Jughead Jones' seemingly normal life is turned upside down when he's struck by lightning. If that wasn't bad enough, he finds himself in an alternate world, where his life and the lives of his friends are a popular teen television show. But he'll soon find out that he didn't get there by accident.

Someone is killing off the cast members playing his friends, and the only way for him to get home is to figure out the killer. But it's not going to be easy. Like the TV show, everyone's a suspect, and a dark secret separates reality from fiction, threatening to tear both worlds apart. How exactly did he end up there in the first place, and is it possible for his friends from his world to come through too?

- Sabrina shook her head. "No, not just you. All of you. This town, your lives- it's fabricated in the real world, and there's a huge following. Unfortunately-" Sabrina sighed. "There happens to be a cult dedicated to using magic to resurrecting you guys from the cast members." she turned to the boy. "To answer your question, you are both right and wrong. The eight of you are connected through both worlds."

Cole cocked his brow. "We've been Freaky Fridayed?"
woah hi there it's me

coming to you with a fic ive posted before, but it was deleted twice.....lets not go into that

lmao. I'm that idiot who trusted a friend with my ao3 password until she deleted 50 fics :D i

feel like my small mental breakdown which has been going on for two months now is still
visible in my writing style in these notes.

ANYWAY. This was super fun to write and there's i think 5 chapters fully written and

edited, and 2 or 3 still in random docs.

enjoy!

yes this is a weird but i thrive on weird. weird is my middle name. im weird, im a weirdo. i
don't really fit in, I don't-

See the end of the work for more notes.
Jughead Jones had never really been scared of the rain. As a boy, he had embraced the wet days. His sister Jellybean would stare mournfully from the window, but he would have on his yellow rubber boots and rain slicker and out out he’d go; splashing, jumping, drinking the drops in his open mouth. He wouldn't stop until he was covered in dirt, until his rubber boots were filled with filthy rain water, and every step was a wet sounding squelch. Jughead still remembered a time when he'd rushed in from the rain with Archie and Betty. They had been eight years old, and just finished running around Archie's garden like maniacs, giggling and screaming as rain cascaded down.

They twirled, danced, fell over and jumped back up, even more hyperactive than before. Betty and Archie had embraced his love of the rain, and joined in his games, and for that he was thankful. The three of them had sneaked in from a storm, him leading, holding hands with Archie, while Betty brought up the rear. Their goal was to reach his bedroom and peel off their soaking wet coats and boots, and get as dry as possible in the twenty minutes it would take for Archie's dad and Betty’s mom to come and pick them up. Jughead had already known he was in trouble. Archie had promised his father that he'd stay inside and play video games, and it had taken Betty nearly five minutes of pleading to let her her mother allow her to play at Jughead's. The two of them looked like drowned rats. Archie's red hair had been soaking, his fringe hanging in wide brown eyes, while Betty's golden curls stuck to her pink cheeks. Though neither of them were wetter than Jughead, who was dripping. His black hair was a sopping mess of soaking curls in his face.

They had only made it halfway through the kitchen, trying to suppress their giggles, before a loud cough. The three of them had spun around, to find their parents standing there looking horrified; Fred Andrews and Alice Cooper looked like they were about to faint. His mother had stood with them, her lips curled into an amused smirk.

"Jughead," she folded her arms. "What did I say about the rain?"

He'd been speechless. His genius plan to help Betty and Archie get dry had been foiled, and Betty's mom looked like she was about to cry. "I'm sorry mommy," Jughead managed to get out. It was all he could say. Archie's father had sighed, before chuckling, and Archie, pressed to Jughead's side, their hands entangled, had perked up, his expression brightening. "Kids, right?" the man laughed, nudging Betty's mother who was paralysed. Jughead had been sure the woman hated him. She reminded him of a villain in his comic books; icy blue eyes and a hard expression, her arms folded. Though he was pretty sure Alice Cooper was a million times worse than any scary monsters Spiderman had faced. After snapping out of it, Alice had rushed forwards and grabbed her daughter.

"Elizabeth!" the woman cooed. "How on earth did you get so wet?" Gladys had thrown her a towel, and she'd wrapped it around the shivering blonde. "Gladys, I don't want Elizabeth playing with Jughead anymore," she'd hissed out, attempting to dry Betty's curls.

Betty hadn't said anything. Neither had Archie. Jughead had kept his mouth shut too, because all it took was a sly look exchanged between the three of them, quickly becoming wide grins when their parents weren't looking, which sealed the deal. There was no way that was happening. Alice Cooper would never stop them from seeing each other, because Archie and Jughead were best friends, and the tiny blonde was Archie's neighbour. That night, Alice had dragged Betty away, and it felt like a goodbye. But despite her mother's efforts, he saw her the following weekend, then at school. The three of them grew up together, and Jughead's love of the rain never stopped or faltered.

When Jughead was fourteen, he'd snuck a bottle of his father's whisky and he and Archie had
finished it off in the redhead's garden. They'd sprawled on already damp grass and stared at the stars, giggling drunkenly, talking about everything from middle school, to the new girl Veronica Lodge, who had pricked Archie's interest. When Betty had spotted them, she'd joined them. And to the three's shock, the heavens had poured down on them, and bore them no mercy. A lot of things happened that night. Archie had revealed his plan to get Veronica Lodge's attention, while Betty had blurted that she wanted to kiss him. Jughead had nearly fell back. he had spent most of his childhood convinced Betty was in love with Archie. But the girl wanted to kiss him. Him.

It was supposed to be a moment brought on purely by their foggy minds, influenced by far too much alcohol consumption. But one kiss in the rain had turned into a date at Pops, stealing kisses in their favorite booth while Archie threw fries at them, and before he knew it, he was tangled in her bed sheets. Betty Cooper was the best thing that had ever happened to him. And he thanked the rain for that. Even if it was crazy to believe in fate, believe that Betty had only confessed her feelings because the skies had opened.

Fast forward two years, the three of them were going into their junior year, and were closer than ever. Jughead was still happy with Betty, and Archie had begun dating Veronica Lodge. The Three Musketeers had become four, and Jughead had found himself with a stable group of close friends. Veronica Lodge wasn't the girl he thought she'd be. Sure, she was a rich girl, majorly spoiled. But she had a liking for some of his favorite films and books. The two of them could talk about his favorite actor River Phoenix for hours, while Archie and Betty let their competitiveness get the better of them on Mario Kart. It was comfortable. The four of them clicked as both a friend group, as well as two separated relationships. Jughead and Betty + Archie and Veronica.

So Jughead was happy. His life was as good as it could get.

When the wind picked up one night on his way back from school, Jughead felt a familiar pang of childish excitement, quickly overshadowed by annoyance. Now? When he was miles away from home? He bit back a groan. A storm was brewing, and it had been all day. The air had felt thick, stormy clouds hovering menacingly, but never unleashing hell.

Glancing up at the blackened cloud that dominated the sky above, he frowned. There hadn't been a storm in a while. It was the beginning of Fall, so rain was expected. He was on his way back from a Blue and Gold meeting, kicking his way through autumn leaves strewn across the walk. Unfortunately for him, his father's iPod - a treasure he preferred to use to listen to music, instead of his battered 5S- had died halfway through fifth period so the only soundtrack he had was the light rustle of dead leaves at his feet.

Jughead shivered a little when a few experimental drops of rain scathed his neck, sending shivers rattling down his spine. Shit. Maybe wearing a t-shirt wasn't a good idea. He pulled out his jacket from his pack and threw it on, his fingers working quickly to fasten the buttons. Jughead quickened his pace. Sure, he loved rain. But getting soaked wasn't at the top of his priorities right now. Getting home and working on his article for the Blue and Gold was and skyping with Archie until midnight was.

Unlike his younger self, he preferred to watch a storm through his bedroom window. His lazy walk became a jog when the sky, now fully black, unleashed a torrent of water, driven by a gust of wind that toyed with his hair and blew his jacket open. The wind started to howl, as if crying, warning him. The first crack of lightning rent the air and within seconds the rolling boom of the thunder reverberated overhead. Soon the rain fell, slow to start, splattering the sidewalks haphazardly.

Above him, straying leaves that had managed to cling onto partially skeletal branches were stripped away, another gust nearly blowing him off his feet. When the sky flashed, Jughead's chest clenched.
Okay, this was the kind of storm he couldn't dance in, like when he was eight. He pulled his hood up, catapulting into a run. The world seemed to blur by in a whirlwind of battering wind and rain lashing his cheeks. When he reached a bus shelter, he hurriedly yanked his phone out of his pocket, blinking rain from his lashes. His notifications were lit up with missed calls from Archie.

"Shit, shit, shit," he hissed, nearly jumping out his skin when the sky rumbled. Lifting the phone to his ear, he glimpsed a flash of light across the horizon. Jughead watched it, mesmerized by a second blinding strike across the sky; fork lightning getting progressively closer. He'd never seen it so close. Another powerful gust of wind knocked into him, but it was teasing him, never truly knocking him from his feet.

With trembling hands, he called Archie, his fingers sliding on the screen. Another crash of thunder, followed by electric blue light illuminating his face sent his heart careening. Thankfully, the boy picked up on the first ring.

"Jug?" Archie's voice was a piercing static screech in his ear. The boy, as usual, sounded worried. "Dude, where are you? Have you seen the storm?"

"Yeah," he managed to get out, surprising himself with a loud laugh. It quickly died out when a tree ahead of him exploded, lightning bouncing off it. "I'm out in it, Arch."

"What? Are you insane?" Jughead rolled his eyes at the boy's theatrics. "Chill out I'm fine-" the words choked in the back of his throat when the storm seemed to finally close in on him, lightning zig-zagging right above him. Jughead staggered away from the bus shelter. He wasn't exactly a meteorologist, but he did have lingering knowledge from facts he'd picked up when he was a kid. According to a documentary Betty had been fascinated with when they were kids, lightning never struck in the same place twice.

"Where are you?" Archie sounded out of breath. Jughead could almost imagine the boy pulling on his coat and shoes, stumbling around, searching for his dad's car keys.

He swallowed, skidding to a stop. The rain came down hard, slamming into him, while icy wind lashed his cheeks. "Uhh-" Jughead rubbed his eyes, letting out a shaky breath. Through fraying lashes he spotted Riverdale's Elementary school on the other side of the road. The bright yellow fencing was unmistakable. He and Archie used to sit on it and pretend to fall off, scaring the life out of the poor teachers. "I'm right next to the elementary school," he gasped out. "Remember in second grade when we played that game?"

"Which game?" another hiss of static sounded out. Jughead could vaguely hear another voice, a low murmur. Fred Andrews. "Yeah, I'll be careful dad," the boy was talking to his father. "Jug, stay where you are, okay? I'm getting in dad's car now-" the boy drew in a breath, which crackled in Jughead's ear. "Jesus fuck, it looks apocalyptic."

"Maybe the world is finally ending?" he chuckled. Archie groaned.

"Don't say that-" the rest of the redhead's words were whipped away by the wind. Archie's voice picked up after a moment. He sounded like he'd ran a marathon. "I think it's a tornado, Jug. Like I said, stay there alright? Try and find shelter. Ronnie's just texted me. She's with Betty. Once I pick you up, we're going to Ronnie's."

"The Pembrooke?" Jughead swallowed a groan. "Dude, her dad hates you."

"Thanks, asshole," Archie laughed. "He doesn't hate me. I'm warming to him. Hiram's not exactly sunshine and rainbows about you either. Anyway, don't move. I'm on my way."
"Aye aye, captain," Jughead tried to joke. Archie was freaking out as usual, and it was only a storm. But it felt like the lightning was circling him. On Archie's end there was the sound of a car door slamming, and the familiar burst of an engine rumbling to life. "Hey Arch?" his gaze strayed on the sky, waiting for another earth shattering crash. He couldn't stand still, pacing the pavement, stealing glances at the thunderous storm cloud hovering above. "Call me crazy, but I think the lightning is out to get me."

"Hold on, say that again. I'm trying to get the radio working." the blast of static from Archie's father's ancient stereo made him wince. When a station eventually came through, Archie cranked up the volume. It was a pop song he vaguely remembered from a few years ago. Archie hummed along to the tune. "Alright, I'm listening."

"I said, I think the lightning is out to get me," he repeated. There hadn't been a flash in a while, which could only be bad. Jughead held his breath, narrowing his eyes at the sky. "It feels like it's preying on me, dude. Like it's preying on me, dude. Like it's a living thing waiting to strike."

Archie chuckled. "You watch too many movies, man. The lightning isn't out to get you, Jug. You're paranoid." the second Archie said that, the tree that which had previously been hit, was struck again. Jughead stumbled backwards, nearly dropping his phone. But the storm had no mercy. The tree exploded once more, splitting apart and crashing onto the road. Jughead felt himself freeze in place. Another crack of thunder sent his heart into his throat. "Archie, listen to me," he managed to hiss out. "Lightning never strikes in the same place twice," gasping, he stumbled over his words. This was the first time in his life he was truly terrified. "I just watched it hit a tree three goddamn times!"

For a moment, he thought the boy had put the phone down on him, or worse; the phone lines had been obliterated, but after a few painstaking seconds, Archie's voice came through in a rush of garbled static. "Sorry, I lost you for a sec, what did you say?"

No longer patient, Jughead let out a hiss of frustration. "Archie, the lightning is trying to fucking kill me!"

"Wait, it's lightning again?" Archie's words sent his stomach galloping. "Jug, I get what you mean about the tornado, but I haven't seen any more lightning. There was a flash before I left the house, but that's it. Are you sure someone's not setting fireworks off?" his friend's words didn't make any sense. Riverdale was a small town, and Archie was, what? a five minute drive away. It was almost impossible for Archie to not witness the lightning storm raining from the sky, as if he'd personally attacked Zeus.

Even cowering from seemingly sentient lightning, Jughead rolled his eyes. Archie was his best friend, and always would be. But damn, the boy said some stupid shit. Who in their right mind would be setting off fireworks in the middle of a storm?

"What? Archie, I know the difference between lightning and some idiot setting off fireworks!"

Another strike hit the sidewalk a few feet away, and Jughead turned to run. Definitely not a god damn firework. He was quickly blocked by a second hiss of electric blue light slamming into the walk and could only stare, baffled, as writhing blue light forked across the sky, hitting every single tree ahead, as if teasing him. Unbelievably, the lightning was playing with him, waiting for the perfect time to hit.

This wasn't happening. staggering back, he blinked rapidly, waiting for the ground to disappear from underneath his feet. But it was real. He was wide awake, and this was really happening; tendrils of seething light following his every move.

"Archie!" Jughead managed to cry out. "Y- you need to get here now, this is...this is s- something
else," he took slow steps in the opposite direction, backtracking. But the lightning seemed to stalk him, strike after strike, sizzling in the air. When there was no reply, Jughead slid his phone back into his pocket, managing two staggered steps forward. He waited for the flash, but for a relieving moment, there was nothing. Feeling more confident, he took another step. Then another. *I'm going to die.* He thought, slightly hysterically. *Oh god, I'm going to die at sixteen years old.*

How will people remember him? *"Oh yeah, Jughead Jones? He was struck by lightning."*

The urge to spin around and make a run for it was overwhelming, but the lightning was dormant. Testing his steps. Watching every move he made, as Jughead managed a clumsy run, forcing his aching legs to go faster. Though something made him stop, staggering to a halt, nearly falling on his face. He was soaking, his knitted beanie limp over his curls. At first Jughead thought he was hallucinating. But after blinking, peeling strands of his hair hanging over his eyes, he saw her. Across the road, there was a girl standing on the very edge, staring at him, hiding behind a whirlwind of silver hair. Conscious of the lightning storm, Jughead waved his arms wildly to get the girl's attention.

"Hey!" he yelled. But the girl didn't move. She looked like an apparition, a phantom, bleeding from the storm; she wore a red sweater and jeans, her expression still masked by her hair. He tried again, louder this time; "Hey! What are you doing?"

Jughead was halfway across the road before he could hesitate. He was stumbling, reaching out to the stranger. But she stayed frozen, a ghost teetering on the fringe of the road.

Another flash drew a cry from his lips, followed by a turbulent gust of wind knocking into him, sending Jughead to his knees. In front of him, the girl's face was suddenly illuminated in harsh purple light. She looked around his age, maybe younger; chalky pale cheeks, wide green eyes and lips curled into a mute scream. She was looking right at him.

*Behind you!*

The girl's scream carried on the wind, but it was too late for him to run. Too late for her to try and save him. She stood, petrified into place. Jughead could sense the lightning behind him, striking the walk, closer and closer. He managed to get up, force his limbs into submission. But he was too slow, dragging himself down the sidewalk while the lightning laughed at him. He pulled his phone out, and with numb fingers, dialled his dad's number. Which was ridiculous. His father would never believe that he was being chased by lightning. But he had to try. With shaky breaths, Jughead pressed the phone to his ear, praying his dad was home, praying he'd pick up the damn phone.

"The number you've called is not available right now, please leave a message after the-"

Jughead felt his phone slip from his fingers, just as something hit him; starting off as a tiny prick, like a needle. But it grew greater, blossoming into a searing agony flooding his body, volts shocking his heart. But he couldn't scream. His lips felt out of reach, and there was only white hot pain igniting him from the inside. Colors flashed in front of his vision, bright zig-zags and pulsing prisms glowing brighter and brighter.

He was half aware of his own body slumping forwards, still clinging onto consciousness. He could smell the stink of his own flesh sizzling in the air. His thoughts spiralled drunkenly. Lightning. Was the only coherent thing he could think of, because there was so much pain, rattling his body. It was the kind of pain he'd have nightmares about, the kind where death seemed better. Less sufferable.

Suddenly his father felt a whole world away. Archie and Betty, even Veronica, were out of reach and he was being dragged into the darkness whether he liked it or not, while his body got closer and
closer to the walk, before landing with a meaty smack.

And then, there was just darkness.

The first thing that crossed Jughead’s mind when he woke up, was that he was no longer outside, staring up at a tumultuous sky. It took him a moment to come to, wincing at a dull throbbing in the back of his head. That was to be expected. He’d been hit by damn lightning. Confusion fogged his mind when he managed to open his eyes, finding himself blinking at an unfamiliar ceiling. He sat up quickly, drinking in his surroundings.

He was in a small, bright room. There was what looked like a dressing table covered in bags of hair product and makeup, various colourful wigs decorating a shelf and a clothes rack packed with hundreds of outfits. Jughead swore he glimpsed his own black and red patterned jacket, and his S shirt. After a moment of staring around the room, baffled at what he was seeing. It looked like someone's dressing room. There was a coffee cup, phone and jacket slung on the table, white headphone wires dangling off the edge. Jughead stood up, swaying slightly. Looking down at himself, he was no longer soaking wet. The clothes that had previously been glued to his skin, were bone dry. When he gingerly ran his fingers through his hair, his beanie was still nestled over his curls. Swallowing hard, Jughead started towards the door. but tripped over something. When he looked down to see what it was, his stomach flew into his throat. There was somebody laying curled up at his feet.

It was a guy. Peering closer, Jughead noticed the boy had the same ratty dark curls as him. He wore a white dress shirt and skinny black jeans. Jughead knelt next to the boy, gently pushing him to the side. But the second he touched the boy’s icy cold skin, the world seemed to concave. His head spun, chest aching. When the boy lifelessly rolled onto his side, Jughead had to cover his mouth to suppress the cry choked at the back of his throat. He was staring at himself. It was like looking in a mirror. The nameless boy’s eyes were closed. He had the same long narrow nose that Jughead despised. It took a few seconds for him to realise the boy was dead. When Jughead tried to find a pulse or a heartbeat, there was nothing. An out of body experience. He thought, automatically. He was staring down at himself. But where was he? What the hell was he wearing?

Jughead jumped at the sound of footsteps, stumbling away from the body of himself. But he caught a glimpse of something laying next to the body. Before he could stop himself, he was hurrying forwards on his hands and knees. It was a needle. When he picked it up, it was still full of clear white liquid splashing against plastic.

"I heard screaming!" a sudden voice rang out. It sounded like Betty. Jughead dropped the needle, scurrying to pick it back up, but before he could, it disappeared out of existence. He grabbed for it, but pawed thin air. When his gaze went to the body, it too had gone. Like it had never been there. Jughead rubbed his eyes, holding his breath. Okay, so he was losing it. He started towards the door once again, eager to get out, but it flew open before he could, sending him stumbling back into the dressing table.

"There you are," Betty was standing in the doorway. But there was something different about her. Instead of her ponytail, her blonde hair fell in blonde waves, tickling her shoulders. She was wearing a fluffy white robe. The girl’s blue eyes were bright, her smile settling the knot in his stomach. "Oh, did you already get changed?" her expression darkened slightly. "Are you okay?" she murmured. "You look really pale."

Jughead swallowed, nodding. But his brain felt like it was on fire. He most definitely wasn't okay.
His head was still throbbing, the body on the floor—his double, still made no sense, and he had no idea where he was. "Betty, what's going on?" he managed to get out. His voice was a soft whimper. The girl cocked her head. "Betty?" her lips curved into a smile, and his chest tightened. "What, are we going by our characters names now?"

Jughead stared back at the blonde, waiting for the girl to start laughing, revealing this all to be some kind of prank. But the longer Betty frowned at him, Jughead started to realise this wasn't a joke. "Characters?" he repeated, swallowing. "What are you talking about?"

The girl sighed. "Look, I'm tired, okay? It's not even seven O'clock in the morning, and I'm running on barely any coffee," she raised her eyebrows at him. "If you're playing some kind of prank with the others, I really can't be bothered this morning."

"It's daylight?" he managed to splutter. It was 6PM the last time he'd checked. Betty's eyes narrowed. "Cole, are you okay?" she laughed nervously. "Dude, you're scaring me."

Cole? The name wasn't familiar. He started to question who that was, but the door opened again, a stranger sticking their face through; a man in his early twenties with a backwards baseball cap and a mess of blonde hair. "You guys need to be on set in five," he said quickly, before hurrying away.

Betty nodded with tired smile. "Gotcha. Thanks Dean." she held the door open with one hand. "You coming, or are you going to mope in your trailer all day?"

"My trailer?" Jughead parroted. That was all he was able to do, repeat everything the girl was saying, in a disbelieving tone, his eyes wide and confused.

Betty's smile disappeared. "Have you been knocked on the head?" she held out her hand for him to take. "Look, maybe a bit of fresh air might do you good. What was all that yelling earlier? Did someone come into your trailer?"

Jughead didn't reply. But he did take her hand, squeezing it for dear life. "I think I'm going crazy, Betty," he said softly. "There's something wrong. You might think I've lost it, but there was—there was another me, and this needle, and now I don't know where I am—"

Betty laughed, rolling her eyes. "Okay, save the acting for the scene, dude." she was dragging him out of the trailer before he could reply. Jughead found himself walking onto what felt like a film set. There were white trailers parked everywhere, camera equipment being carried around by strangers on a gravel pathway. The sky was blue, a cool breeze lightly playing with his hair. Betty didn't let go of his hand, and he stared around in awe. This was definitely some kind of prank. Surely. His birthday was soon, so maybe Betty had somehow managed to get him on the set of his favorite film?

The girl swung their arms playfully as they walked. They were heading towards a crowd of people hanging around a table full of food and drink. Jughead could see every type of muffin, toast, fruit-plastic cups of coffee. The aroma drifted in the air, and his stomach rumbled. Betty saw his face and laughed. "I knew craft services would cheer you up. So I've been reading through our schedule. We've got a shoot from 7 till 12, and then lunch. So I was hoping we could go get a coffee? We can go to that cafe downtown. They're still doing pumpkin spiced late's, even when it's way past October—" Jughead tuned out a little, drinking in the set. It was beautiful. As if Betty had seriously got him onto a professional film set! The body double must have been some kind of crazy mind trick.

When she turned to him with a playful smile, he managed a nod.

"Sure." he said, playing along. he couldn't help let out an incredulous laugh. "I don't know how you
managed it Betty, this is insane."

"Managed what?" Betty turned to him with confused eyes, an amused smile on her lips. "Can we stop with the character names? It's a getting a little old." she nudged him playfully, and Jughead felt his gut twist. But he didn't have time to question her. The girl was pulling him towards the table, grabbing a plate, handing him one. Jughead wasn't sure what to do. He'd never seen this amount of food in his whole life. Betty started to pile hers with muffins and cookies, so he copied. The girl giggled. "Don't you usually get salad?" when he turned around, she was smirking at his plate piled high with treats.

"Salad? Betty, you know I don't eat salad," he took a bite of a muffin to prove himself, reveling in the chocolate filling that melted in his mouth.

The girl just frowned at him. "Cole, seriously, are you okay?" she murmured, pulling him gently away from the table. "You're acting really weird."

Jughead blinked at her. "Who's Cole?" he finally said, eyeing her. "Why do you keep calling me that?"

Betty's eyes grew wide. "Because that's your name," she said softly. "Cole, do you want me to take you to the medical tent? You like you're going to throw up."

She was right. He felt like he was going to gag. "Betty, if this is a prank, or a surprise, please tell me," he hissed desperately. "because I think I'm going mad."

The blonde's eyes grew turbulent. "Cole, my name is Lili. Not Betty," she said, her tone hardening. "Betty Cooper is my character. She took his hands and squeezed them tightly. "You need to tell me if you've hit your head, because it could be serious."

Jughead could only splutter. "What?" he pulled away from her. "I haven't hit my head, I was struck by lightning, and-

"What's going on?" a familiar voice rang out, and Jughead found himself looking at Veronica. Though the girl wasn't in her usual black dress and tights. Even her pearls were missing. Instead, she wore a denim jacket and jeans. Her dark hair was pulled into a loose ponytail. She was nibbling on a muffin. "You guys look pretty freaked out," she commented, through a mouthful of food. Jughead stared at the girl. Veronica never spoke with her mouth open, especially when she was eating. She eyed Jughead with a confused smile, popping the last few morsels of cake into her mouth. "Is he okay?"

If Betty was worried about him, she didn't show it in front of Veronica. She shrugged with a smile. "I think he's just tired," she said. But the girl was staring at the ground. Veronica nodded. "Alrighty, well I'm gonna go to makeup. I'll see you guys later?"

The girl was running off, eagerly greeting a group of people carrying a long white table. Betty's fake smile disappeared, and she turned back to Jughead, her eyebrows creasing together with worry. "Are you well enough to film?"

Film what? Jughead opened his mouth to question her, yet again, when the same guy from earlier-Dean. "Lili, Cole, we need you on set right now."

Nausea curled in Jughead's gut, an acute slash of pain rocking his skull. It was clear now that Betty wasn't joking around. Her name was Lili, and he was apparently "Cole".

Was it possible that he'd been hit by lightning and transported to an alternate world? Betty, or he
guessed "Lili" smiled at Dean, before taking his hand once again. "It's just a rehearsal. They want to
go through the script before we go to hair and makeup. Listen, if you start to feel ill, just talk to
Andy, okay?" the girl spoke quickly as Lili hurried through a maze of trailers, before pulling Jughead
through an empty parking lot.

Jughead skidded to a stop, bile burning at the back of his throat. He was staring at Pops. But it was if
Pops- was part of a movie, or a television show. There were cameras set up everywhere, cranes and
filling lights hovering over the diner. "What is it, what's wrong?" Lili asked, her voice shaking.
"Cole, are you okay?" the girl's voice sounded like an echo in his ears. Jughead blinked, then he
blinked again. But this was as real as the freak lightning storm. Before he could help himself, he was
stumbling towards the diner, the girl taking off after him. "Cole, hey, what are you doing?"

Stepping inside felt all wrong. Pops looked like a skeleton. There were people dotted around,
crowding behind cameras, setting up neon lights that shined into the windows, projecting purple and
red. It was light that had always felt natural to him. There were kids sitting in fours with bits of paper
in front of them. Even the food looked fake. Jughead spied his usual table, a rush of relief flooding
his veins when he caught a familiar mop of red hair, streaks of blue and gold that could only be the
bulldog Letterman jacket. Jughead shook his head. He'd never been so happy to see the damn thing.

"Archie!" his head continued to pound, bile searing his throat as he headed towards the redhead, legs
shaking. He slumped down in front of the boy, who didn't look up. The boy's head was buried in his
arms.

In front of him were two white plastic cups, still filled to the brim with coffee. It looked like Archie
was sleeping. There was what looked like a script, crumpled on the table, covered in coffee stains.
Jughead peered at it, squinting. RIVERDALE. The word was printed at the top of the page,
followed by:

CALL SHEET.

EPISODE: 312

Jughead was staring hard at the "character list" who happened to be most of his friends and family.
He saw his own name, followed by whatever the hell Betty had called him. His gaze lingered on the
cast list, before trailing over the bolded dialogue. Though he only glimpsed the first line, before a
groan startled him. Archie sat up with bleary eyes, strands of his red hair sticking up everywhere.
The boy regarded him with a confused frown for a moment, before his brown eyes widened.
"Cole?" his best friend peered at him with a smile. But it felt like he was looking at a completely
different person. Instead of Archie's usual worried tone, eyes crinkled around the edges, the boy
looked playful. There was something wrong with his voice. Replacing his usual all American drawl,
there was an Aussie, or even Kiwi twang.

"What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be filming a scene, like right now?"

Archie's voice was too much. Jughead felt his cheeks redden, his throat closed up and tears welled in
his eyes. "Archie," managing to spit the boy's name out, even when he already knew this boy wasn't
his best friend, Jughead swallowed hard. "Please tell me this is a joke." Archie raised his eyebrows
and laughed. "Alright, one; It's KJ," he chuckled. "And two, fill me in. What happened while I was
napping?"

Jughead held his breath. "Look, you need to listen to me, alright?"

The boy nodded, still looking confused. "I'll try. What's the problem?" Archie frowned at him. "You
look kinda sick, bro."
Jughead managed a laugh. "Trust me, it's worse than that," he stabbed the call sheet with his index finger. "What's this?"

"You mean the call sheet?" Archie cleared his throat. He held it up, waving it a little. "Uh, Cole, if this is some kind of weird quiz, I had barely any sleep last night and I've got to memorize a whole bunch of crazy nonsense."

"No, I mean, what is this?" Jughead pointed at the lines of dialogue, then the name of his town printed at the top. His heart was in his throat.

The redhead squinted. "You mean Riverdale?" The boy's accent was hurting his head. A woman with greying hair turned up, placing a tray of milkshakes on the table. Jughead let out a breath. Finally, something remotely normal. He grabbed the chocolate one and took a sip. But the usual fruity cream he was used to tasted like sour yoghurt. He spat it back out, pulling a face.

"Dude, are you feeling okay?" Archie was grinning at him, talking with that ridiculous accent, while the woman let out a heavy sigh.

"How many times do I have to say it? It's clotted cream and day old yogurt, boys. You don't drink them."

Jughead felt dizzy. "I knew that," he said weakly, swiping his lips and swallowing hard. The "milkshake" had only made him feel sicker. When the woman wandered off, Archie smiled apologetically at her, before turning to him, leaning on his fist with a quizzical smile.

"Alright, what's going on?"

Jughead opened his mouth to speak, but no sound came out.

The boy chuckled. "You come in here looking like you've just been given a week to live, call me Archie, start drinking the prop drinks, and, jesus, you look out of it," before he could pull away, the redhead was feeling his forehead. "Huh. You're not warm. Are you alright?"

"KJ, we're starting in a few," a man who was setting up a camera nearby yelled over, and Archie straightened up, cursing under his breath. The door opened, and in walked Veronica, finally looking like Veronica Lodge. She'd changed into a white blouse, pencil skirt and high heels. The string of pearls were back. She strode over, holding her own copy of what Jughead guessed was the script. "Cole, aren't you meant to on stage C?" she frowned at him, cocking her head. "Then again, maybe you should go to the medical tent, you look really ill." he must have looked disgusted, because the girl shrugged, smiling reassuringly. "It's probably just a bug. Mads had stomach flu last week."

Archie nodded. "She's right, dude. You should go and get checked over."

"I'm fine," Jughead managed to get out, when he wasn't fine. He felt like he was going to faint. Everything since he'd woken up had made no sense. His name, the names of his friends, who were now weird alternate versions. What about the body of the boy with his face? At the thought, his stomach revolted. When he jumped up, the world seemed to spin around jarringly, as if he was riding a carousel. "I just need to get some air."

"We'll come with you," Archie got up, grabbing his arm. The strangers with Veronica and Archie's faces led him out of Pops. He felt momentary relief when they stepped into the cool air. Instantly, he recognised the familiar blonde ponytail pacing the sidewalk. Betty, or the girl playing his girlfriend, had changed into a pastel blue sweater and jeans. Her blue eyes were wide with worry. She hurried over. "The crew are postponing the shoot for an hour," she said quickly. "Cole, what happened?
You can tell us."

He pulled a face. "Trust me, you wouldn't believe me," he gasped out. "I need to get one thing straight," Jughead frowned at the faces crowded around him, swimming around his vision. The pain in his head was getting worse. "You guys aren't Betty, Archie and Veronica."

They stared at him as if he'd just grown a second head. "No..." Veronica laughed, but he could tell the girl was trying to mask her confusion.

"That's what he was saying earlier," Betty murmured. "He kept calling me Betty."

"And back on set, he called me Archie," the redheaded boy ran a hand through his curls, pulling a face. "So, what, he's so sick he thinks we're our characters?"

"I'll handle this," Veronica said. She grabbed his shoulders gently. "Cole, you need to listen to me, okay? We're not Betty, Veronica and Archie," she pointed to herself. "I'm Camila. I play Veronica, and they are KJ and Lili. They PLAY Archie and Betty."

That was all he needed. The nail in the coffin. The final blow. Even when the truth had been written in front of him on the call sheet. Jughead pulled away from KJ and Camila. "You're all crazy," he whispered. But he was in denial. How could they be the crazy ones? How could any of this be possible? His life...Jughead stared around him, drinking in everything he thought he knew. The diner he'd come to every day since he was a kid, the friends he'd made, even his girlfriend- was fake. His life was a television show.

The three of them shared a look. "Should I call an ambulance?" KJ pulled out his phone, but Lili shook her head. Her cheeks were pale. "No, not yet. We'll take him to medical." the girl's words set something off in his chest. His heart pounded,

"Get away from me," Jughead managed to choke out. Lili looked taken aback. The girl looked like she might break into tears herself, but she shook her head. "No, Cole, sweetie, we're trying to help."

Jughead stumbled away from them, tears threatening to slide down his cheeks. His thoughts were an array, a tornado; Jughead Jones was a character. A piece of fiction. Someone had created him. He fell into a run, the world swaying with every step. A cacophony of shouts from the strangers playing his friends scathed his ears, but he didn't turn around.

He didn't look up as he ran, staggering over rough gravel. Though there was nowhere else to go. His home was fake. Probably not even a real trailer. Where the hell was he? How could he get back home? His thoughts trailed off when he bumped into something.

Or someone. Looking up, Jughead found himself staring up at the same girl from the lightning storm. The pain in his head dulled, and the world seemed to finally stop spinning. This time the girl's silver hair was held back by a black headband. She wore an identical red sweater and jeans. Instead of staring mutely at him like last time, she offered him a small smile.

He scowled back. "What did you do to me?" he demanded, half sobbing. "You were there when it was lightning. What the hell did you do?"

The girl didn't seem fazed by his tone of voice. "Jughead Jones," she said. He relaxed when she used his real name. "Look, I know you're scared, but I can help you. My name is Sabrina Spellman, and I'll try and explain everything."

The girl pulled out a crumpled twenty dollar note. "Do you want to get a coffee?"
The waitress's name was Callie, and she was grinning like a maniac. Jughead noticed the girl was trembling behind the counter, tapping the tip of her pen far too violently on her notepad. "Will it be your usual?" she squeaked, and Jughead, still feeling like he'd been ran over by a steamroller, nodded. What was his usual? When he turned to Sabrina with questioning eyes, her lips curved into a small smile. "You're famous here," she murmured. "Riverdale is an insanely popular TV show. They're on their third season."

Good for them.

Jughead started to feel sick again. The aroma of crushed coffee beans wasn't helping. "Yeah, that's the thing I'm struggling to grasp," he hissed back while Callie fixed their drinks. Sabrina asked for an iced coffee before leading him to a table near the window. The cafe was mostly empty, which was relieving. Though he could deal without Callie's huge grin. He could tell she was snapping photos trying to be discreet. Jughead groaned, resting his head in his hands. "Tell me again," he said, peering at the tiny blonde. "Everything you're saying is just going in one ear and out the other."

"Exactly," Sabrina said. "Imagine a piece of rope. At first glance you think it's straight, right? Zoom in, and you see what it really is; millions of different threads all tangled up, but all heading in the same direction." when Jughead looked confused, she shrugged. "So, think your world as one of those different threads."

Jughead tapped his fingers absently on the fancy mahogany table. "So, what, my life is a rope?" he couldn't resist spluttering, and the girl rolled her eyes. "No, idiot," she said. "Your world is just one of the many threads entangled together. She pulled off her necklace to demonstrate, letting it dangle from her fingers. "When you were struck by lightning, you appeared here, in this world, which is one of many worlds next to yours."

Eventually, he nodded. "Right," he said. "So in this world there's another me. That makes sense." he murmured, but his gaze strayed on Sabrina's necklace. "But wait, he's dead. When I woke up, he was laying on the floor. I think someone stabbed him with a needle."

Sabrina paled, her smile disappearing. "Right. That." she dropped her necklace on the table. Callie appeared with their drinks, setting Sabrina's iced tea in front of her, and then what looked like a caffeine explosion next to him. Jughead frowned at the drink. "This is what he likes?" he pulled a face, pushing it away. "Is that everything, or would you like anything else?" Callie asked. Jughead spied her phone behind her notebook, and rolled his eyes. "We can see your phone," he grumbled. "How about you actually do your job instead of invading our privacy, huh?" the girl's eyes widened, and her cheeks turned bright red. Feeling a little guilty, he shrugged. "I could do with another drink," he muttered. "Just a normal black coffee. No fancy cream or toppings."

Callie nodded, grabbing the drink and scooting away. Sabrina cleared her throat when the waitress
had made herself scarce. "You didn't have to talk to her like that." she sipped her drink. Jughead sighed. It had been a long day. Well, he'd been struck by lightning and transported to a different universe where his damn life was a TV show.

"Look, the guy who plays me on Riverdale, or whatever, he's dead." Jughead didn't realise his hands were shaking. "And he disappeared right in front of my eyes before I could do anything- before I could call anyone, or try and help him." his voice broke, no matter how hard he tried to seem cold. He looked at Sabrina for answers. "Can you explain that?"

The girl shook her head. "I don't know why it's happening," she admitted. "all I know is that if a cast member dies in this world, they're replaced by their counterpart in yours."

Jughead bit his lip. "So when Cole kicked the bucket, I was brought here." Sabrina's words made his stomach turn. The kids playing his friends, were they in danger too? Who had killed Cole?

"Yes," Sabrina said, as if reading his mind. "They are in danger. Someone is trying to kill off the main cast members playing your friends, which started with Cole."

"What about you?" Jughead couldn't help asking. "You called me Jughead, so you're obviously from my world. How are you here?"

The girl smiled sadly. "I'm just a wanderer," she said. "I'm actually astral projecting right now."

"You're what?"

Sabrina shook her head. "It doesn't matter. What matters is that you need to figure out who's picking off the Riverdale cast, before your friends end up here too."

Jughead wiped his eyes, swallowing a groan. All of this was so much to take in. His head was pounding. "Wait, so if one of them dies, they're automatically replaced. So if..." he screwed his face up. Her name had escaped his mind. "The girl with blonde hair, the one playing Betty. If she dies, Betty from my world comes here?"

"Yep." Sabrina's expression darkened. "And that can't happen. With you, it's a blip. You're like a glitch in the Matrix. An accident, if you like. But five of you, all in this world?" the girl mimed an explosion with her hands. "That's not good. If you think of the rope again, with so many of you hopping from thread to thread, it'll start to get thinner and thinner, and then it'll tear. And believe me, you don't want that."

Jughead shivered. "The girl who plays Betty-"

"Lili." Sabrina corrected him. He rolled his eyes. "Right. Whatever. She said she heard yelling when I first woke up in his trailer. Do you think that was his killer?"

"It could be." the girl murmured. "And since you look exactly like Cole, you're not safe yourself. What if the killer comes back to finish the job?"

That wasn't a comforting thought. "Why actors though?" he asked. Callie came back, silently this time. She kept her head down. Jughead felt like apologising, but Cole probably got it all the time. He was doing the poor kid a favour, surely. The girl handed him his coffee before rushing off. He lowered his voice into a hushed whisper. "Of all the people to kill, why start picking off actors in a TV show?"

Sabrina shrugged helplessly. "That's what you've gotta figure out." She took another tentative sip of her tea. "Speaking of which, heads up." her lips quirked into a smile, and she gestured behind him.
When Jughead turned around, Cole's cast mates were rushing through the door, looking flustered. Callie automatically hounded them; thus beginning a confusing mix of the three of them smiling politely and writing on napkins all while scanning the cafe. No doubt for him. Jughead groaned, hiding behind a menu. It wasn't the best camouflage. "Maybe if I stay real still behind here, they won't notice me."

Sabrina chuckled. "Look, I know this is bad, alright? This is like insanely bad, and I wouldn't blame you if you had a total mental breakdown-"

"Is that supposed to be make me feel better?" risking a peek over the menu, Jughead watched the three of them start towards them. He dropped the menu in defeat. They'd seen him. He was compromised. From the looks on their faces, they didn't look happy.

"What I mean is," Sabrina continued. "They're Cole's cast mates. You've gotta be nice to them, and at least try and act like him. If you want to protect them and keep your friends from suffering the same fate as you, you've got to get close to them."

He scoffed. "Protect them? Sabrina, I'm not some sort of-" Jughead trailed off when he found himself staring, and talking, pretty damn loudly, at thin air. The blonde had blinked out of existence, as well as her drink. So when he finally turned to Cole's friends and cast mates, he looked out of his mind. Before he could speak, the blonde playing Betty slumped down on Sabrina's seat. She looked like she had been crying, her cheeks chalky white. She dragged out her Betty ponytail, ringlets of gold straying in wide blue eyes. Archie, or whatever his name was, had swapped his Letterman jacket for a sweater, and Veronica was hugging her denim jacket to her chest.

The blonde reminded him too much of Betty. Jughead offered them a small smile, but neither of them returned it. "Hey," he said finally. "What are you guys doing here?"

The blonde looked taken aback. "What are we doing here? Cole, we're supposed to be shooting, and instead the whole crew are going out of their minds looking for you!" when he couldn't say anything, the girl took his hand gently. He resisted against pulling it away. "Is it drugs?" she whispered. "Because if it is we can get you into some kind of clinic, Cole. You know we'll do anything to help you, right?"

It was hard for Jughead to make eye contact with her. He stared down at the table, his eyes stinging. "It's not drugs," he managed to say. "I- I'm okay, really."

"Then why are you sitting in a cafe having a conversation with yourself?" when he looked up, the boy who played Archie was frowning at him. But his brown eyes were kind. Just like Archie. "No offense mate, but you're looking and sounding pretty crazy right now."

Jughead held his breath. He couldn't tell them. They'll think he's even crazier. So he settled with an oblivious smile. "I'm just not feeling great today," he lied. "It's nothing to worry about."

Neither of them looked convinced. "You think you're your character," Betty's alternate murmured. "How can we ignore that?" she didn't let go of his hand. Her eyes were so sincere. So caring. He looked away quickly, avoiding her pained expression.

"No, I'm Cole." Jughead spoke up, with what he hoped was a reassuring grin. "I'm Cole, and you're my castmates."

"Uh-uh." Archie's counterpart folded his arms. "Spoken like a true crazy head," his accent twanged and he wrinkled his eyebrows. "What are our names then?"
Oh god. Sabrina had told him the blonde's name, and he was pretty sure the Kiwi had said his name multiple times. But that was when his mind was a whirlwind. He rolled his eyes. "This is stupid, guys," he tried to laugh. "of course I know who you are!"

"Then tell us." The raven haired girl cocked her head. "Our names, Cole. It's not that hard."

He sat for a few painstaking seconds, hoping their names would miraculously come to him. But they didn't. Instead of basking in embarrassment, he jumped up with a dismissive wave. "Okay, I'm not sitting around here playing the 'Who are you?' quiz, alright? I've already got a beast of a headache." That wasn't a lie. "I've gotta go."

"What?" It looked like Betty was jumping up to go after him, her eyes wide, lips parted in silent protest. But it wasn't her. This was some weird twisted, alternate version of the sweet, sunshine blonde, his other half. This girl had darker eyes, a sharp bite in her tone. "Cole, you can't just ghost us!"

Technically, he wasn't ghosting them. If he could figure out who killed their cast mate, he was home free. "I'm not, I'm going back to set," he said over his shoulder. "I'll see you guys later?"

Jughead was making his way to the door before any of them could reply. His eyes were stinging again. Just looking at the three of them reminded him of the real versions back home. His girlfriend and best friend. At the corner of his eye, Callie was heading over with a stormy expression. She looked pissed. "Hey!" she shouted. "I heard you guys talking, is it true you've lost your memory? Is Riverdale going to be cancelled?"

He yanked the door open before she could reach him. "No comment," he muttered, sliding through the gap into the cool afternoon air. Sabrina said that they was in a place called Vancouver in Canada. The late morning commute was fairly light. A stretch of colourful stores decorating the plaza.

Jughead had to get back to set, but looking around, nothing looked familiar. The way to the coffee shop had been a confusing blur. Sabrina had dragged him there anyway, and he hadn't bothered memorising the directions.

"Let me guess," a voice made him jump. The familiar New Zealand twang made his chest clench. Archie. But- not Archie. When he turned around, the redhead was standing behind him with a teasing smile, his red curls splayed across a pale forehead, freckles dancing across his cheeks. "you've forgotten the way back to set?" when the boy raised his eyebrows, Jughead shrugged. "No," he said stubbornly. "I'm just basking in the sunshine."

"Right." the boy rolled his eyes. "Listen, something's up with you. That's obvious, okay? but can you at least tell me you're not into something shady? Lili's terrified you're losing the plot."

Lili. Jughead mentally noted that down. That was her name. He shook his head with a laugh. "You mean drugs?" Both Lili and her cast mate had mentioned drugs on two separate occasions. Was Cole really into some shady shit?

"Yeah, I mean drugs. Did you see yourself? Raving about nothing being real, calling us by our character's names, and then having a full blown conversation with yourself?" the boy threw his arms up. "What are we supposed to think?"

Jughead found himself smiling slightly. The boy might not be Archie, but he definitely had his friend's theatrics. The ability to over-dramatise everything. He sighed in defeat. "If I tell you what's really going on, you'll think I'm crazy." he started walking, and wasn't surprised when the boy followed him, falling in stride.
"Try me," he said. "I'll believe everything but aliens."

"What's your name again?" he blurted, and the boy looked confused. "What?" he laughed out loud, and Jughead found himself liking it. "It's KJ. Damn, have you got amnesia? Lils thinks you knocked your 'ed this morning and gave yourself memory loss."

"Lils..." he murmured, and KJ scoffed. "As in Lili? Your girlfriend?" the boy whistled, and Jughead swallowed. The girl playing his girlfriend- was Cole's girlfriend. He suppressed a whine. That was going to be hard to wrap his head around.

"You've got it pretty bad then, huh? Do you think you'll be able to film?" KJ looked genuinely worried. Jughead looked away, frowning at cracks in the sidewalk as they walked, counting wads of chewing gum dotting his path. "I'll be fine," he muttered.

"Do you even know what we're filming?" KJ pulled out a cigarette to his surprise, sticking it between his lips and igniting the end with a polka dot lighter. Jughead watched the flame dance in the breeze. "Sort of," he mumbled to the boy's question, "sorry, but how old are you?" he couldn't help asking. Maybe teen celebrities in this world were allowed to smoke at such a young age. It was like word vomit, but KJ just grinned, taking a few drags before blowing out a plume of smoke.

"Twenty one," he said, and Jughead had to swallow the yell in his throat.

Shaking his head in disbelief, the boy chuckled. "I'm guessing you've forgotten your own age?"

"Sixteen," he said in a breath. "I'm sixteen. I should be sixteen."

"You mean like Jughead?" KJ took another drag of his cigarette, puffing out smoke. He resisted against a cough. "What's going on with that, anyway? you think you're a comic book character?" the redhead started to cross the road, and Jughead hurried to follow him, scared of getting lost.

Vancouver, according to Sabrina, was huge.

"Comic book character?" Jughead felt faint again. "There's a freakin' comic book about me?" He quickened his pace. KJ nodded. "Yeah, it's one of the biggest comic book companies in the world." he let out a sigh, running his hand through his hair. "Dude, you really need to see a doctor. Thinking you're the character you play isn't healthy at all."

Jughead didn't reply. Because everything he wanted to say would make him sound like a nut job. He ended up not speaking the rest of the way, and tried not to think about the way the redhead was looking at him.

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"Okay then Cole," the doctor's name was Dr. Marlowe. He looked to be in his late forties with greying hair and a beard. His eyes were a dull green, framed with black spectacles sitting on the edge of his pointy nose. He smelt of blueberry candy and antiseptic.

"What seems to be the problem?" the man was painfully close, traces of his lunch staining his white over coat. Jughead sat on the observation bed, shuffling uncomfortably on the thin paper crinkling underneath him.

"I said I'm fine," he said, for what felt like the thousandth time. He blinked rapidly when Dr Marlowe shined a torch in his face. When Jughead bothered to look up, the mellow lighting from a sputtering bulb above made him wince. The hospital ward was like he'd expected; bland white walls and yellowing wallpaper. The stink of bleach mixed with nauseating hospital food turned his gut.
"Does that hurt?" the man murmured, switching eyes, then again. Jughead followed the beam best he could, wincing when a slash of pain rocked the back of his skull. He shook his head. "No." he lied. The throbbing in his head didn't worsen or get better whether he was being blinded by a torch or not. The pain was most likely a side affect of getting hit by lightning. Though he knew telling the doctor that, as well as the fact that he was a fictional character from a different world, would surely land him in the loony bin. After sticking his tongue out so the man could stick a long metal prod between his teeth, before taking it back out and frowning at it, he sighed. "Look, this is a waste of time, I'm fine," he insisted. There was only a white curtain separating him from Cole's cast mates, who sat behind it. They had stayed mostly silent, thankfully. If they started talking about his possible lapse into psychosis, he could end up on an actual ward.

Jughead didn't want to be there. The longer he stayed with Doctor Marlowe, watching him try and find a phantom diagnosis, the likelier the chances of another cast mate getting the chop.

KJ had lured him into a trap, and he was so damn out of it, he hadn't realised the boy had been leading him to Vancouver General Hospital. "We're going to set," the redhead had insisted. When Jughead was fairly sure they'd passed it. He didn't know Vancouver well at all, but a film set is easy to spot, and they were going a different direction. But KJ had continued, insisting they were going to meet Betty and Veronica. Lili and Camila. Jughead had to keep telling himself that. He'd been suspicious the whole way there, but agreed. After all he was pretty inebriated. His head was still spinning, that continuous throbbing arching the back of his skull. It was incapacitating. Before he could protest or try and make a run for it, Lili and Camila had appeared seemingly out of nowhere, with matching determined expressions. The three of them had dragged him through the automatic doors, straight into the Accident and Emergency ward, ignoring his repeated yells of, "I'm fine!" while his chances of finding their potential murderer were dwindling with every passing moment that went by. So now here he was, wasting a poor guy's time.

Dr Marlowe folded his arms. "You don't appear to be sick, and your temperature is fine," he narrowed his eyes. "You may be a celebrity, kid, but to me you're just another patient, and you get the same treatment. No luxuries." Jughead nodded, swallowing hard.

"Understood," he said quickly. The man nodded before turning around and pulling the curtain back, revealing Cole's cast mates. They were sat bunched together like sardines, peering at the doctor hopefully, as if they were awaiting to find out if he had some kind of disease. Jughead swallowed a groan. The three of them were convinced there was something wrong, and it was getting progressively harder to persuade them he was totally fine. Dr Marlowe probably had a wife and kids he had to provide for. He didn't exactly look ecstatic when he'd called Cole's name out in the waiting room. Though luckily for him, nobody recognised him. After the Callie incident, Jughead was pretty much done with the show's crazy fans. "Is he okay?" Lili asked softly. Her hair was a tangled mess, sticking to pale cheeks. The girl looked like she'd been crying, her eyes swollen red. The other two looked better. KJ wore a beanie over his mess of red curls, and Camila had the hood of her sweater pulled over her head, strands of her raven hair trickling out.

The doctor scowled at Lili, his eyebrows pushing together. They reminded him of tiny grey caterpillars resting between his beady eyes. "I don't know what you kids qualify as an illness, but your friend is completely healthy." he grumbled, adjusting his stethoscope.

"Really?" KJ glanced up from his phone, his brown eyes crinkling. Jughead was still struggling to deal with the boy's accent. The Kiwi twang was hard to understand at some points. The boy slipped his phone in his pocket before fixing Dr Marlowe with a polite smile. "Look, we promise we're not wasting your time, we're actors in this TV show, and-"

"I know who you are," Dr Marlowe cut him off, rolling his eyes. "That red hair is like a god damn
traffic light. In case you haven't noticed, there are teenage girls hounding the front desk. My fourteen year old can't get enough of your sex filled shit fest."

"Oh." KJ looked startled. Jughead wondered if the boy was used to being criticised. "Hey, we don't write the show," he joked. But the doctor didn't seem to find the funny side. "Are you kids done?" he groused. "Your friend is fine. In fact, he's my healthiest patient today," he said. "If you'll excuse me, I've got real sick people to examine." Doctor Marlowe gestured for Jughead to shuffle off the observation bed, and he was about to, when Lili let out a frustrated hiss. "Wait!" she said. "There's something wrong with him," the blonde insisted. "Can't you do more tests?"

The doctor scoffed. "More tests?" he demanded. "Look girly, I said he's not sick. There's nothing wrong with him."

"I'm pretty sure he can't talk to us like that," Camila muttered. Jughead stayed sitting, swinging his legs. "The doctor is right," he spoke up. "Guys, I said I'm fine."

Doctor Marlowe nodded. "Your friend saying he is fine should be enough to get it through to you."

"Look kids, he's probably under the weather from work. I can say that he's exhausted, from the dark circles under his eyes. He just needs sleep."

"Right." Jughead tried to smile, but Lili's expression was tightening his chest. She wasn't going down without a fight. "No," she said sternly. "No, you need to understand that I know him, okay?" she sniffled, swiping at her eyes. "He looks right through me, doctor. There's something—there's something wrong," the girl slumped down with a sob and leaned into Camila. Doctor Marlowe sighed. "I'm a doctor, not a relationship adviser."

Lili's head snapped up. "Excuse me?" she squeaked. KJ pulled a face, but he didn't lose his smile. "Lils, I've got this." Jughead weirdly respected the boy. Archie would have argued with the doctor until he was blue in the face. But the Kiwi seemed a lot calmer than the others. "Look man, we're not trying to cause trouble," he nodded sincerely.

"What Lili means is that this morning Cole seemed different. He's normally so put together and ready to film. But he seemed completely out of it and was acting all crazy, like freaking out when he saw our production call sheets and scripts, and—"

KJ sighed, running his hands through his hair and rubbing his eyes. The guy looked exhausted. "He kept calling us by our characters names, as if we really were them."

"And drinking the prop drinks." Camila added. "He thinks he's Jughead," she looked up sharply. "like the character he plays. "That's bad right? Can't you do some kind of," she scrunched her face up. "I don't know, some kind of scan?"

Doctor Marlowe hummed. "What else?" he murmured. Something had changed in his expression, and Jughead's gut twisted. But he stayed silent. Lili glanced at him, her blue eyes pleading with him to understand why they were doing this. It was because they cared. But they were just making fools out of themselves. If a real medical professional couldn't sway them, Jughead didn't know what could. He gritted his teeth, biting back a groan.

Could they not understand that he was trying to save them? He looked away from her, scowling. Cole was dead, and his friends were next if he didn't figure out who had a hit on them. The idea of Archie, Betty and Veronica coming through to this world made his gut twist. To protect them, he had to keep their parallel selves safe. Which was going to be hard if the doctor diagnosed him with some
kind of mental disorder. His two options were to tell them the truth, and end up in a psychiatric ward with foam walls, or keep it to himself and continue wasting doctor Marlowe's precious time. Lili's gaze trailed from him to the doctor. She played with her hands in her lap nervously. "He disappeared off set and we found him, like half an hour later, in a cafe," she said quietly.

"And he was talking to himself." KJ finished. "He was having a fully blown conversation with himself."

"He was?" the doctor raised his bushy eyebrows. "that sounds like the early symptoms and signs of Psychosis and Schizophrenia." he rubbed his chin, his expression darkening. "I may have to do an MRI scan. But it will have to be a scheduled appointment," he cleared his throat. "Young man, are you comfortable with going ahead with an MRI scan?"

Jughead shook his head. He wasn't crazy. He wasn't even Cole! Their Cole had disappeared in front of his eyes, never to be seen again, and he wasn't even from their damn world. His eyes stung as he jumped off the observation bed.

"I was joking around with you guys this morning," he said stiffly. "I took it too far, and I'm sorry."

KJ's eyes hardened. "Wait, what?" he hissed. "You faked the whole thing?"

Camila let out a breath. "Cole, what the fuck?"

"I suggest you kids get out of here before I call the cops," Doctor Marlowe said coldly. " Pretending to be sick and wasting a medical professional's time is against the law."

"We understand, I- I'm sorry," KJ went bright red, grabbing Jughead's arm. His grip was far too tight, but Jughead didn't pull away. Camila jumped up to leave, but Lili stayed put. "He's lying," she said softly. "So he doesn't have to get the scan."

Doctor Marlowe shook his head. "Young lady, if he was truly going through a psychotic break, he wouldn't claim he was pretending. Patients who are mentally ill are dissociative. It can be hard for them to tell the difference between fiction and reality," the man glared at Jughead. "Cole seems fairly mentally stable, wouldn't you say?" the girl bowed her head, Hiding behind her hair, and the doctor seemed smug. "Like I said, you've got ten seconds to leave, or I'm calling the cops."

"We're going," said KJ, quickly. "I left my details with the front desk. We're sorry for the trouble caused. Come on, Cole." his teeth were gritted. It was the first time Jughead had seen Archie in the boy's expression. The doctor didn't reply, only scoffing to himself. Jughead found himself being dragged out of the ward, then back down twisting hallways with the same drab paintwork. Lili and Camila led the way, the redhead keeping a firm grip of his arm. When they made it into the reception, Jughead glimpsed the cluster of girls the doctor must have been talking about. They were eagerly waiting at the counter, iPhone's at the ready. Jughead expected Cole's friends to head over and greet them, happily signing autographs. But instead Camila and Lili managed to dart to the door, keeping their heads down, KJ dragging him along with them. When they were finally outside, Jughead sucked in a breath of precious air and looked up.

How long had they been in the hospital? He couldn't help admire the sky; it blushed purple, milky white clouds spattering the horizon. KJ let go of his arm, but the redhead still didn't speak. At least not to him. He checked his phone before letting out a sigh. "We've missed the morning and afternoon shoot. Rob's gonna have our asses tomorrow."

Lili pulled her jacket tighter around herself, a biting breeze toying with her curls. "We can say we took Cole to get checked out," when Jughead bothered looking up, the blonde was frowning at him.
She didn't believe he was pretending. It was obvious in the curl in her lip. But she didn't speak up about it. "we're not exactly lying."

"Why did you do it?" KJ finally asked, and Jughead felt his cheeks turn pink. He turned to face the boy's steely eyes and twisted lips. He'd yanked his beanie over his forehead to avoid being recognised. "Why would you play us like that, man?"

Ignoring the boy was his best option. So Jughead kept his lips sealed. Camila rang an Uber and the three of them piled in the back. Lili and Camila spoke amongst themselves, with Lili stealing glances at him, while KJ stuck his earphones in and blasted music. Jughead figured it was best for him to leave the boy alone. Feeling lonelier than ever, he leaned head against the window of the cab and allowed himself to finally break; hot tears slid down his cheeks. For Cole. For his friends who had no idea he was dead. For Archie and Betty back home who were probably worried sick about him.

Luckily for him, the others weren't paying attention. He watched the late afternoon commute fly by in a blur of colours, tears still clinging to his lashes. The Uber driver didn't speak, and after a few failed attempts at conversation with the guy, KJ fell asleep, his music still blaring.

Jughead wasn't sure of their destination. Were they going back to set? That seemed unlikely, when it was so late. They'd had been in doctor Marlowe's office for hours. Finally, after what felt like forever, the Uber pulled up outside a fancy apartment building. Lili jumped up, shaking KJ awake, and Jughead stumbled out, swiping at his eyes. He stared up at the multiple story building, a checker board of light and dark windows, depending on who was home. The others were heading into the reception, and after a moment of hesitating, he followed them. Fuck. Anxiety curled in his chest.

Where the hell did Cole live? Which apartment was his? How did he get in?

The apartment complex's reception looked a million dollars; a golden chandelier greeted him when he walked through, straight onto plush marble flooring. There were expensive looking couches around glass coffee tables, flat screen television's dotting the walls playing reruns of what looked like a teen drama. Jughead followed Cole's cast mates to an elevator and joined them, squeezing between the girls. KJ, still listening to his music and ignoring the world, stabbed the number 5 on a silver panel and they began to ascend.

Camila's phone vibrated, and she answered it automatically; "Hey, Mads. Yeah we've got him," the raven head paused. "It's a long story. Now tell me on a scale from Screwed to Very Screwed. How much trouble are we in?" the girl fell into a conversation, and KJ kept his head down, nodding his head to his music. Lili grabbed Jughead's hand gently.

"You live in 305," she murmured, after a moment of silence. Jughead didn't know what to say. The girl pressed something cold into his hand, and when he looked down, it was a small golden key. He met her expression; gentle blue eyes, and a small smile. It was like looking directly at Betty Cooper. "You weren't pretending were you?" she said softly.

Jughead swallowed. "Lili, I was messing around," he managed to spit out. But she shook her head. "You might have fooled the others, but I know there's something wrong."

He might have said something, tried to insist that he was fine, but the elevator dinged loudly, silver doors sliding open.

"Later." KJ was out first, bounding down the hallway without looking back. Camila hugged Lili goodbye and offered Jughead a small smile before following KJ.

"Hey, wait up!"
"Cole, can we talk?" Lili lingered for a moment. Jughead nodded with what he hoped was a smile, but flinched in surprise when the girl moved to kiss him. When their foreheads bumped, she jumped back, looking startled. "Oh." Jughead bit his lip. "Look, I'm sorry, I just haven't been feeling great, okay? I'll - I'll see you later."

Luckily, Cole's apartment was right in front of him. Lili didn't say anything, to his surprise, and disappeared down the corridor. Jughead tried to ignore the pounding in his heart. Of course he couldn't kiss her. The girl resembled Betty too much. Who was quite literally in another world. There was a thought slowly blossoming in the back of his mind, one that he was trying to suppress. If Lili died in his world, she would be replaced by Betty. And they'd be together again. He shook his head, mortified.

No. He was saving Cole's idiot cast mates, and going back to his world.

Jughead shoved the key in the lock and twisted it, swinging the door open.

_A dead guy's apartment_, he thought, switching the light on.

How many times had he wished for his life to be interesting? Living in a dead guy's condo would have excited him before the lightning storm happened. Now it was just sad.

After wandering around aimlessly, trying to piece together the type of guy Cole had been from his belongings; the posters on his wall and vinyl's cluttering his bedroom floor, half empty sketch books covered in drawings of Lili. It made his heart ache. Jughead collapsed into the boy's bed, burying his head in pillows that smelt like lavender.

Tomorrow, he promised himself, as his mind teetered on the edge of unconsciousness.

Tomorrow will be better.

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Chapter End Notes

leave kudes and tell me what you think if you'd like more :)
Living the life of a dead boy; day two.

Jughead woke up at 6am sharp, after being startled awake by twelve alarms which all played the same irritating ringing noise that got progressively louder the longer they droned on. After stumbling around in the darkness, shutting them all off, Jughead sat on Cole's bed and went through text messages blowing up the boy's phone, which was on the nightstand.

He must have subconsciously shoved it in his pocket yesterday in Cole's trailer. Swiping sleep from his eyes, Jughead flicked through each notification. He could barely keep his eyes open. Outside, it was still dark. The phone's screen was far too bright. Cole had follow requests on Instagram, a bunch of likes, messages from strangers. The boy's lock screen was a photo of him and Lili grinning at the camera. Ignore it, he told himself. Jughead concentrated on texts, scrolling down, each one had been sent in the middle of the night.

Casey: Hey man, what was with you yesterday?

Ness: u ok?

Mads: you guys are so dead lmao.

Lili: Morning. Can we talk? I'm worried about you, baby. Call me crazy, but you seem like a different person. Tell me I'm wrong, okay? I love you xxx

Jughead held his breath. He wouldn't get emotional over a text from the girl. He stared at it for several seconds, his fingers hovering over the keypad, before forcing himself to look away.

At the very bottom, there was a text from KJ, sent twenty minutes ago.

5:50am: KJ: Hey. Breakfast? followed by a string of emoji's Jughead's foggy brain couldn't make out. He found himself smiling a little. After everything that had happened yesterday, the boy still wanted to hang out. Which was crazy, considering he'd made it out like he'd been faking a mental breakdown. Archie would never have forgiven him.

He clicked on the message, which brought up a screen demanding his fingerprint. Jughead bit his lip anxiously. Would it work? The finger print screen disappeared, and the text conversation popped up. Jughead typed quickly; Sure. Give me 20? He scrolled up the texts. Apparently, Cole wasn't an emoji person. His texts were vague and to the point. Jughead sent the message and threw the phone on the bed, letting out a sigh.

Cole's wardrobe was straight forward; a variety of different dress shirts and tees in different colours. It took Jughead nearly five minutes of messing with the shower dial, only to be scorched by burning hot water that shocked his sleepy mind into focus. After showering, he pulled on a plain red shirt and jeans, letting his hair dry curly and unbrushed. When he was brushing his teeth, the phone vibrated with a message, and he grabbed for it, scanning the screen. It was KJ again.

KJ: 6:17am: How are you up so early? Don't you usually ignore my texts and head to set with Lils?
Oh. Jughead frowned at the message. So Cole wasn't an early bird. He regretted sending the message. Before he could type out a reply, three ellipses popped up. KJ was typing.

*KJ: 6:19am: texting you every morning is a habit lol. Sorry I woke you.*

This time there were no emoji's. Jughead tapped off the text conversation and shoved it in his pocket. So KJ was being an ass. That was to be expected.

The next hour went by in a blur. Cole's phone was a goldmine for help with trying to live his life. He ordered an Uber and sent a quick text to "R. S" on the top of Cole's contact list, since there was a plethora of missed calls from the guy. "Hey, sorry about yesterday."

It was all he could say. Because the truth would make him sound insane. The Uber arrived quickly, and Jughead stumbled out of Cole's apartment, locking it behind him. The elevator ride turned his gut. KJ's offer of breakfast was pretty appealing right now. The ride to set was mediocre, and this time the Uber was annoyingly chatty, and seemed far too interested in his personal life. "Are you alright?" the guy was youngish and of Asian descent with a permanent grin and curly hair sticking from a baseball cap. Jughead leaned into the plush leather seats and fidgeted with Cole's phone in his lap. What he really wanted to do was google himself. KJ said there was an entire comic book based on him and his friends, and the urge to check it out was getting the better of him. But the idea of seeing Betty and Archie as illustrated characters, a whole world away, made his heart hurt. "Mmm." Jughead eventually answered the driver in a low mumble, rolling his eyes. The driver's overly optimistic tone was hurting his head.

Luckily he felt slightly better. The dull throbbing which had rocked his skull yesterday was dormant. Jughead let his mind wander, following raindrops sliding down the window pane. Vancouver was only just waking up, and he was fully dressed, ready to start the day.

A huge part of living Cole's life, was filming Riverdale. Playing himself. That was going to be hard, but it was the only way he could get close to the others. Surely the killer would strike again. If he could figure out who it was, he could go home.

"Something wrong?" the driver asked, after a dragged out silence. "You're usually happy to talk about the show."

Jughead shrugged. "Tired." he muttered in reply. Which was true. Yesterday was exhausting, considering he'd lived out two days in two different worlds.

The roads were bumpy, turning Jughead's stomach. By the time the Uber rolled up next to the famous Warner Brother's studios, his meagre breakfast of half a cereal bar was in his throat. Jughead thanked the driver, shouldering his bag. He'd packed today's script laying on Cole's countertop, as well as the boy's laptop. Jughead walked on shaky legs through the gates, glimpsing his trailer a few feet away. The early morning sky was a stretch of vivid pinks, a chilly breeze grazing his cheeks.

"Cole!" he turned at a voice; a stranger careening towards him with a huge grin. Jugehad squinted. No, not a stranger. He swallowed a cry. Kevin.

The boy playing the Keller kid was taller, short brown hair sticking up everywhere. He was in a loose tee and jeans.

"What was up with you yesterday?" the boy asked, with far too much enthusiasm. The boy looked like he'd downed a dozen energy drinks. Jughead had no idea what the relationship between Cole and this guy was, so he shrugged with a teasing smile. "I was sick," he replied. He figured he'd be saying that a lot today.
The boy scoffed. "Yeah, I guessed that. But was up with you though?" no matter how fast Jughead power-walked, the boy easily kept up with his stride. He swallowed a frustrated breath. "I was just sick," he grumbled. "Isn't there somewhere else you should be?"

Fuck. Jughead knew he'd upset the boy when his face fell. He had a thin patience. Cole must have found it easy to deal with people's bullshit every morning.

"Oh shit, yeah," Kevin's double smiled, backing away. "I won't bother you this morning, Moody," with a wink, the boy walked away, whistling. Moody. He'd been called worse.

The boy was just like Kevin. Jughead thought, as he headed to his trailer. Maybe a little bit more annoying, but yeah- a carbon copy.

Turning Jughead into- himself, was a long, dragged out process, which went on for far too long.

After showing his face in the writers room, he'd been mildly reprimanded by a tall smiling guy in a sweater vest, wearing glasses. Though Jughead had been baffled by the posters dotting the walls. He found himself; a literal depiction of him, with a nose far too big. Next to him there was Archie, Betty, Veronica, Kevin, Cheryl-

The list went on. He found himself being pulled into a trailer for hair and make up and dumped in a chair while a woman with a voice like nails on a chalkboard screeched in his ears for an hour. He was dressed in Jughead Jones' clothes, which were identical to his own. Finally, Jughead stumbled onto Stage C, holding his script. He was shaking, but he could do this. How hard could it be to act like himself?

Lili was on the set. She smiled at him, and he returned it. The girl looked like Betty again. He could almost pretend she was really here, wishing him luck. It was an indoor scene, looking like they'd made a set for Jughead's room. There were camera's set up, the director, a tall, oldish man who looked like he shouted for a living, flipping through the script manically. Jughead kept his head down, making sure he was standing on his marker. The man must be the famous Andy the others were talking about yesterday.

"Archie," Andy said after a moment, before jumping up from his chair with scarlet cheeks. He glared at the crew, as if they'd personally wronged him. "KJ! Where's KJ?"

"I think he's in his trailer?" Lili spoke up, shrugging.

Andy pulled a face. "Why on earth-" he shook his head. "Can someone go and GET him?" he spat. Though none of the crew members moved.

"I can?" Lili offered. "He's never late on set. It's only rarely."

The girl's words might not have meant anything to the others, but Jughead felt a shiver slide down his spine. His palms grew sweaty. "I'll go get him," he managed to choke out. Lili looked like she wanted to join him, but he was already running off the stage and through the studio doors, back out into the biting morning breeze.

Not him, Jughead mentally pleaded. If the killer got KJ, that meant Archie would come through. Sabrina's warning was still haunting him.

Not him. KJ's trailer wasn't that far away, but Jughead found himself running like a maniac. Until his brain felt like it was bleeding from his ears, until his veins pumped battery acid.

"KJ?" he pounded on the boy's trailer door, and to his disdain, there was no answer. But there was a
muffled cry. Jughead bit back a yell.

There was no way this was happening. "KJ, hey! Are you in there?" he was breathless, kicking and punching the door, until it finally cracked under pressure, flying open.

"Stop!" the word was flying from Jughead's lips before he could help it. Like word vomit. He'd known KJ barely a day. Their last communication had been a salty text and the redhead was already about to follow in Cole's deadly footsteps. Which meant Archie would come into this world.

Jughead wouldn't let it happen. His chest was aching, lungs squeezed of oxygen when the door flew open. He blindly stumbled into the boy's trailer, the actor's cry eliciting a fight or flight response in the back of his mind, adrenaline filling his body with ice, a sickening flood of fear forcing his trembling legs forwards.

Time seemed to slow down as he staggered into the dressing room. Through flashes, Jughead glimpsed KJ trapped in a stranger's choke hold, brown eyes wild, lips gagged by a silver strip of tape. The boy was squirming, battering his attacker with everything he had, but the stranger held on, unfazed by his manic struggling.

The killer was tall, dressed in all black, a balaclava covering their face, masking their identity. Their focus was on KJ for a single moment, muffling the boy's already frantic yelling with their hand. KJ gestured wildly for Jughead to run, but his heart was in his throat. At first he thought the killer was going to spare the redhead. But as soon as the thought graced his mind, allowing the smallest amount of relief, with the jarring motion of the needle being raised, they stabbed the silver point into the boy's neck, pressing down the plunger. Jughead saw himself lunging forwards, managing to disarm the masked killer, and freeing the boy. But Jughead was paralyzed. He couldn't move. He was half aware of his knees hitting the ground. But he felt no pain. The world seemed to speed up once again, as if someone had just hit fast forward on a VCR. KJ went limp, his arms falling to his sides, his body sagging in the stranger's grip, before falling to the floor in a crumpled heap.

It was almost mesmerising, sickening, how the killer let the boy drop, like KJ was nothing. The killer loomed over the motionless boy, kicking him in the side.

KJ didn't move, and Jughead felt his gut twist.

"No!" he choked out, a cry ripping from his throat. But the killer wasn't finished. They slowly lowered themselves to their knees and rolled the boy onto his back, leaning in once again with the needle, lifting it up to jab it into the still boy's neck.

That was when Jughead finally found his voice, which was no longer incoherent gibberish.

"Get away from him!" he yelled, his breath hitching when KJ's attacker flinched, the needle slipping from his fingers and hitting the ground with a soft thud.

The stranger looked up, and finally seemed to notice Jughead, and he could only stare back, helplessly, swallowing burning bile. His blood was full of lead, vomit searing the back of his throat, hot tears sliding down his cheeks. Jughead figured he should have felt some kind of triumph when the killer, upon realising who he was, staggered back. They had been taken off guard. In their eyes, Cole was miraculously back from the dead and staring right at them. Jughead wanted to jump up, to force his numb limbs into motion. But he simply stared blankly, as the masked killer jumped up, stumbling into KJ's dressing table, before diving onto it, and throwing himself through the open
window just big enough for his slim form to squeeze through. When he was gone, Jughead was
crawling over to KJ, his heart stampeding. He'd tried. He'd really, fucking tried, and when he'd been
faced with the killer, he couldn't do anything. Couldn't even move.

The killer's discarded needle was still on the floor, and Jughead waited for it to disappear. But to his
confusion, it stayed. He picked it up, watching clear fluid slosh against the plastic container. Jughead
cringed. "Archie?" He said softly, bending over the redhead and feeling for a pulse, then a heartbeat.

He got both. Wasn't the boy supposed to be dead? He didn't look dead; his cheeks were still a
healthy rosy, skin warm, glistening with sweat when Jughead found himself trailing his fingers over
his forehead. There was a steady beat in his chest, a healthy ba-bump, the same motion in the boy's
neck. Maybe it was different this time.

Jughead groaned. KJ had been sweet. As annoying and overly optimistic, as well as having a
questionable music taste. Jughead had found himself warming to him in the little time he'd known the
guy. Now he was dead. Because of him. If he hadn't have frozen up, maybe he might have been able
to tackle the killer, giving the redhead enough time to make a run for it. But he had just...stood there,
and then knelt on his knees and watched KJ suffer the same fate as his doomed cast mate. He'd stood
there, and watched it happen; watched KJ's eyes fly open in shock when the needle broke through
his skin, his pupils rolling back, the muffled yells dying in his throat as he succumbed to whatever
had been forced into his bloodstream.

Fuck. Jughead ran a hand through his hair, blinking back tears. He told himself he wouldn't cry if
one of Cole's cast mates was killed. But he couldn't help it. How could he mourn KJ when he was
supposed to keep up his act as Cole? Lili was already on to him, if he broke and told her everything,
she'd send him to the loony bin. Jughead swiped at his eyes and took a deep breath, willing himself
to calm down. Everything was going to be fine, he told himself. When truthfully, it wasn't. He was
trapped in an alternate world with a killer on the loose, and his friends and family were half a world
away.

At least he wasn't alone anymore.

It was a selfish thought, and Jughead was sure when he was truly on his own, nobody nearby to
bother him, he'd finally break down.

But at this moment he had to be brave. For Archie. If Archie woke up and he was a screaming,
crying mess, yelling incoherently, the redhead would freak out.

"I'm sorry," Jughead mumbled, which was all he could say.

Jughead watched the boy's chest move up and down with every breath. He looked like he was
sleeping. How long until Archie woke up? Jughead started to feel sick at the thought of explaining
all of this to the boy. Would the redhead even believe him?

Jughead started to peel the tape from the boy's mouth. He'd only gotten halfway before the redhead's
eyes flew open, and he flinched, retracting his hand.

Suddenly he couldn't breathe, a million words were on his tongue, but they were tangled, stuck in the
back of his throat. The boy stayed laying down, his brown eyes wide and confused, flitting around
the room. Jughead held his breath. "Archie?" he murmured softly, leaning over the boy. He couldn't
help notice the needle still hadn't disappeared. "Archie, is that you?"

"Hmm?" the boy lifted a hand to his head, grazing his temples.
"Ow, my head's pounding." it took a moment for the boy to recover, he jolted away from Jughead, as if he'd just grabbed a hot iron. "Wait...wait, what?" he whimpered, hissing out a breath.

Jughead blinked at the boy. "Archie?" he said again. But there was something wrong with the boy's voice. Even slurred, it still lingered with hints of that familiar drawl.

"Archie?!" the boy sat up abruptly, tearing off the straying tape still hanging onto the corner of his lips. His eyes widened with fright. "You're still calling me that?"

The boy looked flustered. "The- the guy who attacked me, where did he go?" for a second, the redhead's words didn't register in Jughead's mind, instead bouncing around his skull, a flurry of confusion. but then they did. He licked his dry lips. "KJ?" Jughead managed to choke out with a disbelieving laugh. "You're still you?"

The redhead glared at him. "Who the fuck else would I be?" he tried to stand up, but fell back, windmilling. Jughead grabbed his shoulders, steadying him.

"Calm down," he said.

The boy shook his head. "Calm down? Cole, that guy tried to fucking kill me!" he yelled. The Kiwi twang was unmistakable, dripping from his tone like honey. Jughead never thought he'd be happy to hear it. KJ was trembling. "Shit, we need to tell someone!" he cried, trying to jump up again, but his legs gave way, sending him falling onto his knees. "Where's my phone? did he take my phone? Oh fuck, shit, he stabbed me with something!"

KJ gingerly brushed his fingers over his neck. "Did you see what he injected me with?"

This couldn't be happening. Jughead thought, slightly hysterically. This was an actual miracle.

Finally, KJ snapped. "Why are you just sitting there?" he tried jumping up once again with laboured breaths, but he staggered, stumbling into the door.

Jughead couldn't keep up with the boy's manic movements. He slowly got to his feet, grabbing KJ and yanking him back to his knees. "You need to take it easy," he said. What he really wanted to say was stuck in his throat. Whatever had been plunged into the boy's bloodstream was clearly sending the boy hysterical. KJ blinked at him, his pupils growing significantly. "Take it easy?" he hissed. "Cole, someone just tried to kill me-

Jughead slammed his hand over the boy's mouth, gagging what he guessed was going to be a cry for help. "Mppmmhmm?!"

KJ struggled through angry muffle speak, but he held on. The boy's eyes were wide, reminding him of Archie. How many times had he calmed his best friend down over the years? Archie was always getting into fights in school, and Jughead would be there with his signature eye-roll and pep talk to relax him. His heart ached for Archie, but the Andrews boy was safe for now, as long as KJ kept kicking.

He could only be relieved.

"Chill out, okay?" Jughead leaned forward, pursing his lips. "Can you do that for me? Just breathe, and I promise I'll tell you everything."

To his surprise, KJ did. He inhaled shakily, before exhaling warm breath into Jughead's hand. Jughead nodded. "Alright, you need to trust me, okay? What I'm going to tell you is completely crazy, and I know I'll sound insane but I'm telling the truth," he took a breath. Telling KJ the truth
was a big risk. The boy could either believe what he was pretty sure sounded like a fairytale, or call him crazy and drag him back to Dr Marlowe. Jughead smiled reassuringly. "Promise me you won't freak out?"


Jughead slowly removed his hand. KJ wiped his mouth, grimacing. "You've got ten seconds, and your hands smell like salmon," he folded his arms. "What the hell is going on Cole?" the boy started to get up once again, but Jughead grabbed his arm, tugging him back down.

"Okay, first thing's first, I'm not Cole." Jughead said quickly. When KJ didn't answer, only frowning at him blankly, he bit his lip.

KJ groaned. "Not this again," he said, exasperated. "In case you hadn't noticed, I was just fucking attacked! and you're still playing games?" He huffed out a harsh laugh. "How far are you going to take this bullshit?"

"It's not a game." Jughead said, pleading with the boy to understand. "Can you just listen to me for one minute, okay? What happened yesterday, I wasn't making it up."

The boy cocked his brow. "Oh, so you do think you're your character?"

Jughead flexed his fingers, every inch of him pricking with irritation. "Just please let me explain."

"Not here," Jughead murmured, standing up. He didn't notice the shadow in the doorway. KJ scratched the back of his head, looking uncomfortable. He was looking behind Jughead. "How much of that did you hear Lils?"

Jughead turned to find the small blonde leaning against the door frame. Her blue eyes were narrowed slightly. She straightened up with a sigh. "Enough." Lili said softly. She nodded at Jughead, and he wanted to bury himself into the ground. KJ knowing the truth was one thing, but Lili?

He opened his mouth to try and protest, but the girl walked over to him and took his hands, squeezing them. Jughead had trouble making eye contact with her. "You're different Cole," Lili said. "I've known since yesterday morning that something has been wrong," she shook her head. "You look straight through me, and you tell me I shouldn't be worried, but I am, okay? It's not just that-" she trailed off, wiping her eyes with the sleeve of her sweater. "You just seem like a completely different person, and I want to believe what you tell me," Lili was crying.

"Just, please," she said. "Please let me listen. I'll understand."

Jughead let go of her hands, shoving his into his pockets. "You won't believe me," he whispered. "Trust me Lili. You don't want to know." His own eyes were stinging, but he didn't move to wipe the straying tears dribbling down his cheeks.

Lili shrugged. "I don't care if what you tell me is crazy, if it bends the laws of physics, It's better than being in the dark, staring as a stranger walks around in your body!" Lili's voice was strained. The blonde hugged herself, her gaze never straying from him. "I can try." she said, through tears, nodding at KJ. "Right KJ?"

"I guess?" the redhead was rubbing his head, wincing. Lili smiled softly, her indigo eyes swivelling back to him. Jughead lost his breath. Once again, Betty Cooper was bleeding through the girl. He was staring at her smile, her kind eyes, the little wrinkle between her brows. If he suspended his
disbelief in that moment, he could truly believe that Betty was standing in front of him. Lili’s eyes were pleading with him to understand.

“We want to know everything.”

Chapter End Notes

Keep commenting for more! :)
Staring down at his chocolate milkshake, Jughead held his breath. He hadn't touched it, only picked at the whipped cream fraying the surface. He found himself back in Common Grounds, the coffee shop Sabrina had taken him to yesterday. By midday, it had started raining, and there were mostly students and kids with their heads in their laptops. There were small things he hadn't noticed yesterday, like the mellow lighting, blood orange walls and vintage carpet.

Callie had taken their order without even the crack of a smile, and squeaked through most of it, keeping her head down. The girl had paled when he'd made his way over to the counter, practically hiding behind her notebook when KJ was ordering for the three of them. The smell of crushed coffee beans wasn't as sickly as last time, circulating around the shop along with freshly baked cookies. There was a jazz band playing softly through the radio, and he revelled in it, allowing music to seep inside him, loosening the knot in his gut. They found a quiet booth near the window and Jughead started stalling, commenting about the decorative wallpaper, and how good the mini cheesecakes in the baskets on the counter looked. "Cole." Lili had cleared her throat, shutting him up.

"Tell us," she urged, and initially, Jughead had settled on telling them a watered down version. He would tell them about the multiple universes, Sabrina's warning and the killings. But leave out the part about Cole. But as he got more comfortable, he found himself spewing out the whole deal. The two of them never broke eye contact with him, and when he was finished, he gulped down half of his milkshake. It made him feel sick, but the silence following his choked out explanation was uncomfortable to sit in.

Cole's cast mates sat opposite him. Lili was staring hard at her chocolate mocha, as if she could magically send it hurtling across the table and KJ frowned at his own milkshake, shoving the straw in and out of the plastic cup in jerking movements. Finally he pulled off his beanie with a shaky sigh.

"So let me get this completely straight," KJ said after a moment. "Riverdale is real," the boy glanced up and met his eye. The boy for once wasn't smiling. Jughead only nodded, and the redhead continued. "There's a killer on the loose that's only after us."

"That's right."

"Cole is dead." KJ spoke softly, his fingers still toying with his shake. After a glance at Lili, Jughead swallowed.

"Yes." he said. The girl made no move to protest, or call him out. She stayed completely silent.

KJ seemed more inclined to believe him, which was surprising. But the boy still had a sceptical tone. He hummed.

"Right. And you're, what?" his eyebrows furrowed. "Jughead Jones from an alternate universe whose taken Cole's place."
"I know it's hard to believe, but it's true," Jughead murmured, scratching the corner of the table nervously.

KJ shrugged. "Dude, you can't exactly prove it. You literally play Jughead, of course you're going to know everything about him."

Casting his gaze to the grains on the mahogany table, he groaned. "You think I'm crazy."

KJ chuckled. But there was that familiar warmth in his eyes, a kindness Jughead had grown accustomed to in the little time he'd known the boy. "You just told us you're a comic book character trying to save our lives so the world doesn't end."

"Not end," Jughead rolled his eyes. Sabrina's warning was still fresh in his mind. "Like I said. Think of a rope. From first glance it looks straight, right?"

KJ cocked his head. "Sure," he said, after a moment. "But I don't get your analogy."

"I'm getting there," Jughead continued, resisting the urge to snap. Damn, the guy was impatient.

"He held his breath. "If you zoom in though, that rope is made up of millions of different threads. Think of them threads as our separate universes. I was told by someone that coming here was just a glitch. It can happen. Whatever happened when I came through into this world can be seen as an accident. But if whoever's targeting you succeeds, and all of my friends from my world come here, that could rip a tear in reality."

"Uh-huh," the corners of KJ's lips quirked into a smile. Jughead felt his chest tighten. He was losing him. "And let me guess, your so-called "friend" also goes to Hogwarts?"

Jughead gritted his teeth. "This isn't funny. I'm telling the truth."

The redhead stared at him for a moment, as if waiting for the joke to drop. For him to burst out laughing and say, "Fooled you!" but Jughead's expression stayed stony, and KJ blinked. "I'm really trying here," he groaned, resting his head in his hands. "But you do realise how insane this sounds, right? Multiple universes? You being a fucking comic book character, and for some reason my death means the end of the world?"

"Not just yours," he corrected. "The whole main cast."

KJ spluttered. "That doesn't make me feel any better! So what, we're the catalysts for the apocalypse? And you can tell me that while keeping a straight face?"

Joking or not, the boy was right. The whole phenomenon still didn't make sense. He had barely got his own head around it, and here he was trying to explain it to a clear sceptic, and a girl who had gone deathly silent. "Basically." Jughead muttered.

"It is crazy," he admitted. "But it's the truth whether you choose to believe it or not." sitting back in his chair, his gaze flitted over paintings hanging on the walls.

There were two little girls in the booth behind them yelling about Star Wars, aggressively squeezing Capri Sun's while their mother flitted through what looked like paperwork. Jughead ignored the girl's squealing, and the all-too familiar thrum of pain arched the back of his skull. He lowered his voice so he didn't sound like a nut job.

"Someone is trying to kill you guys, and they nearly got KJ earlier," Jughead winced. "The same person who..." he trailed off. The words were in his mouth, but he couldn't say them. "The same
person who killed Cole." Lili said softly, finishing for him. But she didn't look up. Jughead wanted to say something to her, anything. But what would he say? "Sorry" just didn't cut it. That word was for fixing childish squabbles or mending a friendship. "Sorry I broke your pen," or "I'm really sorry I can't make it to dinner tonight, I just got a migraine." Jughead felt his gut twist. The words were on his tongue; "I'm sorry about Cole, he was- a nice guy." though was he? Jughead had never even met the boy, only building a personality through assumptions. What could he say to make her look at him?

Eventually, he swallowed the lame apologies building on his tongue. There was nothing Jughead could say to soften the blow. He could only wait, and pray she believed him.

"What if it was a fan?" KJ spoke up. He hadn't properly acknowledged Cole's death. Every time Jughead had hinted at it, the boy had quickly changed the subject, his expression growing dark. "I get crazy fans sneaking into my trailer all the time."

Jughead frowned at the boy. "Did these fans try and stab a needle in your neck?"

KJ didn't answer, instead letting out a shaky sigh. Lili didn't speak again. She was still staring at her coffee, her blonde hair hiding her face. "So, lets say I believed you," KJ started. "Which I don't," he said quickly. "You've said some weird shit before Cole, but this just takes the cake," the boy rolled his eyes. "Anyway. Lets say I believed you," KJ leaned across the counter with a genuinely curious expression. He nibbled on his straw. His strawberry milkshake was still full. "Why us?"

When Jughead didn't answer, the boy cleared his throat. "You said some psycho is out to get us and after what happened earlier, I can believe that," he shuddered. "But why us?"

Jughead shrugged. "That's what I'm trying to figure out," he replied. A thought sprung to mind. "KJ, the person that attacked you, how did they get into your trailer?"

"I don't know. I was on my phone, checking Twitter, and before I knew what was happening, this asshole is trying to strangle me," he gingerly rubbed his neck. "What did they inject me with?"

"Liquid Cyanide." Jughead nearly jumped out of his skin, KJ hissing out in surprise when Sabrina appeared in the empty booth next to him. She was in the exact same red sweater and jeans. But this time her blonde hair was tied into a ponytail with a red ribbon.

The strange girl waved at Cole's cast mates, and they only stared back, baffled.

Jughead cleared his throat. "KJ and Lili, meet Sabrina. She's been helping me."

"But...how did she...?" the redhead was staring at the girl, wide-eyed, sputtering verbal question marks. She only smiled at him. "Don't mind me, like Jughead said, I'm here to help. Oh, and you were injected with a concentrated dose of liquid cyanide," she said.

"What?" KJ paled. But the girl waved dismissively. "You're fine. It's only lethal in two doses."

"Two doses?!"

Sabrina smiled kindly at the boy. "Relax," she said. "It'll be halfway out of your system by now."

"This is crazy," KJ hissed through his teeth. But he didn't make a move to get up, or run away. His head hit the table with a soft thud. "This is totally fucking crazy."

Jughead straightened up in his chair. He'd gotten used to Sabrina appearing and disappearing at will, but even Lili had looked up, her dazed blue eyes flitting between Sabrina and Jughead. She didn't
know who to look at. "That explains why KJ didn't die," he muttered. "The killer, whoever the hell he was, tried to give him another shot."

"And that was when you scared them away," Sabrina finished. She leaned on her fist with a sigh, her green flecked eyes settled on KJ's head still buried in his arms. "It was the exact same attack as you-know-who," Sabrina nudged him, and Jughead felt shivers skitter down his spine. Cole. He'd woken up and found the boy's body, the syringe on the floor next to him. "Why use Cyanide?" he spoke out loud. Sabrina shrugged.

"It's the perfect poison," she murmured. "Now you've just got to figure out the killer." she said. At the girl's words, Lili finally stood up. Jughead noticed she was trembling. "Okay," she blew out a soft breath. "This is too much," the blonde ran her hand through her hair. Her cheeks were white. "I'm going to get some air."

Jughead jumped up after her. "Lili," he said. But she didn't turn around. The girl continued walking towards the door, swaying slightly, as if she was in a daze.

"Lili, wait!" he was running after her before he could help it, gently grabbing the hood of her sweater and pulling her back. Lili didn't turn around. But Jughead could see her tear stained cheeks, the raw agony in her eyes. "I said I need some air," she choked out, slipping through the door into the late afternoon breeze.

The girl walked stiffly, bumping into stranger's in the crowd.

Jughead followed her, everything he wanted to say was stuck in his throat. "Do you believe me?" he managed to get out when he reached her.

Lili sniffled, walking faster. A cool breeze blew her hair back and she hugged herself. "Do I believe what?" her laugh was harsh. "That you're fucking delusional?" the girl finally spun to face him and Jughead lost his breath. "That you and KJ have been playing some sick game for the past few days and expect me to roll over and laugh?"

Jughead swallowed back a cry. "Why would I be lying?" he snapped. When she tried to walk away again, he grabbed her gently, his thumbs moving to swipe tears from her eyes. The girl flinched. But she didn't pull away. Jughead felt his chest tighten. He took a moment to look into her eyes, trying to see Lili. The actress. Not Betty. But even when he blinked, he still saw his girlfriend in every detail of the girl. There was just Betty. Elizabeth Cooper. Everywhere he looked, there she was, haunting him in her bright blue eyes, the curl in her lip, even the look of pain. Agony. How many times had he held Betty while she cried?

Lili stared at him. "I don't understand," she whispered. "Who are you looking for?"

Betty. He choked on her name. He was looking for Betty.

When Jughead couldn't answer, because his heart was so full of pain and longing for Betty, Lili wrenched herself from his grip with a sob. "Leave me alone."

He stood there for a second, letting the breeze whip his hair in every direction, the girl's words playing like a stuck record in his head. The crowd had softened around them, and Jughead found himself standing on an empty sidewalk, staring as the blonde got further and further away. He could still hear her sobbing.

"Hey, what happened?" KJ had followed them, pushing his way out of the coffee shop, ignoring Callie, the crazy waitress's, yells.
Jughead didn't acknowledge the Kiwi for a moment. The boy came to stand next him, his brown eyes following Lili down the sidewalk.

"Cole, what happened?"

"I'm not him." Jughead said it quietly, ignoring the boy. He wanted to say it to Lili, to scream it in her stubborn face.


"Where are you going?" KJ followed him, much to his disdain. He wanted to be alone. And the overly enthusiastic Kiwi with the smoking habit wasn't his ideal companion right now. Jughead accelerated his pace. He could still see Lili's retreating figure.

"I'm trying to believe you, y'know," KJ said after a moment of awkward silence.

Jughead shrugged. "You don't have to," he said. "I wouldn't believe me either. I sound insane."

The boy chuckled. "Well yeah, sure you do. But even I can't look past a girl randomly fucking appearing out of nowhere."

"Yeah, Sabrina does that."

"Right. So if you are telling the truth, does that mean-" KJ pulled a face.

"Fuck, does that mean..." he trailed off, and Jughead nodded.

"Yes." he said. His heart was in his throat.

Lili was at a crossing, teetering on the edge, her hair a golden whirlwind whipping around her.

"Cole's dead." KJ spoke so softly, his gaze stuck to the walk. Jughead wanted to say something that wasn't "yes" or just nodding his head. Instead he kept his gaze on Lili.

Something was wrong. He noticed a second too late. Jughead blinked rapidly. He'd been so busy staring at Lili, half wary of her walking into the path of a black SUV, he didn't realise it had pulled up next to the blonde, who staggered back. He heard her scream, and it set his lungs on fire. Jughead was darting forwards before he could help it.

"Stay there!" he yelled over his shoulder at KJ. Time seemed to stop, just like with the killer earlier. The sidewalk was empty, only Lili, backing away as a group of people in all black hounded her. Jughead couldn't scream. He couldn't cry out, his chest was heaving. Lili was being dragged into the back of the SUV, and by the time he'd reached the edge of the walk, the SUV's engines were revving. Jughead's mind was burning. All he could think about was Betty. If they got Lili, Betty would come through.

That was good, right? His heart stampeded, but his mind shrieked in protest, forcing his legs forwards.

I'm crazy, he thought, eyeing the SUV's boot.

"Vita est vita." a voice murmured in his ear. Sabrina was suddenly standing in front of him, her green eyes manic.

"Jughead, you can't let them bring Betty Cooper into this world. I unlocked the trunk, and I can
shield you, but not for long, okay?"

"What?!!?"

"Just hurry up!" was Sabrina's frantic reply.

"Shield?" he spluttered. "Shield what?" the girl was gone before he could demand an answer.
Jughead was stumbling forward before he could help it. It was his only chance. He pressed his hand
over his nose and mouth, smothering his gasps for breath. Do it! His mind screamed.

He blindly reached out for some kind of lock, when his hand slipped over the release button. With a
mechanical whine, the boot slid open, revealing a car trunk full of empty trash bags. "Jughead!"
Sabrina yelled. "Get in, I can't hold it!"

The girl was keeping the SUV from driving away, somehow. Jughead ignored questions bouncing
around his skull. How could she do that? How could a teenage girl stall and unlock a car? He held
his breath, throwing himself inside without hesitating and quickly curling into the fetal position,
pressing his head into his lap. Breathe. He told himself, trying to calm down his breathing. But he
couldn't breathe. He couldn't breathe-

A hyperventilation attack was imminent. When he was sure he was going to throw up, another body
was diving in after him. Through fraying lashes, Jughead caught that familiar radiant shade of red.
He swallowed a scream. "What are you doing?"

KJ was breathless.

"What do you mean what am I doing? You just dove into the back of someone's car!"

Chapter End Notes

hope you enjoyed! Keep commenting letting me know you're reading ^_^
"I have my reasons." Jughead gritted back. "Why did you follow me?"

"They took Lili." KJ's reply was cold. "There was no way I was just going to stand there and watch those bastards cart her to who knows where."

The trunk slammed shut on the two of them before Jughead could reply, and the SUV hurtled forwards. Jughead felt his body smash into the other boys, suppressing a cry of pain. They were moving rapidly through traffic, flying over speed bumps. The space was so much smaller than he'd realised. It was pitch black, and he was pretty sure KJ's knees were digging into his chest. He could feel the boys warm breath tickling his cheeks.

Jughead sandwiched his head between his legs. The movement of the car was making him nauseous. If he threw up, surely it would make a noise. And they'd be caught. KJ let out a shuddery breath. "Do you think these are the guys who tried to kill me?"

He found himself laughing, muffled gasps turning into sobs still pressed into his knees. His chest was heaving, but he held his breath, before exhaling.

"No, I think they're just a few of Lili's friends taking her out for a pizza party," he spat sarcastically.

When KJ didn't reply, Jughead sighed. "Almost definitely. There was a group of them," he hissed. "Which means there's not just one killer."

"You mean there's multiple people trying to kill us?" KJ whined. "But why?"

Jughead ignored the boy, focusing on not passing out. He mentally followed the car's turns, trying to picture some kind of coherent location they were heading.

" Seriously, why are we so special?" KJ demanded. The SUV swerved and Jughead was knocked into the trunk. Stars exploded in his vision and he blinked them away, dazed.

"I wouldn't call it special," he managed to get out, his voice slurring. "More like cursed."

"Cursed?"

He didn't answer. Don't throw up.

"Are you okay?" he flinched when KJ kicked him, and managed a shaky nod. "M, fine," he mumbled. "Knocked my head, is all."

"Shit," KJ hissed. "Jug, don't pass out on me."

"You called me Jug." the words slipped out before he could bite them back.

The redhead scoffed. "Don't get me wrong, I still think you're insane," he shuffled uncomfortably, squirming in the tight space.

"So you believe me now?"
KJ huffed out a breath. "I don't know what to believe anymore. The thing is, Cole wouldn't dive into a moving SUV. Even if it was to save Lili, and he adores her. He's not the kind of guy who'd just throw themselves into danger, he's more likely to call the police and remain completely calm."

"Mmmm." was all Jughead could reply. His head was still throbbing. The redhead continued.

"What you told me is fucking crazy, but like I said, I'm trying." KJ's words sounded like they were blurring together, becoming one big confusing whirr of white noise in his ears.

Stay awake, he told himself. Even when the urge to just let go was overwhelming. He dug his fingernails into the flesh of his palms.

Stay awake!

Blinking rapidly, Jughead focused on the movement of the car. His own steady breaths.

The ride didn't last long, thankfully. When the car came to an abrupt halt, Jughead let go of the breath he'd been holding. There was a long silence, only His and KJ's combined breaths, before multiple car doors slamming. Jughead strained his ears. Lili's muffled crying came next, and his heart sank. He felt the redhead stiffen.

"Alright, game plan." KJ muttered. "We spring out of here and knock these bastards out."

Jughead blinked rapidly. The pain was still very much alive, searing across his skull. But he didn't feel like he was falling into the void anymore. "You sound just like Archie," he muttered. "No, moron. We wait for them to leave and then make a move."

Lili's cries were all he could hear. Jughead wanted to slam his hands over his ears, but they were uncomfortably squished into his chest. All he could hear was Betty Cooper, crying out for him. "We're going to save her, okay?" he swallowed hard. "I won't let it happen."

After what felt like a life time of listening to Lili's muffled cries and attempts at escape, they died away, along with multiple footsteps crunching on what sounded like gravel. When Jughead was sure they were gone, he squirmed out of the protective ball he'd curled into and blindly reached for the handle.

His hand brushed it, and the trunk slowly opened up with a whirring noise.


"Where the hell are we?" KJ jumped out, his eyes wide. Jughead couldn't help notice the boy's hair erupt in bright orange, the sun bathing him in mellow light.

They were in the middle of nowhere. There was a long stretch of grassy fields in front of them. When Jughead turned around, there was what looked like an abandoned warehouse; a clumsy structure of crumbling wood, ready to concave on itself.

The shiny black SUV looked so out of place, on what Jughead could only describe as deserted farmland. His gaze strayed on an open door swinging open. It was the perfect set for a horror movie. The killer's hideout.

KJ pulled his phone out, flicking on the flashlight. The boy was shaking, his red hair stuck to a perspired forehead, lips pursed. But he looked determined.
"Let's go."

Jughead nodded, following in the redhead's wake.

"This reminds me of episode seven in season three when Archie and Jughead go to that creepy farm," KJ murmured, taking slow steps forward. Jughead frowned. "I couldn't help but notice when reading the script, that your show is a ridiculous exaggeration of what our lives are really like."

KJ turned to look at him. "You mean Archie's never joined the mob and nearly been killed by a bear?"

"What?" Jughead hissed. "Are you serious?"

The boy's silence could only mean one thing. He shook his head. Focus on the task. Jughead sucked in a breath when he set foot in the warehouse. It was what he was expected. Following the torchlight, Jughead only saw dilapidated walls, the floor strewn with hay. "It stinks," KJ muttered, starting forwards. Jughead pinched his nose when the rancid aroma of rotting tickled the back of his throat. Animal carcass. He told himself. Please be an animal carcass.

Jughead moved to follow the boy, but a voice sent his heart into his throat. Shit.

He stumbled behind an ancient combine harvester, dragging KJ with him. "Bring her here." the voice was a male grunt. Jughead risked a peek. A dozen people in black, dragging Lili, who was no longer crying and screaming. Instead her head was down, her steps stumbled as they ushered her.

"Lili." KJ hissed. "Who the hell are those guys?"

Jughead swallowed hard. Suddenly things were finally starting to make sense. Cole's murder and his awakening in this world had been on purpose. Initially, he'd thought there was a psycho on a murderous rampage. But it wasn't one person. Not even multiple people.

"It's a cult." he managed to choke out. His heart was ready to pound of his chest.

A cult. Jughead pressed his hand over his mouth and nose to hide a sob, or maybe it was hysterical laugh.

A wooden chair was brought forward and the blonde was forced into it, before the group surrounded her. "I don't understand," her voice made his heart hurt. "I don't understand what's happening," Lili sobbed. "Please let me go. I- won't talk, I-"

"Be quiet." the nameless man interrupted her, his voice muffled under the balaclava. "Your incessant crying is hurting my head, child."

"What do you expect?!" the girl's laugh broke into a cry. "Let me go! Are you crazy?!"

"Far from it, my dear." the man chuckled. "Just know that you're fulfilling a purpose."

"What?" Lili squeaked. She struggled violently, but the group held her down. The man pulled something out of his jacket and ice slid down his spine. The needle that had killed Cole, nearly killed KJ. Lili arched back, her eyes widening in terror.

"What is this?" she whimpered. "Please, just tell me what you want!"

The man leaned in close with the needle, gently tipping her head to the side, exposing her neck. He didn't reply. But it was clear what the bastard wanted.
"Jug," KJ whimpered. "What- what are they doing to her?"

Jughead couldn't watch anymore. Gritting his teeth, he turned to KJ. "You need to get out of here, he hissed. "Don't worry about Lili, I- I'll stop them."

The girl's shriek of pain shattered his hopes. At the corner of his eye, the girl's head had dropped limply, her blonde curls hanging in front of her face. Jughead forced himself not to look. He wouldn't look. If he did, he'd rush over. Because the blonde wasn't Lili anymore.

Instead, he focused on KJ, on the boy's wide eyes and twisted lips. Archie Andrews was standing in the fucking slaughterhouse, and he'd brought him here.

"You need to go." Jughead growled. When the boy didn't move, he shoved him. Hard.

"You need to go, now! Listen to me. These psycho's are killing you guys so we can come through," Jughead gritted his teeth. "And I just brought them Archie Andrews on a silver platter."

KJ looked terrified. "What did they..." his voice was a soft breath. "What did they do to her?" When he started forwards, as if in a dream. Jughead grabbed the boy's arm, forcefully yanking him back.

"Don't make a sound," Jughead breathed. The boy struggled in his grasp as the two of them watched the horror unfold in front of them.

"Leave her for a moment," the cult leader ordered his followers, when Jughead was fairly sure he was ready to scream.

"Tie her up."

They obliged, quickly restraining the blonde's wrists to the chair arms, before filtering out of the barn.

When they were gone, Jughead let go of KJ and stumbled his way over, his heart in his throat.

The redhead was kneeling in front of the girl, breathless. "Is this what they did to him?" he demanded, choking on a sob. "This is what they did to Cole?"

Jughead didn't answer.

"Lili?" KJ shook the girl gently, and to Jughead's surprise, Lili jerked, before lifting her head up, her eyes blinking open. For a moment the girl stared at the two of them dazedly, before her eyes widened into confusion, slowly clouding into annoyance.

"Jug?" she said softly, her gaze flickering to him. "What's going on?"

Betty.

Jughead stiffened. He wanted to move forwards, to hold her, kiss her. But his heart was shredded.

Lili was gone. His heart bled for the girl who he couldn't save.

KJ shook his head, raking his hands down his face. "Tell me this is a joke," he spluttered. When Betty Cooper only frowned at him, he backed away, his hands clawing at his face. "This isn't fucking happening, this isn't happening, this isn't happening-" the boy fell into a mantra, tearing at his hair.

Betty peered at Jughead, before looking down at herself, at the bindings holding her to the chair.
"Jug, why am I tied up?"

"It's okay." he managed to get out. Because it was all he could say without breaking down.

Here she was, the love of his life, back with him. But it felt wrong. In the blink of an eye, Lili, a broken hearted woman terrified for her life had become Betty, a confused teenager eyeing him suspiciously. "Are you okay?" she asked softly. "Guys, seriously, did you tie me up?"

The blonde's gaze went to KJ.

"Arch?" she cocked her head in confusion. KJ stared back at her, before turning and gagging, heaving up the milkshake from earlier.

"Where are we?" Betty asked, after a moment.

Jughead finally crouched in front of the girl and began to undo her bindings with trembling hands. KJ managed to get back to his feet, wiping his mouth. "So let me get this straight," he choked out. "You're Betty." he said, glaring at the girl.

She stared back at him. "The- the last time I checked, yes." Betty's blue eyes clouded with fear and confusion. "Archie, what's going on?"

KJ looked like he was going to shout at her, his lip curling, eyes flashing. But he shut his mouth, shaking his head. "We need to get the fuck out of here."

Jughead nodded at him, then looked at Betty. "I'll explain everything when we're out of here, so trust me, okay?"

Betty jumped up, swaying slightly on her feet. She automatically grabbed his hand, and squeezed it for dear life. "Where is here?" the girl finally snapped, her patience wearing thin. "Jughead, what's going on?" she groaned, rolling her eyes. "And don't start spewing that ridiculous story like earlier."

The girl's words struck a chord somewhere, sending his heart spiralling in his chest. "Wait," Jughead grabbed the girl's shoulders, his heart hammering. He stared at Betty, trying to keep his breathing under control. She frowned back at him. "Jug, are you-

"What story?" He demanded. "Betty, please. Just trust me. Did you say you were just speaking to me?"

Betty peered at him, her expression creasing with worry. "You don't remember?" she frowned, cocking her head. "The conversation we were just having in Pops."

Chapter End Notes

So who was Betty talking to? ;)

......,this is basically freaky Friday lmao
ALSO. Please let me know if you're reading, so I can post the next bit! :D
The sky at dawn was what Cole liked best about early starts. When he stepped out of his trailer, stumbling slightly, wiping sleep still lingering in his eyes, he couldn't help admire the blur of warm orange and mellow pink striking across the horizon. It was a pretty sight. Vancouver looked the best in the early morning. The sun was bleeding through the thick partition of clouds, and the air smelt of freshly cut grass and mildew. There was a thin sheet of frost on the ground, still glittering across the walk. Cole hadn't bothered with a jacket when he'd left his apartment, and he automatically regretted it when he stepped out into the biting air. He shivered when it graced his bare arms, sending spikes of ice down his spine. Cole folded his arms, pressing warmth into himself. His hair was still an unbrushed mess, hanging in his eyes. It was only a matter of time before one of the crew members found and dragged him to tame his unruly curls, before dumping Jughead Jones' signature knitted beanie over his eyes. He smiled to himself. It was comfortable, and usually protected his ears from the Winter chill.

Shivering again, he kicked at loose pebbles on the pathway. Damn, he could do with Jughead's beanie right now. It was mid March, but felt like February. Cole watched his breath twirl in the air and he was reminded of the pack of untouched cigarettes still in his bag. He wanted to quit. It was a shitty habit, but there was nothing better than sucking the life out of a cig on his break with KJ on a freezing morning, the two of them passing it back and forth, trying to warm themselves up. Speaking of KJ, where was he? The chilly morning breeze rattled trees above him, sending fresh Spring leaves spiralling in the air. Cole watched the leaves dance across the cobble pathway, with a small smile. There was a butterfly clinging onto one of the tree's skeletal branches, iridescent wings spread gracefully. Cole went to grab for his camera that was usually hanging around his neck, but his hands only grazed his thin shirt. Fuck. He rolled his eyes. Of course he'd left his camera back in his apartment when the opportunity of getting a shot of a butterfly arises. He stuffed his hands in his pocket, watching it take flight.

Cole had received the usual habitual text from his cast mate earlier, when he'd been getting ready. In usual KJ fashion, the text was teeming with emoji's that Cole's foggy mind couldn't articulate so early in the morning. *Hey, you up? Breakfast?*

Followed by a string of colourful blurs that Cole guessed was the laughing/crying emoji.

Barely awake. He'd replied, squinting through fraying lashes. After having a shower and waking himself up, he'd texted: *Heading to set now, want to meet me in reception? Breakfast is on me :) Also stop using emoji's, you're not twelve.*

The boy's reply was instant: *I'm already here lol. I'm in Pops, going through my script. also I do it on purpose. The more annoyed and irritated you are, the likelier you are to reply ;)*

*Asshole.* He'd texted back, with a smile on his face.

With KJ's text still in his mind, Cole headed to the Pops set, his stomach twisting into uncomfortable knots. Ever since this morning he'd had a bad feeling. Maybe it was going to be a bad day. But the feeling was different. It was a growing void of emptiness in his gut, dread choking the breath from his lungs. He couldn't explain it, or describe what felt like a black hole in his heart, a hurricane in his
mind. Every step felt like his last. Cole sucked in a breath of chilly air. He glimpsed that all too familiar vibrant shade of red in the window, and the knot in his gut loosened slightly. KJ.

Seeing the boy, Cole quickened his pace and pushed through the doors leading into Pops. The second he walked in, the bad feeling returned, curling in his gut. Too quiet. Pops looked strange in the dark, every booth dimly lit with dying light seeping through the windows. Normally the set was thriving, even so early in the morning. The set designers and camera crew usually arrived prematurely to get things set up before the cast arrived, but all he saw was a shadow a few feet away, looming over KJ, who was slumped at their usual booth, surrounded by multiple cups of coffee, and his script. But there was something...wrong. KJ hadn't turned to greet him, or even acknowledged that he'd walked through the door. Cole swallowed hard. "You're up early," he said, hoping the boy would lift his head up and shoot him a sleepy smile. But KJ still didn't move. Cole bit his lip against more words. His attention was on his friend, but he couldn't tear his gaze from the apparition just standing there. It wasn't a ghost. He didn't believe in ghosts, or the supernatural. Everything had a logical and scientific explanation.

Except this thing? It had taken him off guard. The lights were off, so maybe that's why the shadow looked so damn terrifying, just standing over KJ like the Grim Reaper. Cole had never been scared of the dark, but in the early morning when the sun still hadn't risen and there wasn't a soul on set, he could suspend his disbelief and let his mind wander. Not a ghost, he told himself. But his stomach still twisted, his heart still pounded, and the breath got caught in his throat. He forced his legs into submission.

"Dude," Cole muttered, eyeing KJ. "Are you okay?"

Cole stopped abruptly when the shadow moved. All at once, his heart catapulted into his throat and he was sure he was about to start yelling. He squinted, blinking, when it twitched slightly, golden light beginning to filter through as the sun finally peeked through the clouds, illuminating the diner set. Cole winced, shading his eyes. KJ's hair burst into an orangeade glow, and finally an identity was drawn from the stranger hanging over him. It wasn't a monster or demon ready to tear out his heart. He let out an exhale of relief.

It was a young girl. He let go of the breath he'd been holding, scoffing to himself. The girl was staring at him, a faceless phantom making way for pretty features bleeding into view. She looked to be in her late teens with pale skin, rosy cheeks and long brown hair pulled into a ponytail, a denim jacket neatly slung over a pastel pink dress and cream ballet flats. She was smiling at him. The girl looked out of place on an empty set. The way she was standing was eerie; completely still, her arms limply at her sides, pink lips twitching into a wide grin. Cole frowned at her. Why was she here? Wasn't there supposed to be on the clock security? He was trying to figure out why she was here, standing over KJ like a shark looming over its prey, when a wave of familiarity hit him, and he folded his arms, shuffling uncomfortably. He knew that smile. How could he forget it?

It was the waitress from the coffee shop in downtown Vancouver, the cast's usual hang out spot. She looked different without her green apron, but her sugary sweet grin was unmistakable. Her name was on the tip of his tongue. Clarissa? Cara? Cassie? She hadn't exactly kept low-key in the past, always asking Cole and his cast mates for autographs, trying to act discreet when snapping photo's of them. It got borderline annoying, but he never said anything. What would he say? "Go away?" Plus, he hated confrontation.

Cole did his best to smile, but questions were still whirring around his mind, setting his brain on fire. He nervously ran a hand through his hair, heading over to her.

"Hey," he waved awkwardly, glancing at KJ. The boy was sound asleep. It looked like he'd conked
out during a coffee break. He smirked a little at the redhead, but the strange girl didn't move, her grin unwavering. She wasn't greeting him, like the crew normally did. He wasn't even sure she was part of the crew. Cole cocked his head curiously. "Clarissa, right?" Cole wasn't sure of her name. "From Common Grounds?"

The girl nodded. "It's Callie." she corrected. She must have read his mind.

"My dad is one of the set directors," Callie explained. "I begged him to let me see the set, and he finally caved," she giggled. "He let me have a little wander."

Cole nodded. There was no way that was true. Crew members weren't allowed to bring their children, unless they were close friends of the writers. But he played along anyway. "Right." he murmured, sliding into the booth opposite KJ. The boy looked completely out of it, his head of matted red curls buried in his arms. KJ was wearing Archie's Letterman jacket, clumsily hanging over a white shirt and jeans. "Hey," he poked KJ once, then again when the boy didn't stir. Callie cleared her throat. "He was like that when I came in," she smiled brightly when he looked up at her, she shrugged a little.

"KJ wake up," Cole muttered, shoving the boy. When the redhead stayed motionless, Cole started to panic. He leaned across the table, sticking his index finger under his chin and gently lifting the boy's head. KJ's eyes were shut. When he snapped his fingers in front of his face, he didn't flinch. Cole let go with a quiet hiss and KJ's head flopped back down. Callie chuckled. "He's sleeping," she said, in a sing-song voice.

"Yeah, I can see that," he said, exasperated. KJ wasn't just sleeping, Cole thought, his throat going dry. He knew the boy was a light sleeper, always conking out on night shoots and during filming. But this wasn't like before. Before- it was easy to wake him up. Hell, if he so much as tapped the boy, KJ would spring awake, confused and sleepy eyes regarding him, before the boy would chuckle, croaking at him to leave him alone.

"I was just seeing if he was okay." Callie said. She still didn't move, or made no notion to sit down. "Uh-huh," Cole couldn't resist a sceptical tone. He gingerly picked up one of the plastic cups of coffee. It was half full, brown bean juice still sloshing against the sides. Cole frowned at it. "What the hell have you been drinking?" he muttered to himself, taking an experimental whiff. The white plastic cups had set off alarm bells.

Usually, the cast got drinks from the Starbucks nearby, or grabbed a clear plastic cup of tea or coffee. He'd never seen this type of cup. It smelt like coffee, obviously. KJ was a mocha type guy, so there was the distinct aroma of chocolate mixing with crushed coffee beans and soy milk. But there was something else. The stink was barely detectable, but when Cole sniffed again, it hit him automatically. Something metallic spiked his senses. It reminded him of the time he'd accidentally swallowed a quarter when he was younger; the waning taste of iron was bitter in his throat. Cole put the cup back down, swallowing vomit searing the back of his throat. "I've gotta get back to my trailer," he jumped up quickly, forcing a laugh. The girl- Clarissa, Cara, Callie- whatever the hell her name was, had done something to his friend. That was glaringly obvious. He remembered leaving his phone in his trailer. Cole managed to nod. "Yeah, I'm just tired," he smiled brightly at her, his gaze lingering on poor KJ. It was a bad idea to freak out now. He had to play it cool until he reached his trailer, and then call 911. He hated the
idea of leaving KJ, but the boy was knocked out. It wasn't like he could wake him up and drag the boy with him. "Are you sure?" Coffee Shop girl didn't move. She was still looking at KJ.

"Yeah, I'm good," Cole said quickly. His mind was on over-drive. If the crazy girl had drugged KJ, then what was she planning on doing? The crew would be arriving soon, and the Kiwi was pretty hefty. What was she going to do, drag him into her car?

No. Cole inwardly groaned. No, he was going to get help.

"I guess I'll see you later then?" her voice was flat, derived of any emotion. She was still hounding KJ, not moving from the boy's side. She was a stalker, surely.

Cole shivered. Not likely. He thought, curling his lip. "Yep!" he said.

Pushing his way back through the doors, Cole nearly fell on his face. His lungs felt starved of oxygen. He took long strides, his legs shaking. "Hello?" he cupped his mouth. shouting again. "Hey!" he picked up his pace, glancing behind him every few seconds. "Hey, I need help!" he shouted again. The set was desolate, which was out of the ordinary.

He wasn't that early. How could there be no crew members dotted around, setting up camera equipment? By the time he'd reached his trailer, Cole couldn't breathe. He slammed the door shut, grabbing his phone. But the screen didn't flash up like normal, his lock-screen of a grassy landscape he'd taken a photograph of on one of his shoots. The screen was black. "Shit," he muttered, fumbling under piles of clothes, then magazines and coffee stained mugs strewn over his dressing table. When there was a knock at the door, he bit his tongue, suppressing a yell. A quick look around his trailer told him that there were no discernible weapons he could use. The only objects that looked good enough to cause damage so he could make a run for it and grab KJ, were his phone and the mugs still cluttering his table. Biting his lip, Cole grabbed for one of the cups.

The door opened, and he dropped it, hissing. He straightened up with what he hoped was a smile. The girl stepped in casually, shutting the door behind her. Cole swallowed.

"Clarissa from the coffee shop," he said shakily, edging towards his phone. If he could get the damn thing working, he could call for help. He raised a brow, twisting his lips into a smirk. But his chest was bursting. "What are you doing in my trailer?"

The girl's lips curled into a smile. "It's Callie," she murmured. Cole took another wary step back, his fingers trailing across his dressing table for his phone. If the girl noticed his hands trembling, she didn't say anything. "Jughead is my favourite character," she said. There was a strange gleam in her eye that turned his gut.

"I was hoping I could get a hug?"

Cole blinked at her. "A hug?"

Callie nodded and clapped her hands together. "Yes!" she started towards him, eagerly. "My dad said the cast wouldn't mind. Is that okay Cole?"

He had a hard time answering for a moment. "Sure." he forced a smile, and opened his arms for a hug. The girl squealed, wrapping herself around him. After a second, he tightened his grip. "What did you do to KJ?" he murmured in her ear. Cole felt the girl stiffen, and she pulled away, her cheeks blossoming scarlet. "What?" her eyes narrowed.

"I- I don't know what you're talking about!" Callie insisted, and Cole rolled his eyes. "Don't talk shit," he said coldly. "You drugged the poor guy's coffee."
"What?" she backed away slowly. "I didn't do anything!

Callie was shaking her head, her blue eyes wide, lips stretched in disgust, but Cole continued. There was no way he was letting it go. He gave her a long look. "Now here's the question: Why did you drug him?" he grew progressively more confident, standing up straight. "What did you want?" he smiled easily at her. Her look of embarrassment flooded him with triumph. "Did you want a selfie with him? Because KJ is a cool guy. Buy the idiot a sandwich and he's your best fucking friend." Cole cocked his head.

"But that's not what you wanted is it?" his tone hardened. The reality of the situation, the terror of it sending his heart galloping. This crazy fangirl was so close to hurting one of his closest friends. He swallowed hard. "You fed KJ relaxants, didn't you?"

"No," Callie whimpered. She folded her arms across her chest, hugging herself. There were tears sliding down her pale cheeks, dripping from her nostrils. "I didn't do anything to him, I swear."

"Bullshit." Cole spat. "I'm not falling for your victim act," he grabbed for his phone, startling when Callie pulled something from the little purse hanging from her shoulder. The accessory he hadn't noticed until now. Cole straightened up with a gasp, his hands flying in the air. "Easy!" he managed to hiss. Callie was holding a gun. The terrified teenaged girl she had been just seconds ago had disappeared, making way for a woman with no emotions. Tears were still streaming down her cheeks, but her lips had twisted into a smile, her blue eyes looked hollow, as if she was staring right through him. It was a total Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde moment. He swallowed a cry of frustration.

"Hey," Cole softened his tone. "You don't have to do this."

"Don't I?" she giggled. Her index finger was lingering on the trigger, and Cole felt his heart splinter. Panicking, he grabbed for his phone again.

"Drop it." Callie's steely voice sent goosebumps pricking over his arms. Cole couldn't help letting out a nervous laugh. He shook his head, letting his phone drop from his grasp, hitting the carpeted floor with a quiet thud. "So you did drug him," he managed to choke out, his voice breaking. Cole glared at her, rolling his eyes "You crazy bitch."

The girl only smiled brightly. "Guilty." she sang. With one hand holding the gun still pointed between his eyes, she pulled out a small pill container and rattled it. "They're called Maxisleep," Callie explained, never losing her grin. "You can get them for a pretty good deal online. I gave him enough to knock him out with no lasting effects."

Cole kept his hands up. "For what?" he demanded. "Like I said, you don't have to resort to kidnapping to talk to him, just go over to him. KJ's a sweet guy, he'll-"

"Don't call him that!" Callie shrieked, cutting him off. He jumped, his heart spiralling. "His name is Archie," she said softly. The girl didn't blink. "And yours is Jughead."

"You're crazy," Cole gasped. "What, did you inhale too much hairspray?" he lowered his hands slowly, and she took a step forward, never straying from her target.

"Do you not watch the show?" Cole couldn't help saying. "Archie and Jughead are fictional characters," he growled. "Can you not understand fiction from reality?" antagonising this clearly mentally unstable girl wasn't the best thing to do, but Cole couldn't help it. Was she planning on hurting Lili too? What about Camila, Casey and Mads? He held his breath. "Look, Clarissa, just-" he stumbled over his words, each one getting tangled on his tongue. His body was frozen, the fight or flight impulse slowly kick-starting his brain. But if he moved, she would shoot. "Just put the gun
"It's Callie." she said, after a moment. "Hands up, sweetie."

"What?" he choked, raising his hands once again in surrender.

"My name," the girl grinned. "My name is Callie. It's not hard to remember."

Cole nodded. "R-right. Callie it is. Okay then, Callie," he put as much emphasis on the name as possible. "Please just put the gun down."

When the girl giggled manically, Cole realised his fate. Fuck, he was going to die at the hands of some crazy fan. "You're funny," she took another step, and Cole found himself backing into the wall, still with his hands up. "Oh I'm crazy?" he breathed, keeping his gaze on the girl's trigger finger. "I'm not the one who's holding the gun."

Callie hummed. "Like I said, you're funny. But not funnier than Juggie. He's my absolute favourite!" she squealed. "He's sweet, funny, a great friend, so loving, and-

"And a fictional character." Cole muttered, resisting the urge to roll his eyes.

Callie's expression darkened. "You were supposed to be last," she said wistfully. Her words struck a chord inside him, igniting his mind. Cole couldn't help the burning curiosity taking over his brain. "What? What do you mean I was supposed to be last?"

The girl shrugged. "I was ordered to come and take Archie out, but you got in the way." she pulled a face. "I'm sad now. The best part about it is the wait, and there's no build up anymore." Callie pouted teasingly. "Thanks for ruining all the fun, Juggie."

Cole shuddered. "You're very welcome, Clarissa," he whispered. "An- an explanation would be great right now," Cole bit his lip. "You said- you said you were ordered to take out Archie," he swallowed. "Who told you to do that? Why do they want KJ dead?"

The girl sighed, before making her way over to him. He flinched away, and she shoved the barrel of the gun into his left temple. Cole held his breath. The feeling of cold steel sent shivers washing over him, a tumultuous wave of fear enveloping him. They were nose to nose, and Cole wondered if this was it. KJ was the intended target, and he'd gotten in the way. He stared at the crazy girl, at her bright eyes filled with insanity, scarlet lips bleeding a gun wrenching grin. "Say it with me," she said softly.

He lost his breath. "Say...say what with you?" all he could feel was the gun. All he could see was the girl's finger inches from the trigger, all he could imagine was his own head exploding, scarlet soaking the walls, dripping from the ceiling. He realised then, that he was crying. Tears burned in his eyes, blurring his vision.

"Say it." she said. When he didn't, or rather couldn't reply, she forced the barrel deeper into his temples. "I said say it!"

"C. A. L. L. I. E." the girl nodded at Cole, and after a moment of hesitation, he repeated it back to her, and she smiled in satisfaction, stepping back. Cole found his chance to stall. Stay calm. He told himself. He was still breathing, and if he managed to disarm the girl, he might still have a chance to save KJ, and whoever was on her hit list. His mind swam with possibilities. This girl wasn't just insane. She was a soldier being pupiteered by a mad man, or woman. It was 1984 brought into the modern era.
"Why are you doing this?" Cole whispered, trying not to think about the gun still protruding into his flesh. It was so cold. "Someone is pulling your strings, who is it?"

Callie smirked. "That's for me to know, and you to never find out." she replied, before the pressure of the gun against his temples disappeared. She lowered the gun to her side, and he could breathe again. But then she reached into her purse and pulled something else out. It wasn't the drugs. He recognised the silver point automatically. Cole had been terrified of needles when he was a kid, but gradually gotten used to them as he grew up. Though seeing the long narrow point the girl was waving around manically as if the syringe was a toy, brought back the childhood fear. Cole whimpered, but didn't move. "Here's what's going to happen," she started, with a grin. Callie flicked the needle, and the clear liquid sloshed against the sides. Cole swallowed a scream building in his throat. He eyed the door, but the girl was so close. Her breath tickled his cheeks. "You're going to take this voluntarily, or I'm going to use force."

Cole swallowed a whine. "What's in it?" he flinched when she lightly pressed the plunger, what looked like water spraying out in an arc, lightly splashing his cheeks.

Callie didn't lose her smile. "Magic." she replied. Cole stared hard at the needle. She held it out to him, but he didn't move. His mind screamed at him to grab the syringe and attack her. But she still had the gun. If he made any sudden movements she'd go trigger happy. Cole bit his lip. Where was everyone? He felt sick at the thought of being completely at this girl's mercy. Nobody was coming to save him.

"I'd rather not," he said after a moment. "Normally I like to know what I'm injecting into myself, and you're not exactly giving me any details, so no."

Callie's expression didn't waver. "Do it." she said coldly. "Or, like I said, I'll do it. Father says we mustn't raise suspicion, so I'm taking you instead of Archie." she giggled when he couldn't resist a sigh of relief. "Don't worry, father will take care of him."

Cole frowned. "Father?" he repeated. "What are you, some kind of cult?" his voice shook, no matter how hard he tried to steel it. "You think killing cast members of your favourite show is going to get you eternal enlightenment, or whatever?"

The girl shook her head, laughing. "No sweetie, I'm just following the word of Archie."

It was Cole's turn to laugh. "What?!" he scoffed. "Did you just talk about Archie, the fucking comic book character, as if he was some kind of god?!"

Callie lifted the gun once again. "He IS a god," she said matter-of-factly. "And when we've taken care of all of you, I'll finally get to him! All of them!" the girl jumped up and down, giggling. "Father says they'll stay with us forever and ever, and ever!"

"You are fucking crazy," Cole spluttered. "You're delusional! If you think Archie and Jughead are real, then so is Daffy duck!"

"You're just a shell," the girl murmured, her empty smile stretching across glossy lips. "I take what's inside, and fill you back up again with him." her words sent tremors up and down his spine, they made him want to cry out, to scream for help. Cole forced himself to stay calm. "I'm a shell?" he scoffed. "That's all I am to you, huh? Just a pretty face who plays your favourite character?" don't cry. He told himself. Never get her the satisfaction. But he couldn't help it. What she was saying
killed him inside, evil words that struck his heart.

Callie's eyes widened. "Are you crying?"

Cole didn't answer. He didn't think he could. To answer her question, he was crying. Of course he was crying. Callie looked sympathetic for the fraction of a second, and he used that to his advantage. Seeing no other option, Cole grabbed for the gun, managing to grip the handle and tug violently. But she held on with an iron grip. When she calmly removed his fingers and pushed him backwards, he staggered, but managed to keep his balance.

Callie's laugh was manic. "Looks like I'm going to have to do it then, doesn't it?"

Cole shook his head, choking back a sob. "You're not touching me with that thing."

"Is that so?"

He waited for the girl to pull the trigger. But instead, she calmly put her gun back into her purse, before grabbing him by the neck, and shoving him onto his knees. Cole was surprised by her strength. When he let out a cry, trying to jump up, she stabbed the needle into the back of his neck. On instinct, he grabbed at it, trying to pull it back out. But the needle had already broken through skin, it was already in his bloodstream. Callie pushed the plunger and he felt it seep inside of him, a freezing poison.

"Shit!" he couldn't help the yelp choking from his lips, before they went numb, his tongue entangling. Before he knew it, ice was flooding inside of him, and then fire; eruptions of lava in his blood, streaming through his veins, while his organs slowly froze. He curled up, sobbing obscenities into the floor, while his body burned from the inside out. "What did you do to me?" he moaned, his words slurring. It felt like they were tumbling from his mouth. He groaned into the floor. "You crazy bitch."

Callie sat over him, gently rolling him onto his back so he could glimpse her through heavy eyes. She was back to being a shadow, a grinning demon prowling over him with starving eyes. Cole trembled when her fingers graced his cheeks, gently brushing strands of his hair out of his eyes. He wanted to move, to cry, to scream, to choke her. But he was numb. His veins were numb, his body was failing him slowly. The girl smiled at him; hollow eyes staring straight through the boy, only seeing what she wanted to see. Jughead Jones. "Don't worry, I won't harm a hair on your perfect little head," she ruffled his curls. "Jughead has to be perfect. He WILL be perfect."

"Delusional...." he managed to mumble. It was getting harder and harder to stay awake. The urge to just let go was so overwhelming. He imagined himself standing on a cliff, teetering on the edge. The cool wind was blowing his hair, gracing his face, tickling his cheeks. Cole blinked rapidly. Callie was still hovering over him with wide eyes. She held the needle, no doubt ready to give him another shot. "What...are you waiting for?" he mumbled, frowning at her through half lidded eyes. "Just do it already."

The girl peered at him. Suddenly everything was so cold. So, so fucking cold. Cole shivered. Callie bent over him, her brown hair trickling in his eyes. "Just know that you're fulfilling a purpose, okay? Jughead thanks you."

"Right. Good to know," he whispered. "Just leave KJ and the others alone."

"Can't do that, sweetie!" she giggled. "He is Archie, after all."

Cole spluttered. "Drop dead," he managed to choke out. "You've really l- lost it, Clarissa from the
coffee shop." it felt like he was on floating on air, almost euphoric. Black spots speckled his vision, dotting over the girl's face. Cole knew he was fading. But he didn't have time to be scared, or freak out. He could only wait for the venom to empty him out like the girl had said. He closed his eyes finally, allowing himself to fall. There was another sharp prick in his neck, and this time there was no waiting. A sense of utter helplessness filled him, and he realised he couldn't stop it. He couldn't stop this crazy bitch's plan for the others. Whatever bullshit she believed in. Callie and whoever ordered her around truly believed that they could bring Jughead Jones to life through him, ignite his empty shell with Jughead's soul, essence, or whatever.

She was going to be pretty fucking angry when all she managed to do was kill him. Though at least that would stop her from going after the others. He was the first test subject.

Failed.

Cole felt himself fall. He was thrown from the cliff edge, plunging into the freezing cold ocean. It almost felt like he was being catapulted from his own body, spiralling into the air. While Clarissa, or Callie's manic giggling filled his dead ears.

The memories still clinging on to her foggy mind were painful. Lili remembered a mixture of burning and freezing, as if she was being dipped in lava, and then plunged into arctic snow. There had been pain. The worst pain she had ever experienced, searing her veins, flooding her heart. It had gotten so intense, so hard to deal with, until everything seemed to explode. Both the pain and the burning. It imploded inside of her, and there was only darkness that swallowed her up. But it was a relief from the constant inferno.

When Lili drifted back to consciousness, she was no longer burning. There was no pain taking hold of her heart, no suffocating weights on her chest. She felt nothing. When Lili sucked in a breath, she revelled in the air in her lungs.

It felt good to breathe again, after spending so long drowning in a bottomless pit. She concentrated on her senses. She could smell: cherry blossom. It was rich in the air, mixing with the scent of mildew and freshly cut grass. It smelt of Spring. Taste: nothing. When she gingerly ran her tongue over her teeth, there was only the faded taste of iron tainting her throat. Feel: there was something soft gently caressing her body. It was tickling her lower back, she could feel it in her hair, brushing her palms. Grass. She was laying on grass. Finally, she let her eyes flicker open, and through fraying lashes she saw two figures hovering over her, bathed in warm golden light.

For a moment she drunk in her surroundings, letting her gaze flitter around. She was lying in a grassy park. The sky was the colour of cornflour, and the sun sat in the middle, bathing everything in heavenly light. Hanging over the two figures was a cherry tree, a gentle breeze sending blossom flying off the branches, twirling in the air. It was the kind of sight she'd expect to see in a movie, or a TV series. But here she was, lying underneath such beauty, while two faceless figures stared down at her. For some reason she wasn't scared. The memory of being strapped to a wooden chair still sent pangs of fear in her chest. The man with the mask looming over her, his expression hidden by a balaclava. He had given her a shot, and her world had been engulfed with flames.

Don't think about that. Lili told herself, when her gut curled with nausea. She was safe now.

"Lili?" the voice was so familiar. It took a few moments to register in her mind, and a flood of emotion choked her heart, squeezing air from her lungs. Her eyes sprung with tears, and she was sitting up, blinking rapidly. That voice.... she had been waiting so long to hear it. When she cocked
her head, her vision cleared. There were two guys sitting over her. Lili recognised the red curly hair automatically, but she didn't say his name yet. Instead her gaze was on the second boy. His skin looked darker in the sun, curly brown hair hanging in wide green eyes. Lili felt her heart shatter. She had been waiting for that exact expression; the playful curl in his lip, that gleam in his eye, while the stranger with his face had looked straight through her for somebody else.

But now he was here, and Lili couldn't breathe again. But it was the best type of losing her breath. "Cole?" she murmured, reaching out, letting her shaky hands grace his cheek. The boy was wearing Jughead's clothes still, the grey knitted beanie nestled over tousled curls, that familiar checked coat hanging off his slim figure. His smile was gentle.

"Yeah, it's me," he murmured, placing his hand over hers. Lili couldn't help spluttering out a laugh. Or maybe it was a sob. "How?" she managed to choke out, searching his eyes for answers. But she only saw pain he was trying to hide, suppressed agony teeming in his expression. "He-" Lili swallowed. "The- the other you, he told me you were dead."

Cole smiled sadly. "The jury's still out on that one." Before Lili could answer, he gently took her hand and placed it over his chest. "What do you feel?"

Lili waited to feel a heartbeat, some kind of notion to prove that he was alive. But there was nothing. "I- I can't..."

At her expression, Cole smiled gently. "It's because we're wrong." he said softly. "Riverdale shouldn't exist. It was built for all these characters that shouldn't be real, and here we are. Two human beings somehow existing in an imaginary world."

"What?" she whispered. Her gaze went to the second boy, who had stayed silent, his warm brown eyes settled on her. The boy was wearing the famous blue and gold Letterman jacket. Lili opened her mouth to say her friend's name, but it got stuck in her throat.

"Archie." she said, and he nodded, looking uncomfortable. "And you're Lili right?" he waved awkwardly. It felt strange hearing the boy's all American accent. She had been so used to KJ's Kiwi twang. Lili stared at the two of them. Cole and Archie, who seemed way too calm for the situation they were in. She was dead. She and Cole were dead, and had magically appeared in the fictional world of Riverdale, and Cole wasn't freaking out.

"How's Jug?" Archie asked hopefully, his kind eyes made her heart melt. There was so much of KJ in his expression. Lili swallowed. "He's okay," she replied. Back in the real world, she had been in denial, ignoring the truth standing right in front of her. If only she'd tried to listen, tried to understand. Now her ignorance had landed her with the same fate as Cole and she had been plunged into a new reality she didn't believe in.

"Cole, what's going on?" Lili managed to get out. The boy sighed, before lying down, stretching his legs out. Archie followed suite, and after a moment, so did she. It felt good to relax in the grass, allowing the tension in her body to loosen.

The boy spluttered. "Oh man. Where do I even start?"

"There's a crazy cult after us in the real world," He began, speaking so calmly, and she respected that. He didn't want to scare her. But she was past scaring. Lili had been through the exact same thing as him, there was nothing that could scare her anymore.

"I arrived on set early, and this...this girl-" he hesitated for a moment, before folding his arms across his chest, hugging himself. "I dunno man, I was terrified of her. She said all this crazy stuff, saying I
was the so-called shell for Jughead, and that she was going to replace me with him," he chuckled. "I thought she was bat shit insane when she started spouting bullshit about bringing Jughead back through me, but I guess she was right." Lili turned to him, her stomach twisting. "Which girl?"

"Remember Clarissa from Common Grounds?" he turned to her, his lip curling. Lili only nodded. She vaguely knew of the girl. A teenager with long dark hair and bright smile came to mind. She was always on her phone. "She's the one who murdered me." his voice broke. "She drugged KJ's coffee, and I wasn't going to let her get away with it."

"Wait, she went after KJ?"

"Uh-huh. The psycho said I was supposed to be last, or whatever. She was supposed to kill him first, but I guess I got in the way," he sucked in a breath, his cheeks blossoming rosy red. "There was no way I was going to let her kill him."

"So she killed you instead." Lili breathed.

Cole didn't answer. Lili could tell just by looking at him, that it hurt to think back. "Anyway, long story short. I briefly feel like I'm drowning in literal hell while my body is pulled apart by a Basilisk, and I wake up here, with Archie Fucking Andrews calling me Jughead. It took a while, but it finally hit me that Clarissa, or Callie, whatever the hell her name was. She actually switched us. I told Archie and Betty, and Betty, she-" he pulled a face. "Betty thought I was crazy, she was calling her mom to come and cart me to the doctor, before she just- she just collapsed."

The boy cleared his throat, steeling himself. "It was crazy seeing it happen, y'know?" he shuddered. "her eyes rolled back, and she just- she just flopped down."

Lili nodded. Cole's words made her feel sick. But she listened. The boy stared at the sky, his green eyes flitting between clouds.

"Then, I guess-" he sighed. "You know the rest. Betty Cooper died right in front of me, and she was scared. I could see the confusion, Lili And then you came through."

His lip curled into the smallest of smiles, and he shuffled closer to her, wrapping his arms around her waist. Lili revelled in it. She felt safe. Happy. "You came back to me."

She managed a nod, swallowing a sob. They shared a kiss, but it was bittersweet. It felt like their last. His lips tasted like salt, and she was crying, but it was real, and he was here- in this world. Here they were together, finally. Lili should have felt some kind of excitement or relief. But all she felt was a numbness slowly taking her over. She still remembered her own death. The prick of the needle in her neck.

The pain. Followed by flames engulfing her body.

"They're not going to stop, are they?" Cole murmured, pulling away.

His expression twitched, and she glimpsed tears in his eyes. Lili barely saw him cry, but he looked so broken- so terrified. It was jarring. Cole was always the one with the answers, but how could she reassure herself when even he looked helpless? He sniffed, swiping his eyes angrily. Lili wanted to hold him. She wanted to kiss him again, run her hands through his hair and whisper that everything was going to be okay.

But it wasn't. She rested her own palm over her chest, and felt nothing. She was- nothing. Looking down at herself, she was wearing Betty Cooper's usual pastel colours; a pair of pale blue jeans and a pink sweater. The only thing that separated her from the character was her loose blonde hair, golden...
ringlets spilling around her like a halo.

Cole surprised her when he blew a raspberry.

"They're not going to stop until they've got KJ and Camila, and the four of us are trapped in this purgatory, this living hell, and they drag Archie into our world."

"Why do they want us though?" Archie muttered.

Cole sat up, sitting on his knees. "Trust me, you might not think it, but you guys are pretty fucking special in our world," he muttered. "I can see the appeal."

"But what if they get your friend?" Archie asked. "The guy who plays me- the Kiwi guy, what was his name? What if they get him too?"

Lili felt Cole stiffen. "They won't." he said simply. He closed his eyes, letting out a shaky breath. "If Jughead is anything like you've told me, he'll look after him."

Tears pricked Lili's eyes, sliding down her cheeks. Cole was right. They were powerless. She didn't wipe them away, only keeping her gaze on the sky. It was so beautiful, yet so unnatural. She wondered what the town really looked like. Cole sighed before turning to her, his green eyes were so alive once again. The eyes that she had mentally begged for, when searching Jughead Jones for that familiar gleam. "What's my last name?"

The boy's words sent shivers down her spine. "What?" Lili whispered. The boy shrugged.

"I can't remember my last name," he muttered. "It's weird, I feel like every day a piece of me is wiped away. My mind is being picked apart. I can't even remember my own name anymore. I know my name is Cole, but my last name is lost," the boy gritted his teeth, his expression helpless. "No matter how hard I try, I can't remember it."

Lili grabbed for the boy's hand, entangling their fingers. "Your name is Cole..." she trailed off, digging for the name in her mind. It had been there seconds before, but now it was unreachable. Squeezing his hand tighter, Lili started to panic. "Your- your name is-" it was gone, lost in the crevices of her mind. She tried again, digging her fingernails into the flesh of his palms. "It's-" she bit her lip. "Your name is-"

"It's fine, Lili."

She paused, chewing the inside of her cheek. "Are you kidding? No! No, it's- it's not okay!" she was breathless. "How could I forget it?" she blinked at the boy who looked as broken and confused as her. But he was better at hiding it. Cole shrugged helplessly.

"This is just a theory, but because I died in the real world, and somehow exist here in Riverdale, pieces of me are being picked away." he chuckled. "The universe isn't happy with the switch. It doesn't know what to do with me."

Lili swallowed. "But that doesn't explain why it affects me too." she whispered desperately. She was determined to remember his name.

What did it begin with? It was so frustrating!

"You're partially right." a familiar voice drifted into the conversation. The girl sounded like wind chimes in a summer breeze. Sabrina Spellman appeared, with her usual smile. She looked exactly the same; her short silver hair tied up in a blood red ribbon and matching sweater. Cole jumped a little,
frowning at her, his eyes narrowing.

Lili figured before he died he might have been freaked out at the random girl appearing seemingly out of nowhere. But times had changed. He wasn't the same person he'd been a few days ago, oblivious to their dastardly fates. And neither was she. "No offence sweetheart, but who the hell are you?"

"Sabrina Spellman," Lili said softly, answering for the girl. She felt lightheaded, as if she was walking on clouds. "She was helping us in the real world."

The girl nodded. "That's right," she pulled a face. "Don't think yourselves lucky that I'm here. Before, all I could do was astral project myself here. But since Lili came through, the tear has gotten worse, allowing me to slip between worlds as I please."

Cole raised his eyebrows. "Right," he said shakily. "Nice to meet you," the boy hesitated before taking a breath. "You said my theory was partially correct."

"Sort of," Sabrina said. "You're right about the switch confusing the universe. At first I didn't know what the phenomenon was, but when I found out about the cult, I now know that there is a group of powerful witches who reside in the real world, who..." the girl looked uncomfortable. "I guess what I'm trying to say, is that they're big fans of Archie."

The redhead looked perplexed. "Me?"

Sabrina shook her head. "No, not just you. All of you. This town, your lives- it's fabricated in the real world, and there's a huge following. Unfortunately-" Sabrina sighed. "There happens to be a cult dedicated to using magic to resurrecting you guys from the cast members," she turned to Cole. "To answer your question, you are both right and wrong. The eight of you are connected through both worlds. The cult have cast a spell which stops you from dying. So instead of dying when you're supposed to, you switch."

"We've been Freaky Fridayed?" Cole cocked his brow. "We've been Freaky Fridayed?"

The blonde teen shrugged. "I guess you could say that."

Lili nodded slowly. "But we're dead," she said softly. "Sugar coat it all you want, it doesn't change the fact that we were murdered in the real world."

Sabrina shook her head. "Let me finish," she sighed. "You're right, you were killed in your world. Think of Riverdale as Purgatory. You guys are dragged here when your bodies are taken over in the real world. Your soul's are simply being switched. It's the universe's way of righting things." before Cole could open his mouth, the girl continued. "What Jughead saw when he woke up in your body, was what's called a soul print. It's residue left from a soul that's been forcibly yanked from its body by a spell."

"That was me?" Cole's eyebrows crinkled in confusion.

"Yes." Sabrina said. "He saw you and freaked out, but then you disappeared, along with what killed you: the needle."

"So we're ghosts?" Cole murmured, curling his lip. Ghosts. The word was on Lili's tongue, but she was too frightened to say it. She shivered, but Cole was wrapping his arms around her. She leaned into his embrace, allowing herself to bleed into him.

"Not ghosts," Sabrina's tone hardened. "Ghosts are dead. You are not. You're just lost."
"What about my memory?" Cole spoke up. "I can't remember little things. Like bits of my childhood. Even my second name. It's like parts of me are just disappearing."

Sabrina hummed. "That's normal," she explained softly. "The reason why your memory is lapsing, and you're forgetting certain things, is because your mind is merging with Jughead's. Soon you'll share memories, and eventually adapt each other's characteristics. It doesn't matter if you haven't switched, it will happen whether you have or not."

"Is that bad?" Lili whispered, and the girl shrugged. "It can be in the early stages. You'll experience bad headaches, followed by visions. If dragged out though, only one mind can come through. The dominant one will take over the weaker mind."

"This is hurting my head," Lili said. Cole chuckled. "Same here. So let me get this straight. I'm not just stuck in Riverdale, my body currently inhabited by a fictional character, I'm also in danger of losing my mind, fighting it out with Jughead Jones." the boy's tone was dripping with sarcasm, but Lili knew he was secretly terrified.

Sabrina shook her head. "I won't let it get to that. I'd say you have a few days at least."

Archie tugged at loose strands of grass in the ground. "So, can you help them?" he asked. "You seem to know a lot, do you think you could send everyone back?" before Sabrina could reply, he cleared his throat. "When you first appeared, you told us that you can skip between worlds as much as you want," he cocked his head, curious. "Couldn't you just take these guys with you?"

Sabrina's smiled sadly. "I wish it was as easy as that."

"I'll take that as a no."

The girl smiled reassuringly. "If KJ and Camila aren't switched I should be able to find a spell that reverses it," she said. "Meaning I can undo what they did to you guys, and return Cole and Lili to their world," at Cole's sceptical look, Sabrina rolled her eyes. "Alive." she said. "You didn't technically die. The spell stopped you from kicking it, and instead did the switchover. As long as Betty and Jughead stay alive, you're fine."

Cole nodded. "Right." a slow smile was spreading across his lips. "And they won't be hurt, since this cult are obsessed with them."

Sabrina nodded. "Precisely." she said.

"Wait." the boy's smile disappeared. "How do you know all of this? What are you, some kind of witch too?"

The girl nodded eagerly. "Sabrina Spellman." she winked at Cole. "It's in my name."

Lili perked up. "So we can go home?" she said, her heart was in her throat.

"Yes. It's just a matter of asking some friends of mine." the girl's expression darkened. "But if KJ and Camila are caught and come here, and Archie and Veronica end up in the real world," she sucked in a breath. "There's nothing I can do." at their blank expression's, Sabrina played with her hands in her lap nervously.

"The spell that's keeping you from dying will wear off, and when it does- and you're still in this world you'll be trapped here."

The girl stretched out on the grass. "That's if the world doesn't end."
Archie paled. "Wait, what?"

Sabrina closed her eyes with a breathy sigh.

"Like I told Jughead, if all eight of you switch, it will cause a rip in reality itself. Whoever these crazies are, they're playing god, and the universe doesn't like it." she shuddered. "Jughead was what I thought was an accident. But then Betty? The tear will get progressively worse. If Camila is switched, both world's will receive a warning. And if it's ignored, and the cult go ahead with switching KJ and Archie, Riverdale and your world will be torn apart."

At the girl's words, Lili shivered, leaning into Cole who rested his head on her shoulder. Here they were, so far away from home. So lost. So incredibly lost. And yet Lili still felt safe. She glanced at the boy, admiring every detail of him, painting a picture in the canvas of her mind. She would remember him. No matter how much the universe tried to pull apart her memories and steal away his name. Lili knew she wouldn't forget him. Ever.

She promised herself.

"And we'll all die." Archie finished for Sabrina. His voice was shaking. The girl looked up, and smiled at him sadly, her blue eyes blooming sympathy. "Basically."

Chapter End Notes

Hey, so unfortunately, this isn't getting enough attention for me to want to post more. I don't know, I feel like I'm writing for one person, which is sort of off-putting. I'm going post this one, and wait to see if anyone else is reading. Hopefully you can understand where I'm coming from. I really hope this doesn't come across as rude. and all the love to the person who keeps commenting.
The Devil's Tail was an off license gas station and convenience store sitting on the outskirts of Vancouver. The sign on the door said OPEN and looked welcoming enough, though the place itself looked run down; old crumbling brick and slanted roofing looking ready to cave in on itself.

When Jughead pushed through the squeaky wooden door, wind chimes hanging above bursting into song, he'd been blinded by intense yellow light buzzing from cheap lights stuck to the ceiling. It was supposed to be a quick rest stop. KJ had rushed off into the toilets, no doubt to throw up again. Betty had followed him, much to his clear discomfort. "I'm fine," KJ had spat, wiping slurry from his bottom lip. He had glared at Betty, as if she was roadkill stuck to the bottom of his shoe.

"KJ, just wait-," Jughead had grabbed the boy's shoulders, but KJ had ragged away from his embrace. "No!" the boy yelled in his face, before breaking down. "I need time, okay? Just let me have some time on my own, I need-" KJ clawed his face with his fingernails.

Archie Andrews had come alive in the boy's expression; wild eyes ready for a fight. For a second, he'd half wondered if KJ had been switched. But then the boy had started sobbing. Betty had tried to hug him, tried to talk to him, but he'd pushed her away.

"Lili-" KJ kept saying her name like a broken record. Every time he did, Betty flinched, shrinking into herself. "She's gone," KJ kept whispering into his hands. "She's gone, she's fucking gone like Cole, and I'm fucking next! I'm going to die," he spluttered, the ignited pieces of Archie in his expression melting away as tears slid down his cheeks. "Fuck, I just need to think!" the actor had staggered back, nearly falling over himself. If a stranger had happened to pass by, he looked drunk, tripping over his untied laces. His red hair was an inferno, sticking up everywhere. He ragged his hand through it, yanking manically at his fringe. "Just let me think, okay?" KJ hadn't waited for an answer, managing a shaky smile, before backing away, disappearing into the dark.

"KJ!" Jughead's heart had started up, his stomach twisting. Every time KJ went off somewhere, or moved from his side, he felt sick. He could be taken at any point, and a dodgy gas station in the middle of nowhere was the perfect place to execute a kidnapping.

"Jug, just let him be," Betty had whispered. But Jughead was determined to protect the redhead, and the girl who played Veronica- Camila. Even if that meant sending his girlfriend to invade his privacy. Jughead let out a breath. It had been ten minutes, and there was no sign of either of them.

He glanced at the television mounted to the wall behind the counter. It was playing a football game in mute, the time scrolling at the bottom left of the screen. Jughead squinted. 21:46pm. Nearly ten O' clock at night, and the three of them were in the middle of nowhere.

Filming Riverdale wasn't exactly a priority of his right now, but Jughead knew the writers and crew were gunning for them. Except they didn't know that two out of the three of them had become the literal characters they were playing.

Lili was gone, and so was Cole. KJ and Camila were next.

The store's owner looked to be in his mid-fifties with greying hair and a beard covered in his lunch. He wore a stained yellow sweater and scuffed up jeans. He regarded Jughead with an amused, but
friendly smile. Jughead had put three candy bars and two energy drinks on the counter, followed by a crumpled five dollar note he'd found in Cole's jeans. The man cleared his throat after a moment of stabbing buttons on the till.

"Aren't you kids on that TV show everyone's lovin' these days?" he asked. It was almost like a slap in the face, reminding him that he was in the body of a dead boy.

The man had a southern accent. Jughead winced when a familiar strike of white hot pain arched across the back of his skull. The pain was getting worse. If it wasn't igniting the back of his head, it was a dormant throb in his temples. It was getting progressively harder to deal with it. The man cocked his head. "Well?" he choked out a laugh when Jughead reached out for his change. "What? are you too famous to talk to a man like me?"

"Yeah, that's me," he mumbled, ignoring the man's other question while he stuffed his snacks in a paper bag. The man nodded with a grunt.

"My eldest Ella loves ya," he shrugged. "No idea why. I've never liked your show, it's not my type of watch. I'm into sports and hunting."

Jughead nodded at the TV screen. "Clearly." he said, bidding the guy goodbye with a two-fingered salute. When he turned to go, the man knocked on the counter. "Oi kid, if you and your friends need a ride into the city, I get off work in fifteen minutes."

Jughead hesitated. A ride would be good. He wasn't looking forward to walking god knows how many miles, especially in the dark. Besides, they were walking targets. From what he'd seen, there was nothing for miles, except the same dusty gravel road surrounded by fields and abandoned farmland. They had to get back to Camila, fast. She was no doubt next, after Lili. Then the bastards would come for their precious Archie.

"We're fine," Jughead turned around with an easy smile. Sure, a ride would benefit them. But they couldn't trust anyone right now. He swung the paper bag casually, heading towards the beaten up door. "Thanks though." without waiting for the man to answer, Jughead walked back out in the cool night air. The gas station was desolate. Betty Cooper was standing a few feet away, her blonde hair flying around her in a golden whirlwind. She had that same expression that had haunted Lili's face the two days he'd known her.

Lili.

Her name was on his lips, but he shook his head. Betty was bouncing up and down on her ballet flats, trying to keep warm. Though KJ was nowhere to be seen. "Where is he?" he passed her the bag of snacks, giving her a quick hug. The girl rested her head in his chest.

"He's not coming out of the bathroom," she said softly. "Jug, he won't even look at me."

Betty lifted her head up, her eyes were raw, still brimming with tears. He nodded slowly. "It's not you," he sighed. "Betty, you understand me, right? They killed Lili, and you came through. He's just lost his friend. You need to give him time."

"But she's not dead!" Betty said desperately. "The other you. He's alive in our world. I talked to him, Jug. He was exactly like you, except..." She shrugged, a smile tugging on her lips. "He was different, Jug. But in the best way."

He nodded. Sounded like Cole.

"He's alive," Betty said softly. "He's just trapped. Like the other me, like..." she trailed off, frowning.
"Lili."

"So we're swapping bodies." Jughead tried to keep his emotions intact, but the girl's words squeezed his heart.

Betty gave him a watery smile. "He's alive, Jug," she said again, and he wondered if she was reassuring herself, as well as him. And he wanted to hold her then. He wanted to wrap his arms around her and never let go. Jughead wanted to scream into the night that his counterpart was alive. That there was still hope. Even if it was the tiniest piece of hope, still clinging. It was something to hold on to. He could do nothing but fall into the girl, allowing himself to finally break. It felt like he'd been in her arms forever, his snot and tears soaking Lili's blouse. Finally he pulled away, and everything was a blur between his frayed lashes still damp with tears.

Betty exhaled, sniffling. "What's his name again?" she whispered. "I don't think it's helping when I keep accidentally calling him Archie."

"KJ," Jughead said. "His name is KJ." he was already taking strides towards the public bathrooms at the back of the store.

"Stay here." he said softly. Betty looked like she was going to protest, but nodded. "Hurry up, Jug. I want to get back on the road before it gets dark." with a quick glance at the twilight sky, Jughead turned and pushed through the doors into the men's bathroom. He was automatically greeted to the stench of weed mixed with cigarette smoke clinging to yellowed brick walls. "KJ?" Jughead found himself in a dim-lit bathroom with three stalls and a line of ancient looking faucets.

The first thing he noticed was the broken mirror. It was shattered, shards littering the ground, some of them still sticking to the wall. KJ was standing in front of it, bent over the faucet. The taps were running, and Jughead's stomach twisted when he saw the flash of red tinging yellowed marble.

When he got closer, he glimpsed splashes of scarlet tainting the plughole, splattering the sides. Jughead slowly made his way over, his breath getting caught in his throat when the boy finally turned around. The redhead had one of the mirror shards clenched so tightly in his fist, blood was pooling down through his fingers. Though Jughead's attention wasn't on the shard of glass. The actor looked a mess, his cheeks flushed crimson, wild, almost feral eyes. Though they softened when they settled on Jughead. "You...obliterated a mirror," Jughead remarked, trying to hide the horror in his voice.

"I didn't-" KJ dropped the shard of glass, his arms falling limply to his sides before his shaking fingers trailed over a three-inch cut running from his nose down to his chin. It cut right through his lip, and Jughead would be lying if he said the boy didn't look like a saw victim. There were tears in the boy's eyes. "I'm not him."

"Well, I'm not gonna lie. Arch would probably do this in your version of our lives." Jughead managed to joke, but his voice was shaking.

He'd slashed at his face with the splinter of glass, and Jughead already knew why.

Swallowing, he grabbed a roll of discoloured toilet paper from a stall and ran it under the tap. KJ stood still, delicately running his fingers down the cut.

"Does it look bad?" the boy shot him a sickly smile when Jughead pressed the compress over the cut, dabbing it up and down. The blood flow wasn't bad, but the boy had completely messed up his face. Jughead tried to act nonchalant, but his chest was burning. KJ had hurt himself so they wouldn't come for him. Which hurt. It fucking hurt knowing that the guy would rather do that to his face than
have the same fate as his doomed friends.

"Damn right it looks bad," he said, grabbing a fresh scrap of toilet paper and soaking it, pressing it once again over the cut.

KJ winced. "It stings."

"Oh really?" he rolled his eyes. "What did you expect? You slashed your face with a shard of glass, of course it's going to sting."

KJ scoffed, but didn't say anything.

"You're just like Archie, y'know. He'd definitely lose it and punch a mirror."

The actor ignored him, and he tried not to be offended. KJ was pissed, upset and probably fucking terrified. It made sense. Jughead lifted the compress to see if the blood flow had stifled, but instead, to his confusion, there was nothing. Where the scar had been just seconds ago was unblemished skin, except a scarlet smear.

There was no sign of the freaky looking scar that had previously been cut into his face. There was nothing. For a moment he thought he was losing his mind, and blinked twice. But it was no hallucination.

_Holy shit._

KJ saw his expression. “What?” His eyes widened. “Jug, what is it?”

“Your face.” He managed to choke out, and the boy startled him with a laugh. “Wow. Thanks. I feel so much better.”

“No.” Jughead swallowed hard. “Your face, KJ. It’s- I think it’s healed.”

“What?” The boy gingerly ran his hands down his face, trailing over his lips, before bounding over to the mirror.

“What the hell?!” KJ pawed at his face, his eyes widening. Jughead held his breath.

“Out of curiosity, how long have you been able to do that?”

“Do what?!” KJ hissed. “Magically heal my goddamn face? Since about five minutes ago!”

Before he consciously knew what he was doing, Jughead bent down and picked a shard of shattered glass.

“Hold out your hand.”

“What?” The boy staggered back with wide eyes. Before the understanding dawned in his expression. “Right, no, I get it. Cole and Lili are dead and stuck in an alternate dimension, so it would make sense why I can suddenly magically heal my fucking face.” He held out his hand, quirking a brow. “Do it.”

"They're not dead. Just...lost."

The boy pulled a face. "It feels like they're dead. It still hurts...looking at you and seeing Cole? It really fucking hurts."
He tried to ignore KJ's words, but his chest ached.

"Hey," the redhead grumbled. "Do it already."

Jughead nodded, before stabbing the shard into the boy’s hand. KJ whimpered a little, and blood blossomed quickly, veins of scarlet running down his wrist. Both of them stared down at the boy’s hand, but nothing happened.

The actor pulled a face. “Oh.” He shrugged. “Maybe it’s just my face?”

But Jughead was staring at the small cut that was very quickly knitting itself back together. KJ noticed, letting out a soft whine. “Are you kidding?” He hissed, glaring down at his hand.

“Cole and Lili are dead, and I’m a freak?”

“Not dead.” He corrected again. It was like talking to a brick wall. “They’ve just swapped places with Betty and I.”

“Oh, my mistake,” KJ rolled his eyes. “They’re not dead, they’re just trapped in a fictional television show.” He wafted his hand, which was now completely healed. “How is this even possible?”

Jughead tried to stay calm, but he really wasn’t expecting the actor to be able to do that, even after everything that had happened. Which begged the question; was it a side effect of whatever spell that had been cast over them?

There was a gentle knock at the door, and both boy's jumped. "Guys, are you finished?"

Yeah!” Jughead yelled back. “Coming!”

"We should get going. Maybe hold off on telling Betty that you're Wolverine. She's already freaked out enough as it is.”

KJ eventually nodded, and they quickly made their way out of the boy's bathroom. When Jughead pushed open the door, the sky had quickly turned black. The gas station was lit up with dim orange light. the store's owner was standing with Betty. When the girl caught sight of KJ, her blue eyes widened, but she didn't say anything, her cheeks paling. The boy’s face was still decorated with smears of scarlet, as if a toddler had been let loose with paint.

The man cleared his throat. "My offer still stands," he said, nodding at an ancient looking pickup sitting in the parking lot. Jughead felt his chest clench. It was almost identical to his fathers. He swallowed hard. Was it possible to get homesick? Even when his world wasn't supposed to be real. Everything, from his friends, his family- his home...it was all fictional. Everything had been written and directed. His life was a TV show and he still couldn't get his head around it.

The man coughed loudly. It was a smokers cough which pulled him out of temporary reverie.

"You kids are more than welcome to jump in the back. I have enough room."

"I was just telling Michael here that we're stranded," Betty spoke up softly, and the guy cleared his throat.

"That's right. I'm happy to save you kids a back breaking trek through the night." he chuckled. "Ya never know what's lurking out there."

He had no idea.
When Jughead opened his mouth to politely decline the offer, the guy folded his arms. "It's a twenty mile walk back into the city," he pulled a face. "That'll take you around fix or six hours at estimate. I can get you back into Vancouver in less than an hour." he glanced at KJ's face, before looking away quickly. "No questions."

Jughead considered it. The man was right- it would take them most of the night to walk back into the city, and it didn't help that a crazy cult were after them. Before Jughead could speak, KJ nodded. "Sure," he said politely. "Do you mind dropping us off at our apartment?"

Michael nodded. "Gladly." he made his way to the beaten up pickup and unlocked the door, jumping in the driver's seat. "You're gonna have to pull the rear seats back to squeeze in," he said. Jughead did just that, managing to squirm through the gap, ending up sitting between KJ and Betty. The seats weren't particularly comfortable; scratchy leather ripped and stained a variety of colours, smelling of a mixture of weed and alcohol. But at least it was safe.

Michael shoved his keys in the ignition and the pickup burst into life, the engine grumbling. Jughead leaned into the battered upholstery seats, letting out a slow breath. It didn't take long to get back on the road. Before he knew it they were flying down winding roads, passing fields and abandoned gas stations. Betty rested her head on his shoulder, her hair tickling his neck. KJ pressed his face against the window. Neither of them spoke, the two of them trapped in their own little world.

Everything was so...wrong. It should have been Archie sitting next to him. Like it had always been. But now it was the actor responsible for playing Archie. At first, KJ had been almost insufferable. Cole's irritating cast mate with a smoking habit, who would not stop smiling. But Jughead was getting progressively more comfortable being around the boy. Archie had grown up with him, and yet because this guy had his best friend's face, Jughead felt like he had known the Kiwi the same amount of time. He just hoped he could save the boy before he was switched too.

Jughead used the time to think. So much had happened, and he was barely keeping it together. Cole and Lili were dead, or according to Betty; "Not dead, but also kind of very dead." whatever that meant. Did that mean Riverdale was some kind of resting place for lost souls?

Surely Sabrina knew. He'd have to mention it to her when she next popped up out of nowhere.

None of it made sense. The cult that were after them were obsessed with getting their hands on him and his friends, and had managed to resurrect Betty Cooper through Lili. Camila was oblivious of what was happening and could get taken at any moment, and Sabrina's warning was still playing like a stuck record in his mind. If the cult managed to bring Archie and Veronica to this world, then it was game over. Looking at KJ, Jughead figured the boy was barely clinging onto his sanity. He'd lost two of his closest friends, nearly been killed, and now he was somehow able to heal himself. Jughead was surprised the boy hadn’t passed out yet.

Michael didn't spark conversation for a while, keeping his eyes on the road. It began to rain, soft drops sliding down the glass, and Jughead found himself mesmerised by the windscreen wipers. He thought about Lili. Was she finally at peace now she was with Cole, in his world? Was there a possibility of going home himself?

The idea of losing KJ too made his chest ache. After a while of watching the rain and trying not to fall asleep, Michael grunted, leaning forward in his seat. His wrinkly fingers tapped a steady rhythm on the peeling steering wheel. "I gotta admit I offered you kids a ride for a reason," he chuckled. "I had ulterior motives all along."

The man's words kick-started Jughead's mind into gear, and he sat up abruptly. Michael reached into the glove compartment just as a slash of pain rocked Jughead's skull, sending his head spinning. For
a singular moment it felt like he was under water, Betty and KJ's voices blurring into one confusing
whirr of white noise.

The pain continued, spiking the back of his skull, pounding across his forehead. First it felt like the
prick of a needle, then a knife cutting through skin, cartilage and bone. Finally, it was a saw, slicing
into his skull, baring no mercy. Jughead felt his head drop from the brunt of the pain, but the voices
of his friends faded out, another overlapping his ears. It sounded distant, faint, like an echo.

"You're crazy."

He recognised the voice automatically; "Do you not watch the show?" it was his own voice,
but...not. It took Jughead a few disorienting seconds to realise that the voice in his head was Cole. As
soon as it dawned on him, he wanted to pull away from it, suppress the voice as hard as he could.
Because Cole sounded terrified out of his mind. All at once he could feel the boy's terror, his
helplessness trapped into one memory. But the voice only got louder, accompanying a static screech
in his skull as if the boy himself was trying to push his way through. It felt like someone had jammed
a radio into his skull.

"Archie and Jughead are fictional characters," Cole growled, his voice ice cold. Who was he
talking to? Curiosity spiked his mind, and Jughead stopped resisting, instead letting himself succumb
to the vision. "Can you not understand fiction from reality?" there were moving shapes in front of
his eyes, blurring together like an old VCR on fast forward. But no matter how hard he tried,
Jughead couldn't grab a coherent picture.

"Look, Clarissa, just-" as quickly as it had come, the voice erupted into static, and the boys words
were no longer coherent. They died along with the pain, which dulled into a tolerating throbbing in
his temples. Before he knew what was happening, the frenzied motions in front of his eyes stopped,
the world swimming back into focus. Jughead realised he had his head between his legs, gasping for
breath. His eyes were squeezed shut, vomit burning the back of his throat.

"Jug?" Betty's worried tone sliced through his thoughts, and he managed to lift his head, blinking
rapidly.

Michael was driving again, and KJ and Betty were staring at him, their faces twisted with panic.

"Is he alright?" Michael glanced in the rear-view mirror. "I was scared I'd freaked out the boy," he
chuckled. "I was only grabbing my phone." he held up a battered looking flip phone. "I was 'bout to
ask you kids a favour, but I'll wait for your friend to get his breath back."

"I'm fine." Jughead managed to choke out. But there was a name stapled in his mind; Clarissa. That
must be who killed Cole. The words were on his tongue, ready to tell the others, but he swallowed
them quickly.

"Sorry," he rubbed his eyes. There were tears trailing down his cheeks, his heart pounding in his
ears. "I get motion sick and pass out sometimes." that wasn't exactly a lie. When he was a kid, his
father used to take him on long country road trips, and he'd end up puking in an old beer can.

Michael smiled kindly. "Just don't hurl on my seats," he laughed, keeping his eyes on the road.
When the man started whistling, Jughead sat back in his seat, wincing when another spike of pain
ignited his head. Betty stared at him, waiting for answers.

"What was that?" she whispered. KJ nodded. "What happened?" the Kiwi looked worried, his lips
twisted into a frown. Jughead wasn't sure what to answer with. If he told KJ he'd heard Cole in his
head, or at least one of the boy's memories, the boy would surely think he was insane. Though then
again, their lives weren't exactly mundane these days.

"Who's Clarissa?" he ended up asking. It came out like word vomit.

KJ furrowed his eyebrows in confusion. "Who?"

He shook his head. "Nobody. It doesn't matter." Jughead attempted a smile, but he knew it lied. Before either of them could start interrogating him, he turned his attention to Michael, who was fiddling with the dial of an old stereo built into the dashboard. He winced when the speakers hissed static. "What was the favour?" he asked casually, trying not to think about Cole's voice. What was that? Who the hell was Clarissa?

Michael chuckled. "I was hoping you'd ask," he said, grabbing his phone once again. With one hand he stabbed numbers into the keypad, hitting dial.

"My eldest daughter Ella is a fan of your show," he said, pressing the phone to his ear. "If you guys could just say hello, that would be swell. It'd make her damn day."

Before Jughead could think about making an excuse, a young girl's voice rushed through the phone's speakers, and his stomach twisted. "Dad, what is it? I'm doing homework."

"Oh are you now?" he chortled. "So does that mean you don't want to speak to some hitchhikers I've picked up?"

The girl laughed. "Are you okay, dad?"

"I'm swell, darlin. Anyway, I've bumped into those kids who are in that show you won't stop going on about. Oceandale or whatever it's called. They're here if you want to speak to them," he held out the phone, and Jughead winced when the girl squealed. "Seriously?!" she squeaked, static overlapping her voice. "The Riverdale cast?"

"That's right." Michael sounded proud. "You've got two minutes, I don't have much data left. They're looking dang tired, so go easy on them El."

"I can't do this," Betty said softly, sitting up. Her cheeks had paled, her eyes wide.

Jughead could feel the girl trembling. "Jug, I- I can't do this. I'm not her."

Jughead held his breath. He still wasn't comfortable with the whole fangirl thing either. "And I'm not him, but we've got to try, okay?"

Betty shook her head and he grabbed her hand gently, squeezing it. "Just say hi, that'll all you've got to say."

"Hello?" Ella sounded hesitant. Jughead opened his mouth to speak, but KJ was already leaning forward towards the phone.

"Hey there," he said politely. "Your dad tells us you like the show."

He was a natural, Jughead thought, the ghost of a smile gracing his lips. Ella sounded like she was having a panic attack.

"Yes!" she squeaked. "How are you guys?" she burst out. "I- I mean how's your day been going? Why did my dad pick you up?"
So many questions. KJ shrugged with an easy smile. "My day's been pretty good, thanks," he said. But his eyes darkened. Jughead already knew what the boy was going to do, and a sharp look wasn't going to stop him. "Except from finding out my friend's been dead all this time, then being forced to watch my other friend die, as well as a crazy cult coming after me." the boy's voice broke slightly, and there was a beat of silence, before Ella giggled nervously. "Is that a scene you're filming?" she asked hopefully, and KJ leaned back into his seat, closing his eyes. "Sure." he scoffed. "It's just a scene."

"Can I speak to Cole and Lili?" Ella whispered excitedly, and to Jughead's surprise and irritation, KJ let out a harsh laugh.

"They're not here." he said coldly, keeping his eyes squeezed shut. Jughead dug him in the ribs with his elbow, rolling his eyes. "He's playing around Ella," he spoke up shakily. "We are here." Jughead forced a laugh when the girl didn't reply for a moment, and her father sent the three of them a questioning look.

"Arch- I- I mean," Betty squeaked, squeezing Jughead's hands tighter. He tried not to wince when her fingernails dug harshly into his skin.

"I mean KJ...he's just tired." she managed to choke out. When Jughead turned to the girl, tears were welling in her eyes.

"Oh." Ella sounded uneasy. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to invade your privacy, I was just-"

"No, it's fine!" Jughead said quickly. "We're just tired, and- and a little cranky."

Ella giggled. "I hope you guys are okay," she said. "I'm gonna go now, I have to do my homework." she paused after a second. "KJ?"

"What?" the boy mumbled after a moment. He didn't open his eyes. Jughead nudged him again, this time- hard. The Kiwi sat up, blinking rapidly. "Can you at least try and act normal?" he hissed at the redhead, who scowled at him, before stretching his lips into a fake grin.

"Yeah, Ella?" Jughead couldn't help notice the pain in the boy's eyes, the agony he was trying so hard to hide. Ella didn't reply for a moment, and there was only static hissing. "Take care of yourself, okay?"

The anger evaporated in the boy's expression, and KJ sighed. "I will," he said softly. "I'm sorry I was an ass, I just have a lot of things on my mind."

"That's okay!" Ella said. "It's nice enough that you talked to me in the first place. My dad said you're tired, so I'll leave you to rest. I love you guys!" it sounded like the girl was going to cry, but Michael quickly ended the call, slipping the phone back into the glove box. After a dragged out minute, he sighed.

Jughead could see the first glimmers of city lights ahead of them. "You kids are in trouble aren't ya?"

Jughead ended up nodding. He was too tired to deny it anymore. He chewed the inside of his cheek. "There are people after us," he said after a moment. He decided to tell Michael a diluted version of the truth. Which meant no mentions of multiple universes, soul switching cast members, and magical teenage girls connecting the cast's lives to the end of the world. Michael nodded, "I figured that," he scratched the back of his head with one hand. "Who are these people, crazy fans?"

"You could say that." Jughead picked at a stray thread on his jeans. Ahead of them, the city was getting closer, becoming brighter and brighter, buildings bleeding into view. The conversation fizzled
out for the rest of the journey. KJ fell asleep, still pressed against the window, and Betty nodded off on his shoulder. Jughead felt comfortable with the two of them squashed together by his side. His girlfriend, and an unlikely friend with his best friend's face.

Michael tuned into a late night radio station that played old 90's songs, and Jughead found himself nodding along to the likes of Nirvana and Oasis.

Cole's memory still haunted the back of his mind. Who was Clarissa? Was she part of the cult? He tried to trigger the voice again, letting his eyes flicker shut. But there was no pain, and the sound wasn't drowned from his ears.

It didn't take long for them to arrive in the city. Vancouver was alive with night life, young girls in short dresses tripping over their heels, stumbling out of nightclubs. "It's the same every damn night," Michael grumbled as he struggled to weave through traffic. Someone beeped their horn and KJ shot awake, bleary eyes widening in fright. Betty didn't move, only snuggling into Jughead's shoulder. KJ groaned, sitting back in his seat. "What time is it?" he mumbled sleepily. "Where are we?"

"Just heading into the city now." Michael replied. "And it's nearly midnight."

Jughead realised this man was almost like a father figure. In this world, he was so fucking lost without his own.

The traffic let up quickly, and finally they were heading down familiar streets.

"Do you think these crazies know where you live?" Michael asked. Jughead's gut twisted when they passed the Warner Brother's gates. The studio looks eerie in the dark. "I don't know." Though the truth was obvious. Of course they knew where they lived.

"Right. Just to be safe I'm going to take you to the Vancouver Police. I know a few of 'em since I used to work in the area. They should look after you, and get this shit sorted out." At the man's words, KJ's eyes widened.

"What do we tell them?" he hissed to Jughead, who shrugged. "We tell them what we told him," he gestured to Michael. Maybe this was their proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Sure, the police weren't going to believe their story. But they could believe that they were being stalked.

Michael parked outside a small redbrick building, shutting off the gas. Jughead woke Betty up quickly, and the three of them jumped out of the back. Betty didn't let go of his hand, leaning into his side. Jughead hadn't even noticed the girl's fear of this world.

She clung onto him like a toddler. KJ ducked his head, keeping his gaze glued to the sidewalk, self consciously swiping at his bloody face with the cuff of his jacket as they walked through automatic doors. Jughead caught the aroma of rich perfume, the fan above blowing cool air into his face. He expected it to be like the sheriff's station back home; jail cells full of drunken idiots yelling threats. But instead the reception looks neat and tidy, a desk situated in the middle.

"Can I help you?" a tall woman with pale skin and dark hair tied into a ponytail greeted them. When Michel stepped forward, her eyes widened, glossy lips stretching into a smile.

"Mike!"

The man chuckled. "Sally, it's been a while," he grinned widely, before gesturing to Jughead, Betty and KJ. They were quite the rag-tag bunch. KJ looking like a nervous mess, still scrubbing at his face, and Betty, an explosion of unbrushed blonde locks hanging in wide blue eyes. Both of them were dishevelled, so their story might actually work.
Betty was still gripping onto his arm. Jughead caught a glimpse of his own reflection in the mirror and his heart sank. He only saw a pale boy with curly raven hair and turbulent green eyes staring back. Except he didn't see himself. There was only Cole.

"I've picked up three strays from my work, and they've got quite the story," Michael explained. Sally cocked her head curiously.

"Huh." she shook her head, chuckling. "Sorry, you just look really familiar," the woman cleared her throat. "Right, If you guys want to come with me, we can file a report." she nodded at Mike. "Are you coming?"

Michael nodded. "I might as well." he smiled brightly. Sally led them through reception, and it was then when Jughead saw jail cells. Though they were mostly empty, except from a drunken looking girl passed out on the floor, and a teenage boy with his head pressed between the bars. KJ kept to his side, ducking his head. "Are you sure this is a good idea? What about Camila? She's still out there, a walking target."

Betty hummed in agreement. "What do we even tell the police?"

Jughead wasn't sure how to answer any of them. Sally led them into a small questioning room with pale blue walls, a table and five chairs sitting around it. He slumped down in one, followed by Betty and KJ. Michael and Sally took the ones opposite.

"Okay then," Sally pulled out a notepad. "What's going on?" she eyed Jughead, her eyebrows furrowing. Jughead bit his lip. "I don't really know how to explain it," he started, glancing at KJ and Betty for help. Though both of them avoided his gaze.

"Take your time, sweetie." Sally smiled reassuringly, and Jughead nodded gratefully. "I guess everything started when-"

When he was struck by lightning.

That's what he wanted to say. Suddenly Jughead wanted to pour everything out. The door opened and a girl slipped through, gently shutting it behind her. Jughead frowned at her. There was something about her expression, the smile on her face. It turned his stomach, a familiar curl of panic twisting in his mind.

Sally leaned forward when a shriek of pain zigzagged across the back the back of his skull, and once again it felt like the sound had been sucked from the room. But this time Jughead didn't shy away from the static whisper in his ears, followed by the all too familiar voice.

"Cole?" Sally's voice sounded faded, mixing with Michael's. But he shook them off, letting his head hang, squeezing his eyes shut. This time there wasn't just the voice. Jughead closed his eyes, ignoring the throbbing in his temples. It came in a flash, like a migraine; a girl's face inches from his own, an evil glimmer in bright blue eyes, and twisted lips.

"Just know that you're fulfilling a purpose, okay? her voice echoed. "Juggie thanks you."

"Right. Good to know," Cole's voice, so weak- barely clinging onto consciousness. Jughead could feel the boy grappling to stay afloat. To stay awake. But his eyelids were flickering, an inferno burning him inside out. "Just leave KJ and the others alone, Clarissa, or Callie. Whatever."

Clarissa. The name enveloped him, a tumultuous wave crashing down on his mind. Jughead snapped his head up, blinking away the vision, reality seeping in once again. Sally and Michael were peering at him in confusion, KJ and Betty looking wary.
The girl. Jughead swallowed. The girl from the cafe who had served them drinks, who he had shouted at. She was the one in Cole's memory.

She had killed him.

And now she stood at the door with a triumphant grin on her face.

Jughead jumped up quickly, grabbing Betty. "It's her!" he choked out, pointing at the girl.

"She- she- she's the one who..." he trailed off, the words he wanted to say were glued to his throat.

KJ seemed to have the same idea. He followed suit, grabbing his hand. "That's her? The one who-"

"Yes!"

"But she's the coffee shop girl!"

Sally and Michael stood up. "Cole, sweetie, there's nothing to be afraid of-"

Sally dropped to the ground before she could finish, and it was only then did Jughead realise that Clarissa/Callie had pulled out a gun.

"Alright, lets not get hasty," Michael let out a strangled breath, throwing up his arms in surrender. But the girl just smiled and cocked her head. "Out of the way," she murmured. There was a loud bang that rattled in his skull, followed by Betty's scream, and Michael was on the ground, a bullet wound in his head. Jughead moved to help him, tears burning his eyes, his head spinning. But there was already blood pooling on the floor.

Ella. All he could think about was the man's daughter. The fangirl who told them to be safe, but not her own father. Callie/Clarissa stuck the barrel of the revolver into his forehead, and he felt a sickening rush of Deja vu. More people stormed the room- ordinary people. They weren't brandishing cloaks like earlier, but Jughead was still equally terrified. KJ let out a hiss of breath, his eyes on a guy who strode in with a smile on his face. "Jonah?"

"You know him?" Jughead asked softly. But KJ's eyes were widening almost cartoon like, his gaze stuck to the stream of people flooding the small room. "Yeah," his voice was a whimper. "Jonah works on set. Along with most of these assholes." he gritted his teeth. "No wonder Cole and Lili, and I were so easy to get to. These bastards have people on the inside." He laughed harshly, his gaze stuck to his supposed friends. Jughead shivered. KJ was surrounded, and Archie was suddenly inevitable. "Humour me," he spat at the lot of them. "Why the fuck are you here, huh? Why would you do that to Cole and Lili?"

Jonah smirked. "Why put up with the fake versions when we can have the real thing?" his eyes glittered. "Nothing personal, dude. But you're not Archie."

KJ scoffed. "Have you only just figured out how acting works, Jonah? Of course I'm not Archie."

"No, you're not." the man's eyes darkened. "You're his shell."

"I'm his actor." the redhead gritted out. "Besides, have you ever thought of it like this? If you do switch us, don't you think Archie himself will be pissed? Do you really think he'll just be happy in this world, gallivanting around in my body?" KJ jerked his head at Jughead. "Ask Jughead! He just wants to go home!" he said, his expression ceasing with desperation. "Right, Jug?"

He managed a nod. But from the looks on the cult's faces, KJ was fighting a losing battle.
"Archie's got a brain," Callie giggled. "Now that's something I didn't see coming."

"You killed them," Jughead said coldly. "Or switched them. Whatever."

The girl's smile terrified him. "Jug, I thought you'd be happy I brought you here!"

"You thought wrong!" He spat, trying to move forwards, trying to figure out a way to get the upper hand. But the crazy girl had an equally crazy army.

"Get back." she snarled.

Jughead complied, swallowing the scream in his throat. He dragged Betty with him, and Clarissa grinned at the two of them.

"Finally!" she squeaked, before her gaze flittered to KJ.

Clarissa trained the gun on the three of them, her index swiftly moving to the trigger.

Without a word she pulled out a phone and pressed it to her ear. "I've got him!" she gushed excitedly, her gaze on KJ, who was frozen. The boy curled his lip. "What did you do to my friends?"

Callie giggled. "I sent them away," She said, sighing happily. "You’ll be joining them soon."

Before KJ could reply, or Jughead guessed- start yelling- she held up a hand to shut him up. "I’m on the phone, honey." Her eyes narrowed as she took in whatever was being said on the other end of the line. "Yeah, he’s in good shape!" she said brightly, eyeing KJ. "He's with Betty and Jughead. Do you have the other one?"

Jughead felt his stomach twist.

Camila. He was hoping she'd stayed out of it.

"Great!" the girl squeaked to whoever was on the other end, and his heart sank. "Let me do this one, he was mine to begin with after all." Clarissa slipped her phone back into her pocket, along with the gun, and pulled out a needle. KJ stayed frozen, his brown eyes wild as the girl slowly made her way over to him. Jughead couldn't move. He tightened his grip on Betty's arm. Clarissa kept the gun trained on Betty and Jughead. "If you two try anything, I'll shoot you." she giggled. "Not fatally of course, but it will hurt a lot."

Chapter End Notes

Comment for more! I love writing this so much! :D

End Notes

i ship sabrina/jug
ill keep adding parts every day or so, ciao! if you liked, let me know! i don't bite ;)

or do i tho

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!