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“People on Reddit are saying Bear and I look retarded,” Clyde Warner reported solemnly.

“Bunch of fat internet virgins,” actual fat internet virgin Douglas Casey remarked with confidence, holding out his furry bear hand for a high five.

Clyde reciprocated, joining hand in paw with his friend.

They had only known each other for about a month, but their friendship underneath the masks was as real as the one portrayed on their YouTube show.

Having spent the last few weeks not only working together on the set of Lexy Chapel Presents Happy Farmstead Friends, but travelling together in a seedy black van from show-to-show for their SCW commitments had brought them as close as two lifelong friends.

It was in the van where both Clyde and Doug shared each other’s darkest nightmares and deepest desires.

While Clyde adored Lexy and was grateful for the opportunity that she provided to hawk bullshit to children and sometimes wrestle on SCW television, he had found out that Doug

seemed to hold a chasmic and somewhat disturbing love for Lexy, even though Doug insisted that he was constantly having sex with multiple women at all times despite Clyde having not seen him with another woman during the entirety of their friendship.

Either way, Clyde could tell the way that Doug spoke about Lexy was true. It was a love that couldn't be denied. But that was the tragedy of it all. Lexy was in a public relationship with Ryan Watson, who was married to Autumn Valentine, who was in a relationship with Ace Marshall, who was thought to be married to Cassidy Carter. There was no room for Douglas in that tangled web of love.

Still, that wouldn't stop Clyde from trying to help his friend, even going so far as to send an email to Lexy on The ChapelCast podcast under the discreet pseudonym of Harry Puffin. To double down on the secrecy and keep Lexy off his tracks, Clyde - or Harry Puffin - said that *he* was the morbidly obese man trying to land a hot blonde boss, even though it was actually his friend Doug trying to court Lexy. Clyde had seen enough movies to know that "asking for a friend" could be misinterpreted as asking for yourself, so he actually asked for himself even though it was for his friend.

Forbidden love was complicated.

"You're going to the wrong places," Lexy told the boys as they continued to high five each other repeatedly after Doug's excellent burn. They all three stood in her office that overlooked the Happy Farmstead Friends set, all preparing to film the latest episode for YouTube. Lexy hammered away at the computer, finalizing the script at the eleventh hour while sitting at her very expensive mahogany desk, not even bothering to look back as she spoke. "Go to my subreddit, r/ChapelShow. All the other ones are echo chambers."

"Will do, boss!" Clyde replied obediently with a salute.

"Maybe refrain from using the R-word in the vicinity of children too," she suggested.

"Reddit?" Doug wondered.

“No, retarded,” Lexy clarified, stopping her typing to throw her hands into the air. “Now you made *me* say it!”

“Oh, shoot, sorry,” Clyde muttered quickly, finishing his extended salute. “Are there retarded kids here today or something?”

“Just stop it!” she cried, going back to typing.

“Okay, right on, no dropping R-bombs in front of the little ones,” said Clyde with a nod. “Fair enough!”

“We just have to be careful,” Lexy warned. “The PR nightmare associated with Hairless Penguin and Dancing Bear being ableist - this is just what *they* are waiting for! They’d do anything to take away our child army—err, fanbase! Child fanbase! Our child fanbase who all want to dress up in Hairless Penguin and Dancing Bear costumes for Halloween. The conspiracy would do *anything* to take that joy away from these poor, stupid children with wealthy parents willing to give us money for said costumes!”

“Sorry, who is *‘they?’*”

“You know, *them*,” she repeated, not helping at all. “This conspiracy is just—okay, Penguin, I appreciate your concern and I envy your naivety, but you’re out of your element! I just can’t deal with it, not on my birthday week.”

“HAPPY BIRTHDAY, LEXY!” Doug suddenly screamed at the top of his lungs, doing what he called his “birthday dance” after. Lexy had found it sweet the first couple of times, but having heard this cry every time her “birthday week” was brought up, she was more concerned about long-term ear damage at this stage.

“Thank you, Bear,” she said even though she was becoming less and less thankful the louder he seemingly became. “Anyway, maybe things are looking up. Ace won. Trios is in our grasp.”

“What about Autumn?” asked Clyde.

"And this week on Lexy Chapel Presents Happy Farmstead Friends, we have a big new character reveal!" she squealed. "How exciting!"

"All right, I love making new friends!" Clyde stated while matching Lexy's excitement.

"Why does it sound so creepy when you say it?" Lexy wondered aloud before shaking her head and turning her chair to face her minions. "Okay, so I had to do these last minute rewrites since Rocky Rhino's still in the hospital after being impaled by the goat we brought on—"

"Ha, what a moron!" Doug chimed in.

"—and Sally's gone missing again on what I can only assume is another crack bender, plus Gia texted me to let me know that she's 'getting her guts rearranged' by a Tinder date even though it's not even *noon*—okay, sidebar, does she really need to get it before she's even had lunch? I dunno. Maybe that's just a me-thing. Anyway, it's fine, I just wrote in someone that can really make this week's episode a must-see! Nobody will notice that the majority of our cast has disappeared!"

Clyde cleared his throat. "In these dire times, I'm ready to step up and—"

"It wasn't a diversity hire," Lexy quickly interrupted.

"What?"

"It's just—I saw people saying that it was racist that our entire cast was white and that there were only white children in the audience and that made them notice that I strictly have white clients and they were trying to make it a thing, but this isn't me responding to that," she muttered worriedly, biting at the nail of her thumb. "I hired her because she's a great talent, not because she's black, okay?!"

"One thing I'm confused about," Clyde said, stepping up with a finger in the air. Lexy looked on expectantly. "Um...Bear's black."

"Preach," Doug bellowed with a bear fist held into the air.

Lexy just sat there in silence, pondering whether or not this could help improve her reputation on the corner of the internet known as "black Twitter."

"Sure. You should probably meet her before we film," she said, turning her chair and yelling towards the door, "Barbara!"

"That's not my name, bitch!" an angry voice yelled out, followed up by the sound of stilettos striking concrete.

"She's lovely, I promise," Lexy whispered to Clyde and Doug.

"Finally, some more *color* on this farm," said Doug.

"Wait, Sally's fuckin' *green*," Clyde blurted out. "Why are they calling us racist?! I—oh, my God."

Clyde stopped talking as the newest cast member stepped through the door, striking a pose in the doorway while holding up both middle fingers.

On her head was a literal pumpkin, which took most of the attention away from her black full bodysuit that was cut at the middle to show off her midriff despite her preparing to be featured on a kid's YouTube program.

"Penguin, Bear...meet The *Villainous Barbara*," Lexy teased spookily. "Hater of all things happy, farmy, and friendly!"

"Why's there a pumpkin on her head?" Clyde asked, unable to stop himself from questioning his boss.

"Why *you* wearin' a *mask*, little boy?!" Barbara shot back, startling Clyde to the point he had to hide behind Bear.

"The Villainous Barbara is a creation derived from my most intimate and nethermost fears," Lexy said before getting quiet and sinking further into her chair. "That Halloween night..."

Her voice trails off. Her pupils dilate. Her nails sink into the arm of the chair. She is lost to the world.

A cold, crisp night. Fog creeps along the streets of North London, rising and dissipating into the black sky. The feet of children march along the pavement, tails of ghosts rippling in the biting wind, faces of peeling, rotting flesh, blood dripping from fanged smiles - an army of the living dead.

Skulls lit shaded with an orange hue hang from above as Lexy walks down the street, not yet the confident woman that she would one day be. She comes to a stop and looks up at her destination.

The last house of the night.

Cobwebs line the jagged fence, an untold amount of spiders clinging tightly to their home. Up the steps, various parts from a disassembled skeleton litter the way, all the way to the promised land of the front door.

She's come so far. She can't give up.

Through the webs, over the bones, and to the door she goes. Everything is okay.

But then, there it is. At her feet.

A ghoulish face. The ember inside illuminates the crooked eyes and gap-toothed smile, giving life to this overgrown fruit without a resting place. This is the thing that should not be.

Her eyes can't fall away from the pumpkin as she brings up a shaking hand to knock on the door.

"You okay, Lex?" Clyde asked, giving Lexy a shake.

Lexy snapped out of the trance and looked around, taking a moment to catch her breath. "Hm? What happened? Did I—" She stopped herself and looked around to see everyone looking at her. She could sense the concern through the various masks. "I'm fine! Don't touch me! I was just...thinking of how big this new character is gonna be!"

"Oh, okay," Clyde said with a shrug, backing off and folding his arms before studying his new castmate's outfit some more.

"Can I just say something?" Doug asked, not even giving anyone a chance to give him permission. He pointed at Barbara. "That looks retarded."

Episode 2: “Spooky, Spooky Witch Sisters”

(A raspy yet soft voice of a British man narrates over a black picture.)

[Narrator]

Children, please welcome...Happy Farmstead Friends.

(Children clap politely as The Hairless Penguin steps out of darkness up to a microphone.)

[↓↓↓click to listen↓↓↓]

Spooky, Spooky Witch Sisters

[↑↑↑click to listen↑↑↑]

[Penguin]

Start us out, Rocky Rhino. One, two, three, four...

(No response. Penguin stands there awkwardly, looking around the darkness.)

[Penguin]

Rocky?

(Sounds of a storm followed by a light rain filter being placed over the video. Penguin continues to look around, panicking.)

[Penguin]

Oh, my...it never rains on the Farmstead! What could this mean? Rocky, where are you? Gia? Sally? Bear?! Where is everyone?!

[Bear]

I'm here, I'm here!

(The Dancing Bear waddles into the spotlight and takes his place next to Penguin, physically shaking with fear.)

[Penguin]

Oh, thank God. Bear!

[Bear]

Why's it so dark?! I'm scared!

[Penguin]

It's okay, we're not alone. You're out there, right, kids?!

[CHILDREN CHEER]

[Penguin]

Well, as long as we have you all, everything will be A-okay!

[Bear]

But what's happening?! I can't see our friends!

[Penguin]

Well, it-it's lich house. It has to be lich house!

[Bear]

But why lick house?!

[Penguin]

N-no, not *lick*. *Lich*. *Lich*. *Lich* house.

[Bear]

But why lich house?!

[Penguin]

I mean, th-they know they can't beat us in the ring, so they're trying to get us here at the Farmstead!

(A thumping sound resembling a heartbeat plays.)

[Penguin]

D'OHMYGODWHATWASTHAT?!

[Bear]

It's the beating black heart of lick house!

[Penguin]

No, no, wait, I think that's Rocky. Rocky, where are you?! We can hear you! Your stupid snare drum.

(After a sharp snare strike, the drums stop.)

[Penguin]

What's happening?

(A strike of a piano begins a haunting tune. Bear and Penguin cradle each other in fear.)

[Bear]

Hold me!

[Penguin]

Sally?! Sally the Snake, is that you?! Gah!

(A bass joins the piano, along with some light drums underneath.)

[Penguin]

Gia?! Where are you guys?! Have lich house possessed you?!

[Bear]

It sounds horrible! So horrible!

[Penguin]

This instrumentation is definitely the work of witchcraft!

[Bear]

What do we do?!

*Halloween,
could it be,
those two lich house sisters,
dare cast a spell on me?*

*Little sisters,
can't you see,
this homely farmstead,
it's filled with glee?*

*Take back your darkness,
and let us free,
through power of brightness,
we banish thee!*

*Spooky, spooky witch sisters,
Spooky, spooky witch sisters,
Spooky, spooky witch sisters,
Spooky, spooky witch sisters,
Bwaah!*

(After a cry of terror, Penguin huddles close next to Bear and holds his hand. As soon as it seems all hope is lost, the storm seems to settle. Slowly, the set comes back to life, the sun shining

down on our heroes. The music gets less haunting and more hopeful as Penguin begins gently strumming along.)

*But wait,
what is this?
Bear's hand in mine,
evil dismissed!*

*Evil forces, stay away,
through this friendship,
we will slay.*

*Evil sisters, stay away,
through our kinship,
your doomsday.*

*We're Happy Farmstead Friends,
Happy Farmstead Friends,
Happy Farmstead Friends,
we are your end!*

[CHILDREN CHEER]

(Bear dances happily as the song ends and the set returns to normal.)

[Penguin]

We did it! We fended off lich house with the power of friendship!

[Bear]
Yaaaay!

[CHILDREN CHEER]

(Bear looks around, noticing that Gia the Giraffe, Sally the Snake, and Rocky Rhino are nowhere to be found.)

[Bear]

But where are our Farmstead friends?!

[CHILDREN WHISPER AND CHATTER AMONGST THEMSELVES IN WORRY]

[Penguin]

It's okay, everyone. If I had to guess, I'd say that they're still being held in the dark realm conjured by lich house.

[Bear]

Those stupid witches!

[Penguin]

You're right, Bear. They are stupid. Stupid, because they don't realize that they've made us stronger than ever!

[Bear]

R-r-really?

[Penguin]

Well, think about it, Bear.

(Penguin sets his guitar on a stand to the side and walks off the grassy knoll to crouch next to the group of children sitting on the floor.)

[Penguin]

Can any of you tell me the message of that song?

[Child 1]

Friendship is power?

[Penguin]

That's right! And what are Gia, Sally, and Rocky to us?

[Child 2]

Less important side characters who don't even get to have dialogue?

(Penguin looks to the side and does a quick cut throat gesture. The camera zooms in and focuses on Bear's stupid face. Off-camera, there's the sound of a scuffle, as well as the muffled cries of a child. The camera zooms back out and there's an empty spot where the child once was. Casually, Penguin looks over to another child.)

[Penguin]

What are Gia, Sally, and Rocky?

[Child 3]

(fearfully)

They're your friends?

[Penguin]

Exactly! Not just mine and Bear's, but *our* friends! Heck, it's in the name! Happy Farmstead Friends!

(Penguin goes from a crouch to a seated position, sitting on the floor in front of the children with his arms hugging his knees. Bear comes over and tries to sit down next to Penguin, but he has trouble navigating the giant bear suit and ends up falling on his back.)

[CHILDREN GIGGLE]

(Bear continues to struggle to get up, looking like an oversized and furry turtle stuck on its back while he angrily mutters to himself. Penguin continues, oblivious to what's happening behind him.)

[Penguin]

And that's the thing with these spooky witch sisters. They don't like friends. That melting candle Kennedy Street tried to be their friend, but all lich house did was be mean in return!

Then Christy Matthews tried to help out the little mute, but that match ended with KEZ threatening her own partner before running back to her sister! They refuse any attempts at friendship. All they have is each other. That's...kinda sad.

[CHILDREN "AWW"]

[Penguin]

Yeah, we feel bad for them, don't we? We can't blame them for lashing out towards any sort of positive contact, because anyone who skulks around like a haunted spirit everywhere and wears warpaint while just walking around backstage in catering clearly has problems at home. They're a product of their environment! I grew up in the cold, harsh lands of Antarctica, which has hardened my body and spirit, allowing me to survive in any environment while being shirtless like I am right now. And Bear, he grew up in beautiful Montana, roaming Yellowstone National Park to protect its wildlife from poachers at any cost, which has granted him the strength and courage to put down anyone trying to poach us!

[CHILDREN CHEER]

[Penguin]

But Lilith and KEZ, they weren't as lucky as us. They didn't grow up with Mama and Papa Penguin plopping a fish in front of them as they woke. They weren't greeted by the calming Montana sun while still digesting last night's illegal hunters that dared to betray the sacred Yellowstone lands. They grew up in a broken home.

[CHILDREN "AWW"]

(Bear finally manages to get into a seated position, scooting his round bottom against the fake grass to sit himself next to Penguin.)

[Bear]

(through labored breaths)
Is that true, Penguin?

(Penguin shrugs.)

[Penguin]
I 'unno.

(Penguin clears his throat while shaking his head.)

[Penguin]
I mean, yes! Yes, of course! They're deeply troubled sisters with mommy and daddy issues! And it's our duty to help them, just like we help our little friends here when mommy and daddy need a break from them, y'know?

[Bear]
Hurr, okay! But-but-but, how do we help such scary ladies?!

[Penguin]
We beat them in a wrestling match.

[CHILDREN CLAP]

[Penguin]
It's what we do best! Now, sure, when we took on two members of the SCW Hall of Fame in our first match together, it didn't end particularly well. I know our referees have a reputation here. They don't often do their jobs very well. They're part of a greater conspiracy against Lexy Chapel and Friends that's spearheaded by the higher powers in SCW. They're also made of glass. Here's a joke for you: a penguin and a raven bump into a referee. The punchline? The referee dies for some reason.

[Bear]
What a crock of ****!

[CHILDREN GASP, ALONG WITH SCATTERED LAUGHTER]

[Penguin]

You're right, Bear, it was a big crock of shame. Shame on you, unnamed referee. The conspiracy has once again taken away something from our admirers. Kids, what do you think of the conspiracy?

[CHILDREN BOO]

[Penguin]

That's right! *Boo!* And not a Halloween *boo* either, because these cold-blooded monsters hiding in the shadows don't deserve to be part of the festivities, they just deserved to be shamed!

[CHILDREN ROAR IN AGREEMENT, SOUNDING LIKE A LITTLE ARMY OF PROTESTERS
ON THE VERGE OF A RIOT]

[Penguin]

But one thing they can't take away from these Happy Farmstead Friends is our undefeated streak in SCW! Now, okay, we didn't *win*, but we also didn't *lose*, and this Thursday night on Breakdown, we'll "not lose" again! We might even *win*! And it won't be because we were smarter, stronger, or bigger than lich house, even though we may be all of those things. No. You know why we'll beat them? Hint: it's because of something that *we* share that *they* don't. Can you all tell me what that is?

[CHILDREN SCREAM "FRIENDSHIP"]

[Penguin]

That's good, glad you got that considering I've only been talking about it for the last ten minutes. Anywho, yeah, that's right! Friendship! No amount of cryptic warnings, gothic face paint, or spooky kidnappings of farm animals can stand up to the power of friendship! Just like we teach the children noble values here at the Farmstead, we'll bring that same mission statement to the ring - just for *you*, lich house. What do you think, Bear?

[Bear]

I miss our friends. I miss Lexy!

[Penguin]

Lexy didn't get kidnapped.

[Bear]

I still miss her.

[Penguin]

Okay. Well, we'll get our friends back! Lexy too, I guess! You moody sisters made a big mistake taking our friends from us and there's a price to pay for that, but when you're at your lowest after being squashed by a giant bear and wrapped up into a pin by a crafty penguin, we won't hold your actions against you. I invite you both to join us in a song after our match, right there in the middle of the ring! A song about growth in the face of grave defeat at the hands of two Farmstead Friends. Shatter that dark mystique you've got goin' on. No more secrets, no more spooky aura. Let's be friends!

(Penguin stands up and grabs his guitar, strumming a happy tune.)

[Penguin]

Well, that's it for this week. Until next time, friends! We'll see you—

(The lights suddenly turn off once again. The children murmur and shuffling is heard.)

[Bear]

Oh, no! Not again!

[Mysterious Voice]

It wasn't those no-ass-havin' sisters that took your friends!

[Penguin]

Who is that?! Who's there?!

[Mysterious Voice]

It's me...

(An orange spotlight shines down on a woman with a pumpkin for a head donning a black bodysuit with her midriff showing.)

[CHILDREN GASP]

[Barbara]

The Villainous Barbara!

[Penguin]

My God...

(Absolutely horrifying music plays as **TO BE CONTINUED** text comes over the haunting image of this pumpkin woman.)