The Virgin and The Fool

by HydenLynch

Summary

There must be at least five…
The Whore. They are corrupted, they die first.

The Athlete.

The Scholar.

The Fool.

All suffer and die and the hands of…whatever horror they have raised.

Leaving the last-

To live or die..

As fate decides.

The Virgin.

Get ready for a super fun "The Cabin in the Woods" AU with my babies + Beau from Zombie Island!

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Daphne had been contemplating the absurd concept of spending the weekend out in the middle of God knows where, doing whatever bored college students do. She had figured that was more of a spring break kind of thing, something she always skipped out on, but she was never really good at saying no to Fred and his all too relaxed plans.

As if suddenly leaving town when she had a 20,000-word essay due in a week wasn’t like writing out her own eulogy.

“This is a good thing Daph,” Fred casually said as he watched her stuff things absentmindedly into her purple duffel bag, swatching her various shades of eyeshadow on his lids. Daph felt too stressed to say anything.

“You really need to spend a few milliseconds not thinking about that asshole Yantz.” Daph sent him a glare, hoping he hadn’t noticed her flinch, as she shoved a couple textbooks into the bag.

Dr. Yantz was the professor of her Business Communications class as well as an ex-lover of sorts. Several one-on-one "tutoring" sessions lead to several dates hidden in the back corner of the campus coffee shop. And maybe a few trips back to his home.

Daphne felt like a total child for having to admit how enamored she was by the sound of his voice, regardless of what he talked about. It was almost like their late-night conversations and strokes of the palm over her knee were haunting her.

“I knew what I was getting into when I started seeing him Freddie.”

She tried so hard to sound unperturbed. Definitely too hard.

The clear raise of Fred’s eyebrows said enough.

“He dumped you in an email Daph. Didn’t have the stones to face you. I’m pretty sure Velma has told you plenty already but-” Daphne raised her hand to let him know she got the jist.

After the email, Yantz had altogether started ignoring her for the most part and pretending that they were never anything.

And that definitely sucked.

A lot.

Fred stared at her for a few seconds, knowing full well that her mind was back on Yantz.

Quickly, he got up from his spot on her bed and slapped both of his hands on her cheeks, effectively snapping her out of her painful trance.

“Fuck, ouch Freddie!”

“This right here is exactly why Velms and I are taking you out with us, to escape the memories of a gross old dude trying to suckle you and you actually not hating it.” She sighed and looked away.

“Daph, we’re letting you meet someone new, I mean he’s no cicada obsessed lunatic with raisin hands but I really think you and Beau are gonna hit it off.” He eyed her bag and groaned, “You
really did not pack your $500 textbooks to read in the middle of the woods while Velma and I try to get you to finally let loose and bang an attractive dude.”

Without wasting a second, he grabbed the huge books out of her bag, she let out a cry of annoyance and made a grab for his wrists.

“They’re for when I get bored. And there will be no banging thank you very much.”

Fred scoffed, “Speak for yourself, Velma and I are gonna make this weekend full of naked entanglement.”

“It better be quiet.”

“No promises.” Fred winked as he placed the books back on her tiny shelf.

Daphne let out a deep sigh as she decided to just leave the books here, it wouldn’t be too bad for her to just be by herself, alone with her thoughts.

Alone.

For a whole weekend.

In the middle of nowhere.

Before she could chicken out and make a dive for her precious books the door shot open and Velma walked in.

Fred broke out in a grin and ran over to wrap his arms around her torso in a tight hug.

Velma hugged him back for a couple seconds before letting out a shocked gasp and backing away from him, “What the fuck?”

Freddie gave her a pout.

“Why the hell are you wearing makeup?”

“Because I like it Velms, this is who I am now. You must start calling me Old Gorgeous-Face because it’s the only appropriate title and I will not answer to anything otherwise. Also, I was bored because Daph takes forever to pack and repack the same bag.” He crossed his arms and turned over to look at Daphne, who was sheepishly hiding behind her hair.

Velma smirked, “What are her thoughts on Beau?”

“Not interested Velms.” Daph called out as she put her back to them.

“Listen I promise he’s not a scumbag of any kind. Just kinda boring I guess. But boring is totally your thing going off of past relationships, seeing as I’ve known you for around what? A million years now?” Daphne rolled her eyes as she zipped up her bag and began to search for the hiking boots she was gonna slip into.

“Oh my Lord Daphne you’re gonna be single for the rest of your physical existence at this rate. You need to actually try to form a loving connection with someone before you die an eight-hundred-year-old virgin.” Fred nodded as he wrapped his arm around Velma’s waist.

Daphne rolled her eyes, “I don’t need to be dancing the Devil’s cha-cha every night with some significant other to be happy.”
“It’s the Devil’s tango and it’s not doing that every night that makes being with somebody something special dear.”

Daph glanced at them and raised her eyebrows.

She was about to open her mouth, a smartass comment on the tip of her tongue.

But was abruptly interrupted by the loud rev of what sounded like a car engine with the local douchbag muffler attached

Fred grinned, “That sounds like Beau now!”

All three of them walked over to Daph’s bay window, the only attractive feature of her one room apartment, and looked down into the street in front of her complex.

Daphne spotted a bright green motorcycle parked in front of their humble camper, which belonged to Velma’s uncle, that they would be riding all the way down to their cabin. Velma wasted no time in throwing open the window and shouting down to the figure leaning against the horribly loud mode of transportation.

He didn’t look like he could be much taller than her, but she was about 20 feet higher than him at that moment, so it was hard to tell.

His hair was a thick amount of perfectly styled brown locks and she spotted broad shoulders beneath an Aviator leather jacket.

At this point that was all Daph could see of him, so it was safe to say that Beau was currently bordering on being either very attractive or the plainest Jane to ever walk the earth. Again, she was 20 feet above him and could only make out so many features.

“Hey B!” Velma shouted as she grabbed onto the frame of her glasses to prevent them from falling off.

Daphne kept nagging her to get the frames adjusted but Velms would tell her to shut up unless she was planning to pay for it.

And then they’d both be reminded that they were broke college students.

“You ready to load this baby up and get the hell out of here?!” Beau said as he stuffed his hands in his pockets and jerked his head toward the RV.

“Yeah go ahead and start loading up, I just need to scrape this makeup off Freddie’s face.”

Fred recoiled and let out a gasp, “Are you embarrassed to be seen in public with me solely because I am wearing overpriced face paint?” Velma grinned and rested a hand on his cheek, “No dear, I’m embarrassed to be seen in public with you because you look like Krusty the Clown’s half-baked sister and I’m not having it.”

Daphne was already on it as she handed Velms a makeup wipe and went to go lace up her boots.

After several minutes of Velma rubbing Fred’s skin raw and them picking up the minimal luggage that Daph had, they began to make their way downstairs.

“Do you really need this much luggage Freddie? It’s only gonna be one weekend not four.” Velma grunted as she dragged one of his many bags towards the storage compartment. Fred threw a
couple more of his bags in, “What? It’s full of all the essentials, wire, nets, industrial strength cord.”

“Ah yes, the bare essentials for having a good time at a cabin in the woods in the middle of Nowhereville.”

“And handcuffs.”

Velma’s gaze shot toward him and lingered for several seconds.

Daphne made a loud gagging noise in the back of her throat catching their attention.

Beau let out a laugh and sent her a thumbs up.

She then decided he was indeed very cute.

As they all began to giggle Daphne decided that maybe this weekend was exactly what she needed to set her brain in the right spot. She could finally forget about Dr. Yantz and all that came with him.

This was gonna be good for her.

Some peace and quiet.

Just letting loose.

With no judgmental stares penetrating her skin and making her shrink back.

This was the chance for her to forget that she was a stressed college student.

This was her chance to channel the Daphne she used to be.

In the middle of nature.

Just the four of them.

No.

Wait.

Fred said it was gonna be five of them.

Who were they missing?

Obviously, there was her.

Fred and Velma came as a set pair.

Beau was their attempted (and promising looking) set-up.

And there was one more.

Who else could Fred and Velma possibly invite to go with them?

Someone that also went to Elias Kingston University.

And someone that Velma didn’t think was a total blowhard, which was a good 85% of the students.
If their fifth member had pulled up across the street from them a couple seconds later Daphne was sure she would have guessed it. But he arrived at the time he did and Daphne felt dread begin to pool in her stomach.

Don’t get her wrong, she loved Velma and Freddie to bits and pieces, but ever since high school she didn’t really approve of the company they chose to keep. And traveler #5 had been good friends with Fred and Velma since freshman year of high school. Meaning he had also been friends with her for over 6 years.

Fred and Velma quickly dashed past her and ran toward the horrible green micro-van, decorated with small, orange flowers and wore a name tag in big, orange lettering.

“The Mystery Machine.”

The whole street corner was suddenly filled with the sounds of R&B on full blast coming from the open windows of the van.

“Shaggy are you crazy?”

Daph heard Velma yell.

Their voices quieted down but Daphne had a good idea what the three of them were talking about.

Norville Rogers, or Shaggy since literally forever, was a famous lover of the jazz cabbage since maybe their junior year of high school. She wasn’t really sure why since he never bothered to explain or defend his actions. Not that it really mattered to her.

Beau walked up and stood next to her, “This asshole is gonna be high out of his mind all weekend, isn’t he?”

Daphne sighed and nodded her head.

“Looks like we’ll be babysitting this weekend.”

While the outside of her looked irked and displeased, the inside of her felt nostalgic that all three of her closest high school buds were gonna be together with her. Plus, a cute guy all to herself. She wasn’t gonna let her distaste for Norville ruin this weekend that she knew she desperately needed.

As he stepped out of his van Daph saw him pull out a long silver rod, it looked like a telescope. And within seconds the rod shrank and looked like a short tube.

It was then that Daph remembered that was Norville’s famous invention, a bong that he made himself that could retract and become disguised as what looked like a Yeti coffee mug. She remembered rolling her eyes as Freddie had showered him with praise at the remarkable craftsmanship. And Velma was in a fit of giggles as soon as it was revealed that Shag had affectionately coined it, “Scooby.”

Named after his crazy Great Dane who tragically died just before their graduation.

Daph wondered if he ever got a patent on it.

Or just continued to put it off, as always.

She grimaced for a second but pulled out her sweetest smile and sent him a wave that he returned with a small two finger point directly at her and said in a soft and clear voice, “Daphne you
fetching minx!”

Daph felt that fake smile plastered on her face relax and morph into an all too real grin.

“That’s right.” She thought, “It’s really hard to have a bad time when Norville’s involved.”

She sent a hopeful look toward Beau and shrugged.

And as she went over toward him to grab his luggage her first thought that lingered for the rest of this unforgettable weekend was:

“He’s gotten taller.”

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“So,” Beau broke a long-relaxed silence as they had run out of conversations to have and there was still several more amusing hours on the road left.

Everyone turned to look at him except Velma who was driving.

It really was quite the sight to see 4’9 Sociology major Velma Dinkley driving something of which she could barely see over the dashboard.

“Velms does your cousin always loan out their cabin to people for weekends?” Velma was quiet for a bit before replying, “Why do you wanna know B?”

Daph didn’t think much of Velma kind of deflecting the question.

She looked over at Beau who rubbed the back of his neck and chuckled, “My family has a lodge out at Rocky Point Beach down in Louisiana and we never use it so….” Fred smirked at him, “What? I’m broke as all hell and can’t keep leeching off my trust fund.”

“Why is it so unacceptable for us to get help towards our education to participate in the betterment of society?”

Daphne’s gaze fell on Shag who was sitting across the small table, currently restocking his inventory for the weekend. It almost fascinated her as to how gentle the actions were to roll a joint. Either that or Shags made it look relaxed and gentle.

Fred sent Daph a grin as Shaggy and Beau began to participate in a sort of debate.

“Because, we’re supposed to be self sufficient adults. Just being able to live out in the world without having any sort of crutch.” Daphne nodded in agreement and sent Shag a glance.

Beau and her locked eyes, they were an intense and deep blue, almost piercing into her.

Those eyes paired with a lopsided grin resulted in her face heating up and she quickly looked away.

Damn he was powerful.

Shaggy laughed softly, “Brother we are gonna be leaning on crutches for the rest of our lives. Like, the world has gotten way too complicated for us to even function properly without these crutches.”

Beau rolled his eyes and Daphne held back a snicker.

“Bills, deadlines, student debts, interviews, minimum wage, hospital bills. The world is one big painful spider’s web and the spider is like, eating us whole ’cause we’re stuck in the fuckin’ web
and can’t walk without our damn crutches.”

That snicker was still sitting in the back of her throat and Beau kept sending her disbelieved looks as if saying, “Is he always like this?”

To which Daph would nod and grin.

She may have had her qualms towards him, but the party was never boring when he was there.

“Norville, where exactly are you going with this?” Daphne said, attempting to cough away any laughter still in her throat.

Shag’s eyes went to her and sent her a look, one of disbelief that was somewhat patronizing, but the way his brown eyes shone - she knew he wasn’t trying to be mad at her.

“We’re too reliant on everything but we act like we’re strong and “self-sufficient” according to the Love Boat over here. Society needs to crumble, we’re all just too chicken shit to admit it.”

Fred burst into giggles, “God I have missed your rants Shag.”

Shaggy winked and clicked his tongue as he lifted up one of his finest pieces of craftsmanship and said, “You will come to see things my way young one.” Fred chuckled again and Velma sighed.

“You two are gonna totally exhaust me this weekend. I was hoping to actually have some fun. And if y’all are able to exhaust me than how the hell do you expect Daph to relax?!?”

“Oh, I’m sure Love Boat will keep her plenty busy.”

The heat returned to her face and she shot Shaggy a look but he merely winked and went back to his craft.

Velma giggled and Fred smirked as he watched the whole exchange.

Still probably redder than her hair, Daphne sent a look over towards Beau who, surprisingly, had a very relaxed and knowing smile. Something dropped in her stomach and she dreaded the possibility that Beau knew full well that Fred and Velms intended to try and set them up this weekend.

“Damn it.”

“If Norville knows than he definitely does.”

God, she hated her friends so much.

As if sensing her uncomfortable feelings, Beau quickly changed the subject.

“Anyway, umm…could somebody please remind me what I was talking about?”

“You wanna rent out your parent’s lodge to pay for the right to learn. Or like, as America calls it, self-sufficiency.” Shag replied, not looking up from the table.

Daphne smiled and looked down at her clasped hands resting in her lap.

Beau cleared his throat and nodded, “Right, anyway I can always use the extra income. I’m kinda used to being not broke.” Daph nodded.

“Correction,” Shag interjected, “You’re used to your parents not being broke and them coddling you whenever you saw fit.”
She knew the feeling all too well.

It had been a couple years since Daph had actually answered one of her parent’s phone calls.

Beau frowned but chose to say nothing.

Finally, Freddie jumped in, “You know what all of you losers need to do is actually get jobs to help pay for shit.”

Daphne smiled, “Easy for you to say, you got an on-campus job to pay and Velma got a full fucking ride scholarship to Elias right off the bat.”

“The world decides in mysterious ways who will live on crutches and who will stand on their own two feet.” She looked over toward Shaggy and nodded, not really sure if she was agreeing with him or just wanting to understand him.

After another several minutes of silence, Shaggy stood up from his seat, effectively reminding Daphne that he had shot up to around six feet tall.

“Do we have any snacks on this rust bucket or am I gonna be forced to starve to death?”

Velma laughed, “Freddie’s got a whole bag just with munchies but it’s in the compartment.”

Shag groaned and leaned against the wall, his lips sticking out in a pout.

“I’m gonna die on this tub with the lamest people I know.”

Beau and Daph giggled and Shag pressed the back of his hand to his forehead in fake agony.

Velms let out a long, exaggerated sigh and looked to Freddie for help.

He smiled, “How’s our gas looking honey?”

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Dilapidated and terrifying.

It was old and falling apart.

Shag quickly voted for them to not stop at Satan’s convenience store and that he could survive another couple of hours snackless.

Of course, Fred was actually right in being concerned about their fuel seeing as they only had a quarter of a tank left and several hours to go. So, against Shag’s earnest nagging, they stopped at what looked like a dilapidated shack that just so happened to have gas pumps.

They all filed out, with hopes of stretching their legs and regaining some semblance of feeling in them.

Shaggy being the last, and most reluctant one out.

“...All I’m saying is the kids in Texas Chainsaw Massacre made the mistake of stopping at a creepy building that screamed “DEATH” at them from every possible direction, and now look at them. Dead and sewn into skin suits.”

“Shaggy, for the love of Pete, please stop talking.” Velma said as she spotted their source of liquid
encouragement for their poor old RV.

Daphne eyed the ancient looking fuel pump in front of them, the disconcerted look on Velma’s face saying enough.

“Something tells me that baby don’t take credit cards.”

Shaggy leaned against the camper next to Daph as Velma sent him an annoyed look. Daph looked around for where Beau had ended up, eventually spotting him walking towards the Shack of Unspeakable Horrors.

As if having the same thought process as her, Shag said, “And the quartet never saw their new companion, Beau, ever again. He truly was a great man. If not slightly opinionated, but solid all the same.”

Daphne chuckled and Velma went over and socked him in the shoulder playfully.

The group giggled amongst themselves for a couple of minutes, taking Daphne all the way back to the four of them sitting at the same table during lunch every other day or so.

It really had been such a long time since the whole gang and been within the same fifty feet of each other.

It was surprisingly nice, if she was being honest.

This weekend was already starting off on a high note that was for sure.

They were all quickly pulled out of their giggling pocket universe by the sound of a startled yelp.

Their gazes all shot toward the shack of Hell and spotted Beau being backed out by what Daphne assumed was the owner of Hell; and the gas pumps.

She was clearly an elderly woman of short stature, not standing much taller than Velma’s, her hair seemed to be far beyond graying and almost looked as if it was rotting on top of her head. Trying to be polite, Daphne hoped her face showed minimal terror toward the weathered individual.

As the lady trudged toward him, Beau rushing behind Velma, both her and Freddie taking a sort of protective stance.

On closer inspection, Daph could see that the lady was chewing on something. Rather loudly and sloppily, which only made the shivers down her spine more intense.

The gang all seemed to be locked in some sort of staring contest with the stranger as she chewed away on what Daphne was gonna say was gum. But was quickly proven wrong when the lady made some sort hacking noise in the back of her throat and spit out a black substance right at Freddie’s feet.

Now there was a clear look of disgust as she realized what it was.

Tobacco.

That word brought back memories from her parent’s annual poker games where only the "handsiest" of people were invited.

The more she stared at this stranger, the faster memories of the guest’s lingering gazes on her as if trying to undress her young body without being kicked out flooded in; how she hated that these
poker games almost always ran long.

The overwhelming feelings seemed to be taking her over and she really wanted to close her eyes or look away.

Again, as if sensing her feelings, Shag stepped in front of her.

Effectively shielding her horrible thoughts away.

How long had they all just been standing there doing nothing?

The sooner they got gas, the faster they could get out of there.

And that was the only thing Daphne wanted right now.

Velms wanted to get them out of there asap - so, she cleared her throat, “How do you work the pump?” Nodding her head in the direction of the ancient contraption.

The lady continued to chew, crossing her arms, sporting a baleful look of judgement and disdain.

“‘Ss a dolla’ fifty a gallon.”

Her voice was gravely and deep, and just as full of contempt as her gorgeous face.

Velma nodded as she reached into Fred’s back pocket and pulled out his wallet, ignoring the sudden yelp he let out, “I’ll take whatever I can get for a fifty.” Fred cleared his throat and shot her a look, “My fifty.”

Velms simply bat her eyelashes.

The stranger made her way toward the pump and turned a rusted crank resting at the side; even the smallest movement seemed to result in her joints croaking and groaning.

After a terrible, silent minute of loud cranking and joints cracking the stranger took a step back and Beau grabbed the pump quickly. Daph and Shag took a step towards Fred and Velma as Beau unscrewed the gas cap and began to fill the tank.

“Perfect.” Daphne thought, “More silence.”

Luckily, Fred was always going to be friendly towards any man, woman or creature on God’s green earth - and that now included potential serial killers that owned shacks in the middle of nowhere. So, the silence was snuffed out before it could really start.

“What do you get a lot of business out here?”

Shaggy seemed to be sending him signals to not participate in small talk with this person. But dear Freddie was never great at picking up on signals.

The stranger looked over at him, still looking like she wanted to skin him alive for merely existing, and began to make that hacking noise again. Daph looked away as she spit, letting her eyes stay glued to Shaggy’s back.

She felt sick.

She wasn’t really sure what she was supposed to do about that.
Throw up on the indefinitely angry psychopath’s property?

That just screamed good idea.

“Only when the sinful cretins travel down ta’ the lake.” Fred glanced down at Velma, a touch of concern in his eyes, and she rolled her eyes and grabbed his hand, instantly tangling their fingers together.

The old lady eyed this interaction with wide eyes, seemingly surprised.

Daphne flinched as the stranger’s gaze instantly shot to her. Pale and lifeless eyes probing every inch of her, and it only made the churning in Daph’s stomach ten times worse.

“Why’s it not you?” The lady whispered, so softly that Daph almost missed it.

“I-….um….!” Daphne couldn’t speak, there were way too many things overloading her senses to the point that she had already forgotten what the old lady even said.

Velma quickly came to her rescue as she pulled out her authoritative voice and said, “This should be enough for the rest of the trip, right?” The individual spit again, Daph felt herself gag - her eyes not wasting a second to start watering, and replied, “It’ll be nuf’ ta git ya there, not nuf’ to git ya home.”

Daphne saw Fred tighten his grip on Velma’s hand.

This lady had managed to disturb everyone here in under five minutes, props to her.

Fred let out an awkward chuckle and sent a glance toward Beau who shrugged his shoulders and looked over at Daphne, seeing that she was physically uncomfortable.

“How long have you had this place?” Fred took another crack at the small talk thing.

The stranger’s gravely voice sounded clear, answering instantly, almost as if it was rehearsed, “Opened up this place afta’ the war.”

She turned around to look at her shack, and Daph almost let out a sigh of relief as soon as those pale eyes were off her and all she had to look as was the lady’s tattered shirt. Feeling almost as if an 18-wheeler had been parked on her chest and it had finally backed off of her.

“How long have you had this place?” Fred took another crack at the small talk thing.

She turned around to look at her shack, and Daph almost let out a sigh of relief as soon as those pale eyes were off her and all she had to look as was the lady’s tattered shirt. Feeling almost as if an 18-wheeler had been parked on her chest and it had finally backed off of her.

“Which war?” Fred pushed on.

The lady let out that hacking noise before saying sharply and loudly making her and Shaggy jump, “You know which war! Damn ignorant sinner!”

Fredde recoiled from the outburst and Velms took a protective step forward.

Daphne was surprised to see Shag launch into action as he calmly took a step forward in front of Freddie and said in a shockingly relaxed tone, “Were some wearing coats of red and other coats of blue? A fight for independence and maybe even rights, perhaps?”

The stranger turned around slowly, her hateful eyes sent a rush of worry through Daph’s body; she really hoped this lady didn’t launch forward and start pulling his intestines out through his mouth like some sort of fucked up magic trick.

“Are ya’ gettin’ smart with me boy?” That question seemed incredibly dangerous and Daphne saw Shag’s shoulders tense up as he tried to stand his ground, “You were rude to my friend stranger. I
don’t typically let people get away with that.”

If Daphne was not too terrified to react to anything, she would have been surprised at his actions.

It really had been such a long time since she’d seen him and she was becoming more impressed by how much he had grown without really growing up at all.

If that made any sense.

The stranger looked like she was ready to pin Shag down and start scooping out his guts with a spoon - Daph felt a shudder rush up her spine and she got the strong feeling that it was time to go before anything got violent.

And clearly the universe agreed with her because a loud clank sounded from Beau’s direction, signaling the end of their happy fun time at the Shack of Hell.

“There’s no need to be hostile guys.” Daphne’s attention was drawn back toward Freddie’s voice as he attempted to defuse the situation. But instead of the aura relaxing, the lady’s voice sounded and it was dripping with venom and spite, “Know you’re place in this Whore!”

“Fuck it. That’s it.”

And that was all Velma needed, this lady had fired enough shots to get her worked up, before she jumped forward; not intending to hold back on the ancient relic before her.

Daphne wouldn’t be surprised if Velma snapped her neck in one go, but in a quick blur Beau had shot in between them.

“Okay guys!” His gaze locked on Velma trying to send the strongest ‘don’t pick a fight with the potential psychopath’ vibes he could and Daph was praying that was enough to calm her down. Shag and Fred looked at each other, Fred being completely unphased by the name shot his way.

Finally, Velma took a step back with a clear growl on the tip of her tongue; her teeth bared and ready for action.

Daphne was sure Velma would put in the best effort, she had seen her fair share of Velma starting/winning bar fights. But the absolutely pure, serial killer gem before them seemed to have a different kind of power. One Velma’s teeth would not be able to stop.

Beau stared her down for a couple more seconds than nodded, walking back toward the camper without even granting the stranger a last glance.

Daph bit her lower lip, ready to forget they ever stopped at this place.

She began to turn and follow Beau back into the safety of the RV, stopping to see Velms pull out the fifty-dollar bill and hold it up, ensuring that the stranger knew what it was, and then threw it down roughly at the lady’s feet.

The stranger’s lifeless eyes followed the bill and simply replied to the action by making that damn hacking noise and emptying her cheeks all on Velma’s feet.

Now Daph was sure she was gonna throw up, the churning in her stomach seemed to turn into bubbling and the world around her started to spin and she lost her footing for a second. And quickly regained it when she felt a hand rest on her shoulder causing a calm to wash over her and her mind to return back to reality; while Shaggy wasn’t looking at her, she figured that he had
picked up on her distress. He had always been good at picking up on people’s emotions.

Velma, refusing to react to the lovely mixture of saliva and tobacco on her sneaker, turned around with a swish and latched onto Freddie’s arm. She then dragged him to the camper, signaling that they were out of here, forever hopefully.

Daphne and Shaggy followed after him, his hand still just casually resting on her shoulder and somehow preventing her from crashing right into the side of the RV since she could barely make out the door to their escape.

Her heart leapt as Shag dared to engage the beast watching them leave.

“Well this has been a fun visit friend! Wish for great success regarding your business.” Daph wanted to slap him in the chest and tell him to shut up since throwing sarcastic comments the stranger’s way was probably a terrible idea; but part of her just wanted him to unleash as many insults as he could on this bitch.

“I hear the railroad is gonna be here any day now and I’m sure that’s gonna be big. Maybe even paved roads but those are just the careless ramblings of a dreamer!”

He shouted out the last part as he shoved Daphne into the camper and hastily following behind, quickly slamming the door.

As soon as the door was closed Daphne let out the longest breath she’d ever held in her life.

“Are you okay Daph?” Beau walked up in front of her, his eyes full of curiosity and concern. Both of which made her feel ashamed for how worked up this whole ordeal had gotten her. So, she forced up a smile and said wearily, “Never better now that we’re leaving.” He gave her that handsome smile and nodded, his hand just barely brushing her wrist before he retreated to the seat by the table.

Daph almost lost her balance as Velma forcefully turned the key in the ignition, still plenty riled from the encounter and Fred’s thumb rubbing circles on the back of her hand wasn’t soothing her rage.

As Daphne worked on steadying her breathing again her eyes met Shaggy’s, he seemed to be concentrating on also being able to breathe properly again; so Daph wasn’t the only one who almost had the life sucked out of her from that whole experience.

Shag soon spotted her staring at him and he gave her a smile, lopsided and insincere but appreciated all the same.

Daphne remembered how Shag always seemed to be the first person to figure out when something was wrong with her, Velma or Fred - and after being together again for a few hours, it was clear that part of him hadn’t changed a bit.

Which Daph was fine with, seeing as it was probably one of the best things about him.

With a happy laugh she said softly, “Thanks for the help Norville.”

He smirked and sent a quick glance toward Velma and Fred, who both smiled at him and nodded.

“Like, does this mean you’ll finally start calling me Shaggy again?”
After their short stay at Casa de Satan, Shag made quick work of getting the group to bring their minds back to nice things.

Mainly the lake and how they’d be spending a whole 72(ish) hours without opening a single textbook or researching topics for papers.

The rest of the ride was composed of laughing and teasing and the starts of future plans that would never be brought up again.

And Daphne liked it.

Everything wasn’t wound up too tight to function, it was all perfectly casual. Even more so it was comfortable and relaxed. These five people were all simply enjoying each other’s company just by being together. All of this making her remember why humans are known as typically social creatures.

But school makes people ignore that, forget that.

“You know, I think everyone at Elias is like way too snobbed up for their own good. That would explain all the campus wide fights that break out like clockwork every few months. Like, it only takes mispronouncing the word ‘vase’ and you could end up nose first in the sidewalk outside the quad; present company absolutely included.” Velma snorted and stretched her arms up toward the roof of the camper, letting out a content groan.

Freddie had taken over driving for her after maybe an hour of coaxing since Velma rarely trusted Fred to drive anything outside of bumper cars.

And even then, that was a slippery slope.

“Shag exactly what about me just screams ‘snobbed up’ to you?” She leaned back in her seat and crossed her ankles, giving him a lazy grin. While Velms wasn’t exactly the picture of laid back, she did live by the rule that only her words were what mattered and any other words could be damned for all she cared.

So, it was more like very few things got to her enough to stress her out.

Shaggy gave her a smirk, clearly already knowing something she didn’t.

“Dear Dinkley, are you not the one who planned this whole trip to begin with? Naturally you must be trying to escape from something. Societal expectations perchance?” She scoffed and rolled her eyes as Fred chuckled and put the camper in park. "Perhaps." She replied curtly in an attempt to amuse him and change the subject.

“Oh my God where are we?!” Daphne shot out of her seat, showing clear signs of disorientation from her roughly fifteen-minute nap; wobbling a bit from sitting down for so long, as she looked through the front window and saw that their surroundings composed of tall trees and scattered sunlight.

Without wasting anytime, she dashed over to the door and threw it open; everyone sighed as a gust of wind blew gently through the door. Caressing their faces and finally giving them some fresh air to cure the cabin fever that was just beginning to form amongst them.

Daph closed her eyes and relished in the smell of old wood and fallen leaves.
Everything was perfectly quiet and her heartbeat soon matched that tranquility.

She hadn’t even stepped out of the camper yet and already this place was doing some good for her.

After another minute or so of forest sniffing, Daphne jumped down onto the ground below. A soft *crunch* filled her ears and she looked down to see the ground was covered in brown and red leaves. She smiled as the first thought that came to her mind was that it looked as if there was a giant red and brown quilt cushioning the forest floor.

“This place is gorgeous Velms.”

“Well, I think it’s just not really anything special as far as woods out in the middle of nowhere go.” Velma shouted from inside the camper as she grabbed her backpack. Which Fred abruptly took from her hands.

Daph heard them playfully argue as Velma teased him for being so determined to be the perfect gentleman.

But she was just barely paying attention as she spotted what looked like a stork standing just at the edge of the forest; it was walking away from them, toward what she assumed was the lake. She was completely captivated by how it strutted elegantly and gracefully even though it was just barely in her line of vision.

“Man, I forgot how much of a slut for nature you are Daph.” Shag’s voice brought her out of her awestruck daze and she turned her attention to him, surprised to find him standing right next to her.

His brown eyes were scanning their surroundings slowly, one hand holding the strap on his backpack and the other resting in the pocket of his jacket, not looking nearly as impressed as she did. After a couple seconds he said nonchalantly, “Looks kinda like the woods from “The Evil Dead,” cabin and all.”

Daph shuddered.

“How dare you compare this beautiful display of untouched nature to that horrifying nightmare fuel!” She jokingly slapped his arm as they began to walk toward the cabin, which Daph realized she hadn’t even noticed seeing as she was too busy drowning in admiration towards the forest being so damn pretty.

The cabin itself looked very sturdy and well made, although there wasn’t any indicator of how long it had just been nestled in the center of the woods. And this was an actual cabin, no wifi or hot-tubs or chocolate fountains.

When her parents said cabin they usually meant one of their many ski/hunting lodges.

Which were nice (obviously) but when Daphne said cabin, this is always exactly what she pictured. Cozy, warm and quiet.

A few feet before the cabin her and Shaggy stopped, mainly just to size it up, and Daph could hear the familiar crunch behind them indicating that the rest of the gang was joining them.

Naturally, it was Beau who took the spot on her right and tapped her on the shoulder to capture her attention long enough to hand her the purple duffel bag she left in the camper. In her peripheral, she spotted Velma wrap her arms around Fred’s torso and smile, “Cute ain’t she?”
Fred grinned down at her before saying matter-of-factly, “If I see even just the shadow of a spider I’m sleeping in the camper.”

Velma rolled her eyes as she backed away from him and signaled for the group to start grabbing their things to load into the cabin.

“It’s the damn woods Freddie, do you want nature to suddenly not have spiders?” Everyone followed her except Daph, who continued to eye the shack curiously. Structure wise the cabin looked very sturdy and secure, but for some reason the cabin was giving off the vibe of being incredibly old and dilapidated.

She took in a deep breath and peeked behind her towards the camper just in time to see Freddie toss a bag at Shags, he let out a startled yelp and almost dropped it. A chorus of laughter echoed from the camper all the way over to her.

However, instead of joining her friends on their fun adventure of unpacking the RV, Daphne turned back toward the cabin and began taking small, hesitant steps toward it.

An exaggerated creaking noise sounded underneath her feet as she stepped onto the steps of the front porch.

She rolled her eyes as Shag’s earlier statement comparing this cabin to the Knowby’s cabin from Evil Dead came to her mind.

How she regretted watching that movie with them when she reached sophomore year.

It was perfectly plausible that the volume of the creaks was due to her brain still recovering from the first nap she’d had in a long time.

After wincing her way through every loud creak and groan across the porch she reached the front door. Holding her breath and expecting the loudest creak of all, alerting the zombies inside that some idiot white girl was about to enter this cabin alone, she turned the knob and gently pushed the door open. Totally startled by the revelation that the door was perfectly silent as she opened it, save for the slight gust of wind that followed her into the cabin.

Letting out a nervous sigh of relief, she observed her surroundings.

Even though all of the lights in the place were off, sunlight was spilling in through the abundance of windows.

Daphne was always a fan of natural lighting.

Looking around she saw that to her right was a small kitchen, accommodating them with the necessities; a hideous orange fridge and a grey stove with only a few feet of counter space, but that was plenty for one weekend. She grinned at the simple blue and white checkered curtains hanging on the window above the sink adding just enough quirk to the area to please her.

To her left was the living area of sorts.

Providing them with one couch and two cushioned seats on either side of it. In the center of the area was a large, stone fireplace with pictures of flowers and wildlife decorating the mantle.

Along the wall there were more pictures, this time of landscapes and animals. Mainly wolves and mountain lions.
Right across from her, on the wall that lead into a hallway that Daph could only assume was where their bedrooms were, was the stuffed head of a large, gray wolf.

She shivered, taxidermy was not really her cup of tea.

Something about unblinking glass eyes just scared her.

Something once free roaming and wild, forced to remain still on the wall of someone’s home.

It was an unimaginable torture.

Daphne noted that there was nothing that seemed to be a sort of personal possession, like pictures of family or embroidered pillows. It was possible that Beau’s question from hours ago was true, that Velma’s cousin really did rent out this cabin for people other than them.

That would also explain why it was so clean.

Not a single cobweb.

The table next to the front door was lacking in a layer of dust that anything left in a cabin that was empty for a number of weeks should be sporting.

Hell, even the floors looked spotless, the floors in her apartment got nasty after only a few days considering how often she had company. It would make sense that a cabin that was frequently rented out to people would have at least some grime.

She remembered seeing an exit off the dirt path about forty-ish minutes before they reached the forest.

It’s possible that exit led to a town of some sort and Velma’s cousin paid someone in that town to clean it regularly.

Her brow creased and a pensive look stayed on her face as the curiosity consumed her.

“Lose something Blake?”

Daphne let out a startled yelp and spun around, taking a self-defense stance and preparing to send her hand flying into the assailant’s throat.

But was quickly stopped by a shriek and the horrified words of Shaggy, “Jesus, Mary and Joseph! Daphne, oh my God I wasn’t even teasing you, literally was just asking you a question, holy shit! Please spare me for the love of all that is holy!”

Daphne gasped and took a step back, moving further into the cabin.

Shag stared down at her while she tried to figure out what the hell she was trying to say, his brown eyes looking 100% done with her bullshit.

“I…-I…. Just, the cabin is spotless.”

“Good for them, I’m proud.”

He smirked at her before moving through the door and brushing passed her.

She could see the other three walking away from the camper and toward the cabin, their arms full of luggage. Shifting her duffel bag from one shoulder to the other, she bit her lip and turned around
to follow after Shaggy.

“So you don’t find it weird that this cabin in the middle of the woods, that are in and of themselves in the middle of nowhere, is perfectly clean?” Daphne asked, having to speed up her pace to keep up with him. Damn him for becoming a giant.

“Not really. Less fun cleaning time for us though, might be a major deal breaker but I think I’ll make it.” Daph crossed her arms over her chest and huffed, “What I actually find weird is the fact that those might be the creakiest fucking stairs in the universe and you didn’t even hear me coming.” He looked down at her with a playful grin on his face, “And then your immediate response to being spooked by me was to attack with full force.”

Daphne bit her lip again and ignored how his eyes watched the action for a split second.

Finally, she constructed a decent lie, “I…. live in a bad neighborhood.” Damn it. She forgot she was terrible at lying. And also forgot Shaggy was basically a master of the whole concept.

He nodded his head and smiled, “Uh huh, sure Ms. Kung-Fu Princess. I got you all figured out Daph.”

Before she could retaliate, Daphne realized they had stopped in the middle of the hallway.

There were two doors on either side of the hallway, making four rooms in total.

“ Weird.” Shag said softly.

“What?”

“I-I don’t know, it’s funky how there are like, the perfect number of rooms for all of us. Didn’t Velma say we’d all be bunking on couches or the floor?”

Daphne shrugged, up until today she didn’t even know Shag was coming. Much less whatever planning Velma had put into this weekend.

He stared down at her, clearly needing some sort of answer.

But she didn’t really have one.

Their staring contest was quickly cutoff by the lively chatter of the missing three that made this silent duet a quintet.

Both Shaggy and Daphne tore their gazes from one another, both choosing to brush off their questions and enjoy this weekend while it lasted.

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Daphne sighed and threw her bag onto the neatly made, clean bed that she decided she wasn’t going to question.

She ran her hands through her hair and groaned, examining the room and ignoring how sore her whole body was. The room was, in short, cozy. Consisting of the bed which had a very intricate, looking almost hand-carved, wooden bed frame. She adored floral patterns which seemed to be the running theme of this room.

A flowery quilt lay atop the bed and there were more photos of various flora like the ones on the mantle in the living area.
There was a wooden chair sitting in the corner of the room next to the only window provided, it was also sporting a lovely floral quilt as well as a single pillow with a single blood red rose stitched into the center. She beamed, this room was the first step to her break-up recovery weekend getaway.

She walked over to the dresser that was against the wall opposite her bed, a large, robin's egg blue rug rested on the floor right in front of it.

The dresser was like one of those two in one vanity/dresser combo thingies.

Where it had a mirror attached to it, productively showing her that she looked like a mess.

Her hair was sticking up in every direction imaginable and her lipstick had melted beyond the borders of her actual lips. She grimaced at the clear sweat stains at the pits of her shirt and rolled her eyes, glad she had packed extra shirts for this exact reason.

Becoming a college student had gotten her well acquainted with the concept of stress sweat.

Slowly, she began to unbutton her dark purple blouse and decided that she would change into her green shirt since she always looked good in it.

She unbuttoned down to the middle of her shirt before she heard someone yell and bang the wall, “Okay hold it! Stop!” from the other side of the wall she was facing. Quickly, she buttoned her shirt up again and opened her door, the room next her’s was Beau’s.

Shaggy and Fred and Velma also opened their doors, both of their rooms across the hall from her’s.

They all shared confused looks before all making their way into Beau’s room.

Daphne quickly decided that she was not a fan of this room in the slightest.

While her theme seemed to be flowers and rustic charm, Beau’s theme was clearly hunting and taxidermy and all the fun stuff that used to give her nightmares when she was little. Stuffed heads of various animals decorated the walls and she saw that instead of floral quilts and robin's egg blue rugs, Beau got fur.

Fur blankets and a fur rug in front of his dresser.

But other than the stark differences in décor, their rooms were almost like mirror images of each other.

Layout wise anyway.

“What’s up B?” Velma asked as she leaned against Freddie and crossed her arms.

“Yeah, it’s not like you scared the bejesus out of some of us or something.” Shaggy said as he followed Velma and leaned against Fred with arms crossed and for a moment, Daphne wondered if she should follow the example.

Luckily, Beau cleared his throat in response to the weirdness and jerked his head toward his dresser.

“There was a…uh…. painting sitting on top of the dresser and I…wasn’t a huge fan- “

“Fantastic, is this why you had us all convene in your hunting lodge?” Shag interrupted again and Daphne reached over to tug on his shirt. He looked over at her and was quickly able to read her
expression, instantly shutting up.

“Uh... no. I-It’s this.”

He motioned toward the dresser that, just like Daphne’s, had a mirror attached to the back.

The four of them stepped forward to get a closer look, Shaggy no longer putting all of his weight on poor Fred.

“Holy shit…”

Velma said softly.

Instead of seeing their own reflections in the mirror, they saw a bed with a floral quilt as well as the same pictures up in Daph’s room. No fur or dead animal heads in sight.

“This is one of those um...what the hell are they called?” Fred said as he took a step forward to touch the glass. “Like, it’s called a two-way mirror. Used by the government to watch us while we brush our teeth to make sure we don’t miss a spot.” Shag said as he crossed his arms, his brow furrowing.

“So what the fuck is it doing in this cabin from like the Stone Age?” Velma stated, more annoyed than curious.

Daph shrugged, “Perverts of the 18th century.”

As soon as those words left her mouth her eyes shot over to Beau, who had remained silent.

Had he watched her change?

Or did he warn them as soon as it happened.

Her urge to confront him was snuffed out by Velma saying, “Well that’s awesome and all but I’m hoping this ain’t in our rooms too.”

Daphne looked over at Shaggy, his face went pale with realization.

“We should go and check to be safe.” Freddie said as he made his way out of the room.

“That is unless Shaggy doesn’t mind watching us test out those handcuffs.” Velma said with a teasing tone.

Shaggy locked eyes with Daph, she read his face which was giving off the tell-tale, “Pray for me.” vibes.

She sent him an apologetic look and nodded, smiling softly.

With a long sigh he followed after them and said, “Velms I didn’t even like hearing that. Would you consider abstinence? Just this weekend?” The rest of the conversation was muffled through the walls, leaving only Daph and Beau.

She stared at him for a while, his fidgeting giving away how nervous he was.

Eventually he rubbed the back of his neck and said, “Look, if it makes you feel better…. we could switch rooms. So there would be no chance of anyone peeking in on you.”
Daphne crossed her arms, “What about the chance that I’m peeking in on you?”

She cocked her head to the side and looked at him, really thinking she’d be better off dying than staying in a room full of glass eyes that followed her every movement.

But Beau simply replied with an uncharacteristic smirk.

“That’s fine by me, I got nothin’ to hide.”

Daph stared him down for a few seconds, cheeks heating up from all the ideas popping into her head. Which was ridiculous since Fred Jones was her best friend and she had seen him naked plenty of times due to his lack of boundaries.

Exactly what about Beau suddenly made her so nervous?

They had only known each other a few hours and it was almost as if they had already called dibs to be hooking up at some point.

Which wasn’t the initial goal of this weekend.

Daphne didn’t like distractions.

That used to be her only method of dealing with her problems and it only made her seem more and more like her screwball parents. That alone was a nightmare, but now that she was in a room that embodied her childhood fears…. everything was on edge now.

Beau’s eyes and his smirk and his shoulders and his lips were all distracting her and she didn’t even remember why she was alone in this room with him.

And so, she threw the towel in.

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Groaning, she threw her duffel onto the less inviting bed.

Really hoping that Beau didn’t put her perfect room to waste. Although, something told her that he wasn’t a big fan of flowers.

After a few seconds of watching Beau get accustomed to his new environment, Daph quickly decided that this was creepy and if it were her, she wouldn’t be a fan of having her privacy invaded. After a brief scan of the room, she spotted the alleged painting that Beau wasn’t a fan of. Letting out a grunt, she picked up the fairly large painting and placed it back in front of the mirror, getting a good look at the thing Beau did not enjoy. And while Daphne was no art critic, she was inclined to agree with this opinion.

Strongly.

The setting of the painting was similar to the woods they were currently in.

With the leaves being various shades of orange and brown and purple.

There was even a cabin in the foreground, a simple one-story lodging with a quaint front porch.

The sky was painted with the colors of a sunset, or sunrise, a gorgeous fade of reds and pinks eventually dimming to a dark purple around the horizon.
These simple details were beautiful, and if those were the only things in this painting than Daph would have found one bright side to staying in the dead animal room.

However, these were merely background details for this picture.

The main centerpiece of this lovely work was the carnage happening in front of the humble cabin.

Carnage might be putting it lightly, but Daphne couldn’t think of a better suiting word at that moment.

A dog, it looked like a cocker spaniel judging by the ears (or whatever was left of them), surrounded by creatures. A towering figure in a dark cloak, no face but a pair of haunting orange eyes. Chains hung from its wrists which were attached to clawed, gangly hands.

Two men with dark gray hoods covering their deformed faces.

A large man with muted green skin, blacked out eyes and sharpened teeth.

Some of the creatures looked almost too human, something that made it more haunting.

Each of the characters surrounding the poor animal held a handful of skin or intestines, some even shoving pieces of the dog into their mouths. Something that brought back the churning and bubbling in Daph’s stomach, for a second, she thought she felt something breathe on the back of her neck. But soon found that this was just the unforgettable sensation of anxiety and uneasiness.

Annihilation.

That was the word she was looking for.

The act or instance of completely destroying someone or something

A state of being, total destruction or extinction.

But that was used in the context of a group of people.

This was one small dog.

But in her head, that word was still the only thing that could be used to describe this.

It was like she heard somebody whispering that word, just under their breath and letting the air carry it into her clouded mind.

“Annihilation.”

She said it quietly.

Almost unable to move, and not really sure what she was doing at the moment.

And all at once, her sanity was back; like a book being slammed shut.

“Yeah, how about no…” Speaking to herself softly she grabbed the fur blanket that was sitting in the chair, made out of antlers of all things, and draped it over the nightmare fuel.

“Must’ve been a lot of emotional torment.” Daphne thought, trying to picture literally anyone painting that monstrosity. Somehow, she knew that no sane person would be able to paint that and not be totally haunted by the helpless dog’s round, brown eyes. Clearly still alive and pleading for
it all to end. But it never will, it was gonna be trapped like that forever with no freedom or escape.

A shiver ran down her spine and she turned toward her bed.

And let out a silent gasp.

The wall was covered with those same brown eyes, begging for it to all stop.

That was it, she was switching back with Beau asap. Before she started sobbing for the mere reason that glass eyes freaked her out.

But then a soft breeze blew over her face and she felt the lump in her throat go down, the fresh air bringing her fearful mood down.

Had she been less susceptible, she would have realized there were no open windows or air vents in her room to deliver that “calming” breeze. But by the time it had hit her face she had already forgotten what she wanted to cry over.

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The wind was blowing against her face, sending her hair rushing behind her in all its glory.

The soft leaves cushioned her bare feet as she dashed toward the pier that was finally in view, her lungs burned cold from the chilled air but it was more exhilarating than anything else. She ignored how her running without a sports bra wasn’t all that fun and kept going, determined to beat the man who got her perfect flowery paradise.

She didn’t even dare to look over at him, afraid that it would slow her down somehow.

When she finally caught a glimpse of the dark blue waters, Daphne let out an excited shriek, reaching out her arm to try and prevent Beau from tying with her.

Neck in neck was not her thing.

Growing up with four other sisters came with side effects.

Her heartbeat sped up as her feet hit the old wood of the pier, becoming shorter and shorter by the second. Until finally, there was no pier left and her breathing hitched, watching her shadow hover over the water, her bare feet just above the surface.

And all at once, she was surrounded by cold.

By wet.

Her arms fighting against the water as she brought herself up to the surface, letting out a loud gasp and giggling.

Beau and their slow followers joining in.

“How is it Ariel?” Fred said as he dropped their stack of towels on the pier.

Daphne smiled as she tred the water, “I-It’s perf-perfect!” She shouted up at them, her teeth chattering out Morse code. Freddie only needed to take one look at her blue lips before smirking, “You know what? I think I’m just gonna chill and get some sun. School has made this boy pasty.”

Velma placed her hand on Freddie’s back, resting her head against his bicep.
“Oh boo man, you’re such a wuss.” Beau said as he sent a powerful splash their way. It didn’t even splash the wood under the pier but Fred still flinched in fear of getting wet.

Velma laughed and elbowed him teasingly and dropped the bag with their clothes next to the towels.

Shag stood at the start of the pier, towel tossed carelessly around his neck and sporting one of his old, olive green V-necks to go with his trunks,

Daphne smiled.

Yet another thing that hadn’t changed since high school.

Although, he had started wearing t-shirts to the swimming pool to make local douchebags stop teasing him over how skinny he was.

She’s sure that if they saw him now, they’d be fairly intimidated. Seeing as he was now a giant among men.

His brown eyes seemed to be scanning his surroundings, confusion and concern decorating his gaze.

Her brow creased, “Hey Shaggy, you okay?”

Everyone brought their eyes back towards him as he was snapped out of his trance like state.

The confusion stayed in his eyes as he made eye contact with her and said, “Yeah Daph. I-…I’m fine. Bu-But I swear I heard someone talking, like somewhere nearby.”

The worry vanished and Daphne smiled, sharing a look with Velma and Freddie. Velms took a step toward him and rested her hand on his shoulder, “Shags, be honest. How much did you hit before we left the cabin?” Her voice was soft and patient and Shaggy merely responded by biting his lower lip and letting his eyes scan the area once again.

Finally, he let out a soft laugh and ran a hand through his untamed hair.

With that, the subject was dropped and everyone continued their business.

Beau and Daph splashed water at each other for a couple minutes, her running out of breath quickly from laughing.

Fred teasing them for their grade school levels of flirting.

After Velma had finished lathering her whole body in sunscreen she walked back down the pier and took her spot next to Fred. Shaggy was sitting at the edge of the pier, letting his toes dip into the freezing water.

Everything was perfect, Daph thought as her body became used to the ice water.

Until Velma let out a loud gasp and pointed into the lake, at the spot just a few inches away from where Beau was. “What the fuck is that??!!”

If she wasn’t already at the halfway point of freezing to death, Daph would have felt her blood go cold.

Both Daphne and Beau’s eyes shot towards the spot, backing up a few inches, seeing nothing
Daphne raised her eyebrow and gave Velms a skeptical look. Seeing the corners of Velma’s mouth just barely turn up, Daphne knew she was bullshitting them. It was clear that Beau and Shag were aware of it too as they smirked and Shaggy crossed his arms.

Fred on the other hand, was earnestly looking through the murky water and trying to spot what his asshole girlfriend saw.

“What was it Velma?”

Fred said, his voice dripping with worry and belief that made Daphne’s heart ache and a snicker appear in the back of her throat at the same time.

Bless him to bits.

Velma decided not to back down, now having great trouble keeping a straight face as she once again pointed into the water, “Oh my stars above! It’s…It looks like….”

“Like what?!?!”

“Like my boyfriend!!!”

“What?”

Poor Freddie didn’t even have time to process as his tiny lover shoved him full force over the end of the pier.

A powerful splash drenched Daphne, Beau and Shaggy. All of them letting out a mix of annoyed shouts and loud giggles.

Fred came rushing to the surface, rubbing his eyes and blowing water out of her nose.

He sent Velma a glare as he moved his hair away from of his face, “Honey, you’re a douche! That was not funny! Holy freaking crap- it’s freezing. Oh my, Christ on a bike.” He shivered and directed his glare at the other three as they giggled, bangs in their eyes from being soaked by the Fred Jones Splash Zone.

“Oh my heavens to Betsy, do you see that?! There’s another one!!!”

Velma took a couple steps back, giving everyone but Freddie some time to brace themselves.

“Jesus Christ I- I think it’s a….”

She took a running leap into the lake, aiming a couple feet next to Fred and creating barely any splash.

Popping up quickly she shouted with a smile, “It’s a beautiful girl!”

Freddie wasted no time in placing both of his hands on her shoulders and pushing her back down into the water.

She came back up and laughed, grabbing onto his hands and shouting, “AAAAHHH NOOO!! PLEASE DON’T HURT THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL OF YOUR DREAMS!!!” Everyone continued that laughter for several hours as back and forth they all talked and splashed and raced.

Daphne bailed eventually, for fear of her nail polish.
Gently tugging on Shaggy’s ankle, signaling him to help her up. Which he obliged and smoothly pulled her up to the pier where she took a spot next to him and dipped her feet in the chilled lake.

Giggling and rolling her eyes as her friends made jackasses of themselves.

Shag whispered into her ear, “Forgive them, they are young.”

“Somewhere in my heart, I’m sure I will learn to.”

He smiled brightly at her, and it occurred to her that she hadn’t seen a sincere Shaggy smile for years.

Maybe cutting herself off from him all that time ago was more a mistake than a wise decision.

But for some reason, back then, she saw him as a distraction and she was determined to cut out all distractions.

Although now that they were all together again, Daphne couldn’t remember for the life of her why eighteen-year-old her saw him as a distraction. She must have forgotten it a long time ago in an effort to leave her life under her parent’s roof behind.

The sun began to set, painting a beautiful picture in the lake water filled with orange, red and pink.

The horrifying picture sitting in her room sporting the same sunset was far from her mind.

Daphne laughed as she removed the towel wrapped around her hair and rested it on the coffee table, listening to Fred and Shaggy bounce off each other effortlessly.

“Fred, if you put on the damn Hex Girls one more time on this trip, I will grab your phone and cram it down your throat. Hopefully snuffing you out for good.” A cloud of smoke lingered around him but Daph had become used to it and hardly even acknowledged it anymore.

Fred rested his phone on the counter, an oblivious smirk decorating his face, as The Hex Girls’ only song to ever hit the Hot 100 started playing and Shaggy let out a low whine and sunk into his chair.

Daph smiled and leaned against the armrest of the couch and rested her elbow on it.

She scratched her scalp gently as she stared at the healthy fire they had started in the fireplace.

Listening to the repetitive lyrics of the eco-goth girl band that hadn’t released a new song in ten years paired with the subtle popping of the fire left her whole body feeling soothed.

Velma hummed along from her chair to the left of the couch, opposite Shaggy’s.

She remembered back in their freshman year high school Velma had been absolutely obsessed with The Hex Girls and anything related to them - it had gotten to the point that their music was the only thing she could ever keep her focus on.

Although since then, Velma has forbidden literally anyone from bringing up that dark period in her life where she had been trying to save up to get eyeliner tattooed onto her lids so she wouldn’t need to waste time doing the same wing and waterline deal every morning.

To this day Daphne is sure that’s the only make up skill Velma has ever mastered.
And it will most likely remain that way.

Beau had been sitting to the far left of the couch next to Daphne and sipping on his beer, drumming his finger on the side of the bottle to the beat of the song. Daph had abandoned her’s next to her towel, never really trusting herself to get wasted since her without limitations sounded terrifying.

“All I’m saying is their pro-monster propaganda freaks me the fuck out.” Shaggy shot back to Fred as he walked into the living room.

Well, more like swayed into the living room.

In one smooth motion, he picked up Daphne’s beer bottle and took a long swig as he continued to sway his hips to the music; spinning around the coffee table, he plopped down onto the middle of the couch and threw his legs over Daphne’s lap.

“Shaggy, you sound like a parent from an 80’s movie. Chill the frick down, it’s catchy and that’s the only reason it’s still on my phone.”

Sinking further into his chair, Shag pouted and said nothing.

Daphne smiled softly at him.

“Anyway…..”

Velma said, clearly wanting to move on from the subject at hand.

“Shag you’re up”

Shaggy instantly perked up, hopping out of his seat and taking center stage, sending an evil smirk Freddie’s way. “You can’t dare me to turn off the music Shaggy.” Fred calmly said, taking another sip of Daph’s beer. Shaggy stood stiff for a few seconds, just staring at Freddie in disbelief and confusion.

“Y-you Fred you can’t tell the darer what they can and cannot dare! Exactly what would be the point of this game if you could set limitations on your fate?!?” Shaggy waved his arms around sporadically to further drive his statement into Fred’s head.

But Freddie simply sipped away, eventually sending a glance toward Velma to signal her to end this rant.

Before either of them could make a move, Daph shoved Fred’s legs off her lap and stood up, walking over to the livid man and grabbing the joint from his fingers.

Instantly capturing his attention, Shaggy dropped the rant and locked eyes with Daphne as she awkwardly held the joint, clearly having no idea what to do with it. Shag cocked his head to the side and rested a hand on his hip as he looked down at her, now enticed to see what quiet Kung-Fu Princess Daphne was going to do.

As expected of the ray of sunshine, she returned his treasure to him and said with an almost mother-like authority in the air, “Norv-uh- I mean Shags, in the time that you’ve been ranting about the Hex Girls, the song has almost reached completion.”

She wasn’t sure what the hell she was trying to do by arguing with him, she doubted that a couple sips of beer she had were making her Captain Confrontation.
The longer she stared at his face, and his smirk, the faster she began to talk.

She heard Fred and Velma start to giggle behind her as she sped on saying absolutely fuck all but being exhilarated by it all the same.

Finally, Shaggy decided to spare her by resting his hands on her shoulders and pushed her backwards gently so that she was returned to her spot on the couch next to Fred.

“Okay, I will give out an actual dare if you don’t drink anymore alcohol tonight.”

Daphne tried to shake her head and tell him that she’d barely touched her beer.

But instead her head rocked back and forth and she let out a flighty giggle.

“Freddie.”

Shag was back on center-stage, rubbing his hands together as he thought.

“Truth or dare?”

Fred took a long swig from the bottle before saying, “Let’s go dare buddy.”

Daph giggled again as Shag said, “Yeah as if you had any sort of choice loser.”

After a couple of seconds, he clapped his hands together and pointed at Fred, preparing him for his challenge.

“I dare you……”

He paused for effect.

“To make out with……”

Velma interrupted to say, “Please say Beau, for the love of all that is holy.”

Fred sent a playful glare her way as Beau cleared his throat uncomfortably.

“With that moose over there.”

Everyone was silent for several seconds, sending confused glances to each other before slowly turning around to follow Shaggy’s finger.

There was no moose anywhere in the cabin, thank goodness, so nobody was going to be getting up and screaming bloody murder tonight that was for sure. There was, however, the lone wolf head resting on the wall. “Shags,” Daph said slowly, as if in awe, “That’s not a moose……”

Shag stared blankly at the wolf head for a few seconds before saying, “Whatever man I’m baked out of my fucking brains so let’s just say that Freddie’s gonna go make out with a mysterious creature for our entertainment.”

Everyone laughed and Fred took another gulp from the bottle before handing the bottle back to Daph, “Hold my Capri-Sun Daphne. You got it Shagman.”

“Don’t call me that.”

Shaggy said as he returned to his chair.
Fred smirked before he turned around and hopped over the back of the couch. The second his feet hit the wood floor, it was like he had been transported to a new world. His shoulders relaxed and he rested his hands in his pockets. Starting his seductive walk over toward the mysterious creature, Velma let out a whistle and clapped her hands together.

His saunter lasted a couple of minutes as he paused to pretend to flip his hair over his shoulder and sway his hips to the new song.

Daphne giggled as Fred finally stopped in front of the mysterious creature, resting his hand on his chest and batting his eyelids.

Eventually satisfied with the romantic build up between him and a stuffed wolf head, he finally made a move.

“You know,” Fred stepped forward, “I’ve never met someone quite like you dear.” His hands slid up and around the wolf’s neck, locking his fingers together. He stared up at the creature with a very authentic intensity, one that made Daph’s smile fade, not really sure what she was watching now.

“Shhhh…”

His face was inching closer with every gentle word he said.

“You don’t need to say anything dear, the door’s already open for you…”

Daphne sent a glance over toward Shaggy, his face was decorated with a confused smile, his eyes questioning and the corners of his mouth stiff and turning down with every second.

He made eye contact with her, clearly not sure what they were being presented with.

They broke contact and returned to the show at hand, Fred’s artistic performance that could possibly have a deeper meaning, one that none of them could understand. Finally, the payoff happened and soft human lips met cold wolf teeth.

It could have just stopped there, easily, but this was Fred’s performance and he seemed to have a whole show planned out.

Craning and arching his neck unnaturally to plant his lips in harder to reach places.

Daphne pressed her lips together into a thin line. The sight of Fred’s tongue dancing over the wolf’s barely a tongue was making the nausea come back in a short wave.

Snuffed out by the disturbed fascination she was feeling as Freddie let out a loud gasp, diving back in for more.

Something about how much emotion Fred was showing contrasted by the dead stare of a wolf who couldn’t be damned about just what the hell this guy was doing to it. Burning passion met with a brick wall to create an almost beautiful work of art, but she seemed to be ignoring the fact that this isn’t a Fred thing.

And yet that was definitely Fred making out with a wolf.

But Daphne had lost the ability to ask questions.

However, Shaggy’s brow furrowed and the wheels in his head started turning.

The room was completely silent in an attempt to give Freddie the breathing room he required.
Daphne’s lips still pressed tightly together.

The silence was brought to an end by Fred letting out a long sigh and backing away slowly, a soft, “Thank you.” Escaped his mouth.

Resting his hands in his pockets, he swiftly turned back toward the group of wide-eyed adults.

Daphne wasn’t exactly sure what she was supposed to do now, in response to something like that.

Thankfully, Velma was always good at setting the mood for a room and she did just that by clapping her hands together. Starting a chain reaction of applause throughout the room, with Daphne’s fast and passionate clapping to the less noticeable and unsure applause coming from Shag. Fred smirked and took a bow for his mind-blowing performance, one that had effectively made goosebumps show up all over her body.

“Nice show sweets.” Velma said, raising her bottle toward the ceiling as a show of props.

He blew her a kiss before taking his rightful place on center stage, eyeing each potential subject.

Daph only needed to avoid eye contact with him for a split second before he said, “Daphne-“

“I hate you.” Daphne said dryly, crossing her arms and sending him a cold scowl. He winked at her and clicked his tongue.

“What does it matter Daph?” Velma said, beckoning Freddie to sit on the arm of her chair. She hugged his arm and Daph sent her a look, “What’s that supposed to mean?” Fred and Velma looked down at each other, both smirking before sending that same smirk in Shaggy’s direction. Daphne followed their smirks and saw that Shag was giving them that same knowing smile.

“Oh my God…what is the inside joke here? I’m not getting it!”

“Hey, Daph- like, it’s not an inside joke. I promise.” Shag laughed and she sent him a confused stare, eventually getting her attention drawn back to Velma and Fred.

“Daphne, you just always pick truth that’s it.” Fred smiled widely.

Daph huffed, “That’s impossible, there’s no way that I have never picked dare in the years that I have known you.” Velma shifted around and let go of Fred’s arm, “Well obviously you’ve chosen dare before. But you’d always chicken out and decide to do truth instead.”

She hated how amused they looked by all of this, Daph had never thought of herself as predictable and their teasing was suggesting otherwise.

She bit her lip and rested her hands in her lap, pretending to not see Beau’s big grin.

“Okay, fine.”

She looked over at Fred, that amused look still strong on his face, almost as if he doubted her, and for some reason this only pissed her off. She wasn’t sure why.

“I’m gonna prove you assholes wrong right now.”

Velma crossed her arms and nodded her head, all of it dripping with a condescending attitude.

“Uh huh, okay sweetie.”
Shag watched the exchange, not sure why Fred and Velma were egging her on. And why the hell Daphne was letting them. She had never really let anything get under her skin for too long, but somehow this middle school teasing was rendering her bright red with fists bared. Kinda weird but perhaps Shag wasn’t in the head-space to be seeing the interaction correctly - it was too hard to tell.

Daphne stared them down, their doubt in her making a fire burn in her chest, very ready to stand up and yell at them without questioning the requirement to yell at all.

Instead she ignored their smug faces and looked down at her lap, Shag staring on wondering just what was pissing her off so much about a game of truth or dare.

“Dare.”

It wasn’t even sitting in the air for a second before her voice was followed up by a loud crash coming from behind them.

Her and Shag let out an abrupt shriek before looking at each other, surprised that they were able to scream at the same time and the same pitch. “What in the name of….” Velma quickly stood up, letting Fred grab onto her hand, and walked around the couch.

Slowly, Daphne turned her head with Shag mirroring her.

Behind them, sitting just in front of the kitchen, was a trap door. An open trap door. One that she had never even noticed before.

Freddie and Velms were already standing in front of the new hole in the floor, hands interlocked.

She, Shag and Beau followed after them,形成 a circle around the dark pit of nightmares.

“Okaaaayy…. our cabin has a secret basement and interrogation room windows. Fucking aces.” Shag said with clear annoyance in his voice.

“Velms, did your cousin know about this?”

Daphne looked over at her, awaiting an answer she never got.

Fred spoke before Velma could give any form of an answer.

“Daph….” His voice was laced with honey, and Daphne was detecting a clear trap in those words.

“If you see anything that looks even slightly haunted than scream fucking bloody murder and we’ll know to make a run for it.” Shag shouted after her as she slowly trudged down the stairs.

Like the whiny stairs on the front porch, these stairs liked to list their complaints one step at a time; Daphne cringing all the way. She looked back up the stairs for a quick second, planning to send Shaggy a bright yet annoyed smile, but soon turned her eyes front and center. She wasn’t sure what she was freaked out by, but Daph wasn’t willing to leave her back exposed to the pitch-black basement.

The sub-par flashlight on her cell phone only seemed willing to reveal things a few feet in front of her at a time.

She then wondered why being called predictable pushed her to make the dumbass decision to pick
dare.

Of course, out of nowhere, curiosity pricked at the back of her mind as she saw snippets of the strange things kept in this mysterious secret hole in the ground. She thought she saw a mirror, the helmet from a medieval suit of armor.

Her feet reached the concrete floor and the air was breached by a strong chill.

She ignored the shiver that ran through her whole body and pressed on, wondering if she should have put a timer on instead of them. Velma would never pass up the chance to push Daphne out of her comfort zone and beyond.

Treading lightly, Daph stood stiff a couple feet in front of the staircase.

Mentally counting each minute in her head, sure she had reached five minutes well over five minutes ago.

Sighing, she wondered if she should stubbornly stomp back up the stairs, or venture further into the horror before her.

Another shiver ran through her spine and something whispered to her in the corner of her thoughts, “Take a look around….”

Maybe she was drunk.

Because she listened to that voice.

Aiming her flashlight around and getting closer looks at the strange things surrounding her.

Taking a look directly to her left, she was met with the cold stare of Satan himself.

She followed Shaggy’s strict instruction and screamed bloody murder, taking a step back and feeling arms rest on her shoulders from behind. Not wasting a second, she grabbed her attacker’s arm and prepared to throw him over her shoulder and crack his ribs when they hit the floor.

And was stopped by a startled shout and someone picking up her phone, illuminating the room once again.

Hazel eyes caught her attention and her breathing hitched.

“Shags, oh my God.”

“Kung-Fu Princess, we beg of you. Please do not knock the wind out of Beau until the fifth date, at least.” He let go of her hand and she realized that he had prevented her from clocking out her potential hook up.

She smiled sheepishly and he smirked down at her.

Turning around, she prepared her apology/excuse but was surprised to see that Beau, Freddie and Velma had already moved passed her and were exploring the area. Feeling a bit safer now that five lights were shining instead of one, she followed them.

Shag gave them all a look of disbelief, eyebrows raised.

“So we’re all just choosing to stay down here in the murder basement rather than continue a non-murderous game of truth of dare?” Nobody responded.
With the whole room relatively well lit, several tables with random trinkets were revealed.

Daphne now saw that the thing that terrified her was one of the masks from those old-fashioned diving suits; rusted with shriveled seaweed tangled and strung about. Nothing about that should have scared her, but something about the fogged-up glass freaked her out - as if there was somebody in that suit, watching them.

Turning her eyes away, she moved on.

Once again choosing to forget what she felt.

“Damn Velms,” Daph’s eyes went to Beau, who was lifting up a pickaxe, like the suit, it was rusted and aged. Ancient looking. “Your cousin is into some weird ass stuff.”

“I-uh-I don’t think this is their’s.”

Shag gave Daphne a look and motioned towards the stairs.

And for whatever reason, she simply rolled her eyes and smiled.

“This probably belonged to the same freaks that installed a two-way mirror in a bedroom.” Daph looked back over at Velms and saw that she was holding a heavy looking mask in her hands. Made from some sort of silver metal, Daph was surprised that Velma was holding it with no struggle whatsoever.

Fred was admiring a long, black cape with an eye-catching red lining that was resting on a dressmaker’s mannequin.

Rung was standing next to her, holding a small figurine that looked like a gleaming blue scarab.

Uninterested by the trinket she moved onward through the little shop of horrors.

“Uuuhhhh…..I say we all go back upstairs.”

No answer.

“Or just totally ignore me, that works too.”

Daph stopped at the center table, a pink scarf, a tattered purple robe, a red skull that looked a little too real. The table was covered in junk, but the one thing that caught her eye was a leather-bound book, no title or name in sight.

“Okay can we please stop touching the cursed objects and return to the semi-comfortable place we call home?”

It was as if Shaggy’s words were going through one of Daph’s ears and out the other.

“Oh for the love of- Daph can you please dare these idiots to go back upstairs?!”

His request came out as white noise as she picked up the book, gliding her fingers along the aged leather. Turning it around, she examined the back with still no engraving in sight. Biting her lip, she opened the book to the cover page. She let out a soft gasp when she saw small, neat handwriting.

“Lena Dupree, 1827”
She gasped again and said, “You guys…”

Everyone’s attention was drawn away from their item of choice and toward Daph and her old ass journal.

“Take a look at this.”

Shag walked toward her and jumped in, “O-Or…better idea—we just go back upstairs and not read anything.”

It was too late for that, the other three had already surrounded her, pushing her to read it.

Clearing her throat, she began, “November 17th, 1827. Simone and I have become used to the dead trudging around on our island. Sometimes I’ll see Moonscar reduced to being a pile of pitiful flesh. Seeing him dead doesn’t bring my husband back.”

“What the hell was this lady smoking?” Velma said with a chuckle, one that they all reciprocated save for Shaggy who had his arms crossed and scowled, not liking this one bit.

“Guys can we just stop and leave this stuff alo- “

He quickly spun around, rubbing the back of his neck and whispering, “What the fuck……???”

Not thinking anything of him turning back to them and saying, “Did you guys seriously not hear that??!!” Daph continued to read. Skipping several pages ahead she stopped in the middle,

“December 3rd 1901,”

She paused and looked up, that was over seventy years that had passed, everyone simply shrugged.

“Today Simone brought me to the middle of our pepper fields with the crescent moon still young in the sky. She undressed me. At first, I was afraid but she told me I had nothing to fear, it was only the darkness and her that saw me. She fed me the ripe peppers till my lips were numb and my eyes were full.”

“Jesus….” Shag said softly, awestruck at how entertained his friends were by this.

“I was touched in many ways that night, but I am not sure if the tears were from my pain or from the peppers. Perhaps Simone didn’t want me to know. Didn’t want me to miss my husband.”

“Christ- Daph I don’t think we should be reading this.” Shaggy took a step toward her to grab the book, and Velma quickly slapped his wrist. “Oh my God Shag yank the pole out your ass and let us have a good time!” Daphne ignored the anger that pricked when she saw how he recoiled away from Velms.

“Keep reading Daph.” Beau rested his hand on the small of her back, raising her heartbeat and heating up her cheeks.

Clearing her throat, she continued, “May 19th, 1910. I think Simone has stopped taking me into the fields at night. But I can hear her take Jacque out instead. Was I that loud when she did those things to me? Between the wailing of the dead and the moaning from the pepper fields, I have yet to get enough rest. And with less people coming to the island of their own will, I am forced to repeat the actions from the pepper field on the mainland to lure the men in. If Jean could see me now I wonder if he’d recognize me…”
Her eyes widened as she skipped down to the bottom of the page.

“Holy hell...”

Fred attempted to peer in over her shoulder, “What is it?! Spill!!”

“Shove off loser! There’s some stuff written in legit Latin down here!”

Shag let out a nervous chuckle, “Okay, I’m drawing a line in the fucking sand. Daphne, please do not read the Latin!” Once again, white noise. It almost confused Daphne that Shag’s words of all things had turned into background noise as curiosity egged her on.

But those thoughts were gone in a flash as she decided to just read the Latin.

“Suus terror tempus iterum. They got vos currit per noctem. Suus terror tempus iterum. Et tu iustus ut mori pauoris. Illud terrible tempus.”

The second she read those words, and probably mispronounced all of them, the room went cold and their cell phones flickered. Something had happened, but none of them payed any mind to it and simply brushed it off as the basement always being that cold.

And everyone smirked and shook their heads as Shag said, “Are you guys actually fucking deaf?? Do you not hear somebody talking??!!”

- 

One thing you’d probably notice about Fred was that he was gorgeous.

A regular Greek God of broad shoulders and piercing blue eyes, hitting puberty at fourteen. And by that, I mean he got hit by an eighteen-wheeled truck of the stuff and it knocked him hard into the asphalt.

When he stood up, unscathed, from the wreckage he looked like the next captain of the football team.

Girls lining up around the corner to send him subtle hints to ask them out and hope he’d get them.

But instead of ever joining the football team, he joined the theater. That’s how him and Daph had first met, she was the costume designer and he was the over dramatic props master. Naturally they took a shine to each other and as far as Daphne can remember, Freddie had just kinda never left.

She was cursed with late night chats about the girls he liked and the latest knots he had learned.

But, at least it was a two-way street, she plagued him with rants about being disappointed by the guy of the week as well as attempting to teach him simple self-defense tactics.

They would always break out in laughter when the rumor that they were dating resurfaced every so often, knowing that it only happened because they’d go to a dance together and cheerleaders would start talking. That was ended the day Fred met Velma.

Daphne had never seen Freddie stutter and tumble over his words that badly within the time she had known him.

Velma on the other hand remained totally oblivious to Fred’s puppy-dog eyes until senior year when he decided to pull out the last resort.
Stealing lines from rom coms.

Velma’s exact words, some Daph continues to quote just to spite him, were, “Jones, you are definitely the biggest fuckin’ loser at this sad excuse for a high school and my parents would rather me marry a guy with a ponytail than a theater nerd.”

Daphne felt bad for finding that statement as funny as it was, but she knew that it made Fred feel good inside because he’d get to remember the rest of that story.

One where Velma grabbed his ascot and yanked him down far enough to kiss him.

“But you are beautiful—…and I don’t deserve you. But God in Heaven above knows I want you.”

And she kept him, practically fused him to her side.

Daphne and Shag had been making bets to see when they’d finally go out somewhere without the word “platonic” being stamped in between them in bright, red letters.

The fact that Shaggy won told Daph he was more aware of romance than she initially suspected.

Something people always assumed about Daphne was that she had a boyfriend every other week and that she was able to wrap any guy around her little finger.

While Daph wished that was how she could describe herself during high school, it was far from the truth.

The truth would be that Fred and Velma were total studs, hopping from one date to the next every week.

While her and Shag kinda sat in the back with no real interest.

Daph’s reason being she wanted to date somebody, and genuinely want to.

She knew hoping to date somebody for love was a sore expectation from a teenager, but that was the way she wanted it and that was that.

Shaggy had never given any sort of explanation as to why dating hardly impressed him. But at this point he had discovered weed and Daphne’s opinion had become biased since one of her best friends becoming a stoner wasn’t something she supported.

There were times when Daphne wondered if she should have taken a chance and asked Freddie out like society expected.

And then there were times where she’d be sitting on the couch in a cabin in the woods, watching her best friend roll his hips and point his butt out way too close to her face. She then would be proud to say she had absolutely no regrets.

Daphne and Beau watched with wide eyes as Fred twirled and shook his hips in a surprisingly fluid motion, grabbing onto the mantel as if it were his pole.

Letting out a soft chuckle, Daph sent a look over to Beau who smirked at her and sipped his beer.

Velma bit her lip and rolled her eyes, legs crossed and arms hidden away in the sleeves of her turtleneck. Shaggy didn’t even understand exactly why this was being treated as just a normal afternoon show, a regular occurrence. Daph saw him freeze when Fred turned around to face him, locking eyes with him and crossing his arms.
“Like what you see Shag?”

Shaggy let out a nervous giggle, sending that trademark call for help toward Daph.

But her default reaction to Shag’s antics over the past few hours had become an apologetic smile and a shrug of the shoulders.

And that’s exactly what she sent him.

A flicker of confusion ran over Shaggy’s features before he turned back to Freddie.

“Like, I’d like it better if it wasn’t on display right in front of me.”

Everyone laughed just a little too hard, in unison.

And this time it wasn’t acknowledged.

Shaggy eyed Beau, who had been thumbing through the depressing journal they had found in the nightmare hole beneath them. Daphne heard him gasp as Fred walked up to him and grabbed his joint, placing it between his lips and twirling toward Velma as she got up from her seat. She gave him a grin and placed her hands on his hips.

Daph looked away, deciding to peek over Beau’s shoulder.

He was examining the pages with the Latin written on the bottom of each page.

Leaning comfortably on his shoulder without a hint of shame or embarrassment, as if this was the norm.

Beau really did seem to relax her easily.

She felt her eyelids grow heavy, letting her cheek smush into his shoulder. Shaggy’s voice sounded somewhere far away, waking her up with no effort, “I have some theories about all this weirdness....” Daphne looked over toward him, wanting to roll her eyes. For some reason. Velma snorted, “Alrighty-o that’s our cue to leave, come on Freddie.”

Freddie chuckled loudly, being interrupted by his own snorts, gripping hard onto Velma’s hand as she dragged him toward the front door.

As she saw him stumble and almost trip, Daphne sat back up.

“Fred…. are you sure you don’t wanna go lay down for a bit?”

He looked back at her as Velma opened the front door, revealing the dark forest surrounding them. Only the moon able to provide a haunting light.

Giggling again as Velms said, “Daph, we’re gonna do plenty of lying down, you can trust me on that.”

“Make good choices!” Beau yelled after them, earning another loud giggle from Freddie as he closed the door behind them.

Everything was silent for several seconds, Daph just listened to the crunching of the leaves outside the cabin until even that was gone. Suddenly Daphne felt strange, as if whatever she was doing has no relevance compared to whatever Velma and Fred had decided to do. Was she really just that boring that without her best friends present, she simply became a background character in her own
life?

That was until she felt someone grip onto her upper arm and draw her gaze away from the front door.

She gave a small smile at the sight of Shag leaning down and signaling for her to follow him.

Seeing as Beau’s attention was drawn back into the journal, she doubted he’d miss her for a few minutes.

She stood up slowly, not minding that they were now close enough that their knees were bumping into each other. Shag on the other hand took great notice and stepped back, cheeks red and eyes looking to the left of her. Daphne smiled once again and tilted her head, moving into his line of sight. “What’s up Shags?”

Clearing his throat and shoving his hands into his pockets, still avoiding eye contact, he made his way over to the kitchen with Daphne following close behind.

He stopped in front of the famed wolf and turned around, yelping when Daph bumped into his chest.

Daphne laughed and took a step back, crossing her arms behind her back.

“What’s the situation Shag?”

He stared down at her for a couple seconds, she could see his mind jumping from one thought to another. Finally, he looked her in the eyes, surprising her with how intense he looked, “Have you really not noticed how everything’s been off since we got here??” Daph’s brow furrowed and she shook her head.

Groaning, he went on, “Everybody is acting more whacked than normal and you of all people didn’t pick up on it? Since when is Freddie the horny blonde girl from every movie with teenagers played by 24-year olds? He wears ascots as part of his everyday outfits for crying out loud.”

Somehow, Daph brushed this all off with a shrug.

He gave her a look of disbelief, slack jawed and confused, “Okay…. well since when is Velma pulling out all this alpha male bullshit? I mean come on, her dream is to be in fucking Mensa! She’s in Elias with a full ride and everything and now she’s lashing out at her friends for wanting to leave a basement?”

Shag’s questions were met with a blank stare.

He scoffed and crossed his arms, finally coaxing Daph to say something.

“They’re just drunk Shags.” She placed a hand on his shoulder and both of their gazes lingered on the action before Shaggy looked back to her, “Daphne I’ve been to some of the craziest keggers snobby Elias can offer. I have seen Fred and Velma so fucking drunk that they can’t even comprehend reality itself, unable to even function as lumps. This…. this is not what drunk Fred and Velma look like.”

Daph sighed, “Than maybe it’s something else……”

He followed her gaze down to the joint resting between his fingers.
Realization washed over his face and he shook his head, “Daph, I-I don’t think it’s any of the fun stuff that’s turning our friends into celebutants.”

Daphne put her hands on her hips, signaling for him to get on with it.

Shag bit his lip, “……I think somebody is working behind the scenes, whispering orders to us and trying to confuse us into doing their bidding. Like some sort of fucked up puppet show. That’s why people keep whispering for us to go into the basement, to read a cursed journal. They’re preparing us for something…”

He began to lower his voice, almost to the point of a whisper, as if afraid that somebody could hear them.

Or worse, was listening to them.

Daphne suddenly became very aware of the fact that dead, glass, wolf eyes were watching the whole conversation unfold.

His brown eyes now locked onto her’s, true concern and, even worse, fear was swimming in them. Her gaze softened and she squeezed his shoulders, this felt very real to him.

“So, you’re suggesting that Freddie and Velma have apparently become teenage clichés because of unseen, effed up puppeteers?”

She heard the air conditioner whir, and in a split-second Shag’s worried face relaxed and his eyes seemed to be dozing off.

A shiver ran down her spine as he stared down at her and replied, “Pop Tarts? Did you say Pop Tarts? Did we bring some down here? Because I could definitely go for a Pop Tart and Jelly sandwich, just like Mama Shag used to make.”

He looked back toward the kitchen, as if scanning it he’d be able to spot the treat.

Smiling, Daph pat his cheek gently and said softly, “Shaggy, I absolutely love you to bits, but you are really high.”

With that, she turned around and headed back to the couch.

The last thing she heard was, “I’m……gonna go read a book with pictures.” And then she walked around the chair and climbed into Beau’s arms.

- 

Daphne, status report.

“Well I am currently sitting on a subpar couch in the living room of a cabin nestled in the middle of some really gorgeous woods. Also, I am shoving my tongue down Beau’s throat, reminding myself that I’m more used to making out with middle aged men and not hotties with more energy.”

Beau’s hands were resting on her hips, drawing smooth circles over her shirt.

She wasn’t totally sure how she had managed to achieve this, the last thing she remembered was discovering Beau, the athletics major, could read ancient Latin fluently.

And then she was running her hands through his hair and letting him bite her lip.
Something she hadn’t really experienced since Yantz.

They had continued that standard bob and weave for several minutes, parting every so often to breathe and admire how swollen their lips had become. Man, she was out of shape.

She had dived back in for another taste when a red alert went off, Beau’s hands began sliding under her shirt. For some reason his hands were really freakin’ cold, even with the fire blaring in front of them. She pulled back, letting go of his neck, “I don’t wanna- I mean I’ve never really……I mean…. I have but- “

Daph looked down at her hands in confusion.

Now that was something totally off to her.

She of all people would know whether she was a virgin or not. And her several late night “tutoring” sessions with Yantz were proof enough that she wasn’t.

What made her say any of that?

Her questions were cut off by Beau’s cold as death hands grabbing her own, “Hey…anything you feel comfortable with, okay?” His eyes soothed her, and she nodded.

Squeezing his hands back, she moved back in, eyes locked on his lips.

She almost jumped out of her skin when Shag strolled passed them and toward the front door.

“Y’all sure you don’t wanna save it for the pepper fields?”

Daphne rolled her eyes, face hotter than the fire itself.

They both remained silent until he had exited the cabin, not even bothering to ask him where he was going. Beau chuckled, “Has he always been like that?” Daph smiled fondly and nodded, “Ever since high school, Shags had never really given a shit what anyone said or thought of him.”

“That must be a nice way to live.”

She nodded again, “His family is just as loaded as mine, so we were both able to connect when it came to the expectations thrown on us.”

Directing her gaze to the fireplace, she said, “He’s kinda been there for me in areas where Velma and Freddie just never totally got it. They tried but…. they never hit it right on the nose like Shag could.”

Her heart lurched as she continued, fingers clasped together, “But…. when I graduated I—...I decided to cut him off.” She bit her lip and sighed, surprised by Beau’s question, “Why? Did he do something?” She froze for a second, not having a clear answer to give him. Because she had forgotten the answer to that question a long time ago.

Shag had never done anything wrong as far as she could recall, he had always just been Shaggy.

There for her when Freddie wasn’t.

Able to relieve tension that would normally drive her insane.

Making her laugh and bothering to participate in any form of banter with her.
The corners of her lips turned up as fond memories resurfaced.

“You know….one time we had both been given detention for “shouting profanities” in the cafeteria—

“You got detention for swearing? How strict was your high school?”

Daphne waved him off and kept going, “And they decided to make us decorate the gym for a student council party thing, whatever that wasn’t important. Anyway, I had set up a speaker to play music, which Shaggy gracefully sang along to.”

Beau laughed, “That guy can sing?”

“Like an angel actually.”

He rolled his eyes and she motioned for him to shut up, “So they had just waxed the floors the day before, and…” Daph had taken a break to giggle at the memory before carrying on.

“Shag had convinced me to ditch my shoes and we just slid around on the floor for hours, dancing and singing along to whatever my phone decided. Until the janitor came in and told us students had to leave so he could lock the doors.” She remembered how shocked her and Shaggy were to realize they’d been dancing there until the school had closed.

“Kinda cool how you’ve been able to stay in touch with your best friends from high school this long.”

Beau threw an arm over her shoulder, sensing that the make out session was over.

At least for now.

Daphne nodded and grinned.

“Not really sure where I would be without Fred. Probably 200 pounds heavier and covered in bed sores.”

Fred had been the one to pull her out of her self pity when Yantz had severed all ties with her via email. Spraying her with water until she was willing to open the curtains and get some sun. Taking her out to talk to people other than him and herself.

He was a saint for not letting her wallow in her BS.

They spent the rest of their time reading entry after entry in the journal. Not really sure what to make of Lena’s claims about them draining the lives of thousands of people to bring her and Simone energy to live another hundred years.

Daphne’s thoughts drifted to Shaggy’s words to her, that there was something wrong with Fred and Velma.

Puppeteers.

She didn’t even need linger on that word for a moment because the tell-tale sound of Shaggy’s shriek sounded from just outside the cabin.

Her and Beau shot up, eyes locking on the front door.

“What the hell?” Daphne bit her lip, she knew it wasn’t hard to get a scream out of Shag, but that
wasn’t just any sort of all’s well that ends well kind of scream. That was bloodcurdling. The hair on the back of her neck was still raised when Beau said in a pitched voice, “May-Maybe that was just the wind?”

Slowly, Daph turned to look at him, eyes wide and eyebrows raised.

She stared at him like that for several seconds, hoping that he realized that was the stupidest fucking thing she’d heard him say since she met him that morning.

One day and he had somehow got her to French him on the couch.

Puppeteers were starting to seem a lot more probable.

She continued to stare him down with shame in her eyes and, lucky for Beau, was stopped by the door practically flying open, slamming into the wall.

Daph yelped and turned to see just who had kicked open the door with the force of fucking Thor.

Her heart dropped down to her stomach when she saw that it was Shaggy and………a blood covered Velma.

Her glasses were gone and her eyes were filled with tears that continued to pour down her cheeks as she moved to close the door. There was a sizable bruise on her forehead and her lower lip was split with blood dripping down her chin.

Hair matted and clumps of mud and leaves stuck in it.

As Daph examined her, finding everything totally beaten and messed up, a thought popped into her head.

Where was Fred?

She remained frozen as Shag began going around and slamming the shutters on the windows shut, closing the simple locks on all of them. Both of them were panting hard, hands shaking and constantly fidgeting.

“What the hell happened to you guys?” Beau walked over to Velma, she looked up a him with a stiff face, tears still flooding down her face.

“I…. they came-…”

She wasn’t able to finish her sentence before looking back to the front door.

Knocking.

First quiet and hard to pinpoint.

Now loud and moving.

Starting at the wall next to Shag who stepped back almost holding his breath.

Daph’s eyes stayed on his shaking hands for a few seconds before gasping as the knock moved.

Getting louder and faster with each knock.

Daphne closed her eyes when the sound finally pounded from the front door.
Velma let out a strained sob, trying not to make a sound as she jumped for the knob and locked the door.

Not a second too late because as soon as she backed away from the door, the knob jiggled, starting out gentle than turning vigorous just like that, shaking the whole door. Daphne prayed that the knob didn’t fall off and give whatever was terrorizing them a chance to pounce in and skin them alive. Then it popped into her head, just was the hell was it that showed up out of nowhere and attacked their cabin?

It was safe to assume that this thing had found Freddie and Velma and then-

The shaking had stopped.

Nobody breathed as they waited for a sign that they were alone again.

Finally, Daph heard Shag let out a low sigh of relief which she mimicked.

Velma ran her hands through her hair before wiping her cheeks and sniffing.

Daphne walked around the couch and stopped to stand right in front of Velma.

Velma looked up at her for a couple seconds before sighing, voice breaking as she said, “We need to get out of here…. right now.”

Beau nodded.

“With just us? Velma where the hell is Fred?”

“Daph….” Shag said, standing next to her.

Velma avoided her eyes, “They got him Daphne…I-…. we can’t do anything.”

Daphne stared down at her, hands on her hips and shaking her head, “No. I think the fuck not. I am not going anywhere without him.” Shaggy and Velma flinched as she raised her voice.

Shag gasped as she abruptly turned around and walked toward the door.

Stopping when he grabbed her wrist, “Daphne no you can’t!”

“I am not going anywhere without my best friend assholes! Got it?!” Ripping her arm from his grip and met with more objections in hushed tones. She quickly unlocked the door, she was gonna get Fred back with or without their help. Sighing, she threw the door open and began to make her exit. Stopping short at the sight of a dark figure standing in front of her on the porch.

Eyes white and skin green and black.

A strange crescent shaped scar under his right eye.

He was maybe seven feet tall, possibly taller.

Decked out in pirate gear way too intricate to have been bought at Party City.

Daphne took in all these details for a split second before letting out a scream and backing up.

The creature made no noise as he threw something at her, something she hadn’t noticed he was carrying in his hands.
She caught it, breathing heavy and heart beating out of her chest.

For a moment she couldn’t actually process what it was she had caught, just being confused by the sticky red stuff that was spreading on her shirt and hands.

Hearing a door slam she stared down at the thing in her hands, now realizing what she was looking at was the back of a head. It was very familiar, somehow.

“Oh my God….” She heard Shaggy say breathlessly.

The room went totally cold as she began to turn the head around.

Velma let out another stifled sob.

Fred’s blue eyes looked up at Daphne from her hands, glossed over and pale.

And in that moment, everything imploded and Daphne could’ve sworn her heart stopped.

She knew she didn’t have time for crying.

Crying would get her discovered by Mr. Seven-Foot-Tall Monster.

Everything ached.

Her shoulder from when she was shoved into her door.

Her ankle from twisting her body around without that foot following.

Her chest from trying to hold in all the tears.

She was alone in a room full of flowers, not really able to process where she was.

Velma had first suggested that they go room by room, block up windows and plot their course to the camper. And always staying together.

But they hadn’t made it to the hallway before she changed her mind and suggested they split up and block the windows alone to cover more ground. And if Daphne hadn’t been borderline hysterical at that point, she would have agreed with Shag’s, “…..What??” And not simply nodded along with Beau. Of course, at that moment the creature that lives in your nightmares broke down the simple wooden door, kicking it off its hinges and almost knocking Daphne down had Shaggy not grabbed her and tugged her out of range. They then all made a break for the closest room they could manage.

Leaving Daphne alone in a flower room.

The image of Fred’s lifeless head flashing over and over in her mind.

She had just left him there.

Just dropped him down on the floor, out of shock, out of fear.

Curl up on the floor and really wanting to throw up.

That’s where she was now.
She looked at the lone window, almost like a beacon drawing monsters in. For a few moments all she could accomplish was crawling toward the armoire next to the window. Her arms having clear trouble supporting her weight as they shook under her. But when she heard the crunching of leaves coming from the other side of that window she began to cry. Standing up and forcing herself to run next to the heavy piece of furniture.

Cringing at the loud noise it made, scratching along the wood floor.

She had just pushed it in front of the window before she heard the sound of glass shattering and the armoire began to rock back and forth.

He was gonna push it over.

He was gonna get in.

He was gonna kill her.

She took a step back away from the window, knowing she should run since staying here wasn’t helpful to her goal of living.

But instead she stood still, standing straight with tears streaming, and screamed as loud as she could.

Calling out for help without so much as moving an inch.

Puppeteers.

That word appeared again.

But it was gone once again as she continued to scream.

Watching the armoire tip forward before knocking back into the wall, tilting forward more with every push.

Her screaming must’ve been echoing through the whole cabin at this point, but she still didn’t stop. Almost choking as she tried to shriek and sob at the same time, which wasn’t working out for her at all. Somehow screaming even louder at the sight of the mirror over the dresser shattering and somebody jumping through it.

Instantly shutting up when she saw that the thing that jumped through her mirror was Beau.

Standing up, he looked at her and then at the shaking closet.

He said nothing as he grabbed her hand and pulled her back toward the new hole in the wall.

She looked back for a couple seconds, realizing that was a bad idea as the thing had succeeded in pushing down his obstacle, it banged hard onto the floor.

Beau had lost patience and tugged her into the other room.

She cried out in pain as the glass cut her legs.

But as she now stood in the room full of animal heads, Beau still didn’t let her sit still. Crouching down and grabbing onto a ring in the floor, one she hadn’t even noticed before.

She now saw that it was another entrance into the basement.
Beau threw it open before standing up and pushing Daphne down into it, following after her shortly and grabbing onto the rope that would close the door over them.

Just barely escaping the monster, he fell down to his knees. Daph stood next to him, pulling out her cell phone and turning on the flashlight.

She let out a breath as she realized they were now in a different area of the basement.

Walking over to the table against the far-right wall, she saw that it was covered in several little dolls, all with different faces and features. She reached down to touch one and was surprised to feel that they were made of wax. She saw there was one of them with a distinct scar under the right eye.

She let out a loud gasp that caught Beau’s attention.

“What happened Daph?”

He stood up and walked over to her.

“This all started with Lena and Simone.”

“The girls from that journal?”

She nodded and looked at him.

“They would kill people and make these wax dolls of them. It said in the journal that the dead gave them energy……”

She bit her lip, she didn’t really need to find out why a seven-foot-tall fuel for her trauma was trying to kill her; but it did help her keep her sanity to try. This was keeping her distracted, until she felt the tears in her eyes once again, “This is probably where they’d kill these people, a-and this is gonna be where the people are gonna kill us. Probably like they killed Lena and Simone!”

Her breathing sped up and she was on the verge of hyperventilating.

“Hey! Hey…. It’s….it’s gonna be okay Daphne.”

She sniffed and shook her head, he lifted both of his hands up to her cheeks to caress them, wiping away stray tears.

“Daphne, I need you to keep it together okay? Otherwise we’re never gonna make It through this...”

She stared into his eyes, still having trouble breathing, and saw the tears brimming in his eyes as well.

Swallowing the lump in her throat, she finally nodded and let out a shaky breath. He smiled brightly and pulled her into his arms, squeezing her tight and giving her warmth.

Finally feeling safe enough to smile back, nuzzling into the crook of his neck.

She just wanted to stay safe like this for a few more minutes.

But she didn’t even get a few more seconds before the warmth was pulled from her arms once again.

Beau let out a loud scream of agony as he began to be dragged back towards the door above them.
Daph screamed after him as she saw the monster dragging him up with a chain that was attached to a bear trap. A bear trap that was now lodged in his back.

With the light shining on him, Daphne now saw that this wasn’t the same monster that threw Fred’s head at her. This one looked like it was wearing a confederate soldier’s uniform, a scar less face unless you counted decomposition as a scar.

Bearing her teeth, Daph looked around for a weapon.

Spotting a long, thin rod, probably used to make the wax for the dolls, sitting on the table. Grabbing it, she turned back around and made a run towards Beau. She grabbed onto his shoulders and tugged him down with all the upper body strength she could summon. As soon as she felt Beau touch down she looked back up at the monster and scowled. Pointing the rod up she yelled, “So you like pain?!”

Jumping up again, she began to stab at his chest as fast as she could.

Making sure to ignore the all too human cries of anguish he let out.

Her arms were covered in a thick black liquid and she sealed her mouth shut tight.

She heard the creature choke and sputter, before finally going still and leaving her with total silence.

Falling back down to the ground, she panted and watched the lifeless lump of flesh with black blood. “How’s that for you?” Normally, in a horror movie, this is when the stupid main characters would be led into a false sense of security and then the big bad would pop back to life long enough to murder them. Daphne refused to be a stupid main character.

She winced as her hand felt like it had suddenly fallen asleep, causing her to drop her only weapon. And for whatever reason, she didn’t react at all.

Looking over at Beau, she nodded and confirmed to him that they were currently safe.

He let out a long sigh and Daph was about to come over and see if the bear trap left some deep wounds in his back. But the universe seemed to refuse to let her get even a mere five seconds of relaxed breathing time.

She let out a loud scream as she heard a door open behind her.

Turning around to see the new thing that was gonna kill them, she was all too relieved to see that it was Velma wearing her pair of back up glasses that she must’ve gotten from her room.

“Velma! Oh thank Jesus….”

She took a step forward and Velma let out a sigh of relief, “I can’t believe I found you guys…… I-…I- um…. I found a way out.” And without wasting another second, Beau and Daphne followed after Velma through the door that led to a dark hallway.

They all sped up, eventually breaking into a sprint.

Daphne felt the tears return when she saw moonlight at the end of the hall.

Somehow, Velma managed to find an outdoor entrance to the cellar, one that brought them out
next to the house.
The camper now in sight, they all let out joyful laughs and began to run for it again.

But then Daphne stopped again, frowning and looking back at the house.

“What about Shaggy?”

Velma stopped in her tracks, turning around with sadness in her eyes.

Dread seeped into every pore of Daphne’s skin. Her answer ringing out like some kind of cruel joke.

“He’s gone Daphne….”

- 

It was grueling to think that the last twenty-four hours that had passed were the first hours Daphne had spent with Shaggy in almost three years.

And now, they had also been the last.

Losing him and Fred in the same hour had ripped something out of her.

She was only able to stand in shock in front of the cabin for a couple of seconds, before Beau screamed for her to run; narrowly missing getting a knife thrown into her back.

Now she was staring out the window of the camper as Velma had pushed pedal to the metal.

She was crying.

Hard.

But Daphne didn’t make a peep.

Her face wasn’t contorted in any form of sadness or pain.

But the tears were still there.

She could hear Velma and Beau talking in the front seats, mainly about getting to the nearest major city and getting somebody to come back down there.

With guns. Preferably big ones.

But all she could think about was how Shag had taken her to homecoming once, the day after her boyfriend at the time had dumped her.

All these memories she never bothered to revisit, coming back up along with the tears.

She could have experienced amazing things with Shaggy.

She could have helped Fred plan his and Velma’s wedding.

So many things that she might have wanted to do.

She had never even thought to ask Shag for his phone number had she? Of course she didn’t, Daph had planned to drag out their reconnecting and eventually be brave enough to get his digits. Not
like dragging it out would do her any good now. Shaggy was dead.

Her best friend was dead.

It was like the world was getting rid of her second chances, no take-backs and no do-overs.

The camper hit a bump, shaking her up in her seat and causing her to whack her elbow against the
glass. Daphne let out a cry of pain, louder than it needed to be but all she felt like doing was
screaming at this point. Beau and Velma turned back to look at her. “Daphne are you alright?!”

Something inside her wanted to snap at him.

None of them were alright.

Two of them were dead and three of them were bruised and beaten, hardly any fight left in them.

But instead she bit her tongue so hard she tasted iron and nodded her head. She felt tears landing on
her lap and soaking her jeans.

Beau slowly turned his attention back to the front, helping Velma remember how they got here in
the first place.

Clearly, he knew she wasn’t okay. The wounds in his back were harder to see now that the whole
back of his shirt was soaked with blood, blending the whole mess together.

Daph wondered how those monsters had killed Shaggy, blood boiling at the idea of him dying the
same way Fred did. The first thing she was gonna do when they came back here with guns was get
back Fred’s head, and hopefully find Shaggy’s body. They deserved some rest literally anywhere
besides here.

A sigh of relief ran throughout the RV as the trees surrounding them disappeared and was replaced
by dirt road and the night sky.

Daphne stared up at the moon, desperate to keep her sanity.

She knew full well that she looked insane enough without being insane.

But she was definitely close to having that quintessential breakdown.

Time had passed slowly for her since Shag had been taken down, so she wasn’t really sure how
long they had actually been driving when she was brought out of her moon gazing by relieved
laughs. Coming from both Beau and Velma as they high fived each other at the sight of the tunnel
they had originally traveled through to get to this nightmare in the first place.

As they entered the tunnel Daph clasped her hands tightly in her lap.

This seemed too easy didn’t it?

Daphne had seen her fair share of horror movies; the fun stuff wasn’t usually over this early.

Unfortunately, the law of horror movies was that if you thought about how easy it was than it was
only going to get harder. Her ears rang at the sound of an explosion coming from right in front of
them.

“What the hell was-….. Velma!! Back up!! Back up!! Back up!!!”
“What the fuck is… I’m going!!! I’m going!!”

Daphne stood up and gripped hard onto the back of Velma’s seat, watching everything in front of them collapse and attempt to close them in. The hairs on the back of her neck stood up and she screamed as the explosion began to catch up with them.

Finally, they got out of the tunnel, the destruction no longer chasing after them.

Velma slammed hard on the breaks, sending Daph falling backwards and letting out a whimper as she bumped her head on the floor. Biting her lower lip to prevent it from trembling as she sat up, ignoring how dizzy she felt and how the moonlight was giving her a headache. Everyone panted hard, just staring at the caved in tunnel.

Their only way out of this hell.

Velma stood up from her seat, “What the fuck is going on here? No fucking way this shit’s for real!!”

Her voice was cracking which only made the lump in Daph’s throat heavier.

Velma rarely cried, and when she cried the situation must’ve been pretty hopeless.

With her boyfriend dead, rotting seven-foot tall monsters after them and their only way out was gone, I guess it was fair that she wanted to cry.

Daphne felt like that’s all she had been doing since Fred’s head was thrown at her.

- 

Velma and Daph leaned against the side of the camper watching Beau limp back and forth frantically. Optimism telling him that there just had to be a way out of this, there couldn’t be a bad situation without some good somewhere.

Daphne simply thought if there was good anywhere, someone else was using it all up and not giving any to them.

Fuck that guy.

She was still crying, although her crying state had been so constant that she hardly bothered to wipe her eyes.

Slowly, she turned to look at Velma, her eyes were red and puffy and her busted lip trembled.

“Velms…. this isn’t a great time to tell you this but…..”

“How isn’t a great time for anything Daph, I say tact has kinda been thrown out the window at this point.” She looked up as Daph with a forced smirk, one that broke Daphne’s heart.

Looking down at her feet and twiddling her thumbs she chuckled, “I suppose you’re right……”

She let out a long breath and looked up at the starless sky, one she didn’t see a point in questioning, resting her head against the side of the RV with a soft *thunk. *

“He was gonna propose to you……”

“Ha…. Of course he was. God that guy is such a sap.” That was the sentence that finally broke her
down, Velma couldn’t hold it in anymore. “I-…I need him. Nothing is gonna work without him…. ” Daphne closed her eyes, the tears running down her cheeks began to flow faster.

She had gone with him to pick out the ring and everything.

It had taken them days of browsing, Fred’s perfectionism met with his adoring love for Velma meant that no simple ring would suit his tastes. When they finally did find one, he decided to hide it and keep it safe until the time was right for him to propose.

Daphne had no clue what he did with it, but maybe Velma would find it, someday.

She opened her eyes again at the sound of Velma walking away from the side of the camper. Her arms were crossed and her cheeks were wet, “Fuck all of this!” She stared out toward the cliff preventing them from freedom.

“Do you have any climbing equipment?!”

Beau said with a spark of hope in his voice.

“In my fucking dorm room!”

Daphne groaned and put her head in her hands.

“Ugh it’s right there! I can practically reach it!!”

Daph’s eyes popped open and she looked over at Velma with a wide stare. “Say that again Velms?” Velma turned around eyebrows raised, “Our escape is so fucking close I can taste it.” Daph walked over toward the other two, concentrating on not losing her balance. Her head was throbbing but that was the least of their worries.

“Didn’t we bring Beau’s dirt-bike?”

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“Alright, I’m gonna jump this ravine, ride to the nearest city, get some help, and bring back some fucking guns. You guys need to promise to stay alive.”

The engine of the bright green dirt-bike rumbled, definitely drawing attention to them. But at this point Daph was ready to run whenever.

She nodded at Velma’s statement, finally bothering to wipe her eyes.

Beau pat her on the back and she smiled up at him.

Daphne sniffled and gave her a hug, squeezing her tightly she said, “We’ll find the ring that sap got you one day okay?” Velma scoffed and grinned, shoving Daph off her and nodding. Placing her hand on the throttle and revving the engine, signaling for both Daph and Beau to back away.

Dirt and rocks were shot up underneath the back tire as she turned the bike around, going as far back as she could to get a safe head start.

Holding her breath, Daphne hugged herself tightly.

If anyone could jump a ravine in a neon green motorbike, it was Velma.

Hell, she’d seen Velma jump wider.
But that didn’t mean she wasn’t nervous. If she did actually make it to a city, who’s to say anyone will actually believe her? Who’s to say anyone will bother to come back and help them—no...save them?

She didn’t have time to ask these questions anymore because Velma had already sped forward.

This was it, their good thing finally happening.

When the bike finally left the ground and finally flew off into the open air, hope ran all through Daphne’s body. She had experienced her fair share of pain and loss tonight, but this was gonna be the end. All she and Beau needed to do was hide out for a few hours, a day at the most. She was sure of it.

It was over.

They had run out of bad luck.

She watched with a wide smile as the wind blew through Velma’s hair and she had neared the end of the ravine.

Sparks surrounded her and smoke flew up around her.

A deafening clang echoed through the ravine.

Daphne yelled and screamed as Beau grabbed her shoulders, dragging her toward the camper.

A wall of pentagons reflected in her eyes as Velma’s limp body crashed into it and fell down the ravine. The wall faded and soon Daphne couldn’t see anything through the tears. Her death was fast and pointless, it hadn’t saved them. If anything is had drawn more horrors toward them.

Velma was never gonna see that ring.

Or hear his vows.

She wasn’t gonna be able to hear anyone’s vows anymore.

She was fucking dead at the bottom of a ravine.

“Shaggy was right, he was right the whole time.”

She kept repeating that as Beau shoved her into the camper and slammed the door shut, turning the key in the ignition and taking off.

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“Where are you trying to go?” Daphne said lifelessly.

“I’m following the road the opposite way out of here.”

“That won’t work, the roads are gonna end and block us off.”

“Then to hell with the roads! We’ll just travel through the woods until we get out of here.”

“What’s the point? They’re not gonna let us out of here. They need us dead...”

She stared blankly out the window, knowing they were both good as dead.
“No, no, no Daphne don’t to this to me…”

She turned and looked at him, he looked awful.

“Look, it’s just you and me. We’re all we got. A-And I can’t have you losing it on me okay?”

He spared a chance to look away from the road to stare into her eyes, begging for comfort. Begging for sanity. Begging for her. He was right. They needed each other, and if she chose to snap then she’d be leaving him on his own. Staring into his eyes, she saw the need and she realized she needed him too. Shaking off everything she felt, hiding how afraid she was.

Ignoring the repeating, “Shaggy was right about everything.” Pounding in her head, she nodded and let out a long breath.

He smiled at her and nodded back.

Daph didn’t even have time to warn him about the movement she saw in the dark behind them, because it had already sent a knife plunging through his neck.

His eyes rolled back and he coughed and gagged and sputtered.

Blood splattering on the dashboard and the window.

Daphne screamed, surprised her lungs still had enough energy to do so.

The thing charged her, this one looked sort of female, with long, greasy white hair and a pink dress covered in white flowers. Unlike the other two monsters Daph had seen, this one had human looking eyes.

Ones that bored into her with a hatred that Daphne just couldn’t understand.

Helplessly she looked back to Beau, he was now slumped over on the steering wheel.

His foot still on the gas, they sped with no control through the woods.

She looked back at the thing that was adamant on killing her and made a grab for her wrists, preventing herself from getting stabbed. Groaning and struggling, being way too distracted to cry; just where the hell did this dead ass bitch get so much strength?! Panting, Daph pushed back, looking around the camper for some place to throw her.

Not paying attention to where the out of control RV was racing to.

That was until she heard an abnormal rumbling as the tires hit new terrain.

She took a risk and glanced away from her attacker. Screaming once again at the realization that the rumbling was coming from the tires hitting the pier.

Daphne knew there was nothing she could do.

There was no way out and she only had a few seconds to think of something.

Her time ran out as she continued to struggle.

Crying out in pain when they hit the water, the impact shooting her into the dashboard and knocking the wind out of her. Sobbing and coughing at the same time, practically suffocating as panic set in, the camper began filling up with water.
The creature didn’t let up, undeterred by their current situation.

Daphne’s arms shook and she could barely muster the strength to fight back.

More than anything, she just wanted it all to stop, the pain, the screaming, the crying, the blood.

That left Daph with a real question.

Why was she still fighting this thing? Why was she still fighting for her life? She knew there was no way out. No place was safe, and fighting one thing and beating it didn’t mean anything. The next second, she’d be attacked by something else. What was the point of all this?

And then she remembered her promise to Velma.

She’d find that engagement ring.

It wasn’t much, but it was something, a will to live. And that was all she needed right now. A found purpose.

In that second, she sent a strong kick into the monster’s chest, sending her flying back disappearing beneath the water, Daphne didn’t have a moment to lose. She wasn’t gonna bother wasting her time trying to open the side doors. She’d have to wait for the pressure to equalize and by that time she’d already be dead.

Her eyes locked onto the emergency exit sitting on the top of the camper, ignoring the creature already rising from the water.

She took in a deep breath, standing up on her seat and getting ready to make her escape.

Only sparing Beau a short, heartbroken glance.

The water around his body was stained red.

Saying goodbye, she turned back to the job at hand and jumped for the exit. Not giving herself a moment to rejoice grabbing onto the handle as she began to push as hard as she could muster. Ignoring how fast the camper was filling up, bringing the monster closer to her by every second.

Daph screamed and begged as hard as she could for the door to grant her some mercy.

She knew pushing against hundreds of pounds of water was a tad out of her skill set but the world owed her a miracle.

Things could go wrong later, she promised.

Like the gates of heaven granting her passage, the door popped open, freeing her in theory. Unfortunately, Daph hadn’t calculated for what would happen if she provided hundreds of pounds of water a way into the RV from another angle. Narrowly avoiding having her neck broken as she dodged the powerful wave, holding on as tightly as she could. Not even able to enjoy the sight of all that water flattening the nightmare lady on to the floor.

Taking in a big gulp of air as the camper filled completely, finally able to get the hell out of there.

As she exited the camper her heart sunk.

Well the world didn’t waste anytime making it hard for her again.
It seemed the camper had sunk all the way to bottom of the lake. Leaving her with nothing but pitch black.

Knowing she had a limited supply of air, she sped up.

She had gotten a couple feet away from the camper when she began to drown again.

Losing all the air she had left as she fought and kicked against the hand that was trying to drag her back down.

Knowing that she wouldn’t live if she kept exerting energy like this, she delivered a powerful kick to the monster’s head, sending it back down. And in one smooth motion, she grabbed the door of the emergency exit and pushed it down.

Already beginning to feel a pulsing in her head from not being able to breathe, she kicked like no tomorrow.

Not able to see a thing but knowing where she was aiming.

Not sure if it was just that dark or if the lack of oxygen was causing her to go blind.

Her body felt totally shriveled up and her lungs burned, just begging for her to breathe. She continued to ignore it, not bothering until she was no longer surrounded by water. Her fingers were numb and her arms hurt as she continued to pull herself higher. God it hurt too much.

She panicked as her legs stopped moving for a couple seconds, refusing to listen to her brain.

She felt herself sinking again.

Trying several times to wake up her legs, she waved her arms about and hoped that would keep her going up.

Wishing she could let out a sigh of relief as her legs finally processed her commands and she went back up. Her ears popped and it hurt like hell, but she still ignored it. She was gonna get out of this lake now damn it!

She was gonna do it for Fred and Velma’s stupid engagement ring.

She couldn’t die now, no sir.

Daphne was sure she heard the angels themselves when her head broke the surface and she took in the deepest breath she was sure anyone in the history of breathing would ever take in.

For several seconds, Daphne just relished in the beauty in being able to breathe.

Knowing the battle was halfway over as she still needed to locate the pier and then swim to it with her dying legs and numb arms. Both of which she could barely move.

When she was sure she had breathed in enough to reverse any damage she may have gotten from oxygen deprivation, she began to look around, glad that while the pentagon wall thingy must have been blocking out the stars it wasn’t blocking out the moonlight.

Thankfully, her good luck for the minute was that she hadn’t drifted far from the pier.

Letting out a groan, she began her trek back to the pier, telling herself, “I’m almost there.” Every time she felt like stopping because the pain was too much to bear. When she finally reached the
foot of the pier, her mind flashed back to that afternoon when she had tugged on Shaggy’s ankle and he pulled her up with little effort.

What she wouldn’t give to tug on his ankle right now.

It shouldn’t have hurt as badly as it did to get herself up on the pier.

But dear God it was a painful process.

She cried out in agony, loudly as she strained each muscle way past its breaking point.

Her shoulders and biceps were burning an intense fire, at one point they gave out and she fell down into the water again. It took her several minutes before she could gather the strength to climb up on the pier again. This time she decided to launch herself as far up as she could, getting a much more successful outcome.

After the fun struggle of getting her whole body up onto the stupid pier, Daph decided that her next course of action would be to lay down flat on her back on the pier.

Victory.

It was her’s.

As she panted and cried she stared up at the blank sky.

She was the only one left.

The only one to survive.

Why her?

She closed her eyes, fairly certain that she was all out of tears for a while.

She had just witnessed Beau get stabbed in the neck.

Velma crash into an invisible wall, falling down into a ravine.

Fred’s head was tossed into her arms.

The only death and body she hadn’t seen was Shaggy’s.

She wondered if she was ever gonna learn how he died.

At this point, Daphne wasn’t even sure what she was gonna do when she finally had the energy to stand up. Assuming she wasn’t killed in this forest, there wasn’t really any place for her to go. Maybe she could become a George of the Jungle but for the forest. Now that didn’t sound like a bad life. But, even George had somebody. All of Daphne’s somebodies were gone.

She began to space off, wondering if she was skilled enough to make leaf clothes for herself.

Interrupted by the crunching of leaves coming from her right, toward the land.

Not even noticing that her lucky minute had passed, she turned to look toward the crackling sound.

In a cruel twist of fate, the monster she had stabbed to kingdom come back in the murder basement was now the one standing before her. Bear trap in hand and most of his face reduced to a fleshy
slop, he had the lovely Daph with a candle rod to thank for that.

Before she could stand up, the creature let out an unearthly scream and shot the bear trap at her, clawing at the wooden planks next to her head.

The next few minutes played out like a sick joke.

Daphne could practically hear the celebration music playing in the background, the clinking of champagne glasses, as this thing beat her to death.

First grabbing her neck and lifting her up higher than his head.

She tried to fight and pull at his hand as his fingers clawed into her throat.

But she was still too weak, not even able to send a kick strong enough to wind him.

Groaning, she tilted her head down and bit into the soft flesh of his hand, seeing as he was already dead, she doubted her would feel this but at this point is was her only option.

But to her surprise, the beast dropped her.

Of course, the wind was knocked out of her and she began coughing again.

Stopped by her screaming and rolling to the right to avoid a bear trap to the face.

Desperately, she began to crawl towards the lands, reaching one arm out in front of the other and helplessly pulling herself forward. Screaming out again as it grabbed her feet and dragged her back toward the edge of the pier. Clawing at the wood, she saw in horror that her nails were peeling up splinters, and stabbing into her fingertips.

She wondered if the puppeteers were watching her right now.

Experiencing emotional and mostly physical turmoil.

And they were probably just sitting and watching her. Possibly for fun.

Probably for fun.

Maybe even laughing.

They enjoyed her continually getting tossed around the pier as she fought for her life.

She looked up at the monster in fear, unable to focus since she had hit her head against the wood.

She knew there was no point in calling out for help.

It was just her left.

And she wasn’t sure her tired voice could manage anymore screaming.

Well, she had given it a good run.

She had battled horrors she couldn’t even comprehend, and she wasn’t really sure what purpose her death was serving. But at least she hadn’t gone down without a good fight. Her sensei would surely be proud of her.

The monster lifted up his mighty trap.
And to match his action, Daphne closed her eyes.

This was okay.

Just some peace and quiet to end the nightmare.

Eyes closed and breeze passing through.

Those eyes shot open at the sound of wooden beams creaking. All she saw was a long silver rod come up and whack against the monster’s face. “Scooby?” She thought. The hit knocked the creature far back and it began to lose its balance along the edge of the pier. While it struggled, a hand came down and grabbed onto her arm, dragging her toward the land. Stopping at a safeish distance away from the thing.

The warm hands gripped onto her tightly and pulled her up.

Huffing, she turned to look at her against all odds hero.

Jaw dropping and eyes tearing up, something she didn’t know they could do anymore.

The two of them looked back to the growling monster as it stomped toward them, twirling his weapon around.

They both looked at each other before he shot forward and whacked the thing down once again with the rod, stunning it backwards.

In one swift move, Daphne kicked the thing in the chest with the biggest burst of energy she could summon and it groaned out in pain.

It took another hard hit with the rod and the monster fell back into the lake.

They both walked to the end of the pier, not even a bubble rose to the surface.

As they both panted Daphne turned once again, he mirrored the action.

“Sha-...Shaggy....”

“Hi.”

They ran through the woods - hand in hand, her grip a lot tighter than necessary.

It wasn’t gonna be long until there were more of them.

Daph had no clue where Shag was taking her, but she didn’t care as long as she stayed with him.

They rushed passed the cabin before Shaggy finally stopped several feet away from the back of it. It was then that Daphne saw it, a shallow grave dug in the ground. Her body went cold when Shaggy let go of her hand and walked over to the hole; raising her eyebrows as he jumped into the grave and leaned down.

“Uh Shag…”

He turned back around and reached his hand out to her again.
“Look Daph, either you join me in the grave or get eaten by the stuff dreams are made of.”

Daphne didn’t even need to listen to the options, all she needed to do was grab his hand and she felt safe again.

Slowly, he led her into the grave and while she cringed at first, Daph was surprised to find her feet hitting a concrete staircase. As they went down the stairs, Daphne got a good look at Shaggy’s back which, like Beau’s, was drenched in blood. Making it difficult to pinpoint his wound. Apparently one of those things grabbed him through his window and drove a trowel into his back and dragged him off.

Luckily, Shag was able to get the jump on it by pretending he was dead. Daph was surprised that he was able act out that plan under a ridiculous amount of pressure. She had just accepted death on that pier just a few minutes ago and yet he had refused death even when he was all alone.

As they traveled further down the stairs the more surreal the whole thing got.

It went from alone in nature as God intended to Area 51’s cousin, Area Nifty-One.

When they finally reached the bottom of the stairs Shaggy signaled for her to go ahead, he then turned around and sealed off the staircase and locked the door. Daphne just stood still, freezing cold and confused as she looked around at the fluorescent light bulbs. It felt like she was in a totally different place now.

A cold and small room with concrete walls, floors and ceiling.

Shaggy walked passed her and said, “Found this place when the stupid zombie dragged me off. We both fell down here and I was able to get the upper hand.”

“Thank God for that.” Daphne said, sure her lips were blue and her teeth were chattering but she knew now was hardly the time to complain. Shaggy was alive exactly when she needed him and not a moment later. “You-……You were right about everything Shags……The…the-uh puppeteers, the voices, the being watched…. Everything.

She walked over to him and placed a hand on his shoulder.

Her smiled down at her and grabbed her free hand.

“Like…. I didn’t do much.”

Daphne smiled a real smile, something she couldn’t say had happened in a long time. “You figured it all out before the shit hit the fan. If we had listened back down in the basement when we were reading that damn journal- “

He took a step forward, standing directly in front of her.

Somehow, just looking up at him and staring into his teary eyes brought something flowing through her whole body, winding all the way back to her chest. A little bit of hope, a bit of security, and just a general warmth throughout.

Seeing his bruise covered face alive and well, more or less, made her happier than anything else in the world.

He hadn’t left her alone.
Like her, he fought.

Maybe for something as small as finding an engagement ring for her best friends, now passed.

And he was still here in front of her. Tall and spunky and covered in dirt and grime. She wasn’t sure how she was still standing after the number of things thrown at her, with no time to process them.

Biting her lip, and tasting blood, she raised her hand.

Aiming to brush her thumb along a particularly lovely little blue blue and yellow arrangement that was causing his right cheek to slightly swell up.

Shaggy didn’t move or flinch away from her touch, more or less leaning into it actually.

Now was their time to breathe.

They were out of screaming and crying.

But they still needed to breathe. Because they were still alive.

That pure bliss of feeling just how warm he was on her fingertips was almost overwhelming. Warmth meant that he was alive, cuts and wounds showed that he was still standing.

Their moment of being alive was cut short by a gargled moan coming from the corner behind her.

Bringing her hand down from his face and turning around, only able to let one loud yelp before her voice gave out. Her eyebrows furrowed in bewilderment at the sight before her. It wasn’t the monster they had battled at the lake, but it was also sporting a Confederate uniform. Rotten and torn to shreds but Daph was a fabric expert, she could recognize any old rag for what it really was.

While the thing was still able to move, it was a very limited spectrum.

It’s arms and legs had been removed from the body, spasming every so often but it was a slow and lazy movement.

Even now the thing was leaned back against the wall in some sort of defeat, as if the growl was the only thing they bothered to try.

Eyes still wide, she turned and looked at Shag.

He looked down at the monster in the corner with a tired face, “Yeeaaahhh I- uh… I had to dismember that guy with a trowel. How’s your day been going?”

Daphne didn’t answer him, just sort stared at him in awe.

He gave her a smile and shoved his hands in his pockets.

“Do you know where we are Shags?”

Shaggy took a step back, “Not exactly……I’m thinking this is some sort of maintenance entrance or something for the local forest clean-up crew. Bu-But I did find this thing.” Daph followed his movements as he walked over to a breaker box screwed into the wall. She saw that he had used the trowel and forced it open, revealing a tangle of wires and cords of various colors.

A few of the wires had been cut in two and as Shag fiddled with them the lights in the room
flickered for a second.

He fumbled with the wires for a bit before turning to face her again, eyes looking down at a spot in the center of the floor. Daphne followed his gaze and quickly jumped back as the floor itself opened up and a bright white light shone from the opening. One of the creature’s loose arms fell down through as the door opened, it let out a distressed grunt in response but did little else. Shaggy and Daph paid no mind to it.

Kneeling down, she said, “What is it?”

Shag answered grimly, “It’s a fucking elevator.”

Daphne’s breath hitched and she turned to look at him, he had started to take a step over to her. As he let go of the wires the door began to close again, darkening the room quite a bit.

“What-“

“Somebody sent these dead piles of disgrace up here to rip us to kingdom come. They wanted us dead, but they wanted to kill us with the rejected Left For Dead models.” He knelt down next to her.

Daph didn’t know what to say. She had so many questions that needed answering and she doubted she was getting any. She sat down on the floor, running her freezing hands through her hair and sighing. “What do they want with us?”

“Beats me. Maybe there are sickos out here that get a kick out of it. You know like human zoos but this is like human Animal Planet.”

She nodded, rich people did tend to have a strange idea of entertainment.

And the Colosseum hadn’t always been an empty landmark had it?

Watching people fall to or overcome struggle, that was the very foundation of human entertainment at the end of the day.

“So, it’s possible that we could be let go? The baby elephant gets to live every once and a while.”

Shaggy smiled, “Not usually two of them….“

Daphne shook her head and grabbed his hand.

“Christ on a bike! Daph like your hands are fucking ice!! Is there no blood flowing to heat these suckers up good God!” She smiled and shrugged, “The camper kind of crashed into the middle of the lake.”

“Of course it did, Danger Prone Daphne should be your stage name damn….” He grabbed her other hand and brought them both up to his face. Rubbing them and blowing warm breath on them, while the action itself was helping to heat her up, a shiver ran down her spine at his actions.

“Better?”

She nodded rapidly, hoping he’d continue.

Instead he brought her hands back down and looked into her eyes, this time causing her to hold her breath.
“What do you think we should do now?”

Daph didn’t answer right away, distracted by the way his brown eyes shimmered.

Squeezing his hands, she said, “I say we go down there and tear shit up.”

Shag raised an eyebrow at her skeptically. “Shags, do we really have any other options? We can’t stay in this concrete room for the rest of our lives.”

“Oh but can’t we? I for one think I’d make an excellent cave person. Just you, me and Frank over here. We could be one happy cave family. We could forget how to speak English and communicate by slapping our thighs. I bet we could invent a rich culture down here.” He only needed to look into her eyes for a second before he groaned and stood up.

The door whirred and opened once again and Shag motioned for her to jump down.

She nodded and fell gracefully into the elevator.

After a couple seconds Shaggy had jumped in after her, just barely missing getting stuck in the door.

As he landed in the elevator, the zombie’s arm crawled over and grabbed the hem of his pants, tripping him.

Daphne stepped forward and caught him as he screamed out.

Holding him from behind with her hands under his arms.

They both panted as Shag kicked the arm back away from them and said, “Fuck you Frank.”

The elevator had gone down for a few minutes, leaving Shaggy and Daphne surrounded by darkness.

The walls of the elevator were glass and Daph couldn’t see any sort of mechanism or shaft that was holding them.

For all she knew, they could just be floating right now.

She held onto Shaggy’s arm for balance, several knocks to the head was making everything spin and being paired with a glass elevator wasn’t exactly working out in her favor. He placed his hand over her’s as they both looked around, trying see something in the vast expanse of nothingness.

Without warning, the elevator stopped.

They both gasped in surprise and looked at each other.

They still had no clue where they were or where they were going.

Shag yelped out as they began to move again, instead of continuing down, they were now moving to the left.

Daphne tightened her grip on him as they began to speed up.

Where the hell was this thing taking them?
“Holy shit….” Shag said quietly, his hand still holding onto her’s.

Daph really hoped that this thing wasn’t gonna take them to yet another delightful death trap like the forest filled with cursed zombies. She knew they really hadn’t been given a whole lot of options; but the few options they did have were bad ones. Go out into the woods and face a seven-foot-tall Moonscar man, or jump into the elevator that seven-foot-tall Moonscar man had come from.

With a bang, they had stopped again, causing Daph to wobble back and lose her bearings. They both smashed into the wall and Shag groaned just under his breath.

Panting, Daphne let go of his arm.

She once again took a crack at looking around. With no pleasing results to speak for.

They were still swimming in complete blackness and Daphne feared them being trapped in there for longer than she’d bargained for.

Slowly, she approached one of the glass walls, hoping to see something, anything, in the distance.

And then, from the darkness, she saw something.

But that something was a lot closer to her than she expected.

Right on the other side of the wall.

Something looking almost like a man but not quite jumped out at her, letting out a loud growl that shook the glass. His skin was a sickly green and his brown hair was overgrown and mussed up over the top of his head. His eyes were totally red right down to the sclera and she saw long fangs in the spots where his canines were meant to be.

She screamed and backed far away from the creature, Shaggy screaming out and following her.

They both pressed their backs to the wall, not even getting a moment to process because once again, their elevator began to move.

Daph held her breath as they stopped a few seconds later.

Everything was totally silent if you didn’t count the heavy breathing coming from her and Shag.

That is, until they heard what sounded like sparks coming from behind them.

Turning their heads slowly to see what it was now.

It was some sort of apparition, at least that’s what Daphne saw. An orange ghost that seemed to spark to life like electricity for a few seconds before fading out. It must’ve seen them because it began to shriek, sparks flying off of it erratically, bumping itself from wall to wall. Shag and Daph covered their ears in an attempt to block out the horrible noise.

Backing away again and both deciding that staying in the center of the cube was the safest idea.

Daphne recognized the click that meant they were moving again, finally continuing down.

It was for a very short distance before they clanged to a stop again, standing back to back in the center of the elevator. Now fully aware that they could be totally surrounded and not be sure.
For a moment, Daph closed her eyes and focused on the sound of Shag’s ragged breathing.

As long as he was breathing, he was alive, and he was still with her.

He let out a gasp as he took a few steps away from her, Daph didn’t even wanna know what had drawn his attention. Just keeping her eyes closed and listening to his breathing, almost forgetting to focus on her own. She heard him let out a low whimper that finally convinced her to open her eyes. Not even having it in her to be scared at the sight of a face, watching her in the darkness.

Well, it was almost a face.

If anything, it was more like a mask. A very familiar mask. As she stared at the shiny, silver mask her brain made a connection.

This was the same mask from the basement.

The large, silver one Velma was messing with.

In that second, everything made sense to her and she let out a pained moan, “We chose this… “

Shag turned to look at her, jumping a bit when he saw the face watching them, “Wha- What do you mean? What did we choose?”

Daphne bit her lip, she hadn’t felt this angry, this stupid, in a long time. Not since she had looked into the slimy eyes of her forty-three year-old college professor and thought, ’Oh yeah, he's the one...’

“In the basement…. You know all that random crap we were fucking with?”

She heard him gasp.

The silver-faced monster took a step forward.

It was tall and broad shouldered beyond realistic proportions.

“This was them…. ” Daphne said, staring dead on into the creature’s cold face, “They made us choose how we die.”

How many of these cubes were there?

How many of these nightmares did they have stored away down here?

How many people had been killed by these things?

It wasn’t fair.

It all boiled up inside and as she stared at that cold face, Daphne cracked.

She screamed up at the monster, it didn’t react at all, and began to hit the walls. Pounding her knees and her fists against them as hard as she could. She couldn’t care less when she broke the skin on her knuckles and began to leaves streaks of blood on the clean glass. It hurt that the creature didn’t look apologetic, or guilty or pained for all the chaos it had probably caused.

Her throat burned as she continued to let everything out, just wanting to break the glass and invite that guiltless son of a bitch to kill her.
But her fists were pulled away from the glass.

She felt arms wrapped around her from behind and her back pressed against a warm chest.

Her screaming died down to whimpering and hiccuped breathing as Shag said in his soothing voice, “Hey… deep breaths Daph, just focus on that okay? Nothing else matters except your breathing okay?” She gulped and tried to breathe, being interrupted by her own panicked exhales. Shag didn’t squeeze her tight or anything, mainly just trying keep her still, “Just follow my breathing alright? In…... and out….”

She followed his lead and concentrated on the pattern of his breathing by the rise and fall of his lungs against her back.

When she had finally gotten a good rhythm back she stared out into the darkness and said, “I watched them die.” He didn’t say anything but she felt him nod and rest his chin on her shoulder. “I- …. I thought I was all alone.” This was the warmest she’d felt since the second this slasher movie had started.

In a low voice, he whispered in her ear, “You’re not.”

- 

They had been sitting like that for a while, Daphne sometimes bringing her hands up to caress his knuckles. But otherwise they were completely still, their cube had stopped moving a while ago and Daphne knew they needed to think of a plan, but her mind was drawing a blank and she cuddled closer to Shag in hopes of getting warmer. Now that he knew she was stable, he wasn’t afraid to squeeze her tightly and rest his chin in the crook of her neck.

Both of them jumped as their compartment shook to life and Shaggy let go of her, still not ready to step away from her.

Daphne looked over her shoulder and up at him with confusion in her eyes, he simply shrugged.

Instead of moving up or down, or left or right, the cube seemed to be moving forward, toward what, they had no idea.

“Oh my gosh….” Daph said quietly. A few feet in front of them, Daph saw it, a row of elevator doors lined a wall. A wall they were heading straight for at increasing speed. Something was bringing them to these doors, something wanted to meet them at these doors. And she really hoped these weren’t the same people that killed all her friends.

But things never went that well for them.

They both grunted as their cube crashed against the door and made that same click.

And then all was still.

Daph looked around, there were no ways to open this door from the inside. Whoever had brought them here was going to have to open it themselves.

As if on cue, the door flew open and a man wearing all black holding a pistol pointed at them was on the other side. The man took a step forward and yelled, “Alright put your hands up!” In response to this both Shag and Daph raised their hands before Daphne yelled back, “Why are you
trying to kill us?!” But since Shaggy had yelled, “Alright man, like just put the gun down!” At the same time, the man most likely hadn’t heard either of them.

Repeating himself once again.

“Both of you! Hands where I can see them! And you! Step slowly out of the elevator!”

Daphne blanked for a second, why did he want just her to step out? She didn’t like this.

“Why just me?”

“You’re in no position to ask questions! Just do as I say!”

Shaggy gripped onto the back of her shirt, not trusting this situation just as much she did. When she didn’t make any move to leave, the man took a step closer. And stepped right into the reach of Frank’s arm, which promptly reached out and grabbed onto the man’s ankle. The poor guy yelled out and looked down, pointing his gun down at the hand.

Shag and Daph shared a split-second glance before they made their move.

Daphne kicked the man’s forearm, causing him to drop the gun and cry out in pain.

Shaggy took that chance and charged forward, grabbing the man’s head and knocking it against the wall.

Blood streaked down the wall and the guy was out like a light. Leaving Daphne and Shag alone and panting, knowing they didn’t have any time to waste. Shaggy bent down and picked up the trowel resting next to Frank’s arm and the gun carelessly dropped by the mystery man.

Signaling to Daphne that they had to go.

She stared down at the unconscious man for a second before looking back up at Shag and nodding, following him to run out of the elevator. She couldn’t help but smile as she heard him say from behind her, “Good work zombie arm.”

As soon as they left the elevator they were met with a high-ceilinged hallway. Each side lined with elevators, the floors and walls were white and when Daphne looked up, the room went on for what seemed like miles.

She jumped when the quiet hallway was breached by a loud, somber voice coming from some unseen loudspeaker.

“This should have gone differently. Ended more quickly. I can only imagine your pain and… confusion. But know this, what’s happening to you is part of something bigger. Something older than anything known.”

She felt Shaggy tap her arm gently, she turned to look at him and saw the fire in his eyes.

She nodded, they weren’t going down without a fight.

“You’ve seen horrible things. An army of nightmare creatures. But they are nothing compared to what came before. What lies below.”

He handed her the trowel and she gripped tightly onto the handle, looking for just what these
people were sending after them.

“It’s our task to placate the ancient ones. As it’s yours to be offered up to them. Forgive us… and let us get it over with.”

Then they heard it. The steady thumping of footsteps. A large group of people running. Running right for them. At the end of the hallway, Daph saw their shadows that got smaller the closer they got to them. Turning to look down the other side of the hallway, Daphne saw that it was a dead end that led to a small room with windows. The words “Control Room” were worded out on the wall next to the room.

Grabbing Shag’s sleeve and motioning toward the room, he gave her a nod and they made a run for the room.

Finding the door to the side, Shaggy pushed Daph in and followed after her, locking the door behind them. Not even getting an extra second to examine the control panel at the front of the small room. Through the window she spotted them.

A whole group of people, all dressed in black and carrying guns.

They spotted her through the glass and she heard one of them yell out a command.

Shag dived down, grabbing Daphne with him, and hid just in front of the control panel.

They were out of the line of fire, for now.

Assuming these people were idiots that never changed position to get a better vantage point.

Groaning, Daphne turned around to get a look at their situation. Only to be met with a panel of buttons and a wall of monitors. She gasped as she looked at the screens, all showing one of the horrific monsters kept in this place.

This was the control panel for the elevators.

As the gunfire continued louder than ever and Daph saw Shag struggle to keep himself curled up, she knew she needed to make a move.

Pulling the labeled levers, she saw the light above the system panel turn green.

Directing her toward a great big, obvious red button.

Biting her lip, she turned back to look at Shaggy. Fear was strong in his eyes but he gave her a firm nod. Surer of her plan with his approval, she lifted her hand above the button and said loudly, “Let’s get this party started!”

Slamming down on the button she heard a slight buzzing noise and somebody outside the room yell, “Hold fire!”

And then everything was quiet, but at the same time, everything was rumbling.

Something was coming.
Daphne heard several dings; the elevators were here.

And then, all hell broke loose in seconds.

Scattered gunfire and petrified screams covered up by loud growls, chainsaws, evil laughter and so many more sounds that Daphne didn’t even know how to describe. She heard the sound of an alarm blaring and red lights began flashing.

As the alarm grew louder, so did the screams of pain, agony, Daphne grabbed onto Shaggy’s hand and gripped it hard as she saw tears building up in his eyes.

She had run out of those hours ago.

Resting her forehead onto his shoulder, Daph concentrated on her breathing; on his breathing.

Channeling out all the carnage that was happening outside the room.

She heard the ding of the elevators again and this time they were paired with sounds of glass shattering. Shag and her screamed as a new horror crashed into their safe zone. The creature flew into the wall and splashed blood everywhere as it shrieked, trying to get back on its feet.

Had this not been singlehandedly the most terrifying experience of her life, Daphne would’ve been over the moon to be seeing a living, breathing pterodactyl right in front of them.

It locked eyes with them and Daphne knew this was the end.

That was until Shaggy stood up, still holding onto her hand, and dragged her to the door.

They ignored the creature’s shrieks as they slammed the door behind them, making their escape into the fray.

Daphne’s stomach twisted in knots at the sight before them.

The pristine white hallway they had entered was no more. Now replaced with blood. Everywhere and anywhere there was blood. Half eaten bodies and small intestine littered the floor. She had done this. An elevator dinged and out ran yet another horrifying creature, not ever going to get its chance as Shag aimed and clumsily fired the gun. Blowing the thing’s head open.

He yelped and continued running, following Daph who was stuck at a crossroads.

Finally deciding to turn left, she ran forward and turned crashing head on into someone.

As Shaggy helped her stand up she was relieved to see that she had crashed into a normal human being.

She was wearing a lab coat and her hair was pulled back tight in a ponytail. She was panting heavily and shook her head, “You can’t go that way. The north exit is totally- “

The lady didn’t get to finish, seeing as she was cutoff by a fucking pterodactyl swooping across the hall and slamming her though the wall. Shaggy flinched at the sound of her screams, begging for help, for mercy. They were ended quickly. Daphne sighed, so the couldn’t go left and the right exit was currently being guarded by some sort of tall, green man who seemed to be moaning to himself.

The constant “Creeeeeeepppppeeeerrrrrr…” was making it hard for her to concentrate.
She felt Shaggy grab her shoulders and he shook her gently.

Then she saw his arm point toward the guarded right exit.

A crown of seven-foot-tall rotting people were trudging toward them. Daphne whimpered as she tried to find a way out. Nearly falling backwards when the pterodactyl returned from its hole in the wall, screeching loud enough to make them both deaf. It soared through the hallway for a second before going down the right exit, knocking Creeper guy over as well as the gigantic zombies.

They saw this as their chance and quickly ran for the screeching dino’s hole in the wall.

Making a quick escape from the nightmares surrounding them.

Even though they had been the cause of all that to begin with.

They kept running.

Finding that the hole in the wall eventually broke off into a candle lit tunnel.

The screams could just barely be heard now.

They were almost out, Daphne could just feel it.

She focused on spotting the light at the end of the tunnel that would be the ending of this night of suffering. So concentrated on the pitch black ahead of her that she missed an elderly man that turned the corner, now becoming very familiar with the feeling of her trowel being lodged in his stomach.

Daphne gasped and backed up as the man cried out in pain.

Not sure how anyone else was able to get into the tunnel, Daph looked down as the man collapsed onto the ground.

He moaned in anguish and writhed about.

'He must’ve been working in this place for a long time.’ Daphne thought, still just looking down at the man in shock. Her breath hitched, this could be the Puppeteer or at least one of them. This old man that was bleeding out on the floor in front of her could very well be the reason why her best friends were dead. Why Shag was almost dead.

Her sympathy for him diminished greatly.

Shaggy stood behind her, holding onto her hand firmly.

Gently, he tugged her away from the man with her trowel stuck in his stomach.

But without warning, the man regained his energy and grabbed onto Daphne’s leg saying, “Please! No….no wait! I’m begging you!” Daph stopped struggling against him. The man coughed and blood dribbled down his chin, his eyes drifted from Daphne over to Shaggy standing defensively behind her.

“Kill him.”

Daph wasn’t given the time to ask if he was joking because another wave of coughing hit.
When the coughing stopped, his whole body had gone limp.

Breathing heavy breaths, Daph looked down at the man. His last words to her leaving her confused. Just what was this whole place trying to accomplish? Because she was certain murdering college students wasn’t high in the demand market right now. Was it?

Shag tugged on her arm again.

“Daph let’s go…”

She nodded, eyes still not leaving the corpse.

Shaggy’s gun cut off her stare and she heard him say, “Here, makes the killing stuff easier….”

Biting her lip, Daphne took the gun and turned back toward Shag who smiled sadly at her before turning around and walking down the tunnel. Her grip on his hand tight as she followed after him. Not sparing the strange man a second glance.

They had found a staircase.

One that spiraled down.

While that wasn’t exactly the direction they were aiming for, it was the only direction they could go. So, they rolled with the punches. Trudging down the stairs for several minutes, hand in hand.

Hope rushed through their bodies as they saw actual, bright lights coming from the end of the stairs.

That hope turned into confusion as they jumped off the last step and found themselves in a circular room. A moat of open air surrounded the edge of the floors making it feel as if the ground they stood on was floating.

Along the wall there were murals.

Murals of people.

All a different size or shape.

Daph turned to look at Shaggy who was currently looking over the edge of the floor, maybe trying to see how far down it went.

At this point Daphne didn’t wanna know.

“Look at this….” She said, circling around the room to examine each mural.

“Like, there are five of them.”

She nodded and bit her lip as she realized, “There are— are five of us.” Shaggy walked over to stand next to her, “Why the hell are we up on the wall of Sketchville?” Shaking her head, she turned to look at him, “Those... puppeteers were changing us, to fit the perfect image.... for a sacrifice.” Shag gave her a look of disbelief as he spun around and looked at each mural again.

“A ritual sacrifice??”
Daphne nodded.

“Great, fun. You get a bunch of matching robes for you and your buddies and then you chain a virgin to a rock and chant over them. It doesn’t need to be this complicated.”

“Right you are Norville.”

The same voice from the loudspeaker sounded behind him.

Shaggy screamed and turned around, both him and Daphne surprised to see a man standing a few feet away from them.

They hadn’t even noticed him entering the room at all.

“But this isn’t about the sacrifice itself,” The man began to walk toward them, “it’s about the way the sacrifice is done. So long as it’s entertaining, then we’ve succeeded in our task.

“And what task is that exactly?” Daphne asked defiantly.

The man chuckled, “A time long before time was even a concept, the world was ruled by gods, The Ancients. They ruled with fear and fire left the galaxy a void wasteland.” He motioned down toward the ground. They were stirring beneath them, “We perform the ritual every year to keep them asleep.”

He began to walk around the room, looking up at the murals.

“It’s different in every culture. And it has changed over the years, but it has always required youth.”

He gazed at them apologetically, “There must be at least five. The Whore. They are corrupted, they die first.” Daphne stared at him confused, Fred was the first one to die, so they must’ve decided he was The Whore. Her mind flashed back to the words of the horrible lady from the gas station.

She had known what Fred was.

The man straightened his glasses and continued, “The Athlete.”

That must’ve been Velma.

“The Scholar.”

Beau.

The man made straight eye contact with Shaggy and said, “The Fool.”

Shag looked more shocked than hurt.

“All suffer and die at the hands of…. Whatever horror they have raised. Leaving the last, to live or die. As fate decides.” He stopped and stood in front of the last mural, looking Daphne in the eyes, “The Virgin.”

It was like Daph heard a record scratch and the fear she felt was replaced by a stunned expression.

“A… A virgin? Me???” She placed her hands on her chest.
He sighed, “We work with what we have.”

Shaggy chuckled next to her.

“This perfect formula has never failed to keep The Ancients asleep for hundreds of years.”

Shag scoffed and crossed his arms, “I can give about a million reasons why that statement is false.”

The man frowned and turned his back to them, “I will admit that when you first arrived here we realized we had made a mistake. We were led to believe that you were The Whore Ms. Blake. And Ms. Dinkley was our Virgin. However, when you arrived, we realized that everything had been flipped the wrong way. Mr. Jones being profiled as our Whore and Ms. Dinkley as our Athlete.”

Daphne bit her lip.

“And then there was the issue that our Fool was not nearly foolish enough to be in that category. Leaving the whole system loose and falling apart. Mr. Rogers has proved to be our ultimate downfall.”

The man gestured toward Shaggy. Both him and Daph blinking in confusion.

Quickly the man’s gaze turned to Daphne, “Ms. Blake, had Mr. Rogers been nearly as stupid as we thought he was, we would have succeeded and the fact of the matter is that if Mr. Rogers dies before the sunrise, we will be victorious in calming the monsters below us.”

Shaggy scoffed again, “Yeah uh huh, you keep killing innocent people year after year with about a 45% margin for error and you’re convinced you’re doing the right thing to save the world?”

“Yes of course. Five, precious, lives in exchange for the safety of the whole world seems like a pretty fair bargain.”

“Yeah, one that never ends! Who’s to say these gods don’t get bored of the one thing you guys know how to do?”

“That won’t happen.” The man replied through gritted teeth.

Sighing, he turned back to Daphne, “Ms. Blake, you can end this all. You just need to kill Mr. Rogers, and order will be restored.”

Shaggy chuckled that nervous chuckle and shook his head.

“You really think killing me is gonna fix any of this?”

The man replied, “I don’t think it’s my opinion on this subject that matters.”

He stopped chuckling, Daph hadn’t said a word for a while.

When his eyes met her’s, her heart broke.

Her hands shook as she held the gun and pointed it at him.

“Daphne… not you……”

Her eyes filled with tears that she didn't know she had left, “The whole world Shags. The whole world could end if I don’t shoot you.”
“Could being the big word in that sentence! Daph even this asshole clearly has no idea what he’s saying!” He raised his voice as he tried to reason with her, tears welling up in his eyes too. His hands shook and his lip trembled as he raised his hands up, trying to calm her, but she took a step back.

Her hands still shaking as she stared into his beautiful brown eyes.

Everything in her was saying not to shoot him.

But then she wondered how many people were getting married today, or having a baby.

Or falling in love.

Gulping, she sniffled, “I- I’m sorry Shaggy.”

His face grew relaxed and sad as he realized she was sure of herself.

“Yeah, me too….”

Those words hung in the air for one...two...three seconds, and Daphne couldn't seem to clear her vision or steady her trembling hands long enough to pull the damn trigger. And then, she had missed her window of bravery.

Dots of white and red flashed across her vision as she felt long, sharp fangs sink into her shoulder. Dropping the gun and screaming at the top of her lungs, not sure where she was summoning this mother of all screams from.

She heard gunshots and suddenly the teeth were pulled out of her shoulder, she stopped screaming and let out a breath of relief.

Falling flat on the stairs.

She could feel her heartbeat in her ears and taking deep breaths made her dizzy, her shoulder felt numb and sticky but she couldn’t be bothered.

She could hear the sounds of Shaggy struggling.

With the strange exposition man was gonna be her guess.

She blacked out several times and would fade back in, still hearing the fight happening somewhere in the room.

God, all she wanted to do was fall asleep so she didn’t need to bear this pain anymore.

She blacked out again.

Waking a few seconds later to see a very familiar face waltzing down the stairs.

Daphne only ever bothered to call him Moonscar, nothing else really stuck.

She sent a smile up at the monster, fully welcoming him to kill her. Having her neck snapped, or her heart ripped out and enjoyed as a snack, she wasn’t picky. It was about time something came along and killed her.

Her heartbeat picked up as Moonscar walked passed her.
Not really fearing her own death, but definitely fearing Shaggy’s, knowing there was no way she could bear that a second time.

Sitting up as straight she could, and already on the verge of passing out, she yelled out to Shag.

“Sha-...”

Damn, it hurt to yell.

“Shaggy!!”

She got that one warning out before she fell back down onto the stairs, breathing heavily.

This time, she didn’t black out, desperate to listen to the fight.

Eventually hearing a scream, relieved beyond all belief to know that it wasn’t Shaggy’s.

The scream grew distant and eventually faded out altogether. Shag must’ve pushed him over the edge, as a present to the giant, evil gods.

She could hear him pant loudly for a few seconds before walking, his footsteps making their way to her.

His battered and perfect face came into view and smiled down at her before taking a seat next to her on the stairs.

The whole place was shaking like crazy, Daph noticed, but she figured that made sense.

Since the world was ending

Sitting up, with great discomfort, she leaned against Shag’s shoulder, sniffing and letting tears run down her cheeks.

She saw him pull out a joint and light it.

That was one way to enjoy the end of the world.

“I’m so sorry that I was about to shoot you…. I- I probably wouldn’t have!”

He responded by wrapping his arm around her shoulder, not reacting to the blood spilling from it.

Sighing he offered her the joint, “I’m sorry I let you nearly get eaten by a werewolf. Oh, and then ended the world. That one’s a biggie.”

Daphne smiled and took the joint, relying on her high school experience to know her way around it.

“No, that’s okay. You always said society needed to crumble.”

“Yeah but I didn’t think literally. I was thinking more Walking Deadish. But I guess I can’t be picky.”

“Yeah I’m kinda done with zombies. Forever.”

She let out a cough, really not sure if she was doing this right. He laughed and she handed his treasure back to him.
“You know…. I don’t think Velma even has a cousin…”

“Huh, well aren’t we all just a bunch of dead dumbasses?”

Daphne smiled and scooched in closer to him. Hips pressed together snuggly.

Finally remembering why she had seen him as a distraction back when she was eighteen. Knowing why she had deleted his number all those years ago.

A particularly powerful tremor shook the whole room but neither of them saw much of a point in being afraid.

“Hey Shaggy?”

“Hey Daphne.”

She reached up and placed her hand on his cheek, forcing him to look down at her as the ceiling began to cave in and the room was filled with angry growls. Rubble began fell from above, narrowly missing them several time.

Brown eyes met purple.

And somehow, this was the safest Daphne had ever felt, never feeling braver.

“I love you.”

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A/N

So this puppy took me several weeks to wrap up.

Far all of y’all that had trouble following, this was a “The Cabin in the Woods” AU with the Scooby Gang + Beau from Zombie Island. Each monster and character is from the Scooby canon, although some of them are harder to guess than others.

While this is for sure a Shaphne fic for the win, in the end I think it’s more of a Daphne fic with Shaphne mixed in.

So if you’re disappointed since it doesn’t have nearly enough Shaphne for you, that’s the reason.

If I get any demand for an extra epilogue chapter than for sure I’ll write it! But mostly this was my Halloween gift to the Scooby fandom. It’s probably easier to follow if you’ve seen CITW before but it’s not required. Only If you want more exposition from all sides. I know explanations are short in this but that’s because it’s all from Daph’s perspective instead of the Puppetmasters.

If you have any questions for me feel free to ask, and if requested I’ll write an epilogue.
Thank you so much for reading!

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Special thanks to bemmacake on Tumblr for drawing all of the corresponding art on our Tumblr blog scoobydoominusscoobydoo!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!