The Brahmses

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Summary

Alternate ending/continuation of the movie.

Greta's conviction that she was meant to be at the Heelshire residence compels her to stay with Brahms after his vicious attacks on Cole and Malcolm. Greta quickly discovers that there is much more to Brahms and their current situation then she had ever imagined.

Notes

It's been several years since I have written any fan fiction so bare with me while I shake off the rust. Comments and criticism are more than welcome. I would love to hear what you all have to say. I'll do my best to update regularly. As of right now I've already written four chapters in hopes of staying ahead in the writing of the story. Enjoy!
Greta had to think quickly. Brahms had already bashed Cole's head to the point that death was certain. Greta was sure she had seen a chunk of his brain among the blood and bone fragments that had hit the floor. Greta realized that Cole was beyond help as soon as a large hand reached for the shattered cheek of the porcelain doll. In one swift movement, his throat had been slashed.

Naturally, Brahms had chased them through the house as Malcolm and Greta tried to escape. Greta watched helplessly as Brahms beat Malcolm with such ferocity that she thought he would meet the same fate as Cole. She knew she had to act now while there was still a slim chance that she could spare Malcolm's life.

"Brahms! You stop it this instant!" Greta snapped without thinking.

At the sound of her firm and unwavering voice, Brahms jumped and his head snapped in her direction, as if he had been awakened from some kind of a trance. Greta climbed out of the tunnel she had tried to use to make her escape. She knew she had to maintain control of the situation. She saw Malcolm's chest rise and fall, indicating that he was still alive.

"Let's go." Greta ordered, taking Brahms by the hand and leading him upstairs. She had to keep talking, to distract him from hurting Malcolm any further.

"Now I'd just like to know what you have to say for yourself. You had promised me that you would be good and now here you are, attacking the delivery man." She added with a forced harshness that matched the tone of a mother scolding her child.

Once they reached the kitchen, she ordered the large man to sit down at the table. Brahms sat in silence and hung his head, clearly ashamed of himself. If the circumstances had not been so serious, Greta would have laughed out loud at the sight. There he was, a man who was well over six feet tall, being scolded by a woman that was significantly smaller and weaker that he was. His body language matched that of a little boy that had been caught stealing sweets from the cookie jar before dinner. The pitiful sight of Brahms, who now resembled a kicked puppy, softened Greta's tone.

"We don't hurt people, Brahms." She began, deciding that some warm milk might help keep him calm. She had to calm him down so he wouldn't attack again. Both remained silent as she busied herself with preparing the soothing beverage.

"I know I had asked you to help me, but I certainly did not mean for you to attack anyone like that." Greta added as she set the glass down in front of Brahms. Still there was no response from him, nor did he even acknowledge the milk sitting in front of him.

"Don't you want your milk? It'll help you feel better." Greta asked after more silence.

Suddenly, a small and child-like voice spoke.

"Greta? It wasn't...I didn't hurt anyone..." He trailed off, his shame and confusion keeping him from explaining further.

"What do you mean, you didn't do it? I saw you." She replied, confusion clouding her mind as she struggled to understand. Tears were forming in his eyes now.
"No, it wasn't me. You must understand that it wasn't me. One of the others hurt Malcolm and that man." He choked out, tears falling freely from his eyes. Greta could hear the childish sniffles behind the mask that Brahms still had covering his face.

"What do you mean, Brahms?" Greta asked as she crouched down next to his chair. At this point, his sobs prevented the man from speaking any further.

"It's ok. Drink some milk." She cooed, trying to soothe Brahms so he wouldn't get out of control again. Brahms lifted his mask just high enough to drink from the straw.

While his mask was lifted Greta tried to get a look at his face. All she could see was a dark beard showing from the very small area of his face that had been revealed. After taking a few gulps, Brahms quickly put the mask back on.

Greta really couldn't make heads or tails of what he was trying to say to her, but she had a nagging feeling that it had something to do with the truth. When she began scolding Brahms only fifteen minutes earlier, it was as if a switch had been flipped and Brahms became an altogether different person. Despite the fact that he clearly wasn't, in the physical sense, Brahms was now acting like a normal little boy rather than a murderous lunatic. It was becoming more and more obvious to Greta that there was much more going on with Brahms than she could possibly imagine.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that's the first part of chapter one. Let me know what you think so far. I may go ahead and post the next part this afternoon, depending on if I have a little extra time to do so. :-)

"Do you suppose Malcolm will be alright? We really don't hate him, you know. He always brings us one of the nice selection boxes for Christmas. One of the others only hurt him because he thinks Malcolm wants to take you away from us. But I know that you won't leave us, will you Greta?" Brahms' child-like voice chattered away.

"Of course not, Brahmsie. But we really do need to figure out what we are going to do now." Greta replied, forgetting momentarily that she was dealing with a twenty-eight year old psychopath. It felt as though she was with the same ghost of a little boy that she had spent all of these past weeks with. The only difference at the moment was that Brahms answered her when she spoke to him.

"Now, you wait right here." She ordered and tapped her finger on the tabletop, indicating that he was not to get up from his current spot. "I need to go help Malcolm. You be a good boy for me while I'm downstairs."

"Yes, Greta. I'll wait here for you." He replied with a sniff.

Greta looked Brahms over, unsure as to whether or not she could really trust him. For now, he didn't seem at all dangerous.

"Finish your milk while you're waiting " Greta said after a moment, and gave his hair a quick, affectionate stroke as she turned to leave the kitchen.

"This is crazy. I must have already lost my mind." Greta thought to herself as she made her way down the staircase and into the basement. Rushing to Malcolm's side, she crouched down next to him on the floor. He was still breathing, but had not yet regained consciousness.

"Malcolm? Can you hear me?" Greta asked frantically, giving his arm a small shake in an attempt to wake him up.

Then, Malcolm groaned, "What the hell happened?" As he blinked his eyes open and looked at her.

"Um...what can you remember?" She asked cautiously. Greta knew she was going to have to tread softly with the information she gave Malcolm if she was going to be able to protect Brahms.

"I just remember running inside because I heard Cole yelling at you. It gets kind of fuzzy after that. I saw Brahms go after Cole, and I think I remember falling down the stairs when I was trying to get you out of the house."

"Yes, that's how it happened. Brahms came out after Cole had smashed the doll. I think he was trying to protect us." She replied, hoping that he wouldn't question her distortion of the truth. She placed his arm over her shoulders and helped him stand up.

"Everything is okay right now. But listen...about Brahms. I don't think we can call the police. He seems to think that he's an eight year old boy. They would just lock him up in one of those terrible asylums or something. I really don't think he's dangerous. It seems wrong to let him end up that way.." Greta explained as they made their way back up the staircase and out to Malcolm's car. She was hoping that his lack of memory and trust in her would help her win his cooperation. 

"So what you're saying is that he's our very own Boo Radley, and we shouldn't "kill the mockingbird", so to speak?" Malcolm asked, frowning in a way that looked like he was struggling to think clearly.
"More or less." Greta replied as she helped Malcolm into the passenger seat so she could take him to the hospital.

After a few more moments, Malcolm spoke. "I think you're right. It seems as though Brahms was just trying to protect you and the doll. His parents must have went through an awful lot of trouble to hide his mental condition all these years. If he was really dangerous they probably would have had him committed years ago."

Greta nodded, as though this whole thing was Malcolm's idea instead of her own.

"I need to run inside and put Brahms back in bed. I'm sure he will be alright by himself while I drive you to the hospital." She explained before shutting the car door and heading back into the house.

The reality was, Greta wasn't sure of anything, especially whether or not she was doing the right thing. The only thing she was certain of was that she was there for a reason and she had to take care of Brahms, no matter what the cost of her actions may be.
A glimpse into the mind of Brahms

Chapter Notes

This chapter is one specific scene so there isn't a whole lot of action going on. However, I think you guys will enjoy reading from Brahms' point of view. Comments and criticism are always welcome. Enjoy!

"No, Greta promised she would come back. You're lying." A small, childish voice echoed in Brahms' head.

"Of course she isn't coming back. Mother and father left us forever. If even they didn't stay then what makes you think Greta would?" A second, much deeper voice echoed right back.

"Greta wants to take care of us. You watch and see. She's going to come back because she promised she would. She only took Malcolm to the hospital and then she's coming home. It's your fault she had to go out in the first place." The child's voice argued.

The argument had started right after Greta left the house to drive Malcolm to the hospital. She had tucked Brahms back into bed a couple of hours ago, promising that she would return as soon as Malcolm was alright without her.

Poor Brahms was mentally split in half. While "little Brahms" insisted that they were not being abandoned and everything would be alright, a much older voice in Brahms' head had more than his fair share of doubts.

"You let her leave and now she's gone forever. Now, I'm not going to just lie here and wait for the smell of that dead jackass to stink up the whole house. I guess I'm stuck with the dirty work, like always." The deeper voice snapped, his agitation with the little one starting to boil over. And with that, Brahms got out of bed to bury Cole out in the garden. For now, the little one had fallen silent.

As Brahms shoveled the dirt into a neat pile, his thoughts began to wander beyond the task at hand.

Greta would have to be insane to return after everything that had happened that night. Surely she realized that she could not control "which Brahms" would be present at any given time any better than he could.

She had overcome her fear of the little one with ease, but she had yet to formally meet anyone else. He was certain that she would not return. Sure, he wanted her to come back for good. She was his Greta too, after all. But the older Brahms had made himself known to her quite suddenly, and he knew his first impression wasn't the best that it could be.

Carefully, Brahms wrapped Cole's lifeless body in a bed sheet and lifted it over his shoulder.

Truth be told, Brahms was not even the least bit sorry for what he had done. Cole was going to hurt Greta, as he had apparently done many times before.

Even worse, he had smashed the doll that meant so much to little Brahms. It became more and more difficult for him as their body continued to grow over the years. The innocent eight year old had felt so out of place in a man's body. The physical representation of the child's "own" body that he had
treasured so dearly had been destroyed. Sure, they still had the mask, but Brahms knew it really just wasn't the same.

No, he wasn't sorry for taking Cole's life. He did his job as the protector, just as he had always done. If that made him a murderous lunatic, then so be it. He took no issue with being the one that had to do whatever needed to be done so they would be alright.

Brahms wasn't exactly sorry that he had hurt Malcolm either. If anything he felt a very minute pang of regret for doing so because it had clearly scared Greta more than was necessary. But the man had been trying to convince her to leave, and was in the process of helping her escape. In his violent moment, Brahms had become even more desperate to keep her. His temper had simply gotten the best of him and he attacked Malcolm as well.

While he had no hope for Greta's return, a sense of longing engulfed Brahms as the headlights of a car appeared in the distance. Even through the trees, he could see the lights travel closer and closer down the road.

Brahms waited, holding his breath as the vehicle neared the turn to the driveway. His heart sank down into the pit of his stomach when the car never turned, but continued straight down the road instead. Angrily, Brahms used the shovel to pack down the now replaced dirt into the ground.

"I told the little pest she wasn't going to come back." He muttered in frustration before spitting on Cole's grave and returning to the house.
Greta's Return

Chapter Notes

You may recognize some characteristics of Brahms in this chapter that are very similar to the Brahms in Trubie74’s story entitled Hell Bound. Her version of Brahms is clearly uninhibited when it comes to man-handling Greta, and it inspired his actions to an extent in my work. A little manly/dominant behavior is always fun. Trubie74’s stories are great so be sure to check out her work!

It was nearly four o'clock in the morning as Greta silently crept back into the house. All was still, and not a single sound was to be heard.

Assuming that Brahms was still in bed, Greta removed her shoes and tiptoed into the parlor. Confusion took over as she looked around for Cole's body, but there was no sign of him. Suddenly, the air became thick with tension as a dark shadow crept up right behind Greta.

"He's gone." A deep, rough voice murmured in her ear, just above a whisper.

Paralyzed with fear, Greta didn't dare move as Brahms leaned in and took in the scent of her dark brown hair. As the cold porcelain of the mask tickled the spot just behind her ear, a shiver shot down her spine.

The mixture of fear and curiosity settling into Greta's stomach was intoxicating. As scared as she was, she couldn't bring herself to protest or try to pull away as Brahms wrapped his strong arms around her waist from behind.

Slowly, he began to walk backwards, his firm embrace forcing Greta to move with him. She felt her inhibitions melt away as she trembled in his arms, and Greta found herself willing to be controlled in this manner.

"That's my good girl. Follow the leader." Brahms whispered in her ear, clearly pleased with his ability to manipulate her so effortlessly.

Backwards they went, out of the parlor and across the hall. Still just as slowly as he had moved before, Brahms turned the pair so they were facing the closed door to Mr. Heelshire's private study.

"Open the door." Brahms ordered as he nuzzled the side of her neck. Unaware of anything aside from his touch, Greta obeyed and pushed the door open.

Greta had no idea exactly what it was they were doing, and she found that she didn't particularly care at the moment. All she knew was that a maniac had his arms wrapped around her, guiding her through some twisted game of "follow the leader", as he had put it.

The edge of danger in his voice was more than prominent, yet Greta found herself enjoying every second of his presence. Her fear never dissipated. Truth be told, Greta had never been so terrified in all her life. At the same time, she felt a sick sense of pleasure stemming from her fear of "this" Brahms, who obviously differed so greatly from the sweet and innocent Brahms she had already grown accustomed to.
As Brahms moved the pair toward his father's desk, Greta looked down at his large hands. Tenderly, she traced her fingers across the scars that were scattered across his flesh. She could only assume they were the physical remains of the fire that had happened all those years ago.

They came to a halt in front of the desk, and Brahms shifted his weight in discomfort. Her gesture had been innocent enough, and she meant no harm by it. Still, Brahms jerked his hands away from her. Her rather bold act of participation had ended his little game, flipping one of his mental switches.

Greta turned to face Brahms, but with the hiss of a panel door on the wall he had disappeared.

Confused, Greta mentally shook herself and looked around the room. Surely Brahms had brought her there for a reason. Suddenly, she realized that at some point he had slipped a small key into her hand. The bronze matched the old, metal hardware on the desk. Carefully, she inserted the key into the lock on the drawer. Quietly, she opened it with ease and began to peruse its contents. Surely she would realize what he wanted to show her when she saw it.

Old photographs and letters were scattered throughout the drawer. Greta shuffled through the family photos with only mild interest. As she carefully placed the photos in a neat pile in the drawer, her hand brushed against a creamy white envelope. Pulling it out into the light, she found that her name was neatly written on it.

Greta pulled out the chair and sat down at the oversized desk before breaking the red, waxy seal on the back. With a deep breath Greta pulled the pages from the envelope and unfolded the cigar scented stationary.

"Greta,

If you are reading this letter, you must have come to realize that my wife and I will not be returning. I am sure you have also discovered that we were not entirely honest with you in regard to Brahms. The knowledge that we have failed our son for so many years has become unbearable. We are terribly sorry to have to pass our burden on to you. I do not know what circumstances have lead you to this letter, but I will do my best to give you at least some of the answers you must be searching for.

I have come to believe that Brahms has what is now called dissociative identity disorder. Physically, there is only one Brahms. However, he seems to have multiple personalities that take turns "driving the car", so to speak. I cannot say for sure how many personalities there are. However, I expect that you will find it is easiest to treat each as an entirely different person and respond accordingly to each of them.

Mrs. Heelshire has always discouraged the acknowledgement of anyone, aside from "little Brahms", who I am sure you will become quite familiar with. My wife has always feared what would happen if we could not control Brahms easily, and she insisted that he suppress all other personalities, even his true self.

I strongly feel that with us taking our leave forever, Brahms will be free to learn to cope with his condition and make real progress. He must be allowed to explore the different internal parts of himself so he can learn to control his own body and mind..."

"Shit." Greta muttered as she poured herself a glass of brandy from the crystal decanter on the corner of the desk.

So, Brahms did have a personality disorder. Greta had already figured that much out for herself. There were more pages to read, but she simply couldn't bring herself to finish at the moment. If his parents hadn't been able to help Brahms, then she wasn't so sure that she needed any of the
"answers" that Mr. Heelshire had tried to provide in the letter.

Greta nonchalantly dropped the papers back into the drawer, not even bothering to place them back in the envelope. She snapped the drawer shut and took another gulp of brandy.

How dare they abandon their son? How could they just dump him on her without telling her the truth like that? Greta really had no interest in the rest of the contents of that letter.

It seemed to her that her instincts had served her well so far, so it only made sense to just follow her gut feeling and take things one day at a time with Brahms.

"Damn them." She mumbled under her breath. Exhausted, Greta rested her head on the desk and fell asleep.
The Next Morning

Even without an alarm, Greta woke promptly at 6:55 that morning. Her body ached from sleeping hunched over the desk. Greta stood and groaned as she tried to stretched out her stiff and sore body.

Assuming that her best bet was to follow the schedule for the time being, Greta made her way into the kitchen to start the coffee maker. So far, she had seen no sign of Brahms. Greta took a deep breath and headed upstairs to the doll's bedroom, unsure that anyone would even be there for her to wake.

"Brahms? It's time to wake up." She called as she turned the corner into the room. No one was there. Then, Greta heard the slightest movement from somewhere behind the wall. It must have been Brahms. There was no doll to dress, and she realized that following their normal routine to the letter was going to prove difficult. She supposed she would just have to do her best.

"Get yourself dressed and meet me downstairs in the kitchen for breakfast." She called after a moment of dead silence. More movement echoed behind the wall. It wasn't clear "which Brahms" was present, but he could at least hear her from his hiding place and it sounded as though he was obeying her.

After quickly washing up and changing clothes, Greta went back into the kitchen and poured herself a cup of coffee. As she began making breakfast, she did her best to do so as quietly as possible so she could hear what was going on behind the walls. After a few minutes she did hear a small shuffling sound to her left. Inspecting the area the noise had come from carefully, Greta spotted a false panel on the wall. Tiny holes had been drilled in the middle, probably for the purpose of hearing what was going on in the kitchen from his hiding spot.

Greta fixed a plate of scrambled eggs, ham, and pancakes, and placed the hearty meal on the table with a glass of juice. Slowly, Greta made her way over to the panel on the wall and lightly knocked on it with her knuckles.

"Hey in there." She cooed softly, hoping to ease Brahms into joining her for breakfast. "Don't you want to come out of there? I'll bet you're hungry."

There was no answer, but Greta knew that Brahms was there. If she listened carefully, she could hear him breathing.

"Okay, Brahms." She said quietly after a few moments before walking out of the kitchen so he could eat his breakfast. He obviously didn't want to be seen.

This really was starting to become too much. It had been so easy when Greta thought she was just taking care of a doll to appease a little boy's ghost. The situation had become entirely different overnight. In less than twelve hours she had "met" two distinctively different Brahmses, and it seemed as though a third, painfully shy, Brahms was making an appearance this morning. Greta really had her work cut out for her.

Greta sat down at the dining room table, just on the other side of the door that lead into the kitchen. She listened intently as she sipped her coffee, hoping she would at least be able to hear what Brahms was up to. After a few minutes she heard the sound of silverware against the plate she had left out on the kitchen table for him.

"Good. At least he's eating." She thought to herself. She really had no idea how she would go about
taking care of him. It seemed pointless to follow the schedule of an eight year old boy. Surely, he had completed the same lessons over and over again in the past twenty years. The academic aspect of his lessons had probably stopped being of importance years ago, and Greta was certain that the poor man must be bored out of his mind.

Perhaps she could figure out a way to modify his lessons in a way that would be more suitable for "everyone". Brahms had been treated like a child for so long that it was apparent that Mrs. Heelshire made a point to shun Brahms as a whole person, forcing his world to revolve entirely around his eight year old self.

Getting Brahms to interact with her freely was going to be a daunting task on its own. There was no telling how many personalities he had, and there was no way to know how each one would act around her. She would have to pay close attention to Brahms and learn how to adjust quickly in order to keep up with him.

Suddenly, the phone rang and pulled Greta away from her thoughts. She stood and went straight into the entryway to answer the phone, certain that it was Malcolm calling. "Hello?"

"Hello Greta." Malcolm's deep, gentle voice answered.

"Malcolm! How are you feeling?" She asked, glad that he had been well enough to get in touch with her.

"I'm okay. The doctor said I have a mild concussion, but nothing too serious. I just got home from the hospital. Listen...I'm not so sure about this whole thing with Brahms. I don't think it's safe for you to be alone in the house with him." He explained, concern permeating through his voice.

"That's ridiculous, Malcolm. Don't you think he would have done something by now if he wanted to hurt me? I've been alone in the house with him this whole time without even knowing it. He's had more opportunities than I'd like to think about." Greta snapped as her anger flared.

"Well, I suppose you're right. I can't help but worry about you though. I don't want anything bad happening to you." Malcolm explained, obviously trying to calm her temper.

"As you may recall, he was obviously provoked last night. He didn't necessarily handle the situation the right way but he certainly wasn't wrong for feeling the need to step in. Are you suggesting that you wouldn't protect yourself and your home if the situation called for it? Of course you would, just like anyone else. Now, if you don't mind, I have other things to do besides listening to you fret over me like you're my mother." She ranted, and slammed the phone back down onto the receiver.

Greta knew she didn't need to be so angry, but she couldn't help herself. She was perfectly aware of the potential danger she was putting herself in. But what would happen to Brahms if she didn't stay? Tears were rolling freely down her cheeks at this point. Sensing that she was being watched, Greta quickly wiped her face with a sniff.

"I know you were listening, Brahms. I'm trusting you, and I need you to learn to trust me too. I can't do this if I'm just going to be talking to a wall all the time. I'm here to take care of you but I can't do that if you won't let me." She yelled, finally letting her frustration over the situation out into the open. Still, there was no response from Brahms.

"Fine. Be that way and make things more difficult than they already are. I'm going outside to empty the traps." She snapped before grabbing her coat and slipping it on. With a huff, she marched outside, slamming the door behind her.
A Little Cooperation

When Greta came back inside, the sound of scales being played echoed through the hallway. Curious, she quietly made her way to the music room. When she peeked through the doorway, Greta saw Brahms sitting at the piano. Realizing that he had left enough room on the bench for her to join him, she silently walked over and sat down.

Other than his muscles becoming tense, Brahms did not acknowledge Greta. His stiffened demeanor showed that he was quite uncomfortable with the situation, and Greta thought it best to let him continue his warm up exercises without interruption. Once he was able to complete the scales without missing any notes, Brahms stopped playing and waited silently for further instruction.

"Very good." Greta said softly, hoping that she wouldn't scare him off by speaking.

Brahms hadn't actually played the instrument in years, but was pleased with his ability to pick up where he had left off as a child. He watched intently out the corner of his eye as Greta flipped through the sheet music that had sat forgotten on top of the piano for the longest time. Greta had no idea how well Brahms could play, so she thought it best to start with something fairly simple.

"This is one of my favorites," Greta started as she placed the notes to Canon D in front of Brahms, "would you play it for me?"

His only response was a quick nod as he put his hands in place on the instrument. Brahms played the song beautifully, and Greta found herself enchanted as she watched his long fingers dance gracefully across the black and white keys. His anxiety seemed to dissipate more and more as the notes continued to echo throughout the room.

Brahms paused for a moment once the song was finished, and hesitantly reached for the sheets of music. He seemed to think he might get scolded for doing so.

"Play whatever you'd like, Brahms. You're doing very well." Greta assured him, wanting him to continue to get more comfortable with being around her. She watched silently as he played song after song with ease. The only song that he had played a second time was Canon D.

"I think all of these songs are too easy for you. Maybe we could get some new music for you to play. What do you think about that?" Greta asked, hoping Brahms would speak to her.

Brahms shifted in his seat, showing his discomfort. Suddenly, he lifted his head and looked around, confusion taking over his demeanor.

"What is it, Brahms?" Greta asked and gently placed her hand on his shoulder. She suspected that another personality had replaced the "shy musician".

"Oh...hello Greta. What are we doing?" The child's voice responded.

Greta sighed with relief, glad to be in the company of someone she was already familiar with. She was unsure of how to delicately explain the shift that had just taken place.

"Er...someone else had been playing the piano. You joined me after I asked him if he would like some new books for music lessons." She answered, deciding to keep her response simple, yet truthful. Little Brahms didn't seem at all phased by her explanation.

"Yes, I know who that was. He doesn't like to speak to anyone. He's very timid, you see. He always
hid from Mummy and Daddy." Little Brahms started, thinking it best to help Greta learn as much as she could about the others.

"I think he would very much like to have the new books." He added after pausing to think for a moment.

"Thank you, Brahms. I'll look into it. I was wondering if you could help me with something while you're here."

As soon as she asked, Little Brahms lit up. "Oh, yes! Anything you'd like, Greta." The cherubic voice chirped, clearly eager to please his nanny.

"I'm not really sure how to ask you this, Brahmsy. Er...could you explain to me how this whole thing with the other Brahmses works? I'm sure you can understand how confusing it is to be with one person, and then a moment later it's someone completely different. I think it'll be easier for all of us if you help me understand." Greta explained as she took his hand and lead him into the study room.

"Yes, it's quite confusing for us too sometimes. That's why we follow a schedule. It can be rather scary to wake up and not know what's going on. I'll do my best to tell you everything that I know." Little Brahms started, heading straight for the desk to retrieve blank paper and a pencil.

"Right, so this is our body." The boy explained as he drew an outline of a human figure. "Most people only have one person living inside of them. The first, original person is sort of like the host. He needs us to help him deal with different situations, and that's where the rest of us come from." Little Brahms continued, labeling the center of the chest on his drawing with the word "HOST" in large print. Here, he paused, glancing at Greta to make sure she was following him so far.

"I see. Please continue." She replied, eager to hear the rest.

"We started off with just the first Brahms, but something bad happened to him shortly after he began going to school. He never told me what it was, but that situation is where I came from." And with that, he labeled "Little Brahms" underneath the host.

"We were both eight years old when that happened, but I never grew up like he did. I'm not sure why."

"So, you appeared because he had a job for you to do that he couldn't handle by himself?" Greta asked, thinking now was the best time to interrupt.

Little Brahms nodded. "The first Brahms was quite scared of everyone, especially Mummy. That's who was playing the piano. When he's too shy or frightened, especially with other people, I take care of us. That is, unless other people are being too mean or trying to hurt us. When that happens someone else takes over."

"Ok, so I understand why you're here, and I think I understand where you all come from. Who else can you tell me about? Who was here last night?" Greta asked, hoping to get as much information as she could.

Brahms nodded before adding a third label, "Protector", underneath himself on the chart.

"We needed someone stronger to protect us. He came around when the other boys at school started beating us. He can be quite scary, and he does get very angry sometimes. Sometimes there are others, and I don't really know them, but it's the three of us that are always here." He finished before putting the pencil back down.
"Will anyone else try to hurt me?" Greta asked, thinking it best to have that point clarified as soon as possible.

Little Brahms paused, deep in thought. "I don't suspect so. Not intentionally, anyway. Something could happen if you were trying to hurt us first, I suppose. But you are so very kind to us...no one has ever tried to understand before. We all want you to stay with us so I don't think anyone would want to do something to make you leave."

"Thank you, Brahmsy. You've been extremely helpful." Greta said after a few minutes, thinking things over, before giving his arm an affectionate rub.

Even though he was still wearing the mask, Greta could tell he had a huge smile on his face. The glimmer in his eyes was a dead giveaway. Curious, Greta decided to go ahead and try to get another answer from Little Brahms.

"Do you ever take this mask off?" She asked, stroking the porcelain cheek with the back of her fingers.

"I don't like to take it off. Our body is grown up, and doesn't look anything like me. I always liked to pretend that the doll was my real body, but it's gone now." He replied as the smile faded from his eyes.

Greta took note of his sadness and made a mental note to try to fix the doll later. "What about the others?" She asked, still unsure if the mask was a means for the others to hide.

"I'm not really sure...I don't think the protector cares very much if he has it on or not. But I think the host does like to keep our face covered. We have some scars from a very long time ago." Little Brahms answered as he adjusted the mask slightly.

"I don't suppose you'd let me see, would you?" Greta asked, hoping she wasn't overstepping any boundaries.

"I don't think I should...it might upset the others and I don't want to get into trouble." he replied before beginning to fidget. Like any other child, Little Brahms clearly didn't care to sit still for very long.

"That's fair. Maybe one of the others will show me one day." Greta said with an understanding nod. "Let's start your lessons for the day." She suggested, picking up the book they had started reading the day before.
Update

Hello my lovely readers!

I must apologize for how long it's been since I've even logged in to AOOO. Life has been pretty crazy for several months, but things are finally slowing down enough for me to resume writing and posting. I cannot say that I'll be able to update extremely regularly (once or twice a week, for example), but there shouldn't be anymore long absences on my part for quite a while. Keep your eyes peeled for a new chapter sometime within the next week!
"Remember to let her into your heart, then you can start to make it better"

They had made it through the rest of the week without any major issues. Brahms seemed to be making a point to let Greta know fairly quickly when a psychological shift took place within him, which did make things easier for her to keep up with. Each personality was distinct enough that Greta was confident she would be able to adjust their activities accordingly throughout the day.

After tucking "little" Brahms into bed, Greta decided a hot shower would serve her well before going to sleep herself. Steam had already started to fill the bathroom by the time she undressed and stepped into the shower.

As Greta lathered her hair with the lilac scented shampoo, her thoughts began to wander. Her world had been turned upside down in the last few days, and she kept going back and forth about whether or not she could handle the whole situation.

She wanted to stay and help Brahms, and at times she felt that she was strong enough to do so. At other times, however, she wasn't so sure that she could pull this off. There was no telling if she'd be able to regain control of the situation if Brahms were to be set off again. Sure, she was used to walking on eggshells to keep Cole from flipping out, but she also knew all too well how severe the consequences were when something beyond her control pushed him over the edge. Previous experience was telling Greta that Brahms probably wouldn't be any different when he got to his breaking point, after seeing what Brahms had done to Cole and Malcolm in his rage only a few nights ago.

Then again, Brahms had never laid a hand on Greta, even during his worst moments.

Greta resigned that she was going to have to give Brahms the benefit of the doubt until he actually made an attempt to hurt her. She would stay and try her hardest to do right by Brahms as long as it was safe for her to be around him.

In all honesty, Greta was heartbroken for the man. It was apparent that neither of his parents ever legitimately tried to help their son. They hid him away behind the walls and only perpetuated the illness he had suffered for many years. Sure, they thought they were protecting Brahms, but the fact of the matter was that he had been far too neglected. Greta knew that she was the only chance Brahms had in life, and she was desperate to do anything she could to help him.

As Greta stepped out of the shower she realized that rather than feeling relaxed, the hot shower had only made her feel more awake. After drying off and slipping into a long nightgown, Greta tip-toed down the hall to peek into Brahms' room.

"Sound asleep." Greta thought to herself before making her way downstairs to the wine cellar, in hopes that a drink would calm her nerves enough for her to sleep.

The Heelshires surely must have been alcoholics, given the number of bottles collected in the large, stone room. Not that Greta could blame them, given the nature of everything that had been going on for the past twenty years. Greta had to admit that she herself had been craving alcohol more than usual under her new predicament.

After perusing the seemingly endless supply of liquid indulgences, Greta selected a nice bottle of merlot and took it into the parlor to relax while she drank.

Glass be damned, Greta took a sip straight from the bottle before flipping a switch on the old radio.
The dial was set on the very first station, which only produced silence. It took what seemed like endless knob-turning to find a station that was actually playing any music at all. It was the first time since her arrival that she had listened to any music besides classical. Greta didn't particularly enjoy modern music, so she was pleased to find a station that was playing older soft rock.

Greta plopped down onto the sofa with her bottle and let the soothing tunes distract her mind from the situation at hand. Before long, she had drained the entire bottle of wine and drifted off to sleep.

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The faint sound of unfamiliar music had been far too intriguing for Brahms to ever consider going back to sleep. Brahms stood, and as he stretched his ears were strained intently, trying to make out what exactly Greta was listening to. Quietly, he crept downstairs, following the sound.

As he entered the parlor, Brahms quickly spotted Greta's sleeping form hugging the empty bottle. Brahms sighed and walked over to the sofa. He had seen his mother and father behave in a similar fashion on many occasions, and Brahms knew that it was a sign his Greta was struggling internally over the recent changes in the house. He had seen her partake in a glass of wine on occasion, but never had he seen her even attempt to drink as much as she obviously did while he had been asleep that night.

Carefully, Brahms slipped the empty bottle out of her grasp, hoping not to wake her as he did so.

"Brahms?" She asked groggily as she blinked her glassy eyes open. He froze, unsure of what he should do next. Slowly, he took a few steps back, making his discomfort apparent.

"What are you doing out of bed?" Greta slurred before sitting up.

At first, Brahms was hesitant to answer her at all, but she clearly wasn't angry with him. If anything, Greta's intoxication only made Brahms feel less self conscious than he normally was. "I heard the music." He replied ever so softly, gesturing towards the radio.

Recognition flashed across her face momentarily. It seemed to have dawned on her that she was speaking to the "host" personality...this was the real Brahms.

"I'm sorry, Brahms. I didn't mean to wake you." Greta slurred after looking him over momentarily. She thought about turning the radio off, but decided against it when she noticed how intently Brahms was listening to the tune that was playing.

"Er...do you like the Beatles?" Greta asked awkwardly when she realized "Hey Jude" was playing on the radio.

"I've never heard this kind of music before." He answered, his voice barely above a whisper, assuming that she had referred to the group that was singing.

The sound was very nice, but it was the lyrics that tugged on his heart. Perhaps he was like this Jude that they sang about. Perhaps he could make things better too. For himself, as well as for his dear Greta.

"I suppose I should have already known that without being told." She mumbled in response, clearly referring to how strict the Heelshires were. She was specifically told that Brahms was only to listen to classical or opera. No exceptions.

Brahms grew uncomfortable as Greta stumbled over to where he had been standing. He could smell the wine on her breath, and she was unusually close. Clearly, personal space wasn't on her mind at
all in her current state. Nervously, Brahms shuffled his feet, looking down at the floor sheepishly as he did so.

"Would you stop that?" Greta snapped, mild irritation permeating her voice.

Cautiously, Brahms lifted his gaze, tilting his head to the side to signal his confusion to her.

"Stop acting like you're afraid of me. I've never given you a reason to be. If anything, I'm the one that should be afraid of you. You've taken advantage of every opportunity to make it that way." Greta explained angrily. Her words were slurred together so badly that Brahms just barely understood what she had said.

He really didn't know what to say to her. Brahms wasn't particularly frightened by her. If anything, he was worried about scaring her.

As a child, people had always been wary of Brahms because of his condition. He had always been considered "odd", to say the least, and he knew how much discomfort he caused because of it. His own parents couldn't even stand the sight of him. The problem was, Brahms didn't know how to explain himself to Greta, regardless of the fact that he wanted to.

If he couldn't tell Greta, he supposed he would have to show her that he wasn't afraid.

"Greta..." He murmured softly, before giving up on saying anything else. Hesitantly, Brahms reached up to his face and slowly removed the porcelain mask that had kept his face covered for twenty years.
Beginning to move forward

Brahms visibly flinched as Greta reached toward his face.

"It's alright...you already know that I'm not going to hurt you." Greta reassured the man before she tried again. Her soft fingers caressed his cheek gingerly, and Brahms became less tense after a moment.

He really was quite handsome, despite the scars that he had kept hidden for so long. His chiseled features were the perfect example of a man that would be considered to be "classically handsome". Even the dark circles under his eyes from lack of sleep couldn't take anything away from his looks. Had the cards he had been dealt in life been different Greta was certain that he would have had women pursuing him constantly, scars and all.

Too drunk to consider using finesse, Greta spoke, her words slurred together as she did so, "I was expecting the Phantom of the Opera or something."

Brahms furrowed his brow and looked away, unsure of what she had meant by the statement. He obviously didn't know if his feelings should be hurt or not. Greta rolled her eyes at herself, realizing that he probably had no idea what she was talking about when she used that reference.

"I meant to say that I don't see anything that needs to be hidden behind a mask. You have a very nice face, Brahms." She explained, correcting herself in order to make her previous statement more clear to him.

Greta took the hint when he made no attempt to respond to the compliment. He was clearly out of his element.

"Since you're up anyway I thought we could talk about your schedule and lessons." Greta said after a few moments, hoping a change of topic would make him more comfortable. She sat down on the couch and gestured for Brahms to do the same.

"What about them?" He asked carefully, unsure of what she had in mind. In all honesty, Brahms was hesitant to accept too much change all at once.

"Well, we've been doing the same lessons over and over again. I can't imagine that the circumstances were any different before I came here." She started, and then paused to see if he would react so far. No reply came, so Greta continued.

"I was thinking we could change things just a little bit. I'm certain that you already know all of the books you have by heart at this point. It seems silly for your lessons to be based on things that you learned twenty years ago. You must be bored to death."

Finally, Brahms nodded in response. "Most of the time I would just fall asleep during lessons while I was still in hiding. Mother never changed them and I had already learned all of the material we have while I was still in primary school." He confessed, keeping his tone low and quiet.

"That's what I thought. What do you think about changing to new lessons and perhaps switching the schedule around a little bit?" Greta asked hesitantly, unsure if he would be open to any changes at all.

Brahms remained silent for a few minutes, thinking over the new proposal.
"I think... I might like that. It would be nice to have things to do and new lessons instead of just going along with mother's long outdated charade." He finally answered, glancing at Greta out of the corner of his eye.

"I'm glad you agree. I have to admit I've been pretty bored myself. So, what do you suggest? Academically speaking you've already learned all of the necessities." Greta answered before lifting her legs up onto the couch, hoping that Brahms would follow suit if she made a point to relax and be comfortable. He was still sitting upright in his spot, stiff as a board with hands folded neatly on his lap. Both feet where still planted firmly on the floor.

"I like it when you read to me during literature." Brahms stated in a flat tone, making it very clear that he did not want that to stop.

"Yes, I like reading too. We'll be sure to get some new books, then. I'm afraid I won't be willing to read the same stories over and over again. I'm sure I can find plenty of new books that you'll enjoy. We'll get some new sheets for your music lessons, too. I think some new piano books for you to learn are long overdue. Is there anything else you would like to do or learn?" Greta asked with a yawn as the late hour started catching up with her.

"I'm not sure what else I would like to study." He answered quietly. Brahms's lack of exposure to the world was obviously a big hindrance for developing any other interests.

"Alright. I'll talk to Malcolm about picking up some new books and music for us the next time he comes over." Greta replied with a shrug, figuring that would at least be a good start for now.

Suddenly, Brahms's demeanor completely changed from quiet and shy into fierce and dominant. "I don't want him here." He growled, a much deeper and rougher tone permeating his voice as Brahms stood up.

The sudden change was frightening to Greta, and she had been caught completely off guard by it.

"H-how else are we supposed to get groceries? That's the only reason he will be coming here, Brahms." Greta replied softly as she stood up as well, hoping a more soft tone from her would help reassure and calm him down.

His face was turning red, jaw clenched tight in anger. "He wants you to leave me." Brahms growled again as he put both of his hands on Greta's upper arms, pulling her closer to him as if she might try to run away if he didn't hold her in place.

"I already told you I'm not going to leave. I promised I would stay here with you, didn't I? I would have already done it if I wanted to go away. I'm staying right here, Brahms, and Malcolm isn't going to change that." Greta stammered, praying that he would believe her. His grip on her was too tight, and Greta's arms ached under the pressure of his large hands. "Please, Brahms. You're hurting me." She begged, wincing in pain as she did so. Tears began rolling down her cheeks as she looked helplessly up at a very angry Brahms.

The sight of her tears softened him, and he greatly loosened his grip on her, though he wouldn't release her arms altogether. He could see how scared she was, and regret stabbed into his heart like a knife. Even in his current state, Brahms didn't want to hurt his Greta or make her be afraid.

"Greta... I didn't mean to..." He started, his voice still deep and gruff, but with a slightly softer tone to it. He was a tough guy but even he didn't have a heart of stone. He really hadn't meant to be so rough with her. It was that damned Malcolm that was making him angry. Silently, the protector vowed to be more careful to not misdirect his anger in her direction. Eventually, he would see to it that..."
Malcolm would not interfere with his life with Greta any further.

Greta suddenly burst into full blown sobs before crumpling into Brahms's arms, eager for any form of comfort she could get. She was far too drunk and stressed out to deal with his outburst. Brahms could visibly see how exhausted she had been all week in this moment, despite how well she kept her feelings to herself most of the time.

Gently, Brahms lifted Greta, cradling her in his strong arms as he carried her upstairs to bed.

She was still trembling as Brahms pulled the covers over Greta, tucking her safely into her own bed. As he turned to leave the room, she reached out and took hold of his hand. Puzzled, Brahms gazed down at his entrapped hand before looking back at her.

"Please...don't go." Greta whispered, obviously still shaken up.

It seemed odd that Brahms had scared her so badly, yet she was still looking to him for comfort afterward. Regardless of how unusual Brahms found her behavior to be, he certainly would not deny her if she wanted him to stay. With that, Brahms quietly crawled into the bed next to her and made himself comfortable.

Greta tossed and turned on her side of the bed for a few moments before scooting closer and resting her head on his chest. Brahms instinctively wrapped his arm around her waist, tracing lazy circles with his fingers on the exposed skin between her shirt and pajama pants. His heart soared with she finally sighed with contentment and dozed off.

"My Greta." He whispered before he fell asleep as well.
An unexpected visitor

When Greta woke, Brahms was long gone from her side. It was nearly nine o'clock as she sat up, restlessly running her fingers through her hair as she did so. The relentless pounding in her head made her groan out loud.

A quick glance around the room was rewarded with the sight of a glass of orange juice next to a bottle of aspirin that Brahms had clearly left for her on the dresser.

"Thank goodness." Greta muttered as she reached for the more than welcome gifts. It had been quite a while since Greta had been so intoxicated, and she knew she would spend the day feeling like death as her punishment.

The house was completely silent, and now seemed like a good time to take a shower. Greta reeked of stale alcohol and the scent made her want to wretch.

After generously lathering her hair and body, Greta rinsed off and stepped out of the shower. Just as she had started to dry off, Brahms burst through the bathroom door.

"Brahms!" Greta squealed in embarrassment as she struggled to cover her naked form with the towel. "What are you..." She started, but was interrupted. A deep, sharp voice cut her off before she could finish.

"Get dressed. Someone is coming down the driveway." He ordered, clearly in a state of panic.

"Now, Brahms, just relax, alright? It's probably nothing. Let me get dressed so I can take care of it. Are you sure it isn't just Malcolm bringing our delivery?"

"I should think I can tell the difference between a beat up grocer's van and a rather expensive car." Brahms spat as he turned around so Greta could put her clothes on.

"Just stay out of sight unless I call for you, and I'll see what's going on. Don't worry, Brahms." She ordered finally as Greta made her way down the large staircase. Just as she reached the entryway, a sharp knock rapped against the front door.

"Miss Evans, I presume?" An elderly man greeted as soon as the door had been opened. His aged, yellowing teeth grinned at Greta as he pushed his oversized glasses further up the bridge of his nose.

"Er...yes. Can I help you?" She replied cautiously, looking the man over as she did so. He wore a brown, corduroy suit and carried a rather large briefcase made of black leather. The man looked to be quite frail due to his age, but the twinkle in his baby blue eyes were a clear indication that he had his wits about him.

"I am Ronald Murray, attorney. It would appear that you and I have some very serious business to discuss due to the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Heelshire."

Greta's jaw dropped in disbelief. How did he know? And more importantly, what did he know?

"Do close your mouth, silly girl. Surely you didn't think the Heelshires kept such a large secret under lock and key without any help." Mr. Murray said with a chuckle as he moved past Greta and into the entryway.
"Well, I suppose Mr. Heelshire's private study would be the appropriate place for us to speak." Mr. Murray said, making his way into the now abandoned room.

"Excuse me! What makes you think that you can just waltz in here like you own the place? I didn't even invite you in." Greta stammered in disbelief, completely dumbfounded by the man's intrusion. This old coot was a very bold man, to say the least.

"Technically, my dear, I do own this property now. I'll spare you the long story and keep my explanation short and to the point until we have discussed things further. I have been the Heelshire's attorney for many years. In fact, I've been dear friends with Mr. Heelshire since we were young children." Mr. Murray began as he sat down and opened his briefcase.

"I received a letter from them a few days ago and got straight to work. It's a shame they felt that suicide was the answer. At any rate, decisions need to be made about Brahms's future now that his parents are no longer with us." He continued, placing several stacks of paper on the oversized desk.

Greta wasn't quite convinced that she could trust this man. It was also unclear if Mr. Murray knew the truth about Brahms, or if the doll representing a ghost was the story he knew. She decided that her best bet would be to cooperate with the man without betraying Brahms to the best of her ability.

"Alright...I suppose I should have expected the family's final affairs to need sorting out. It really is a shame how things turned out. I didn't know them very well myself but I am very sorry that they're gone. And I'm sorry that you've lost lifelong friends with their passing." Greta began as she pulled up a chair and sat on the opposite side of the desk. "I must admit that I'm not sure how useful I'll be to you. I don't have any idea what arrangements they wanted." She finished with a sigh.

"Not to worry, dear. All of that will be taken care of if their bodies are recovered. The big issue at hand is what's to become of Brahms and his life. There are several options for his future that we can discuss. I assume that he has revealed himself to you by now so I won't insult you with a charade. I would prefer that he join us, but I really don't expect him to do so. He's always been terribly shy, you know. Haven't even caught a glimpse of the lad in twenty years." Mr. Murray replied while shuffling through the papers on the desk.

So, he did really know the truth. Somehow, it was a comfort to Greta. At least there was one person she didn't have to pretend for. Greta visibly relaxed and leaned back in her chair, no longer feeling the need to be on high alert.

"I'm sure he's listening. Er...Brahms?" Greta called toward the wall behind the desk. "It's alright if you don't want to come out. Just knock once on the wall to answer yes, twice for no, and three times if you're not sure. We may have some questions for you while we discuss everything. Will that be alright?" She hoped Brahms would at least be willing to communicate in this fashion.

Then, one sharp knock sounded against the old wood paneling.

"Splendid!" Mr. Murray exclaimed with a large grin, very pleased that Brahms was willing to participate.

"Please begin, Mr. Murray." Greta said finally, gesturing toward the piles of documents that were nearly sprawled out.

"To begin, I must fully disclose that I am now the legal owner of all property and assets. My book
keeper will continue to handle all of the financial accounts. Regardless of what we decide, Brahms will be more than well off for the rest of his life, as far as money goes. I am very pleased that his parents made sure that would be the case. Brahms may review the accounts at any time, and I am more than happy to respect his wishes. However, I do have final say so and I will not allow any financial decision go through if it is not in his best interest."

"Brahms, do you understand and agree with everything Mr. Murray explained just now?" Greta interrupted, clearly insisting that Brahms know everything that was to happen.

One knock replied, and Greta nodded her approval for the attorney to continue.

"Now, I am afraid I'm too old to care for Brahms myself on a daily basis. One option is hospitalization. The Heelshires did select a mental facility for Brahms to live in should it be necessary." Mr. Murray started, grabbing for the first stack of paperwork.

Two loud bangs nearly split the wall behind the desk in response. Mr. Murray hadn't expected such a clatter, and nearly fell of his chair in surprise.

"I have to say that I agree with Brahms. Those institutions are horrendous and hospitalization is absolutely not an option." Greta said flatly, making it very apparent that she wouldn't even discuss that option any further.

"Very well. I am glad that we all agree it wouldn't be the best arrangement. Now, Miss Evans, if Brahms is to stay here there must be a full time caregiver available to him." Mr. Murray agreed as he dropped the stack of papers intended for the hospital arrangement into the waste bin.

"I am already here and I have no plans to leave Brahms unless I am forced to do so either legally or for safety reasons." Greta insisted, knowing good and well that this was probably what Brahms wanted.

"That is excellent news, indeed! Exactly what his parents wanted, actually. And I am very pleased that there will be far less paperwork to fill out with this arrangement." And with that, Mr. Murray gleefully dropped almost all of the remaining documents into the waste bin.

"We should ask Brahms if he agrees with this arrangement before we get too far ahead of ourselves. I don't want him to be unhappy with anything that we decide." Greta interjected, firmly believing that Brahms should have the final say so.

"Yes, of course. What say you, Brahms? Would you like to live here with Greta?" Mr. Murray asked, peering over the rim of his glasses intently at Greta as he listened for a response from a behind him. One very loud knock echoed throughout the room. "I would say that was a very enthusiastic yes." The old man chuckled before taking an old fashioned fountain pen out of his jacket pocket so the remaining legal documents could be finalized with signatures.
It's Official

"I told you she wouldn't leave us!" A small voice cheered in Brahms's mind. "You both thought I was wrong but I simply knew she would stay!"

"You're a real pest when you're right. We're happy too but please calm yourself." The Proctector's deep voice replied, although he was struggling to contain his own excitement.

It was official. Greta was legally charged with the care of Heelshire Manor and everything contained inside, as stated in the paperwork. Mr. Murray had always been a clever man. To anyone that read the documents and knew the truth, there was more to that main point than meets the eye. After all, Brahms was contained in the house, wasn't he? She had legally bound herself to staying with Brahms forever. Everyone's doubt about Greta's loyalty faded more and more each time she neatly scrawled her signature for Mr. Murray's paperwork. The Brahmses would not be abandoned, thus dissipating their greatest fear.

Quietly, Brahms made his way through the walls to the panel that lead into Mr. And Mrs. Heelshire's bedroom. Once inside the room, Brahms made his way to a rather large painting on the wall. He lifted the painting from its hook, revealing a safe that had been installed into the wall years ago.

"Oh, that's a wonderful idea! Surely there's something lovely in there that we can give to Greta to show our appreciation!" Little Brahms squealed to the others.

"Yes, now please pipe down for a moment. You're distracting me and I need to remember the combination." The Host replied, releasing a puff of air from his nose in irritation.

The safe contained family heirlooms, mostly jewelry, that Mrs. Heelshire had intended for Brahms to give a bride. Naturally, that intention was long before it was known that anything was wrong with her son to begin with.

Once the safe was opened, Brahms perused its contents. He knew Greta wouldn't want to wear something too extravagant or flashy on a daily basis. It simply didn't suit her tastes.

Finally, Brahms removed a small box, closed the safe, and returned the painting to its home on the wall.

His selection was tasteful, not too over the top or gaudy, unlike most of the jewelry that Mrs. Heelshire had collected in the safe. All three Brahmses were confident that she would enjoy the gift.

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"Brahms?" Greta called, having no idea where he could be as she wandered through the house. Mr. Murray had just left, and Greta was sure that Brahms must be starving by now. They hadn't even had a chance to eat breakfast before the attorney made his sudden appearance. It was nearly lunchtime already.

Greta nearly jumped out of her own skin as a pair of arms gently wrapped around her waist from behind.

"It's only me. I didn't mean to startle you." Brahms' deep voice murmured as he nuzzled the crook of her neck. "We are all very pleased with the morning's events." He added, allowing his lips to lightly dance across her soft skin as he spoke.
Fire erupted in Greta's belly, and her mind grew hazy. She couldn't help but to be physically responsive to him. A shiver shot down Greta's spine as cool breath tickled behind her ear, and all she could think of was allowing Brahms to do as he pleases with her because his touch felt so good. Thoughts of whether this was right or wrong were long gone for the moment.

"Brahms..." Greta whimpered. It was all she could do to encourage him to continue.

"I take it that you're pleased as well." Brahms purred with a soft chuckle, pulling her closer to him. Instinctively, Greta pressed her butt against his groin, illiciting a delicious groan to escape from his throat.

"Damn it, woman." Brahms growled as he took hold of her hair and gently yanked her head to the side to further expose Greta's neck. Her teasing was simply too much for him to resist.

Despite the fact that Brahms had never been with a woman before, it was obvious that his instincts served him well. There was no denying the scent of her arousal beginning to permeate through her pants as Brahms continued to kiss and nibble her neck.

Just as his free hand was slowly making its way up Greta's shirt, the front door slammed down the hallway causing the pair to jump apart.

"Greta? I've brought your groceries." Malcolm's voice called out.

Quickly, Greta regained her composure and gave Brahms a pleading look, silently begging him to be well behaved.

Brahms' only response was a curt nod, due to his frustrated and disheveled state of mind. He found Malcolm's sudden appearance to be most unwelcome indeed.
"Hello, Malcolm." Greta greeted as she entered the kitchen. Thankfully, she had managed to regain her composure as she walked back downstairs.

"How are things?" Malcolm asked cautiously as he looked around and wondered where Brahms was.

"We're fine, there's no need to worry. The Heelshire's attorney just left not too long ago. He knows everything about Brahms and his parents and came to bring paperwork for me to sign. I've been hired on permanently to take care of the property, and Brahms." Greta explained as she helped her friend put the groceries away.

"Ah, that's good to know. Having an extra person in the loop might be helpful, especially an attorney. And I'm glad you won't be leaving anytime soon." Malcolm responded with a grin.

Greta only nodded in response, still annoyed with him for being so fussy earlier in the week.

"Listen, Greta, I'm sorry. I know I made you mad on the phone before. I honestly didn't mean anything by it, I just got spooked over this whole thing and got carried away with worrying." Malcolm explained with a sigh as he passed the woman her shampoo and soap.

"It's fine, I understand and we don't need to talk about it any further." She responded curtly, cutting the conversation off quickly. She was certain that Brahms was listening and she didn't want to get him upset.

Suddenly, Brahms entered the kitchen with his porcelain mask in place. He skipped across the room and held out his hand to Malcolm, as though it has always been himself rather than the doll that would shake hands. "Hello, Mr. Malcolm." The voice of Little Brahms said cheerfully.

Although unsure at first, Malcolm shook the man's hand and forced himself to smile. "It's very nice to see you again, Brahms."

"Greta, I have a list for Malcolm's next delivery if you'll allow me to give it to him." Little Brahms explained and held out a piece of paper for his beloved nanny to inspect.

"Bubblegum flavored toothpaste, hair gel, shaving cream, razors...yes Brahms. You may give your list to Malcolm." Greta answered with a smile before turning to put away the fresh apples.

"Actually, Brahms, I've brought you some extra things. I couldn't recall ever bringing anything specifically for your hygiene and I thought you'd like to have your own things. A gift, from me to you." Malcolm interrupted and passed a large paper bag to Brahms.

"That's very kind of you. I greatly appreciate it, sir." Little Brahms replied graciously and starting
digging through the bag.

"I'm sorry to say I had no idea what flavor toothpaste you would want so I got you regular spearmint this time. If you'd like I'll bring you bubblegum flavor next week, along with anything left on your list that I did not bring you this time." Malcolm said with a smile, amused by the grown man that behaved so childlike.

"Wow! Look at all of this, Greta! Malcolm's brought everything else on the list and more!"

"That's wonderful! Be sure to say "thank you", Brahms." Greta replied as she peeked into the bag. Malcolm had really outdone himself with trying to help Brahms collect some much needed items. Brahms couldn't possibly need any hygiene items for months.

"Thank you, Brahms." Little Brahms said cheekily with a giggle.

"Brahms..." Greta gently scolded, though she still had an amused grin on her face.

"That was a joke, Malcolm." Brahms explained to the other man, his tone suggesting clearly that he was very pleased with himself. With that, Little Brahms cleared his throat and adopted a more sober tone. "Thank you so very much for bringing me all of this. It really was very kind of you." He added before holding his hand out to shake once more.

"You are most welcome, Brahms. Us gentlemen should look after one another, wouldn't you agree?" Malcolm replied cheerfully and shook Brahms' hand.

"Quite right." Little Brahms replied, feeling rather dignified by the exchange. Malcolm had called him a gentleman and everything!

"Brahms, go put your things away in the bathroom please. Malcolm and I will finish up down here and then you and I will do some reading." Greta gently gave her orders and watched as Little Brahms cheerfully skipped back out of the room after saying goodbye to his new friend.

"That went well, wouldn't you say?" Malcolm asked Greta with a grin.

"I'd say so. I'm glad you two are getting along so well. I really am grateful that you've put effort into this. I'm sure it's hard for him to have been cut off from the world for so long, and he really does need a good male friend around." She replied with a smile, no longer feeling annoyed at all with Malcolm.

"I was thinking the same thing." The handsome man said and hugged Greta. "I promise I'll do my best to help both of you."

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Later that evening, Brahms emerged from the bathroom looking rather unhappy and anxious. Startled, Greta asked what was wrong.

"The little one wants a shave but none of us have ever done this before." Brahms answered softly, though he was at least comfortable enough to speak to Greta now that he had begun getting used to interacting with her. He was still rather shy and reserved, but progress had been made between the pair none the less.

"Oh...I understand. Would you like me to help you?" Greta asked softly, having learned that if she also spoke quietly to the host he would have an easier time with conversation.
Brahms only blushed and nodded in embarrassment before leading the way back into the bathroom. Greta followed the man and looked over everything he had laid out on the counter. No wonder he didn't know where to start. Malcolm had given the man an electric razor, beard soap and oil, a traditional razor, after shave, cologne, and shaving cream.

"Oh my...Malcolm really did bring you a lot of extra things, didn't he?" Greta chuckled and plugged the electric razor into the wall.

"I think you'd best start with this. I have to confess I've never shaved a beard before, but we can figure this out." Greta explained and handed Brahms the electric razor. Hesitantly, he pushed the button and his eyes grew wide as it buzzed in his hand.

"I don't want to cut myself." Brahms admitted nervously.

"Look, run it across my arm. It'll only cut the hair." Greta said and held her arm out for him to test the electric razor. He gingerly obeyed, careful to keep the razor angled so the blades wouldn't pinch or cut her skin.

"See? There's nothing to it. Just go slowly and carefully." She encouraged and watched as his features began to calm. He gave her a short nod and turned to the mirror to start working on cutting away his facial hair.

"I'll be just across the hall in my room if you need anything." Greta added softly once it appeared that Brahms was all set with the electric razor and excused herself so he could have some privacy. He always seemed to get uncomfortable if she stayed and watched him while he worked on a task.

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