She looked up at Delia and burst out laughing.

"What's gotten into you, young lady?"

Lydia was suddenly serious.

"Delia, I need the keys to the car. Now."

"Excuse me?" Delia's raised her eyebrows in shock.

"Annie Leibovitz, the photographer, wants to meet me. Tonight." Lydia was surprised how calm that had come out.

Delia stood like a statue staring down at her. Suddenly, she ran out of the kitchen leaving Lydia sitting in a puddle of rainwater and mud. Delia started hollering.

"All hands on deck people! Barbara, pack Lydia's suitcase, stat!" Delia came running back into the kitchen. "What are you doing? Get off that floor - here!" She threw the car keys at her and ran out of the kitchen again.

Lydia giggled in near hysteria. "This is happening. This is actually happening!"

Before she knew it, Lydia was in the car and Delia threw her suitcase in the backseat. Delia
knocked on the trunk to signal all was done and Lydia hit the gas.

**Oh, yeah, this is more like it!**

Betelgeuse was grinning ear to ear as he stood in front of the Stiff Members Gentleman's Club. He chuckled at the pun and as he walked to the door. An extremely large bouncer stopped him in his tracks.

"Password?"

"Uh, yeah, I'm meetin' some friends. They're expecting me."

He tried to force his way passed, but the bouncer pushed hard, sending him staggering backward.

"Hey! No need to be an asshole, buddy!" He growled. The bouncer glared at him making Betelgeuse retreat more. He held up his hands in surrender. "I'm not lookin' for any trouble, 'kay?"

He grinned thinking about what kind of trouble he was about to unleash.

Lydia was definitely going over the speed limit but hardly noticed. She was grinning ear to ear as flashes of her possible future presented themselves in her mind.

"Chris, you beautiful bastard."

Her smile grew wider as she imagined how he must have pitched her to his uncle. It just had to prove that he was more into her than he led on.

**Why else would he have done it?**

**Uh, because he's your friend,** the evil little voice of doubt responded.

Giddy with thoughts of the future and all of its possibilities, she shook it off and thought about how she would show her gratitude whenever she saw him next.

Betelgeuse walked right up to the bar and eyed the stage. He snickered at his most recent antics to get rid of the bouncer as the half-naked dancers eyed him suspiciously.

**That was easy.**

The rest of members turned to look at him. Upon further scrutiny, he realized he stuck out like a sore thumb. Everyone was dressed in their finest getup while he still had his torn up tuxedo on from his almost-wedding. He tugged at his sleeves and blinked himself into his finest striped suit. Adjusting his tie, he walked towards the stage.

The windshield wipers were doing jack shit to help Lydia see through the persistent rain. She could barely see the cars in front of her. Thinking of safety, despite her speeding, she put on her hazard lights so that the cars behind her could see her better.

The music wasn't really his taste, but that didn't stop him from enthusiastically dancing in front of the stage while a beautiful purple skinned stripper wiggled her ass in front of his face. He fought the urge to grope said ass, but, well… that only lasted about a fraction of a second.
Lydia heard the honking first. She couldn't pinpoint where it was coming from.

"Hey! Who said you could touch me? Vince! This pervert put his hands on me."

A young handsome man with jet black hair stood up and eyed Betelgeuse with contempt. He clearly ran the place. He snapped his fingers and the bouncer blinked into view. He was covered in yellow sand and had his arms were held up to defend himself from something. Everyone stared at him as he looked around trying to register where he was. When his gaze landed on Betelgeuse, he snarled.

"You!"

_Aw shit._

It happened too fast, Lydia didn't have enough time to react. An 18 wheeler was suddenly in view.

Betelgeuse could have taken them all had he anticipated being kicked in the balls from the dancer before him. As soon as he hit the ground, security attacked all at once.

She didn't even have enough time to scream.

All went black.

All went black.

_Note:_

Chapter 3 Author's Post Notes:

**Universe tidbits:**

My interpretation on summoning Betelgeuse is a little more complicated than other author's because after watching the film for the billionth time last night, there were some things that irked me. Here we go.

Betelgeuse moves his grave to the model. Why? If all they have to do is say his name 3 times?

They have to dig him up first and he busts out without having to say his name again 3 times.

Saying his name 3 times after the snake part, he gets sent back to the model but doesn't really go away.

Adam had ALL the time in the world to say his name when Betelgeuse sent him to the model. Instead, Adam got in the car and drove towards Betelgeuse and crashed into his foot. So, either Adam was muted by Betelgeuse or proximity is a factor. Or Adam is just plain dumb. Obviously, the real reason is, it's a film and they needed some action.

We also know: "Geographical and Temporal Perimeters... Functional perimeters vary from manifestation to manifestation." So, I'm thinking you can't just waltz onto someone else's haunting grounds. This makes it easily believable that Betelgeuse has truly been stuck in that grave for centuries. It's just not that easy to get out. It also explains why he doesn't just go right back to the
Maitlands after being eaten and is stuck in the waiting room. He was pushed out of the perimeter. The waiting room has its own perimeter.

The afterlife has a voucher system. I'm using that as the reason why Juno is able to visit them so easily.

The movie goes by the rule of three for several things. 3 knocks on the door to enter the waiting room. Invoking his name 3 times brought Adam and Barbara to Betelgeuse inside the model. Saying "home, home, home" sends Adam and Barbara out of the model.

**My thoughts are these:**

Saying or doing anything 3 times with the proper intention will manifest whatever you're trying to do within reason.

I'm using Planes of Existence layers to separate the living world from the netherworld. Physical Plane and the Astral Plane. When I use the word aether or aetherial body or aetherial fog or quintessence, I'm referring to "spiritual air" or a layer or even a veil between the planes.

A living person has a Physical Body as the outermost layer. A ghost has an Astral Body as its outermost layer. Everything has energy, even inanimate objects, so everything has layers, it just depends on where that object exists that determines what kind of layer it has.

A poltergeist is a ghost who has the ability to manipulate things that have a Physical Body with the intention of using it to disturb the living. Adam and Barbara are only able to do it with the sheets and then again at the dinner party. So, that makes them poltergeists too at those points in time. Even Betelgeuse refers to himself as a ghost.

I know I'm forgetting something… Oh well!
Lydia woke up in a bed. She blinked and looked around. The walls were bare and dull grey color. She sat up slowly and realized she was in a hospital bed, but that was the only thing in the room.

She removed her blanket and saw she was still in the clothes she left the house in; mud covered boots, dark blue jeans, long-sleeved black shirt, and her poncho. Everything felt odd. She could certainly feel the blanket in her hands, but it didn't seem right. Even the walls seemed a bit warped when she concentrated on them. Her breathing came easily enough but the air felt... different.

She swung her legs onto the floor with ease. Too much ease it seemed. She tried to remember how she got there. The events of the crash came flooding in at once. Images overwhelmed her so much that she had to hold her head in her hands to stay grounded.

"Oh no. Am I... dead?" She whispered.

"No," said a voice suddenly.

Lydia snapped her head to find a woman about her age in the room. She was a lanky thing, with long brown hair and buck teeth. A headband adorned her head, making her look innocent and vulnerable.

"Who are you? Lydia demanded.
"Oh, um, I'm Bertha. Nice to meet you, Lydia. You're probably a little confused."

"You can say that," she replied cautiously.

"They don't really like it when we get out of our rooms, but it's just so boring here, and we don't know when we'll... well... wake up... so..."

"Wake up?"

"Yeah, so, um, you're in a coma."

Lydia stared at the girl before her in disbelief. "Where am I?"

"That's a good question!" She chirped happily. "We are in sector eight! It's a holding area for people like us. But, I guess your caseworker will tell you everything you need to know."

"My caseworker?" Lydia started to panic. She had a caseworker. She was in a hospital bed. She was dead. She had to be dead.

No. She said I wasn't dead. What did she say again? I'm in a coma. Okay. So, this is a dream.

"This is a dream," she whispered.

"Well, kinda, but no, not really."

At that moment, a knock came at the door. A short dark haired man entered the room. "Bertha, what are you doing here?"

"Oh, just welcoming Lydia. I wanted her to see a friendly face when she woke up."

"That's nice, dear, but you should really get going. I need some time with her now."

"Okay! See you later Lydia!" Bertha left the room.

The short man walked towards Lydia and sat in a chair. A chair that was definitely not there before.

"Hello, Lydia, I'm Bart. I'll be your caseworker while you're here. Nice to meet you. You're probably wondering where you are."

Before Lydia could interject, he continued talking like he was regurgitating a script he'd said many times before, flipping through the pages of what looked to be a hospital chart.

"You suffered a severe head injury, which has placed your Physical Body in a coma, which brings you here, sector eight. You will wait here until your number is called and you can either go back to the Physical Plane or pass on into the afterlife."

"No. No-no-no-no."

"I understand this can all be a bit overwhelming, but you'll just have to be patient."

"You don't understand. I have to leave. I have to go to New York."

Bart ripped a piece of paper out of the chart and handed it to Lydia.

"Yes, yes, we all have places to be. Here is your number. I'll see you again when your number is
called and then we will find out what the next step is. All right?"

Lydia took the piece of paper as Bart got up and went for the door. It read: 360,058,216

"Uh, mister? This is a really big number. Hey, wait! Hey! I want to see Juno!"

Bart suddenly stopped in his tracks.

"Juno? How do you know-"

"I want to see her right now!"

Bart frowned and shook his head. "I'm afraid that's impossible right now."

"Well then, when?" Lydia shouted.

"When you die, I suppose." And with that, he left the room.

Lydia felt like her mind was literally being pulled in different directions. She was panicking. There was a little knock at the door and Bertha peered inside. Witnessing a distraught Lydia, she walked up to her and gingerly held her hand.

Lydia looked at Bertha, her voice shaking with fear. "How long have you been here?"

Bertha gave her a sad smile. "Five months."

Lydia felt a pang in her gut. It reverberated through her whole body and it hurt like hell. Crossing her arms over her midsection, she doubled over.

Bertha stroked her back and tried to soothe her.

"That's your solar plexus. It responds to emotional pain. Since you're separated from your Physical Body, it doesn't have a buffer anymore. Once you calm down, it'll go away."

Lydia tried to breathe through it.

"Hey look, you have a smaller number than mine!" Bertha showed Lydia her number: 385,000,760.

Lydia's eyes widened in horror. Bertha had been here for 5 months and her number wasn't too far behind her own. "I need to get out of here, Bertha. I can't stay here! I have graduation, I have a job, I have a very important meeting!" She was in hysterics.

"I know. We all left things behind." Bertha squeezed Lydia's hand.

"There's gotta be another way," she breathed. "I could die here."

Bertha sighed sadly. "Yeah, I suppose that's a possibility for everyone here."

"I need some air. Can we go outside?"

"Yeah! It's actually pretty bizarre out there. Come on, I'll show you!"

Bertha grabbed Lydia by the wrist and yanked her off the bed. They ran through a twisted hallway until they reached a double door. Bertha pushed on it and pulled Lydia outside.

There were mostly empty dirt fields and at the very edge was a wall of fog that went straight up to the sky as far as the eye could see. The sky was grey with streaks of green light streaming through
The floor cracks.

"The fog goes around the whole perimeter. It's so we don't leave. Some have tried but just end up back here." Bertha seemed in awe of everything. Lydia started running for the fog. Bertha watched her disappear into it. For a moment, Lydia was hidden from view, but then she burst out of another area at full speed and suddenly stopped. Bertha waived at her smiling.

"Weird, huh?" She called out to her.

Lydia crumpled to the ground in utter defeat. Bertha ran up beside her.

"It's not so bad you know? Sometimes we get visitation rights!"

Lydia whipped her head up to meet Bertha's gaze. "What do you mean?"

Excitedly, Bertha sat up to attention. "We can get visits from family and friends who have passed on, if they're still in the Astral Plane, that is.

Lydia's gut was humming with hope. Maybe I can call Barbara! "How?"

Bertha was up and running again without warning. Lydia followed close behind. Once they were inside the building again, Bertha led her through the twisted hallways into a room full of telephone booths. They were all occupied with lines of people wait for their turn. Lydia groaned in frustration, but Bertha simply went up to the next person in line at the closest booth and whispered something in their ear. It was an older woman and she looked towards Lydia and nodded her head. Bertha beckoned Lydia to approach.

"She says you can cut in front. You won't have much time so, make it quick"

Lydia turned to the woman and thanked her profusely. It seemed like ages before the person in the booth came out even though it was only mere seconds. She quickly scurried inside. She closed the door and picked up the receiver, but there were no number keys. Absolutely nothing to dial with. Suddenly, she knew what to do. She put the receiver to her ear, closed her eyes and concentrated on Barbara's face.

"Barbara. Barbara," she took a deep breath and prayed this would work,"Barbara." The phone started to ring.

"Hello?"

Upon hearing Barbara's voice, Lydia's solar plexus burst within. She struggled to keep her composure. "Barbara, it's me, Lydia."

"Oh my god! Lydia! Wait, Adam, hold on! Lydia? Oh no, please don't tell me…"

"I'm in sector eight. Can you call Juno or something and get me out of here? Please!

"Sector eight? What does that mean?"

Someone was already knocking at the door.

"Barbara, call Juno. Tell her I'm in sector eight. Please, I need to get out of here!"

"Sweetheart, we can't, we've used up our vouchers. But-"

The call disconnected. The knocking came again even more impatient.
This can't be happening.

Suddenly a face came to mind. Her eyes widened at the possibility.

Should I? Would he?

The knocking came again even louder. She slammed the receiver down and then placed it at her ear again.

"Beetlejuice. Beetlejuice… Beetlejuice!

Chapter 4 Post Notes:

Oh shiznit! What is Lydia thinking! She's in for it now folks!

Let's talk details:

Anyone reading this ever had any lucid dreams? I have. And they are weird, let me tell ya. I tried my best to describe, without over-describing, what sensations feel like it that state. Lydia is in a coma and her aetherial wrapped soul is now in a holding area.

People believe that when you lucid dream, you are actually astral projecting or ethereal projecting. Apparently, there is a difference between the two, but I've read a lot of convoluted jargon on the subject. So, I'll be sticking with something I read on a medium's website which is something like this:

The ethereal body is the body you have immediately after death and it disintegrates over time. After that, you have an astral body.

Because Lydia is still alive and has Physical Body still breathing, her conscious form is an ethereal body or subtle body still connected to it. She can feel sensations, but in this state these sensations are different.

From lucid dreaming experience, I've noticed that whenever I feel any kind of pleasure or pain in that state, it's overwhelming. It's like an instant fire that spreads all over, usually waking me quickly. So, I've included that. In waking life, we feel our solar plexus "ache" when we have a deep emotional desire or deep emotional pain. Angst will certainly affect it.

Since the solar plexus is near the digestive system, which affects about 70% of everything going on in our body, and emotions affect our digestive system, I thought it would be very symbolic to keep referring to it. It shows up a lot and there will be a payoff.
Reunion

Chapter Notes

Oh dear. This is it. The chapter you have all been waiting for. I think. Lol. Our favorite couple meets in this chapter and I'm eager to know what you think!

Disclaimer: I wish, but I don't own Beetlejuice. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

Betelgeuse started to stir when he felt something nuzzling his cheek. His whole being ached from the collective blast he endured and he wasn't quite ready to wake up. The nuzzling moved to his ear and evolved into a suckle. It felt good.

"Mm, baby, yeah. That's nice."

He turned over and flung his arm around whoever was next to him. Whoever it was, they were now squirming in his embrace pleasantly and began nibbling harder.

"Ow," he chuckled, "easy there… OW!" his eyes snapped open to reveal a baby sandworm with his ear in its mouth.

Betelgeuse shrieked like a banshee causing the sandworm to retreat in fear suddenly, taking his ear with it.

"Hey! Get back here you little shit!"

It scurried away as Betelgeuse scrambled to his feet to give chase. When he got close enough, he threw himself on the beast and wrestled with it, prying his ear out of its mouth. Betelgeuse shot up from the ground and then grabbed the scared little sandworm by the tail, tossed it in the air, and punted it across the fields of Saturn.

"And it's good!" He cackled until a rumbling beneath him froze him to the core.

"Oh, fuck."

A large sandworm erupted from the ground before him.

"Ah, you must be mama..." he laughed nervously. The mother looked around for its young, becoming visibly agitated when she saw no sign of the spawn. "Ha! Well, um, I think I saw your kid somewhere around here. Great kid you got there."

Mid-sentence, he made a break for it and the sandworm raged in fury chasing after him.

"Shit-shit-shit-not again!"

He concentrated on finding an opening. He ran until he found a sweet spot and snapped his fingers. The sandworm was hot on his tail but he managed to reach the door he had just manifested and
crashed through it in the nick of time.

Tumbling into an alley, he blinked hard sending the door away just as the sandworm was about to lurch through the portal.

Betelgeuse rolled onto his back and crowed his victory, flipping off no one in particular with both hands. After his laughter subsided some, he dropped his arms to his sides. He looked utterly depressed.

"Fuck, this sucks."

A high pitched whistle filled the air and was growing louder by the second. Betelgeuse squinted looking up at something in the sky. It was getting larger and he realized it was plummeting straight for him. His eyes widened in fear.

"Why me?" He whined. He threw his arms up to his face and braced himself for the impact screaming his head off like a little girl.

A large telephone booth crashed into the ground in front of him, leaving him unscathed, and started to ring.

As the dust settled, he opened one eye and suspiciously looked around. Danger apparently gone, he sat up. Tired of waiting for him to answer, the telephone booth opened and the phone receiver catapulted out the door, hitting him square in the face.

"Oomph! Gah! Fucking-mother-shit!"

"Hello?"

Betelgeuse heard the timid feminine voice come out of the receiver. He raised one eyebrow and looked around to see if someone was pulling a prank.

"Are you there?" The little voice asked.

He eyed the receiver again and picked it up placing it by the earless hole in his head.

"Who is this?" he gruffed. Whoever it was, he could hear her breathing.

_That's odd…_

There was a long silence before…

"I'm in sector eight. Meet me by the perimeter. Hurry. I'll be waiting."

The phone disconnected.

The booth yanked back the receiver, nearly taking his arm with it, closed the door and shot up into the sky again.

Betelgeuse sat dumbfounded for a moment. He scratched his head then reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out a cigarette. He pondered at what the fuck had just happened as he snapped his fingers and lit his cigarette with a flaming finger.

_That voice… sector eight…_

"That's the coma ward. Who the hell could be calling me from th-"
He almost choked on the smoke as the realization hit him.

*Nah. It couldn't have been…*

But it was the only possibility. He didn't know anyone else alive right now except the Deetzes.

*It was her.*

He still had trouble believing it to be true. He picked up his ear, dusted it off, and shoved it back into place. He replayed the cryptic message again in his mind and smiled in a way that would leave anyone running for the hills of Saturn.

"Lydia." He chortled. "Well-ah! Guess I'm off to sector eight."

Lydia nearly tripped over herself as she ran out of the booth. She apologized to the woman who had let her cut in line and ran past Bertha. She realized quickly that she didn't know where she was going. She skidded to a halt as the weight of what she had just done crashed into her.

Her whole being was vibrating from the clashes of emotions wrenching at her midsection. Unable to stand any longer, she slid down against a wall onto the floor.

*Oh, holy shit, what've I done? What have I done?*

She replayed what had happened in her mind over and over again. At first, she had heard some muttering, maybe some cursing, and then… his voice.

"Who is this?"

It was like a punch to the stomach. She would recognize that voice anywhere.

*It was him. It was really him.*

She couldn't believe it, but what had she expected? She hoped he didn't recognize her voice. She hoped he would come. She hoped he wouldn't. She hoped…

*What am I gonna do?*

Certainly, once he found out who called him, he would want revenge…

*Right?*

There was no way he would help her. But if anyone could get her out of here…

*It would be him.*

She knew what he wanted. His freedom. Marriage. She shuddered. She wanted to throw up or was it shit herself? She didn't quite know exactly, but her solar plexus was pounding. So wrapped up in her turmoil was she that she didn't notice when Bertha came to quietly sit down beside her.

"Were you able to reach someone?"

Lydia laughed mirthlessly. "Yeah, I did."

"Are they coming to visit?" She asked sweetly.
Lydia pursed her lips and nodded slowly. "Yep, I think so."

"Oh that's nice. I'm glad!"

Lydia laughed again before hugging her knees to her chest.

_I'm so screwed._

It didn't take long for Betelgeuse to locate sector eight. He had been there before, but he couldn't see past the fog and had no idea where Lydia would be waiting. She would have to come to him but knew that she would run into the same problem.

So, he considered how he could possibly get a message to her. He could enter the fog, but it would never lead him into the ward, not without a guide, or some major manipulation. No, subtlety would suit him better here. He needed something small that would go unnoticed, except by her. The perimeters of the aetherial fog were bound to lead her in circles.

_Not this time._

"Let's see, let's see," he scratched his chin thinking, "Ooo!" He knelt to the ground and searched his pockets until he found what he was looking for, a small snake. With a snap, its shiny red scales transformed into bold, monochromatic stripes. He inspected it, not quite happy with it.

"Hmm, needs somethin'..." he grinned as an idea popped into his mind.

He was jittery with anticipation. This was the most exciting thing that had happened since the Maitlands set him loose. His little friend was set free with something in its mouth and he watched, with glee, as it slithered away and disappeared.

"Your knight is here, Lydiaaaaa," he singsonged. He cackled wildly, perched himself cross-legged in mid-air, and waited.

Lydia stood outside staring at the fog, chewing her lip, eyes dancing wildly in her sockets looking for any sign of him.

_Nothing._

She had not really thought this through, but who could blame her? Now, she pondered how she would find him in the fog.

_Can he even come through? Will he even show up? Oh, he'll show up..._ Her mind whispered in warning. _What's that?_  

Something in the distance had caught her eye. She walked cautiously to the edge of where the fog began until she reached a strange thorned twig with a black bulb sticking out of the ground.

It was a closed black rose, she realized. She bent down, brushing her fingers across the petals, only to gasp and retreat when it suddenly blossomed, revealing a small snake curled up inside. It hissed as it dropped to the ground and the flower withered and turned to dust.
The snake stretched out and rose to meet Lydia's eye, mere inches from her face. She gazed in wonder more than fear. A mixed feeling of exhilaration and dread filled her being as an involuntary smirk tugged at her lips. She could have sworn it snickered as it lowered itself and slithered into the fog.

Lydia stood slowly and wondered why she wasn't more afraid. With pursed lips and steeled nerves, she stepped into the abyss. "Here we go."

The fog was thick. It was hard to keep the snake within view, but it would wait patiently whenever she lost sight of it so that she might follow. Suddenly, the snake raced off and disappeared, before she went to follow she stopped dead in her tracks. A silhouette of someone was standing before her a few feet away. She swallowed hard and took a few steps closer, extra slow.

Her solar plexus tingled in warning. It was him. There was no mistaking it. She could see the outline of wild hair sticking out in every possible direction. His stance was casual, hands in his pockets and a twist in his lips.

"Well, hello, betrothed," his rough voice greeted her with a hint of menace.

Lydia's eye twitched, but it was the only thing that gave away the current of dread welling up within. Her arms crossed and tried her best to approach the situation just as nonchalantly as he was.

"Didn't think you'd show," she said, aloof.

"Ohohoho, I wouldn't miss this. Karma, you I know I love it." He sniggered.

"Funny, that's exactly what I thought when you got eaten by that sandworm."

There was a long silence and, briefly, Lydia thought that she had ruined her chances, but then he threw his head back and held his sides as he burst into laughter. It was unsettling but boosted her confidence.

"Woo! Kid, you got some balls," he barked, "I knew I liked you for a reason."

She could feel him sneer at her. "How do I get out of here?"
He was silent again.

Lydia felt her lips quirk into a smile as she spoke her next words. "You see, I've got these friends that I said I'd meet, it's the kinda thing I have to be there in person…"

He guffawed again recognizing his own words he'd used on her six years prior. The irony was just too much.

A smile came upon her, despite herself. His laugh was infectious, but she was still wary. After he regained his composure, he cleared his throat and got straight to business.

"Who's your caseworker?" He asked.

"Some guy named Bart."

"Bart? What does he look like?"

"Short and stubby. Weird looking guy, black hair, dark eyes, pointy ears."

"Ah! Bartholomew." He sucked air between his teeth and clicked his tongue. "He's still around, huh? Well, that's not great news for you, kiddo."

"Why?"

"Ah, well, he's a stickler for the rules. Had a great time rufflin' his feathers back in the day."

"How long will I be stuck here?"

"Hard to say." She could hear the smile in his voice.

"I've got a number-"

"Numbers are pretty arbitrary there if you know what I mean." He exhaled dramatically. "So many variables and whatnot. I mean, you could kick the bucket before your number's even called."

Lydia staggered, her hand shooting to her midsection as it flared.

"You alright there?" There was no concern in his tone. It was sinister. It made Lydia cringe.

"Can you get me out?"

She could see him tilt his head. He sniffed and brushed something off his shoulder.

"Sure, I can help." He said, ever so quietly. The same exact reply he had given her when she had asked him to save her friends from being exorcised. It gave her chills. Then he sniffed again.

"What's in it for me?"

"I'll marry you." She said without the least bit of hesitation.

"Ah-ah-ah," he wagged a finger in the air, "been there, not done that."

"I mean it this time. I was gonna anyway, you know?"

Betelgeuse dropped his arm to his side, intrigued. "What'da ya mean?" he inquired dubiously.

"I mean, I was going to hold up my end of the deal."
"Pft!"

"Really, I was! I just didn't know you meant we'd get married right away. Thought you'd come back when I was eighteen or something. Been waiting ever since."

She tried her best to sound convincing. It was half true, after all. She thought it was payment he would try to collect when she got older, not a shotgun wedding right then and there. She had been waiting, just not with any intention of paying up. He hadn't said anything. He was thinking.

Betelgeuse could only see her silhouette. It was taking everything in him not bust through the barrier. He was itching for her to see him and eager to see her reaction. He wasn't very surprised that she acted cool and collected. The almost deadpan tone of her voice told him she was still unphased by what most would shit their pants for. This pleased him to no end, but he knew she was nervous.

**Probably wondering how I'm gonna stick it to her.**

He knew she was lying through her teeth. It had only worked on him the first time because he was just so desperate to void the bylaws placed on him. He thought he could handle the little girl. But this time, he knew and didn't even care.

He had burned the paperwork that held his most difficult restraints. Getting summoned would be a piece of cake now. She didn't need to know that. Still, the marriage clause would be better. It would leave a permanent crack in the aether wherever she went and he would be able to pop in and out whenever he wanted.

The wheels turned in his mind.

"Why didn't you come back?" she asked curiously.

"Got busy," he said, buying himself some time. "I'm pretty popular, you know?" He adjusted his jacket and came to a decision without any real plan or reason. "Okay, babes. I'll do it."

He could hear her gasp, which made him smile. "You will?" she asked with a hint of hope in her voice. "Why?" Her tone changed doubtful.

"Way I see it, you let me out, I let you out, you still owe me for savin' tweedle dee and tweedle dumb. Maybe I can win your dark lil' heart over and you'll be askin' me to marry you when this is through. What've I got to lose?"

The truth was he didn't have much better to do at the moment.

**Plus, the longer I stay in contact with a breather, the harder it is for them to get rid of me.**

He could hear her breathy giggle.

"Yeah, sure. How do I know I can trust you?"

His smile turned feral. "What me?" His words dripped with sarcasm. "I've pulled through for you before, didn't I?"

This was true. He had come through that night, but it was because he thought he was getting something out of it. Did he really believe her? Did he think he'd get it this time? Was he just bored?
Or is he going to make me pay?

Lydia weighed her options. There had been no word from Barbara or Juno. She had no idea when she'd be called in. No guarantee she'd survive.

"Can you really put me back in my body? I'll live? For sure?"

"Cross my heart and hope to die again, babe. And you'll fulfill the end our deal? Posthaste?" He clipped.

"Yes."

"Excellent. We're gonna have us some fun." He chuckled most menacingly as he raised his hand in the air. A sharp nail poked through the wall of fog and slid down, tearing through the veil. Lydia covered her ears as a shrill sound filled the air, like nails on a chalkboard. Then, a white moss covered hand came through and his ringed index finger curled slowly, beckoning her to him.

"Shall we?" He called to her sweetly.

Lydia gulped down the fear building up in her throat and placed her hand in the waiting palm of Betelgeuse.

Oh my goodness. It happened! Lydia doesn't even know she can't just get rid of him by saying his name 3 times! She's in over her head I think! But better the devil you know than the devil you don't know… right? ::maniacal laugh::

Tell me what you guys thought of their first conversation all these years later. I tried to come from a place of some familiarity, but not too much.

I think I've already touched on enough universe stuff for you guys to be able to follow along with what I got in this chapter. If not, just ask your questions in the comments section and I'll respond in
the next post!
A shrill sound filled the air and everyone dropped to the ground covering their ears. Bertha looked around wildly for Lydia. She raced to her room, but it was empty. An announcement blared in tandem with the shrill alarm.

"All patients report to the fields immediately! Stay close to the building and do not go near the barrier. I repeat, do not go near the barrier."

Bertha followed the crowd outside. Once everyone had evacuated the building, the deafening alarm ceased. Everyone sighed in relief bringing their arms down. They talked over one another trying to figure out what was going on.

Three caseworkers stood at the entrance of the building, including Bart. It was Bart who addressed the crowd with a bullhorn.

"Everyone, please remain calm. Silence! Thank you. We will be calling your number in chronological order. When your number is called, please report to your caseworker and enter the building."

A man near the front raised his hand. "What's happening?"

Bart eyed him with annoyance but answered.

"We fear there has been a breach of security. We just want to make sure you are all accounted for."

"Did someone escape?" Someone else called from the crowd.

Immediately the masses started to murmur amongst themselves.

"Now, now, please remain calm. We will begin to call your numbers in a moment."

When Betelgeuse felt Lydia's hand in his, he almost did a jig right then and there. She was actually
going along with it. She definitely had more gumption than he initially thought.

*Okay, asshole,* he mentally berated himself, *try not to fuck this up this time. Remember, boundaries. Boundaries-boundaries-boundaries.*

Juno had always tried to hammer that into his head since he was a child. He could hear her words echo in his mind now.

'Boy, you'll drive everyone mad! Nevermind asking anyone if you've overstepped your bounds! Assume the answer is yes, you insufferable muck-spout!'

The alarm went off as soon as he ripped the barrier, so there hadn't been much time. Still, he couldn't afford to damage the goods, so he was gentle pulling Lydia through the veil. It was lucky she was small, ripping the veil any more would likely endanger the entire perimeter. He wasn't so sure he hadn't already done it some permanent damage.

It started off well enough. She managed to get an arm and a leg out before toppling over. He was still holding her hand when in trying to keep her balance, she bunny hopped on one leg and rammed her head into his gut falling to her knees.

She stayed there stock still for a moment, hand in his. Apparently, she had been holding her breath because she let out a long exhale and lifted her head slowly, giving him a full view of her face for the first time in six years. She seemed to be having as much trouble finding what to say as he was. So, he did what he thought would help and cracked a joke at her expense.

"Very graceful, Lyds. I give it a ten outta ten," he rumbled, amused.

She looked at him confused for a moment as if she had expected an entirely different person to be standing before her. He quirked an eyebrow and smirked.

"You know, as much as I like havin' you so close to my balls, we should probably skedaddle. Like, now."
That did it. She jumped up to attention, snatched her hand away, and dusted herself off.

"You're still gross," she muttered.

He laughed and threw an arm around her shoulders. She started to try and squirm out of his embrace, but he held on tight and stomped a foot to the ground creating a gaping hole beneath them. Lydia only had a moment to widen her eyes before they began to plummet.

Her screams and Betelgeuse’s cackle were cut off as soon as the hole snapped shut.

Juno was half listening to her new client moan about her surviving husband.

"It's just not fair, ma'am. He should be here, not me. The slob had left his goddamn pants by the stairs. He leaves his dirty laundry everywhere! If you ask me, it should be considered murder. That sonofabitch!"

Juno rolled her eyes as Miss Argentina walked into her office. The smile she gave was genuine as the opportunity to escape the horrid woman presented itself.

"Is it an emergency?" She nodded her head and widened her eyes, signaling to Miss Argentina to say 'yes'.

The receptionist looked a bit perplexed but went along with it. "Yes?"
"Wonderf- I mean, oh dear! So sorry, but we'll have to take a raincheck." Juno stood and ushered the woman out the door. "Try reading up on some haunting techniques, give him a good scare. That'll make you feel better, so long!" She slammed the door shut. "Bimbo."

"Juno, the Maitlands wish to speak with you."

Juno shut her eyes hard and hoped she'd heard wrong. "Why? They used up their vouchers."

"Yes, I'm aware, but they said it was an emergency and caused a scene in the waiting room. Threatened to set a sandworm loose here if they didn't see you right away."

Juno smirked, "Is that right? Good thing they can't do that."

"Yes, I sent them home right away, but..." Miss Argentina pursed her lips doubting herself.

"What?" Juno asked concerned.

"Mrs. Maitland said that the Deetz girl was in an accident and is in sector eight."

Juno raised an eyebrow. "That's not my jurisdiction." She waved it off and went back to her desk.

"I know," continued Miss Argentina, "but... I just heard that there was a breach in sector eight."

Juno dropped the files she had picked up and slowly raised her eyes to meet Miss Argentina's.

"No." Was all she could utter.

Miss Argentina shrugged her shoulders. "Don't you think he woul-"

"No," she emphasized trying to will away what her mind knew to be true.

Miss Argentina knew it was probably best to let the matter drop, but she couldn't help herself. "I mean, I think he would..."

"GODDAMNIT! If I find out that Lydia Deetz is missing from sector eight... I'm gonna kill that stupid horse's ass!"

Miss Argentina was cringing away from Juno. The small woman could be terrifying when she wanted to be.

"BETELGEUSEBETELGEUSEBETELGEUSE!" Juno poured all her energy into summoning the horse's ass.

They were falling and Lydia was screaming. The madman next to her was laughing like the wicked witch of the west. She didn't even notice when he grazed his fingertips along the side of her left breast. Lydia couldn't tell whether her eyes were open or shut, it was so black.

She was still screaming even after they landed safely in what looked like a forest. Mouth still agape, she turned to him as her screaming slowly and comically died off and turned into a squeak. She looked up at his shit-eating, grinning face.

"You got quite a nice pair of lungs on ya, don'tcha?" His eyes drifted lower. "Gotta pair o' other nice things too."

Lydia looked down to find that her poncho and the shirt beneath it had shimmied up above her
breasts from the fall.

Lydia brought her fist up fast, but Betelgeuse was faster. He jumped out of the way and held up his hands in surrender.

"Hey, now," he entreated, "no need for domestic violence, sweet cheeks. I am savin' your hide, after all."

"Did you touch my boob on the way down here?" she seethed as she adjusted her clothes.

Betelgeuse actually managed to look aghast and placed his hand on his chest. "Here I am, goin' outta my way, riskin' my neck for you, again. And whatta I get? Dirty looks, a swing to the face, and unwarranted accusations. I mean, sheesh, what does a guy gotta do get a 'thank you' these days?"

Lydia narrowed her eyes at him but then shifted her weight around, looking somewhat ashamed. "Thanks."

Betelgeuse gave her a slow smile and a wink in return. "You're very welcome."

He took a few steps towards her and she took a few steps back. He stopped and considered her for a moment.

"I don't remember you bein' scared o' me, kiddo." His tone was more serious than she thought him capable of.

"I-I'm not scared of you." She didn't sound very convincing.

"Hmph..." he took stock of her as she twisted the hem of her poncho in her hands. "This way," he said, and walked passed her.

Lydia could have sworn she saw hurt fleetingly cross his face as he walked by her. She followed him, keeping two paces behind. She watched in silence and tried to process everything.

When she had stumbled to her knees and looked up at him for the first time in half a dozen years, she was dumbstruck. Memories flooded her mind from that night and she had trouble acknowledging that he was standing right there in front of her as if the ghost she remembered was different from the one she now faced.

It was an odd feeling. At that moment, it reminded her of the time she met Goldie Hawn at a gallery in New York. She watched Overboard so many times, it was one of her dad's favorite movies. She wasn't really a fan, but upon seeing her in person, it had felt so surreal-

Oh, god. Am I feeling starstruck? She mentally vomited. How lame is that?

She refused to acknowledge that she indeed was feeling awed by the dead man walking before her. Then she tried to give herself some slack.

He did all these crazy amazing things, he saved my friends… Okay, Lydia, okay. You were sixteen, impressionable. It was the most exciting thing that had ever happened in your life up until that point… up until any point. Ever. Shit, I don't think meeting Annie Leibovitz could top this. Well, maybe... No. No, I don't think so.

She sighed heavily and realized he had been quiet the entire time she was warring internally with herself. The silence was making things even more strange. She cleared her throat and picked up her
pace so that her gait was parallel with his.

"So, how're we doing this? Where're we going?" She asked matter-of-factly.

Betelgeuse threw his arm around her shoulder and pulled her in close so he could talk directly into her ear. Lydia made a small sound of protest but stayed put not wanting to damage the fragile civility they had established.

"Would ya believe that I have no idea?"

"What?!"

"No worries, babe, we'll figure it out."

"But you said you could put me in my body!"

"Oh yeah, piece-o'-cake. But we gotta find your body first."

"Um, okay, it should be in Connecticut."

"Oh, so still hangin' around that podunk town?"

He practically had her in a headlock. Lydia was having trouble walking, but it didn't seem to bother the poltergeist.

"No, I was home after I finished classes."

"Oh yeah? Where?"

He was talking to her like they were old chums and it was making Lydia's head spin with so much confusion, she just answered his questions as they came without even wondering if she should be.

"NYU."

"Nice. Great school. Photography, I hope? Don't tell me you went into psychology like every other dipshit your age these days."

Lydia actually barked out a single laugh and caught herself.

*Wait. How does he know that?*

She thought about prying herself away and questioning him but thought better of it.

"Yeah, photography with a minor in business and journalism."

"That's my gal!" He gave her a small shake of encouragement, which made Lydia trip over herself. "Mixin' passion with a bit-a business sense. Knew you were smart. So! Any boy toys in the mix?"

He waggled his eyebrows and gave her another shake, hungry for gossip.

"Um, kinda…" *Why, Lydia, why did you just say that?*

"Oooo, tell ol'Betel all about it. Is he good in the sack?"

Lydia scoffed, her eyes widened in shock. "That is none of your business."

"Aw, come on! I'm just trying to make conversation! Hey, would it help if I was a chick?" He...
asked excitedly. He didn't wait for her to respond. He suddenly stopped walking and jumped away from her.

Lydia stumbled trying to catch her balance from the sudden lack of support. She caught sight of his stilettos first. Then her eyes snapped to his cantaloupe sized breasts. Lydia's jaw dropped.

His tube top was showing way too much midriff with a dirty blonde happy trail leading into his bell bottom jeans. His hair was long and frizzy and he whipped it over his shoulder in exaggerated femininity.

"Come on," even his voice was more feminine but still raspy and rough. "Betty just loves gossiping about boys. Now, don't over exaggerate. How big's his dick?"

She couldn't help herself. Lydia burst out laughing. Her solar plexus spreading a warm sensation through her that made her even giddier.

Betelgeuse, or Betty, looked at her with mock pity. "That small, huh?" His voice suddenly went back to normal as he brought a heel up to adjust it. "Seriously, I don't how women can walk in these things."

The absurdity of it all was just too much for Lydia. She crossed her arms over her midsection and tried to calm herself.

Suddenly, Betelgeuse let out a growl. He was holding his head in his hands with his eyes shut. At first, Lydia thought he'd suddenly gotten angry with her for laughing, but then he started shouting.

"Dammit, Juno! You're gonna blow my fuckin' head off!" He growled again, turned around and
punched a nearby tree.

The tree shuddered, dropping leaves and pieces of bark. A crunching sound emanated from it as the bark on its trunk started to shape into a large face. Then, to Lydia's surprise, it started to talk.

"Imbecile! You Bet-," the face had stopped short and furrowed its barky eyebrows. It scanned Betelgeuse from head to toe. It rolled its barky eyes and continued yelling. "You better not have had anything to do with the sector eight breach."

Betelgeuse pulled up his tube top and adjusted his breasts, which made Lydia giggle.

The tree face peered over Betelgeuse's shoulder and shuddered in anger upon seeing Lydia's silent fit of laughter and tear streaked face.

"Lydia Deetz!" It bellowed, bringing Lydia's hysterics to a complete stop. "You march your ass back to the coma ward. Now!"

Betelgeuse let out an exaggerated phlegmy exhale. "Juno, you suck the fun out of everything. When'd ya lose your sense of humor?"

"I never had one, you buffoon!"

"Mmm, you're right. Listen, Junebug. Lyds and I have a deal, so, beat it. Or, are ya gonna snitch?"

"Betelgeuse. It's only a matter of time before Bartholomew finds out who's missing and who did the abducting! And you," the tree face turned to Lydia again, "you obviously didn't learn the first time around, what happens when this nincompoop is involved in anything! Do you still have a death wish, girl?"

Betelgeuse turned to Lydia and raised his eyebrows. They were actually waiting for her to answer.

"Um, no? And, he didn't abduct me. I called him."

Betelgeuse swelled with pride as Juno huffed in frustration.

"Well, you belong together, now, don't you? Because you're both brainless!"

Betelgeuse only chuckled, which made his breasts bounce up and down. Lydia couldn't help the next fit of giggles. "This is so insane."

"You bet your ass it is!" Juno bellowed. "I bet he didn't tell you that you just about signed your own death warrant!"

Now, this grabbed Lydia's attention.

"If you get caught, you'll get a one-way ticket to the afterlife," Juno said soberly.

Lydia was losing her patience. "I guess we'll just have to not get caught, then. We should get going now, you're slowing us down." With that, Lydia stalked off.

Betelgeuse laughed aloud and slapped his knee. "You just got dissed!"

Juno stared at Betelgeuse with a bored expression. "I wonder how many years they'll slap on you for this."

"Bah! Who gives a shit? I know I don't."
"I do," Juno entreated.

"Hey, Junebug? Can you stick around while I walk in that direction?" He pointed towards Lydia.

"Why?"

"I want'cha to tell me how my ass looks in these jeans. Be honest, do I look fat?" He walked away and looked over his shoulder just in time to see Juno glare at him and disappear. He snickered as he changed back to normal, putting on his more casual clothes and cap.

When he turned around again to walk after Lydia, she stood in the distance waiting for him. He couldn't quite place the look she was giving him so he ignored it and appeared at her side with a blink.

In the most gentlemanly way possible, he held out his arm knowing full well he'd most likely be turned down and gave her a goofy smile. With a smile and a head shake, she looped her arm within his, surprising him for the umpteenth time since first he'd seen her.

Bartholomew had lost his patience by number 2,000. He gave the task to another caseworker and decided to walk the perimeter. They tried to stop him and told him it could be dangerous, but he was determined to prove it had all been a mistake. No one had ever ripped through the veil. It was impossible.

And anyway, who would be that determined to join the afterlife? We only have a handful of flags…

He momentarily thought of his newest client, Lydia Deetz. She had a flag on her file from six years ago.

She'd make a horrible civil servant. Too much defiance in her eyes.

As he walked the perimeter, he reflected on his own qualities. He was loyal to the system, followed the rules without question and had a zeal for keeping souls in line. He also had an unnatural knack for discovering troublemakers All of the qualities that would have made him an accomplished inquisitor in life.

He shook his head in dejection. It was his loss of faith that had landed him in the position he was now in. His church had failed him and he had no reason to live after that.

What a fool I was, but no longer.

Although no one knew what happened when souls crossed over from this plane to the next, he had faith, this time, that his unrelenting loyalty would lead him to the heaven he still believed in.

His reverie was interrupted when he saw something move across the floor.

There shouldn't be anything out here.

He ran after it. It was just out of reach, but he launched himself at it and was able to grab it by the tail. The small black and white snake struggled in his grasp. Then, he saw it and paled. The rip in the veil. It seemed to be trying to stitch itself together but was instead slowly ripping itself more.

"How? I don't understand, who could possi-"
The snake let out a hiss and bit him. His other hand shot out to grab it near its head. He stared in anger and it began to snicker.

*A snake. Black and white stripes. Someone strong enough to rip through the veil?*

Betelgeuse may as well have left a calling card.
"He's back," he growled.

Bartholomew's seething hatred boiled to the surface as he squeezed the snake until it stopped struggling. He dropped it on the ground and stomped on it for good measure.

The inquisitor within raged for justice.

"This will not stand. I shall hunt you down, Bait al-jauza." He smiled as he walked away from the hole and the snake, now lifeless on the ground.

---

**Post Notes:**

Just to clarify, the veil is a thick aetherial fog, the closest thing you can get to physical matter. We already know that Betelgeuse has plenty of practice manipulating physical matter, so aetherial matter is sub-physical. A piece of cake for him. Still, manipulating matter takes energy.

I'm steering away from using words like "magic" to describe how he is able to do what he does. I feel like it gives the impression that others are not capable of doing what he can. Everyone is capable of manifestation. Some are better than others, yes, but it's for lack of practice and belief in one's self rather than being "special" per se.

Knowing the laws of the universe, knowing the handbook, gives you an advantage. Knowledge is power, as I've had BJ mention already. He's had a lot of alone time to contemplate on those things.
We all know he's a cocky bastard, so that also gives him an advantage over others. He believes in his potential and believes he is better than others. So, therefore, he is.

The will to take action is also a factor. Certain emotions drive people to action. For instance: Anger, Fear, Love. BJ emotes with major intensity no matter what feeling it is. He doesn't hold back, also an advantage.

Manifestation is possible in every plane. The more physical the plane, the trickier it is to manifest. Everything is energy. Even BJ needs to replenish.
Lydia was getting tired. She had no idea how long they had been walking and Betelgeuse was frying her brain with his constant jabbering.

*Man, he can talk.*

She had lost track of what he was saying so she focussed on finding an opportunity to interject.

"...pissed himself, started crying. It wasn't my best work, but I gotta say, it was somethin' to see."

Lydia yawned before she could give a noncommittal reply.

"Am I boring' ya? Just tell me. You don't really talk much do ya?"

Lydia scoffed.

"Maybe if you gave me a chance to talk I would," she muttered.

Betelgeuse silently mocked her. She yawned again and had to pull on his arm to hold herself up.

"Looks like ya need a cat nap."

"Why am I…" she yawned again, "so tired?"

"I'm a bit tuckered out myself."

He grunted in disappointment when Lydia pried herself away from his arm to lean against a tree.

"You're tired? Could've fooled me," she complained, then slid to the floor. "Do you always talk that much?"

"Why does everyone ask me that?"
He asked it so genuinely that she laughed aloud. *Either he's really clueless or he's a great actor.*
*I'm going with clueless.* But when she looked up at him, he was grinning with a twinkle in his eye. *Okay, maybe a good actor, then.*

Betelgeuse was a *damn* good actor. He wouldn't admit it, but 'tuckered out' was a gross understatement. He was running on fumes. He'd done three transfers and ripped a barrier in less than twenty-four hours. Not to mention the parlor tricks he'd done just to get Lydia to lighten up.

The way she had looked at him and practically scurried away at his advance made him feel shitty. Normally, he'd relish in it, but this was Lydia. She was like him and that earned her some respect in his book.

*Just a little.*

He watched as she struggled to keep her eyes open.

"Your circadian rhythm must be kickin' in," he said as he brought up his arm and pushed his sleeve up to look at his watches. "Should be about two a.m. in Connecticut right now."

Lydia furrowed her brow in confusion and yawned yet again. As usual, he ignored the little voice yelling 'boundaries' in his head and sat down next to her until their shoulders were touching. She didn't move away or complain, so he relaxed into her some more. Betelgeuse had always been overly social by nature, add to that the centuries of isolation?

"Do you not have any sense of personal space, BJ? Or are you just trying to cop another feel?"
Lydia deadpanned.

*BJ? Blech.*

He narrowed his eyes and thought hard.

"Both," he shrugged.

He was delighted when she snickered. Making her laugh was quickly becoming his favorite pastime. He briefly remembered a time when he had made whole crowds piss themselves in laughter. He had spent a much longer time making people piss themselves for other reasons, now. That thought was pushed aside.

"And pick a new nickname for me, will ya? I'm named after the star, not my favorite cocktail."

"Gross, but, that makes more sense now!" She said like her mind was just blown. "I have a question. Well, I have lots of questions, but I'll just stick to one…"

YAWN "for now.

"Shoot."

"How come you're not all tingly?"

"Tingly?" He asked puzzled.

"Yeah. When I touch Barbara and Adam I feel my skin go kind of numb."

"Well, there's your answer. You don't got skin now, do ya?"

"Is that it? That's all you're gonna give me." She eyed him playfully.
Ooo, I like that look.

He decided to mirror her look back to her.

“Well, you know, you're a breather. So, kinda can't tell ya. You know you tell your friends, your friends will-"

She laughed and nudged him hard. "Oh, shut up!"

She eyed him again and her laughter died off slowly, leaving a smirk on her face.

Is she delirious or flirting? Both? I think a little smooch will let me know!

Again, the little voice sounded the alarm and he gave it a mental 'fuck you'. He leaned in to plant his lips on her, but she was already talking again. He reeled it in before she even noticed and scratched the back of his neck trying to look aloof.

"Why are you being nice?" She asked shortly.

He furrowed his brow and frowned. "Whaddya mean? Haven't I always been nice to ya?"

She thought carefully, "To me. Although, there was that one time… you know. The snake?"

Betelgeuse loudly expressed his annoyance. "The one time and she has to bring it up. Did I hurt ya? Nope. Did I-"

"Why?" she cut him off.

"I thought you were just sticking to one question?" He criticized.

"Fine, whatever."

"Aw, come on now. I'm only joshin," he relented, "I like ya, kid. You and I have a lot in common."

"Ha! Like what? You don't know me." she jeered.

"You see ghosts, don'tcha? That's one thing." He counted on one hand.

"But you're dead."

"I saw ghosts when I was alive, dummy." He condescended.

This gave Lydia pause. More questions started popping up in her mind. So many, she could hardly keep track of what she wanted to ask next. He could see her eyes cloud over, wondering what he'd just revealed. Wondering what she should say. Wondering what secrets he held. But he was in no mood to go down that road. So, before she opened her mouth to say anything else, he finally listened to the little voice and stood up.

"You should get some shut eye."

He noticed his tone was short. Her face had fallen a bit. He didn't want to frighten her away.

"Don't let the sandworms bite!" He crooned playfully. Lydia snorted.

That's good enough for me.
"Where are you going?" She asked as he walked further away.

"Someone's gotta be the lookout. Ol' Junnie's right. Not much time to get this done. So, rest up. If you feel something pinchin' your ass, it's just the alarm," he winked.

He chortled when he could've sworn she turned a little green before she gave him her best 'don't you fucking dare' look.

When Lydia lost sight of Betelgeuse, she felt a bit unnerved. Unwittingly, she had begun to feel safe in his presence. She briefly thought about how she could possibly get to sleep on the ground, when suddenly and without warning, she was wrapped up in a sleeping bed. And there was something in there with her. Knowing him, she cringed at the thought of what it could be. With enough bravery to shock even herself, she pulled out a stuffed animal in the form of her first encounter with him. The snake with the creepy head. Wild hair and all. She poked at it just to make sure it wasn't really him in disguise.

She looked around for him, but he wasn't there. So, she snuggled into her sleeping bag with her totem and fell asleep.

She hadn't seen him, but he was there. He almost laughed aloud when she poked the little lovey he left for her. He watched her sleep for a few more minutes before concealing her presence. He wanted to dwell on some nagging feelings and thoughts that had come up while he watched her, but he was too worn out. So, he slept.

Juno was pacing. And smoking. She had been told to make herself available for a conference call. Miss Argentina already informed her that Bartholomew was responsible for arranging the meeting.

_He knows. Goddamn, that fool. Probably left his fucking business cards everywhere. Damn it. It just had to be Bartholomew. I thought I'd never had to hear his squeaky self-righteous shit again. Cocksucker._

A phone appeared on her desk and started ringing. Juno grimaced before answering and placed the call on speaker.

"Juno's office," she answered.

"Hello, Juno, I hope you're well today?" Said an unidentifiable voice. No one knew who the operator was. It was always assumed that he or she was from a higher level.

"Yes, operator, thank you. Although I do have a lot of work to do. Is there any way we can reschedule this meeting?" She replied, trying to buy some time.

"Absolutely not!" Yelled Bartholomew.

"Very sorry to inconvenience you, Juno," the operator continued. "Caseworker, Bartholomew has grievances and has specifically requested you to be on this call. Connecting to the mediator now."

The mediator was also unknown to the residents of the astral plane. Juno started to worry, but if there was anyone more conniving than her surrogate son, it was her. She steeled herself and prepared for the worst.

"Good day, caseworkers," said another unidentifiable voice. "Let me remind you that this meeting
will be conducted in a civilized manner. Bart, you may state your case."

"Thank you, mediator. I'm calling for the arrest of Betelgeuse. Known poltergeist and aggressor. I have reason to believe that he is responsible for the sector eight breach."

**Reason to believe, huh?** Juno smiled. *He doesn't have proof.*

"I thought your grievance was with caseworker Juno? Why have you requested her on this call?"

"Yeah," Juno responded. "What does this have to do with me?"

"You know very well that *he* is responsible. He no longer has superiors to-"

"Everyone has superiors," the mediator interrupted. She didn't know why, but that gave Juno chills.

"Of course, mediator, forgive me. I only meant to say that culprit needs to be dealt with immediately before he causes any more harm. Especially to the soul he's abducted." **Shit. Does he know it's Lydia?** Juno tried to reason with herself. She was the only one who knew what had happened with the Deetzes. Client confidentiality prohibited other caseworkers from prying into one another's business. *Keep calm. Don't give anything away.* She stayed silent.

"Please state your case clearly and concisely, Bart. Do you have any proof that Betelgeuse is responsible for the breach? If so, whom has he extricated?"

Juno noticed that the mediator used the word 'extricate' not 'abducted' or 'kidnapped'. Maybe it was just her imagination, but it appeared to her that the mediator didn't like Bartholomew. *Then again, this is a mediator and maybe she/he was just doing a great job being neutral.*

Juno could hear the hesitation in Bartholomew's voice.

"Well, I found the breach... and a... snake. But it was a very distinctive snake. Had black and white stripes! That's his signature! Everyone knows that!"

Now, Juno interrupted. "May I have permission to interject, mediator?"

"Of course."

Juno used her words carefully. "Sandworm stripes are very popular and commonly used in all manner of things here. Some troublemakers like to tag their handiwork to instill fear. If I may add, Bartholomew has a sordid history with Betelgeuse."

"I know he's out, Juno!" Bartholomew interrupted.

"I gave permission for Juno to speak. She shall speak without any further interruption from you."

"As I was saying, I believe that Bartholomew is jumping to conclusions. If he truly believed that Betelgeuse was the intruder, why isn't he on this call?"

"I tried! He blocked himself off! I say that's reason enough to know he's guilty!"

"Bartholomew." the mediator now had a coldness to its voice that made Juno momentarily dizzy. "You have been muted for the time being. Juno, is Betelgeuse no longer confined?"

Juno hung her head and sighed.
"No. He's been out for close to seven years now."

"And in that amount of time, there have been any complaints about him?"

"Not until Bartholomew."

"Well, that is surprising," the mediator said without a hint of surprise. "Has he done anything to redeem his past transgressions?"

**Well, that's a weird question.**

Was the mediator on her side after all? Who knew what the supervisors had access to or what they decided to do with the information. Juno thought quickly about how to respond.

"As a matter of fact, yes, he has. He saved two souls from imminent exorcism. Drew them back with only seconds to spare."

**Let's just leave out everything else he did…**

"Very impressive. Any reason why he may have cut off communication ties?"

Juno knew she couldn't lie, but she sure as hell wasn't going to give everything away.

**A half-truth then.**

"I believe he's upset with me. He found out recently that some of our friends moved on. He didn't get to say his farewells. He blames me."

"Understandable. Bart, who did you say was abducted?"

Bartholomew was unmuted and started stammering. "Well, we're st-still taking a-attendance…"

"So there is no evidence yet that anyone was removed from sector 8, let alone against their will?" The mediator questioned.

"Uh, well, n-no-

"That will be all, Bart. Rest assured that we will send someone to repair the damaged barrier as soon as possible. There are more pressing matters to be dealt with until then. Juno, apologies for wasting your time and expect another call soon. We've been discussing a possibility for promotion for you. You've done wonderful work. Good day to you both."

The mediator had left the call, leaving a seething Bartholomew and a grinning Juno on the line.

"You still there, Bart?" She just couldn't help herself.

"I'm going to get him, Juno. You make sure he knows that." He said quietly.

"Sure thing," she replied, dripping with faux civility and hung up the phone.

**Chavi, you lucky bastard. Let's hope your luck actually lasts this time.**

---

**Post Notes:** Oh Juno... Ever the reluctant mother hen. And Bart is just an uber douche, huh? My
idea for the operator and the mediator is that they're from a higher plane. If we go in order, the plane above the astral plane is the mental plane. Here is a snippet from Wikipedia:

"In the mental world one formulates a thought and it is instantly transmitted to the mind of another without any expression in the form of words. Therefore on that plane language does not matter in the least; but helpers working in the astral world, who have not yet the power to use the mental vehicle."

So, I thought the whole phone thing was a fun way to use that.

Another thing I wanted to add about action and manifesting is that whenever I have had lucid dreams, sometimes I'm willing something to happen and it doesn't work. Whether it be turning night into day, or flying, or just changing the scenery... most of the time, just thinking it doesn't make it happen. I have found that in those instances, I've had to trick my mind into thinking that something I do will make that thing happen. For example, one time everything was too dark. I tried thinking about turning on light, but nothing happened. So, I decided to look for a light switch in the dark. My hand immediately found one and I flipped the switch. And then there was light!

You'll see in a future chapter, that Lydia will go through this thought process. Also, think about Betelgeuse. He ALWAYS does some kind of action for something to happen. Blinking, winking, nodding, hand motions, are all actions he uses to make things happen.

One more thing. Not sure if I've been able to make it clear, but suicides are working through there time in the astral plane in order to move on. My interpretation of why that's the case is that they need to feel worthy of moving on. They probably don't even see it that way, but they have no way of knowing when their job is finished. Betelgeuse has no intention of working through his crap and you'll see why in a later chapter.
Where's Deetz?

Well, I believe you'll all be happy with how this chapter ends. Teehee.

Disclaimer: I do not own Beetlejuice. Waaa. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

"Boy! Did I just feel your hand on my backside?" She was beautiful even when she was angry. But she didn't seem that angry at all. In fact, she seemed to be suppressing a smile.

She was older than him, but just about of marrying age at most. She was obviously of higher status, though most were, for a Manzer foundling had no status at all. He had seen her come to the market with her mother every Sunday after mass.

"Be you a pickpocket or are your manners simply atrocious?" She demanded.

Well, he was a pickpocket in training, but that had nothing to do with pinching her backside. Thoroughly ashamed, he hung his head.

"My apologies, miss." He said as she shuffled his feet.

She seemed to pity him, for she was no longer angry. "What is your name, boy?"

"I've no name, miss." He admitted.

She furrowed her brow in confusion and his heart almost failed him.

"What do they call you, then?"

"All manner'a things," he said with a guilty grin.

She laughed. He would surely die now from the beautiful sound.

"I can only imagine." She considered him a moment then pulled out her coin purse. "Here," she said as she gave him some coin "there is a carnival. You would have a merry time there."

He opened his hand and felt her fingertips touch his filthy skin as she left the coin in his palm.

"Will you be attendin'?"

"Indeed I will," she winked and then walked away.

Betelgeuse awoke with a start and felt sickened by his dream. He hadn't thought about her in centuries.

Rhoslyn. Ugh, why? Because you've been rubbin' up on the breather too much. That's what'cha get, dumbass.

He jolted to his feet at the thought of Lydia. He had no idea how long he'd been out. He snapped his fingers and she was revealed. Still sleeping in the sleeping bag with her arms wrapped around the stuffed snake. He smirked at her innocent form and then checked his watch.
Six a.m. Not great for a full recharge, but it'll do.

He sat back down and leaned against the tree behind him. He pulled his hat from his head, pulled the placard off, and turned it over. Scrying was a cinch, but at that moment he wasn't sure where to start looking. He decided to start with the Deetz residence. He had a clear path there now, so it was the easiest place to look and wouldn't take too much energy.

Barbara was cleaning ferociously and Adam was reading the handbook and taking notes. The Deetzes were nowhere to be found. He needed directions. He needed more mirrors. Lydia didn't have much time. He wasn't worried though. He knew exactly who he needed to see if he was still around.

What the fuck?

He watched Lydia, apparently still asleep, moving and…

An evil grin split his features as he realized what was transpiring.

Chris was in her room in Winter River. He was slowly making his way around scrutinizing her work that adorned her walls. He looked so sexy with his round butt and wide shoulders. Lydia found some courage and walked towards him. She pinched his cute ass and he whirled around. His smile was perfect.

"Did you just pinch my ass, Deetz?" He asked playfully.

She frowned a bit at his use of her last name. She thought they were past that. She moved closer and placed her hand on his chest. She traced the contours of the muscles there before pushing him so hard that he fell back on her bed.

"Easy girl," he laughed.

She was beyond horny. She'd never felt this hungry for sex in her life. She didn't know how, but they were already naked. The sensations were strange. She could feel, but it wasn't like she remembered. It was overwhelming. She needed to fuck. Now. When she looked at him again- it was him. Wild blonde-greenish hair. Dark circles around his eyes. Pale white skin with patches of moss or mold, who knows what the fuck, and she wanted him. Now. He looked at her with hunger in his eyes as she brought herself down on him, hard.

And it was over. And over with a bang. It was an instantaneous orgasm that made her see stars. She moaned in her sleep. Wait. Sleep?

Lydia gasped awake, her orgasm sill lingering as her solar plexus throbbed in pleasure.

Oh, fuck. Thank Christ that was a-

"Gah!" Lydia screamed as she turned her face to see the stuffed snake before her. Flailing her arms she tried to get up but was tangled in her sleeping bag. Legs basically tied up, she fell over face first into the dirt. Then she heard it. Betelgeuse's wild cackle filled the air.

Face streaked with dirt, she looked up to see him desperately gripping onto a bag of popcorn. He was thrown on his back, legs in the air, laughing like he belonged in the looney bin with popcorn strewn all over the place. She growled and punched the ground.
"You. Asshole!"

He kept laughing as his words came out broken between squeals and coughing.

"You. Oh man! That was… amazing… the look… on your… face!"

"You did it, did it didn't you?" She yelled while she scrambled to her feet. She kicked the sleeping bag away and had every intention of kicking him next.

His laughter was dying off as she charged in his direction. His eyes were still closed as he tried to compose himself.

"Who was the lucky schmuck, Lyds? BAHAAHAHA!" He lost it again, but Lydia stopped in her tracks.

**He... wait. What?**

"What do you mean?" She was confused. He didn't know? Wasn't he responsible?

"One second… you're all… moanin' and dry humpin' and shit." He laughed some more. "The next-
" he mocked her by imitating her scream with her own voice and flailing his arms. He started
cackling away again.

Lydia was mortified. Her moans had been heard and she had been gyrating too. What had she been humping exactly? She turned around and spotted the stuffed snake on the ground. Her eyes were
about to drop out of her sockets.

She had a wet dream with Betelgeuse and it was technically her doing. Not his.

She thought about running or digging a hole and climbing in it, but instead, she started laughing
too.

For a moment, Betelgeuse was caught off guard completely and stared at her like she belonged in
an asylum. Just as suddenly he threw his head back again and literally rolled on the floor choking
on his own laughter.

…

…

After their hysterics had worn off, Betelgeuse was humming with energy. He marveled at the girl's
sense of humor. It should have been embarrassing for her. She should have chewed him out for
laughing at her, but she had laughed right along with him. Her sense of self was so intact, that she
could laugh at her own expense. Not many had that capability and it won her even more points
from him than being a medium did.

"Don't we need to get going?" She finally croaked after a final snicker.

"Yep. I think I got enough juice to send us to the next destination."

"A hospital in Connecticut I hope?"

"Nope, a fun house." He looked at Lydia's confused face and waggled his eyebrows. "Come on
let's blow this joint!" He grabbed her hand and yanked her up to stand.

She dusted herself off. He spread his arms wide and gave her a leer.
"Come to daddy." He purred.

Lydia scrunched up her face in distaste and walked into his personal space without touching him. He rolled his eyes and moved closer to her, wrapping his arms around her. He pretended to be trying to find a good purchase on her for traveling purposes, muttering something about 'better safe than sorry,' then looked down at her.

She was avoiding his gaze completely.

"You know," he said sensually,"I could get used to this."

Lydia sighed in frustration. "Can we go already?"

"Okay, okay." He closed his eyes and a tree cracked in half making Lydia jump in his embrace.

**Well, that felt nice**, he thought.

Lydia turned her head and saw a gaping hole in the tree that had cracked. She put two and two together very quickly and stomped on his foot. He yelped, jumped back and hopped on one leg, exaggerating because she hadn't stomped too hard.

**At least, not as hard as I should have.**

"You clown!" She tried to look mad at him for jerking around, but she couldn't help but feel amused. He was like no one she ever knew. No one she currently knew. Alive or dead.

"Nope," he said as he held up a finger, "but close." He winked at her, grabbed her by the arm, and led her through the split in the tree.

Bartholomew sat at his desk, completely and utterly humiliated. He blamed Betelgeuse. Every major indignity he had ever suffered was his fault. He wanted him gone, had prayed for his exorcism centuries ago when his former colleagues were been fed up with him as well.

However, only the living could exorcise the dead. The last time Betelgeuse got in any real trouble with the living, it didn't take. He had been so close. Unfortunately, he escaped his fate, he had escaped his prison, and now he'd escape punishment again.

Bartholomew had worked so diligently to keep everything in order. Once again, he was not recognized for his hard work. Instead, Juno would get a promotion. Not he.

He slammed his fist hard on his desk, splintering it to pieces. Then a phone appeared in the mess. It rang until he answered it.

"Hello?"

"Call from, Adam and Barbara Maitland. Do you wish to be connected?" said an operator.

"Yes," he replied dejectedly.

"Hello, is this sector eight?" Adam's voice blared through the receiver.

"Yes. Why are you calling," he said annoyed.

"My name is Adam Maitland and I'm calling to request a visitation pass to see Lydia Deetz. She should be in your facility. You see, she was in an accident-"
"Yes, yes. I know. All visitations have been postponed until repairs can be made to our barrier. Goodbye." Before Bartholomew could hang up, Barbara's voice pleaded with him.

"Please. Please, sir. She's our goddaughter. We just want to know she's okay."

Bartholomew knew he couldn't deny visitations. Ripped barrier or no, he had no authority to keep family at bay. He couldn't get into more trouble.

"All right, Mr. and Mrs. Maitland. Please hold. I need to make sure she wants to see you."

"Wait!"

"Hold please." He placed them on hold and called his assistant. "Victor? Yes, could you please send for Lydia Deetz?"

"Sure thing, boss."

"Thanks a bunch."

He drummed his fingers on his armchair and imagined sticking a hot poker in one of Betelgeuse's eyes. The phone rang again. "Yes, Victor?"

"Deetz… isn't here."

Bartholomew leaned forward in his chair. "What do you mean?"

"We called her number, her name, she's not here."

Instead of becoming angry, but Bartholomew smiled. "Thank you, Victor." He switched to the other line. "Mr. and Mrs. Maitland? I'm afraid I have some horrible news." His smile widened.

He knew he had brought them to the right place, but it all seemed wrong. He looked around and saw the swamplands in the distance, but smack in the middle was a bar. And it was hoppin'. Normally, he'd waltz right in and have a good time, but-

**That's exactly what I'm gonna do.**

He started walking towards it, but Lydia pulled on his arm.

"This place looks," she eyed her surroundings suspiciously "it's..." she couldn't find the right words.

Betelgeuse looked around again and saw nothing out of the ordinary, then he remembered.

"What? All the dead folks?"

The ghosts were just being themselves, but their trauma was plastered on them in the way they appeared. It looked like a Halloween party, only the patrons weren't wearing costumes. They were wearing their deaths.

Betelgeuse almost felt insulted that Lydia, of all people, would be frightened of them. But when he looked around yet again, he realized something else.

"You've never seen ghosts like this." It wasn't a question. He thought of the Maitlands. "The two stooges back home are the only ghosts you know."
He felt his mood dip considerably.

"And you," she said quietly, looking ashamed. She had obviously read his disappointment.

He saw her lip quiver for just a moment before she sucked it in to conceal it as she brought a hand up to her stomach. He mentally kicked himself for making her feel inadequate. Why were his expectations of her so high? He hadn't had such confidence in anyone or anything in god knows how long. When had he placed her on a pedestal?

"It's all right, kid." He tried to sound encouraging, but even he caught the condescending tone beneath. "They're just deadbeats. Just don't talk to anyone," he warned. "No one can know you're still breathin', got it?"

He sounded so serious that Lydia nodded her head and cast her eyes down.

"You can look, just don't stare. And try not to breathe too… obviously when you're not talkin.' I don't think it'll give you away, but they'll wonder."

She nodded again without looking him in the eye.

_Aw fuck. She's pissed. Damn it, asshole. Now ya gotta fix it._

He tried to think of a reason why he shouldn't care, but it wasn't coming to him. So, he cringed a bit at the solution that presented itself in his mind.

_Nah, she won't go for that. I mean maybe she might. Just ask, stupid._

"Do ya dance?" He blurted out. He had meant for it to come out with his usual jeer, but it sounded more like he was losing his patience.

Lydia looked like she could have paled. Or blushed. "Uh, not really."

"All right, whatever let's just go inside." He muttered and started walking to the entrance.

Lydia practically ran after him and laced her arm around his. He looked down at her arm like it was an alien appendage. She noticed but didn't withdraw. Her other arm shot to her stomach again. He was about to comment on it when she started speaking.

"There's a lot of people here. Don't want to get separated." She reasoned. He gave her a curt nod and they entered the bar.

If Lydia had been overwhelmed outside, she didn't what she was now that she was inside. Betelgeuse was leading her through the thick crowd of victims. That's how she saw them. That's why she was so uncomfortable. It wasn't the gore that really bothered her, it was the reality of it. These were people. People who had died in some of the most horrific ways she'd only ever seen in movies.

She kept bumping and squeezing through people, apologizing and excusing herself. She was grabbing onto Betelgeuse's arm for dear life. Literally.

_And what the fuck was that anyway? He can touch and grab me all he wants, but I can't touch him? And he called me 'kid' again. I'm not a fucking kid._

His mood had shifted so suddenly, that it had frightened her some. She thought maybe it was because they were no longer alone and they were in danger of being discovered. But then she
thought back.

He definitely looked at me weird when he realized I haven't seen any other ghosts since… then.

Her solar plexus tightened painfully just thinking about it.

She had vague memories of what she thought was ghost activity when she was younger, but complete apparitions never happened until Winter River. She had often wondered why at sixteen she was suddenly able to see Adam and Barbara and why she'd never seen another ghost after Betelgeuse. She had tried to look into it but never found a concrete answer. After a while, life caught up with her it was no longer important. But after that look he gave her, she wondered if that was normal. Wondered if something was wrong with her after all.

There's nothing wrong with you. He's just an asshole. Maybe it was something else completely and you're overreacting. Why do you even care?

But she did care. He'd gotten under her skin and she didn't even know when it had happened. She had shared more laughs and adventures with him in a day than she'd ever shared with her own friends in four years of college.

That's just not right.

The back of his head looked smug. She wanted to smack it.

Motherfucker.

Then, he looked over his shoulder at her… and smiled. Her solar plexus fired up immediately. It had been genuine. Like the weird episode just moments ago had never happened. It drove her insane.

What the hell is wrong with him? A lot. There's a lot wrong with him. Then why do I like him? She almost choked. I like him?

The truth was not easy to swallow. She liked him. She liked him and thought he was…

No. good lord, Lydia, no. Don't even think it. Don't even-

She thought he was cool.

NOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

She needed a wall to bash her own head in with and knife to cut her gut out with.

There is definitely something wrong with you.

He led them to a small booth in the back.

"Wish this place was here back in the day! Woo! The music, the atmosphere, I'm lovin' it!"

He was back to his crazy self.

"Ooo. Um, I'm gonna make some inquiries, if ya know what I mean." He snorted and left her at the booth.

She turned to watch him leave as he made his way to the bar. He ordered something and then
started flirting with the bartender. She was a blue-skinned, voluptuous redhead, wearing what seemed to be a very skimpy outfit and a tie. The tie didn't seem right to Lydia, then she realized it was way too tight around her neck… oh. But it didn't seem to bother Betelgeuse who was clearly coming onto her.

Lydia rolled her eyes and glowered. What you're gonna get jealous now too? She chided herself as she forced herself to turn around and focus on something else.

Then a grey-skinned man approached the booth and set down a drink in front of her. He was handsome. Clearly dead, but handsome. He was very thin, but dressed well and had a nice full head of jet black hair. He looked her age too.

I'm at a bar. The jerk is having fun, so can I.

She smiled up at the man and thanked him for the drink.

"Hello, miss. My name is Vince." He held out his hand for hers. She smirked at the formality of it all and placed her hand in his. He kissed it ever so gently.

"I'm Lydia." Oh shit. Should I have said that? Fuck.

"Miss Lydia, it is a pleasure to make your acquaintance."

He was waiting for her to invite him to sit, but she wasn't sure she should let him. She decided on friendly conversation instead.

"You come here often?" Way to sound smooth, dweeb.

"Only when I need to get away. It's one of the few places I don't own. It's nice to be someplace where I don't have to worry about running things."

She internally rolled her eyes but smiled at him anyway. She tried to look casual as she looked over her shoulder to see if Betelgeuse was watching. She tried not to look too smug when she saw that he was. He looked curious more than anything. She gave him a mischievous little smirk, then turned away again.

Betelgeuse kept watching the interaction. He could have sworn he'd seen the guy before, but he couldn't place where. Then he noticed Lydia's body language.

Well now, look at the little minx go.

There was no time to think about how her flirting with the handsome douche made him feel because she picked up a cocktail he hadn't noticed before.

"Oh, fuck!" he yelled. He ran for it, completely forgetting himself for a moment. Then she brought the glass to her lips and he finally realized he could just make it disappear.

But it didn't disappear. The glass had shattered right on her mouth and its contents splattered everywhere. When he finally reached her, he pushed the young douche out of the way and yanked Lydia out of the booth.

Lydia was too shocked to register what was happening. Betelgeuse had his hands on her face squeezing her cheeks together forcing her mouth open.

"Are ya outta your fuckin' mind!" He shrieked. She fought down the pain in her midsection as tears
welled up in her eyes. "Did you drink it? Did any of it go down?"

He was looking inside her mouth like he'd find the answers to his questions there. She looked him straight in the eyes to yell back at him when she saw it. A look of pure terror on his face. He hadn't even looked that frightened when the sandworm had come crashing through the ceiling to devour him. She was stunned into confusion.

**What did he ask me? Did I drink it? The cocktail?**

"No, no. I don't think so." She said hurriedly feeding off his fear.

They both stood stock still when they realized they were making a scene. With Lydia's face still pinched between his hands, Betelgeuse looked around at the gathering crowd and started to nervously chuckle.

"Isn't she adorable?" he yelled over the music. They kept staring. He cleared his throat, then he did the only thing he could to make the situation look normal.

...  

He planted one on her.
Let's Dance

Here's the next chapter! I'm a little stuck on chapter 11. I'll figure it out soon, promise.

Disclaimer: I do not own Beetlejuice. I do this for fun. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

Blinding rage is what she should have felt. Her mind kept screaming to kick him in the balls. Hard. But she didn't. A fleeting thought told her she should be tasting something foul as his tongue forced its way into her mouth. But she didn't. In fact, she tasted nothing. She couldn't taste, but she could feel. And it felt good.

It was a strange sensation if it could be called that. Like the time her father dragged her to his colleague's son's birthday party. Dark clouds had threatened the merriment, but children packed into the bounce house and conducted themselves like crazed, caged animals regardless of their parents' wishes. Lydia avoided it completely until they clamored out to eat cake. Then, she bounced to her little heart's content until her hairs stood on end from the static building in the air. When the children returned, she was delighted to find that she was shocking them whenever they got too close. Drunk with power, she started zapping the other children with her newfound 'superpowers', static electricity shooting from her fingers. Her digits pulsed for hours after, but not unpleasantly.

That's how her tongue felt at the moment, reverberating with his power. The static feeling was spreading from her gut outward, filling every inch of her being. It was like she was living through the weird sex dream all over again but in real time instead of through a haze of unconsciousness. The worst part? She wanted more.

It took every ounce of her will to finally listen to her rational mind.

No one can know I'm still breathing. Go with it.

For a moment, she allowed herself to wonder whether this was valid rationale or just a sorry excuse. Then, she felt him make a grab for her ass and her knee flew forward.

When she opened her eyes, he was doubled over before her, cupping his crotch in agony. Then, the clapping started. The nearby crowd laughed and cheered, then went back to their fun. Once everyone turned away from them, Lydia dropped to the ground and reached for Betelgeuse. At her touch, he retreated with a growl, stood, and beelined for the exit.

When he was swallowed by the mass of spirits, panic started to set it. Lydia was surrounded by people she didn't know, in a place she had no idea how to navigate. She went running after him, but a hand landed on her shoulder, halting her panicked search. She turned to see a concerned Vince. He leaned in close so that he could speak directly into her ear.

"You're panting," he murmured.

Now that it had been brought to her attention, she realized that her mouth was open and her chest was heaving. Oh no.

He motioned his head in the opposite direction and led her out the back way of the establishment.

Still grabbing onto his abused jewels, Betelgeuse power walked out the door and headed for the
"Fucking ungrateful bitch," he muttered. He didn't even feel the pain anymore but his ego was still hurting. "I go outta my way for her… saved those dumbasses… pull her outta that place… make her laugh… reeled it in so she'd feel safe… stop her from instant death- what the fuck am I doin'?!"

He threw his hands on his head and screamed out into the empty swamplands. He felt cheated. He felt betrayed. And those feelings were deadly. His fury boiled within as he replayed what had happened.

He had kissed her. He kissed her to HELP her, to distract the crowd from her living status. He kissed her and felt her melt into him. He kissed her and it was fucking amazing. As usual, he had gotten carried away.

'It's always the same with you, Chavi,' he heard Juno's voice from ages ago. 'They give you a hand and you try to take their soul.'

Betelgeuse was a greedy, filthy bastard. He knew that. Wore it like a badge of honor and laid it on thick when he knew someone was watching. And, oh, were they watching. A whole crowd watched on enthralled as she gave him a good one to the nards, and after such an epic kiss, too. Not to mention the efforts he had taken to save her from poisoning herself. As it was, he was used to getting the shit end of the stick. **So why am I so pissed this time?**

Because it had been Lydia who'd done it.

A flash from his living days nearly knocked him over.

'Bait al! What in heaven's name are you doing?'

*He was holding a ring out to her.*

'I've made my own way, Rhoslyn. I can provide for you now."

*Tears were falling down her face.*

'I cannot. I cannot-'

'My heart is yours, it always has been-'

'I do not love you. How could you think I would marry a Manzer?' she whispered.

*Everyone was watching. Everyone.*

"Fuck!" He bellowed as he stomped and kicked at the ground. After abusing the dirt lost its appeal, he whirled around and stared at the bar with an evil glare.

They had laughed at him. They didn't know who he was.

**Time to change that.**

Lydia was trying her damndest to run but her legs kept following Vince until they were out the back door and on the empty porch outside. It was eerie and dark with shadows, but one could still see the treeline of where the swamplands thickened.

"You must be the one who escaped the coma ward," Vince spoke with gentle curiosity.
Although Lydia could not move she found that she could still speak.

"I'm just here to have a good time. I don't want any trouble. Let me-"

"Why would you leave the safety of the aethereal plane?"

He took slow steps towards her. Lydia could hear the soft thrumming of her solar plexus getting louder as her fear escalated. It suddenly occurred to her to call his name.

"Betelgeuse-Betelgeuse-Betelgeuse!"

She waited. And waited.

"Are you trying to call that disgrace of a man who dishonored you in front of everyone here tonight?" he said with disgust.

She was alone. He left her.

**He's not coming back.**

"He must have taken you against your will. It doesn't make sense otherwise," he continued.

"I asked him to save me!" She yelled out, incensed by the stranger's insulting assumptions. "I'm a grown woman and I make my own goddamn decisions, so LET! ME! GO!"

"Dear Lydia, I'm not going to hurt you. I will release you once you understand the danger you are in."

Lydia took a few breaths to calm herself. She needed to be calm and wait for an opportunity to escape.

"You're vulnerable outside the barrier. The longer you stay here, the more your aetherial body disintegrates."

Lydia was now giving Vince her full attention. "My what?"

He pointed at her lower abdomen. "You still have your chord. It lies within you connecting you to your physical body. It extends outward giving you a layer of protection, so to speak. But that layer dissolves over time. When it does…"

"I die," Lydia finished with the obvious.

Vince nodded somberly.

**Did he know this? Why wouldn't he tell me?**

Then it hit her. The only reason he would let her out and not tell her what could happen is if that was his plan after all. Meandering through the woods, taking her to a bar... they were all diversions. It made perfect sense. The revenge she thought he wanted had been in motion all along, from the moment she stepped through the veil.

Lydia fell to her knees. She could feel the tightness in her chest and the burn in her gut. She was dying. He was letting her die.

Vince rushed to her and held her as she cried.
"It's quite alright, dear Lydia. No need for tears. I can take you back to safety."

"No," she sobbed "they'll kill me."

"No, no. Do not worry. I have some authority here. I can make sure that they do not harm you for your transgression."

Lydia was suddenly hopeful. "Can you tell them to send me back?"

Vince somberly shook his head. "That, I'm afraid, I cannot do. I can only make sure they give you due process."

Lydia knew without a doubt that if she waited in the coma ward, she would die. She didn't know how she knew, but there was no question about it. She just knew. She crumpled again and sobbed her heart out. She had found her will to live six years ago because of Betelgeuse and now it appeared he would be responsible for taking it away as well.

"Come, sweet Lydia. All will be well. Have faith in the system."

"HA!" barked a voice in the darkness.

Betelgeuse had felt her summons, but decided instead to take his time. He wanted her to squirm a bit, make her fear that he had abandoned her. That would be the extent of his payback. He was angry, but not with her. Not really. Her reaction wasn't all that surprising after he gave himself a moment to simmer. The rejection hurt like hell, but she couldn't be blamed.

_I am what I am_, he thought, like it was a good enough reason for her to scorn him. Like so many had done before her. Like Rhoslyn had done.

However, his anger had to be directed _somewhere_. His plan was already in the making when he saw her… with _him_. The dark-haired prince cozying up to his Lydia…

_My Lydia?_

She was not his. He knew he couldn't have her. Not in any way that mattered. This knowledge did nothing to quell the searing hot rage bubbling up in his gut at the sight of his royal lowness wiping away her tears, as though he had any right to do such a thing.

_Well, if I can't have her fucknugget over here ain't gettin' her either._

He waited patiently, fuming, for an opportunity to show himself. When he heard fucknugget tell her to "have faith in the system" he couldn't take it anymore.

Lydia and Vince looked out toward the edge of the swamp. A dark figure was slowly making its way toward them. Though shrouded in darkness, Lydia could see the wild hair that could only belong to Betelgeuse.

He stepped into the light and Lydia actually gasped. When she had first seen him at the barrier he had looked the same as he did six years prior, only his striped suit was torn and dusted yellow. At the time, his demeanor had seemed almost gentle. Seeing him now, cigarette between his lips which were twisted into a menacing grin while he casually strutted their way, she was reminded of why she feared him in the first place.

Betelgeuse floated up the steps and silently landed on the porch. He took one last drag of his smoke before flicking it away. He didn't even spare them a glance as he adjusted his cuffs. "I think it's
time to take yer dainty little hands off my fiancé."

Vince stood up and gave him a once-over. "I remember you now," he said with confidence, "you're the fool who intruded on my club. I remember teaching you a lesson that night. Don't make me repeat my efforts."

Betelgeuse had been inspecting his fingernails while Vince was speaking. He looked at Vince with a hooded gaze. The shadows only accentuated the malicious gleam in his eyes. Though Vince no longer held Lydia under his will, she was still paralyzed.

"Lydia," Betelgeuse said in warning, keeping his eyes on Vince, "c'mere."

Frozen with indecision, she didn't move. Instead, Vince stepped forward. "I will not allow you to harm her any longer. I'm taking her back to sector eight."

Betelgeuse finally looked down to where Lydia was still crouched. He raised his eyebrows and gave her an amused smirk. "That what'cha want? Givin' up already?"

The hurt of his betrayal still lingered on her face. "You lied to me," she whispered.

"Oh, I did, did I?" he sneered.

"You said you'd put me back in my body," she accused. "You've just been leading me in circles waiting for me to die! We had a deal!"

His mask of malice turned into confusion, but only for a moment.

"If I wanted you dead," he stressed his consonants, "I would've let'cha drink that cocktail little prince shit-stick here gave ya."

Both Vince and Lydia were taken aback by his response. Lydia looked up at Vince, sure that he would dispute the poltergeist's claims. Vince turned to her and his expression revealed everything she needed to know.

"My god, Lydia," Vince began contritely, "I could have killed…"

Lydia shot to her feet and flung herself at Betelgeuse, wrapping her arms around his rigid body and burying her face in his chest.

Betelgeuse was stunned. His arms were still at his sides when he looked down to make sure he wasn't imagining things. She was hugging him. He couldn't remember the last time anyone had done that. Awkward and unsure, he brought up his arms to return the embrace with a gentle squeeze. When she made a move as though she meant to pull back, his grip loosened. However, instead of retreating, she tightened her arms around him, pressing herself closer. Naturally, Betelgeuse brought his hands low to her waist and turned his face into her hair. Instinctively, he took a deep breath in the hope of catching her scent, forgetting that those kinds of sensations were lost to him long ago.

"I'm sorry," she muffled into his jacket, "for kneeing you in the balls."

"Yeah, well, it happens. A lot," he muttered, smirking down at the top of her head. The blunt manner of her apology was downright adorable.

He swayed with her a moment and brought his hands even lower, resting his fingers on her bottom. She didn't seem to notice as she raised her face to meet his. With relieved tears in her eyes, she
grinned. "What can I say? It was a knee-jerk reaction."

He snorted and playfully smacked her upper cheeks. Were she inhabiting her mortal body, a deep flush would have colored her cheeks at the lewd gesture. "Dumbass. Let's get the fuck outta here."

He left one arm around her and started to steer her away when Vince reached out and grabbed her hand.

"Lydia, I can't let you leave with him. He can't be trusted," he implored.

Betelgeuse had come back to the bar with every intention of raising hell. Unwittingly, Lydia had diffused the mania that had come over him, but when his eyes fell on their clasped hands, it returned with a vengeance.

"I thought I said hands off, pencil dick," he grated.

Immediately, Vince's hands were severed from his wrists. Lydia's mouth fell open when they dropped to the floor and scurried away. After screaming in a rather undignified manner, reminding Lydia of a little girl, Vince ran after them.

Betelgeuse leaned on Lydia for support while he cackled away.

"Beej!" Lydia scolded. "I don't think that was necessary."

**Beej? I like it.**

"You're right," he sobered. "Poor guy… looks like he needs a HAND!" He cackled away again.

Lydia couldn't believe she was giggling.

"Well!" He shouted after some composure finally came to him. "We gotta shakedown this place for some answers. And I believe I owe ya a dance."

When Lydia looked into his eyes, they were filled with some kind of sick pleasure.

"Two birds with one stone, if ya ask me," he chortled. He gave her a malevolent wink as he rasped, "It's showtime."

Everyone inside was enjoying themselves for the most part. Or, they were until Betelgeuse kicked down the door and the music suddenly stopped. With Lydia on his arm, he made his way to the center of the bar as the group of spirits moved out of his way.

"Evenin', dearly departed!" He announced gleefully.

Someone had the nerve to speak up. "Hey, you can't-" The soul's lips melded together, silencing him.

"Now, I haven't been in these parts in a long time. Anyone know what happened to the funhouse that used to be here?" He questioned.

The souls muttered amongst themselves but nobody answered him.

"All right then. Anyone know where I can find the sleazy motherfucker that owned it? Goes by the name of Scuzzo?"
Silence. Betelgeuse looked down at Lydia and gave her a toothy smile.

"Well, in that case," he turned back to the crowd. "I wanna make sure my ghoul here has a nice time tonight. If ya don't mind."

In an instant, everyone and everything was blown back against the walls, leaving he and Lydia in an empty circle. Betelgeuse grabbed Lydia and twirled her away from him. The room spun and she felt his control over her as she gracefully slowed to halt at the center of the circle.

A spotlight shone down on her and when she heard everyone gasp, she looked herself over. Her clothes were no longer recognizable. Instead of the clothes she’d been trapped in since awaking in sector eight, she now wore a bedazzled black halter top that exposed her smooth abdomen. Black fishnet sleeves encased her arms and a flowing black and red spider-web pattern skirt with high slits on both sides flowed about her legs. Apparently, Betelgeuse didn't think shoes were a necessity for her as she was barefoot. It was the most exposed she had ever been in public, not counting her vintage one-piece swimsuit she rarely used. Even that covered more of her than her current costume.

Betelgeuse hadn't changed his outfit at all but now held a blood red violin and bow at the ready.

*This. Fucking. Guy.*

A bell tolled ominously in the distance and Betelgeuse brought down his bow. The sound that came forth was nothing like Lydia had ever heard. It was dark, full of magic and mystery, of longing and loneliness. It was without a doubt the most beautiful piece of music she'd ever heard.

Her arms tugged at her, asking her to move them. They were no longer under his control but merely suggesting what she should do next. A reassuring sideways glance and wink from him soothed her initial trepidation and encouraged her to move.

*Oh fuck it. Let's do this.*
Lydia let her arms extend outward and above her head. Sensually, they moved with his playing. Her wrists turning, her fingers curling and extending. Her hips were next, lifting and dropping in a fluid motion. She looked like a gypsy queen, though she had no way of knowing it. A sexy gypsy queen. She felt like one too and reveled in it.

The notes came faster and faster and she quickened along with them. Another spotlight shone on the band in the corner of the room and the music started up in earnest. Lydia's hips spun and dipped with a speed she didn't think herself capable of. The music was jazzy and swing-like with vaguely Hungarian influences, all in a minor key, blaring ferociously and fast.

The patrons now wore uniformed dance outfits; the men in red and white pantaloons, matching shirts, and straw hats, and the women in short skirts and sleeveless striped tops. They all held hands and pranced in a circle around Lydia and Betelgeuse at a dizzying speed.

Lydia gave into the drugging feeling the music was giving her; twirling and kicking and swaying, unencumbered by inhibitions. Betelgeuse watched her as he played over the band, stomping one foot on the ground in time with the beat. His unrelenting gaze burned over her unabashedly and it egged her on even more. Then, suddenly, he threw the violin away and grabbed her.

With one hand on her waist and the other clasped in her own, they danced with vigor, dipping back and forth to the rhythm. He spun, lifted, and swung her as he saw fit, never breaking form. The room blurred and when she thought her chest might implode from the intensity of her breathing, the bridge came and everything slowed around her.

Using his knee to part her legs, he brought her in close and bent her back, arms wrapped firmly around her waist to keep her from falling. Her perfect neck was exposed to him, thumping with life. He could swear that she was looking at him with something akin to longing. Then, her throat fluttered, as though she had just swallowed something. A pink tongue darted out to wet her lips. That look was all it took.

His mouth came to meet her collarbone and he ran his tongue from the base of her neck, over the pale column of her throat, across the sharp line of her jaw, and straight into her gaping mouth. She shuddered in his arms. Before she had a chance to come to her senses and reject him again, he snapped back up and ended the kiss first, taking the choice away from her. Simultaneously, the music returned to its crazed speed, the windows shattered, and the doors burst open, letting an alarming number of swamp creatures into the bar.

Everyone was still dancing as they screamed in horror. Alligators and snakes became their dance partners. Insects and bats flew through the air between them. Lydia's eyes widened at the calamity that was ensuing while Betelgeuse laughed boisterously, twirling them around the room.

Then, quite suddenly, the music ended. The creatures and patrons were released from their compulsion and then the real screaming began. The alligators snapped at their prey, the snakes wrapped themselves around their flailing victims, the cloud of bats and insects were obscuring the exits.

Betelgeuse was holding Lydia close. He smirked down at her as she glanced wildly at the surrounding chaos.

"I know where he is!" Some unfortunate soul screamed.

Betelgeuse tore his gaze away from the dark beauty in his arms and summoned the soul to him. The flailing spirit was dragged through the crowd and across the floor, still wrestling valiantly with a rather large boa constrictor.
"Where?" He asked with a deadly smile.

"The Wastelands. He had to move to a more secluded place so he wouldn't get caught. I swear."

"Thanks, pal," he said sweetly, genuinely grateful.

With a blink, Lydia and Betelgeuse were outside, leaving the souls to fend for themselves- **Hey, he wasn't that grateful**- only to be met with Vince and swarm of civil servants.

---

**Post Notes:**

The music that inspired the dance scene is a song called The Ghost of Steven Foster by the Squirrel Nut Zippers. The song came out in 1996, hence the reason I did not blatantly put it in there. I highly recommend you give it a listen!

So, everything in the astral plane has an astral body. I went old school and decided that if Lydia cannot consume anything from the land of the dead. If she ingests anything from the astral plane, the astral essence will extinguish her life spark. Vince referred to it as her chord, referring to a metaphysical term "Silver Chord." Here's a wiki snippet about it: "In other research, it is described as a strong, silver-colored, elastic cord which joins a person's physical body to its astral body (a manifestation of the physical body that is less distinct)"

I know it says astral body, but living beings have astral bodies too. Since Lydia is alive, I'm distinguishing her bodily form as aetherial and not astral. Let me know if I need to clear this up some more.

Just make this clear... Lydia is alive. The air she's breathing that her physical body is breathing. Her aetherial body is in sync with her physical body, so she appears to be breathing. This comes from dreams where I think I'm drowning. Once I take in a breath, I'm "breathing under water." Obviously, I'm not. I'm breathing air but my dream form can't distinguish that.
Juno stood her ground among the caseworkers and watched the bar patiently as horrified screams sliced through the music. Despite her confident stance, internally she was shitting bricks.

**What the flying fuck are you doing in there you blithering idiot?**

Bartholomew was growing more excited with each passing moment. The screaming from inside the bar only confirmed for him that Betelgeuse was going to get what had been coming to him for so long; a demotion and chains. Certainly, he would be sent to the lower levels indefinitely this time. Chained to a desk for the rest of his sentence, or hopefully until judgment day, where he would most assuredly be deemed unworthy and sent straight to hell where he truly belonged.

When Betelgeuse and Lydia appeared hand in hand before him, Bartholomew couldn't keep his jubilant shouts at bay.

"I knew it! I knew it!" He laughed victoriously. He gave Vince a violent pat in the back. "Good work, son! This is a glorious day." An evil smile was aimed in Betelgeuse's direction. "A glorious day indeed," his whisper dripped gloatingly with triumph.

Betelgeuse gave him his own wicked smile in return as he waved innocently. "Hey, Bart! It is Bart, now, right? Long time no see, buddy."

No one noticed how he protectively stepped in front of Lydia, shielding her from the crowd.

Juno shook her head at the sight. His demeanor was lost on everyone but her. She was familiar with the look in his eye, the possessive body language.

**He's attached. This is not good.**

Betelgeuse looked at Vince and cracked his knuckles.

"Oh, Romeo. You made a big boo boo," he gritted through his teeth.

Vince had the good sense to look worried.

Lydia's hands shot forward and latched on to Betelgeuse's jacket. He flinched at the sudden contact but backed into her slightly, his only way of consoling her at the moment.

She felt completely helpless. Briefly, she wondered what she would do if she could manipulate things the way he did. Suddenly, it was like a lightbulb went off her in her brain.

**Stupid, Lydia! You read the handbook!**

It had been years since she read anything from the handbook. Still, she reasoned with herself.
I'm not dead. Maybe it's not the same. But maybe…

"Lydia Deetz," Bartholomew addressed her like the fugitive she was, "turn yourself in at once, name Betelgeuse as your kidnapper, and we can take you back to safety. No questions asked."

"That's a sweet deal, babe," Betelgeuse mused aloud, somewhat nervous despite his faith in her, "whadda ya say?" The cocky twist of his lips did nothing to belie his doubt.

"Fuck you, Bart!" She shouted resolutely over Betelgeuse's shoulder, releasing her grip on his jacket to mingle her fingers with his and hold his hand tight so that it was unquestionably clear to all in attendance where her loyalties lied.

Betelgeuse chuckled and his distrust faded away completely, only to be replaced by a well of affection that caught him off guard with its sheer depth and warmth. "Atta girl."

Juno rolled her eyes. Peas in a fucking pod.

Bartholomew fumed. Little wench!

Vince spoke up next. "Fair Lydia, please listen to reason! This scoundrel has deceived you. We only want to protect you."
It was Betelgeuse's turn to roll his eyes.

Lydia could no longer stand it.

"That's it! Listen up all of you! I left of my own free will. If I wait in sector eight, I won't make it!"

"There is no way of knowing that for sure," Vince pleaded.

"Lydia," Juno stepped forward, "you're positive?"

Lydia eyed the older ghost and nodded her head.

"The girl is a medium," Juno announced. Everyone gasped at the revelation. "She's felt her own death. If she says she'll die in there, then she will."

Murmuring erupted among the civil servants.

"That hardly matters!" Roared Bartholomew. "If that is her fate, then so be it. She cannot cheat her way out the process. She has no say in it!"

"It's my life! I just want to live!" She yelled back.

Bartholomew gave her a sad smile, "My dear, so does everyone else here."

Lydia had no response to that. She knew she was losing and just hoped that Betelgeuse had an escape plan. Scared and nervous, her grip on his hand tightened.

"I think it's time to make like a prom dress and take off," she muttered anxiously.

Betelgeuse cackled at her perverted pun. "You got some timin', babes!" **Fuck. I think I'm in love.**

"Let's get this show on the road!"

Juno already knew what to expect. Silently, she had backed away from the group and shrouded herself in darkness.

Still holding Lydia's hands, Betelgeuse raised his arms the to the sky and with a grunt brought them down fast.

Green lighting struck the ground amidst the souls before them. After recovering from the blast, most ran away or disappeared altogether. Bartholomew staggered to his feet, temporarily stunned. He had faced Betelgeuse before, but the kind of power he was manipulating now was far more advanced than anything he had ever seen. Quickly, he understood that his time spent in subjugation had clearly not gone to waste.

**No matter. I've learned a few tricks of my own.**

As fast as he could, Bartholomew pulled his arm up as if holding a bow and arrow and let loose. At once, sharp branches from the surrounding trees hurled themselves at the fleeing couple.

Betelgeuse looked over his shoulder just in time to push Lydia to the ground and shield her, unnaturally stretching himself around her.

Before Bartholomew could let loose another barrage, a blackened Vince grabbed him by the arm.

"What are you doing?! You could kill her!"
Bart tried to shake Vince off as Betelgeuse shrank back to his normal size and collapsed into Lydia's arms.

His energy was quickly depleting as his form tried to expel the splintered spears and patch itself up. Pain seared through him. All he could hear was screaming and it felt like it was ripping him apart. It was Lydia. She was screaming bloody murder. It was high pitched and so incredibly loud that everyone nearby had collapsed.

Juno covered her ears in agony and dropped to her knees. She saw Bart trying to get back up on his feet to attack again. Growing another set of arms, Juno slammed her second pair of fists to the ground. A crack in the earth went straight for Lydia, who was still holding onto her protector and opened up underneath. They dropped through right as Bart sent another shower of spears their way.

The blunt arrows went straight through the bar's walls and more screaming erupted from inside.

Bart ran as fast as he could and peered over the hole in the ground where the couple had fallen. They were gone.

Bart roared in anger as he spun around, following the crack right to Juno who was still on all sixes. When their eyes met, Juno knew he was out for blood. She closed her eyes and braced herself for whatever was coming.

Then, all was dead silent. Juno opened her eyes to find everything in sight frozen in place. Bart was mid-air with a flaming spear in his hands. Even Juno couldn't move.

From out of the swamp, came the dead. Skeletons marched on and circled the perimeter. Bart fell to the ground and was apprehended immediately.

"No! You don't understand! They've escaped! She helped them!" He pointed a blaming finger at Juno.

He was silenced and bound. Juno and the others were rounded up.

"Are you all right?" Asked a concerned Vince.

"No thanks to you," She grumbled.

"I'm so sorry. Had I known that she was…" he had no more words.

"Yeah, that's right. Just shut up. Hope this serves as a lesson to you to stop acting like you're some kind of authority around here keep your goddamn nose outta people's business."

Vince hung his head in shame and said no more.

A skeleton soldier walked up to Juno and pointed to the bar. It said nothing, but she understood.

"I'll take care of it," she assured it. "Everyone who's still able, get in there and tend to the wounded. I'll start the fucking paperwork."

It was dark. Lydia could hear her own breathing, but nothing else. The weight in her arms told her that Betelgeuse was still with her.
Waiting to be captured or killed, she remained utterly still. She didn't know what to expect anymore. For several minutes she strained her eyes and ears, just waiting. When it became clear that nothing was coming, she whispered into the dark.

"Hello?" She waited. Again, nothing stirred. Betelgeuse should have said something snarky by now, but he was silent. She shook him and was terrified when he was still motionless.

"Beej?" She whimpered quietly. When there was still no response she yelled. "Betelgeuse! Wake up!" She shook him harder. "You better not be fucking with me, you sick bastard!"

Panic flooded her entire being. Keeping one arm around him she fumbled in the dark around her. She felt dirt first, then her hand hit something. It sounded like glass rolling on the floor. Then she felt something else. She followed it up and around and realized it had some kind of fabric and springing cushion.

A couch? I'm in somebody's living room? Or is this some kind of holding area where they keep lawbreakers until a trial? Are there trials down here? Am I going to jail? I'm going to jail.

She took a deep breath and tried to remember the handbook. I can do this. I can make shit happen.

"Light! Let there be light!" She yelled. She shook her head at her own stupidity. If Betelgeuse had been awake he would have laughed at her. His silence was eating away at her. She began her exploration anew.

"If there's a couch, there's gotta be a lamp here somewhere." She scooted closer, never letting go of the unconscious ghost. Her arm crashed into something hard. She felt around.

"Coffee table!" In her excitement at discovering another familiar object, she knocked over something that had been on it. She knew she needed both hands so, carefully, she settled the unconscious Betelgeuse on the ground. Then, she crawled toward the table, making sure to leave one foot touching him at all times.

Cautiously, she moved her hands on the table and grabbed at something that felt somewhat pliable. Inspecting further, she deduced it was a candle.

"Yes! Now, how the hell do I turn it on?"

Okay. Betelgeuse lights cigarettes outta nowhere all the time. What does he do?

She tried to remember all of the instances where he had magically just made things happen.

"Blinked. He's blinked. He's snapped his fingers. He's nodded. Flicked his wrists. Always does something..." she was speaking fast trying to make sense of it all.

"Okay! Fire needs friction so... I'll snap my fingers!"

She touched the wick of the candle and snapped her fingers. There was a small burst of blue and the wick came to life with a small flame at its end.

"Ah! Holy shit I did it!" She grabbed the candle and brought it to the ground. She was relieved to finally see him but something about his face gave her pause. She brought the candle closer and realized his face looked different.
The one candle wasn't really enough to get a good look at him altogether, but she could tell he was not as white, the moss and mold were nowhere to be found, and the dark circles around his eyes were not as prominent. His hair, still a matted mess, even looked blonder now.

She scrutinized his every feature, noting that although he most certainly looked more alive than she was used to seeing him, he looked very sick.

"Is this you, Betelgeuse?" She whispered and found herself wondering once more how he died. Then, she wondered when he died. The same questions she'd been asking herself for years flooded her brain and she quickly realized that despite their time together, she still knew absolutely nothing about him. He obviously knew more about her than she did him. She had never spoken to him about school or photography but he was still able to correctly guess what she was going to school for.

She took the candle and looked for anything else on the table that might help her. All she found were more candles and an oil lamp. After they were all lit, she glanced around at her now glowing surroundings.

It was a mess. Bottles, cans, cigarette butts, newspapers, insects, all manner of junk littered the place. Then it hit her. With a tsk, she returned her eyes to the indisposed ghost.

"You're such a dude, Beej." She wanted him to react, to laugh, or even to tell her to fuck off. Suddenly, she noticed he was littered with holes and gasped.

"You're dead, aren't you?" She sobbed. "Dead, Dead, deadski."

She bent down next to him and inspected one of the holes in his chest and was astounded to find that it was slowly closing itself from the inside out. Some still had pieces of wood in them. Immediately, she went to work on removing his jacket and unbuttoning his shirt. When he awoke, she would see about getting to know him properly.

**Yes, when he wakes up.**

Gently, she placed her hands on his exposed chest and just felt him for a moment. The right words for what she was feeling escaped her for the hundredth time since she first woke in the coma ward.

It wasn't like skin. She was merely feeling contact. Some kind of pressure letting her know that she was touching something. Her mind was able to clearly understand what she was touching, but nothing felt like she remembered it should.

After some more struggling, she managed to pull his shirt off when something else caught her eye. She adjusted his arm so she could look underneath and found lumps. She was by no means a doctor, but it was clear they were swollen lymph nodes. Just to make sure, she ran her fingers behind his ear feeling around until she found a lump there too.

She continued to let her fingers graze over him when she started to feel… anxious. There it was again. The feeling of need. Of wanting something. Of wanting him.

She laughed a moment as she considered what he might do if their roles were reversed.

Instead of giving into her filthy little mind, she started pulling out splinters and making sure the holes were not obstructed.

*This could've been me.*
“Thanks,” she whispered, knowing she’d have to repeat it when he awoke.

Yes, when.

Betelgeuse was in pain, that much he knew. He tried to remember what had happened. Slowly, he opened his eyes and was greeted by a dirt ceiling.

No.

He knew that ceiling. Knew every crack, every hole, every root, every piece of moss, every mound of dirt on that ceiling.

No-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no-no.

He was back.

I’m gonna cry.

He would have, too. His bottom lip was already quivering. However, the sound of rustling made him freeze. He turned his head slightly and relief washed over him.

Lydia was lying on the floor face down, resting her chin on her hand, reading a book, bathed in candlelight.

He almost spoke but decided to watch her instead. There were many instances in their time together that gave him pause. Often, he found himself wanting to reflect on her and how she made him feel, but everything had been batshit crazy from the moment he ripped the veil and he was never given the chance. Until now.

It was peaceful. She was so engrossed in whatever she was reading that it made him smile. He remembered seeing her for the first time in much the same way; peacefully bent over the handbook in the attic.

From the moment he first saw her, he knew she was a medium. Fellow mediums always recognized their own. It's what saved her from his antics when he haunted her family. It's the reason he'd decided on finding a way of getting her to set him free.

Can't marry the living if they won't see ya.

Three months of her little visits to the attic told him everything he needed to know about her. She was smart, talented, and a big ol' softy. All the black in the world could never hide her kind nature. It didn't hurt that she was a pretty little thing too.

She was still little, hadn't grown an inch since then, and still pretty. Very pretty. Her baby face had vanished, though. Now, she was a woman. That had been made abundantly clear to him when he dressed her in that skimpy outfit back at the bar. It was proven again when he watched her dance like a goddamn sex goddess from on high, all for him.

The memory of her sensual promenade sent a wave of longing straight through him. He almost moaned aloud but bit his upper lip instead. Hard.

He wanted her. That didn't surprise him, but there was a reason memories of Rhoslyn were
haunting him now. Feelings he thought himself no longer capable of experiencing had surfaced in the short time he spent with Lydia.

On top of the pain he was feeling from his wounded form, there was now a deeper, internal ache. The kind of ache he felt when something he wanted was just out of reach. Status forbade him from claiming the woman he loved in life. It the was the shittiest kind of irony that status was now also responsible for keeping him from the woman he loved in death.

His mind didn't even try to retaliate. He was in love and he had known it from the moment she kicked him in the balls at the bar. At the time, he fought it but all the telltale signs were there.

*You've gone done it now, shithead. Nice job.*

He only felt the slightest twinge of shame from hoping that they were trapped in his grave together, if only because he knew first hand what horrible, tedious existence that was. Then, she would be forced to stay and, surely, he would win her over. No one would be able to get in the way. Eventually, curiosity at the very least would take hold of her and lead to doin' the nasty all over the fucking place. He would have her crazy over him for sure, then. Suddenly, the pit of crushing claustrophobia that was his grave felt like heaven. He closed his eyes and extended his aura to see if they were really imprisoned. Tragically, he sensed nothing keeping them there.

*Dammit.*

He opened his eyes, looked himself over to find that he was covered with a ragged blanket. Painfully, he lifted the blanket and—

"Why am I naked?" He croaked.

Lydia must have jumped three feet in the air.

"You're awake!" She scrambled to her feet and stared, wide-eyed with shock.

He raised an eyebrow at her, waiting for an answer. Her eyes only grew wider and started looking everywhere but in his direction.

"Uh, how're you feeling?" She asked innocently.

"Naked," he barked back.

Lydia inhaled and started talking at a dizzying speed.

"Well, you had these holes from, you know, Bart and the spears, and you had a bunch of splinters, and the holes were closing, couldn't have them closing with all that stuff in them… right?" She found the courage to look at him.

He was grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

"Babe, if ya wanted to see my dick, all ya had to do was asked."

Lydia's mouth opened silently and then she started sputtering. "I-I did *not*! Didn't see… I put the blanket…"

He couldn't hold it anymore. Pain or no pain, he needed to laugh or he would burst.

Lydia stayed open-mouthed while he laughed his ass off. Then, he hissed and groaned in pain and
she narrowed his eyes at him.

"That's what you get," she chastised.

"Owy, owy," he whined like the man-child he was. "Why are we in this shithole," he cried and kicked his feet on the ground.

"I thought you brought us here."

He snapped his head up and grated through his teeth.


Lydia found his misery amusing. She giggled, which elicited a deep frown from the forlorn Betelgeuse.

"I'm so happy you're okay," she said genuinely. She could feel her gut contract and fresh tears threatening to gush out again.

Betelgeuse looked at her and searched her eyes for a long moment, then looked away again. He cleared his throat. "You still got time. I'll get ya to your fleshbag. Don't worry your pretty little—"

Lydia rushed to his side and dropped to her knees. She pushed her hair behind her ears, grabbed his face with both hands and kissed him full on the lips.

His eyes were still open as Lydia continued to crush her lips to his. For some unknown reason, he couldn't get his bearings. Just when he started to remember who the fuck he was, he went to yank her down on top of him but the slightest movement upwards caused the pain to his torso to return in waves.

"Gah!" He ground out along with more unintelligible garble.

Lydia released him. "Oh no! I'm sorry!"

"No," he growled and grunted. "Ya-don-nee-ta-be-com-ba-ere!"

He was still groaning through his words, making it hard for Lydia to understand.

"Beer? You want a beer?" She asked confused.

"Fur-fucks-ake." He rasped along with more gibberish, desperately trying to reach for her so she would keep kissing him.

"Okay, I'll see if I can find one." She hopped to her feet and scurried away.

_Goddamnmotherfuckingshit!_
Quid pro quo

WARNING: Mature/DETAILED content ahead.

Okay, people... this was a very difficult chapter to write. Nothing nearly as crazy as other stuff I've read right here on AO & FF so, I hope you can all enjoy this chapter. I've never written smut before so cut me some slack. I'm still writing chapter 12, which will go into some of Beej's past. Needless to say, trying to translate stuff into middle English is a nightmare. Probably all wrong, but whatever I think it'll be worth it. teehee

DISCLAIMER: I do not own Beetlejuice. I'm broke AF. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

It was torture. Lying naked on the ground while the woman he had recently come to realize he loved, who kissed him willingly, initiated it no less, was lying next to him and he couldn't do shit about it.

He was scared to move more than an inch of any part of himself. She was so close. Talking her pretty little head off about Annie whoever-the-fuck and college and traveling and god knows what. All he could think about was how to roll over on top of her and fuck her right through her clothes.

I can do it. I think I can. I think I can. I think I can. I think I can.

His mantra was interrupted.

"Beej?"

"Huh," He gruffed.

"If I'm borin' ya, just tell me," she said in a gruff voice trying to mock him.

He made a noncommittal sound and shrugged his shoulders.

"Sorry. I'm driving you crazy, aren't I?" She said, embarrassed.

"You have no fuckin' clue," he replied seriously.

Lydia turned toward him and propped herself up on her elbow.

"Well, fine! I'll shut up then," she incensed and gave him a shove.

"OW!"

"Oh shit, I'm sorry!" She apologized and started softly stroking where his shoulder met his chest.

This is hell. I'm in hell, he thought as she caressed him.

Lydia eyed his muscled chest. She imagined running her fingers through his chest hair and wondering what he'd do if she did. I mean, he can't move, she thought deviously.

"So, where'd you get these muscles, Beej? From that muffin top you're sporting, I thought you'd have more of a StayPuff Marshmellow Man thing going on."

She watched, amused, as he fluttered his eyelids in annoyance.
"Liftin' bodies of my victims who were dumb enough to point out my flabby physique." Her eyes widened in alarm. Then, he slowly turned his face to her, looked into her eyes, and gave her a warning grin.

"I wouldn't put it passed you," she said cautiously. "So you were a grave digger? EMT?" she joked.

He chuckled at the thought of himself driving an ambulance.

"Why the sudden curiosity?" He said as he eyed the small, pale hand still lightly caressing him.

She shrugged and removed her hand from his person. The downward pull in the corner of his lips did not go unnoticed. "You know more about me than I do about you."

"Yeah, don't think I didn't notice you talked about everything under the sun except that boyfriend you said you had," he grumbled.

Lydia raised her eyebrows in surprise. I think someone sounds jealous.

"I never said I had a boyfriend," she replied coyly, full of mischief.

He tried and failed to disguise the victorious smirk that was forming on his face. No boyfriend. Good. Not that it'd matter anyway.

"Tell me about your wife," she blurted out before she could stop herself.

Betelgeuse flinched. Yep. That was as good as a cold shower.

It was obvious how she guessed he had been married. Shit, he pulled the wedding band off her cold, dead finger right in front of Lydia.

"Blech," he grunted in disgust, avoiding her gaze "why?"

"Fine," she responded dejectedly, "I just wanted to get to know you, but whatever." She pushed herself up to standing and he immediately felt the emptiness at his side.

"Carny." He said dryly.

She looked down at him with a furrowed brow.

"That was her name?"

"No, dumdum. I was a carny." He offered no further explanation.

The thought of him dressed as a clown inspired a bout of muffled girlish giggles.

"I was not a clown," he interjected as if reading her mind. "I mean, I did fill in for the guy every once in awhile but-"

She started laughing in earnest now. His bored expression never wavered as he waited for her to work through her hysterical fit.

"Okay," she calmed herself. "Everything's coming together now. If you weren't a clown, what did you do?"

"Wouldn't you like to know," he smiled mischievously.
"You're such a pain."

"Tell me about your *not* boyfriend, and I'll tell ya."

She bit her lip and wondered how much she should say. He was obviously not going to divulge much. Thinking of Chris now felt so odd to her. It was like she was remembering someone from a distant past.

"Okay, well, he's twenty."

"Cougar." He chuckled.

"Says the would be cradle robber?" His mouth dropped open ready to defend himself but she didn't let him. "You know exactly how old I am! Did you know then?"

"Uh, yeah?" he said, not sure he should have been honest.

"You would have sullied a young maiden," she said with a horrible British accent.

He groaned in pain again as a laugh ripped through him.

"Don't make me laugh. It hurts. Like your maidenhead ain't already been popped."

Lydia was horrified. "How'd you know that?"

"I didn't," he waggled his eyebrows.

"You fucker."

Another wave of chuckles had him grimacing. Lydia shook her head, annoyed with herself. Then a thought occurred to her.

"What would my wifely duties include after we get married?" she asked.

Betelgeuse went still. He hadn't thought she actually, truly meant to go through with the deal. Trying his best to remain nonchalant, he cleared his throat and sniffed.

"Well-ah, you know, the usual. I expect dinner and foot rubs after a hard days work."

Lydia sat cross-legged next to him. "I'm serious. We've never talked about what happens... after."

He gave her a leer. "What would ya like to happen?"

She rolled her eyes. "Could you give me a straight answer for once?"

He grew serious for a moment. "Nothin'. Nothin' happens," he sighed.

"Nothing? I have a hard time believing that." "Marriage of inconvenience. I meant it. In name only. I mean, you already told me what touching the likes of us feels like. Imagine what fucking would be like."

Lydia pursed her lips together trying not to react to his blunt revelation. The thought of him on top of her, thrusting away, made her want to jump his bones right then and there. The numbing sensation she remembered from hugging Adam and Barbara made her frown.

While Betelgeuse had been asleep healing, she tried to decipher what she felt for him. Lust was
certainly the dominant emotion. When she thought about how little she knew of him, she reasoned that her feelings stemmed from the wondrous feats he was capable of performing. Being dead made him the most interesting man she had ever crushed on. Not to mention his completely uninhibited nature; never hiding who he was, always saying what was on his mind, his overly inflated self-confidence - all qualities that were as maddening as they were sexy.

"You're actually thinking about us fucking?" he wondered aloud, stunned.

This brought Lydia out of her reverie.

"You never answered my question," she deadpanned.

"Whoa-whoa-whoa! Hold on here!" He argued. "Answer that question!" he yelled.

She stood up and he lunged for her as she backed away from him. He dropped onto his side curled in the fetal position as his muscles visibly spasmed in agony.

"So, you're telling me," she mused aloud as he rocked himself gently on the floor, "that this might be the only chance I get to know what the ghost with most is like in the sack?"

His eyes shot open and he whipped his head up to meet her gaze. There was strange glint her eye that made him gnaw at his lower lip.

"Witch," he shot out, "get your perfect little ass over here and I'll show you what I got the most of."

Lydia could feel her heart quicken at the lurid threat. "Answer my question."

He growled in frustration. "What question?! I can't fucking remember!"

"What was your wife like?"

"Oh. My. Fucking. God! She was some chick I knocked up. It lasted, like, a month. Left me after she lost the kid. I can't even remember her name right now! There! YA HAPPY?!!" He slammed his head back down on the ground and snarled.

For some reason, Lydia felt relieved. It saddened her that he had been robbed of a family in life, but was glad that he had told the truth when he said she meant nothing to him. Lydia definitely didn't need a scorned ghost wife haunting her for what she was about to do. It took everything in her to stand her ground and torture him just a little bit more.

"Too bad you're still in pain. Guess we can't do much now anyway," she teased.

"Lydia Deetz," he cautioned, "Do not. Fuck with me."

"What if that's exactly what I wanna do?" She admitted very quietly.

The confession did not go unheard. When he examined her again he noted that her breathing was somewhat erratic, dark eyes glazed over with something sultry and promising. He shook his head slowly and a lazy, predatory grin cut across his face.

"I warned ya," he said with a dangerous sweetness in his voice before mentally bracing himself for the discomfort he was about to feel. He ripped the blanket off, exposing his naked form, and pitched himself forward onto all fours.

Lydia only had enough time to gasp as Betelgeuse snarled again and pushed himself up from the
ground to a standing position. The holes were mostly closed by now but still looked serious. He swayed a moment and looked like he was about to faint, but the madman regained his balance. Lydia's eyes were locked on his erection that was pointing right at her.

"Oh fuck," she breathed. Just when she was about to make a run for it, Betelgeuse went in for the kill. He slammed himself into her making them fall against the wall of dirt behind her. She screamed from the exhilaration of it all as he hoisted up her legs around him and chomped down on her neck.

Pain from her neck and pleasure from her solar plexus met in the middle causing her to moan into his hair.

Betelgeuse could hardly think straight. Everything he was doing was out of sheer willpower. The pain was excruciating but his need to have his way with her was greater.

*It'll go away. It'll go away*, he reasoned. *just like this opportunity if you don't take it right the fuck now.*

It wasn't often that his conscience was loud enough to listen to. Even when it was, he'd mostly ignored it. However, it was loud enough now and he knew exactly what sensations felt like while aetherial projecting.

Whatever pain or pleasure she felt would be amplified tenfold. Her physical and spiritual body where both feeling the effects of everything emotional and what she was understanding as physical. She didn't have a chance to stop him now and might certainly regret it later.

*Don't you fucking say a word. Just fuck her senseless and deal with it later.*

"Lydia," He rasped into her neck.

"Betelgeuse," she groaned.

He almost lost himself completely.

"Listen to me. Don't make another goddam sound or *this,* he thrust against her, "is happening. You understand me? You better hit me over the head with somethin' - real hard. Yer not in yer right mind."


He dug his fingers into the meat of her ass as hard as he could to get the point across.

Lydia winced as the pleasure was now being taken over by pain. It was unbearable.

"No," she whimpered.

Betelgeuse was shocked that he was able to freeze at the barely audible word. It had sent fear right through him and he was quickly regretting warning her.

"Keep going," she pleaded into his ear, "just fuck me already."

That was the end of him. "You betcha."

Her mouth found his and he savagely plundered it with his tongue. He thrusted against her, eliciting delicious moans from her again. She could feel his hard member bruising her through her jeans.

He bit her lower lip and she cried out. Pain and pleasure driving her wild, she grabbed him by the hair and yanked his head back.

He gritted his teeth and she took a moment to look into his eyes. He was like a rabid animal, holding nothing back. She could see his madness in all its wild glory behind his expressive blue eyes and it set her on fire.

"Clothes," she demanded, voice hoarse with desire.

He spun them around and tossed her on the couch. She growled from the sudden separation but stilled when she got another eyeful of his naked girth.

When she grew impatient she looked up at his face, which was frozen in what looked like reverence. She looked down at herself and saw that her clothes had vanished.

She gave him an evil smile as she slowly got onto the balls of her feet and opened for him, arching herself against the backrest of the couch.

He hissed and shook his head slowly, then he dove right for her, buried his head between her thighs and clamped onto her eager clit.

Groaning into her as he lapped away like the manic mongrel he was, Lydia threw her head back as stars burst behind her eyelids.

Her fingers desperately trying to anchor her as she lost all sense of herself. A strangled cry escaped her as her climax overcame her all too quickly.

Unrelentingly, Betelgeuse plunged his tongue inside her, letting her clenching walls clasp around it.

"Fuck!" Lydia let out another guttural cry as another wave of pleasure crashed over her.

"Oh-fucking-shit," she groaned, "stop… I'm..." and another. She mewled as she fought for sanity, desperately trying to push the devil away from her.

"Stop-stop-stop," she panted in quick succession.

When he didn't hear or just wouldn't listen, she grabbed him by the hair again and pulled him up toward her. The force of his landing sent the sorry excuse of a couch toppling backward.
A dust cloud enveloped them as soon as they hit the ground obscuring them from each other's view. Worried he may have caused her pain from landing square on top of her, Betelgeuse pushed himself off of Lydia and started waving his arms in an attempt to clear the air. He could have sworn he heard her sniveling.

"Shit, babe, you okay?" he asked concerned. He bent over her and started to move her hair out of her face. He was sure she was crying, and as the dust settled he saw that she was indeed crying... from laughter. He exhaled in relief and collapsed on top of her, no longer able to keep himself up.

Her laugh was infectious and before long he was chuckling along with her. They stayed that way for a few minutes until Lydia found some sobriety and wrapped her arms around him. Gently, she raked her nails on is back and scalp. He groaned into the dirt floor then turned his face into her neck and nibbled away at her, leaving kisses over every bite.

"Are you okay?" She asked him, beginning to feel her libido rising again.

"Mhm," he returned, drunk on pain and desire.

"Still hurting?" She inquired, hoping the answer was, no.

"Mhm."

"You should rest," she said sadly.

"Nuh-uh. We're not done here."

"No, we're not," she giggled again. "Can you get to the bed?"

Betelgeuse was half expecting her to call everything off, so he was elated to know she intended on continuing the sexcapade. That alone gave him the strength he needed to get up off the ground. His balance was still off, so he used the dirt wall to steady himself and extend a hand toward Lydia. She took it but didn't use it for support, afraid they'd go tumbling to the ground again. Once she was up he pulled her to him and crushed his mouth to hers, using his free hand to dig into the back of her head and press her closer.
His tongue licked her lips, requesting entrance and she opened for him instantly. She flushed her body against his, pushing him flat against the dirt wall. She pulled away leaving her hand on his chest so that he wouldn't close the space between them. She looked into his eyes as the hand that rested on his chest traveled downward painfully slow. Avoiding the dents still visible on him, she grazed her nails through his chest hair, down over his paunch, and still lower until she reached her target.

Keeping eye contact, he let out choked grunt as she wrapped her hand around him. His eyes fluttered closed as she began to stroke him, only for him to snap them open again, not wanting to miss a thing.

For once, he was glad for the pain because it was keeping his orgasm at bay. Still, he was dangerously close.

"Bed," he commanded, "now."

Lydia smiled as she bit her lower lip and shook her head slightly.

"Nu-uh. We're not done here."

Betelgeuse knocked his head against the wall behind him as soon as Lydia dropped to the ground. Without the least bit of hesitation, she took him into her mouth and he groaned in ecstasy. He was quickly losing control so he started repeatedly thumping his head against the wall, hoping the pain would keep him in check.

After a few moments of sucking and swirling her tongue around him, Betelgeuse felt her hand cup his balls.

"Fuuuck," he husked as he brought his gaze down. He immediately realized it was a bad idea. After her head bobbed before him for the third time, he nearly went cross-eyed as he fought down the urge to come.

"Okay-okay. Come back up here," he rasped. She picked up her speed instead.

She-devil, he thought as his vision started to blur. He couldn't stop her and he could no longer say anything coherent so, between his desperate grunts and thrusts, he dug his fingernails into the earth behind him. When her tongue slid into his slit, he shouted as euphoria took over him.

His knees buckled and Lydia released him as he slid to the floor. "Quick for you too, huh?"

"Yeah, well, it's been awhile," he muttered, slightly embarrassed.

"Really?" she asked wondering what to make of that.

Looking at her now, he knew what her expectations of him were. It wasn't like he'd taken great pains into showing her he was something other than a handsy manwhore. Still, the look in her eyes made him feel… inadequate.

It was true that the Inferno Room was his last lay, right under her goddamn roof but not because he was holding out for someone special or anything.

"Yeah, you know, took a break. Women. They get a taste of this," he thumbed to himself, "they get too clingy." He didn't have the energy to sound very convincing.

The face she gave him now told him she wasn't buying it. What was he supposed to say? That he'd
been celibate since he last saw her? That would give her the wrong idea. He also needed to protect his pride, so he did the next best thing and changed the subject.

"Now let's fuck already," he murmured "you're driving me fuckin' nuts."

The spark was back in an instant. Lydia gave him a feral grin. "I hear a lot of talking and not enough doing."

"Ohohoho… I'm gonna do your fuckin' brains out."

Lydia lifted her hand, opening and closing it like a hand puppet while she mouthed "blah blah blah."

Betelgeuse barked out a laugh, yanked them both to standing and threw Lydia over his shoulder. "Ah! You're insane," she laughed.

"You're a naughty girl," he purred, "gotta set ya straight." He gave her a swift spank on one cheek and walked quickly to the old twin bed sitting in the corner.

He threw her down on the springy mattress that caused her to bounce a few times before she settled. He looked down at her filthy naked body that was caked with dirt and was immediately turned on again.

"Dirty girl, too." He licked his lips. Lifting one of her legs out of the way and settling himself between her thighs.

Bracing his arms on either side of her, he started a trail of kisses over her abdomen.

Lydia couldn't help but smile. He's being so sweet. 

Suddenly, he latched onto her nipple and ran his tongue over it with lightning speed. Her whole body jolted. Then, he gave it a little bite.

Okay! Not so sweet. Fuck-fuck—

She combusted again. "Oh god," she exclaimed breathlessly.

"You can call me that anytime, babe, anytime."

"Damn it!"

He could tell she was frustrated. "Was the matter?"

Lydia shut her eyes tight. "It's too much. I don't think I can do this."

Betelgeuse couldn't help but laugh at her confession. She opened her eyes and glared at him.

"Okay. I'll stop torturin' ya. Let's see." He got up on his knees and brought a hand down to her abdomen.

He closed his eyes and assessed her. Lydia's solar plexus was a tangled mess, pulsing in frayed and jagged edges.

He opened his eyes and gave Lydia a smug smile.

"Nice ta know what I do ta ya, Lyds. Scrambled ya up real good."
Before she could retort, he put an index finger down and traced a clockwise spiral on her.

"That feels nice," she said languidly. Then she felt something shift within her. "Whoa! What was that?"

He kept going until he reached her belly button. "Boop!" He finished with a light tap.

Lydia felt good. She felt centered and more aware of her surroundings. She was also more aware of the ghost before her and blushed.

Betelgeuse was hoping against hope that she wouldn't come to her senses too much and end things before he could get laid. Still, he waited for her to speak.

"I feel… better?"

Aaaaaaaand… he thought, bracing himself for the rest.

"Um, I don't usually, uh, do this kinda thing."

There it is.

He wasn't ready to give up just yet. "Do what kinda thing?" Hoping to get her riled up again, he caressed her thigh.

"Sleep with guys I hardly know," she said quietly.

It didn't escape him that Lydia still hadn't asked him to move away, or put clothes on, or close her legs.

"I ain't judgin'." Leaning over her again and placing his hands on either side of her, he stopped a hair's breadth away from her lips.

Lydia knew he really wasn't judging. It's what made it so easy for her to do everything they'd done up until now. There were so many questions that needed answering. It was clear to her that Betelgeuse had no intention of wanting anything more from her once he had his freedom.

If I give him his freedom…

There was no way to have a physical relationship once she was back in her body. If she slept with him now, it'd be like one-night stand. Though it wasn't altogether clear what kind of relationship they'd have after it was all over, she also wondered what would happen if they failed their mission.

Everything he'd done for her was because there was a reward. Right? There was, however, something so open and honest about him. Lydia felt conflicted.

Betelgeuse was still waiting, watching as she deliberated her next move. The energy he was using to keep still was waning, however, and he would collapse on top her if she didn't do something soon.

And then things will really take a turn.

Lydia placed her hands on his chest and gave him a gentle push. He sighed in disappointment, but gave her a quick peck on the lips anyway and rolled onto his side, setting her free. It surprised him when she turned to face him instead of running like hell from the bed.
Now that his mind was not as occupied, he felt the pain more acutely. It wasn't as bad as it was, but he was glad to be still once more.

**Would've been happier if I'd scored, though**, he lamented.

The bed was small so they were still touching. He was in hell again. Lydia gave him a smirk as if she knew what he was thinking.

"I guess you're not mad," she quipped.

"Mad?" he scoffed, "I made out like a bandit! Gave some, got some. Now I'm in bed with a beautiful naked woman." Betelgeuse watched her light up at the compliment.

From what Lydia could tell, Betelgeuse seemed satisfied. Not at all like others she'd fooled around with whose attitude completely changed after realizing she wouldn't put out. His casual demeanor made her feel comfortable lying there naked with him. For a moment she was tempted to crawl into his arms.

"How cute," croaked a voice nearby.

Lydia and Betelgeuse shot up to sitting and faced the intruder. Juno was standing near the toppled couch and staring them down with annoyance.

Lydia backed into her bedmate and tried covering herself with her arms. Betelgeuse made no such attempt to cover his own nudity. Instead, he placed an arm around Lydia's shoulders and gave Juno a proud grin.

"Hey, ma!" He greeted brightly.

Lydia looked from Juno to Betelgeuse.

"She's your mother?"

"No," the older woman answered flatly.

"I clearly recall you saying you loved me like a son. The one time," he bantered and pointed a finger at her.

Juno looked like she was about to breathe fire. Instead, her eye twitched. "Here I was, thinking you were an intelligent girl."

"Hey," he barked, "leave her alone!" Betelgeuse snapped his fingers and clothed Lydia in her usual outfit. He left himself in the nude to irk his surrogate mother some more.

Juno quirked an eyebrow and shook her head. "Bart was apprehended for severely injuring civilians."

"Good. Hope they stick'm in a hole just like this one for three and half centuries."

"Don't think they didn't sing about who let loose a bunch angry swamp creatures on them."

Betelgeuse reclined back on the bed and got comfortable. "Oh yeah? Who did that?"

"A striped suit asshole!" She yelled at him.

Betelgeuse chuckled. "Good times."
"Are they okay?" Lydia asked concerned.

Betelgeuse flinched. Of course, his sweet dark angel would care if innocent deadbeats had been harmed.

"I suppose no worse than this willful idiot is right now," Juno glowered. "You should be resting not fooling around."

Lydia had forgotten that Betelgeuse had been in agony only moments ago. Feeling suddenly guilty, she frowned.

"Are you okay, Beej?" She turned to look at him only to find him with his eyes closed and a smirk on his face.

"Peachy, babe," he responded suavely.

Juno charged right for them and grabbed Betelgeuse by the big toe, dragging him off the bed. He landed on the ground with a thump and curled up immediately, wracked in pain.

"ARGH! WHAT THE FUCK?!

"Peachy, you say?! Wouldn't have been able to do that if you were peachy!"

Lydia darted to his side. "Stop it! Beej, you alright?"

"No," he whimpered. "Kiss it better." He puckered his lips at Lydia who only frowned.

"This fool needs to get back to a hundred percent and fast. If you're going to go through with this fruitless endeavor, it needs to be done soon! Bart is a tricky bastard. He's not going to let this go. He's been a problem for years and he has it out for you."

"But you said he's been apprehended!" cried Lydia.

"He'll just be reassigned. If he gets demoted… there's really nothing stopping him from coming after you again. He thinks it's his God-given duty to keep souls in line. Betelgeuse has been on his shitlist for centuries! Believe you me, Lydia, you're on that list now, too."

Juno stopped her tirade just to make sure they were both paying attention. "He meant to kill you back there," she said seriously. "If time and your parents won't kill you… he will."

Lydia felt something unravel in her midsection.

"He's not that stupid," Betelgeuse retorted dryly.

Juno looked down to meet his gaze. "Had it not been for Lydia's Banshee Cry and my transfer… you didn't see him, Chavi." She shuddered. "The look in his eyes... he was aiming for her. Not you."

Betelgeuse saw red. In a flash he was standing across the room from them in his striped suit, looking very dead and very dangerous. "Where is he?"

"Don't waste your time or your energy. You don't have much of either. I'll try to delay the proceedings. You get her to Saint Joseph's Hospital. How are you going to do it?"

Betelgeuse tried to look casual as he leaned against the dirt wall behind him. "Scuzzo's funhouse. Then, I'll find a crack and push her through."
Juno chewed her lip trying to find a flaw. It was a simple plan, which worried her.

"Scuzzo can't be trusted," she said warning him.

"Pft. Like I don't know that?"

"Fine. Seems like a decent plan. You have two more days, tops."

"I know."

Without even a goodbye, Juno faded from sight. Lydia collapsed onto the bed and buried her head in her hands.

"He's going to kill me," she whispered.

"That's not gonna happen-"

Lydia stood up and started pacing. "He would have! You heard her! We were sitting ducks! You wouldn't have been able to save me a second time! I need - I need to learn how to defend myself!"

Betelgeuse snatched her by the hand as she walked by and brought her close. Nodding in agreement, he placed his hands on her shoulders to steady her. "Okay," was all he said.

In a dark holding cell, Bartholomew was sobbing. Everything had gone so terribly wrong. All of his efforts had been laid to waste. It was a terrible misunderstanding. He was the good guy. Yes, he inadvertently harmed others in the process but they were already dead and it was for a righteous cause.

"Why does this always h-h-happen to m-m-meeeeee! I always do m-m-my b-b-best. And I get punished."

"Stop sniveling in there! You're driving us up the wall!" shouted another prisoner. A chorus of "Yeah!" and "Shut the fuck up!" followed suit.

Bartholow threw himself at the bars of his cell and yelled back. "You're all heathens! Filthy, filthy heathens and you will all pay! I am a caseworker! Know your place!"

The other prisoners started laughing. "You're nothin' but a slave!" one shouted back. "Didn't have the stones to make it as a breather! Coward!" The laughing erupted again.

"Always laughing," he seethed, "always laughing at me." A vision of Betelgeuse laughing at him filled him with rage. "I must stop them. Capture them. If they won't get punished, then I have to do it. There must be some justice! It can't all be for nothing!" Bartholomew fell to the ground and whimpered.

A whisper filled the air around him. "Bartholomew…" it called, "Bartholomew…"

Bartholomew looked around wildly looking for the source. "Y-y-yes?"

"Justice must be served. You are the hand of justice. It is your destiny."

"Who's there? Who are you?"

"Do you not know me? I've known you since your beginning."
"My… Lord? Is it you, Father God?" he whispered back.

"My son..."

Bartholomew laughed and cried with glee for his time had finally come at last.
The Incredible Bait Al-Jauza!

Sorry for the delay everyone! Work is picking up all of a sudden and I'm also trying to finish a screenplay ASAP. However, here is a long chapter for you all! I hope you enjoy my character references to the animated series!

Chapters 13-15 are being edited. I'll post them as soon as they're ready. I'm getting close to the end! I think maybe 3 more chapters... not quite sure. Then I'll work on the sequel!

Lots of goodies in the post notes for you guys to look at. Let me know what you think.

Disclaimer: I do not own Beetlejuice. I make no money doing this. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

It was amusing at first, but Lydia's non-stop recitation of the handbook while walking around in an endless circle for the past four hours was making his head spin. Betelgeuse decided to put an end to it. He shrieked and let his head literally spin on his shoulders. That did the trick.

"What the hell? Lydia gaped.

"That's it. Give me that." Betelgeuse tried to snatch the handbook out of her grasp.

"What? Why?" Lydia retreated, clutching the handbook to her chest.

"So I can wipe my ass with it! Give it!" He demanded.

"No," she said defiantly, "this is what saved your ass back at the bar! I learned the Banshee Cry from the in-"

"Intermediate Interface chapter on Haunting. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Whoopdeedoo! Childs play, babe."

Lydia was insulted. "I brought them to their knees," she said haughtily.

She had also unknowingly added to Betelgeuse's injuries. She doesn't need to know that. He needed to keep some of his dignity.

"You surprised everyone, but now he knows that you know the handbook. Guess what, babes, he's read it too."

Lydia frowned and furrowed her brow in defeat. "What am I gonna do now?"

It was Betelgeuse's turn to be insulted. "Are ya fuckin' kiddin' me? I'M STANDIN' RIGHT HERE!" He stomped his foot on the ground like a toddler. "You think I learned how ta bring lighting down from the fuckin' aether from that garbage?" He yelled, pointing at the handbook.

"No?"

"Hell no! Everythin' I do is original, babe. I'm fuckin' Michelangelo in these parts!" Betelgeuse suddenly had a dreamy look in his eye. "Everyone used to shit themselves at the sound of my name."
"Used to?"

The dreamy look vanished and was replaced with a scowl.

"Not the big bad wolf anymore?" Lydia teased.

"Hey! Just because I was stuck here for *three hundred and fifty years* doesn't mean I've lost my touch! I'm not the big bad wolf, I *eat* wolves!" He menaced.

Lydia gasped. "You were… stuck… here… for…"

Looks of shock and pity took turns squirming on Lydia's face before her countenance changed to one of accusation. "What did you do?"

"Lots o' shit," he proclaimed proudly, then his face dropped again, "but it's what I wouldn't do that really got me fucked." He suddenly regretted saying that. "Whatever. Point is, learn from the master, m'kay?"

"What didn't you do?"

Betelgeuse threw his head back let out an exaggerated sigh of frustration. "Who cares?"

"I do," she said genuinely.

Those words, with that kind of sincerity, had only ever come from Juno. Betelgeuse looked at Lydia searchingly. "Why?"

It was the same question asked in the exact same way the night she first met him. Lydia's heart broke. That one word was asking more than she was ready to reveal. More than she was ready to admit even to herself.

"I… *like*… you." she responded hesitantly.

"And the Oscar goes too…" he whipped up an audible drum roll.

Lydia rolled her eyes. "I wouldn't have sucked your cock if I didn't like you!"

Betelgeuse was stunned by her crass response and the logic behind it. "Well, damn. I guess not, huh?"

This was unusual for him. No one had ever outright told him that they liked him. He knew he'd grown on certain people like Juno and a few others, hell, he even knew that Rhoslyn *liked* him.

*Hold the fuckin' phone. If she likes me… maybe… I got a chance after all?*

His mind started reeling.

*Okay, but I gotta be stealthy. Sure as hell don't wanna repeat what happened last time. But what about gettin' her to her fleshbag, genius? Well, I got a couple o' days. I mean, can she fall for me in a day or two? Stupid, she won't choose you over her life. Right, but she doesn't have to. Looks like we'll get hitched after all. Then, I can stop by whenever I want and… and… and what?*

Lydia watched Betelgeuse internalize for awhile. His facial expressions were changing so quickly, it was obvious he was arguing with himself about something. She wanted to laugh but he looked so
lost at the moment that it made her heart bleed for him.

Lydia made her way to the now upright couch and patted the seat next to her. Furrowing his brow, he sat. Lydia took a deep breath and turned to face him. Having no idea what she should say, she grabbed his right hand and grazed her fingers over a blackened, crusted patch of skin near his thumb.

If Betelgeuse's heart could beat, it would have been thumping out of his chest.

"How'd you get this?" she asked softly.

He dragged his eyes away from her angelic face to his dead hand. Any other time, any other person, he would have said something abhorrently perverse just to make them run.

"Plague."

Lydia let out a breathy nervous laugh. "You don't mean... the bubonic plague?"

He stared at her delicate fingers tracing the signs of death on his rough hands. It was doing all kinds of things to him that he couldn't even name. "Yep."

"Like... the fourteenth century?" She whispered excitedly. Lydia looked up to see his face.

Betelgeuse could tell she was fighting back awe. He snorted. "Don't fuckin' romanticise it. It was a shit time. You've no idea how lucky you kids have it."

Lydia couldn't help it, she started bouncing up and down with elation. "Holy crap! You're six hundred years old!"

It was clearly impressing her so, he didn't want to disappoint. "Six hundred forty-six."

Her jaw dropped at his confirmation. Lydia brought her legs up on the couch, scooted closer to him, entwined her fingers in his, and sat on her heels. "When's your birthday?!"

So, the more I answer, the more attention I get... okay!

"September fifth, thirteen-eleven. I didn't know that until I read my file, though."

"Of course you're a Virgo," she deadpanned.

"Psh! There's a picture of you next to Scorpio," he teased back.

"You know my birthday?"

"October twenty-ninth," he answered matter of factly.

Lydia shook her head in disbelief. She really wanted to know how much he knew about her and how he'd learned any of it, but there were more pressing questions on her mind.

"So that means... you were what? Forty when you died."

"Thirty-seven," he mumbled.

A smirk tugged at her lips as she pondered how best to take a jab at him about being middle-aged but she quickly changed her mind when she saw that his face was, pretty clearly, daring her to do so.
"Is Chavi your real name?"

Betelgeuse laughed. "Nah, that's the Romani word for child. You know, gypsy language. Lots o' that in the carny lingo."

"Oh." Lydia was visibly confused. He knew what she was going to ask next, but Lydia had already rested her other hand on his lap, which made him go blank.

"What's your real name then?"

"Betelgeuse," he responded flatly.

Comically widening her eyes, Lydia stuttered. "Y-you-just-said… it! I thought… I thought you couldn't say it! I wondered why you didn't mind me or Juno saying it! What? Why? I've been so careful not to say-"

"Calm down, tiny! I couldn't say it before. Part of my sentence. I torched the shit outta that clause. And everything else for that matter."

"Well, shit. Okay. Good to know… Okay… so you died from the plague…"


"But you said…" she started.

"I never said that's what killed me."

"Well, then what was it?"

"Guess," he challenged. As Lydia pondered, Betelgeuse brought his other hand to rest on their entwined ones. He smirked when she pretended not to notice.

"Another sickness?" she asked.

"Nope." Caressing her wrist with his thumb, he moved closer to her when again, she didn't pull away.

"Oh god. Were you murdered?"

Betelgeuse leaned right into her ear. "No," he whispered, as he noticed her breath quicken.

Lydia used her free hand to angle his face to her so she could look in his eyes. Searching for the answer there, her breath caught in her throat. Undiluted hunger burned in his irises. Then, she suddenly knew.

"You killed yourself," she said, barely audible.

The hunger in his eyes dimmed into emptiness.

"Bingo," he replied just as quietly. Quickly, he recovered and pulled back. "You get a cookie!"

A cookie appeared in her abandoned hand and Lydia brought it up to her mouth. Betelgeuse smacked it out of her grasp. "What's wrong with you?!

Lydia laughed. "I'm just kidding!" They were both trying to keep things light, but there was an awkward silence nonetheless. "I can guess what got you into trouble now," she said triumphantly.
"Oh yeah, smarty pants? What was it?"

"You wouldn't work as a civil servant. Go ahead. Tell me I'm wrong."

There was a slight pause but Betelgeuse smiled, telling Lydia she'd hit it the nail on the head.

"Tell me about your life."

The smile faded from his eyes. He tried to hide his displeasure. "That was a long time ago."

Lydia visibly deflated as she realized she'd lost him and he wouldn't divulge anything more. Everything in him was telling him to tell her anything she wanted to hear. Do anything she wanted him to do. He wanted to make her happy.

*I'm in so much fuckin' trouble.*

"Okay, how 'bout we make a deal?" He offered.

"What kind of deal?" She asked suspiciously.

"I teach ya how to be a badass, like myself. If ya impress me? I won't just *tell* ya what you want to know..." he paused for dramatic effect, "I'll *show* ya." He waggled his eyebrows at her to see that smile again. Lydia didn't disappoint as she flashed him a dazzling grin.

"Deal."

---

Bartholomew had not heard from the voice again and was quickly becoming despondent.

*I'm losing my mind.*

"Bart," called a voice.

Bartholomew sprang from his cot hoping it was back, but noticed Juno standing before his cell.

"What do you want," he seethed.

"What were you thinking, attacking like that?" She managed to keep her anger at bay.

"They'll be fine in time," he grumbled.

"I'm talking about attacking a breather with the intention to kill!" Juno's anger erupted.

Bartholomew frowned but sat straighter. "She's a fugitive, on the run with a dangerous criminal."

"She's just a girl."

"SHE BROKE THE RULES!" He bellowed. Bartholomew sniffed and shrugged his shoulders, regaining his composure. "She's already *meant* to die in the ward. Why would it matter if I were the one to end her life now?" He finished his question with an innocent smile.

Juno was livid but she kept her voice even. "You are not an executioner. You are a caseworker. Well, you were." She let that sink in.
Bartholomew felt the weight of her words and was filled with terror. "What are you saying?" He croaked, voice cracking with fear.

Juno lit a cigarette and took one long puff. Smoke emitted from the slit in her neck and the little light available in the cell reflected in Juno's eyes, making her look downright diabolical.

"I've no doubt that there will be severe consequences for your actions. Do you know what happens to murderers here, Bart? Because I don't. Never met a murderer on this level. That's because they don't end up here."

"I didn't murder anyone!" He cried.

"But that's exactly what you intended to do."

"Please," he begged. "I-I-I wasn't thinking!"

"I might be able to convince them that it was a crime of passion. I could tell them that it didn't seem like you were aiming for the girl," she offered.

"What do you want?" He asked desperately.

Juno took her time to finish her cigarette. She didn't even meet his gaze when she spoke next.

"I want your word that you will not interfere with her again. That you will not seek her out."

"Fine, whatever you-"

"And, you will… never… go near my boy again." Juno finally looked up at him.

There was a coldness to her eyes and voice that sent a shudder through Bartholomew. A flare of righteous anger welled up within him as he envisioned Betelgeuse impaled in the swamplands.

"Boy?" He whispered. "That boy is a verminous stain to everything in existence. He is the reason I'm still here! Every year of my service now has been compounded by his very actions! I should have been promoted a long time ago. Moved up. Maybe even moved on by now, if it hadn't been for your boy!"

"Don't act like you didn't have a choice, Bart. It makes you look even more pathetic. Take responsibility. Be a fuckin' man, for once. You made bad decisions that extended your sentence. You decided to play out your little fantasy of being 'inquisitor of the dead'. YOU pissed off the wrong dead man."

Juno moved closer to the bars of his cell and kept her tone dangerously calm. "If you ever harm him again… let's just say… demotion doesn't scare me." She faded from view.

Bartholomew lurched to his feet and grabbed the bars of his cell. He raged and wailed until he grew very tired and slumped down to the floor.

"Bartholomew…" said the ominous whisper.

"Oh you have returned to me! Oh messenger from on high! I need your guidance!" He pleaded on his knees, hands clasped in prayer.

"There is a way… for you to escape."

"Lead me, my lord!"
"There is something you must seek outside this cell. A weapon you must find in order to carry out
my will."

"What is your will? Tell me and I shall endeavor to carry it out!"

"Too many unworthy souls crowd your plane. The system has failed them."

"So very true, my lord! I myself have said so!"

"You must act as judge in my stead."

"I accept! I will not fail you!"

"Good. Come. Follow my voice."

Bartholomew crawled into the darkest corner of his cell and simply vanished.

Lydia was furious. She had thrown everything into her last attack on the poltergeist and he just
evaded it… again. The size of her conjured fireball seemed impressive to her. She was certain he
would at least flinch in response. Betelgeuse didn't even spare her a glance while she attacked. He
just read his newspaper in his right hand while slapping away fireballs with the left. It wasn't that
he successfully circumvented the blast that enraged her. No, it was what he used.

A flyswatter? Sonafabitch. How?

"How! How is a flyswatter better than my fireball?! You're cheating, aren't you? Stop it! STOP
LAUGHING!"

Betelgeuse's hand was over his mouth to keep her from seeing him laugh but she could see his
merry convulsions. She was on him in a flash and hitting him with his now rolled up newspaper.
He threw his hands in the air, surrendering.

"I'm sorry, Lyds. Okay! Okay." He took a moment to compose himself. "Why do you think a
fireball is better than a flyswatter?"

"Hm, I dunno? Maybe because… it IS? A flyswatter can't stop fire!"

"Yeah, but I believe that it can," he said simply.

"You better have point and you better get to it fast."

"Everything you're able to do here, and I mean everything, is only possible because you think is.
Your certainty has to be greater than your opponent's doubt."

Lydia raised an eyebrow. "What the fuck does that mean?"

"How did ya make the fireball?"

"I used the candle's flame and waved it at you."

"So, you waved your hand at the flame and just expected it to grow the size of a basketball and hurl
in my direction?"

Lydia thought for a moment. "Yeah."

"Exactly."

There was a long silence right before Lydia resumed her blows on the ghost before her in between grinding out her words.

"What, "SMACK "does," SMACK "that," SMACK "mean!" SMACK. SMACK.

The newspaper was suddenly a bouquet of black and red roses. Lydia stopped her abuse and stared the lovely flowers in her hand.

"It means," he said with a seductive timber in his voice, "that you were able to trick your mind into believing in something that should be…” he opened his arms wide, motioning her to look around, "impossible."

He finished as vines started to come through the dirt walls, ceiling, and floor. Roses bloomed all around them and petals started to fall. Lydia's mouth fell open into a smile. He watched her twirl and laugh until he the ache in the pit of his stomach spread up into his chest and down into the front of his pants.

Life had not been fair to him and death was being downright mean. Betelgeuse possessed more patience than others gave him credit for but he couldn't take it anymore. He had quite literally gotten a taste of her and was now hooked. Time was of the essence and he was beginning to chafe at the thought of sending her back, where she could possibly forget everything that happened between them. It was time to play dirty to win her affections.

In the hours that had passed since she admitted she liked him, he had been contemplating what she might want in a man. It didn't seem like it would be too hard to guess. Seduction was never his forte, preferring to having people see him at his worst, but he had enough sense to know what the classic staples were.

**Romance, gifts, sense of humor… Prince Charming looks.**

It struck him now that he had been completely depleted earlier, which meant he was at rest, which also meant she'd seen him without his face on. Lydia had asked about everything, even pointed out his gut and muscles, but never mentioned his face.

**Interestin'. Maybe she liked what she saw. Maybe that's what got her hot and bothered to begin with.**

Horns wanted to sprout out of his head but he refrained. Instead, his evil little plan simmered within while his innocent fae queen made rose angels on the ground.

Betelgeuse hadn't seen his own face since he was alive. Recalling it now from memory wasn't difficult, though. He knew he didn't have Prince Charming looks. In fact, he looked especially fucked up the day he died. Still, he knew he could clean up well if he really wanted to. He sifted through his memories, searching for a time in his life that would be most favorable and found it.

A deep dark chuckle escaped him as a more youthful version of himself mentally patted him on the back. **I got this, gramps. Let me take the wheel.**

Quite suddenly, a ball of rose petals exploded on his face and sent him blasting into the wall
behind him. Betelgeuse actually had to crawl out of the wall on hands and knees. When he stood up and dusted himself off, Lydia was smiling at him with two machine guns made of rose petals in either arm.

"Say hello to my little FRIENDS!"

Rose petal bullets flew at him with a speed and force he had not expected. It sent him right back into the hole in the wall and she didn't relent until he was completely buried. It was the first time he'd heard her version of a maniacal laugh, which was downright cute as hell.

He noticed he wasn't in much pain, which impressed him further. Lydia had attacked with complete control not adding to his injuries this time.

"I win!" She yelled, elated and shot more petals into the ceiling. "Wooo! Right? That was awesome! That was—"

Lydia's guns fell to the floor as she stared at the man before her in utter shock. He looked like he was in his twenties, with blonde hair that was fuller and more tamed but still messy, adding to his rugged good looks. His brilliant blue eyes penetrated her and held her in a trancelike state.

"Very nice work, Lyds," he said genuinely, full of pride.

The tone of his voice sent a humming energy straight to her panties. She looked him up and down. He looked like a hot stable boy right out of a fairytale, wearing a simple white shift that showed
some chest, dark brown breeches, and kneehigh leather boots. She swallowed hard when he grinned at her.

"What-ah…" She began nervously, "what's this, now?"

Betelgeuse took slow steps toward her. Shrugging his shoulders, his grin widened when he noticed she was fighting not to take steps away from him. It was time to lay it on thick.

"Ye apprev the chaffare, suete lemmam? Thou hewe daswen. Leet me kithe eftsoone."

Never in her entire life had Lydia used the word swoon. It was a dirty word that only reminded her of weak overly romantic teenage girls but when those foreign words escaped his lips with that accent, rough voice, and that 'I'm gonna ravage you' look on his face… that's exactly what she wanted to do. Swoon.

A very unattractive sound came out of Lydia as she cleared her throat.

"Heh, um, don't know what you just said," he was getting closer, "you, uh," and closer, "look…" Lydia nodded her head in approval. "Well. You look well. Pretty. I mean good."

Betelgeuse suavely interfered on Lydia's personal space. "Graunt mercy. Al not als shene alstow toute," his smile was wicked now, knowing she couldn't understand him.

"So, what's happening?" She asked as she took a tentative step back.

He took two steps forward. "Nyht ant day, I naam forpyne goost. A suete cos of thy mouth Mihte be my leche." He was mere inches away. "Leve fornicacioun anoon I may raught pees."

"Did I just hear you say something about ghost fornication?" she raised an eyebrow at him and crossed her arms over her chest.

Caught, Betelgeuse chortled. "Is your mind always in the gutter, babe?"

"Me?" She scoffed. "What do you think you're doing with," she poked his chest with her finger and found that it was hard as a rock, "this, um, getup?" She finished with uncertainty.

"You impressed me," he said simply, which made her cute face light up. *So, my opinion matters. Also very interestin'.* "I believe we had a deal," he purred, then suddenly he clapped his hands hard and all went black.

Lydia was breathing fast. She reached out for him but felt nothing. "Beej? What are you doing?"

She felt his arms from behind her wrap around her waist like a vice and he pulled her into him as he rested his chin on her shoulder. "Lok, lemmam mine," he whispered into her ear.

There was a light flickering in the distance that looked like it was quickly flying toward them and the sound of music and voices filled the air. Very quickly, the scene reached them. A bonfire blazed while a group surrounded it. Some played instruments, others danced, still, others ate or drank. Lydia turned her face towards Betelgeuse who was looking at her with an unreadable expression.

"Is this," she wondered, amazed, "a memory?"

Her answer came in the form of Betelgeuse's clone who suddenly ran into view like his life depended on it and leaped over the large fire.
"Looth fonne!" a very large drunk naked man yelled after him as he tried to give chase. The poor man was panting and doubled over, exhausted. He seemed to be cursing.

"What is he saying?" Lydia inquired. At the snap of Betelgeuse's fingers, she could suddenly understand everything.

"Loathsome fool! I'll... have thy... head on a stake!" The man cried through desperate breaths and fell to his knees. At this, the whole company burst out laughing.

"For Christ's sake, Bait al-jauza! Give the man his clothes back," a thin beautiful woman yelled.

"Not until the drunkard admits he stole from me and pays me double what he took," the clone yelled back.

"Ay," another man cried, "we should take a hand from the thieving swine!"

"Enough!" Cried another voice. This one was familiar to Lydia. An older woman walked into view.

"It's Juno!" Lydia cried excitedly.

Juno kicked the naked man in the ass. "Chavi, give the idiot his clothes."

The duplicate shrugged his shoulders and tossed a bundle into the fire instead. An equal amount of cheers and jeers filled the air. Lydia looked over her shoulder at the young Betelgeuse still holding her. "You're so mean." She elbowed him.

"Don't pity that guy, babes. He's a piece o' shit." He smirked at her but didn't seem amused.

Juno yelled at the man to go back to his wife and the festivities started again like nothing had happened. The music started up with drums first. The young Betelgeuse ran up to Juno and gave her a slobbery kiss on the cheek. He jumped away quickly and laughed when she swung at him.

Lydia shook her head. "Have you always been a pain in her ass?"

"Since the day we met," he replied dreamily.

"When was that?" Lydia laughed.

Betelgeuse waved a hand and the scene melted away and was replaced by a new one. Juno reappeared but was obviously younger. She held a peasant boy of about ten years old by the ear.

"Ye pykepur chavi," she hissed at the boy and dragged him away from the middle of dirt path into a tent.

Lydia broke from Betelgeuse's grasp and ran after them. She entered the tent and found Juno towering over the boy who was sitting on a stool.

"Show me your loot," she demanded. When he made no move to do so, she patted him down and pulled out a coin purse. The boy tried to make a run for it but she yanked him back down by the blonde hair on his head. She emptied the coin purse on her table.

"Nice work," she admired and pulled a ring from the pile. "I'll take back what's mine. I must say," she continued once she placed the ring back on her finger, "no one has not been able to steal from me for quite some time. The very fact that you were able to pull this off my finger at all tells me you're quite talented."
The boy had the audacity to smile at her.

"What is your name, chavi?"

"I've none," he replied proudly.

Juno grabbed him by the chin and looked into his eyes. "No matter. You shall name yourself one day. How long have you been able to see the dead?"

The boy's jaw dropped but he tried to act like he didn't know what she was saying. "I-I do not know what you mean."

"You see the dead," she said resolutely.

The boy visibly paled and looked around to see if anyone else heard. "I do not-"

"Come to me tomorrow if you wish to achieve greatness someday." She released him and waved him off. The boy went running out of the tent and Lydia followed. She crashed into Betelgeuse as the boy crashed into a girl of about fourteen. She was dressed beautifully, had blond braids and had crystal blue eyes. Riveted, Lydia watched the encounter.

"Tis you!" the girl exclaimed jubilantly. "Are you enjoying the carnival?" She asked sweetly. The boy was stunned into silence and blushing.

The scene melted away leaving Lydia and Betelgeuse in darkness again. "Why'd you do that? I wanted to see!"

Betelgeuse stayed silent as he conjured another memory. Eerie music greeted them first. Then a large tent appeared before them. Torches lit the entrance on either side. People were lined up to enter.

"I think this is more your speed," he said cryptically.

"What's going on?" Lydia breathed.

Some of them looked excited while others looked frightened. It was quickly getting dark when a figure walked out of the tent. It was him. Lydia gasped as she watched a young but more familiar looking Betelgeuse spread his arms wide and bowed. The crowd cried out and cheered. He righted himself and gave his most wicked grin, which elicited a gasp and excited murmurs from the crowd. He was dressed in layers of black and white and a striped hat. His face was the face Lydia had known since she was a girl. Alabaster white with dark-ringed circles around his eyes and green moss peppered around his face.

Lydia turned quickly to face her partner, but he was no longer at her side. She turned back to the scene before her and watched on when he began to speak.

"Greetings boys and girls. Ladies and gentlemen. I am Bait Al-jauza! I shall be thy guide this evening as ye walk the halls of death! Enter now and see the strange and unusual with thine very eyes and let the show begin!"

As soon as the tents entrance seemingly opened without any assistance, Betelgeuse began to speak again.

"Lollai, lollai, litil child, whi wepistou so sore?"
Lydia was enraptured. Although she couldn't understand most of the words Betelgeuse was saying, she felt like she could. His words resonated within her as if he was telling her a great truth and she felt something dark and melancholy wash over her. It was a familiar feeling. The same feeling that kept her separated from so many in her life.

Betelgeuse was looking right at her as the end of the crowd thinned.

"Child, thou ert a pilgrim in wikidnis ibor,
Thou wandrest in this fals world, thou loke the bifor.
Deth ssal com with a blast vte of a well dim horre
Adamis kin dun to cast, him silf hath ido befor.
Lollai, lollai, litil child, so wo the worth Adam
In the lond of paradis, throught wikidnes of Satan."

They were alone now. Betelgeuse's eyes bore deep into hers as he extended a hand for her to take and bowed. As Lydia walked toward him, she realized she was crying. Silent tears streamed down her face. Hoping he hadn't noticed, Lydia snapped her fingers and instantly her face was dry.

He waited patiently, eyes cast to the floor until she placed her hand in his. Before righting himself, he met her eyes again and gave Lydia a knowing smile. It was at this very moment she realized what he meant when he said they had things in common. Somehow, he knew her deepest self. The part of her that most would call odd, strange, and unusual. The dark part of her that most would shy away from and pretend did not exist. The part of her that always made her feel so utterly alone.

I'm not alone, she thought as Betelgeuse led her through the entrance of the tent. His hand sat low on the small of her back, guiding her through the dark.

Lining the walls of the interior were all manner of strange people raised on platforms and lit by torches. Lydia spotted a dangerously thin man first. Skin and bones, painted like a skeleton and wearing only a loincloth, he lifted a giant boulder on his shoulders. The next exhibit was of a woman with giant spider legs dancing gracefully. She crouched low to the ground and contorted herself in impossible ways. Lydia thought she was beautiful. Then, there was couple covered in hair from head to toe, each with a small dog in their arms. They appeared to be very much in love. Nearby, a man laughed wildly. His mouth was stretched unnaturally wide in an open-mouthed smile that gave Lydia goosebumps.

On and on it went until they reached the end, where Juno sat a table with her eyes rolled back as unintelligible ominous babble poured out from her lips. People around her were crossing themselves and muttering prayers. Bait Al-jauza stood behind her and placed his arms on her shoulders. Immediately, Juno closed her eyes and went silent.
"Tonight and only tonight, speak to thy lost loved ones. Hear their wisdom from behind the veil that is so thin this evening," he announced somberly. "for a small price, of course," he added with a devilish smile.

He met Lydia's gaze and the memory faded until they were back in the small dirt confines of his grave. Betelgeuse hid from view and tried to collect himself.

**What the fuck was I thinkin'?** He thought as he held his head in his hands. It had been too much for him. Seeing everything that way. Seeing his life, his... **family.** He usually choked at the word. His family and everything that had been ripped away from him.

"Beej?" Lydia called out, looking for him.

Still invisible to her, he looked up and saw the concern in her eyes. He couldn't continue the charade. He changed back to the form she was most acquainted with and revealed himself.

"Don't worry, I'm still here," he said with his usual smugness, trying to hide his nostalgia.

Seeing past the facade, Lydia gave him a sad smile. "That was incredible. You... you're incredible."

It was like Cupid decided that the arrows already lodged in his dead heart weren't enough, because he felt the sting of love tear through his chest yet again. He swallowed down a sob and cleared his throat.

"I know," he replied simply and shrugged.

Lydia laughed and rolled her eyes as she approached him. She almost reached him when she wavered a bit and yawned. The bed came to her aide and she toppled onto it as it gently bumped into her legs.

"Damn," she shook her head, "thanks."

"Get some shut-eye. We'll go to Scuzzo's as soon as you're rested."

"What about you," she asked with a hint of hope in her voice.

"Gonna keep an eye on things and watch ya sleep," he admitted unabashedly.

Lydia gifted him with a giggle and curled up on the bed. She noticed the bed was slightly larger with clean sheets and fluffy pillows. She buried her face a pillow and inhaled. She caught a whiff of concentrated oxygen and cafeteria food.

"That's weird. I just smelled food."

"Probably someone eating in your room."

"My room?" Then, she suddenly understood. She was smelling whatever was in her hospital room. Lydia started freaking out.

"My body. I'm in the hospital. What if... oh my god... what if when I get back to it, I'm paralyzed or something or a fucking vegetable!" She started hyperventilating as another horrible thought took the forefront of her mind. "What if I forget everything?"

Lydia hadn't realized that Betelgeuse had sat beside her. She felt his fingers massage her scalp.
"Let's cross that bridge when we get there," he said, his gentle tone shocking Lydia into looking up at him. "You know," he began as he looked at his hand working through her hair, "you could always," he shrugged, "stick around if ya want, I dunno." He mumbled the rest.

When she didn't respond he brought his gaze to her eyes again and immediately wanted to kick himself. She looked terrified. "Worst case scenario, o' course," he added quickly.

Lydia tried to hide her fear. "Yeah… right." She turned over and closed her eyes, willing away the look she'd seen on his face that was now burned into the back of her eyelids. It had been so raw and vulnerable and it scared the hell out of her. Lydia's solar plexus started to ache as it unraveled from her emotional turmoil within.

No. He doesn't see me like that. Stop thinking about it. I don't see him like that. I don't.

Sleep came to her quickly as Betelgeuse continued his ministrations, rubbing strands of her hair between his fingers. He wanted to steal a kiss...

That's exactly what I'm gonna do.

Betelgeuse leaned in and hesitated.

"You really never change, do you?" Juno whispered from behind him.

Betelgeuse closed his eyes, sighed and waved a hand over Lydia so she wouldn't be disturbed.

"You're burnin' yourself out comin' and goin' like that," he irked as he got up from the bed and walked away from them both. A lit cigarette was conjured and he began puffing away. "Well, since yer 'ere," he exhaled a cloud, "where's the batty saint? I'm feelin' a lot better now, know what I mean? Nothin' like a little mayhem ta cure a pair of blue balls. Right?" He whipped around and gave her his creepiest grin.

Juno was looking at him with pity in her eyes. Betelgeuse snarled and pointed a finger at her.

"Don't look at me like that!" He snapped.

"What are you really doing? What do you expect is going to happen, huh?"

Betelgeuse collected himself, flicked his cigarette away and adjusted the lapels of his suit.

"What? You didn't get the weddin' invite? I'll make sure to send it in the mail."

"Then what? Haunt her until she dies and hope she's got unfinished business? I suppose you'll make sure she does. There's no way you'll let her live her life."

"Quiet," he warned softly.

"She'll never marry someone she loves, she'll never have children, she'll have a miserable afterlife. Reminds me of someone-"

"SHUT UP!" he bellowed as he covered his ears and seethed.

"She's not Rhoslyn."

"Fuck Rhoslyn! That was six centuries ago! You think I still give a shit about that broad? I stopped caring the moment she told me she didn't love me," he yelled.
"But she did love you," she retorted. "And you still cared about her enough to leave her everything after you died."

There was a murderous glint in his eye and his nostrils flared in fury, but Juno continued.

"It was a different time. She knew it would leave her son disgraced if she married you, but she did love you. Lydia's probably already halfway there herself." She gave the sleeping woman a pitying glance. "You have a way of doing that, you know? You worm your way into people, for better or worse, until you make yourself a goddamn symbiotic relationship."

Betelgeuse bit his lower lip to keep from showing his hurt, he'd have drawn blood if he was alive.

"Always knew you thought the best of me, ma," he dripped with sarcasm.

"You tried to manipulate Rhoslyn into marrying you. You're doing the same with her," she pointed at the sleeping Lydia.

Betelgeuse looked at his sleeping goddess and his heart broke. Juno was right. He leaned against the dirt wall and slid to the ground.

"You can be a good man. I've seen it." Juno approached him cautiously.

Burying his face in his hands, he groaned. "What I do?" he murmured. "Ugh, god, I've got it bad-\textit{FUCK}!" He fistied his hands in his hair and tugged.

"Do what I couldn't let you do," she replied sadly. "Let her live out her own life. The way she chooses to."

"I've already told you I don't blame you. I made my choice."

"You do blame me. I sure as hell do." Juno slid down the wall next to him and offered him a cigarette.

He took it and they smoked in silence.

\textbf{POST NOTES:} Unfortunately, I don't know how to make the links work here so, I've written the full titles for search purposes if you're interested in taking a look. I had to use a very simple Middle English dictionary and poetry to write the dialogue. It's probably full of mistakes or not accurate but I tried my best.

\textbf{Translations:}

...Like the merchandise, my love? You seem dazed. Let me show you more.

...Thank you. But not as pretty as your ass.

...Night and day, I am a tormented spirit. A sweet kiss from your mouth might be my cure.

...Let's get our fuck on so I may have peace.

...Look, my love.

...Loathsome fool!
...You thieving child.

**The music that inspired the freakshow:** Dark Gypsy Music - The Firedancer - Dark Waltz
[https://youtu.be/-NpNOHGBt-A](https://youtu.be/-NpNOHGBt-A)

**Middle English Poem excerpts from Why weepest thou so sore? Translation by Clerk of Oxford:**

Here it on youtube: [https://youtu.be/KkwU6mJVnFQ](https://youtu.be/KkwU6mJVnFQ)

"Lullay, lullay, little child, why do you weep so sadly? By necessity must you weep: it was prepared for you long ago, that you should ever live in sorrow, and sigh and mourn ever, as your elders did before now, while they were alive. Lullay, lullay, little child, child lullay, lullow; you have come into an alien world."

"Child, you are a pilgrim born in wickedness, and you wander in this false world; look before you! Death will come suddenly with a blast 'out of a well dim horre', to cast down Adam's kin, as he has often done before. Lullay, lullay, little child, Adam made this woe for you, in the land of Paradise, through the wickedness of Satan"

**Ginger, the Dancing Spider:** I imagine her performance like this one: [https://youtu.be/JItkRLV1f-c](https://youtu.be/JItkRLV1f-c) "THE SPIDER amazing dance by Milena Sidorova"
WEIRD AUTHOR'S NOTES:

How I came up with his BJ's profession while he was alive:

All the carnival stuff, his overly dramatic reactions, his ridiculous commercial, and "It's Showtime," all pointed in the direction that he may have been a performer of some kind. At least to me, it did. His guide hat always tripped me up. For a while, I had no idea how I'd explain why that's the first thing we see him in. Its style did not exist in his presumed era. Eventually, the reflective surface was as good as it got, then the freakshow guide came to me. He obviously didn't wear the hat while he was alive, but his outfit just got more modern as time went by. So, his showbusiness face and his clothes are a modernized version of his prior profession's costume.

Then there is a line that YouTube subtitles interpreted differently than what Beetlejuice says in the film. When he comes out of the model with his carnival getup, he says "Well, I'm back. I'm feeling really good about myself, know what I mean?" BUT the subtitles on a YouTube upload of the film, which is incorrect many times, read like this: "Well, I'm acting. I feel real good about myself, know what I mean?" Being an actor, I found it hysterical and conveniently saw it as a sign that I was on the right track. lmao.

Now you know.

DISCLAIMER: I do not own Beetlejuice and I make no money off of this story. Just a big fan. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

It was an eerie room full of forgotten things. Outdated tools, weapons, and technology littered the space. It was especially difficult to maneuver considering Bartholomew had no idea what he was looking for. The voice had led him to this unnaturally large place. Eventually, all the manner of things that occupied the area would disappear as the astral layers disintegrated. He hoped that the weapon he was looking for still existed.

The deeper he went the more he noticed he could sense… warmth. He hadn't felt that since he was alive and was almost unable to recognize it. An odd pulsing glow caught his attention. He made his way toward it.

It was a small chest and something was glowing from inside.

"I think I've found it, my lord," he whispered excitedly. "Although, it seems a bit small to be such a great weapon."

"Do you doubt me?" The voice asked menacingly.

"No! No, of course not! Forgive me!"

"Pick it up and tell me what you see."

Gingerly, Bartholomew opened the chest and smiled victoriously as he wrapped his hand around a
warm wooden handle. Like King Arthur pulling the sword from the stone, he pulled the artifact from the chest and pointed to the sky. Then, his face fell.

"It's, uh… stamp," he said confused.

"Yes!"

"Uh, are you sure…” he began.

"Silence! You now wield the Damnatorum Sigillum!"

Bartholomew dropped the stamp in fear and retreated. "My lord! That is… illegal. That method hasn't been used since…"

"Since the start of the Inquisition. Now, do you understand why you are the only one worthy of such responsibility?"

Bartholomew dropped to his knees and wept. "I'm humbled. Forgive my trepidation! You make me worthy! I shall bear the crushing weight of this power."

Bartholomew could not hear the voice snicker over his own sniveling.

Lydia yawned and stretched without reservation as she awoke and frowned when she noticed that Betelgeuse had not taken advantage of sleeping in the same bed with her.

"I thought you'd be fondling my ass or something. I'm almost disappointed," Lydia announced as she stretched again.

"Sorry," Juno replied dryly, "but I don't - what do you kids say nowadays? Swing that way."

Lydia grimaced before slowly turning to face Juno. She found the older ghost sitting at a desk, bent over some files and writing away. Betelgeuse was nowhere in sight. Lydia sat up on the bed and gave the small space another once over.

"Where is he?" Lydia asked.

Juno didn't raise her gaze. "Out."

Lydia shook her head annoyed. "Obviously. Where?"

Juno kept scribbling and didn't respond. Lydia took a calming breath, not to let her frustration show, and tried another tactic. "I didn't know you were both mediums."

Lydia smiled internally when Juno's pen stopped. The caseworker looked at her with a hooded gaze and gave her a mirthless smile. "Indeed," she replied, not giving anything else away.

"You called me a medium, but I don't think I am," Lydia quipped.

Juno scoffed. "Why do you say that?"

"I haven't seen any more ghosts since I was sixteen. Betel seemed… disappointed when he found
out." Lydia tried not to dwell on the look he had given her at the time.

Juno raised an eyebrow, placed her pen down and leaned back in her chair. "Trauma," she said simply.

Lydia furrowed her brow. "What?"

"When someone is able to see through the veil, it's usually because they've experienced something traumatic. Most of the time, it happens when they're children. For me, it was watching my younger brother drown in a river."

Lydia gasped and felt her gut constrict. "I'm sorry," she whispered. Juno seemed unaffected.

"For you, it was watching your mother pack her bags and leave without as much as a backward glance in your direction."

Lydia cringed. The pain in her gut felt like glass slicing up her insides.

"Trauma," Juno continued, "can also inhibit one's ability to see through the veil." She bore holes into Lydia as she carefully said her next words. "If the last ghost you saw while you were still in your physical body was him, I think you're smart enough to figure out why."

Lydia let out a shaky breath as she realized what the woman was telling her. "No," she denied, "he didn't traumatize me."

"Keep telling yourself that," she replied as she picked up her pen once more. "You wouldn't be the first, you know. He's really got a knack for it."

"He didn't!" Lydia was disappointed in herself for letting her anger show. Reeling it in, she put up her usual walls. "Almost losing my friends did," she continued monotonously. "Seeing them waste away was... you're their caseworker. You did nothing to help them. He did. He helped them."

"Don't talk about things you don't understand. And as I recall, he saved them because you promised him something in return. Or do I have my facts wrong?"

"Why do you treat him like crap? I know you love him. You raised him."

Juno's mouth dropped open several times to retort but nothing came out so, Lydia pressed on. "Maybe I am a medium because I seem to be getting something from you right now. Fear. You're afraid of him."

"I'm afraid for him," Juno corrected. "Look at you. You spend two or three days with him and you think you know him? Like you said, I raised him. I protect him."

"By locking him up in a grave for over three hundred years?"

"I already told you not to talk about things you don't understand."

"You're trying to protect him from himself but-"

"I'm trying to protect him from YOU!"

The two women had shocked themselves into a silent staring contest just as Betelgeuse popped into view.

"Mornin' sunshine," he greeted Lydia brightly, then turned his attention to Juno. Betelgeuse looked
from one to the other and furrowed his brow. "What the fuck happened," he gruffed.

"Nothing," they said in unison, each looking a little guilty.

Betelgeuse looked dubious. "You talkin' about me?"

"No," they responded again as one.

Smirking rather smugly, Betelgeuse nodded his head slowly. "Yeah, ya were," he crooned.

"Where have you been," Lydia huffed and crossed her arms over her chest. "You said we'd go to Scuzzo's as soon as I was rested. Well, I'm rested. When are we leaving?"

Betelgeuse glared at Juno. "I leave for ten fuckin' minutes and ya already got me into the dog house. Can'tcha lighten up? Sheesh." He looked at Lydia. "Just went to let off a little steam is all, babes."

Lydia's stony face faltered for the briefest of moments as a sudden pang of jealousy at the thought of what he possibly meant, hit her in the gut. The red-headed bartender flashed through her mind.

"What'd you do?" She tried to sound uninterested.

Juno scoffed. "Incredible. Get the hell outta here, both of you. I'm going to make sure the council keeps delaying Bart's trial. I can't guarantee it, but at least I'll be able to keep an eye on things."

Juno faded from sight along with her desk leaving an uncomfortable silence behind.

"So," Betelgeuse began, "guess we should get goin' now."

Lydia cast her eyes to the floor. "Yeah. Sure." She was conflicted, feeling like she wanted to say something else but didn't know what. Juno's last words about protecting Betelgeuse from her had left her unsettled and confused. Lydia wanted to confront him about it, but it scared the crap out of her.

"Worried about was gonna happen to ya when you wake up? Don't."

Lydia decided to piggyback off what he thought was wrong. "How? I'm supposed to die. Maybe it's because my body is that fucked up that I won't be able to recover."

"Or maybe ya catch an infection while ya wait around. Or maybe Chuck can't stand to see his daughter hooked up to machines and pulls the plug. Or maybe the fuckin' roof collapses over your bed. Point is, you don't know. We'll scope things out today and go from there. You don't have ta go back if ya don't wanna."

Lydia finally looked at Betelgeuse. "What about our deal?" She challenged, wondering how he could forget that detail. If she decided not to continue living, then he wouldn't get his freedom. "Wouldn't this all have been a waste of time for you if I decided last minute to cop out again?"

"So, you're admitting you copped out the first time?" Betelgeuse grinned.

Lydia opened her mouth to defend herself but then realized she couldn't lie to him anymore. Her answer to him was casting her eyes to the floor again while giving a slight nod of consent.

Betelgeuse cackled at her pathetic admission. "You're so goddamn adorable, babe. C'mere."

When Lydia looked up again, she saw he was holding out his hand to her and wanted to kick herself for almost tripping in her rush to get to him. Instead of going for his hand, she buried
herself at his side and hugged him. Lydia was overwhelmed with emotion. Betelgeuse hadn't spoken his answer to her question but she understood the answer nonetheless. With or without the promise of a reward, he would help her. She finally felt his arm wrap around her and give her an awkward pat on the back. His stiff demeanor did not go unnoticed.

Meanwhile, there was an all-out war zone in Betelgeuse's mind as he looked at the ceiling and ground his teeth together. He had lied about being gone for ten minutes. He'd been on Saturn on a sandworm killing spree for close to two hours just to keep his mind off Lydia. He felt rejuvenated and surprisingly clearheaded having made the decision to keep as much distance between them as possible. Now, she was rubbing up against him and all he wanted to do was chain her to his wall and fuck her into the next millennium. The mental image made his voice crack as he pushed her away.

"HO-okay! Time ta go!" It was a long trip to the wastelands so he continued to hold her at arm's length. "Hold on. It's a few jumps to get there. Concentrate on giving me some of your energy for it." Aaaaand that was a mistake, he thought as her tickling energy flowed through his arm.

Lydia frowned at the way he had dragged her away from him and decided to test a theory. Betelgeuse whimpered internally when Lydia brought herself close again and wrapped her other arm around his waist. She felt him stiffen again.

Clearing some of the lust from his mind, Betelgeuse transported them back to the swamplands. He looked around for a moment and ignored one of the ghouls screaming as he ripped himself from Lydia's side and dashed in particular direction.

Lydia ran after him, only to crash into his back when he suddenly stopped short and grabbed onto her again. He quickly placed her before him and wrapped his arms around her waist but she noticed it had none of his usual perverted implication.

"Kay! On the count o' three, jump."

Lydia looked at the murky water before her. "In there?" She asked nervously.

"Yep. Feed me some juice, babe." He was really asking for it now, as her energy flowed through his front. It was delicious torture. "Ready?" He rasped against her cheek.

"No."

"Three-" and he pitched them forward into the water as Lydia screamed.

There was a moment of panic for Lydia when she realized she hadn't taken a full breath before she hit the water. They were traveling fast and her chest felt like it wanted to implode. Struggling in her guide's grasp, she heard him clear as day.

"Breathe through yer nose. I'll make sure nothin' gets in," he said. Your lungs are in a hospital, ding-a-ling. Just breathe, her mind retaliated. Lydia took a breath and was relieved when oxygen filled her lungs.

Before long they burst through the surface of a gray sea. "Keep yer gob shut!" Betelgeuse shouted at her. "And swim like your life depends on it because it does. All kinds of crazy shit in these waters." Lydia could hear the warning in his voice. He released her very suddenly again and started swimming for shore.

"Wait!" She called after him, trying to keep herself afloat. Betelgeuse angrily whirled around to tell
her not to open her mouth again when he lost sight of her.

"Lyds!" He panicked and dove under.

Lydia was kicking as hard as she could but she was sinking like a rock. Praising baby Jesus that she could still breathe, Lydia was still freaking out. No idea how far she was from the surface or if Betelgeuse would be able to find her, she fought the urge to scream. It was even more difficult to keep her mouth shut when a large creature bumped into her in the dark waters.

**Don't panic. Don't panic. Think. THINK!**

Something huge was going straight for her with its mouth wide open. While its enormous and numerous teeth started coming into view Lydia inhaled as deeply as she could, puckered her lips, and blew. Suddenly, she was shooting up and away from the creature, but it changed directions and gave chase.

Another creature was quickly approaching her from above. Lydia could have sworn it was a striped eel as it avoided her completely and swam passed her. A second breath had Lydia breaking through the surface and flying in the air. She concentrated on letting her breath carry her to shore. It was a slow and unsteady process but she finally plopped on land on her hands and knees. Lydia watched helplessly as a tumultuous struggle happened just beneath the surface. Water splashed, fins crashed, and suddenly all went still.

"Beej... Betel!" Lydia screamed between her panting. "BETELGEUSE!"

At that moment, one of the sea creatures jumped out of the water and swam towards shore.

"YEEHOO! YEAH!" She finally heard him cry from afar. Lydia squinted only to see Betelgeuse gliding along on waterskis adorned in striped swim trunks and a pair of sunglasses.
When they got close enough, Betelgeuse released his hold on the creature and smoothly glided to safety.

"You scared the shit outta me," she tried to sound mad and failed miserably. He chuckled as the skis disappeared, leaving him to languidly walk the rest of the way to her. His hair was damp and hung low grazing his shoulders. A cigarette dangled lazily between his lips as he snatched her by the waist with one hand and placed the other low on her abdomen.

Lydia held her breath and waited for his next move, her heart beating wildly. He released her and pulled away all too soon as he took a long drag from his cigarette, then flicked it away.

"Thought ya might've doused out that spark o' yours. Nice skills out there, kiddo." His beach attire turned into the more casual clothes and hat he'd worn in the forest as he walked passed her.

Lydia's nostrils flared in anger. *Kiddo*, her mind echoed. "When did that happen?" She accused.

Not noticing the angry tone in her voice, Betelgeuse kept walking. "When did what happen?"

"You going back to patronizing me," she replied coldly.
Betelgeuse halted and cautiously looked over his shoulder. "Givin' compliments is patronizing now?"

"No. You calling me kiddo, is."

He waved her off and started walking again. "Ah, whatever. You're twenty-two years old. I've been around for over six centuries. Most everyone's a kid to me."

Lydia didn't follow, instead, she jabbed back. "Yeah? Didn't seem like you saw me that way when you were buried between my legs."

That froze him to the spot for a moment as the flashback drilled into his mind. *Sweet merciful Christ on crutches.* His willpower was hanging by a tattered thread and she was skipping rope with it. Betelgeuse swallowed down the serpent within and placed one foot in front of the other in the opposite direction of his seductive prey, then something hit him on the back of the head. He froze again but the serpent was dangerously close to freedom.

"That better've been another midget who threw whatever-the-fuck that was at my noggin," he warned quietly.

Lydia could feel the heat of anger in her eyes as she pulled off her other shoe and sent it flying in his direction.

The shoe never hit him. He was gone in a blink of an eye and her legs were pulled up by an invisible force and she landed on her back in the sand. He towered over her and wagged a finger at her.

"Ah-ah. Now, I don't think that's any way to treat yer knight in grimy armor, now is it?"

Lydia laughed mirthlessly. "My knight? You fucking jerk. You've been trying to seduce for two days straight-"
"I don't know what you're talkin' about."

"Asshole! Did I give in too easily or not easy enough? Which is it? Don't think I haven't noticed you how you've been acting since you got back from 'letting off steam,'" she air quoted.

She started to get up off the ground and dusted the sand off herself. "Couldn't keep your hands off me before. Now you're all hot and cold and calling me kiddo. Guess you got laid real good, huh? Don't need the kiddo anymore to-"  

Her cold tirade was cut off by his unyielding grip on her wrists as he pushed her back up against a darkened warped palm tree. He held her wrists above her head with one hand and turned her face toward his with the other. Lydia was filled with dread as a psychotic glint danced in his eyes.

"Let me make something real clear to you right now before you make a very big mistake. I'm not the type to let something I want slip away because it's the right thing to do. BUT, I like you, kiddo. Call it kindred spirit or whatever. So, I'm givin' ya one last warnin'. I. WANT. You." He tapped her nose.

He paused long enough to hear Lydia whimper. Whether it was out of desire or fear, neither of them knew at the moment.

"If you don't want to be kiddo to me - if you want my hands all over you - if you want me to let off steam... inside you," he smiled, "I will oblige, make no mistake. But I will also haunt your ass for the rest of your fucking pitiful short life and make sure no one touches what's mine. Especially the pipsqueak waitin' for you back home. Chris Cooper." He finished, accentuating his constants with another deadly smile.

Lydia's eyes widened in horror at the sound of Chris' name. Certain that she'd never said his name, Lydia started. "How-"

"Have I made things crystal clear?"
Lydia nodded.

"Good," he said with a wink and released her. "Now, we got a bit of walk before we can jump to our final destination. Follow the leader," he exclaimed with enthusiasm and sauntered off.

Lydia relaxed against the tree and tried to even her erratic breathing. She had nodded her assent that everything was crystal clear to her, but it was a lie. Her mind was in a fog and not able to process everything he had just said. Lydia focussed on what she was feeling instead. Noting that she should have been terrified. At the very least worried about Chris' safety but she was not. Lydia was excited. Her energy was vibrating within as if she'd just gotten off the best roller coaster of her life.

Betelgeuse was on fire, pissed with himself for pushing her away, for basically telling how he felt about her, for not taking advantage of the situation.

_There. That should do it. Now she'll hate your guts and she'll leave you alone. Then, you can finish this fuckin' quest of torture. Let off steam, she says, like she knows anythin' and actin' like... like she's fuckin' jealous or somethin'. Well, that's exactly what I'm gonna do when this shit's over. Bury myself in so much pussy that I forget my own fuckin' name let alone her. HA! Jealous. Let's see if she wants me all over her now that she knows what's really goin' on here._

Lydia adjusted her poncho and finally gathered herself enough to walk after him. She stayed about ten feet behind him at all times and he never looked to see if she was there.

_He has feelings for you. At least, he thinks he does. That kind of possessiveness isn't... But if he's willing to let you go... that's what that was. That whole fucking scary monologue was just his twisted way of telling me to stay away because he..._

Now, Juno's words made perfect sense and it occurred to her that she must have also spoken to him. Maybe even told him to back off. That's why he left and why he came back acting differently.

"Now what, Lydia?" She whispered to herself. Lydia decided the safest option was to keep her distance for the time being. So, they continued walking in silence.

Juno was slumped over her desk staring at her wall in utter exhaustion. She always felt overworked, but this was ridiculous. Finally, she admitted to herself that she hadn't tried very hard to release Betelgeuse from his prison... for a reason.

_He's King fucking Midas. Everything he touches turns to shit._

This disaster wasn't nearly as bad as other things he'd done before, but she was certain he would really go off the rails once Lydia was out of the picture. Always a troublemaker when he was alive but he was a complete loose cannon since he took his last breath.

_No, she corrected herself, since he found out..._

A red phone appeared on Juno's desk and rang. Juno shot up in her chair and eyed it with great unease. She picked it up. "Juno, speaking."

"Juno, this is Victor from sector eight. There's been another breach. We're taking attendance now but..."
"What is it?" Juno demanded.

Another red phone appeared on Juno's desk and rang so loud it shook. "Hold on, Victor." She picked up the other receiver just as Miss Argentina came barrelling through the door.

"Juno!" she cried then stopped dead at the sight of the older woman holding an emergency receiver on either ear.

"Juno, this is a message from the Unity Plane. Please listen carefully."

Never having received a message from them before or ever having heard of anyone receiving a message from anyone higher than the Mental Plane, Juno wanted to faint. It was only rumor and conjecture that such a plane even existed.

"There have been sightings of unauthorized lower level portals for some time now and they are increasing in number."

"Juno?" Victor called in worry.

"Sh!" She shot back.

Another red phone appeared on her desk and she wanted to scream. Miss Argentina picked up. "Hello?"

"A few souls have gone off the grid. We are concerned that they are being manipulated to act against others. Please exercise caution and warn your clients. Goodbye." The message ended.

"Dios mio," breathed Miss Argentina as she hung up her phone.

"Juno!" cried Victor.

"WHAT?" she bellowed.

"There was a note… meant for you. It says 'Juno, I've considered your offer. Got a better one.""

"Juno," whispered Miss Argentina.

"What is it now?" she asked in despair.

"Bart is missing."

Juno dropped the receiver and buried her face in her hands.
The Shit Stain, Scuzzo.

WARNING: Nothing too graphic, however, there is a reference to Lydia being molested in her childhood. Oh, and graphic description of a character being chopped into little pieces.

I wasn't going to include the molestation memory, but it's important to talk about. Not just for a deeper understanding of the character, but because it is a real problem in our world that should not be forgotten. Call it part of my therapy or whatever, but more than 3 million children in America are victims of sexual abuse. Here's another horrifying fact...

"An estimated one in 20 teenage boys and adult men sexually abuse children, and an estimated one teenage girl or adult woman in every 3,300 females molests children. Although that's well over five million people, most families mistakenly believe that as far as molesters go, there has never been one in their family, and what's more, there never will be. Add together the child victims, the adult survivors, and the abusers, and that's 15 out of every 100 Americans who have been either a molested child or a molester." - ChildMolestationPrevention.org.

Now... smile everyone. Life is wonderful and we can all work together to make it a better place!

Let us put a small band-aid over some of that angst in the previous chapter, huh?

**Beta:** The Art Of Suicide

**Edit 08/28/2019:** The beautiful fanart below is by everyone'sbettermom! It was such a lovely surprise! Thank you so much!

It was slow going, trudging through the endless beach. In the time she was given to contemplate while Betelgeuse was giving her the silent treatment, Lydia experienced every stage of grief, except acceptance. If he really had just expressed how he truly felt about her, she supposed she should be the one to speak first but she didn't have any idea what to say.

Currently, she wallowed in the depression stage. The desire to tell him she felt something for him too lingered, but Lydia knew there would be major consequences that she just wasn't ready to deal with. If she were being honest with herself, Lydia wasn't even sure how deep her feelings went. The most imperative question was that of whether Betelgeuse would ask her to stay once he knew she may very well... possibly want... **more** than just friendship. Was friendship even still on the table for them? They had certainly been friendly. Maybe too friendly.

While Lydia spiraled into a myriad of confusing emotions, Betelgeuse just felt plain stupid. He was concentrating on avoiding the other souls wandering nearby and looking for the perfect spot to transfer. They must have been getting closer. She still hadn't said a word and it was eating away at him like nobody's business.

Besides staying silent for that long being completely unnatural for him even when bereft of company, this was the second woman he had confessed his feelings for and it was driving him nuts that she hadn't verbally rejected him. She was just... quiet. Granted, he never used the word love, that would just leave him vulnerable to the pain that was sure to follow. He wondered and secretly hoped she was considering his words again and maybe, just maybe, she'd want to give it a shot.

*Maybe I can try again. Be less of an asshole about it. Fuck Juno and doin' the right thing. I can*
tell her everything and just let her decided what she wants to do. It's not like it's completely impossible for it to work.

There were ways. One he knew of for sure was astral projection. He could teach her how to do it willingly while she slept or meditated. Betelgeuse had done it countless times while he was alive. It might take her some time to learn and it would be a fickle state of being, but the more she practiced the more success was possible. Lydia's body would be vulnerable, but he would keep her safe. Betelgeuse lamented that it could take years for her to master, even he never achieved complete control while in that state and most certainly never while he wasn't completely asleep.

Another idea occurred. Possession. He had accomplished full carnal possessions without permission before, part of the reason for his punishment, in fact. Throwing your voice was one thing, but a full carnal possession with permission might just be the answer to the dilemma.

And if that doesn't work, I'll possess a fuckin' dildo to keep her satisfied if I have to and just whack off until she kicks the bucket - this-sucks-major-fuckin'-balls.

Betelgeuse almost missed the entry point, deep as he was in his incessant scheming. He stopped abruptly and assessed his energetic surroundings.

"This is it," he announced and waited for Lydia to say something. She stopped just behind him and said nothing. He cringed internally, not knowing what he should do next. "It's another long jump but I don't wanna drain ya so, just, uh—"

He felt her latch onto his trench coat and fought the urge to pull her into his arms. "Ready?" he asked, not expecting a response.

"Yeah," she replied morosely.

Betelgeuse wasn't sure what was worse, a silent Lydia or a sad Lydia. "Goddamnit. I can't take it anymore." Without looking at her face, he turned to her. "I'm sorry, alright?! I can be a real dick. Just… don't listen ta me. I didn't wanna scare ya, I just-"

"You didn't," she interrupted. "I get it." There was a moment of silence, then Betelgeuse nodded. He was about to turn away again when Lydia spoke.

"I guess you were right," she shrugged, not caring that her next words would dangerously inflate his ego because she was desperate to lighten the mood. "Got a taste and I got a little clingy," she deadpanned.

Betelgeuse's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. He gave Lydia a sideways glance just to make sure he'd heard right. Lydia was looking dead ahead with a blank look on her face and for a moment he really thought he'd imagined it when, very slowly, she gave him a sideways glance of her own and smirked. It was like giving a starving dog a bone. Betelgeuse snatched her up by the waist and twirled around cackling.

"Babe! As long as it's you doin' the clingin', I'm happy!" She smiled down at him but he noticed a flash of uncertainty in her eyes. Not ready to let the moment pass, Betelgeuse placed her on the ground again but continued to hold her.

"Listen, I didn't know what the hell I was sayin' back there-" he started.

"I think you did," she stopped him and kept her eyes on his chest to avoid making eye contact.
"Well, I mean… I…" fuckin' love you and I don't wanna share ya, please stay. "I really like ya, ya know, and I think we've been havin' fun together… right? So, I mean, I was thinkin' maybe we could… I dunno… go-out-er-somthin'," he trailed off mumbling the end of his sentence.

"Are you asking me to stay?" she asked, fixated on a button on his shirt.

"No," he said seriously.

Lydia felt pain immediately and didn't know why. She wasn't sure what answer she would have preferred. A 'yes' would have probably caused the same pulsing ache currently filling her entire torso.

"Lyds," he murmured as he cupped her face in his hands and gently forced her to meet his gaze. "We don't know what we're gonna find at the end of this. If you decide to go back, I can't blame ya. If I could… if it were me… I know I'd wanna get the hell outta dodge."

"So, then what? You said-"

"I know what I said and I wasn't lyin'. BUT there might be a way to work things out," he released her face and turned his gaze away from her, not able to look her in the eye for what he was going to say next. "Obviously, there'd be some drawbacks," he muttered.

"Are you saying… when I wake up… you want us to try… and date?" Lydia wasn't sure what the hell was happening but she could literally feel the unraveling of her solar plexus.

"Well, when ya say it like that… it sounds kinda silly," he laughed mirthlessly then snapped his gaze back to her questioningly. "Is it? Silly?" He asked, hoping she'd say no.

Lydia turned away from him and started to pace with one arm crossed over her chest and a knuckle pressed onto her lip. Betelgeuse was stunned that she was actually taking the time to think about it. He really couldn't believe that she'd be interested. Maybe she's trying to figure out how to let ya down easy, he thought.

"How?" she finally asked.

Betelgeuse managed to refrain from doing a victory fist-pump and instead, clapped his hands hard. "Okay!" he yelled enthusiastically, grabbed her by the shoulders and started talking a mile a minute.

"I've been thinkin' about it! So, what breathers call Astral projection, is a real thing. We could try that. Maybe even carnal possession would work. Never tried it for anything other than scaring the piss outta people but in theory - I think it could work. Hell, there might even be a clause in the marriage contract! I've never actually seen it. Got the idea from the Posthumous marriages in France back in World War I. I can probably dig around and see how it worked for those guys-"

"Beej." Lydia was dizzy.

"I'm sure there's gotta be someone still around who has more intimate details, if ya know what I mean? I know I can't take ya dinner or anythin' like that BUT when you project, we could come here. They got all kinds of shit we could do together. Or we could travel. I can take ya anywhere, babe! Anywhere ya want. Guess I'll have ta get another place. Fix it up nice. You'll probably wanna decorate-"

"Betel."
"Huh? What? Did I say somthin' wrong? I was just thinkin' out loud, ya know. We don't have ta—"

Lydia placed a hand on his mouth to shut him up. "You're talking really fast and it's a lot to process."

His shoulders slumped visibly and he nodded. Lydia removed her hand and grabbed onto the lapels of his coat. "Can I think about it?"

"Sure, sure! Yeah, o' course!" He plastered a smile on his face to hide his disappointment.

"Thank you," she murmured gratefully. "Why don't we figure out what kinda shape I'm in and go from there? Is that cool?"

"Psh," he waved it off, "cool as a cucumber, babes."

Searching for the truth in his words, Lydia narrowed her eyes at him and was satisfied enough with his smug look. "Okay. I'm ready."

Lydia wove her arm through his and gave him a reassuring smile. There was a sudden rush that lasted a few minutes before they were both in the middle of nowhere. It's looked like a black desert. Nothing in sight for miles except the flat cracked ground.

"Okay, Lyds, let me do the talkin'. Try not to give yourself away. You know what… let's change yer outfit."

He went to snap his fingers but she beat him to the punch. Lydia now wore a loose black and white striped long-sleeved shirt and form-fitting black denim pants. She wore black leather knee-high boots and her hair was up in a messy bun. She made herself even paler and darkened her cheeks and the rings around her eyes.
"You mockin' me, babe?" Betelgeuse asked as he looked her up and down lustfully.

"Just wanted to give it shot," she said innocently. "How do I look? Does it work for me?"

"Mhm… it works alright. I mean, it looks better on me, obviously." She turned around and he caught a glimpse of her plump little ass. "Nope. Better on you. Definitely better on you."

Betelgeuse couldn't help himself as he lunged for Lydia and brought her back flush to him. Lydia flared with desire when he wrapped his arms low on her waist and nuzzled into the nape of her neck.

His right hand found the hem of her jeans and he dipped the tips of his fingers inside. Lydia gasped when his fingers tickled the inside of her hip bone.

"I don't think ya know what ya do ta me," he growled into her ear. Betelgeuse was delighted when she shuddered in response. It was enough to egg him on so, he dragged his left hand up beneath her shirt until his thumb lightly grazed the underside of her right breast. The fact that she hadn't juiced up underwear for her outfit drove him insane. Lydia's breathy moan didn't help matters either.

Lydia was beating down the waves of frenzy with an imaginary bat. "Beej," she breathed. "Aren't we running out-**ugh**-" she was having trouble thinking because his hands kept traveling deeper in their respective directions while he bit down on her neck.

"That pipsqueak Cooper make ya feel this good?" **Say, no.**
"Who?" Lydia let out. Betelgeuse chuckled in triumph.

"Hey there, lovebirds!" An enthused voice rang out.

Betelgeuse stiffened at the nasal voice that greeted them. He gave Lydia another quick bite before shushing her and reluctantly removed his hands from her person. Wearing his signature showman grin, he turned around with open arms.

"Aw fuck me," the man before him muttered and tried to disappear. He quickly found that he couldn't move and tried to act casual. "Bait Al, it's so... good to see you. Where have you been?"

He smiled.

"Vacationing in Hawaii. Ever been? Fuckin' GORGEOUS! Though, not nearly as gorgeous as my little lady, here." He held Lydia by the waist and pulled her closer. With a blink, he brought them inches away from the shit stain, Scuzzo.

"I hear you're still in business?" Betelgeuse asked sweetly.

"Yep, still going strong," he admitted.

"Good ta hear. As I remember, we have a deal. I'm here to collect."

"You wanna go in? You?" he asked incredulously, then he brought his gaze to the dark beauty and smirked. "Or her?"

"Just me," he replied, thumbing to himself. "It'll be quick and then we won't need to see each other for another few centuries, at least."

"But I love it when you visit," he dripped with sarcasm.

Betelgeuse's smile never reached his eyes. "Sure ya do. Now, open sesame."

Scuzzo sighed and found he could move again. He clapped his hands three times and the ground started to rumble and crack. Lydia watched in awe as a massive two-story carnival funhouse rose out of the blackened earth. When everything settled, the doors opened.

"I need everyone out," Betelgeuse demanded.

"What?! I can't just turn everyone out! I'll give you three mirrors. That's plenty, I'm sure."

"A whole floor or things are gonna get interestin' around here."

"That's not fair!"

"I helped ya get that soul-suckin' thing here, I can help take it away. We have a deal."

"Goddamnit! Fine!"

Betelgeuse turned to Lydia as Scuzzo went inside to escort the second floor out. "Okay, babes, I'm gonna go in. You stay here. If he even looks at ya funny, ya call me. Alright?"

"He looks familiar," she said as she watched Scuzzo apologizing to a group of patrons.

"Yeah, the piece o' shit ya saw in my memories," he explained. "Don't talk ta him. He's bad news."

"As bad as you?" she challenged.
Betelgeuse snorted and brought her close. "No one is as bad as me. Don't ya forget it." He winked at her, gave her right boob a quick squeeze, then made his way to the entrance. Lydia had yelped from his sudden assault and before she knew what she was doing, her hand had shot out and smacked his ass.

Betelgeuse jerked from the unexpected love tap, turning to face her, he hopped backward with a mischievous gleam as he blew her a kiss.

Stopping briefly next to Scuzzo, he looked up at the taller man. "She's off limits. Understand?"

"How'd you end up with something so precious?" He asked as he hungrily took in Lydia's form.

Betelgeuse grabbed Scuzzo by his collar and forced him down to his level. "You're sandworm shit if ya touch her. Pretend she ain't even here. Got it?"


"Well, it's a good thing the dead can't get drunk, huh?"

Betelgeuse released him and gave Lydia one last look before heading inside. He shook his head in scorn as he weaved his way through the multitude of souls staring into the mirrors. Some were dangerously gaunt, having wasted away, entranced by whatever they were watching. Some watched their own memories of their sad lives. Others looked on longingly at surviving loved ones.

Lydia could feel she was being watched. She looked over her shoulder to see Scuzzo smiling at her. He waved innocently. "How'd you guys meet?" He yelled. "We go way back, you know?"

Lydia ignored him.

Scuzzo changed tactics. "I mean I've known the guy since we were alive. You don't seem like his type."

Lydia flinched and slowly turned to face him. Scuzzo hid his smugness and pressed on. "I mean the love of his life was a tall, blonde, blue-eyed Aphrodite!" He laughed remembering Betelgeuse's pathetic pining over the years they were forced to spend together. "Not that you're not beautiful or anything. Please don't think that. Just, uh, kind of the opposite. Just curious as to why his tastes have suddenly changed."

Lydia frowned and could feel a lump of jealous anger settle in her midsection. "He told me he didn't love his wife."

Scuzzo guffawed, making Lydia feel small and stupid. "Oh, deary, not Greta! Nah, I meant Rhoslyn. The one that got away! He never told you about her? Such a sweet thing. Poor guy thought she'd marry him because she had no other prospects after she widowed."

Curiosity getting the better of her, Lydia walked right into Scuzzo's web. "What do you mean?"

"Well, you see, she had a kid, I think it was a little boy and, uh, her husband was a bit of a gambler. Rhoslyn couldn't provide for them much longer after he died, so Bait Al proposed to her. He made this whole public spectacle, had us perform in the streets and everything. Guess he thought she'd say yes." Scuzzo smiled as Lydia ate up everything he said. "We all kind of thought she had a thing for him. They'd been friends since they were kids."
"But she turned him down?" Lydia asked quietly, remembering the blonde young girl from his memories. "Publicly?"

"Yep. Broke his heart into teeny tiny pieces. She was a bit of tease, now that I think about it. Anyway, he burned down his caravan that night and fucked his way through an entire brothel for a whole drunken month after that." Scuzzo basked in the look of pain that Lydia now wore.

"That's… horrible."

"I mean, let's face it, a highborn lady like Rhos would have never gone for a filthy son of a whore. A tiger can't change his stripes. I'm sure you just haven't been around him long enough to see him for what he really is."

"Oh yeah?" Lydia got defensive. "What's so bad about him?"

Scuzzo laughed merrily again. "Why don't you see for yourself?" He motioned to the open door.

Lydia looked at the entrance with unease.

"Just say his name once into a mirror and ask it to show you his past," he said simply.

Lydia didn't even realize that her legs had taken her halfway in already. She hesitated only a moment before resolutely walking inside. Scuzzo followed behind her, turned toward the door and shut it behind them. He whispered to a soul and removed them from the mirror before motioning for Lydia to stand in front of it.

"Go ahead," he whispered.

Lydia knew she shouldn't but she did anyway. "Betelgeuse," she murmured. "Show me his past." There was a ripple on the surface and then the face of the young girl she'd seen in his memories appeared and smiled radiantly at her.

Concentrating all of his energy into the mirrors, Betelgeuse spoke. "Show me Lydia Deetz." Every mirror sprang to life with images of Lydia at different times in her life. He walked from mirror to mirror looking for her accident or whatever happened afterward. He smiled briefly when he caught a glimpse of their first meeting. He frowned when he saw an even younger version of herself holding a knife dangerously close to her face in a bathroom. Another memory almost made him lose his shit completely. It was of a much older man bent over Lydia's child form, who was no older than ten, kissing her on the lips with his hand under her shirt.

A little black notebook appeared out of the aether and opened near Betelgeuse's head. "Note ta self," he grated, as he looked daggers into the scene before him. "Kill my babe's molestin' fuck." A little pen scribbled away and then the notebook disappeared.

Disgusted and feeling murderous, Betelgeuse waved the image away. It was replaced by a smiling Lydia chatting with the infamous Chris Cooper. Betelgeuse watched intently as the young man opened a guitar case and started playing and singing for her. Lydia was visibly giggling. She rolled her eyes at one point and gave the handsome boy a playful shove.

It should have angered him but it didn't. He frowned as Juno's lecture rang in his ears. Betelgeuse knew she deserved better than a deadman but his greed had gotten in the way again. He could almost see both her futures. The one with the handsome fleshbag was bright and full of wonderful opportunities. While the one with him was dark and full of resentment of having missed out on what life could offer her.
Betelgeuse couldn't look at them anymore. He turned away and something caught his eye. He walked quickly to the mirror that had gotten his attention. It was a semi truck colliding with a compact car. Lydia's form was ejected out of the windshield and flew right out of the way of the tumbling car. He cringed as he watched her body skid down a hill off the side of the highway.

Lydia watched in anguish as Betelgeuse professed his love for the beautiful Rhoslyn. Scuzzo had been right, they were nothing alike. Rhoslyn was almost as tall as Betelgeuse with a bright and amiable disposition. Voluptuous with a breathtaking smile, thick golden hair on her head and sky-blue eyes to boot.

Scuzzo took the opportunity to manipulate the images before her. There was Betelgeuse drunk. There he was in bed with not one - not two - but three women. There he was again beating a man senseless and taking his coin purse. Another memory showed him destroying a small room, she'd never seen him so angry. It was almost like watching the memories on a loop, but she could tell that they weren't the same. She watched him get older but his destructive behavior never changed.

Suddenly, Lydia was watching a middle-aged Betelgeuse in bed looking very ill. Juno sat on the edge and was talking to him. She held up a cup and tried to pour its contents into his mouth. He pushed her hand away. Juno looked like she was pleading with him. She was crying and caressing his face. He looked uneasy as his own tears started to flow. It seemed he agreed with her on something and the cup was placed in his hand. She helped him bring it to his lips and he drank.

Scuzzo snickered, which made Lydia jump. "Poison. Both of them mediums and had no idea they'd be slaves in the afterlife for what they did," he chuckled evilly. "Poor Juno. Couldn't watch her favorite orphan suffer so she helped kill him. Know what the kicker is?" he asked fiendishly as he brought his mouth to Lydia's ear. "He would have survived. Should have seen the rampage he went on when he found out!" He laughed again.

Lydia's eyes widened in horror.

"What the flyin' fuck is goin' on here?" Betelgeuse seethed from behind them.

Both Scuzzo and Lydia jumped away from the mirror.

Betelgeuse got a clear view of himself dying and slowly closed his eyes in an attempt to quell his fury.

"I told you. To wait. Out. Side."

"She was just curious, old man," Scuzzo interjected.

Betelgeuse's snapped his eyes open and sneered. "If you think she's gonna pay up, you're fuckin' dreamin', clown."

Scuzzo shrugged his shoulders then quickly grabbed Lydia by the back of the neck paralyzing her. "You're the only one who gets free tickets to this show, buddy. She wanted a peek, now she has to pay. Right sweetie?"

"Pay what?" she shouted. "You never said there was a price."

"Oh dear, everything comes with a price," he chuckled. He forced Lydia to turn around, shoved his tongue down her throat and grabbed a handful of her breast under her shirt. The mirror still showing Betelgeuse's memories shattered and the pieces of glass flew into Scuzzo's groin while Lydia landed an impressive uppercut that sent him crashing into the mirrors behind him.
Scuzzo screamed in agony as Lydia ran to Betelgeuse who looked like a demon straight out of hell. He made a backhanded motion and Lydia went flying out the door. It seemed like she would tumble endlessly but she finally found herself on her back. Lydia was disoriented and nauseous as she pulled herself up to standing. The screaming coming from inside made her cringe.

Scuzzo scurried outside and Lydia gasped from the sight. Every inch of him was covered in broken glass. His eyes had been gouged out, his tongue flopped around on the ground, and the shards were slowly digging into him. Lydia wanted to vomit as Scuzzo chunks started to fall to the ground.

Betelgeuse walked outside and adjusted his coat like nothing out of the ordinary was happening. Then he balled his hand into a fist and the shards violently inserted themselves further into Scuzzo until he was a pile of cut up clown flesh at Betelgeuse's feet.

Next, he snapped his fingers and the pile burst into flames. Lydia started dry heaving when Betelgeuse whipped out a stick and began toasting a marshmallow over the fire. She blacked out completely when he took a bite.

---

**POST NOTES:**

I was so excited to have finally reached the funhouse. It was one of the very first images in my mind that took form when I started dreaming all of this up. I just imagined these poor souls looking into their old lives and envying those who are still living. Like most people on Facebook. lol
Anyone else super excited for the Beetlejuice musical? I KNOW I AM!
WARNING: Very heavy explicit material. For those of you who do not care for it, I was going to put little *** but I was warned not to because it would take my reader out of it. I know it would take me out of it. So...I guess just skim?

Keep in mind, there is dialogue that is important throughout... at least to me it is.

For those of you who enjoy it... have fun! ;)

The beautiful artwork below is called "Fools" by AnimagicWorld on DeviantArt. I just thought it was adorable and sweet and fluffy and I wanted it right here in this smutty chappy. =)

DISCLAIMER: I do not own Beetlejuice. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

***SMUT ART BELOW by Chamel-Anne
Lydia opened her eyes and was greeted by a short ceiling made of twigs. When she sat up, she found she was inside a tiny little house made of tree branches and dried leaves. A large patch of soft moss was her bed. It reminded her of the little house the Lost Boys built around Wendy from her school’s rendition of Peter Pan that she had tech’ed for. In her dazed, half-awake state she couldn’t help but wonder if her Captain Hook was waiting outside.

Lydia felt a wave of nausea wash over her as a vision of Scuzzo assaulted her mind. He really was a piece o’ shit. She felt even more sick with herself for intruding on Betelgeuse’s memories. Then, she noticed she was drained of energy as if it had been forcibly taken from her.

Crossing her legs, Lydia closed her eyes and imitated what she’d seen Betelgeuse do a couple of times already, methodically placing her hands over her abdomen. At first, she saw nothing. Then, there was a glow. Willing herself to see more, the glow took the shape of a small pulsing sphere. Upon closer inspection, it looked like a tightly wound up ball of yarn. The pulsing seemed faint to Lydia, though she had nothing to compare it to.

Lydia opened her eyes and looked around again, trying to find something to occupy her mind with as she was dreading her next encounter with the angry poltergeist.

Maybe he’s not that angry. He did build a little house for me. Unless… someone else did it.

That thought scared the crap out of her and is what finally inspired her to open the tiny door and crawl out. As quietly as possible, Lydia stood and took a gander. Betelgeuse was nowhere in sight but that didn’t mean he wasn’t there. She knew now he could hide from view. Unseen by her, he sat high in a nearby tree watching her look for him.

After he sent Scuzzo’s remaining essence to Saturn, Betelgeuse turned to find an unconscious Lydia on the ground. He had cursed up a storm and rushed over to her, assessed the damage and tightened her unraveled chord again. With his remaining energy, he brought them to the perfect crack in the aether that would lead to her body at St. Joseph’s Hospital.

To push them both through, he needed a proper summons in the perimeter, but no one was around except the night nurses. Betelgeuse wanted to reserve his energy for the proper time in order to send a message through, not having much at the moment. He was hoping the schmuck Chuck would be desperate enough to get his daughter back to call him into the room. They would probably have to wait until morning unless they didn’t plan on visiting Lydia at all, at which point he would have to change his plan.

Betelgeuse felt another dip in his energy and so decided to strip away everything that was currently using it. All glamour now gone except his shirt, pants, and hat, he leaned back against the tree and waited to be discovered while he continued scrying.

Lydia finally spotted him perched overhead, looking into his hat, and felt equal amounts of relief and dread.

“Hey,” she called meekly.

He didn’t look at her when he spoke. “Up and at’em already, huh? You should go back to bed. Gotta be ready for go time in the mornin’.”

“Oh, you found me? Wait, I leave in the morning?” Lydia felt a little panic.
“Yep, your leg is totally busted and there was some brain swellin’. Cuts and bruises and everthin’ but you should recover,” he replied dryly.

“W-what do you mean, busted?” she asked quietly.

“Shattered your femur. They already patched it up though. Good luck with metal detectors.”

“Oh, I thought maybe I was dying because my, um, solar plexus looks a little dim.”

“You are. Dyin’, I mean.”

Lydia furrowed her brow but wasn’t as worried as she thought she might be to receive such news. She wasn’t dead yet, after all. What really bothered her was his flippant attitude in regards to her wellbeing. Like he didn’t care at all.

“Which is why you’ll be on a plane straight to yer fleshbag once someone comes to visit ya,” he finished.

Lydia should have felt elated but she wasn’t. It was like she’d lost something precious to her, something she desperately wanted back. Looking up at him again, she knew what it was.

“Beej?” She called out, trying hard not to sound so uncertain. His response was a gruff, indecipherable sound. “Can we talk?”

Betelgeuse snorted. “Nothin’ good ever comes out of a ‘can we talk’ conversation, but yer gonna do whatever ya want anyway, right? So, spit it out already.”

“I’m sorry.”

He scoffed this time and finally looked at her. “Sure. Whatever.” Then, he was staring into his hat again.

“I really am. I promise I’ll make it up to you. As soon as I can, I’ll call you when I wake up and we can get married. You can be free--”

“Yeah, I don’t think so,” he interrupted.

Hands flying to her abdomen, Lydia almost doubled over in pain. “What? What are you saying?”

“I’m sayin’ the deal’s off.”

“What about what you said on the beach?” She pleaded.

“Forget it.”

“But--” she squeaked.

“FORGET IT!” He yelled back. “Just live your life. Finish college. Get married. Have kids. Live. You’re probably gonna forget your time here anyway. It happens to everyone…” He was quickly losing his composure. His biggest fear was that she would forget everything they had been through.

Betelgeuse looked down when she didn’t respond only to find that she wasn’t there anymore. He managed to catch the small door of the little house he’d made for her close. Pinching the bridge of his nose, he cursed under his breath.

The pain in his own gut was wrenching. Allowing an hour go by, Betelgeuse still hadn’t heard a
peep come from the little house and it was torture. Facepalming, he took an unnecessary breath and jumped off his perch. Betelgeuse walked to the little house and sat next to the small door with his back against the wall. He stayed quiet a moment before leaning his head back and calling out to her.

“Lyds,” he closed his eyes. Lydia didn’t acknowledge him. “I’m not mad at ya.”


Betelgeuse opened his eyes and smirked, her voice soothing some of his pain away.

“I’m mad myself,” he admitted.

“You’re mad at yourself because I looked at your memories? Yeah, that makes sense,” she deadpanned.

“No, I’m mad at myself because… I know I haven’t done shit while dead or alive to deserve ya. Maybe if I had… things would be different now.”

There was a long silence.

“Did you love her?” She asked so quietly, he wasn’t sure he’d heard right.

“Did I love her?” He repeated.

“Rhoslyn.”

Betelgeuse rolled his eyes. The dead woman would not leave him be. “Yes,” he admitted as he shook his head, confounded. “It never would’ve worked.”

“Do you still love her?” She strained.

“No.” There was no hesitation this time.

“Why not? Did you try to find her here? When she died? Why wouldn’t it have worked? I mean, what was in the way after--”

His mirthless chuckling interrupted her nervous talking streak. “Did I try to find her? No, I didn’t try to find her. She sent me a message before moving on though, sayin’ she was sorry and… thankin’ me for leaving her and her son my money after I died. Why wouldn’t it have worked? Well, we were very different. Really different. It took me awhile to realize that. Plus, she did not like me talkin’ to spirits. Really creeped her out and was pretty sure I was possessed by the devil or whatever.”

Lydia chuckled. “I don’t think that’s far from the truth.” She laughed. The sound of it was comparable to giving someone who was dying of thirst a fresh glass of ice water. Betelgeuse drank greedily, raised his eyebrows, and nodded in agreement.

“Why did I stop lovin’ her?” He sighed before continuing. “Other than realizin’ it would’ve been a crap relationship… You know, time goes by and things change…” he gave the little door a sideways glance and wondered if he should continue. He cleared his throat. “Aaaaaand eventually I, uh, met someone who, uh, I felt… could really understand me.” He cringed at his last words and facepalmed again.

Another long silence had Betelgeuse biting at the bit. Then the little door cracked open. He looked
at it hoping she was coming out but she wasn’t.

“It’s nice in here. Cozy, but I think we both fit. I mean, if you want—“

“Yep, yep. Comin’ through!”

Betelgeuse scrambled inside as Lydia shut the door behind him. He settled into the back corner clumsily and took in their cramped accommodations. “Yeah, pretty nice, if I do say so maself!”

Betelgeuse finally took a moment to glance at Lydia and she immediately cast her eyes down.

“You, uh, were talking about me… right?” She looked up at him briefly to see if she could read his answer on his naked face. Without the extra dark circles, his eyes were even more penetrating.

Betelgeuse tried to look smug. “Nah! I was talkin’ about Joan Crawford. Real sweetheart, that one. Got too kinky though. Always wanted to do weird shit with wire hangers.”

Lydia snickered and slapped his knee. She left her hand there and he looked at it with such longing that it made something flip inside her gut.

“Yeah, I was talkin’ about you,” he murmured as he reached for her hand still on his leg and frowned. Comparing his dead calloused hand to her smooth youthful one, Betelgeuse felt wretched.

“So… What are we going to do?” she questioned. “Because…” she continued, “I really want to remember all of this. And I really want to see you again. Maybe… try out those methods you were talking about,” she finished with a grin.

Betelgeuse couldn’t believe his ears. “Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

He looked at their hands again and gave her a sad smile. “I know I said I’d only give ya that last warnin’ but, uh… you should really take yer time and think about it. I might be devilishly handsome, crazy talented, a maniac in the sack and shit…” he paused to let Lydia laugh, then he got serious and dropped his gaze. “I can’t … give you… what a guy with a pulse can, babe. You’re still young. You could always call me up when you’re back in town, sixty-odd years from now.”

“Oh yeah?” she quipped. “You sure you know how to show an eighty-year-old woman a good time? Maybe Juno and I can invite you to our bridge games and show you something really exciting.”

Betelgeuse laughed openly and shook his head.

Lydia scooted next to him and placed his arm around her shoulder to lean her head on his chest. “Can’t we just… I don’t know… does it have to be all or nothing?”

Betelgeuse contemplated her question. He’d always been an all or nothing kind of guy in everything that he did but she brought up a good point. It most certainly didn’t need to be all or nothing, although he was all in already. If he had the will - albeit reluctantly - to let her go now, it would stand to reason that he’d be able to do it down the line if she wanted to end things. Though he would make sure to try and make it impossible for her to want that.

“Nah, I guess not. I’ll take whatever you give me, babes,” he said finally. He was hopeless.

Not wanting to worry anymore about what may or may not happen, Lydia gave into just taking what Betelgeuse was willing to offer. Her hand traveled from his knee, up his thigh. She quickly
grazed her fingertips over the front of his pants and heard him groan before it finally came to rest over his chest. Lydia pushed herself up, straddled his legs, and started unbuttoning his shirt without making eye contact.

“It’s a bit dark in here,” she muttered, then closed her eyes and exhaled when she freed him of his shirt. On her exhale, tiny lights illuminated the ceiling.

Betelgeuse looked up to see little fireflies fluttering around. “Nice. You’re gettin’ real good at that,” he smiled, noting that she swelled with pride at his compliment. He made a quick mental note to compliment her as much as possible just to see that glow.

“Had a good teacher,” she replied coyly.

Betelgeuse scoffed. “Good? I believe you used the word, incredible, before.”

Lydia raised an eyebrow at him while she unbuttoned his pants. “Never gonna live that one down, are you?”

He didn’t get to answer that question because her hand was already working wonders in his pants. Instead, he moved his hands to her hips and slid them up and under her shirt. Lydia jolted when he cupped both her breasts. He stilled his hands and gave her a small guilty smirk.

“This okay?” He asked. She nodded her head, yes. Betelgeuse bit back a moan when she rubbed his head with her thumb. “Okay, I think he’s happy down there, let’s ease it up a bit, huh?” He let out a sigh when she released him.

Betelgeuse brought his hands up, hiking up her striped shirt for Lydia to shimmy out of. Both their chests bare, he splayed his hands on her back and pressed her to him. With a bit more uncertainty than their first go around, Lydia cupped Betelgeuse’s face and pressed a tentative kiss on his lips. He couldn’t help but give her an amused smile.

“You’re makin’ my goddamn teeth ache, babe. Bein’ all sweet n’ shit. Ya want me a be sweet?” He whispered. For some reason, it sounded like a warning to her.

Betelgeuse brought one hand to the back of her neck and leaned forward so that she was forced to arch back, starting a slow trail of kisses from her collarbone to her chin, then angled her head down to his and nibbled on her lower lip, finally placing his own gentle kiss on her. Now, she knew why it sounded like a warning, Lydia was being tortured and she was aching for more.

Wanting to explore her breasts once more, he decided to take it a bit slower. So far, in his hurry both times before, she reacted quite strongly. Betelgeuse used one hand this time to caress her ribs just underneath her right breast. He used the back of his fingers to ghost over the side of her bust, then slowly brought them down over her nipple. She keened in response and he held back a chuckle.

“Sensitive?” He teased. She answered with a lovely little moan. “Talk ta me, babe. Whaddya like?” He husked sensually.

“Mmmm…” the lusty fog was back and Lydia couldn’t think straight. She vaguely recalled that he’d asked her a question. Lydia was losing patience and was already slowly gyrating on his thighs.

“I can’t hear you,” he purred as he gave her other breast the same attention.

“Everything. Just… everything,” she had no idea what was coming out of her mouth.
Betelgeuse chuckled aloud this time and wrapped his left arm around her waist as he used his right arm to brace himself in order to place Lydia on the soft ground. He got on his knees and rested one of her boots on his chest to begin unttying her laces.

After successfully removing her socks and shoes, he straddled her legs and started undoing her jeans. He left small kisses on her abdomen as he tugged on the hem of her pants to pull them over her butt. Betelgeuse had forgotten that she wasn’t wearing any underwear and growled when he rediscovered the fact.

Lydia tried to wiggle her legs so that he would let her open them, but he squeezed his knees together and kept her pinned. He ran his tongue from her bellybutton to the underside of one breast before gently latching onto her nipple. She couldn’t help but arch into him as she let out a breathy moan. Betelgeuse continued working his tongue over her and slid his hand over her thin layer of glossy, raven hairs before dipping one finger into her folds.

Lydia was desperately trying to open her legs for him, bucking her hips every time his finger rubbed deep into her clit. She could feel herself on the edge when he released her right breast and went to work on her left one, dipping a second finger to join the first.

Lydia was light-headed and she let out a string of soft curses as the build-up threatened to shatter her. She cursed him directly when his breathy snicker tickled her sensitive nipple.

Betelgeuse was proud of himself for not losing his mind yet. He wanted to make sure that she remembered this night. This was only the beginning of what he had in store for her. He was very willing to be the gentle lover… the first time. He smiled evilly as he realized there might very well be twelve hours until the hospital allowed visitors back in. He planned to make them count. Over and over again.

Betelgeuse finally relented and freed Lydia’s legs when he swore he heard her breathe the word “please.” He ripped her pants off the rest of the way and kicked off his own before grabbing her legs from under her knees and parting them wide. “Fuck, babe. You’re beautiful, you know that?”

He went to bring his mouth to her when she stopped him, panting. Betelgeuse tilted his head questioningly. She reached for his face and tugged gently so that he’d come to her. Lydia placed one hand on her abdomen. “Fix it, please,” she rasped. “I want it to last.” Betelgeuse gave her a crushing kiss on her lips and did as she requested. He tightened her chord then lowered himself on top of her.

Lydia could feel his arousal on her inner thigh as he brought his lips to her once more. A few more innocent kisses were given before his tongue demanded access. She opened for him and he plundered her mouth and scraped his teeth against hers. Lydia tore her mouth away when she felt his tip slide between her folds and stilled at her entrance. Her breath hitched when he slowly pushed his way in.

Betelgeuse groaned loudly when her tight walls enclosed around the tip of his girth. A strangled moan escaped him as he pushed himself deeper. Lydia’s heady whimpering was driving him to madness and he fought the urge to thrust wildly. Instead, he pulled out slowly but not completely and thrust into her once more. She cried out and dug her fingers into his back as he repeated the movement until he had built up to a steady rhythm.

Wanton cries and gasps tore through Lydia as Betelgeuse’s speed increased. He plundered her mouth again and she jerked beneath him when his left hand found her breast once more. He thumbed and pinched as he impaled her over and over again. She surfaced from the onslaught of his mouth as her climax threatened to take her over.
“Fuck, B... I’m-I--”

“Go ahead, babe,” he gruffed and sped up the tempo once more.

He gave her nipple another caress with his thumb and she mewled into his collarbone and shattered beneath him. As soon as her walls started to clench around him, Betelgeuse lost himself completely and cried out his own splintering pleasure that shook his whole being.

Lydia raked her nails on Betelgeuse's back as he came down from his frenzy. Acknowledging in her mind that he was the best lay she’d had in maybe ever, she smiled into his neck to hide the thought from him. There was no way she was going to voice that. Hearing him moan as he continued to gently rock inside her was already flaring her desire all over again.

Adoration was probably the best word to describe what Betelgeuse was feeling. Lydia had been an unreachable deity and she had allowed him to worship her the best way he knew how. He was dazed from a mixture of satiation, longing, and fear. The mere thought of losing her was like a stab in the chest. He forced himself to keep his mind on the present moment. Right now, she was there. Right now… *She’s mine*.

Betelgeuse propped himself up and saw a mischievous glint in Lydia’s eyes.

“Hmmm.” He narrowed his eyes at her suspiciously. “That's not the look of a thoroughly satisfied woman.”

Lydia laughed, then jerked her hips up, eliciting a growl from her lover. “I guess you’ll have to try harder.”

“You’re speakin’ my language, babe. Now that we got the cutesie vanilla stuff outta the way…”

Betelgeuse suddenly ripped himself away from Lydia, who cried out in both surprise and disappointment, and pulled her up to sitting. In one fluid movement, Betelgeuse turned his sultry prize around while he settled onto the balls of his feet and sat on his heels. He had a perfect view of her ass while she braced herself on all fours. Hooking his fingers on her hip bones, he pulled her back to him until her legs were on either side of his.

Lydia was confused for a moment. She thought he was going to start pounding her from behind but she felt his arms wrap around her ribs.
“Up,” he instructed, as he supported her to sit on his upper thighs. He helped her angle her legs until she was basically in a squatting position.

Betelgeuse splayed his hands on her ribcage and slid them up until he reached under her arms and guided them over her head. She felt completely exposed and her breathing quickened, then he guided her to lift herself as he positioned at her entrance once more. “Down.” He commanded.

Lydia went to bring down her arms to steady herself for her descent but Betelgeuse gave her a light spank in warning. “Hands where I can see ’em,” he chided. She stifled a giggle and rested her arms on her head again. With his help, Lydia descended slowly until she felt the pressure at her entrance. She breathed out a moan when his fingers dug into her hips, then she cried out when he suddenly thrust upwards at the same time he pushed her down the rest of the way.

Lydia was frantic in seconds and her hands reached behind her head, desperately searching for something to hold onto as Betelgeuse slammed into her at an alarming speed. He continued to bury himself in her as he brought his left hand to her breast and his right hand down her front and into her slit.

At this point, he didn’t have to work too hard to keep the pace going. Lydia took over seating herself while he focused on driving her out her mind with his hands. It was working. Arching herself and throwing her head back, Lydia’s mouth dropped open as wanton cries she’d never
heard before escaped her. She came suddenly and violently but Betelgeuse did not relent.

“I’m not even close to bein’ done with ya, Lydia Deetz.” He hissed directly in her ear so she’d hear him over her strangled howls. He pitched forward, still within her, until her arms rested on the ground, then pounded away. The position inspired a feral possessiveness within him as she met him thrust for thrust. Betelgeuse snarled and lurched between his covetous thoughts as Lydia’s memories flashed in his mind.

“I’m gonna make sure you’ll never want anyone else inside this beautiful pussy o’ yers,” he ground out. “You understand me?” He stopped his onslaught to drive the point through.

Lydia growled like a wild animal and tried to push back.

“Say it.” He ordered. When she only moaned, he drove his hand between her legs and clamped onto her. He rubbed his fingers over her tender folds until she tried pushing back again and stopped. “Say it.” He repeated.

Lydia groaned in frustration. “I’m gonna... make you pay...” she panted.

Betelgeuse smiled wickedly and rubbed at her folds again while he slowly buried himself within her then stopped short once more and pulled his fingers away.

“FUCK!” She screamed angrily, then changed her tune. “Don’t stop,” she pleaded. Clamping onto her mound again, he gave it a rough little shake that made her scream with pleasure. “Tell me who this belongs to,” he requested sweetly.

Lydia growled again. “Me,” she barked, stubborn to a fault.

A dark chuckle escaped him. Then, he pulled out of her and let her drop to the ground. Lydia slammed her hands to the floor in pure rage before scrambling up on all fours and faced him like a lioness ready to kill. Betelgeuse almost lost his resolve when he saw the ferocious sneer on her face. He only had time to widen his eyes in shock when she pounced on him and tackled him to the ground.

“You wanna play this game?” She taunted, as she grabbed ahold of his cock. “You don’t think I know you, most eligible bachelor since Valentino ?’ She mocked, as she stroked him gently. Thorny vines started to grow beneath him. “As soon as my back is turned, you’ll just go let off steam, remember?” Her voice was dangerously cool and sent a shiver right through him as the vines clasped around his wrists and ankles, sending delicious pain straight to his pulsing head in her hands.

“No,” he grunted.

“No?” She challenged picking up the pace.

“No,” he rasped as his mind fogged over. “Ungh, god-fuck.”

“Yes. Who did you fuck while I was sleeping in your bed?” Drunk with power, Lydia’s fury was building. She brought her head down to his hips, licked his tip and he jolted. “Maybe I should be asking how many did you fuck?”

“No one. None.” He husked.
Lydia paused her torture but it seemed to only worsen his state.

“Don’t-stop-don’t-stop-don’t-stop! He begged.

She released him, which made him whimper, then she straddled him and lowered herself onto his erection. “Ugh, yes,” he exclaimed.

She gyrated slowly on his shaft while she gently teased his slit with her thumb until he muttered curses and gibberish.

“Who does this belong to?” She whispered.

“You,” he choked.

Lydia really wasn’t expecting him to give in so easily, especially after she had denied him the answer he wanted to hear to the same question. She also wasn’t sure she believed him.

“Swear to me that you’re telling me the truth. That you won’t fuck around behind my back. Because if that’s really what you want from me, then you have to give me the same--”

“I swear,” he blurted. “I’d never do that to ya.”

Betelgeuse’s serious tone gave her pause. He lifted his hips to keep her moving on top of him.

“Why?” She asked as she lifted herself slightly in order to finally reward him.

Watching his face grimace as he fought down his answer, Lydia raked her nails over his ribs, then plunged his tip into her and rotated her hips.

“Oh my god. Yer gonna fuckin’ kill me,” he bleated.

“You’re already dead. Why should I believe you?” She really was asking. Lydia was no longer playing. She wasn’t even sure if she ever was. She needed an answer.

“Because…” he breathed. “Because I fuckin’ love you, goddamnit.” Betelgeuse shut his eyes hard and held an unnecessary breath.

Stunned, Lydia stared down at her victim in bewilderment. She couldn’t believe what was happening. The indomitable poltergeist she had once feared so long ago was now utterly and completely hers. Mouth still agape from his confession, Lydia’s eyes glazed over as his words repeated in her mind on an endless loop.

Wondering how this could have happened, it all hit her at once. Betelgeuse had been watching her. Lydia didn’t know when or for how long but he knew enough about her to make it clear that, somehow, his piercing blue eyes had lingered long enough to make him fall helplessly at her feet.

It was exactly what she wanted and she knew that now. Lydia’s shadowed self throughout the years had pondered on it before. The secret pleasure of knowing he’d chosen her to release him all those years ago had always been there. The sneaking glances here and there hoping to catch a glimpse of him coming to claim what she’d denied before.

A powerful, insane, deadman had needed her and wanted to marry her. It didn’t matter why. Power was power and even though Lydia had scorned the idea of marriage then, what sixteen-year-old girl wouldn’t be giddy at the thought of wielding that kind of power over a man? It had felt shameful to think of it then but now… now…
Betelgeuse found the courage to open one eye to assess the damage he’d wrought. Lydia was still as a statue and seemed to be looking straight through him. He opened his other eye and let out the breath he’d been holding. “Lyds?”

She blinked out of her reverie and gasped. The vines disappeared and she clawed at him desperately for him to sit up. He sat up quickly and wrapped his arms around her as she forcefully conquered his mouth. They joined again and ruptured in each other’s arms for the rest of the night.
Pray ta Me

My goodness! Well, I got some great feedback for that last chapter haha! THANK YOU SO MUCH for leaving reviews and sending me your sweet messages. You really have no idea how my heart just swells with joy upon reading your lovely words. You really make my day.

So, here is a big YOU ARE AWESOME badge to:

Tajmahallow

Turniptree

Makaco

GoldenAerie

J

Ava

TheLadyBookworm

If you go on tumblr, search for Mordellestories and you can follow me there! Sometimes I post little snippets with commissioned artwork. Or little teasers of chapters.

I'll also be reposting some old chapters today, I hope! Nothing major. Just art on Ao3 and fixing my authors notes.

Some great news! This story will be 20 chapters with an epilogue! I'm already writing the sequel, which has WAY more elements to it. This means the chapters are going to be MUCH longer... Yes... I shot myself in the foot here. I'm on chapter 10 so far and I don't even think that's halfway through the story. It just took on a life of it's own... what else can I say? lol

WARNING: Some funny smut in the beginning, some violence and character death ahead.

DISCLAIMER! I do not own Beetlejuice. Beta: The Art Of Suicide

Snake Beej and Lydia ART by @addatheripper

Hospital Scene art by me.

Bartholomew suddenly appeared in a wooded area with twisted trees. If his prey was anywhere, it would be here. Keeping his insurance hidden from view, waiting for the perfect opportunity, Bartholomew froze when his ears were assaulted by an angry howling. Growing fearful for a moment, Bartholomew readied himself for an attack. It sounded like a pack of wild animals in the
middle of a feast. Except it wasn't that at all.

"FUCK, LYDS! Please tell me you're close!"

"UNGH, why?!"

There was panting and more growling before Betelgeuse could speak again.

"Because you're riding my dick like a jockey going for gold and I don't know how much longer I can keep this shit up!"

Bartholomew cringed at the realization of what was happening. Giggling erupted next to him from an invisible source. Silencing the air around them, he edged toward the fornicating heathens.

Peeking out from around a tree, Bartholomew caught a glimpse of his foes in the throes of passion.

Betelgeuse was practically buried under a pile of twigs and leaves while Lydia rode him wildly in reverse. Bartholomew rolled then averted his eyes when Betelgeuse got a few resonating spanks in, finally pushing Lydia over the edge. Howling again in unison, Lydia collapsed and spasmed atop her lover.

"Animals," Bartholomew muttered.

Waiting for them to get decent before attacking, Bartholomew twiddled his thumbs impatiently. After a few moments, he finally took another peek only to find them tangled up again attempting to sixty-nine with Lydia on top.

Losing his patience, he hid behind the tree again and decided to interrupt.

"Would you two quit it and put some clothes on!"

Betelgeuse and Lydia froze, faces between each other's legs.

"Keep walkin' pervert! Can't you see we're fuckin' busy!" Betelgeuse yelled.

"Or busy fucking," Lydia quipped.

"Right, right, right," Betelgeuse agreed as he made to resume his imperative task.

"Enough of this!" Bartholomew came out of hiding and forced himself to stare at the offending sight.

It filled Bartholomew with anger when the two lovers didn't seem phased by his appearance. They merely looked somewhat annoyed.

"Should we just keep fucking and let him watch?" Betelgeuse muttered.

"I think we should get rid of him. Sandworm style," Lydia replied.

Betelgeuse snickered as they both stood up to face Bartholomew; filthy, nude, and glorious. Lydia placed her hands on her hips and leaned against her ghost as he wrapped an arm around her waist from behind.

"What do you want?" She called out to Bart.

Bartholomew's fury was building. The woman was just as bad the snake behind her.
"Have you no decency? Either of you? I expected such crassness from that one, but not from you, child."

"Ohohoho, Barty, you don't wanna patronize this one. Take it from me." Betelgeuse warned.

Lydia grinned evilly.

"Hey, babe," he murmured into her ear. "Ya have no idea what this doin' ta me. Watchin' that weird fuck, watchin' ya like this..." he growled into her hair and grabbed her ass. "I don't know whether ta rip 'em to pieces or fuck ya senseless right now."

Lydia reached a hand behind her and caressed her lovers face as he pressed his erection into her back.

Bartholomew frowned.

"Do whatever you came here to do already. Betel and I have a busy schedule planned."

"Oh, I think you'll want to squeeze me in," Bartholomew smiled.

"In yer fuckin' dreams," Betelgeuse scoffed.

It took a moment for Bartholomew to realize how that must have sounded.

"No, I meant, that... you know squeeze me into... oh, forget it!" Bartholomew snapped his fingers, revealing a smiling Bertha standing next to him.

Lydia started at the sight of her. "Bertha!"

"Who?" Betelgeuse was confused.

"Hey Lydia," she waved happily and gave her a thumbs up. "Nice work, girl!"

"Shut up!" Bartholomew seethed. He wasn't being taken seriously and that had to change. "Lydia, come with me or Bertha will suffer the consequences of your actions."

"You bastard!"

"Who the fuck is Bertha?!"

"I'm Bertha!" She called sweetly. "Nice to meet you!"

Betelgeuse shrugged his shoulders and gave her a curt wave back. "Hi, how are ya?"

"I'm okay, I guess. I think he wants to kill me, though. So... yeah..."

"I won't let that happen," Lydia stated flatly.

Bertha seemed like she was about to say something when Bart suddenly plunged a fist into her gut. Bertha let out a terrifying scream of pain.

"NOOOOO!" Lydia bellowed as Betelgeuse pulled her behind him, dressing them both with a subtle gesture as he did so, he in his signature show business attire and Lydia in her spider-web poncho and jeans.

"No, please let her go! Stop it!"
"Cool it, Lyds. He won’t kill ’er."

"Won't I?" He replied and squeezed his hand around Bertha's solar plexus eliciting another blood-curdling scream.

"Beej! Please help her!"

"If you so much as twitch, Betelgeuse, I'll rip her chord right out."

Betelgeuse wasn't as certain anymore that Bart would not do as he claimed. There was a deranged gleam in his eye that mirrored his own.

"Uh, Lyds? Is she, like, family or somethin'?" He muttered under his breath for only Lydia to hear. "Cuz, I think we should just crush this shithead now."

"No! We have to save her."

"I'm losing patience, Ms. Deetz! Stop conspiring. It's you or nothing."

"Fine! I'm coming!"

"The hell ya are!" Betelgeuse yanked Lydia by the back of the poncho as she tried to dart past him. "He tried to kill ya. What the hell do ya think he has planned for ya now? A fuckin' picnic?!"

Bertha screamed again in agony. Lydia tried to pull away, but Betelgeuse rooted her in place by sinking her feet in the ground. "Beej!"

"Would ya hold up a sec? Let me talk to him… Hey, Bart! You don't wanna do that, alright? Think about the consequences. You'll be sent to the lower levels for sure. I know ya don't want that."

"The Lord will protect me!"

"Aw fuck," he breathed in annoyance. "Listen, it's murder you're talkin' about. Get it? The, uh, lord... ain't gonna spare ya from—"

Bartholomew started to pull out Bertha's life spark and her screaming turned even more frightening. Lydia blasted through her confines as Betelgeuse used the surrounding trees to continue to stall his lover from turning herself in. She fought through the trees as best she could but he was too fast. The ground turned to quicksand beneath her.

"Nooooo! Let me go! I swear, if she dies I'll never forgive you!"

Everything stopped. Lydia panted for a moment then her confines disappeared. Betelgeuse grabbed her by the poncho again, lifted her out of the quicksand and placed her gently on the solid ground. He looked at her very seriously and placed his hands on her shoulders.

"Why?" He asked quietly.

"She can't die because of me. I can't do that. I can't live like that. I'll never forgive myself."

"He's going to kill you." He said resolutely. "Do you understand what that means?"

Lydia looked into his concerned eyes. "It means I'll be under house arrest for a while. Are conjugal visits allowed?" She tried to make it sound funny but failed. "I guess it also means I'm copping out of our deal again, after all."
Betelgeuse searched her eyes for a long moment, not giving anything he was thinking away. Looking over his shoulder, he saw Bertha convulsing and slumped over Bart's arm. "You better make it painless or I'll make a private hell just for you." Bart had the nerve to smile at him.

"No need to cause unnecessary suffering," Bartholomew assured.

Betelgeuse cupped Lydia's face in his hands and kissed her forehead then her lips. "Ya think ya got unfinished business?" He asked worryingly.

Lydia widened her eyes and nodded gravely.

"Good," he pronounced without the slightest bit of shame. "Call me as soon as you're home. I'll be waiting."

Lydia threw arms around her dead lover and kissed him passionately one last time.

"AHEM! I'm getting a little impatient here."

"Take it easy, numbnuts," he ground out. Betelgeuse gave Lydia an encouraging smile and let her go. He turned to watch her leave and wanted to feel elated that he'd have her permanently soon enough but he felt absolute dread. This doesn't feel right. This isn't right. Bart, you fucker, I'm gonna make you pay for this.

Lydia walked slowly toward her executioner. She stopped about two feet away from him.

"Good choice, Lydia. Stand next to me now." Bart instructed.

Lydia turned around to look at Betelgeuse, he looked furious. She gave him a sad smile then walked to Bart's side.

"How interesting, that the great and powerful Bait Al-jauza should stand there so meekly and watch his prize die right before his eyes. Wrapped around her little finger? Or just plain selfish? Both? Hmm?"

Betelgeuse gave Bart a hooded gaze and smiled dangerously. Bartholomew only laughed then turned to Lydia. "And you, attaching yourself to this fiend. Do you even know him? You must not. Not really."

Lydia looked directly into Betelgeuse's eyes and nodded confidently. "We know each other," she said finally.

Bartholomew shook his head slowly and gave a sad smile of his own. "Well, that just tells me what kind of harlot you truly are."

Betelgeuse snarled but not before Bart pulled violently on Bertha's chord and ripped it out of her. Everything slowed for Lydia. She didn't even know she was screaming as she looked at the pulsing orb in Bart's hand. As Bertha landed on the ground, Bart squeezed hard and the orb imploded, disappearing along with Bertha.

Lydia didn't get to recover when suddenly Bartholomew plunged his hand into her midsection. She'd never known pain like that. It resonated throughout her whole being, raging through a series of networks within, burning and freezing at the same time.

"LYDIAAAAAA!," Betelgeuse blared. The scream that tore from her throat pierced him with such a force that he moved into action without a second thought. It was the most gut-wrenching sound
he had ever heard and it tore his mind to pieces. He was lost now and the raging serpent was loose. The snake barely noticed that Bart had taken something out of his pocket as he slammed Lydia into a tree and started to pull his arm out of her.

Betelgeuse could already see the beginnings of her glow when he launched himself in mid-air, enveloped his serpent body around Bartholomew and bit down on his face over and over again in quick succession.

In the chaos that ensued, Betelgeuse was unaware that Bart still had a hold on Lydia's spark as he pulled him away from her.

In room three-eleven of St. Joseph's Hospital, a coma patient lay in her bed in what seemed to be a state of peace. A red-headed woman sat in a chair beside her, reading a book aloud when a loud endless beep rang from the machine next to the unconscious dark beauty.

Delia jumped from her chair as a group of nurses started to fill the room. "What's happening?" She cried in alarm. "Please, tell me what's happening!"

"Get her out of here!" A nurse shouted.

Another nurse grabbed Delia by the arm and started to lead her out of the room. "It's alright, ma'am. We're gonna do everything we can to."

"NO! I'm not leaving," she yelled. "Please, please let me stay. I'll stay out of the way. That's my daughter!" She begged as another nurse helped take her out of the room. Delia was not, by any means, a religious woman. Regardless, she fell to her knees and prayed anyway.

While Betelgeuse continued to gnaw away at Bart's essence, Lydia had sagged to the ground. She watched as the snake she knew from her past viciously tore chunks of Bart's face off. Just behind them was her dimming orb. Lydia no longer felt pain but also couldn't move. She felt so tired, so depleted, that she just wanted to sleep.

Apparently, Bartholomew still had one trick up his sleeve. In a sudden flash, his body ejected spines from within, impaling the snake as it shrieked in distress. Betelgeuse flailed around, loosening his coil around his prey. Face torn to shreds, Bart blindly reached for the stamp in his pocket. He pulled it out and started desperately waving it around, just barely missing Betelgeuse with each thrust. Just as Bart was about to hit his mark, the ground swallowed him whole and crunched his form to goo.

Lydia's labored breathing was slowing as she removed her fingers from the soil. Her last effort to finish Bartholomew had drained the rest of her energy. Betelgeuse hissed in frenzy looking for Bart. When his eyes landed on Lydia, he froze right before quickly slithering to her side.

Hovering his face before her own, much like he did once upon a time, he wrapped himself around Lydia's small body and placed his forehead to hers. Lydia found that she was petting him and almost laughed at herself. "It's okay, Beej," she whispered. "I'll see you soon, right? It's not all bad."
Betelgeuse returned to his normal state with his arms wrapped around Lydia's torso. "Are you in pain?" He choked out, not able to bear it if she said, yes. Lydia shook her head and he almost sobbed in relief. He planted light kisses on her cheek and lips but grew still when she didn't respond in kind. He leaned away from her in order to get a better look at her face.

Lydia's eyes were half open and glazed over, her mouth slightly open as small quick breaths escaped her. She was dying in his arms. It felt so wrong that he actually did sob aloud this time around. Betelgeuse sat next to her then brought her into his lap, holding her against his chest. A soft pulsing glow caught his attention.

Just there, he saw her dimming spark and stared at it for a few moments. Betelgeuse knew if he didn't do something now, she would die. Lydia had not returned his sentiments after he brashly confessed his love for her. The thought of her staying because she wanted to save that girl's life and not for his sake made Betelgeuse groan in misery. After banging his head into the tree behind him a few times, he finally returned his gaze to Lydia.

"Ya have ta go back," he whispered. Then, he jumped into action.

Betelgeuse floated to a standing position with Lydia still cradled in his arms. He summoned her
chord to him and hovered it over her abdomen. Carefully, as to not cause her any pain, he lowered the glowing spark until it vanished completely. As soon as it settled within her, Lydia started convulsing.

Summoning all the wrath that dwelled within him, Betelgeuse roared into the space before him and tore through the veil. On the other side, he could see nurses scrambling about in her room. He searched for a recognizable face and almost missed the flash of red in the distance.

Delia was on her knees, hands clasped in prayer, muttering promises and bargains to an unknown god. He found the will to smirk and blinked hard as he concentrated on answering her pleas.

"That's right," he drawled insidiously. "Pray to me, momma Deetz."

Delia wasn't even sure what was coming out of her mouth anymore as she begged whatever gods were out there for just a drop of mercy.

"I'll go into religious pottery! Make little saints and donate them to orphans! Rosaries! That's a thing, right?! I'll go to church! Whichever one you want! Fuck it! If you won't help me, I'll pray to Satan himself!"

Suddenly, she felt something in her hands. Gasping in bewilderment, she found a small piece of old yellowed paper. It read:

**Have a daughter snoozing herself onto death's door?**

**Need a miracle, but your God can't be found?**

**Pray to…**

**BETELGEUSE**

**BETELGEUSE**

**BETELGEUSE**

It was a wonder that Delia didn't faint right there on the spot. She looked up into the room as a doctor hurried inside. "The patient has stopped breathing!"

Delia shook her head in denial of what she just heard. She looked down at the paper once more.

"Betelgeuse," she whispered, once. "Betelgeuse!" she blurted, twice.

"Come on! We're losing her!"

"Three times a charm, red. Come-on-come-COME-ON!" Betelgeuse yelled.

A lonely tear fell from Delia's eye when her face suddenly turned very wicked.

"BETELGEUSE!"

There was one brief moment of quiet. Then, the ground shook beneath them, the lights blew out, and a strong gust of wind materialized from the aether, blowing everyone out of the proximity of Lydia's bed. A familiar crazed cackle filled the air. Right before Delia's eyes stood the thing of
nightmares, the gruesome apparition that fueled some of her greatest work— with the limp form of her stepdaughter in his arms.

Delia exhaled in relief and her lips quirked into a bewildered smile. Betelgeuse didn't acknowledge her, even though his face held a sneer. He took one last moment to kiss the sleeping beauty, crushing his mouth to hers, before slamming her soul into her sleeping physical body.

Lydia's body arched violently as she took one loud, long breath of air and plopped onto the bed again as still as a corpse. Then, the insistent beep steadied as regulated numbers appeared on its screen.

When the doctor and group of nurses were able to find the wherewithal to gather themselves, Betelgeuse walked out of the room and stood in front of Delia who was staring passed him at Lydia.

"She's… normal. Everything's back to normal." Everyone sighed with relief and started smiling. Delia finally raised her eyes to her grotesque deity of death only to find him smoking and brushing off an imaginary something from his shoulder.

"WOO! Now that was some shit-ah!" He finally looked down at the red-headed Medusa who was smiling up at him. He coughed on his smoke momentarily, snorted, and swallowed a loogie. "That'll be ten Our Farters and five Hail Cabbies for you, missy." He chuckled darkly and flicked his cigarette away as Delia threw her arms around his legs.

It was a good thing for Delia that he was corporeal enough for her to do that, or maybe not, because a few nurses now watched her as she hugged air. Betelgeuse shuddered in disgust at the emotional display and tried to wriggle from her grasp. When that didn't work, he let her fall through him onto the floor.
"Alright, alright! Cut the crap. Got enough women lined up as it is. Got shit ta do, know what I mean?"

Pausing a moment to catch one last glimpse of Lydia, his facade faltered briefly. Without sparing another second for Delia, who sobbed with joy on the floor, he walked towards Lydia's bed and ran his fingers through her hair. His fingers only felt a slight pressure, notifying him that he was touching something but he felt nothing substantial. He smiled sadly when she shuddered under his caress.

"See ya around… lemman," he murmured, then disappeared.

Lydia moaned and squirmed, which made Delia snap her head up and start pulling herself to standing. She raced to Lydia’s bed and caressed her face very gently, as though the girl would return to her comatose state if she were to make the wrong move.

"Lydia?" She sobbed.


"Shhh. It's okay. You're going to be okay, now." Delia smiled down at Lydia as her eye closed again and she fell back into a deep sleep.
Saturn Sounds Nice

Thank you so much for the reviews, kudos and PM's everyone! It really does inspire me to keep writing. Honestly, this whole thing just keeps evolving and my chapters are just getting longer... I really had no idea what I was getting into with this fic.

All is going well. I'm on chapter 12 of the sequel already with many more to come. I know it takes a bit to update, however, it's because I want this story to be the best it can be. Bare with me!

I also want to give a little shoutout to FairDrea who also has some great BJxL fics and drabbles (go check 'em out!).

**UPDATE TO PREVIOUS CHAPTERS:** I messed up guys. I hate being wrong but I can accept it. I changed BJ's eye color to BLUE. MK has blue eyes and I have been very strict about the appearance of the characters so far so, I had to do it. I love green eyes. I have green eyes. But... he's got blue eyes. I'm SORRY!

Disclaimer: I do not own Beetlejuice. ::UGLY CRY:: **Beta:** The Art Of Suicide

**Art below by cocoa-at-night on tumblr!**

Saint Joseph's Hospital

The first thing that was apparent to Lydia was that she ached all over. It was not a splintering pain, but a dull ache that covered her entire body and face. It was almost as though she'd been hit by a truck.

Suddenly, she gasped awake as the image of a semi truck flared across her memory. Her eyes fluttered open briefly, just long enough to see Delia's face came into view as the woman hovered over her.

"Lydia?" Delia murmured. "You awake now?"

Lydia rolled her eyes around, surveying her surroundings. She tried to speak but a dry croak escaped her instead. Clearing her throat, she tried again, this time managing to say one word.

"Water."

Quickly, Delia ran to the pitcher on the tray table and poured her out a glass. It almost spilled as she rushed back to Lydia and held the cup to her lips.

"Oh, honey, I'm so glad you're awake!" She sobbed.

She struggled to sit up and so Delia shuffled around a bit until she could find the remote to the bed and angle her up. Lydia drank greedily but coughed as some of the water went down the wrong pipe. Reclining again, she tried to compose herself.

"What, uh, what happened?" She asked quietly.

"I was hoping you could tell me!" Delia exclaimed excitedly. "But I'm going to call the doctor first, Okay?"
As Delia practically skipped out the door, Lydia called out to her again.

"Where's my dad?" Delia froze for a moment and replied without looking back.

"Rest your voice, sweetie," she said with a forced smile and walked out.

Lydia was too tired to worry about what may have happened between Delia and her father. She groaned in pain, looked around again, and couldn't shake the feeling that someone was still in the room, watching her. She caught a glimpse of a little button beside her hand on the bed and pulled at it, following its line to one of the IV bags.

"Oh, hell yeah." The button was pressed and almost immediately some of the pain melted away. "Yesssss." She could have sworn she heard a snicker.

Eventually, Delia returned with the doctor.

"Hey there, Lydia. I'm Dr. Stevens. How are you feeling?" The doctor checked her chart as she tried to assess herself.

"Um, like I got hit by a truck."

The doctor laughed aloud. "So, you remember what happened then? Or is that just a turn of phrase?"

Lydia attempted a smile. "I got hit by a truck. While driving on the highway... to, uh," the memory of why she was driving at all was like a slap in the face. "Aw fuck. I was supposed to meet Annie Leibovitz. Shit."

"Don't stress yourself," he consoled. "Your health is more important right now. I'm sure Ms. Lebowitz will understand your situation."

Lydia gave him a curt nod as he continued. "Well, I'm very glad you remember what happened. Do you feel like you're having any memory issues at all?"

Lydia thought hard and long about it. She did indeed feel like she was forgetting something. Something very important. "Uh, I don't know."

"That's okay. I'm going to let you rest now and then I'll come back later to ask you some more questions and do some tests. Make sure your brain swelling has gone down. We'll also have to discuss some physical therapy. That sound good?" Lydia nodded again. "Okay great! I'll come back soon." With that, Dr. Stevens departed from the room.

Delia sat on the bed next to her and held Lydia's hand. "What did you promise him this time?" She whispered conspiringly.

Lydia looked confused. "Promise who what?"

"You know," she looked around suspiciously. "Betelgeuse." She covered her mouth like she had said a bad word.

Lydia widened her eyes and then furrowed her brow. "What do you mean?"

Delia gave her a little nudge. "He brought you back early this morning. You must have made a deal with him. Right? I hope it's nothing too bad."

Lydia was starting to worry. Her breathing quickened at the thought of the poltergeist and she felt a
mixture of dread and excitement until fear finally won out.

"I don't remember," she said finally.

The temperature in the room dropped considerably until the breath of both women could be seen. They shivered and looked around the room. Then, just as suddenly everything was back to normal and Lydia felt a strong sense of emptiness when whatever she thought had been watching her was gone.

Betelgeuse was on a rampage, lashing out in blind anger within the confines of his grave. He blasted everything in sight until nearly everything that resided in his small pit of misery was little more than dust. Still, it wasn't enough to quell the pain in his chest and so he pulled at his hair, squatted to the ground, and screamed as loud as he could.

After about thirty minutes of that, he fell backward onto the ground and stared at the ceiling. Lydia had forgotten everything. She'd forgotten him. He wanted to die and then quickly lamented the fact that he was already dead and there was no relief from the pain he was currently experiencing, even in death.

Except… he thought as he remembered being eaten by the sandworm, the oblivion of transitioning. As horrific as that thought had once been, the concept seemed like sweet relief now. Betelgeuse had already convinced himself that "suicide" via sandworm was the answer to his misery when he felt the pull of Juno's summons. He let the aether take him and appeared in the same position on the floor of her office.

Juno was not surprised at all when she finally saw her charge on her floor looking quite forlorn.

"I've been trying to call you since yesterday," she said dryly.

Betelgeuse didn't move or say a word.

"Where's Bart?"

He was insisting on being a statue.

"I'm guessing the mission was a success?" Juno pressed on.

Betelgeuse frowned.

"Well, I didn't get a notification and you're here without her. I'll assume she's alive."

He closed his eyes.

"I'm proud of you," she blurted out like it was painful to say.

Betelgeuse opened his eyes slowly and eyed the older woman with an unreadable expression. Juno stared, waiting for him to say something. Betelgeuse clicked his tongue once then slowly opened his mouth. Nothing came out for a moment.

"She doesn't remember what happened here," his voice was hoarse and quite subdued, then his bottom lip quivered for a fraction of a second and he burst out bawling for the first time in six hundred years.

Juno was horrified and very uncomfortable as she watched Betelgeuse breakdown in a way she had
never witnessed. She had seen him cry when he was alive, but they were usually tears born of anger or injury. At a complete loss of what to do, she just stood there, averted her gaze, and waited for him to cry it out.

Two hours later, Juno was sitting at her desk with her fingers to her temples while Betelgeuse continued to pour out his woe on her floor.

"I can't," she muttered, on the verge of losing her marbles. "I can't take this shit anymore." Juno stood up, walked around her desk and kicked Betelgeuse's side. He didn't acknowledge her and continued his sobbing. "For Christ's sake! Get it together! It's for the best!"

That last statement made things worse. Betelgeuse wailed like a widower at a funeral. Juno decided that anything was better than leaving him in this state. She had no idea how long it would continue but knowing him, he would take it to the extreme and may never let up until Lydia was standing in her office with unfinished business. Deciding that false hope would actually be a kindness, she sat on the floor next to him and hesitantly patted his shoulder.

"Hey, listen," she said loudly so he'd stop to hear her out. He didn't let up. "WOULD YOU SHUT UP FOR A SECOND?!"

Betelgeuse hiccuped and sniveled quietly.

"Thank you! Jesus... when did she wake up?" she asked him, still frustrated.

"Th-th-this m-m-mornin'," he hiccuped again.

"And you expect her to just remember everything after a handful of hours? She was in a coma for goodness sake!"

"Sh-sh-sh-she r-r-remembered the a-a-a-accident!" He cried.

Juno frowned, knowing that it was probably a lost cause, but offered him a comforting lie anyway. "Just give her some time. Memories are a tricky business. She might start remembering bits and pieces soon enough or she may even remember it all at once someday. Who knows? But, Betel…" Juno looked him in the eyes now and sighed. "You have to let her make her own choice when she does. Don't you want her to live a full life?"

"No," he whined.

Juno rolled her eyes and smacked him on the head. Betelgeuse winced and frowned then threw a temper tantrum, toddler style. "Not-fair-not-fair-not-FAIR-HEH-HEH-HAIR!"

"You goddamn baby! When has anything ever been fair?!"

Betelgeuse abruptly froze as he considered her comment. "You're right," he said soberly. "So, I should just do whatever-the-fuck-I-want."

"What? No, that's not-"

Betelgeuse floated up to standing and dusted himself off. He was a brand new ghost. "I'm gonna tell 'er," he said resolutely.

"Betel-"

"I'm gonna go back there and tell 'er everything! Yep!" Betelgeuse pulled out a comb and failed
completely at taming his mane. He started adjusting his tie next when Juno stood and grabbed him by the arm.

"You will not do that."

Betelgeuse completely ignored. "I can show her what happened and everything will go back to how it was!"

"Chavi."

"We'll get married, fuck like rabbits again, travel, have some fun, maybe adopt a kid, who knows-"

"CHAVI!

"WHAT?! WHY CAN'T I HAVE A LITTLE FUCKIN' HAPPINESS FOR ONCE IN MY SHITEXISTENCE?!" He roared, eyes dark with resentment.

Juno was speechless.

"Since the moment I took my first cursed BREATH! I've know nothin' but bitter fuckin' disappointment. I've never had anyone... no one has treated me the way she..." he took a shuddering breath in order to continue. "Not even you could stomach me enough to give me-

"That had nothing to do with you," she reasoned, understanding exactly where he was going.

"Could've fooled me!" He yelled.

"I didn't give you the kind of affection every child needs. I know that." Juno steadied herself by holding onto her desk. "That had nothing to do with you, boy. It had and has everything to do with me... not having the courage to..." she couldn't finish.

Betelgeuse scoffed and Juno turned to him abruptly. "I wasn't lying. I do love you like a son." She forced her eyes closed and willed her unshed tears away. "You drive me up the fucking wall. You don't make it easy but I would do anything to protect you."

"I don't need protectin' anymore," he announced seriously.

Juno nodded her assent. "You're right." She looked away from him. "Do whatever you want. Just spare me the pity party." Juno gave him a sideways glance. They smirked at each other in understanding and he disappeared.

Sighing, Juno went to her chair and sat. "I need a fucking vacation."

Betelgeuse went back to his grave first and paced, thinking about how to best approach, Lydia. When he saw the piles of dust everywhere, he panicked.

"Oh-no-no-no-no! The couch! The bed!" Betelgeuse frantically tried to reverse the damage by focussing on the couch first. When he finally brought it back to its normal form, he plopped down and caressed the cushions that Lydia had sat on. It occurred to him now that his whole place had been touched by her and he made quick work to bring everything back to order. When the bed was how he last left it, he threw himself on it and buried his face in the pillow she had used. He couldn't smell anything but inhaled anyway, taking in any delicious residual essence of Lydia that may have been left behind.

Feeling much calmer and definitely more optimistic, he rolled over to his side and inspected his
abode again. For the first time ever, the mess bothered him. Betelgeuse frowned, wondering what Lydia had thought when she first saw the place. If she liked him even after seeing him at his worst... he started to feel giddy at what could be if he showed her his better side.

"No, this won't do... gotta tidy up for the little lady."

With a wave of his hand, the beer bottles, cigarette butts, ash, and other junk vanished. He smoothed out the dirt walls, ceiling, and floor but took great care in leaving its roots and cracks in place to give it character.

Really getting into it, Betelgeuse dug shelves into the walls and arranged all of his books on them. On the side of the wall where Lydia had expertly brought him to heel, he lined it with the same vines and roses he had once showered her with before taking her down memory lane.

Betelgeuse added more little hovels to the walls and placed red candles in them. He surveyed his work, considering what else she might like.

"Hmm... what else?" He muttered. He snapped his fingers. "Clothes! Women like clothes... and shoes... jewelry? Yes!" He closed his eyes and visualized a large cherry wood armoire and filled it with everything he thought she would want- and a few little numbers for his own benefit.

Another glance around the room had him nodding his approval but then he noticed there was a lot of bare wall. Betelgeuse conjured up some paints, an easel, and a few canvases before dressing himself in an outfit reminiscent of Bob Ross. Paint splattered everywhere as he attacked the canvas with vigor. After a while, he finally stepped back, rubbed his hands together and chuckled darkly. He had created three borderline pornographic paintings of he and Lydia.

Sending his paint supplies away, he hung his paintings then did a three-sixty turn to the center of the room. "Perfect!" He announced to no one in particular. No longer having anything else to preoccupy his mind with, Betelgeuse frowned when the main problem resurfaced.

"Now, whadda I do about her memories?" Pacing again, he pondered the dilemma. "I could, uh, turn it into a novel. Dumb. Ummmmm, a movie? Maybe. I could just tell her how it all happened. Let her ask questions and go from there. Yeah, I think that's the best option. Okay. Maybe I should change? What if I show up like my younger self again? Nah... too sneaky. Um, I could look like I did right before I got the plague! Maybe wear somethin' a bit more modern... casual... Wait. What if she doesn't recognize me? Damn it. Okay... signature get up it is. No, wait... that might freak 'er out because now she only remembers the crap from six years ago. DAMN IT!"

Betelgeuse growled in frustration, then checked his watches. "It's late. She's probably asleep." He growled in frustration, not wanting to wait any longer. "Fuck it. I'll just show up and wing it." He conjured his hat and removed the placard to take a peek in her room before trying to contact her. Having a clear line to her room, Betelgeuse peered until Lydia came into view.

Lydia was huddled next to Delia on her bed. Upon closer inspection, he realized they were crying. "Crap, what now?"

"I don't understand," Lydia sobbed. "He should have been waiting for me!"

Betelgeuse's heart nearly broke. Had she remembered finally and was wondering whether he abandoned her? "I'm right here, honey! I'll be right there-"

"He loved you, Lydia," Delia consoled.

Confused, Betelgeuse froze. "Is she talkin' about me? She has ta be..."
"Your dad just," Delia continued. "You know he couldn't handle stress very well."

"Are you sure he's not in the waiting room or something? Maybe buying real estate on the other side. I wouldn't put it passed him." Lydia tried to laugh at the ridiculous thought but cried some more instead.

"Adam and Barbara already inquired. He's not there."

Betelgeuse now understood everything. Charles had croaked and moved on while Lydia was comatose. "Oh, that fuckin' spineless prick!" He snarled. "Don't worry, babe! I'll take o' ya."

"Can you stay?" Lydia asked her step-mother. "I don't wanna be alone. What if... he comes back?"

Betelgeuse felt a punch in the gut. "No... she doesn't mean me," he denied.

"Honey, I think he would have come back to collect already, don't you?" Delia reasoned.

"I don't want to chance it. I don't wanna see him. Maybe if you stay, he won't come."

"Okay, sweetheart. I'll stay."

The placard fell from Betelgeuse's hand and the vision disappeared. Gingerly, Betelgeuse made his way to the bed and curled up in the fetal position. He stared at nothing in particular as he replayed Lydia's words in his mind.

"She doesn't wanna see me," he said quietly. "She doesn't wanna see me... she doesn't wanna see me... she doesn't wanna see me... she doesn't wanna see me... she doesn't wanna see me... she doesn't wanna see me..."

Betelgeuse wanted the ground to swallow him whole. It did and it led to straight to Saturn. Lying on the sandy yellow ground, he didn't even flinch when a Sandworm charged right for him from beneath the ground. He was still repeating Lydia's last words when the huge worm attacked. Betelgeuse was finally silenced as the sandworm ate him head first.
It was a typical day in the waiting room as Miss Argentina called numbers and logged all of the visits until he showed up. She had opened the window to call out a number and nearly dove under her desk at the sight of Betelgeuse shimmering into view on the sofa.

"Mierda," she cursed under her breath. "Regenerating here, which means something bad must have happened, which means he's going to make my afterlife another living hell for another six fucking years!" She tried to calm herself and briefly considered ushering him to Juno's office without even taking a number when there was a knock at her window.

Miss Argentina opened the window only to be greeted by the sight of the poltergeist himself. Her mouth dropped open when she noticed that his favorite suit was torn and yellowed and he wasn't wearing his usual face. Eyes that usually glimmered with menace were now dull and empty. She almost didn't recognize him at all. The tattered striped suit was the only thing that gave him away.

"Hello, Betelgeuse," she tried cautiously. "You can take a number-"

"Saturn," he gruffed.

"I surmised as much. Please take a number."

"Send me to Saturn." He said flatly.

Miss Argentina, along with everyone else in the room, simply stared at him. Betelgeuse hadn't even blinked yet, looking right through her into nothing.

"Maybe you should see Juno."

Betelgeuse's eyes flared momentarily as they focused on her. "Saturn. Now." His upper lip twitched in warning. Without another thought, Miss Argentina pushed one of the emergency buttons and Betelgeuse was ejected out of the room, through the ceiling, straight for Saturn.
After about a hundred and fifty clients were called, Miss Argentina opened her little window to call a number. She jumped out of her chair when Betelgeuse's face was there to greet her once again.

"Jodienda!" She exclaimed. He looked even worse than the time she had seen him two months prior.

"Betel-"

"Saturn." He murmured.

"Have you lost your mind?" She accused.

Betelgeuse barely shrugged his shoulders.

"Listen, just go straight to J-." 

"Saturn."

"Juno will want to see you I'm sur-"

"Saturn."

"Dios mio, just go to-"

"SATURN!" He bellowed.

Miss Argentina growled and stomped her foot right before ejecting him to his desired destination. After several weeks he was back. "Saturn," he would bark. She stopped trying to argue with him.

_EJECT._

"Saturn."

_EJECT._

"Saturn."

_EJECT._

"Sa-"

_EJECT._

She couldn't take it anymore.

Juno had just arrived from a home visit and found Miss Argentina sitting in her office.

"What's wron-"

"If I have to see his STUPID face again, I will QUIT! I will ask for a TRANSFER, Juno, I SWEAR!"

Raising her eyebrows in genuine surprise, because she had never seen the woman so angry, she sat across from her.
"Why don't we start with whose stupid face you're talking about?"

"BETELGEUSE!"

There it was. The mayhem Juno had been patiently waiting for from her adopted son had finally come. It took a bit longer than she expected, but the man was head over heels for the Deetz girl. Juno really thought he had gone back to Lydia and was holed up with her somewhere, but a peek into the Deetz residence proved otherwise.

Many times now, Juno checked up on her if only to catch a glimpse of Betelgeuse royally fucking up everything, but she never saw him. Lydia was peacefully recovering at home with no other ghostly disturbances other than the Maitlands who fussed over her as if she were a wounded animal.

After a couple of months of that, she chalked it up to Betelgeuse changing his mind and finally doing the right thing. However, she had been absolutely positive he would cause her some major headaches. Not a peep from him for months as she checked his grave occasionally to see if he was there. The sight of his "renovations" almost killed her all over again. Organized, squeaky clean as a grave could be, and a purposeful color scheme was just too much for her. Still, she never saw him there and nothing changed within his living space.

Juno couldn't help but smile. "What's he done now?"

"NOTHING!"

Juno's smile faded. "What do mean? You just said-"

"He's lost his mind, Juno. I don't what's worse! An angry annoying Betel or a sad, mopey, suicidal Betel!"

Shaking her head in order to follow what Miss Argentina was saying, Juno questioned her again. "Of course an angry annoying Betel is worse. What the hell are you saying? What do you mean, suicidal? He's dead!"

"Juno." Miss Argentina closed her eyes briefly to summon patience. "He keeps regenerating in the waiting room every goddamn month - sometimes more, stalks up to my window and then demands that I send him to Saturn."

Juno was flabbergasted. Never in her right mind would she have imagined that was possible. "No, that can't be. He hates sandworms - you're telling me… he's going there on purpose? Getting eaten? And regenerating-"

"YES!"

"Well, for how long?!

"SIX FUCKING MONTHS! He's just on this loop of death and it's depressing as hell! You have to do something. I saw his you-know-what last time. I'm pretty sure he'll lose the tattered pieces of his suit completely this time around and I'll have to watch a naked, middle-aged, pudgy, sad excuse of a man walk up to my window again and ask me to send him to the belly of monsters-"

"ALRIGHT! Why didn't you tell me sooner?! Why haven't you sent him in?

"I thought you knew! That-that maybe you were letting him go through whatever-the-hell he's going through! He won't see you."
Juno stood up and walked to the door and opened it. "Come on! I need you back in the waiting room. As soon as you see his pale deadass, you call me."

"Where are you going?"

"To get a visitation voucher. I need to see Lydia."

"That could take months!"

"Oh well!" Juno power walked out the door and headed for her supervisor's office.

It was a peaceful sunny day in Winter River, Connecticut as Lydia marked off another day in her calendar. It had been six months since her accident and her leg was recovering nicely. She wished she could say the same for her mind.

Sleep was not coming to her easily. The news that her father passed and didn't stick around after the fact had been shocking. Lydia could not understand it, no matter how many times Delia or the Maitlands tried to explain what they thought his reasons were. She was his daughter, and he left her. Just like her mother. Granted, Charles did have a heart attack when he found out that his only daughter was in a coma with only a twenty percent chance of waking up again. Still, he should have at least haunted their home in order to see his daughter through. She felt betrayed. She felt empty. She felt…

_Utterly alone._

The dark void inside of her that she had been able to quell once upon a time was growing within her again. Lydia would lie awake in bed crying, wondering why she felt like she was missing something so very precious to her. Something just out of reach. Then, she would remember her parents and cease wondering.

That was not the only thing that was wrong, though. Things had changed for her in many ways since waking up in the hospital. For one, she was seeing ghosts almost everywhere she went. Lydia thought that maybe the head injury had knocked things around in her brain but also felt that it was part of what was missing.

Strange dreams plagued her nearly every night; snakes and black roses, carnivals and freaks. A lanky girl leading her through a maze. _He_ also took shape in her nightmares- if they could even be called that. It was almost always the same images of the poltergeist bowing and reaching for her hand or laughing. Sometimes the dreams would turn a bit… well, she would take a shower upon waking.

Lydia blamed most of it on her painkillers and boredom. She wanted to get back to school as soon as possible, finish her classes, and graduate already. More importantly, finally see Chris and her friends. _And Annie Leibovitz._ Now that she was walking a bit with the help of a cane, those things would hopefully happen soon.

It was getting dark out as Lydia waited for Delia to come and do her evening check-in. They had gotten very close. Delia was her rock throughout her entire recovery and she was incredibly grateful for her step-mother. The expected knock came.

"Come in," Lydia called.

Delia entered with a cup of hot chocolate. Lydia rolled her eyes when caught sight of it.
"I'm going turn diabetic if you keep bring me those," she deadpanned.

Delia waved off her comment and hand her the cup. "Sugar is good for the soul. How are you feeling?"

Lydia adjusted herself on her now lower bed. "I'm fine."

Delia gave her a sad smile. "Any, um, sign of…"

"No," Lydia said quietly after taking a sip of her warm beverage.

"So strange," Delia shook her head bemused. "Do you think, maybe, he just did it to help?"

Lydia scoffed. "I highly doubt that."

"Well, what do you think?"

"I don't know, Delia. I've been going over it in my head and I just can't remember anything. I mean, I have these dreams but they don't tell me anything. He's done this before though. We made a deal six years ago and he never came to finish the… uh… ceremony."

"Then why?"

"Maybe…" she thought about her more erotic dreams with the ghost who looked less terrifying than she remembered. "Maybe I already gave him what he wanted." She finished and gave Delia a worried glance.

Delia understood. "Well, I would have probably done the same."

"Yeah, well," Lydia chuckled. "You kinda have a thing for him, I think."

Delia gave Lydia's good leg a smack. "I do not!" When Lydia gave her a dubious look, Delia rolled her eyes and smiled. "Okay, maybe a teensy-weensy bit. He's the reason my work started selling, after all. Not sure I wouldn't mind showing him my gratitude for saving my girl either."

Lydia shuddered and feigned a gag. "Gross."

They shared another laugh and then grew somber again. "You keep strong, sweetie. Okay? I know it's been hard six months but."

"I'm fine," Lydia reassured her. "Just need some proper sleep for once. That'd be nice."

"Okay, just turn in early and see if tonight's the lucky night." Delia went to her and gave Lydia a slightly awkward peck on her head. They were still getting used to their new dynamic.

"G'night..." Lydia called out to her as she closed the door.

"Good night, sweetie."

Lydia eased into her sheets and started the new ritual that she had begun as soon as she came home from the hospital and started counting snakes in her mind. As usual, her mind would drift to the menacing ghost. She had come so close to calling him several times already to demand an explanation from him. Especially when she was alone in her room in the dark but she always chickened out in the end. Sleep found her easily on this night. Still, she dreamt of snakes, roses… and stripes.
OH, the angst! When will it end?!

WARNING: Things get a bit smutty. Just a little.

Thank you for the lovely comments mostghost, alphamano, GoldenAerie, Unseelie, Annoying_dog.

I hope I'm not missing anyone!

UPDATE TO PREVIOUS CHAPTERS: If you missed it in the last one, I changed BJ's eye color to BLUE to match movie Beej. I apologize but it had to be done.

I DO NOT own Beetlejuice! Beta: The Art Of Suicide

The waiting room started to come into view again as Betelgeuse's translucent form became more solid. He waited until he was fully regenerated, which was taking longer and longer now, then made his way to the open window. A blur of green and red dashed across his vision and the window slammed shut.

Betelgeuse knocked softly, not having the motivation to do much of anything other than his new hobby of perpetual suicide. The window snapped opened. Before he could say "Saturn", a green arm slammed a sticky note on the outside of the window, almost shattering the pane when she closed it again.

OUT TO LUNCH, ASSHOLE.

Betelgeuse snarled. He didn't want to be angry. He wanted to wallow and travel to oblivion after being munched on by the ravenous sandworms who had gotten a taste for his flesh. He knocked louder.

"Stop fuckin' around! You know the drill! Just push the button!" He tried pulling on the window but it didn't budge. "Fuckin' bitch! I'll tear this WHOLE PLACE APART! YOU KNOW I WILL!"

"Hi Beej!" A sweet feminine voice called.

If Betelgeuse had a beating heart, it would have stopped dead in his chest. A hopeful countenance replaced his furious one as he turned slowly. He searched the room but couldn't find the face he had been longing to see. Instead, a lanky girl with an overbite waved at him. *Becky… no… Betsy?*

"I thought that was you! I never forget a naked man, not having seen too many myself."

Betelgeuse cocked an eyebrow then looked down at himself. He was as bare as a newborn baby.

"Shit," he breathed. Betelgeuse turned around and ripped a number out of the dispenser then made his way to… *Burp?* He stood in front of the burn victim sitting next to her and eyed the ghoul menacingly, dick at eye level. The ghost cleared his throat, stood up, and maneuvered around
Betelgeuse. Plopping down next to... BERTHA! Betelgeuse conjured himself a blanket around his naked form.

"Hey, Burp," he greeted morosely.

Bertha giggled at the odd nickname. "How's Lydia?" She asked innocently.

Betelgeuse flinched at the sound of her name. "Not sure," he grumbled. "Haven't, uh, seen her since... ya know..."

"Oh, I thought you guys were together," she said apologetically.

Saturn was sounding like heaven right now. " Didn't work out," he choked.

Bertha eyed him sadly. "Why? You guys seemed good together, from what I saw... and heard." She stifled a giggle.

The bare man bent over and buried his head in his hands. "She woke up and she doesn't remember... us... like that," he mumbled to the floor.

"That. Sucks." Bertha was genuinely saddened by the news. "Guess that means she doesn't remember me either... I was kinda hoping we'd be friends. She seemed really cool."

Betelgeuse looked at the newly dead girl and nodded in agreement. "Hey, uh, for what it's worth. Sorry I couldn't save ya," he grumbled uncomfortably.

"Oh, no worries. It's better this way. My parents were in denial. I wasn't going to wake up. So, thanks!" She said brightly. "Who knows how long I would have been in sector eight! So. Boring. It was nice being around my family again but it's also kinda sad. You know, since they can't see me. That's why I'm here. I wanna move out."

Betelgeuse frowned then voiced his thoughts. "Lydia might be able to see you. Maybe get a message to yer family to stop moppin'."

"Really?!" She asked hopefully.

"Ya can't leave the house yet. Most likely they'll sell it eventually. Or just croak."

"Why is it like that?"

"It's, uh, to help ya move on. They think if ya watch helplessly from the sidelines that, uh, you'll give up eventually and want to leave for a 'better' place."

"Who's they?"

"Who the fuck knows?" He shrugged. "Upper management? Whatever. Anyway, you could learn how to send Lydia a message. Maybe she'll see it." He gulped down his apprehension. "If ya do... um, would ya... say hi for me? And... and maybe tell 'er..." he sighed not knowing what to say.

"Why don't you send a message?"

Wondering this often himself, he always came to the conclusion that it was too late. If she didn't remember their time together, she wouldn't want him that way and there were many opportunities that life could give her that would make being with him seem like a death sentence.

"Forget it. Don't mention me, okay?" Betelgeuse leaned back and closed his eyes. Without looking,
he pointed to the window. "And let me know when that cunt is back."

"Okay," Bertha giggled.

Lydia breathed a sigh of relief when she walked into her new apartment in New York City. When Bell had called her up and told her that she and a couple others wanted to get an apartment together instead of a dorm, it filled Lydia with hope. She wanted a new start and the offer was too good to pass up.

Chris walked in pushing a dolly and took a chair off of it, setting it down in the living room area. "You should sit down," he advised with concern. "I'll start bringing everything in until the others get here."

"Thanks, Cooper." They were still on a last name basis. It was an awkward reunion at best. Lydia could tell that he wasn't sure if he should hug her or shake her hand upon seeing her. Instead, they did neither. They had spoken over the phone a few times when the gang occasionally hung out but because she had never been close to them, the conversations were brief.

Lydia hobbled with her cane over to one of the bedroom doors. She gasped loudly, cane clattering to the floor when the form of an old woman greeted her from the center of the room.

"Hello Lydia," she said dryly as she helped the falling girl stay upright with her energy. "Do you remember me?"

Lydia was worried when she couldn't move her legs, then her cane stood upright and she grabbed at it. Whatever was supporting her released its hold when she stabilized herself.

"Uh, hi," she replied with uncertainty. "Sorry. Do I know you?"

"I'm Juno," she responded with a sigh.

Only one person that name could belong to. "You're Adam and Barbara's caseworker." It was not a question.

"Yes."

"Did something happen to them?" She asked worriedly.

"No, I'm not here about them. I'm here about you. I don't have much time, I was only able to get a level one visitation voucher on such short notice."

Lydia's mind started going a mile a minute. "My father! Did he come back? Did you find him?"

"What? Oh, no, no. He, uh, he's gone," she announced uncomfortably.

The still healing girl lost her balance again but Juno sent the lonely chair from the living room under her before she could fall.

"I'm sorry." Juno eyed the girl sadly. "I'm here because I was wondering if you remembered anything from your time on the other side. I'm assuming, no."

"The other side… When I was in a coma? No, I don't think so. I've had dreams but… they don't make sense. Oh," she suddenly thought. "Are you here… because of… him?"

Juno narrowed her eyes. "Betelgeuse?" Lydia started at the name. "Yes, as a matter of fact, I am."
"So, he's ready to seal the deal?" She asked flatly. "Fine. Whatever. I'm ready. I just want to get it over with so I'm not wondering all the time."

Juno raised her eyebrows and walked to the resigned girl. "What do you mean?"

"He wants his freedom, right? Delia told me he was the one who brought me back. I'm guessing I must have made a deal with him. I assumed I promised I'd marry him."

Juno nodded her head. "And you want that to happen?"

Lydia furrowed her brow in confusion. "Do I have a choice? I already promised him twice. I don't think he'll be happy if I try to get out of it again. I want what's left of family safe."

"Safe? Has he threatened them?"

"Um, no."

"Has he threatened you?"

"... no."

"Have you seen him?"

"No." She whispered.

"Then maybe you should stop assuming shit and let me talk."

Lydia shut her mouth and adjusted in her seat.

"Good. Now, do you or do you not want to know what happened?"

Lydia only to a moment to breathe. "Yes. I do"

"Even if the news is… unfavorable?"

Lydia did a quick soul search, then nodded her head. At that, Juno conjured up a file and handed it to young medium.

"I don't know if this will help you… or hurt you… I don't know if you'll like what you read in there. I don't know if you'll remember everything after reading it but…" Juno still held onto the file as Lydia's fingers tugged at it slightly. "I need you to promise me something."

The normally stoic woman eyed the ghost seriously. She could see the worry in her eyes and nodded for Juno to continue.

"If you're going to call him… make sure you know what you want. And let him down easy if… well, you'll know what I'm talking about."

Now, Lydia really looked confused.

"Promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"Good." Juno looked around when she heard someone enter the apartment. She gave the young handsome man a once-over then looked at Lydia warningly. "And make sure that one isn't
anywhere near you if you do call him. Good luck." She faded from sight.

"Deetz? Ho, shit! You shouldn't be moving furniture! I would've moved it for you."

"It's okay, no worries. Um, can you bring in the boxes that say 'bathroom'? I want to freshen up a bit," she lied, desperate to open the file and needing alone time in order to do it discretely.

After Chris moved her suitcase and the boxes into the room, he opened them for her, then started organizing the living room furniture. Lydia closed the bedroom door and limped into the master bathroom as fast as she could and shut that door as well.

Lydia sat on the toilet lid and ripped the file open. At first, she just skimmed through the sector eight information because Adam and Barbara had already recapped her on that but her eyes stilled on the name that haunted her dreams, *spelled like the star*… the revelation triggered her to feel a wave of warmth but she could not place why.

**Betelgeuse and Lydia Deetz were found at the Gator Dun Bar. When asked to name her abductor, Ms. Deetz announced that she left the barrier of her own free will. It is presumed that Betelgeuse ripped the barrier in order for her to make her escape.**

Lydia's eyes widened. "What?"

She skimmed through the rest of the procedural information and the drama that ensued at the bar when again she found something that made her pause.

**Because I believed that Bartholomew was a danger to the girl, I assisted Betelgeuse and Ms. Deetz escape. They were held in a safe house until Bart could be processed. When Bartholomew escaped his prison and breached sector eight in search of Ms. Deetz, Betelgeuse took it upon himself to guide Lydia back to her body.**

Lydia stopped reading for a moment to process everything. She shut her eyes and willed herself to remember. "Why? Why would he help me? What did I promise him? Why would I have to let him down easy? Did I… seduce him?"

Lydia shuddered at the thought. She didn't think she was capable of something like that, not because of his overall abhorrent… *everything*, but because she didn't think she would use someone in that fashion. Juno's words and countenance also gave her pause.

"She seemed like she was… worried about him. Come on, Lydia… remember!" She looked back to the file and went back to the part at the bar.

**Betelgeuse attacked, bringing down aetherial lighting, insisting on protecting Ms. Deetz. Bartholomew attacked with spears in hopes of hitting his target. It was clear to everyone present that he meant to kill Ms. Deetz. Betelgeuse intercepted the attack and sacrificed himself in order to save-**

Imagining the events as she read them on paper, the image of Betelgeuse's body impaled by spears filled her mind when suddenly, she heard a piercing scream. The Banshee Cry ripped through her brain along with her memories.

Lydia reached for the sink in order to keep herself steady as the memories assaulted her and rearranged themselves in the order of how they occurred.

"Now, I'm in bed with a beautiful naked woman."

"Very nice work, Lyds."

"You impressed me."

"Just letting off some steam, babe."

"Let me make something real clear…"

"I. Want. You."

"Because I fuckin' love you, goddamnit."

Lydia lowered herself to the cold tile floor, panting and trying to clear her mind. She covered her mouth to stifle a sob as her chest heaved and the biggest migraine she had ever experienced started to form. _Fucking asshole! Hasn't tried coming to see me. After everything. Loves me? Fucker. Not when things are rough, huh? Seven-motherfucking-months!_

Lydia rolled to her side and struggled to stand. The pain only served to fuel her angry resolve. "I'm going to give you… a piece… of my mind… you sonofabitch." Lydia finally pulled herself up using the sink and faced her angry tear ridden face in the mirror.

"Betelgeuse," she ground out through clenched teeth.

A familiar tingly sensation tickled the poltergeist's consciousness.

Betelgeuuuuuuuse

An angry angelic face manifested in his mind.

Betelgeuse!

His eyes snapped open and looked around frantically. "Lydia?! How many times was that?!"

"What are you talking about" quipped Bertha.

Betelgeuse launched out of his seat, his blanket transforming into his striped suit and his show business face was back on.

"Whoa," Bertha awed as she saw his transformation.

"COME ON, BABE!" He leaned back, yelled and fisted at the ceiling. "SAY IT!"

Lydia closed her eyes and took a hissing breath as she imagined his smug face. "Betelgeuse!" She opened her eyes, fully expecting him to show up with a goofy stupid grin on but he was nowhere in sight. She waited a few more minutes before losing her composure and started crying. Going through a rollercoaster of emotions before finally reaching and staying on scorn.

"What the fuck were you expecting, Lydia?" She growled at herself in the mirror. "Everyone fucking abandons you!" Lydia knew she was being unreasonable but she didn't care. Wiping away
her angry tears, she splashed some water on her face and then heard a crash.

Her cane was almost forgotten in her haste to see what had happened. She could already hear Chris muttering curses. Upon opening the door, Lydia found Chris nursing his foot. A threatening Betelgeuse sat across from him on the coffee table, only inches away from Chris’ face.

Lydia was frozen at the doorway, afraid that any sudden movement would send everything into chaos. The angry ghost was deeply scrutinizing the much younger and more physically appealing man, tilting his head this way and that with a sneer on his face. She wanted to kick herself for not heeding Juno’s warning.

"I guess I can understand the appeal of Baby Dean over here but I gotta say, babe… did ya really have ta dump me while rubbin' your new beau in ma face?" He asked with a dangerous quiver in his voice.

"Get out," she hissed.

Both Betelgeuse and Chris snapped their gazes to Lydia whose eyes were red-rimmed with wrath.

"I'm not goin' anywhere until-" Betelgeuse started.

"I'm sorry, I really don't know how it happened. I'll pay to replace the mirror," Chris explained.

Lydia hadn't even noticed that the mirror of her favorite vanity was shattered to tiny pieces on the floor. Chris may not have known how it happened but she sure as hell did.

"Chris," Lydia spoke with all the calm she could muster. He looked even more worried now that she had used his first name. "Don't worry about it. But I need you to go… now."

"But, I'm not done… please don't be angry… I promise I won't break anyth-"

"Chris, there is a poltergeist sitting less than a foot away from your face and I'm worried you're going to get hurt."

Both the living and dead man dropped their jaws.

"Uh… like, for real? You don't have to make stuff up just to-"

The sofa levitated off the ground and tipped back, sending Chris rolling back onto the floor. He shot to his feet and ran to Lydia's side as it crashed to the floor again.

"Holy fuck!

Betelgeuse managed an evil grin. "Two can play at that game, babes. I can show 'em a real good time if ya want."

Lydia calmly stood in front of Chris and faced him. "Don't worry about the stuff. I'll deal. Try to sleep this off."

"Whoa! Wait-wait-wait! You can't stay here!"

Lydia wrapped her arms around him and gave Chris an innocent peck on the cheek, sending Betelgeuse into the land of all that was red. Under the sofa cushions grew massive sharp teeth as Betelgeuse growled from his seat and sent the sofa chomping in their direction.

"Watch out!" Chris braced himself for the impact when the snapping couch slammed in front of
them as if it had hit an invisible wall. Lydia didn't even flinch.

"Don't worry," she consoled. "He won't hurt me." She glanced over her shoulder and gave Betelgeuse a sneer of her own as the sofa continued to growl and bite before them.

"He's just jealous." She turned back to Chris as Betelgeuse's eyes glowed a poison green and his face started to crack with rage. "Though, I don't know why. He's the one who left me." She emphasized.

Betelgeuse's face returned to normal and the sofa became lifeless the instant her last words escaped her. "What?" He barked.

"Lydia, I can't leave you here."

Betelgeuse almost tossed him out on his ass but Lydia addressed him first. "Betelgeuse," she called sweetly. "Show Chris you're going to play nice so that he can have some peace of mind."

"Pfft."

"Unless you would prefer to talk some other time?"

There was a long silence before Betelgeuse snarled and placed the sofa where it belonged, repaired her vanity, and even went the extra mile by unpacking her boxes and arranging their contents in neat piles on the floor.

"This is fucking crazy!"

"Now, go." Lydia gave Chris a shove and pushed him out the door. She locked it and took a breath before turning around. Lydia found the ghost pacing her living room and muttering to himself.

"Well?" She instigated.

Betelgeuse whirled around and threw his arms out. "Well, WHAT?! You fuckin' call me 'ere while that little shit head is here takin' care o' ya, bein' all 'boyfriend of the fuckin' year'... fuckin' rubbin' it my face! WHY LYDIA?! I told ya how I felt about ya! Do you remember or NOT?"

"Oh, I remember everything... NOW! What kind of person tells someone he loves her then disappears for SEVEN MONTHS! Did you know my father died and he didn't stay?" She questioned him. "Did you?!

The face he gave her was her answer. She sobbed and the tears flowed again.

"Lyds," he whispered. "I wanted ta come back. I-I stayed at the hospital until you woke up but then..."

"Then you left."

"You didn't remember anythin'. What was I supposed to do?!"

"TALK to me! You were supposed to stay and tell me everything!"

"You know that wouldn't have worked. You hated me! I might as well 've been the fuckin' boogie man! You said you didn't wanna see me!" He pleaded.

"Because I couldn't remember! You were supposed to help me remember," she trailed off with shaky breaths. "You have no idea, what I've been through."
"Well, I wasn't exactly havin' a picnic maself!"

"My mother abandoned me. My father abandoned me. YOU abandoned me. EVERYONE I LOVE ABANDONS ME!" She started sobbing in earnest.

Betelgeuse shot his hand to his chest. Love. She said, love. He had her in his arms in a flash. At first, she buried her face into him but then started struggling out of his grasp. "Leave me alone! Don't fucking touch me!"

Ignoring her protests, Betelgeuse kept her trapped as Lydia's torso and face started to tingle with a cool numbness. He held her and kissed the top of her head. It wasn't anything like she remembered and knowing that she wouldn't be able to feel him the same way again brought on another barrage of tears.

"I'm not goin' anywhere." He promised. "I'm stayin' right 'ere. Yer right. 'M a fuckin' idiot. I shoulda stayed. I shoulda tried anyway. I'm sorry, babe. I'm so fuckin' sorry. Please forgive me. Don't send me away. Lemme make it up to ya. I won't fuck up again. Not like that."

The tingling sensation was spreading. It was having a calming effect. Drained physically and emotionally, she wasn't supporting herself anymore and was completely at Betelgeuse's mercy. When her sniveling began to subside, he picked her up and carried her to the sofa. Sitting down with the dark beauty cradled in his arms, he manifested his jacket over her, knowing full well it hardly mattered. Lydia wondered if the effects from his ghostly touch would become unbearable and decided she didn't care.

At a loss for what to do next, since she had stopped struggling but also wasn't asking him to stay, Betelgeuse decided on doing some mundane tasks that his lover might appreciate. All he wanted to do was please her in any way that she would allow. Although his own desires dictated that he bury
himself within her, Betelgeuse knew that would not bode well.

Lydia was in pain because of him and it would take time for her to forgive his stupidity. Abandoned, was the word she had used and she compared him to her shit parents. If it wasn't completely over between them, it would be a miracle. At the moment, Lydia was limp in his arms and Betelgeuse was determined to take advantage of the time granted to him in order to try and make things right. He couldn't lose her again. Not if he could help it.

Face tucked into his neck, the exhausted woman heard things being moved around. At one point she heard the stove turn on and briefly wondered what he was doing. She wanted to open her eyes, but they felt so heavy. The smell of mint and lavender finally made her look. Lydia was met by a cup of tea hovering close to her face.

"Should be good ta drink now. It's not too hot," he reassured.

Lydia moved to grab it but it floated to her lips for her. She took a tentative sip first, then greedily gulped down. It was grounding her as it settled in her stomach.

A simple "thank you" wanted to escape, but Lydia held her tongue. Feeling extremely conflicted, she fought between her opposing mental images. Her mind was reeling with "what if's" and "why's." Lydia was certain she didn't want to know what Betelgeuse had been doing for the past seven months. Scuzzo's retelling of what had happened when Rhoslyn turned Betelgeuse down was enough to drive her completely mad. The memory of Betelgeuse spitefully in bed with three women made Lydia want to pull out the Handbook and send his dick to the Lost Soul's room.

She wanted so badly to just start swinging at him with wild abandon, then choke him out while she conquered his body with her own. Now that Lydia had her memories back, she realized that her feelings of emptiness had stemmed from his absence. She missed him without even knowing it and it was all his fault. It did not escape her that she had just confessed her feelings for him. Lydia loved him. Now that she had experienced the bitter taste of his desertion, she was certain beyond a shadow of a doubt.

There was more noise in the distance so she finally peered around the room. All her belongings were gone from their piles. The boxes were flattened and folded in a corner and her bedroom furniture was gone. When she looked at him, she saw that his eyes were closed but moving rapidly beneath his lids. She almost wondered if he was asleep and dreaming when his eyes fluttered open and the noises stopped. He turned his face to Lydia and gave her a small smirk.

"That oughta do it."

Lydia furrowed her brow at the odd remark. Then, he stood and carried her to the master bedroom. She was surprised to find her entire bedroom furnished and decorated with everything she brought with her. Betelgeuse placed her on the bed and removed her shoes. Lydia felt the tingling subside as soon as he relinquished his hold. He was very gentle with her still healing leg but she was now painfully aware of the ache pulsing from it. Lydia had been trying to avoid taking her painkillers but it was the only way she could sleep through the night.

Gently massaging her feet, Betelgeuse started running the water from the tub with a thought. "Can ya soak?" He asked. She avoided his gaze but nodded. The water in the bathroom stopped running and Lydia could smell her favorite honey almond shea butter soap calling to her. Taking a long inhale for the scent to further calm her nerves, she resolved to stare the maddening deadman in the eye. When she did, there was a gentle smile on his face. "Smell good?" He questioned.

Lydia's tongue was being stubborn so, she merely nodded again. Knowing he couldn't smell or
taste anything… or properly feel anything, the sobs threatened to bubble up again at the thought of that. One more look at her infuriating ghost pushed her over the edge and she started crying again. She covered her face with her hands and broke down in earnest once more.

Lydia felt Betelgeuse sit even closer and placed a tingling hand on her waist. "Tell me what ta do, Lyds. I've seven months to make up for. Let me take care o' ya."

His words only made her cry harder and she hated herself for not being able to calm down. Tentatively, Betelgeuse pulled on her hands until he could see her face. He dried her tears and moved her bangs out of the way, then dropped his head down slowly to kiss her. He waited for her to make a move in protest but she did not. When Lydia closed her shimmering eyes, he gently placed his lips over hers. Lingering there a moment, he pulled back and waited for Lydia to open her eyes again.

Eventually, they did. "Not really the same is it?" He asked her. She took a shuddering breath and shook her head. "Does it feel bad?" She shook her head again and finally spoke, her voice filling him with relief.

"Just feels… kinda cool and… uh, tingly. How does it feel for you?"

His heart broke when she looked at him with hope in her eyes.

"Can't really describe it."

"Try?"

"Like I'm kissin' a forcefield or somethin'..."

"Great," she deadpanned.

Betelgeuse snickered. "Come on, water's gettin' cold."

She reached for him when he made to stand up. Betelgeuse stilled and waited patiently as she thought deeply on what to say. "What are we gonna do?" She whispered.

"Whatever ya want." He smiled.

"No, I mean—"

"I know what ya mean." He sobered. "It's all up to you, Lyds. Always has been. I know what I want." He pointed at himself then dropped his hand on her again. "If there's a way ta come back from this… for you to give me another chance… Good luck gettin' rid of me now, that's all I'm sayin'."

Betelgeuse paused a moment to let Lydia interject. When she looked away from him again and stayed silent, he nearly lost his resolve. Abruptly, he stood up and facepalmed as he started pacing in front of Lydia's bed.

"It's that kid, isn't it?" He pointed to the door then brought his hands to his head to keep it from exploding with rage. Taking a brief moment to compose himself for Lydia's sake, Betelgeuse thought the situation through.

"O' course it is. I just stepped aside while this guy worked ya for seven fuckin' months… I only had ya for four days… I'm not surprised but that doesn't mean I'm not fuckin' pissed!" He hadn't noticed his volume had steadily escalated as he spoke. "Well, fuck that!" He yelled at Lydia who
was looking more upset as he went on. "I'm not goin' down without a fight. And ya better believe I'm gonna win, Lydia. Mark my fuckin' words!"

The stubborn scorpio could feel herself growing colder and colder as he went on. How dare he speak of Chris when he'd most certainly plowed through who knows how many whores since she'd last seen him instead of seeking her out. The usual walls up now, it was easy for Lydia to seem unaffected as she finally spoke.

"I thought there was no competition. You said it yourself, you can't give me what a guy with a pulse can."

It was like she'd ripped his heart out and eaten it while he watched, Betelgeuse stilled as the pain he'd felt between sandworm meals started to envelop him but then he noticed something.

It was true that Betelgeuse had many faults, probably too many to even count, but being unobservant was not one of them. Maybe it had something to do with being a medium, or maybe it had to do with learning to survive in a harsh world at such a young age, but Betelgeuse had always prided himself on his intuitive discernment. Add to that his impeccable photographic memory and there was very little that could escape him.

There, lying underneath the icy glare in Lydia's eyes, was something else he'd seen before. Accusation and jealousy. Lydia wasn't trying to hurt him, she was challenging him. Heartbreak wasn't something Betelgeuse knew how to handle, but a challenge? Well, that was something he could deal with… aptly.

Lydia continued to stare at the unblinking poltergeist, not wanting to give him the impression that she was sorry for what she said, even though she was horrified with herself. Scorn festered within and Lydia was unwilling to ease off the punishment for her deserting former lover.

Her eyes were drying out and starting to burn and so Lydia blinked. In the fraction of a second that it took to moisten her eyes, Betelgeuse was already in her face. Lydia felt shame after jerking backward from surprise, hitting her head against the headboard. There was a calculating look in his eyes as a smirk crept onto his face. Seething, she wanted to smack him but settled for glowering.

"I know that look," he murmured smugly.

"Hate?" Lydia retorted.

"Nah, ya don't hate me," Betelgeuse said confidently as he shook his head slowly. "You're pissed, but cha don't hate me."

"You're a piece o' work, you know that?" She bit out, spitefully.

Raising his eyebrows, Betelgeuse nodded.

"You're so fucking full of yourself, you don't know what's what," she seethed.

"That right?" He replied, amused. Betelgeuse inhaled then clicked his tongue in thought. "Well, I might be clueless when it comes to certain things about women, but I know you, Lydia Deetz. And I know… that… look. You've given me that look three times before." Betelgeuse tapped his temple, letting her know he knew exactly when she'd done so.

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"It took me a minute to put it all together. Once…" he held up a finger, "when I got back from
sandworm huntin'."

Lydia furrowed her brow. **Sandworm hunting?**

"The second time," he brought up another finger, "after ya clocked me in the head on the beach..." he waggled three fingers in front of her face.

Lydia was starting worry as she caught on to where he was going with his monologue. Betelgeuse grinned as he saw the realization in her eyes.

"A third time, when you were dommin' me with my dick in yer hand." He chuckled as Lydia blushed. "You thought I went off to, what was it? Let off steam by fuckin' some other broad or somethin'. Right?"

"I don't care what you do with your dick anymore," she clipped.

"Oh, I think ya do, my little scorpion," he drawled. "So, what is it now? Think I was runnin' rampant, stickin' what's yours in any hole I could find?" He jeered.

Lydia gasped at his mention of the obvious thing in question still being hers and felt her core pool with warmth. **Fuck,** she thought as she squeezed her thighs together making her wince from the ever-growing pain in her leg. Lydia tried her best to ignore it.

"You're going to tell me you haven't done it before? First time we had a proper introduction, you were in a miniature whore house. Scuzzo clued me in on your other... fuckathons."

Betelgeuse shut his eyes and grimaced. Upon opening his eyes again, a pen and a little black leather book popped out of nowhere. "Note to self," the pen started to scribble as Lydia eyed it with surprise. "Thank Scuzzo personally for poisoning the well."

Lydia scoffed and the notebook disappeared. "I think you poisoned your own well."

Betelgeuse shrugged. "Maybe... but that was a different time, Lyds. Different circumstances." He hissed his S's.

"What's so different? I had no idea we were... together. You were free to do as you pleased. Right?" She challenged.

"Ya don't get it, do ya?" He asked seriously, then shot a hand behind Lydia's head and latched onto her hair, bringing her forward and crushing his mouth to hers.

Lydia whimpered as the soft prickly sensation spread through her mouth. It felt all encompassing. Betelgeuse broke away suddenly but kept his mouth close to hers as he passionately hissed his next words.

"You've screwed me up real good. Ever since you kicked me in the jewels that night and probably even before then, I've been at your mercy. At your beck and call like a fuckin' mutt at his master's feet! Takin' anything yer willin' to give. I've been a pathetic mess without ya and I'm not proud of it, but this," he grabbed her hand forcefully and cupped it on his erection. "No one. No one has had the pleasure of touchin' since ya found me in that stupid fuckin' model, in that boring fuckin' attic... 'cept you. And I don't plan on changin' that."

Lydia's blush was spreading quickly at his lurid declaration of his love for her. Betelgeuse gave a slow thrust into her hand before placing her own hand between her legs and guiding two of her fingers between her tight thighs. She tried to bite back a moan but it escaped her anyway.
"So, now that we're clear on that," he declared matter of factly. "I think it's time ya call the pipsqueak and tell him it's over. Now." He warned as his own jealousy started to boil at the thought of the young suitor.

Lydia let out a breathy giggle into Betelgeuse's furious face. "Looks like you've done your own assuming about who else may have touched what's yours."

A sly grin split his features as Betelgeuse realized what his raven-haired beauty was saying. "I need ta hear ya say it." His smile was deadly as he guided her fingers up and down her still clothed crotch.

Lydia's eyes clouded with desire and she felt herself tighten within. "No one," she breathed. "Just you."

Betelgeuse felt an equal wave of relief and lust engulf him as Lydia spread her legs open for him. "That's a good girl," he rasped, increasing his speed and bringing her other hand to her breast. Watching Lydia moan and jerk as he used her fingers as his own to tease and pleasure her, Betelgeuse huffed and panted along with her to get them both riled up as much as possible.

Releasing her hand that was at her breast when he heard her telltale signs that she was about to combust, Betelgeuse brought his own hand down to the front of his pants and rubbed with vigor. Knowing that his own sounds of getting to the finish line was something his little minx enjoyed, he grunted and groaned into her ear. He noticed that she was still teetering on the edge and so he husked a command in hopes of pushing her over.

"Open wider for me, babe."

That was it. Lydia cried out at the same time her legs had fallen open, following his demand. She gave her final thrusts as she came down from her screaming orgasm and Betelgeuse followed suit. Her intoxicating sounds finishing him, coming into his hand while letting out a resonating cry of his own.

"God, I missed ya so fuckin' much," he husked into her cheek.

Lydia smiled devilishly, "You can call me that anytime, babe, anytime."

Barking out a laugh, he nipped at her neck, sending ghostly chills right through her. "Witch. I'll show ya what's what."

"Okay, but after you get me my painkillers. My leg's been killing me for like an hour."

Betelgeuse jerked his hand away from its resting place and glared at Lydia. "Why the hell didn't ya tell me?"

"I was too busy being a jerk to you and then we got…busy," she said guiltily.

"I deserved it." He lifted his hand and caught the flying pill bottle. "And I have some other ideas on how to get…busy, if ya know what I mean." He winked as a glass of water floated to Lydia's nightstand.

"Mm. Do tell."

Betelgeuse's signature dark chuckle escaped him as Lydia smirked with mischief.
POST NOTES:

I know that on FF I can't insert images but if you got to my tumblr (@mordellestories) you'll see beautiful artwork I placed in the chapter by @beetlesallaround! The artist is SO talented and gave me permission to use this particular work for this chapter because it matched so perfectly!

I also made a trailer for this story that can found on my tumblr as well!

Update on my progress on the sequel to this story: I've reached chapter 14 but now I'm going through everything and making some changes. Since the sequel is SO much more complicated than this one, I need to make sure everything makes sense. I've had some issues with consistency because... well... things evolve. So, I am VERY reluctant to post any chapters until it's complete. I don't think it will take me too long though as I am working through it every day. NO LIE. My wrist is killing me.

I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter!
It was turning out to be a lovely evening. Somehow, Betelgeuse had kept the temperature of the bath water warm as they talked for ages. Well, Lydia had done most of the talking thus far, catching him up on what she'd been up to for the past seven months. It did not escape him that she liked to keep reminding him that seven months had indeed gone by.

When Lydia finally asked him what he had done to keep busy while he waited for her to remember their time together, he mouthed off some jokes and changed the subject.

"I'm serious. What have you been doing? Because…" She wasn't quite sure how to phrase it. "Well, I mean, Juno was in a hurry to help me remember. Did you trash the entire Neitherworld?"

"The Neitherworld?" He laughed. "Nice. Wait. Juno came ta see ya?"

"Today. She gave me my file to help me remember."

The poltergeist was stunned. It would have never occurred to him that Juno would go out of her way to help him, especially after displaying such blatant disapproval. She must have known he was destroying himself, one sandworm at a time. Now, he would have to thank her. His little notebook popped out of nowhere and the pen scribbled away. Then, it popped out of existence again.

"Noting to yourself to thank her?" Lydia asked sweetly and he grunted his affirmation.

The bath was truly relaxing and Lydia was already feeling those happy sensations from the mixture of her painkillers and a satisfying orgasm. It really had been so dismally long since she'd gotten off properly. She giggled aloud at the thought of thanking the still hungry ghost.

"I guess the pills kicked in?" He smirked at the ceiling.

"Yep!" Lydia responded jubilantly.

Betelgeuse snickered. "Well, ya know what they say about drugs and sex."

"What do they say," she quipped.

The wicked ghost suddenly and violently launched himself into the air and dove into the tub atop of her, making an unnecessary splash since he wasn't even wet. Lydia screeched but then went very still as she caught a glimpse of his manic gleam. The excitement was bubbling within as he continued to eat her up with his eyes.

"That it's fuckin' amazing," he finally answered her. He attacked, scraping his teeth on her neck and biting down as hard as he could. He knew her physical body wouldn't experience any pain from his touch but he was desperate for her to feel him as strongly as possible.

The exposed woman gasped as sharp electric shocks popped on her skin and the now familiar
tingly sensation coursed through her. He slowed his pace and nuzzled her cheek once he was satisfied with her reaction.

"Doesn't it bother you?" She questioned sadly.

"Hm?"

"That we can't - not really anyway..." She trailed off, unsure.

"Give me permission."

"Permission to what?"

Betelgeuse lifted his face to meet hers and smiled. "Say, 'I give you permission.'"

She looked at him dubiously and he responded with a sly grin. "Don't cha trust me?" Then, he winked deviously.

She giggled and his heart constricted at the angelic sound. He didn't realize how badly he missed it until it hit his ears.

"I give you..." she grinned mischievously. "Permission."

Dragging a slow and gentle hand across her abdomen that sent butterflies to her stomach, he placed it on her solar plexus and slowly dipped it right through her.

Lydia gasped at the ghostly sensation spreading within her. Then, it was as if his hand found another layer of her and she felt him.

"I feel it!"

"Try not to resist," he warned as he adjusted himself over her and disappeared within. Her body jolted and arched instantly. "Shh," he tried to calm her, "just let go. Let me in."

After another less violent spasm went through her, Lydia dropped her guard down and she felt... love. It was warm and hummed in her being. There was also anger, longing, and frustration all mixed into passion and it was all for her. She could feel how much he wanted her, how much he adored her. It was intoxicating, filling her with pleasure. She could feel him completely from within and it was delicious. The warmth spread to her lips, traveled down over her breasts, and caressed her nipples.

"Whoa," she breathed. "That's... wow."

"Close your eyes," he whispered in her mind.

Doing as he instructed, she saw waves of color meld together until a clear vision of her bathroom was formed. It was an odd phenomenon because she knew her eyes were closed. Betelgeuse was naked and lying on top of her, makeup gone and wearing the skin of his younger self, even managing a dampness in his hair that made it hang low over his shoulders. He looked very proud of himself.

"That was easier than I thought," he smirked smugly. "You really do trust me." He said it confidently enough, but the truth was that her initial resistance had frightened him. There was a lingering wariness of him within her that filled him with guilt.

"What are you doing?" She asked nervously.
Betelgeuse brought up a hand to caress her cheek. He shrugged, leaning in close.

"Figurin' it out."

It occurred to her suddenly that she could feel his hand on her face without the tingling sensation. Then, she felt his erection press into her hip.

"Oh," she gasped.

Lydia tried to move and the vision flickered. It gave her pause before she scolded him. "Change…" she moved her eyes over his appearance, "this."

"Oh yeah?" He scoffed. "Don't forget, I saw my competition strutting' around here." He raised an eyebrow, daring her to retort.

"Aw, does someone's already overly inflated ego need stroking?"

He snorted. "I'll tell ya what needs strokin'," he grumbled and averted his gaze, grouchy.

She tried to reach out to him but found it almost impossible. It was as if her body was too heavy to move. Then, the vision flickered again.

"What is this? Why can't I move?"

The ghost frowned. "Learnin' to move your astral body without moving your physical body while you're still awake will prolly take some practice."

"I see. Guess I'll have to practice then," she said with a smile.

Encouraged, Betelgeuse rocked against her.

"In the meantime," he purred, "you'll just have to lie there completely helpless." He moved in for a kiss.

"Ah-ah-ah!" Lydia warned. "Forgetting something?" She eyed him up and down.

Betelgeuse rolled his eyes. "Fine." With a snap of his fingers, he was back to his middle-aged self, receding hairline and all. "Ya happy now?" He dove in for the kiss he had been denied.

"No, actually," Lydia quipped as his lips barely grazed her own. He hung his head and groaned.

"What now?" He complained.

When Lydia didn't answer, he looked up at her only to find that she appeared incredibly shy and unsure. This piqued his curiosity. That was a new look.

"Tell meeew," he crooned.

"I'm not done with my bath," she lied.

"Oh, babe," he was getting excited. "Please tell me it's some kinda kinky fantasy. I'll do anything. Anything."

His timid lover looked in every which direction to avoid his gaze. "Not really… it's, uh, nothing." She chanced a look at his face and regretted it.
He was biting his lower lip in anticipation looking like a horny devil. "If it's nothing… then tell me."

She groaned when he wiggled himself lower between her legs. "Damn it. Forget it. It's stupid."

"I can get it outta ya the hard way or the easy way… I much prefer the hard way but I'll give ya one last chance."

Lydia rolled her eyes and finally decided it was better to just let it out. She took a breath, then exhaled and muttered it all in one word. "Iwannatriyitwithyerfulloutfiton..." Lydia shut her eyes hard.

Betelgeuse frowned and furrowed his brow, at first, as he tried to understand what the hell Lydia had just said. He replayed it in his mind, finally made it out… and busted out cackling like a crazed lunatic.

Furious that he was laughing at her, Lydia snapped her eyes open and felt her body reject him.

"Aw shit! No! Babe, wait!" He chortled.

The angry woman felt a jolt go through her.

"I'm not laughin' at cha! I swear!" He pleaded but continued chuckling.

The vision flickered again until Lydia's physical eyes opened and Betelgeuse was ejected out of her body. The naked poltergeist was still laughing as he rolled onto the bathroom floor.

"Asshole," she fumed as she tried to stand.

"Dammit, babe! Yer just so fuckin' cute!" He shot two fists into the air. "Let's do it!" He clamored to the tub on all fours as Lydia was unsuccessfully trying to pull herself up.

"Go away," she muttered.

"Never," he said very seriously. The tone was so drastically opposite from how he'd just been speaking that Lydia whipped her head around to meet his.

Betelgeuse caught her face in his hand and leaned in close. His countenance was so commanding and she felt smaller than usual.

"Like I said, I'm not goin' anywhere. And I'll wear whatever the fuck ya want and do whatever the fuck ya want because I wanna give ya what ya need, babe." His smug grin was back. "Ta be honest, yer little fantasy is somethin' I've already thought about. This?" He motioned to himself from top to bottom, turning himself back into his signature showbiz persona. "Is me. And my balls are tinglin' right now knowin' that it's me ya want."

Lydia managed a snicker but, once again, blushed from his lewd way of making her feel loved and wanted.

"So," he grinned wickedly. "Whaddaya say?"

At that moment, there was a knock at the front door. They could hear the locks being turned and quick footsteps.

"Deetz?!"
"Damn," Lydia breathed. "My roommates."

Betelgeuse frowned, levitating Lydia to a standing position and summoned a towel for her. Another knock resonated from her bedroom door.

"Hey, it's me!"

"Hey, Bell! I'm just getting out of the bath!" Lydia replied.

"Okay. Um, Cooper called me... talking some craziness about a man-eating couch and a poltergeist?"

"Want me ta juice her?" Betelgeuse offered.

"No!"

"No?" Bell questioned.

"I mean…" Lydia had no idea what to do or say about the situation. **Heh. Hey Bell, yeah, let me introduce you to my… invisible… ghost… boyfriend? That will go well.**

"What the fuck should we do?" She whispered at the smirking ghost.

"Doesn't matter ta me. I mean, Imma be hangin' around for a while, Lyds. Not gonna be able to explain away every little supernatural thing that happens around here. The pipsqueak already knows… Might as well get it outta the way."

"Deetz?" Bell called again.

"Um, yeah! I'll, uh, I'll be right out!"

After dressing herself, Lydia timidly exited her room to find Bell and another girl arranging their things in the living room. "Hey, girl!" Bell greeted. "This is Sash. Sash, this is Deetz."

The two exchange an awkward hello.

"So what kind of drugs was Cooper on, anyway?"

"Heh, yeah… No idea, but as you can see…" Lydia looked at the sofa. "Everything's fine!"

"Okay, then. Hopefully whatever the hell he's on wears off by tomorrow because we have a busy day!"

Lydia agreed with her and after a while of idle chit-chat, she returned to her room and locked her door. Betelgeuse was on her bed reading a newspaper. Watching him lying there being so patient, left Lydia feeling ashamed. He had obviously been waiting for her to call him into the living room and prove he existed. That is what they had agreed upon but Lydia chickened out last minute. The surprisingly subdued ghost kept reading his newspaper and started clucking and flapping his elbows.

"Ugh. I know, okay?" She said quietly, then made her way to the bed and sat near him. Lydia was nervous. She had something on her mind and didn't know how to proceed on broaching the subject.

The poltergeist finished pretending to read the last sentence of the article and threw the paper down on the nightstand. He took note of the way that Lydia was keeping some distance between them and sitting at attention, picking at her cuticles nervously. Sighing, he finally looked at her.
"What's on yer mind?"

Not meeting his gaze, the nervous wreck inhaled. "I think I didn't tell them because… um…" she gave a frustrated sigh.

"Because yer still not sure about all this," he finished matter of factly.

With a guilty look, Lydia nodded. "I think so."

Betelgeuse smiled sadly then tugged at her sleeve. "C'mere. S'okay," he consoled.

Lydia shimmied over and curled up next to him, resting her head on his chest. "Can we…"

He braced himself. **Please don't say "take it slow."**

"...take things… a little slow?"

_Goddamnit._ "O' course, babe. Anythin' ya want."

Immediately, she wanted to apologize and reason with him, even though he'd agreed. "It's just... there's a lot to figure out, right? And… I mean… I still owe you." She could tell he was going to interrupt. "And, I want to go through with it, but because I said I would. Not because… you know…"

"You're madly in love with me?"

She smacked his gut. "I don't what I'm saying anymore."

Betelgeuse chuckled, frustrating her further. "What we need is a proper date. How does that sound?"

Lydia grinned bashfully into his jacket. "What do you have in mind? Dinner for one and an empty chair? Maybe a movie would make more sense?" She laughed at the thought of her fighting with someone in order to keep a seat free at the theater.

"Yeah, we can try that stuff," he chuckled. "I can get most people ta see me if I look as normal as possible."

"Really?"

"Most of the time, yeah. I mean, not have full conversations or anythin'. Their minds just kinda accept that there's someone there. Haven't tried in a while though. Your folks and those city slickers were the last breathers that could see me."

Lydia scrambled to sit up. "But you didn't _look_ normal! Not at all!"

Betelgeuse waggled his eyebrows then offered her the answer. "They were already expectin' the unusual, babe. Same thing goes for when people expect the _usual._"

Understanding dawned on Lydia and her eyes widened as a smile crept on her face. New possibilities immediately opened up to her.

"It's kinda against the rules, but-"

"You don't have any rules," she finished excitedly.
Seeing his dark angel glowing and full of hope was almost too much for Betelgeuse to handle. Spirits needed special permission to venture into the land of the living the way he was describing. He knew he'd never qualify for it and it would certainly count against him… but that look. That look would make it worth it. Still, he needed to be cautious. He couldn't get locked away. Not now.

"Well, we'll need ta be a little stealthy. Keep it to a minimum. But hey, once you get the hang of astral projection, we can go anywhere in the… Neitherworld."

"Stop making fun of me." She chided.

"I'm not! Don't be surprised that it catches on, you know!" He laughed.

"So, this could really… work."

"Put yer mind to somethin' and you can do anythin', babe." He smiled. "S'pecially you."

"You mean, us," she replied with confidence.

Betelgeuse couldn't help the goofy grin that emerged on his face. "You betcher pretty little ass, honey."

**AN:** Technically this should have been part of the last chapter, but it was SO long. I probably didn't even need this chapter in here but I wanted to give everyone a little more closure and explain how they are going to explore making this odd relationship work.

The next chapter is basically the end of PART I. There will be a short epilogue as well.

I have not been able to move on with the storyline of PART II yet because I'm rewriting some earlier chapters and dialogue. As I've mentioned before, the second part is more complicated, has more characters, more subplots… I've really shot myself in the foot here but I know it's going to be worth it.

I have a second beta now helping me make sense of it all, I've included some elements (cartoon and universal show) that I don't think have been done before… it's going to be NUTS and I hope you'll like it.
Graduation had come and gone and the anniversary of the accident was quickly approaching, which meant that Betelgeuse was losing his everloving mind over Lydia’s present. The blasted thing had still not arrived. *Count on the fuckin’ French to be on time with anythin’!* Technically, they’d only been officially together for five months and Lydia had not even made a single mention of the approaching date. It was driving him nuts. *I mean, aren’t women supposed to be hung up on crap like that? Got me all worked up on this shit like I’m the fucking dame ‘ere! Get yer shit together Betel!* He was currently non-corporeal and swirling endlessly in a circle around the living room ceiling.

He knew from the moment he laid eyes on her that she was a stoic little misanthrope. Now that he knew her more intimately, he recognized that those waters ran deeper than he originally thought. Even though she was finally dropping her guard with each passing day, she still behaved infuriatingly casually and kept her feelings close to the chest. The doting ghost never knew whether he was smothering his patient saint or just giving her the right amount of attention. Juno had scared the holy hell out of him once already when she mentioned that he was being an overbearing oaf, per usual, and that she wouldn’t be surprised if Lydia exorcised his pale ass while he slept. After being reminded of how irritating he could be, which was boundless, Betelgeuse had reeled it in and tried to give Lydia some space. After twenty-four agonizing hours, he returned to an outraged girlfriend.

The scorpion had grilled him on his absence and resented that he did not even bother calling her for so much as “hey babe, ya miss me?” To which he just rebutted with “the aether goes both ways, babes!” That was their first official fight as a couple. It was loud, rash, full of insecure and preposterous accusations about how one didn’t really love the other, which of course led to the most amazing makeup sex either of them ever had and he *officially* moved in. *Thanks, ma.*

While he was busy being sandworm fodder, Betelgeuse had missed Lydia’s birthday. *At least I was around for Christmas.* He tried his best to make it up to her then by getting her a genuine grimoire from an actual Salem witch who had survived the trials. It was easy enough to procure now that he had complete ownership of the funhouse after Scuzzo was apprehended for having it in the first place. Loads of deadbeats owed him now from all over. Not to mention the debt that the “Prince”
of Limbo owed him and his girl.

It was for those reasons that he went above and beyond for Valentine’s Day and finally brought Lydia to the astral plane without a single hiccup. Betelgeuse took her to as many otherworldly spectacles she could handle. Then, they danced the night away and, finally, re-christened his renovated grave. After their wonderous fuckathon, he showed her the armoire full of goodies. The fuckathon commenced after that as a show of gratitude.

This, however, was different. It was the anniversary of when things had completely taken a turn for him, for the better this time. The ghost was determined to show his dark beauty how much he appreciated the day she had called him into her life. Again. It had to be something new. Something that had never been worn by anyone before. Something specially made for her. Something with a physical body so that all would be able to see it and know that she was his.

So, it was with careful planning that Betelgeuse commissioned a retired, morally flexible jeweller, for a brooch. Email correspondence was sent back and forth, right under Lydia’s nose. In order to pay for the inordinately expensive piece of jewelry, he considered stealing some money from the living, but didn’t want Lydia to become suspicious. Instead, the thieving poltergeist compromised by stealing from the dead.

When Lydia was studying or in class, Betelgeuse would graverob. She never had to know, but if she ever grew wise to his crypt looting, he was hopeful that his delicate moral compass wouldn’t be too upset. Not like they’re usin’ it! It was already embarrassing enough that he couldn’t properly take her out on the town in the physical plane. It made him feel like less of a man, she had to be able to understand that! Argument prepared, the poltergeist anxiously awaited the post.

“Beej! I’m home!”

Fuck!

“Hey, babe!” He greeted her chirpily as he manifested in the living room.

Lydia dropped her bags upon entering her home. They levitated to her room on their own at his behest as Betelgeuse swooped down for a passionate kiss. Backing her up to the front door, her ghostly lover trailed kisses down her neck, then quickly plunged his head through the closed door and looked down the hall. The postman had just turned the corner. SHIT! Shit-shit-shit!

“Nice to see you too!” She exclaimed. With astonishing urgency, he snatched his girlfriend up, threw her over his shoulder, ran to her bedroom, then tossed her on the bed and kicked the door shut.

“Gah!” Lydia screamed with a mixture of surprise and frustration.

He was at a loss of what to do next. “Uh, um… let’s fuck!”

“What?!”

She didn’t have any time to protest before he had turned the stereo on full blast and jumped in bed on top of her. Lydia could barely get her next words out. “What has… gotten… into you!”

“Just been thinkin’ bout cha all day, is all! I just wanna ravage--” He cut himself off as he sensed the presence of the postman at the front door. “Whoops! Forgot somethin’!” As quickly as he had jumped into bed, he popped out of sight, leaving a bewildered half dressed Lydia behind.
The postman was just about to knock when the door shot open and the package was sucked out of his hands by an invisible force. Then, the door slammed shut.

“Uh… you have to sign for it!” He called out quickly.

The door shot open again and his clipboard was sucked into the apartment in the exact same manner the package was right before the door closed once more.

“Hey! I need that--”

Again, the door cracked open and the clipboard flew out, hitting the wall behind the flustered postman before shutting for the third and final time.

“Just another day in New York…” the mailman grumbled as he picked up his clipboard and walked away.

Running this way and that and flailing his arms in the air, Betelgeuse tried frantically to figure out what to do with the package.

“Betelgeuse!” Lydia groused, charging toward her door. He could now hear her struggling with the handle he was keeping jammed. “What the hell is going on?! Let me out!”

“Heh! What was that, babe?” He raced to the kitchen and threw the package in the fridge. “Music’s kinda loud!” In a frenzy, he thrust a hand in his coat, pulled out a blowtorch, and commenced to weld the fridge door shut.

“No shit! I can’t turn it down. What are you doing?!”

Before she could kick at the door, he popped back into the room.

“What the hell--”

Snatching Lydia up again, he wrapped her legs around him and raced to the bed once more. His excitement was overflowing and he had to keep up the pretense after all… right?

His medium was an expert at projecting her astral body, more so than Betelgeuse ever had been when he was alive. In a short period, she learned to not only project while sleeping, but could now also project for short stints while meditating. Still, it took time to get into that state and the ravenous ghost was ready to go. “Let me in, babe. I’m goin’ crazy over ‘ere.”

“Okay,” she rasped. “I give you perMI-SSION! Holy shit!” He jumped in mid word.

Usually, he gave her enough time to prepare in order to give her some semblance of participation as she still could only minimally move her astral body when he possessed her. The sudden invasion left her excruciatingly aware of her physical surroundings. Lydia was not able to see what he was doing but could distinctly discern the intense sensations of licking, sucking, and all manner of teasing as if it were truly being administered to her skin. After trying to concentrate on meeting him within herself, she found that Betelgeuse was purposefully keeping her out. The bastard planned to leave her writhing and thrashing like a victim in a horror film, only instead of hacked to pieces, she would be left twisting in her sheets from unadulterated pleasure.
It was absolutely maddening that her only view was either the back of her eyelids or her ceiling. Abruptly, his tongue grazed down her neck, then over both her nipples at once. *How the fuck?!

The poltergeist held nothing back and continued to use his filthy tricks until, suddenly, he sent those same delicious, torturous sensations over every inch of her and in between. Lydia didn’t even realize she was clenching her jaw shut until something hard and blunt dug between her lips, demanding entrance. When she opened her mouth, it was abruptly filled with a hardened girth, leaving her mouth wide and compromised. The lapping and licking did not let up and Lydia was left with the daunting realization that her ghostly lover intended to just keep adding to his onslaught as she felt yet another rounded pressure rub down her folds and rest at her entrance. When she felt the same sensation grind up between her ass cheeks and repose at her other entrance, Lydia started to grunt her disapproval. An evil chuckle rang in her ears.

“You’ll like it,” his dark voice promised.

“Mmmm!” She growled to get her point across.

He *tsk’d* his disappointment and pushed no further, but neither did he remove the invisible appendage. Deciding it was best to stick to where he was allowed, *for now*, Betelgeuse poked and prodded through her soaked inner walls, using only his tip. It was then that Lydia started to try and close her legs and move her arms without even realizing it.

“That’s gonna hafta stop,” he murmured sensually as her arms and legs were forcefully spread and pinned to the mattress. He had intended a slow torture but couldn’t take it anymore. With a violent thrust, Lydia felt him sheath himself inside her. Overwhelmed, her eyes rolled back and her body arched as far as it could go from the numerous incursions on and through her person. He fucked her all over, right through her first and second orgasm until she was certain she’d lost her sanity.

The music continued to blare over her muffled sounds of unbridled passion.

---

Lydia was spent. Her insane lover had seen to making sure she was completely useless. His strange behavior from earlier did not escape her, though. At first, she chalked it up to watching porn or something similar, but now she wondered if it had anything to do with their anniversary. A blush stained her cheeks as she remembered that they hadn’t even spoken about the impending date. She wasn’t sure that her *boyfriend*... *So weird*... considered it their anniversary, having only been officially dating for five months.

What an incredible five months it was. Wonders never ceased as far as her ghost was concerned. When Betelgeuse said there were seven months to make up for, he had been deadly serious. They were basically inseparable. Getting herself to lucid dream had been easier than they anticipated and they were able to take advantage of many lovely nights. Her progress impressed him as Lydia was able to stay longer and longer in the astral plane. There were days that she needed twice as much rest in order to compensate for her double life, but nothing out of the ordinary for a college girl having fun. It was worth it.

If she thought she was falling in love after merely a few days with the insatiable deadman, she was definitely head over heels now. The ghoul was a goddamn beast. A mad animal who absolutely worshipped her. It was intoxicating. True, he could be infuriating at times but in the end, it was endearing and kept her on her toes. Of course, there was that one *misunderstanding* . The fight they had made her feel so guilty, but after she opened up to him about how she was used to expecting the worst and wondered when he would grow bored with her and move on… her fears were quickly quelled that very night. Over and over again. Still, it was difficult to say in words how she
felt about him as her pride would usually not allow it.

Every holiday and even in between, Betelgeuse went over and above with his gifts, leaving Lydia to feel like her own gifts were absolute crap in comparison. What could a ghost ever want? On one occasion, he practically begged her for a photo of herself. Much preferring to be the one taking the pictures, she didn’t have any self portraits. One evening, she lied about needing to study late to get him to leave. It was her attempt at getting the privacy she needed to set up her camera. After taking several photos of herself that she abhorred upon developing them, she decided on a different approach.

Never would she forget the look of awe on his face when he unrolled his Christmas gift. It was a sketch of them in a candid pose, made to look like a photo of them sitting casually on the couch.

She felt like a total idiot at the time, handing him a single piece of paper as a present. Naturally, the ghost loved it and carried its astral copy in his pocket at all times. On another occasion, she bought him new watches. It didn’t matter what she got him, he could only take its astral layer with him so, she always ended up with the physical gifts locked up in a drawer. Still, he always seemed overjoyed and grateful for any little show of affection from his demure lover.

This time, she had a different surprise altogether. Betelgeuse was going to freak, she knew it. It was something she thought long and hard about. Currently, he was still nestled within her body even though their love making had ended sometime ago.

“So, I was wondering…” Lydia started.

“Hm?”

“I think it’s time I tell Delia and the Maitlands about… us,” she continued cautiously. She watched amusedly as her lover’s head popped out of her chest, eyes wide.
“You serious?”

“Yeah,” she replied coyly. “I mean, it’s been… awhile now. What do you think?”

“I think they’re gonna have a shitfit, that’s what I think,” he grumbled.

Lydia laughed at his put upon expression. “Would you come out already? Let’s talk about it.”

Frowning, the ghost rolled out of Lydia’s body and propped himself up on his elbow. “I thought you’d be, I dunno, kinda happy. No?”

He shrugged. “They’re not gonna like it, Lyds,” he warned.

“And since when do you care?”

“I don’t care. But… you do.” His frown deepened.

It was almost unreal how much he cared about her wellbeing. Gently, she caressed his face in order to try and console him. “I don’t care what they think.”

“Pft. Yeah, ya do.”

“What I mean is… It won’t change anything. They’ll just have to adapt. I have to go back home now, anyway. You can’t sneak around them .”

“Psh. You underestimate me,” he countered with a sly grin.

“Bell blames it on her LSD days, but poor Sash thinks she’s losing her mind with all the crap you’ve pulled around here. There is no way you’d behave around Delia, Barbara, and Adam.”

A smirk fell across his face. She knew him so well. “Fine. But if they rag on ya too hard, I’m makin’ em pay,” he grated and pointed a finger at her to mark his words.

“They’ll deal, because they love me,” she said matter of factly.

“Hmph. Whatever. I’m the one that loves ya,” he grumbled with jealousy.

Chuckling, Lydia shook her head. The slightest bit of affection shown her way by others was enough to send him on a competition to prove he loved her more.

“They’re the only family I’ve got left, Beej.” She watch the scowl take over his face. “And you.”

The jealous ghost gave her a sideways glance and his lips twitched into a small smile. “So, I want my family … to get… along .”

At that, Betelgeuse groaned, rolled his eyes, and let his head fall back on his pillow.

“Can you just… try?”

“Lyds, yer the only one demented enough ta even like me. Trust me on this, people hate me, especially when I try.”

Lydia laughed openly as he huffed with annoyance. “Okay, no worries,” she giggled. “Just be you.”

“Always am, babe,” he grinned wickedly.

Lydia would allow him to believe that for his own sake. There were many sides to Betelgeuse and
his repugnant side was the one he forced on others the most. Mostly, it was because he thought he was better than everyone else or because he’d rather everyone underestimate him. However, she knew there was more to it. The nameless bastard he was is what dictated how others saw him, no matter how much he tried to change their minds. At one point, he decided to prove everyone right and embraced it, giving himself a name and persona that inspired people to detest what they could not understand.

The scorpion smiled secretly. She loved that side of him. Every side of him. It was time to show him that.

“Uh, Lydia?” Sasha’s concerned voice carried into the bedroom. “Why is the fridge welded shut?”

Betelgeuse snickered as Lydia gave him a shove.

Today was the day. Betelgeuse paced his grave in an endless circle, waiting for Lydia to summon him. Usually never too far from his beloved for more than a few hours at a time, it was agonizing. He was tempted to check in on her and see if she had told them yet.

Lydia mentioned wanting the house to settle before breaking the news and had explicitly forbade him from peeking. Which, of course, made him itch to do the exact opposite. Refraining only because she had expressed how important this was to her, the poltergeist wasn’t sure how much longer he could stand it.

Today was the day. Lydia was nervously directing everyone around the house for the final preparations. Things were going much too slowly and she worried that Betelgeuse would take a look at what was going on. Still waiting for the movers to finally head out the door, Juno finally appeared.

“Oh! Good, you made it!” Lydia pulled the caseworker in for a hug without even realizing it.

“For God’s sake,” Juno retreated awkwardly and fixed her jacket. “You even hug like him now.”

The young woman laughed as Delia shoved the last mover out the door with a tip. “Yes, yes, thank you!” She slammed and locked the door behind them. “Finally! Let’s get this show on the road!”

The redhead was jittery with excitement as she rubbed her hands together.

The Maitlands, however, could not hold back their unease. Adam had to speak. “Lydia, I don’t know if this is…”

“Adam,” Barbara warned, “she’s made up her mind. It might be… hard to comprehend… but she’s already made this crystal clear. Right, honey?”

Adam adjusted his glasses and crossed his arms. “Yeah. Right. Okay…”

Lydia gave them a guilty smile. “I know you guys don’t understand…”

Barbara interrupted, “No, honey. We do understand. It’s… really weird … but we’re here for you.”

Lydia could feel the tears threatening to fall as she waved her hands about in a nervous fashion. “He is weird,” she sighed lovingly. The second to last guest had arrived. At seeing the extremely short deadman dressed in black, the medium felt trepidation.

“Oh fuck, guys. What if… what if he doesn’t like it? What if…”
It was Juno’s turn to interrupt. “Lydia,” she said with a bored expression, trying to hide her real emotions. “He’s going to lose his mind with happiness.”

Lydia took a deep breath to calm her nerves. “Okay… It’s time, I guess.”

**Betelgeuse.**

He heard the whisper in his mind. “Finally! Okay… whadda I wear? Why didn’t I think of that earlier? What the hell have I been doing?! Why am I nervous?”

**Betelgeuse.**

“Just, uh, wear the gross trench coat. That should make’m squirm when you plant one on ‘er in front of ‘em.” He changed from the cleaner, more modern clothes he had been wearing for Lydia into the first outfit that the Maitlands had ever seen him in.

“**Betelgeuse!**”

Juno was already rolling her eyes as he made a grand show of it all; the floor quaked, the paint peeled, and the air filled with his crazed cackle right before the ground cracked open and he flew right out of it. It closed shut as Betelgeuse landed with his arms wide open, his showman grin plastered on his face as he greeted the room.

“Guess whooooo?” The maniac cackled again as he took everyone in, freezing once he realized their reactions were not what he was expecting.

The Maitlands were shaking their heads in disapproval, though Barbara did look a bit amused. Delia had a stupid smile on her face, which probably scared him the most. Then, his eyes landed on Juno. “What the fuck are you doing here?” He asked, bewildered.

Juno sighed and motioned her head for him to look behind him.

The mossy deadman frowned and turned only to be met with a view too incredibly beautiful to be true. Lydia was dressed in a black and crimson bridal gown with a spider web veil, holding a bouquet of matching roses.

“Happy Anniversary,” she called timidly. His jaw detached from his face and hit the floor. The bride laughed and walked toward him. She poked his nose, which sent his jaw reeling up to meet his face again. “I guess that means you’re surprised?”

Betelgeuse could only stare unblinkingly at the beauty before him. His mind was going a mile a minute trying to process what was happening. Someone moved in his peripheral and he glanced over to find the short, deformed officiant he had summoned so many years prior. Scoffing in disbelief, the poltergeist shook his head slightly, then looked down to his smirking, deceitful lover.

“That look is priceless,” she joked. The ghost bit his lower lip; brow furrowed, blinking quickly, and showing his uncertainty. “Say something already,” she pleaded with a nervous laugh.

A mischievous smirk finally appeared on his face. “So, I did win your dark little heart over after
Lydia laughed and threw her arms around her groom. Putting on a good show for their audience, he returned her embrace animatedly, choking down exaggerated sobs of elation. He peeled her off of him only to plunder her mouth greedily. Then, someone cleared their throat, making the couple surface and look at the gathered witnesses.

“I think that’s suppose to happen after ‘you may kiss the bride,’ right?” Barbara asked, feigning ignorance.

Betelgeuse barked out a laugh then shook Lydia in his arms. “Ohoho, you! You’re gonna get spanked for this, babe.”

Adam decided to look away and pretend he didn’t hear those words.

Surveying the room in excitement, Betelgeuse tried to sound insulted. “How long has everyone known about us?! You didn’t just whip this up today? Right?”

The dark bride giggled but it was Delia who spoke next. “Pretty much from the start. When Lydia remembered, she called us and told us everything. She’s been planning this for awhile.”

Confounded, Betelgeuse shook his head again and gave Lydia an open mouthed grin. “You got me, babe.”

“Shall we begin?” Asked the officiant.

“Fuck-YEAH!” Betelgeuse bellowed.

Juno snapped her fingers and her adopted son was suddenly dressed in a matching black and red tux with a red bowtie, hair detangled and combed to boot. He looked himself over as he made a silly turn then started hopping up and down with excitement.

“Oh man, oh man! I… I’m gonna cry…” He whimpered as he brought Lydia in for a crushing hug then quickly wrapped her arm around his and took two giant steps toward the officiant. “Let’s do this!”

The short man began the ceremony and the ghost found himself tapping his foot on the ground with impatience. Lydia swatted his leg and he stopped immediately.

“Do you, Lydia Deetz, take this man to be your wedded husband?”

Lydia smirked devilishly, “You asked me, and I’m answering. Yes, I love that man of mine.”

Betelgeuse snorted and slapped his leg. “GHAD, I love you, babe!”

“And do you, Betelgeuse, take this woman to be your wedded wife?”

“Abso-fucking-lutely! YES!” He turned toward Lydia, jittery with anticipation for the officiant to say ‘you may kiss the bride.’

“The rings, please.”

“Aw FUCK! The RINGS ?!” Betelgeuse freaked out, patting his pockets. Lydia guffawed as Delia and Juno stepped up to give them their respective rings. “OH! Holy shit!” He laughed at his own expense. “Thanks. Phew!” Everyone managed a snicker.
The bride placed Juno’s ring on his finger and the groom placed Delia’s ring on Lydia.

“Good,” pronounced the officiant. “I now pronounce you…”

The bride and groom smiled at each other bashfully.

“Damned for eternity.”

The lovers furrowed their brows and turned to face the stout little ghoul. Betelgeuse didn’t even have time to react when the deformed man turned into Bartholomew and slammed something onto his pale forehead. Juno screamed in outrage as Betelgeuse staggered back from the blow. The room was in chaos. Before the caseworker could react, she caught a glimpse of the object in Bart’s hand and her angry face turned into one of pure terror. The intruder managed a smile before disappearing completely.

“No,” Juno breathed. “NO!”

The distraught poltergeist rubbed at the angry sting on his forehead as his bride rushed to his side. “Are you okay? What did he do? Let me see!” She pulled down on his jacket and inspected his head. The brand read “D.S.” and was burning like a lit cigarette. “What is that?!” Lydia looked into her fiance’s blue eyes and was instantly filled with dread. He was afraid. “Tell me!”

“Chavi,” Juno whispered in horror.

The damned soul pulled his angel into his arms and held on for dear afterlife as he addressed his mother. “Take of her for me,” he choked out.

Lydia was in a state of pure panic as she tried to pry herself away. Delia and the Maitlands were at a complete loss to what was happening. They couldn’t comprehend and were speaking over each other. The terrified bride looked up at her beloved poltergeist and saw his agony. “No, tell me what’s happening. Please,” she pleaded quietly. Betelgeuse was turning to ash right before her eyes. “NO!” She screamed.

“I love you, Lydia,” he rasped, throat burning from the transition taking place. He couldn’t speak anymore, not that she would hear him anyway. His poor bride was screaming so loud. He managed to mouth the words ‘thank you,’ hoping that she’d know just how much their time together had meant to him. He failed to get one last kiss right before he turned to dust completely and dissipated.

The screaming never stopped as Lydia dropped to her knees and desperately gathered up the tux that was left behind. She spotted his ring rolling away and threw herself at it, snatching it up and bringing it to her chest along with his clothes.


“Lydia.” Juno approached her cautiously. “He’s gone.”

“Betelgeuse-Betelgeuse-Betelgeuse!”

Delia and the Maitlands sprang into action trying to get ahold of her to give her some kind of support. She shrieked at their touch and they all sprang away.

“Betelgeuse-Betelgeuse-Betelgeuse!” She tried again. And again, until her voice left her completely.

When Juno collapsed in front of her in tears, that’s when Lydia knew… it was over. The
despondent bride broke down in grief as the caseworker placed her hands on her shoulders.

“I’m going to find him”, Juno swore. “You understand me? I will find him and I will do everything I can to bring him back. And I’m going to tear Bart into fucking pieces and feed him to the demons he’s working for.”

Lydia continued sobbing so Juno shook her hard to snap her out of it. The poor girl was barely able to stay quiet. Her eyes were listless.

“YOU NEED TO STAY STRONG! We are going to bring him BACK! Tell me you understand. TELL ME!”

In between snivels and gasps, Lydia nodded.

“You need to get angry, girl. Leave your grief behind as soon as possible and come find me.”

The heartbroken woman collapsed again but Juno would not let up. She shook her hard once more.

“What would he do, huh?!”

Lydia’s mind flared with the imagery. Instantly, her thoughts turned to the moments she observed his unreserved, angry mania. Finally, Juno saw what she was looking for. A deep crimson glint in the girl’s eyes that promised vengeance.

“That’s right,” she whispered menacingly. “Hold on to that. And use it.”

Juno nodded, satisfied, and disappeared, leaving a heaving Lydia behind. Her eyes were clouded over with undiluted venom and she shook with fury.

*I’ll find you. I don’t care how long it takes or what I have to do. I’ll bring you back. I swear it.*
There was nothing more to live for. Based on a spur of the moment decision, she decided to jump from the top of the ABC Headquarters. The production assistant’s life was her last go at figuring out what to do with herself. Her job had ended today, might as well end it all. The frazzled, wide-eyed woman took a daring step up to the ledge and assessed the drop.

“I wouldn’t do that, if I were you,” a monotonous, feminine voice called to her.

Prudence jolted from surprise and nearly sent herself over the ledge. Cautiously, she turned to look for the owner of the voice and found a small, dark-haired woman sitting casually on the floor, looking up at the sky, fiddling with what seemed to be a… spider?

“Who are you?” She asked timidly. The woman had an eerie look to her as if she were some messenger from the great beyond come to warn her.

The ghostly looking beauty fixed her gaze on the suicidal ginger.

“Suicides become civil servants in the afterlife,” she responded dryly, ignoring the initial question.

“I’m not sure I believe in an afterlife,” Prudence muttered in response.

The woman laughed mirthlessly. “Well, don’t say I didn’t warn ya.” She returned her attention to the sky.

There was a long silence. Though the dark woman seemed indifferent toward her presence, Prudence found that she could not leave her. Her pale skin, the shadows under her eyes, that strange faroff look in her gaze; they all kept her transfixed. Prudence wanted to talk to the mystery woman. What else was there to do anyway… she could prolong her death a little while longer.

“What are you doing out here?” She finally asked the goth.

“Looking at the stars,” she replied quietly.

Prudence scoffed. “This is New York City, lady. There are no stars,” she pronounced scornfully.

“I don’t have to see them to know what I’m looking at.” The woman lifted a finger and pointed to the sky. “Right over there, that’s where Orion is tonight.”

Prudence looked but saw only black. “Are you a crazy person?” She asked in earnest.

“At this point? Probably” she sighed. “Do you work here?” She inquired without looking at the owl-eyed girl.

“Not anymore. You?”

“Almost.” A wicked grin cracked her features and Prudence felt a shiver go down her spine. “Very
soon.” The woman inhaled then snapped her attention back to Prudence. “Wanna a job? I have a lot of work to do. I need extra hands on this plane. I’ll pay you well. And you can live in my house. It’s haunted. So. Hope you don’t mind.”

The woman had to be crazy. “I don’t even know your name.”

“Lydia Deetz.”

The memory of her name from earlier that day came to her. Prudence had actually been the one to prep the conference room for her arrival. If she really was Lydia Deetz…

“I’m Prudence… Fisher. They loved your pitch, you know. I think it’s kinda weird but they want it.”

Lydia snickered evilly. “I know.”

“Middle-aged dead guy named Beetlejuice, best friends with a little girl? Sounds like a pedophile to me.”

The medium laughed openly at the insult. “I’m sure Betelgeuse would agree with you, but I need a show geared towards kids. Very important.”

Prudence finally stepped off the ledge and sat on the ground opposite of the intriguing yet terrifying woman. “Why?”

Lydia waggled her eyebrows and leaned forward as if to tell her a secret. “Because… kids will believe when they summon him,” she whispered ominously, then leaned back with a smug grin. The bride of the dead looked to the sky again and began her invocation. “Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse. Betelgeuse.”

His name was sweet relief in an existence of endless torment. He would have forgotten it completely had it not tickled his subconscious several times a day… like a prayer. Sometimes, he could barely make out the face of an angel. How he wished he could remember her name. He knew her. He had to have known her in some previous life, if one even existed. Every time that sweet voice called to him, he could feel his chains weaken. Never enough to free him, but enough to ease his suffering until he was grateful. The angel would protect him. The angel would come for him. Soon. This he knew. It was the only thing he knew… other than his name.

Betelgeuse… Betelgeuse… Betelgeuse…

TO BE CONTINUED…
Once again, thank you for all of the follows, kudos, favorites, messages, and comments! They really help motivate me.

I hope you meet me in the sequel which is COMPLETE!

End Notes

Help me self-publish by buying me a coffee: Ko-fi

Want early access to all my work including this one? Go to my Instagram and comment on any post with "add me!"

Here's my tumblr!

Read my other fanfic here:

Good Omens

Beetlejuice

Beauty and the Beast

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!