

~COLE~

~November 5th, 2016, 8:15 pm~

Somewhere in the dark, almost empty streets of the west district, Ashley could be seen walking away from her school campus and towards her first bus stop. She was wearing a pink sweater over a burgundy, rounded skirt. She also wore white buckle shoes with black, knee high socks, with her brown, one strap satchel on her left side. Ashley also had her blue ear plugs in her ears, playing R&B music from her phone as she walked towards the bus stop, smiling from the music and mouthing the words to keep her occupied. She reached her stop and stood in place for a moment, smiling as she slightly bobbed her head to the music whilst thinking back to a few days ago when she was talking to Jacob, five minutes after Jacob dropped off Haley.

(Ashley: "For someone so eccentric I honestly thought you'd be boring~")

Jacob: "Well there's a lot about me you don't know...~ I just wish your friend could stay a night long enough to see it in bed~"

Ashely: "Well if you ask me... It looks like she's missing out~")

Ashely stopped thinking before taking the earplugs out of her ear and removing the cord from her phone, proceeding to neatly wrap them up in order to put them away. She suddenly felt a tap on her shoulder, followed by the deep, grim sounding voice of a male.

???: "Hey--"

Ashley began to turn her head in order to acknowledge the man behind her, but almost immediately before she could get a long enough look, the pale fist of the same male had swiftly been thrown across her face, slugging her jaw and smashing in her cheek.



Ashley grunted in sudden shock, stumbling back as she lost her vision for a short period of time. She tried to wipe her mouth as she opened her eyes for a split second to see that there was no one behind her. She then felt a tight, sudden grip on her left right arm as she was quickly swung into the dark alleyway next to her. Confused and afraid, she shrieked as she tried to run forward, attempting to get away from the assaulting male behind her. The male immediately caught up with her before she could get away, pulling her left arm back and clutching tightly on the back of her neck as he dug his knee into the back of one of Ashley's, brutally taking her to the ground as the right side of her face hit the pavement and her satchel and phone flew elsewhere. The male then proceeded to grab both her wrists with his right hand, roughly restraining her as she yelled and screamed, pleading for the man to stop.

"GOD, PLEASE, DON'T!!! STO--"

The man then delivered another blow to the back of her head, silence her screaming for a short moment as she grunted loudly, shrieking terribly from the pain. Before continuing, the man had seemed to pick up Ashley's phone, texting someone using her messaging app as she squirmed. After finishing, he deleted the message before throwing away the phone and promptly proceeded to snatch down Ashley's skirt and panties, causing Ashley's eyes to widen in terror as she could hear the sound of both her and the man's bottoms being stripped down. She started to sob loudly, desperately squirming and struggling as her hollering persisted.

"... W-Wait, NO!.. SIR, PLEASE--"

Ashley was interrupted as the man's face came close to her. A wide, malevolent grin, brimming with confidence and conceit, etched across his face as he spoke deeply in her ear, bearing a seductive yet gruesome tone., causing her to stop cold.

"Stop struggling..."

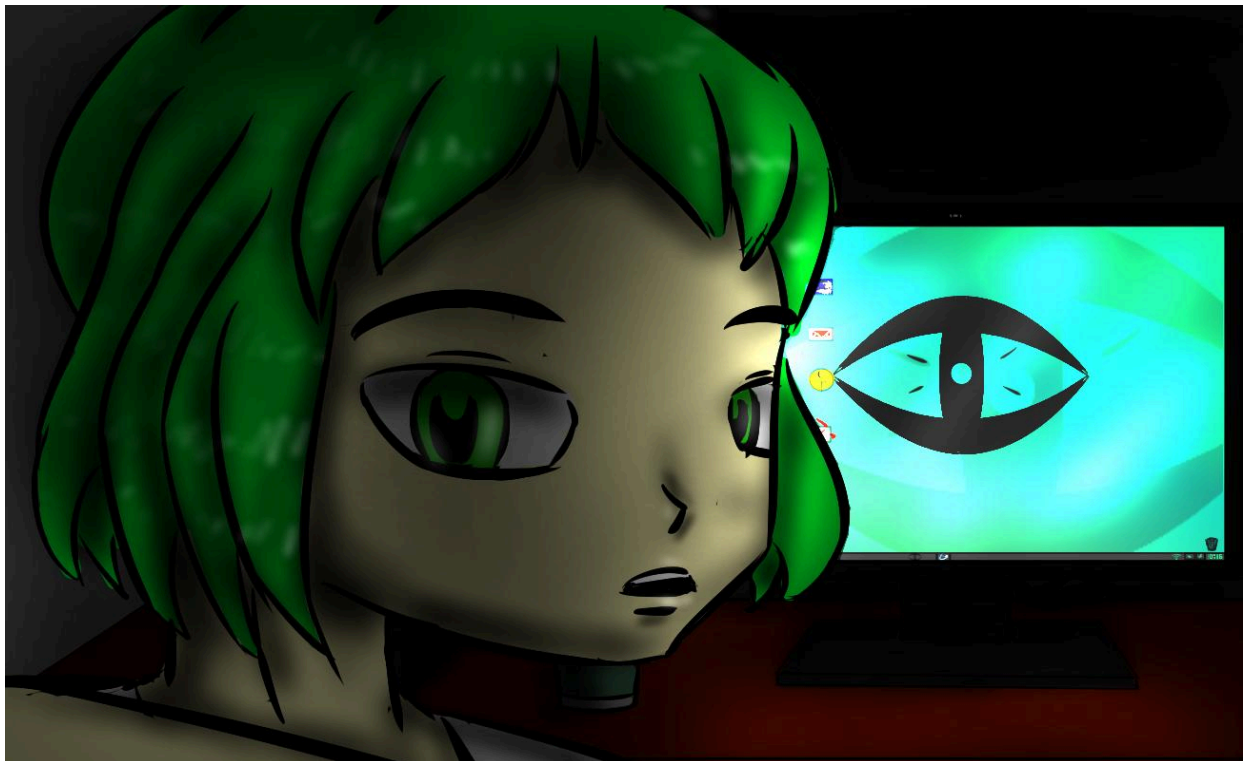
Ashley's bruised and bleeding face became riddled with dreadful horror and confusion as the sound of the man's voice seemed to give her the true and terribly apprehensive realization of what was about to happen. She then looked forward, trembling with panic as she suddenly felt the sensation of her insides being brutally penetrated. She let out a raspy, guttural shriek as she felt the length of the man's penis, entering several inches deep within her womb, roughly rubbing against her walls. Her gagging sounds and cries of pain worsened as the man continued to roughly, insert himself in and out of Ashley, violently pounding against her as he grunted loudly. Ashley screamed in agony and overbearing anguish as the thrust slowly got faster and faster. The man let go of Ashley's wrist, gripping uncomfortably tight on her waists as he continued to wedge deeper in the back of Ashley's knee. Ashley wailed in anguish, trying to claw herself away as the man grabbed her hair by the back of her head and slammed her forehead into the pavement, creating a bloody gash in her head. She gasped in shock as the continued trauma towards her skull caused a low ringing in her head, silencing her as she could do nothing else but stare at the ground. She looked down at the drops of blood flowing from her face and hitting the ground as she began fearing for her life in ways she herself could not understand, gawking terribly at the sight of her blood loss. Before she could do or say anything else, the man proceeded to smash her head in the ground once more, this time crushing her nose in the process, and causing more blood to gush out. The sudden and forceful impact caused the ringing in her ears to deafen all other sound, silencing her completely as her terribly horrified face became dulled down to that of confusion and distress. Her vision blurred immensely as she lost the ability to move, whilst Ashley's static expression persisted. Seeing this, The man took it upon himself to continue handling her like a ragdoll. The man suddenly stopped, seeming to hear something as he immediately let himself out from inside of Ashley and ran into the darkness of the alleyway, grabbing Ashley's phone at the same time. Ashley's expression stayed stagnant as the bus had arrived, and the gleam from the headlights shined on Ashley's twitching body.

-Chapter 6-
The Concept Of DEath

~November 7th, 2016, 10:15 am~

Haley was wearing a white t-shirt and grey boy shorts, and had been sitting in front of her desktop in her dark room, wearing a headset as she checked her employee profile. Her dull expression lay still amongst her wandering eyes as she focused on her computer screen, whilst her TV stayed on the news channel at low volume. Her phone lay face up on the desk to her left as she began to have split second flashbacks of her time at botin de la vida, including almost specifically her time with Tiffany and Red, as well as both her and Tiffany moving the drugs around the town, and the terrible end of the party that followed. She stopped as she closed out one of the windows in her browser, sitting back in her chair before taking off her headset, sighing as she sat still

for a short moment. Suddenly, her phone let out two vibrations, prompting her to turn her head and look at it's screen, seeing clearly that it was Jacob. She picked up her phone and opened the messaging app to see a message from him reading "So how was the beach?... I heard you had a pretty wicked night", followed by a wink emoji. Haley's expression softened, proceeding to text Jacob back as she was interrupted by another message in the background from Tina. She stopped for a minute before continuing to text Jacob a message reading "It was okay. Thanks for asking.". She sent the message to Jacob before turning her attention to Tina's contact profile, opening the messaging app from her end as she looked at a text that read "If you're not too busy, can you come to Sown County Hospital, love?...". Haley looked in confusion as she hesitated to respond, trying to think of a reason as to why she would need to go to the hospital. Suddenly, as she continued to stare at her phone screen, Tina had sent another message reading "Ashley's in the hospital, she's been hurt...". Haley's eyes widened greatly as she became baffled by the messages that she had just read. Suddenly, the news channel had caught her attention as she turned her chair around to look at the screen, listening to what the anchor had to say.



News Anchor: [Another tragic disaster was reported this morning as the notorious "Sweet Dream" takes yet *another* victim. Nineteen year old Ashley Foust was found unconscious in an alleyway last night near West District Community College, and was found naked from the waist down. Forensics say that she was brutally raped before taking massive blows to the head, and was hospitalized as a result...]

Haley's confused expression had combined with that of fear as she silently watched the news report, almost puzzled by the events that had been described.

~Two Hours Earlier...~

Benny, who could be seen driving down a busy street in a black, 2015 Jaguar XF, was on his way from work early, heading towards Sown County Hospital. He was still in his work clothes, a black hoodie and brown cargo pants. Benny tried his best to dash through traffic and reach Ashley and the others in as little enough time as possible. Moments later, Benny had arrived at the hospital, quickly parked his car, and swiftly walked inside to sign himself in as a visitor.

Meanwhile, a couple of police officers could be seen standing in front of a closed room door, including a pale skin, male detective, wearing a black leather coat over a blue t-shirt and jeans, sporting short black hair with his badge worn on his belt with the initials "F.P.D.". The detective himself was speaking to a confused and perturbed Chloe, who was wearing a blue jean jacket with a black and white striped shirt to go underneath, and black jeans pants. The detective continued to question Chloe about her older cousin, regarding the incident.

Detective: "The longer you take to fidget around and keep quiet, the more innocent lives we have to scoop up from the same maniac that did this to your cousin... If you two are as close as you say you are then we're gonna need something a little bit more than some 'I dunno's'..."

Chloe: "A-And I'm *telling* you I don't know *anything else* from her personal life!... I mean, I know she goes to school, and I know she helps take *me* to school sometimes, but that's it. You think I would hold out on details about my cousin if she was *raped!?!...*"

Detective: "Any other friends that she might've brought back to the house?... Anyone she could've talked to, uh... Somebody else's friend we can talk to, anything--"

Chloe: "Dude, look, I-I can't even seriously answer you anymore, what do you expect me to tell you when I don't even know w-what's going on!?... Can you just... PLEASE, leave me alone, or... Wait for someone else?!"

Detective: "Look, little girl, my patience with you is running thin along with our leads... I haven't slept for two days and I missed my morning coffee for this... Your cousin is lucky to be alive right now! And if I found out--"

Benny: "*Hey!...*"

Without another word exchanged, Benny had slipped in between Chloe and the detective, interrupting him as he spoke out on Chloe's behalf.

"Is there a problem here, detective?..."

- "... Why yes, there is... The latest victim of this country's most infamous *serial rapist murderer*, and I'm denied an audience... I've got no witnesses, no backstory, no description, and no one else in relation to this invisible nut case... And to top it all off, I've got some random guy in front of me intruding on my investigation. But if you wanna talk that bad, maybe you can help your friend here out while I *continue*."

-“Sorry, but I’m not too fond of you talking to her in that tone... Let alone either of us...”

-“And who are you supposed to be?”

-“I’m her other cousin’s boyfriend... Which, by association, makes the woman inside that room one of my top priorities at the moment... And I refuse to allow you to harass her any further from now. So consider me a close family member of hers and direct whatever questions you had for her to me... *Then* you can continue...”

Benny’s cold, sullen expression lay plain on his face as he crossed his arms and stared into the detective’s eyes. The detective, hesitant to allow this to escalate any further, took heed before acting upon impulse, looking at Benny from the corner of his eye with an indecisive scowl. Understanding that further pestering with Benny would cause much more trouble for everyone, he conceded, proceeding to stick his hand out, offering a handshake, so as to properly introduce himself.

“... Well then... Fine, I’ll bite the bullet... Detective Manni--”

-“*Your name*... Is of no importance to me...”

The man looked at Benny’s face, displeased with Benny’s attitude. He analyzed Benny’s cold, immovable expression, yielding to Benny’s presence yet again as he retreated, taking a pen and paper out of his coat pocket and beginning to question Benny.



“... R-Right... Anyways...”

Many moments later, the detective had gone away and Angela, Morgan, and Tina had all arrived at the hospital, standing along with Chloe and Benny. Angela was wearing a blue, loose-fit, off the shoulder blouse with tight black jeans and sandals, while Tina wore her green sweater over black short shorts and white, flat sneakers. Morgan was wearing a black cargo jacket with grey shirt underneath, as well as grey cargo pants and black and white flat sneakers, topped off with her black beanie. The group stood around in a semi circle as they listened to one of the female doctors of the hospital. She was tall with long, brown hair, and the name-tag on her white lab coat read "Pamela".

Pamela: "She came in two days ago around nine o'clock in the morning... One of the night time bus drivers found her lying unconscious in the alleyway near the college. She didn't wake up until the next day, but due to the lack of information she was able to provide within her state at the time... We were only able to contact you all afterwards... Whenever she was able to speak properly, that is. She suffered many vulva contusions as well as perennial bruises and internal vaginal lacerations... Amongst that, she's also suffering from a mild concussion caused by two blows to the back and front of the head... And a broken nose... Above all, she's healing, but... Through further diagnostic and treatment... We've recently moved to assume that Ashley might have gotten some permanent brain damage... We don't know how bad it is yet, but... We're working on further updates..."

Chloe: "So... She's still gonna be okay though, right?..."

Pamela: "She'll be fine, but... Until we're able to see any progress... We don't know how long it'll be before she can go home..."

Benny: "It's fine, Pamela, just take your time..."

Pamela: "I want you all to know that I truly do understand how you guys must feel right now... One of my own sisters... She-... About a year ago... *Also* fell victim to that-... *That... Thing...* Accept... She didn't make it out alive... Because of her, I make it my business to treat *every* victim of sexual assault that comes through these doors... And Ashley here... She's no different."

Angela: "Pamela, thank you so much for helping out my cousin, you have *no idea* how much it means to us..."

Pamela: "It's okay, really... In truth, this is as much personal for me as any of you. But I am just doing my job in the end... Ashley's asleep right now, and... I'm assuming you all live with her, so, If you all wanna sit in there with her until she wakes up, or even spend the whole day with her, that's fine. There's a cafeteria downstairs. There's also a family lounge room down the hallway to your right."

Benny: "Thank you, Pamela... We really appreciate your help."

Pamela: "Of course... Um, before I go, Ashley talked about another one of you all?... '*Haley*', was it?... The description sounds like my nephew's new friend. Do any of you know of an Ivan Orlov?"

Angela: "... Um... No, it doesn't ring a bell, why?..."

Pamela: "Just checking on who my nephew hangs around these days... He says he found people like him, but you never know how things end up in Full. And I'd be less of a nag if his mother wasn't so careless... Anyway, if she shows up, tell her I said 'hi' for me..."

Benny: "No problem..."

Pamela walked away from the group as they all waited a moment before sighing to themselves. Benny turned to everyone else as they began to converse with each other about the current situation.

Tina: "Well, I suppose I do speak for all of us when I say that this has been a rather gutting morning for us all, yes?..."

Angela: "I-I was at work, and... Baby, *you* called me, and... Ugh-I just... Immediately clocked out of work and called someone to cover my shift... And then, I-I picked Tina up on the way, and... I called Morgan... *This... Wow...*"

Chloe: "Hey Benny, don't you have to work?..."

Benny: "I left... Explained on the way... Got written up... No big deal..."

Tina: "I say, hoover, I myself am quite curious as to how you got here..."

Chloe: "I-I was the first person that got called, or... I guess the first person that picked up... I asked Davon to bring me up here so I could see what was going on--"

Benny: "You skipped school..."

Chloe: "Well *you* skipped *work!*... And then got *written up* for it, it's not like the same thing isn't gonna happen to *me!*... School is for *stupid* people anyways..."

Morgan: "Yo, Benny... Can I pull you to the side real quick?..."

Benny and Morgan removed themselves from the group, leaving Angela, Chloe, and Tina to themselves, allowing the two to have their side conversation. The two got close to each other and spoke low as Morgan took a short minute to herself, scratching her nose and donning her usually vexed expression before she spoke.

"... So, um... Haley's coming?..."

Benny sighed as he responded to Morgan.

-“... Well, Morgan, it *is* her friend too, it would only be fair if she knew...”

-“Yeah, but is she coming right now?”

Benny waited a moment seeming slightly agitated at Morgan's current focus. Despite the context, he tried his best to stay his tongue as he responded.

-“... N-No, no... Morgan, I, um... I don't know, I haven't talked to her yet...”

-“... Good... Then, um--...”

Morgan scratched the back of her head before gesturing her dismissive decision with her thumb, continuing to speak.

“I'm gonna go ahead and split...”

-“... Morgan, a lot worse things could happen--”

-“Yeah, okay, but my friend, slash, ex-girlfriend just got brutally raped, so I think we've already hit the pinnacle of the 'worst' for today... Listen, I ain't leavin' for half a week like before, I just don't need Haley around making things worse, so... I'm just goin' home, then I'm goin' to work... Maybe that'll restore some faith in your fairytales...”

Morgan slid past Benny as she made her way out of the hospital sector and towards the main exit. Benny kept his eye forward, staring off into space instead of turning around to say anything else. Although slightly annoyed, he sighed to himself, yielding to do or say anything else directly towards Morgan.

Benny, Angela, and Tina could later be seen in the family lounge room that was earlier mentioned by Pamela. It was dark inside; lit only by the gloomy scenery of the clouded skies, provided by the large window in the back wall. The room was of a wide rectangular shape, divided by a wall in the middle that separated the two entrances. In the section occupied by the three, an L-shaped sofa could be seen in the back of the room, and there were leather stools and cube cushions randomly assorted amongst it. On the left of the room was a counter decorated with racks of healthy snacks, microwavable food, and other shelves and compartments to accommodate any visitors. On the other side was a sink, trash can, and refrigerator. Benny was leaning on the snack counter with his arms crossed while the others had placed themselves adjacent, with Tina sitting on one of the cushion cubes with her legs crossed in, and Angela standing next to her, also with his arms crossed. Benny spoke up as to break the silence.

Benny: “Before we get into this... Chloe is busy at the moment, right?”

Angela: “I asked Pamela if she could take Chloe to the cafeteria while we talked for a moment, so... I gave Chloe about fifty dollars, and, knowing her... We might actually have a lot of time.”

Benny: "And Haley?..."

Tina: "Well, I haven't quite gotten to contacting her yet, love... Just like you asked, I slipped out while she was upstairs this morning almost as soon as Angela pulled up in the cab.... We kept things very discreet... And, I suppose, rather... You're going to explain your reasoning for all that?"

Benny: "I wanted those two, especially, not to be involved in this small little family meeting we're having... Mainly being..."

Benny paused for a moment, rubbing the back of his neck before returning to his arms to his chest and finishing his statement.

"... I think Jacob is the one who raped Ashley..."

Tina and Angela looked at each other, seeming shocked as they returned to Benny.

Tina: "I say, love, are you certain?..."

Benny: "Take it as an educated guess... His actions, his... Tone... The way he would look at every individual... I'm not the only one who thinks that something was off about him when he showed his face, am I?"

Tina: "... He is a bit *chuffed* about himself, if I might add..."

Angela: "... Oh, well..."

Angela hung her left hip to the side as she waited a moment before responding to Benny.

Angela: "I mean, in a way... He was definitely really weird... I mean, think about it, Tina, the guy just... *Strolls on in* and starts *flirting* with everyone, and he was... Talking all over the place; just... Unnecessary compliments, just to get a positive reaction out of us. And then he contradicts himself by wearing such *boring* clothing. The boy's crazy in my opinion..."

Tina: "I say, are you implying that he's some sort of *psychopath*?..."

Angela: "Honey, if the shoe fits, then wear it, but, I was just judging him off a first impression, I couldn't even imagine him going as far as... *Raping Ashley*..."

Benny: "... Well, it's like I said... This was more of an educated guess... A few weeks ago, Angela, while me and you were asleep... I heard him and Ashley talking to each other in the living room... They were both loud, but... Jacob's voice, specifically, piqued my curiosity. So, I got up to watch them in their conversation from the doorway. The conversation seemed casual, but the way he was just... *Ogling* her... Staring at her with the most... Uncomfortably interested look of his... Lecherous... Cravings hidden

deep within his eyes... I knew something was off, immediately though, when he started asking her all these questions about her private life... Her job, her love life, the type of clothing she wears, details about her daily routine... Most prominently mentioned was her school life, specifically her night classes. Due to my own suspicion, I cut him off before he could pick anything else that could be useful to him..."

Angela: "Sweetie, have you *seen* Ashley?... Just about any guy that comes her way gives her the same looks..."

Benny: "Ashley was found unconscious near her school on the fifth of November around nine o'clock... An hour after she gets out of her night classes... If I remember correctly, around that time, Angela, Haley was out for the weekend... And Jacob stayed behind for the time being... From what you've told me... Correct?..."

Angela: "... Oh my god..."

Benny: "Around that same time, I get a text from her saying she'll be staying at a friend's house for a few days... As such, we all assumed she was okay... But of course, how could we possibly assume that someone else was texting us the whole time..."

Angela: "But even if that's true, and... He *is* the one responsible... It still just doesn't make enough sense, I mean... Him and Haley have been dating for almost an entire month now, If anything, wouldn't he--And, *God forbid*... Wouldn't he have gotten to Haley first before Ashley?..."

Benny: "From what I can gather, Jacob is a methodical, self centered character... He's very careful, and particular about how he does things... And every step he takes has a reason... However, for some reason, there's a hole where his heart should be. Jacob is proud of himself... Conceited... He finds his values to be that of perfection, and by association, himself... So, in order to stay that way, he decided to keep someone around that he could seduce with his own corrupt mindset... It wasn't that hard; find a girl with an empty enough mind and, with the right tools, you could work wonders. Obviously, unfortunately for him, Haley, at the time, wasn't all too willing to satisfy his '*needs*', so, he sent her away, so as to reduce the risk of interference, and moved on to someone a little easier while he continued to program Haley's mind into believing whatever he wants her to."

Tina: "*If I may* add, love... Haley *did* tell me whenever they got home from their date that day that Jacob was rather *frisky* with his hands... After a, rather *gentlemanly*, time spent at a jazz lounge, our *bellend nutter* of a suspect took the time out of his day to introduce her to his humble villa outside of Full..."

Angela: "A villa?"

Tina: "Yes, quite... From what she told me, the man went on about his, *rather malicious* opinion, mind you... Concerning 'family' and 'freedom' and what not, ended up luring Haley to his room, and suddenly went on *rubbing* and *fondling* her about, as if it was his own business... And whenever he made his way

to her fanny, she broke free and the man took her home as frustrated and quiet as ever. My apologies for not telling you anything sooner, love, but Haley made it quite clear that she'd much rather keep that bit of information between me and her. Yet, given the situation, I feel like something like that is important... So, if you need any more proof about Jacob being a *blue balled pervert*, there you go..."

Angela: "O-Okay, fair enough, that's all the proof I need, but, Benny... If--... If you had that kind of information on him, why didn't you tell the authorities?..."

Benny: "We're talking about the accusation of an emotionally compromised socio psychopath and his mentally ill girlfriend... Both things that Haley is very well aware of. And the last thing she needs right now is some *cop* questioning her about the possibility of whether or not her boyfriend just raped and hospitalized someone... Let alone one of her friends... Besides, we already have to deal with one special brand of crazy in the form of a *five foot eight orange haired lesbian*... We don't need the other one to completely lose it... But..."

Benny's expression softened as he sighed before continuing.

Benny: "She *should* at least know what's going on..."

Angela: "... Alright then, I guess we're really putting our foot in this one..."

Tina: "I can text her right now and she can be down here in the next hour or so... It does take quite a long time to get here from home, love..."

Benny: "... Tell her to get here as soon as she can..."

Meanwhile, Haley had just found out about the event of Ashley's rape, and had just finished putting on her clothes: her regular black sweater, brown shorts with red belts, and black beanie with pins and patches. She put her spare key on a key ring attached to a random keychain, grabbed her phone, charger, and wallet, and put all items into her pockets. She quickly walked downstairs and pulled out her keys, opening the front door. As the door swung open, she was immediately greeted by Morgan, standing plainly in front of her with a confused expression across her face, causing Haley to flinch and stop cold as she stared back, bearing the same expression. The two awkwardly stared at each other before Haley tried her best to muster up some words.



“... U-Uh... Um... Morgan?...”

-“... Yeah...”

-“... Did you, um... Y-You heard... About Ashley?”

-“Yeah-yeah, I, um... I left out early... I was... Um... Gonna go home and... Just...”

Morgan looked into Haley's eyes as she tried to come up with an excuse as to why she left the hospital. Flustered by Haley's sudden appearance, Morgan tried her best to keep composure, as even she herself was unsure of why exactly she wanted to come home. She sighed before she spoke up again.

“... Look... Man... I dunno. I-I couldn't deal with all the shit... And...”

-“... You know... You... Left... For a really long time... I, um...”

Haley looked down as she rubbed her right arm, hesitating to speak for a short moment before continuing.

“... I missed you...”

Morgan's confused expression continued, as she was puzzled as to what she should say back. She instead chose silence as Haley continued.

“... I mean... I was worried... Something had made you mad... You never told me... I tried not to ask... Th-That’s all, really, I just...”

-“... Nah, I, um... I... Was, uh, dealing... With...”

Morgan got progressively more quiet, hanging her face away from Haley as she quietly mumbled to herself.

“... You... And... Him... So, I, um--”

-“What?--”

-“I left the house... Because I was pissed... Listen, I work, like, thirty minutes away from Sown county, so I’ll take you there instead of you taking a *bus* or *train* or whatever... Cool?”

“... Yeah, sure...”

Morgan waited a moment before sighing and turning around as Haley followed her out of the door. Haley turned around to close the door, locking it before looking back at Morgan as she walked off into the alleyway towards her parked car. Haley stared for a moment before letting go of the door and following Morgan to her car.

Moments later, Haley could be seen entering through the automatic sliding doors, walking immediately towards the man behind the front counter. She took out her wallet as she spoke to him.

“H-Hey, I’m here to visit someone...”

-“ID please?--”

-“Yeah, yeah, just take it--”

-“Whoa, calm down, you’ll get your pass... What’s the patient’s name?...”

-“Ashley Lianne Foust...”

Haley anxiously waited to get her pass as she looked around to survey the hospital lobby. Suddenly, coming in through one of the automatic doors, Benny could be seen looking around before eventually spotting Haley and calling for her name.

“Haley!...”

Haley turned to the sound of Benny’s voice as Benny quickly made his way towards her. As they got close together, a slowly rising state of panic started to form within Haley. Her voice cracked lowly as she spoke to Benny.

"I-I heard, on the news and from Tina, i-is she--"

- "She's fine... And she's healing..."

Haley sighed in relief as the man behind the counter got her attention, so as to give her her visitor's pass. Haley took the pass as she turned her head back to Benny. Her slight body language indicated her amounts of anxiety and distress as she struggled to speak up, eventually being able to form words for herself.

"... Ah--... Benny, I didn't know what to do, I-I got out of my chair as soon as I finished watching the news report, it--... This happened two days ago... *Two days*, Benny... Is there.... Is there anything *else* wrong with her?"

- "... She's currently suffering from mild brain damage in her frontal lobe... She keeps falling asleep... Her words get slurred every now and then... She's got mood swings too... We don't know if it's permanent, but we're waiting on results... We're planning on leaving in a bit and coming back tomorrow... In my opinion... It's best you just not see her right now... She might not even be awake enough to register your face."

- "Okay... I can deal with that..."

- "How did you get here so fast though? I thought you would've taken the bus. It took you, like.... Forty five minutes..."

- "... Um... Morgan took me..."

- "... Oh..."

- "... Guess nothing changes, even after a few weeks, huh?..."

Haley looked down at the ground, holding herself gently as Benny's soft eyed expression watched in sympathy. He waited a short moment before speaking up to her.

"... Hey, don't worry about all that, alright?... You don't need to be putting so much stress on yourself..."

- "I don't know which part to be worried about the most... But I'm here now, so..."

- "... Yeah... Um... Me, you... And the others... We need to talk."

- "... Um..."

Haley looked at Benny with a face of slight confusion as Benny stayed silent for a moment before speaking again.

“... Just follow me...”

Meanwhile, Chloe could be seen sitting outside of the hospital on a bench, facing part of the parking lot with an empty styrofoam box of what used to be hospital cafeteria food. The air was still, and the bleak grey sky was covered with clouds. Chloe's usually happy expression seemed occupied with one that seemed much more absent minded. She swung her legs back and forth, gently kicking the ground with her heels as she spaced out. She felt a vibration under her butt as she pulled her phone out to see that Davon was calling her. Her expression became filled with joy as she answered the phone, speaking with a goofy tone.

“Hellooooo?...~”

[“H-Hey, u-um... Chloe, uh... Hi?...”]

“Oh, well, how's it goin', 'Cutie-bob Awkward-pants'?... Did ya' miss me?...~ Did you forget my birthday again?~”

[“Yyyeah, I um--”]

“Ugh, it's okay, Davon, It's April fourteenth, but you can get me presents now if you want.~ Anyway, we're leaving the hospital in about twenty minutes, so, just be here by then and we can hang out!”

[“N-No, Chloe, that's-th-that's actually... Um... Why I called--”]

“Yeah, bae, you NEVER call me, I always have to call you first.~ I mean, I don't have a problem with It, I think it's really *manly* of you!--”

[DO YOU EVER SHUT UP?...]

Chloe's face became stoned with shock as she grew silent, allowing Davon to pause for a moment before he spoke again.

[... I don't wanna-ugh--... I don't wanna hang out with you... *Any*more, okay, I--...]

“... What?...”

[Chloe, I-I get it, okay, I get that you helped me keep my job for a little while longer, but... Skipping class all the time... I-we-ugh-we can't... *Keep* doing that. Okay?... The school called my mom, and... Ugh, we almost got suspended, and... I mean, you're cute and all, but... It's affecting my grades, and--]

“Wha--... But--... Well if I'm so *cute* then why are you just... Bailing out on me? I thought you *liked* skipping class, that's why I--”

[NO, Chloe, I-I only did it for you because I was... I-I was *scared* of what would happen; i-if you would *tell* someone, or... J-Just anything, but we've been *caught*, Chloe... The principal wants to see us first thing in the morning... Plus... YOU, you're just... So *intense*, and just... *Always hungry*, I'm always taking you to get something to eat, and then you never have any money for *gas*, and--... Look, I just *can't*, okay... It's like... I mean... I just feel like you're kind of an, u-um... uh--... A *ditz*?... And toxic?... S-Sometimes, w-well... M-Most-Most... Times, you just--]

Chloe's shocked expression slowly turned into that of anger as she heard the word "ditz" utter from Davon's mouth. She eventually cut him off, shouting as she began to rant wildly with him over the phone.

"OH YEAH?! W-WELL, SCREW YOU, W-WHAT DO YOU KNOW? Y-YOU WOULDN'T EVEN KNOW WHAT A 'DITZ' WAS IF IT HIT THAT CRAPPY CAR OF YOURS ANYWAY! Y-YOU'RE JUST SOME... AWKWARD BOY WHO GOT LUCKY BECAUSE I *YELLED* AT SOMEONE, SO, WHO CARES!? I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU AT ALL, WHY WOULD I!? A-AND HERE'S A '*P-PRO-TIP*' FOR YOU... YOU'RE NOT EVEN TH-THAT CUTE! I-I BET I COULD FIND WAY CUTER GUYS THAN *YOU*! S-SO DON'T EVEN WORRY, 'CAUSE, AS OF NOW, YOU'RE D-DEAD TO ME! THAT'S RIGHT, DON'T EVEN *SPEAK* TO ME IN THE HALLWAYS TOMORROW, CAUSE I'M JUST GONNA *TURN AWAY* AND--"

Chloe stopped herself as she heard the tone on her phone indicating that Davon had hung up. Wildly frustrated and angered, her expression met cleanly with shock as she looked at her phone, baffled by Davon's sudden dismissive action. She screamed as loud as she could as she threw the phone across from her and towards the pavement, smashing the phone as it bounced up and down. She immediately realized that she had thrown her phone as she groaned, annoyed that her phone had broken, before standing up from her seat and throwing her arms across her chest.



Elsewhere, Haley could be seen walking behind Benny inside the family lounge. Benny stood away from Haley as Angela walked up to her and hugged her as Haley hugged back. Angela spoke up as she let go of Haley.

Angela: "How's it goin' girl?..."

Tina: "Ah, yes, how was the ride over as well?... If anything, I'd say you arrived here rather quickly..."

Haley: "Yeah, it, um... Wasn't very long... Where's Chloe?"

Angela: "Well... Benny figured she should be away from the group while we had this conversation..."

Haley: "... Well, what kind of conversation is it?..."

Angela turned her head right to look at Benny before taking a few steps back. The group gave Haley a nervous look, waiting a moment before Benny spoke up, prompting Haley to respond.

"As you know, Ashley was raped on one of the nights that you were away for... And Jacob wasn't with you at all? He didn't keep in contact with you, or... Visit you over the weekend or anything?"

- "No, he stayed behind, um... He had to watch his house while it was being fumigated. Why?... Is there a problem concerning Jacob?... Is he okay?..."

-“... The person who raped Ashley, we, um...”

Benny sighed as he swallowed his feeling of worry and tension. He then waited a moment before opening his mouth and speaking to Haley.

“We think it was Jacob...”

Haley's eyes widened at Benny's claim. Her face filled with wild confusion and disarray as she took a step back, uncertain as to how she should respond. She looked at each of them, as she noticed they shared the same sorrowful expression on their face, before speaking up.

Haley: “... Jacob?... *Sweet Dream*, is... is Jacob?... Ah--... *Off of what proof!?*”

Tina: “Well, love, we... Don't really have any solid... *Physical* evidence other than a text sent to Benny from Angela's phone during the time of the event... However due to the mental aspect of it, followed by the timing, we came to a... Family agreement that he was the one responsible and thought we'd give you the news...”

Haley: “‘Give me the news’? You just told me that my boyfriend is the person behind the rape of one of my closest friends!”

Angela: “Haley, he's crazy! The boy isn't right!”

Haley: “‘Crazy’?... You all just accused someone of raping someone else because you think he's weird and *he's* crazy!?... A-And then you expect me to just... Go along with it and believe it without anything else behind it to back it up?!... I've been dating Jacob for over a month now, and... *Yeah*, he might be a little full of himself... But... To think he would go so far as to do this?... Just... How could you even say that about someone else and you barely even know who they are!?...”

Tina: “... Well, um... To be fair, love... I might have... Leaked a few details about you and him regarding your date the first time he arrived at our home...”

Haley looked at Tina with shock, complexed as to the reveal of Tina's confession, speaking to her directly

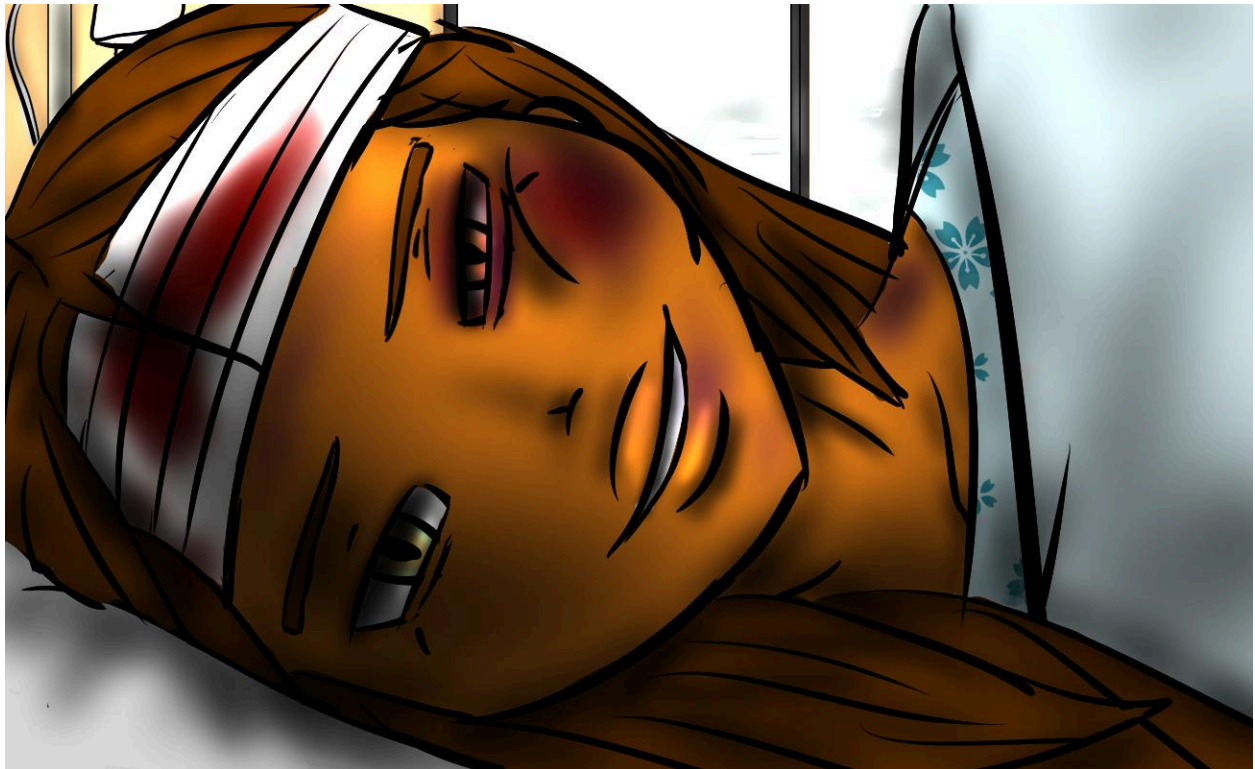
-“... *You told them?...*”

-“Y-Yes, love, well... I figured at the time that it would be most wise to inform them, given the circumstance of the topic, I--... I'm sorry, Haley, I know that that was a very sensitive detail about you, but I-I thought it would help all of us if we just--”

Haley gave Tina an intense look of confusion, bewildered as to the sudden reveal of Tina's betrayal of privacy. She immediately turned around and left the room, storming off into the lit hallway. The other three, disheartened, hung their heads as they did nothing, allowing her to leave the room. Haley walked off, hanging her head in

confusion as she held herself tightly. She suddenly stopped cold, widening her eyes as she realized that she had almost passed Ashley's room. She looked to her left to see Ashley's door cracked open, thinking to herself about Benny's words. Without another second standing still, she averted her attention to Ashley's room, opening the door to see her. Haley's expression turned to sorrow as she bore witness to Ashley, who was currently sleeping in her hospital bed, wearing a white hospital gown. Her forehead was wrapped in bandages and her face was badly bruised, along with a white patch over her swollen nose. She had wires hooked up to her body, which was covered by her gown and bed cover, all of which were hooked up to a heart monitor, as well as an IV needle in her arm, and a clear oxygen mask hooked up to a bag of morphine. The hospital room was of average size, having much room to walk around it as the bed was closer towards the wall that had a window with red curtains over a long couch. There was a table near her bed with food, and another one far adjacent to the bed with stuffed animals and "get well soon" balloons. Mounted above the table was a flat screen TV turned onto the news channel, and in front of the room was a door leading to the bathroom. Adjacent of the door was a sink under several counter doors, and the rest of the room was covered with other hospital accessories. Haley hesitated before she eventually walked closer to Ashley. As she met with Ashley's bed, she reached her hand out towards her to touch her face. Suddenly, Ashley's eyes started to slowly blink open. Her tired eyes lay drowsy and low upon her face as she turned her head towards Haley, cracking a light smile at the sight of Haley's face. She spoke slowly with a tired crack in her voice, addressing Haley's presence.

"... How's it goin', Spacegirl..."



"... Ashley..."



-“I was wondering when you would come to visit me...~ But, who’d blame you for not wanting to see me like this...”

-“... Ashley, you... I-I can’t believe... *This...* Happened... To *you...*”

-“... What?... This?...”

Ashley spoke in a joking manner as she responded to Haley.

“I’ll be okay, Haley... The doctors say I should be okay... I believe them... For the most part... But I’m always so tired now... I wake up and I get a few minutes to eat before I doze off on everyone... A lot of people I know came in today and gave me presents and “get well soon” cards... Everyone’s so worried about me... I’m only worried about whether or not my phone survived the attack.~”

Ashley giggled to herself in an attempt to make Haley laugh, looking towards the TV as she finished. Haley looked at Ashley with pity and sorrow. Her heart ached as she held Ashley’s hand before opening her mouth to speak again.

“... Ashley... Who did this to you?...”

“... I don’t know... But, whoever they are... I don’t think I like them very much.~ They do seem pretty violent.”

Ashley responded with humor, yet again, as Haley yielded to any response to Ashley's words. Ashley turned her head, looking into Haley's eyes as she smiled. Her glossy eyes fought back tears as she spoke once more.

"I'm just happy you're okay, spacegirl..."

Haley looked into Ashley's eyes with despair, terribly saddened by Ashley's miserable state. Ashley's grip on Haley's hand softened as she began to doze back off. As Ashley's eyes began to close, Benny could be seen standing in the door with his hands in his pockets, looking at Haley with a deep expression of woe. Haley hung her head as she let go of Ashley's hand, standing still for several moments before eventually turning around and walking towards the door. She kept her head down, refusing to look at Benny until she eventually got closer to him. She took a quick glance at him before looking away, holding herself as she stuttered in her words.

"... I-I'm... I'm just gonna... I'm gonna go..."

Haley stopped speaking as she slid past Benny, who moved his body aside. She slowly walked out of the hospital section and towards the nearest exit she could find. Benny watched Haley leave, dispirited by her dismissive nature towards him, before turning his attention towards Ashley's sleeping body. He sighed to himself as he continued to do nothing else but look at Ashley from afar.

Sometime later in the day, Haley had returned to her home, sitting in front of her desktop computer in the dark. She rested her elbows on the desk, laying her head on her left fist as she used her other hand to slowly tap the screen of her phone. Jacob's contact had been opened in its chat window and pulled up on the picture of Tiffany that he had previously sent her. On the monitor screen was a video chat line, showing Ivan, Donn, and Grehta & Anais in three different windows. From what could be seen, Ivan was wearing a yellow t-shirt while Donn was wearing a black t-shirt and bullet necklace, and Grehta and Anais both wore white t-shirts. The three were talking to each other about a topic that was previously brought up earlier as Haley sat in silence, staring down at her phone screen with her usually vacant expression.

Ivan: ["I MEAN, it's not like I WANTED to be that wasted!... At least, I don't THINK so... Most of the party before the shooting is PRETTY MUCH a blur..."]

Anais: ["Well DUH, Einstein, geez... That's how alcohol works! You get hella hammered, right, hella hammered... And then you pass out! And it's like nothing ever happened, geez!..."]

Donn: ["Well, I mean... Stuff did happen..."]

Ivan: ["Like what!?"]

Donn: ["You said Anais was pretty hot, and then you two made out later..."]

Ivan: ["WE DID WHAT!?... I DID WHAT!?"]

Anais: ["DONN, YOU IDIOT, YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO TELL HIM THAT!"]

Donn: ["*Oh, fuck... Um... Oops?*"]

Ivan: ["EWW!"]

Grehta: ["Donn... I miss you.~"]

Donn: ["Same here, Gren'..."]

Ivan: ["*God, DONN, way to HIDE a SECRET!... WHATEVER, what happens at the Spoils Of Life STAYS at the Spoils Of Life! ANYWAYS, we were ALL pretty messed up! ESPECIALLY you, Haley, you were all KINDS of SCREWED!... Like... The guy pointed the gun at you and you just KEPT ON LAUGHING, it was NUTS!*"]

Anais: ["*Yeah Haley, you were SO TURNT! You did all KINDS of stuff!... One day I wanna get as brave as you! And then I can be as LIT as you! You're goals, Haley, geez, you're goals!*"]

Haley: "Gee, guys, thanks... Really means a lot..."

Ivan: ["*Hey, Haley, you okay?... You seem A LOT more down in the dumps for some reason... DID SOMETHING HAPPEN BACK AT THE BEACH?... I swear, you can tell us!... You know that!*"]

Haley: "Nah, my, um... My friend... Earlier today. I found out she had been in the hospital while I was gone..."

Anais: ["*Oh, no! Is she okay!?*"]

Haley: "Yeah, she's... She'll live..."

Donn: ["*What happened to her?...*"]

Haley: "... She was raped... Brutalized into submission... Suffered several blows to the head... She may be dealing with some permanent brain damage, but no one knows how serious it is yet..."

Ivan: ["*ASHLEY FOUST!?!... She's all OVER the news today!... Everyone's raving that she made it out ALIVE, if anything, a-at least where I AM... It was by that guy, 'Sweet Dream', right!?*"]

Haley: "Yeah... Sweet Dream..."

Donn: ["*Do you want us to come over there and visit you?...*"]

Grehta: ["*We could rent a room...*"]

Haley: "Nah, it's fine... It just kind of sucks that she's there, this'll all... Pass over, eventually..."

Ivan: ["Oh, man, I TELL YA', Haley, if anyone knows that feeling, I CERTAINLY do... A year ago, my aunt Tiffany was KILLED by Sweet Dream... We had to bury the body and EVERYTHING..."]

Haley: "Oh, Ivan, I'm sorry..."

Ivan: ["It's okay! Really!... I-I mean... I wasn't the closest to her, but she would visit me A LOT, you know?... Some of the COOLEST MEMORIES I ever had were with her!... *She was super young though; I think she was only about FOUR or FIVE years older than me at the time!... For someone with such a mature mindset, she really* liked to have fun, and ALWAYS made a point to wear AND LOOK a certain way in some *pretty* OUTLANDISH stuff! Like having half shaved hair and pretty looking knee highs!...]

Haley's tapping stopped as she suddenly realized that the description of Ivan's aunt matched that of the Tiffany that she was currently looking at on her phone. Still staring at the picture, her disinterested expression turned to mild confusion as her body stopped cold and mouth parted.

Donn: ["... Yo?"]

Ivan: ["Hey, Haley!? *Did your screen freeze!?... Is your connection okay!?*"]

Haley: "... Hey, Ivan... What kind of clothes did Tiffany like to wear?"

Ivan: ["Huh?... O-Oh, um... LOTS of stuff... She was really into dark colors though... The last outfit she was wearing had a lot of purple in it... Black and purple stripes, a top that showed her shoulders... And a skirt?... I think? YEAH a SKIRT... A BLACK one!"]

Haley: "*What color were her eyes?...*"

Ivan: ["Blue!... You sure are asking a LOT of questions about my aunt--"]

Haley turned her attention towards Ivan's window as she interrupted.

"If Tiffany was killed a year ago, then how was she with me at the beach this weekend!?!..."

["*Wh--... What?*"]

"Tiffany! She was with me the whole time! You saw her, Ivan, you *had* to! When you splashed water on me and she gave me the towel..."

["Um... I mean, I SAW that, ALL of it, but... I didn't see my *aunt Tiffany*. If *anything* I figured you were with that BLONDE guy you told us about... *What was his name?... 'Jacob'?*"]

"... *Jacob?*..."

[“Yeah! Wasn’t *he* the one that gave you the towel?”]

Haley’s pupils contracted as she snapped into a state of silent panic. She looked down at her desk and clutched her head as her eyes shook, profusely, back and forth. Her mind raced, running at scrambled intervals by thought of Tiffany’s current existence being fictional as Ivan continued.

[Yeah, blonde hair, goatee, really confident, likes to wear pretty average clothing!?... That looked just like him! You two SEEMED pretty close together!... Am I wrong?”]

In between almost every word, split second memories of Jacob, wearing a purple shirt and black and purple striped swimming trunks, in places where Tiffany should’ve been, beginning at the train station and ending with him caressing her on the dance floor, also leading into Jacob shooting at Lotto instead of Tiffany. Haley’s head dropped, hanging lower towards the surface of the lowly lit desk as her expression of distress, riddled with acute, chaotic confusion, persisted upon her face. Static began to flash in and out as she retreated back to her mind.

Hold on... Back up... This is entire time... For three whole days!?... Are you trying to tell me that while I thought I was talking to someone completely different... Someone who isn’t even alive... It was Jacob the whole time?... The WHOLE TIME?... How!?... How does something like that happen!?... What’s going on!? Have I already lost it? Did--... Did he really--

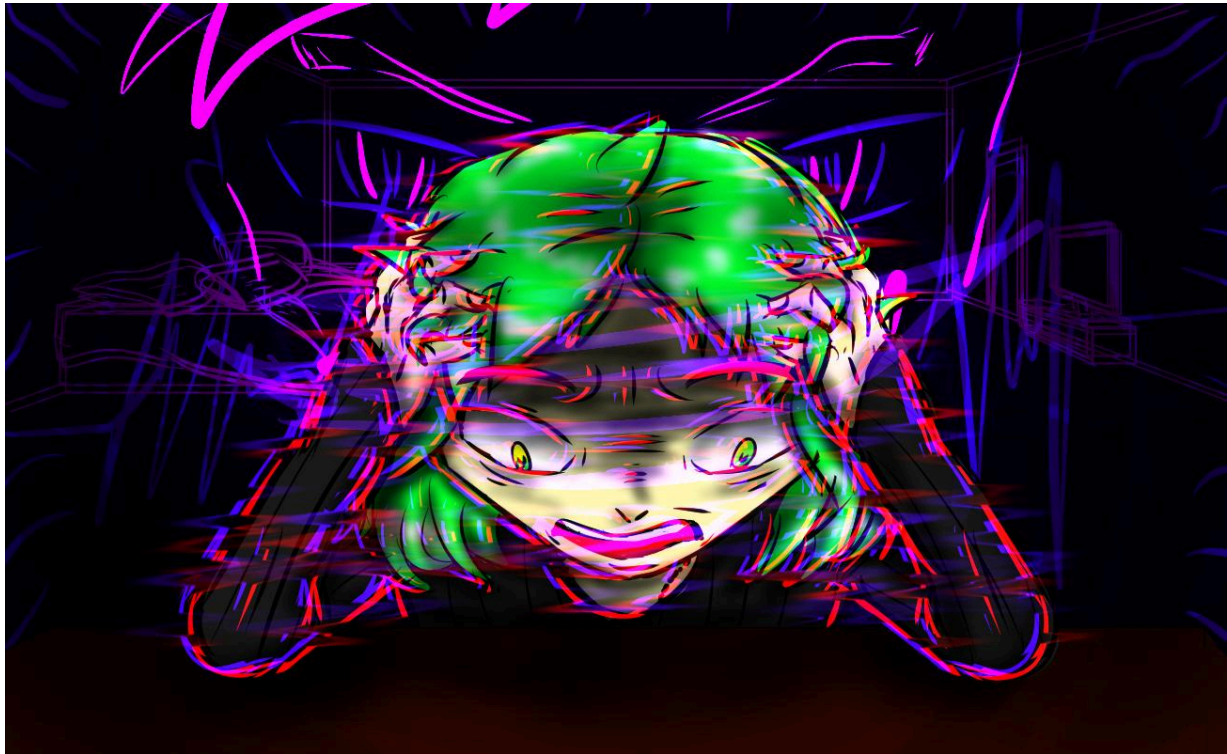
Haley suddenly began to recall her recent moments of the hospital, followed by several other moments she had shared with Jacob, all through split second, rushing static transitions. She saw a glimpse of Jacob’s warped face, plastered with his overbearing, confident grin, causing her to snap her head back into posture and sit up with her chair. Her expression persisted, and her eyes shook in different directions as her panic mind raced wildly amongst the disarray of her confusion.

He was trying to have sex with me in the very beginning anyways... He took his time with me, *made me want him around*... But he got bored of me... He went on to the next best thing... He was impatient... He couldn’t *wait* any longer... This is what Jacob does on his spare time?... *Manipulating people, hurting people?... Killing people!?*... He’s *famous* for it!?... This is what he was talking about before?... Living without the consequences of his own actions!?... The constant play on someone’s life without repercussion of morality? Malevolent self indulgence.... Yielding to malice and lust... What kind of “*freedom*” is that?

Haley clutched her head again as she continued to think, and her panicked breathing grew more abundant by the second. Her room began to fill with dark, black static as shadows began emerging from the walls. Slowly, but surely, the shadows approached her in her thoughts, reaching out with grotesque black claws, taking solid form.

I could be next... Is that why he’s keeping me around? Was he just focused on brainwashing me!? Why does he *DO* this!?... *HOW* does he do this?... Sixty seven reported victims... Fifteen killed... Like some kind of career... This is how he gets off... This is how he lives... *This is how he sees the world*... How he administers his “*freedom*”... To be “truly free”... Cold bodied and clear of the chains that bind all things

living under the perception of *order* and *reality*... Unobstructed by ramification of responsibilities... Feeling of body, emotion, thoughts... The true meaning of the abyss... Substance, significance... Pure existence... Brought to an end... Extinction... Destruction... Eradication... Obliteration... *Oblivion*...



Haley's mind ran rabid as she continued to drown in her own insanity.

Ivan: ["HALEY!"]

Haley suddenly snapped out of her trance as her panicked breathing came to a complete halt. Her eyes went back to normal, bearing a doe eyed expression, as Ivan spoke once more to get her attention.

["... H-Haley... You're hands..."]

Haley looked at Ivan before she looked down at herself, realizing that her hands had been clutched tightly around her neck, restricting her breathing. She immediately removed her hands, as they shook and twitched. She tried, desperately, to place her palms down on the desk, looking at them with distress and confusion in her eyes as Ivan continued.

Ivan: ["H-Hey, are you okay?..."]

Donn: ["Is there a *reason* you were trying to *choke* yourself to death?"]

Anais: ["...Haley?..."]

Haley's shaking hands reached for her phone and closed out of its messaging app in order to read the time and date, reading "1:15 pm, Mon, 7th November". She continued to look at her phone as she talked to Ivan.

"... Hey, Ivan... What's today's date?"

["Today?... Well, it's *November seventh... Twenty sixteen...*"]

"And what's the time?..."

["One fifteen *right now...*"]

Haley immediately let out a shuddered sigh in relief as her entire body shook momentarily. She slowly put her hands in her lap as she looked down, away from the camera of her computer. She then waited several moments to calm down before speaking up again.

Haley: "... I need to... Take a walk... I-I need... S-Some-some *air*, I need some air... I-I'll, um... I'll talk to you guys later, o-okay, just... *Bye...*"

Ivan: ["O-Okay, Haley--"]

Anais: ["Later..."]

Donn: ["We'll catch you some other time..."]

Grehta: ["... Bye..."]

Haley exited out of the video chat, taking a moment to herself as she sat back in her chair in the dark, still silence.

A few hours after Haley's breakdown, Benny, Angela, Tina, and Chloe had all arrived back home, and were currently in the process of continuing on with their daily activities. Chloe and Tina were both downstairs playing their usual 2D video game on one of Tina's console devices. The both of them sat next to each other with their legs crossed in, focused intensely on their game. Chloe, especially, seemed focused on nothing more than the objective in said game, while Tina, as always, was slightly more relaxed. The level had ended and the results of their progression had shown up on the screen, allowing for Tina to boast upon her victory.

"Blimey, I'd say I *nicked* that one almost a little *too* late, hoover. Might I suggest brushing up on your speed next time?"

-“Huh?... Ugh!... YEAH, well... You kept doing that thing, with the hands!”

-“Nothing more than an essential part of Kim's moveset, hoover.”

-“Yeah, okay, but... Like...”

-“My word, it’s always some sort of excuse with you, no matter what the subject is, it’s quite unsavory of character... Well at least in my opinion... I honestly don’t understand why you’d continuously want to play this game against me either, to be frank. It’s not like you’ve ever beat me ever since we started... But anyway, I guess that does it for the story mode; took long enough...”

Chloe sat in silence as Tina spoke, staring off into space with a solemn expression upon her face. She eventually doubled back at the TV screen, noticing an option that Tina had flown past titled “survival horror”. Her still solemn face had been struck with interest as she spoke up to Tina.

“... What’s that?...”

-“Excuse me?...”

-“What’s that mode? The *survival thing*?”

-“Oh?... *Oh*, yes, yes, that one... Bit of a chore that one can be, sometimes, but it’s really nothing more than fighting zombies for as long as you can and finding out how long you can survive. My record, at the moment, sits a little under an hour, solo, but I don’t like to brag too much about it--”

-“I wanna try it...”

Tina turned her head to Choe with a confused look upon her face as she responded.

“Pardon me?...”

-“I wanna try it! Come on, let me beat your score! How hard could it be!?”

-“Admittedly *quite* hard, as a matter of fact.”

-“Well, like... So what, j-just give me the controller...”

Chloe snatched away Tina’s controller, proceeding to select the mode of play as well as her character. Tina’s brow raised as she continued to look at Chloe with a baffled expression upon her.

“... Have you gone *mad*, hoover?”

-“*I’m not mad, why would I be mad? Everyone gets a little excited sometimes, and everyone makes mistakes, everyone’s human, and there’s NOTHING WRONG so SIT BACK and watch me beat your high score!*”

Tina's face of confusion grew worrisome as she watched Chloe's sudden burst of energy. Chloe began to play the game, unable to focus do to her vexation, and was constantly getting hit by the amounts of enemies present, taking unnecessary damage. Tina watched the pitiful display of frustration as she opened her mouth once more to try and reason with Chloe.

"Chloe, we can always just play another game if you'd like, love--"

- "I can't hear you over the SOUND... Of me BEATING YOUR HIGH SC--"

Before Chloe knew it, she had already been killed by the enemies on the screen within less than five minutes. The words "Game Over" showed up on the screen, accompanied by dispiriting music, as Chloe stared at the screen, donning wide eyed confusion. Her expression immediately turned into anger as she tossed the controller on the carpet, speaking out with a displeased tone about her voice as she stormed out of Tina's room.

"Well, *whatever*, I'm gonna get something to eat..."

Tina silently watched Chloe leave the room, hesitant as to whether or not she should follow her. Meanwhile, Benny could be seen sitting in front of the living room's grand piano. He had changed into his grey sweater and black sweatpants, and was currently in the middle of the beginning of a piano piece, of which barred a heavy melody in the low bass line.

[Click To Listen](#)

He moved his fingers with the utmost elegance, seamlessly hitting every key and perfectly replicating every note with ease. Angela, who had changed into his white crop top and tight black short shorts, was wearing his blue dress shirt loosely as he walked towards Benny from the bottom of the spiral steps, watching Benny play as he stood in front of the leather chairs. Benny kept his eyes closed, seeming zoned out as he continued to play without bearing any sort of attention to what was around him. Eventually, Angela spoke up, interrupting Benny as he spoke.

"Which one's that?..."

- "Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata'... One of my favorite pieces... I like to play it through when I get bored..."

Angela had walked towards the back of the piano and sat down next to Benny, who had turned his back away from the piano and closed it's fallboard. Benny rested his elbows on the fallboard as Angela spoke.

"Now, I *specifically* remember you telling me how much of a waste of money it was to get this thing... I always wondered why you never complained afterwards, but now I *finally* understand...~"

- "Yeah, well, just because it's a waste, doesn't mean I can't enjoy it...~"

- "How did everything go with your Job?... I don't want you to get fired, I would've thought you went back by now..."

-“Eh, it’s still just a write up... I explained the situation and got off with a fair warning... I should be back tomorrow.”

-“Well then, he must really like you If he’s openly willing to let you slide just like that...”

-“‘She’, actually...”

-“Oh?...”

-“Yep... Three hundred pounds, and built like a brute... Swears it’s all muscle, and pretends as if I don’t see her ogling me up and down the aisle. Wouldn’t say it isn’t common for people to land a job with just their appearance, but... If I had room to complain, then I wouldn’t have time to... Mmm-I dunno... Play Beethoven on a grand piano...~”

-“... You know, maybe getting fired isn’t *such* a bad thing.”

The two smiled as Angela made his joke and Benny snickered silently as he hung his head back. Angela adjusted himself on top of Benny’s as she laid sideways amongst his body, resting his right hip in Benny’s lap. Angela covered them both with his dress shirt, and the two kissed each other’s lips for a short moment before Angela moved on to Benny’s neck, kissing it lightly before gently biting on it. He retreated from Benny’s neck as the two looked at each other with passion in their eyes before completely indulging in each other’s embrace. Benny then stood up, carrying Angela away from the Piano and towards the spiral steps, so as to further continue their session.

Moment’s later, post coitus, Benny could be seen entering Ashley’s room and closing the door behind him. The walls were purple and the carpet was silver, as the rest of the room shared a pink and purple color scheme. The counters and shelves placed amongst the walls were full of stuffed animals and random pictures, as well as figurines. Her Bed, placed in the back of the room, was full sized, and had a black and white comforter with fluffy pillows. There was also a black bean bag chair in front of her window. The room was dark, with poor lighting from the outside of which was shielded with transparent pink curtains. Benny looked around the room as he noticed how clean she kept it, despite the amount of objects and decorations that could be seen. Hung on the walls, and placed neatly on the dressers and desks of the room, were photos of her memories with everyone in the house, including Morgan, Tina, Angela, Chloe, and even a few of her and Haley. He walked around the bed as he saw a particular picture sitting on a shelf that was right next to her bed. In the frame could be seen a memory of Benny and Ashley eating ice cream together at a fair with goofy expressions on their faces. Benny picked up the picture, staring at it in sorrow and pity. He thought back to Ashley’s pained, yet, smiling expression at the hospital and compared it to the one within the photo. His expression persisted as he sighed quietly to himself before walking towards the bean bag chair and gently sitting on top of it. He tapped the picture in his hand as he looked out the window, sitting in silence.

Elsewhere, under the grey, cloudy sky, Haley was looking amongst the city skyline, standing still at the edge of a skyscraper. The wind blew gently as the busy city streets gave a clear visual to the scenery. All of which, however,

Haley paid no attention to, looking out into space as her desolate expression stayed static upon her face. With her mouth parted and her eyes forward, she kept her body motionless, stuck deep within her own mind.

Three hundred meters of concrete and stainless steel... Towering over civilization. A perfect view of everything... The scenery... The lights... The sky... Nothing but you, the wind in your hair, and your thoughts... The only thing to worry about is the thousand foot drop that follows... Pain... Human perception through the eyes of negativity... The boundless possibilities held together through hope... And conceived by faith. The emotions that make you who you are... The world that you've created... The life you look forward to... I could end it all right here... A headfirst dive toward an early conclusion... The one moment where I can feel in control... It's the only answer I have left to a question of which I've never known the origin... It's the easiest way out... One of many, to be honest... Tricky thing is, once you've come to terms with all of it... The only thing left is to take that final step forward... And once you do... And you realize that the book you worked so hard on finishing is suddenly being closed just a little earlier than anticipated...

Haley put her out her right foot, leaning off the edge of the building and, in an instant, the scenery had disappeared and she was standing at the edge of the bowl in the abandoned skate park she had visited sometime ago.

... It all just... Goes away.

Haley's expression persisted as she readjusted from her deep indulgence of melancholy and absence. She looked out into the bleak sight of the abandoned area of which she currently could be seen standing amongst, and her face became met with self pity and sorrow. She looked down beside her as she noticed that the rubik's cube from when her and Jacob were conversating at the diner was still there, untouched with particles of dust amongst its surfaces. She bent over and picked the rubik's cube up, staring at it for several moments before sighing to herself. She hung her head up as the hand of which she held the rubik's cube dropped to her hip, standing in silence as her arms dangled by her side.

Meanwhile, Morgan, who had just gotten off of work, could be seen walking towards her car inside of a parking complex. With the trunk facing the outside, Morgan opened up its hatch to take out a brown cargo bag, unzipping it to reveal another set of clothes for her to change into. Morgan then got in the back of her car and took off her work clothes, changing into her blue jean shorts and red flannel shirt. In the middle of her changing, a young, pale skinned male could be seen walking past the trunk of Morgan's car. He took a quick glance at Morgan changing inside the car before doubling back to look at her again, watching her bend over to pull up her shorts, noticing her pink bra and panties as he continued to stare. As the young male gawked at Morgan, she suddenly got out of the car, wearing only her shorts and her bra, and glared at the male as if she knew he was staring at her the whole time. The male was struck with fear as he immediately went back on with his day, walking away from the scene. Morgan watched him leave with the same imposing scowl before looking down at herself, noticing that she had allowed the indecent exposure of her breasts, and sighing in annoyance.

Moments later, Morgan could be seen driving in the city of Full, wearing her red flannel with the sleeves rolled up, grey jeans, and black beanie, and was currently on her way home. Her radio had been turned on a

Hip-Hop/R&B channel, and she was dealing with five o'clock traffic in the right hand lane of an intersection. Her right hand on the wheel as her left elbow sat on her left hand window, resting her head on her fist as she waited. She eventually got bored and proceeded to click random radio buttons, changing to different radio stations. At some point, she had passed one of the news stations and, for a split second, heard the words "'Sweet Dreams' investigation" from one of the female anchors, stopping at a country station as her eyes scrunched slightly with interest. She waited for a short moment before changing back and listening to the news.

News Anchor: [Officials are still unable to find any evidence on "Sweet Dream's" victims. No one knows of his whereabouts, or even if he's a *real person*. Many say that Sweet Dream died years ago, and that his calling card, the small stuffed animals, are just sick, twisted ways of paying homage to the serial rapist murderer, or at least... The idea of him. The most recent survivor, Ashley Foust, makes his *sixty eighth* victim since his first - Tiffany Orlov - who died at the young age of nineteen years old. Doctors at Sown County Hospital refuse to allow anyone to question Ashley regarding the incident until she has fully recovered, and is released from her stay...]

During the middle of the news report, Morgan had paid notice towards the street signs leading to different parts of the intersection; the one heading forward in her direction reading "Centiran Rd.", the direction leading to her home, and the one intersecting her direction reading "Sown Industrial Blvd.", the direction leading back to the hospital. She thought to herself for a short moment, putting both hands on the wheel as she tapped anxiously on its rubber grip. As she reached the light of the intersection, she waited for it to turn green before silently grumbling to herself, annoyed at the allowance of her own emotion, and made a left down Sown Industrial Blvd.

Morgan could later be seen walking through the halls of Sown County Hospital, passing through other doctors and patients as she made her way towards the section of which Ashley resided. She eventually reached the section, looking around for Pamela before walking towards the nearest counter behind her, speaking to one of the employees.

"Hey, um... I'm looking for Pamela Orlov?... She's treating my friend, Ashley..."

- "Oh, um... Pamela's on her break at the moment, but... She should be getting off in a few minutes, but you can still go visit her if you'd like to..."

- "Okay, thanks..."

- "No problem."

*The employee smiled at Morgan as she walked away, heading towards Ashley's room. She reached Ashley's room, opening the door to see her pained, drowsy face looking towards the TV as she lay propped up in her bed, watching the news channel. One of the nurses was in the middle of changing her morphine bag as Morgan stepped through the door, closing it behind her as the sound of the doors *click* prompted the nurse to turn around and acknowledge her presence.*

"Hi.~ Are you one of Ashley's friends?"

-“Yeah, I just came to see her, are you two busy or something?”

-“Oh, no, I’m actually about to be on my way...”

Ashley, upon hearing Morgan’s voice, slowly turned towards Morgan’s direction. Her eyes contracted slightly, seeming intensely focused on her presence. Morgan got closer to Ashley and initiated conversation with her while the nurse finished her last few tasks around the room.

“Hey, Ash, what’s up?...”

-“... Morgan?...”

-“Yeah, um... I’m sorry I didn’t come see you earlier. I was here before, but I had work, and... Well... I know that’s probably not a real excuse, especially since Benny stayed and all...”

As Morgan continued to talk to Ashley, her eyes became trained on what the nurse was doing, paying no attention whatsoever to Morgan’s words. With an anxious expression upon her face, Ashley patiently waited for the nurse to take the tray of finished food and leave the room. As the nurse walked through the door and closed it behind her, Ashley’s eyes snapped back towards Morgan. She immediately grabbed Morgan’s shirt by the collar, interrupting Morgan as she pulled her closer, propping herself up with her other arm. She raised her voice, speaking loudly at Morgan with a face of anguish and overwhelming distress.

“Jacob!...”

Morgan’s wildly confused expression stared into Ashley’s eyes as she responded.

“... What?...”

-“It’s Jacob!... Sweet Dream! It was him!...”

Ashley struggled to sit herself up, putting both hands on Morgan’s collar as she continued.

“That disgusting... Despicable, egocentric, lying, foul, immoral, peice-of-fucking-shit-BASTARD is HIM!...”

Morgan’s intense face, dumbfounded beyond explanation, continued to stare at Ashley as her mouth parted greatly. She waited a short moment, breathing heavily in her words as she responded.

“... Jacob... When--”

-“I saw him with my own eyes!... And I could hear his voice!”

Ashley pulled Morgan closer. Her heart monitor began to beat rapidly, shuddering as she continued with the expression of pure rage riddled across her face.



“You wanna know what I think? I think I'm a fucking circus clown for trusting Haley's boyfriend, and now I look like SHIT... Because, while she was on a fucking vacation, that monster followed me after school... Caught me at the bus stop... And then he beat me... Threw me to the ground and whispered in my ear while he VIOLATED ME!”

Suddenly, the door was burst open by two nurses, causing Ashley to calm down, so as not to let anything else slip from her mouth while they were there. She pulled Morgan closer as she spoke, one more time.

“Kill him... I don't care who, or what else has to go with him... I just want him DEAD, and I wanna picture of his corpse so I can frame it on my FUCKING WALL!...”

Ashley pushed Morgan backwards, causing her to stumble back towards the door while the nurses rushed to Ashley's bed. They spoke to her, holding her down and checking the hardware as they tried to calm her while Morgan slowly stepped back, away from Ashley.

“Ma'am, please calm down, your heart rate is rising way too high!...”

Morgan stared wildly into Ashley's eyes, bearing an intense mix of anger and confusion as she noticed Ashley's face had now shown an intense, immeasurable amount of blistering fury while screaming at her.

"KILL... HIM!..."

Morgan's expression persisted as she looked into Ashley's eyes. Her breathing fell short as she continued to back away from Ashley. Ashley screamed and fought the nurses attention as her mind seemed gone to places not even she knew she had, let alone Morgan herself.

Moments later, Morgan could be seen storming through the front door of her house, slamming it shut as she immediately made her way up the stairs, bearing a wildly angered and feral, unsettlingly intense expression. Benny, Angela, Tina, and Chloe, all of which could be seen in the top floor, were startled by the loud sound of the slamming door. Chloe and Tina, who were both initially on their phones, were sitting on the couch, and Benny could be seen leaning on the wall near him and Angela's room, with Angela leaving the kitchen and standing out in the hallway. All of them stared in confusion at the staircase as Morgan had finally reached the top, walking furiously towards Benny.

Angela: "What the hell is wrong with you?!"

Morgan: "It was Jacob!..."

Angela: "What?... Wait--"

Morgan: "Sweet Dream... The *fucker* who raped Ashley, is JACOB!"

Angela: "... How did you--"

Morgan: "I went to see Ashley and she told me *her-damn-self*, that's how!..."

Morgan's intense eyes widened as she stopped herself for a short moment before continuing.

"... Where you just 'bout to ask me *how*, instead of *why*?..."

Everyone stopped for a short moment, yielding to any answer until someone spoke up.

Tina: "... Well, love... We were planning to tell you..."

Morgan: "... You knew who the fuck it was the whole time and you didn't tell me!?"

Angela: "Goddamit, Morgan, we knew you would *flip out* about it, so, we weren't going to tell you until we figured out what we wanted to do about it!..."

Chloe: "... Jacob?..."

Benny turned his attention to Chloe as he noticed her confused, yet, sorrowful expression that had immediately donned across her face as she stood up from the couch. Benny became flushed with worry as he looked back at Morgan and the others. Tina spoke up, walking from the couch and meeting Angela's side.

Tina: "Now, love, we had already discussed this only earlier today, and we were planning on telling you today... We thought it'd be better for everyone if we had done this on a much less stressful basis..."

Angela: "Yes, can we *please*, not do this *right now*?!"

Chloe: "Jacob is... 'Sweet Dream'?... This entire time I thought it was some random weirdo off the streets or something. I-I mean, if I would've known he was some kind of creep then I wouldn't have let H--"

Chloe flinched, just barely covering her mouth with her hand as everyone stared at her, confused as to what Chloe was going to say. With the immediate point of interest towards the subject at hand, they spoke up to Chloe as to get her to confess.

Angela: "... What were you about to say?..."

Chloe: "Huh?... U-Um..."

Tina: "... Chloe... If there's something you need to tell us... Now is a good time..."

Chloe: "... Haley was acting really weird... One day... A-And she asked me to... Meet her at the old bowl... Me and... Davon left from school, and... And she started telling me about some guy that she... Seemed interested in, so... I--... Um..."

Morgan walked up to Chloe with her fist balled together as she scowled at her, prompting Benny to speak up.

Morgan: "Are you trying to tell me that you *Helped them get together*!?!?"

Benny: "*Morgan...*"

Chloe: "I-I thought it was what she wanted! I-I mean, i-it looked like she really wanted to talk to him, so, you know, I was trying to be a good friend!"

Tina: "Had you at least seen what he looked like at first?..."

Chloe: "I-I didn't--... I-I didn't... I-I mean, I meant to, eventually, but... She wanted to keep it a secret, so I figured I should just stay away and let her do things on her own--"

Morgan: "*So you let her date some random psychopath without even getting his fucking name!?*"

Benny: "Morgan!--"

Chloe: "I was just trying to help out! I-I just wanted to help make her happy! A-And, maybe everyone could be happy--"

Morgan: "You didn't DO *anything* but let a *murdering rapist* sit next to you in *someone else's house!--*"

Benny: "MORGAN!"

As Benny's howling yell echoed throughout the house, Morgan immediately turned to him, startled by his sudden outburst. Everyone looked at Benny before turning back to Chloe. Chloe's brown face had shown red as anger and frustration could be seen clearly in her eyes. She clenched her hands beside her as she looked down.

Tina: "... Love--"

Chloe: "YEAH, well... W-What do you know!? It's not like *you* did anything to contribute to any of this! AND you flaked!... You're just some *extra role* in someone else's life! Just like... M-Me--... Just like e-everybody else! SIDE NOTE... Y-You're not even that special either! You're just some *lame dyke-lookin bitch* who thinks she's cool and gets WHATEVER SHE WANTS, just because everyone else is *scared* of you! B-B-But, SPOILER ALERT, you're not!... You're just an *ANGRY LESBIAN*. A-And I--... Y-You know what, I-I don't even CARE, 'cause... C-'Cause I--..."

Benny: "... Chloe..."

Chloe stopped in her words, refusing to respond to a worrisome Benny, shaking profusely as she stood still. After several moments, she turned around, away from everyone else, and stormed off downstairs, reaching the front door, and slamming the door outside of the house.

Tina: "A--... Oh, *bloody HELL*, Morgan, did you have to the scream at her the entire *fucking* time, like some *ovulating banshee!?*"

Morgan: "... *You really expect me not to yell!?*"

Angela: "We *expect* you to calm yourself and not *scream* at the *top of your lungs* as soon as you get home!"

Morgan: "He was *in our house!*... He stood *right next to her* while he *stared us in the eyes* and *lied* to us! Everything that seeped out of that gaping, *conceited piece of SHIT*... That he calls a MOUTH... was BULLSHIT for us to play along to. He USED us just so he could get to HALEY. And then he USED HALEY so he could get to *ASHLEY!* HE-PLAYED-US... He played ALL of us! *Every-single-one*, and you just expect me to sit around and *take it* like some CHEAP WHORE off the side of the FUCKING CORNER--"

Benny: "*Morgan...*"

Morgan looked at Benny as his grave, solemn expression lay static upon his face. He folded his arms across his chest as he paced himself in his words, speaking to Morgan with a stern voice.

“You need to leave...”

Morgan looked at Benny, displeased by his choice of words, ultimately choosing silence as her response. She looked at Angela and Tina’s sullen and worried expressions as she felt sudden guilt towards her actions. Before she could show it, she looked down away from everyone else before immediately storming out of the top floor living room; quickly walking down the spiral steps and towards the door, as she exited the house, slamming the door behind her. Everyone else stayed silent for a moment before someone eventually spoke up.

Angela: “... Well that went way worse than I was *hoping* for...”

Tina: “Benny, if you’ve not already noticed, I am *quite* worried about Chloe, so, I am going to *immediately* disregard Morgan’s ‘sudden outburst’... And move on to *retrieving* my friend, thank you...”

Benny: “... Tina--...”

An overwhelmingly worried Tina, who had been driven to immense anxiety over her dear friend, had walked away from the other two and was on the way to the stairs as Benny spoke up to her.

“Hold on, I’ll go get my keys--”

-“*I shall be going ALONE, thank you!...*”

Benny stopped in place, shocked by Tina’s disregard for Benny’s help as she continued to walk down the stairs and towards her room to get whatever she needed to go out and look for Chloe. He waited for a short moment as the feeling of irritation and frustration began to finally take over. He dropped his hands to his sides clenching his fist as he hung his head up, prompting Angela to say something.

“... Baby... Just breathe...”

Without looking forward, Benny, finally unable to hold in his massive build up of stress and anger, turned around slowly, carefully walking towards him and Angela’s room, and quietly shut the double doors behind him. Angela waited for a minute, before hesitantly walking towards the closed double doors. His face shown bare the unsettling look of concern as he placed his palm on the door, looking down at the floor as he listened to the inside. Suddenly, loud sounds of violent crashing and banging could be heard in the room, getting louder and more disturbing with unpredictable periods of silence between them. At first, it started slow, with long pauses, but eventually, after a few long moments, became more rhythmic and terrifying. After a while, the noises stopped, and nothing but silence could be heard afterwards. Angela put his hand on the doorknob as he suddenly heard one more loud crashing sound, shaking the door with it’s horrific, banging bass. Angela flinched as he put

his hands back on the door's flat surface. His eyes widened as he was greeted with another long period of silence. After several long, quiet moments, he suddenly heard Benny's cracking voice through the double doors.

"... We should probably clean this room..."

Elsewhere, Haley could be seen sitting alone on the bench of one of the bus stops near the abandoned skate park. She kept her head down as she stared at the solved rubik's cube laying amongst her lap in the palm of her hands. As pedestrians passed by, paying no attention to her still body, she began to think back on a discussion she and Benny had sometime after they first met.

~August 18th, 2016~

Benny and Haley were both lounging in the downstairs living room together. Night had fallen, and the room had grown dark as only the flames from the brightly burning fireplace was used to light the room. Haley was sitting down on one of the leather chairs, wearing a white, off the shoulder t-shirt and black boy shorts, holding an empty wine glass as she waited for Benny, who was currently in the middle of picking a wine from the wine wall. Benny was wearing a grey t-shirt and dark grey sweatpants as he comfortably went about his selection. As he eventually pulled out his wine of choice, he broke the overbearing silence of which was accompanied only by the crackling fire, speaking to Haley as he strolled over towards her position, seeming to emphasize on a topic of conversation.

"When we are first introduced... From the beginning... The concept of morality... Between 'good' and 'evil'... We are almost immediately taught under the notion that one side is superlative over the other... And that the other is a farce. A scam, if you will..."

Benny had eventually reached Haley's position as she held out her glass, allowing Benny to fill it with red wine. Benny went to pick up his glass that was currently sitting on the table in front of them, filling it as he continued to speak.

"Obviously, as you should know by now, 'good' is ultimately the most preferred choice... It's very meaning begets positivity... Hope, faith, life, love... Righteousness--all things of that nature. But what begets 'good'? A force so profoundly dependent on human perception can only flourish and be understood with definition... Something so loosely slung about within the english language, not really knowing where it came from - where it started - or even why it is so important that we... Follow it to the utmost detail... Preferably speaking..."

"... It's because there was an opposite side... One that wasn't so... 'Preferable'"

Benny sipped his wine as he took a seat in front of Haley in one of the leather chairs, continuing to speak.



“When a human being is faced with a decision... They will most often always pick the one that guarantees them comfort... And as such, because they are human... They are immediately brought up under the notion that everyone would make that decision... That it would make sense... Because everyone wants to be comfortable. A life worth living... And so, we create guidelines and rules that would better accommodate that comfortability... We create beliefs and stories that allow us to keep ourselves within our comfortable shell and continue on with such beliefs, and we do all these things in the ultimate pursuit of happiness... And anything else that may seem to deviate from that comfortability is, well... Disregarded in a much more *darker* sense... Even so much as the very thought of something that would seem to interfere within our own path of righteousness feels very... *Uncomfortable*... We don't *like* it... And we brand it as something terrible off the reality that it *does* make us uncomfortable and that it *does* deviate from the ultimate plan of *being* comfortable; *of being* 'happy'... *Hate*, in a more simply used term... It is used to express that discomfort... And as such creates the divide of 'good' and 'evil'... And of course, one would not exist without the presence of the other... Such as the *base knowledge* of good and evil, hate and love, life and death... Right and wrong... And although these things have equal weight, there's nothing necessarily unjust about falling towards the most positive choice; who doesn't want to live a life of comfortability?... To cherish and indulge in something they love, and to have hope. Whether anything is material or not isn't that important, you know? Just do the things that would make you feel the best, in most people's opinion...”

-“But then there's also the things made acceptable for society's sake... Things that don't necessarily follow the same rules...”

-“Ah, yes, and so begets *law*... The regulation of actions that allows the imposition of penalty... Murder, and theft... Even suicide are all things deemed socially unacceptable... Through obvious reasons, you wouldn't want some hack going around mad, killing people... However, although these 'socially inept' beings have chosen a life that is deemed malevolent and atrocious... It is through their own perception they themselves carry that creates a reality of which they find themselves comfortable... The preconception of 'good' does not appeal to them as much as what you and I would think to be so much more satisfying. To hate love and to love hate... Half of us will love someone because of the positive message they influence, and the other half will hate someone just as equally because of the negative and unsightly influence *they* create... Hypocrisy... It is our only true claim to values we hold most dear... As well as the cornerstone of the very essence of existence known to us as the balance...”

-“And what do you think?... What do you say is the best thing to do?... Even someone with so much knowledge of the absolute would eventually have to pick a side to lean on...”

-“... Well, I would ultimately pick that which I feel is 'good'... But what do I know?... After all, I am just human.~”

Benny gave a low eyed smile to Haley as she looked down at her untouched glass of wine. He took a sip of his glass before opening his mouth to speak again.

“But looking beyond reason... Beyond meaning... Beyond emotion... I do ask myself every now and then... ‘Does any of this even matter?’...”

-“... And?...”

-“... Some questions aren't made to be answered... Even the ones that are most personal...”

Haley finished her memory of her and Benny's conversation as her vacant expression, staring down at the ground in front of her, took notice of the long awaited arrival of the bus. She looked at her phone, as the time read 7:05 pm, before rain started to fall from the sky. The rain fell harder as she looked up for a brief moment before getting on the bus and paying the fair.

Meanwhile, back home, Benny could be seen pouring his own glass of red wine, facing the bar counter as he sat in silence on one of the leather stools, accompanied by nothing but the dribbling sounds of rain from the outside. While resting his elbow on the counter, he rubbed his temple with two fingers while he rolled his eyes back, sighing as he took a sip from his glass. He put the glass down and slid it away from him as he pulled his phone out, speaking to himself as he began to scroll through several windows on his touch screen.

“Maybe I should've went back to work...”

Suddenly, as he opened up a social media app on his phone, he was interrupted by a call from Tina. He answered the phone and put it on speaker as he laid the phone face up, grabbing the glass of wine and taking another sip.

"Hello?.."

-["Benny, I do apologize for dismissing myself so rudely, but I am in dire need of your assistance--"]

-“Hey, hey, slow down, what’s wrong?...”

-["I have been searching for Chloe for almost two hours now and I have yet to see any sign of her! She’s not at the hospital, she’s not at home, she’s not at school, and she’s not answering her phone - it just keeps going straight to voicemail. And I am trying my hardest to keep it together, love, but, I would very, VERY much appreciate it if you weren’t too busy to assist me--"]

Benny’s confused expression grew more intense as he stood up during Tina’s explanation with his phone in his hand. He spoke to Tina as he looked around the living room for his keys, expressing mild levels of urgency.

"Where are you?"

-["I’m in front of Seventh Isle theater in the west district."]

"I’m on my way."

Benny hung up the phone and put it in his pocket as he finally found his keys on the living room couch. He immediately made his way down the stairs and reached the door, quickly opening it as he was stopped cold by what he immediately saw in front of him. Standing In front of him, plain as day, was Chloe, wearing her jean jacket tied around her waists. Her big poofy hair had gotten messy and wet, dropping down past her shoulders, and the rest of her clothes were completely soaked. Her frowning expression of frustration and displeasure could be seen still upon her wet face as she looked straight into Benny’s eyes. Benny looked back, wildly confused, finding himself speechless as he looked back into Chloe’s big blue eyes. He raised his eyebrows, further befuddled at the amount of danger that was originally expressed earlier before sighing in exasperation, hanging his head up as he took his phone back out, dialing Tina’s number as he put the phone back to his ear.

Moments later, Chloe could be seen inside the kitchen, facing towards the bar counter as she ate a cup of chocolate pudding with a silver spoon. Benny, who was currently, pacing the room with the phone to his ear, was in the middle of speaking to everyone concerning Chloe’s whereabouts. The last few people he had finished talking to her parents, finishing the conversation with the words "You too, bye" and hanging up the phone. He sighed quietly to himself as he rubbed the top of his forehead, looking back at Chloe as he spoke.

"... Chloe, what happened to your phone?..."

Chloe answered Benny, still bearing her angry, expression as she stirred her spoon inside the cup of pudding.

"... I threw it..."

-“... You... Threw it...”

-“I threw it because I was *mad!*...”

Chloe turned away from Benny and threw her pudding cup, along with the silver spoon, into a nearby trash can that was inside of the kitchen. She faced herself opposite of the living room view, crossing her arms as her attitude persisted. Benny, with a worrisome expression, walked towards the kitchen and stood behind Chloe, away from her still drenched body as he propped his body up on the kitchen stove, leaning back as he awaited Chloe's next few words. Silence accompanied the pitter-patter of the rain outside as he waited for several long moments before Chloe eventually spoke up, speaking in a much softer voice.

“... I get it, okay?...”

Benny's worrisome expression combined with that of confusion as he crossed his arms, waiting for Chloe to turn around so he could see her face. Her body quivered slightly, pausing for a moment before eventually turning around, revealing her glum, forlorn expression as she spoke up again.

“Everyone was right... Morgan was right, Tina was right, Davon was right... I'm not smart... I'm not even *special*... And I try to prove to everyone that I can be useful by helping out and doing the best I can, but it always ends up blowing up in my face and I screw it all up... I just wanted to help... I just wanted to feel important... And now it's probably my fault that Ashley's in the hospital...”

Benny suddenly began to feel intense empathy with Chloe, seeming almost heartbroken by Chloe's sudden venting of woe and despair. Tears started to bead up in her eyes as it became difficult for her to speak, looking down towards the floor with her fist to her sides as she tried her best not to sob in her words.

“I'm a *ditz*, an *idiot*, I eat too much, and I'm always *loud*... And all I do is get in people's way and annoy them because I think I'm being *funny*, but I'm really just making everyone *hate* me... And my own parents don't even want me in the house while they're gone... *I can't even keep a boyfriend*...”

Chloe staggered closer to Benny, causing him to lower his arms to his sides and allow her to lean her head on his chest as tears fell from her face. She cried in her words as she continued.

“I'm such a *fuck up!*...”

Chloe sobbed into Benny's chest as he held her closely, wrapping his arms around her as he squeezed gently over her wet hair and soaking upper back. As Chloe buried her face in Benny's sweater, holding Benny tightly as Benny nuzzled the side of his face in Chloe's hair, kissing her forehead before doing so. The two stayed like this for several moments, not saying a word as Chloe's constant sobbing eventually got softer and quieter. Eventually, nothing but the rain could be heard in the background as Benny waited several more minutes, seemingly not wanting to let go of her.



Eventually, his soft grip had let up as Chloe had removed her face from Benny's chest, sniffing as she dried her eyes with her forearm. Benny caressed her wet hair as she looked up at him, staring into his crestfallen eyes. Chloe eventually looked down, away from Benny's eyes, before burying her face in his chest yet again as Benny waited a short moment before cracking a low eyed smile and eventually speaking up.

"... You wanna eat everything in the house?..."

Chloe yielded to a response before eventually nodding her head, rubbing her face against Benny's sweater. Benny rubbed the back of her head, smiling with the expression of endearment as the two of them continued to hold each other. Benny then looked to his left to see Angela, leaning on the inside of the doubled doors, smiling with his arms crossed over his chest as he adored Benny and Chloe's embrace from a distance. Benny let out a small chuckle, hanging his head back as he sighed to himself. Angela turned away as he made his way back into the room, leaving them off to gorge with a final exit statement.

"Just try to save me some chips at least.~"

Elsewhere, Morgan could be seen driving recklessly through the streets of Full. The sky had grown dark, bearing a dark blue hue as the moon began to shine brightly over the cloudy scenery, illuminating the rain. With an intense expression of displeasure, her point of anger seemed to have no clear focus, glaring almost blankly down the road. Her expression, still upon her face, accented by her angled eyes, persisted as she tried her best to tighten up her driving, seeming to have more control than previously demonstrated. Suddenly, she began to think back on the moment she had met Jacob for the first time, as the memory of him kissing Haley's lips played back in her head. Her eyes grew more intense and her fist clenched tightly on the wheel as she sped up, dodging traffic along the way. She opened the glove compartment of the car as she searched around the pills and the gun

to grab her silver flask. As she grabbed her flask, she shook it in her hand, looking at and realizing that it was empty. She scoffed at herself as she made the next available right turn, driving for a few more moments before she reached the "TruGas" gas station, the same one that she and Haley had visited upon Haley's arrival, quickly pulling up to one of the parking spaces. After parking the car, she promptly stepped out, shutting and locking the door before walking into the TruGas. She walked straight towards the liquor aisle as the man behind the counter, who was leaning his elbow on its surface, had noticed her familiar face and demeanor. Morgan reached the liquor aisle, searching for a bottle of Moonshine to refill her flask. She glanced over to her left side, doubling back as she noticed dried up splatters of blood on the floor, almost immediately realizing that it was from the hooded man that she had brutalized from before. The man spoke to Morgan from behind the counter as she went on about her business.

"Oh, hey... You're that angry lesbian from before..."

Morgan said nothing as she continued to look within the glass doors of the shelf in front of her. The man waited, seeming irritated by her lack of response, before speaking up again.

"... I take it you still noticed that blood on the floor?... Cops said you did a real number on that guy... Ended up with three broken ribs and a severe concussion... And you should've stayed afterwards to show your face. With all that damage you did, you've got em thinkin' you're some kind of *wild beast*... A real brute... *Heh*... And now that you've ran off and you barely show your face here anymore, those goddamn blue boys check this place almost every night, waitin' to see when you might show up again... And because of *that*, I barely get any more customers here..."

"I don't see how that's my problem..."

"Yeah, of course you don't... But this ain't about you, redhead... This is about *me*... And my store... I thought about what I would say to you and that other girl if I ever saw you again... Whether or not I'd call the cops... Whether or not I'd complain..."

Morgan said nothing, continuing on with her business as the man continued, seeming slightly agitated. Morgan's lack of respect, as well as apparent need of guidance, prompted the man to speak up once more.

"You know, I had a life too, once... I was young, and it ain't like yours, but I had one... I used to know a girl named Sherline... Beautiful, black hair, glasses... And she was thicker than a bowl of oatmeal... We were only datin' each other for a few months, but it was fun as hell, nonetheless. Then she told me that she loved me and that she wanted to be with me for the rest of her life... But, me, I wasn't into all that... Too much shit I ain't fit to talk to you about happened to me before I met her... A lot of stuff I ain't proud of till this day... Stuff that makes a man rethink his own self worth... So, I dumped her... As *fast* as I could. The night after, I hit the bar... Had a few drinks... Landed my next broad... Now, twenty years later, she's the head of some big time company down south and I'm stuck here... At this gas station. Two decades of opportunity that I threw away, just because I couldn't look myself in the mirror at night... That situation you 'helped' me with back then?... I admit, at this point, I'm just some shitty old man lookin' to line his pockets... But this gas station is *all I have* now... It ain't much, sure... But I'd

rather take a bullet through my nostril for what I have left than just give it away to some other hick... You can't run away from everything, red... Most things, sure... But not everything..."



Morgan's sullen expression, staring into the glass, grew softer as her eyes trailed away from her front view. She yielded to any response, staying still for a short moment as she briefly allowed the man's words to sink in. She then, almost immediately afterwards, scoffed at the thought that she would allow someone else to lecture her about her own problems, snatching the bottle of moonshine off the shelf, and quickly closing the glass door shut.

Meanwhile, back home, Benny, Angela, and Chloe could all be seen upstairs. The rain had stopped, leaving nothing but the dark, moonlit scenery, and the living room was brightly lit by the white ceiling lights. Chloe had dried herself off, and was wearing a fresh set of clothes, courtesy of Angela, consisting of a navy blue dress shirt with a white t-shirt underneath, and black leggings. She was sitting down in the middle of the couch, watching cartoons and eating a bowl of chocolate ice cream. Benny was inside the kitchen, leaning over the kitchen counter with an uncomfortable expression about his face as Angela could be seen rubbing his back. Angela spoke up to Benny, seeming to comfort him about something.

"Ya' know, 'eating everything in the house' is usually kept as a metaphor so that you don't... Actually eat everything in the house..."

-“Try telling her that--”

Benny burped in words, interrupting his speech as he groaned from the large amounts of food he was still currently digesting. Angela sighed as he bent down next to Benny, kissing Benny's cheek before resting his palm amongst his own, speaking again.

"There's always more than one way to skin a cat...~ Any reason you couldn't have just given her the cliché prep-talk?..."

- "I wanted to..."

Benny groaned softly as he rose up from his leaning position, stretching his back as he continued.

"But I figured someone else would have that in mind."

Angela looked up at Benny, raising his brow in confusion before she suddenly heard the swift opening and closing of the front door, followed by small, quickly paced footsteps. Their stern, seemingly frustrated, voice was low before fading into a, much more, louder, angrier tone, as it was apparent to be Tina's voice. Tina spoke, rapidly without breath, raising her voice as she walked up the stairs.

"I can not BELIEVE the *unprecedented, bloody obscene* amounts of *overwhelming anxiety* that you put me through! I put on my *good knickers*, searching through the *deepest darkest depths of virgin mary's most famous mystery* for *hours* that feel like *decades*, only to find out that you were right under my bloody, godforsaken nose the *entire time!*"

Tina, as described, was wearing blue jeans with fades at the knees as she appeared from the top of the spiral steps. She immediately walked towards Chloe, bearing an intensely displeased expression, and jumped on to her lap, wildly pounding on Chloe's upper body in a fit of frustration and rage as her green sweater flapped about. Chloe tried to defend herself, attempting to respond verbally to Tina's expression of emotion.

"Hey--"

- "You *ludicrous, nonsensical, preposterously ulcer inducing, nosh hogging, senseless--... PLASTERED, strawberry creams*, getting MY knickers in a TWIST over you!..."

- "Can you--... Stop *hitting* me!?"

Tina stopped hitting Chloe, interrupting her as she grabbed her by the collar and continued to yell in her face.



“There is *no* reason, WHATSOEVER why you should feel lesser than anyone for some *inconvenient rubbish* that had *nothing* to do with you, nor should you be worried *bloody knackered* of whether or not your *fanny* is worth *deflowering*!... And I REFUSE to allow some *knob headed, cock up CHILD*, like DAVON, to make you feel as if you aren’t *anything* less than the lengthy, food guzzling *princess* that you are! I couldn’t give a rats *leaking arse* how much of an *idiot* you *think* you are! What matters is that you are MY idiot and I will *immediately* dismiss anyone who says otherwise, right after I *personally* see to it that my own *foot* is so *deeply wedged* into their *arse* that they’ll have a *hands on experience* with *heaven’s golden gates*!... Do I make myself *clear*!?”

-“... I--”

-“DO-I-MAKE-MYSELF-CLEAR?!”

-“YES!... *God*!... You don’t have to be so *mean* about it...”

-“... W-Well then... Wonderful...”

Tina hopped off of Chloe’s lap as she walked over to Chloe’s right side, standing amongst the table as she continued to speak, now seeming to be much more dignified than moments ago.

“... Anyways, love, I am most elated to see you in one piece... Benny also informed me that you ate quite healthily while I was away, so, thank you, Benny...”

Benny nodded once as Tina made her way around the table and towards the spiral steps, continuing to speak.

"And I do hope you brought a change of clothes during your little adventure, because you will be staying with me tonight in my room..."

- "Huh?... Tonight?! Where am I gonna sleep though?"

- "You will be sleeping next to me in my bed so that I can further assure that you will not run off tonight..."

The two of them blushed through similar degrees of embarrassment as Chloe responded.

"W-WHA--"

- "Effective immediately..."

- "I don't even have any clothes!"

- "Never fear then, for I have plenty of unworn garments for you to try on, once you have made your way downstairs..."

- "But I can't fit your clothes! You're like... A foot and a half!"

- "I AM FOUR FEET EVEN, AND YOU SHALL RESPECT ME AS SUCH."

Chloe continued to blush as she pouted, sitting on the couch without moving a muscle as Tina reached the downstairs floor. After a short moment of silence between the two, Tina yelled from the lower floor, alarming Chloe.

"Is there MOLASSES in your ARSE?..."

"COMING!"

Chloe jumped up again, quickly running downstairs so as to not upset Tina any further. Benny walked out of the kitchen as they left, rubbing the back of his neck as he tilted his head to the side. Angela walked out behind him, walking towards the double doors as he spoke to Benny.

"It's getting pretty dark outside... You haven't slept well in a while, baby. You sure you don't wanna call it a night?"

- "Eh, I haven't gotten too much time to myself today... I can at least make something out of it. That piano isn't gonna play itself.~"

-“Oh my god, fine.~”

Angela let out a small laugh, smiling as he walked through the doors of their room. He left him alone with one last sentence before closing the door.

“Have fun.~”

As the doors closed, Benny waited for a short moment, putting his hands in his pockets as he looked down at the floor, sarcastically mocking the words from Angela’s mouth as he spoke under his breath.

“... Yeah... No problem...”

Benny stood still for a moment before eventually walking towards the couch and picking up the remote to the TV, switching the TV off as he tossed it back onto one of the cushions. He walked passed the spiral steps, heading straight towards the light switch as he flipped it down, turning all the lights off, besides the ones in the kitchen, before heading downstairs.

~November 7th, 2016, 8:47 pm~

Sometime after Tina and Chloe’s reunion, Benny found himself waking up in the main living room. The top board and music rack were closed shut as his head, buried in his resting arms, slowly rose up from the top of the grand piano. His eyes squinted, blinking as he looked around to notice that he had fallen asleep, as opposed to playing the piano, which he had originally planned for himself. He slowly got up from the piano bench, cracking his neck as he slowly moved his tired body towards the spiral steps, barely picking his feet up off the floor as he made his way upstairs. Upon reaching the top floor, he took a few more steps forward towards his room before he eventually noticed someone sitting in the couch, watching TV, as nothing but the images of the TV screen were used to keep the room lit, and the blinds of the front window were closed. It was none other than Morgan, sitting closer to the left side of the couch hunched over with a bottle of Moonshine in her hand that she had bought from the gas station, staring down towards the floor. Benny’s tired eyes glared at her, saying nothing as he continued on his way. He looked over to the kitchen counter to see Morgan’s flask, laying flat and empty on the counter’s surface. He stared at it for a short moment before turning his body slowly, staring at Morgan from the corner of his eye. A moment of silence swept the room until, suddenly, Morgan spoke. Her cracked voice, softly carried and gentle, filled the room as she uttered her words without moving a muscle.

“... Her first kiss... This whole time, I thought it was going to be with me... But it was with him... With someone else...”

Benny said nothing as his tired, low eyed, sullen expression lay still upon his face. Another period of silence filled the room before she opened her mouth a second time.

“... Do you wanna know why I call Haley ‘Moonshine’?...”

Benny stayed silent, hesitant to give any response to Morgan's question, turning around completely as he faced the back of her head. Several more moments of silence between the two had passed before, eventually, Benny spoke, keeping his expression about him as he walked towards the couch.

"... Sure... I'm all ears..."

Upon reaching the sofa, Benny carefully adjusted his body into its far right end, facing himself towards Morgan as he laid his back on the crevice between the arm and the back cushion. He waited patiently for Morgan to speak up, keeping his mouth closed the entire time. After another period of silence, Morgan finally opened her mouth to speak her peace, keeping her soft tone whilst doing so.

"... When I was fifteen years old... Was around the time that my father had started to take out his drunken aggression out on me... Beating me... Using me... You heard that part already... But at some point, I can't really remember when it started, but... I went in the basement while he was away... Figured out the code to the lock on this... Big black door, and found cases of Moonshine... Loads of it... Enough to last a lifetime... So, I took a bottle and began the first year of my destructive alcoholism... I knew it was bad, as well as the slew of consequences that followed, but I didn't care... The way it made me feel... The drunken high it would give me every time I finished a glass... It felt good... Felt even better knowing that I was stealing from him... I was addicted... I just couldn't stop... Other drinks did the job, sometimes, but not as much as this one... Suddenly, out of nowhere, Haley shows up with Ashley... I look at her, and she looks at me... Give it a few days and we're hanging out with each other pretty much all the time... We never missed a day without seeing each other at least once... We became best friends... And I guess it didn't take too long for me to realize why, because, *suddenly*... She started becoming *synonymous* to my addiction... I would feel that same-drunken-high every time I was with her... I couldn't think without her being on my mind... I couldn't sleep without fantasizing over her lying next to me... And although there were other people I hung around... Nothing did the trick like hearing the sound of her voice... So, I called her 'Moonshine'... Just out of the blue, nothing too serious at the time. She thought it was cute, and didn't say much about it at first; she just kind of rolled with it... Until one day--and I remember every moment so vividly... She stops me in the halls while we were walking to class together, she says... 'Why do you call me 'Moonshine'?...' And I just looked at her and said... 'Cause it's my favorite drink... And you're my favorite girl.'... And she blushed a bit, and smiled... We agreed and we joked about it afterwards... But, time flew by, and... Things changed... I graduated at seventeen, and... We just never really thought about it too much... Eventually, I started trying to... Change her a little bit... Turn her into something she wasn't really into, and she didn't mind it too much. Of course, she never noticed... And I remember everything that I went through just to make her like me more than anyone else, starting from the clothes she wore to the type of things she liked to do, and when I would look at her and just... Evaluate everything from head to toe, everything seemed to fit just right, but those eyes... Something about those eyes just... Showed me something I could never even describe if I tried... So, one day, me and her were sitting on the hood of the impala, watching the stars under the pale moonlight. She was pretty bummed out about her history grades; they weren't lookin' so hot... She sat in front of me and asked me if I was still her favorite girl... I told her 'yeah' and she asked me why... And, in that moment... Something inside me just... Burst to life, all of a sudden... I looked

her straight in the eye and said... 'When the sun sets low and the moon gleams high in the sky... It creates the visual of the most beautiful... Most elegant piece of scenery that I could just sit down and enjoy for hours on end until it goes away... A sight so wonderful... And a feeling so sublime that I can compare it to nothing else... Besides you... And as I sit here under the stars and the moon shines brightly over those big green eyes... I get a picture so much better... Inside a frame that last till the end of time...'... And she looked at me, blushing brightly... A smile across her face as she scooted over and held me tight, saying 'thank you'... I realized that same night that there would be nothing else... Nobody that could ever give me the same emotion... That same feeling of adornment and warmth that she could give me..."

Morgan took a sip of her bottle, tilting her head back as she drank, before continuing.

"So, on the day I spread my mother's ashes, I decided to make her transformation complete... That night I would finalize what I had worked so hard on... Just... Wipe it all away... Everything about her that had nothing to do with me... With us... And, at some point during, she started telling me all these things... Just... Pouring her heart out to me... Saying all this stuff about how much she cared... How much she enjoys our time together... How much I made her happy... And as I looked into her eyes, and knew in my heart that everything she said was true... It was only then that I realized that I was about to lose a part of her that was already mine... And then she choked... The alcohol finally hit and she threw up all over my bathroom floor... Passed out without a pulse... Then woke back up without a thing to hold on to... Besides that godforsaken nickname... Everyday since then, when the night falls, I remember, *specifically*, that dreadful night... And I continue to indulge in *nothing* but that horrible substance to remind myself of the night when I clipped her wings... Everything I did... Every step I took... I did it for her... Because she's the only thing that gives me purpose... I can no longer find value in anything, including my own life, nor can I imagine a world that she isn't a part of... To anyone else, she's the light of their eyes... And a bundle of untouched warmth wrapped in cuteness... But to me... She's the only thing that matters..."

Morgan stopped her long, drone out speech, looking still at the ground as she paused for a short moment. Suddenly, she reverted from her soft spoken tone into her usually stubborn, unfriendly one as she continued.

"So... If anything were ever to happen to her to where she should suddenly *disappear*..."

Morgan put the bottle of moonshine on the table in front of her and propping her legs up on its surface, clasping her hands over her stomach. Benny glanced over to it as he noticed that the bottle of moonshine had actually been empty long before she had finished her explanation, looking back at Morgan as she continued.

"Let's just say it won't turn out very well for me..."

Benny stared at Morgan, still bearing the exact same expression from before, seeming unfazed by Morgan's explanation. He waited a short moment before opening his mouth.

"... You know..."

Benny slightly adjusted himself before finishing.

“... You are really.... Really frustrating...”

Morgan’s eyebrow raised slightly as she blinked in confusion, turning her head to face Benny as he continued with a certain sternness in his tone.

*“I have been nothing... But nice to you... Since the very moment I met you... And *nothing* about you has changed since then...”*

Benny slowly, but surely, started to stand up from the couch and make his way towards Morgan, seeming to, very slowly, glide over towards her as if he was a growing force of overwhelming darkness, keeping his stern, unrelenting tone as he continued.

“Every-night... I get out of bed to talk to you about the exact same thing over and over... Listening to your dramatic overtone of sorrow and despair, because, for some insubstantial reason... You feel as if your problem doesn’t need to be fixed...”

Morgan took her feet off the table, becoming gradually more worried of Benny’s petrifying stare, as well as his sudden, frighteningly dark tone. She slowly put her legs up on the couch, inching backwards as Benny’s tall, slender, imposing body, started to grow a shadow over her own. He spread his arms out, placing his left hand on the top of the couch, and the other at the bottom, as his gradual movement persisted amongst his speaking.



“You’re a self loathing, ridiculously stubborn, sadistic *hypocrite* who *leeches* off some other girl for four years... And then you got her drunk and *killed* her just ‘cause you couldn’t say your own name without gagging... You destroyed her over the off chance that you could further indulge in your sick... *Twisted* fantasy that you could be with a *shell* of a woman... *Get over it...*”

Benny stopped moving, completely surrounding Morgan’s personal space as his shadow almost engulfed her entire body while he continued.

“You’re a monster... A demon that fell for an angel it didn’t deserve... And when you cut off it’s wings and found out it was going to share, you realized you had made a mistake that you can *never* make up for... You screwed up... Now *own* it... Reclaim what you have made yours... Take *back*... What was so *blatantly stolen* from you... And *regain* the woman that you have worked so *ludicrously hard* for by *any-means-necessary...*”

Benny straightened his posture and walked away from the couch, making his way towards him and Angela’s room. He reached the handle of his door and cut his eyes towards Morgan one final time, leaving her off with a short bit of words before entering his room.

“... Because I don’t remember training you to be *weak...*”

Without saying another word, Benny walked inside and closed the door behind him. Morgan’s sullen expression, mixed with horror, stayed still on her face as she spaced out for a short moment before eventually returning back to her sour, gloomy mood. She carefully stood up from the couch, unsure of how to respond to Benny’s words. Still, only for a moment, stood a defeated Morgan, before she eventually made her way to her room, softly opening the door and walking inside. Without turning her back, she began to close the door behind her, hesitating as she began demonstrating to herself much more apprehensive behavior. Eventually, without fail, she closed the door behind her, and locked it without a word to leave off of.

~November 7th, 2016, 9:15 pm~

One of the city busses that Haley had taken on her way from the abandoned skate park had arrived at the bus stop near her home. As she stepped off the bus, bearing her usually vacant expression, she immediately made her way down the street towards the house. After several moments, she had arrived home, and could be seen carefully closing the door from the inside before quietly walking up the stairs and entering her room.

Moments later, Haley could be seen sitting in front of her desktop set up with nothing but the monitor screen to illuminate her room. She was leant back in her chair, staring blankly up at the ceiling with her desolate eyes low, and her mouth parted. While she spaced out into the darkness of her room, her friends from her recent beach trip, Ivan, Donn, Anais, and Grehta were all gathered together in a video chat window, speaking to each other about a topic that Haley, obviously, found little to no interest in.

Ivan: [“And then this HUGE dog just JUMPED AT ME out of NOWHERE! L-LIKE... It LOOKED like it was a-a-a-um... A PITBULL! Yeah, and I think it was a BLUE NOSE!]

Anais: ["Geez, Ivan, why are you always almost *dying* somewhere!?"]

Ivan: ["PFFT, I dunno!... I always survive though! *He was still kind of cute!*... O-Or was it a *she?*..."]

Donn: ["Did you find out who it belonged to?..."]

Ivan: [Some OLD lady that moved in a few days ago. Frikkín' LOST it while she was *gardening* or something? I think it's name was Gustav?"]

Anais: ["That name sounds SO cute!"]

Grehta: ["Anais, we have a pitbull named Gustav..."]

Anais: ["Yeah, okay, but he's not a blue nose!..."]

Grehta: ["Uh-huh, and um... He's grey... And he lives with grandma because he got too big..."]

Anais: ["Oh, yeah, that's right, we--... HEY!"]

Grehta: ["Gustav...~"]

Donn: ["Sounds like you almost got murdered by Anais and Grehta's pit, man..."]

Ivan: ["WOW! I mean, the MURDER part sounds a little bad... *But that's pretty cool!* What a SMALL WORLD we live in!"]

Anais: ["Aye, don't be *hurtin'* my *dog*, boy, *geez!*"]

Ivan: ["WHO SAID I WAS GONNA HURT YOUR DOG? *GOD!*"]

Grehta: ["You can pet Gustav if *you* want, Donn...~"]

Donn: ["Thanks, Gren'..."]

Ivan: ["WHAT?... How come DONN get's to pet him!?"]

Anais: ["Because he tried to *kill* you, DUH, geez! I'm not gonna have *my* dog get sick off of *your* blood!"]

Ivan: ["WHO SAID HE WAS GONNA EAT ME!? You know what, whatever, CHANGE OF SUBJECT!..."]

Anais: ["Pfft... Russian dog food.~"]

Ivan: ["THAT'S RACIST."]

Donn: ["Hey, that might explain why you're so tough, bro.~"]

Ivan: ["THAT'S *STILL* RACIST!"]

Haley: "Hey, Ivan..."

Everyone went quiet as they all brought their attention to Haley. Ivan responded accordingly as Haley spoke.

["Yeah?... *What's up?...?*"]

- "... Why am I alive?..."

Everyone looked at Haley, confused as to her question, as well as its significance. Ivan, unable to answer properly, responded with a question as Haley continued.

["... UM... *Why do you ask?'*"]

"... We live in a world... Filled with nothing but hatred and war... Disconnection and despair... We find value and solitude in substance... Materials of momentary entertainment, and expect it to last a lifetime... Trapped within the false illusion of hope... That we may one day find truth between science and religion... Theories and philosophies... All things created through our fear of the unknown... And our overwhelming drive to understand that of which we can not see... And with each passing moment... For every day we wake... In hopes that everything will change before the night falls... We drown ourselves into endless pools of unpredictable emotion... Looking for an answer beyond the question that follows... And we keep faith that we may experience those answers... In as many a form as possible... So that reason and meaning... Can finally bear it's weight... Yet I have not found my path... The starting point of my search is all but visible to my own eyes... I have not yet felt the true, cold malevolence of pain and hatred... Nor do I know the warmth... And the nurturing reception of love... So I ask you one more time... Why am I alive?..."

Everyone stopped as they looked away, unable to answer Haley's question. Their own silence spoke louder than anything, as they all took a moment to think for themselves. Suddenly, Ivan spoke up, allowing everyone else, besides Haley, to turn their attention to him.

["... Well... *I'll be honest with you, Haley...* I don't *really* think that's a question we can give you a correct answer to... Especially when you make it so *personal...*"]

Haley stayed silent, keeping her expression as she continued to stare at the dark ceiling. Eventually, after her short moment of silence, she responded.

Haley: "... Hey, guys, I'm not feeling so hot... I think I'm gonna go to sleep..."

Ivan: ["O-Okay... *Text us when you wake up, or something...*"]

Donn: ["Yeah, sleep tight, kiddo..."]

Anais: ["Goodnight!"]

Grehta: ["Bye..."]

Haley sat up as she exited out of the chat window, slowly getting up from her chair and walking towards her bed. She, very carefully and gently, climbed in towards the middle of the bed, and laid face up on her bedspread. With her arms spread to her sides and her large, vacant eyes facing straight up into the ceiling, she stared blankly into space, seeming to not move a muscle, or even breathe for that matter. Motionless and silent, she left nothing but her mind to wander, as tears started to fall from her still, desolate eyes.