# The Pitchfork Kids: Headless Hummingbirds

DISCLAIMER: Most of the characters in this book are based off real life people!

## Chapter 1

Sydne walked out of her room one afternoon, expecting to see her and her friends' wholesome house full of happiness. Instead she saw her friends being nothing more than a collection of idiots.

"HOLY SATAN, WHAT HAPPENED HERE-" Sydne shouted as she looked into the living room.

The entire place was drenched in soap, water, and perfume liquid, with rats absolutely everywhere.

Amidst the mess was her nephew Kit, and her friends Zayne, Asher, and Val, who were all running around chasing rats with towels, soaps, and water basins.

"OH, HI SYDNE, WE'RE WASHING RATS FOR PEOPLE TO MAKE SOME EXTRA MONEY, IT'S A LOT HARDER THAN WE EXPECTED." Kit shouted as he tried aggressively scrubbing a rat.

Sydne sat down on the edge of the slightly elevated hallway, the bottom of her heels barely scraping the soapy monstrosity below her, and questioned her choice in friends. But she knew the answer to that. Insane people usually have insane friends.

"Need some help?" She asked.

"GEE, I DON'T KNOW, WHAT DO YOU THINK LITTLE TIMMY?!" Val shouted as he was trying to dry off a rat.

"Yeah- you all need help-" Sydne teased as she stepped into the living room. The moment her foot stepped on the wet, soapy, rat-infested floor, she slipped and started sliding around.

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"This is gonna be a long day…" Kit sighed as he watched Sydne sliding around and the rat running away from him.

As the time passed, the chaos got worse and worse. Kit probably gave most of the rats blunt force trauma from throwing them aggressively into the wash basin in front of him, Sydne, Asher and Val definitely suffocated a few rats when trying to dry them off, Zayne probably got rabies from all the rats that bit him, and they probably wasted hundreds of dollars worth of perfumes, soaps, water, and any other grooming products they could get their hands on.

"SYDNE I LOST MY RAT- CAN YOU GET IT?" Kit shouted.

"THERE IS AT LEAST FIFTEEN RATS IN THIS LIVING ROOM, HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO FIND ONE PARTICULAR ONE. THEY'RE ALL HALFWASHED AND RUNNING AROUND!" Sydne shouted back as she rushed around with a towel.

"JUST GET ME A RAT THEN!"

Everyone was running around. They were all slipping and sliding, flooding their own home, and losing their minds. Somehow they were having fun and laughing more than screaming in agony.

"What the-" Alex said as he walked out of his room.

"OH, HI ALEX!" Asher smiled as he was sliding around on his stomach.

"This place smells like if Bath and Body Works melted-" Alex coughed in shock.

"We're washing rats- AND WE NEED HELP!" Sydne shrieked.

Kit got up and grabbed Alex's wrist, dragging him into the chaos and forcing him to help the rest of the group.

"I NEVER AGREED TO THIS-" He screeched, but it was too late. He fell into the soapy, perfumed water, his clothes now absolutely soaked and his skin screaming from the ninety-million exfoliating serums being thrashed onto it.

"Hi! Help us catch rats." Sydne said with sarcastic cheeriness.

As everyone was running around, Zayne slipped on a patch of pure soap and flew over Kit and his basin.

Pitch Black Heroes

"GAH!" He shouted as he landed ass first in Kit's water filled basin.

"ZAYNE!" Kit shouted.

Water went everywhere and the room was even more flooded than before, the water had spread into the kitchen and the hallway, threatening to leave permanent stains on the tile and grow mold in the carpets.

"NOW I HAVE TO REFILL THIS!" Kit scoffed as he pushed Zayne out of the basin, causing Zayne to land into the water face first, nearly swallowing a rat and a gulp of poison- or at least something that shouldn't be gulped by a living being.

As Kit picked up the basin, Asher ran into him, shattering the basin and leaving sharp pieces of gray plastic floating amidst the water.

Asher's loud scream woke up Devereaux and Toby. They dashed out of their rooms and over to the living room and watched in horror.

"Our landlord is going to kill us…" Toby muttered.

Alex, Sydne and Val were still rushing around the room, catching rats, ignoring the huge mess and the obvious disappointment from their friends.

"I think it's time we move…" Devereaux said blankly as he walked into his room.

"I think it's time we get real jobs instead of chasing pathetic dreams none of us can execute properly since we're all broke as hell. Because when we fail at said dreams, it makes *some* of us do stupid crap that RUINS EVERYTHING!" Toby hollered angrily as he glared at Kit.

"It was an idea I had, I tried it, and that's all that matters." Kit said in defense before screaming as a rat began to crawl up his cargo pants- which led him to fall into the water and soak his hair.

Toby rolled his eyes as Devereaux walked out of his room with a re-used grocery bag filled with some of his belongings.

"Guys pack your things, there is no way we are *not* going to be kicked out of this house," He instructed blankly.

"GAH!" Sydne shouted as she grabbed onto the collar of Deveraux's shirt and pulled him down onto the mess.

"Owwww…" Deveraux mumbled with his face in the water, before shooting his head out and spitting out the disgusting concoction that coated the ground.

"This tastes like spoiled water." He complained.

"It kind of is." Alex chuckled as he slid over, a rat and sponge in hand.

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A few days later it was proven that Devereaux's prediction was true.

The landlord who had rented the Pitchfork Kids the house- who was already skeptical of allowing a group of immature teenagers to live in a house by themselves with no adults around- had heard about the water, rats, and grooming supplies wasted in the few hours and kicked them out.

"Look, you're all great kids. But you just can't live by yourselves in a house, *especially* if you're going to do THAT to it." He stated as he pointed to the front door, where Bath and Body Works blood was slowly dripping out of the crack at the bottom of the door. "Just go home to your parents." He said as he took back the keys and drove off.

"YAY! WE'RE HOMELESS! I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS!" Kit shouted happily.

"Well he can go take an "L" because we don't have parents! We'll make plenty off of books and art once we can actually get our dreams off the ground." Sydne scoffed as she glared at Kit, who was happily frolicking around due to their newfound homelessness.

"You're not okay-" Alex said with a chuckle, a little blush crowding his cheeks.

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"We need a place to live." Dine stated blankly. Dine was another one of the group's members. She somehow slept through the hell- god knows what empowered her to do it- but she still did somehow and had to help clean the mess in a confused haze.

"YA THINK?!" Asher shouted, his emotions dysregulated from everything that happened.

"No, no I don't."

Asher screamed in angry confusion before laying down in the fetal position and crying in depressed YUNGBLUD songs.

"This is why Asher needs anti-depressants." Toby teased as he looked down at Asher.

"I DON'T NEED ANTI-DEPRESSANTS, I NEED VIOLENCE!" Asher cried before pulling out a knife from his pocket and hugging it like a stuffed toy.

Sydne looked down and smiled at him, her overbite denting into her lips before she turned away and started fidgeting with her bracelet.

"Get up! Before the police pull over and send us all to jail!" Zayne demanded as he tried pulling the knife away from Asher, but Asher being Asher- wouldn't let go as he continued to ugly cry.

"Whelp, looks like he's being left behind." Alex said as he started walking away jokingly.

"Wait no-" Asher said as he instantly stopped crying and put his knife away. "I want antidepressants."

"This isn't even about getting you anti-depressants- I- whatever..." Alex stammered confusedly.

Everyone chuckled for a second before taking the situation seriously again.

"Do we have any money to make a downpayment on a 9-bedroom house?" Toby asked.

"No, we need to make at least 50 grand before we can do that." Sydne explained.

"Wow, how convenient that we're un-flipping-employed!" Toby shouted as he looked at the floor angrily and raised his hands expressively.

"Looks like we'll have to find a job to grind at." Kit muttered.

The group started to walk together throughout the town. They looked like a group of your run of the mill teens who were unique- but stereotypical enough so that everyone would leave them alone.

They didn't go to school- at least not anymore.

Their lives weren't really normal if you think about it.

For starters, they never had parents- or at least good ones.

Their earliest memories were blurry, but they knew that their childhoods weren't what people called normal.

It started off just Sydne, Kit and Devereaux.

They were about seven years old, all the memories before then were non-existent, as if someone had gone through their heads and erased it all.

It was the middle of Madison Wisconsin, it was late at night and raining. They didn't know where they were, all they knew was who each other were and that they were related. Sydne was the aunt of Kit and Devereaux, who were brothers.

They wandered around the town for hours, before a policeman finally took them over to an adoption center. They were never questioned, or asked who their parents were- the guy just kinda knew and took them there.

At the adoption center, they were left outcasted and neglected by the caregivers for some odd reason. They never broke the rules or did anything wrong- they just were there- and the caregivers hated that.

Eventually they were adopted by a couple that lived in a farm house somewhere in Rice Lake.

And they were terrible parents.

They were ignored and neglected.

Their pet dog did a better job at raising these kids than the actual adults did.

When they went to school they were bullied for being expressive and more unique than the other kids- so there was really nowhere for them to escape to. I know it sounds cliche- but that was the only thing going on with them. Sydne wore pink and skirts and patterns and cute things that have gone through a sanrio machine fifty times over. Kit dressed normal-ish, but always had the attitude of a mole-rat on cocaine, always wanting to do some crazy, unexplainable shit that went on in his mind. Devereaux was the quiet one- and dressed pretty much normally too, but because of who he hung out with he was sort of forced into the bullying.

By the time Sydne and Kit were thirteen and Devereaux was eleven, they were thrown out to the streets to fend for themselves- because that's totally legal.

They ended up sneaking into an apartment and living in the closed rooms that had infestations so that nobody would catch them.

They couldn't work so they just ate school food and took everyone else's leftovers so that they could eat breakfast and dinner.

By the time they were fifteen and started highschool- bullying got worse. They ended up changing who they were and acting and dressing like everyone else just so they could not be beat up for-wearing a certain skirt.

Eventually, they met Zayne, a sixteen year old who aided a lot for the teachers, they realized he was in the same boat and invited him into their small apartment.

By the time they finished their first semester of Sophomore year and Devereaux was in eighth grade, they dropped out. Zayne tried adopting them since he was tall enough to look like an adult.

Sydne, Kit and Devereaux worked on chores and trying to make any money at all while Zayne worked on looking like an adult and forging ID's so that he could get a job.

That's when they met Asher working as an insurance salesman. He was the same age as Sydne and Kit which convinced them to kidnap him and stay in their house until he agreed to stay. Plus- you

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didn't hear it from me, but a little birdie heard that Sydne fancied Asher a tad too.

He then met Toby and Dine hiding in an abandoned warehouse together, trying to survive on scraps. He then brought them back to the tiny one bedroom apartment.

They had to throw an old mattress into the bathtub and use it as a bed since so many people lived there now.

Then they came across Val- the landlord's son, who nearly told on them- but didn't since they promised to keep him hidden from his abusive mother.

Val then met Alex who was living out of restaurant dumpsters and brought him back to the apartment.

Sydne wasn't exactly happy with how many people were there- but she really didn't have a say in any of it.

They all had terrible adoptive parents or just terrible parents in general, and all dropped out of school for the same reason of needing to make money and live.

After Zayne turned seventeen and tricked the government into letting him adopt them all, they left their infested apartment and back to Madison to look for a charitable fellow to help them... Which was a terrible idea.

Until they met Mr. Monroe.

Tabby Monroe was a middle aged man who decided to rent his very large house for an extremely cheap price until they could figure out what to do with themselves.

When they got the house, the landlord gave them strict rules and told them if they ever caused too much ruckus he would immediately kick them out, which he never enforced. He held it over their heads but it was an empty threat. At least it was until the day of the rats.

There was one time they had tried to adopt a stray dog that had rabies. The landlord wasn't too pleased with that, along with the fact he had to drive them all to the ER *and* pay the medical bills.

"I can't believe he actually kicked us out." Zayne said, genuinely shocked.

"He always did let us get away with a lot, but I assumed one day we would cross the line." Val responded.

"We already crossed the line, but he couldn't bare to let us all go back to sleeping in that damned bathtub. Until he could, that is." Toby snarled.

"Remember the time we blew up the water heater because Kit insisted he could fix the gas leak so we wouldn't get in trouble?" Dine chimed.

Everyone stopped and laughed.

"I'm surprised he even let us stay after that." Sydne marveled through her giggles. She then looked over and saw a girl with red hair sitting on a bench. "HEY!" She called out to the girl as she waved her hand around.

The girl turned her head pathetically and started staring at the group.

"CAN YOU HELP US?!" Toby called out as he waved his arms aggressively.

The girl got up and rolled her eyes, unamused and bothered by their presence.

"What do you want?" She asked as she walked over to them.

She was a little shorter than Zayne, probably a similar age too, and wore a basic T-Shirt, denim jeans and Converse sneakers.

"So sorry to bother you- but we need to find a place to work, do you know any?" Zayne asked.

"Yeah, follow me." She said in a blank voice as she started walking away. The group shrugged and started to follow her.

"What's your name?" Val asked.

"Tylai." She replied coldly, her eyes fixed to the crosswalk ahead of her.

"Oh that's a nice name. I'm Val."

Tylai rolled her eyes and continued walking forward, ignoring Val's introduction.

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As they walked, the group started chattering among themselves again.

"What if we're still too broke to buy a big house again?" Asher hesitated.

"Then we'll just rent again." Sydne responded, she looked up into his green eyes and smiled ever so slightly.

"We have a terrible rent history, we flooded our last place. Nobody will ever want us." Dine scoffed.

"So? We'll just flee the state!" Kit cheered happily.

"No. I like Wisconsin." Devereaux said as he crossed his arms.

"Can you guys shut up, you're really annoying." Tylai scolded as she turned around, the second time she ever bothered to make eye contact with them.

"Sorry-" Sydne said before Kit cupped her mouth.

"No sorries," he said.

Sydne rolled her eyes and sighed as Kit lifted his hand away from her mouth.

Tylai's outburst was enough to shut up the group. They continued walking for about five minutes or so in awkward silence.

Suddenly Devereaux looked over, and saw an IKEA store nearby that looked busy and open.

"How about there?" He suggested as he pointed towards IKEA.

The group turned around wide-eyed and looked at the store.

"YES! IKEA IS THE BEST! THEY SELL YOU BUILDING MATERIALS AND A CRAPPY MANUAL. LET'S WORK THERE!" Zayne shouted happily as he started running down the street towards the store, almost getting run over multiple times in the process.

"IKEA? Really? That's the best we can think of?" Val scoffed.

"It's either that or Arbys." Kit said.

"IKEA IS GREAT!" Val shouted instantly as he started speeding towards the store, also almost getting run over.

"Whelp guess we better go beg for jobs." Toby said calmly as he started leading the remaining group members towards IKEA, across the road, also making everyone else almost get run over.

"YOU'RE REALLY JUST GOING TO ABANDON ME?!" Tylai called out to the running group. When she didn't get a response, she scoffed and walked away.

"MAYBE WE SHOULD FIND A CROSSWALK-" Sydne shouted at her friends- completely ignoring the poor pedestrian they bothered, before giving in and following them down the road.

This time the cars were stopping and honking their horns aggressively at the group.

They're clearly cut out for all the adulting they're gonna have to do in two years.

## Chapter 2

When the group entered the store, they almost instantly felt something was wrong.

The store was huge, larger than a normal store. The shelves were enormous. Zayne, the tallest person in the group by a landslide standing at a whopping 6' 10, could stand normally and his head wouldn't even graze the top of the shelf.

There was food everywhere, not only in the cafes - but in displays and hidden under carts and in shelving.

There were more pallets than there was actual furniture, and the employees were... interesting to say the least.

They all had the standard uniform- bright yellow shirts and blue jeans. But, they acted so robotic. Walking around, ignoring each other, moving furniture, and they refused to show their faces to anyone in the group.

"Does anyone here actually know how to get to a manager?" Sydne asked as she looked back at the group.

"We've never had a reason to go to an Ikea before, nobody here is smart enough to decipher their manuals, why the hell would we know where anything is?" Devereaux scoffed.

Brick Kids

"Sorry, just trying to see if anyone knows anything about anything in this stupid store!" Sydne shouted angrily.

After Sydne shouted, all the employees around them slowly turned their heads to face them.

That's when the group noticed a very distinct yet tiny detail.

Instead of a face, they had a smooth, polished-leather-like slab of skin coating the front of their head.

No eyes, no mouth, no nose, just silky smooth skin.

"Holy mother of hell-" Sydne said quietly in shock.

"Make-up really has advanced these days." Dine chuckled nervously, clearly denying anything malicious about what was staring at them menacingly.

"We should let the employees work and try to find the manager-" Zayne said as he started walking away quickly. The group followed reluctantly.

Toby looked back at one of the employees, he could see its blank head looking back at the group, the skin around where a mouth should be stretched ever so slightly, revealing a slight smile.

A chill ran down his spine as he dashed to catch up with the rest of the group.

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The group walked for what seemed like hours, not finding an upper management office or anything useful at all.

"Can someone just pull out like a GPS or a compass on their phone so we can figure out where the hell we are?!" Asher asked angrily.

"I'll see if I can," Sydne said as she pulled out her phone, only to be met with the surprise of the screen refusing to turn off and remaining a soulless black void.

"That's odd, my phone should be at one-hundred." Sydne mumbled as she slapped the side of her phone before shrugging and putting her phone back into her brown leather Brahmin bag. This bag was conveniently mailed to her by a stranger a few years back.

The rest of the group pulled out their phones, being met with the same result.

"So, we're stuck in IKEA, with no way to contact anybody else and no way to tell where we are?" Zayne confirmed.

"Pretty much, unless we can find an upper management office." Kit said as he sat on the floor. "How can an IKEA be so big..." He muttered tiredly as the rest of the group sat down.

Suddenly, all the lights in the building went out, the only light around them was the string lights and lamps somehow still remaining lit.

"Closing time already?" Kit said as he looked up at the ceiling.

"I guess, but I don't feel tired enough to sleep," Dine said as she stood up.

"If we find an upper management office we'll just wait by it so we can go ask for help." Kit said as he got up and started walking again.

The group followed Kit and Dine who were leading the group.

The place was eerie and borderline scary since the lights were off. It felt like the building was alive somehow like it had something malicious planned for the group. Like it was alive and making conscious choices.

Everyone had obviously caught on by now that something was definitely wrong, but everyone was far too afraid to say it out loud.

As the hours of endless walking continued, IKEA grew bigger and bigger. It was sickening to see the same displays with the same set up with the same items repeating over and over, it's enough to drive the most mentally stable person insane.

"HOLY SATAN- HELP!" Kit screamed.

"KIT!" Sydne and Alex cried in sync as they both turned around to face him.

When they turned around they were met with the horrific sight of Kit being attacked by one of the employees.

The employee was on his chest, tugging at his short fluffy hair and smacking his face. Despite the employees small size it was somehow doing a lot of damage.

Sydne ran over and tried ripping the employee off of him but the employee kicked her and she kept getting thrown back.

Alex and Zayne started trying to help, but they still weren't strong enough. The employee somehow had a great amount of strength and seemed almost indestructible.

"STAND BACK!" Val shouted as he started running toward Kit and the hostile employee. Everyone that was previously trying to help Kit had stepped back and watched as Val ran up with a green, crystal-shaped lamp and attempted to bash the employee.

Somehow, he missed and bashed Kit's head instead, knocking him out.

When Kit's body hit the floor, the employee jumped off of his body and dashed toward Asher, probably attempting to attack him too. But, Sydne opened her purse in front of the employee causing it to run inside.

Sydne quickly zipped up her bag and threw it on the ground as everyone watched and listened as the employee was aggressively attempting to escape.

"How the hell does that bag fit a small person?!" Asher stammered in disbelief.

"I like big purses, okay? They can usually fit a small child, like this *thing*." Sydne grimaced as she looked at her purse.

"Well first, what do we do with Kit, *someone* knocked him unconscious." Zayne said as he glared at Val.

"Sorry- I missed, by a lot..." he chuckled.

"I'll carry him." Alex said as he bent down and picked Kit up, bridle style.

Alex gazed down at Kit's unconscious body, it looked like he was sleeping, so, so peacefully. Alex cracked a small smile and blushed.

"Sweet dreams…" He muttered at Kit's face, before his attention was dragged away and he started focusing in the group again.

"What do we do with the bag? Take it with us?" Dine asked as she stared at the bag, still with the employee rustling inside.

"I don't know, there's no way I'm strong enough to carry it." Sydne said as she kicked the bag. The employee inside started to squirm even more and even let out a small roar of anger.

"Do we kill the employee? Like with a stab or something?" Toby asked.

"No, maybe it can't be killed." Asher said.

"Well I'm not leaving my stuff here! I have my phone, inhaler and other important things in there!" Sydne stated.

"Zayne should carry it, he'll be strong enough to!." Asher said as he eyed Zayne.

Zayne sighed and held out his hand. "Give it here…" He muttered.

Toby, Dine and Asher all picked up the purse by strap the and threw it on him like a sash.

"Now don't open it until necessary." Alex instructed as the group walked on.

Suddenly, the lights blared on, the bright fluorescent glow they produced nearly blinded the group.

"Is this just light or Jesus-" Val mumbled as he rubbed his eyes.

"Nah, this is the goddamn sun." Zayne replied jokingly.

Once everyone's eyes adjusted to the brightness, they looked at Sydne's purse.

The bag wasn't rustling, whatever creature that was inside was put to sleep or calmed significantly down.

"That's- odd…" Toby said as he took a closer look at the bag.

"Best keep it closed, we don't know what this *thing* is like." Zayne said.

"Welp, looks like it's back to walking. We need to find upper management." Asher stated as he continued walking forward.

Everyone sighed and followed.

What else were they supposed to do, turn around and leave? They probably would have by now, if it was possible. They have walked so far that it would take another day of walking, and who knows if they would even find the exit.

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After a long while of painful hours wandering around in a forsaken hell hole, Kit woke up.

"What the hell..." He muttered as he rubbed his head with his hand. It took him a solid five minutes to realize he was being carried in Alex's arms.

"Oh, look who finally decided to wake up!" Dine teased as Kit started blushing.

"Yeah yeah, sorry. Thanks Alex." Kit said as Alex put him down. Kit grabbed Alex's shoulder to balance himself and looked around.

"So- we've been out here for how long? And how far have we gone?" Kit asked.

Everyone looked over at him and shrugged.

"We've been walking. Just walking. Painstakingly but walking." Sydne dramatized.

"Geez it hasn't been that bad." Asher scoffed, clearly meant as a joke but part of his tone meaning otherwise.

"LOOK! THERE!" Devereaux shouted as he pointed towards a glowing tower with a large white sign with "Information," written on it. "IT'S AN INFORMATION TOWER, WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHERE TO GO!" Devereaux shouted as he started running towards it.

Everyone looked over, and their eyes all widened in excitement.

"IT'S A CHRISTMAS MIRACLE!" Sydne shouted happily as she started following Dev.

"IT'S THE MIDDLE OF JULY-" Asher said as he ran up next to her.

"SCREW THE DATE, IT'S CHRISTMAS!"

Eventually everyone started running at full speed towards the tower emitting a bright fluorescent blue glow.

By the time everyone got to the tower they were all out of breath yet still ecstatic about finding it and managing to get to it alive.

"Holy hell, this could be our ticket out of here!" Asher shouted excitedly as he looked at it in awe.

"How do you turn this thing on?" Kit asked as he pounded on the machine lightly.

Suddenly, the blank white screens filled with static and color as an unholy grinding noise erupted from the machine.

"Turn that off!" Sydne pleaded as she kicked the base of the machine while covering her ears.

"STOP! YOU'LL-" Val started shouting, but was interrupted by a voice emerging from the machine through the static.

It was the psychotic laugh of a young woman.

After the scratching dissipated, the screen showcased a bleak office setting with a woman sitting in an office chair behind a desk in the middle of a room.

The girl was beautiful.

She had a perfectly tan complexion with silky brunette hair tied up in a sleek bun. Her eyes were a bright green. She had plump lips and teeth so perfect your dentist would be jealous.

She was wearing a navy blue 1980's power suit with pastel yellow accents and accessories.

"Break me?" The woman behind the desk smirked.

Everyone instantly quieted down and stared at the screen.

"What..?" Toby mumbled as the group gathered around the biggest screen and watched.

"Oh you sweet, sweet people. I know your type far too well." The lady chuckled.

"You come in looking for your foolish furniture or a job, you look around, you stay in long enough to find one of these towers, watch whatever I put on screen, and come to the horrifying truth that you're stuck here! You got yourself trapped in this hellhole and

there's no hope for you and your pathetic selves getting out of here!" The lady said as she smiled an evil grin.

"Who are you..?" Dine muttered.

"Oh, ho, ho, you'll find out real soon..." The lady giggled as the screens glitched back to white.

The group stared at the screen in silence, trying to process everything they just watched and listened to.

"Well we're either in a very well-executed haunted house or we're actually stuck in this hellhole of a store-" Zayne said with sarcastic positivity.

"We're stuck here." Kit said matter-of-factly.

"How can you be so sure?" Toby retaliated.

"It's the middle of July- who the hell opens a haunted house in the middle of goddamn July."

"Oh yeah huh."

Kit sighed as he sat down on the tower and pushed his hands into his face.

"What are we gonna do..." He muttered in worry.

"Either make a new life here, or try and find a way out, but either one won't give us much of a fulfilling life," Sydne said.

"Does anyone have a paper and pen? We can make a pro and con chart and decide what to do." Devereaux suggested.

"Staying here is obviously the best choice, free food, free housing, we could live the rest of our lives here- it would be like being homeless- but better!" Kit cheered.

"You mean it would be like being homeless but we have a home?" Asher questioned.

"Yeah- I guess, but like- we don't have any insurance that we'll always have food, or that we'll always be safe." Sydne argued.

"Yeah- but we live- or lived in a terrible society. We don't have that insurance either way." Kit snarked.

"Oh shut up you know what I mean."

"You all have points, but we'll most likely waste our childhoods trying to find a way out." Asher said.

Everyone just looked at eachother, each equally conflicted with what to do. Nobody wants or even should want  to stay in a place like this, but finding a way out presented itself as impossible, or at least that's what their surroundings and the strange video they watched told them.

"Well, we'll definitely need a house or something like one no matter how long we stay here. We already know this place is hostile, we need to make some form of shelter so we can have a safe haven to go to if we're ever in trouble." Asher stated.

"Asher's right, we need a base, even if we don't stay here long." Sydne agreed.

"Kit and I are good at building, we can build a base with rooms and stuff." Alex suggested as he glanced over at Kit.

"Dine and I can collect stuff like entertainment and decor and building materials!" Toby cheered.

"I can scavenge for food with Sydne!" Asher said.

"Val and Dev are good for quality control, and I can defend Alex and Kit from employees if they ever try to attack." Zayne suggested.

"Okay, that works, Alex and I will start building, Asher and Syd, you guys bring a bathtub over here so that we can have a place to store all our food, Dine and Toby, go find some stuff that you think we could use for fun or furniture or building or anything like that, and Dev and Val can make sure everything works properly!" Kit instructed. Everyone agreed and rushed off to start their tasks.

"What about me..." Zayne frowned.

"Zayne you literally gave yourself a job. Here." Kit said as he picked up a bundle of string lights that was lying on the floor. "You can kill things when it's nighttime with this- and any other stuff if you want-" Kit said hurriedly, shoving the fairy lights in Zayne's hands.

Zayne looked down at the string lights shoved messily in his hands.

"Cool! I get to strangle things!" He smiled.

Fiction Kids

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As the hours- or what felt like hours, passed the group worked tirelessly.

Alex and Kit were almost done with the base. It was made out of pallets Dine and Toby found laying around the shelves. A lot of the pallets relied on balance and compression, but you could find the occasional rope knot, a loose piece of duct tape, tied string lights, or even oddly placed ladders to keep things balanced or weighed down.

Despite the poor quality of materials and the obvious lack of building experience, the base held up surprisingly well. The loose pallets didn't collapse under the pressure of TV's or couches, and the walls could handle a bathtub being rammed into it with the force of a 3rd grader and an average highschooler struggling to pick up, hold and carry a bathtub being jammed into its walls.

On top of that, Dine and Toby had gathered such a large pile of miscellaneous items that they needed to lean ladders on the sides to climb and reach the top. There were all sorts of things; really weird dolls, Scrub Daddies, slides, lamps, and so many other items that weren't relevant to anything and would most likely never be used.

While the base was being built, Dev and Val just crashed themselves into the walls and jumped on everything they could see. Their job was basically a license to be chaotic and try to break everything they could without getting yelled at by an adult. Not like there was an adult to yell at them but- whatever floats your boat I guess.

They would run into the walls, beat the floor in anger, and kick around everything. Eventually, they had to be stopped because they got *way* into it and we're breaking stuff that would pass a normal quality control assessment. Then again they weren't professionals- so who really knows how good the place was.

And sad little Zayne remained bored as a 2 year old, strapped to a chair, watching paint dry. None of the employees wanted to attack

whenever lights were on, it was very weird, and Zayne was left to entertain himself by trying to tie different knots with the string lights Kit had given him.

"Alright, that's the last of the food we can find within a reasonable distance, or without getting lost." Sydne said as Asher and her threw in the miscellaneous food they had collected into the bathtub.

"Alright, thanks. That's enough to last us a week at most I'd say." Kit said as he peered over the pallet above Asher and Sydne.

"How's the base coming along?" Sydne asked, as she looked up.

"We're getting there, we're gonna have to keep working through shut off if we want to finish the base by tomorrow." Kit sighed as he jumped down from the pallet.

"Where's Alex?" Asher asked.

"He- he's doing great, I think he's on the other side of the roof tying some pallets together with cables." Kit said as he looked back, a slight blush crowding his face.

"Someone's got a crush~" Sydne taunted as she elbowed Kit.

"No- I just think he's cool," Kit mumbled.

"Cool enough to date?" Sydne giggled.

"Shut up." Kit growled.

"Alright, alright, sorry." Sydne muttered cheerily.

Kit looked over at Asher, who was giggling.

"Anyway, where are we all going to sleep? I'm so tired." Asher asked.

"Actually, I have a whole thing planned out, once Dine and Toby get here I'll be able to explain. In the meantime, you can gather in the sitting room, or whatever you wanna call the room you gather in. The only useful furniture Toby and Dine managed to bring us today were beds, a Scrub Daddy, and a TV. Everything else is kinda useless." Kit sighed as he went over to a pile in the corner of the room filled with tape rolls, ropes, string lights, and various other objects that could be used to tie stuff together.

"Go fetch Zayne too, Dev and Val should be in the room." Kit instructed as he climbed back on top of the pallets and continued building.

"Alright, I'll go find Zayne." Asher said as he walked off.

Sydne waved at him sheepishly before leaving to look for Dev and Val.

The base looked mangled, like it was made with 4th grade craft materials and was sloppily put together with rope, glue, and tape. Despite that all, the base still had a homey and wholesome feeling to it. Like it was a cozy cabin in the woods.

You could find the perfect place, and just sit there, purely enjoying the comfort, the strange, spine chilling comfort that you feel.

"Hey Syd!" Val shouted as he waved his hand aggressively.

Sydne noticed and walked over. She sat down with Dev and Val by the giant TV Dine and Toby managed to find and lug all the way back here.

"Does the TV work or is this just for show?" She asked.

"It works, but we're too scared to actually watch any of the shows or channels, we're afraid it would be similar to the recording we saw earlier." Devereaux admitted as he glared up at the TV.

"We could always just turn it off, you know?" Val said. It was obvious he was trying to be brave and courageous but it was also obvious he was terrified of the giant black glass and polymer sheet connected to a thin border that stood in front of them.

Val got up shakily to turn on the TV, but before he could Asher and Zayne arrived.

"Hey guys, what did we miss?" Zayne asked as he walked over and sat by Dev. Asher followed behind and sat next to Sydne.

"Nothing, just trying to find the bravery to turn on this TV." Dev said as he pointed up.

"I don't think that's a good idea, we might find that lady again, she was hella creepy." Asher said.

"Or you'll burn the base down." A voice said.

Everyone looked up to find Kit hanging upside down from the ceiling.

"If we use any electricity in this base the thing will burn down in an electrical fire and we'll be stuck with the employees having full access to our bodies." Kit said as he jumped down. "A-K-A, we'll die."

"We would either way, eventually we would age and die of Pancreatic Cancer or Congestive Heart Failure, or something painful and slow. I'd rather be food." Asher snarked.

"Fair argument." Kit agreed.

"Or die playing cringe parkour games?" Sydne teased.

"Yup, pretty much." Asher laughed.

♀ ♀ ♀

Soon enough Dine and Toby came, and Alex took a break from working to listen to Kit.

"Okay, so we have bedrooms set up, but we're all gonna have to share. Alex and I were talking and we decided that Dev, Sydne, and I should share a room, Alex, Asher, and Val will all share a room, and finally Dine, Toby and Zayne will all share a room."

"Of course I'm with Zayne." Toby sighed.

"Why do I have to be with Val..." Asher whined.

"I thought you said these would be good ideas! Not bad ideas." Kit accused as he glared at Alex.

"I never said they were good- I just said they were reasonable." Alex defended.

"I want a room with Kit." Toby said.

"I want a room with Dev!" Zayne shouted.

"I want a room with Syd." Asher stated.

"I want a room with Val." Dine commanded.

"I want a room with Kit!" Alex hollered, joining in the chanting.

"What do you mean you were the one who made up the roommates in the first place!" Kit whined in confusion.

Bitsy Kids

Eventually everyone was chanting at Kit to get their roommates changed, it looked as if a mob had formed around him asking him for his life savings or to donate a single penny to feed starving kids in Africa or something along those lines.

It had gotten so bad he had to flee up to the ceiling and watch the mob friend group shout aggressively. The only people who probably weren't yelling and complaining were Sydne and Devereaux.

"What do you want from me…" Kit cried. "I'm just a powerless gremlin…" He sobbed, pretending to cry.

Before the mob could get any louder the lights shut off, the screaming buzz died along with the light.

The lamps around illuminated everything, looking like an abandoned city late at night.

Suddenly a rustling sound could be heard from Sydne's purse.

"Holy satan-" Zayne said as he threw the bag off of him.

"I bet Satan would be hot." Val smirked.

"WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU. VAL THIS IS SERIOUS!" Sydne shouted.

"If he was Canon Gray- mwah, chefs kiss." He mumbled.

"I NEED STABILITY!" Sydne screamed as she stomped off.

Eventually the group fell quiet and looked over at Sydne's purse. The purse was rustling, like something was thrashing the insides.

It was the creature Sydne had caught earlier, it had woken up and chose violence, quite literally.

"Okay, let's sleep, clearly we need some." Kit declared.

"Everyone to their rooms!" Sydne called as everyone dashed away. Nobody knew exactly where to go, but they all had a general idea based on the color and designs of the duvet covers.

Everyone walked into their rooms, and looked at how the beds and furniture were placed.

In Dev, Kit, and Sydne's room, they all had separate beds, but they were all pushed up right against each other, as if they were trying to make a really big bed by combining them all. At the end of the room were two desks spread apart from each other a good

amount, sporting a pile of Scrub Daddies and a small kiddie slide as chairs for the desks.

"This place looks worse than a prison cell…" Kit mumbled.

"Weren't you the one who decorated it?" Sydne asked.

"No, Alex was in charge of all the decorating…" Kit mumbled, embarrassed.

What was the best part of the room was the beds, even though they were most likely infested with bed bugs.

Kit's bed was a BSD fan's biggest dream. It had fanart of Dazai and Chuūya showcasing their powers all over. It had grays and scenery decorating the sheets and pillow cases.

"It's so cool!" Kit smiled as he jumped onto his bed and squealed.

"Shut up, you sound like Sydne anytime she does *anything* that gives her a serotonin boost." Toby sighed annoyingly as he passed by.

"Hey! I'm not that obnoxious!" Sydne scolded.

Toby shrugged. "If you say so."

Sydne's bed had everything that would fit and classify in the "Pastel Soft," aesthetic.

Everything from strawberries to My Melody was plastered all over the sheets and duvet of that bed. Even though Sydne had the capability of writing the most disturbing books and scenes that make you question your own morality, she took femininity to a whole new level and adored pink, soft, cute things more than she should.

Devereaux had rather a more simple pattern, it was just penguins. Toby and Dine even managed to find a penguin plush to give to him.

Alex, Asher, and Val's room was nearly identical, three beds, but pushed farther away this time, and then two pathetic desks at the end of the room using less materials, in this case a soil filled plant pot and some clean plates that suspicious spaghetti was scraped off of, as sad excuses for chairs.

The pattern on Alex's bed was quite simple and cute- despite how violent Alex can be- it was covered in adorable, wholesome cats doing various activities, such as grooming their paws or playing with a ball of yarn.

The Pattern on Asher's bed was also simple. His sheets and duvet were just covered in printed photographs of beautiful trees. Asher loved parkour but loved trees even more. They were big and strong and beautiful, and he loved taking photos of them.

"How did you find this?!" He shrieked happily.

"I don't know, I'm not Dine- or Toby." Val said matter-of-factly.

Speaking of Val, his bed was probably the best out of everyone's. His bed had Daisies and Cherry Blossoms decorating it, it was simple but aesthetically pleasing. Even though he liked to play the role of the slaying badass who would kick anyone to their grave, he couldn't resist a nice floral or sakura pattern.

"Why do we have such crappy chairs?" Val complained. "You guys do know there are real chairs you could have given us."

Toby and Dine shrugged. "Didn't feel like doing all that work." They said in sync.

"You gave yourselves more work by making these crappy chairs."

As Kit walked by he laughed and winked at Toby, who fell to the ground and started belly laughing. Clenching his stomach.

Everyone looked at him, then back to each other, and then back at Toby. Getting more concerned every second that passed.

"What's so funny?" Dine asked.

"I purposely asked Toby to give us crappy chairs just so I could hear this conversation."

Everyone looked at Kit blankly and blinked, unsure of why the two of them found it funny- but didn't say anything. Too afraid and concerned about the giggling gremlin on their floor.

Dine, Toby and Zayne's room was relatively the same, but also different. Instead of three separate beds, Toby and Dine shared one King sized bed, while Zayne's was pushed into the most sad, depressing, isolated, dark corner of the room.

"Why do you and Dine share a bed?" Zayne asked.

"Because we just slay like that." Toby smirked.

Toby and Dine's bed had Pit from Kid Icarus: Uprising all over their bed. The printings weren't coordinated very well but Toby seemed hyper fixated on it and Dine couldn't argue or refuse it.

Zayne, on the other hand, had the most emo bedspread this world had ever seen. The pattern was just the words, "Please do drugs in the bathroom," everywhere.

"What is this- this is stupid!" He revolted.

"Cry about it." Dine giggled.

You could hear Alex laughing and pounding his mattress from the other room.

Instead of the desks being at the very end of the room, they were in the middle, filling the gap between the two ends of the room.

After everyone examined the rooms for a second, they all climbed into their beds and drifted off to sleep.

Despite sleeping on literal erasers, it was oddly easy for them to fall asleep. Now, the quality of said sleep is- questionable at the very least, but they managed to drift off in just a few seconds.

Their little shack was still cool from when the AC was on, but since it stopped it started to heat up a little- causing a cozy atmosphere of a fireplace during a cold snowy night.

## Chapter 3

Everyone woke up after god knows how long. They were all groggy and even less rested than before they went to sleep.

"Oh god that was awful..." Devereaux groaned as he slipped out of bed.

Somehow, the others were still asleep, peacefully.

Devereaux hobbled out of his makeshift room and walked down into the sitting room. The lights had come back while everyone was sleeping, but it hardly felt like a night had passed.

Pitchfork Kids

Nobody knew what the light turned off declared in here, after Devereaux's sleep it was clear it wasn't a day cycle, but the most anyone could figure out is that the darkness made the employees lurking around hostile and bloodthirsty.

Without thinking Devereaux walked over and turned on the TV. He stepped back a few paces and sat down and stared tiredly at the screen.

It took him a moment to realize that he wasn't meant to touch or turn on the TV, let alone let it run.

Before he could get up to turn it off, the screen was already presenting a video.

"***WELCOME TO IKEA!***" It said in a loud booming voice.

The audio managed to wake up everyone else. Devereaux listened to everyone groan and get out of their rooms.

"What the hell was that..." Asher tried to yell despite how tired he was.

"I turned on the TV- come quick, I think this might be important." Devereaux explained.

"Didn't I say the base would burn down!" Kit shouted. Everyone looked around and noticed there was no fire. Everyone gave Kit a look of "Really?" and continued on.

Without fully understanding what was happening everyone shuffled over and flopped pathetically on the couch and floor around the TV.

"Try and stay awake, looking at you Sydne!" Devereaux scolded as he pointed to Sydne, who was lethargically laying her head on Asher's shoulder.

Sydne noticed and quickly jolted up, her face red as cherry paste. Asher's face grew red too, but nobody really noticed, everyone was still in the midst of waking up and watching the video.

"Welcome to the IKEA training tapes series!" The TV said in a cheery girls voice, similar to the one the lady had that spoke to them at the information tower.

Preview Kits

The screen faded to black and showed big white text stating; "Tape 6. Rules 8 and 3. Situation: Empty." The screen faded into a pre-recorded, horribly acted video, with one employee in the middle, looking nearly like the others- except he had a face.

"This is Samuel. Samuel is a good employee, he knows the importance of following the rules that are set by IKEA ****." Whatever came after "IKEA" was heavily distorted and impossible to understand.

"Samuel, what are your favorite rules?" The voice asked. The employee pretended to look up in thought before smiling.

"Eight and **THREE**." He replied, though it didn't seem like he was supposed to say three, it sounded like someone cut the audio and shouted three in replace to whatever he was actually saying.

"Samuel looks depressed and underpaid." Kit observed.

"No shit Sherlock, he works in retail." Zayne hissed.

Devereaux held a finger to his lips, signaling for them to be quiet.

"That's right, eight and **THREE** are very important when working here!" The voice said, the word "Three" still being shouted- but harder to hear.

"Rule eight discusses what to do when someone has their phone out between 6:73 pm and 8:24 pm on February 42nd." The voice declared.

Everyone stared at the TV in shock and confusion. You can't have a seventy-third minute, and February is definitely not 42 days long.

Everyone started to doubt and lose hope that this was an actual, serious video. Whoever did this either was pranking- or something terribly wrong has happened in this world.

"If there's an employee or human with their phone out please slap it out of their hands and take them to the nearest information tower, if these times come during nighttime and an employee or human's phone is out please do not hesitate to att***- redirect them

and inform them why this rule must be followed. Take them to the upper management office if needed."

The audio abruptly cut off at "at," like someone was about to say something that wasn't allowed or they shouldn't have said.

"Rule ***THREE*** discusses the-" Suddenly the tape cut, and then a deep guy's voice emerged.

"I would like to apologize. Rule nine is now its own separate tape. The scenario is no longer relevant to you. I am disappointed you chose this tape to watch. Please find a proper one immediately and give this one to upper management. Goodbye."

The screen flashed to black as the TV spit a VHS tape from some compartment in the back.

"That was really creepy-" Dine said blankly. Though something inside her was shaken. This place seemed to be a real store- at least before whatever shit happened, happened. It had rules and training, it had a purpose- a purpose that wasn't to torture poor teenagers just trying to survive.

Dine was washed with a sudden craving to stay. Dine started to love the base, love the aluminum aisles outside. She loved the idea of staying and felt some strange but sudden connection to it.

Dine knew she didn't have to worry though. They had just got there- and there was no way they'd be finding their way out any time soon. It would at least be a year before they would even start to figure it out- and that indeed was true. She felt safe and comforted here, and she could sense that a feeling of loss and threat would be on its way- but not for a long, long time.

She knew they would be staying for a while, and in that moment- that was all she wanted.

Alex picked up the tape. "We need a place to put this, it's probably important." He said as he pocketed the tape.

"We should try to find the rest of the tapes and try to piece everything together." Devereaux suggested.

"Bad idea. Let's just get to work, and try to forget this." Alex instructed. His voice was loud, as if a strict teacher was scolding their class for talking.

"What about we try to get them to take one of us to the upper management office and then we follow the sacrifice and then we'll ask to leave!" Kit cheered.

Everyone looked at him as he awkwardly stared back.

"Kit. That's the stupidest idea I've heard all day." Toby snarled.

"Gee, I'm sorry. I'm the only one who cares about leaving apparently."

Nobody wanted to forget about it, not even Alex- who clearly hated that video with every cell in his being. But everyone agreed to ignore it and rushed off to their jobs, despite how tired and freaked out they were. And everyone did forget about the tape- at least for a little while, but the idea of it never really left their memories- just got pushed back by a wave of other thoughts and ideas. Thoughts and ideas that in the end would seem like a waste of energy to even think about.

"Devereux- no-" Kit said flatly.

"YOU CANNOT SUPPRESS ME!" He shouted as he dashed into his shared room, carrying an unholy amount of lamps.

"If you do that I swear-" Kit scolded as he followed Devereaux.

By the time Kit finally got inside the room it was too late, Devereaux had already turned on the twenty lamps or so, causing Sydne, Kit, and Devereaux's room to radiate with light.

"WHAT THE HELL, TURN THAT OFF!" Sydne squeal-shouted as she jumped up from the desk she was writing at.

"NEVER!" Devereaux shouted as he ran out, leaving Sydne and Kit in a blinding maze of artificial lighting.

Sydne and Kit were running around their room, attempting to shut off all the lamps that somehow didn't require power chords.

"I CAN'T SEE-" Kit screamed as he tried finding switches or little rope things that would turn them off.

"Should we help them?" Toby asked.

"Nah, this is entertaining." Val smirked as he took a sip of a suspicious soda that had been sitting in the food tub for god knows how long.

"You okay Kit?" Alex asked as he walked up to the entrance of the room, which was still a blinding mess.

"GEE- I DON'T KNOW ALEX! WHAT DO YOU THINK?!" Kit yelled angrily.

Without thinking Alex leaped into the mess of lights and attempted to help.

"Why would anyone willingly go in there-" Val said, dumbfounded.

"Alex just isn't the smartest." Toby stated.

"Or- yannow..." Val giggled.

"Maybe you're right, but still."

Despite Alex's attempts to turn off the lights, almost nothing got done.

"THAT'S IT- I GIVE UP!" Sydne shouted as she stomped over to her bed and laid down.

"I can't do this by myself-" Kit whined.

"Excuse me-" Alex snarled.

"Sorry- forgot you were here-" Kit giggled. Alex rolled his eyes and continued working on trying to shut off all the lights.

"Can we just replace Devereaux with someone else?" Sydne asked.

"With who?" Kit replied.

"I don't know- like Asher or Val- or someone that won't flood our room with lights."

"If we don't wanna put up with him nobody else will."

"Fair."

After what felt like half an hour or so, Kit and Alex finally managed to shut off all the lights and throw them off the building onto the IKEA floor, watching them shatter into a million pieces.

"This was a waste of time." Sydne snarled as she stepped out of the room.

"You guys are finally done!" Toby cheered sarcastically.

"Yeah, thanks for all your help." Kit snarled. Toby gave a giggle before speaking. "Sorry Kit, but I'm not stupid." He smirked.

"Fair point." Alex said as he rubbed his eyes, trying to get them to adjust to the normal lighting.

This was a prime example of what happens to mentally unstable teenagers when they're trapped in IKEA and surrounded by fear, mystery, and faceless people running around.

As you can tell it's nothing close to good.

Honestly it wouldn't be good for any age group. But it's especially bad for this one.

"Anyway, anyone wanna go into Val, Alex and Asher's room and vibe and stuff?" Toby suggested, eager to get away from the awkwardness.

"Sure." Asher said as everyone started walking to Val's room, leaving Kit and Alex alone in a room.

"Ugh, sometimes Toby pisses me off." Kit grunted as he flopped onto his bed.

"I get that- but don't stay mad at him forever." Alex said.

"I know, I know, but still."

Alex sat awkwardly next to Kit, their faces slowly corroding with blush. Kit and Alex listened in silence for about 5 minutes to the laughter and screams from the room directly across from Kit's.

"Wanna go join them?" Alex said shakily.

"Not really, I'd rather stay here with just you." Kit said, smiling, blush also starting to overcome his face.

Kit sat up abruptly. "I like being around you Alex, I really like it." He turned and looked Alex in the eyes.

Fiction Kids

Alex's face turned full red, as if cranberry juice had been poured straight over it.

"I've always wanted to let you know something, but I don't know how so-" Alex took a deep breath and leaned into Kit's face and planted his soft, plump lips onto his and kissed him. Kit was surprised, but wasn't upset. He liked Alex, and liked being able to kiss him.

Kit closed his eyes along with Alex and they shared one long, intimate kiss. They both could feel how much the other loved them, and wanted to spend all their lives in a pool of these feelings.

Once Alex and Kit pulled away Alex's eyes darted to the ground in fear.

"I'm sorry if I- " Alex started saying, before being interrupted by Kit.

"Shhh, it's okay, I like you too." He said, as he looked longingly into Alex's eyes.

Alex smiled and finally felt at ease. He's been building up these feelings for a while, it felt good to finally let it out.

They had known eachother since they were 14. They had spent countless nights awake while the others were asleep back on Earth giggling.

They had gotten ice-cream together, executed fake bank robberies, burned down kitchens, had pillow and prank wars that lasted years, they would painted each other's bedrooms and wear each other's clothes.

They've known each other and loved each other for so long- that even in the concrete oasis of hell, Alex felt like it was the perfect time to confess.

"That was abrupt." Kit muttered as he smiled. Alex chuckled.

"Yeah- sorry about that."

"I love you." Kit whispered.

Alex smiled and looked back at him.

"I love you too."

Suddenly they heard a camera shutter and looked over. In the entryway to the room across was Sydne, holding a camera she somehow managed to find and was taking photos.

"Sydne- WHAT THE HELL-" Kit shouted as he sprang up to go fight her for the camera, but before he could get to her she had thrown up the camera towards the unfinished ceiling where Asher was sitting as he caught the camera and dashed off.

"Time to use the skills I learned from parkour fail videos!" he shouted as he tried to leap over a gap. Sadly and quite pathetically though, he missed and fell face first into the floor, luckily the pallets were somehow soft and didn't cause him much pain.

Everyone was laughing as they walked over and Zayne helped Asher up.

"You okay?" Kit asked, still laughing his ass off.

"Yeah I'm fine." Asher giggled as he stood up.

Luckily, the fall and sudden humor made Kit and Alex forget all about the camera, allowing Asher to shove it into his hoodie pocket without them noticing, keeping the possible blackmail and quote-on-quote, "documentation."

Ever since that moment, Kit and Alex we're officially together. Sydne tried to hold a fake wedding but nobody had the energy to put together a fake altar and listen to Sydne talk in Shakespearean-English for about three hours.

Despite the terrible situation they were in, the uncertainty, the danger, the everything,

everyone was still giggling.

this is why they were all friends,

this is why they're always together,

this is what friendship truly was,

this is what the group was meant to be like, from the first day they all spent together back on Earth.

♀ ♀ ♀

PRISM ARC

As time went on the group accumulated lots of stuff, countless pieces of furniture, food, and "Daddy Scrub Daddies" as Dine called them. They didn't have a use for them, just thought they were cute and funny to keep around.

There was only one thing they left the base to look for.

Tapes.

Those dreaded tapes full of mystery and backhanded rules.

Alex didn't want anything to do with those tapes and tried to keep everyone from finding them and playing them. He kept the tape they had found that one day hidden away- not even Kit knew where he kept it. Dine on the other hand was the complete opposite. Dine wanted to watch all the tapes, learn everything she could about IKEA, but there was one problem.

The tapes were almost impossible to find, and the group didn't have that much time.

The time when the lights were on got shorter and the time when lights were off got longer. Which meant less time to be productive and more time for employees to absolutely obliterate their living breathing selves.

They got more violent too, the gremlin in the purse nearly broke free at some points, luckily Val managed to knock the thing out whenever it almost did and Asher would tape up the purse each time. Eventually the purse no longer looked like a purse, it now looked like an oversized box that was shoved into a duct tape machine.

"My purse looks apocalyptic- not cute!" Sydne complained as she looked at her purse. "I don't want it to look like this- this was a good gift!"

"Well the thing inside keeps getting stronger- it'll wake up and kill us all if we take off the tape!" Asher exclaimed.

"Then we need to kill it!" Sydne instructed.

"And who's gonna do that?"

"ME!" A voice shouted.

Everyone looked over to see Val, standing in a heroic pose with a lamp swung over his shoulder.

"Why do you look like a try-hard actor-" Kit said matter-of-factly.

"I look like I'm about to kick some ass!" He shrieked back.

"You? Val? Kick ass?" Toby chuckled. "Maybe in another universe where Asher isn't a literal idiot and Sydne hates pink." He smirked.

Val rolled his eyes and stepped up to the purse.

"Get ready for a beating you little gremlin!" He shouted as he raised the lamp.

"Wait- stop-" Sydne cried as she attempted to grab the lamp back.

"My stuff is in there, and I don't want it to be crushed into a million pieces!" She shouted.

"Well how else do I kill the damn thing?!"

"By opening the bag."

"It's covered in layer after layer of tape- how are we supposed to just- open it?." Kit asked.

"With this knife." Asher said as he pulled a clean, stainless-steel knife from his hoodie pocket.

"Why do you just have a knife on you-" Alex asked, confused as to what had just happened.

"Good question- I actually don't know." Asher replied as he knelt down and began cutting through the tape.

"Be careful." Sydne reminded him as she knelt down.

The knife cut through the tape so smoothly, as if it was soft fleshy skin, as if the tape was made with the soft, bloody flesh of a human face opposed to plastic, fabric-mesh and polyethylene it's supposed to be made out of.

"Why are you pushing so hard?" Zayne asked.

"I'm not- I'm hardly applying any pressure- this is so weird..." Asher mumbled as he watched the blue steel blade glide through the tape as if it were cutting cheese.

Asher slid off the tape from the purse and looked at the bag for a second.

Pitchfork Kids

Asher squeezed the duct tape and looked at the knife. The tape wasn't soft or any weird material- it obviously was strong enough to keep the employee in there. But it cut so easily, as if it was soft butter.

"It looks good as new" He mumbled in astonishment.

"Better than it did before I even taped it up…"

Everyone hovered over Asher and examined the purse. The purse wasn't falling apart or anything like that, but there were scratches and small tears in it that suddenly all disappeared after the duct tape was placed on it. Amazed at what it had managed to do, but before anyone could really comprehend what the tape had done, the lights shut off, awakening the employee inside causing it to thrash and start tearing the bag open.

Asher screeched and threw the bag towards the middle of the hallway.

"Here goes nothing-" Val gulped as he walked a few feet in front of the purse.

The employee's fist burst through a gap it had created in the purse as Val raised the lamp he was holding, preparing to swing.

"It'll be okay- you can do this-" He kept mumbling to himself, his face growing weary and his legs starting to shake.

"This was a bad idea-" Devereaux said as he looked away.

"I-It's fine guys, I-I got this…" Val said, attempting to sound reassuring but he couldn't get rid of the permanent tremble in his voice.

The employee was still struggling to get out of the purse, and Val knew it would get out. Everyone knew that, but what nobody knew was if Val would make it out of this alive- hell, if anyone would make it out of this alive.

Val's heart pounded as he watched the employee finally get out of the purse.

"In the name of Canon Gray, spare me!" He shouted as the employee started dashing towards him.

Val swung at the employee as it tried to jump on him, knocking it back. Val kept swinging blindly as the employee kept trying to jump and attack him.

Everyone else flinched and stepped back, holding each other as if they were a scared family watching a young child die to a chronic illness.

The employee wasn't getting hurt by Val's swings, but Val didn't get hurt from the employee either. They were both in the middle, nobody losing anything or gaining anything.

The employee was a lot stronger than before, when it attacked Kit. It was faster, stronger, and somehow heavier despite it being the size of a small chihuahua.

Val was scared and could barely think, all he could think of was "SWING, SWING, SWING," he couldn't come up with any whitty plan or any way to actually stay alive.

This was what battle was.

No time for a plan.

No time for an idea.

One thing goes through your head.

And that one thing tells you to attack the bastard with all you've got.

"OW-" He shouted as he stopped swinging, lifted up his left foot, and hopped backwards.

The employee managed to sneak under Val's lamp and bite one of his ankles.

The bite broke through the skin and started swelling, his ankle turning purple, blood and pus leaking from it, the employee probably broke the bone too.

"HOLY MOTHER OF HELL-" He shouted as he tried to put pressure on it.

Now that Val was preoccupied and injured the employee managed to jump up to his face and start beating and scratching the crap out of him.

Brick Kids

His face started to bleed and his vision started to blur. The employee had a grasp of his clothes, his hair and his shirt.

The employee was hurt too- but not that much. There were some bruises on its face but that was the height of it.

Everyone watched in horror as their friend began to fail, he was bleeding so much it was all over the ground and all over his clothes- there was probably enough blood to fill more than a century's supply of pads, or those really large pools billionaires own.

"I can barely see straight!" He shouted as he started to swerve like he was high or drunk. Despite that, he was still swinging, and pretty hard if you ask me.

"I need to help Val-" Kit said as he started walking towards the mess, but Toby grabbed his hand.

"Don't- Val can do this." He said, surprisingly confident. Hearing Toby say that eased everyone, like God came down to reassure them Val would be fine. But Toby's not God- so that was kind of weird.

Val kept swinging, yet he still looked like he was about to collapse. His brain started rushing thoughts around, it couldn't silence down. Everything from what he wanted to eat to "what the hell is gonna happen to the group if I don't do this?" was just circling around his mind like a merry-go-round.

Val kept swinging at the small employee rushing at him, his fists raised and violence rushing in his horrifying blank head.

"You blood-thirsty piece of shit!" He shouted as he swung and hit the employee, actually managing to do some damage this time.

"HELL YEAH!" Kit shouted. Despite the blood loss and blunt force trauma, he managed to start feeling good and motivated to do even worse to it.

Val hit it again.

And again.

And again. So many times it started to shed just as much blood as Val was, they both now looked pale and sickly. The room began to smell like metal, the blood odor began to fill their lungs. Cuts and

bruises on both Val and the employee, blood leaking out of it, their clothes all stained from oxidizing blood.
Both on the verge of death.

Swing.

Get hit.

Swing.

Get hit.

Swing.

Get hit.

Rinse and repeat until one of them inevitably dies.

Both had backed off, tired and worn out from the fight, but neither were going to back down until one of them was a rotting corpse 6-feet under.

"Are you done?" Val asked sarcastically to the employee, who sheepishly shook its head no.

"Well you're about to be." Val smirked before yelling and running toward the employee, his heart beating fast and his lungs filling with air, possibly his last breath. He raised his lamp and swung at the employee with all the force he could muster, the employee hit the wall, blood splashing onto the pallet from his skull, and falling down, leaving a trail of smeared blood. If he didn't die from that he surely would die from blood loss.

Just when Val was about to turn around to the group and raise his fist in victory, he felt woozy, everything spun, his eyes closed shut and he hit the ground.

"Val!" Kit and Toby shouted as they rushed over to him.

Val was laying in a pool of his own blood, that thing managed to do a lot of damage despite how small it was.

The employee looked like a small copy of Val's unconscious body, except this one wasn't breathing. Instead of a pool of blood forming around it, it was soaked up by the clothes- and somehow it was soaked up on its "face," if you could call it that.

"Will Val be okay?" Devereaux asked as he looked down at him.

Prism Kids

"We don't know- we don't have medical help- these cuts are deep, his ankle looks diseased- which it probably is, and he probably has like eight different forms of brain damage." Zayne said as he examined him.

"We need a doctor, I doubt this IKEA has one." He sighed.

Alex stepped back and looked over at the duct tape.

"What about the tape we used on Sydne's purse? If it can fix that maybe could fix Val." He said as he picked up the roll of tape.

"That fixed minor things on an inanimate object- this is complex shit on a human being." Kit snapped.

"Sydne, try some on the gap in your purse." Alex said as he handed over the roll.

"Uh- okay." She said as she walked over and slapped some tape on the hole.

After about five minutes Sydne took it off, revealing a good-as-new, untouched purse.

"It can fix a hole in a bag, surely it can fix Val- it would just take time though." Alex said as he ripped off a piece and placed it on one of Val's wounds.

"We'll give it about a week or until Val says he feels better." Alex said blankly as he wrapped his ankle in tape.

By the time he was done, Val was nearly covered in tape from head to toe, his head had been wrapped about eight times- to help with the eight different types of brain damage, as well as wrapped all over his face, arms and legs.

"I feel like an idiot wrapping someone in duct tape thinking that'll make them feel better-" Alex finally said as he stepped back.

"I hope it works." Asher sighed.

"I'll take him to his bed, you guys figure out what to do with the dead demon thing." Alex said as he picked up Val bridal style and carried him into one of the rooms.

Everyone else looked at the dead employee who seemed to defy the physics of being dead.

"Why does it look like the cloth on its face- " Devereaux said as he tugged on what he assumed was the employee's face skin. To his surprise he removed some sort of skin-colored, mesh mask that was covering the employee.

"Jesus Christ-" Dine said as Devereaux threw the mask to the side.

Removing the mask revealed a face- like the ones humans had. Its blue eyes were wide open but drained of life, looking dull and matte. His eyes were a bright neon blue with his pupil being replaced with a neon yellow gear. The employee had fluffy, dirty blonde hair and brown skin. Blood was dripping from his lip, except the blood was an odd mix of yellow and blue, but it quickly turned red when exposed to the outside air.

"This thing must've been human once- like us..." Toby muttered.

"Wait- so people can turn into employees- and live here?!" Dine said, shocked.

"Guess so- I mean it makes sense why there's so many." Kit said.

Alex returned and noticed the employee had been unmasked and now looked normal- besides being the size of a tiny dog.

"Oh god- is that Asher?" Alex stammered as a half joke.

"Ah yes, he definitely looks like a mayonnaise brunette boy." Toby said with a sarcastic tone.

"I'm right here!" Asher shrieked as he looked back over at Alex.

"I'm kidding, I'm kidding." Alex chuckled as he walked over to the lifeless employee.

"I'm throwing this thing off the roof." He said

"I finished the ceiling- remember?" Kit said.

"Well, better get me up there."

After about thirty minutes of watching Kit remove a pallet from the ceiling, Alex climbed up and stood by the edge.

"You should say something inspiring! Something we'll quote for generations!" Dine shouted.

"Like what?" Alex shouted back.

"I don't know- think of something!"

Alex looked over and thought for a moment, before awkwardly giving a sad excuse of a speech. "So- uh- on this- era in time, Val defeated an- uhm- employee-gremlin-demon thingy and almost died. He did not though and he's being fixed with- uh- Rapunzel tape- and this employee is dead so- uh- I shall throw him off this ledge where he will remain dead and rot on the floor of IKEA." He stammered as he tossed the body off the ledge of the base, watching it splat like a glob of bread dough on the floor.

Everyone below started laughing as they helped Alex down and watched Kit re-attach the pallet to the ceiling.

"That speech brought a tear to my eye." Zayne taunted as he pretended to wipe a tear from his face.

"Well I'm sorry I can't be inspiring on the spot." Alex mocked.

While that was going on, Val lay passed out on his bed. This moment was an incredible sacrifice and depiction of bravery for him- something that will eventually be drowned out and forgotten in the grand scheme of things.

Let's just take a moment to appreciate this now, before it's washed out of your brain too.

## Chapter 4

Val winced as Alex lightly squeezed his ankle.

"Does it still hurt?" He asked. Val nodded.

"Does it feel better from when the employee first bit it?" Val nodded again.

"How many fingers am I holding up?" Alex asked as he held up three fingers. Val squinted and held up 4 in response.

"Well your vision is getting better." He said.

Zayne walked in the room and met up with Alex and Val.

"Is he doing better?" he asked.

"Yeah, but he still can't talk or see very well."

Val sighed and flopped back onto his back.

Historical Kids

"Cheer up Val, you just fought a demon- and won! You should be happy you even were brave enough to *think* about fighting the thing- let alone actually doing it." Alex said, attempting to encourage him, but Val remained upset.

"I'm gonna go do my work- you stay here." He said as he walked away, leaving Val alone in his bed, unable to walk or escape the psychological torture known as boredom.

Val hated sitting down and doing nothing- at least ever since the group had gotten stuck here. Nobody had the slightest idea how long they've been stuck, but it was long enough to make sitting down and resting all day feel unnatural, there was always work to be done, even though Val and Devereaux had to stop quality control they did take up other jobs. Val would help scavenge with Dine and Toby, and Devereaux would help Kit and Alex build.

Doing nothing felt illegal, except for those moments they collectively agreed when the "Work day," ended- if you could even call it that.

Everyone's internal clocks synced when the lights shut on or off as day or night- despite the concerningly short hours the lights were on and the increasingly long hours the lights spent off.

The employees got incredibly more violent too, as if the IKEA was holding back before- and just now it was coming at them all with full force.

♀ ♀ ♀

"Val- where did Alex hide the tape," Dine whisper-shouted as she burst into Alex, Asher and Val's room."

Sometime during that day the entire group decided to leave for some "Fresh air," despite the fact they'd just be breathing in the same artificial schmuck they were breathing in at the base.

Val still couldn't talk or see well because of his fight with the employee, therefore decided not to go out with the rest of them. Leaving everyone to trust Dine to watch Val to make sure he'd be

Pitch Wars

okay while they were gone. But Val did know when to do something, when not too, and when something should be kept a secret.

Clearly, there was a reason Alex didn't want anyone to access the tapes.

So obviously, Val blindly pointed to where Alex kept the tapes hidden because Val didn't care as he was covered in magical duct tape, almost died, and lost all regard for society and or the wishes of others.

"Thanks, Val- you're poggers," Dine said as she rushed over to Alex's bed and started rummaging underneath it.

Underneath was a depressing plethora of items, dust, Scrub Daddies, a random cat plushie and a single red crayon. Among the mess though, Dine found the sacred item she's been looking for.

"The tape..." She mumbled in awe as she looked at it, the tape had a strange field, drawing it to her constantly. Ever since she watched the video she couldn't stop thinking about it- she just wanted to learn everything about IKEA now, staying there sounded like heaven compared to going back to her hometown.

Dine was left in the base alone, she was left to look after Val, she didn't know how much time she had but she hoped it would be enough to watch the full tape again.

Dine popped the tape into the gap in the back of the TV and started to watch. Though- instead of the big booming voice and the retro-style graphics, it just rested on a black screen.

"We've told you. This is corrupted. Please find the proper tape. ***NOW***." The voice said.

"Ugh- now I can't watch it." Dine sighed as she threw the remote at the TV.

Once Dine threw the remote and it cartoonishly bounced off the corner, the TV started to speak again.

"The tape can be found by an information tower, as long as you have Jea- *her* permission." Dine perked up.

"Information tower..." She mumbled. She stood up and looked through the entrance, recognizing a particular blue light they had

found when they first came here, the information tower. Where they had met the lady, where they had learned that they'll be suck, *where they had learned how to live.*

"I'll be back tower- not now, but soon." Dine said, determination riddling her voice.

Right as Dine stepped inside Alex and Zayne rushed back into the base and dashed for Val's room.

"What the- is everything okay?!" Dine asked as she followed them.

"Sydne just reminded us Val might have severe blood loss and dying or something- I mean he lost like 5 liters- AND WE THOUGHT COVERING HIM IN DUCT TAPE WAS A GOOD IDEA! AND LEFT HIM HERE!" Alex shouted.

"You guys have some weird paranoia." Devereaux muttered.

Dine looked back into the entrance and saw the rest of the group dash back in and into Val's room.

"I mean it is healing duct tape- all his cuts and scars healed after a day, it'll probably fix his blood." Sydne said.

"What's a symptom to look for?" Zayne asked.

"Is he paler than Asher?"

"No-"

"Then he's fine, the duct tape is doing its job fine." Sydne scoffed as she stepped away.

"So you all just ran back here to see if Val was dying of blood loss-" Dine asked blankly.

"Basically." Asher replied, shrugging. "Wait I'm not that pale-" he whined after noticing what Sydne had said.

"I mean- she ain't wrong." Devereaux chuckled.

Asher gave an exaggerated scoff and stomped his foot lightly on the wooden pallet below him.

Dine kept the tape hidden in her jean pocket.

Dine was caring less and less about everyone- except Toby. Dine would always care about Toby, she dreamt she could stay in IKEA forever, just her and Toby. Dine had already accepted their

defeat- the fact that forever, they would always be stuck. But she needed to make sure at least Toby could stay with her there, and that they could live within the rules of IKEA, which meant she needed tapes, which meant she needed to visit the information tower one last time.

Honestly, it's difficult to say why she resorted to this. It's obvious Earth is no haven- but this place wasn't even close to better. It was basically a concrete hell.

I believe Dine had a nervous breakdown. Discovering the only way to ever feel joy in her life again was to convince herself that IKEA was her new home. The place to live in. That they were all meant to end up here and start a brand new life- just her and Toby.

It was the only idea that could bring her any sort of peace, a sliver of joy if you will.

And when all other methods of being happy are taken away, and you find the one thing that just makes everything a wee bit better.

That's when you crave that shit like how a junky craves a hit.

You become obsessive, and over time it doesn't even bring you joy anymore. You just want it because you've wanted it for so long. You throw away everything you got for a chance to just feel what you've been dreaming for.

I didn't know that was possible.

But you can get addicted to a place.

More specifically,

Hell.

But what do I know? I'm just a regular old guy whose analyzing the situation like how my English teacher taught me to.

♀ ♀ ♀

That night, whilst everyone was sleeping, Dine sneaked out.

Despite the dangers the night time brought, Dine knew she would be fine, just don't be loud.

Pitch Wars

Dine wasn't ready to fight for her life, she wasn't ready to bash an employee with a lamp, nobody was- especially after what they saw happen to Val, the duct tape may be doing it's work but he was still bedridden and suffering.

Dine didn't care though, her mind was already set on what she wanted, and nothing would pull her back.

As Dine walked through the darkened paths, it lit up ever so lightly by the sickening colored glow of different lamps, the farther she got away from the base the more guilt piled up inside of her, it was making her sick to her stomach- but she already had her mind set on what she wanted. No- not wanted, what she *needed*.

She needed to find this tape, she knew everyone would be mad- but all she really cared about was Toby, nothing more.

Dine looked back, now barely able to see the obnoxious base everyone was peacefully sleeping away in.

As Dine drew closer to the tower she could hear the employees hobbling around her, they weren't close enough to notice and attack but she could definitely tell they were there. She grabbed a small bedside lamp and shut off its light, hoping to blend in more with the dark- despite all the other lights around her.

Her footsteps sounded much louder now and so did her breathing, it felt like an employee at any second would attack her. The tower was approaching though, for some reason, Dine thought the tower would keep her safe.

Eventually, Dine got close enough to ditch her lamp, which she did and she started running towards it.

She was so far away from the base she would have to wait till the lights came back on to go back or else she would get lost.

"Oh sweet satan I finally got to you!" She shouted gleefully, forgetting about being quiet to keep employees from noticing her.

She walked around the somewhat thin tower countless times, looking everywhere for a tape, but none was found.

"What gives?!" Dine sighed angrily as she kept circling the luminous blue tower.

Dine grunted angrily and kicked the tower.

Suddenly, the screens blared on, revealing the office- but darkened, as if the lights were off when this was recorded.

"I see I've found someone willing to join my forces?" A ladies voice said- similar to the one they had heard when they first interacted with the tower.

Suddenly a desk lamp was turned on, revealing the same girl as before sitting in the office chair behind the desk.

"Well, I've got a deal for you! I know how badly you want the tapes- you really want to learn all there is about this place- because you want to stay." She said matter of factly, Dine nodded in response, as if the lady was watching her.

"Well, I can't just tell you where the tapes are, someone else might see- but I can help you locate them, be careful though- some are corrupted, you **must** give me the corrupted copies if you find any." The lady said , her voice suddenly getting very stern.

"Now, I believe you have something for me?" The lady asked.

Dine had taken the tape with her, just in case she needed it.

Dine nodded and pulled it out of her pants pocket.

"Hand it to me." The lady said as she got up and held her hand out towards the camera. The lady kept getting closer, to the point half of her arm was cut off from the camera's view.

Dine glanced to her right side and noticed a long, thin, wrinkly hand slowly stretching out beside her.

It moved slowly, as if it was an old lady behind her raising out her hand, it was shaky, pale, gray and unnaturally long and thin. The fingers were stretched demonically long and had disgusting green-stained nails, the skin looked like rubber and it wrinkled in such a way that it made it look like the possible bone beneath it was no more than paper thin.

Dine wanted to badly to look behind her and find out where this arm was coming from, clearly not the lady in the screen- the lady in the screen looked so young and beautiful, and the arm wasn't clothed either, the lady in the screen was wearing a long sleeve suit top so the arm would have been clothed if it was hers.

"Give it to me." The lady said again in a stern, booming voice.

The lady on the screen jolted forward and so did the arm, as if it was controlled by her.

Dine was mortified, this looked inhuman- god knows what it's connected to. Dine felt as if it would grab her neck and strangle her at any moment.

Dine shook as she placed the tape into the ominous hand that was trembling beside her.

After she did, the long, stick-like fingers slowly curled around the tape and the hand and arm started retracting, and so did the arm she could see from the screen.

Dine wanted to turn back so badly, but was too paralyzed with fear to even blink.

The lady on the screen had pulled back her arm, her hand now holding the tape.

"Good, good." The lady said, a smirk crowding her face.

Suddenly, the screens snapped off and the lights blared on.

"Shit!" Dine mumbled to herself as she started dashing back toward the base. She had to get back before anyone noticed she was gone. Dine wasn't scared because the lady simply took the tape and didn't tell her anything else- unlike what she promised.

Dine had to run back to her base in five minutes to make sure she could climb back into her bed and present herself as if she didn't escape during the middle of the night and had experienced great trauma.

PRISM WORKADS

By the time Dine had returned about half of everyone were already awake, and most likely looking for Dine.

Dine sighed and awkwardly knocked on the bottom of the ramp, wincing as she did.

After a minute, a collection of steps waddled over and someone pushed down the ramp.

"Hi Alex..." Dine sighed, looking down at her feet to avoid eye contact.

"Where the hell have you been?!" Toby shouted as he scurried over.

Dine looked up for a second to look at Toby, but then darted her eyes toward the ground again.

"Sorry... I saw something last night and felt the need to check it out..." She mumbled as Toby grabbed her hand and pulled her into the base.

Kit stepped out of Asher, Alex and Val's room to see what was happening.

"Why are we obsessing over Dine- did she kill something-" Kit said jokingly, yet still confused.

"I left during the night to grab something." She chuckled, still avoiding eye-contact.

"You had us worried sick!" Toby sneered as he threw his arms around her. The hug didn't feel embraceful, as if the whole point of it was for looks.

After Toby pulled away Alex started talking again.

"Val told us why you actually left." Alex said, glaring.

"What do you mean? I thought he couldn't speak-" Dine said in confusion.

"He can't, but Sydne always has pen and paper on her- little weirdo..." Alex muttered

"HEY!" Sydne shouted from her room as she poked her head out into the hall. "I'm a writer, you must always be prepared for everything."

Bishop Kids

Alex rolled his eyes, then looked back at Dine as Sydne left the room.

"He said that you asked where the tape was, that *I* had hidden for a very *good* reason, and then had left while we were all asleep."

Dine knew she was caught now, but didn't want to admit it.

"I never asked for a tape, what would I want with that smelly old thing anyway?"

"If you didn't take it, why can't I find it?"

Dine shook, she wasn't a good liar, and she certainly wasn't that good at making cover stories.

"I don't know, someone else must have taken it, because I sure didn't."

"Pat her down." Alex commanded.

"What do you mean pat me down? What is this, an airport!?" Dine shrieked defensively.

The outburst was enough to wake up Asher, Dev and Zayne from their slumber and cause everyone else to draw to the scene, Kit was even pushing Val in a makeshift wheelchair made with a broken chair and tennis balls, to come watch.

"You took it! I know you did!" Alex yelled back.

Val nodded towards the audience.

"Look! Val even agrees!" Alex pointed to Val.

Dine looked back and yelled, "I NEVER DID ANYTHING ALONG THOSE LINES!"

Now the fight was getting heated, Toby stood in the corner, waiting for Dine to calm down so he could pat her down or strip search her, or whatever Alex wanted.

"If you didn't do it, you wouldn't be getting so defensive!"

"Am I not allowed to feel offended that you assumed I'd betray you all like that?!"

Dine gazed over to Toby and shouted at him.

"TELL HIM THAT I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!"

Toby was frozen in place, unsure of what to do.

"DON'T DRAG TOBY INTO THIS!" Alex screamed.

"YOU ALREADY DID WHEN YOU ASKED HIM TO PAT ME DOWN!" Dine shouted back.

Val was starting to get mad, very mad. He wanted so badly to stand up and yell out and stop the fight, saying something like he saw wrong- or just throw Dine under the bus.

Despite his wanting, he was still unable to walk or speak, the duct tape had been working fine- but nobody had found real medical supplies to help him.

The only thing that could speed up his recovery would be to slap more duct tape onto him and probably eat some of it.

Val tugged on Kit's sleeve and pointed to the duct tape around his swollen ankle.

"You want more duct tape?" Kit whispered, attempting to not interrupt the fight between Dine and Alex- if you could even call it that anymore, it now was just a match on who could yell louder and assert more dominance as if they were wolves.

Val nodded.

Kit ran off and brought him a pair of scissors and the roll of duct tape, which still had a surprising amount left.

Val cut off a piece and wrapped three layers of duct tape on his neck.

"What are you doing-?" Asher whispered to Val, but he was ignored.

Val then started wrapping his ankle with more tape, by the time he stopped the tape made the ankle thicker than his shoe.

Val tried standing but still couldn't, so he wrapped more duct tape on his ankle- but also his whole leg. He also wrapped more around his throat.

Eventually his entire left pant leg was covered in thick layers of duct tape, and his neck looked like the tape was taken off his head would roll off his head. He tried to stand and could tell he couldn't. He still couldn't speak. He started wrapping duct tape right under his hair and even the corner Kit and Alex had originally placed tape. He then tried to say something, but could only let out a whisper.

"Crap..." He whispered to himself.

If he layered anymore on his neck he wouldn't be able to balance when he tried to walk, so he did the only thing he could. He ripped off a piece and shoved it in his mouth and started to chew.

The tape was sticky and rubbery, it rubbed against his teeth and repelled his saliva, it was just bundling up together and turning into a hard wad as if it was dry gum. The texture made Val want to vomit right there but he kept chewing, it tasted like a piece of thick paper drowned in wet paint that was also covered in adhesive polymer.

It's best you don't ask how he knows what that tastes like.

Eventually he managed to swallow, it took him a second to let it pass through his throat, and then another minute to make himself not want to throw up.

Then he tried to speak again.

"Hey!" He shouted.

He jolted his hand violently and cupped his mouth. He was surprised at how well it worked.

Alex and Dine stopped fighting and looked over at Val.

Val sat there awkwardly, he could feel everyone's gaze on him like some cheap body mist.

Everyone was surprised, nobody had seen him talk for what felt like weeks, and yet here he was- covered in massive amounts as duct tape- he might as well be the roll itself standing there, yelling at them.

"That's right, 70% of my current weight is the duct tape and I am normal again!" Val said as he straightened his back, finally feeling better, and stood tall.

"Is that why you wanted the roll- so you could fix yourself and you could yell at them for fighting?" Kit asked.

"Yes, idiot." Val replied, a smile crowding his face.

Val took a wobbly step forward . "Stop fighting," he commanded.

Brickwork Kids

"Do you think advice from Elementary School anti-bullying videos is going to make us stop? Because you're wrong." Dine scoffed.

"Well, this is still a stupid thing to fight about. Who cares if Dine has the tape? It's a silly form of technology from the 70's, literally I could care less on who has it." Val sighed.

Alex huffed and looked away from Dine.

"Whatever. You're dismissed." Alex mumbled as he walked away, bringing the argument to an oddly abrupt stop.

"Since when did we make Alex the headmaster of us-" Kit asked confusedly.

"Alex is just upset I guess." Val said.

"Now, Asher please get your knife and help me cut off all this tape please- I can feel my circulation being cut off." Val stammered.

"Okay." Asher said as he knelt down by Val and pulled out his knife.

"I'm going to go see if Alex is okay, I'll be back soon." Kit said as he walked off.

"Alright, we'll stay here with Asher." Sydne shouted back.

Sydne and Dine sat by Asher and watched as he carefully cut through the margarine-like tape.

"Do you actually have the tape?" Sydne said as she glanced at Dine.

"Well, not anymore," she muttered. "I gave it to some lady, it doesn't even work anymore anyway."

Sydne gave her a grave look but didn't speak.

"Screw you all..." Dine said after a couple minutes of silence and walked off.

"Dine- no..." Toby sighed as he got up and followed her.

Val, Asher, Sydne, Zayne and Dev watched as Toby and Dine started walking away, Toby desperately trying to make Dine stop being mad.

Brick Kids

"Way to go guys, we're stuck in a crappy house in the middle of a death trap with two pissed off people." Zayne scoffed sarcastically. He then got up and walked into his room.

"I guess I'm leaving too, I don't wanna be here." Devereaux sighed as he did the same as Zayne.

"Ugh, this is all my fault..." Val muttered as he buried his face- or what was exposed of it- into his hands.

"It's not your fault- you didn't do anything-" Sydne said as she looked up at him.

"If I just shut my mouth and let them fight it out everyone wouldn't be so upset and depressed." Val grunted as he crossed his arms.

"Oh god- if you let them fight it out we'd have a mangled, bloody, dead Dine on the ground and a half monster Alex." Asher chuckled as he continued to cut through the duct tape.

"Don't say that- I don't know what we'd do if any of us died." Val said.

"Especially if they were torn apart by those employees, but that's not something we have to worry about." Sydne said, smiling.

"Yeah, I guess you're right, I trust everyone to be smart and not get themselves killed." Val sighed, the tense mood of the room finally beginning to relax.

"Freaking glitch-" Asher muttered as he jolted the knife away from Val's leg and his left hand, censoring his wish to curse for the sake of everyone else.

"What happened-" Val asked as he looked down at Asher.

"I cut my finger..." Asher whimpered as he wiped the blood off with his sleeve.

"Oh no," Sydne muttered as she grabbed Asher's hand and started examining it.

"Put some tape on it and it should be fine." Sydne said as she looked away to get the roll of tape, Asher's hand still in hers.

Asher's face was red as cherry paste as he looked at the back of Sydne's head, shocked.

Val was holding his breath, desperately trying not to giggle.

"Got it!" Sydne said as she ripped her hand away from Asher's to tear off a piece. Asher's blush disappeared, but his excitement didn't.

Sydne then took his hand again and wrapped a little piece of duct tape around it.

"Better?" Sydne said as she looked up at Asher. "Oh my gosh you look sunburnt-" Sydne chuckled as she lightly touched Asher's cheek, making him redder- and bringing blush to Sydne's face too.

"This is cute and all- but can you stop being a 90 Day Fiance couple and cut the tape off- I can't feel my foot." Val interrupted.

"Oh yeah! Sure," Asher said as he re-focused and went back to cutting the tape off.

The knife glided through the thick layers of tape flawlessly. Even Sydne, unarguably the weakest of the group was able to cut through with ease.

It came off easily in thick chunks, and was melted together like butter or a really soft cast.

"Alex, is everything okay?" Kit asked as he sat next to Alex at the front of the base and intertwined Alex's hand in his.

Alex looked away but tensed his hand around Kits.

"Alex, what's wrong?"

"Nothing, I just- I just don't like those tapes, they'll do something bad- I know it!" Alex said, lightly stomping their feet.

"It's just a tape- calm down."

"I don't think we should trust Dine as much anymore, knowing full well that she was reckless enough to lose it..."

"Don't say that- we can always trust Dine!"

"I don't..."

"You have to trust Dine, we've all been friends since we were living in that apartment- you can't just stop trusting her over a silly little tape."

"Sure I can, those tapes are evil." Alex hissed

"You can't just assume that- plus, Dine's super passionate about the tapes."

"You're not changing my mind- those tapes are gonna be the death of her- I swear."

"Don't say that- nobody's gonna die anytime soon, the first person who's gonna die is the first one of us to be 90 and get some chronic old-people illness."

"Not with those tapes- she'll bring something home that'll end her life." Alex snarled.

Kit sighed. "Why are you so against the tapes exactly?"

"Their training videos, meant to teach people how to work here, how to be here, how to stay here, clearly it's going to make her want to stay or bring something home that'll rip her to shreds!"

Kit rubbed Alex's arm tenderly.

"Calm down, Dine is smart enough to not get herself killed."

"Whatever..." Alex ripped his hand away from Kit and brought his knees to his chest. "I just wish she'd listen to me, I know she took it- she had to have..." Alex sighed.

"I'm sure everything will be fine, like Val said- it's just a silly tape, what's the worst that can happen?"

"So, so many things- but who am I to dwell on them." Alex shrugged, his attitude changing abruptly. Kit took a second to process the abrupt change, before shrugging it off.

"Yeah." Kit smiled as he grabbed Alex's hand again.

Alex looked over at Kit and smiled.

"You always make everything better..." Alex sighed.

"That is what I'm aiming for!" Kit said with sarcastic cockiness.

Alex chuckled, his cheeks reddening a little.

Kit stood up, forcing Alex up with him.

Preview Only

"May I have this dance?" Alex chuckled as he did an exaggerated bow. Kit laughed and nodded as he let Alex wrap his arms around his waist.

Neither of them knew the waltz, but neither of them cared. All they cared for in that moment was each other. The comforting, cotton feel of the other's hands, the homey warmth their hearts beat out, their very essence was all that they craved. Not a proper dance, just each other.

They both laughed to the point breathing was difficult as they swayed shakily to the imaginative music.

Alex and Kit gazed into each others eyes, lost in the moment, having forgotten all their worries.

Rightfully so.

♀ ♀ ♀

"Go away Toby..." Dine sniffed as she looked over her shoulder, noticing Toby walking toward her in their room.

"I'm not leaving until I convince you to stop being so mad and upset at everyone." Toby said sternly.

"Guess you'll be trying till the day I die..." Dine muttered as she turned away.

"The day you die will be the day my world collapses." Toby sighed sweetly, even though the tense mood didn't match the romantic tone.

Toby sat down next to Dine and wrapped his arm around her.

"Why are you so upset? You did take the tape after all." Toby asked.

"Alex is making it out like it's a bad thing, when it wasn't even slightly malicious."

Dine was obviously lying, there's no way in hell that the information tower or the creepy hand could be anything besides evil, but she didn't want to admit she could have done something terribly wrong.

Pitchbook Reads

"Do you know where the tape is? Alex would feel a lot better knowing where it is."

Dine started fidgeting, she didn't wanna tell Toby anything.

"Uh- I gave it to- to a- to a girl!" Dine said.

"Who?"

"I don't know- just- a girl, she said she knew what to do with the tapes and offered to take it off our hands."

"Was she an employee?"

"Yeah- that's why I thought it would be best if it went with her."

Toby looked at her but didn't say anything, though his facial expression said it all.

"I wonder what she'll do with it…" Toby sighed, clearly not pleased with what Dine did.

"I'm sorry- I just thought it was best if it stayed here, with its rightful owners."

"You're talking about the tape like it's a dog…"

"I know- it kind of is, training tapes are very important to businesses, I wouldn't want us to be responsible for ripping it away from them."

"This place is a hellhole, not a business- why do you care about it?!" Toby shrieked.

Dine looked down at her feet in disappointment and shame.

"It's not that bad, I kinda like it here. I was thinking we could all stay and live here- there's nobody to ruin our lives- almost no responsibilities- way better than back home, you know?"

Toby looked at Dine in horror, pulled his hand away and got up.

"You're a monster! How could you want something like that! You know we've all been dying to go home, we've all been trying our hardest to just sustain our lives- and you wanna stay just so you don't need to have responsibilities?!"

Dine flinched at Toby's piercing words.

Pictorikids

"You're the only one who would wanna stay here! You can't just stay behind- and you can't force us to stay here!"

Toby stomped out of the room, clearly angry, leaving Dine slouched onto their bed.

"And there goes the only person I really care about…" Dine sighed as she stuffed a pillow onto her face.

"Maybe I'll just die- not even Toby wants to put up with me…"

Dine then shook her head, attempting to shake the negative thoughts out of her brain.

"Oh shush, Dine, you won't be dying anytime soon." She chuckled to herself.

She thought about getting up, but decided she wasn't ready to face the others, god knows when she would.

## Chapter 5

"THESE ARE MINE AND YOU CAN'T HAVE THEM!" Asher shouted as he held the bag of Goldfish closer to his chest.

"Asher- for god's sake just give us the Goldfish!" Zayne shouted as he lunged for them but Asher managed to dodge.

"Haha! P.E has proven educational!" Asher shouted as he started running around like a mad man.

"Asher for heaven's sake just give us the food!" Devereaux shouted as he grabbed onto Asher's arm.

"THESE ARE MY CHILDREN! HANDS OFF!"

"Asher you pain in the ass!" Zayne groaned as he sat on the floor in defeat, allowing Devereaux to chase Asher around.

Sydne walked out of her room, her morning hair a mess and a notebook stuffed lazily into her left arm.

"What the hell is happening…" Sydne yawned.

"Asher is hoarding Goldfish and claiming it's his children!" Devereaux shouted as he lunged at Asher again, and missed.

PICKLE KIDS

"Yeah, yeah, cool…" Sydne muttered as she walked over to the food tub.

Sydne dug around a bit until she found a bottle of Dr. Bob stashed in the corner.

"Will you all be mad if I drink this?" Sydne asked as she turned around and pointed to the bottle.

"Why would we be mad? There's plenty of other stuff in there anyway." Zayne shrugged.

Sydne uncapped the bottle and started drinking.

The somewhat cool, cola-like liquid flowed into her mouth, the sugar and flavoring stimulating her taste buds. The liquid was delicious and watery, like a breath of fresh air, it was a light taste of home. When Sydne finished she tossed the bottle into a bucket everyone declared the trash.

"That was-" Sydne started saying, before interrupting herself and clenching her stomach. "I think I drank that too fast…" She groaned as she slowly lowered herself to the floor.

"You okay?" Devereaux asked as he stopped chasing Asher and walked over.

"Yeah- I just chugged that too fast." Sydne chuckled lightly as she bought herself to her feet, the pain slowly easing away.

"Imbecile." Kit teased as he walked out of the sitting room and into the hallway.

"Since when were you up?" Asher asked.

"Since the lights came back on." Kit replied.

"Why?" Sydne asked.

"Why not."

Kit walked over and looked at the empty bottle.

"You didn't drink that whole bottle- did you?" Kit asked Sydne as he pointed to the bottle.

"It was good- I wanted too." Sydne shrugged.

"I don't think that's good for you- but oh well."

Sydne laughed.

Eventually everyone else awoke, which meant the day would be officially starting. That didn't always mean work, it would usually mean just leaving to go do something to fill our minds, better to do something useless than have a mental breakdown about getting home.

Even though nobody was actively looking for a way home, everyone wanted to get home- at least a little, though their home never really felt like home to them- like they were from a different place and that they were placed on Earth for some random reason. Not like IKEA was any better- it was worse clearly, but nobody was in that big of a rush to go home, but they still wanted too.

Kit stood up, tiredly looming over everyone.

"We don't need any more building materials, some duct tape would be good, and we don't need food." Kit mumbled.

Sydne's stomach ached when she heard the word food.

"Sydne, Asher, can you go find some more duct tape? We still have a lot but who knows the next time someone will fall ill or nearly die. Finding a first aid kit would be good too- but those might be harder to find- anything related to medicine really." Kit instructed.

Kit sounded like an overworked history teacher who's just a tad too interested in History for his own good, beginning to ramble about World War II or the rise of Christianity.

"Looks like we're paired together again." Asher smiled as he looked over at Sydne.

"Guess so." Sydne chuckled, her cheeks turning a light shade of pink.

Sydne and Asher left the base as everyone else got their jobs and instructions on what to do, basically everyone was stuck with some sort of base maintaining job, everyone except Sydne and Asher.

"Why do you think they only sent us out?" Asher asked.

"Have you seen the food tub? We're basically the best at finding anything in this hellhole." Sydne replied.

Suddenly, Toby ran out and caught up with them.

"Hi guys!" Toby said happily, as he inserted himself between Sydne and Asher.

"Why are you here?" Asher asked, a little upset he wasn't getting the alone time he was expecting with Sydne.

"Kit let me leave, because of the tension with me and Dine."

Sydne shrugged, "Makes sense."

"I'm gonna go look for random shit, you two have fun!" He said, oddly happly- and then ran off.

"That was oddly terrifying-" Sydne said matter of factly.

Asher chuckled but didn't speak a word.

As they walked through the empty, near-silent paths and ventured through the displays he couldn't help but glance at Sydne. He liked spending quality time with her- and he was so happy he could live out another fantasy-like scenario where it's just them, alone within the endless halls. Though awkward silence coated them, like tear film.

"Are you okay? You seemed in a lot of pain earlier." Asher asked, attempting to start a conversation and show that he cared.

"Well- the pains have been on and off but I'm sure I just had too much or had it all too fast." Sydne said, dismissing the possible severity of the situation.

"If you're not feeling well we could go back- we have a ton of duct tape still- and I could always go out by myself too you know." Asher offered, but Sydne refused.

"I'll be fine."

As they walked, they made sure to check displays and other shelves for any first aid kits or duct tape, sadly finding nothing.

"Oh my god- we have to take this with us!" Sydne shrieked as she ran over to a kids area and picked up a barbie-like doll.

The doll had Pacific-blue hair that was shoulder length and littered with clips, a Galaxycore dress that was somehow made of satin and the dye used must have had such bright pigment, since the colors were vibrant and bold. The doll has no face- but there was

clear evidence of one, as if the paint that was used to decorate the face has been scratched off

"She's absolutely gorgeous- we have to take it home! It could be our child!"

Asher's cheeks reddened at "our."

"I don't know if Kit would appreciate it if we brought a doll instead of medical stuff."

Sydne sighed and put the doll back.

"I never said we couldn't take it." Asher giggled as he picked it up and tucked it under his left shoulder.

"We have to bring at least a roll of duct tape though."

"Well there isn't a roll anywhere, and I refuse to go past that information tower!" Sydne said sternly and she pointed to the tower.

"Well we might have to." Asher said as he started walking off.

Sydne sighed dramatically and started following him, scanning every possible area for a roll of duct tape, though there wasn't any. Sydne kept eyeing the information tower, so badly wanting to run away from it.

Asher kept looking around too- but mostly kept looking straight ahead. He didn't want to go past the tower but coming home with just a doll would get one of them killed- and nobody in the group would be anything close to okay if someone died.

After about fifteen minutes, Sydne and Asher had reached the tower, the sickening glow of the blue trim reflecting onto their clothing.

"It looks even brighter than I remembered..." The tower reflecting in Asher's eyes.

"I don't like being near this thing, let's turn back." Asher said, now trembling.

"Good idea." Sydne agreed as she gave the base a good kick, showing her dislike of the tower.

Once her foot was pulled away, the lights around them dimmed off, until the only light was a few feet away from them.

"Crap-" Sydne said as she froze and looked at the tower's screens, which were already showcasing static.

"Hell- how do we turn this off-" Asher stammered as he started pounding and kicking the tower frantically, fear crowding his voice.

"Oh, you can't, dear..."

It was the woman that spoke to them though the tower before. Suddenly the static disappeared until it was pure white with the woman standing in the middle of the cocaine-like void.

"Hello there." She said sweetly, waving gently at them.

Asher and Sydne didn't do anything, not even blink.

"Well that's rude." The woman said. "I don't like rude customers in my establishment, it's very hard to run a loving and caring environment you know- and people like you only make it harder."

"I don't give two flying ducks about your 'establishment,' you witch!" Sydne shouted as she stepped closer, her hands now resting on the base of the tower.

"My oh my, you're really rude!" The lady giggled. "Is this how you treat retail back *there*? Like a flock of demons?" The lady mocked as she walked to the camera, she eventually got so close that you could only see the bottom of her neck.

"Because that's not very nice..." The lady whispered, though the voice seemed to come from directly next to her right ear.

Sydne jolted her hand up to her ear and looked over to the side, to find nothing, and the lady on the screen standing properly once again.

Sydne tensed and grabbed Asher's hand in a desperate attempt for comfort, it was an involuntary movement for her. Whenever she was stressed, she would usually grab something and dig her fake painted nails into it, no matter what it was.

Asher winced at the pain but didn't want to make any sudden moves, afraid of scaring the lady on screen into hurting one of them.

"It's not nice to mistreat retail Sydne, it really isn't."

"H-how do you know my name..?" Sydne stuttered in shock.

"Oh it's easy to learn everyone's names, especially when the sole part of your being is stuck *there*, with all the pointless bags of blood running around, pretending like they're the ones being victimized." The lady sighed, as if she explained this to people on the daily.

"You guys are actually the longest lasting- nobody's ever lasted more than a few weeks- maybe it's time I go harder..." She muttered.

"That's what he said." Asher giggled immaturely to himself, but to his dismay the girl on screen heard him.

"QUIET! I don't care for your sleazy jokes!" She suddenly screamed, clearly offended by Asher's inability to take her seriously.

"Back to you *girl*."

"What about me?" Sydne said with sudden defiance, masking the fact she was scared and bawling like a baby inside.

"I don't like you're attitude, I had already been so kind to your group- clearly you weren't sent by anyone to come take me down- I thought I'd be nice and let you stay here- at least till you got fed up and committed suicide, but that point seems to be further than I've expected."

Sydne and Asher stepped back.

"We didn't do anything- we're just trying to make due with what we have- you're the one being a brat!" Sydne shouted back.

"NO I HAVE NOT! YOU HAVE BEEN NOTHING BUT AN ISSUE SINCE YOU ARRIVED!"

"THEN WHY DON'T YOU JUST TAKE US OUT- I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU TRY!" Asher yelled.

"MAYBE. I. WILL!" The lady shouted as she lunged her hand toward the camera.

Suddenly a long, wrinkly, outstretched arm with a hand sped from behind Sydne and picked her up.

Sydne screamed as she was brought into the air, her skirt pinning down onto her legs with the violence as she was being pulled up.

The arm was long and a disgusting shade of brownish-yellow. The nails at the end were gray and long, bits of dried blood and

fungus growing from the bottom of it. The arm and hand had mushrooms and mold growing from it, as if it were a fleshy log. The arm had clearly no place in the IKEA with all the clean, industrial furniture.

After a moment of violent shaking the veins in the arm started to glow a neon blue color, the glow slowly climbing its way up to the hand.

After the glow reached Sydnes skin she started to glow ever so slightly, she stopped struggling and slumped, her skin growing pale and her face looking tired.

"That'll show you..." The lady said as she pulled her hand away from the camera and her hand, who had a grasp on Sydne lowered her down and then jolted back into the darkness.

The screen shut off, the lights flashed back on, and Sydne collapsed to the ground, holding her stomach in intense pain.

"Sydne are you okay?!" Asher shrieked as he knelt by Sydne.

"I- I don't know..." Sydne groaned as she tried to get up, but failed.

"Here- let me help-" Asher said as he scooped Sydne up in his arms bridal style and started dashing back toward the group.

"Everything will be fine-" Asher kept muttering as he looked down at the suffering Sydne in his arms.

Asher was panicking, not sure what was wrong with Sydne, and Sydne was scared, not sure if she was dying.

Sydne's stomach twisted and turned, causing her to wince in pain, clenching it each time.

"GET SYD A BED!" Asher shouted as he ran into the base a few minutes later.

Everyone jolted back in surprise and looked over at Asher and Sydne.

"Oh my god- is she dying?!" Kit cried as he ran over.

"Maybe- probably- I DON'T KNOW!" Asher trembled.

"Give her here." Kit said as he scooped up Sydne and brought her into her room and placed her on her bed.

PRISM ALS

"What the hell happened?" Val asked as he walked into the room.

"Screen lady- like- talked to us- and Sydne got grabbed by a big hand thing- and- and- injected with like- something-" Asher stuttered, unable to organize his thoughts properly.

"I would call you crazy- but that sounds extremely possible." Dine said as she emerged from the back of the group.

"It does?" Kit said in surprise as he looked over at Dine.

"Yeah- that screen lady can do anything."

Asher started helping Sydne sit up, despite the fact she was still in pain.

"Well whatever she did, it was bad." He said.

"I-I'm f-fine..." Sydne muttered as she tried to get up, but almost doubled over from pain.

"No you're not-" Val said.

Suddenly Sydne clapped her hand over her mouth and ran over to a gap in the wall that Kit hadn't patched up yet, and threw up, despite the stabbing pain in her stomach.

"I think whatever that hand injected into her made her sick-" Kit said.

"No- really?" Val said sarcastically.

When Sydne finished vomiting, she laid on the ground, clearly feeling every part of her body suffer.

The vomit on the ground of IKEA didn't look what you expected. It wasn't green or brown or would make someone else throw up the same way she did. Instead it was a bright, glowing neon blue. As blue as the Pacific and had a sickening bright glow, it looked as if someone had drawn with glowing blue paint on the floor.

"That doesn't look like regular vomit-" Zayne said as he peered over the edge.

"Well maybe because this isn't a normal sickness." Kit sneered.

Kit picked up Sydne and brought her back to her bed.

Picture Ads

"Now you need to rest, and we'll try to find a way to make you better and make sure you don't die!" Val said, attempting to sound cheery- but nobody was appreciative of that.

"I'll stay here with you." Asher said as he pushed a makeshift desk chair over by Sydne's bed and sat there.

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Toby walked through the store, picking up miscellaneous objects and searching random drawers and closets and such.

"What do I even need?" He asked himself.

Toby was still out and walking around, he couldn't use any phones to communicate since they didn't work properly, so Toby was out, left clueless about everything back at the base.

"Maybe Kit would like this." Toby said as he picked up a lamp the shape of a pencil, the color of the light was flashing between all the colors of the rainbow.

"I guess it would be a good gift for him." Toby smiled as he stuffed the lamp into a bag he was carrying and continued on.

Toby was lonely but he wasn't that upset about it. He liked being alone with his thoughts, and he liked passing the occasional employee- though, still afraid of them.

"This looks cool." Toby said as he picked up a game-cube.

"I wonder if it works."

The lights had yet to turn off, which surprised Toby, since the lights had been on for a while. Toby had been out for what was probably an hour or two and his bag was already overflowing with random items to bring back to base.

"I wonder what we'll do with all these."

Toby kept walking and kept finding things. Many, many things. Almost everything the base had to offer was either vital to survival or completely pointless, everything else was too hard to transport without a small group or machinery.

His bag was filled with lamps and pencils and toys, that was all he managed to find and transport by himself- they were pointless, but something.

As Toby kept walking he heard little voices talking nearby, it didn't sound like anyone from the group- but it was definitely people talking.

Toby started looking around, trying to find them. If they weren't dead, Toby had to bring them back to the base. The more the merrier after all!

Toby walked around, drawing closer to the voices. He was just barely close enough to the point. He could barely make out what they were saying.

*"I thought we already talked about this."*

*"It's not my fault it's stupid."*

There was a man and a girl talking.

The man was probably an older brother or a friend.

Toby kept following the voices, slowly figuring out what they were talking about.

*"Just do what she says already, no more issues!"*

*"I never even wanted to be part of this, I'm not doing every little thing she asks!"*

Now things were getting interesting.

Clearly, this girl got pulled into something she didn't want to be part of, but was somehow.

The girl sounded about 16, the same age as everyone else in the Pitchfork Kids. The man sounded a few years older, early twenties at most, and 18 at least. He was probably the manager of something or a leader of a different group.

Toby started getting excited, maybe the Pitchfork Kids could find more friends and they could work together to get back home, and then they could be a big group of friends that hang out and do everything together. Though nothing could come through the Pitchfork Kids bond, they've all known each other for so long.

Pitchfork Kids

Toby eventually got so close to the voices that he could clearly hear what they were talking about. As Toby rounded a corner, he spotted the two people talking, two people, both employees.

Toby hid back behind the corner, but still remained within hearing distance, and peeked his head out ever so slightly.

"You have to follow her rules, she was kind enough to let you be part of us- but for some reason you won't do as she says." The guy scoffed.

"I'm sorry but I didn't think she was gonna turn me into *this*." The girl said as she gestured towards her body.

The guy talking was average height, pale, and a little chubby, and again lacked a face and a head of hair because of the mesh mask he wore. The uniform fit tightly on him and he was crossing his arms, clearly upset with the girl.

The girl was tall, thin and had dark tanned skin. She also lacked hair or a face because of the mask. The uniform sat loosely on her thin figure and she clearly had tried drawing and cutting it to make it more fashionable. She had her arms crossed too, they both seemed to be arguing about something, though Toby wasn't exactly sure on what.

"Isabella, you have to comply! You're here to help keep the outsiders inside this place for Her Honor!" The guy said.

"I don't care about Her Honor, I care about you guys finally letting me go. I may have agreed to join your little workforce but that was only because I was sick of hiding and staying alive for no reason." The girl- who was named Isabella shouted.

Toby stood off to the side, watching and listening.

"Plus, the rules I'm going against aren't that important, they're just silly rules to make Her Honor feel more in control over us!" Isabella argued.

"Every rule Her Honor makes is very important, how dare you accuse her of such!"

"Oh, grow up! You're brainwashed and you know it!"

The man sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose.

"Take off your mask," he instructed.

"Oh, so first you get mad at me for breaking Her Honor's rules, but now you want me to take my mask off, which is very against the rules." Isabella mumbled as she took the mesh mask off her face.

Revealing- well, a face. A face with dark brown eyes, plump lips, and a pouty expression. As she took off the mask, she revealed her black hair which was done in a long braid that reached her mid back.

"AHA!" The guy shouted as he pointed to her braid.

"It's against the rules to have your hair done and past shoulder length! You have been breaking the rules." He said, as if he was a lawyer who just proved the defendant guilty.

"That's a silly rule- the mask can hide it, why can't I have it done?"

Toby's jaw dropped at the sight of the girl unmasked. This was a girl, a normal teenage girl just like him, just like the Pitchfork Kids, just like the other teenagers back at home. Toby did already know the employees looked way different under the masks, but his mind was still racing with questions.

How did she get here?
Why was she here?
How did she become an employee?
Are we all employees like this?
Will they become employees if they don't escape fast enough?
Can she die?
How long has she been here?
Will the Pitchfork Kids become employees one day?
Were the employees all at one point a person?
Did the employee Val kill used to be a person?

"The mask can't always do everything for you! Sometimes you need to take some responsibility and fix yourself." The man said.

"If those kids that came here found out we were normal people they'd surely try to convince you to be their friend or something."

Toby gulped.

Pitchfork Kids

The man wasn't wrong- but it was still shocking how cliche the group's ideas could be.

"Maybe I would rather be with them than you!" Isabella shouted angrily as she put the mask back on.

"If you keep breaking the rules I'll have to tell Her Honor, if she finds out she won't be so nice to you anymore." The man said.

"Whatever, death sounds more appealing than an eternity as an employee."

"Being an employee is great, be more grateful about this opportunity. You'll never age, you won't die naturally, you live a great life."

"If boring is your definition then great I guess you're right." Isabella scoffed as she walked away. Toby hid under a table in a display and watched Isabella.

Toby then got up and started running back to the base. He had to tell everyone about Isabella, maybe they could help her escape and bring her into the group.

"GUYS!" Toby shouted as he ran into the base.

"Not you too!" Kit shouted. "Who is dying and how are they dying?" He asked as a joke.

"Nobody-" Toby replied.

"Well Sydne sure is dying, she threw up neon, glowing blood or something, so are you doing that too"

"No- I saw an employee, that's what happened to me."

"Oh wow! An employee! Like there isn't a dead one rotting on the floor by the base." Alex sighed.

"No- like, I saw one unmask!"

"Like the one rotting on the floor by the base?"

"I heard her talk!"

Preview Only

Once that sentence left Toby's mouth, everyone stopped what they were doing and looked at him, even Sydne managed to hobble out of her room with Asher to see what Toby was talking about.

"They can talk?" Asher said, shocked.

"Yeah- and turns out, they all used to be people like us, and this girl doesn't want to be part of the little scheme thing and- and- we can convince her to join us! We just need to find her again." Toby said excitedly.

"So you want us to go on a wild goose chase for an employee who doesn't like being an employee?" Alex asked with great skepticism.

"Yes! That's exactly what I want!" Toby said with exaggerated enthusiasm.

"Yeah- no. Sydne's like throwing up glowing blood- we're not wasting time on finding an employee in a store." Asher scoffed, clearly upset at how dismissive Toby was.

"Well I'm sorry to hear about Sydne- but this could be revolutionary for us!"

Toby and Asher started getting mad with each other.

Asher cared about Sydne and wanted everyone to care that she wasn't okay, while Toby was more focused on bringing in another new face they'd have to watch over.

"Asher, Sydne will be fine, just give her duct tape. Literally- that stuff fixed Val's blood loss, brain damage, scars, cuts, blunt force trauma, a most-likely rabies-infected bite, sprained and broken bones- that tape can do anything."

Asher sighed angrily and walked back into Sydne's room.

"I guess Toby has a point- I mean when I was hurt, you guys would go out and just leave me with one person- can't we do the same for her?" Val said.

"I guess you're right- It would be more productive." Kit agreed.

"We should wait to see if Sydne gets to a state where she's at least stable- I think she's on the verge of tears because of the pain- and the nausea." Devereaux suggested.

"Very well." Toby sighed.

The rest of the day passed by. Sydne stayed in her bed all day and Asher stayed close by watching her- even though it pained him to see her in such a bad state. Kit stayed by also supervising.

Sydne was Kit's aunt- older by only 9 months but an aunt nonetheless and he wanted to make sure she was okay and to make sure she knew that he cared, despite the fact it also pained him to see Sydne so sick.

Toby stayed with Alex and Val in the sitting room. All they really did was just sit around and talk. Toby didn't want to be around Dine- despite how much he cared for her.

Dine sat alone in her room, Zayne and Devereaux would occasionally say hi as they passed by- but Dine was still alone. She just wanted to calm down and stay stuck in her bed till something forced her to be involved came along.

"So- what do you know about this employee girl?" Val asked.

"Well- her name is Isabella, she has tan skin, dark brown eyes and her hair was done in a long braid." Toby described.

"Like Repunzle?" Alex asked to clarify.

Toby nodded.

"It was weird- she was talking with another employee but he was scolding her- apparently she had been breaking the rules of someone they kept calling 'her honor.'"

"Maybe that's their leader or something- maybe they're not allowed to speak her name?" Val suggested.

"That's very likely, I wouldn't be surprised if they're under the brainwashing-influence of some sort of cult leader." Alex said.

"But it didn't seem like Isabella was affected by it at all- she was more pissed about being an employee than valuing it."

"This is all so confusing!" Alex whined.

"Was the employee I killed also like her?" Val asked.

"Yeah- but probably under their leader's influence." Alex explained.

"Do you think we could convince her to join us?" Val asked.

"Definitely, she seems like she's just waiting to get away- it will be a cinch."

Oh how wrong Toby would be.

So.

So.

Very wrong.

Alex, Val and Toby kept chatting about converting Isabella, occasionally hearing Sydne hurl followed by either Kit or Asher walking out of the room with a bucket to dump the strange and thick blue neon liquid onto the ground.

"Have you tried using duct tape at all?" Val asked one time when Kit was dumping out the bucket.

"We put some on her stomach but it's not really working." Kit replied.

"Feed her some." Val instructed.

"No- am I crazy?" Kit was skeptical.

"I had to eat a lot of tape to get my voice back- you gotta feed her tape as well."

"There's no way eating tape is *good*." Kit sneered.

"Trust me- I managed to survive brain damage, blood loss, rabies, broken bones, sprained ankles, all from that tape- and eating it sped up the process."

Kit rolled his eyes and handed Val the roll of duct tape. "Knock yourself out."

♀ ♀ ♀

"I'm not letting you feed her duct tape-" Asher said bluntly as he tried to grab the roll from Val.

"It may be healing but I don't think you could even swallow the damn thing."

Pitchfork Kids

"Val keeps claiming it will work- I think he's just silly though." Kit shrugged as he sat back on his bed, which was next to Sydnes bed.

"Kit, you watched it work, you swine." Theo hollered. "Asher- I know you simp for her- but I need to feed her duct tape, okay?" Val said in a sweet and soft voice, as if he were talking to a stubborn preschooler.

Kit laughed while Asher and Sydne went red in the face.

Asher gave an exaggerated sigh to show his anger and stepped aside.

"Thank you." Val said, before aggressively shoving a piece of the ripped duct tape into Sydne's mouth.

"I can't eat this-" Sydne said, gagging with her full mouth as she attempted to chew and swallow the tape.

"Yes you can- I can, mean you probably can- just- just try-" Val insisted.

Sydne rolled her eyes and continued to attempt to chew and swallow the tape, gagging every seven seconds or so.

"This is gonna make her throw up more!" Asher shrieked angrily.

"It might- but if we keep feeding it to her it'll make her better."

"This is stupid- just because you nearly died doesn't mean you're a doctor." Kit sneered as he glared at Val.

Eventually Sydne managed to swallow the tape- though it was gagged down almost the entire way down.

"Now was that so hard?" Val said.

"You know the tiniest thing can make me gag- that was hell." Sydne sighed.

"Well get used to it if you wanna stop throwing up radioactive ocean juice- okay?"

Val left the room and Sydne, Asher and Kit chuckled.

"Do you feel any better after that?" Asher asked, letting his hand wander over to her's.

"A little, but that was still hell."

"Wait actually?"

Sydne nodded weakly to Asher's shock.

Kit smiled but it was forced, his eyes darted to Asher's hand and then, forcing Asher to make eye contact with him.

*"I will get revenge blackmail on you two like you have blackmail on me and Alex..."* Kit mouthed, Asher nodded shakily and pulled his hand away, suddenly remembering the hilarious event when Sydne got a photograph of Kit and Alex kissing.

Surprisingly they still had fun in this place.

## Chapter 6

The days that followed were just a bundle of trying to remain entertained and waiting for Sydne to be well enough that she would only need one supervisor.

Asher and Sydne both hadn't slept for about two days. Kit had tried to stay awake with Asher to watch Sydne but fell asleep three hours after everyone else went to sleep. Sydne couldn't sleep, she was in a constant state of pain and nausea. Asher refused to take his eyes off Sydne for a moment, he was scared he'd blink and then she'd be gone. Everyone had tried to reassure him nobody would die- but Asher couldn't help but worry.

Asher tried to keep Sydne's spirits high by talking to her, but Sydne didn't reply much. Her stomach hurt so bad that most of the time talking was impossible.

But even just sitting there together in silence, Asher adored her.

Sydne adored the silence with him too, and honestly would usually have her spirits lifted ever so slightly when she could hear the base buzz to life and everyone talk and scurry around.

"I'm so sorry that happened to you- I should have done something." Asher said apologetically.

Sydne smiled at him sweetly and put her hand on top of his, trying to tell him everything was okay and he wasn't wrong.

Bright Kids

"You didn't need to do anything..." Sydne said sweetly, before gagging and throwing up bright, neon blue liquid into a bucket.

"What does that stuff even taste like?" Asher asked.

Sydne looked at him, dumbfounded at the odd question but answered.

"You don't wanna know..." Sydne muttered as she clenched the bucket and threw up again.

"I'll empty that out for you..." Asher said once Sydne put it down. He picked it up and walked out of the room.

Kit was out in the base looking for the duct tape, as he walked around he noticed Toby and Zayne playing Uno in the sitting room.

"You bastard..." Toby sighed as he glanced down at the card Zayne slapped onto the pile.

"That's sexist." Zayne said, clearly joking but still managing to get some anger out of Toby.

"How are you so good at this?!" Toby shrieked, ignoring the fact that it was his turn.

"I'm good at many things." Zayne said, scooting closer to Toby and sneering.

"What's that supposed to mean..." Toby weeped, every second just manifesting as more trauma he'll have to deal with later on.

Zayne dragged his hand against Toby's cheek, leaned in and purred lightly. Toby's cheeks turned red, matching the color of a Hibiscus flower.

"What the hell are you tryna do-" Toby whimpered.

"Seduce you my dear..." Zayne said.

Toby screeched an ungodly noise- didn't even know a human had the vocal capability of making that sound, but here we are- and punched him square in the face.

Zayne yelped and threw his cards at Toby, who had fell over laughing at him.

The whole scene looked like something straight out of Helluva Boss, or worse.

Fiction Kids

Kit gagged and walked back into the room, hearing Asher scream shortly behind him.

"Holy satan- Zayne's terrifying-" Asher said, huffing.

Kit rolled his eyes and took the bucket from Asher's hands, then plopped it into Sydne's lap.

"I feel like I'm dying..." Sydne groaned as she laid back.

"If you don't eat this duct tape you probably will." Kit said as he started tearing a bunch of little pieces, shoe size of paper tears.

"I'm making you a soup, made with duct tape and boiled sodas from the food tub."

Sydne and Asher looked over at Kit and the bowl, gagging at what they saw.

A bunch of crumpled, gray wads floating around in simmering carmel brown liquid.

Not appetizing.

"How did you heat it up-" Sydne asked quietly.

"Heat lamp."

Kit then went out back to the food tub, only to return back with bottles of water, cans of beans and melted ice cream. He poured them all into the giant bowl he had gotten out somewhere while he was there and started mixing with a broken table leg.

The soup looked disgusting, gray lumps simmering in shit colored liquid, colors from the ice cream refusing to mix in and setting on top as a film and beans being mashed by the table leg and looking like tiny pieces of floating mold.

"This is gonna make me sicker-" Sydne said as she scooted away from the bowl.

"Well you need the duct tape and you need the food so eat it or starve." Kit scoffed.

"Kit I don't think you understand- she's already throwing up the goddamn pacific ocean mixed with a glow stick, she doesn't need to also throw up whatever the hell this is." Asher grimaced.

"You want her to live or die?"

Asher sighed at Kit's response, accepting defeat surprisingly fast and he slumped down in his seat.

Kit left the room, leaving Sydne and Asher alone in the.

"I'm not eating that." Sydne grumbled, shoving the bowl away from her.

"I mean Kit said you had too-" Asher said as he picked it up, gagging at the stench.

It smelled like fluorescent perfume mixed with mold and vinegar. Not very pleasant.

"You can't even pick it up without-" Sydne started saying, before doubling over and throwing up back into the bucket.

"Okay- maybe I'll try a little bit…"

Asher picked up the bowl and stirred the makeshift spoon in the grotesque liquid for a bit before picking up a piece of soaked duct tape and putting it into her mouth.

Sydne gagged and winced as she chewed the duct tape.

Asher rested his hand on top of hers, feeling sorry she had to eat the hellspawn of this soup.

Sydne gazed back at him, trying to let him know that there's nothing to be sorry for- and also trying to hold back a wave of tears that formed because of the food.

"I don't even think this food would fly in a prison." Asher sighed as he looked down into the bowl.

Sydne nodded in disgusted agreement.

It took about the entire day just for Sydne to eat the whole thing. Each swallow of duct tape made her feel a bit better, before a gush of the disgusting remainder of the soup to undo what the tape had just done.

Sydne and Asher were left alone most of the day, someone occasionally stopping by to put more duct tape in the bowl.

"Can't you just give me a giant surplus of tape so I can be better as soon as possible?" Sydne complained.

"Well I guess- but that would be hard to not choke on, I mean it's already hard to chew this little thing, it would probably choke

you otherwise." Val replied and he held up a small ball of tape between his thumb and index finger.

"You should make them pill sized so I can just go on a swallow spree." Sydne said before gagging and throwing up more blue liquid.

"Maybe when we get back."

"Get back? From where? Walmart?" Asher said sarcastically, causing Sydne and Val to chuckle a little.

"Sydne's well enough to be left here with just one person, Kit wants you to stay, we're going to search for this employee Toby's obsessed with." Val said as he got a bag that was sitting on Kit's bed.

"We'll be back before the lights go out."

"You're just- going to leave me here?! Alone and feeling like crap?" Sydne cried.

"You'll be fine- just eat as much tape as you can and rest- and don't let that bucket overflow, *please*." Val grimaced as he pointed to the bucket that was clutched between Sydne's hands.

"Oh yeah-" Asher said as he got up, grabbed the bucket and went to the entrance to empty it out.

Val tossed Kit his bag, somehow everyone magically found bags laying around and neither Asher or Sydne were informed.

"Take good care of her, if you don't you'll end up six feet underground or bloody and destroyed by an employee." Kit sneered, obviously having separation anxiety.

Asher nodded and plastered on a fake smile. A fake smile would look better than a trembling lip and a face painted with fear.
He turned to Kit and said "I'll take good care of her."

Kit nodded skeptically before calling out goodbye to Sydne and stepping aside so Asher could dump the bucket out onto the floor.

"Screech like the little kids you bully in ROBLOX if Sydne starts dying or something, got it?" Zayne chuckled.

"Got it."

"Did they leave?" Sydne asked.

"I think so." Asher said as he handed back the bucket to Sydne. Sydne snatched it and held it close to her aching stomach.

PRISCILLA AIUS

♀ ♀ ♀

"So- what exactly are we looking for?" Zayne asked.

"A tall employee girl." Toby replied.

"How do we tell who is who- they all look the same for crying out loud- for all we know she could have died already!"

"Well, we're just gonna have to hope that's not the case now huh?"

"If you get me killed I am going to rise from the dead and hunt you down with a car battery." Dine scolded, only half joking.

"Pshh- what are you talking about I wouldn't get y'all killed-" Toby glanced at Val, "Probably."

Kit sighed and looked over his shoulder, their base was still within his vision.

The base. Their home, their carefully handcrafted abode in which Sydne and Asher were peacefully waiting for their return.

Kit adored that thing. It was like a child to him. He had worked so hard on it, poured so much of his love into it, it was where they have been living for the past months- or what felt like months. Kit would be crushed if that base was. And most importantly. It had Alex's love too. Alex poured his love, effort, skill and essence into that same very thing. That base was infused with the very person he was, it was like a second place to house his soul, another body in case something ever happened to the first one. If Alex was ever gone, that base would basically be what was left of the person he was.

"So who's gonna be the first to tell Toby they're delusional?" Zayne said obnoxiously loud, clearly teasing.

"I will." Toby volunteered.

"Touche," Zayne said, rolling his eyes.

The small group chuckled a bit before going back to silence. The light outburst brought Kit's attention back to the group.

"Do you have any leads or clues on who this might be?" Devereaux asked.

Pitchfork Kids

"Sorta- she's tanned and she's tall and thin- she also has black hair and is probably subtly breaking the rules of "her honor," whoever that is."

"How convenient that we don't know who her honor is or what any of her rules are." Val scoffed, annoyed at the fact they were going on this wild goose chase in the first place.

"She sounds like she's a nice girl." Dine said sarcastically, rolling her eyes at Toby's insane ideas.

"She is, if you hear anything that sounds like a girl talking follow it, it could be her," Toby instructed.

"I was being sarcastic." Dine growled angrily, but Toby dismissed her.

"This could take forever, this place is huge, there's no way we'd be able to pull off something like this, there are millions of employees literally everywhere." Kit said.

"Why are you suddenly being so doubtful?" Alex asked, concerned for his boyfriend's random attitude.

"I just think this isn't a good idea."

"SHHH!" Toby scolded, causing the group to shut up and stand still looking at Toby- who was slowly sneaking around, hiding behind furniture and apparently following *something*.

The group quietly followed Toby, not asking any questions. This was Toby's little voyage and he was the one who knew the most.

As the group walked around the light sound started growing louder. The sound was what they assumed Toby was following.

It was a girl.

A weeping one.

Sniffles and sobs could be heard from somewhere. It was clear something was wrong. There was a quiet, broken mumbling that could be barely heard between the sobs.

The group got closer, the crying getting louder. They could feel a sudden wave of a sorrowful mood wash over them, clouding and mixing into the air, in their lungs, almost causing them to choke on their own breath as if they were about to cry. Like the girl's tears

Prism Kids

emitted some sort of chemical, that caused everyone else to cry as well, like an onion.

I never thought I'd ever have to say something like this- but that girl is like an onion.

As they rounded the corner they found Isabella, knees pressed to her chest, crying in the corner of a display, her mesh mask lay on the floor and her long braid resting by her hip.

"Hey, are you okay?" Toby asked sweetly as he stepped closer, raising his hand slowly to show tenderness and that the group was threatless.

Isabella looked up and started violently scooting away, she didn't know Toby, and Toby wasn't supposed to know her.

"S-stay back!" She screeched as she stumbled, grasping for her mask violently. "I-I'm an employee- I- I could kill you- any moment now! I- I'm vicious and- and- and evil!" She hissed pathetically as she stood up shakily and sheepishly threw the mask over her braid and her head, transforming her face into a flesh-colored, blank slate.

By this point the rest of the group was close behind Toby, intrigued to see this girl for the first time, eager to meet her.

"Don't be scared- we're friends, we want to help you." Val said as he brushed past everyone and walked closer toward Isabella.

"I- I don't need help- I'm an employee- I can kill you once those lights turn off! I- I can make them turn off- I'm unpredictable- I'm evil! I'm a- a stone-hearted killing machine!" Isabella kept shouting as she backed away. The group advanced forward in response, the closer they got the shakier her voice became.

Six teenage kids stepped toward this girl, who was breaking multiple rules set by her honor, mortified out of her skin, and was definitely either going to be killed or do the killing.

"Please- Isabella, we're friends! Please let us talk." Isabella stopped in her tracks as the words fell out of Toby's mouth.

"How- how do you know my name..?" She muttered as she pulled off her mask, showing her guard being put down.

"I- uhm- I guessed?" Toby chuckled nervously.

"No you didn't."

"Uhm- well- it's a long story-"

"Tell me about it."

Toby sighed and gave in,

"One day while I was scavenging on my own I had heard you and another employee arguing, I could tell you weren't happy here and you weren't completely under the influence of whoever "her honor" is, I could tell you needed help- so we've come to help you."

Isabella looked at him skeptically.

"What could you do to possibly help me?"

"We could bring you to our base- we have food, we have shelter, we can help you run away and escape from this employee life, we can tell you're not meant to have this life- you don't want this- it's obvious, and we wanna help." Devereaux piped up.

Everyone agreed with him.

"You can't help me, I'm an employee, I'm an employee under Her Honor, the ruler of all things in this building, she is all mighty and powerful, nobody can survive her harsh conditions, I shan't abandon her, Her Honor is my honor and I will forever stand on that fact!" Isabella screamed, her voice shaking and fluidly changing its volume, in an attempt to sound heroic and honorable to whoever Her Honor was.

"Please listen to us- we're here to help- we know you don't want this!" Zayne pleaded.

"You know nothing. I have lived here under the ruling of Her Honor for years, you've only been here a few measly days, I know everything and you know nothing, once those lights shut off your lives will come to an end at my hand! I shall forever honor Her Honor and keep her at my side, I am Isabella Marigold, an employee under Her Honor, I do not break the rules." Isabella said, once again obviously scared and shaky.

"Your honor! If I could ask for aid!" She shouted. After a few seconds the lights around her and the group started to flicker, as if about to shut off.

"RUN!" Alex shouted as he took off. The rest of the group quickly followed, Isabella did too, and wasn't that far behind.

Their footsteps thudded on the hard concrete, the flickering following them like a puppy would follow the smell of freshly grilled ribs.

Now Isabella was acting differently, she was faster and stopped speaking, only growls and roars coming out of her mouth, as if she was infected with rabies and had lost all sense of humanity, like darkness overcame her.

"Please Isabella! We just want to help!" As Isabella's name slipped off of Toby's tongue Isabella seemed to flash back to reality and stopped running.

"Your honor! If I could no longer have any aid!" She shouted as the lights stopped flickering and everyone froze.

"Gah-" She said as she brought her hand up to her forehead and started massaging it as if she had a migraine or had just hit her head on a hard surface.

"Are you okay?" Toby said as he reached out his hand to console her, but Isabella pushed him away.

"You stupid people, what do you know about anything! You'll just die in a few days like the rest of them!" Isabella shouted in anger.

"What do you mean- we've been living here for months- we haven't been anywhere close to death yet!" Zayne exclaimed.

Kit and Val coughed lightly.

"Well- besides for two of us, but we managed to keep them alive for a long time- and I'm sure Sydne will be fine."

"Wait- months?" Isabella asked, surprised.

"Yeah, or we don't know exactly but it feels like months- we're surprised we haven't come across you sooner." Devereaux said.

Isabella looked at them, anger and violence vanishing from her face with fear, sorrow and dread filling its place.

Pictoria Kids

"Oh no- oh no, no no no no no." She muttered as she stepped closer to the group, with them stepping back.

Oh how the turns have tabled.

"What's this coming from- you were just a rabid animal and Now you *care*??" Dine sneered.

"No- no, I mean- I mean yes- I- THIS IS BAD!" Isabella shouted, everyone looking at her- now suddenly at attention and taking her seriously.

"You- you can't let Her Honor get a hold of you- you can't- you can't stay here any longer than you already have- you- you have to get out- she'll make your life hell one way or another- you need to hurry-" Isabella stuttered fearfully.

"What are you talking about- what's so bad about staying here?" Kit asked skeptically, trying to pry information out of her.

"Everything- I used to be living a sustainable life here- like you guys. When Her Honor realized she couldn't kill me she decided she had to get rid of me somehow. She started convincing me to join her employees- I was all in- It sounded like heaven- but apparently propaganda is a lie!" Isabella slammed her fist on the nearest hard, flat surface.

"Well what do you want us to do?!" Val hissed.

"Are there any more of you?"

"Yeah- they're at the base though, one of them is vomiting up goddamn glow stick juice." Val replied. Isabella looked at him in horror.

"*Blue*, glow stick juice?" She confirmed.

Everyone nodded.

"That's not glow stick juice- that's Her Honor's form of abuse to make us follow her shit ton of rules." Isabella explained.

"Can it *kill*?" Devereaux shuddered.

"It can if it's not cured soon, I've been infected with Stilla Havet Syndrome lots of times but you're not supposed to have it for more than three days."

Everyone's faces fell and the color began to drain.

"She's had it for a week…" Dine mumbled.

"SHE'S HAD IT FOR A WEEK!" Kit hollered, fear and panic flying from his voice.

"WHAT?!" Isabella screamed. "HOW THE HELL IS SHE STILL ALIVE?!"

Sydne sighed and slumped down in her bed, the bucket filled with blue liquid still clutched between her arms.

"I'm so tired of this…" She mumbled.

"I can tell." Asher replied sympathetically.

Sydne sighed and leaned over, allowing her head to rest on Asher's shoulder, making his cheeks flush.

They sat there for a bit, enjoying the pure bliss that was each other. The silence did creep over the moment but neither seemed to mind. It's one thing to *say* something and it's another to *be there*.

The moment felt like forever but was probably just a minute or two.

A *lovely* minute or two.

"I'm kinda glad we're alone here together." Asher sighed happily. Sydne smiled.

"Why do you?" Sydne asked.

"Because now the group won't be peering over our shoulders, watching our every move."

"I guess that's true."

Asher sighed and looked up at Sydne, who was peacefully laying on his shoulder. After a bit though she gagged and threw up in the bucket again.

"You should eat more tape." Asher said as he ripped off some more bits of tape, tossed them in the sludge of liquid. He then stood up, mixed it around and got a spoonful of the medicine that looked like the embodiment of Ebola.

Fiction Kids

Sydne huffed but eventually complied as Asher put the spoon into her mouth and tipped the liquid down her throat and then stopped to allow her to chew up and eat the duct tape inside.

"I swear to god this is worse than hell." Sydne complained with a full mouth.

Asher looked at the bowl and scooped up a bit of liquid, then brought the spoon to his lips and drank a bit. Immediately spitting it out and gagging intensely afterward.

"We don't need you throwing up too-" Sydne said, shocked at the stupidity.

"I'm sorry okay I had to- god that's awful."

Sydne chuckled a bit and then sighed.

"Oh, I love you..." She mumbled, probably thinking it was quiet enough that even a pen dropping could drown out the noise.

Asher looked up at her, wide eyed, cheeks red as cherry paste, and a smile climbing up his face.

"You heard me didn't you-" Sydne mumbled, her face turning red too as she hurried her head into the palms of her hands.

"Hey it's okay, I'm not mad about it." Asher said, sweetness crowding his voice.

"I love you too..." He mumbled.

Asher let his gaze wander to the doorway, usually where their friends would be passing through or something along those lines, but remembered they were out. Only he and Sydne were in the base. Only them. Enjoying this moment, peacefully, blissfully, where nothing could go wrong.

He felt Sydne's hand relax on his, and that's when he knew she had really fallen asleep.

He laid her down in the bed and pulled the covers up and over her. He put the bowl on the nightstand and then stood up, planting a small kiss on her forehead before walking out and letting her get some much needed rest.

Fiction Kids

Now left with nothing to do Asher stood by the entrance, waiting patiently for someone to come by with something for him to do. The TV's only played tapes and their phones didn't work.

Suddenly, as if the world could read his mind, he saw a group of people running toward the base at full speed.

It was his friends, and someone new.

Running at full speed.

Towards their sad house.

Like fucking maniacs.

"WE FOUND HER!" Toby shouted excitedly as he tried to gesture toward Isabella as best as he could.

"WHO'S HER?" Asher hollered back.

"THE GIRL WE WENT ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE FOR!" Val replied.

"Oh her," Asher said as he walked down the stairs of the base to meet up with the group.

"Where's Sydne? Is she okay?!" Kit said frantically.

"Oh yeah she's fine- she just fell asleep, she hasn't slept in ages, so it's best you don't wake her-"

The group pushed back Asher, interrupting him before he could finish his sentence.

"She's not dead- I was with her when she fell asleep!" Asher called back to the group as he went up the steps again.

Everyone was crowded around Sydne who was lying peacefully in her bed.

"Had she been eating her duct tape?" Alex asked. Asher nodded.

"Duct tape-?" Isabella asked confusedly.

"The duct tape here is magical and can repair or heal anyone or anything. It even saved Val from massive blood loss when he fought one of the- erm- employees..." Kit said, allowing his voice to trail off towards the end.

"I see..." Isabella mumbled, knowing why they would fight an employee, but also feeling bad- knowing they all used to be like her.

Devereaux shook Sydne lightly, allowing her to wake up.

Fiction Kids

"What the hell do you want..." She muttered as she opened her eyes and slowly sat up and lifted her head to look at the group.

"Holy satan-" She said, startled by the sudden group of people around her.

"We're back." Kit said, a smile on his face.

"I can see that." Sydne sighed.

"Do you feel any better?" Val asked.

"A bit I guess."

Isabella walked through the crowd with Toby to see Sydne.

"This is Isabella, the girl we went looking for, she knows what's wrong with you and maybe she can fix it."

"I never said I could fix it- I never even said to take me here- you all just kinda started running." Isabella explained.

"Then why did you follow us-" Dine asked.

"I just felt like it."

Everyone shrugged.

"Anyway she's here and we all know you need help so maybe she can fix you." Kit said.

Everyone backed away and let Isabella walk up to Sydne.

"What did you even do?" She asked.

"I may or may not have accidentally turned on an information tower, and started insulting some lady on the screen..." Sydne chuckled nervously.

Isabella's jaw dropped.

"YOU INSULTED HER HONOR?!"

"If that's what you call her-"

"YOU IMBECILE, THAT'S WHY YOU'RE LIKE THIS!"

Isabella stood up and clapped her hands.

"Your honor, if I could ask for aid!" She shouted as she stood up straight. Once she said the phrase a nearby light began to flicker.

"INCORRECT!" She shouted desperately, causing the light to stop flickering.

"Your honor, if I could apologize." A sudden breeze emerged from somewhere.

Prism Kids

"Your honor, if I could ask for aid." Another breeze washed over the group.

"Your honor, if I could ask for an aid of hand." Suddenly her arm shriveled up and shrunk back into her shoulder, disappearing into her sleeve. Then another arm grew, this one looking identical to the one that had grabbed Sydne. Leaves and wrinkles eroding it, like the arm itself was molding.

"Correct. If I could ask for an orange." The hand glowed a light orange for a split second before Isabella put her hand on Sydne's stomach.

"Your honor, if I could use this aid for bad." Another light breeze blew on them.

When the breeze disappeared the blue started to climb up the veins of the arm. After a few minutes of watching the luminous liquid climb up the arm and Isabella brought her hand away.

"Your honor, if I could no longer have an aid." The old, disgusting arm shriveled up and fell off like a finger would if you blocked blood flow to it. Isabella kicked the arm away from everyone as her old one grew back.

"That's totally not traumatizing-" Dine muttered.

"You should be all better now, but Her Honor is probably gonna keep doing terrible things to you all, she won't give up till you die, leave or join- whatever you do don't join." Isabella warned as she picked up the arm and started eating it.

"WHAT THE FUCK?!" Toby screeched as he stumbled backwards in fear.

"Don't worry, don't worry- it's normal I swear-" Isabella said desperately as she swallowed. "It's a gift from Her Honor, therefore we must cherish it." Isabella smiled.

"Yeah you got some weird cult stuff going on-" Kit said making exaggerated hand gestures.

Isabella shrugged and smiled weakly.

"I did agree to it..." She muttered as she turned to walk out. "I hope you guys never see me again and manage to get the hell out of

this place before you end up like me!" She said with sarcastic cheeriness as she waved exaggeratedly.

"Wait! Can't you stay-" Toby begged.

"I wish I could but I have duties-"

Suddenly a strong breeze cloaked everyone, pushing the bed ramp they used to block the exit, Isabella to be pushed back into the group and everyone being stuck to the wall.

"Your honor, if I could leave." She said, ready to kneel if she had too.

Another strong breeze cloaked the room and horror filled Isabella's eyes.

"Your honor, if I could apologize, if I could be forgiven, if I could be spared or punished."

The breeze turned into a gushing blow of wind, as if someone took a giant leaf blower and put it on full speed.

Toby reached out his hand to Isabella's shoulder but the wind pushed him back.

Their house was slowly turning into a tornado, small things like paper and pencils and makeshift utensils being lifted and slightly spun round by the wind.

"Your honor- if I could be forgiven- if I could be spared- if I could be kept-" Isabella begged, the gravity pulling her down to her knees, as if praying to a god for forgiveness.

Suddenly, the breeze stopped, and a scream of pure trauma slipped out of Isabella's mouth. Her eyes welled with a wave of tears as she let out a sob.

The clothes she was wearing started to sink and dig into her skin, melting into her body, becoming one with her blood.

Everyone gagged and winced as they watched the uniform burn into her skin like acid.

Her tears fell to the floor, causing the wood to look damp as if it came straight from a rainstorm.

"MAKE IT STOP!" She cried, tugging on her hair in a desperate attempt to ease the ever growing pain. Another big gust of wind

waved over her, pushing her down and causing her to scream more. She planted her hands on the ground to steady herself, the pain getting worse by the second, her in a constant state of crying and screaming.

"SOMEONE HELP ME!" She cried. But the group just looked at her and winced, the terrifying sight paralyzing them in place. Their brains stuck in a state of Anosognosia, unable to process the unfathomable sight presented before them. Her skin was folding over itself, sucking the clothing into her body, absorbing it, fabric disappearing into the void under her skin, her flesh becoming a living canvas of art, using the clothing on her body as the paint as it was slowly drowning into her body.

Isabella let out another blood churning scream as if she was being murdered brutally and somehow surviving.

Pain.

Pain.

Pain.

***Pain.***

Was all that could run through her head.

Eventually, Isabella's screams got ever so slightly quieter, the pain was easing now that the clothes were nearly gone. Nearly melted into her skin like candle wax melts onto itself. Drying onto its surface so the fire on it can burn longer, no bit washed.

No breath wasted.

Everyone got ready to look away, thinking Isabella's clothes were finally gone into her skin, in her body, forcing itself into her like a germ.

Isabella gave out a sigh of relief, the pain had subsided, she felt normal. She couldn't feel her skin twist and turn and fold onto itself. They couldn't feel foreign material absorbing into her skin like acid.

She couldn't-

"AHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!"

Wait for the second round to be over.

The group jolted back, watching her suffer, watching her scream, wincing whenever she would seize from pain.

This was worse than before.

Her skin wasn't folding atop itself anymore, instead it was ripping at the seams. Forcefully peeling away like a mother would peel her child away from a toy. Like how a finger nail would peel off its bed. Like how a gem would push past the sediment to gleam in the sun only to realize the sun doesn't shine to its cave.

Isabella let out a giant sob, loud enough to rattle the very ground. She straightened her posture and tugged at her bare arms in an attempt to ease the pain, tears running down her face, every neuron in her brain aching and begging to turn back time and ignore these kids.

It felt like she was giving birth through her skin. Mold tearing through it.

Through the mess, normal clothing was emerging. Forcing itself upward, pushing through the thick, so-called protective layer of her body to shine through.

"LORD HELP ME-" She cried, pain circulating through her body, every inch of herself felt like it was being stabbed as the clothes grew onto her as plants grew through concrete. It was parasitic. Using her body as a petri dish to repopulate and grow.

Her breaths grew heavy and quick, her lungs filling with air only for pain to push it out with a scream. The suffering was enough to put Satan himself into a state of fear.

Eventually though, it evened out.

The clothes stopped growing.

Her skin stopped tearing at the seams.

Her body stopped screaming.

Her eyes stopped crying.

And the clothes that pushed through her skin rested peacefully on her bare body.

Isabella stared at the ground, frozen, paralyzed, her jaw open, taking in sharp and heavy breaths, leaning over ever so slightly and her hands still clutching her sides.

"Holy fucking hell..." Isabella mumbled, her voice shaking from shock.

"Was that- that normal..?" Zayne asked, one of the only people still able to speak after watching that hellshow.

"Only- only when you... switch sides..." Isabella trembled.

"When- when you become an employee?" Asher asked.

"And when you're- you're fired..."

Tears streamed down her face again. The realization hit her.

"I never thought I'd feel that pain again..."

The group stood behind her, their limbs feeling glued in place. Isabella couldn't move either. Her brain was too stunned to tell her body to do anything. All she could do was.

Breathe.

Inhale.

Exhale.

Inhale.

Exhale.

Inhale.

Exhale.

Then you clench your teeth and hold it.

Isabella gasped and looked back at the group, still leaning forward ever so slightly and clenching her arms.

The group stared back in shock, unable to look away from her face.

"W-what is it?" She muttered as she brought her hand up to her face.

"Y-your eye..." Alex muttered as he pointed toward Isabella's right eye. "It- it's all blue-"

Sydne tossed Isabella a pocket mirror from her bag. Isabella opened it and stared at her face.

Her iris was now a vibrant neon blue with a bright yellow gear

Pitchfork Kids

in replace of her pupil.

Isabella kept staring, now realizing that this was a permanent reminder of the pain and suffering and lack of time wasted she'd never be able to rid of.

"I-" Isabella stuttered, unable to form a coherent thought.

Val reached out and placed a hand on Isabella's shoulder. She went to jolt away- but let Val's hand rest.

"I never knew that this would happen again..." Her eyes watered with sorrow and disbelief and a silent tear wallowed out of her eye.

The memory was a fresh wound, bloody and bruised, and the new eye she was given didn't help much. She had too much adrenaline to realize the true ache or scar it would leave, how long it would take to heal, how long it would take to forget the pain.

Toby walked over and stroked her arms gently, this time Isabella let him and didn't jolt away.

The silence clogged their ears and deafened the air. Only the shaky breaths of everyone could be heard.

"Looks like I'll be staying, it's not like I have a choice..."

END PART 1

## Chapter 7

The clothes that tore apart Isabella's skin to shine through were old and tattered, as if she'd been wearing them for months and had no time for mending.

She had fleece gray tights with an endless amount of rips and holes in them, an oversized white sweater torn at the collar, hem and sleeves and a navy blue tennis skirt just barely showing through underneath. Her shoes were basic white Nike AirForces with a huge hole in the side that was patched up with rope and glue. She had greasy black hair with a half torn navy blue bow clip in her hair. Her clothes looked as if they had been through WWI, WWII and a nuclear

Pitchfork Tales

bomb just to get to her, which probably wasn't far off from what they really went through.

Everyone was now burdened with the sudden responsibility of getting used to her being around. Only a few hours ago, she was chasing them down and now she was supposed to be their friend who they had to look after.

Toby was probably the first person to accept her and adjust to her. Toby was always around her, and talking to her, and making sure she felt welcomed in their little shack.

Kit had a very untrusting nature and was quite paranoid he would hurt someone, but Sydne convinced him after endless pleading to at least give her a chance which Kit reluctantly agreed to.

Zayne and Devereaux weren't the most social of the group and often just traded a quick glance and hello with her before rushing off, very difficult people to befriend when a basic friendship is formed after months of those small interactions.

Val followed Toby quickly and made an effort to be kind to Isabella, he was open with her and wanted her to know that any past conflict no longer lingered in his mind- though he didn't open up completely like Toby did.

Sydne was too trusting for her own good and often would need someone to push her toward the right people, so characteristically, Sydne was very kind to Isabella and opened up to her like Toby did, she never held grudges on anyone and would often brush it all aside.

Asher, like Kit, had an untrusting nature but was harder to budge than Kit, he was more likely to have a more bias view of her when giving her a second chance and use the tinted ideas of her to form his opinion, but Sydne was the queen at convincing people to give other people second chances and managed to convince him to give her another chance, not caring for if it was tinted or not.

Alex would open up despite his cold nature, but didn't. He would hold a grudge and ignore her, but didn't. Instead he joined Devereaux and Zayne in their antisocialness due to bigger, more

important things being on his mind, no space to worry about some random girl who'd probably let go at some point or would run away to leave them for dead.

Dine, on the other hand, hated Isabella and was not afraid to show it. She never looked at her, spoke to her, or even breathed in her general direction. She hated Isabella as if she had just watched her kill her family and lick their blood off her fingers. Nobody knew why, sure most of them didn't exactly trust her but outright hating her was a completely different thing. Toby and Sydne tried to change Dine's views and ideas but Dine kept refusing and even taking it as far as to bully her as if she was a popular high school girl.

"What's your problem ?!" Toby shrieked.

"Her." Dine sneered as she pointed towards Isabella, who was just sitting down in a corner of the hall talking to Sydne.

"And what has she ever done?" Toby crossed his arms.

"Try. To. Kill. Us. Do you idiots have literally nothing in that soft skulls of yours to put two and two together?!" Dine looked down in pathetic shame.

"She. Is. Going. To. Kill. Us. Dead!" She yelled, clapping her hands at each word.

Unknowingly, she had yelled a bit too loud which had spiked Isabella and Sydne's attention and they were now eavesdropping on her and Toby's conversation.

"She was under some shitty propaganda or false belief or something! She like- was forced because she believed something or something like that." Toby stuttered.

It was a pathetic and low-quality attempt to change Dine's mind because Dine wasn't wrong honestly. Isabella wasn't under any form of mind control, she may have believed a false truth but she still could make her own choices. She could still choose not to do something to them, she could still choose to hurt them- and quite viciously if she wanted to.

"You can't even vouch for her! She was just kicked out of some dumbass cult and then gave birth to clothes through her skin or

whatever that was and now is our responsibility?! I don't wanna deal with her ass, AT ALL!" Dine screamed as she stomped off.

Asher popped his head into the hallway. "What the hell happened here-"

Sydne put up a hand and mouthed "later" to him as she turned to hug Isabella, who was obviously hurt by what Dine said but magically didn't cry.

"I'm sorry about her- I don't know what happened but she just- is in a bad mood I guess." Toby explained, clearly ashamed.

"It's fine- It is true, I was just to blind too see the full capacity of what my choices could be."

"It's not your fault, that lady had you wrapped around her little finger with that illness crap or whatever I had." Sydne said, attempting to comfort her.

"It's called Stilla Havet, I've had it many times for breaking her rules."

"See, manipulated into doing her dirty work." Toby said. matter-of-factly.

"Thanks guys!" Isabella said happily, having almost forgotten all the hurtful things Dine said about her.

The hate in Dine's heart grew even more at Isabella's bliss.

Sydne and Toby nodded.

"Whelp, I have to go grab Asher to go do some food hunting, with another one in the base. It would be good to grab some more food." Sydne said as she got up and turned to leave.

"Are you *sure* that's what y'all are heading out to do?' Toby teased, his lips curving into a smirk.

"Oh shut up." Sydne sighed as she rolled her eyes and walked into the sitting room. Toby and Isabella chuckled.

"Anyway, I'm going to meet up with Kit and ask him what I gotta do, ya'know? You can come too if you'd like- but I'm not sure anyone would be wanting to send you out after what you went through."

"It's fine, I'll come along!" Isabella said, willing to try and make herself an asset to the group.

She and Toby walked into Sydne, Devereaux, and Kit's room, to find Kit sitting on his very superfan bed.

"Hey Kit, do you need us to do anything?" Toby asked as they leaned against the frame of the entrance.

"Yeah actually- I need a bunch of room making supplies and furnishings for it, so Isabella has a place to sleep- me and Alex can get on building it." Kit instructed.

"She can just stay in my room." Toby suggested.

"Dine. Hates. Her. Guts. And we don't need another riot about who they share rooms with." Kit shivered at the memory of the riot.

Toby burst out laughing.

"OH MY GOD THAT WAS HILARIOUS! YOU WERE ON THE ROOF LIKE A SCARED SQUIRREL!" Toby bellowed, the riot may have been months ago but it was still hilarious.

Isabella chuckled nervously, she didn't know anything about the riot or how a riot would be anything but horrible.

"It's not my fault, y'all terrified the crap outta me." Toby and Kit laughed before Kit picked up a paper and handed it to Toby.

"Anyway, do you want the list of things for the room?" Kit asked. Toby shook his head.

"If Dine isn't good with Isabella staying in our room we can always switch around, I know Dev and Zayne wouldn't mind sharing, neither would Sydne and Asher."

Kit sighed. "Fine, if you really think that's the best way to go about this, I'm gonna switch Val and Dine though- I heard her say some nasty ass things about Isabella."

Isabella looked down at her shoes.

"Fine." Toby agreed reluctantly.

"Can I have a job please..?" Isabella asked quietly.

"Can you have a what now?" Kit said in shock.

"A job- I don't wanna be a useless bag of blood- I wanna at least benefit all of you guys somehow."

Kit glared at Isabella, his eyes cold and unforgiving.

"How are we supposed to trust you? For all we know you're gonna go rat us out to your little god lady, tell her where we are and get us brutally killed with our heads rolling." Kit snarled.

"Hey hey- you said you'd give her a chance, plus you could always send her out with others. I also think the lady knows where we are already-"

Kit looked at Toby and sighed.

"Dammit you..." He muttered as he fetched a piece of paper and skimmed it.

"Well the only jobs I have on here is getting food and Sydne and Asher already left to go do that. So there aren't exactly any jobs I could give you, if you really want a job you could clean up some garbage or something- but we don't really have any jobs open."

Isabella sighed and walked out.

"Sorry-" Kit called out, though Isabella didn't hear.

"It's fine, I'll go vibe with her." Toby said as he walked off to go find Isabella.

Isabella was in the sitting room, fidgeting with the TV while Val and Dine watched.

"So these play more than tapes?" Val asked, mildly interested in what Isabella was doing.

"Yeah, there's regular TV that plays IKEA ads and a good show called 'Släpps i detaljhandeln,' and there's another good show called 'Bakom SCP:s hemligheter.'" Isabella said, happy to finally be given some freedom to chat.

"Can you translate those titles into English?" Val requested.

"Actually, I don't know what they are in English, the dialogue of the shows and stuff is all in English except the titles, it's weird."

"So we only get two shows? Slips-eye-whatever and Bacon-SCP-Hand-Lighter?" Dine mumbled, pronouncing the names horribly wrong.

Fiction Kids

"Usually yes- unless you know the secret pass code to get into the streaming service! Which I, your great friend Isabella, just happens to know." Isabella explained with sarcastic cockiness.

"The streaming service is called "Streamingtjänst för fångar, Läge: Anställd IKEA," and the passcode is super long and complex- uhh..." Isabella started mumbling and tapping her fingers in the air as if she were tapping a keyboard or a number pad.

"OH! It's 'Tänk dig att översätta detta, haha nörd,' it took me months to remember it properly." Isabella said as she continued fidgeting with some wires behind the TV.

"Do you know what any of those mean?" Val asked. Isabella shook her head.

"I only know English, not whatever this language is. The other employees know the translations but refuse to tell me, they won't even tell me what the language is."

"What geniuses..." Dine mumbled under her breath, only Val heard her and he was clearly upset by it.

"What's gotten into you- you're usually so nice." Val whispered back. Dine shrugged.

"I don't want her here, that's all."

Val rolled his eyes and brought his attention back to Isabella.

"Are there any good shows on the streaming service?"

"I don't know really- there's a lot of movies on there, and our breaks are never long enough to watch any, there are some series on there but I never really put in the effort to look into them. With you guys I bet y'all could find something cool."

After a minute or two of fidgeting Isabella pulled out a handful of wires and bowed.

"And that my friends is how to hijack a TV."

Val clapped, entertaining Isabella's fake show, while Dine rolled her eyes and was drawing on a napkin.

"Ahem," Toby said, pretending to cough into a closed fist.

"Holy Satan- how long have you been standing there?!" Dine shrieked as she stumbled backwards ever so slightly.

"Long enough to know this TV isn't useless and that everything on it is titled in a different language nobody here knows.

Isabella nodded towards Toby and threw her handful of wires on the floor.

"Jesus Christ- what the hell did you guys do to this TV- even the TV's we reserved for training tapes were easier to hijack than this- and trust me, those TV's were specifically made to run tapes- nothing else even would have the slightest chance to get past it."

Toby took a seat next to Val and watched Isabella at work.

"When did you learn all of this stuff anyway?" Toby asked.

"Things get very boring as an employee- you need to entertain yourself, and the other employees aren't exactly the nicest people."

Isabella kicked her foot into the center of the TV screen, forcing the black slate to snap on, being overtaken by a pale white.

"Ow- is that really how you have to turn it on?" Val winced.

"It's that or finding an object as thick as a tape to put into the VHS compartment, either way these TV screens are made of steel so we're good."

Again Isabella ran her foot into the TV screen, causing it to light up with bright neon blue, similar to the blue in the IKEA logo.

"Bro this TV must be really old, or at least hijacked multiple times before."

Isabella took off her shoe and jammed it into the VHS compartment behind the TV and continued to bash her other foot into the screen.

"That looks painful..." Val said as he got up to go help Isabella. Val walked up to the TV and started kicking it too, he didn't know why, Isabella was doing it so he assumed he should too.

"That looks so painful you idiot." Dine said, astonished.

"It's fun though!" Val smiled as he continued to kick the TV aggressively.

"I wanna help!" Toby cheered as he got up to join Val in the bashing of the TV.

Kit walked into the sitting room to see what the commotion was, only to be met with a collection of idiots kicking a TV.

"Can I have context? No? Okay I'm joining" He said as he rushed over and joined in the kicking.

Everyone was cheering and laughing, scaring Zayne and Devereaux away to the entrance, not even they were brave enough to figure out what was going on.

"What do you think is happening up there?" Zayne asked, whispering quietly into Devereaux's ear.

"It's either something cursed, illegal, traumatizing or nightmare inducing." Dev replied, counting each reason on each of his fingers.

"Do you wanna go up and see?"

Devereaux shook his head violently.

"And get traumatized? Hell no."

Suddenly they heard a loud thud from above followed by a bunch of laughing.

"Yeah we're not checking that out."

Alex had hobbled  out of their room, saw what Val, Kit, and Isabella were doing and flat out fell on the floor.

"Holy satan are you okay-" Val said between gasps of air and laughs.

Kit held out his hand and pulled Alex up, who was still in shock.

"What the hell did I see-" He muttered before sitting back down on the floor with Dine.

"Why- why were you all doing that-" Alex stuttered. They knew they shouldn't be so surprised but couldn't help but remain in shock.

"That's the only way to turn on most forms of technology here, kicking it. It's concerning most of the time but it's all powered by Her Honor's magic so it needs very special conditions to turn on." Isabella replied.

Once everyone stepped away from the TV an IKEA ad began to play and Isabella smirked.

"Now, let me do my dirty work." She said as everyone sat down, she picked up a handful of wires, and started kicking the screen again, slapping wires on it, and fidgeting more with the back.

"You look high." Dine remarked snottily. Isabella ignored her though, she was focused on kicking the screen in the right places, slapping wires in the right places, and fidgeting with the right bits and parts behind the TV so it could work right.

♀ ♀ ♀

"I'm tired..." Sydne complained as she loaded another eight plates of spaghetti into a knapsack she was carrying with her.

"Oh shush, there are more people to feed now, which means we need more food." Asher explained.

"How much more could one person actually eat?"

"A lot more than you, that's for sure."

Sydne gave a dramatic gasp and brought a hand to her chest.

"I'm offended!" She shrieked jokingly as Asher laughed.

"Here, trade." Asher said as he handed Sydne a clipboard and a pen while he took the knapsack out of her hands.

"Yay!" Sydne said happily as she skimmed the page. "We just need more water, lemons and Goldfish and then we should be fine."

"All those Goldfish are *mine*." Asher hissed.

"You can have them- can't stand the texture of those things anyway." Sydne said as she waved her hand toward him.

"I can't wait to get out of this place- IKEA air and pathetic light glow get boring over time." Asher sighed.

"Yeah, I miss my Cuphead Tumblr Ask Blogs..." Sydne said longingly.

Asher threw 7 lemons into the bag and looked back at Sydne.

"Lemons acquired, what's next?" He asked. Sydne looked down and quickly skimmed the page.

"Water."

Bitsy Kids

Asher nodded and started walking on, Sydne following quickly behind.

"Pause." Asher said after a couple minutes of walking.

"What?" Sydne asked as she watched Asher bend down to pick something up.

"What did you find-" She asked before Asher whipped around holding a black plastic stick-man like doll with balls for his belly and head.

"Oh my god it's so cute!" Sydne squealed happily as she looked at the figure in awe.

"This is my new child, meet Bob." Asher said as he showed off his figure.

"Yes, we all love Bob! Give him here, I'll carry him." Sydne said as she took the figure from Asher's hands and tucked it under her shoulder.

"Now make sure it's safe, I don't want Bob, my own child, to get hurt." Asher said with a hint of sarcasm.

They both chuckled and continued moving forward.

The IKEA was big and the cafes where they found their food was scarce, sure random pizzas and goldfish would be found around the displays of the furniture and some tables and counters would have lemons and lemon slices, but that wasn't very reliable, what they really needed was a nearby cafe, though they got unlucky with where the base was built and it was a good hour walk to the nearest one.

"Why didn't we pick a place closer to the cafes?" Asher whined.

"I guess we didn't think that far ahead- I mean it was better to have a place with building material and furnishings, it takes longer to lug that stuff around than a knapsack full of food and drinks." Sydne said.

"I guess so. Water!" Asher rushed over to what looked like a display holding playground equipment. On top of the slide were three bottles of water and a bag of chips.

"Hey! Look at that, we got extra chips too!" Sydne said as she scribbled something down on the paper on the clipboard.

"And there's another doll, want it?" Sydne asked as she picked up a plush doll and waved it in the air to grab Ashers attention.

The doll was made of basic fabric that any stuffed toy would be made of, and was stuffed with regular old cotton batting like a normal toy, but it was still different.

This toy looked exactly like an employee, not just any employee.

*Isabella* as an employee.

The employee was tall and skinny and had long thin arms and legs. The skin of the employee was a baked tan and the uniform was the same as all the other employee uniforms. The only thing letting them know this was Isabella was the long yarn braid that came from the back of the doll's head, and usually all employees were bald and kept their hair flat and down underneath their mesh head covers.

"Woah..." Asher said as he walked over slowly and caressed the doll's cheek with his hand.

"Okay it's just a doll-" Sydne said as she turned the doll to face her, but was suddenly met with the shock and wonder Asher had.

"That- that looks just like Isabella..." She muttered as she started turning the doll around in her hand, examining it head to toe.

"Should we bring it back- to Isabella? Maybe she'll know what it's about." Sydne suggested.

"Probably- but she might not though, but who doesn't want a doll that looks like them?"

"Me."

Asher rolled his eyes.

"What do we need next?"

"Lemons and then we should be good."

Sydne continued scribbling something down on the paper, writing little words along the edges in shaky cursive handwriting.

"What's that you're writing down- the next New York Times best seller?" Asher joked.

Sydne laughed and turned the clipboard.

PUBLISHED

"Words in cursive." She chuckled.

The words ranged from names to little quotes and phrases she had memorized from books and Pinterest posts over the years.

"Yaland, I'm really going to miss this place once we leave." Asher said, Sydne shot him a disappointed look.

"What do you mean- this place is hell- literally- there's something always trying to kill us every five seconds," She sighed, surprised by Asher's sudden comment.

"I mean, think about it. Nobody ever really understood or liked us back on Earth, we were just- those stupid teenagers who all ran away from home, rented a house and lived on the verge of homelessness. Here there aren't any old hags around to scream at us for simply existing, I don't wanna go back home- don't get me wrong I don't wanna stay *here*, but I wanna go somewhere that *isn't* home, a place where we'll all be accepted, where we won't have to mask anything." Asher looked wistfully down to the ground, and Sydne gazed at him with a soft smile, the wanting and determination she could see in his eyes was just beautiful.

"I know what you mean, I don't like it here either but I don't want to go back to earth- but what other choice do we have? It's not like we can't just find some brand new place to live- unless Hell is where ya wanna go but we'd all need to die first." Sydne said.

Asher sighed and chuckled lightly. His cheeks turned a light shade of salmon.

"C'mon, I saw some lemons over there- I'm so ready to get back home." Sydne said as she nodded toward to the right and started walking over there, Asher following quickly behind.

As they walked, they let their focus shift onto mere nothingness, any worries or resting ideas had left their minds, all they were focused on were each other. Their walking synced, the loud thud of Sydne's leather black, heeled boots echoed out in perfect sync with the light squeak and "*pshhh*" of Asher's black Vans.

There was a foot of space between them, a wall of air following them as they walked next to each other, a wall easily broken.

Asher's right hand dangled longingly next to his side, his left being occupied with the knapsack full of food. Sydne's left hand dangled lifelessly at *her* side, nothing but a pen intertwined between her fingers.

Their footsteps echoed through the empty halls. The place was deserted, an empty tomb, a place to be forgotten, and they were there, being forgotten by everyone back on Earth.

Sydne stepped closer to Asher, the gap between them now being halved, their hands still resting on their sides.

The air was cool and artificial, the AC blazing on cold as vents and fans circulated the air around them, like how the employees circulated the constant fear of death.

Death was such a low-life worry, a constant fear that was only used as an excuse by many. Death will happen, it always will, you can't change or fix that, so why worry? Instead of trying to make their life the best it can be, trying to live life to the fullest, trying to make their life a journey worth living through, instead, people spend years with the constant idea of death looming over their heads. They don't do anything because their scared it would lead to their death, why live a life if it's going to be a boring one?

Asher extended his arm and grabbed Sydne's hand, making her drop her pen and look into his emerald eyes. Asher bent down and picked up Sydne's pen, tucking it over her left ear and using a lock of her brunette hair to keep it in place as they laced their fingers together, like a weaving meant to be.

♀ ♀ ♀

Sydne and Asher showed up at the base, Devereaux and Zayne were at the entrance, sitting on the floor and looking up toward the building.

"Uhm- are you okay?" Asher said as he let go of Sydne's hand and started towards the door.

Pitchforks

"You don't wanna go up there-" Devereaux said as he stood up and pushed Asher back.

"Why not-" Sydne said as she pulled the pen out of her hair.

"It sounds like pure chaos up there, who knows what could be going on up there." Zayne shivered.

"You guys are literal babies-" Sydne said as she pushed past all the boys and walked into the base, Zayne and Devereaux looking pale-scared despite this being a normal occurrence.

"How are you guys so scared of something possibly traumatizing and concerning happening? You've been friends with us for years!" Sydne stepped out the door, walked up to Asher and took the knapsack out of his hands.

"I'm going and staying in, if y'all wanna be killed by an employee go straight on ahead." She said snarkily as she walked up the steps and rounded the corner out of view.

"What's up with her-" Devereaux said, noticing how Sydne was acting extra grumpy and looked over at Asher.

Asher shrugged and followed Sydne into the base.

Chaotic laughing, yelling, screaming, and other unidentifiable noises could still be heard from the sitting room.

"Are they trying to wash rats again-" Sydne asked as she finished dumping the knapsack out into the bathroom.

A loud crash emerged from the room, followed with a deafening silence.

"Someones dead- oh god- someones dead-" Asher said as he ran into the room, Sydne following quickly behind.

The room was barely 10 yards away, but they still felt like they had gotten there too late.

"Who's dying, and where's the duct tape-" Sydne stopped talking as she looked onto the group.

No blood, no glass, no cocaine-pale body on the floor.

"Was that not you guys-?" Asher asked. Kit shook his head.

"We thought that was someone else-"

Isabella had gotten up and was looking out the glass table they had taped in place of a pallet to use as a window.

"I think they realized I'm gone." She muttered, the blurred abyss of furniture and fluorescent glowing lights taking up all her sight.

"So they broke something?" Toby asked.

"Yeah- anything I particularly liked, it's cursed with Växande smärtor, whoever doesn't break something will be cursed with them being the next one for- that…" Isabella brought her hands up to her arms, gripping them tightly as she started to shake, the memory of the pain still fresh in her mind, her skin crawled with remembrance.

"Don't worry, you'll never need to feel that pain again." Toby said as he went over to Isabella and tried to comfort her.

Dine looked away jealously, her eyes narrowing on a stain left on the Pallet from when Val had fought a different employee.

Everyone had wanted Val to win, leaving the goblin dead on the ground- but for some reason this one gets special treatment because she's *different*.

Different. My. Ass.

Dine got up aggressively and walked into her room.

As she walked away she assumed nobody noticed, paying any form of attention to her- they were all obsessing over the killing machine in the sitting room.

"Disgusting…" She muttered.

Isabella took a deep breath and turned around.

"Sorry about that, I'll try to forget it."

"It's fine- we're all still a little shaken up from watching that- I didn't even know something like that was *possible*." Asher muttered.

"Asher- what's that you got there?" Toby asked. Asher looked down and noticed he was still holding the dolls he and Sydne picked up while looking for food.

"Oh- yeah, these were just some dolls we found lying around, we thought they were cool so we decided to take them with us."

Val looked over at Sydne. "You sure she didn't threaten to put you six feet under if you didn't bring them?" He said, pointing at Sydne.

"No actually- this one she didn't wanna bring but we thought Isabella might like it." He said as he held out and showcased the doll they had found that looked liked a carbon copy of their employee friend.

Isabella walked over and examined the doll closely.

"That's weird- nobody here has the time to make anything like that." Isabella took the doll and grazed her hand over it's head slowly, the yarn of the hair and the felt of the skin tickling her finger.

"I guess Her Honor probably made this." A breeze washed over the group as she said "Her Honor."

"Oh- I guess I can't call her that anymore- old habits die hard." She muttered as she tucked the doll into the large pocket of her hoodie.

"Does that really not creep you out?" Sydne said.

"Woah, is Sydne's horror tolerance finally dwindling down?!" Kit cheered sarcastically.

"Oh shut up- it's the thought someone had made that doll, someone had gone out of their way to make a doll that looked like you." Everyone fell silent and shivered an oh-so-tiny bit at the realization.

"Anyway," Asher said. "Anything interesting happen while we were gone?" He said as he pointed toward the TV.

"Oh yeah- that. Isabella hijacked the TV and unlocked a bunch of shows and a streaming service!"

Sydne's eyes widened as she ran over to the TV.

"CAN I GET THE CUPHEAD SHOW ON THIS?!" She shouted happily as she fiddled with the wires behind it.

"Don't do that- you'll ruin it!" Isabella said as she ran over and started to fight Sydne.

Pictoria Labs

"Don't mind her- she's a Cuphead fanatic." Kit chuckled as he helped pull Sydne away from the TV.

"Can I get Run or Die on it?!" Asher asked excitedly, everyone turned around and stared him down.

"Do you have your VR with you?" Toby asked. Asher stared at him before realizing.

"Oh yeah- no I don't." He said. Everyone sighed as they all walked away from the TV.

"Can we watch something? I've been bored for ages." Val complained.

"Sure, I can find us something." Isabella said as she fiddled with wires behind the TV.

The TV glitched brokenly between show icons and rows, their unknown names flashing before everyone's eyes as they stared on in awe, as if a TV was an entirely new concept.

"That one looks cool!" Asher said as he pointed toward a show called 'De hemska dödsfallen från papier-maché.'

"Ew, no, it looks terrible." Sydne said as she turned around to face Asher.

"You look terrible!" He scowled jokingly.

"Well no duh, I haven't done my hair, make-up, or skincare for months."

"Ew, girly things." Toby grimaced as he pretended to gag. Sydne chuckled and flicked her hair sarcastically.

"I'm just that poggers.'

"OH! OH! THAT ONE HAS ME ON IT!" Val shouted to another show.

Everyone looked over and held their breaths to hold in their laughter.

"You wanna watch 'Den superhäftiga snyggingen, shawty, dräpande, tjejchefsdrottningen,'? That show is megga cringe." Isabella chuckled.

"But look! There's an absolute shawty on it, like me!"

There was a guy with black hair on the icon slicking it back and holding a can of what we could only assume was Bacon Grease, he was wearing a tuxedo with a bright sunflower corsage on it.

"Val that looks nothing like you- you don't even like suits!" Kit said as he turned around to face Val.

Val rolled his eyes and smirked.

"You're just jealous I can slay." Everyone laughed before turning their attention back to the TV

"All these look like garbage." Toby sighed as he got up.

"I'm gonna go talk to Dine about Isabella moving into our room, she'll probably be fine." He said as he stretched and started walking off.

"Shouldn't you tell Zayne too-? Kit called out, only to be shut down by Toby's waving hand.

"Nah, it's just Zayne. He'll put up with anything."

"HEY! I HEARD THAT!" Zayne yelled as he ran up the entrance and started to chase Toby down, who was now running around like a headless hummingbird.

Val got up to help Zayne with the chasing, after all it was funny to see Toby so scared of him.

"PLEASE! I HAVE UNO TRAUMA!" He shouted in a fake crying voice.

Alex scooted into Kit and started cuddling with him, letting Kit wrap his long and warm arms around his body as he let himself melt into the moment.

Sydne sighed and placed the pen intertwined between her fingers down on the ground, only for Asher to pick it back up and tuck it over her right ear.

"PLEASE! I'M INNOCENT!" Toby shouted as he continued to run.

"Una noche de pie!" Zayne shouted as Val and he continued to run around as Toby fake cried and squealed.

"I'm just- not gonna ask..." Devereaux muttered as he attempted to back away from the chaos he just walked into."

"Oh no you're not!" Kit smiled as he got up, leaving Alex to fall on the floor, and forced Devereaux to sit next to him and watch the chaos unfold before him.

"Jumping through the wall sure sounds like a good idea right about now…" Devereaux muttered.

"That sure ain't gonna be possible, a lot of these walls are held together with the duct tape which probably re-inforced it or whatever.

"Okay that stuff is magical but I don't think it's *that* magical." Sydne said .

"I don't understand what's so special about a roll of duct tape, it's just tape, it holds things together, and I don't think y'all should be eating it." Isabella said, grimacing a little.

"Actually the duct tape we found here is super cool, It can fix any flaws on clothes or objects or anything, and if you put it on a cut or bruise it magically goes away- and- and- if you eat it you stop being sick! It's super cool!" Kit explained, oddly excited about it for some unknown reason.

"You're kidding- that stuff is poison." Isabella said, shocked.

"No- it's actually quite the opposite." Sydne explained. "Someone hurt me." Isabella demanded blankly as she rolled up the sleeve of her hoodie.

"What- no- we're not going to do that-" Devereaux said confusedly.

"Please, I wanna test if the tape kills me."

"Whatever you say." Asher said as he pulled his knife out of his pocket and walked over to Isabella.

"Do you got anything- yannow- a little less terrifying- like the blade from a pencil sharpener? Or a sharp tooth pick-" Before Isabella could finish her sentence Asher thrusted the knife into her right shoulder and watched as blood starting leaking out of it and Isabella cry in pain.

"WHAT THE HELL ASHER-" Alex shouted as everyone ran over. Toby, Zayne and Val stopped running and walked over to see what happened and Dine poked her head around the corner.

"Relax, just tape up the wound." He said as he signaled for someone to get the roll of tape, which Toby ran off to do.

"Asher, that tape is *good* but it is not *that good*." Kit exclaimed, his voice shaky and full of fear.

"Please, it kept Sydne from dying when she was supposed too, fixed Val's blood loss, brain damage, and broken ankle, this is just a stab wound, nothing too serious." Asher sighed.

"I never thought I'd ever hear anyone call a stab wound 'nothing too serious,' but you learn something new every day!" Sydne shrieked, upset at Asher's unnecessary brutality.

Toby ran over to Isabella, ripped off a piece of tape and slapped it over the wound on her shoulder.

The blood that was dyed onto her hoodie soaked back into her body, and underneath the tape the clothing and wound stitched themselves back together

"Oh my god..." Isabella whispered to herself, absolutely amazed at the magic of the tape, letting the wow factor flood into her brain and drown out the mind-piercing memory of the transformation she suffered through.

Asher cleaned off the knife with the bottom of hise hoodie and shoved it back into his pocket.

"See, it won't hurt you, it fixes you!" Asher said matter-of-factly .. Everyone seemingly forgot what Asher did once they saw Isabella was okay.

"Oh my honor, that's amazing." Isabella said, her breathing heavy and her eyes wide with shock.

"Why did you guys think it's poison? This stuff is magical!" Kit asked.

"Her honor- or- I mean- Jeantete." Everyone looked at Isabella, wide eyed when she finally revealed Her Honor's name.

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"Jeantete? Is she French or something- that girl sounds whiter than the expired mayonnaise on the burgers here." Zayne shrieked.

"I don't know- she tells us that she'd been taking elocution lessons since she was a young girl after her family moved to America to hide her French accent, she refuses to talk without it- though whenever she talks very fast, like when she gives a lot of orders, you can always hear just the littlest bit of it."

Everyone was shocked.

The bloodthirsty, murderous, enslaving monster was French and had elocution lessons.

"But- elocution lessons are like- a civilized person thing, demons don't have those."

Isabela shrugged. "I guess she was forced to by her parents?"

"Or maybe she turned back after a traumatic event!" Sydne suggested a little too excitedly.

"Sydne, this isn't a novel, she probably was born evil, always hating people, got powers somehow and used them to become a ruling demon that enslaves people she can't kill." Kit sighed angrily.

A giant gust of wind brushed over the entire group, almost sending Sydne to floor- but Asher caught her before she fell.

"Oh yeah- that girl can hear us." Toby scoffed.

"I was expecting her name to be like Esmerelda Vivian Ghroul or some stereotypical, pretentious villain name like that- not Jeantete." Val said, gagging as he said the name.

"Like what Kit said, this isn't  novel." Sydne repeated with sarcastic cockiness. "It would make a good one though."

"Okay, let's move on before Sydne starts narrating an entire plot for a giant book series about our sad little lives.

"Hey!" The group laughed.

ꕥ ꕥ ꕥ

Ever since Isabella had come and joined the group, Dine had been ignored- well everyone has a little but she didn't take it lightly.

Pitch Kids

Dine used to always be with Toby, always hanging out with them, talking to them, they were basically the platonic versions of Sydne and Asher or Kit and Alex. Ever since Isabella joined the group, Dine hadn't been getting as much attention as she wanted. She understood that she needed to be considerate and to care about this new girl- which for one she did not understand, but knew she at least had to fake it somewhat.

Dine remembered when she tried to talk to Toby and was just dismissed because they were too busy helping Isabella.

"Hey Toby- wanna talk?" Dine asked as she rested herself on the wall she was standing behind.

"Not right now Dine, I need to help Isa with something." Toby replied.

"Oh come on, we haven't talked in ages." Toby once again shook his head.

"Dine not now."

Dine gazed down and walked away.

Toby never even looked at her.

Dine shuddered at the memory of that event, it was not a fun one, it was one of the first events that proved to Dine that this girl was nothing but bad news and that she was slowly going to be replaced by her.

Day by day, hour by hour, she felt less and less relevant to everyone and decided to lash out on Isabella- she caused it after all.

Dine stayed on her bed, staring at the ceiling, recalling all the bad memories Isabella caused and all the bad memories she's on her way to causing.

Another time Dine tried asking for help, but nobody paid her any attention because they were all too busy caring about this new girl who apparently is going to be rehabilitated or something.

"Can someone help me lug this couch around?! I need it for the sitting room."

Silence.

Pitchblack Arts

At least all she heard was silence. In reality there was mumbled convos and background noise. But she only heard silence. A lack of response to her cry for help.

Dine turned over on her bed, growing uncomfortable at the memory.

I hate that girl.

I hate that girl.

I hate that girl.

I absolutely hate that girl.

Isabella was the reason Toby didn't care about her anymore. She's the reason Toby is mad at her. She's the reason everyone is going to die. She's the reason there will at least be someone gone when they find a way out.

Dine often daydreamed of the day someone would die, fall to the floor in a pool of their own blood, watching everyone cradle their body and cry, just so she could say "I told you so." She knew it was wrong, she knew if anyone found out she'd be cast away and die out in the industrial wilderness- but she couldn't help but give in.

Each day that passed by, the more of a jealous rage she spiraled in, anger soon becoming the only emotion she felt. Her mind numbing day by day. Her fragile psyche broke more and more, every moment was another little crack in the wall of her soul, soon loosing all regard for her life and everyone else's. Logic becoming a foreign topic to her, reality and fantasy blurring together to create a hellhole of an image of life she was stuck in. She no longer thought rationally, the only thing she wanted was *what she wanted*. She didn't care how to get it, she just knew she had too. Life and Death blurring together into an unfathomable mess, like her brain.

There's no real way to describe how Dine was feeling, it was a concept only those who have felt can express to each other. Her brain was as if heaven went up in flames and hell drowned in an ice-cold lake.

All because she didn't get the attention she wanted.

Pathetic…

Or depressing.

Depending on how you looked at it.

Dine knew she started feeling that the second Toby mentioned rehabilitating an employee, trying to save someone from this hellhole with them.

In all honesty, Dine didn't actually want anyone to die, she just wanted everyone to agree with her, and she wanted to feel part of the group again- to have the attention Isabella stripped away from her, if Isabella was around everyone knew interacting with the both of them at once was difficult, and if one of them was gone the other could take their place.

Notice how I said if *one of them* was gone.

Dine heard laughter erupt from the sitting room. She got out of her bed and poked her head around the corner of the entrance to her room and glared at the group.

"Look at them, having fun and hanging out with that guillotine-waiting-to-happen." She muttered snarkily under her breath

"I can't wait to watch them all die to her hands." Suddenly, Dine looked down at her feet, full of guilt and shame when she realized what she just said.

"Nevermind…" She mumbled as she went to lay back down on her bed.

The giggling from the sitting room clogged the air, and Dine was filled with overwhelming jealousy.

"I wish they could just- just see what I see, see my point and *agree* with it."

But she knew deep down they wouldn't.

She knew deep down that they had all already decided to trust her- to some extent.

She knew that the only way to make them see her side, was to make a tragedy happen.

Which Isabella was already going to make.

She just needed a little,

*nudge.*

# Chapter 8

Isabella had been with the group since midday, and they knew nothing about her besides her name and history.

Suddenly the lights shut off, the world outside the base was pitch black but the fairy lights kept the room deceintly lit.

"And thats on midnight!" Sydne cheered as she got up. "I'm gonna go to sleep, Toby you'll need to explain to Dine that Isabella is staying with you-"

Sydne was interrupted by Devereaux screaming.

Sydne looked back and saw Devereaux on the floor, Isabella on top of him trying to attack, her blue eye glowing like a light bulb.

"HELP!" Devereaux screeched as he tried to keep Isabella from scratching his face off.

Asher and Zayne rushed over and tried pulling her off, but her grip on him was too strong.

Dine peeked her head around the entrance to her room and shuddered.

"RABIES!" She shouted as she ran over to help Asher and Zayne.

Sydne and Toby tried doing the cliche, "This isn't you," thing and tried to pep-talk her out of whatever that was.

Kit and Alex tried pulling Devereaux from underneath, Kit's knuckles and fingers getting hurt in the process.

"VAL, DO SOMETHING!" Asher shouted.

Val was the only one not doing anything, he was in shock and had just froze, but Asher's demand woke him up.

"LIKE WHAT?!" He shouted back.

"ANYTHING JUST- JUST SOMETHING!" Kit shouted.

Val looked around frantically before picking up a nearby chair and attempted hitting Isabella with it.

Who she hit was Zayne, who was now laying on the floor, passed out, and the chair was now broken.

"GOOD JOB." Dine said sarcastically.

"I'M SORRY- Y'ALL ARE JUST MOVING SO MUCH!" Val shouted as he pulled Zayne's unconscious body away to clear a path to Isabella. Val picked up some fallen fairy lights and tried whipping Isabella with them, ultimately failing after realizing he was hitting Asher instead of Isabella.

"I'M SORRY-" He said again.

"IT'S FINE, JUST STOP ACTING LIKE ME AND KNOCK HER OUT!" Sydne shouted.

Isabella was still going ham on Devereaux, trying to hit him and scratch him, once even raising her fist to punch him but punching Kit's hand instead.

Toby and Sydne eventually went to brute force and tried pulling Devereaux away.

"I'M GETTING TIRED!" Devereaux hollered.

Val grabbed a lamp and swung.

Asher and Dine backed off so they wouldn't get hit, though Dine's wrist did get sprained from the lamp as she was backing away.

"WHY IS THIS SO HARD?!" Val shouted angrily as he threw the lamp and started to straight up tackle Isabella.

The group looked in horror at the human sandwich that had formed before them.

Isabella caught in between Devereaux and Val, and honestly nobody was winning.

Isabella was attempting to punch and scratch Devereaux and Val at the same time, despite him being on opposites side of her.

Devereaux was just trying to not die. He was only fourteen and very small. An entire sixteen-year-old girl on top of him, trying to beat him up and kill him was something he wouldn't take very well and could very much lead to his death.

And the almighty Val, who has one employee death under his

belt of experience, Karate lessons from middle school, the ability to turn chaos into even more chaotic chaos and the god-given ability to pick up items and throw them to a location with little to no precision, on top of the both of them, desperately trying to at least neutralize the danger of her attacks.

The trio were just there, in the middle of the sitting room, everyone having backed away to let them all toss and turn around in a fist fight.

"HELP!" A creaky voice yelled, but it wasn't Val or Devereaux. It was Isabella.

"WAIT!" Toby shouted back as he pushed Val out of the way and took his spot on top of Isabella.

"HEY!" Val shouted as one of Isabella's long nails scratched across Val's eye, leaving a bleeding wound.

"ISABELLA! CAN YOU HEAR ME?!" Toby shouted.

"TOBY, GIVE UP, WE ALREADY TRIED THIS!" Sydne shouted back, but Toby ignored her.

"ISA, PLEASE DO SOMETHING!" Toby shouted again. Isabella's neck seemed to snap and jolt itself towards Toby, her arms still frantically attacking him and Devereaux.

"PLEASE ISABELLA- JUST TRY TO GET OUT-"

But it was too late.

Val rushed in and bashed the back of Isabella's head with a lamp, letting her body slump down on the floor, unconscious and limp.

Everyone just stood there for a moment, breathing heavily, letting all the adrenaline filter out of their blood streams.

Devereaux scurried up and stood by Sydne and Kit.

"I told you guys she was dangerous." Dine said blankly after a few moments of silence.

"You are such a prick." Toby replied just as blankly as they walked over to Zayne and put his arms around his neck.

"I'm going to put Zayne to bed, Sydne, Asher, get some duct tape and patch up everyone that got hurt, then you can help me

patch up Zayne." Toby instructed as he walked off, Zayne's tall body dragging behind him pathetically.

Sydne and Asher rushed off to find duct tape while Devereaux, Kit, Val and Dine kept an eye on Isabella.

"You don't think she's dead- do you?" Kit asked shakily. Val shrugged.

"I honestly don't know, there's no bleeding though- and a concussion could be easily fixed with some rest and tape. But I did hit her pretty hard." Val said, shame creeping from his voice. Devereaux brushed Isa's hair out of her face and touched it lightly.

"She doesn't feel cold- I think she'll be fine." Devereaux reassured.

"Most importantly, are *you* okay?" Alex asked as he walked over to Kit and held his hands in his. Kit nodded slightly.

"I'm fine, my hands just got a bit beat up, nothing a bit of tape can't fix."

Alex let out a sigh of relief and lightly kissed Kit's hands.

"Are you okay?" Kit asked Alex. Alex nodded.

"Yeah, I didn't get hurt."

After a few minutes or so, Sydne and Asher returned to the sitting room and begun cutting tape with Asher's knife. Little pieces of tape were being passed around, everyone putting tape over cuts and bruises from the battle.

"Val, don't you want some tape for that-?" Kit asked as he tried giving Val a piece of tape for his scratched, bleeding eye.

"No way! This would be such a cool battle scar!" He said as he pointed to the giant wound across his eye.

"If you say so." Kit shrugged as he tossed the tape back to Sydne.

"We'll be back in a bit, if Isabella wakes up tie her to a chair." Asher instructed as he followed Sydne into Toby, Zayne and Dine's bedroom.

Dine bent down and hauled Isabella over her shoulder.

"What are you doing?" Alex asked.

"Throwing her over the edge." Dine explained blankly as she carried Isabella towards the window.

"What the hell- don't do that!" Devereaux yelled as he ran towards the window and blocked Dine's path.

"For fricks sake, she tried to kill you! Do none of you have any respect for your lives?!" Dine scolded as she tried to push past Devereaux.

"We can handle you two having beef with each other- but flat out killing is just- just no!" Kit retaliated.

"Well, I, for one, want to make it out of here alive. And if you guys don't let me toss her over this edge then nobody will be taking any step outside that damn door in one piece."

To her dismay, Alex and Kit had pulled Isabella off Dine's shoulder and were both carrying her.

"She may not be perfect, and a lot of people here don't trust her- but killing her is just wrong!" Kit exclaimed.

"SHE LITERALLY ATTACKED YOUR LITTLE BROTHER- HOW THE HELL DO YOU THINK SHE STILL DESERVES TO LIVE?!" Dine scolded. Kit opened his mouth to say something but ultimately closed it and looked shamefully down towards the ground.

"YOU BETTER NOT BE GUILTING ANYONE BACK THERE!" Sydne shouted from the room.

Sydne always struggled with the concept of being guilty of something and often would apologize and take responsibility for things she didn't do. She assumed someone was mad at her for something she did and struggled to tell if someone was joking or being sarcastic opposed to being genuinely upset with her. She knew she had this problem and desperately wanted to work towards fixing it, so whenever she heard someone being guilted she would get upset since she knew the mental conflict it could cause the victim.

"OH SHUT UP!" Dine screamed, not particularly towards anyone. "I WANT THAT GIRL DEAD AND OUT OF THIS BASE, IF ANYONE WANTS TO MAKE IT OUT OF HERE ALIVE YOU WILL LISTEN!"

Dine walked out of the base's entrance, despite the lights still being off and the employees all in their feral hunting mode.

"Dine it's not safe to go out there-" Val said, but it was already too late. Dine had already scurried down the makeshift ramp and was running off into the black abyss with glints of lamps in the distance.

"Should someone go after her- she could get killed." Kit suggested, but was ignored.

"I don't think so, that was her own stupid mistake, if she dies or gets hurt that's her fault." Val said coldly.

"I just- I just don't want anybody to die- I mean- can't we all just live happily together? Must we all fight and argue over every little thing?" Kit sighed.

"I don't want anyone to die either, if she's not back by next night we'll all go out looking for her." Devereaux said, and the group agreed.

"Okay, Zayne's all patched up, someone bring in Isa!" Asher called out to the group. Alex and Kit hobbled Isabellas unconscious body inside the room and plopped it onto Dine's bed.

"Put some duct tape around her head- pretty sure she got brain damage from me hitting her." Val said, Toby nodded and did as instructed.

"I should get some duct tape too- I mean, I did get hit in the head when we first got here and nobody bothered to put duct tape on me!" Kit scoffed cockily.

"Here." Toby said annoyed as he ripped off a piece of tape and smacked it in the middle of Kit's fluffy hair.

"I- hey!" Kit shouted as Sydne helped him pull it out and ripping out as little hair as possible.

"Ow- ow-ow-ow-ow-"

"I'm sorry I'm trying to be gentle." Sydne cried.

Toby carefully wrapped Isabella's head a few times over, underneath her large braided ponytail.

"Asher, knife." Toby said as he held out his hand.

Asher dug into his pocket and pulled out his pocket knife, handed it to Toby and watched as he sliced through the piece of tape smoothly and handed it back.

"I'm still concerned about why you need to carry a knife with you everywhere." Sydne said as she dug back into Asher's pocket and pulled it out.

"I'm still concerned about why you need to carry a purse with you everywhere." Asher mocked. Sydne stopped herself before replying.

"Touche." She said as she crossed her arms and laid back on the wall.

Toby started apologizing. "I'm sorry everyone- I didn't know she could get violent like that- I really thought she'd be fine to keep around but-"

"Toby, it's fine, there's probably some underlying reason for her to act like this, don't beat yourself up about it- it's fine." Val said as he placed his hand on Toby's shoulder.

Toby had his back turned while apologizing to the group, looking down sorrowfully at Isabella and Zayne. When they looked back everyone saw the tears welling in his eyes and streaming down his cheeks.

"No- no don't cry- it's okay- everything will be okay!" Kit reassured as he ran over to Toby and embraced him in a hug.

Once Kit fully wrapped his arms around him, Toby let all his guard down and let out a large sobbing cry and buried his face into Kit's chest as he hugged back. Val walked up to Toby and went to hug them but Kit pushed him away and mouthed the word "later." Val nodded and backed away and signaled to the group to follow.

Everyone followed Val, leaving a sobbing Toby and a Kit trying to comfort him in the room.

Pitch Wars

Dine walked slowly through the store, her stained sneakers squeaking silently on the slick concrete of the floor. Dine didn't know why she had ran out like that, or where she planned to go, she didn't know how to build a base like the one Kit and Alex managed to make, she just knew she had to get out of there.

The shining lamps in the displays around her reminded her of city lights, it reminded her of when the group would all meet up at the city cliff and look out onto the dark yet sparkling abyss of the city below.

Dine stopped in her tracks to look over at a bright blue light that was a few miles away.

"The tower..." She said to herself, remembering everything about the lady- or Jeantete she had seen.

Dine quickened her pace and started running towards the information tower, she knew that Jeantete would manage to help her with finally getting rid of Isabella, and the tapes- Jeantete could help her with that too.

"Jeantete, I'm coming for you." She said as she continued to run towards the tower. Her feet pounded on the hard cement floor as she ran, her hands shaking with excitement and exhaustion.

Memories and feelings of reassurance flowed back to her after remembering everything that Jeantete had told her.

She dashed past employees who did nothing but gaze at her like she was a ghost, like they somehow knew she wasn't worth killing.

Once Dine got to the tower she put her hands on the base and shouted.

"JEANTETE! I'M HERE!"

Nothing.

Silence.

She kicked the base of the tower with her foot and screamed again.

Eventually, the screens went from blank white too static, then to Jeantete sitting in her office per usual.

"Good evening to you as well Dine." Jeantete said calmly, her hands resting peacefully on her desk.

"I have a problem I need you to fix." Dine explained. Jeantete lifted her head and somehow made eye contact with Dine.

"I love repairing others' issues, may you tell me what the matter is?"

Dine took a deep breath and nodded.

"It's Isabella- she joined our group and I just know she's rotten evil- she'll kill us all dead and by the time it happens it'll be to late to convince the group to stop trusting her- but they won't listen, she even attacked one of our friends and everyone is too brainwashed to see how terrible she is!" Dine explained.

Jeantete nodded slowly and spun around in her chair.

"Isabella is an- interesting girl to say the least, she managed to stay alive for so very long on her own, I forgot why she even came here." Jeantete said as she looked up as if she was trying to remember something.

"Can you help me get rid of her?"

Jeantete shook her head.

"I am powerful dear, but not that powerful, but you are absolutely right. She is terribly evil and must be stopped before she can hurt anyone else. Though your group has also caused me issues, I'm willing to look past them to assist you with Isabella. Your friends are quite stubborn like Isabella. Isabella was never able to be fully under my control- only ever under it when the lights were out. She often broke rules and such, clearly your friends would be much harder to break through," Jeantete said as she extended her hand toward the screen, a long, green, wrinkle-infested hand creeped beside and in front of Dine.

"Take that tape and play it, if it's unable to teach your friends the dangers of Isabella you'd have to make Isabella do something terribly unforgivable- or kill her. Either one works.That tape should do the trick though."

Dine took the tape from the hand.

The tape was a bright neon blue with yellow paper in it, on the back it said "Faroma med anställd 32 754, Isabella." The plastic seemed to lightly glimmer in the darkness and felt light in her hands.

"Are you sure this will work?" She asked. Jeantete nodded.

"When you're finished with it you must return it back to me, clear?"

Dine nodded and tucked the tape into her pocket.

"Thank you Jeantete." Dine said as she bowed. When she looked up, she noticed the screen had already gone back to it's default blank, white screen.

"This has to work, I need them to see how terrible she is." Dine muttered as she turned to walk back. The lights were still off and the store still a starry night sky. Wishful thinking and fantasized ideals of the future echoed in her mind, she had high hopes for this piece of film and polyester plastic, this could go one of two ways.

One, they could finally see her side, understand her and leave that damned girl for good.

Or, she'd have to make an unforgivable tragedy happen, one that would shake the group for the rest of their years.

One was merciful, the other would require a sacrifice.

Dine never believed she could ever do what she did, but jealousy and hatred can do a lot to a person.

Like committing a murder.

A bad, bad murder.

Dine kept her pace slow and quiet, her gaze forever stuck on her shoes. She knew the employees wouldn't hurt her, she knew they knew she was on their side, she knew that Jeantete had told them about her, and all the great things she had promised her, she could hear their light muttering when she walked past a display- a new one she hadn't seen before.

She stopped and popped her head around the corner, gazing around she noticed there was nothing more than a doll, no employee there to have been muttering, just a doll sitting on the shelf.

Dine walked up to it, her fingers itching to take it.

Her eyes widened as she got closer and it's details started becoming more apparent.

It had a face.

And a body.

It had tan skin and a face with eyes, dirty blonde hair tied up in a messy bun, a white turtle neck shirt with sleeves that go down to her elbows and a pastel yellow sweater vest over it, ripped baggy jeans with black fishnet tights underneath and generic black sneakers.

Dine picked up the doll and without question held it up to her chest, staring at the now empty spot the doll once laid.

"It's me. . ." She mumbled blankly.

"It's me. I know who I am." She said again.

The doll's essence began to melt into her skin, without flinching,

just letting it soak into her body, as if she knows it was good for her.

"I am never letting you go." She said again.

## Chapter 9

Most of the group had already gone to bed and fallen asleep, despite everyone's worry for Dine's whereabouts. The only two people still up were Kit and Alex.

"Alex- what if she's dead? What do we do- Toby would be absolutey crushed- nobody would have the morale to keep on going- it would practically start a suicide chain." Kit worried as he paced around the sitting room, his speaking jumbled and fast.

"I'm sure she's fine- I mean Val might not be with her but she can take care of herself." Alex replied, just as stressed as Kit but he's better at sounding calm in levels of high distress.

"Alex this is serious- we're literally in a killing machine- we could all die right here, right now and we've all been laughing and joking

Pitchfork Kids

and- we literally, PUT ONE OF THEM IN OUR HOUSE!" Kit shouted. Alex cupped his hand over his mouth and listened closely to their environment, waiting for someone to groggily hobble out of their room and yell at them, but nobody showed.

"Shhh, we don't wanna wake any of them up unless Dine comes back." Alex said as he pulled his hand away from Kit's mouth.

"Ugh, fine." Kit said as he slumped down on the floor, Alex sitting straight up next to him.

"What do you think we'll do when we get home?" Alex asked. Kit looked up at him with a confused expression and thought before speaking.

"I don't know really, I guess just- try to find a place to stay or something." Kit replied as he sat up and laid his head on Alex's shoulder. Alex kissed Kit's forehead and looked over by the window.

"Is it just me or, do you not wanna go home?" He asked, Kit looked up at him in confusion.

"What do you mean? Like stay here? Hell no."

"No, I mean like- find a way to a different place- a place where we'd all be accepted and happy- kinda like a fantasy land but a real one." Alex explained as he twirled a lock of Kit's curly, dirty-blonde hair.

"I mean, I guess you're right. Nobody really did ever like us on earth."

"I liked you on Earth." Alex chuckled.

"Well you're part of the group, ain't you?" Kit laughed.

After the giggling, they settled down and just stared into each other's eyes, getting lost looking into the deep brooding colors of each other's eyes that only they could see, a color only a love filter could unlock.

The atmosphere went from stressful to romantic in a matter of seconds, Kit and Alex just being in each other's presence alone was enough to make them both calm down.

"Are you calm now?" Alex asked as his cheeks reddened.

Kit nodded. "Now that I really know you're here."

Kit and Alex have known each other for a long time, and Kit developed feelings for Alex early on in their friendship.

"You know what, you being here makes this place just that little less terrible." Kit said.

"Oh, I love you." Alex replies as he rested his forehead on Kit's. They just sat there for a bit, smiling, enjoying the silent moment of togetherness they got.

"I never knew a person could be considered a sacred gift." Alex smiled. Kit felt his hot breath on his neck.

"I love you." Kit said as he pushed up Alex's head lightly, closed his eyes, and kissed him.

Alex's eyes widened but slowly fell back down as he kissed back, wrapping his arms around Kit's neck as he sat there in pure bliss.

After a second or two the lights blaired up and interrupted their moment.

The buzzing from the bright fluorescent lights woke up Toby and Val who sheepishly walked out of their rooms.

"Has Dine come back? Or has Isabella woken up?" Toby asked. Kit shook his head no and pulled away from Alex to check on Isabella.

They had placed Isabella in a chair that was hung on the ceiling and tied her there with duct tape and fairy lights.

"Are you sure that's safe?" Val asked as he reached up his arm and flicked one of the legs of the chair with his fingernail.

"I think so- I mean it was Asher's idea so-" Alex said as they all looked up and watched the dangling piece of furniture in the air.

Isabella was peacefully sleeping there, her head laying on a pillow on her own shoulder, her ankles tied together, her arms over the back of the chair and tied and her eyes closed.

"She looks so comfortable but so not comfortable at the same time." Toby said as he yawned and looked up.

"She looks like a hanging body." Alex said. The room fell silent and everyone slowly turned their heads to look at him. "What? I'm not wrong." He shrugged.

Fiction Kids

"And this is why we don't let Alex drive." Val sighed.

"I would be a great driver mind you." Alex snarled as the rest of the group chuckled.

"Sure, sure." Kit teased as he brushed his hand through Alex's hair.

"I'm not that violent!" He shrieked as he pushed Kit's hand away.

"Didn't you try to kill the Ice Cream guy once because they wouldn't give Sydne a cone that looked like Hello Kitty or something?" Toby said as they leaned against the wall and pointed towards where Sydne was sleeping.

"That was under very special circumstances. Circumstances not relevant to me driving." Alex said in defense.

"You tried to kill him by tying him to the passenger seat of his truck and driving it off a cliff." Kit said matter-of-factly.

The group fell silent as they watched Alex stare blankly back at Kit.

"I am feeling personally attacked right now. I did not consent to this." He said as he clapped his hands together and took a deep breath. The group laughed as Asher and Devereaux hobbled out of their rooms.

"Rise and shine." Val said as he waved at them.

"I'm tired." Devereaux complained as he laid down on the floor by Kit.

"Well the good news is that we're not doing anything that important right now! So you can take all the time you want complaining." Kit said as he pulled Devereaux to his feet.

"Also was Sydne up with you guys last night? She wasn't in her bed so I thought she was like on the ceiling writing something." Devereaux asked.

Kit looked at him confusedly and shook his head.

"Uhm- no, she went to bed before almost all of us- she had writers block or something and decided to sleep on it." Alex said.

"Well she wasn't in the room."

Everyone turned their heads to face Asher while Kit gave him a death stare.

"What-" He said as he looked back at everyone.

"If Sydne wasn't sleeping in her room where else do you think she went?" Kit snarled.

"Are you assuming I killed her-" Asher asked as he stepped away from everyone.

"No you imbecile-" Kit was beginning to say before a giant "AHA" boomed from the end of the hallway.

Everyone looked down it to find Sydne, awake, in the food tub, with a pencil in her right hand and a notebook resting on her left thigh.

"How long have you been there-" Kit asked, shocked and concerned.

"Since I said I was heading to sleep, I saw the tub and it gave me an idea on what to write." She smiled as she continued scribbling in her notebook.

"The idea was..?" Toby pressured.

"FAMINE!" Sydne cheered. "A book about a dystopia years in the future where famine is the most prominent side-effect." Sydne ranted as she continued writing.

"See I didn't kill her!" Asher said as he held his hands out towards a very well and alive Sydne.

"That's not what I meant but okay." Kit sighed as everyone stepped back into the sitting room.

"Where's Zayne? Is he still sleeping?" Toby asked.

Val nodded. "Me bashing the back of his head in with a chair really got him to think- It will probably be a while before he wakes up." Val explained, chuckling nervously as he remembered what he had done the night before.

Sydne walked into the sitting room and tossed her notebook into her room as she walked by it, making it leave a loud thud, but keeping the pencil intertwined between her fingers.

"Did you give up?" Asher asked as he grabbed Sydne's arm, making her stop so he could tuck the pencil above her right ear.

"Yeah actually. Plus, we have more important things to worry about now. Like Dine coming back, Isabella and Zayne being alive." Sydne began to list.

"We should start looking for a way out too, I mean it's probably been at least a year since we got stuck here." Asher said as he looked out the window longingly.

"Earth is no palace but it sure ain't no hell like this place." He said.

"I can't believe we've been here so long- none of us look like we've aged, I mean our clothes definitely have been getting destroyed but that's from the environment." Sydne said as she pulled out her skirt to look at all the tears on it and examined her arms and legs.

"I know it's weird- I mean we're not adults yet we should still at least get a little bit taller- and I'm pretty sure Sydne would at least be 5 feet tall if a year passed." Toby teased.

"Oh, actually you don't age here, time moves on but Jeantete used her magic so that nobody can age." A voice from above them said.

Everyone looked up to see Isabella finally awake, the pillow on her shoulder falling down and comedically hitting Alex in the head.

"What the- why the hell am I on the ceiling!" She hollered as she started kicking her conjoined feet and squirming in the chair.

"Also how did it not fall down after three seconds-" She asked again as she looked up to see the very poor quality knot made from fairy lights keeping the chair up.

"Stop that kicking or else you are going to fall!" Alex said as they grabbed onto her feet and tried holding her still, but ultimately failing.

"Well stop hanging me up here like a chandelier!" She squealed as she stopped kicking, looking down at the group angrily.

"You have no room to speak- you could have killed us all dead! You're lucky that Val didn't bash your head in so we *wouldn't* end up

as a pile of dead, headless bodies!" Kit shouted angrily, before being calmed down by Sydne.

"I- what- I'm not one of her slaves anymore, I shouldn't act like that." Isabella scoffed, assuming they were just making assumptions about her.

"I thought we all moved past the whole 'Isabella's evil because she was Jeantete's slave for years!' thing."

"No we're serious, you actually attacked Devereaux, you we're all on top of him and trying to beat him dead." Val as he made an exaggerated explosion with his hands.

"I couldn't have, I'm not- I'm not one of them- If she really exiled me then she would have taken away the dark effect." Isabella said as she looked down at the group with fear.

"Put me down, put me down right now." She whispered, just barely loud enough for the group to hear.

"No- you're going to attack us all-" Kit started to say before being cut off by Isabella.

"PUT ME DOWN IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU!"

Without hesitation Asher reached up and started to untie the fairy lights.

"This might take a while, their super tangled and messily done." Asher said as he continued to fidget and pull the thin string laced with little plastic, glowing crystals.

"Just do it as fast as you can." She muttered.

"Can you explain what's going on?" Toby asked as he looked up at her.

Isabella sighed, obviously not waiting to answer the question but what else was she supposed to do?

"Whenever you're being turned into an employee Jeantete gives you a chocolate, it has some sort of weird magic or something that brainwashes you and makes you a mindless slave- It didn't work on me that well and only half of it worked, making me hostile at night." Isabella explained.

"So that's why they only ever attack at night?" Isabella nodded.

"Can you hurry up?" She whined as she started to squirm.

"Sorry, sorry, it's super tangled- I'm not good with this." Asher said as he kept trying to untie the lights, string wrapped around his wrist and fingers.

"Let me help you." Sydne said as she pulled on his sleeve.

"You're like two feet tall- how are you supposed to get all the way up here?" Asher teased.

"Just pick me up or something." Sydne said.

"I CAN DO THAT!" Kit shouted happily as he grabbed Sydne's waist and lifted her up to Asher's level.

Sydne smirked and took over the detangling and untying of the string keeping Isabella bound to the chair.

As Sydne worked with Asher, the group heard a blood curdling scream come from the hallway.

"I didn't know we were torturing people." Kit said blanky as he turned to look down the hallway.

"That's probably Zayne, I'll go make sure he's okay." Val said as he grabbed a roll of duct tape and started towards his room.

Val had sort of became the groups doctor, even though he knew nothing about how the body worked or how to identify certain illnesses or what the proper practice for anything was, he knew how to cut duct tape and place it on a surface which was really all you needed to do to keep someone from dying here for the most part.

Val walked into Zayne's room to find him sitting up and breathing heavily, his eyes darting around in the room.

"Holy hell calm down-" Val said as he walked over and started to take the tape wrapped around his head off.

"What happened- what did you do to me- why am I not dead-" He said frantically between gasps of air.

"For satan's sake calm down!" Val shrieked again as he put his hands on Zayne's shoulders and shook him violently.

The aggressive thrusting shook him out of his stress as he calmed down.

"Sorry- I just- blah." He said as Val stopped shaking him and started to re-wrap his head with more duct tape.

"It's fine- I guess the last thing you saw was me holding a chair in a stance ready to bash you, makes sense that's where your brain continued from." Val chuckled.

Zayne chuckled, laid back down and sighed.

"Did you give me brain damage?" He asked. Val sighed dnd nodded shamefully.

"Probably, sorry about that- I have a tendency to miss horribly, like I did with Kit." Val and Zayne laughed.

"Okay, can you get up and walk for me?" Val asked as Zayne sat up.

Zayne hobbled out of his bed sheepishly before grabbing onto the wall, his legs being the same as Ramen noodles and his vision blurring.

"Sorta- if you want me to walk like a drunk person." Zayne said as he pulled himself up with the wall, only to fall onto the bed.

"Did you have a stroke?" Val asked jokingly. Zayne chuckled. "I had a Val stroke!" Val and Zayne laughed as Val wadded up a ball of duct tape and shoved it in Zayne's mouth.

"Eat this, I'll be back in a bit to check on you." He said as he walked back out into the sitting room.

Now, Alex and Asher we're holding back Isabella as Sydne blocked the doorway out.

"YOU CAN'T GO OUT THERE! YOU'RE BASICALLY A WALKING TARGET!" Kit shouted.

"I'M NOT SAFE TO BE AROUND LET ME GO!" Isabella shouted as she tried struggling out of Asher and Alex's grip.

"IF YOU GO OUT THERE YOU'LL BE OBLITERATED!" Asher shouted.

Sydne was cowering at the yelling and started to cry silently and shrink back into the doorway.

Val thought fast, ripping off a large piece of duct tape and slapping it over Isabella's mouth, causing her to stop squirming and admit defeat.

Asher and Alex let her slump out of their hands, Asher immediately rushing to Sydne afterward to comfort her with Kit.

"You are staying here whether you like it or not! We are the Pitchfork Kids and once you're one of us there ain't no way you're leaving!" Devereaux exclaimed sternly, trying to explain to Isabella she's stuck with them but also trying to lighten the mood with some light comedy.

Isabella's eyes widen at the word "Pitchfork." As if she had just remembered a vague buried memory at the sound of the word. Isabella started to scream into the duct tape covering her mouth.

"Now you're keeping that on until we make you a secure room to stay in during the night so you can't escape." Val said, assuming she was asking for the tape to be removed. Kit hoisted up Isabella and started to carry her Bridal-style as she went to put her in Dine's bed.

"Someone get the fairy lights and tape, we're tying her down to Dine's bed." Kit sighed anxiously as he started walking towards Dine, Toby and Zayne's room, Val and Alex followed, leaving behind Devereaux, Asher, and Sydne in the sitting room.

"I'm sorry about the yelling." Asher apologized as Sydne sniffed and stopped crying.

"It's fine, I just don't do good with it." She chuckled as she used her sleeve to wipe her tears.

In the room, there was lots of yelling and commotion, if anyone there died it would probably be obvious to police there was a struggle.

"LET ME GO AND LET ME LEAVE!" Isabella shouted. The group had removed the tape on her mouth.

"Ouch." Devereaux said as he turned to face Sydne and Asher.

"Who do you bet to run out in fear first?" He asked.

"Isabella." Sydne and Asher said in sync. They all laughed despite the dire situation.

The noise from the room grew louder as the noise in the sitting room grew quieter, and the funnier the noise became.

Pitchfork Kids

# Chapter 10

Dine stopped in front of the entrance and took a breath. She had the tape, and the willpower, all she needed now was luck. Sadly, that wasn't a talent of Jeantete but, you win some you lose a few hundred.

Dine started walking up the steps before hearing all the commotion from the bedroom.

Dine's face gaped in shock. Afraid of what could possibly be happening, she took a step back and contemplated running away and becoming Jeantete's daughter or something- nothing ever seemed to be scarier than what she was imagining to be going on in that room.

They were stuck in an infinite IKEA where they could all die anytime.

Now was not the time to be doing whatever they were doing, no matter what it was, and honestly Dine didn't wanna know.

She walked up the steps and trembled into the sitting room where Sydne, Asher and Devereaux were all chuckling to eachother and they waited for someone to dash out of the room, covered in tears and needing months of therapy to fix the trauma they just had to endure.

"Is what I think happening, happening in there?" Dine asked, pointing to the room shakily. Everyone was sitting on the floor, they drew their attention to her, then nodded.

"Yeah, they started just a bit ago, I hope they get Isabella to calm down and they finish fast, I wonder who the first one to get out is gonna be." Sydne said calmly as she snuggled next to Asher. Dine's eyes widened in horror, not realizing they had two different ideas on what was happening.

"And you're just- snuggling over here with Mr. Brunette Boy?!" Dine shreiked.

Pitch Black Ads

Devereaux nodded and shrugged. "I mean- it's for the best," he said.

Dine looked at them all with disgust before slowly walking to the room, the screaming and rustling getting louder with each step, her mental image of what was happening getting clearer by the moment.

"I am going to kill myself if I see that one thing I don't wanna see." Dine mumbled to herself as she closed her eyes and stepped into the doorway.

The screaming got louder and she felt a pillow being thrown, hitting her in the side. She opened her eyes to see something way different than what she expected, but she still couldn't tell if it was worse than what she thought.

"What the hell are you all doing?!" She hollered. Everyone stopped squirming and let themselves off of Isabella.

"This little lady was trying to run away, so we're tying her and taping her to this bed so she can't escape." Val said as he grunted and ripped off another piece of tape from his calf.

Isabella was laying down In Dine's bed, her long hair taped up on the bed in an ugly ponytail. Toby was holding down Isabella's right arm, or more so Isabella couldn't lift up her arm since Toby was hanging off of it. Kit was on top of Isa, in a very awkward position, his legs spread over Isa's waist, a roll of tape in his mouth and holding down her shoulders. Val's body was covered in long pieces of tape, he stood as still as possible as if he was a shelf they stuck tape on to grab later when they needed it. Alex was holding a fairy light and trying to tie her down in a bed, also in an awkward position, his feet keeping him suspended in the air due to the little bridge he found under the bed, inhumanly stretched out trying to tie the thin copper and silver wire together.

"So let me get this straight-" Dine started saying.

Kit batted his eyes exaggeratedly at Dine.

"Isabella here wanted to leave, run away into the store where she would most likely be killed, and you four are going out of your way

to tie her to a bed so that she *wouldn't* run away and get herself murdered brutally?" Dine asked, intense sarcasm polluting her voice.

"Yes, what's the issue?" Toby replied, obviously annoyed at Dine's tone.

"No- I just wanna know why we just don't let her die- her life can't be that valuable." Dine shrugged.

The room fell silent, the air stiffened with tension, and everyone gaped in shock, letting go of Isabella.

Isabella just laid there, her hair being taped to the bed keeping her from jolting away from the scene. She looked away and turned her body to the right.

"DINE! YOU ABSOLUTE HEATHEN!" Val shouted, his face red with anger.

"I think you need to go." Toby replied, he clenched his fist angrily and jolted his head away. Val started stomping toward Dine.

"Stupid girl. You're the one without the valuable life." The room fell even quieter.

Dine turned away and mumbled something under her breath as she walked out, tossing them the tape Jeantete had given her over her right shoulder. The tape made a loud clanking sound as it lightly bounced across the floor, soon Dine's footsteps took over the room, cloaking over everyone like cheap purfume.

"Already heading out?" Asher said as he adjusted Sydne's sleeping head. Dine ignored them as she walked out the door again, she wasn't actually planning to go anywhere- just sit outside for a while.

Devereaux got up and peeked his head out the door, he looked out to see Dine sitting on the floor, knees clenched up to her chest.

When Dev turned back he saw Toby and Val walking into the sitting, ranting very loudy to everyone else.

"And she- I DON'T KNOW WHAT GOT INTO HER!" Toby yelled, rubbing the bridge of his nose.

"She's like a completely different person! It's so weird!" Val muttered.

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"It's like she woke up like this- this just happened overnight- one day she was Dine- the next day she was this weird lady who would probably leave us all dead!" Toby complained.

Val looked down at the ground. "I don't know what we possibly could have done, ever since the mention of Isabella, she's just hated her- like she already knew who she was and that she would be nothing but trouble- but that's not true! Right..?" Everyone looked at each other at what Val said, unsure of how to respond.

"I mean- she did attack us- but it was because of the brainwashing crap she went through." Asher said.

Sydne yawned and woke up, she looked around in confusion.

"Why do Val and Toby look mad and why do you all look so traumatized..?" Sydne muttered as she yawned and rubbed her eyes.

"Dine just absolutely insulted Isabella and treated us all like dog shit is all!" Toby shouted angrily as he stamped his foot.

"Calm down- we all know that Dine is having a hard time adjusting to Isa, she probably didn't mean it-" Sydne explained, before being cut-off by Devereaux.

"Sydne, face it. She doesn't like Isa and she never will. She wants her gone and she's mad we don't agree with that." Sydne looked down in shame.

"Our minds have all been a little messed up since we got here- the stress, uncertainty and the general vibe of this place. So I guess I understand why she's refusing to befriend Isa, but mainly- I'm scared she's just gonna go insane and do something awful- make a terrible choice and practically change everyones lives for the worse. We've all been cuckoo lately but Dine- it's affected her the most definitely." Asher explained as he laced his fingers with Sydne's.

"She left this behind." Toby said as he held out the tape Dine had tossed at them before walking out.

"Another tape- I thought we gave up on these." Sydne said as she got up, releasing Asher's hand, to go examine the tape.

"I thought we gave up too but I guess she found another one." Val said.

"It was like a plot point of our lives that we just forgot about." Sydne muttered as she took the tape out of Toby's hands.

Devereaux and Asher followed Sydne up to the tape and examined it with her.

"Why does it look like that?" Devereaux said. He poked the tape as if it was a blob of slime.

The blue plastic glistened in the flourescent ceiling lights, it's smooth surface appearing to have been sanded down only moments ago and glowing as if it was a star or a beautiful orb of magic. The yellow paper seemed to flow within the tape magically, the sleekness of it glistening in the light.

It had an addictive aura, drawing them all to it as if they were a bunch of drug addicts and this was the last bag of that sweet powdered snow on Earth.

"Man- I think we should play the tape." Sydne said, almost as if the tape had her hypnotized in a trance.

Within a moment's notice she snatched the tape and walked over to the TV, bending down to put the tape in the slot behind the TV. The rest of the group aimlessly followed and sat down on the sitting room floor. Kit, Alex and Zayne all hobbled out of the rooms they were in to see what was going on.

"What are you watching?" Alex asked.

Asher turned his head and stared at him blankly.

"A tape." He then turned his head away and focused back on the TV, Sydne rushing to take a seat next to him.

Alex and Kit were also suddenly entranced and sat down in front of the TV, watching intently.

The TV screen flashed bright neon yellow, the sound of a bottle to a knife and skin pulling apart populated the audio, despite the unplesant sound the group sat in silence, staring at the TV, even Sydne, who was noise sensitive, didn't flinch.

PRISCILLA ANNE

Dine slouched on the ramp leading to the entrance before perking up at the disgusting sound of the tape. She jolted her hands to her ears, it was unfathomably loud, and peered inside, the noise getting slightly louder.

She knew it was the tape.

Only someone as terrible as Jeantete would start a tape with a horrifying noise.

Actually.

Was she terrible?

Dine couldn't tell anymore.

She couldn't tell anything anymore.

It was all a blur of hatred and wishes of death.

On someone.

Someone who the group knew.

Who was there right now.

A girl.

Somewhere.

Somewhere close.

That will leave.

Very.

Very.

Soon.

The agonizing sound stopped, allowing for Dine to release her ears, a glitchy female voice emerged from the TV speakers.

It wasn't Jeantete, at least she didn't think so, it was deeper and had a thick French accent, it sounded like it belonged to an ugly, French, sulk. The English spoken was broken, as if someone had just learned how to form a basic first grade sentence but couldn't master English's unique grammar.

"Isabella. The employee of the month. Or is she?" The video sounded like a cringy top-10 video, any average internet user would recognize in the first few seconds.

"So young, her honor couldn't kill her, so she is now one of us." The accent was thick and hard to decipher. It reminded her of thick,

Pitchfork Kids

curly hair, light brown and shoulder length. Hair brushes getting caught and distorted in the thickness of it.

"Danger to us. She known for breaking the rules and brainwash not working on her."

Dine's smile grew bigger and bigger, it had to be working on them. Jeantete said it would. The video brought up what Dine considered to be great points. She was a menace, couldn't follow a rule for the life of her, unpredictable and definitely past redemption.

Dine imagined walking into the sitting room, being met with a wave of hugs and attention from the rest of the group before having a public hanging with fiary lights, everyone laughing at her pale dead body, using her limbs as a coat fixture or a disco ball. They'd think she was a genius, worshipping her as if she was a Greek Goddess from years of carefully crafted mythology, pleading for forgiveness and thanking her for saving their lives from such a horrible thing.

Her blood boiled with psychotic glee as she imagined a demonic ceremony, Isabella screaming on the floor, blood pooled around her, tears flowing out of her eyes, reliving the tortuous pain she felt when she switched from employee to girl. From demon to angel. If that was even possible.

She wanted Isabella's head displayed on a wall, a staff she carried around as she paraded the group, she wanted to bathe in her blood, she wanted to kill her, torture her, she wanted to finish what Jeantete started.

She could imagine herself blanching her, dumping her in hot boiling water making her skin melt away, then dumping her into the frozen waters of the arctic, rinse and repeat until her screaming hoarses her voice, then peeling her skin and slashing her muscle, letting her bleed out into nature and nourish the grass which once nourished her.

Dine let her imagination run wild.

Guilty pleasures becoming all her heart desired.

From guilty pleasure to addictive drugs.

The video continued to play, the voice continuing to spit out slander about Isabella in broken English.

Dine was waiting patiently, prepared to jump into the sitting room the second the video finished and watch everyone start apologizing and doing what she said

Though, to her dismay the video no longer held the interest of the group. The weird aura had vanished and the group was no longer frothing at the mouth to watch it.

The video now sounded like bull, as it was that is. Everything went in one ear, made them all a little angry and curse the video, then out the other.

"Why does Dine have this? Where did she even get it?" Sydne sighed as she stood up and finally removed the tape, the exhaustingly loud, poor quality audio finally simmering down to a quiet hum.

Toby whimpered and buried his face in his hands.

"This whole thing has been a giant mess, nothings gone right! Dine's a psychopath, we almost died on multiple occassions, we all smell like a pile of dead squirrels, we're trying to redeem a murderer- WITH NO PSYCHOLOGY DEGREES MIND YOU, we haven't had real food in months, and everyone that knew us back home probably thinks we're dead since we've been gone for like a year and two months or something!"

Kit opened his mouth to say something, then winced and shut it.

"I mean- not everything has been bad. Kit and Alex started dating, we made a cool house, we made some fun memories, we made a new friend- I think." Sydne said, trying to lighten Toby's mood.

"No Sydne, you can't make this good! We're basically characters in a book with some psychotic author torturing us! This entire thing has been hell on- ON SOMEWHERE! NOTHING COULD MAKE THIS BETTER BESIDES FINALLY DYING. GOING HOME IS A SHITTY IDEA, STAYING HERE IS AN EVEN SHITTIER IDEA!" Toby huffed. "YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE CAN'T JUST MAGICALLY CHANGE THE FACT THAT OUR LIVES HAVE BEEN RUINED. WE'RE SURROUNDED BY KILLING

MACHINES, WE'RE TRYING TO DO CRAP WE CAN'T DO, AND WE BASICALLY JUST THREW AWAY OUR LIVES!" Toby screamed.

Toby glared down at Sydne, tears streaming down his face, streaks of his skin tone showing through the streaks it left behind. Toby ran out of the door, passing Dine, not taking a second to look back.

"They've got a point- I mean- look around you. Okay, so? We have a house that a gust of wind could take down in a second, who gives two craps if Alex and Kit are together- this entire thing has been a nightmare. Stop trying to make it better, we all know that our lives have basically been tossed into a blender and blended together until we are just one big useless lump. It's not like we can find some magical portal to some magical dimension full of rainbows and butterflies, you need to grow up." Val explained, his tone going from neutral to angry within seconds.

He left without looking at anyone.

Sydne looked over at Kit and Alex, who let go of each other's hands and walked into their rooms.

"Dev-" Sydne began, before he turned away.

"You're a writer, write us out of this hellhole." He said coldly as he walked out the entrance into the store.

Sydne slumped down by the wall and looked down at her feet.

"I don't wanna be here either but I'm not complaining." She muttered.

♀ ♀ ♀

Isabella laid in Dine's bed, immobile from the tape and fairy lights that were wrapped around her body, keeping her to the bed.

Silent tears dripping down her face as she looked up at the ceiling.

She.

Heard.

*Everything.*

Pitch Wars

The video's accusations played on repeat in her head. A manipulative earworm.

She heard the fight too. Toby's screams, the running away, the threatening whispers, and what they all thought of her.

Someone they needed to help.

In her words.

A burden.

She wanted to struggle out of the tape and string holding her down, but she couldn't. Listening to everything had taken all her energy. She just wanted to melt away into a pathetic puddle of nothing.

Dine silently stepped into the room and glared at Isabella.

"Welcome to the group." She said coldly as she walked past her.

"I- I'm really sorry- I could get out of this bed if you just untied me and cut all the tape- I don't wanna be here as much as you don't want me here." Isabella stammered.

"If that's the case why don't you kill yourself?" Dine suggested, her voice cold and monotone, as if emotion was an unheard concept.

Isabella's face went ashen with shock.

"Sorry. That wasn't what I was supposed to say huh?" Dine said sarcastically, as if what she just said was a funny joke. Isabella just stared at Dine, who started staring back.

"I hope you're proud of yourself." She said. Isabella looked back at her with a confused expression. "For doing what?" She questioned.

"For breaking this group from the inside out, for ruining our lives. For making us all hate each other. I didn't know you were a walking barrel of toxicity. Well *I* knew, I don't know about anyone else though."

Isabella started to cry, whimpering, careful not to sob and bother anyone else.

Dine cralwd into Toby's bed, pulled the blankets over herself, and allowed herself to fall asleep.

♀ ♀ ♀

Toby wandered through the halls mindlessly, his mind trapped thinking about the past few months. Everything was wrong. The moment he stepped foot in the store he could just feel everything going wrong.

Dine was one of the biggest issues, she grew cold, and bitter and lost all regard for everything that wasn't Isabellas funeral. And Toby knew this. And so did everybody else.

As he walked the halls, his damaged sneakers pounding softly against the floor. Then he stopped.

He wasn't going anywhere. He wasn't trying to either.

But He didn't want to go back home.

Toby decided to take a break and bunk in an old room display.

The display had a large red couch made with suede that rested next to a broken pool table. There was a rug he had found and pulled out to use as a blanket. It was a large circle with a nauseating pattern of alternating yellow-green and dark navy blue stripes. Toby had pushed the birch wood shelves from the display, along with nearby pallets and tables and closets to make a closed wall so employees couldn't get to him. He made the ceiling with an ungodly amount of coffee tables and the classic fairy lights the group always used.

The room was pitch black when Toby was done, he had removed all but one small lamp that could barely light a corner.

The room was dark, cold, and full of everything bad. The outside noise was so noticeable it turned into a loud whisper of blurred white noise. Nothing could be understood or made out from the deafening blur.

Toby was well educated in the etiquette of running away. His family, to say the least, often made him want to run away, the last time they did it he was 15, he did it so well he managed to craft an entire new life for himself with the help of the Pitchfork Kids.

Don't ever take anything important with you.

Pitchfork Kids

Of course Toby did the responsible thing and left his phone and didn't take any food. If they noticed he had taken those things he would start a search party to try and find him, knowing that they probably ran away to never come back. If he left it all, they would probably spend the next chunk of time thinking he just went out for a walk or a short-term adventure. By the time they noticed he was gone for good it would probably be too late, he would have died of starvation or already made it far enough that they couldn't possibly venture that far into the cold concrete retail abyss that is IKEA.

Two, don't ever drop any hints you're running. Of course Toby made this decision on impulse after the fight, there were clearly no hints and with all of Dine's disappearings this looked as if he would just be gone for an hour or two to clear his head.

Three, leave no trace. Of course, It was hard to leave and not leave a trace in such a vast place like IKEA. Toby took some pallets and rearranged the perfect, magazine-like displays that were set up would be very obvious and noticed within an instant, but Toby thought nothing of it. The pallets were barely ever used and he had probably gone far enough away.

Toby wrapped himself up in the choppy rug and laid down on the couch. He didn't know what time it was, whether the lights were on or off. Toby just wanted to sleep. He just wanted to sleep so much the dream became reality. But a dream is just a movie your brain plays in your head. Movies aren't real.

But this hellhole somehow is.

## Chapter 11

The group did notice Toby was gone. They knew Toby well enough to know that Toby followed the running away etiquette and basically did the exact opposite of what he was supposed to do.

The air was tense and filled with melancholy and unsatisfied anger towards each other. It was thick, coating your body in an emotional film.

"Who wants to go out first?" Sydne sighed.

Everyone stayed silent.

"Okay, I know we all hate each other right now but if we don't go after Toby he'll die, and we don't want anybody to die, so grow up and someone come with me!" Sydne yelled angrily. She gazed at the rest of the group before Kit stepped forward.

"Good, now you guys situate the rest of yourselves into groups of two, if me and Kit can't find Toby, we will come back and another group goes out." Sydne grabbed Kit's wrist and jolted him out the door with her.

"Is she okay-?" Val asked after a few seconds of silence.

"I genuinely do not know." Asher replied.

Sydne was not okay.

She was angry. Very angry.

Sydne adored this group with her soul, and the fact they appeared to be falling apart at the seams broke her. She always wanted them to grow old together, to be 80 and all die from pancreatic cancer in a hospital laughing at their memories. Now, they might not even make it to 18. This group was everything to Sydne, her inspiration, her family. Losing it would be like losing her sight or another giant chunk of who she is.

Kit, to say the least, understood that good things disappeared with time. He knew that the best things will eventually be gone, and he wasn't one to break down and cry over it. He got attached but never passed the line of feeling like he needed this group to stay alive. He was well aware Sydne and other people felt that way but honestly he didn't.

As he and Sydne walked through the halls in silence, Kit felt Sydne tighten her grip on his wrist.

"What's wrong?" He asked as he looked over at Sydne.

"Nothing." She replied, her eyes fixed to the floor in font of her.

They walked in silence for a bit longer, their breathing syncing up.

"You know, just because it's leaving doesn't mean it's no good." Kit said. Sydne stopped in her tracks, her eyes still fixated on the ground.

"All the good things go eventually."

Sydne held Kit's wrist even tighter, making Kit wince at the pain. Despite being extremely short and weak she somehow had the grip of a Coconut Crab.

"This one wasn't." Sydne muttered as she continued to walk.

This time Kit was the one who kept her from moving forward.

"Everything good goes away eventually, nothing lasts forever, it's a fact of life." Sydne raised her head but didn't look back. Kit could tell she was crying.

"If we stay together though, it will be fine right? There is a chance we will still stay together- right?" Kit nodded in response, despite knowing Sydne couldn't see.

"A small chance but a chance at best. Either way everything will be fine." Sydne lowered her head again.

"If the group breaks up, just know, it wasn't your fault." There was silence after that was said.

Pure.

Unbridled.

Silence.

Before Sydne collapsed to the ground and let out a loud sob.

Kit sat by Sydne and coddled her as she cried. Kit knew exactly what was happening, it's happened before with other people. The Pitchfork Kids were different from those other people though.

They were kinder.

Nicer.

Better at understanding.

And listened to eachother more.

They were perfect.

Like a diamond.

Pitchfork Kids

But one day a diamond will break to.
But, one day seems very, very far away.

♀ ♀ ♀

"Don't look at me!" Dine shreiked. Everyone was staring at her, anger sparkling in their eyes.

"What do you mean?! It's your fault Toby ran away, you need to go fix this!" Val shouted. Dine held up her hands pathetically and cowered away.

"It's that Isabellas fault actually, if she was anything else but a demon that works for some ugly French dog maybe this group wouldn't be getting torn apart!"

"DON'T SAY THAT ABOUT ISABELLA!" Val shouted back.

Dine cared for the group sure, but it never felt right for her to be with them. The always felt a little like the odd one out, she didn't dislike it and they definitely didn't exclude her but she didn't exactly feel like these were her people. She wouldn't wish doom upon the group but she wouldn't be particularly devastated if doom did fall. She knew people actually cared about the group, like Sydne, but if she was honest this was just another ride to her real destination.

Though it's all about the journey they say.

Zayne grabbed Dines shoulders and pulled her into his room, where Toby and Dine also slept.

He pushed Dine into a wall, grabbed a bunch of Toby's belonging and forced them into her hands.

Dine had been frozen the entire time, shocked on how aggressive everyone was being.

"Once Syd and Kit some back, which mind you they SHOULDN'T even be out there, you are going out there and we don't want you back till you've found Toby." Dine scoffed and crossed her arms.

"This is stupid, you guys are just too stupid to see what I see." Zayne sighed loudly and angrily before walking out of the room, shaking with anger.

PASSION KIDS

"I don't give two flying craps about what *you* see, what I care about is Toby getting back in one damn piece!" Val screamed, tears starting to well in his eyes.

Dine huffed and shoved everything Zayne had given her into a small bag on the floor.

She understood why everyone was mad, but didn't like to show she knew why. She wanted them to know she believed Isabella is terrible and that she will die on this hill. She'd rather be shredded into millions of bloody bits than admit to the group she was wrong, or at the very least acknowledge that she understood.

She did care for Toby and really hated the tension she created from him having a different opinion than her on Isabella, but she knew deep down something bad would happen to someone in this group if she let Isabella keep on brainwashing them.

Dine sure as hell was no Val, she could barely fight a 14-year-old trying to pick-pocket her, but she was a determined girl, and she was confident she could easily overthrow the frail, trauma-stricken employee in their base with nothing more than a heavy object.

She'd chuckle and smirk at the idea of Isa's dead body, she truly did become a sociopath, the lines between good and bad blurring. She did know killing was bad, but couldn't tell if it was bad now. I mean, even Jeantete agreed with her- as if that was any type of validation for what she thinks, Jeantete was bad too- at least she thinks that a little part of her still is.

"Someone barricade the door to where Isa is, I don't want her escaping during the night and killing us all." Alex instructed as he got some fairy lights and pallets.

"See? You all think she's some disgusting killing machine yet you keep insisting *I* don't think so?" Dine huffed.

"We don't think that, we just know she has some weird magic crud going on from Jeantete right now, so we're trying to keep everyone safe whilst accepting her and being her friend." Devereaux muttered.

Everyone dispersed and did little, miscellaneous chores to keep themselves busy and distracted from the tension. It was awkward and silence became the one thing clogging their ears.

Everything they did could barely even be considered work, it was just tedious tasks that just barely, if they were lucky, made life there just a little, teeny bit easier.

They were doing things like polishing lamps, dusting the fragile clumps of whatever that was keeping the walls together- nearly taking off a wall, sorting all of the *two* tapes they had, and decorating with ice-cream-paint on the walls.

They all were off doing their own things, as if they were strangers keeping to themselves, lacking interest in anything they might have in common.

They did all wonder what Sydne and Kit were doing.

They were fine, well and bored.

Wandering the wasteland that was the IKEA they were stuck in.

"TOBY! GET YOUR ASS OUT HERE!" Sydne screamed. Kit chuckled

As they walked, they noticed certain displays missing certain bits of furniture. Tables specifically.

"Huh, that's weird, everywhere else is absolutely perfect- these shouldn't be missing anything."

Something was clearly wrong. The displays with missing components seemed to follow a pattern. Every fourth display on the right hand side would be missing something or at least have clearly been altered.

"Do you think Jeantete did this?" Kit whispered. Sydne shrugged.

"Whoever did it, clearly didn't do a good job at being subtle about it." Sydne replied.

As they walked the lights had shut off, the background buzzing they had produced coming to an abrupt end, true silence resting in their ears.

"Crap- what do we do now?!" Sydne shrieked in panic. Kit quickly coverd her mouth with his hand, but it was to late. A number

of employees had already heard Sydne and we're on the prowl for them, a few locating them and circling them into a corner.

"Hey Sydne, please tell me there's a gun in that bag of yours." Kit muttered, his voice shaking. Sydne quickly rummaged through the giant alligator skin blog that was resting on her left hip before looking back at Kit and shaking her head.

"Can you run?" He asked, Sydne looked down at her shoes. They were black, inch and a half heeled leather boots, she could run and do almost anything in heels but they were sorta big and the shoe flying off and hitting one of them would happen without a doubt.

Then a bright look locked her eyes.

Sydne slipped off her shoes and broke off the heels on the nearest display wall.

"What the hell are you doing?" Sydne ignored Kit.

Sydne then handed one to Kit and tucked one in her hair.

"We run for it if they get to close use these as some sort of makeshift dagger or something." Sydne instructed.

Kit looked at her, dumbfounded, shocked at how stupid his aunt can be sometimes.

"What are these supposed to do, their not even Stilettos, what the hell are these going to do?!" Kit hollered.

"It's this or nothing so suck it up and deal with it!" Sydne screamed. She abandoned her broken remaining parts of her shoes and started running back to the base as fast as she could.

Kit looked over at Sydne and then back to the giant cluster of employees surrounding him before reluctantly turning around and following Sydne.

The employees that we're crowding them suddenly yelled at eachother and the blob started to chase after them to.

They could hear muffled talking and demonic screeching behind them,their pace speeding up and their breaths heaviying.

"I DON'T THINK THIS IS GONNA WORK VERY WELL!" Kit shouted at Sydne.

"OH  WELL, WHAT ELSE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO?!" Sydne yelled back.

THey had walked for what seemed like hours before this point, so it was probably a good forty-five minute sprint back to the base.

"WHY DID WE VENTURE OUT SO FAR?!" Sydne complained.

"CAUSE TOBY DID!"

Sydne and Kit gave up on their plan- if you could even call it that, and ran around like maniacs, their screaming alerting even more employees, making more chase them down.

Eventually, they had to switch directions and run away from the base, since they didn't want to bring the rest of their group down with them. They ran through the crowd, getting grabbed a few dozen times and allowing themselves to be hit and even bitten by some of the employees. They came out the other side still running and looking like hell.

"What do we do now?!" Kit shouted as he threw his makeshift-heel-weapon at the mob.

"I don't know, wait them out?!" Sydne suggested, her breathing heavy and shallow, her hands shaking as she continued to run and fumble for her inhaler.

"Do you need help?!" Kit called out as he slowed down to match Sydne's speed despite it being a bad idea.

"No- I, got this." She gasped. Her asthma was being set off by all her running, she struggled to breathe and struggled even more to use her inhaler. She was slowing down to something barely over a speedwalk, whilst the group of employees behind them was sprinting.

"Sydne hurry!" Kit yelled as he signaled Sydne to go with him. Sydne gasped and shook her head.

"I- I can't." She called out, letting out a loud, heavy cough.

Against his better judgement, Kit ran back and hoisted Sydne onto his back. Sydne sheepishly wrapped her arms around his neck and let Kit grab her legs and give her a piggy back ride.

Sydne opened her inhaler and took a puff.

Her eyes were droopy and her breathing was still heavy, though less shallow than before.

Kit had to slow down his sprint to accommodate the new weight on his back, but he was still fairly ahead of the employees and was doing a pretty good job at not falling backwards and giving Sydne a concussion.

As they ran further and further from the base, they could feel part of themselves being forgotten or left behind, as if the further they got, the less likely it was they would make it back home and see everyone again. Every mile they went was another percent dropping off their statistics of getting back, as if they were running away and never returning.

"Keep your eyes out for a place to hide, I need to stop soon. I'm going to pass out if I can't catch my breath." Kit gasped. Sydne puffed her inhaler a second time and looked around, her breathing going back to normal.

"It's all just displays, nothing we could use." Sydne explained.

"Ugh, where the heck do we go!" Kit said codgerly between gasps of air.

As Kit started to slow Sydne noticed one of the displays had been turned into a box, tabled and pallets used in miscellaneous ways to close it off.

"THROW ME ON TOP OF THAT BUILDING!" Sydne instructed.

Kit flinched at Sydne's sudden scream and instinctively threw her atop of it, in an attempt to get the startling noise away from himself.

"Wow, good job." Sydne marveled as she smiled, surprised on how hard Kit threw her and how fast.

"Uh- yeah- totally." Kit stammered, refusing to admit it was a total accident.

"What a wonderful day!" Toby cheered as he sprung out of his bed.

He cheerily skipped into the hallway of the group's 9-bedroom home and turned on the TV.

"Oh gollly! My favorite show!" He cheered as the intro to *Demon Slayer* started to play.

"Why that's peculiar, I didn't know a new episode was coming out." Sydne said in amusement as she took a seat next to Toby.

"Whelp I better go on my merry way!" Toby cheered once again. He walked over to a recently-shined display case, full of expensive and polished Katanas.

"Wowie! What beauts we got here!" He smiled as he took off the top one.

"Where are you heading off to superstar?" Sydne asked as she changed the channel to a different show.

"I'm just going off to fight some folks from Demon Slayer." Toby replied.

"Why you can't leave looking like that child, here have some popcorn before you go!" Kit insisted as he shoved a fistfull of popcorn into Toby's mouth.

"Why that's just generous of you Kit!" Toby smiled as he popped a few more pieces into his mouth.

"Why I'm heading out ot the battle field with a line of Demon Slayer characters lined up for me to fight conveniently located in our backyard!" Toby said, his teeth shining bright through his smile.

"Alright, we'll root for you!" Val said as he gave Toby a big thumbs up.

Toby skipped into the backyard where the sun was so bright he had to squint.

"My what a happy jolly day!" He said as he stepped onto the battle field.

"Why, may the first person step forward!" Toby called.

Before the event continued, Toby woke up.

It was all a dream.

An obvious one- but a dream none the less.

A dream about what Toby wished the days were like.

The sound of loud yelling and scrambling and the obnoxious stomping on the roof had woken him up and filled his ears.

Toby stayed on the couch and pulled the rug-blanket slightly closer to their face and stared off into the darkness.

The real, real darkness. The darkness of the room re-populated his head where the dream he had once lived.

Usually Toby would cringe and gag at a dream so positive like that, Toby hated acting like an overly-optimistic preppy person who never thought anything sad or negative, but this time was different. He longed for a life so normal and happy.

Demon Slayer characters may not be real- at least to his knowledge- but he could very well live a life where he was happy.

Where he woke up every morning and didn't immediately wish for bed time.

Where he actually wanted to wake up each morning to hang out with the group.

It used to be like that.

But now every day has been tinted with the pathetic stain of the neon blue and yellow of IKEA,each day just another thing everyone had to fight through, most of them not being able to make it and relying on the rest of the group to push them through. Each day was a war, any moment they could just go on and kill themselves, yet the idea of leaving the group to stay alive would force them ahead just one more day.

Toby hated it.

They wanted nothing more than home.

Toby remained on the couch and listened to the commotion around him and gazed into the blackness of the room he had made.

He couldn't lift himself up to go see what was happening.

His happiness had left the moment that it appeared.

Toby knew nobody had felt true happiness in months, no matter how they appear or how they presented themselves.

FICTION KIDS

They were all very good at faking.

No matter how many times they laugh, no matter how many times they said they're fine or that they're happy in the moment. They all knew it was fake happiness.

It wasn't authentic.

It was just their pathetic counterfeit excuses of happiness so the days that felt like years would go by ever so much easier.

Eventually Toby felt sleep paralysis coming on as he lay there still, staring into the darkness so he got up finally.

"Who the hell is making that noise and why the hell are you on my roof!" He shouted as he pushed the couch over to a half-broken pallet on the ceiling so that he could see who was up there.

Sydne was.

Sydne was on their roof.

Jumping up and down, on the pallets, without shoes, only her pastel pink watermelon print socks.

"Sydne-?!" Toby shrieked.

Sydne stopped jumping, her skirt finally restingdown properly.

"Oh my god, TOBY!" Sydne hollered as she ran over to hug him. Kit stopped looked up as he ran around to see Toby .

"Oh my god, TOBES!" Kit screamed.

He managed to climb up the table wall onto the roof out of pure joy to hug Toby.

"How the hell did you guys find me?" Toby asked.

"We didn't mean to, some blood thirsty employees are outside your door and want to kill us all, I saw the building and assumed someone was inside, so I thought if they let us in we would be fine." Sydne explained.

Toby looked up towards the ceiling to see all the lights off.

"Crap- come inside." They said as they broke off the broken piece of the pallet so that Sydne and Kit could slide into the little room.

The room was very small and only about 400 square-feet.

Toby went back inside. He taped the broken piece back to the ceiling, and sat on the couch that the rug they used as a blanket had slipped off of.

"This is quite the- the cozy place ya got here…" Kit mumbled as he bumped into a wall on accident.

"Quite dark too." Sydne said as she fumbled trying to find a light.

"Oh, sorry about that, let me get the light." Toby rushed over to the corner and turned on his tiny lamp, that could barely light his face.

They all huddled together in a corner and started talking.

"So, is this where you went after you ran away or did Jeantete kidnap you and force you here?" Kit asked.

"I made this place so that the employees wouldn't get me." Toby explained, calmly as if nothing was ever wrong.

"Are you- uhm sure this place is safe-?" Sydne stammered as she watched a pool table nearly fall from it's snug spot in the wall from the pounding fists of the other employees.

"I made it as safe as I could, not sure what much else I could do." Toby explained as he patted a table leg, like he was a dad who just built their child a treehouse and was proud of what they'd created.

"I hate to break it to ya but this place is going down!" Sydne Said as she looked around anxiously.

"Anyway, we should bunk here till lights go on so we can head back to the base safely." Kit instructed as he stretched and laid on the floor.

"Uhm, no. I won't go back, at least not now, I'm not ready yet." Toby replied as he stood up.

"What do you mean- everyone's worried sick for you, you can't just hide out here the whole time!" Sydne exclaimed.

"I'm not ready to face everyone. I ran away for a reason and that was to hide from everything, not face everything like a big brave hero in some novel or something Sydne could explain in excruciating

detail." Toby said, surprisingly chill despite being afraid of the very people he was talking to.

"If we come back empty handed they'll just send another one to come and find you." Kit explained.

"Then tell them I'm not ready to go back."

"Have you seen how stubborn we are, you're being a prime example." Toby shrugged at Sydne's comment.

"I'll go back soon, when I'm ready, but I'll just be to overwhelmed if I go back now. I'll go back when Dine and Isabella probably start getting along so their little quarrels won't get to me." Toby sighed.

Sydne and Kit glanced at each other before sighing. "Alright." Sydne said. "But if you stay out too long we'll send someone to check on you at the very least. And if we find a way out we'll come get you to come with us." Toby nodded.

Eventually, the pounding stopped, signaling to Sydne and Kit the lights have turned back on and it was time for them to head back to the base.

They both left without saying a word, weirded out and slightly angry with Toby not wanting to come back home. They didn't like leaving Toby behind but knew forcing him to come back would do nothing good.

The walk back was quiet and awkward, Sydne and Kit felt like it would be wrong to engage in cheery conversation on their way back.

"There you two are, Dine get your ass out there!" Zayne shouted once Sydne and Kit came back. Zayne yanked Sydne and Kit back into the building, to be greeted with Asher and Alex waiting to give them big hugs.

"Where's Toby? Couldn't you find him?" Alex asked. Dine started sheepishly dragging herself out the door, very very irritated.

"No actually, we found him just fine." Kit said.

"Hah! I ain't going out there!" Dine shouted happily in Zayne's face before throwing everything into a random bedroom and lounging in a chair in the sitting room.

FICTION AIDS

"If that's the case where the hell is he?!" Val asked, their voice angry.

Sydne and Kit looked over at Dine, who was brattily lounging in a chair and flipping through shows on the streaming service Isabella had unlocked for them.

"He said he wasn't ready to face everyone yet, especially *her*." Kit responded after a moment of hesitation, he pointing a finger over at Dine.

"Why didn't you make him?!" Devereaux shreiked.

"It would be inconsiderate! We're all struggling because of this, Toby is just being smart and removing himself from the situation so he doesn't have a meltdown and kills himself!" Sydne said, trying to defent herself and her nephew.

"Why is suicide the first thing you think of?!" Asher asked, genuinely concerned and curious.

"It's the second leading cause of people under twenty-five dear, and here it's either kill yourself, be killed or do the killing!"

Everyone quieted down to ponder her answer, genuinely agreeing with it.

"Well if you left them there how do we know if he'll be okay? What if Jeantete gets him- he'll die in a pit of fire, he'll be crushed and turned into a monster thirsty for blood, he'll scower the ground for us then pin us all to the floor and kill us!" Val worried, with exaggerative expressions and a dramatic narrating voice.

Kit face-palmed unionicly. "He said he'll come back soon but just not now, he needs more time in his terrible motel room to gain back his sanity so he doesn't tear the real base to shreds." Kit said as he hugged Val.

Dine had been sitting on the couch the entire conversation. She listened for the first bit, then lost interest when Sydne started explaining why her and Kit didn't drag Toby back.

"If they don't make it back it'll be fine, there's still us eight." Dine said, her mind on autopilot and unaware of the moment.

"Dine!" Sydne shouted.

"One, Toby will make it back and we're not leaving without him! Second, it would be nine." Sydne said.

"Not for long." Dine muttered. Sydne looked at her with a look of terror before backing away slowly to the rest of the group.

"Also I'm gonna need my bed back, someone please make Isa a room." Dine demanded.

"Why don't you do it if you're so high and mighty!" Val shouted back.

"I don't know how, but I do know Kit and Alex know how, why not make them do it." Dine smirked and gave a small cackle to herself.

Alex and Kitt looked at eachother and sighed.

"Sure, we can do it." Alex muttered as he started walking out the entrance, dragging Kit with him.

"Good, it better be done by lights off because I will not sleep on this disgusting couch, literally it smells like mold and probably has body parts soaked inside it." Dine said as she poked the cushion she was sitting on.

"Whatever princess." Kit snarked

After Kit and Alex emotionally left to work on Isabella's special room for her to stay in during the night, Zayne and Devereaux went to go patrol their building spot to protect them, Val went to go talk to Isabella and Sydne and Asher left to find furniture.

"I hate this." Alex muttered as he slammed his face into a wooden pallet.

"Cheer up, we just need to force Isabella and Dine to be friends when we get back home." Kit said as he went over to go console Alex. He gave Alex a hug and planted a kiss on his head.

Alex smiled softly and rested his head on top of Kits shoulder.

"Where would I be without you." Alex muttered as he let Kit wrap his arms around him.

"Single and lonely." Kit chuckled.

Alex smiled wholesomley.

Property of AJ's

After a moment of cuddling they split apart to continue working on the new base extension.

They wanted Isabella's room to be bigger and more stable than the other rooms, so she can run around to try and fight off the mind control she was given by Jeantete.

Which also meant she would be running into walls, jumping off of the very minimal furniture and everything else.

It needed to be a safe place to. They wanted to put pillows and cushions on the walls if they had time so Isabella wouldn't get hurt as she ran around, though they weren't entirely sure if they'd even finish the room by lights off.

As the two ran and climbed around, they would call for things from Zayne and Devereaux. They went from supervisors to their supply closets.

"FAIRY LIGHTS!" One would shout, and a wad of fairy lights would be shoved into their hands.

"DUCT TAPE!" And duct tape was pushed into their hands.

"ROPE!" And thus, rope would appear.

"There scary-" Zayne muttered to Devereaux as he handed Alex a wad of fairy lights right after he screamed it aggressively.

They watched as Kit and Alex pulled themselves up to the ceiling and ran around the floor to tie all the corners together and tape all the edges. It was fitting right in with the rest of the base.

"OW! OW! OW!" Kit started screaming as he tried to pull himself off of the wall, accidentally getting his hair stuck to the duct tape in the upper corner of the room.

"WHAT?! WHAT?!" Alex cried as he ran into the room, finding Kit squealing in pain as he tried to rip his hair away from the duct tape.

"How the hell did you manage that?!" Alex cried, attempting to cover up his giggles.

"Good question. I never thought my hair was this fluffy-" Kit replied as he gave up and left himself uncomfortably standing in the corner.

"I feel like I'm in time-out." He said.

Alex laughed.

"What do you think is going on in there-" Devereaux asked Zayne, his eyes fixated at the wall.

Zayne looked down at him and sighed. "You're too pure for this world." He said, dismissing the question.

Suddenly a loud scream could be heard from inside the room, probably from Kit.

"GAH! DON'T DO THAT!" He screamed. Now Val was interested, and ready to dropkick anything attacking Kit.

"Hippity hoppity, your shawty death is now my property!" He cried as he ran into the room, his foot raised above his head, ready to bash his heel into whatever is in the room.

"Oh-" He said, before falling backwards.

"Oh, hi Val. Got any scissors?" Alex asked surprisingly calm as he continued to gently pry Kit's hair away from the tape.

"No, Asher is the only one with anything sharp." Val said.

"Right, and he's busy taking Sydne out on a cringe date- or I mean- getting furniture." Kit chuckled.

Alex and Val followed with their laughs.

"Here, let me help." Val said as he pushed Alex away.

"Now Kit, do you want some pain killers?" Val asked smugly.

"Uhm- where would we even get any- but sure-?" Kit said.

Val nodded and backhand-slapped Kit's cheek.

"OW! That was not a pain killer- AHH!"

Val had grabbed Kit's legs and ripped him off of the duct tape agressivley.

The duct tape had a small collection of dirty blonde hair stuck to it.

Kit looked at it while sitting on the floor.

"MY HAIR! I WAS GONNA GET THAT DYED!" Kit shouted angrily.

"Don't worry, it is duct tape, it's magical, we'll just throw your hair back on." Alex said calmly, grabbing the duct tape and slapping the hair back onto Kit's head.

Pitchfork Kids

"Give it a second." He said as he continued to wack Kit's hair with a piece of flimsy tape.

"This is hilarious, if my phone worked I'd record this." Val laughed.

Zayne and Devereaux finally got sick of waiting and they both went to look inside.

"Alright." Zayne said as he looked at the scene.

Kit sitting on the floor angrily, Alex slapping him with a piece of duct tape, and Val laughing at them.

"This is, not what I expected." Zayne said bluntly.

Val looked at him for a split second before everyone burst out laughing.

"What's all this noise-?" Dine said irritably as she walked into the room.

"Why is her room so big?! It should be the size of a jail cell, that's where she belongs!" She scoffed, completely dismissing the comedic scene.

"Well that's rude." Kit sighed, the humor in the air now gone because of Dine's pessimism.

"I still need to hide my head." Kit muttered.

"Oh- just wait till Sydne gets back, she can probably lend you a headband or something."

Kit sighed and stood up.

"Back to the grind I guess."

They all dispersed back to what they were originally doing.

"What happened-?" Isabella asked as Val walked into the room.

"Nothing, Kit just did something stupid." Val laughed.

Isabella sighed.

"Can you untie me please? It's getting uncomfortable being stuck to a bed with tape and duct tape keeping you bound to it." Isabella asked.

Val looked her up and down and thought.

"Promise you won't run away?" He said.

Pretoria Kids

Isabella sighed and nodded reluctantly. "Fine." She murmured. "Just don't give me a reason to run anymore."

Val nodded and started to untangle her from the trap of fairy lights and duct tape.

"Gosh- we really went overboard." He said in shock as he carefully ripped duct tape off of her hoodie sleeve. Isabella chuckled and pulled her right arm up.

"Oh thank Jean, I was scared I'd loose circulation in this thing!" Isabella said with a smile as she flapped her arm around and wiggled her fingers.

"Thank Jean?" Val said confusedly.

"It's an Ikean saying." Isabella replied.

"Ikean?"

Isabella sighed.

"This place used to actually be a place to live, it was a weird place of choice but it used to be another world sort of. I don't know much of it, since I was never born here- I was born after Jeantete took over. Not here though." Isabella explained.

"Oh- where were you born? Earth presumably?" Val joked. Isabella shook her head.

"I actually don't remember- I know it wasn't Earth though- at least I don't think. I remember a couple things, like people eating live animals that lived inside them and like- school? A lot of school." Isabella said with certainty.

Val laughed, assuming Isa was joking.

"Animals living inside you? Sounds like a fever dream, though the school one does make sense, we're all supposed to be in highschool so- makes sense that you'd remember that." Val said.

"No- but like, it wasn't normal school- like it was always school, all the time. There weren't breaks or- or something- it's just- I just know it wasn't normal! It was like torture, it was like being a slave to- to the education system or something!"

Val looked at Isabella blankly, who was now shaking, as if she was physically angry and was holding a grudge towards something

PRISMA Kids

that she couldn't even remember properly. Val patted her shoulder awkwardly.

"Calm down there- your memory is fuzzy and that's probably the biggest issue. The school there wasn't that bad probably." Val said as he tried to calm down Isa.

Isabella sighed. "You're probably right." Her body calming down and ceasing to shake.

Val wanted to say something but couldn't bring himself to. He didn't wanna believe what Isabella told him but her body had such a realistic response he was struggling to convince himself otherwise.

"We need to wait till Asher comes back, so we can cut your hair free from the duct tape." Val explained, hoping to turn the mood of the conversation around.

"Oh, okay... I will miss putting it in a braid." Isabella sighed. Isabella often had her long, thick, black hair braided tightly, the braid managing to reach to her mid back.

"It'll be fine, Kit lost some of is hair from duct tape, so you won't be alone." Val laughed. Isabella followed.

Suddenly, as if heading to the call they heard Asher groan loudly by the entrance and Sydne's heavy breathing.

"Holy satan- this thing is heavy-" Sydne gasped as she tried helping Asher move a big bed up the entrance to the base.

"I told you- ugh- not to do anything!" Asher said, groaning and gasping as he forced his arms to pull upthe bed.

"You're- you're barely making- it." Sydne said, her breathing shallowing with every word she spoke.

"Do you two- need help?" Kit asked as he stared at the large bed once he rounded the entrance, shocked by it's size.

"Why- why is it so big- it's one person she doesn't need such a big bed-" Kit stammered, his words choppy from shock. Asher was holding the bottom legs of the bed while Sydne was underneath, pushing it upward to keep it from crushing down on her head, though her elbows and knees bent, clearly unable to sustain the weight much longer.

"It was the only one- we found." Asher muttered. "One, two, THREE!" He shouted as he tightened his grip on the two bottom legs of the bed, grunted and hoisted up the bottom, Sydne helping by using all her strength to try and push the bed up.

"I'm- I'm gonna go get Zayne to help you two-" Kit stammered as he rushed back to where Isa's new room was being built, standing off to the side was Zayne and Devereaux.

"We- we don't need help!" Sydne shouted between shallow gasps for air.

"Zayne- Asher and Sydne are suffering with Isa's new bed back there, be a dear and go help them." Kit said as he pulled Zayne along.

"What- I didn't consent to this!" Zayne protested.

"Don't care~" Kit sang as he led Zayne to where Sydne and Asher were trying to move the bed.

"WHY IS IT SO BIG?!" Zayne shreiked.

"I DON'T KNOW HELP THEM!"

Zayne reluctantly crouched his tall body underneath the bed and pushed it upward, Asher feeling a giant wave of relief and Sydne falling to the floor.

"Thank you so much." Asher muttered shamefully as he and Zayne slowly moved the bed over to Isabella's new room.

"You good Syd?" Kit asked innocently, holding up a thumbs up while Sydne took a puff of her inhaler.

"Yeah." Sydne sighed as she let her breathing level out.

Kit nodded and ran back to the base. There he found Alex taking down part of the front wall to make room for the new bed.

"Sorry- sorry-" He kept saying as he untied fairy lights and ripped duct tape.

"Alex, as much as I respect you- HURRY THE HELL UP!" Zayne screamed.

Val walked into the hall and saw the giant bed crushing Zayne and Asher, waiting to be placed in her room.

"Why is her bed so big- she's one girl-" Val marveled.

"JUST SHUT UP ABOUT THE BED ALREADY!" Asher hollered angrily.

Dine had been unnaturally quiet about Isabellas new bed. She wasn't shocked, surprised, or even a little jealous.

She.

Was.

Livid.

She death-stared the bed as if it was holding a gun to her temple, or keeping her head locked in place for a guillotine.

They really were treating Isabella better than everyone. Nobody just goes and gets someone a double bed because they felt like being nice. Dine always saw Asher as relatively lazy, despite that not being *entirely* true, she was definitely shocked at this.

Nobody just builds someone their own bedroom because they want to.

Nobody just goes and overworks themself to bring you fancy, oversized furniture.

They were trying to make a point.

They wanted to show Dine that this new girl was more important than her.

At least that's what Dine took away from the situation, and since she didn't know any better, she might as well be correct.

"That's, quite the bed you got there." She said, her voice monotone and cold.

"Yeah, it was the only bed me and Syd found within reasonable distance." Asher laughed.

Soon Sydne met up with everyone and took a seat next to Dine.

Dine got up and moved away.

"Nice to see you to." Sydne scoffed.

Dine ignored her and continued to stare down the bed. She held an emotional grudge to a mattress, large piece of cloth and a pillow.

Pitchfork Kids

That was not just a bed, it was the symbolization of the group outright insulting her, making sure she knew they hated her and would pry this new girl up on a pedestal. This was them telling her that she was no longer liked.

Dine's mind began to fill with disgusting visions of being worshipped like a god and torturing Isabella, before she inevitably died.

She could trap her in a room of flesh-eating bugs, so they could slowly peck away at her flesh, the feeling of the clothing seeping in and ripping out of her skin being reborn and refelt.

She could torture her with Scaphism, she doesn't remember where she heard it but all she knew is that she needed a place to trap her, milk, honey and a whole lot of patience. She could watch through a window and laugh at her suffering. Recording her screams of pain and remixing it to play at her funeral, where nobody would wear a speck of black.

She could cook her alive in a Brazen Bull. A hot fire blazing underneath fueled by her pure hatred for Isabella. She could fall asleep listening to her screams manipulaited into a bulls screech.

She could throw her in a lake.

Feed her poisoned birthday cake.

And not give a crap about missing her, she knew she sure as hell wouldn't and she'd convince the rest of the group not to either.

She could bury her alive.

And if she ever came back with a knife and tried to kill her while shes sleeping, she knew the group could easily overpower her and take her down, back to her pathetic, monstrous level.

She just couldn't decide how she should die.

She definitely wouldn't go to heaven.

And Dine would just love to hold her head up high with pride.

This is why her heart was dead inside.

Her soul was cold, hard and petrified.

She shook the childish visions out of her head and went back to staring at the large bed.

She knew what she would do.

She would duct tape her to the bed, limbs sprawled out and skin stretched so far it's almost thin as air. She would take a piece of paper from Sydne's notebook, and slit her skin full of paper cuts *everywhere*. Each one centimeter apart, she'll bleed and scream in pain, then she'll take her of the bed, dragging her sagging, pathetic, disgusting body with her, she'll bring her to a giant pool of Hydrogen Peroxide and throw her in. She'll listen to her scream sas every inch of her body burns, the blood now mixing with the liquid, and she'll wait till she eventually drowns or bleeds to death. Then she'll take her clean, dead body and cook it up in a pot, then serve it up to everyone in thin slabs and call it a ritual to honor Dine's hard work.

But, she would need to convince them, and their all pretty set on Isabella being redeemable and a good person deep down. She needed to make Isabella do something terrible, horrible, something unforgivable, and surly she will be gifted the worship she always wanted, and she knew just what she would get Isabella to do. Screw living here with Toby for the rest of their lives, this was far- far better.

Of course it was a big decision, life changing, irreversible, some would call it a permanent solution to a tomparary issue, but Dine didn't care anymore. She was more concerned with making the group hate Isabella.

Dine actually hesitaited before setting her mind on the idea, it was pretty big. She wasn't sure she could pull it off without some guilt, but the feelings disappeared as quickly as they arrived.

She didn't care, and she didn't want to. As soon as Isabella's room was finished, she would strike.

As she sat silently on the couch, watching the group struggle to fit furniture into Isabella's room she drafted her plan.

It wasn't perfect, but it would get the job done, and the effects she wanted from it was *almost* guaranteed. Nothing could go wrong and nothing could stop her.

Dine you bastard, you've done it again.

♀ ♀ ♀

Once Asher and Zayne finally got all the furniture into Isabella's room they both sighed and stood by the doorway in pride.

"It's beautiful." Sydne smiled as she ran up to Asher and wrappedd her arms around his arm.

"Now we just need Isabella to come and see it!" Dine piped up, uncharacteristically eager.

"Well, look who's changed her outlook on Isa! I know you'd come around!" Kit smiled.

Dine wanted to slap him and say he didn't mean it, but alas, that was not the best idea.

"Well after thinking she probably isn't *that* bad." Dine said, her voice exaggertivley nice.

"Anyway, Asher we need you in Toby's room." Val said. Sydne let go of Asher's arm and followed him.

"Why?" He asked.

"We need to cut Isabella's hair from the duct tape, it shouldn't be to short but her long braid will have to perish." Val said as he faked a tear.

"Oh okay." Asher said as he pulled out his pocket knife.

"SPEAKING OF HAIR!" Kit shouted as he ran over to Sydne.

"I desperately need headband or something to cover this mess on my head." Kit pleaded.

"Uh- sure, here." Sydne said as she handed Kit a pink, sparkley headband.

"Ew, what am I, a girl?" Kit complained as he put it in his hair. Sydne laughed and walked away, following Asher into the room where Isabella lay trapped.

"So just- chop her hair off?" Asher asked as he looked down at her. Val nodded.

"Just don't cut it all off, just barely passed the duct tape so I still have some of my hair." Isabella pleaded.

Brick Kids

"Fine." Asher sighed as he rolled his eyes.

He lightly tugged at Isabella's hair, letting it stretch and thin out. He lined his knife up with the bottom part of the duct tape and sliced through her hair.

"SWEET RELIEF!" Isabella shouted as she sat up aggressively, her hair now slightly curled from the braid and falling to her lower shoulder instead of mid back.

Isabella turned around and looked ather hair, which was stuck underneath a thin slab of duct tape. She glazed her hand over it before feeling her own remaining hair.

"I would be sad but my hair is probably so happy that all those dead ends are finally gone-" Isabella said.

"You can still tie it up too!" Sydne cheered as she fished around her bag, only managing to pull up a broken and tare up scrunchie. "I-uhm, can't help you with that at the moment." Sydne stuttered as she awkwardly shoved the garbage back into her purse. Isabella laughed and turned to face the group.

"So- what should I do?" She asked. Dine poked her head into the room an smiled widley.

"Come with me!" They shouted happily as they grabbed her arm and pulled her into the hallway, dragging her past the sitting room and to her new bedroom.

"Ta-da!" Kit anf Alex said as they bowed and showcased the room.

"Woah..." Isabella marveled. "It's marvelous, worthy of royalty!" She said.

She was very wrong, but from where she came from Jeantete would be the one who owned a room like this.

The room was about double the size of the regular bedrooms three people shared, one large bed tucked away into the corner and a small chare pushed up against the wall on the left side.

"Maybe if you were a prisoner." Kit mumbled, shocked on how much Isabella loved the room.

Fiction Kids

"Surley even Jeantete gave you guys better rooms than this." Alex said. Isabella shook her head.

"Her Honor never gave us beds, we got office cubicles with cleared desks. Sometimes if it was to painful to sleep on the desk you could sleep on the floor." Isabella explained matter-of-factly, her face blank as if it was normal for people to sleep in office cubicles.

"Oh you sweet summer child…" Sydne murmured as she gave Isa a hug.

Isabella recipricaited but only for a moment, she soon wiggled away and walked into the room.

"It's so big! Why is it so big-"

"So that if you feel violent you could run around and into walls and stuff and *not* kill everyone here!" Kit said happily, taking pride in his and Alex's thinking.

Isabella laughed happily and threw herself on the bed, continuing to laugh with joy.

Everyone giggled and let themselves inside. It felt like any other room, it just wasn't extremely small and two other people didn't sleep in it.

"We need to line the wall with pillows though, so it doesn't hurt to run into it. Alex explained as he knocked on a pallet.

"Actually, you don't. Remember when I fell face-first into the floor? It didn't hurt that much, it was like falling in foam, not the comfiest but definitely not the worst." Asher said.

Sydne chuckled at the memory of Asher trying to jump a gap in the ceiling and failing terribly.

"I'm still going to get back at you two for keeping blackmail of me!" Kit scowled.

Asher laughed while Sydne smiled like an idiot and blush crowded her cheeks.

The group laughed and talked in the sitting room until the late hours of lights off. Her pure happiness somehow keeping her hostility tucked away.

"Oh, why don't you look at the lights. Time for bed!" Isabella cheered, eager to spend her first night sleeping in her new room and her new bed.

"Just know after this whole brainwash thing is over, you'll be moving into a room with three people and this will either be repurposed or taken down, sorry but the base will collapse if this thing stays up for too long." Kit called out to Isabella as he walked by her room.

Isabella responded with a sheepish "Mhm," as she squealed and marveled at the room.

She felt like royalty in that room, like she was just crowned a queen and would start living her new and improved life among her new friends.

She will live a lovely life among these new people.

Something has to happen first though.

It was now night time. Everyone was tucked away in their beds, sleeping soundly as the deafening silence of the store rang through their ears.

Except Dine.

Dine was awake.

And ready.

She slowly stepped out of her bed, careful not to wake Zayne, who was snoring loudly.

Dine crouched down and looked under her bed, her hand swaying left to right underneath, looking for a broken lamp she had stashed a few days before.

It used to be just a weapon for incase she needed to defend herself from Isabella or give Val a weapon to kick somethings ass with, but now it was a weapon.

The perfect weapon.

Prism Kids

After a minute or two her fingers brushed against it and she pulled it out.

The lampshade was made with a teal parchment that rested over a plastic LED light bulb. The stand was a cold steel that fit smoothly in her hands.

She kept the lamp close to her side, her feet stepping through the hallway, the lamp swaying gently.

As she walked her mind was blinded by a craving for death.

As she approached the door, she could feel Isabella's controlled aura. Nothing cloaked your body more than that. It felt like margarine had been smeared all over her arms and legs.

She found she couldn't move.

The end of the lamp was positioned towards the door, ready to smash it open.

She couldn't.

She could not do it.

For once in her life she was to afraid.

She sighed and put the light down, looking down at her shoes in defeat.

Not now.

Not tomorrow.

But soon.

Fother. Mucking. Soon.

Dine walked back to her room and hid the lamp under her bed again. Zayne was still peacefully sleeping away, and since nobody came out to check on her the assumed the rest of them were still asleep to.

She hadn't woken anybody up.

Good.

## Chapter 12

Pitchfork Kids

The next day Dine decided to sleep in, she wasn't ready to face Isabella after what she planned to do.

She wasn't supposed to see Isabella today.

And Isabella wasn't supposed to see her.

But they were going to see each other today.

And tomorrow.

And until Dine got the courage to do the one thing she wanted to do more than anything.

Devereaux and Val got up first before anybody. The lights were just turning on and then AC was still off, the place still being a tad bit to cold for the frosty artificial air to start being circulaited around.

They walked into the sitting room and  sat down on the floor together.

"Good morning Devereaux." Val said, uncharacteristically formal.

"Morning." Devereaux responded sheepishly.

'You haven't been talkative lately, especially after since we ended up here, I know this isn't ideal but you know, you aren't usually this silent. Zayne's been really quiet to." Val said.

Devereaux shrugged. "I just don't feel like talking. I'd rather wait till we are in an ideal situation to start talking with you all."

Val nodded. "Makes sense, what about Zayne?"

"He never appeared as a talkative person to begin with to me, but yeah, he has a similar reason. He would rather focus on getting out of here than socializing with the rest of you guys." Devereaux explained.

"I guess that makes sense. Still wish you two would be more open."

Devereaux sighed at Val's difficulty. "We'll talk to you guys once we're not *here* okay?"

Val laughed and nodded in agreement.

Zayne then emerged from his room and yawned.

"Why hello, care to talk?" Val asked in a thick and fake British accent.

"Uhm. No." Zayne muttered, unamused at Val's attempt at humor.

"Jeez, tough crowd." Val muttered.

Zayne laughed and smiled, something he hasn't done in a while.

"Oh my god you're happy." Devereaux said with an exaggerated shocked face, causing Zayne to laugh more and Val to join in.

"What do you think everythings going to be like when we get home?" Val asked.

"Oh, terrible. Everyone's gonna think were zombies and we'll still be homeless." Kit said as he emerged from the shadows.

"Holy satan how long have you been up-" Devereaux said.

"Since two seconds ago." Kit replied as he smiled widley.

Everyone just looked at him before shaking off the scary event and laughing.

"How do you think Isa's holding up in her room?" Zayne asked as he leaned against a wall.

"Probably amazing." Kit smiled.

He was wrong.

She was miserable.

She was tired and could feel her psyche breaking every blink.

"Kill me..." She muttered pathetically as she yawned and pulled the blanket over herself, finally able to sleep.

She remembered the feeling of something in her head, she could feel it. It felt like a tongue, a tongue licking her brain, coating it in a disgusting film trying to make her act the way she didn't want to.

She stared at the ceiling, seriously debating about running away.

Then again, they put so much effort into finding her, and bringing her into the group, leaving would just be selfish. She didn't know what else to do though, she couldn't leave and she could stay, and Jeantete certainly wouldn't want to take her back in. She was stuck.

Sydne opened the door slowly and peeked into the room, Asher standing close behind her, looming over her shoulder to peek inside, only to find a tired Isabella staring at the ceiling.

"Oh, sorry did I wake you?" Sydne said as she opened the door more.

"I have been awake since you all went to bed and would like to sleep." Isabella groaned in response as she pulled the blanket over herself

"Oh, okay, sorry." Sydne said as she slowly closed the door and turned around, almost running into Asher.

"Oh- I- hi..." Sydne muttered, her cheeks turning bright red. "I didn't know you were- right- there..."

Asher smiled sweetley and resting his arm on the wall behind Sydne, his tall figure shadowing over her.

"I was here the whole time." He smirked. Sydne laughed nervously in response, her cheeks continuing to redden, Asher's cheeks doing the same.

Sydne was very short compared to Asher, she felt very intimidaited and flushed.

Asher then finally dropped down to her level and pushed his hands away from the wall, their faces now level and close.

Sydne smiled sweetley, dreaming about what would happen next. Sadly her dreams were interrupted by Alex waltzing into the room and yelling at everyone.

"GOOD MORNING PEOPLE!" He cheered, startling Asher away from Sydne, dropping his hands to his sides and straightening his posture, and Sydne accidentally hitting her head against the wall and sliding down to the g round.

"Good morning to you too..." Sydne muttered as she rubbed her head.

"You okay?" Asher asked as he grabbed Sydne's hand and hoisted her up to her feet.

"Yeah, sorry." Sydne said.

"Don't apologize." Asher scoffed.

Sydne looked up at him and smiled, her cheeks turning a shade of salmon pink.

ꕥ ꕥ ꕥ

Toby sighed and pulled his makeshift blanket over his head, wanting to drift back off to sleep.

Toby has been sitting down and doing nothing for the last few days, pathetically and half-heartedly looking for a sign to go back, despite the fact he didn't even believe in stuff like that.

Each day that passed by was another drop of hope drained from Toby, hope that wasn't even there to begin with.

He had almost left a few times after Kit and Sydne had shown up, their visit fueling him up a couple times, before deciding he still wasn't ready. For some odd reason Dine and Isabella's bickering had taken an abnormally large toll on his mental health.

He spent his hours daydreaming about Dine and Isabella being best friends once he came back. The three of them staying up past when everyone else fell asleep, going somewhere better than Earth and living their best lives together, going through school as that one part of the larger group that didn't know how to separate, getting the same jobs, being neighbors. Toby knew that wouldn't happen, but what else was one to do when they put themself in self-inflicted isolation?

Toby grabbed his stomach and hunched over. He hadn't eaten since he left the base, and the hunger pains were getting unbearable.

"Maybe I should go back soon," Toby muttered to himself as they pulled over their small lamp.

Just as the words left their mouth they heard a pounding on the ceiling door of their base. It sounded as if someone was in a panic and needed their attention badly.

Toby sighed and pushed their head back up and glared at the door.

Pitch Black Books

"Sydne, Kit, if you're back I know it's daytime and there isn't a billion employees chasing you!" Toby called out as he started sheepishly pushing their couch-bed over to the door to stand on.

Once Toby was able to get the couch over to the door, he called out again. "You can stop now, I already heard you!" Then the pounding stopped.

Toby sighed and opened the door, only to see nothing.

The space by the door was blank, not a figure in sight.

Toby grabbed the edges of the gap and hoisted himself up and looked around, still no person.

Just as Toby was about to go back inside the building and close the door a pizza box and three oranges fell out of the ceiling gap and landed on the couch.

"Holy crap-" Toby said, startled, he let go of the edges and fell onto the hard concrete floor, the door shutting violently behind him.

Toby got up, ignoring his aching body, and examined the food. Toby glazed over it for a quick second before scarfing down everything in a matter of minutes, as if he never had food before.

The pizza was lukewarm and greasy while the oranges were semi-soft and tasted like rubber coated in molasses. The quality was what you would expect from a furniture store. About what you expect from a Public School canteen. But Toby couldn't care less, food was food and he felt fulfilled.

"Maybe I should wait just a bit longer." Toby said to himself, the food refueling him and allowing them to stay just a wee bit longer.

Toby assumed someone from the group had dropped off some food and didn't want them to know, but Toby was smarter than that and could tell someone like Val had popped by.

But Toby wasn't as smart as he'd like to assume.

Because everyone else in the group hadn't left the base.

The food was unnaturally filling and gave Toby a fuzzy, warm feeling deep inside, that made him happy and content with where he was at the moment.

His head was screaming though.

Screaming to Dineve.

Go back to the base.

To run back before something terrible happened.

But of course Toby would be too stubborn to even listen to himself.

"WHERE IS THAT GIRL!" Jeantete shouted as she pounded her fist on her desk.

"I- I don't know Your Honor." An employee said shakily, clearly intimidated by Jeanette.

"Did you guys not make the tapes easier to find?! She was supposed to find seven by now, BUT SHE HASN'T EVEN CAME SINCE I GAVE HER THAT TAPE ON ISABELLA!" Jeantete groaned angrily, her French accent shining through, digging the heels of her hands into her eyes.

"Your Honor, if I could suggest." The employee said.

"Just talk la pute." She snarled back.

"Your honor, if the possibility she's doing Your Honors dirty work." The employee said.

Jeantete looked down at the employee, her eyes glowing with anger. "You know my name, PUTAIN DE L'UTILISER!" She screamed.

The employee jumped and scrambled over to the corner and started flipping through a French-to-English dictionary frantically.

"Don't bother, French is to good of a language for you anyway, *poseur*."

The employee nodded and put the book away.

"Someone here go run off and check on her, make sure she's not dead or de la merde."

The employee ran over to a microphone in Jeantetes office and started speaking into it.

"Her honor has ordered one brave soul to show themself in Her Honors bureau, in two minutes if one does not arrive Her Honor will

be injectng you all with Stilla Havet! Her Honor is waiting and so am I." The employee instructed, his voice seemingly drowned out through the microphone, but reaching every employee.

"I never mentioned Stilla Havet gros con, why did you tell them that." Jeantete growled.

"Am I wrong?" THe employee said smugly.

"THATS IT! I AM SICK OF YOUR IMMATURE BEHAVIOR!" Jeantete hollered furiously. "VOUS AGISSEZ TOUJOURS COMME VOUS ÊTES MEILLEUR QUE TOUS LES AUTRES EMPLOYÉS ! JUSTE PARCE QUE JE VOUS FAIS CONFIANCE POUR ÊTRE MON EMPLOYÉ DE MAIN DROITE NE SIGNIFIE PAS QUE VOUS ÊTES MEILLEUR QU'EUX, EN RÉALITÉ VOUS ÊTES PIRE. JE TE DÉTESTE. JE SOUHAITE QUE VOUS MOURRIEZ DÉJÀ. POURQUOI NE VOUS AI-JE PAS TUÉ. VOUS ÊTES UN RÉEL GASPILLAGE D'OXYGÈNE, VOUS DEVRIEZ DÉJÀ MOURIR! JE REGRETTE DE VOUS AVOIR FAIT MON EMPLOYÉ DE MAIN DROITE, JE DEVRAIS POUVOIR PRENDRE SOIN DE CET ENDROIT MOI-MÊME MAIS NON VOUS AVEZ INSTITUÉ À ÊTRE MON ASSISTANT POUR QUE VOUS POUVEZ SORTIR DU MONDE TOUS LES AUTRES EMPLOYÉS LE FONT! JE NE PEUX PAS VOUS CROIRE, HUMBILEZ-VOUS POURQUOI PAS YA-" Jeantete started scolding in French.

Her words were fast and came naturally for her, French was her mother language. She spoke it whenever she got angry at someone or was just mumbling to herself. Every employee was required to learn a little bit of French, since she would sprinkle it in whatever she would be saying.

The employee didn't need to translate this, he's heard it millions of times, it was a daily routine that he'd screw something up and Jeantete would start screaming at him in French. He's been suffering under that paragraph for years, and overtime learnd what each word meant. She never changed it.

"Vous gaspillez littéralement de l'espace" She mumbled when she finally stopped yelling.

The employee stood still, staring at the middle of the floor, refusing to react to her.

Jeantete cleared her throat and started talking again. "Go be a dear and check the door." She instructed. Her voice calm and all traces of her accent hidden away.

"Yes Your Honor." The employee said.

"You know my name, utilise le."

"Yes Jeantete."

The employee walked up to the door and swung it open, an employee was standing there, clearly shaking but trying to keep his composure.

"Did you hear her screaming?" The employee whispered to the other. The other nodded slightly.

"Your Honor, if she may come in." The employee asked as he walked away to stand next to Jeantetes chair.

"No. She could ask herself." Jeantete responded, her accent once again hidden.

"Your Honor, if I could come in." The other employee said.

Jeantete nodded and the employee walked in.

This employee was a little shorter than the first, and was clearly hiding long hair under her mask and in the back of her shirt. Her voice was high pitched, like a 10 year old girls.

"Stop." Jeantete said, the employee stopped walking.

"You believe you're a brave soul, correcte?

The employee nodded. "Correct."

"Who is your supervisor?" Jeantete asked.

"Wally."

Jeantete looked at the other employee and gestured toward the microphone.

The employee walked over and started talking in the microphone.

"Hello, Wally, Her Honor would like to see you in her bureau in four minutes." The employee announced before walking back and standing next to Jeantete.

"What's your name?" Jeantete asked the girl employee.

"Rachel."

"Well, Rachel, depending on what Wally says we'll determine wether you're correct or incorrect." Jeantete said.

"Correct Your Honor."

"Good, good."

After about two minutes another employee knocked on the door.

"Go be a dear and open it."

The employee next to her nodded and went to go open the door.

"Your Honor, if he may come in." The employee said as he walked back.

"Yes he may."

Waly walked and stood next to Rachel.

"I didn't say to stop." Jeantete said.

"Your Honor, if I could apologize." Wally said as he bowed.

"Walk." Jeantete said, dismissing his request.

Wally walked a few more steps before bumping into her desk.

"Show me Rachel's file." Jeantete demanded.

Wally nodded aggressively and typed on her keyboard, pulling it up for Jeantete to look at. "Do you believe Rachel is a brave soul?"

"Correct." Wally replied.

"It seems you are incorrect. Licenciée." Jeantete said after scrolling through Rachels file for a few seconds.

. The two employes bowed down.

"Your Honor if I could apologize." Rachel said.

"No you may not. Licenciée." Rachel kept her head bowed and scurried out of the room.

"Licenciée, Wally." Wally nodded and left the room.

Once the two employees left and were surely far enough away they couldn't hear anything in the office, the employee began to speak.

"Jeantete, if I could suggest something." He said.

Jeantete sighed and rolled her eyes. "Quoi?" She responded sheepishly.

"There's this kid named Toby who's living nearby, I've heard employees talk about him. He's affiliated with the group. If we get the information out of him we'd know exactly what's going on with Dine." The employee said.

Jeantete looked at the employee and thought for a moment.

"Intelligent. Let's do that." Jeantete said as she smiled at the employee.

"Sometimes you're not so bad." Jeantete said before continuing to type on her computer and mumble in French, to again ignore her right hand employee until she needed something done.

## Chapter 13

It had been days since Dine first tried her plan. Each night she would try. She would try over and over but just couldn't bring herself to do it. Somehow she had an ounce of sober sanity that wasn't drunk with jealousy and a craving to be worshipped that kept telling her to turn back and scratch the entire thing. She didn't know how to force herself to do it.

She needed someone relying on her to see it though.

She needed someone to know her plan and rely on her for continuing it.

And she knew who.

She couldn't ask Toby, obviously, he wasn't even here.

She couldn't ask Sydne, she would have a melt down from guilt afterward.

She couldn't ask Kit, since he actually wanted people to live their lives no matter how much he disliked them.

She couldn't ask Asher, because he'd probably tell Sydne who would tell someone like Kit.

She couldn't ask Val, since he didn't really care for the fact Isabella used to be an employee.

Correction, *is* an employee.

Tuckish Kids

She couldn't ask Devereaux, he never really put much effort into anything he was asked to do, same with Zayne.

That left one person.

One.

Perfect.

Person.

Dine just needed to get him on board.

Sadly, that is no easy task.

Dine hadn't gotten a full sleep in a while, she was to busy plotting against Isa and figuring out how to indoctrinate Alex into joining her side.

Isa hadn't been sleeping well either, her mind control was getting worse and worse, even staying on her during the day, leaving her drained and exhausted.

One morning though Isabella ran out of her room, beaming with joy.

"GUYS! GUYS, GUYS, GUYS!" Isa started screaming in the sitting room.

Everyone was awake by then and looking over at her.

"What." Dine said in a monotone voice passive aggressively.

"I DID IT. LAST NIGHT WHEN MY MIND CONTROL KICKED IN I MANAGED TO GET CONTROL OVER IT FOR LIKE, THREE SECONDS!" Isabella cheered.

Dine darted her head up to Isabella and stared at her, her face pale with fear.

"What-" She muttered again, but it was quickly drowned out by everyones cheers.

"OH MY GOSH ISABELLA! THAT'S AMAZING, WE'RE ALL SO PROUD OF YOU!" Sydne shouted as she ran up and gave her a hug.

Everyone was so happy and encapsulated her in a giant group hug, everyone talking loudly and congratulating her.

Everyone except Dine.

Dine was looking down at Isabella's feet in horror.

Dine was running out of time.

Picture Ads

Somehow she understood that one day Isabella wouldn't act like an employee, but that day seemed to be approaching sooner than she expected.

Chaos and panic were running through her head. If her plan doesn't work, how the hell was she going to explain why she tried it, how was she supposed to save the group from the hell she was gonna bring.

"Dine, aren't you happy?" Val said once the group stopped hugging.

Dine was snapped out of her trance and looked up at the group, who was now looming over her.

"Huh- oh, yeah, congrats Isa." She muttered as she smiled weekley up at Isabella.

Isabella smiled back and then went back to sitting down and talking with the group, the happy and enthusiastic air continuing to be supplied with their voices.

Alex was the only one who wasn't engaging in conversation, along with Devereaux and Zayne but that was just normal for them.

Dine knew she didn't have any more time to plan, it was tonight or never.

The day was new and she still had some times, limited but some, Dine grabbed a piece of paper from Sydne's notebook and started to scribble on it with a broken pencil she had found the other day.

She drew and wrote the most pathetic and rushed plan ever seen.

There were millions upon millions of variables that could all go wrong and foil the entire thing, but intense calculations and probabilities were out of the question now.

She needed Alex on her side, if only she was part of the plan the group would be able to tell and it would fail.

Dine was not going to give this all up for nothing.

This was to valuable to risk going through the pain of just to realize it didn't work. Alex was her key to making sure it would be successful.

The paper was filled in under ten minutes, low-quality sketches and handwriting filled the page. Her plan was simple, yet horrible.

If Alex didn't agree to her plan, she'd bribe him. She'd go up and up until he agreed to her plan, once he did she would execute the plan, and then everything would be fine as long as Alex doesn't give her a hard time about his missing payment.

Alex was sitting down next to Kit and holding his hand as Kit talked with his loud voice and big expressions.

Obviously it would take more than a "Psst" to pull Alex away from the love of his life.

"Hey Syd I need more paper." Dine said as she ripped another page out of Sydne's notebook.

"I- okay-" Sydne stuttered before going back to the conversation and laying her head on Asher's shoulder.

Dine continued to scribble more.

More of her plan.

She started grinning with psychotic joy as she kept glancing at Isabella and then back to the paper.

Tonight.

Tnight.

Tonight.

Dine has never been more excited for tonight ever.

Everything would change in the matter of a single night,

Everyones lives will be changed, and it would take no more than half an hour.

Any longer was risky.

But what would they do?

Stop her?

Doubt it.

There would be nothing they could do, then cry and mourn.

It's laughable how pathetic the group can be at times.

You think you have true friends until you try executing a plan like this.

Alex is especially pathetic.

Pitchfork Kids

But the group wouldn't deal with his pathetic ass for long.

"Guys, we should do something to celebrate! Let's go out and explore for a bit, it's funner than being cooped up in here all day!" Sydne cheered as she stood up on the chair she was sitting on and waved her hand in the air.

"Isa just did an amazing thing, Sydne's right this does deserve a celebration!" Kit chimed in agreement.

The two relatives high-fived and jumped down from their seats.

"Come on!" They both shouted as they went tumbling out of the sitting room and through the entrance, the rest of the group got up and ran after them.

Dine sighed and walked slowly behind them. She was tired of sitting around too but she had no energy to actually get up and go somewhere.

Staying behind would be to suspicious, too much effort and too sad for her to deal with, so she reluctantly got up and followed them out into the big wide world that was an IKEA.

A beautiful place of full of concrete, murderers, artificial oxygen and nauseating fluorescent lighting. Not even the great Amazon Rainforest can compete with this level of beauty.

Dine kept behind the group, afraid of actually interacting with them, opting to keep to herself and watch everyone else have fun.

I mean, how could she do anything when she was so hyperfocused on her plan tonight. On fixing everyones lives, tonight. It was quite the responsibility to bare on her shoulders, she took an inch and ran it for miles, determined to save everyone from the wrath of Isabella.

"Hey, hey, look at this!" Sydne called out as she pointed out a display holding a strong resemblance to a living room.

"Oh my lordy lord is that a GAME CUBE?!" Kit shouted happily as he ran over, picked it up, and started squealing about it.

"Woah, that's cool- but why is it important?" Alex said.

"BECAUSE BEING COOL IS COOL!" Kit hugged the Game Cube close

to his chest and smiled.

The Game Cubed looked like any other, regular Game Cube console you'd find somewhere on Ebay.

It was purple, with one large compartment to put games in on the top and a grey controller connected to one of the ports on the front of the console.

The group walked over and marveled at it, for some odd reason it gave them waves of nostalgia- despite the console not being something of their time.

"When we go home we're keeping this." Val said.

"And then we'll sell it for a ton of money and buy a house!" Asher cheered.

Everyone looked at him and then back at the console.

"I mean I did want to keep it but- you're right! It probably works to, if we sell it for enough we can pay enough for the rent on a new house while we go look for jobs!" Kit exclaimed.

The group all laughed and high-fived eachother.

"Looks like we'd all be going to work at Arby's after all this." Dine said against her better judgement.

The rest of the group laughed and joked with her. Isabella laughed along despite, not knowing what to say. She didn't know how they got here, how they met or anything at all. She just knew they weren't mass murderes and didn't think she was Satans long lost cousin twice removed.

"Hey, Dine, come on!" Isabella said as she signaled for Dine to come along.

Isabella and Dine may have had a difficult time getting along before, but that never stopped Isa from trying her best to befriend her.

"Mhm, coming." Dine said in a fake cheery voice.

She looked up and watched the group get further and further away from her.

Pitchia Kids

She watched as Sydne jumped onto Asher's shoulders. She watched as Zayne picked up Devereaux. She watched as Alex and Kit spun around. She watched as Isabella laughed watching them all.

This was the first time in a long while that any of them had felt true joy. Everything had just been upsetting since any of them showed up, joy almost became foreign, but somehow Isabella's achievement just overwhelmed everyone.

Even Dine.

But not for the same reasons, as you know.

The group laughed, smiled and had fun running around the department store.

They trashed displays, picked on employees who wanted to get back at them but couldn't since the lights were on, and they were collecting anything they could load into Sydne's purse, who was being worn on Asher since Sydne was weaker than a dead clam and would be walking at point three of a mile per hour and having an asthma attack.

"Why is your bag so heavy...?" Asher complained as he hoisted it up.

"Because everyone is loading a bunch of extra crap in it." Sydne said as she surned around to face him and started walking backwards.

"No- there's got to be something else you're carrying in there, like a machine gun or something. What Kit keeps impulsivley tossing in should not be this heavy." Asher said as he stopped and started using his fingers to pry around the bag.

Sydne rushed over and covered the opening of the bag with her arms.

"You don't wanna look in there." Sydne said as she made intense eye contact with Asher. Asher stared back before going wide eyed and pulling his hand out of the purse.

"I- I understand." He stammered as he smiled weakly.

Sydne blushed and kept staring into his eyes.

Fiction Aids

They were green. Green like the forest. A  forest where the most unique animals lived in happy families and where flowers were prettiest. A plce where stron, talltrees covered the awe-inspiring beauty within. Asher was like that.

A million beautiful things hidden away in one tall, handsome package.

Unknowingly, Sydne let her hand wander to Ashers, their hands then intertwined as they stared at each other. Lost in eachothers eyes.

Sydne's eyes were golden brown, the color all the cook book tell you to look for before you stop cooking or baking whatever is on your stove or in your oven.

It was like the hard, melted sugar that covered a creme brulee that you had to break through before you got to the goey custard center. It reminded Asher of mountains and beautiful fields of flowers. The brown turned ever so gold in the sunlight, like a buried treasure finally revealed. Something beautiful hidden under another beautiful thing,

Sydne was like that.

A beautiful treasure wrapped in a beautiful package.

Asher leaned down, his face now level with hers.

He wanted to lean in.

He wanted to fell her lips on his, he wanted to stay in this moment until their timers of life ran out. He wanted to keep her fingers tangled with his, he wanted to see how her waist fit into his hands, he wanted every inch of her to be his, and Sydne was no different.

She wished to be locked in this moment forever. For their eyes to be chained to eachothers gaze, for his hand to hold her's and his other holding her close to him. She wanted to see how soft his lips were, how his hoodies felt on her. She wanted to see how long this moment would last. every second feeling like a lifetime of pure bliss and happiness.

"Don't let go..." Sydne whispers as she tightened her grasp on his hand, she pushed her purse out of the way and started drawing closer to his body.

"I won't, I promise..." Asher replied as he put his other hand over her back and pulled her closer to him.

After a few silent seconds Val had shouted at them, breaking the moment.

"SYDNE MOVE. I FOUND SOMETHING AMAZING." He shouted very aggressively, shocking Sydne and Asher as Sydne pushed away and Asher stumbled backwards.

"OH ALEX, DON'T LET GO OF ME!" Kit shouted mockingly as he clung onto Alex's back.

Alex laughed loudly, trying to hide the fact his face was beet red and he was secretly longing for that type of affection from Kit.

Kit and Alex were never a very touchy and sappy couple. THey loved eachother, yes, but they never reallyshared intimate moments, at least while everyone else was there- god knows what they did while everyone was busy harassing Sydne and Asher with moths outside.

"Oh shut up, I bet you two get all lovey dovey behind our backs!" Sydne snarled as a smirk grew on her face.

"Hah, in your Stardew sap dreams!" Kit snarled.

"THAT SAP IS TASTY AND YOU KNOW IT!" Sydne yelled back jokingly as she ran over and tried to tackle him to the groud, failing badly.

Honestly, Kit could get very sweet and sappy if nobody was around, since his chaotic, careless, Im-immortal mask could finally drop.

Alex remembered nights when neother of them could sleep and they would go cuddle in the sitting room.

Alex remembered Kit's warm hands wrapped around him as he blabbered on about how much braincells he lost that day or how he made Sydne go ballistic over something meaningless. He remembered

smiling and listening on lovingly, his voice washing away all ense of dread and stress he had built up over the ages.

But, those times were rarer than this book would lead one to believe. Sure Kit would hold his hand or give him a kiss from time to time but he never would openly do something sappy and romantic. He always felt like he needed to put on some "I'm a chaotic teen that believes their immortal and would rather die right then than anything else who thinks traditions are stupid and, most importantly, and I make it half of my personality!" Alex didn't hate that, it was the Kit he had fallen in love with, but he did miss the sweet sappy Kit that would hope he could have his arms wrapped around Alex for the rest of his life.

"I love you" was a phrase ever only said in private, and he was sure Sydne couldn't even begin to fathom what that sentence would sound like coming out of Kit's mouth.

"Well, I wouldn't mind being sappy." ALex whispered to Kit as he spun around and placed both his hnds on Kits hips and stared into his eyes. Kit stared back into Alexs eyes for a moment and let blush crowd his cheeks.

Alex closed his eyes, leaned in and opened his mouth ever so slightly for a kiss, but Kit pulled away and laughed nervously.

"And that right there was an accurate reenactment of what Sydne and Asher do when we're not looking!" Kit stuttered as he pushed away from Alex.

Alex looked at Kit, his heart cracked a little.

Kit mouthed "Sorry, later" to him ad sent an air kiss once he was sure nobody would see.

Alex sighed, a little annoyed, buthe never really stayed mad at anybody for long, Alex wasn't one to hold a grudge.

Kit also liked being all sweet and sappy with Alex, but wasn't comfortable with being himself out in public.

People were out in public.

And people judge other people.

But those other people aren't really people.

Their angels.

Angels that get ignored because their different.

The Pitchfork Kids were angels.

Thats why they feel so comfortable with them.

Their the same thing.

The same type of being.

They float above it all.

But someone drags them down.

Alex fell behind the group and started walking by Dine.

"Hey leech." Alex said.

"I never consented to that name-" Dine complained as she gaven him an offended look.

"Relax. Just asking if you miss Toby."

Dine rolled her eyes and punshed Alex in the arm.

"Rude." Alex said as he started walking away.

"Wait." Dine said. Alex stopped and turned around, her tone being uncharacteristically serious and cold,.

"What?" Alex said, sudden dred washing over his body like a wave of water just splashed him.

"I need your help."

Alex cocked his head to the side and raised his eyebrow. "With what?" He asked.

"Isabella." Dine replied.

Alex's eyes got wide, he didn't care much for Isabella and was really surprised that Dine didn't seem to care either.

Alex leaned in and Dine nstarted to whisper in his ear.

Her plan.

Coming together.

Oh.

So.

Fucking.

Fast.

Goodbye life one of them should think.

I'll be gone soon one of them should thnk.

Pitchfork Kids

Someone is going to die that night.

Someone loved.

Tortured.

Someone you might not want to die.

But we don't always get what we want now do we?

END PART 2

# Chapter 14

The group finally returned home, sober off alcohol and drunk on laughter.

The group waddled through the entrance laughing, Sydne having an asthma attack from it and Kit needing to be held up by Alex and Val so that he wouldn't fall over and laugh himself to death.

But Dine and Alex couldn't participate in such goofy ahh shenanigans.

They had more important thinks to be thinking about.

The group was to tipsy off chaos to feel the death and melancholy that clouded the room.

Dine and Alex felt it though.

They created it.

And everyone else was to busy with their self-made laughing gas to do anything about it.

"You guys are all acting like drunken idiots." Alex said as he giggled and tried to keep Asher from falling over.

"WHAT- WHAT ASHER DID THOUGH- THAT WAS TO- TO FUNNY!" Devereaux screamed as he started laughing even harder, which made Asher and Kit fall to the floor and clench their stomachs as they laughed.

Dine tried holding Sydne up and making her take her inhaler but she couldn't since Sydne couldn't get a proper deep breath in.

Fiction Kids

"I'm so glad nobody here is 21." Dine muttered, which somehow caused even more laughter to erupt.

Even Isabella was laughing.

She was caught in the chaos and oh so happy.

Something she wouldn't be for a long, long, long time.

At least she knows how to have a good time before everything goes downhill.

"You guys are great!" Isabella cheered as her laughing calmed down a bit. Alex winced at Isabella, as if her words were stabbing him in the foot and he was restrained from reacting.

"Dine, are you sure you wanna go through with this, everyone's going to get hurt. They'll miss how everything used to be, you shouldn't do this." Alex whispered into Dine's ear. Dine rolled her eyes.

"Alex. There is one way to do this. If we don't do this we're not going to be able to free everyone." Dine explained.

"I don't want to anymore."

"Alex. You've had like 5 hours to decide, you can't tap out now. I need you. Without you this will fail, so shut up and wait for the proper time."

Alex sighed.

This seems rushed, but this is how things work in reality.

Tight schedules.

And little time to think.

The laughing mass of flesh settled down and stopped laughing.

"That was so fun, best day ever!" Zayne cheered as he held up his hand as if he was holding a shot glass and waiting for a cheers. Despite the obvious lack of alcohol and their lack of jiggers, they still all held up their hands and had an imaginary cheers, their smiles still wide but their laughs silent.

"Well, I'm heading off to bed." Zayne yawned

"You were actually sociale today, I could stand being in the same room as you- it's shocking." Val giggled.

Zayned sighed. "You guys are contagious, it's all I can say." He smirked.

Zayne walked off into his room.

"I'm gonna go sleep to, night ya'll." Sydne said as she struted away.

As more and more people announced themselves heading to bed, eventually everyone had agreed to head off to sleep- even Dine, leaving Kit and Alex alone in the sitting room.

Kit looked over and smiled. "Hey, sorry about earlier. You know why I couldn't do it just then." Alex crossed his arms angrily and looked up at Kit.

"I know- I just wish it wasn't like this…" Alex shrugged.

Kit walked over and leveld Alex's head with his.

"Stop it right there." He said as he watched Alex blush.

"You're to cute when you're angry." Kit smirked as he pressed his lips against Alexs.

Alex stood there, in puppy love coated shock, and kissed back.

They stood there for about five minutes, their eyes closed as they enjoyed a long overdue kiss.

When Kit pulled away Alex grabbed his head and pulled his forehead to his.

"Don't." He muttered as now it was his time to show Kit how much he loves him.

Kit and Alex sat in the middle of the sitting room, cuddling and sharing long, intimate conversations.

"I'm sorry." Alex said as he rested his head on Kit's shoulder and tightened his grip around Kit's hand.

"Why?" Kit said as he looked down at Alex and pulled Alex closer to him.

"It's just, I shouldn't be getting so upset that you don't like PDA, I should be more understanding." Alex sighed as he looked up.

"You shouldn't be apologizing, I should. I'm putting my social image above you, I shouldn't be doing that." Kit said, his happy expression dropping.

Alex snugged his head into Kit's shoulder. "Don't be, we're all WIP's, we can't get to mad and upset with eachother for having those rough edges."

Kit looked down and kissed the top of Alexs head.

"I love you so, so much." Kit said, his voice soft and sweet as if he were singing a lullaby to a baby.

"I love you to." Alex said.

"I promise, from now on, I'll be more affectionate, I promise." Kit said as he held Alexs hand and kissed it.

"My king." He finished.

Alex smiled, but inside was crying.

He didn't want to help Dine anymore. He can't lose Kit. Kit was the only man that had ever made him feel so happy. He can't loose Kit. He can't put Kit through that torture. He loved him to much.

Why.

Why.

Why.

Why.

All these paranoid thoughts started racing through his head. He wanted to melt into Kit's body never to leave him.

He loved KIt, why did he agree with Dine. He'll loose it all. He can't loose it all. He loves him to much. Kit is his soulmate, the one person put on this earth to be with him.

Why was he doing this.

Why.

Why.

Why would he do this to himself.

Alex swung his legs over Kit's and buried his face in his chest as he squeezed his waist.

"Is everything okay Alex?" Kit asked as he wrapped his arms around his back.

"Just, don't let go... Please..." Alex muttered, holding in a giant wave of tears.

Pitchork Kids

Kit looked down, scared at how Alex was asking, but doing as he said.

"I won't, we'll be together forever." Kit whispered as he kissed the back of his head.

Now Alex was really over the edge.

Why did he agree to Dine's plan.

It was so blank.

Rushed.

He didn't think about anything.

What is wrong with him.

Why would he just

Throw.

It.

All.

Away.

Kit just made a promise to be a better boyfriend. He can't leave him now.

Why would he do this.

Alex's mind started flooding with dread and regret.

Kit.

Kit.

Why did he ever think doing this to Kit was a good idea.

"I'm sorry..." He muttered as he started crying into Kit's shirt.

Kit held him tight.

"Please don't be sad. Whatever you did, it's all forgiven now..." Kit said as he lifted Alexs head up. His face was red and wet from crying, and a small tear stain formed on Kits shirt.

"Can we, can we please be happy again?" Alex asked, his voice trembling as he sniffled.

"Of course." Kit said as he started kissing Alex again.

Alex wanted nothing more than this event to last the rest of his life.

Alex kissed back, his brain now forcing the depressing fact of reality to the back of his brain- to be forgotten till he's forced to

Inkstorm Kids

confront it. His brain flodded himself with the bliss of the moment, trying not to hurt from when he knew was happening next.

He never planned this.

Never planned on doing this.

But hell, it was happening now.

Alex didn't have regard for if anyone saw him anymore, this was his last chance of showing his undying love to Kit.

He loved Kit with every cell in his being.

And Kit loved him.

They liked this.

They didn't want this to end.

They just wanted to be happy and together.

Alex and Kit both melted away into the moment, the world around them becoming a blur as for now they could only focus on eachother. The person there that they loved and cared for.

They had cuddled for a long, long time. They were right there in the sitting room.

Two lovers.

Together.

Sharing their final moments.

Would be a shame if something happened to one of them.

♀ ♀ ♀

"Alex, you dumbass get up." Dine said as she hoisted up Alex by his shoulder.

Alex woke up mid snore and opened one eye.

"Oh, hi Dine." Alex said as he yawned loudly.

Kit was sleeping soundly beside him, his hair messy and his face comfortably resting.

"What did you guys even do?" Dine said as she looked at Kit who was still asleep.

"Shared my final moments alive cuddling." Alex stated blankly.

FictionKids

"Whatever, let's go." Dine said, dismissing anything and starting to walk towards Isabellas room.

"I don't-" Alex started to say before Dine cut him off.

"Want to do this anymore? To bad! Do you want to be worshipped like a god?! Because if you don't do this you can toss that dream out the fucking window!" Dine said aggressivley, almost shouting.

"But... Kit..." Alex said as he started to cry again, remembering the amazing bliss he had just experienced with Kit.

"Kit can go find another man to date, you're not the only guy in the world. He'll survive." Dine said as she rolled her eyes.

"But- *I* don't want to leave him- *I* can't do this to him- I love him-" Alex cried.

"Shut up." Dine snarled. Alex continued to cry but stopped reasoning with her.

Dine had gone mad.

She would have cared before.

She would have tried to prevent this.

What happened?

Wish I could say.

"Walk." Dine instructed.

Alex cried and walked slowly towards Isabellas room.

The closer he got the louder Isabellas grunts and struggling got.

He stopped about three feet in front of the door.

"W-A-L-K." Dine spelled out. Alex held up his hand to signal that he needed a moment.

Every cell in his body and every thought in his brain was screaming at him to turn back and wake everyone up.

To get Dine tied down to a bed like how they tied down Isabella and keep him under watchful eye.

"DON'T DO THIS ALEX. YOU DON'T WANT THIS. PLEASE."

He could feel his skin screaming against the plan.

His mind played memories of Kit and him.

Kit taking him out to icecream.

Fuckboi Kits

Kit riding on his back.

Kit ranting about anything he wanted.

Kit telling him he loved him.

Kit and cuddling just a few hours before.

"No, no, no, no," ALex mumbled as he started to back away.

"Where do you think you're going..?" Dine said, her smile psycopathically wide and her voice a raspy whisper.

"Walk or I'll do it for you."

"I can't, I can't throw this all away, I can't leave Kit, I can't leave this group. Please Dine, I can't do this..." Alex protested, but Dine was to stubborn to listen.

She was to far down the pit of insanity.

The most he could do?

Make her blink from the dandruff in his hair getting into her eye.

"Please Dine, I don't want to do this anymore, please, please, I don't want this- I want anything but this please."

Dine laughed maniaclly.

"Whatever Alex. If you won't do it I'll do it for you." Dine said as she placed her hands on his shoulders.

"No, Dine- Dine please. We can figure out another way around this- this isn't the answer- Dine I don't want to do this anymore- Dine stop- Dine- Dine-"

But she wasn't listening.

She didn't care about anyone anymore.

She just wanted to be their god.

She wanted a large marble statue where she could be worshipped.

She wanted everyone to see she was right.

She would be one crooked cult leader.

But, someone else would take that spot.

Alex struggled away from the door, but somehow Dine was stronger.

Picture Kids

As Alex got closer to the door, his tears became denser and flowing out of his eyes faster, his heart began to race, and his brain was showing him every happy memory he'd ever had to try and overpower him.

It didn't work.

Dine opened the door.

Pushed him inside.

And shut the door.

And waited.

And waited.

And waited.

After about 7 minutes Dine opened the door, peeked inside, and smiled.

"Perfect." She smiled as she tossed the lampshade she had been holding onto the floor. Stepped inside and shut the door. Unarmed.

And there it was.

Everything.

Changed.

Nothing is going to be the same.

Ever.

Ever.

Again.

Boy oh boy, what a shame.

That Kits lover was a snake.

Or a dead one as I should say.

Kit yawned and smacked his lips together, tired and groggy from last night.

After a few seconds he remembered Alexs sweet words and their cuddles together. "Where is he..?" Kit mumbled to himself as he yawned and looked around.

Pitchfork Kids

He expected to wake up with Alex next him, sleeping soundly. He was expecting to kiss his head to wake him up and to hold his hand the whole day.

As Kits eyes darted around the room, his gazed locked onto Isabellas door.

The longer he looked at it the stronger the feeling of death and melancholy grew.

Reluctantly, Kit got up and walked over to the door slowly. Dreading each step he took closer.

The closer he got the more noticeable the *fresh* blood slowly leaking out from the bottom of the door.

Kit stared at it in horror and prayed it was either a dream or from something else. Like someone got their period and just bled on the ground an unnatural amount, and in Isabellas room- or someone snuck in a bunch of barbeque sauce and tried to paint the room with it.

But those were just silly.

He knew what happened.

Kit opened the door, to find the room basically flooded with fresh, drippy, flowey blood.

"I- I'm sorry..." A girls voice said quietly, her voice quivering with guilt.

"No..." Kit muttered as he stared at the bloody mess.

"Don't come any closer... Please..." The voice said again as she pushed herself against the wall.

"***NO***!" Kit screamed at the top of his lungs as he fell down to his knees and started sobbing loudly.

"NO, NO, WHY, WHY DID YOU DO THIS, WHY?!"

"I'M SORRY I DIDN'T MEAN TO. I DIDN'T WANT THIS!" The girls voice shouted again.

The rest of the group woke up to Kits screams and scurried out of bed and towards Kit father than I was was humanly possible.

"WHATS- wrong..." Val said as he slowed his pace and stood behind a sobbing Kit

"Holy hell..." He muttered as he stared into the bloody watercolor that was Isabellas room.

As the rest of the group arrived people would stop and stare at the blood orange that had seemed to replace the room.

"Oh god no..." The room reminded them all of those messy paintings they would make since nobody wanted the maroon paint.

Each person reacted differently.

Sydne stared on blankly, processing the idea of death over the blood.

Val had collappsed to the ground and was now passed out from shock.

Zayne shrugged and went to go sit alone in the sitting room.

Devereaux started to cry and ran away to hide.

Asher sat on the groud and stared on as silent tears welled in his eyes.

Sydne couldn't help but wander inside.

"STAY BACK-" The girl shouted as she tried to press herself through the wall- attempting to get as far away from everyone as she could.

There was blood soaked ripped clothing around every which way and puddles of fresh blod, the smallet breeze managing to make it spill out and drip onto the floor.

As Sydne walked she could feel her shoes getting wet, every step was in another bloody river of denial.

There were arms lodged into gaps in the walls, looking as if they would grab you by the neck and strangle you if you did so much as walk by, fingers rolling around in the blood and spreading it about like puffy paint.

There were teeth falling from the ceiling, the drying blood not stong enough to suspend hard, white enamel for long. There was a thigh rolling across the floor, getting stained in blood and dripping off of it.

The rest of the leg was lodged under Isabella's pillow, which was

also soaked with blood, the end of the leg dripping a small yet steady stream of pure blood.

There was an eye hanging out of the girls hair, fresh crimson tears still dripping off, making her hair sticky with red juice. There was a foot stuck in a gap in the ceiling, blood just flowing out.

There was a hand clapsed around the girls neck, blood flowing out of the millions of gashes that had found their home there. The forearm was teared to pieces and was a small little pile of ray-ground-pork-looking flesh in a pile, blood oozing out of it and staining the wood.

There was another eye rolling down one of the crevices in the floor, too big to fall through, but to small to avoid getting stuck. Another eye was ripped in half in the corner and another was stuck on a pointy piece of wood by Isabellas bed.

There was a tongue ripped to pieces sitting on her chair, the dark navy color being stained ever so darker from the blood the tongue bitd produced.

An ear was floating around in a poodle, the rest probably ripped apart with all the other ripped apart flesh scattered about in different piles.

A torso lay peacefully on top of Isabella's bed, blood spewing out of every cut and gash, it looked pale and shrivled, like all the blood and organs had been ripped out, Isa's bed now completely red from the natural dye.

Sydne gagged as she looked down and noticed she had stepped in someones heart, the organ squishing down and releasing blood like a sponge releases water. There was a piece of a kidney tangled in the girls hair, and a knee cap was was dried and stuck to the wall.

A couple toes were also tangled in the girls hair, bleeding out into the soft abyss and turning it into a hard, sticky mess.

There was another leg, not torn to pieces surprisingly, that was hung onto the ceiling by a bloody lock of hair, that wasn't the girls.

The rest of the body parts and organs, besides some pieces of lung, liver and face meat were surly scattered around the room in the piles of ripped of flesh.

Where were the bones?

Everywhere.

Every corner you looked were rotting, blood and half-flesh coverd bones.

They were pearly white and shone like a diamond in the bright blinding lights of IKEA.

The floor and walls were basically dyed with blood, causing the room to smell murky like rust iron out in your back yard on a rainy day and containers of oil that was splint amongst the steel floor. The room unnaturally cold, the feeling of death and dread cloaking over you like a blanket made out of air.

And amongst the chaos of it all.

Standing against the bloddy wall.

With blood and human bits covering her.

Was Isabella.

In her hands was Dine's untouched head, kept pristine and perfect, as if she had purposely kept it that way so they could hang and marvel at it.

Of course the rest of her body was scattered amongst the mess of body parts and teared up flesh.

Along with Alex's.

On the wall was Alex's shirt, ripes in it but enough to make out what it looked like. Floating in a puddle of blood were Dine's jeans, the denim repelling the blood somehow and keeping it afloat.

Isabella's white hoodie was now a deep maroon red, dyed from Dine and Alex's blood, her skirt a shade or two darker and dripping, the soles of her shoe being dyed red the longer she sat in the mess.

"I- I'm sorry..." She muttered as she dropped Dine's head, covered her face with her blood-and-flesh-cover hands and collapsed to her knees.

"I- I was fighting it off- then- then they just came in, no weapons, they just- stood there- like- like they wanted me to do it- I- I couldn't resist…" She cried as she started sobbing into her hands, her tears showing as a light shade of pink.

Guilt washed over her body.

She.

Killed.

Another.

Person.

That person would be alive if it wasn't for her.

They would be walking and breathing, if she wasn't there.

Someone died to her hands.

And she didn't want the face the music.

"Isa…" Sydne muttered. "How could you…" She said as she dropped to her knees and stared at the blood puddle she landed in.

Alex and Dine were gone.

Dead.

All Isabellas fault.

"Look- I'm sorry- I tried to fight it off but it was to strong-"

"OH SHUT UP!" Kit screamed through sobs. "DO YOU THINK THEY WANTED THIS?! FUCK NO. AND WE DON'T WANT YOUR SHITTY EXCUSES!" Kit cried as he curled up into a ball on the floor and sobbed even louder.

The thing is, Alex didn't want this.

But who said Dine didn't?

Who said Dine's plan didn't involve getting herself killed?

I don't remember anyone saying that.

Everyone sat in silence, processing the idea that Dine and Alex were gone.

The deaths probably hit Kit the most.

Just a few hours before they were all over eachother, starting a new chapter in their relationship.

A chapter that ended far before it even started.

Prism Kids

Kit couldn't help but sob at the sight, covering his eyes with his hands, unable to look at the mess presented before him.

"ALEX… WHY YOU…" Kit shrieked through tears.

Sydne got up and went to comfort her nephew.

"I'm so sorry Kit." Sydne as she hugged him.

Kit sat up on his knees and cried on Sydne's shoulder, allowing her to wrap her arms around him comfortingly, allowing him to let all his repressed emotions out.

Eventually a crying Devereaux emerged from his hiding place and curled up with Sydne and Kit, crying along side them.

Isabella stayed glued to her spot, guilt flooding into her head as she watched everyone cry and suffer.

"You caused this." A little voice in her head rattled.

Isabella bent down and picked up Dine's decapitaited head. She started walking slowly towards everyone, clutching the cold, flashy head tightly in her hands.

The face had a bright, wide smile on it, a sociopathic smile that thought one of the worst things that could happen was good.

Isabella stopped at her doorway, and looked over the collapsed group. As she glazed over them her eyes got hooked onto Zayne, who was mouthing "Not yet," and signaling to her to give the head to them.

Isabella looked at him, shook her head no and contiued to walk closer.

Zayne got up and stood in front of her, his unnatrually tall figure towering over her.

"Their not ready for that, give it here. I'll keep it safe for them." Zayne said as he tried to take the head from Isabella, but sadly failing.

"Let me go get it treated first." She said as she looked down at it, holding it close to her body to try and keep it from rotting quickly.

Pitchfork Ads

Dine sped around Zayne and everyone else and out the door, her feet leaving puddled, bloody footprints behind her as she walked throug the base, blood staining her socks.

Zayne watched as she scurried out of the room.

Sydne looked up and made eye contact with him as silent tears streamed down her face.

"Is she running away?" She mouthed. Zayne shrugged. "Maybe, maybe not." He mouthed back.

Everyone was shook from the event, especially Kit.

Kit hated himself more than anything now. He could have stopped it, if he had stayed awake a little longer, if he had woken up when Alex went to die he could have saved him.

Nobody would be crying, Alex and Dine would still be here.

That room wouldn't be filled with blood

Alex and Dine would be with them.

Alex and Dine would be with them.

Alex and Dine would be with them.

Alex and Dine would be with them.

They wouldn't be a pile of blood and flesh scattered about an incompetent household.

Kit could just feel in his bones that he could have stopped it.

But he fucking didn't.

He could have at least made Alex's last day alive better.

But oh no, can't stop acting like a fake chaotic teen! How dare you assume I have a soft spot for the one man I love!

Kit wished the lights were off.

He could throw himself as Isabella and die just like how Dine and Alex did, he'd succumb to the same fate as them. He'll feel their pain and they'd get the justice they deserved.

If he never fell asleep he could have stopped it already, everything was his fault.

Who cares if he didn't actually kill them, he could have saved them from their premature fate. He could have done something, but instead he decided to just sleep. He didn't even feel Alex being lifted

off of him or pushing himself away. It was basically like he didn't care.

He did care, he did, but his failure to save them made him feel like he didn't. He should be the one ripped to a million shreds.

Kit could have done something, he had so much possibility- if Isabella wasn't there everything would have been okay, if Kit had listened to himself and didn't let her murder everyone, he could feel it was all his fault.

But most importantly.

Alex was gone.

He had been a shitty boyfriend, he didn't mean to- but he still had. Alex died in an unhappy relationship he probably wanted to badly escape from. He had been trapped in a miserable hell and now he's completley gone from this earth?!

Kit couldn't believe it.

Alex was always supposed to be there, he was never supposed to go- Alex was the one that was supposed to live for a long long time- he was supposed to leave with them, this wasn't supposed to happen.

Kit stopped crying and stared off into space, dissasociating, just swimming in his jumbled, greiving thoughts.

Alex and Dine were only 16, got stuck in IKEA, and then died. They died before they could even taste the adulthood danging right over their heads- especially Zayne, he was 17 and planned on legally adopting everyone once he turned 18 so they wouldn't have to worry about being parentless.

At least Alex and Dine didn't have to worry now.

They were in a better place.

Or a worse place.

Depends on your view of them.

That still didn't change the shock Sydne had received when she saw the blood originally.

She just wanted to scream and slap herself until she work up from this nightmare.

Fiction Kids

But as you know.

It's hard to wake up from something that happens when you're already awake,

Sydne was hurt, she never liked having to handle death in the real world and always struggled with it, but she cared about everyone more.

Despite desperately needing help herself she knew she had to mask it away- everyone else needed some form of vent and if she wasn't available she knew nobody else would take on her role.

Sydne was used to this and would work through it eventually.

She knew this was a true tragedy though.

Val was surprised. Val was chill and about the same level of closeness with Dine and Alex as he was with everyone else, he wasn't one to seclude himself to a group of people that was sucked within another group.

Val was mournful, they died far to soon. He knew that they would have done so much more for the world, Earth or not, if they were still alive.

Two young, chaotic souls stripped away from them to soon.

Val wanted to cry, like everyone, but kept it all piped down. He didn't like being vulnerable in front of everyone.

He had made plans with Alex and Dine to go do a bunch of stuff once they got home. He could never even tell something like this was lingering around, seeing the bloody mess felt like a fever dream.

Val just wanted to help comfort Kit, kept him distracted from his own messed up mind.

Alex and Dine were part of the group, an irreplaceable piece of the cursed puzzle they all created, they will greatly be missed by everyone.

Val could feel everyones sorrow in the air, even his own. It seemed like a crime that wasn't against the law if that makes sense. It was something he knew had happened  but didn't actually believed happened, it was a foreign concept.

Zayne was left unphased.

Blood, seen it. Death, seen it. Sure he was sad, he didn't want them to die- but he was so understanding of the idea of death he was desensitized to it.

He didn't really mourn them at all, he just liked to think back on the memories they made and respected everyone since he knew he was the only one like that.

He low-key wished that everyone would stop being so emotional and accept death as a normal thing that shouldn't be dwelled on it how they did, it can get annoying how everyone got emotional at times and he would just have to sit there and wait.

He would miss Alex and Dine, maybe a bit more than he'd like to admit, they were his friends and he- like everyone else, had lots of plans to hang out with them.

Not much to say about him there.

Same with Devereaux. He wasn't really close with anyone besides Kit and Sydne- everyone else was just an acquaintance that he was forced to be around and interact with from time to time.

He didn't hate anyone, he just never bothered making a bond with them.

Dev only formed small bonds with people and opinions on things because Kit would basically be forcing him.

The only reason he was mad at Isabella and pretended to be devastated from Dine and Alexs death was because Kit would surley be broken from it. He really only was in the group because of Sydne and Kit, he just wanted to support them so allowed himself to deal with everyone else.

Asher was shocked- like mostly everyone else. He was close friends with Val but they were never besties and Val didn't seem to upset about the whole ordeal, neither did Sydne- so he wasn't sure how he was supposed to act.

He just pushed down all the confusion and mournful emotions down to the bottom of his brain.

He was sad, he didn`t want anybody to die and didn't even see the death coming, it was a big surprise to everyone and of course a devastation.

Death was a natural yet very sad thing, he grieved fast and knew how to move on quickly but it would still be a fresh, painful wound for a while.

He didn't know what everyone else was feeling so he didn't know how he was supposed to act. He usually just acted like the majority to avoid the possibility of messing something up by doing or acting how he really wants to. It wasn't healthy and he barley did it with the Pitchfork Kids, but this was a special occasion he was scared of messing everything up in.

So, to avoid everything he just kept his mouth shut and expression numb.

Everyone was honestly struggling to process the death of Dine and Alex.

How did it happen?

Why did it happen?

Alex and Dine had done nothing to Isa, so why did she kill them?

Their deaths seemed so unreal some of them even started to deny its existence in their brains.

They can't be dead, they were just sixteen- they have the entire rest of their lives ahead of them- they can't die.

Or, can they?

Nobody wanted that to be the case. It would mean what they are seeing is real, what they think happened is rea, what their base smells like is real, the tragedy is real.

The tragedy nobody ever expected

Everyone was disturbed and bereaved from the loss of their dear friends. It was a tragedy they all simoultaniously agreed they wouldn't speak of once they get home- let alone want to, none of them would ever want re-live let alone remember this death-stained day.

♀ ♀ ♀

Isabella didn't run away, though she really wanted to. It would make them think she just wanted to get this whole ordeal off her record. It would rub in the idea that she never fully switched sides.

Which she did.

She did switch, or thats what she thinks at least.

That pain was real.

She looked back, one last time before disappearing into the abyss of the store.

She will return, but not for a while.

She took one last breath of the metallic air. The air stained with death and tears that she created, turned around, and left.

She left them all stunned in shock or crying.

She knew what she had to do.

But how she would do it, now that's the real question.

She was walking around aimlessly, examining the bottom layer of material on the random fat poles that probably went well past the ceiling.

She was looking for Jeantetes office.

Jeantetes office was mounted upon a special pole with an invisible staircase that usually only employees could see, though Isabella's been called up there so much she had the path stained in her brain.

All she needed to do was find the right pole to start climbing from.

When Jeantete first had wandered into this place as a young seventeen-year-old girl, she had found her way up to the top of the tower and located what used to be the Sky House, the old sign even sits at the front door.

The Sky House used to be a place of refuge that people would seek when cast out from society.

Pitchfork Kids

Believe it or not, IKEA used to be a place you *wanted* to end up in. But then Jeantete took over.

And we all know how that went.

Isabella didn't know the full story, nobody did, not even Jeantete could recall it all properly, it was so long ago.

IKEA was and still is a sentient being. It apparently was brought to life by a girl named Threeta. The store loved being alive so much that it gave the girl the power to create whatever she wanted.

She created food scattered about, and employees to act as helpful friends and robots that would listen to whatever you needed to say.

Nobody knows for sure what happened after Jeantete arrived. A lot of the employees, who were now given souls and mind control shit, say that Jeantete had messed up the place so much that the store tried to kill itself.

But it's a store.

Stores *don't* do that.

Stores *can't* do that.

Everyone would just, shrug, like it was no big deal what happened.

The most accepted rumor was that Jeantete found her way to the Sky House, which Threeta had created to make as her refuge/office, destroyed it and stole some magical piece of furniture Threeta had made and took all of her power. Then turned Threeta into an employee, and created a brainwash serum and turned all the employees into monsters. Then built a new stairwell and house atop another pillar, to differ her from Threeta.

Nobody really knows why.

And I don't think anybody really cares why.

The store, as it was said, probably sent itself into some deep sleep so that it wouldn't have to witness the hell that Jeantete created.

The store still has more power than her.

It could easily destroy everything inside.

It would need to be woken up though.

Isabella wandered around, her mind loud as it shouted billions upon billions of thoughts in her face.

Eventually she came across a tower with a darker platform and stopped in her tracks.

Here she was.

Right where she was supposed to be.

Isabella raised her arms and felt around for an edge. Once she found one, she grabbed on, pulled herself on and started walking. She looked as if she was ascending into heavens and was a poor dead soul still trapped in her body.

As she walked bloodied footprints marked her path as he soles were ringed out with each new step she took. She looked back and winced at the mess she made.

"Jeantete won't like this..." She muttered as she looked back at Dines head that was dripping more blood onto her soaked sweater.

Isabella sighed angrily and continued upward, there wasn't much she could do anyway. The steps would now be forever tainted with Dine and Alexs memories.

Memories everyone thinks they'll remember.

After about five minutes Isabella made it all the way up the staircase and approached the door to Jeantets office, or *bureau* as they liked to call it.

Waves of memories and nerves flooded into her body. It was like she was there for the first time again.

The first time she was called to the bureau she was shaking. She was a new employee and was basically scared of everything. Now the big bad lady who had tortured her was calling up to her big bad office where she could do big bad things, and Isa was't having it. As time went on though, and she broke more and more rules, she got used to being shoved in front of this door and became numb to it. Isa knew Jeantete needed her, and she was not one to just toss an employee out the window like it was trash. Souled employees were rare here, since before they were mindless embodiments of Siri that

was a little less fun to talk to, Isa knew she was valuable and broke the rules often in protest since she knew Jeantete wouldn't do anything.

But she did.

She felt the pain tingle once again on her skin, she drew a sharp breath and squeezed Dines head tighter- accidentally causing more blood to spew onto her clothes.

She lifted  up her foot to take a step, a think bloody stain rested on the concrete where her foot once was.

She stepped closer.

And knocked on the door.

Within seconds she heard someone walk over and watched as the door swung open.

It was an employee. Jeantetes right hand employee to be exact. He wasn't forced to wear a mesh mask since he would be tucked away in Her Honors bureau all day.

"Holy mother of hell..." He mumbled as he looked Isabella up and down, shocked at the amount of blood and flesh she was covered in, he then gagged once he noticed the psychoticly smiling decapitaited head in her hands.

"Let me in." She said, her eyes pleadeful.

"Employee, who's there?" Jeantete asked calmly.

The employee stayed quiet, shocked and extremely traumatized despite having committed murders far more violent and grotesque. It's just been a while since he's seen blood.

"I- I don't- know how to ask..." He muttered as he started shutting the door, slowly as he still couldn't peel his stare away from Isabella.

"WAIT!" Isabella yelled as she pushed past the employee and showed herself to Jeantete.

"Oh my seigneur..." Jeantete mumbled as she looked Isabella up and down.

"You're staining my floor with that wretched blood all over you. Get out. I don't need you in my presence, a dead goldfish is more

useful than your pathetic ass." She snarked as she turned her head away.

"Please." Isabella started saying. "I know I'm not one of your brainwashed children anymore but please- I need you to help me. Just, please, I'll give up anything you want me to, just please treat this head." Isabella said as she walked over to Jeantete's desk, tracking blood all over her carpet, and placing Dine's head down. "It was all I could salvage. My friends need this, their friends just died- if I don't give them this memoriabelia they might never recover."

Jeantete gave Isabella a hesitant look before finally picking it up and examining it, blood seeping onto her hands as she looked at it.

"Well. It is a very nice head you've managed to get here- not even the little idiot standing next to me could rip a head off this clean. Maybe it was a bad idea of me to let you go." She said as she gestured toward her right hand employee and glared at Isabella.

The employee next to her didn't react to her rude comment.

"Just- please. Just treat it, I want to give it back to them so that they can have some sort of memorial for her so they could rememberher- like how you guys hand bloodied masks on your walls to remember them."

Jeantete laughed.

"You sweet summer child, I don't do it to remember them! You guys are nothing but extra parts. I hang them on there because I don't want them to be littered around, someone might see a mask before their fully in, turn around and leave."

Hanging on every wall were old, blood-stained mesh masks from employees over the years. Employees that have all died and sacrificed their whole lives for some propaganda.

"Though, I can make a deal." Jeantete said as she dragged one of her ugly long fingernails over Isabellas hand and smirked.

Isabella couldn't help but tremble in fear.

PICTORIAL

Toby's eyes shot open at the sound of an ear splitting shrill of a scream coursing through the building.

"God damn is someone giving birth-" Toby muttered, unamused and somehow not worried at all.

Toby rubbed the sleep from his eyes and sat up in the makeshift bed. He rubbed his back and groaned.

"This bed is not giving..." He muttered as he yawned and stretched.

Toby had been living in his little struggle cottage for about three weeks now, and suffering from sleepless nights, halucinations from the dark, and insanity from isolation.

Though Toby wasn't dehydrated and starving, quite the opposite actually. Someone has been leaving food and soda on the trapdoor on the ceiling for him to eat.

Each day Toby would open it up, watch the food fall down onto the floor and then they'd toss it in his stash. Toby has been eating like a regal every mealtime, it was one of the only things keeping them from going fully insane.

"Do you think Dine and Isabella finally stopped fighting? I think Dine and Isabella stopped fighting, what about you Yazora?" Toby said as he turned around and looked around the barley lit abyss.

"Oh right, you were just that one hallucination-"

Toby sighed and sat down on the floor and stared down the wall intensely.

"I think I should stay a bit longer." He smiled and gave himself an imaginary nod.

Toby's mental state was slowly debilitaiting as he had spent about two weeks hidden away in their little home and hasn't seen another living being since Sydne and Kit had broken into their place while being chased by a mob.

"This was a great idea- definitely a great idea." He smiled and gave himself an imaginary pat on the back.

Another shrilling scream rang out through the building, shaking Toby's base.

"WHY DOES IT SOUND LIKE SOMEONE'S GIVING BIRTH?!" Toby shrieked angrily.

The screaming then dwindled to a stop and Toby groaned angrily, tired of literally everything.

"I can't wait to go back home…" He muttered as he fell backward and placed his hands over his face.

Toby looked around and sighed. "I should start putting everything back." He said as he got up and started slowly taking the ceiling apart.

Why not just leave and keep that building there? You may be asking.

And my answer for that my friends.

Good question.

Toby climbed up to the top and started to slowly took off pallets and tables so he could take off the walls.

The really sloppy base relied on friction, gravity and balance or something an architect major can come along and explain for me, one wrong move and the base would come crashing down on poor Toby- leaving him dead on the ground. So comforting.

Each new item Toby got out was another display that would finally be fixed and put back to what it was supposed to be. It would have been smarter to leave them ruined because at least then he could form some sort of mental map of the place, but what do I know?

Toby was so happy to finally be breathing that artificial icy air and seeing something that wasn't total blackness, it was like going outside, but if the outside wasn't real, like a basement dweller who did everything in total darkness finally went up to go talk to their mother who probably forgot they were there.

As Toby worked, he started to feel their insides churn and suddenly felt extremely nauseous. Like there was an aura of

something that wanted to keep them there so bad they would not be bedridden.

"Gosh..." Toby said weakly as he started looking around. Reluctantly he pulled himself up to the ceiling and peered over the edge, and there, on the floor, hacking and coughing bright neon blue slime, was an employee who had their hands pressed up to the walls, her mask on the floor.

"Please... Don't leave..." The employee groaned. Obviously whatever she was doing was to much for her frail little body to do.

"Oh my gosh- are you okay-" Toby started to say before a wave of nausea washed over him.

The employee girl looked up at Toby and began to cry.

"I'm sorry..." She muttered. "Her Honor will finally take away my illness if I'm useful- so- so I need you to act, like I found you..." She muttered as she gagged up a slimy wad of neon blue.

"What are you doing to me..?" Toby groaned as he laid his head down, the energy to keep it up now being gone.

"Making you sick..." The employee murmured.

Toby's vision started to blur as he desperately looked around for a fix.

The employees hands were on the wall.

The wall touched the roof.

Toby was touching the roof.

The employee was touching the wall.

The employee used the last of her strength to push her hands against the wall even more, causing Toby to feel ridden to the roof.

The employee was clearly wasting away, one of her hands slipping off the wall, only to be slapped back up abruptly with an audible grunt from the employee.

This caused a sudden dissapearince and rush of nausea.

Then Toby realized what was happening.

With the little strength he had left, the rest had somehow been stripped away in the short amount of time Toby had been feeling like shit, Toby rolled himself off the roof and onto the hard concrete

floor. Besides a throbbing head and a light body ache, Toby had felt a billion times beter.

After a moment Toby got up and walked over to the employee girl, who was looking at him horrifyingly.

"Please- I need this-" She muttered as she reached out her hand- only for Toby to kick it to the floor.

The girl then slumped down and laid on the floor.

"How long have you been dealing with that?" Toby asked.

"Four days..." The girl mumbled.

"I thought those only killed you if you had it for like a week." Toby said, skeptisism crowding his voice.

"Yeah- but- Her Honor is powerful and amazing... She can make anything possible..." The girl said as she took a shallow gasp for air.

Toby looked down and let their expression grow dark.

"I'm going to do the right thing." Toby said as he walked over to a display, picked up a lamp and walked back over.

"No- please- Her Honor will save me if I prove useful... just let me prove it to Her Honor..." The girl reached out her hand but it pathetically flopped on the floor.

Toby sighed and raised the lamp, ready to bash in the creatures head and put it out of it's misery, when suddenly, another one ran over. This one wasn't dying on the floor and eagerly crouched down and started holding the girl's head in his hands.

"YOUR HONOR, IF I COULD ASK FOR AN AID!" He screamed.

Nothing.

"YOUR DAMN HONOR!" He screamed.

Suddenly, a giant breeze washed over them, knocking Toby to the floor.

"Your Honor if I could apologize." he stuttered, his voice obviously full of dread and fear.

A light breeze glazed over them.

"Your Honor, if I could ask for an aid of hand." The employee said, his arm shrivled back into his body and out grew another one

that represented a rotting log, like the mystery one that would grab things.

"Your Honor if I could ask for an aid of orange." He stammered, the girl hacing up more blue slime.

A light voice was heard in the breeze that came.

"Yes, but not on the girl." It whispered. The veins in the arm started to glow orange as he lifted up, it was drifting away from the dying person in his arms.

"I- I- I- I- I- can't make it- go onto you-" He grunted as he tried to smack it onto her shoulder.

Toby stared at the event, this poor boy trying to save this poor girl but some other force preventing him from doing it.

Toby knelt down and picked up the girl.

"PUT HER DOWN-" He screamed, but before Toby could register what he said, he threw the girl right into his hand. The minimal contact time they had was just enough for the girls illness to start being sucked up by the orange veins. This caused the girl to be stuck into the arm until the veins were all blue.

Once it was over, the girl fell face-first into the cement and groaned.

"You- you saved her!" The employee exclaimed happily as he ran over to hug Toby.

Toby smiled awkwardly and patted him on the back.

"Uhm- yeah, I guess I did." He stammered awkwardly.

"Oh no no..." A whisper spoke through a breeze. "Little child, you didn't save her. You only made me angry. You don't want you're little bossy pooh all angry now do you?" The voice said in a childish mocking voice.

"One- thanks for talking to me like a mature adult! Two- don't ever say that again that made me throw up in my mouth." Toby said

The employees started giving the universal signal to "shut up," and then Toby realized how stupid that was.

"I mean- uh-" Toby stuttered, but it was to late, Toby could feel the evil plans just emerge in the air.

"I should go- bye." Toby said as they got up and ran back towards the base.

Toby had to warn everyone.

Toby could tell something terrible was going to happen.

But of course, Toby would be met with something far worse than he could have ever expected.

♀ ♀ ♀

"Now now, hand over the head and I'll do it all for you." Jeantete instructed as she held out her hand to take Dine's head. Isabella looked up at her, tears streaming down her face as she reluctantly held over the head, her baggy employee T-shirt jostling as she moved.

"Good girl." Jeantete smirked as she put the head in her lap and placed one hand on top of it.

"How do we ask for things again dear?" She said menacingly, treating Isabella like a toddler who didn't know how to handle herself.

"Your Honor, if I could have you treat the wound…" Isabella said softly, tears staining her new shirt.

"Good, good, you still remember how things work around here. Glad to have you back Isabella, you really are a prize." Jeantete said as she head in her lap started to float and spin around in the air, a neon blue aura forming around it.

"Oh look, you're obedience is creating this." Isabella let out a small sob and turned away, unable to look, still doubting what she had just done.

"Awe, is the little ruined goods angry? Here, have a chocolate." Jeantete said as her right hand employee scurried over and handed a chocolate to Isabella.

Isabella sighed and slapped it out of his hands.

"Incorrect Your Honor." She groaned as she turned back around, Dine's head still floating in the air.

Fiction Kids

"Don't pull a stunt like that again, or else I'll have to infect you with Stilla Havet. And we don't want that now do we?" Jeantete explained, absolutely butchering the pronunciation of the foreign name.

Isabella stopped and raised her head up and looked Jeantete in the eye, she had that one expression where it doesn't really look different, but when you really pay attention you can tell their going through crap and need help.

The head eventually stopped spinning and dropped onto the floor, it clinked like porcelain but didn't even get a scratch.

"Why look at this! Is it, a head, that *you* ripped off of someone?! My oh my, you really are a monster! I would be oh so proud if I were you." Jeantete said.

Isabella looked at her, her eyes widened in shock. "I never told you I did that- why would you assume I did?" She questioned, but it was already written all over her face that she was the one who did it.

"Oh please. It's obvious. You're clothes we're soiled in blood- and it was obviously not your own, nobody bleeds that much- no matter what you think!" Jeantete chirped, ignoring Isabella's obvious sensitivity to this topic.

"Can you not mention it?" Isabella murmured angrily, Jeantete smiled wide and began to cackle.

"Oh dear, are you ashamed of what you did? I would be so proud if I were you. You killed a person! You took away the sacred gift of life that they've been fighting for! You did an evil, monstrous deed, how could you be ashamed?" Jeantete giggled exaggerativley. The streams of tears that were flowing down Isabellas face were now larger.

"Oh, employee, be a dear and make her shut up." Jeantete finally said, content with what she managed to do.

The right hand employee walked up to Isabella and pulled up her face, forcing her to look at him. Her eyes were red, watery and full of regret, the employee actually winced when he looked into her eyes.

"Shut up Isabella." He mumbled, just saying what he knew Jeantete wanted to hear.

Isabella drew a sharp breath and nodded before staring back down at her shoes

"Go get your little head." Jeantete instructed as she waved over to it dismissivley.

Isabella went and picked it up, not a word leaving her trembling lip.

"Okay, go give it back to your human friends or whatever stupid things you need to do with it." Isabella turned around and left without saying anything.

"I didn't dismiss you~" Jeantete chimed behind her, but Isabella didn't really care- she just wanted to get it over with, say her last pathetic goodbye with the rest of the group before being sentenced to this eternal hell again.

Sometimes ignorance is bliss.

If she were ignorant against the real world and how things should be, she'd probably be so much happier- and she wouldn't have ever gotten in this mess to begin with. All the other employees seem to cower in fear at the thought of death, they wail and pleadge undying loyalty to Jeantete, they don't have to deal with wanting to change everything to be whats morally good, they think their current lives are amazing.

Isabella sat on the side of the stairwell outside for a little bit, trying to listen in on anything the two inside would be talkin about, she did it all the time when she was and employee before, it's how she got respected, since she somehow always knew what was going on.

"Jeantete, why would you do that to her? I mean I know you need to keep your status but maybe a little sympathy would be good." The right hand employee said.

"Well, she pulled off a humans head, she's the best employee I've ever had- an opportunity to get her back and possibly behave is always worth it."

Isabella perked up and scootched closer to the building, hiding where she always hid before.

"I'm just saying, maybe she would be more obedient if you act more like a coordinator rather than a tyrant." Jeantete slammed her hand on her desk.

"Do you want to go back to the aisles and mingle with the rest of those idiots, or do you want to stay up here, with me, like a royal that everyone loves?"

The employee drew a sharp breath and nodded. "I'd much rather stay here Jeantete." He said.

Jeantete scoffed at him. "Supposé ainsi" She snarled.

Isabella sighed a bit to loudly and laid down on the floor, only to be jolted back up with the right hand employee walking out of the door and beginning to walk around and check the small perimeter of the building.

Somehow, Isabella had slid down the stairwell and was now sitting at the bottom, staring at the cold concrete.

There wasn't much to do now but go back, all the way back to the base to drop off the head and ask to be relocated to somewhere far away from them, it was all she could do.

It was fun.

But now it was goodbye.

A long painful goodbye that would fill Isabella with so much guilt she'd beg on hands and knees to Jeantete to kill her.

Which of course she wouldn't.

Isabella picked up the head and started to walk away slowly, every step felt like another decade where she would regret and reminisce the past.

The base was about a forty-five minute walk, but Isabella was determined to make it be at least few days long. One so that she wouldn't have to get back to work right away, and two to let the group get over the whole death in general and prepare for some sort of service.

Isabella wasn't even close to the base and could already feel their angered gazes and hatred cloaking her.

She will admit, it felt kinda nice to be an employee again. At least now she was what she's programmed to be.

And Dine and Alexs blood stopped rubbing on her skin, which was now damp and semi-stained with blood. Apparently cotton hoodies and fleece tights aren't exactly the most absorbant material to be wearing when committing a murder.

Isabella hoped she wouldn't run into anyone on her way to the base. Anyone like Toby, who was currently standing at the bases door, covering his nose to block out the smell of wet rusted iron.

"The hell is that smell..." he complained as he started walking up the ramp, the closer she got to the actual inside the base the stronger the smell became, and the more red-stained pallets came into sight.

Toby eventually stepped in and gagged loudly at the smell, causing everyone to stop what they were doing and look at him.

"Oh- uhm, hi..." Sydne murmured as she glanced up from the mop in her hands.

Toby looked on, pale with shock, a million questions running through his head, and astonished at how much blood was everywhere.

"I- what- happened..?" Toby asked reluctantly, then heard Kit burst into loud sobs again.

Kit was in the sitting room, crying and being comforted by Val and Devereaux. Asher was helping Sydne clean up the blood in Isabellas room, but most of it was soaked into the compact wood and would not be coming out anytime soon. Zayne was sitting still and emotionlessly on one of the sitting room couches, staring blankly at the floor.

Asher waved over to Toby, signaling him to come over.

"What the hell happened and why is Kit bawling like a baby?" Toby asked, concern in his voice. "Did we find kool-aid? Cherry

ice-cream? Someone had an accident?" Asher shook his head to all the suggestions.

"No." He replied. "So uhm, I don't know how to tell you this." Toby was washed over with a wave of worry and death.

Asher started getting nervous, not sure how to tell Toby what happened.

"So uhm, we lost Dine and Alex..." Sydne said from across the room, cleaning up a pile of ripped up flesh.

"What- did they like leave or like what do you mean?" Toby said angrily, oblivious to what they were trying to say.

"THEY DIED!" Kit screamed from the sitting room as he let out another loud sob.

"Yeah, that..." Sydne explained, her voice shaky, tears about to break out of her eyes.

"Dine and Alex were killed by Isabella earlier today. We found their blood and mangled bodies where in Isa's room... Isa left with Dine's decapitaited head- it was the only thing that was okay, and I uhm... don't- don't think she's coming back..." Sydne explained as gently as she could. Toby and Dine were like best friends, she couldn't imagine how hurt he must have been.

Luckily, you guys don't have to.

Toby was heartbroken.

Dine and Toby were best friends, inseparable, they did everything together. If that group ever split up they would have been the two that somehow managed to survive the mess and would just be those two best friends.

Toby and Dine always made plans to do everything together. They promised eachother that they would both grow old and finish their bucket lists together, they would have kids and make their kids be best friends, they would go bungee jumping and go skydiving. They were gonna go water skiing, climb a mountain, participate in a cooking show despite them failing to work the microwave ¾ times. They were gonna go kayaking, scuba diving, try and ride a whale even though that's probably illegal.

They had so many plans. How could she just abandon them like that.

They promised to always be there when the other died. Toby was supposed to be there. Right next to her.

Toby.

Toby was supposed to be there. Supporting her. And yet he had failed her. Toby could have stopped it, he could have- he had the chance to, but he wasn't there.

He wasn't there when he should have.

Toby was shocked, he couldn't even begin to comprehend what happened. It was a tragedy.

A tragedy that he could have never been prepared for.

Toby cried silent tears and stared at his shoes in shock. They just sat and tried oh so desperately to understand what could of happened and why.

"I'm really sorry Toby. if we woke up earlier we could have tried to do something- but they didn't scream. We don't know if Isabella had some sort of power that convinced them to go into her room, or if they committed suicide and went in willingly." Sydne quickly followed, but Toby had already collapsed to the ground and started crying silent tears.

"No..." They whispered. "No, no, no, how- why- I was supposed to be there- I always promised Dine I'd be there in her final moment- I'm- so sorry- I-" Toby tried talking through their tears, the sentence was janky and stuttered out.

"We're so sorry Toby, this is really hard for all of us, thinks are going to be really different for a while, we're so sorry." Asher hesitaited as he went to place a comforting hand on Toby's shoulder, only for them to slap his hand away.

"I just, please leave me alone..." Toby cried as they got up and walked into their room.

Sydne and Asher gave eachother a defeated look and returned back to their depressing work of cleaning up the dead remains of their friends.

Sydne was devistaited by what happened, but knew she couldn't cry or show it, that's why she took the job of cleaning the mess. Sydne was used to being the one vented to so she was used to needing to be the one seemingly "unbothered" by the situation so that everyone else felt comfortable to let their feelings out on her. Sydne wanted to cry just as much as everyone else, she was struggling to wrap her head around the whole idea that Dine and Alex were gone forever just as much as everyone else, but if she was bothered nobody would come talk to her, which would be like taking away a way of letting your feelings out and moving on.

Asher was bothered as well, he missed them both terribly, but he was good at keeping his emotions inside and to himself. Honestly he got over the grieving process faster that way, if he didn't acknowledge the feelings all at once and confronted them little by little it would be much more manageable and he would get over it quicker.

Everyone would have to get over it eventually, they would still miss them both dearly, but eventually it would be more of a light miss, like how someone would miss an old project they had lost. They enjoyed their time with them and remembered them in a more happy, memorial like way over than a depressed way.

Devereaux was never to close with Alex or Dine, he knew them, called them his friends, but he wasn't *that* shaken up by the whole situation. He still missed them, sure and he sure wished they we're still alive, but he was more focused on making sure everyone else was okay. If it was someone like Sydne or Kit he would definitely be gone and would be to busy sobbing to help anyone else, luckily that wasn't the case and he was ready to step up and help anyone who needed it.

Val was good friends with them both and was just as shaken up as the rest, but he grieved and worked through his emotions by helping everyone else around him work through theres. He never liked confronting himself and would rather confront something similar or something that resembled himself. He worked through his emotions by

working through other peoples similar emotions. Val knew that by helping everyone else he would also be helping himself.

And Zayne, to put it as kindly as possible, didn't really care. He wasn't close with either of them and saw death as something natural that was to be expected by all. He found it very childish to get all emotional about death, it was just death after all. Nobody cries or have breakdowns over the endings of books, movies, magazines or anything like that, why should you get all upset about an ending of a life? It was their time to die anyway. Everyone will die either way, no point in getting upset about it. He would miss them around but it would be more of a "whelp my buddy left after the play date, awe shucks," kind of thing.

Everyone continued on in silence. Kit silently sobbing with Val and Devereaux, Zayne respecting everyone else by remaining quiet, and Sydne and Asher silently cleaning up the bloody mess left in Isabellas room.

Silence.

Pure.

Shouting.

Silence.

It was very awkward and uncomfortable in that base. Everyone upset, angry and grieving over Dine and Alexs sudden deaths no one was ready to face the questions that then had to be answerd because of it.

What do we do with their stuff?

What do we do when we get home?

What do we do with Isabellas room?

Do we keep the remains to bury?

What do we do with their stuff back home?

Those questions needed fast answers, but sadly nobody was ready to approach them yet.

As Sydne and Asher finished cleaning the bloody messes, Sydne finally broke the silence.

Brief for Kids

"I just need a simple yes or no, are we keeping Isabellas room up?" She asked.

A jumbled mix of yes' and no's emerged from the house, impossible to tell which one won.

Kit, Toby, and Devereaux all said no, while Val, Asher and Zayne all said yes.

Controversy time~

"Why would you say yes?! She literally killed two people, who knows if she won't kill anyone again?! Devereaux protested.

"I know I know, I want to hear her side of how it happened first, thats why I want her to come back, to stay would depend on what happened originally." Val explained.

"No, we can't have her interacting with anyone again- what if she kills someone else? We can't trust her anymore." Devereaux argued.

"Yeah but we all know she has an issue, do we not? She didn't get out and actively seek them out to kill, she has to deal with the mind control, theres no damage to anything else, meaning that Dine and Alex had to have went in and if that was the case there's no way that she could overpower it then." Val defended

"Are you saying that Alex and Dine willingly went in there and killed themselves?! No fucking way!" Kit screamed, going from sad to angry within minutes.

"I'm not saying that is what happened, but I think Isabella would have been a bit to violent to open and walk out of that door and to kill them both without waking anybody up!"

"I mean, Val has a point." Asher chimed in, a death stare was shot back at Asher by Kit and Toby.

"Sorry, sorry." He muttered as he went back to trying to use his hoodie soaked in water to scrub out the blood stains in the wood.

"I don't care really." Zayne said once he noticed a few people started looking at him, anticipating a response.

"Isabellas dangerous, we should leave her to suffer to Jeantete!" Toby screamed.

"Woah woah, she did kill them yes but like- Jeantete is terrible, we shouldn't wish that kind of stuff upon people." Zayne said, Toby stared him down, watching him recoil in fear.

"Well?" Val said as he turned around and looked at Sydne. "Whats it gonna be?" He asked.

Sydne stopped and thought for a second.

"I don't know." She responded finally. "I mean, I understand why we don't want her back since she did such a bad, violent thing to our friends, but Val's right- she does have an issue. It would only be right to get her side of the story. I'll make my decision if she ever comes back and tries to apologize." Sydne explained.

"She'll lie! She'll say Jeantete was mind controlling her or something stupid!" Kit hollered.

"She *was* being mind controlled by her." Asher said matter-of-factly.

Everyone started fighting and bickering besides Sydne and Zayne, who both just wanted them to all shut up and get over themselves.

"I'm sorry but I don't want the rest of us here to die!" Devereaux shouted as he slumped back and crossed his arms.

"And I don't want to punish someone for something they have no control over!" Val hollered back.

The room was erupted with shouting, noise, and threatening gestures. They all honestly just wanted to watch eachother fall and prove that their idea is correct and the others ideas aren't.

"Can you all shut up? No amount of bickering is going to make this situation better. If she comes back we're going to listen to her and we're going to decide then if we'll let her back." Sydne said coldly. "That's final."

"Since when did you decide for everyone?!" Devereaux shrieked angrily.

"Since now." Sydne said as she sighed and walked into her room and Asher decided to sit down with the rest of them.

"We're still not gonna listen to her right?" Toby confirmed as they also went to sit down, an eruption of yes's and no's emerged and the bickering started over.

"Look." Zayne said, everyones attention pulling away from the argument and back to him.

"Do you think those two wanted this? Do you think those two would want us to refuse an apology from someone or try to erase Isa from our lives? No, Val's probably right anyway." He preached.

Zayne sat there and listened to the few seconds of silence, expecting it to be like he just presented a big revelation and now everyone loved him and they were all going to bow down and say something like "Preach oh wise one," and stop bickering and he would have created everlasting peace among the group.

Sadly.

That did not happen.

"Zayne shut your ass up." Toby sneered as they re-initaited the argument.

At least he tried.

"I'M NOT THE ONE PUTTING EVERYBODYS LIVES IN JEAPRODY!" Toby shouted at Asher.

"WELL I'M NOT THE ONE WHO'S REFUSING TO HEAR EVERY SIDE OF THE STORY!" Asher shouted back.

"BOTH OF YOU ARE IN THE WRONG JUST SHUT UP!" Zayne shouted, joining the abundance of noise.

Sydne groaned and shoved her face into her pillow, irritated with all the noise.

Sydne honestly didn't really care what they came to the conclusion of, in the heat of the moment she knows they'd be to shocked and curious to turn Isa down so in the end she will get her moment to explain, even if it's very short.

Sydne listened to the yelling in the sitting room and sighed.

They were sad.

Angry.

Screaming.

Not much you can do there.

Sydne slowly closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

♀ ♀ ♀

God knows how long Sydne had been sleeping. When she woke up the screaming had dissolved and the only light in her room was coming from the sitting room.

Sydne got up and walked outside, eager to figure out what she missed while she was asleep.

It felt like she had been sleeping for billions of years, but if we're being honest it was about two days or so. For some reason she had been very tired and just needed to get a good, long sleep.

When she walked out into the sitting room the noticed all of the lamps they had were on and it was an absolute mess, she was hoping to not see any more blood.

On the couch was Kit and Devereaux sleeping together, Kit's arm dangling off the edge and brushing the floor.

Zayne was staring at everything intensely and then glanced up at Sydne.

"Oh, hi." He said.

Sydne yawned and waved. "Is everybody okay-?" She asked, Zayne shrugged.

"Well Val fell asleep 12 hours ago, and Dev was the first to fall asleep 36 hours ago." He responded.

Sydne rubbed her eyes.

"Have we all been asleep for multiple days?" She muttered. Zayne nodded.

Sydne sighed, unhappy with herself and everyone else. They should be doing something productive and trying to get out.

Sydne pushed Asher's legs aside to make room on the couch for herself, then took his legs and placed them back in her lap.

"What are we gonna do when everyone wakes up. We can't sleep our way back home wether we like it or not." Sydne said.

Fiction Kids

Zayne sighed. "Probably start bickering and being useless until we magically find something that leads us back home." He shrugged.

"Bull, staying here killed Alex and Dine, who knows who else will die if we stay. We need to actually start doing something." Sydne complained as she started tapping her nails on Ashers leg, somehow not waking him up.

"Well it's where we're at right now." Sydne groaned and slumped back in the couch.

After a minute or two Kit woke up, Devereaux still snuggled up with him.

"The hell... Is Alex here..?" Kit murmered as he rubbed his eyes. Zydne and Sayne glanced at eachother worridly.

"Oh wait..." Kit followed.

His small smile fell down to a frown as he lied back down and started staring at the ceiling.

"How long ago was it?" Kit asked without making eyecontact with anybody.

"It's been about two days since you've fallen asleep." Zayne responded, Kit smiled weakly.

"I had a nice dream." He said, dismissing Zayne's response.

"Tell me about it." Sydne said.

"Well, it was me and Alex. We were in a cottonwood forest and we were having a picnic. The food was all nightmare fuel and disgusting, but for some reason Alex really liked it. And we ate the food and we talked." Kit started explaining. Sydne and Zayne were nodding in response.

"And then when the food was gone Alex told me that he was gonna go away and I'd never see him again- he then told me that he's not mad at me, asked me to miss him, and then he blew away." Sydne smiled and placed her hand on Kits.

"Thats sweet." Sydne said, smiling.

Kit smiled back and nodded.

"Whelp what are we doing?" He asked, immediately trying to pull his mind away from the upsetting thought.

"That's a good question." Sydne said. "We don't know."

"Syd thinks we should start trying to find a way to leave, but I highly doubt anyone will have the motivation to actually go out and try to find something." Zayne explained.

Kit thought to himself before bursting out laughing. "Give us the right reason and we'll do anything you say."

They all waited for someone to angrily wake up to Kits laughs, but somehow nobody did.

"Well honestly I'd do anything that gets us back home. I don't want the rest of us to die." Kit said as he tried to push Dev off of him, but failed.

"I am in so much pain right now how the hell did I fall asleep like this-" Kit complained. Zayne laughed and went to help him pull Devereaux off.

"Help- I'm gonna need so much duct tape after this, everything hurts..." Kit complained as he tried pushing Dev off while Zayne tried pulling him off.

Duct tape.

Tape.

The tapes.

Ever since they watched the tape on Isabella they haven't found any and have been pretty laid off of them for a while, but if theres one thing that can shift the attention from that pointless argument to something productive, it's these tapes.

Sydne dashed out of the room and ran towards what used to be Alex's room.

Alex insisted on keeping the tapes hidden under his bed, he hated those things more than he hated screaming toddlers.

As Sydne approached his room she felt a wave of remorse and melancholy.

Alex was dead.

And seeing his belongings so soon was almost just to much for her to handle.

Seeing his messy bed and all his other nick-knacks made it seem like he was just out for an errand and would be back very, very soon. But that wasn't the case and remembering that was the most painful part of all.

Sydne slowly went inside and peeked down under his bed. It felt like a sin to be tampering with his stuff, it fels like she was committing a terrible crime just by *thinking* about touching everything he had. It was his stuff.

But he's not here anymore.

Painful reminder.

Sydne eventually pushed back the other things and pulled out the tapes.

Now she felt even worse.

Not only was she touching what Alex had hidden, what he decided to put there, she was also touching the things Dine had found.

Alex hid them.

Dine found them.

Good lord whats wrong.

Sydne wanted to cry and put them all away. She shouldn't be handling these, they belong to the dead people that hid and found them.

But they did technically belong to everyone else, even when they were there.

Maybe the reminders of them being gone is a bit to much.

Sydne still collected up all of the two tapes and brought them out to the sitting room.

"Tapes!" She cheered. "If these tapes supposedly hold all the information about this place we can surly find a way out with them!"

Kit and Zayne looked at eachother, Zayne now holding Devereaux by shoulders.

"You have a point, but that could tape years for us to find the right one, this place probably has millions." Zayne said.

Psychotic Kids

"Yeah but at least we're making a path to getting out. Plut we'll all need something to keep us busy for a while, nobody wants to fall into a depression in IKEA of all places." Sydne said.

Kit nodded reluctantly. "She's right, I'm gonna go out and look." He said

"Wait- like- now? I mean, you just woke up- shouldn't someone else also be sent out with you?" Zayne said, but it was to late. Kit was set on going out and looking for tapes, and thats just what he'll do.

Kit got up and stretched.

"If any of you wanna come, I'll be waiting." He said as he started walking toward the doorway.

Zayne sighed and got up.

"I'll go with him, you wanna come?" He asked.

Sydne shook her head and pointed to Asher's legs that were spread over her lap.

"Oh I see." Zayne chuckled, Sydne's cheeks flushed.

Zayne waved and left.

Kit took in a breath of the cold, ventilaited air and started walking around and actually searching displays for tapes.

It may have half been an excuse to get away from everybody, but he also genuinely wanted to look for tapes, seemed like something fun to take his mind off Alex.

It was always so funny how Alex would try and hide the tapes from Dine, believing whole heartedly it would kill her, sadly Isabella wasn't a tape so he'd probably be upset to know his predictions were wrong.

He always told Kit about where he had hid the tapes after he snatched them from Dine and only really wanted Kit to know, though when you live in a base with a bunch of other people with pallets for walls everything that ever happens or is said is heard by everyone.

Fiction Kids

Kits eyes started to well with tears as he started remembering all the times Alex had shown him where he was keeping the tapes.

If only this happened on earth.

If it was on Earth they wouldn't be forced into work literal hours after they died.

They could get justice.

But because of where they were they were all forced into work, if they were back home they could grieve all they wanted, but no.

Honestly Kit wasn't to mad about it. Getting away from the stuffy base and actually doing something to distract himself was honestly a very nice change. Kit liked to distract himself when he was upset, it wasn't healthy but it worked in the short-term.

Though it was getting hard for him to keep going on.

After about twenty minuets Kit decided to sit down, take a little rest to really process everything before moving on.

"There you are!" Zayne said as he ran over to Kit. "I've been looking for you for like, twenty minutes, how the hell did you get so far in such a little amount of time?" Kit laughed and patted next to him, signaling for Zayne to sit down next to him.

Zayne reluctantly sat down next to Kit and rested his head on the dresser behind him.

"Sorry about Alex." He said.

Kit smiled back a wave of tears.

"It's not your fault. I'll get over it one day." He said as he looked down at the ground.

Zayne patted Kit on the shoulder awkwardly, unsure of how to respond. He didn't care all that much, but he didn't really want the one who just had a mental breakdown over it to know that.

"I know you don't care all that much." Kit sighed as he pushed Zaynes hands away.

Zayne gave a nervous smile and put hisi hand in his hoodie pocke.

"How could you tell?" He asked.

"It's obvious," Kit said matter-of-factly.

PRISM AUDIO

Zayne chuckled and go up once he noticed that Kit wasn't all that upset or angry about the whole ordeal anymore, despite it only being a few days since it happened.

"Whelp, let's get back to searching," Kit said as he got up and clapped his hands together.

Zayne followed and they started to walk around and search displays together.

They checked under beds, checked in drawers, basically smashed every TV in sight, and turned over every piece of carpet they could find, yet somehow nothing was there.

"How did Dine find three of these?! It's like they don't even exist." Zayne sighed as he smashed a TV with his shoe. The thi plastic shattered and fell to the floor.

Kit shrugged as he pulled out a drawer and dumped the contents out.

"How the hell did she do it?" Kit mumbled

Zayne flung open a closet door and found a tape hanging out of a coat pocket.

"Finally!" He marveled as he held it up in the air.

Kit walked over and smiled widely at it, he jumped up and snatched it out of Zaynes hands.

"Haha! We're so poggers." He said as he shoved it in his hoodie pocket.

"If we found that one surly we can find more!" Kit called out as he ran off to search more displays. Zayne followed behind.

The two ran, now just enjoying the fun of running instead of actually doing something. They ignored most displays and just wanted to chase eachother down.

Kit and Zayne laughed manically, their loud thudding footsteps resonating throughout the store, small pieces of furniture lightly shaked as they passed by.

Kit and Zayne would have both said they were happy in that moment.

Pitchfork Kids

Zayne probably was, but deep down Kit was just trying to forget the screaming pain he felt inside.

Love is a very dangerous and scary game.

Yet almost everybody you know plays it.

Half of them don't even know their playing it.

As Kit went on he ran into something, or someone.

"Sorry- wait..." Kit said as he looked down, his face went pale with fear.

Below him was a small employee.

"Oh my god..." Kit muttered as he dropped down to the employees level.

"Hey little buddy." Kit said in a sweet voice. The employee angled his head down and then back up again. The employee then pulled the tape out of Kit's pocket, causing Kit to scream and fight him for it.

"GIVE IT BACK!" Kit shouted angrily as he tried pulling the tape out of his hands, but somehow the employee the size of an average eight-year-old was stronger and kept a strong grip on the fragile piece of plastic.

Zayne looked over and saw Kit struggling with the employee, the tape slowly slitting from his hands.

Zayne dashed over, went behind Kit and placed his hands above Kits on the tape, attempting to help him pull it away from the employee.

For some sad reason two late-teenage boys could not pull a small plastic VHS tape out of the hands of an eight-year old.

Truly pathetic.

IN the end the employee on the battle and managed to run off.

"GET BACK HERE!" Kit screamed as the employee scurried away.

Without saying another word Kit dashed away, chasing the employee through the concrete halls.

As the employe ran he kept screeching. He sounded like a child who didn't get the toy they asked for.

Brick Kids

Zayne lazily chased after Kit who was more determined to catch this thing than a stereotypical Virgo.

Eventually the employee slowed down a little, all the running finally catching up to his low stamina.

Kit was starting to run out of stamina to, but continuing to push himself so that he could catch up with the thing.

Zayne was not walking slowly, unamused and frankly uncaring about everything. He just wanted to do something that wasn't watch people sleep.

The three ran/jogged for about seventeen minuets, until the employee finally stopped running to catch his breath.

Kit smirked with what little energy he had left and lunged toward the employee.

"I GOT YOU NOW!" He shouted.

Kit had managed to grab the employees shoulder and push him into a wall and then to the floor.

Kit was not on top of the employee, staring him down, and trying to pull the tape out of his hands.

The employee screeched again and punched Kit in the nose. Kit cried out in pain and fell oneo the employee, his body weight keeping him from getting up.

"Good lord stop trying to make out with that thing and take the tape." Zayne sighed as he bent oer and plucked the tape out of the employees hands.

The employee screeched even louder, causing Kit to jolt up and cover his ears from the noise.

The moment the employee could he jumped up and dashed away.

"Aesthetic." Kit said after a few moments of silence.

Kit and Zayne looked around, their bodies started to tremble.

"So uhm, quick question, where are we?" Zayne asked, his voice high pitched and exaggerated.

"Good- good question..." Kit answered back.

The two of them were, and say it with me folks!

Prism Ink

Lost.

"Okay- well does anything look familiar?" Kit questioned as he looked at Zayne, the look in his eyes begging that he knew at least something.

Zayne shrugged.

"We're L.O.S.T." He spelled out.

Kit groaned and pushed his head into his hands angrily.

"If we follow that employee we might find an information tower or something though." Zayne suggested as he placed a hand on Kits shoulder, attempting to comfort him.

"Good lord Zayne employees can't fix anything!" Kit snapped. "I mean- that probably won't happen and this whole thing is a pointless waste of our lives."

Kit still had tension with the idea of employees being good.

Zayne shrugged and started walking the way the employee had scurried.

"Are we really doing this?" Kit muttered as he started walking to.

Zayne nodded without looking back.

The displays looked the same as all the others, there were only about 25 different displays they've ever seen and they just repeated throughout the store, but shese ones weren't destroyed or had been tampered with.

The two trotted along, the lights glistening above them and the cold air causing them to shiver ever so slightly. The farther they walked the more smelly the place became, like they were lingering into some weird part of the store nobody really bothered to clean

The smell of metal and rot grew larger, intriguing them to explore further, causing them to now ignore all the displays around them in favor of exploration.

The metal smelled oddly familiar.

Kit stopped in his tracks.

"I- I think we should turn back..." he said, shaking.

Zayne looked at him confusedly before realizing why.

Metal.

BRICKFORK KIDS

And.

Rot.

"Okay." he said.

Kit looked up at him, genuinely surprised with what Zayne said.

"What-" Kit asked as he started backing away from everything.

"I understand why you don't wanna go on, who says you have to? We can go look for an information tower or something that actually works and use that for help." Zayne said.

The smell reminded Kit of the base.

The base that still smelled like Alex and Dine's bodies after what happened.

You probably think this whole thing was going to fast, and honestly it was.

The situation they were in, from day one, called for consistent productivity.

And they did almost nothing.

They could be out by now.

But they were to busy living in the moment to actually do something.

Not that theres anything wrong with living in the moment, it's just.

They all knew if they worked harder to find a way out Alex and Dine would still be alive. And because of that notion everyone sort of collectively decided they couldn't wait around any longer, they lost two people and they're refusing to loose the rest.

That was good, working hard to get out of the place is a good thing- I'm not saying that they should just sit and hide around in their base like they were doing before, but they rushed to the point to fast.

Kit and Toby needed to grieve, but they didn't have time to. Now knowing full well the danger their in, their all hooked on leaving, no room to sit down and actually work through emotions.

Maybe you could find time for that if you want to be sleep deprived and rendered useless in the morning.

They all knew deep inside the moment they were home they'd all spend a few quiet days mourning Alex and Dines death, it was the right thing to do, and they all knew that they would want them to get out of there first before anything.

The one question that rested among them was why.

Val was right, Isabella never left the room, if she did the whole base would have been covered head to toe in blood and guts and ripped up pieces of human flesh, and everyone surely would have wokened up if she started killing someone in their sleep.

If nobody work up or heard everything, they must have made an effort to at the very least not scream.

But it couldn't have been a suicide.

One, they had litterally no reason to, and two, if it was Alex wouldn't have gotten so emotional last night.

But, sadly, they'd never know the whole story, and thats for the best.

"Kit?" Zayne asked.

Kit blinked out of the trance he was in and broke free from his thoughts

"Sorry." Kit said as he turned to the right and started walking away.

Zayne stepped to follow him but looked down the  hall they were skipping before.

In the distance, he could see a small pile of something.

He shrugged and went along with Kit.

♀ ♀ ♀

"NO- NO- THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING!" Isabella screeched as she tried crawling away from a hoard of Employees.

"Weren't you turned back into a human or something stupid like that?" One of the employees giggled menacingly.

"Oh my gosh guys, little Failyabella has a little friend~" Another one of the employees taunted.

Pitchfork Kids

Before Isabella met the Pitchfork Kids she was bullied by your typical group of mean girls since she was always getting in trouble for breaking the rules.

They never told Isa their names and nobody ever asked.

Isa never really cared for them, they were just a collection of teens who probably screwed the football team and bribed teachers to pass Sophmore year, but for some reason they were a lot more threatening to her than before.

She couldn't put her finger on it, but she could tell that they were a lot different know, it was scary.

"Whats wrong Failyabella? Human caught your tongue?" One of the girls laughed as she stuck her hand in Isa's mouth and pulled her tongue out, blood started to spew out from the bottom of her mouth where her tongue used to be, she screamed in pain.

Her mouth started to fill with steel-flavoured-blood. She was forced to choke down mouthfuls of blood. She ws coughing without a proper way to breathe, blood flowing into her lungs.

The girls above her laughed and pointed as blood started to spill out of her mouth and onto the ground and her clothes.

It was boiling hot, melting holes through her pants and degrading her skin and teeth.

Isabella screamed in pain but started to suffocate to the blood filling her mouth.

"Look at Failyabella! She can't even talk! She can't even breathe! She can't even taste her own blood!" The girls all chanted.

They eventually shoved their hands in their own mouths and ripped out their tongues.

Isabella looked on in horror as she suffocaited and watched as they melted into the floor and their eyes rolled to the back of their heads.

Their teeth all fell out and blood flowed out of their mouths like a water fall.

Their blood instead pooled under Isabella, she was slowly sinking down into it, like quicksand but if it was a liquid and smelled like wet iron.

"I can't breathe..." Isabella thought.

"I can't breathe."

"I can't breathe."

"I can't breathe."

"I'm going to-"

Isabella joled up with a gasp.

Isabella watched as the metal pipe that was in her mouth and gradually getting shoved down her throat fell to the floor and made a loud clank.

It was just a dream.

Isabella looked around and was shocked to find that she in fact wasn't getting her tongue ripped out and choking on her own blood.

Isabella got up and shook the chills off her spine.

She couldn't believe what her brain had just conjoured up.

She was in complete denial that could have even imagined that happening, yet she did.

Odd.

Just to check Isabella put her disgusting hand in her mouth and felt around for her tongue and teeth, as she expected, they were all there and well.

Isabella stared at the floor ro process what her brain had just conjured up.

Eventually she decided to get back up and keep going.

She had decided to go back to sleep not to long ago so that she could rest up and get ready for another purposely long journey to returning this head to the Pitchfork Kids.

Did she want to face them again while holding their friends decapitaited head?

No.

Did she have to?

Pitchfork Kids

Yes.

Isabella picked up the head and continued to walk.

One thing stuck to her mind.

"It's all my fault."

Isabella knew she was the one that made Dine and Alex die, if she wasn't there she wouldn't be doing this, she knew this whole thing was all her fault- and yet she almost didn't feel sorry for them.

It was weird.

She felt bad that *she* killed them.

But she didn't feel bad they were dead.

That realization just made her hate herself even more.

She walked through the halls as she battled her own head, getting ever so closer to that wretched base.

But always wanting to get farther away.

## Chapter 15

Asher groaned as he rubbed his eyes and sat up in the couch.

"Ow..." He complained as he rubbed his back.

"Morning sleepy head." Sydne said as she pushed Asher's legs off her lap, forcing him to fall on the ground.

"You're so kind." he muttered as he got up, almost falling onto Sydne and using her shoulders as support.

"You're acting drunk." She said.

Asher smiled like an idiot.

"I just took a quick nap of couse I am."

"You slept for two days."

"Oh-"

Asher sat down next to Sydne and tried to grab her hand, but she pulled her hand away.

"We shouldn't. After what Kit just lost it's just wrong." She muttered.

Brook Kids

Asher was heartbroken but understood what and why this was happening.

"Sorry." He said.

"It's fine."

The two of them sat in silence for a bit.

"Has anyone else woken up?"

"Kit and Zayne, they went to go look for tapes to distract themselves from everything."

"Ah, good for them."

"Yeah."

"Wanna talk about it?"

Sydne sighed.

"No, I'm the one who you talk to. You talk about it. Whats up with you?"

Asher shrugged.

"I don't know, I just feel really bad. I just wish they hadn't have died. I thought nobody was ever going to die, you know? I didn't expect something like this to happen. I thought we were going to get away and live some teenage-dirtbag-dream until we all died." Asher sighed as he brought his knees to his chest.

Sydne opened her mouth to say something but cut herself off.

"I understand. I don't think any of us expected this. It's a true tragedy." Sydne guessed, attempting to comfort Asher. She placed a hand on his shoulder. He couldn't help but blush.

"Can you believe it's been three days since everything happened?" Sydne marveled as she reluctantly laid down and placed her head in Asher's lap.

"I guess I can." He sighed.

Tears started to form in their eyes.

Asher started to cry silently as he let Sydne let out loud sobs into his thigh.

Asher stroked Sydne's back comfortingly as she cried.

They both cried.

Black Kids

They hated every bit of what happened and were only now allowing themselves to process it.

Asher started to let out loud sobs as well, and the both of them just held eachother and cried.

Asher continued to stroke Sydne's back as Sydne wrapped her arms around his waist.

They both knew they shouldn't be so intimate like this.

But they needed comfort while they cried.

It's what they craved.

"I miss them... I want them to come back..." Sydne weeped, her voice muffled from Ashers thigh.

"I know, I miss them to, I wish they would come back to..." Asher answered in response.

"You know whats funny? I always thought that they would be the ones to take us back you know? They bicker so much I thought they would have to work together and we'd all go home because of them..." Asher explained as he laughed psychoticly.

Sydne sniffles and laughed along with him.

"I always thought that they would be here when we left. Not be the main way out per-se but at least be here." Sydne smiled. For some reason, Asher being there just made her feel safe and made her memories with Alex and Dine and her plans with them seem far more happier and wholesome over morbid and depressing.

Though, despite everyones rushed grieving and the forever lingering trauma from all they blood they now have engraved in their memories, they were all slowly breaking through.

By default, these kids were eager to move on and grieved quickly. They would usually spend maybe four to five days grieving and then would once again see the bright side of life again.

Deep down they all expected death and knew death was a natural process that eventually they'll all have to deal with sooner or later, but it would still always hurt when someone had to leave.

After a few minutes Val started to wake up, startling Sydne and Asher away from each other.

"How long has it been..." He moaned as he sheepishly sat up.

"Two days." Sydne replied confidently.

Val blinked and looked around the room, where everyone was either sleeping in a position that would surly make their back feel broken when they woke up, or were awkwardly sitting amongst the mess.

"You two look comfortable." Val yawned and looked at them.

Asher was tying his hoodie around his waist to hide the tear-stains on his jeans and Sydne was trying to slowly move Tobys legs away from her.

"I feel so much better after that sleep." Val marveled as he got up and stretched. "It's like I'm not super depressed anymore!"

Sydne shrugged. "Sleep is good for that."

"Who else woke up?" Val asked as he started chugging a soda from the food tub.

"Zayne and Kit, but they left to look for tapes." Asher replied confidently.

"Oh. Should I go out and help them?" Val asked as he started towards the door.

"Nah, their long gone now. I heard them running over to the right over there earlier- so If you go looking for them you'd get lost." Sydne explained.

"Fair." Val responded as he spun around and sat back down awkwardly between next to Devereaux.

"Wait why would Kit go? I thought he would wanna stay and mourn Alex or something." Val asked as he glanced over at Asher suspiciously.

"I guess he wanted to do something to keep the whole thing off his mind." Sydne shrugged

"Makes sense." Val replied. "Say- do you two think the tapes can help us get out?" He pondered.

Sydne plastered on a fake smile.

"Yes! Surely a tape will over something similar to how to escape this place in case an employee ever needed to do so. Since their real

people being mind controlled both with some force and propaganda, it wouldn't be impossible these employees are sent out into the real world to go lure in other people- when we came in the parking lot was busy, meaning something drew people here." Sydne explained as she started  babbling on about Valries about how to escape.

"I believe the way out would be hidden in either some of these displays or wherever Jeantete has decided to take refuge. Unlike the other employees she probably has a place she waits and hangs out for stuff to happen in her favor, and with her being the leader in all she surley would be the most important- and would deffinetly be given her own personal way out in case she ever needed to do some weird work." She finished.

"Okay, so what you're telling me is that if we find some French dictators house we could find a way home?" Devereaux scoffed, though still curious about the whole ordeal.

"YES!" Sydne cheered. "All we need to do is form a plan and possibly look at some tapes to get a rough idea of what we're dealing with."

Val shrugged.

"Sounds possible, but also really stupid." He said.

"It is also very possible I'm completely wrong and we're just stuck here. Forever." Sydne sighed pessimisticly.

"I think that we'll find out way into a magical world with cool people and we'll get magic powers and fight evil or something and we'll go to a special school and we'll turn out to be the chosen ones with the strongest powers ever!" Val shouted jokingly.

"Honestly after what I've seen I wouldn't be surprised if we found out way into a magical world, but being the chosen ones with the strongest powers of all? No chance." Asher giggled.

"Honestly we'd probably cause something terrible to happen and be hated by all of society." Sydne said matter-of-factly. "Then again, I don't think we're in a book."

"Stop giving her ideas guys, she might start brainrotting on us!" Devereaux stressed as he pretended to shiver.

"Remember the internet?" Asher asked, changing the subject.

"Yeah, who could forget?" Val replied.

"I wonder how much stuff we're missing out on back home- I mean, Sydne's cuphead comics on Tumblr are probably well past revealing their deep dark lore secrets, and all of the You Tubers we like are probably unboxing their diamond youtube plaques as we speak- and all of the online stores are probably fresh out of whatever we were planning to buy." Asher explained.

Sydne, Dev and Val thought for a moment and realized he could be right.

"I mean- we've been here for about a year at most, not multiple years- so nothing could have changed to much." Sydne said.

"Yeah but so much has probably changed, we'll be pumped full of content once we're back home." Asher smiled.

"You mean back at the home we got evicted from?" Dev asked sarcastically.

Oh right.

They have no home!

They came looking for a job, got sucked into some hellish labrynth, and getting out means back to being homeless- at least here they could build themselves a place to live.

"Maybe going home isn't such a good idea." Asher muttered.

"And stay in a death trap? Hell no." Devereaux snarled.

"We'll figure something out- swear." Val shrugged.

The four of them sat around in silence. Pure. Utter. Silence. Nobody really knew what to do, everything had just been boring, long, drawn out days, what they needed now was Kit and Zayne to come back with whatever they manage to find.

Speaking of Kit and Zayne, they were alive to say the least- to what extent, I'm not so sure.

"Oh my god..." Zayne marveled as he saw magical, floating, bloody footprints all around the edge of this random pissar in the middle of the store.

"That's it. Magic is real. Prove me wrong." Kit said as he crossed his arms.

"Kit the people here turn into walking murder machines at night and you only now figured that out?!" Zayne rolled his eyes. Kit shrugged.

"Where do they even lead to-" Kit asked as he ran towards it, only for an invisible and hard object to hit him in the head as he walked on.

"Ow!" Kit cried out as he stumbled backwards.

"Well, somethings there- we just can't see it." Zayne observed as he waved is arm around where Kit supposedly bumped his head, desperately searching for whatever it was.

After a few minutes of waving his arms around like a raging lunatic, be finally caught grast of something.

"BAZOOKA!" He shouted happily as he pulled himself on top of the invisible platform

"You're floating-" Kit marveled as he started flailing his arms around, searching for the invisible platform.

Zayne got on his knees and grabbed Kits wrist, hoisting him up to the platform.

"This is so trippy." He rasped as he pushed himself against the tower behind him.

"Do you have anything to mark the floor with?" Zayne asked as he held out his hand.

Kit dug in his pockets for a few seconds before giving him a defeated look. "I don't have anything."

Zayne stood up and kick his foot lightly, his foot tapping against something hard.

"Good news: I didn't break my foot, Bad news: It's a staircase." He sighed.

"Oh come on!" Kit screeched. "I'm hopping down."

As Kit walked over to what he believed was the edge and tried jumping off, only to be stopped by Zayne grabbing the collar of his hoodie.

PRISM BOOK KIDS

"No you don't." Zayne said.

Kit started kicking his legs angrily, casually hanging over the edge of the platform.

"Fine fine, just put me down." He demanded.

Zayne lowered Kit, trying to find the platform with his feet.

"We're going to figure out whats at the top of this." Zayne said as he finally placed Kit back onto the platform and cautiously took a step forward.

"This is gonna be so fun." Kit said as he stumbled over the first step.

Zayne and Kit then started up the invisible stairwell, every step taking at least three minuets of evaluation before being put into action.

If anyone had seen them they would have been frozen in shock, the two of them looked as if they were ascending into the sky. Like they were souls traveling to Heaven. Of course they weren't, and if they were souls Hell would be the only place to go- but you know, it would be cool to see.

After about twenty five minuets Kit slumped down onto the invisible floor.

"Can't, go, on..." he huffed, his voice muffled from his face being shoved into the cold concrete of the stairs.

"Well we gotta, it'll take even more energy to go back down, you do know that right?" Kit snarled as he kicked Zayne's ass with his foot and continued onward.

"Rude." Zayne sighed as he got up reluctantly and continued up the stairs cautiously.

After another twenty five minuets the two of them finally reached the top of the invisible stair case, almost falling off multiple times in the process.

"Holy eyebrows, we're so far up-" Kit murmured as he peered over the invisible edge, only to see grey fog below, as if the floor wasn't there and he was floating in a dream.

Oh the platform they reached was a small little house, surprisingly not being pathetically held together with bundles of wires and splotches of duct tape.

The house was made of cherry bark wood and had a spruce dungeon-like door guarding the front. The roof was made of thin brick slabs and there was a small window cil with a wilting poppy resting inside, it's life may have been spent in a small pot- but it was a life nonetheles.

As the two got closer to the building they started being cloaked with a blanket of fear. The house gave off a threatening aura- as if the house itself would get up and kill them.

As they stepped closer they hard a woman screech something in French. They flinched and ran under the windowsill, the small pot bounding ever so slightly.

"DEAD?! HOW COULD ISABELLA LET THAT IDIOT DIE- WE NEEDED HER!" Jeantete screamed.

Kit and Zayned lit up with shock and curiosity.

"Well I mean, she was following in Threetas footsteps-" The employee started saying before Jeantete slapped him across the face, causing him to fall into the wall under the windowsil.

"Don't ever speak that girls name again! TU M'ENTENDS?!?" Jeantete screeched.

The employee groaned and rubbed his head before nodding weekly in response.

Weak.

Like the flower right outside.

"Correct your honor..." The employee mumbled as he lowered his head.

"I can't believe you. You know that girl caused me so many problems, I've told you countless times about the merde she put me through, you know better." Jeantete scolded, her french accent splashing through her lips.

"Your honor- you can't tell me I'm wrong. If we recall your story, Threeta wanted to do good and died." The employee explained.

Jeantete raised her hand and scowled. "This is nothing like Threeta, I wanted her dead- she was the one reason *this* happened to me." Jeantete scowled as she pulled her arms down to show off her body.

Kit gasped and peeked over the cil to look at what was happening, his eyes widened once he saw.

Kit watched as Jeantete pulled a small piece of wood out of her shirt pocket and started to contort in disturbing ways.

Her skin turned the color of mustard yellow and it began to shrink and wrinkle up. She grew taller and skinny, as if she haden't seen food in days. Weeds and worms started to protrude out of her skin and her eyes dried to the point they crackled like lips. Her actual lips shrunk into her mouth and her hair thinned out and oiled.

She was a disgusting creature.

After a few minuets of making the employee look at her she put the piece of wood back into her pocket, and everything had been reversed.

She shrunk back to her normal size, her skin filled out and the weeds and worms buried back into her skin.

That piece of wood was magical and was the only thing keeping her alive, nobody could live looking like a malnourished dirt monster.

"Correct your honor." The employee sighed.

Jeantete smiled and crossed her arms.

"What do you plan to do with Isabella after she comes back? We both know she's going to ask for some large favor- like being moved to a new sector, or to be freed." The employee asked.

Jeantete glared at him. "You poor imbecile, you and I both know what we'll be doing." Jeantete saidl. "We'll be chaining her to the ceiling till she dies." She shrugged.

The employee gagged.

"Your honor, theres a better way to go about this-" The employee tried to explain, but Jeantete cut off.him

"ARE YOU QUESTIONING MY ABILITY TO DO MY JOB?! HOW DARE YOU ASSUME I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GO ABOUT THINGS!" Jeantete screamed, causing Kit to flinch back into hiding.

"ALL I'M SAYING IS THAT THIS IS NO WAY TO BE A RULER OR WHATEVER SHIT YOU'RE TRYING TO BE!" The employee fought back. Right after the words left it's mouth. He never meant to say those things, but honestly, he wanted to.

All those things were true. Jeantete had no idea how to keep power over all these brainwashed slaves and honestly should be jailed up. But it was just but a small employee, whilst Jeantete was a divine god. Or- she has been every since she took Threetas wood.

"I'm sorry ma'am but you need to understand what you're doing is extremely wrong. You must admit you have no idea how to run a cult."

"CECI N'EST PAS CULTE!"

"I don't know what the hell you said, I'm not *française* or however the hell you say it! But I do know that you are some snotty fink who is not fit to be ruling over anyone! Everything you've done is just morally wrong- there are better ways to take care of things. And one of those ways is to take care of you and your mental illness!"

Jeantete stared at the employee, dumbfounded by the words that just came from it's mouth. This was supposed to be *her* servant, *her* yesman, he was supposed to do every single thing she wanted and never fight back.

Kit and Zayne were peeking through the window, intrigued and guiltily entertained by the fighting inside. This employee was fire. They were standing up to the big boss lady herself? Props to him.

"Je sais ce que je fais, ne me dites pas comment faire ce dans quoi je suis un professionnel." Jeantete muttered threateningly.

"You shouldn't be doing this. This is a literal cult- worse than hell could ever be! I'd much rather go down there than stay under this abode of pointless rules!" The employee cried. "Isabella is a good one. She knows a sick, evil person when she sees one."

"Don't push me on this. I have so much power. I could take away your life, everyone elses lives, I could make this store way worse than you're pathetic little brain could ever imagine."

"Do it. I dare you."

"Maybe I will."

"You know that you need me. I was the best one that came to this base seven years ago. I was supposed to be your favorite. You said you'd listen to me. YOU TOLD ME BEING WITH YOU WAS LIKE HELPING TO RULE OVER A HEAVEN EVERYONE WANTED TO BE IN! YOU SAID I WOULD HAVE HEAVEN IN MY HANDS- NOT HEL!" The employee screamed.

"N'AGISSEZ PAS COMME VOUS AVEZ GRANDI ! RIEN NE POUSSE ICI - PAS MÊME VOTRE CERVEAU PATHÉTIQUE DE QUINZE ANS - J'AI UNE UTOPIE - C'EST PARFAIT POUR QUICONQUE QUI NE VEUT PAS ÊTRE UN TÊTE DE MERDE ET SUIVRE MES RÈGLES!"

"SPEAK ENGLISH. I'M NOT SOME SNOTTY FRENCH LADY WHO RESORTED TO THIS BECAUSE SHE WASN'T HOT ENOUGH FOR ONLY FANS!"

Jeantete was getting heated. It was one thing to call her out and be right- it was another to disrespect her like this while calling her out and being right.

"J'AI MIS EN PLACE LA VIE PARFAITE POUR TOUT LE MONDE ICI - C'EST LEUR CHOIX DE RÉALISER COMME ELLE EST INTELLIGENTE ET PARFAITE ET C'EST UNE AUTRE FAÇON D'AGIR COMME VOUS ET ISABELLA ET DE PRENDRE MA BÉNÉDICTION POUR BAISER ACCORDÉE!"

"STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU!"

Jeantete sighed angrily and rolled her eyes.

"Maybe if you stop being obtuse you ould understand what I'm talking about, but instead you choose to be an idiot."

"I am an idiot. I believed your little cult was the one thing the world needed to have fucking peace."

"It is."

"Brainwashing people to believe in terrible, terrible, false things and support terrible, terrible, false things is the opposite of what you want to do. Real lands aren't ruled like that."

"Mine is. Because mine is best."

"I'd rather kill myself than stay here any longer."

"And I'd like to watch."

Kit got a bit to close to the wall and bumped into the windowsil, a small noise channeled throughout the one room house.

"Oh you little…" Jeantete started to say. "VOUS AVEZ AMENÉ VOS PETITS AMIS À VENIR REGARDEZ CELA ! BIEN DES BLAGUES SUR VOUS, ILS SAVENT QUE C'EST LA MEILLEURE VIE QU'ILS ONT PU DEMANDER - COMMENT OSEZ-VOUS ASSUMER QU'ILS VOUS CROIENT. JE N'ACCEPTE PAS D'IDIOTS. TOUS LES IDIOTS MEURENT AVANT QUE JE PUISSE LES REJOINDRE ! PEUT-ÊTRE QUE SI VOUS ESSAYEZ D'UTILISER VOTRE CERVEAU UNE FOIS DE TEMPS PENDANT QUE VOUS NE COMMETTERIEZ PAS UN ACTE DE TRAHISON AUSSI TERRIBLE CONTRE MOI, VOUS ÊTES UNE DIVINITÉ MERVEILLEUSE!"

"IF YOU CALLED YOURSELF SOME SORT OF GOD. GODS BRING GOOD. NOT SOME HELLISH CULT THAT RUINS THE LIVES OF SO MANY PEOPLE!"

"I'M NOT RUINING LIVES."

"YES YOU ARE!"

"WHY DID YOU BRING EMPLOYEES OVER HERE!"

"I DIDN'T!"

Jeantete gritted her teeth as she looked over the employee, the tip of his head to the bottom of his feet, over and over again.

Kit and Zayne ducked back into hiding and after a bit peeked back up to watch.

"This place is far worse than Threetas base. Maybe I should go hang out there, it's only four towers down."

"If you do that I'll make sure you're dead."

The employee started to shake, but still managed to roll it's eyes.

"Your honor. You can't outrun karma. She will catch up to you, you're not as smart or slick as you'd like to think. One day someone will deal with you and your sick, mentally ill head. One day you will be taken care of- and that will be the day we celebrate." The employee said coldly and matter-of-factly.

"Bold of you to say imp boy." Jeantete said, masking her accent. "You need a way to deal with me?" She giggled psychotically.

"Well..."

"ET SI NOUS TRAITONS AVEC VOUS À LA PLACE !" Jeantete screeched as she picked up the employee bu the front of his shirt and chucked him out the window.

The employee screaming and the glass breaking was enough to cause Zayne and Kit to scream and duck as they felt the cool, sharp shatters of class coat their hands, arms, backs and hair.

After a few seconds Jeantete walked over to the microphone in her office and began to speak.

"I'm looking for a new assistant. Anyone interesting must bring yourselves and your advisors. Don't. Waste. My. Time." She demanded. She then walked back to her desk, sat down and began typing her life away.

Kit and Zayne slowly pulled up their heads. The feeling of glass shards falling off into a puddle around them sending chills down their spines.

Kit and Zayne quickly looked at eachother and then down toward the grey fog below.

That employee just stood up to the big evil mastermind of this hell- they can't just let him die. They had to try and save him.

The two of them looked at eachother and nodded as they both got up and started running down the stairs, not caring about if Jeantete heard their footsteps, and almost tripping over the broken flower pot with the wilting flower now surly dead.

The two of them ran as fast as they could, they were running down an invisible staircase afterall.

The two of them were breathing heavy and taking long jump-like steps to get down quicker.

They were both panicking and traumatized from watching a living, breathing being that obviously knew that what the employees were doing was a bad thing get chucked out a window to die.

Jeantete is a disgusting woman, change my mind.

The two of them came upon the bottom of stairwell and stared running around the displays looking for the employee, they could not just let this poor soul die. It was so important, he would surley want to join their cause and help them- at least thats what they wanted to believe. It was obvious they weren't employees and they knew and insider could help them tromendiously.

"THERE!" Zayne screamed as he pointed to a display with an employee resting unconsciously on the couch.

Kit ran over and started doing the Sternal rub to try and wake him up.

"Please don't be dead..." Kit pleaded as Zayne impaitently peeked over his shoulder.

Eventually the employee groaned and slowly got up and blinked his eyes open.

"Oh my god- I was just thrown out a window and survived- how is this even possible- this is a couch- I should be dead-" It started stuttering.

"Take it easy." Zayne said. "I'm Zayne and this is Kit, now, we're not here to hurt you- we watched what you said to Jeantete and we're so happy and proud! We want to be your friends, you do not need to be scared..." He said softly as Kit gave a little wave. "What's your name?" Zayne asked after letting the employee process what he said for a bit.

"Toms- Toms Goldshine." He stuttered weakly as his eyes darted between Kit and Zayne wearily.

"Nice to meet you Toms. We're going to help you." Kit said.

It felt weird to Kit to be helping someone that was in fact an employee- the assistant of the big guns here, after one had just

killed his boyfriend. You would think he would hate all employees and never trust one again- but oddly enough- after seeing what Toms did, he honestly didn't care. It was obvious that Toms was good, but it still made Kit feel guilty and confused as to why he was so okay with helping an employee. If he never trusted an employee his boyfriend would be alive- and yet- here he was, putting one on his back to carry as they slowly tried to find their way back to base.

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"How are they still not back yet..." Sydne worried as she curled up on a ball on the couch.

"Maybe an employee got them to!" Devereaux shrieked exadgerativley before Asher shot him an icy look and mouthed "Not now."

Sydne got up and started pacing around anxiously.

"What if Dev's right- what if Isa found them and- and attacked them and now their dead and rotting in some isolaited part of the store- and now they'll never come back and it's all my fault!"

Asher grabbed her hand, causing her to stop pacing and turn back to look at him. She gave a defeated sigh and plopped down next to him wearily.

"You know, you guys could always go out looking for them- there's no one stopping you." Val said as he stretched his legs while sitting on a different couch.

"You're right!" Asher cheered, now it was his turn to stand up "Come on, we'll go out and look for Kit and Zayne!" He said as he pulled Sydne out the entrance with him.

Sydne screeched in shock and protest but couldn't do anything, she was weaker than a dead clam and Asher was a normal human being.

"I DON'T CONSENT TO THIS!" Sydne screamed as she wailed her arms around in a successful attempt to get Asher to let her go.

Publish Kids

"Asher!" Sydne said, the sqeualy jokingness leaving her voice as she glanced up at him.

"Whats wrong?" Asher asked, genuinely curious.

"You and I both know why this is wrong." Sydne said, her voice starting to break.

Asher looked around, the vague image of the base and the repeating displays around him suddenly making him feel claustrophobic.

"What do you mean?"

Sydne sat on the floor, her tight leather skirt covering her bottom thighs.

"We both know why you wanted to get us out of the base so bad, the moment Val suggested that you just took me and ran out- you nver do that unless you find it the perfect excuse for something."

Asher looked down at the ground guiltily and sat down in front of Sydne. "I'm sorry... I just- thought it would be nice..." He muttered.

"No, no, you're not wrong- It's just feels to wrong. I mean Kit lost Alex and Toby lost Dine- it feels to soon, we shouldn't be doing this- they just endured a tragedy and we're just over here going about as if everything is normal."

Asher placed his hand on Sydne's knee, causing her to finally look up and make eye contact with him.

"I know what you mean. You're right- we should be sensitive, we shouldn't be all over eachother when their right there to watch us. But we're alone, it's okay, it's not your fault they had such a traumatic event happen to them, if none of them told us they were uncomfortable with it and their not around it's okay."

Sydne looked away again.

"You don't have to do anything if you don't want to, I'm just saying." He said as he stood up and offered his hand to Sydne.

Sydne looked into Asher's eyes and then to his hand. After a bit of thinking she just pushed herself off the ground and started

walking, disregarding the fact they were supposed to be looking for Kit and Zayne, she just wanted to walk- to walk with him.

As they walked quietly next to eachother, Asher's hands tucked into his hoodie pocket, they would take a few minuets to examine the nearby displays to see if they could find any clues of what direction Kit and Zayne may have turned.

They we're failing horribly. Turns out open drawers aren't the best way to locate someone.

"Where could they have gone, all we wanted from them was some pieces of plastic." Asher complained as he checked under a bed.

"It's Kit and Zayne, together, without adult supervision, for all we know they set Jeantete on fire by accident, didn't know about it till three hours later, and are now looking for her burning body before the rest of this place catches on fire." Sydne chuckled.

Asher laughed and stood up, then noticed a tall, glowing, blue tower.

An information tower.

They haven't seen one of those in so long.

"Syd, there's an information tower over there." Asher called out as he signaled to walk over to it.

Sydne nodded and went to walk over to the tower, the blue light illuminaitng the concrete ever so slightly with it's watery glow.

Once the two got close enough to the tower, they just stared at it. Suddenly they remembered the traumatizing event of an arm shooting out from oblivion and grabbing Sydne as she was injected with a deadly poison.

Then they remembered about Isabella frankly saving her life.

And then taking away Dine's and Alex's...

They both took a synced step back, only now truly processing what had happened, the realization of what they had been through, the horror everyone had endured and how Dine and Alex had the shittiest last minuets alive ever hit them like a truck. They were shocked as they finally placed two and two together and realized

that they were in the living embodiment of hell and frankly didn't care.

Without even touching the cursed piece of technology, the screen roared and exploded with static. A small patch of blackness appeared amidst the rough noise and moving pixels of color.

The blob slowly morphed into the silhouette of a girl.

Two eyes appear.

A smile appear.

Color then started to fill in the void and the static started to drip away.

"Hello kids~" The voice whistled as the face on the screen smirked.

Sydne let out a small gasp of shock while Asher started breaking out in a cold sweat,. The girl on screen began to laugh.

"You guys are just *so* easy to scare. I knew earth makes their residents soft but I didn't think you guys would be THIS soft." The lady laughed. "I'd honestly be surprised if you guys were even able to walk out the door and breathe air without bursting out into pathetic crocodile tears!"

The lady's words stung like alcohol on a papercut. A steak laced with words driven right through their emotional heart.

"That's not what we're doing- you're the one making this happen!" Sydne fought back, but it was to late- her mind had already dripped into guilt mode and every word she spoke in her defense would be hollow and meaningless.

"I'm not making that happen, I'm simply ruling my lands exactly how you're supposed to. With fear, power and a psychotic dream to drink the blood of whom you're talking to!"

Sydne and Asher went pale with fear as the lady cackled and started tripping around like a junkie high on crack.

"You guys are so funny! Literally, why pay for a streaming service when you can just torture people!" She giggled.

"That's not something to be proud of." Sydne scolded.

"Mhm, yeah, hey isn't that what the doctor said to your mom after she gave birth to you?"

Now Sydne was angry, fuled with petty rage at the insult.

"You're not acting like a disgusting dictator- whats wrong with you?" Asher asked.

"I'm just in a good mood! And when I'm in a good mood I want everyone else to know how much of a mistake they are!" Jeantete giggled.

"You and I both know you don't want this. You can stop." Asher said, Jeantete rolled her eyes.

"What do you know?" She sighed.

"I know what you want." Asher said. "And I know you're a grease fire just waiting to catch." Sydne smiled cockily.

"You kids are pissing me off." Jeantete murmerd, her happy-go-lucky attitude turning into anger.

"Listen to us Jeantete, we know what the good things are- and running a fucking cult isn't one of them." Asher sneered.

Jeantete went wide eyed and angry, then walked closer to the screen and scowled.

"What the hell did you just call me?" She snarled.

Asher stood still in fear as he glanced over at Sydne who was obviously disappointed in the stupid mistake.

"I- uhm- lucky guess?" He stammered, causing Sydne to sigh and ready to grab his wrist and run.

"That little bastard Isabella told you didn't she? How dare you even speak that name, it's to good for your disgusting mouth to speak."

The three of them stood around in silence for a few seconds, then Jeantete smirked and began to raise her hand.

Asher grabbed Sydne's hand as they looked around, waiting for the perfect escape moment.

Asher gleaned over his shoulder and saw a disgusting, outstretched arm shooting towards them. "RUN!" He shouted as he darted left, Sydne dragging behind him.

Fiction Aids

The two ran through the concrete halls and screamed through their shallow yet heavy breaths. Asher's hand tightened it's laced grip with Sydne's more and more every time he glanced over to see her terrified face and the disgusting, outstretched hand chasing them down.

"WE NEED IT TO GO AWAY- I CAN'T KEEP UP!" Sydne huffed as she started to slow down.

Asher looked back over his shoulder at the hand and then back to Sydne.

"HOLD ON!" He shouted as he pulled Sydne onto his back and he kept running.

Sydne wrapped her arms around his neck and pathetically held on as they ran through the labrynthed halls, her hair blowing through the wind, occasionally getting snapped by the hand.

"IS IT GETTING CLOSER OR FARTHER?!" Asher called out. Sydne looked back and nearly screamed.

"IT'S SO MUCH CLOSER HOLY HELL HOW DID YOU SLOW DOWN SO MUCH?!"

"MAYBE BECAUSE YOU'RE ON MY BACK!"

Asher glanced over and heard Sydne scream from a few strands of her hair being pulled.

"DO YOU LIKE TO FLY?" Asher asked.

"WHAT-" But before Sydne could ask or even comprehend what he said Asher put his hands on her legs and threw her ahead of him.

Sydne screeched in fear as she waved her arms and legs like a lunatic and Asher sped up- finally managing to put some space between him and the decomposing log of a hand chasing them down.

As gravity naturally started delting Sydne towards the floor, Asher grabbed her hand and pulled her into a closet in a display and pressed his hand over her lips to keep her quiet.

Sydne gave out some muffled screams but eventually gave in and stayed quiet.

They two of them sat silently, pressed up against eachother as they listened for any cues Jeantets hand was finally going away.

They spent thirteen minutes in that closet.

Tired.

Hot.

Sweaty.

Pressed up against eachother in a dark confined space.

Eventually they caught the sound of wrinkling dry skin shrinking away. The two of them pushed out of the closet and fell atop one another on the soft carpet of the display.

"Holy satan..." Sydne muttered. "That was hot."

Sydne then stared down in fear, realizing what she had just said. Asher wrapped his arms around her waist and let his cheeks turn a bright shade of strawberry red.

"I- I'm sorry-" Sydne stammered as she pushed herself off and started to walk away.

Asher laughed, got up and looked around.

The hand was gone, the atmospheric dread was gone and their way home was gone.

They we're lost in IKEA.

As if they weren't already.

"Crap, crap, crap..." Asher mumbled as he paced around, panicing.

"Now we're never gonna get home- if everyone else finds the way out they won't be able to find us and leave us to die!"

Sydne looked at him curiously. "What happened to me being the anxiety-ridden one-" She joked, despite it being an extremely inappropriate time to do so.

Asher laughed as he placed his hand on her shoulder and sighed. "Sorry." He said. "I just want to make sure we're both okay."

Sydne smiled softly and wrapped her arms around his and they began to walk around, looking for a way back home.

The further they got from their original starting point the more happy they felt. They had a strange, merage like feeling that they were about to find the exit- or some sort of magical save haven where they could just live happily.

Though neither of them dared to say it.

They were both to scared to jinx it.

If someone said they felt an odd sense of calm and they came accorss a place full of dead, scattered bodies they would feel absolutley horrible.

After a bit of walking Sydne stopped and looked at a large pillar next to them.

"I feel like somethings there-" Sydne said as she walked over and waved her arm around, trying to feel for something possibly invisible.

"There's probably nothing there." Asher said as he walked over to Sydne and dragged his hand across the air as he apathetically trotted over to Sydne. He then felt his hand get caught on something and stopped in his tracks.

"Or maybe you're right and I'm wrong-" He muttered as he continued to smash the side of his balled up hand against the invisible wall.

Sydne walked over and waved her hand around the arera Ashers hand got caught. As she waved her hand around she then felt a cold, smooth surface. "It's a stair case." She said as she started to frantically dig around in her large purse.

After a few seconds she pulled out her inhaler and started to shake it violently before spraying a few puffs onto the estimated location of the smooth surface.

The fine white powder fell and rested upon the surface like fluffy snow, revealing a step in a stair case.

"STAIRWELL! AHA!" Sydne yelled as she placed her hand where the inhaler mist had fell and pushed herself up onto the platform- with some help from Asher that is.

Asher than pulled himself up and there they were. Floating in mid air, above the cold concrete floors of IKEA, with an invisible staircase suspending them.

"This is so trippy-" Asher said as he looked down towards the ground and shivered.

Sydne stomped her heeled boot on the staircase, trying to find where it ended.

"It's a pretty wide staircase, but if we miss a step we could surly fall and die." Sydne said as she began to autiously take a step.

"And that's where I come in." Asher smirked as he placed his hands around Sydne's waist, lifted her up into the air and then placed her down onto the next step.

Sydne looked up, her face red with blush and he just looked down and smiled.

And that's what they did. For the entire way up. Doesn't sound stupid at all. Asher would place his hands on Sydne's waist and lift her onto the next step while he did all the work with figuring out where the next step was.

"Ash, are you sure you want to do this? It seem slike you're doing a lot of work." Sydne said as she tried to take a step herself and almost fell and died.

"NO!" Asher screamed as he grabbed her hand and pulled her back onto the platform.

"Okay, okay, I'll let you do all the work." Sydne stammered as she allowed Asher to pick her up and place her on a new stair.

After a painful two hours of climbing the stairwell they came to the top and looked on in shock.

At the top was the demolished remains of a small house. There was wood stained red with blood- sending shivers down their spines with flashbacks to Dine and Alex. There was broken lightbulbs rolling around and doors hanging off the hinges. Bricks broken into shards. There were bones scattered about and unidentifiable crumbs of whatever else had been destroyed. It looked like an old, abandoned war zone. A war zone that held one very important key.

"Holy satan..." Sydne muttered as she stepped closer to the mess.

"This place... This place used to be someones home." Asher said as he gently tapped a broken door and watched it smash into the concrete.

Prism Kids

"No, really?" Sydne said sarcastically as she swooped around to look at him.

"You can be freaked out around us Sydne." Asher sighed.

"Oh. Right." Sydne chuckled.

The two of them then shut up and succumbed to the depressing atmosphere and looked on in horror. It looked as if a nuclear bomb had exploded there- yet the rest of the store saw no issues.

"Okay, so- if someone else had a house on top of a giant tower that was demoshied that means two thing. One, someone else had probably looked for a way out. And two, there's no way we can stay here."

Asher shrugged and went inside the demoshied building- even that was a generous term.

Inside was ripped and demolished furniture. Barely even staying together- the smalled AC breeze could topple it over and destroy it. The inside rained with melancholy and reminded them that hell would be many times better than whatever this place was.

"I wonder if their still alive." Sydne wonderd aloud as she walked in and exameined the room.

In the very middle was a desk- somehow still in tact and appeared undamaged compared to the rest of the mess.

Asher walked up to it and pulled open the large middle drawer and started digging around inside.

There were papers, pencils, expired gum, a piece of rotting wood and a small notebook.

"There's a notebook in here." Asher said as he picked it up.

Sydne ran over and snatched it out of his hands and began to examine it closely. It was covered in soot and had dried splotches of blood on it- but it was still one of the prettiest notebook she had ever seen. It had a navy blue sueade cover with thick midori pages and a built-in silk bookmark.

Sydne's eyes sparkled as she gently caressed it with her hand. She was an finatic for notebooks and collected those things like their her life support.

"This person uses a fountain pen. This is Midori paper." She said as she opened it.

To her shock the first page was covered in sloppy cursive. The second page was covered in rough sketches and even more writing.

"What is it?" Asher asked as Sydne kept analyzing the dancing lines.

"It's. It's about IKEA." Sydne muttered.

"No shit thats all there is to talk about here- like what else?"

"No like- how to open a portal."

## Chapter 16

Isabella sat down and sighed. She hadn't slept in ages in fear of having another dream like the one before. She placed Dine's head at her side and stared at it. The plastered smile taunted her.

She wasn't far from the base. Just a few more miles and she'd be there- but she was scared. She didn`t want to be at their door getting yelled at.

She knew they wouldn't be happy to see her.

She had killed two of their friends. The blood was on her hands- hell their flesh was in her hair.

They would see her in her new and disgusting uniform she put back on to get them their friends memorial.

She yelled and pushed the head away from her. It made a loud clinking sound as it hit the concrete.

Everything was just coated red when she pictured it in her mind.

The Pitchfork Kids were mad at her, Dine and Alex we're mad at her, she was mad and them.

And most importantly.

Herself.

She saw two hopeless bodies of flesh and just dove- sure the mind control was on her but it was still her hands that did it. She was still the one who gripped them and broke them down.

She could remember their blood in *her* mouth. The metallic taste of life- the life that she took away. The life that would still be here if she never got her hands on it.

"AH!" Isabella screamed and threw the head. It bounced on the concrete with a loud ceramic clink- though never even scratching.

Isa sighed and picked it back up and continued to walk, ready to give up on friendship, return the head and to her own life.

"Come on Dine, we have people to get yelled at by." She said pathetically as she looked at the head.

The closer she got to the base the sicker she felt.

She was imagining every scenario that could happen. They could kill her- well not really but metaphorically. They could yell at her- they could do anything. And she was not prepared.

The invisible cloak of death covered her like a warm embrace of a friend. A friend that broke you from the inside out and turned you into their emotional slave.

Isa got closer and closer, dreading the next coming step- a step closer to her emotional doom.

Eventually, she got there.

And stared right in the face of hatred.

The hatred she assumed to be there.

She walked up the ramp, clutching Dine's head closer to her chest.

The thick stench of wet metal filled her lungs as she coughed.

She knocked on the door- a new asset since the lights were on.

Toby perked up at the sound on the knocking- he was hoping it was Sydne and Asher with Kit and Zayne in toe. He didn't wanna open it though- scared it would be someone trying to kill them again.

Despite it all Toby got up and pulled off the makeshift door and stared down in shock.

PUSH OF KAOS

"Hey Toby…" Isabella muttered as she held out Dine's decapitaited head and looked away. "This is for you- I went to get it treated so maybe you could display it somewhere- as a memorial."

Toby took the head and then stared back down in disgust.

"What the hell are you wearing?" he snarled.

"I had to trade my place as a human to get Jeantete to treat the head- you guys getting the head is more important than anything."

Isabella stared down at her feet and braced herself for the line if vicious, verbal attacks about to be sent her way. She would be able to take anything and not break- she would obviously break later but what mattred was that she was strong that moment.

Toby looked her up and down, back down to the head, and then started to cry.

"Dine…" He muttered as he dropped to his knees and hugged the decapitaited head to his chest- the smooth ceramic-like coating cold against his light clothes.

"Sweet, sweet Dine…"

Isabella looked up.

"I am so sorry for what I've done… I shouldn't have stayed as long as you wanted me to."

"NO!" Toby cried as he dropped the head and lazily wrapped his arms around Isabellas neck.

"Don't go- Dine would want you to stay, please, don't go anywhere."

Isabella knelt down and hugged back as Toby cried on her shoulder. Isabella was still confused, she expected Toby to be livid- but she wasn't complaining about this response instead.

"Don't ever leave this place- you may have taken the lives of who we loved but the last thing they'd want is for you to go to… Please, I'm so sorry." Toby sobbed.

"No, I'm sorry. Dine would be very proud."

Little did they know how wrong they were. Dine wasn't proud, happy, excited. And she would have rather *died* than see that event. She made that obviously clear.

She would be looking up from the chains of hell and screaming. That's not what she wanted. She died for nothing.

Toby finally stood up and led Isabella inside.

The place stunk of death- but it didn't smell as bad anymore. It was still strong but just ever so more bearable than normal.

"S-Sit down." Toby said as he ran and shut the door to Isabellas room.

The only people still there was Val and Devereaux. Dev was very, very angry to be breathing the same air as Isa, while Val frankly didn't care.

"Wheres the rest?" She asked.

"Kit and Zayne are out and Sydne and Asher are out." Val replied as he spread out his legs.

"What's *she* doing here." Devereaux snarled.

"Nothing." Toby said. "Cut it out. Dine wouldn't want us to be treating her this way."

"Maybe Dine doesn't want that- but I bet my bottom dollar Alex does."

Toby stared down the young boy angrily before stomping off to his room.

"I can just go-"

"No." Val responded blankly.

Isabella shrugged and sat down on the floor awkwardly. This was nothing she expected- and seeing everyone acting so uncharistically chill about her return was really messing with her head.

"So. You came back to kill someone else?" Devereaux said coldly.

"Oh shush. Even if she was saying that, it wouldn't be making anyone else anymore safe." Devereaux rolled his eyes as Isabella just awkwardly smiled.

Fiction Kids

The three of them sat around- Toby staying in his room and willfulluy ignoring everyone.

"So- you don't seem very enthusiastic Val." Isabella muttered.

Val looked at her and shrugged. "I could kinda tell you would be coming back. Seemed dumb if you never came back to apologize or anything like that. This was expected." Val responded.

"Oh. I see."

"Sorry, I'm kinda tired- that's why I'm not so cherry n' crap."

"It's okay."

After a few more minutes they heard a bunch of grunting coming from the doorway and heavy breathing.

"GUYS! WE NEED SOME HELP!" A voice called out. Everyone ran out to the entrance to find Kit and Zayne hobbling around an employee.

Toms to be exact.

"ANOTHER ONE?! KIT DO YOU WANT US ALL TO DIE?!" Devereaux shreiked.

"I don't think an employee who would want us all to die would stand up to Jeantete." Zayne muttered.

"It could have been a set up."

"I don't think an employee would willingly get chucked out a window and almost die for a set up." Kit scolded.

"Oh-"

Toby and Val rushed down to help Zayne and Kit push Toms up the stairs.

"He was chucked out a window? What window is there to be chucked out of?" Val asked as they sat Toms down on the couch.

"The one on Jeantete's house." Zayne snarled.

"Jeantete had a house?!" Val sheriked in confusion. Kit nodded.

"It's really high up- he's super lucky he landed on a couch- he's still super hurt though."

Toms was pale and could barley lift his head up to look at everyone.

Pitch Black Kids

"Devereaux go get us duct tape." Toby instructed as he looked down at the injured Toms.

Reluctantly Devereaux peeled away from the group and got the duct tape out of Alex's room. He then walked out and sheepishly handed it to Toby, who then wrapped Toms up like a mummy.

"Okay- so we wait how long?" Devereaux asked.

"A few hours if we don't feed him. Fifteen miuets if we do." Kit replied.

Val ripped up clumps of duct tape and started shoving them into Toms mouth.

"What the hell." Toms gagged out through his full mouth.

"It'll work just try your best to chew it up and swallow it down." Val said.

Toms shrugged and continued to chew on the tape until he could gag it down his throat.

"So this is supposed to make me feel better?" He questioned. Val looked down at him with a wid smile on his face and nodded aggressively.

"It cured me from a little something called brain damage!" Toms looked at Val in pure shock.

"How did you even get brain damaged in the first place?" Before he could get an answer another wad was shoved into his mouth.

"He's not that hurt don't waste it-" Zayne explained.

"Just making sure he doesn't die on us you tall blonde idiot." Kit huffed.

Zayne rolled his eyes as Toms gulped down another slobbed mess of tape.

"I think I'm good-" He said as he stood up and looked around. "Why does this place smell so much like blood-"

"We don't talk about that." Devereaux interrupted.

Toms shrugged and looked around and spottered Isabella. Who was staring at the entrance still.

"Wait-" Toms muttered as he ripped off some duct tape so he could move easier. "Isa?! Is that you?!" He shrieked as he ran over

best he could to her. "These are the people you so badly wanted to give that head to?" He questioned.

Isa turned around, still processing the fact they just bnrought in another employee so quickly- even she would have hesitated.

"How do you know about that-" She muttered as she looked at him.

"It's me, Jeantetes right-hand employee- or old one. I was there when you made her treat the head."

Isabella looked at him in shock.

"Toms..?"

Toms nodded to his name and Isabella started to smile. "I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU MADE IT OUT OKAY!" She chjeered as she gave him a big hug- taking his feet off the groubnd.

"I remember hearing her yell in French and hit things, I was so scared it was you she hit- oh my god I'm so happy."

Toms smiled and pushed himself away from her.

"I'm fine- mostly. I probably have some trauma but that's the worst of it- she never hit me to the point I was severly injured." Toms explained.

"How did you get away? She's everywhere and faster than anything?" Isa asked.

Toms twiddled his thumbs and smiled awkwardly. "She uhm- may or may not have thrown me out a window..." He chuckled nervously. Isabella stared him down.

"I- WHY ARE YOU SO CALM?!"

Kit coughed loudly as the two of them turned around, their oversized and thin uniforms flowing in the wind they created.

"So do you two know eachother or-?" He asked as he pointed at the two of them.

"Oh yeah! I hid him and took care of him when he was a baby. He's like the little brother I never wanted." Isa smiled as she rested her arm on his head.

"Yeah- when I was like seven Jeantete bfound me and made me her little personal servant for a while. It sucked working for her." Toms explained.

"You we're born here?!" Val said shockingly.

Toms nodded and frowned. "My childhood was wasted as a cult Leaders servant. Though now I can salvage three more years!" He smiled.

"Or you're whole life if we never find a way out." Kit snarled.

"Wait. So Toms is like- a born employee?" Devereaux questioned.

Isa nodded. "Yeah. I'm hoping she didn't send you here to kill us all."

"We watched him stand up to her and then get thrown out a window- that just screams "I'm not evil!" In my opinion." Zayne smiled.

"So. After an employee just killed two of our friends you brought one in who helped make everyone a slave?" Devereaux mumbled.

"The only thing I did was talk into a microphone and get yelled at in French. I wouldn't agree to get tossed out a window thirty five feet off the ground for shit!" Toms excalimed.

Devereaux rolled his eyes. "You guys are mentally ill burnouts. I'm sure you'd do anything."

Toms sucked in a deep breath of the blood-stained air as Isabella placed her hand on his shoulder.

"Let's just focus on something that isn't the clothes we're stuck wearing- okay?" She suggested.

Everyone agreed, reluctantly or not.

Toms stayed close to Isabella, she was the only person he recognized or felt comfortable with- everyone was just some random stranger that just kind of existed. The only other one he recognized was Toby, who he heard abot while patrolling some employees. Of course he knew Kit and Zayne- but only since they found him laying in a couch like a total idiot.

"Did you and Kit find any tapes or just this sad child?" Toby asked as he passed by and handed a plate of spaghetti to Toms.

"No, we just found him in all his glory." Kit chuckled.

"Speaking of finding- have you guys seen Sydne and Asher anywhere?" Toby asked.

"I thought they'd be here- did they leave?" Kit asked. Toby nodded.

"Yeah- they left to go looking for you- probably got sightracked by something pink though." Val chimed in.

"I hope Sydne's okay." KIt muttered.

"What about Asher?"

"I don't care about him."

Everyone chuckled while Toms was lost in thought.

He was just thrown out the window, by someone who's been taking care of him since he was seven. He just stood up to someone that had been mentally abusing millions of people and ran some crooked cult.

He just stood  up to someone worse than satan.

He looked down at his hands- which were now trembling and quickened his breathing.

"I- I can't stay here- I have to hide." He said as he jolted up and started running away.

"TOMS!" Isabella called as she reached her hand out desperately. But it was too late, he had already flung open the door to her room and stared in horror at the stench and remaining mess.

"Holy magasinière..." He marveled.

He was over washed with a thick cloud of wet iron and melancholy as he looked on.

"So this is why you came absolutely soaked in blood?" He questioned as he spun aroud, to see a shamed Isa.

"Yeah- it happened during the night..."

Toms looked her up and down, some of her skin still a light pink from the blood.

Psychokids

"Eh. It happens when you're spoon-fed brainwash juice all day." Toms shrugged as he shut the door.

"I still- I still can't be here. I'm still an employee. She'll just hunt me down and ruin everyone here. You guys need to get rid of me!"

"NO!" Kit shouted.

Everyone looked at him and raised an eyebrow.

"I uhm- you know the inner workings from being her little slave thingy. If we get rid of you we'll still be left in the dark. Plus- you stood up to her. And she obviously thinks your dead since she chucked you out a window. We're pretty safe."

Toms looked down and sighed. "I don't want to put you all in danger- I don't want something bad to happen-"

Just as the words left Toms' mouth, the building started to seize violently.

"AH!" Kit screamed as he wrapped his arms around Zayne in fear.

The pallets below their feet began to wobble and shift out of the tape and ropes.

"GET OUT! GET OUT!" Toby hollered as he grabbed Zayne and Isa who were holding on to Kit and Toms and dashed everyone outside.

"WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?!" Isabella cried, but of course nobody answered.

After they all escaped to the cold, unforgiving halls of IKEA they watched in horor as the walls and floor slowly began to fall apart and crumble.

"No... no no no. She's going down." Kit muttered as he looked on in horror.

That base was just more than a makeshift shelter. It was their home, the place that offered protection and refuge from the modernized hell that surrounded them.

This was the one place they could be relaxed in such a dangerous place. This was were all those memories of petty fights and silly pranks were made.

This was the last thing they had of Alex.

Once this was gone every mark Alex had made on their lives would be gone to.

Tears started to stream down Kits face as the pallets fell atop eachother and broke like trust with a friend.

Furniture was smashed, their food now surly spoiled and all Kit and Alex's hard work crumbled to bits within a matter of minutes. The embodiment of their love, their memories. Every single thing about their relationship was woven into those walls.

That wood held their very essence- not just Kit and Alexs but the whole groups. They had spent over a year here and lived there for so long- they've suffered every tragedy there. And now it was gone.

"No… Alex…" Kit muttered as he walked up and grazed his hand over the mess of broken furniture and compressed wood.

Everyone else looked on in horror. Their home was gone. The place they relied on for safety was gone. Now they we're really in danger. They already had targets on their backs from pissing off Jeantete and stealing two of her employees- and night could come whenever she pleased. They didn't have time to make a new home. They only had time to run.

"What do we do- we can't re-build a new house- only Kit can and we'd all be killed once the lights turn off within a heartbeat." Toms said as he looked over at Isa.

"NO!" Kit cried as he dropped to his knees among the mess and looked at the disheveled wreckage that they once called a home. "No, no no. This is all I had left of Alex- and it's gone to…" He muttered as held a piece of broken pallet to his chest.

"Kit- I'm so sorry about what happened. But we desperately need to hide somewhere or else we'll be dead." Val stated urgently.

"No… I- I can't leave our home like this…" Kit muttered.

The word "home" stung like antiseptic on a wound. A home was somewhere you felt safe and comfortable. Somewhere you felt loved and protected. Somewhere you wanted to be.

Nobody wanted to be in IKEA. Nobody wanted to spend any longer than they'd have to sleeping on the dusty furniture beds and spend another day staring out windows wondering if they'd be able to tomorrow.

As everyone looked over at the wreckage of their home, they heard footsteps emerge from behind them.

"What the hell happened." Sydne said as she tightened her grip around Asher's hand and looked on in horror, clutching the notebook in her hand.

Everyone spun around who was within earshot and looked the two down, confusion and embarrassment in their eyes.

"What the hell happened to our house-" Asher said as he stepped forward, dragging Sydne along with him.

"We don't know. We were just standing around and talking and then it started to collapse. Lucky we got out before the roof caved in on us." Toms exclaimed.

"Who the hell are you." Sydne said, millions of questions running through her head.

"Hi. I'm Toms. I'm the employee that worked for Jeantete but one day I called her out for being a jerk and then she threw me out a window. Kit and Zayne found me and now I vibe with you all." Toms said as he held out his hand.

Sydne shrugged, shook his hand and smiled.

"Hi. I'm Sydne and I wanna know what the hell happened."

Val shrugged. "We actually don't know.

"Did you guys managed to salvage anything?" Asher ashed as he pulled Sydne closer to him.

Everyone shook their heads no.

Everyone watched as Kit remained in the mess and cried.

"Should we do something?" Zayne asked.

Sydne nodded. "I'll talk to him." She said as she let go of Ashers hand and alked over to Kit.

BrickKids

The closer she got the bigger the mess was. She could see the giant cracks in the clumps of wood and the shattered remains of the furniture they had scattered about.

"Hey…" She muttered as she knelt down besides her nephew and put her arms around his shoulder.

"It's gone… It's all gone…" Kit muttered as his tears wet the wood around him. "*He's* all gone."

Sydne sighed, and pulled Kit closer to her.

"Alex… He's really gone now." He muttered.

"Yeah. He's gone. He's dead- but that doesn't mean things weren't great when he was around." Sydne eased.

"But I don't want him to be gone. This base was the last thing we had left of him- and now he's gone…" Kit sobbed.

Sydne sighed and let Kit cry on her shoulder.

Don't get me wrong- Kit was devastated when Alex actually did die. But he always felt that as long as their home. The home they built together. As long as that was still up, Alex was never really gone. A piece of Alex was always living somewhere. A part of him was entwined in the walls and floors.

But now that the building itself was gone.

The last vestige of Alex was gone. He wouldn't come back. There wasn't a thing that held his life and passion as much as those pallets.

He was really gone.

And he wasn't coming back.

"Don't worry Kit. He lived a happy life, and we all had a happy time with him. Gone or not he's made an impact on us."

Kit sniffled and smiled up at Sydne.

Kit opened his mouth to speak but before he had the chance the lights flickered off. Leaving the group in the lethal blackness.

"OKAY. CAN WE WRAP THIS UP. WE'RE SCREWED IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING!" Devereaux screamed.

Kit and Sydne sprung up and ran to the group. Kit's light-up shoes blinking with each step as Asher pulled out a lighter.

Disney Kids

"Since when did you have a lighter?" Zayne asked as he pointed to it.

"I don't. I did the cool movie thing where I pull random crap out of nowhere." Asher answered with sarcastic enthusiasm.

Zayne stared him down confusedly before stumbling from a push from behind.

Everyone stared at him as he stood, frozen in the pose he ended in after he regained balance.

"Run." He said as everyone nodded and dashed away, their foot steps thumping through the halls.

Asher grabbed Sydne and pulled her along while Zayne took Kit and Devereaux onto his back. Toby grabbed Toms' hand to pull him along while Val pushed Isabella to the front of the hoard to guide them somewhere.

"WAIT- WHERE DO WE GO?!" Sydne cried out in desperation as they ran into the oblivion.

"THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION- ANYONE KNOW A SHELTER ANYWHERE?!" Isabella responded.

"NOPE. WE EITHER RUN TILL THE LIGHTS TURN ON OR FIGHT THE EMPLOYEES OFF." Toby screamed.

"Val. GOT A LAMP?" Kit asked. Val shook his head.

"OKAY THEN- I KNOW A PLACE." Isa said as she grabbed Asher and Zaynes hand and started pulling them along.

As they were running, Toms suddenly stopped.

Toby turned back to him, there wasn't an employee behind them- and if there was it probably lost interest a long time ago.

"Toms..?" Toby said as he tugged on his hand, trying to pull him along. Until he took a second look on his uniform.

"Oh no..."

Toms smiled as he stumbled backwards.

"G-Go... I-I'll catch up l-later..." He stammered as he tried to lunge at Toby but barley missed.

Toby screeched and started to run again.

Everyone turned back to see Toms struggling on the floor while Toby was running, his face starting to tear.

"CRAP!" Isabella called as she sped up.

"SHOULDN'T YOU BE ALL EVIL TOO OR SOMETHING?" Val asked. Isabella shook her head.

"HAVEN'T HAD ANY CHOCOLATE SINCE I GOT MY UNIFORM AGAIN. I DON'T HAVE THAT URGE- I SLEPT IT OFF."

"You can do that-?"

But there wasn't time for questions or explanations. Toms had lost all control and was now speeding down to them with nothing but blood lust and hatred shining from his eyes.

Kit drew in a sharp breath and grabbed Devereaxu's hand and squeezed it. Devereaux squeezed Kit's hand back.

Asher hoisted Sydne onto his back and grabbed Toby's wrist to pull him along.

"WE'RE ALMOST THERE!" Isabella informed as she let go of Asher and Zaynes hands and sped up.

After a few more minutes of running they saw her from the darkness, holding open the cloth to some sort of tent.

"IN. IN." She cried as everyone got ready to duck in.

Asher threw Sydne inside, her skirt allowing her to slide on the concrete and into the tent. Kit tossed Devereaux into the opening, no sliding necessary and launched himself off Zayne's back and rolled into the tent.

Asher then swung Toby and Val giving them a head start into the tent while he and Zayne slid on the concrete.

"I'LL BE THERE IN A SECOND," Isabella called out as she closed the flap and started restraining Toms.

"Never though I'd be doing this to the most important employee in this entire hellhole but, oh well!" She said as she got fairy lights and tied him up, leaving him to wiggle like a dying worm on the ground.

Isa then turned around and went back into the tent to meet up with everyone else.

# Chapter 17

"Wow Isa. This place is really cool." Sydne said as she brought her knees to her chest.

"Thanks. It's a magic little tent I got from Toms' parents. I set it up here in case I ever needed to hide. Anyone who wants to hurt you can't get into this tent. That's why it let you all in!" Isa exclaimed.

"Thanks for letting us in. This tent is cool and all- but there's no way we'll survive in here. We need to either make a new base or figure out how to leave." Zayne said, rushing everyone to the point of the matter.

"I think we're closer to the second option than we think." Sydne and Kit said in sync.

They both looked at eachother and laughed.

"No really. Jeantete keeps a special piece of wood on her that keeps her alive and looking young. It also gives her all her powers." Kit said.

Sydne and Asher stared at him, mouths agape.

"What?"

Sydne smiled as she held out the small felt notebook.

"This notebook tells us how to get out. It tells us about everything we'd need to know to escape!" Sydne explained.

Zayne snathed the notebook out of Sydne's hands and started flipping through the pages, skimming for something useful.

"If the store is awake, simply knock the wood on a display wall and a portal wll open for you." Zayne read. "Oh. That's easy- we just gotta take the wood from her for a bit and then we'll be right home!"

Isabella shook her head.

"It's not that simple." She said. "The store has been asleep for years. I heard from some other employees that it willfully went to

sleep because Jeantete was to "intimidating" or something stupid. It can't do anything if it's asleep." Isabella explained.

"Well how do we wake it up!" Devereaux asked as he shook Zayne's arm like a whiney baby.

"Hold on hold on, I'm looking." He said. "If the store is asleep, you probably won't have much luck waking it up. If it's asleep from fatigue it means the store is dying and won't be able to do much. You'll be kicked out into a random dimension. If he's asleep by will or to hide from something you need to get rid of the thing making it sleep and press your head to a TV. If you wait long enough eventually the store will wake up."

Zayne looked at everyone, who was staring at him eagerly.

"So we need to kill Jeantete." Val said.

Everyone looked at him with shock at how calm and collected he is with the idea.

"I mean- how hard could it be? If that wood thing is true she's some decomposing piece of mush that will shrivel up if we take the wood away."

Isabella laughed.

"It's not that easy. We need to get the wood from her. She doesn't let anyone walk in her office without permission- there's no way we're getting close enough to snatch that wood. And even if we did, she has powers to do whatever the hell she wants so we wouldn't get very far."

Val crossed his arms and looked up at everyone.

"Well we can't just sit here and rot! We need to do something- we just don't know what we need to do." Toby said.

"We could just- you know. Go in head first and try to fight her- it's not efficient but at least it'll give us a shot at succeeding." Sydne suggested.

"A shot to succeed yes. An even bigger shot at death. Or at least becoming an employee- so no." Asher said.

"Isa, she thinks you're an employee right? Wouldn't she trust you more than us?" Toby asked.

Pitchfork Kids

Isa shook her head. "She thinks I'm a traitor. I only became an employee again to get her to treat Dine's head."

After a few seconds of thinking, and listening to Toms struggle outside- Kit came up with an idea.

"Okay. She thinks Toms is dead right? Which means she would need a new little slave goblin right? What if you went to her base right? And told her you're looking to spark a new level of devotion and you ask to be her new little assistant. Then when she's occupied we launch a surprise attack with Toms behind her to try and snatch the wood and then she'll start shriveling up and then we just wait for her to die!"

Everyone looked at Kit. Kit stared awkwardly back at everyone, waiting for a response.

"I LIKE IT!" Devereaux smiled as he raised his hand.

Everyone else started agreeing and cheering and raising their hands to.

"Okay we got a plan. All we gotta do is execute it. We'll do it in the morning when Toms is sober from the chocolate. It will be perfect!" Isabella said.

It wasn't the plan they used, but they still got out through a perfect and flawless event.

If your definition of perfect and flawless is a marred catastrophe that almost killed everyone that is.

♀ ♀ ♀

The group remained inside the tent until they could hear Toms stop having a seizure outside.

"Do you think we can go out?" Kit asked.

Isa nodded. "The worst that could be out there is a pissed Toms, but you know you know."

The group got out of the tent to find a very cranky Toms lie upon the floor.

Pitchforks

"Sorry bud." Zayne said as he took Asher's pocket knife and started to cut him free.

Once set free Toms got up and glared at everyone. "Okay I understand why you tied me up but come on. Could have at least put me in a nice spot." He complained.

The group chuckled as Zayne helped him up.

"Okay. So do you guys have a plan for a new home here or something?"

Sydne shook her head, but kept smiling. "We have a plan on how we can escape! It'll full-proof and it'll get us out flawlessly." She said ass she held out some pages from the notebook.

Toms looked at it. His eyes widened in fear as he read the plan.

"We can't do this." He said.

"What?"

"We can't do this. She'll hear you guys throw me onto the roof or me break a window. She'll kill us all before we even have time to comprehend the fact we're dying."

Everyone stopped and looked at him, before sighing.

"What else can we do? We don't have anything besides some lamps. It's our only shot at getting home and living." Sydne said.

"The furniture here wouldn't hurt her. But I know what it would hurt." Toms smirked. "FOLLOW ME!" He yelled as he took off running into the consuming oblivion.

Everyone groaned and ran after him, still worn out from the chase they had a few hours before- but they had no choice. If they didn't follow him they'd be dead for sure.

After even more running. Running that nobody wanted to do. They came to an information tower. It's bright blue glory drawing everyone ever so closer.

"What's the point of taking us to an information tower?" Zayne asked.

"We can break the information towers! It'll annoy Jeantete and we wouldn't have such a hard time fighting her since it would just be hands and a head!

"I don't know- maybe we should look for a tape first. Just to check that everything will work out well-" Toby said, starting to back out.

"Oh hush. Those tapes are nothing but bull anyways. They'll tell you she's invincible and any idea of killing her is a pathetic fantasy. I know what we need to do. I've lived here my whole life- Please. Trust me."

Toby sighed and agreed.

Val ran around through all the displays and got everyone lamps or other heavy objects to smash the information tower with.

"On the count of three." Toms said.

"One."

"Two."

"*Trois.*"

Everyone stopped and held their breath. Nobody here spoke French.

Jeantete.

Was here.

"Oh you sweet children. You all think you're so smart…" Jeantete said as she walked out from behind the information tower.

"It's honestly quite entertaining to have watched you all. So full of life and energy. Full of hope that you'd manage to get out. Oh you sweet summer children."

Jeantete placed her hand on Asher's shoulder and begun to squeeze it.

"Don't touch him." Sydne snarled.

"Oh. I'm sorry. Would you rather me kill him?"

Sydne looked at Asher and then back to Jeantete before crossing her arms and glaring at her.

"Oh! Toms~ You we're like a son to me." She said with an eerie sweet tone in her voice.

"A son that you threw out a window?" Toms barked.

"Are we not supposed to discipline children?"

Pitchork Kids

Zayne was getting antsy. Eager to hurt her. Angry with how well she was stalling.

Without warning Zayne rained his lamp and smacked the back of her head with it.

"Fils de pute!" Jeantete muttered as she pulled her hand to the back of her head to sooth the pain and turned around.

There was Zayne. Smiling at her like nothing happened.

"It's not nice to hit people boy!" She growled, her accent slipping through.

"Oh I'm sorry. Is it not nice to steal either?" he smirked as he held up his hand, the piece of wood shining between his fingers.

"WHAT?!" Jeantete hollered as she looked down at her feet, which were mutating and turning into a gross, decomposing mess.

"GIVE THAT BACK!" She screamed as he reached up for it. But to her dismay Zayne had tossed it over to Kit who was taunting her with it.

"YOU KIDS AREN'T EXACTLY BEING NICE!" She scolded as she lunged towards Kit, only for her disgusting feet to make her fall.

"It's not nice to run a cult either you know." Kit said as he passed the wood to Toby as he ran by.

The mold was now past Jeantetes knees. She hollered but nothing changed.

"RENDEZ CELA!" She cried out in French.

"Does that mean keep going? Sorry, I don't know French" Toby teased as he threw it over to Sydne who stuffed the wood in her purse and threw it over to Toms.

Instead of brutally killing her like they wanted, they resorted to a twisted game of monkey in the middle. All of them throwing the bag to eachother as Jeantete gurgled and screamed at them, pathetically reaching for the bag but missing every time due to her body turning into some rotting mush.

She missed every single time.

Until she didn't.

Val had tossed the bag over to Dev, but underestimaited how high he'd need to throw it- it was just ever so low enough to Jeantete to raise her arm and grab it by the strap.

"SHIT!" Val cursed as he watched Jeantete pull the bag to herself and start to open up the bag.

"WHAT DO WE DO. WHAT DO WE DO." Kit panicked.

Jeantete opened the bag and pulled out the wood, the rotting now reversing itself at an alarming rate.

"I really didn't wanna do this, but." Toms muttered as he took the lamp next to Devereaux.

He stabbed his lamp into Jeantetes rotting back and used it to launch himself in front of her.

Once the rot healed around the back she screamed in pain. Her hand jolting out- allowing Toms to smash the wood with the other lamp.

The wood smashed into hundreds of pieces and let out a giant cloud of sawdust.

"YOU LITTLE PRICKS!" Jeantete yelled as she turned into a giant log monster.

Her head nearly invisible from the ground, her arms stretching out for miles and her feet clumped together into a disgusting clump of mold that slithered her around.

Jeantete smirked and picked up Val and Isabella. They screeched and squirmed in her tight grip.

"IF YOU REALLY THINK YOU'RE ALL SO HIGH ANd MIGHTY. WHY CAN'T YOU GET ME?!" She taunted as she shook around Isa and Val, their screams echoing in the halls.

"Crap. What do we do." Sydne asked.

"We cut off her arms, that's what we do." Asher said.

"How do we get to said arms?" Kit scolded.

"Now that is what I call a high-quality question." Asher joked. A very sad and pathetic attempt to lighten the mood.

"We need to get her down, but we'd take forever to scoop out that mold." Toms said.

Kit suddenly grabbed Ashers shoulder and squeezed it.

"Ash. Give me your pocket knife." Kit sad.

Asher looked at him with confusion, but still gave him the knife without any hesitation.

"ONE OF YOU TWO GET YOUR HANDS FREE!" Kit shouted.

Val wiggled one of his arms free and waved it around in the air.

"HERE!" Kit said as he threw the knife at Val. Just a friendly reminder throwing knives at people is not good, especially if their Val.

Val did grab the knife, and nobody got stabbed and died of blood loss or got stabbed in an important part of their body.

All that happened was that Val grabbed it from the blade.

Val's hand started to bleed all over his arm. His pearly white bone showing through his hand.

Val screamed in pain, yet somehow through a miracle he didn't drop the knife. Just kinda screamed and cried.

"I'M SO SORRY!" Kit shouted from down below.

Blood started to drip from Val's hand onto Jeantete's decomposing arm and onto the floor.

"It's fine..." Val cried out as he clutched the knife by the handle, the blood staining the blue steel blade and dripping onto the handle.

Through his loud sobs of pain, Val started slowly sawing Jeantetes tough skin with the knife.

The knife was sharp and despite having a smooth blade, did a good job at slowly cutting the skin.

Jeantete roared and attempted to flick Val away, but the knife he was using was stuck so far down into her thick skin that he could hold on.

Eventually Val managed to cut off Jeantet's han, allowing it to fall off and Val get medical help- or tape help if you prefer, for his sad, sad hand.

Jeantete screeched and let go of Isabella to cover the little blood leaking from her decapitaited hand.

"HAH WE'RE FREE!" Isa cheered as Asher and Devereaux patched up Val's hand.

"COMMENT OSES-TU. JE POSSÈDE CET ENDROIT ET VOUS OSEZ ME MANQUER DE RESPECT!" Jeantete hollered.

The group looked up at her as she shrunk into the mold into her legs and cried in pain and agony.

She cried and yelled- though her voice getting warped and intelligible. The pile of mold got bigger and bigger, sucking in the large body that reign above it more and more.

Eventually the room grew still and quiet, and the mold shriveled into the ground- the concrete now being dyed green.

"Oh my god." Toby muttered as he looked at the empty store.

The sense of fear had dissipated from the air, they felt like they could finally breathe. Their biggest concern was gone.

"She's gone... we're free..." Kit marveled. Then he remembered that Toms smashed the wood- their one way out.

"We're not free- just not in danger..." Sydne explained.

Everyone stood around silently for about five minutes, admiring the sense of safety and the amazing feat they had just done.

The air felt soft. Breathable. It wasn't an internal fight every breath.

It was a beautiful feeling. It felt amazing to finally feel safe and free.

Toms eyes were taken over with a powerful sting. He dug the palms of his hands into his eyes to soothe the pain.

When he revealed his eyes, he had shining yellow gear iris' and neon blue pupils. In both eyes.

A permanent reminder of his wasted childhood. The childhood he wasted being a cult leaders assistant.

"Oh ho ho! I'm proud of you all!" A voice from oblivion boomed.

"WHO ARE YOU. WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE?!" Sydne screamed.

"You only say that in Discord calls-" Kit laughed.

Sydne slapped Kit's shoulder.

"You don't know me. I don't know you. But I have been waiting ages for someone to take Jeantete down- and you guys did it.

Thank you- thank you so much. You guys have saved me." The voice thanked.

Everyone kept quiet and looked cautiously at eachother.

"So- who are you?" Zayne asked.

The voice laughed, a wave of fog washed over them. "I am the store of course!" It said.

"Wait- you weren't asleep- the notebook said you we're." Asher exclaimed.

"Oh. I was. But then you guys came- you made such a ruckus I couldn't stay asleep. You are truly a wonderful group of children. I can't believe how lucky I am to be graced with your presence." It said.

"Wait- so can you send us home?!" Val asked.

"Yes son. Yes I can."

Everyone started to squeal.

"I know you all want to go back to Earth. But you guys don't belong there. I can send you where you do belong. Where Threeta was from."

Before anyone could open their mouths to ask a question a shimmering gold portal formed below their feet.

"Enjoy your true home children." The voice said as everyone screamed and fell through.

That portal. That portal was the most important thing that could have happened to this world. That portal set the path to everything being fixed. That portal led the Pitchfork Kids to the place they were born. The place they belonged. The place they meant to fix.

Everything would have been perfect.

On the other side of that portal they all fell into the cotton-like grass, pastel green fog surrounding them in a brand new place.

They weren't in front of their house.

Hell, they weren't even on earth.

They were in a new place.

Pitchfork Kids

New clothes, new bodies, new rules, new society, new everything.

I welcome you all.

To Pitchfork Green Cloud.

The end of this world.

The beginning of another.

- R. F. W.

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Pitchfork Kids