

# **HATCHETFACE SUMMER**

**BY B. R. FLYNN**

"Hatchetface, Hatchetface  
Knock, knock, knock  
What's the time, twelve-o'clock  
Hatchetface, Hatchetface  
Chop, chop, chop  
First your mom, then your pop  
Hatchetface, Hatchetface  
Chase, chase, chase  
Far too scared, lose the race  
Hatchetface, Hatchetface  
Stop, stop, stop  
Chopped apart, we all drop"

--Children's Jump Rope Song

### **Prologue, "A Quiet Getaway"**

*June 10th, 1978*

"Fine, fuck you, then, Todd," Trisha said and headed for the lake.

"Trish, wait," Todd said. "I didn't mean it. I just meant that she was striking is all. Know what I mean?"

Trisha wasn't listening. There was a dock that reached a considerable distance into the beautiful lake. It was sunset - a gorgeous sunset, red, burgundy with a fine line of clouds on the horizon, framing the sight like a painting - and Trisha walked out onto the dock. She was on the taller side, voluptuous, with long wavy blonde hair. Her tan skin was lovely, her hips wide. She stripped off her shirt as she walked the dock, threw it aside. Her ample breasts bounced from side to side as she walked, her considerable ass swaying from the movement. She undid her shorts and pushed them down, stepping

out of them in one fluid movement. Now that extraordinary ass was free - she was completely naked - and she knew that Todd was watching, was wishing he hadn't said what he'd said.

"Trish, Jesus," Todd said. "I mean, she's your sister! It's good that I think that, right?!"

But Trisha wasn't listening. It was an incredible summer evening and she was going skinny dipping. Todd wasn't invited. She didn't have to tell him: he already knew. He stayed back, not stepping onto the dock, sticking near the woods as Trisha jumped into the water.

It was a beautiful dive: Trisha went sailing into the water, her jaw-dropping body shimmering in the fading, amazing sunlight. There was still a slight chill in the water but it faded fast, settling into a brisk, pleasant glow around her lovely form. She swam like a champ, which wasn't surprising: she had always loved the water, had taken to it like a fish since she was little. It was her second home.

It had seemed like a great idea: a quiet getaway up north. Trisha, Todd, Trisha's sister Eve and her boyfriend Clark. But it had turned into a nightmare. Todd was ogling Eve from the very beginning. Clark, for his part, didn't seem to notice but Trisha certainly did. And she didn't like it one bit. She didn't blame Eve: she was a stunner but didn't ask to be. It was just who she was.

Idly, Trisha thought about seeking out Eve, wherever she was, and having a good talking to her about the whole situation. Yeah, that would be good. Talk it out. Where was Eve?

In fact, Trisha observed, she hadn't seen Eve or Clark all day. They had gone swimming the night before and weren't at camp in the morning. Trisha figured that they must have wanted the day to themselves. The two of them had taken a liking to the lake, especially the little boats anchored to the dock. They loved drifting out into the water, spending time together. It was sweet, really.

Yes, Trisha remembered: one of the little boats was missing when she headed down the dock just now. They were probably out here somewhere.

It was dark now, she could tell looking up at the surface of the water. The sun had faded behind the mountains. Just a little bit more exploring, she decided, then she would head back up, have a talk with Todd if he was willing.

In the meantime, she descended. The lake bottom was not far down and she reached it pretty quickly. It was hard to see down here but she was able to make out some great details: fish, old, gnarled trees, and something farther out, something that had disturbed the dirt. She headed towards it, tried to make it out. What was that?

She frowned. It was one of the boats resting at the bottom of the lake. What the Hell? As she got closer, she saw the first body: a young man, twisted and broken. His head was missing. Crawdads had got to the stump of flesh where it had once been. Trisha stifled a scream.

The boat had a hole in its hull and, trapped under it, was Eve. Her chest had been hacked to pieces

and her dead eyes stared up at the surface of the water, pleading for help. But none had come. That meant that the young man was Clark.

Now Trisha did scream, bubbles escaping from her mouth and traveling topside. Soon enough, she followed, practically clawing her way up. It seemed to take forever until she broke the surface but it couldn't have been more than a few seconds. Reaching fresh air, she breathed deep, coughed and swam to the dock.

"Todd!" she screamed. "Todd, it's Eve and Clark! Todd, where are you?!"

She climbed up onto the dock, her naked body wet and dripping. Shuffling onto the hard boards, her breath coming in short, panicked bursts, she wiped water out of her eyes. Something was happening down the dock. Someone was standing over someone else who was prone.

Trisha could now see that this prone someone was actually a prone dead body. Worse, it was Todd's body. His limbs were twisted, his legs practically pulled apart like a wishbone, his crotch bloody and destroyed. His face was pressed into the ground and the back of his head was split open like a cracked egg.

As Trisha watched, the person standing over Todd's body repeatedly drove a hatchet into the back of her boyfriend's head. Again and again the killer brought the blade down, widening the gash in the back of Todd's head.

The killer was tall - over six feet - strong, menacing, but definitely female. She wore old, torn jeans and boots under a green half-shirt that was tight across her considerable bust and revealed her midriff, complete with strong six-pack. An old grey cloth bag covered her head, one eyehole - the left - cut out of it.

*My God, Trisha thought, it's her. It's actually her. Hatchetface.*

She had thought that the spectre was just a myth, a legend to scare kids around the campfire. But here she was, in the flesh. Trisha tried to stifle a scream and failed.

Hatchetface immediately looked up and saw Trisha, that one eye illuminated by the moonlight. It was an angry eye. Trisha turned to run, intending to jump back in the lake, not knowing what else to do.

She didn't get far.

Hatchetface threw her weapon at the young woman. It spun through the air, end over end, and embedded itself into the back of Trisha's neck. Trisha felt the impact and stopped in her tracks. There was no pain, not yet, just a strange feeling of built-up pressure suddenly released. Trisha felt around her neck until her fingertips touched the blade of the hatchet. She withdrew her hand, looked at it: it was covered in blood.

Then the pain came, all at once, and Trisha dropped to her knees on the dock, so close to the water,

yet so far. A moment later, she dropped again, this time on her face. She was finding it hard to breathe now, hard to move. She managed to turn her head as the sound of footsteps approached her up the dock.

Hatchetface stopped by Trisha's side and looked down at her curiously, head cocked to one side like a dog. Trisha reached out to her, the need for help overriding any sense of logic.

The killer ignored her pleading hand and reached down to retrieve her hatchet. She gripped the handle, put a foot onto Trisha's back and pulled the weapon out of the young woman. Trisha was pulled up with the blade for a moment before it separated from her body. She flopped back down on the dock, making a few gurgling sounds as blood came pouring out of her mouth.

She watched Hatchetface walk away, her hand still outstretched to the other woman. It was useless. She felt all the strength leave her body, the arm dropped down. Her vision began to cloud, going dark. Soon, she saw nothing.

Death followed shortly after.

## Chapter One, "The Trip"

1

*June 26th, 1981*

Bree rolled tight enough to keep the buds inside but loose enough to let them breathe. She was a master. That, at least, was what Jenna thought. She wasn't so sure about anyone else in the van, though. Joel was driving, of course: it was his van. He was Jenna's brother, always smiling, though it was usually a cruel smile. She loved him, of course, but he could sure be an asshole sometimes. His hair was of a much lighter shade of brown than Jenna's: he took more after their mother, who's hair was blonde and wavy, unlike Jenna, who took after their father, dark brown and straight. Jenna's hair reached to the middle of her back. She was pretty though more than a little odd in her look. There was a little gap between her front teeth and she had just the slightest tummy. But her shapely little butt turned more than a few heads.

In the passenger seat of the van was Greg, a friend of Joel's. Greg was hard to read. He always seemed to be hiding behind those glasses of his. A little wide around the middle, bearded, usually with a beer in his hand as he had now. He was cute, Jenna supposed but not her type, of course. He laughed at something that Joel said which Jenna had missed as Bree lit the grass and took a deep drag. She held it in for an alarming amount of time - until her eyes were watering - before letting it out in a blissful exhale, the smoke drifting over her face. She smiled up at Jenna from her prone position. Jenna smiled back.

Jenna was sitting on a shitty couch that Joel had found on the side of the road and tossed into the back of the van more than a year ago. It wasn't exactly comfortable but it got the job done. Kirsten sat next to Jenna, all five-foot-nine of her, her dark blonde hair about chin-length, her smile a not-quite-understanding one. She was Joel's girlfriend, impossibly slim and pretty, with blue eyes framed by long lashes. She chuckled and shook her head as Bree smiled up at Jenna, offering the grass. Jenna took it, placed it between her lips and drew deep. It felt great, that strange mixture: an itch at the back of the throat and, simultaneously, a calming, soothing feeling that started in her head and spread throughout

her body. This was what grass did to Jenna, every time. There was never any of the paranoia that her friends sometimes exhibited and she never felt quite "stoned" but it always calmed her down. She found herself often imbibing in social situations where she felt out of place or uncomfortable.

There was a yipping, annoying bark as Pippy, Kirsten's puffy little poodle, came trotting towards his mistress, passing by Bree, who was laying on the floor of the van, knees up. A worn copy of *The Satanic Bible* lay next to her head.

"Come here, precious," Kirsten said and lifted Pippy into her arms. "Is that smoke bothering you? Is it? Yes it is!"

Bree smirked at Jenna, who stifled a laugh. Bree was tall and had her hair cut short like a boy. It was dyed red. She was beautiful, with milky skin and a knowing smile. Jenna knew what Bree was thinking - "*Squares*" - and uttered a little laugh.

Jenna took another long drag and handed the grass back to Bree, who stuck it between her lips as Jenna sidled along the couch, getting closer to Joel and Greg in the front seats.

"How far is this lake?" she asked.

"Little ways still," Joel said. "Near the Rim. Henry found it. Guess an older cousin of his used to camp near there with the Scouts when he was a kid."

"Awfully vague," Jenna said.

Joel shrugged. "That's Henry for you."

Henry, his girlfriend Rachel and their friend Marta were on the road ahead of them in a beat-up Charger. Jenna was always surprised that the car still ran with all the abuse it had taken over the years. Behind her, Kirsten was eyeing Bree on the floor - from her lofty position on the shitty couch - with a disapproving look.

"Satan, huh?" she asked.

"Hmm?" Bree said, still focused on her grass and some interesting spot on the ceiling of the van.

"Your '*Satanic Bible*'?" Kirsten said.

"Oh, yeah. Interesting stuff."

"So, do you sacrifice little children on your off hours?"

"No," Bree said as she drew in a lungful of pot and let it out real slow. "Only annoying little dogs."

Kirsten uttered a small, strangled cry, held onto Pippy tighter and shook her head, disbelieving. Jenna smiled at Bree's joke.

"Pretty weird place from what I hear," Greg said.

"Oh, yeah?" Jenna said.

Greg took a swig from his beer, wiped his lips with the back of his hand and nodded. "Yeah."

"How do you mean?" Jenna said.

"I mean that there's an old, closed-down campground on the lake. Other side of where we're going. Near where we're going... Something like that. Must be this same place that Henry's cousin scouted at or some bullshit." He shrugged. "I don't know."

"An abandoned campground," Jenna mused. "Creepy."

"Damn right," Greg said.

"Ah, you pussies," Joel suddenly interrupted. "Ain't nothing up there but some damn little woodland creatures. Nothing to be afraid of."

"Wait, wasn't there some legend?" Greg said. "Some nursery rhyme? Jenna?"

Jenna shook her head. "I don't know any. Joel and I only came up here a few times growing up. And it wasn't like we interacted with any local kids or anything. Only cousins and the occasional friend."

"Well, I came here, too," Greg said. "With my folks." He took another drink from his beer and shook his head as he swallowed it. "I don't know. Can't quite remember it."

"Been smoking some of that grass with Bree, Greg?" Joel asked with a smile.

"No," Greg said. "Never touch that shit. Screws up your mind."

With that, he took another long swig of his beer, saw that it was empty and rolled down his window. He sent the bottle flying into the road, where it clattered against a shelf of rock along the side.

## 2

A little ahead of the van on the road, in a beat-up Charger that was sputtering and coughing up the occasional plume of black smoke, were Henry, Rachel and Marta. Henry and Rachel sat up front while Marta sat in the back.

"So, what's this place like?" Rachel asked.

She was a slim, pretty redhead with prominent freckles. Currently, she was rummaging through a bag of trail mix, picking out nuts but leaving the raisins where they were.

"Oh, you'll love it, baby," Henry said. "Beautiful lake, no one around."

Henry was big, Black and beautiful with a moderate afro that looked great on him. His smile was winning and he shot her one now, out of the side of his mouth, his eyes focused on the road ahead of him.

"Isn't there a town nearby?" Marta said from the back.

She was short, curvy with long, wavy brown hair and big, heavy breasts that she loved to show off whenever she had the chance. At the moment, they were threatening to pop out of the half-shirt that she



was wearing whenever the car went over a bump in the road.

"Right," Henry said, shooting her a glance in the rear view mirror that was perhaps a little longer than it should have been. "But it's a podunk little place. Barely a village. One doctor, a general store and a few drug-addicted locals. Sheriff's deputy rolls by every day or so, makes sure everything's a-okay. Nothing to bother us, that's for sure."

On the radio, Blue Oyster Cult was telling them to not fear the Reaper but none of them were really listening. Rachel was looking out the window, scanning the trees as they passed, the desert giving way gradually to mountains and forest, the landscape transforming around them. The window was rolled down and Rachel loved the slightly more chilly air up here. It wasn't cold, of course, but it was much cooler than it was south, where they had come from.

"My uncle died on this stretch of road," Marta said suddenly.

Rachel looked back at her, eyes questioning. Henry just shook his head and kept his eyes on the road ahead.

"Hit something in the road," Marta explained. "Darted out in front of him and he swerved to miss it, slammed into a tree. His head came clean off when it went through the windshield."

"Jesus," Henry said as Rachel covered her mouth in shock.

Marta shook her head. "I know, I know. Gruesome."

"What'd he hit?" Henry asked.

"That's the thing," Marta said. "Nobody knows. He was alone in the car. Must have hit something, though. Clipped it, at least. There was a trail of blood from the middle of the road off into the woods. Also on his bumper. No body was ever found, though."

"Lovely story," Henry said.

Marta shrugged. "I got a million of 'em."

Henry was still eyeing her in the rear view mirror. "I'll bet you do."

Rachel caught his look, frowned disapprovingly and went back to watching nature pass by the window. A squirrel darted through the underbrush, from one tree to another, clambering up the second.

"I've got one," Henry said.

Rachel sighed almost inaudibly and turned to regard him. "Got what?"

"A story," Henry offered.

"Oh, yeah?" Marta asked.

"Yeah. You ever heard of Hatchetface?"

Rachel tried to frown even harder - and more severe - than she already was. Henry smiled from ear to ear. Marta just looked interested.

"Sounds like a metal band," she said.

Henry chuckled. "Not quite. She was a girl."

"Oh, someone cute?" Rachel said pointedly.

"Ah, no," Henry said. "While back, almost twenty years ago, there was this girl. Her father owned a mortuary. Little place, you know? Mother died in childbirth and father never remarried. Devoted to his little princess, know what I mean? Maybe a little too devoted. Anyway, it was the fall - well, as fall as it gets in Phoenix - and Daddy takes his little girl to the carnival. One of those traveling ones, set up in a big parking lot somewhere. A few tilt-a-whirls, a small roller coaster... And a funhouse. Nice time out for Daddy and Daughter, right?"

"Right," Marta said.

"Wrong. You see, they picked the wrong evening to enjoy the carnival. Happened to be the very night Julius Andrew Gowen went to the carnival."

"No!" Marta said.

"Yes. Old Julius escaped from the loony bin - one night only, folks! - and made his way to the carnival. Well, you remember the stories. Twelve people butchered in one night at that little carnival. He snuck up on people, strangled 'em to death, stabbed 'em, chopped 'em up. All the while, hiding the bodies, dumping 'em in trash bins and what have you. And his masterpiece? Well, that was the funhouse, wasn't it? He rode that ride, got off in the middle of it and hid. Killed four people with a hatchet in the funhouse before the police put about thirty rounds into him, turning him into Swiss cheese. Daddy and Daughter got off lightly... Or did they?"

"Well, did they?" Rachel said, interested despite herself.

Henry shrugged. "Well, Daddy lost a finger - the little one - and Daughter... well, let's just say that Old Julius really did a number on her face. Took out an eye, left all kinds of scars. But maybe they were lucky. Maybe. They got out with their lives, didn't they? Not a whole lot of people could say that who were there that night. Daughter recovered. Her wounds healed." He shrugged. "Physical ones, at least. A little time passed. But you know how kids are. They like to tease. And they teased poor little Daughter a whole Hell of a lot. Took to calling her Hatchetface."

"Poor girl," Marta said.

"You're damn right!" Henry said. "She wasn't doing very well. So, Daddy tries to cheer her up. Decides to sign her up for the Scouts. Take her to camp one tranquil summer."

"What happened?" Rachel asked.

"Our little Daughter couldn't take the teasing, the humiliation. Camp was too much. She snapped." Henry snapped his fingers - quick and hard, the sound deafening in the small car - and Marta jumped.

Henry just laughed and continued. "Picked up her own hatchet and went to work. Nine kids, four adults. They think she got her Daddy. Nobody ever saw him again, at least. Her, either, actually. She was shot, we know that. Some good-ol-boy Sheriff's deputy took aim and popped one off, his bullet finding its mark. But she ran off into the woods. They never found her body."

"She's still out there?" Marta asked.

Henry shrugged again. "Who knows?"

"Where was this camp at?" Marta asked.

"Let me guess," Rachel said and shot another disappointed look at Henry.

Henry looked at her and smiled wide. "Not far from where we're camping on the lake." He turned his attention back to the road and his face suddenly changed expressions from one of mean-spirited fun to one of total shock. "Holy shit! What's that crazy woman in the road?!"

Both Rachel and Marta screamed as Henry swerved the car a little. They turned their own attention to the road as Henry began to laugh: there was nothing there.

Rachel pounded on Henry's shoulder in anger. "You asshole! Scared me half to death!"

"Bastard!" Marta offered and threw a pencil at his head. The writing utensil bounced off his temple and landed on the console before rolling down around Rachel's feet.

"Hey, it was funny, wasn't it?!" Henry said to the intense protest of the ladies.

### 3

The van and the Charger were at rest in the parking lot of a general store in the little town not far from where they were planning on camping. Jenna, Bree, Kirsten and Greg stood around the cars while Joel, Henry, Rachel and Marta picked up the last few supplies they needed for the stay. Bree smoked - normal cigarettes out in public - and Greg drank, taking sips out of his bottle.

"So, it's like an exorcise video, right?" Greg said.

"But it's sexy?" Bree said.

"Right, right. Like beautiful chicks doing all this stuff with their bodies, leg lifts, squats, you know? Oh, man, I get more outta that than any skin flick, let me tell you."

"That's gross, Greg," Kirsten said.

"What? Isn't that, like, more respectful or something?"

"No, it isn't."

"I don't know," Bree said. "Sounds interesting."

"You can't be serious," Kirsten said.

Bree shrugged. "So this is on tape?"

"Yeah, yeah," Greg said, "but I happen to have it on laserdisc. High tech shit, let me tell you."

"And what's it called?"

"*Aerobicise, the Beautiful Workout.*"

"I'll have to remember that."

"You're sick," Kirsten said. "Both of you."

Bree and Greg laughed, Jenna joining them as Kirsten picked up her dog and walked away from them: far enough to be out of earshot but not far enough to be out of sight.

Jenna put an arm across Bree's shoulders, leaned in and whispered something into her ear, conspiratorially. Greg frowned at them and took another drink of his beer. The two women laughed at their own private joke and Greg smiled, trying to fit in any way he could.

"So, you're not, like, really a Satanist, are you?" he asked.

"Nah," Bree said.

"So why are you reading that book?"

"Just find it interesting. That's all."

"Cool. I read *Chariots of the Gods* last year. That was pretty good. What I can remember of it, anyway."

Bree nodded but didn't say anything. A moment of uncomfortable silence passed in which Greg kept drinking and Bree kept smoking. After what seemed like an interminable length of time, they heard Kirsten's voice, mercifully sparing them any further discomfort.

"Get away from me!" she said.

The three of them looked over to where Kirsten had planted herself and saw that she was not alone. An old man, tall and thin, was standing close to her, his wild face practically rubbing up against hers.

"What the Hell?" Greg said.

The three of them headed over to join Kirsten, who was clutching onto Pippy, her face turned away from the strange man, her expression one of slowly mounting fear. The old man was so wrinkled that he looked like a raisin, albeit one who was a pale white and had considerable stubble. His balding head shined in the sun and his glasses were perched on the edge of his nose like an old grandmother reading a bedtime story to her grandchildren. He wore a simple white T-shirt and tiny riding shorts. What was presumably his bicycle was parked nearby, leaning against a pole.

"You'll die, just like all the rest," he said to Kirsten as the others approached.

"What, what?" Kirsten said. "Why would you say that?"

"God is watching you," the old man said, his eyes wide, practically popping out of his head.

"Always watching."

"What's going on here?" Bree asked, pitching her cigarette away into the parking lot and squaring up the situation. What looked to be a local girl of about thirteen, with orange red hair watched them from the other side of the parking lot. Both of her knees had band-aids applied to them and she sat next to her bike eating an ice cream cone as she watched them.

"Ah, yeah," Greg said a moment later. "What's happening?"

"I was telling your friend here," the old man said. "She's going to die, like all of you."

"Is that a threat?" Jenna asked.

"I speak only the truth."

"Look, we're just a few college friends having some fun out in the woods," Jenna said.

"That's what they all say. And they all died."

"The fuck you talking about?" Greg said.

"She'll get you. All of you."

"Scaring the tourists, Tom?" a new voice asked.

Everyone turned to regard the newcomer. He was a tall, fit man who appeared to be at least in his late fifties. He was attractive in that classic, stylish aging man sort of way, his hair a well-groomed silver, clean-shaven with a winning smile.

"I wasn't doing anything wrong, Doc," the old man - presumably Tom - said.

"Sure you weren't," the newcomer said. "Now, best be on your way." Tom protested but didn't get a full word out before the newcomer cut him off. "Go on, now. Get!"

The old man looked at the newcomer, a strange expression on his face, then he looked at the college kids. After that, he headed to his bike, got on it and rode away, never able to keep his eyes off the group for more than a few seconds. The newcomer watched him go, gave him a jovial wave and waited until he was out of view before turning his attention to the group.

"I apologize for Old Tom," he said. "Dr. Owen Travers, at your service. My practice is right across the street here. I was going to grab a hot dog when I saw that you young folks had been accosted by our local doom-sayer. He's harmless, really."

"Yeah," Greg said. "What the Hell was he talking about?"

Dr. Travers sighed and shook his head. "A ghost story. Nothing to be concerned about."

"What kind of ghost story?" Jenna asked.

"Hatchetface," another new voice spoke up.

They all looked around to find the young teen girl who had been watching them a moment before. She was close now, still licking her ice cream cone and looking excited about what was going on.

"Shelley," Dr. Travers said, "shouldn't you be getting home? Isn't your mom going to be worried about you?"

"Nah," Shelley said and took another lick of her ice cream cone. "She barely notices me even when I'm there."

The girl seemed to be looking at Bree with some intent, as if sizing the older woman up. Bree frowned.

"All the same," Dr. Travers said, "best be heading home."

Shelley sighed and stomped one foot onto the asphalt in frustration. Then she headed away, back to her bike.

"Hatchetface?" Greg said.

"She means Annie Blade," Dr. Travers explained. "Just a girl who went crazy and killed a few people here quite some time ago. Don't worry, she's dead. Been dead a long time."

"Uh..." Greg said.

"Just ghost stories," Dr. Travers said again. "Legends. Every little town has at least one. This one happens to be ours. You know how kids like to talk. They make up stuff. I'd expect that there's no more than 10% truth to any of it."

"Kids and old men, huh?" Bree said.

"I suppose."

"Well, thank you," Jenna said. "For intervening."

"You're very welcome. I hope you enjoy your trip."

"Oh, we will," Bree said.

Dr. Travers dropped them a wink and headed into the general store. Greg took a another swig of his beer and watched the man go.

"Enjoy that hot dog!" he called after the man, but it seemed he was out of earshot. He turned to the women. "Why would a doctor be having a hot dog for lunch? That make sense to you?"

Bree shrugged. "Kosher, maybe?"

"Maybe."

A moment later, Henry, Joel, Rachel and Marta joined them, supplies in hand. Joel looked at Kirsten, who still looked a little scared.

"Everything okay?" he asked.

"Yeah," Kirsten said. "There was just some guy being an asshole. That's all."

"Where?" Joel said looking around. "I'll kick his ass!"

"Hey, I got your back," Henry said.

The two of them looked at Greg, who was finishing his beer. Greg did a double take, then spoke up.

"Oh, yeah," he said. "Where is the guy? I'll beat the living shit out of him... Seriously, the guy was an old fuck. A gust of wind would have knocked him over like a stick in a hurricane. Not a problem. Believe me."

"I'll believe you when you slow down a little," Henry said. "What's that, your seventh this morning?"

"Something like that."

"It's barely noon, dude," Joel said.

"What can I say, I like to party. And sometimes you got to bring the party to ya."

Joel laughed a little while Henry shook his head. Bree lit up another cigarette.

"Let's go," Henry said. "Day's a wasting."

"Right," Joel said.

They headed back to their cars. Their final destination wasn't far now.

#### 4

They set up camp not far from the lake, in a small clearing in the woods, trees all around them. Beyond the trees, practically encircling them, was the Rim, a vast shelf of rock stretching majestically above them. It was gorgeous.

The girls were already at the lake while the boys volunteered to pitch camp. Well, Greg had not volunteered but Joel and Henry had persuaded him to help. He was doing the bare minimum of help: holding a stake down with one hand, the other filled with his bottle, while Henry hammered the stake into the ground on what was to be his and Rachel's tent.

Joel and Henry both had their shirts off, their strong, young bodies wet with sweat. Both of them had nice six-packs and strong arms. Henry was a receiver on the University football team while Joel was in track. It showed on both of them. Greg certainly did not have his shirt off; was, in fact, wearing entirely too much for the climate and was probably sweating more than the other two under his layers of clothing.

Joel was busy getting another tent ready when he heard a car pull up near them. He squinted through the trees and saw someone approaching, a car parked behind whoever it was.

"Afternoon," the stranger said as he approached.

Joel could now see that it was a man, a police officer: Sheriff's deputy. No, scratch that, the Sheriff

himself. Joel smiled to himself. *We're getting the royal treatment*, he thought.

"Good afternoon, Sheriff," he said out loud.

"Sheriff Parker," the man introduced himself.

He was middle-aged, a big man, both in height and around the middle. His dark hair was beginning to grey but it was all there: no sign of a receding hairline. He wore glasses and had a hand resting on his gun. Joel thought that was a little much but it wasn't his town.

"Joel Carlson," Joel said, offering his hand. "We're up from the University."

Sheriff Parker looked at the hand but didn't take it. "I expected as much."

Joel dropped his hand. "All right. Can I help you, Sheriff?"

"You sure this where you wanna be putting up camp?"

"Um, yes. Why? Are we on private property?"

"No, no. Nothing illegal about what you're doing, it's just..."

"Just what?"

"Well, there's plenty of great camping up near Payson, Show Low."

"We wanted to be near the lake. Gorgeous out there."

"It sure is. Lilith Lake is just about our pride and joy."

"Then, surely, you'd want tourists to see it, visit it?"

"I expect."

Henry and Greg wandered up next to Joel. Henry looked at Joel, then at the Sheriff.

"Problem?" he asked.

"No, not a problem," Sheriff Parker said.

"Sheriff here says that we would find a better camping experience up near Show Low," Joel said.

"Is that so?" Henry said.

"Well, we are kind of already here," Greg said. "Stakes are down and everything."

"I can see that," Sheriff Parker said. "No talking you out of this?"

"I think not, Sheriff," Henry said. "With all due respect, of course."

"Of course," Sheriff Parker said. "Anyway, I'll leave you be. Just wanna let you know that I'll be in the area this whole weekend. I'll check up on you, make sure you're okay."

"Something we should be worried about, Sheriff?" Greg said.

"Nothing too serious, boys. Just a few disappearances over the last few years. That's all."

"Disappearances?" Henry asked.

"Probably just jilted lovers," Sheriff Parker explained. "Runaways, that sort of thing. Nothing to be worried about."



"Nothing too serious'," Greg said. "'Nothing to worry about.' You sure want to reassure us, Sheriff."

"Yeah." He looked at each one in turn, as if memorizing their faces for filing away. It was unsettling to say the least. "Yeah. No troubles. Have a good weekend."

Then he turned and returned to his patrol car, tromping through the woods like he wasn't accustomed to it in any way, shape or form. Henry lifted a hand in a stiff, unmoving wave.

"Bye, Sheriff," he said. Then, to the others: "Strange guy."

"Strange town," Greg said. He took a swig of his beer.

"Think he's on something?" Joel said.

"Probably just the bottle," Henry said.

Both he and Joel looked pointedly at Greg. Joel was smirking.

"Hey, don't look at me," Greg said. "Each of us drunks is unique in his own little way."

Joel laughed as Henry shook his head. They got back to work a moment later but not before Joel thought he saw something through the trees. An animal, or maybe a person.

Someone watching them.

## Chapter Two, "Voyeurs"

1

While the boys were setting up camp, the girls were at the lake, near the dock. Bree had offered to help set up camp but the boys would have none of it. So she was now sitting on the edge of the dock, listening to the others talk.

"But what if she is alive?" Jenna said.

"Who, Hatchetface?" Marta asked.

"Yeah, Alice," Jenna said.

"Annie," Kirsten said.

"Right," Jenna said. "Annie."

Marta and Jenna were sitting near the dock, just basking in the sun. Kirsten stood near by, Pippy yipping at her side as he always seemed to do. Rachel was a little ways off, walking along the edge of the lake and looking out onto the water. She was in listening distance, however, and Bree knew that she had an ear cocked in their direction.

"You're saying that the crazy guy that you ran into at the general store was telling the truth?" Marta said. "Is that what you're saying?"

"Maybe," Jenna said. "At least, he was partially right."

"Bullshit," Marta said.

"Yeah, bullshit," Kirsten said.

"But what if she is?" Jenna said. "What if she's been living out here for years, on her own, hunting for her food, dipping into the lake to bathe, sleeping in old counselor's cabins? What if? Isn't that exciting?"

"God, no," Kirsten said. "It's scary is what it is."

"What if she wants company?" Jenna explained. "Companionship. Maybe that's all she needs. Human contact. It's what we all want, right? Is that so crazy?"

Marta shrugged but didn't look too hostile to the idea. Kirsten sighed and rolled her eyes. Rachel looked over her shoulder at them, her face unreadable.

"Bree?" Jenna asked.

Bree frowned and thought about it. She imagined Annie Blade, Hatchetface, out there in the woods, alone, crazy, wild. Were her thoughts even human anymore? Or were they more like an animal? She shook her head.

"I don't know," she said. "All I know is that if I were her, I'd want to go swimming whenever it was warm enough. Like now. I want to go swimming."

"But we left our suits back at camp," Jenna said. "I don't even think that they're unpacked."

"Then we'll have to make due," Bree said.

She stood up on the dock and dramatically took off her shirt, revealing her pert, rather large, perfect breasts. Kirsten let out a surprised gasp while Jenna smiled and Marta nodded her head enthusiastically.

## 2

They were not alone. Someone was watching them. The Prowler crept through the trees, hidden, pushing aside a branch to get a better view. Leering, drooling, enjoying every moment of what was happening.

Bree had just taken off her shirt and all the other girls looked either shocked or interested. It was all so enticing.

"That's the ticket," Marta said.

She also stood up and took off her own shirt. It didn't take much effort, considering it was a tiny half-shirt. Her massive tits swung free in the sun as Bree pushed down her shorts and panties. Her pubic hair was trimmed but still voluminous, dark and deep, promising untold pleasures confined in folds of hidden flesh.

Nude now, Bree ran down the dock and dived into the water. Marta wasn't far behind, kicking her shorts away from one leg, her big, round ass lovely and bouncing. Jenna shook her head in disbelief but followed suit, stripping. Her breasts were on the small side but gorgeous, her nipples erect at the excitement of the sudden show. The Prowler licked cracked lips and watched, and watched, and watched.

Jenna's ass was small and extremely cute, biteable, yummy. The Prowler liked the way it moved as the girl ran down the dock to join her friends in the water.

But the three that were now in the water were Evil Dykes. The Prowler knew this, could feel it. Disgusting girls! But sexy, all the same.

Now it was Kirsten's turn. Would she join her friends? As the Prowler watched, the girl did, sighing

and taking off her shirt. The Prowler shook with delight. Kirsten's body was amazing, all slim tightness with neat pubic hair. Her annoying dog was yipping as its mistress stepped onto the dock and headed down it to join her friends.

The Prowler had been watching them since they got here and had been listening, knew all their names. So he knew that left only Rachel, the alluring redhead, out of the water. She was watching her friends with a curious eye. What would she do?

The Prowler tried to send out thoughts - sinful thoughts, perverse thoughts - to penetrate the girl's fragile mind. It worked! Rachel started to strip and the Prowler was treated to the lovely prize of the girl's milky white body and all her delightful freckles. It was glorious. Her pert little butt bounced as she headed into the water, just walking in from the side unlike her friends, who entered via the dock.

The Prowler - Old Tom - thought about the girls, about all the various couplings, with the boys at camp, with each other, with himself. It was almost too good to fathom. He unzipped his pants, let his throbbing member loose and started to stroke it vigorously.

It was going to be a great weekend.

### 3

At dusk, they were all gathered at camp, sitting cross-legged - Bree passing a joint - around a campfire they had made. It burned bright and strong, hot and comforting. The wind picked up off the lake and blew in their direction, creating a brisk chill in the air, something that they never would have experienced in Phoenix.

Jenna accepted the joint from Bree and took a deep drag, held the smoke in her lungs for as long as she could then let it out slowly. After that, she passed the joint to Marta, who followed suit.

"Camp Mogollon is right around the edge of the lake," Henry said when the joint got around to him. He took a drag and coughed, passed the joint over to Joel. "Not far from here."

"I was wondering where it was," Greg said as he took a swig of his beer.

"Right around the bend, you might say," Henry said. "You know, it had a reputation even before ol' Hatcherface went to work on a bunch of kids there."

"Really?" Marta asked.

"Oh, yes," Henry elaborated. "Spooky place. The Indians called it 'The Bad Place,' in whatever language they spoke, anyway. They stayed away from the lake, away from the land around it. Thought it was cursed. And maybe they were right. Story goes, one brave wandered onto the land, stopped at the lake to quench his thirst and went mad. By the time he got back to his tribe, he had stripped all of his

own skin off. He came walking out of the forest into the village, his lidless eyes staring at them, flayed body stinking, flies following him wherever he went. Took ten men strong to take him down. Ten tomahawks to the skull, that's what they say. The Indians gave him a proper burial, picked up everything they could carry and moved out, farther up, past the Rim. Out of this accursed valley. And I don't blame 'em. For how beautiful it is here - and it is gorgeous, really. For all that, don't you feel something wrong out here? Something in the air tonight?"

He looked off into the distance, as if picturing the spot where all this had happened in the past. The joint came around to Greg, who shook his head, not even looking at it. His gaze was focused on Henry.

"Jesus, man," he said. "Trying to scare the shit out of all of us?"

"Oh, yeah," Henry said with a smile.

"So was that all bullshit?" Rachel asked.

"Not all of it."

"The skinless brave and all that shit about Hatchetface?"

"Look, I may not have all the details right, but it's all essentially true. It happened. Believe me."

"I believe you," Bree said and stood up.

"You do?" Jenna said.

"Sure. Why would he lie?"

Jenna shrugged.

"I'm going for a walk," Bree said. "Tempt fate, as it were. Anyone want to join me?"

She looked at Jenna. Jenna took a quick look at the others. None of them were looking at her in a funny way, so she stood up.

"I'll go," she said.

"Excellent," Bree said.

"Sounds like a great idea," Henry said. "Joel, Kirsten, I haven't seen the lake yet. What to join me?"

"Sure," Joel said.

Kirsten looked at him for a moment, a strange expression on her face. But Joel prompted her and she stood up along with him.

"Fine," she said.

"See you all later," Henry said. "Won't be long, baby."

This last was directed at Rachel, who barely noticed. Jenna looked at the girl as she was getting ready to leave. Rachel looked like the pot had hit her hard. Her eyes were drooping, her mouth opening and closing, as if she were feeling her teeth with her tongue and didn't like what she was finding there.

As Henry, Joel and Kirsten headed towards the lake, Bree and Jenna entered the woods, heading

south. They were quiet as they walked, just enjoying each other's company. Jenna shot a few delighted glances at Bree, who couldn't hide her smile.

Despite all the weirdness, all the eccentricities of the people involved, Jenna was having a good time. And she could tell that Bree was having a good time, as well. She was guarded and kept herself hidden most of the time but Jenna could read her like a book.

When they thought that they were far enough away from the camp, they stopped, Bree pushing Jenna up against a large, strong tree. They kissed, a passionate, hungry kiss of two people who had wanted to kiss for some time but had not found the opportunity to do so. It was intense, gorgeous and, if anyone were watching, they would have gotten quite a show.

"I've been waiting to do that since Phoenix," Bree said when the kiss broke.

"Me, too," Jenna said. "Jesus, I can't resist you."

"Why would you want to?" Bree said.

They kissed again. This one was shorter, a quick meeting of lips and tongue, almost a gesture. It broke as Bree felt Jenna up, her right hand finding purchase on the other girl's left breast. She squeezed, making Jenna moan with pleasure, before moving lower, caressing the girl's side until she reached her ass, which she then grabbed hold of.

"This is the world's greatest ass," Bree said, face less than an inch away from her lover. "You know that?"

"I've been told that," Jenna said. "But it's not as good as yours."

Bree's hand fumbled into Jenna's shorts, skin connecting with skin. She cupped the girl's sex in her hand - that soft, exciting hair down there - her fingers getting to work, exploring the folds of flesh. They kissed again as Bree fucked Jenna with her hand.

When it broke, Bree rested her right cheek against Jenna's left. Jenna began to gnaw on Bree's ear as Bree whispered into Jenna's.

"I wanna fuck Marta," she whispered, eliciting a shocked gasp from Jenna.

"You wouldn't!" Jenna said.

"Oh, I fucking would," Bree said. "Fuck the shit out of her, bury my face between those tits, suck on those nipples. I'd want you there, of course. I'd want you by my side, sitting on her face. Would you like that? You would, wouldn't you? You pretend to be shocked but that's what you really want, isn't it?"

"Oh, yeah," Jenna said.

She could feel it coming, could feel it build up inside her, getting ready to crash over her like a wave. It was close.

"I wanna fuck her, too," Jenna said. "Let me fuck her."

"Yes," Bree said.

Her breath was coming in short, staccato bursts. It sounded almost as if she was going to climax as well, even though she had barely been touched. Maybe it was because she was so worked up, Jenna observed.

"You perverted bitch," Bree said, suddenly forceful, her hand gripping Jenna from the inside. "You whore. Tell me what you are. Tell me!"

"I..." Jenna said. She was so close now. "I'm a whore. A fucking whore. Ravage me! Do it!"

Bree did it. And it was good. So good. Jenna felt it roll across her. Her whole body shook as it happened. And she wanted it to happen again. And again.

Something moved at the edge of her vision. A person. Someone small, hidden. For a moment, her half-crazed mind threw up the possibility that it was Marta, that she had come to join them in ecstasy. But, no, whoever it was, they were too small to be Marta. Soon, they were gone, disappearing into the underbrush, and Jenna convinced herself that she had imagined the intruder. Maybe the pot was making her paranoid. Either that, or Henry's story.

Either way, she didn't care. She kissed Bree and made her move on the girl, wanting to pay her back for the incredible gift she had just provided.

4

Old Tom, the Prowler, had watched the group for most of the day. Several times, he had to hide and retreat to the woods on the lake, like now. It might have been his imagination, but he thought that someone else was out here in the woods, also watching. But that was all nonsense, of course. Oh, he certainly believe that Hatchetface had been here, once, but that was long ago. Nothing had happened in this area for the past three years. It was safe. Safe for people like him to get their jollies off. Which is what he'd been doing all day.

As he watched from behind the safety of a tree, three of the group made their way to the dock, and the lake. He was a good distance away, but close enough to get everything he needed: he could hear them, could see them well enough in the bright moonlight. The moon hung over the lake, so big that it almost looked fake.

There was Henry, Joel and Kirsten, followed by Kirsten's annoying dog, who barked all the way there. Joel's hand was clutching the small of Kirsten's back.

"Do it for me, hon," Joel said.

"I don't know," Kirsten said.

"It's a favor. For me. You'll love it. I know you will."

"But it's wrong, isn't it?"

"What's wrong about it? I mean, you like Henry, don't you?"

"Of course."

"Well, I like him, too. He's my best friend."

"I thought Greg was your best friend."

"Greg's old news," Joel said. "Besides, you certainly wouldn't be out here with him, would you?"

"No," Kirsten said, "I guess not."

"Yeah, baby," Henry said. "You know you want this. I mean, Joel can vouch for me. He's seen me in the showers at school."

"I certainly have. He's hung like a horse."

Old Tom couldn't believe how lucky he was. First, all the girls skinny dipping and now this: a threesome! Sometimes, God could spoil an old man.

"Well," Kirsten said, "let me see, I guess."

Old Tom licked his cracked lips, fiddled with his crotch and got ready. As he watched, Henry unzipped his fly and, with some effort, produced a large member. Kirsten suppressed a gasp.

"Wow," she said.

"Yeah, baby," Henry said.

Joel chuckled, reached out and grabbed hold of Henry's manhood. He stroked it. Kirsten looked shocked.

"But..." she said and shook her head.

"But what?" Joel said.

"But what about Rachel?" she said.

"Fuck Rachel," Henry said. "Bitch hasn't been putting out like I want her to. I'm here to have fun."

"Okay," Kirsten said.

And, as Pippy continued barking, she got down on her knees and saw to Henry. A moment later, Joel joined in the fun, unzipping his own fly. Kirsten saw to him, as well.

Old Tom was busy seeing to himself, his big, bulging eyes looking like they were about to pop out of his head. He pleased himself while leaning against a tree, his right foot outstretched and planted against another tree just ahead of him. This second tree was providing him with most of his cover, but gave him a great view of the action.

And what action it was! A few minutes later, Joel was lying on his back on the dock, dick standing



straight up in the air. Kirsten lowered herself down onto the stiff pole while Henry squatted over both of them, entering Kirsten from behind.

It was too much for Old Tom. He was very close. He could feel his balls tighten, could feel the liquid getting ready to make its ascent. It was close.

There came a call from somewhere in the woods, some nocturnal animal, crying alone somewhere about the lake. It was a high, eerie cry and Old Tom felt his arms break out in gooseflesh. But he didn't let that slow him down. This was going to be the best damn orgasm of his life and he was determined to let it flow naturally.

Behind him, there was a small sound, as of someone treading on a stick. He frowned.

There was someone behind him.

Someone behind the tree that he was resting against. They must have crept up on him while he had been distracted - very distracted - and now they had the drop on him.

But his body could not be stopped, not in this moment. He was coming, there was no two ways about it, and that was all that truly occupied his mind. His hand was a blur on his dick. It was red and ready.

That was when Hatchetface, in all her glory, came out from behind the tree he was hiding behind. She was tall, her body beautiful, her hidden face terrifying. Her hatchet was drawn back to strike and, as Old Tom watched, she swung it towards him.

He wanted to scream, wanted to tell her that he was on her side, that he wanted to punish these sinners, but he didn't have the time. The hatchet found its mark - his neck - and there was a brief moment of further consciousness as he felt the blade connect with the tree that he was leaning against. It had gone straight through his neck. A clean cut.

And he realized, in those last moments of consciousness, that he was the sinner. And had been all along.

Old Tom's head fell off the stump of his neck, dropping to the floor and rolling a few feet away. His dick erupted semen all about, the biggest load of the old man's life and he wasn't there to see or feel it. Meanwhile, the stump of his neck sprayed blood like a fountain, covering the tree and spattering against Hatchetface as she watched him die, head cocked to one side like an animal.

## Chapter Three, "Sin"

1

Hatchetface knelt down near Old Tom's body, which had fallen prone on the ground at the base of the tree that he had been leaning against in his last moments of life. The killer looked down at the body, curious, as always, wondering how long they stayed conscious before the Blackness took them, before it did whatever it did with them.

She wore tough boots and her torn pants showed lots of strong leg, as well as the tight green half-shirt that she wore, exposing a strong, sensual six-pack of abs. Over the shirt was a brown jacket, open at the center. Finally, there was a pair of tight black gloves and a grey cloth hood, open at one eye, the left. It was tied off at the neck with a length of rope that hung down her back a good six inches or so.

She was strong but not a body-builder. Her strength was lean, hardened by nature. She was a survivor in this land, like the Indians before her.

She took off the glove of her right hand and touched the bloody stump where Old Tom's head had been, rubbing the red liquid between her fingers as she thought, her mind confused. She knew this man. Knew Old Tom, had seen him in the woods from time to time. Normally, he knew to stay away but not tonight. No, tonight he was hurting himself, abusing himself, a slave to that throbbing red Weapon between his legs. That Evil Thing.

Hatchetface shook her head. She didn't even know that he had one of those until tonight.

Slowly, she stood up and looked down at the horrible display near the dock. Her dock. Two boys were hurting that girl, thrusting their Weapons into her. And she was pretending to like it, trying to look brave but Hatchetface could tell that the girl was in pain.

The killer looked at her hatchet, which she had set down on the ground near the old man's body. She picked it up and marveled at its now-bloody, razor-sharp edge, head cocked to one side.

Should she kill them now?

Now, while they were engaged in sin? While they were vulnerable?

She looked at the hatchet and saw her own, masked face reflected in the blood. She nodded slowly.

Yes.

Yes, now was the time. Time to stop them. Time to make the pain go away. She had to kill the boys.

And the girl? Yes, she would have to go, too. She had been hurt, had been tainted by the horrid Weapons wielded by the boys. There was no saving her now.

Hatchetface started to walk towards them slowly when she heard something - something out in the woods - and stopped, frozen. There was something else out here with her. Not an animal, but a person. It was a Watcher.

Another Watcher, someone curious. Had they seen her? No, that was impossible. If they had seen her, they would have screamed, made some kind of panicked noise, but there had been nothing.

Still, Hatchetface thought better of going for the boys and the girl at the moment. If there was someone else out here, they might See, might Watch as the Sinners were killed. Then this person might warn the others.

No.

No, better to hide the old man's body and let the Sinners be, for now at least. She had time. She just knew it, sensed it somehow. These Sinners would be here for a few days. They would Sin and frolic while Hatchetface Watched.

And this other Watcher?

Well, she would just have to keep an eye out for this other Watcher. Keep her good eye peeled, keep her ears open. This Watcher would turn up at the wrong time, in the wrong place.

And Hatchetface would have them, whoever they were.

## 2

The next morning, less than an hour after sunrise, Jenna sat up, stretched and looked to her right. Bree's sleeping bag was empty. Past it, Marta still slept soundly, still beautiful, still bewitching in an earthy sort of way.

It was Bree's tent and it was a good tent, spacious, thick enough to keep a good amount of cold out but thin enough to let the people inside breathe. Neither Jenna nor Marta had a tent, so Bree was fine with letting them stay in hers.

Jenna sighed. It had been a tough night. After the sudden, passionate sex in the woods, the two of them had returned to camp and decided to call it a night. Marta was already in the tent, already asleep.

Bree had looked at Jenna, a naughty expression on her face, and whispered erotic fantasies into Jenna's ear. They had come very close to just going for it, right then and there, getting Marta involved, but cooler heads - and tired bodies - had prevailed and they went to asleep instead. But Jenna had dreamed, had imagined seeing Bree and Marta in the middle of the night, fucking each other's brains

out and asking her to join them. Jenna had smiled and got in on the action.

All a dream, of course, one that was both frustrating and fantastic at the same time. She had woken in the middle of it, a noise in the woods waking her and found it difficult to get back to sleep.

Now she was paying for it. The sun had awakened her - there was no going back to sleep now - but she didn't feel fully rested.

Yawning, she unzipped the door of the tent and got out, stretching her legs, her cute ass pert and ready for the morning. Sitting on a blanket around the dead campfire was Bree. She was having a cup of coffee and reading her Satanic Bible. There didn't appear to be anyone else up.

She looked up as Jenna exited the tent and smiled. Jenna smiled back and this was answered by a shake of Bree's head.

"Morning, sleepy-head," Bree said. "Thought you'd sleep for another two hours or so."

"Are you kidding?" Jenna said. "Sun woke me. Hard for me to sleep with the sun shining on my face."

"I hear ya."

Jenna grabbed a cup and the pot of coffee off the little portable gas stove they had brought. She poured herself a cup and joined Bree on the blanket. "How long have you been up?"

"Since just before dawn," Bree said.

"Jesus."

Bree shrugged. "Just the way I am."

Jenna nodded. "Say, you hear anything last night?"

"Like what?" Bree said.

"I don't know. Something out in the woods."

Bree frowned. "I'm not sure. I did wake up at one point. Don't know why."

Silence reigned for a few moments while both of them thought. Jenna leaned against Bree, loving the warmth of her body.

"Anyone else awake?" she asked.

"No," Bree said. "Not that I know of."

"Good."

She leaned in closer and the two of them kissed. It was more sweet than passionate. They weren't going to start fucking right here and now, that was for sure, but it was good just to feel, just to steal a kiss while all their square, straight friends slept on, unaware of the beauty of what the two of them had together.

It was not yet mid-day, the sun coming down hard, and all of them were at the lake. They all wore suits this time: Kirsten and Rachel lying on towels and sun-bathing on the dock, Greg - a beer in hand - watching them, occasionally scratching himself, while everyone else was either in the water, swimming, or out in the two boats they had found tied to the dock.

Joel tossed a football to Henry, who caught it deftly out of the air. They were about knee-high in the water, in the shallow part of the lake, running through the heavy liquid, getting a real good workout. Marta and Jenna swam, dived into the water and came back up, talking and occasionally laughing at each other's jokes. Bree languished in one of the boats, her skin pale but looking great in a small bikini.

"So, you girls like the sun, do ya?" Greg said and took a swig of beer.

Rachel looked at him, lowering her sunglasses for a moment to peer at him. Kirsten didn't bother to look at the man, just ignored him with considerable expertise.

"You could say that," Rachel said as she pushed her sunglasses back up and looked away from him.

"Cool," Greg said. "I'm not so sure about it myself. Seems... bright. You know, a little too bright." He looked warily up at the sky, an unsure look on his face.

There was no response from either of the girls and so Greg returned to his beer. Out in the water, Jenna and Marta came up for air, splashing at each other, just generally having a good time.

"So how long have you known Henry and Rachel?" Jenna asked after they calmed down some.

"About two years," Marta said. "Well, I've known Rachel longer than Henry. Henry came into the picture a little over a year ago, I guess."

"Right."

"And you?"

"Me? Oh, well, Joel's been friends with Henry for close to three years now."

"And Greg?"

"Oh, much longer. Almost seven years at this point."

"And how long have you been friends with Bree?"

"Oh, Bree? Um... I met her... two years ago, I guess. I'm not really sure."

"Yeah, right."

"What do you mean?"

Marta swam up to Jenna and put an arm around her shoulders. She whispered into the other girl's ear.

"I mean," she said, "that I think you know the exact day, the exact minute, that you met Bree."

"Why?" Jenna said, more than a little nervous. "Why would I know that?"

"Come on."

"No, really. Why?"

"Because the two of you are thick as thieves. And..."

"And?"

"And," Marta said and got even quieter, "you're clearly sleeping with her."

Jenna's eyes widened and she looked at Marta, mouth open. Marta looked around, saw that no one was currently looking at the two of them, and physically closed Jenna's mouth with a flick of her hand.

Jenna's teeth clattered together.

"Don't look so surprised," Marta said. "I can just tell."

"How long have you known?" Jenna asked.

"Since the first time I saw you two together. I spotted it right away."

"And you won't... You're not gonna tell anybody about it, right?"

"No, I won't tell your brother."

"Thank God."

"But you should really tell him yourself."

"If he finds out, he'll tell my dad. I can't let that happen."

"Why not?"

"My dad... Let's just say my dad won't like it and leave it at that."

"All right, okay, I won't push. So, tell me. How is she in bed?"

Jenna sighed and looked at Bree wistfully. Bree was almost asleep in the boat, eyes at half-mast, zoning out.

"She's incredible," Jenna said.

"I knew it!" Marta said. "I'll bet she knows all kinds of stuff."

"Oh, believe me, she does."

"So is it just a sex thing? Or..."

"I think it's something more. I hope so, at least."

Marta nodded. "That's sweet. She's a cool chick. You're lucky."

"Tell me about it," Jenna said.

"Hey, help me pull a little prank on your brother?"

"Always."

"Okay, listen."

A few minutes later, Jenna swam to the shallow edge of the lake, got on her feet and headed for Joel.

Her brother caught a mighty pass from Henry and nearly toppled off his feet. He righted himself with a smile.

"Hey, sis," he said as she approached. "Having fun?"

"Yeah, yeah," Jenna said. "Say, Joel, will you take a look at something for me?"

"Sure. Hold up, Henry!"

He tossed the ball to Henry, who caught it and shook his head. He sighed.

"What," Henry said, "you need to help sis apply a tampon or something?"

"Just hold your horses!" Joel said.

"It's right over here," Jenna said. "Follow me. It's the weirdest thing."

She led him a little deeper into the lake. The water now reached up to about mid-calf on Joel, and waist-high on Jenna.

"So, what are we looking at?" Joel asked.

"A dupe," Jenna said with a smile.

That was when Marta attacked from underwater, like a shark. She darted to Joel, hands popping out of the water and grasping the boy by his shorts. Jenna diverted her eyes at the last moment as Marta pulled Joel's swim trunks all the way down to his ankles, exposing him to everyone present.

"Hey, look what I found!" Jenna called out.

Everyone turned to look at her and Joel as Marta disappeared back into the water. Joel was caught off guard and didn't hide himself right away, giving everyone a good look at his privates. They all laughed.

On the dock, Greg looked over, a smirk on his face. He took a swig of his beer.

"What, is it cold in there?" he said.

"Hide that pathetic little thing!" Bree said from her boat.

"Is that fishing tackle?" Marta said as she emerged out of the water several yards away.

Joel hastily covered himself and looked around, embarrassed. He tried to pull up his shorts while still keeping himself covered. It wasn't easy and a second later, he fell over backwards, dunking himself underwater to the delighted laughter of everyone else.

Henry threw the ball up in the air and caught it, over and over again as he shook his head. "I see you didn't pull my shorts down. Why not? I'm not embarrassed. You all can see what I got anytime you like."

"Yeah," Greg said from the dock, "yeah, we know, Henry, you're hung like a horse. Nobody needs to see that."

Henry caught the football one last time and threw it at Greg, a strong overhand toss that sailed

through the air. The ball found its mark - Greg's forehead - knocking him over onto the dock, making him spill his beer. Rachel and Kirsten practically squealed with laughter as Pippy barked and barked and barked at Greg's suddenly supine form.

"Yeah, real funny," Greg said as he rubbed his already-red forehead and sat back up. "Shut the fuck up, dog."

But Pippy would not be silenced. Greg made a fist as if to punch the beast. Kirsten covered her mouth in shock. Greg caught her look and slowly relaxed his hand. He shook his head at her, just to reassure her that he meant no harm.

Joel emerged from the water, shorts in place once again. He looked around, face flushed, spitting out water. He looked at his sister.

"Not cool, sis," he said.

Jenna shrugged. "What can I say, bro? I can't turn down a good prank."

Everyone laughed once again. It was a good morning.

The last one.

Kirsten had a secret.

It wasn't a big one. She wasn't a spy. She wasn't the love child of royalty. No, nothing so dramatic. She needed glasses. It had been getting worse and worse lately, to the point where she couldn't make out many details past a few feet.

But she couldn't get glasses. That would be the worst. She couldn't imagine walking around with glasses detracting from her good looks. It was unthinkable.

So she suffered in silence, caught herself when she was squinting and quit it. She didn't need to see all the little details, did she? It wasn't a requirement or anything. So she let Joel do the driving and rode shotgun when she could. She let Joel do most everything, really. Even stuff like the night before. She was surprised but shouldn't have been. Joel had strange tastes.

At the moment, everyone was enjoying lunch at the campsite and Kirsten was trying to decide if the black spot on her hot dog was just residue from the grill or a bug of some kind. But she was trying to be subtle about it.

Unfortunately, it was at the wrong angle to see when she lifted the dog to her mouth to take a bite. And she didn't want to call attention to herself by turning it awkwardly in her hands. That would be weird.



At her heels, Pippy barked incessantly and Kirsten came up with a brilliant idea. Her eyes lit up and she looked around, made sure that no one was looking. When she was sure that they weren't, she tore off a piece of the dog - a piece containing the mystery black spot - and fed it to Pippy.

"Are you hungry?" she said as cute-sounding as she could manage under the circumstances. "Yes you are! You are a hungry little boy, aren't you?!"

Pippy gladly devoured the offending piece of meat and was silent for a moment or two. Kirsten sighed and went back to eating her lunch, looking around as she did. Jenna - or so she thought: it was a blob with dark hair, clearly female, though - walked by and waved at her before sitting down on a blanket near Bree. Bree was easy to spot. She was taller than the other girls, clearly female as well, but with short hair and so easy to keep track of. There was no mistaking her for Rachel, though they were similar in height.

"Not eating?" Jenna asked Bree, confirming her identity to Kirsten.

"Not hungry," Bree explained.

"You sick?"

"No. I mean, I don't think so. Do I look sick?"

Kirsten's eyes widened, genuinely curious since she couldn't really make out Bree at this distance. She turned away, though, not wanting to let on that she was interested. Bree was weird and a little off-putting.

"No," Jenna said. "I don't think you look sick."

"That's good, I suppose," Bree said.

"For sure."

"You girls want another?" Greg said from his station at the portable grill. He had been cooking the dogs. "Bree, have you had any?"

"I'm fine, thank you," Bree said.

"And I'm full," Jenna said.

"And you? You want another?"

Panic overtook Kirsten for a moment. What if he was asking her? She couldn't tell where he was looking. Sweat began to flow down her forehead. It was hot today and getting hotter. And should she answer? Was anyone looking at her?

All this in a mere split second. A flurry of thoughts, confused and disjointed. Then:

"I'll take another, sure."

This from Rachel, who was sitting to Kirsten's right, surely looking as pretty as usual, although Kirsten couldn't really tell: she was just out of the girl's good sight range, just a blurry shape with bright

beautiful red on top. Kirsten smiled warmly at the girl when she thought she was looking at her.

"Hey, beautiful," Joel said as he approached and sat down next to her.

He leaned in for a kiss and Kirsten accepted before realizing that his mouth was full of hot dog. She would have pulled away had she known. So she took it through gritted teeth.

"Done?" he asked.

It took her a moment before she realized that he was talking about her food. "Oh. Yeah."

"Man, these dogs are great," Joel said. "I could eat about ten of them."

"I'm sure you could," Kirsten said.

There followed a moment of awkward silence as Joel chowed down on his dog while Kirsten watched. When he had just about finished, Kirsten put a hand on his leg.

"Can we talk privately for a minute?" she said.

"Sure, babe."

He finished up the dog and got up, the real dog near his legs barking, yipping and generally being an adorable nuisance. The two of them took a walk into the woods and when Kirsten felt that they were far enough away from the others, she spoke.

"I want to talk about what we did last night," Kirsten said.

"What did we do last night?" Joel said.

"You know what I mean. With Henry."

"Oh, that! Just some fun, hon. Nothing serious."

"I don't think Rachel would see it that way."

"Who cares what Rachel thinks?"

"I care. She's my friend."

"But you didn't stop, did you? I didn't see you slow down when you saw what Henry had between his legs. Can't say I blame you."

Kirsten stopped and turned to him. They were surrounded by trees. The afternoon sun was diffused through dense brush, a brilliant display of nature that was largely hidden from Kirsten.

"That's another thing," she said. "What was that all about?"

"What was what all about?" Joel asked.

"You..." She looked genuinely embarrassed speaking about it and looked around, trying to make sure no one was watching: it would have been difficult for her, of course, but she gave it a try. "Jacking him off. What the fuck? Are you gay now?"

"No, of course not. I'm just... open-minded. What, you never fooled around with any of your girlfriends?"

"No! I mean... There was this one girl, but..."

"Well, how is this any different?"

"I..."

"Come on, tell me."

"I don't know," Kirsten said.

"It's just a bit of fun, babe," Joel said. "Don't take it seriously."

"I keep thinking of Rachel."

"That's the spirit."

"That's not what I meant."

"Well, maybe you should. You're friends. I'm sure she wouldn't mind messing around with you, having a little fun. Hey!" He was animated now, eyes wide with excitement as he walked next to her, using as many hand gestures as he could. "That might be how we could bring her into our little fold, through you! Come on, isn't it a great idea? You get intimate with her, you know, fool around, eat her pussy out. Oh, can you imagine her pussy? All red! So great! Anyway, munch her out, get her all hot and then - wham! - me and Henry show up. All fucking, all the time! Wow, great plan, Kirsten! You are the best!"

Kirsten just stared at him, mouth agape, shocked. She shook her head and started to back away.

"It's like I don't even know you," she said.

"Kirsten, come on!" Joel said. "You're acting like a child. We're all adults here!"

She walked away from him, deeper into the woods. Her sight was worse out here. Nothing but green blurs all about. But she trooped through it, wanting to make a point to Joel. Pippy yipped and barked, following her.

"You're overreacting!" Joel called out behind her.

But she wasn't listening. She was angry and wanted him to know it. That was when her foot caught on something in the underbrush and she went down, hard. Joel was at her side in a second and helped her up.

"You okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I think so," she said, too surprised to still be angry. At least for now.

"What did you trip over?" Joel asked.

"I don't know."

"Shit."

"What?"

"Have a look."

He brushed aside a few branches and Kirsten squinted to get a good look at it. What he uncovered was a bicycle. Kirsten squinted harder. It was a familiar bicycle.

"Jesus," she said.

"What?" Joel asked.

"This is the bike that the old creep had. It's his bike."

"Mother fucker! He's out there watching us. Pervert!"

Kirsten frowned. It was an alarming thought. Someone out there in the woods, someone who wasn't one of them.

Watching them.

## Chapter Four, "Hard Conversation"

1

Jenna and Bree had managed to get away from the others in the early hours of the afternoon. They were near the lake, in a small clearing of trees just looking down at the water, enjoying each other's company. Jenna sat on a rock while Bree stood, leaning against a tree. And though they didn't know it, they were mere feet away from where Old Tom had been killed, his spunk and blood now part of the forest floor, unobserved by the two women.

The two of them, however, were being observed themselves. A Watcher was nearby, looking through branches, her form hidden in the shadow of the trees. She was quiet, small, easily hidden, and enjoyed watching the girls, these two in particular.

"What about your mom?" Bree asked.

"I don't know," Jenna said.

"My mom was okay with it. My dad... Well, he says he's fine about it, but... I'm not so sure."

"Well, my mom..." Jenna trailed off.

"What?" Bree asked.

"My dad beats her."

"Really?"

Jenna nodded. "Yeah. For as long as I can remember, so probably as long as he's been married to her. Just hits her sometimes."

Bree shook her head. "I'm sorry. Is that why you never want me to come over?"

"Probably, yeah. Plus, I think that everyone would just be able to tell. You know? Just be able to read me like a fucking book. Read my little sideways glances at you. I wouldn't be able to help myself. At least with Joel, he has Kirsten to distract him. All his attention is on her, you know?"

"Right."

"But at home... Different story."

"I understand," Bree said.

"What does Heather think about you?"

"My sister's as gay as me, babe."

"Really?! But she's so elegant, so... girly."

"Wow, thanks. What am I, chopped liver?"

"That's not what I meant!"

"I know. Just fooling around."

"It's just that you're so... tough. Heather doesn't strike me as the type."

"There are all kinds of types, let me tell you. None of us are in a box. Look at you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Bree explained, "that I don't think many people that look at you would be able to tell that you're gay. You look normal. And that's the point, right? We are normal. Nothing strange about us, is there? Nothing strange about this."

She pushed herself off the tree and got on her knees in front of Jenna. They kissed and the Watcher smiled to herself, put a hand over her mouth to stifle a giggle. Two girls? But how did they do it? How?

The kiss was long and passionate. The Watcher could hear their tongues exploring, could hear their lips smacking together, becoming one. She touched herself briefly. Naughty, naughty!

"God, I want you right now," Jenna said when the kiss broke.

"Wait for it, babe," Bree said. "It's so much better when you wait."

Jenna sighed. "You're right, you're right. I know you're right! Doesn't make it any better. Bitch."

They both laughed and got up. Jenna dusted off her ass as Bree took hold of her hand.

"Suppose we should see what everyone else is up to," Bree said.

"If you insist," Jenna said.

They headed back towards camp, leaving the Watcher behind, unobserved. Shelley - the young teen who the group had run into in town - broke out of her cover and smiled after the two young women. How exciting this all was! So much naughtiness and bit of mystery, as well. It was eerie here in the woods. Her mom was probably tying one off at home right about now, so sloshed that she had no idea where her daughter was, nor did she care.

Well, so what? Shelley was out here in the woods and she meant to have a good time. Even if it meant hiding in the underbrush and experiencing all this vicariously. She ducked back into cover with glee.

"Because he's an old fucking pervert!" Kirsten said, clearly distressed.

The young woman stood with her hands on her hips, looking defiantly at the others. Pippy was at her feet, yipping and barking, and generally just being a nuisance.

Marta watched with some interest. Kirsten was known to fly off the handle sometimes and it was occasionally entertaining to watch. And maybe it still would be but, at the moment, there was nothing amusing about her anger and annoyance. Marta could feel it coming off her like heat.

"Calm down, honey!" Joel said. "He's probably just--"

"Don't tell me to calm down!" Kirsten said, cutting him off. "Some old fuck is out there, probably jacking off while watching us... do stuff! It's disgusting! Why aren't you all as pissed off as me?! What's wrong with you all?!"

All of them but Bree and Jenna were gathered around the old man's bicycle, which Joel and Kirsten had apparently found a few minutes ago.

"What is he gonna see?" Joel reasoned. "Huh? What? Us fooling around? So what? Let him watch. I'm not ashamed. Are you?"

Kirsten gave him a strange look that Marta couldn't decipher. Something passed between the two of them that Marta didn't understand. It was strange. What were they hiding?

"I don't like it," Kirsten said after a moment.

"Don't like what?" Bree said from behind all of them.

Kirsten actually jumped a little at the surprise. Marta turned and found Bree and Jenna approaching. She looked down to see if they were holding hands. They weren't, at least not now, but she thought that they had been until very recently. Something in the way they walked, how close they were. Could the others tell?

"We didn't see you at camp," Jenna explained, "and followed the shouting. What's going on?"

"Joel and Kirsten here found a bicycle that that old creep was using at the store," Henry said.

"She's a little freaked out," Rachel said.

"Well, can you blame her?" Greg said.

He took a swig from his beer and looked at the others, as if challenging them. Henry shrugged while Joel shook his head in frustration.

"That doesn't help, Greg," he said.

"You're welcome," Greg said.

"You see!" Kirsten said. "Greg agrees with me! It's scary. Some old fart out there. He can see everything we do, don't you see?!"

"What is he gonna do, exactly?" Bree asked.

"Yeah," Henry agreed. "He comes near us I'll bust his old head open. That'll give him second

thoughts."

"That's your answer to everything, isn't it?" Rachel said. "Bust some heads. Typical."

"What?" Henry said. "No, really, what? He invades our privacy, he makes Kirsten feel uncomfortable, I'll bust him wide open. Is there something wrong with that?"

Rachel looked at him long and hard. Then she turned her gaze to Kirsten, mouth open. Once again, Marta felt left out, felt like she had seen something pass between them but didn't know what. It was perplexing.

"Well, he was a prick," Bree said. "Let's punish him, at least."

She stepped through the crowd, pulling something from her pocket as she did. Marta saw that it was a Swiss army knife, which Bree now flicked open and knelt down by the bicycle.

There came the sound of hissing, escaping air as Bree ventilated both tires of the bike. This complete, she stood up, closed the knife and stuffed it back into her pocket.

"Classic," Greg said.

"Good job, Bree," Henry said.

"Make him walk back to town," Joel nodded.

"But what if that makes him angry?!" Kirsten said. "What if he comes to hurt us because of that?"

"Then we're back to my busting-heads plan," Henry said.

"My 'boyfriend,' ladies and gentlemen," Rachel said. Marta could practically hear the quotes hugging the word "boyfriend" as the young woman spoke. "Always ready with a little violence."

She was the first one to leave, turning and heading back towards camp. After a moment, Kirsten followed her, Pippy at her heels the whole time.

"Well, show's over, I guess," Joel said. "Women. What the fuck is going on in your heads?"

This last directed at Marta as he passed her. Marta only shrugged in response and looked at Bree and Jenna with a smile.

Jenna almost put her arm around Bree but stopped herself at the last moment. It was adorable.

Marta shook her head and started to head back to camp as well. Everyone else joined her moments later.

"Let's keep walking," Rachel said to Kirsten as the two of them reached camp.

"Into the woods?" Kirsten said, more than a little afraid.

"That's the idea, yes," Rachel said.



"But what about the others?"

"We need to talk."

The slim, pretty redhead left the camp for the woods, leaving Kirsten behind. The brunette looked around, fearful - both of the encroaching woods and the impending conversation with Rachel that she knew was coming - for a moment then followed. Leaves crunched under the soles of her shoes. Normally it would have been a pleasant sound but now it was somehow ominous and conjured up images of figures lurking amongst the trees, waiting, watching. Even Pippy's small, yipping, constant companionship couldn't dispel this alarming feeling.

When they were a considerable distance from camp, Rachel began to speak. She sighed first then got into it.

"Did you sleep with Henry?" she asked.

"What?!" Kirsten said. "I..."

Rachel nodded. Kirsten knew that the other woman could see that she was blushing, trying to cover it up and failing. She looked away, ashamed.

"You did, didn't you?" Rachel said.

"Yes," Kirsten said.

"Fucking bitch."

"I'm sorry."

"You're sorry? Sorry?! You think that even begins to cover it? Huh?"

"No, I know it doesn't."

"That's great. I'm glad that you grasp the gravity of the situation. Henry is my boyfriend. Has been for a while now. Does that mean anything to you? Anything at all?"

"Of course, it's just..."

"Just what? What could your next word possibly be?"

"I felt bullied into it. They... kind of forced me. I mean, they didn't hurt me or anything. And they didn't threaten me, but--"

"Hold on a minute," Rachel cut her off. "They? What are you talking about?"

"Henry and Joel had sex with me," Kirsten explained. "Both of them. At the same time."

Rachel shook her head, blinked a few times in rapid succession and stared at the other woman, mouth agape. She seemed speechless.

"I've never done that before," Kirsten said. "It was kind of scary and a little uncomfortable. My ass still kind of hurts."

"Your ass?!" Rachel said. "Who the fuck are you? They both did you? Both of them?"

"Yep. And Joel... He kind of... jacked off Henry. It was weird."

"I... I don't even know what to say. You've completely stumped me, Kirsten. I feel like I don't even know you. Or Joel. Or Henry. You're all strangers to me."

"Rachel, don't be like this," Kirsten said. Pippy was barking and yipping louder now, more insistent than ever, wanting attention. "Now that it's out in the open, maybe it's a good thing. Maybe... Maybe we could all be together, you know? Like Joel and Henry... You and me, maybe? I mean, you're really beautiful, and..."

"Just stop!" Rachel said. "Just stop right there! I'm no dyke, okay? I'm not like that. I don't want to be with you. I don't want to be with Joel. I don't think I even want to be with Henry anymore. You're all... Just... Fuck it."

She stormed off, back towards camp. Kirsten reached out for her but Rachel shrugged off the touch, slapped it away. Pippy jumped at Kirsten, yipping ever louder now. Kirsten felt her anger rising, felt that she had to lash out at something. She directed that anger towards Pippy.

"Pippy!" she screamed. "Stop! Bad dog! Bad!"

She leaned down and swatted the beast, earning a yelp from the dog for her efforts. The dog slunk away, looking back briefly at Kirsten before darting deeper into the forest, away from camp. Kirsten shook her head in frustration and anger and stomped back to camp, leaving Pippy alone in the woods.

4

Pippy explored the forest, nose to the ground, little feet trotting through the foliage, the altercation with his mistress already forgotten. There were just so many interesting smells out here. A veritable world of smells, all of it accessible from such a little nose.

Pippy imagined all the strange creatures whose scent he picked up, thought about what they had eaten, wondered if he could eat all of these odd things himself. And, if so, where were they? All he had to do was follow his nose. It was that simple.

The smells were far too enticing, too attractive to him to let go of and he wandered farther and farther, until he came upon a collection of man-made structures. People had been here at one time, many of them. And, oh, the food they had eaten!

Pippy could smell the remnants of the food, long gone though it was. It was heavenly. He wandered towards the buildings, sensing that someone was still living here, in one of these buildings. There were strange noises in the air, noises that he associated with people, with humans. An odd, banging sound. And, louder than that, another sound. The kind of sound that would make his mistress move in weird

ways, sometimes when she was alone, and sometimes when she was with someone else. They would stand in the middle of the room and move about, sometimes with their arms intertwined, sometimes not. Pippy didn't understand what this sound was but he knew that his mistress liked it all the same and moved towards it, hoping that whoever lived here would feed him something yummy.

The dog was close to the buildings when he stepped on something hard hidden in the foliage. There was a loud, metallic click and huge metal jaws sprang out of the ground and caught Pippy's back legs between them. Bones snapped and blood sprayed. There was intense, immediate pain and Pippy yelped, fell over. It was a pitiful yelp, barely louder than a whimper. Pippy didn't have the strength to call out any louder.

\*\*\*

Hatchetface came upon the trapped animal a few moments later. The dog was caught in one of the slasher's modified bear traps, sharp, strong and incredibly fast. It killed most things that were caught in it. But this dog had only its back legs clipped by the trap. It must have been fast. Now the beast was lying on the ground, back legs severed above the knees, blood pooling out around it.

The slasher looked past the dog to the trap, where the dog's legs were still trapped. She tilted her head in curiosity and approached the dying beast. Behind her, in what remained of the old summer camp, the sound of her generator was largely drowned out by music: some old, somewhat eerie 50s song.

Hatchetface reached the dog, who whined up at her. She looked down on the beast with her one good eye, quizzical, curious. The dog seemed to be pleading with her. But it was no good. Animals were of no consequence to Hatchetface. She saw them as food, at best. And this scrawny, pathetic creature would be no good for a meal.

She pulled a rather large hunting knife from her belt and held the beast with one hand and brought the knife down with the other, piercing it in the chest again and again. There were pained yelps until there suddenly wasn't anymore. The dog was dead.

Hatchetface - head still tilted to one side - began to dissect the beast a moment later, taking it apart, learning its secrets as one would divine the future in entrails.

## Chapter Five, "Among the Missing"

1

"You can share Joel and Kirsten's tent," Rachel said to Henry, who was staring at her with an expression that was a mixture of surprise and superiority. "Or you can sleep outside for all I care."

"Outside?" Henry said. "Baby, it can get cold at night."

"It's June. You'll be fine. And don't call me baby."

It was late afternoon - heading into evening - and the two of them were relatively alone, a few hundred yards from the camp. The sun streamed in through the trees, dazzlingly brilliant and beautiful.

"What's wrong?" Henry said. "What's happened to you?"

"Nothing's happened to me," Rachel said, "but something's sure happened to you."

"I don't understand."

"No surprise there."

"Oh, I get it. You're jealous. All the girls looking at me."

"This is way beyond jealousy."

"How so?"

"I know."

"Know what?"

"I know about you and Kirsten. And Joel. Last night."

Henry was quiet for a moment. Caught. Rachel looked at him, refusing to speak. The silence hung in the air between them like a swinging noose.

"How'd you find out?" Henry finally said.

"Kirsten told me," Rachel said.

"Dizzy bitch."

"Don't blame this on her. She may be dumb but she's just as disturbed by this as I am. She was like a deer in headlights when I confronted her."

"So you already suspected it?"

"Yes."

"How? I don't understand."

"God, you're so dumb sometimes. You know what makes you look the dumbest? It's that you think *I'm* dumb! I'm not stupid. I see how you are around Kirsten. Okay, so you want to fuck just about every girl you see, fine. I see that, too. But it's different with Kirsten. This morning, I could see it. I just knew. It was the way you acted around her. Something changed. And, yeah, I suspected what it was. Right away. And Kirsten just confirmed it."

Henry opened his mouth to say something, then closed it. He shook his head and brushed her off, turned to leave. Rachel watched him go, a little sad, angry, conflicted. She watched him go and watched a part of her life go with him.

2

"Have you seen Pippy?" Kirsten asked.

Greg looked up from his beer, burped and shook his head. It was well into the evening and most of them were sitting around the fire, just enjoying the stillness and the silence. There was something in the air, though. Kirsten could feel it. Something wrong. Rachel had retired to her tent alone, refusing to talk to anyone. And Henry... Well, Henry was trying to act like his old self but Kirsten could see through the facade, despite her bad eyesight. Rachel had confronted him about what had happened last night. That much was clear. It had made for a strange day. And she hadn't seen Pippy since Rachel and her had had their little blow-up earlier.

"No," Greg said. "I haven't seen your dog. Maybe a coyote ate him?"

Kirsten was mortified. "God, I hope not!"

"Never know," Greg said with a shrug.

"Something else to worry about," Kirsten said.

"What else do you have to worry about? We're out in nature. No one else is around. We have no problems. Not out here."

"Maybe you don't have any problems but I do."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Yeah, I..." She trailed off. She had almost just told Greg all about what had happened today and last night. What was wrong with her?

"What?" Greg said.

"That pervert is out there!" Kirsten said, trying to cover her tracks. "Don't you remember that?!"

"Oh, yeah. Forgot about him. Maybe he killed your dog."

"You're the worst."

"That's what I'm here for."

Kirsten left his side and headed towards Joel, who was near Henry, cracking jokes. She stood by him for a moment, not saying anything, waiting for him to acknowledge her. After a moment, he finally did, looking up at her with an annoyed expression.

"What is it, Kirsten?" he asked.

"We have to find Pippy," she said.

"Your dog?" Henry said.

"Yes, my dog," Kirsten said. "I haven't seen him in hours. Something's happened, I'm sure of it."

"Who gives a shit about your dog?" Henry said.

"Now, hold on a minute," Joel said. "If Kirsten says that something's happened to Pippy, then we better go find the damn thing." He looked up at Kirsten. "Any ideas where to start?"

"I don't know. You boys know more about all this wilderness stuff. Where would he go?"

"He'd go where there's food," Joel said. "So maybe there's food lying around somewhere that's not right here in our camp."

"Like where?" Kirsten said.

"Like another camp, maybe. Could be somebody else out here."

"And what if that pervert did something to him?"

"If he did, then we'll bust his head, right Henry?"

Henry looked at Kirsten like he wanted to kill her. Kirsten found herself drawing ever-so-slightly back, a little afraid.

"Right," Henry said.

"Now, let's go look for him," Joel said.

He stood up, clapped his hands together loudly to get the group's attention and spread his arms out wide like a televangelist. Everyone else looked at him expectantly.

"All right, everyone," he said. "Pippy's missing."

"Who's Pippy?" Marta asked.

"My dog!" Kirsten chipped in.

"That's right," Joel continued. "My girlfriend's dog. He has gone astray, as it were."

"Can a dog 'go astray'?" Greg asked. "Don't they just run away?"

"You're not helping, Greg," Joel said.

There was scattered laughter among them. Joel smiled and shushed them with a gesture of his hands.

"I know," he said, "I know. Serious shit. We need to find him. I propose that most of us go look for

him, while someone stays back and watches the camp. Rachel?" He looked around and frowned.

"Where's Rachel?"

"Uh," Henry said, "Rachel is indisposed. She's in her tent."

"So she can watch the camp," Joel said, satisfied.

"I don't think so," Kirsten said. "There's no way she'd even pop her head out if anything went wrong here."

Joel sighed. "Fine. Someone else, then?"

"I'll stay," Bree said.

"Great," Joel said.

"I'll stay, too," Jenna said.

Joel frowned. "Okay. Two people staying behind. Well, three, really. Is that really necessary?"

"Yes," Jenna said.

"Yes," Bree said.

Marta chuckled. Kirsten frowned. What was going on? She couldn't follow it. Had something happened that she couldn't see? Why was Marta laughing?

"Well, let's go," Joel said.

Everyone but Bree and Jenna stood up with a sigh, none bigger or more pronounced than Greg's. Joel slapped a hand down on the other man's shoulder.

"Come on," he said, "it'll be fun. Wandering around the woods while it steadily gets darker? What could go wrong?"

It was perhaps an hour after the others had left - the evening turning to night, the sun disappearing behind the mountains - when Shelley felt brave enough to venture into the camp itself. Bree and Jenna had retired to their tent and Rachel had been enclosed in her tent for some hours now. The teen girl crept through the camp as quiet as possible, watching her footfalls. She rounded the fire pit and saw that the door to Jenna and Bree's tent was hanging open, the two of them sitting in the tent just enjoying each other's company. Shelley immediately hid behind one of the chairs that the group had set out around the fire. She listened. And watched.

"I never saw it," Jenna said.

"It's great," Bree said. "Lots of great bands are in it. Just incredible. The power, you know?"

"Yeah."

"It's like touching a live wire. There's nothing like it."

"I saw The Guess Who once, when I was little."

"That must have been great."

"It was. My uncle took me. He was always going to shows like that."

"Hall & Oates are electric live. There's just nothing like it."

"I'll bet."

"Hey," Bree said.

"What?" Jenna asked.

"What we waiting for?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean we're alone here."

"Well, not really. Rachel is in her tent."

"She won't care."

"You sure?"

"Absolutely."

"But what if they all come back?"

"What if they do?"

"Well, that would be embarrassing."

"Doesn't it excite you? Even a little bit?"

"I don't know," Jenna said.

"Well, I do," Bree said.

"The door of the tent is open. Let me at least close it."

"No."

"No?"

"You heard me. Leave it open. Turns me on."

"You're a freak."

"Don't I know it."

Bree leaned in and kissed Jenna, who responded passionately. Shelley was excited, already feeling something between her legs that unfamiliar, something that surprised her. The feeling came off the two women in the tent like a heat wave passing over her.

Bree took off her shirt first. She wore no bra and her breasts practically stood up and said, "Hello." Shelley had never seen anything so beautiful. Her breathing came in short, excited bursts.

Jenna's shirt followed soon after. It wasn't long before the two women were completely naked,



kissing and feeling, touching and caressing. Shelley began to touch herself.

She was thinking of Nikki, another girl at school. Nikki, with her long, black hair and smooth skin. Shelley had found herself looking at Nikki often during class, strange feelings that she didn't understand welling up inside her. Now she understood those feelings. These two women were teaching her with every touch.

It was just getting really good - Bree's head was buried between Jenna's legs - when Shelley heard something behind her, something in the woods. Someone? Perhaps it was the others coming back.

Spooked, Shelley bolted out of the camp - in the opposite direction whence the sound came - as quietly and as quickly as she could. She was gone in seconds.

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Hatchetface approached the open door of the tent, stalking through the camp. The other Watcher had just been here, had ran when she sensed Hatchetface's presence. The slasher considered chasing after the other Watcher but was more interested in what was happening in the tent.

The two women were hurting each other. They were attacking one another. It was unnatural.

But...

But Hatchetface saw no Weapons on either of the women. They were both like herself, weaponless between their legs. How could they be hurting each other?

And - following swiftly after that thought - what if they weren't hurting each other? What if this was something else?

Hatchetface froze, not knowing what to do. She was confused, conflicted.

In the tent, Bree and Jenna were oblivious to Hatchetface's presence. Each girl's head was between the other's legs, gnawing, sucking. Hatchetface thought that they looked like a snake eating its own tail. Infinite.

It didn't make any sense.

Somewhere up on the road came the sound of an approaching car. None of the people in the camp would have been able to hear it but Hatchetface's senses were heightened, like those of an animal, and she turned towards the sound. A moment later, she left the camp, deciding that she would wait. She would kill the two girls later. Right now, she didn't know what to do with them. And there was a strange feeling between her legs, something that she hadn't felt before, at least not often.

It had to be replaced.

Had to be replaced with something more familiar: the cold, calculating feeling of rage.

And death.

Sheriff Parker thought he had a cushy job. Lilith County was small, with only three towns and a tiny village in its jurisdiction, plus a few campgrounds and the lake. Mostly it was quiet.

Mostly.

But there were times that could test a man's mettle. Parker still remembered the state of Camp Mogollon when he had come upon it - a mere deputy back then - after the chaos. There was blood everywhere, body parts strung in the trees, bodies nailed to walls.

He shook his head, trying to get rid of the images. It almost worked.

He sat in his patrol car on the road near the camp that the young folks had erected. He had been here about twenty minutes now. Had walked down to the camp to check it out.

It was mostly empty but Parker could hear the unmistakable sounds of people having sex in one of the tents: moans accompanied by the sounds of flesh against flesh. So, he had left, without snooping any further, assuming that everything was okay now.

Now?

Now came the hard part.

He rarely made his way down to the abandoned Camp Mogollon. Not if he could avoid it. Nothing happened down there, of course, not in the last few years, anyway. Even then - three years ago, when those four young folks had disappeared - there was nothing going on in that abandoned camp. Nothing. The disappearances had nothing to do with any of that old nonsense. Probably just a few kids mixed up in drugs and ran away from home. Went to Canada or something.

Even still.

He had to check it out. Had to look into it tonight. Just to be cautious.

He started up the patrol car and got it moving. It wasn't too long of a drive to the old campgrounds but it felt longer tonight. He stewed over all the old details of the massacre all those years ago. There was the boy who had had both of his arms chopped off. He was still alive when Parker had found him, pleading for his mother, but time and loss of blood had snuffed him out soon enough. Then there was the killer herself.

Annie Blade.

Parker had seen her, seen her disfigured face, all those years ago. She had stumbled out of one of the cabins, her hatchet in hand, covered in blood. She had stopped, turning her head to look at him.

Parker had had his pistol drawn but he hesitated, not knowing what to do. She had scared him. This little girl had scared him half to death.

"Freeze!" he finally had said.

But Annie Blade had not frozen. She had run. And Parker had fired. He had hit her but she had escaped into the woods.

*Where she no doubt died!* he thought. *She's dead! Has been for years!*

Yes. That was the truth. She wasn't some monster living out in the woods all these years. Those were just stories. Stories told to scare the kids who lived around here, as well as the ones who came here on vacation or scouting trips.

But still there were those disappearances.

But they were nothing. He had to believe that. There was nothing out here in the woods but some animals and the beauty of nature.

He finally reached the old campgrounds and parked the patrol car. He shut down the engine and sat for a moment, looking down at the camp. It was nestled in a small, gentle slope of a valley, laid out among the trees. There were ten cabins, as well as two buildings for toilets and showers and a larger building that had served as a mess hall. Beyond the buildings was a large, elaborate dock on the lake. Kids used to dive off the docks, they used to launch boats from here. But not anymore. Not since the massacre. Now the whole camp was empty.

But, if it was empty, then why was there a light on in one of the cabins?

Parker frowned and got out of the patrol car. Yes, there was a light on down there. Just one light, in one of the cabins.

And there was something else.

Drifting up towards him was the sound of a generator, soft but constant, always there. And something else. Was that music?

Yes, it was. Some old 50s song, scratched, playing on a record deck down there in the camp. Someone was here. They were living here.

Possibilities swirled around in his head: poachers using the place as a camp. Homeless. Drug dealers using it as a base.

Yes, that was it: must have been. Drug dealers. They were probably hanging around here when the four young people had disappeared three years ago. Maybe they even were the missing kids!

This was huge. He was onto a real crime here.

But...

But what if it was Annie Blade? What if she had been living here, on and off, for years? What if this

was her home? Home for the killer.

For Hatchetface.

It was too horrible to consider and Parker shrugged it off. He turned around and opened the patrol car door, reached in to retrieve the mic and call it in.

But he didn't get the chance.

An animal - a jackrabbit, perhaps - ran by the car and spooked him. He whirled around, facing the campground once more, back leaning against the patrol car. When he realized that it was only an animal, he sighed and laughed a bit.

That was when a hand emerged from under the patrol car - hunting knife in its grasp - and cut the Achilles tendon in both of his feet. A straight cut, right across both of them.

Parker screamed out in pain and dropped to the ground instantly. He turned over onto his back and reached out for his feet, the pain intense and biting. As he was flailing, someone emerged from under the car, someone tall, strong and wearing a sack over their head. It was a woman. When Parker realized who it was, he spoke her name. Not the name she had been given at birth. No, nothing so pleasant. He spoke her true name.

"Hatchetface," he said.

Hatchetface stood to her full height above him. He realized with some horror that she had been with him the whole drive from the young people's camp to the campgrounds here. She had stolen away on the underside of the car while he was checking out the young people's camp, had hung on as he drove down to the campgrounds here. What was she? She wasn't human, that was for sure.

With his right hand, Sheriff Parker reached for his sidearm while he reached out to her with his left, pleading. It was pathetic, he knew, but he had to try it, had to live somehow.

"Please," he said.

Hatchetface sheathed the hunting knife and produced her hatchet. It was the same one she had used in the massacre all those years ago. Parker recognized it. He had almost pulled his pistol when Hatchetface brought the weapon down on his pleading hand.

The axe caught in the flesh between his ring finger and his pinky finger, splitting his hand in two and traveling down it, continuing into his arm itself. He screamed and blood sprayed from his wound.

His right hand finally unholstered his pistol and he began to bring it up, finger already tightening around the trigger. Hatchetface pulled the axe out of his left hand and brought it down on his right.

The gun went off - harmlessly into the air - as the axe chopped off his hand at the wrist. His severed hand dropped to the ground, gun still clutched in its palm. Blood came flowing out of the new stump like a fountain, drenching Parker and the ground below him.

Hatchetface brought the axe up once again and Parker could feel panic set in, could feel adrenaline pumping through his body. Survival was all that was on his mind.

All the while, he was screaming.

The axe came down in a wide arc - strong and deadly - for his head. He pushed himself to one side, turning his head as he did. The axe came down on his nose, severing it. He could see it topple onto the ground right in front of his face. He could feel blood fill his sinuses, his mouth. It was horrible. And the pain.

But it wouldn't last long. Hatchetface worked like a machine and brought the axe up and down again, this time sinking it into Parker's temple.

Sheriff Parker could feel the axe pass through his skull, could feel it scraping against the bone. Then he could feel it hit the ground on the other side of his head.

The axe blade had divided his brain in two and he thought no more. There was only pain.

And darkness.

## Chapter Six, "Camp Mogollon"

1

Kirsten, Joel, Henry, Greg and Marta had been searching for Pippy for a little over an hour and a half when they heard the gunshot. It rang out over the forest, echoing across the Rim. All five of them looked out to where they thought it had come from, various levels of alarm written on their faces.

"The Hell?" Greg said.

"Was that a gunshot?" Henry asked.

"Damn right," Joel said.

"A hunter?" Marta offered.

"Maybe," Henry said.

"Didn't sound like it was that far from here," Kirsten said.

"No," Joel said, "just over there a ways."

Henry coughed deliberately. The others all looked at him.

"Yeah," he said. "That's the way to ol' Camp Mogollon."

"Of course it is," Greg said. "Where else would a gunshot come from?"

"It probably was a hunter," Marta said.

"Yeah, probably found a deer in the old camp and took a shot at it," Joel said. "Anyone want to check it out?"

"No," Henry said, shaking his head.

"Yeah," Marta said at almost the same time.

Kirsten looked at Joel aghast. Greg just looked on, an unreadable expression on his face.

"Oh, come on," Joel said to the skeptical among them. "We've been dancing around the campground since we got here. Plus, it's the most likely place that Pippy would have gone to. There might be old food lying around. Plenty of dead animals, too, I'd bet."

"Does anybody else hear that?" Kirsten asked.

"Hear what?" Henry said.

"Sounds like screams to me," Kirsten said.

"That's bullshit," Joel said.

"Yeah, bullshit, I don't hear anything," Greg said.

Henry chuckled and kept moving. He seemed to be diverting away from a path to the old campground. Turning towards the others, he shook his head and walked backwards. "Ain't nothing but bad in that old camp. We stay away from there and we'll be okay. Trust me."

He turned back around and nearly slammed right into the dead body that was swinging in front of him. He uttered a little cry and fell onto his ass, disturbing sticks and stones in the ground. Dirt plumed up around him in a small cloud. He looked up at the body with horror. For a moment, he couldn't tell what it was. At first, it was just a shape. A shape hung by a noose coiled above in one of the trees, swinging in front of them all. Then he squinted. It was a small animal and he sighed. Not a person, then. That was when he heard the anguished cries from Kirsten.

"Pippy!" she said. "Oh God, Pippy!"

Yes, that's what it was. Kirsten's dog, mutilated and strung up in a tree. It was hideous. Blood dripped down on Henry and he immediately shuffled away, out of the line of fire. He stood up and just watched as Kirsten practically melted down, crying and sobbing. Joel tried to comfort her but she pushed him away. Finally, she accepted a hug from Marta and looked away from the body, burying her head in Marta's shoulder, eyes closed.

"Jesus," Greg said and took a swig from his beer. Henry happened to know that he had at least two more bottles in the knapsack that he had slung over his shoulders. He shook his head.

"Who would do such a thing?" Marta said.

"Well..." Henry said.

"What?"

"Bree is into all that Satanic shit, right?"

"Wait a minute," Marta said.

"Yes!" Kirsten said, suddenly looking up at all of them, face a mess of tears and snot. "Yes, she said something about sacrificing dogs! I thought she was just joking but..."

And she lapsed back into tears once again. Marta shook her head but Greg was nodding.

"She's a weird one," he said. "Always thought so."

"You people are all crazy," Marta said.

"What?" Greg said.

"Bree would never do this."

"You just met her," Joel said.

"Oh, yeah? You've known her for a while. What do you think?"

"I don't know," Joel said.

"Look," Marta said, "take her back to our camp."

She nudged Kirsten towards Joel. The girl was reluctant at first but, soon enough, accepted Joel's help.

"Give her something to make her feel better," Marta said. "And talk to Bree. I'm sure you'll see that this is bullshit."

"You going somewhere?" Joel said.

"Yes," Marta said, "I'm going to check out the campground."

"What for?" Henry said.

"Want to find out what that gunshot was. If it was just a hunter, fine, I'll head back. But I gotta know."

"Well, I'm not going with you," Henry said.

"I wasn't asking you."

"You shouldn't go by yourself," Joel said.

There was silence for a moment, then Greg sighed. "Fuck it. I'll go with you."

"All right," Marta said, "it's settled then. Let's go. We'll see you in a bit."

She and Greg started towards the old campground, where the gunshot had come from. Marta looked determined. To Henry, she looked like Nancy Drew embarking on a mystery. It was cute, in a way, but she was a strange one. He shook his head.

He pulled out his pocket knife, opened it and cut down Pippy's body. It hit the ground with a sickening squelching sound and Henry winced. He wound up the rope and carried the dead dog behind him, a little off the ground. It was a macabre sight and he was glad that Kirsten wasn't looking at him.

"Let's get moving," he said to the others.

Marta and Greg entered Camp Mogollon from the north side, with the shore of the lake. They had been walking the Rim in a somewhat circular pattern as they were looking for Pippy and, luckily, had avoided the entrance that the dog had chosen, the west. If they had, their experience there would have been completely different.

There was a strange feeling in the air. Marta could sense it the moment she spotted the camp through the trees. A kind of *unwelcome*, as it were. There were a number of animals about. Marta saw a jackrabbit pounce by and heard movement in the trees all about her. Nature had overtaken this place.



And yet...

Someone was here. Or had been here quite recently. Marta could see light emanating from somewhere in the camp, along with the distant sound of a generator. And was that?

Yes, it was music. Some old song, upbeat but somewhat sinister when played out here, in the middle of the woods, at full dark. She recognized the song.

"Is that the Chordettes?" she asked.

"Beats me," Greg said.

"You think this is where that old guy lives?"

"Could be."

"You think he killed Pippy?"

"As revenge for us popping his tires?" Greg said.

"Yeah," Marta said.

"Seems harsh."

"Well, sure, but he didn't exactly seem stable."

"Good point."

"There's a mystery here."

"A mystery?"

"Yeah!"

"You sure you're all right?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you seem excited."

"But it is exciting!" Marta said. She turned to him with a smile. "Aren't you excited?"

"Not especially," Greg said.

"Ah, you're no fun. Wish Bree and Jenna were here with me."

"Well, we can't have everything we want now can we?"

"Come on!"

They headed into the camp. Above them, the moon was bright and full, its rays beaming down on them. It should have been comforting but it wasn't. It was more like a spotlight, picking them out for special attention. And not the good kind, either.

The dock extended far into the lake, much more elaborate than the one near their own camp. Greg had stopped and was looking at it intently. Marta had to punch him on the arm to get him moving again.

Soon they reached the first of the cabins. They were wood and Marta estimated that each would have housed four scouts when the campground was open. Each cabin sat on sturdy wood legs slightly

off the ground. Each had its own little porch. It was cute. Marta imagined that it was a nice camp when it had been open but not so much anymore. One of the cabins they approached was near a large tree. It looked like the tree had mostly overtaken the cabin, hanging over it. And there was something hanging from the tree. Marta squinted.

"What the Hell's that?" Greg asked.

"It's a noose," Marta said.

"A noose like the one Pippy was strung up on?"

"Yep."

So it was. A noose, empty and swinging in the wind. Marta watched it for a moment before shaking her head and moving on.

They were headed to the source of the music. As they approached a cabin, Marta knew that this was where the music was coming from. Cautiously, she mounted the steps. Greg hung back, clutching one of the wooden posts of the cabin, his fingernails unconsciously digging into the pulp.

The door to the cabin was open and a light was on inside. But Marta could see the whole interior of the cabin and didn't see anyone there. Just as she thought, there were four cots sitting inside the cabin, all a dull and worn green. An end table sat against the far wall, under a window looking out towards the lake. A portable record player had been set on the end table. As Marta stepped into the cabin, the song ended and she watched as the needle arm raised up and moved back before setting itself down again, the song starting back up on its own.

"Automatic," Marta said.

"What?" Greg said.

He hadn't moved into the cabin at all, still standing outside it. Marta turned to him as he finished the beer he was nursing and tossed it away.

"It's on a loop," Marta explained. "Automatic."

"Right," Greg said.

Marta shook her head and looked back at the record player. It was old, from the 60s at least. And the record itself was scratched, worn, the song sounded weary, as if it wanted to die, was asking to be put out of its misery.

The window above the end table was open about a foot and the wind streamed in, blowing the plain, see-through white curtains. To Marta, they looked like ghosts hovering above the record player. She had to get out of here. It was far too creepy.

She turned and started to walk out of the cabin. Every footfall felt like it was about two minutes apart. Time stretched out, like it did when she was a child who had gotten up in the middle of the night

for a glass of water and had to head through the completely dark house. She was sure - simply sure - that a hand would dart out from under one of the cots and grab her ankle. Any moment now.

Why was the door to the cabin so far away?! It seemed miles. She quickened her pace, her peripheral vision filled with imaginary demons ready to pounce at her from out of the dark.

She was suddenly 10 again. A little 10-year-old tomboy awake at night and afraid of shadows in her room. There were Things in the shadows. Things that wanted to get her.

Things that wanted to feed.

She finally reached the cabin door and exited the cabin. No hand emerged to snatch at her, nothing pounced from the shadows. It was all in her imagination. She wasn't a little girl anymore. She was a woman now, an adult.

"You okay?" Greg said.

"I'm fine," Marta said.

"You look a little spooked."

"I'm not spooked. I'm intrigued."

"Intrigued. Good word."

"Indeed it is."

"Want a beer?"

"No, thank you."

"Suit yourself."

Greg took off his knapsack and rummaged through it, emerging triumphantly with another beer bottle. They must have been warm by now. Marta shook her head. How gross.

That was when Marta spotted something - or someone - far across the campground. She was looking at Greg and movement flittered past her line of sight and she looked up. Yes, someone was there, far off. She seemed to recognize the color palette of the person. Tan and brown. A police officer. Or a sheriff.

"Was that the sheriff?" she said.

"What?" Greg said.

"It's the sheriff! Hey, sheriff!"

And she darted off, across the camp. Greg put out a hand half-heartedly in an attempt to stop her.

"Hey, wait," he said.

But it was too late. She was already practically gone. He shook his head.

"Dizzy bitch."

Greg didn't get very far before he was winded. He clutched his chest with his free hand, his other fist curled around his beer. If anyone were looking, they would have found his display humorous. But no one was looking. Right?

He stopped, taking a few deep breaths, and looked around. Nope. No one was around.

He looked at the shapely, departing ass of Marta and shook his head once again. He waved a contemptuous hand at her and turned around.

If it really was the sheriff that Marta was chasing after - and he had no reason to suspect otherwise - then why did he have to accompany her? He wasn't needed. Marta and the sheriff would sort all of this out.

He took another swig of his beer and then reached into his pocket and pulled out a pack of smokes. He shook one out and stuck it between his lips. This accomplished, he stowed the pack away and retrieved a lighter. Soon, the fire of the lighter was awake and eating the air around it. He set the tip of the cigarette alight and stowed the lighter next to the pack of smokes.

Smoking deeply, really enjoying it, he made his way through the camp, back the way they had come. The dock - that lovely dock - was calling to him.

It was like a woman lying supine on the water, naked and waiting for him to come and sit upon her. And who was he to argue? He certainly wasn't going to say no.

It was an amazing night and this camp was creepy and he wanted to sit out on the dock, enjoy his smoke and his beer and just not give a fuck about anybody else. Not right now. Now was his time.

He wandered through the camp and made his way to the dock, smiling as he went. "I'm coming, baby."

Marta was still some ways away when she realized that someone else was with the sheriff. The lawman - and whoever was with him - was among the trees at the base of a gentle slope that led up to a road above the camp. Marta couldn't quite make out what was happening but it looked like there was someone behind the sheriff. Someone holding onto him. It didn't make any sense.

"Sheriff?" Marta said.

Both figures stopped. Yes, there were definitely two of them, that much was for sure. But what was the second figure doing with the sheriff?

Marta stopped, suddenly unsure of herself. As she watched, the sheriff dropped out of sight, just simply fell into the underbrush. The second figure looked at Marta for a moment then walked backwards, disappearing among the trees. Marta shook her head in confusion.

She ran forward, heading towards the two figures. What was the sheriff playing at?

"Sheriff?" she said. "I'm not a threat. You can come out."

She reached the spot where the lawman had dropped out of sight. The trees were thick here, blotting out most of the light of the moon. Marta grabbed the flashlight that she had in her pocket and turned it on, directed it towards the ground. She found him almost instantly.

He was dead.

One of his hands was gone, along with his nose. His head was split open, brains leaking out onto the underbrush.

And the truth crashed over Marta all at once.

Whoever she had seen - this second figure - had killed the sheriff and had been dragging him along when Marta approached. And this second figure was still among the trees near her.

She clapped her free hand over her mouth with such force that she felt her teeth rattle but it kept her from screaming. The killer was nearby and she didn't want to attract attention.

She switched off the flashlight, put it away and crouched down, trying to hide in the underbrush. She moved slowly, making her way back in the direction she came.

She was almost totally silent. If she hadn't been so scared, she would have been proud of herself. She crept along, making her way slowly, carefully.

Soon she heard movement and the second figure emerged from behind a tree perhaps ten feet from where she was hiding. Marta could tell right away that the killer was a woman. A tall, strong woman wearing a cloth bag over her head with one eye cut out to see through. The woman held a sharp hunting knife in one hand - the moonlight glinted off the blade brilliantly - and Marta could see another weapon on her person: a hand axe.

A hatchet.

*Oh, God,* Marta thought. *Hatchetface.*

She was real. No legend this. Here she was, in the flesh. It was worse than any nightmare Marta had ever had. She was currently looking in a different direction, away from Marta, but for how long? Surely, she would find her any moment now.

Marta began to move again, this time towards a row of buildings on the west side of the camp. She wanted to call out for help, wanted to get Greg's attention - wherever he was - but she was too afraid, not wanting to give her position away to Hatchetface.

She moved steadily away from the killer. She could see a path out of the camp on the west side. She wanted to warn Greg but if that wasn't possible, then she would just have to flee and bring the others back to help him, if he was still alive.

And now here she was in the dark house, 10 years old again. A little girl afraid of the dark. The path seemed so far away. As she looked, it seemed to stretch farther away. She blinked the delusion away and kept moving.

She was out of the underbrush now. It was a risk, but she had to get out of here. She looked over her shoulder: Hatcheface had still not seen her. A jackrabbit hopped by, heading in the same direction that she was. It headed onto the path out of the camp.

*Lucky rabbit*, she thought.

That was when the rabbit's feet hit the ground, completing a hop, and a massive, steel trap closed on it in a flash. The animal was nearly obliterated, becoming a cloud of blood and fur.

Marta stifled a gasp. How many more traps littered her escape route? How many?

All this in less than a second flat. Hatcheface turned to the sound and spotted Marta instantly. She started towards her.

Marta got up and ran, but not to the path. She certainly would have been caught in one of the traps if she had. She darted towards the row of buildings here on the west side. They were bigger than the cabins, built for a different purpose.

Marta ran and ran and ran. Hatcheface was right behind her. Marta could feel her, could smell her. She was close, knife in hand, ready to strike.

It was a nightmare. A living nightmare. Marta couldn't have conjured it up if she had tried. Hatcheface was the boogeyman, come to kill her. But this boogeyman was a woman, a deadly and dangerous woman, out for blood.

Finally, Marta reached the first building and opened the door to get in. It was unlocked and she was able to make it inside.

Hatcheface reached out for her and got her hand inside before Marta was able to shut the door behind her. The door slammed onto the killer's wrist, which clutched at Marta like an animal. It was a gloved hand, black leather. Worn and used.

Marta forced all of her weight against the door, pinning the killer's hand inside. But Hatcheface was so strong, so single-minded, that Marta knew that she would get in.

She pulled the flashlight from her pocket and began to hit the killer's hand again and again, harder and harder each time. Finally, Hatcheface's hand disappeared outside and Marta shut the door completely. She quickly latched it and locked it and backed away.

She expected the killer to pound against the door but it never happened. There was just silence and stillness.

Marta stood where she was, breathing heavy, dripping with sweat. The flashlight she was holding was broken, completely smashed, so she dropped it to the ground. A battery rolled away. Marta followed it.

She was in a spacious restroom. Along the wall opposite Marta were closed stalls and, farther down, urinals. On the wall that held the door, a row of sinks. And, on the far end, Marta could see showers: each divided by a sheet of clear, though fogged, plastic. The plastic swayed in the breeze. Marta was reminded of rows of butchered cattle - or pigs - hanging in a slaughterhouse. It was not comforting.

Moonlight streamed in through the windows above each stall. Marta put her head in her hands and wept for perhaps two minutes. It was all too much. Too much horror, all in just a few minutes.

She suddenly stopped sobbing and looked up, eyes bright and alarmed. Breeze. Where was the draft coming from?

She spotted an open window above one of the stalls. That was it. She had to close it in case Hachetface tried to get in.

Slowly, she approached the stall below the open window. A hand reached out tentatively. Softly, she placed her palm against the seam of the stall, preparing to open it. It was dark in here, the restroom only lit by the light of the moon, and she had to move her hand down to find the latch.

Before she found it, there was a sting in the palm of her hand. Instinctively, she pulled her hand away from the stall. Now there was pain there in her palm.

*What the Hell?*

She looked at the palm of her hand and found a strange darkness there. A darkness that was getting bigger.

It was blood.

Blood welling up in the palm of her hand. She had been cut. But how?

She looked up at the stall and her eyes widened with terror. The seam of the stall. It was through the seam. A blade.

A razor sharp blade.

She backed away, hitting the wall between the door and the sinks. She reached up and found a light switch, turned it on. She had remembered the generator, knew that there must have been power in these buildings.

The lights flickered on - a sickly yellow - and Marta was frozen in fear. The moment the light came on, the stall below the open window burst open and Hachetface came rushing out of it like some kind

of funhouse skeleton on a spring, ready to scare the kids who were brave enough to enter.

*She got in while I was crying! Climbed in like some kind of monster!*

Marta didn't even have time to scream. Hatchetface led with her razor sharp hunting knife, which buried itself in Marta's throat. The knife passed right through her neck and stuck into the wall behind her.

Marta gasped as blood welled up in her mouth. She looked into the implacable, terrifying face of her killer. It was the face of a dark legend, a demon in human form. That one eye stared back at Marta as the life drained out of her.

Marta coughed up a mouthful of blood and Hatchetface pushed harder, forcing the hunting knife through the thin wooden wall of the restroom and out the other side. The hilt of the knife was now flush with Marta's throat.

Marta reached out and grasped pathetically at Hatchetface's arms. She didn't know what she was doing, wasn't truly thinking in these last few moments of life.

There was a moment of what was almost tenderness. Marta thought she saw something in Hatchetface's one eye: a sadness. Regret. Marta's right hand made its way to Hatchetface's neck and softly touched it. The killer cocked her head, confused, and Marta coughed up another mouthful of blood.

The spell seemed to break and Hatchetface pulled the knife out of Marta's throat with mighty force. It tore open a massive gash in the girl's throat and she immediately collapsed to the ground in a heap.

Her last moments were spent looking at Hatchetface's boots, her fingertips clutching at the floor, scratching out meaningless scribbles. Her vision went dark.

Her life followed shortly after.



## Chapter Seven, "Truth"

1

Bree and Jenna were sitting around the campfire, Rachel still in her tent, when Joel, Kirsten and Henry returned to the camp. The flickering light from the fire illuminated Bree and Jenna's smiling faces and, as they turned to watch the others returning, those faces darkened as they saw the mood their friends were in.

Bree saw that Henry was carrying something - something that slumped in his arms, something that looked like dead weight, something that looked wet and awful - and frowned. She shook her head.

"Is that--" she said but never got to finish answering the question.

Kirsten took one look at Bree and pounced on her. She knocked Bree off the small lawn chair that she was sitting on - it was a drab, off-white affair - and got right on top of her.

"How could you do that?!" Kirsten screamed in Bree's face. "To Pippy! How could you?!"

"What?!" Bree said.

"You're sick!"

Jenna stood up and grabbed at Kirsten but was too late to stop a mighty swipe from the suddenly-Hell-cat Kirsten. She raked her nails across Bree's face, drawing blood.

"Hey!" Jenna said as she grabbed hold of Kirsten's midsection. "Get off her!"

With some effort, Jenna was able to get Kirsten off Bree. Kirsten rolled across the floor of the forest, slamming her hands down in rage. Bree slowly sat up and wiped blood away from her left cheek. She could feel fairly deep grooves there: Kirsten had dug deep.

Kirsten looked at Bree and reached out as if to scratch her again but she was several feet away now and made no effort to move. It was just an angry gesture.

"How could you?!" she said.

"What do you think I did?!" Bree said.

Henry approached, dropped the dead body of Pippy on the ground in front of Bree - between her and the fire - and just looked at her, not saying anything.

"Jesus," Jenna said. "Pippy. What happened?"

"She happened!" Kirsten said, pointing at Bree.

"Well, we don't know that," Joel said.

Bree was silent, just looking at the dead body of the dog. Jenna sat down next to her and put a hand on her shoulder.

"She said that she sacrifices little dogs to the Devil!" Kirsten said. "She said it."

"Fuck, I was kidding!" Bree said.

"Then how do you explain this?" Henry asked.

Bree looked up at Henry and stared into him. She slowly shook her head.

"See!" Kirsten said. "She won't deny it! She killed him! She killed Pippy!"

"You had lots of opportunity," Henry said. "Plenty of time to make a little dog go away, get rid of him. Hell, I thought he was annoying as shit, always yipping and being a general disturbance, but killing him? That's fucking cold."

"You have to admit, Bree," Joel said, "you're into all that Satanic shit. And Satanists do this kind of shit all the time."

"No, actually they don't," Bree said. "And I'm no Satanist anyway. I'm just reading that book because it's interesting."

"Either way," Henry said, "you have had plenty of time, like I said. Always wandering off. Half the time I'm here in camp looking for you, you're not here."

Bree and Jenna exchanged a look, then Bree looked back at Henry. "Why you been looking for me, Henry? Huh?"

"Don't turn this around on me! You're the one on trial here."

"Trial?!" Bree said. "Looks like a witch hunt to me."

"So you're a witch!" Kirsten said.

But she was the one that looked like a witch in that moment: banging her fists on the ground, spitting, turning in place. She looked mad, unhinged.

"You people are all incredible," Bree said. "Half of you wanna fuck me," she looked pointedly at Henry, "and the other half of you wanna burn me at the stake. Now you wanna do both, that it?"

"Fuck you?" Joel said. "That's ridiculous." He laughed. It sounded fake, forced. He shook his head and smiled like a jackass.

"News flash!" Bree said. "I don't wanna fuck any of you! And I didn't kill the dog. Someone else must have."

"You still haven't explained your little disappearances," Henry said. "That's what's bothering me! Where you been going, girl?"

"Nowhere," Bree said.

"Nowhere," Henry said. "That's fucking convenient."

"It is what it is," Bree said.

"Give us an explanation," Joel said. "Where have you been? I've noticed you missing, too."

"Maybe I don't always want to be around all of you," Bree said. "Huh? Ever think about that? I don't exactly have much in common with most of you. I'm an odd duck, okay? But I wouldn't kill a Goddamn dog."

"That's your defense?" Henry said.

"You'll just have to believe me," Bree said.

"Give me a reason," Joel said.

"All of you stop it!" Jenna said and stood up. "Bree hasn't been around..."

"Jenna, you don't have to," Bree said.

"No, I want to," Bree continued. "Bree hasn't been around a lot because she's been with me."

"Huh?" Joel said.

"Haven't you noticed that whenever you don't see Bree, you don't see me, either?"

"Actually..." Henry said.

"Yes," Jenna said, "yes. She's been with me."

"Doing what?" Joel said.

"Fucking, okay?!" Jenna said. "The two of us have been having sex every fucking chance we get. And we've been trying to keep it secret."

"You..." Joel said. "I don't understand."

"Oh, Jesus H. Christ, Joel," Jenna said. "Bree is my girlfriend. And has been for a while now."

"You some kind of dyke?" Henry said.

"Which one of us are you talking to?" Bree said.

"Both of you, I guess."

"Well, I can't speak for Jenna," Bree said, "but, yeah, I'm a fucking dyke."

"So am I," Jenna said.

"Fuck," Joel said. "I've been so blind. So fucking blind. You're one of those..."

"Get over it, Joel," Jenna said.

"Yeah, get over it, Joel."

This last from Kirsten. Everyone looked over at her. She looked completely changed: sitting now as she was, cross-legged, leaning against a lawn chair but not sat inside it, smoking. And it didn't look like a cigarette.

"Is that my dope?" Bree asked.

"Yeah," Kirsten said. "Hope you don't mind."

"No, be my guest."

"That shit's strong," Joel said.

"Oh, shut the fuck up, Joel," Kirsten said. "And, like I said, get over it. You're not exactly straight, now, are you?"

"I..." Joel said. "I don't know..."

"I... I don't know," Kirsten imitated him. "You're pathetic. I've seen you fucking jacking off Henry here. Just stroking his big Black cock."

Jenna laughed. Joel turned dagger eyes towards her.

"Shut up!" he said. "That's a filthy lie!"

"It's the truth and you know it," Kirsten said and took another deep drag. "I seem to recall that you were the one to make him cum. He splattered all over my little tits but quite a bit of it ended up on your neck, if I remember it right."

"I..." Joel said. "I..."

Henry was curiously quiet through all this. He looked away, embarrassed.

"Joel," Jenna said, "I don't care. I don't care what you are. Be what you wanna be."

"I will!" Joel said. "Besides, a man can do what he likes! But a chick has to like cock! Any girl who says otherwise is lying to herself! Goddamn it!"

He stormed off, heading to his tent and practically jumping into it. Kirsten watched him go and shook her head, taking another drag.

"This is great shit," she said.

"Look," Bree said, "let's talk about what's important. Henry? Henry?!"

Henry finally looked at them. Bree shook her head.

"Henry," she said, "I don't give a shit what you do and who you do it with, okay? Now listen to me."

"All right," Henry said.

"The old pervert," she said.

"Yeah?"

"He obviously did this. He killed Pippy."

"Yeah?"

"Yes," Bree said.

"Yeah," Kirsten agreed, eerily calm now. "Yeah, that makes sense. He's a bastard. Oh, shit, did I do that?" She was looking at Bree's face. "Oh, I'm so sorry."

"It's..." Bree said. "It's okay, I guess. Hey, where's Marta and Greg?"

"They stayed out," Henry said. "Checking out the ol' campground."

"That's..." Bree said. "Don't you think that's a little dangerous?"

"Well, we figured you had done this to the dog at the time," Henry said. "Didn't even think it could be anybody else."

"Okay, well," Jenna said, "if they aren't back soon we should go get them. In one of the cars this time."

"Right," Bree said.

"I'm sure they're fine," Henry said, waving it off.

## 2

Hatchetface stood over Marta's body, just staring down at it. She had been here for some time now. She wasn't exactly sure how long but it had been a while.

She hadn't wanted to kill Marta. Had, in fact, liked Marta. Liked looking at the girl. Liked the way her hips swayed, liked how her tits bounced when she walked.

But it had to be done.

Marta had seen her with the dead body of the sheriff and no witnesses could be left alive. It had to be done. Had to.

And yet...

She had not enjoyed it. Had not liked killing Marta. Normally, when she took a life - watched the very essence of someone fading away, draining from their whole body, but especially the eyes - it calmed her, soothed the inner Beast that raged at the whole world. It was one of the only things that did the trick.

She hated Weapons, those hideous Things between some people's legs. They hurt, they wounded. They had to be stopped.

But this girl.

She was different. She could have been someone that Hatchetface could touch, could feel. And, in turn, she was someone that could have touched back. But there were others.

Those two in the tent earlier tonight. They touched, they felt. They were doing something that Hatchetface had never experienced, something that she wanted. Something that would have been better even than the calmness that followed a kill.

But it was not to be.

She had other work. Other things to do. People to correct. Weapons to silence.

Slowly, she turned her head and seemed to look through the wall. To the dock. To the one sitting there.

To the one who had trespassed in her Domain.

3

"You stay here," Bree said.

"Bullshit," Jenna said. "I'm coming."

Bree was heading toward the cars, next to Henry. Jenna was close behind. All of them were watched by Joel, who sat in his tent, drinking a beer with the door open, silently judging.

"No, you're staying," Bree said. "You watch Rachel, make sure nothing happens to her."

"Rachel can take care of herself."

"I really don't think so. She obviously found out about Henry and Kirsten... and Joel."

"If something's wrong, I want to help. I like Marta. And... I like Greg, too. He's a pain but he's funny. And sorta nice. Sometimes."

Bree stopped and took hold of Jenna's shoulders. She stared into her eyes.

"Look," she said, "I don't want anything to happen to you. Stay here. Be safe. Protect the others. They're in no shape to take care of themselves."

"You think that's gonna convince me to let you just go?" Jenna said. "You're cra--"

Bree silenced her with a kiss. Henry looked on, lecherously, for a moment then looked away. After it went on for another moment, he coughed. The kiss ended and Bree looked at Henry, shrugged.

"You bitch," Jenna said, but with a smile. "All right. I'll stay."

"I'm gonna go, though," Kirsten said.

She seemed to emerge out of the woods like a ghost. No one saw her coming. She had another roach in her hands, her third if Bree had her math right.

"I don't think that's a good idea," Bree said.

"Yeah," Henry said.

"I'm not gonna listen to either of you," Kirsten said. "I'm coming. No kiss from my lover - any of them - is gonna make me stay."

"Baby," Joel said from his tent.

"Don't call me baby!" Kirsten said. "You don't get to call me baby anymore." She smiled a slightly mad smile. "If that fuck is out there, if that asshole who killed Pippy is out there, then I'm coming. And

I'm gonna kill him. Just kill the fuck out of him. And you're not invited. Coward. You stay in your tent like a little fucking girl. Stay."

Joel opened his mouth to speak but Kirsten shushed him with a curt whistle that none of them expected. All of them kept quiet.

"I'm going," Kirsten said. "I'm stoned off my ass, I can't see for shit! Can't do a whole heck of a lot but I can sure try! I can sure try."

She turned to leave, and Henry and Bree followed suit, but soon she stopped and turned back around. She pointed at Joel.

"Make me try to fuck Rachel so that you, me, Henry and her can be a foursome," she said. "Jesus! You're no kind of a man! Maybe I will eat some fucking cunt while I'm out, Joel! Maybe I will! Maybe I'll munch the fuck out of Bree's dripping pussy. And you won't be invited." She turned to Henry. "You, either. It'll just be me and Bree, eating the ever-loving-Christ out of each other's assholes. Just rimming the fuck of those beautiful pink holes."

Jenna was looking at Bree, eyes wide, but she was silent. Bree shook her head at her lover and made a swiping gesture across her throat, as if to say, "No way in Hell."

"And you won't be there, Joel," Kirsten said. "And you never will be. Ever again. I'm going to fuck who I want when I want. And I'm going to kill the mother-fucking shit who murdered my dog. Understand?"

"Yeah," Joel said after a moment's consideration. "I understand."

"Truth will out, Joel," Kirsten said. "Truth will fucking out." She turned to Henry and Bree. "Let's go."

"Aye aye, captain!" Henry said.

"Shut the fuck up," Kirsten said. Then she laughed and took another drag. "Jesus, I am stoned."

Bree was still looking at Jenna and raised her hands in a shrug. "Guess she's coming with us. Keep an eye on the camp."

"Right," Jenna said, a little floored at all that happened in under a half hour.

Then Bree, Henry and Kirsten marched through the woods until they reached the cars. It didn't take them long to figure out that they weren't going to be able to use them to get to the old campground.

"What the fuck?" Henry said.

"What?" Kirsten said. "What is it?"

"The tires," Bree said. "Look at the tires."

All four tires on both vehicles had been slashed. They were practically eviscerated.

"Mother-fucker!" Henry said. "This asshole is really getting on my nerves."

"First my dog and now this!" Kirsten said.

Bree was quiet, taking in the whole situation, trying to figure it out. She stared off into the woods, not blinking.

"Bree?" Henry said.

"Yeah?" Bree said.

"What do you think?"

"I think we have to walk."

"Right."

"Okay," Kirsten said.

So they walked.

4

Greg sat on the far edge of the dock, way out over the water, just looking at the lake and moon above, drinking his second-to-last beer and having his fourth smoke. It was amazing out here.

The water swayed, knocking a little boat gently against the dock. The boat was lashed to the dock behind him by about twenty feet. It was old, worn, but cute in its own, peculiar way.

Greg could see trees on the other side of the lake. They were far but his eyesight was excellent. The trees also swayed in the wind. A chill came wafting up off the water and tickled his feet. He wiggled his toes. He had taken off his shoes but the water was too far down for him to dip his toes into. A few feet out of reach.

He was thinking about his dad. His dad used to take him out to Lake Pleasant when he was a kid. It was northwest of Phoenix and the two of them would just spend time there. Sometimes fishing, sometimes taking a little boat out, sometimes doing nothing at all, just spending time together.

Those had been good times. The best times, really. Now, after three years of college, he felt that his life was spinning away from him, instead of just beginning, as the college experience was supposed to make one feel.

His dad had always talked of college, talked of how it was the best time of his life, how it was the beginning of something greater. He had placed great importance on it, a higher Significance with a capital "S". Greg felt that he had spent his whole life preparing for college and, now... Well, he had spent most of his college life drinking. Just drinking, smoking, having regrettable sex with people he didn't find especially attractive and didn't really want to be around. Had he had some fun times? Of course he had. Hell, he had had fun today, and the day before. Great times, even. But there was



something missing.

Maybe he should have been using his college years to really learn as well to make friends. Was there a way to balance the two?

Greg didn't know and so he took another drink, finishing the bottle. This accomplished, he just looked at the empty beer for a moment, contemplating it. It was a strange thing, an empty bottle: it had once held a liquid that wasn't exactly good-tasting but was, in fact, a short cut to good times; a quick path through the woods to the party. And what a party! A huge, roaring bonfire fifteen feet high with naked chicks dancing all around it. Oh, man was it great. But now the bottle was empty. Now its only meaning was: "You have to go get another one of me. So snap to it!"

He knew that he had one last bottle in his knapsack. It was behind him, on the edge of the dock about twenty feet back. He had left it there along with his shoes.

The image of naked chicks dancing around the fire was still in his mind and that made him think of Marta. Sexy Marta. Where the Hell was she? Surely, she and the sheriff had worked out everything by now. She was smart. Smarter than he was, anyway. So where was she?

It was annoying. He sighed. This called for another beer. The last one.

But he didn't turn around. Didn't move at all. He just looked at the empty beer bottle in his hand. Then he looked out over the lake again. Man, it was beautiful out here.

He threw the empty beer bottle out into the lake. He had a good arm, even if he wasn't exactly a sports guy. The bottle sailed out far in a wide, high arc. It came crashing down into the water with a barely-audible splash. Greg chuckled.

That was when he heard the crash behind him: the sound of a beer bottle breaking. He gasped in terror, knowing what must have happened: his knapsack must have toppled over because of the wind, his beer rolling out and falling over the side to smash in the bed of the little boat lashed to the dock.

He instantly stood up and ran to his knapsack. He knocked one of his shoes over the side in the process - the left one - but didn't care. His beer! His Goddamn beer!

He lay on the dock, stomach to the wood slats, head hanging over the side. He looked at the little boat swaying in the wind among the gentle waves.

There was nothing in it. Greg frowned. Surely, his beer bottle should be smashed in the bed of the boat. Right?

But there was nothing.

All at once, he knew that he wasn't alone. Someone was here with him. Somewhere on the dock. But where? Where would they be hiding? And who would be cruel enough to pull such a horrible prank on him?

"Marta?" he said.

He banged his chin against the edge of the dock, defeated and depressed. That was his last beer. He really wanted that inside of him.

He got what he wanted a moment later.

There *was* someone on the dock with him. Someone hiding. Someone standing among the wood support beams of the dock, half-submerged in water.

With a mighty upward swing, Hatcheface drove the broken bottle that she had smashed against the side of one of the support beams into Greg's head, right between his neck and his chin, on the underside of his mouth. The ragged, super-sharp edges of glass cut through the soft flesh there and emerged in his mouth.

The pain was intense and Greg screamed. It came out muffled and wet.

Greg could feel the sharp glass cutting into the underside of his tongue. He struggled, moving his jaw to try to get it out but that only made the pain worse.

Hatcheface used her other hand to push the bottle deeper inside, cutting right through Greg's tongue and sticking into his upper palette, letting it go a moment later.

Greg whirled away, holding his mouth and neck, crying out a muffled, almost-silent cry, and bleeding all over the dock. He could hear the killer rummaging around in the little boat below him. He had to get away. No matter how much pain he was in.

Slowly, he started to crawl down the dock, towards land. Every inch of movement was agony and he could feel flesh tearing away inside his mouth. It was awful. The worst thing he had ever felt in his life.

Behind him, Hatcheface climbed onto the dock. She was dripping wet, a heavy, sturdy boat oar in her hands now. She walked towards him, taking her time. He wasn't going anywhere.

But Greg tried. He took a look behind him, eyes wide in terror. Unlike Marta, there was no revelation of who this was that was killing him. She was simply a monster. A demon come to kill him. And he had to get away.

He got a few more feet before Hatcheface overtook him. She stood above him and raised the boat oar high above her head.

She brought it down in a hard swing, landing a strike on Greg's left leg. Greg could feel his knee pop and shatter. He screamed and more pain flooded his mouth.

Hatcheface hit him again, this time taking out his right elbow. Then his right knee. His right elbow. His back.

After that, Greg couldn't move anymore. He could only scream.

He opened his mouth all the way, the bottle dislodging and cutting apart his tongue. A large chunk of

it came slithering out of his mouth as he screamed, blood flowing from his open mouth like a fountain.

Hatchetface hit him one more time, in the right shoulder. It practically snapped the bones there into several pieces and collapsed his rib cage.

He was now a silent, broken, lump on the docks, opening and closing his destroyed mouth, trying to move his shattered joints. Hatchetface looked down at him and cocked her head. A moment later, she kicked him in the side, turning him over onto his back. Another kick sent him rolling farther towards the edge of the dock. A third and Greg sailed over the side and into the water.

He was still alive, still breathing, as he fell into the water face down. Mercifully, he drowned to death a few minutes later.

## Chapter Eight, "A Macabre Find"

1

A strange sound woke Shelley. She looked around, confused, expecting to see the dark corners of her room at home but instead seeing the vast, seemingly endless expanse of the woods all around her. She frowned, confused for a moment, then it came to her: she had fallen asleep out here in the forest, somewhere outside the college students' camp. She was having a great weekend, watching them all. They were all so exciting, so exhilarating. That fight earlier in the night was amazing: shocking and funny to Shelley's young ears. She didn't dare approach but they were so loud that it wasn't necessary: she could hear them from quite a distance away. It was sometime after that that she had drifted to sleep, finding a comfy spot on the soft ground.

But now she was awake. What had awakened her?

She looked around for something - an animal of some kind - but there was nothing. The forest was silent and still. But it wasn't a calming silence or stillness. It was the kind of silence and stillness that Things lurked in, stalked in. Killed in.

She pushed her red hair out of her face - it had matted to one side - and took a quick, panicked look behind her. She was expecting to see something crawling up towards her, its claws outstretched to get her. But there was nothing. Just that awful stillness.

That old jump rope song crept through her head, unbidden, unwanted:

"Hatchetface, Hatchetface

Knock, knock, knock

What's the time, twelve-o'clock

Hatchetface, Hatchetface

Chop, chop, chop

First your mom, then your pop

Hatchetface, Hatchetface

Chase, chase, chase

Far too scared, lose the race

Hatchetface, Hatchetface

Stop, stop, stop

Chopped apart, we all drop"

She used to sing it all the time a few years ago - everyone did - but out here, in the middle of the night, the words got to her. In fact, they were downright scary.

The song came first: that's what she remembered. She heard the song first, before the legend. The story came later. It was an awful story but an exciting one, as well, exactly the kind of thing that 13-year-olds like Shelley devoured. She couldn't get enough of it: something like this - like this multiple murder, this killing spree - could happen just outside of her own little town? It was unbelievable. In fact, Shelley hadn't believed it, not at first - she figured that it was made up - but eventually got confirmation from her mother who, in one of her few lucid moments, had told her that it was all true. Well, most of it. It had been embellished. That was the word her mother had used, embellished. Shelley had to look it up at the time.

So it was true. Or at least part of it was true. Annie Blade had murdered several kids and adults one summer night many years ago, over at Camp Mogollon. She had disappeared, presumed dead. Those were the facts. Everything else was pure speculation.

Now, out here in the wild, Shelley could imagine Hatchetface - all grown up - hiding among the trees, stalking her prey. It was a chilling thought and Shelley continued to search the area with her gaze - not daring to move - trying to find the killer.

But she was nowhere to be seen. Of course she wasn't. She was dead. Had died long ago. There was no one out here hunting anyone else. It was all in her imagination.

Shelley shook it off and stood up. Sleep didn't seem like an option all of a sudden and she decided to see if the college students were still awake. Older kids stayed up late, right? Later than she did, at least.

She got up and was about to head off in the direction of the kids' camp when something made her turn around. She didn't know what it was - some feeling, some intuition - but it was strong and Shelley obeyed it. She turned, squinting, trying to see better in the dark, letting her eyes adjust more.

The forest was dense and blocked out much of the moonlight. Shelley had made sure to bring along a small flashlight - just in case - and she retrieved it now, flicked it on.

There was something there, something perhaps fifty feet from where she had been sleeping, something that she hadn't seen when she laid her head down to rest. It was partially buried. Some kind of mound.

Shelley ran to it, excited, intrigued. She moved with the kind of stupid grace that nearly all 13-year-olds displayed: one expected them to fall and break their necks at any moment but each footfall seemed

to connect without stumbling. Most of the time, that was.

As she neared the object, her flashlight flickered. It created a kind of strobe-light effect, eerie and psychedelic.

"Damn batteries," Shelley said and hit the flashlight a few times.

That seemed to do the trick and the beam was constant now, providing enough light for Shelley to get a sense of what it was she was looking at. Shelley covered her mouth with her free hand when she realized what it was.

The "mound" was a coffin.

It was large, as if to accommodate a rather tall person. It was old and had been partially buried in the ground, but not all the way. No, this was not a normal burial place, not at all. The ground around it reached up to just below the seam of the coffin, where the lid could be opened and closed.

It was grimy, dirty. Shelley could actually feel the infections that she could get from touching it. But that wasn't the worst of it.

The worst of it was the chains.

Two thick, strong chains crossed the coffin, one vertically, one horizontally. They disappeared under the coffin and into the ground. They were unlocked now but looked practical, as if one could trap someone inside the coffin indefinitely.

Shelley just stared at the coffin in horror and fascination, frozen in fear. She had an overwhelming - unnatural - desire to open the coffin, to see what was inside. She fought against this unholy notion, tried to push it away, but it was too strong.

She took a step towards the coffin and stopped. Somewhere nearby, an animal cried out its nighttime song, spooking Shelley.

*Don't be such a scaredy cat! Open it!*

She nodded, slowly, and took another step forward. The coffin was right there. All she had to do was kneel down and open it but she hesitated.

Who's coffin was this? Where were they? They certainly were not in the coffin, Shelley reasoned. The chains were unlocked. So where were they? What if they were out here? Watching her? Would they be angry? Then, the worst of it:

*Is this Hatchetface's coffin?*

Is this where she slept? What if opening the coffin was an offense to the killer? What if she got mad at Shelley and hunted her through the woods? What if she chopped Shelley all up, like in the song?

Shelley found that her teeth were rattling. She was just able to convince herself that it was the suddenly chill air that was causing it, not fear. But only just.

This was ridiculous. There was no Hatcheface. There was only Annie Blade. A real person. One who was dead now and had been for a long time.

Shelley kneeled down and grabbed hold of the coffin lid. It was heavy and couldn't be moved with only one 13-year-old hand so she put the flashlight down on a nearby rock, trained it on the coffin, and grasped hold of the lid with both hands.

She got it partially up before hitting the chains, halting her progress. They may not have been locked but they were still looped together, making it impossible to open.

*Stupid Shelley. You have to push the chains aside!*

She shook her head in frustration and grasped hold of the padlock that held the two chains together. She unhooked the padlock and dropped it on the ground beside the coffin. After that, she grabbed the chains themselves. They were surprisingly heavy and it took some effort for Shelley to move them. She realized as she unlooped them and pushed them aside that she hadn't ever handled a chain before: a real chain, like this one. She had seen plenty of them, sure, but had never held one. No reason to, really. She and her mother lived in an apartment in a house with three other residents and neither of them did any outside work at the house. And it wasn't as if any chains had been required to maintain the house.

Huh. Just one of those odd moments that one had in life: something that one thought they must have done at some point but never actually accomplished.

The chains now lay coiled on the ground on either side of the coffin and at its head and base. Shelley rubbed her hands against her shorts. That feeling of infections returned to her. How long had this coffin been here?

Once again she grasped hold of the coffin lid and pulled it open. It took some time but Shelley was able to open it all the way. It stood open on its own now and Shelley let go of it.

The interior was dark, of course. Shelley's flashlight only hit the edge of the coffin and didn't penetrate it. Shelley once again wiped the palms of her hands on her shorts and then unconsciously rubbed them together. She really wanted to see inside but was also afraid of what might be there.

What if there was a body inside? Worse, what if there was a vampire inside?

A beautiful but deadly vampire, her hair black and covered in cobwebs, her skin white like milk, her lips bright red. The kind of woman that could kill your heart before actually killing you. With her teeth. Her sharp, strong fangs.

Vampire movies were Shelley's favorite. She had seen the new *Dracula* when it had come out in the theaters a couple years ago - her mother had bought her ticket since it was an "R" picture - and it had scared the shit out of her. She had loved it, of course, but it sure was scary. Especially the scene with the girl vampire coming back to life, with her scarred face and haunting expression.

What if there was a vampire in there? What if all of those stories were true?

During the day, it was easy to dismiss such ideas as merely fantasies made up to scare children but now - here, in the dark, in the middle of the night - it wasn't so simple. Here, anything was possible. Anything could be lurking in the dark.

But Shelley had to see, had to know, so she grabbed her flashlight off the nearby rock and trained it on the interior of the coffin, holding her breath as she did. Fear and excitement flowed through her. It was an extraordinary feeling.

The coffin was empty, of course. No vampires to be seen. Only bugs, which skittered about, reacting to the light. Shelley saw a centipede slither away and winced. Man, she wouldn't want to be trapped inside this thing with something like that!

Then it came to her: vampires slept during the day. So if a vampire really did call this coffin home, she wouldn't be here now. She would be hunting the woods for young blood. Like those college kids.

Like her.

But that was all nonsense. Vampires weren't real, Shelley reasoned. Hatchetface, on the other hand...

Right now, the existence of Hatchetface didn't seem so implausible: seemed, in fact, almost reasonable. Why would a coffin be out here? Who put it here? It was just the kind of macabre detail that fit with the Hatchetface legend.

But, on the other hand, it didn't make any sense. A coffin out here in the woods didn't connect to any version of the Hatchetface legend that Shelley had ever heard.

All the same, Shelley began to believe that Hatchetface was real, that she was out here somewhere. Somehow, this coffin was her's. Or connected to her in some way.

It was a scary thought and Shelley felt gooseflesh break out on her arms and her neck. Just then, her flashlight started to flicker once again and Shelley started hitting it, hard. It flickered a few more times then went out entirely.

She was shrouded in darkness, alone and afraid. Suddenly she didn't feel so adventurous anymore. Suddenly she felt like just what she was: a little girl alone in the woods.

She had to get out of here. Had to escape whatever was hunting these woods. She had her bicycle, of course - it was parked by the road a ways from the camp - but it wasn't nearly fast enough.

*The kids!*

The college kids were close. They had cars. They could get her out of here. They could just leave!

Shelley dropped her flashlight by the coffin and stood up. She turned and started to run towards the college kids' camp, leaving the coffin standing open like a hungry mouth. She had an irrational image of the coffin coming after her, chomping at her escaping feet. But it didn't happen, of course.



The coffin stayed where it was buried. Awaiting whoever it belonged to.

2

Bree, Henry and Kirsten had taken the road around, figuring it would be the quickest route to the campground instead of traipsing through the woods in the middle of the night. It was a moderate hike but they had made it and were now looking down at the old campground from up on the road. It was a gentle slope down to the camp, an easy walk, but they hesitated. They could hear faint music coming from the camp along with the sound of a generator and could see a few lights on down there. Kirsten had lit up another blunt. Bree looked at her, more than a little annoyed. At this rate, there would barely be any left for the trip home.

"What, are they having a party down there?" Henry said.

"I don't know," Bree said.

"A party?!" Kirsten said. "That's amazing! We should go. We should totally go. Wouldn't it be fun?"

"I don't know," Bree repeated pointedly.

"I guess they're doing okay," Henry said.

"Doesn't make any sense," Bree said. "Why is the power on down there?"

"Maybe this is where that old pervert stays," Henry said.

"You think he's down there?" Kirsten said. She was suddenly quiet and reflective, in contrast to her outburst just seconds ago.

"It's possible," Bree said.

"Better check it out," Henry said. "Find our friends."

"Right," Bree said.

"Yeah," Kirsten said. She laughed suddenly. "Hey, think we'll be able to trap him? The pervert, I mean? Maybe trap him and kill him? You know, torture him to death? I was thinking about biting his balls off. You know, crushing them between my teeth before tearing them off, then chopping his dick in two."

"Um..." Henry said.

"I like where your head's at," Bree said, "but don't you think we should just get the cops involved? You know, if we have him trapped?"

"No way," Kirsten said. "He's all mine."

She looked at Bree, eyes low, blunt dangling from her mouth. In that moment, she looked like James Dean to Bree, a strange bad boy of the silver screen. Who happened to be a young woman. She couldn't

deny it: she was kind of turned-on.

"Whatever you say," Bree said.

Kirsten nodded, as if the matter was settled. Then she smiled and the bad boy look broke all at once. Man, was she stoned.

They started down towards the camp, watching their step. In the dark, none of them saw the pools of blood just steps away from Kirsten at the base of the hill, among the trees. The first building they came upon was what looked like an administrative office: small, dark, unoccupied. The door was standing open and Bree cautiously poked her head into the little building, just checking things out. Finding nothing, she joined the others in their exploring.

"Marta!" Henry called out, cupping his hands around his mouth.

"The fuck are you doing?" Bree whispered furiously.

She got in his face, serious and concerned, looking around. Henry looked confused.

"What?" he said.

"If there is somebody dangerous out there," Bree explained, "now they know where we are! So shut up!"

Kirsten was nodding but had an amused expression on her face, as if she was truly enjoying all this. Bree caught the look and frowned. Kirsten was on edge - teetering - threatening to topple over the side. All it would take would be a soft push. Bree put a hand on the girl's shoulder in concern.

"Are you okay?" she asked.

"I'm great, babe," Kirsten said.

"Babe?"

"Yeah, babe." She looked past Bree, towards a row of cabins near the lake. "Most of those are probably empty. Wanna ditch this faggot and fuck?"

"God, no," Bree said.

"Well, if you change your mind..."

"Don't wander off!"

"This is a big place," Henry reasoned. "We'd be able to cover more ground if we split up."

"Are you nuts?" Bree said. "We stay together."

"I don't want to be around this killjoy anymore," Kirsten said, hitting Henry in the arm. Henry winced and stared at her, remaining silent. "Don't make me stay with him."

"Jesus, I should have taken Jenna and neither of you," Bree said.

"Is anyone else hot?" Kirsten. "Christ, I'm fucking baking."

She wiped sweat out of her face and crossed her arms below her breasts, grasping the hem of her

shirt. A moment later, the shirt was gone - up over her head - tossed aside: she wore no bra. Bree sighed and looked away. Henry couldn't stop staring at her tits. Kirsten caught his look and covered them.

"These aren't for you!" she said.

And she sauntered away. Bree made a move towards her, tried to stop her.

"No!" Kirsten said. "You don't want to fuck? Then leave me alone. I feel dirty."

She walked away and Bree felt that it wasn't her place to stop her. If she wanted to kill that old pervert, then fine. She could certainly try. Maybe the old bastard was a push over. A little dog was one thing but a fully-grown human being? That was something else entirely.

Kirsten was now naked from the waist up, just wearing her shoes and just about the tiniest pair of shorts that Bree had ever seen: Kirsten's ass cheeks poked out of the bottom of them. Normally, Bree would have enjoyed the sight but not tonight. There was something out there. She could feel it.

Something watching them.

### 3

Jenna sat in one of the lawn chairs nursing a beer. She looked more than a little like Greg in that moment: staring off into the middle distance, eyes fixed, occasionally taking a swig from the bottle in her hand. She knew what she looked like but she didn't care. She was worried. Something was bothering her, something about this whole situation. It was as if they were all missing something: an important detail.

As she was musing to herself, Joel came out of his tent and sat in the lawn chair next to his sister. He stared at the ground for a moment before turning his gaze towards her. Jenna didn't look at him right away: she held her gaze on the deep forest around them. Finally, she did look at him. Her raised eyebrows asked a silent question: "What do you want?"

Joel nodded, as if reading her mind. He sighed.

"Can we talk?" he asked.

"Of course," she said.

"Good, cause we need to."

"Do we?"

"Yeah."

"What do we need to talk about, Joel?"

"So... You're gay?"

"I am."

"That's... Where does that come from?"

"I don't know. You're gay, where do you get it from?"

"I'm not gay!" Joel said.

"Jacking off their new best friend is not something that straight guys do, Joel."

"But it's not like I fucked him or anything. And he didn't fuck me."

"So if you're not gay, what are you?"

"I don't know. Curious, I guess. Just... I can't explain it."

"Well, I've known who I am since I was little. I just felt like I couldn't tell anyone. But if you don't know what you are then that's okay. There isn't anything wrong with that. You're figuring it out, I guess. So what?"

"So what?" Joel said. "So I'm a football player. Football players aren't gay. They just aren't. I can't be gay. Plus, I love women. Love 'em! How can I be gay if I love women?"

"So you like both!" Jenna said. "There are people like that. It's okay."

"Look, you can't tell anyone. Well, anyone else, I guess. My reputation is too important."

"Jesus Christ."

"What if a scout shows up to one of the games and he gets wind of... of what I do sometimes? Huh? It could ruin the rest of my life! This is serious."

"The rest of your life?"

"Yeah, the rest of my life! And I don't know why you're acting like you're suddenly morally superior to me: you were lying to me, to your friends, to your family, to all of us till earlier tonight!"

Jenna turned her head away and was quiet. Joel watched her intensely, waiting for a response. The moment stretched out, the silence deafening. A knot popped in the fire and Joel jumped a bit in his chair. Jenna chuckled and looked back at him.

"Why are we arguing?" she asked.

"I really don't know," Joel said.

"We have so much in common. We're so alike, in so many ways. And extraordinarily different. So what?"

Joel shook his head. The firelight only lit half of his face, the other was in shadow.

"You don't know the pressure that's on me," Joel said.

"But I do," Jenna said. "You don't think that there's pressure on me?"

"What pressure? What kind of pressure is on you? What could possibly be wrong? With you? With Ms. Perfect?"

"Ms. Perfect? What are you talking about?"

"Mom loves you, Dad practically worships you! You could do anything you want. You could be anything and they would support you! But me? Me?! If I don't succeed, if I don't make tracks, if I don't fucking win?"

"What? What would they do?"

Joel was quiet again. He crossed his arms as if he were cold. But it was a warm night, Jenna reflected, and they were sitting in front of a fire.

"They'd turn their back on me," Joel said softly. It was almost a whisper.

"No, they wouldn't," Jenna said. "They're not like that. They may not be perfect - like me, apparently - but they're good people. Reasonable. Dad, okay, maybe he'd have trouble with what you've been doing but Mom? She'd support you."

"You won't tell them, though?"

"No, I won't tell them."

"What about you?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you. What are you gonna do?"

It was Jenna's turn to lapse into silence. She looked away again, off into the woods. She realized that Joel must be seeing her face much like he was seeing his: half in shadow.

"I think I'm going to tell them," she said.

"Why?" Joel asked.

"Because it's right."

"But you could just keep it a secret. No one would know except me and your friends. It'd be fine."

"But Mom and Dad are important to me. They need to know. I don't want to lie to them. Not anymore."

"Well, I'm not gonna tell 'em. No way. And you better not tell them, either."

"I already said that I wouldn't. I'll keep your secret. But everybody here knows."

"Not true."

"What?"

"Marta and Greg weren't here," Joel said. "And Rachel was asleep. They don't know. So let's keep it that way."

Jenna sighed. She looked at Joel, making sure that he was looking deep into her before she spoke.

"Fine," she said. "You wanna keep living this lie, fine. I won't tell Marta, Greg and Rachel."

"Thank you!" Joel said. He sunk his head into his hands in relief. "Oh, God, you don't know how good this feels. Fucking weight lifted off my shoulders."

"Don't get too comfortable yet."

Joel looked up at her, alarmed. His eyes were wide, almost comical, in the flickering firelight.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean," Jenna said, "that you think you'll be able to keep Kirsten's mouth shut? You think anyone can? I don't think so."

"Ah, fuck..."

Jenna smiled a sad smile. She put a hand on her brother's shoulder and tried to comfort him. But there was a distance between them, a space that Jenna couldn't traverse. A gap.

A twig snapped behind her in the forest and Jenna looked in that direction. At first she didn't see anything then a form started to take shape, running out of the woods.

"That them?" Joel asked.

"I don't think so," Jenna said.

She stood up, suddenly ready for anything. Until that moment, she didn't realize how on edge she was. It was as if she expected to be attacked from all sides and here was just confirmation.

Then Shelley came running of the woods and into the camp and Jenna frowned. The young teen was disheveled, dirty. And she looked scared. That was what worried Jenna the most.

She looked at Joel, who shrugged. Then she looked back at the young teen, recognizing her.

"The girl from town?" she said.

"Help me," Shelley said. "Please, you gotta help me!"

Hatchetface watched Kirsten from one of the stalls, peeking through a small hole in the door. Her one good eye was bloodshot, little red veins pointing towards the inner ring of blue surrounding the pupil. The cloth around the eye was ragged, old, worn, providing a strange frame for the mad orb that sat in the socket.

The two women were in the ladies restroom. Hatchetface had been just standing in the building, listening as the three intruders approached. Then Kirsten had approached the restroom and Hatchetface had made a swift retreat to one of the stalls.

Kirsten was naked from the waist up, her shirt draped over her left shoulder. She was tan, trim, lean, beautiful. Hatchetface couldn't stop looking at her.

Right now, Kirsten was washing her face in the sink, splashing her face repeatedly. Her head was practically all the way down in the sink, her body bent, ass pointing straight at Hatchetface.

"Stoned," Kirsten said to herself. "Fucking stoned off my ass."

She turned off the water in the sink and laughed, eyes closed. Then she checked the pockets of her small, tight shorts but didn't find anything there and seemed upset.

"Damn," she said. "All outta pot. Shit. You hear that, you ol' pervert?! I'm outta weed! See how long till I get sober and can kill you! In the meantime, I guess you can enjoy a little show!"

Hatchetface was confused. Who was this girl talking to? Surely it wasn't Hatchetface herself: she was well-concealed, and quiet as the grave. Was there something wrong with her? Had the Weapons that the two others had stuck into her the other night wounded her? Hurt her? Yes, that was it. The Weapons could hurt girls like her. They could hurt any girl.

And yet...

Hatchetface found something stirring inside her, rising from the hidden place between her legs and flowing over her. It was a pleasurable feeling. She liked looking at Kirsten. Liked how her body looked. Wanted to touch her. Wanted to feel.

*But she is damaged! The Weapons have hurt her!*

Yes. Yes, the girl was hurt, she had to be put out of her misery, had to be dealt with, as soon as possible. Still, Hatchetface hesitated.

And watched.

Kirsten swayed her hips back and forth, moving her ass to the rhythm of the faint music drifting through the campground. All of a sudden, Hatchetface wanted to see that cute little butt free of the confines of those tiny shorts, wanted to see what those cheeks looked like.

And it was as if Kirsten was reading her mind! The girl unbuttoned the shorts and pulled the zipper down all the way: it was a pleasing sound that echoed through the restroom. She started to push the shorts down, revealing nubile, young flesh: a beautiful ass, small, compact and biteable. Spankable. Hatchetface pictured herself touching those cheeks, pictured herself slapping them and making them red.

She shifted in place in the stall, adjusting her legs in excitement and Kirsten stopped, half looked over her shoulder at the stall. She was still and Hatchetface was still as well. For a moment, neither of them moved so much as an inch. Then Kirsten shrugged and looked at herself in the mirror. She smiled, clearly liking what she was seeing. Her nipples were hard, despite the relative warmth of the restroom.

"You are sexy," Kirsten said.

She was clearly talking to the mirror - to herself - but Hatchetface imagined that the girl was speaking to her and she felt a strange warmth spread through her body. She put a hand to the door of the stall, fingers slowly scratching at the wood.

"I'd fuck you," Kirsten said. "I'd fuck the shit out of you. Just bury my face in your fucking pussy."

She touched herself as she spoke and gasped, arched her back in pleasure. Her eyes were closed, her teeth grit together. Then she looked back into the mirror, breathing heavy.

"Just eat you out," she said. "Eat you the fuck out."

Hatchetface pictured it: pictured herself with Kirsten. She thought of the two women together in the tent, how they "hurt" each other: "hurt" that somehow didn't seem to hurt. Hurt without Weapons.

Maybe it wasn't hurting at all? It was all too much for Hatchetface.

"Oh, man," Kirsten said. "I could use a shower. Oh, look!"

She had noticed the shower stalls on the far end of the restroom. She smiled.

"Looks like I'm in luck!"



## Chapter Nine, "A Tender Moment"

1

"Please help!"

Shelley was hysterical, practically in tears with terror. She ran to Jenna and wrapped her hands around the older girl's midsection, burying her head between her breasts. Jenna didn't know what to do and simply wrapped her own arms around the young teen and held her close. She looked at Joel, who shook his head and looked incredulous at his sister.

"What is it?" Jenna asked the girl.

"There's something out here!" Shelley said and looked up at Jenna. "Something in the woods!"

"Something?" Joel said.

"Hatchetface! She's out there!"

"Oh, for Christ's sake," Joel said. "She's having us on, the little bitch! Get the fuck outta here, kid! Go home to your mom. Go get grounded!"

"Joel!" Jenna said.

"She's lying!"

"No, no," Shelley said, "I'm not lying!"

"Shelley?" Jenna said. "That's your name, right? Shelley?"

The girl nodded furiously. Jenna nodded back.

"Okay," she said. "Shelley, what's going on?"

"I was asleep in the woods near here and something woke me up!"

"What?" Joel said. "What woke you up?"

"I don't know. Something."

"You see?!"

"Shut up, Joel!" Jenna said.

"I found something," Shelley said. "Oh, God, I found something! Something in the woods."

"What did you find?" Jenna asked.

"It was a coffin! A coffin!"

"I can't believe this shit," Joel said. "What were you even doing out here, huh, little lady?"

"I..."

"Tell us, Shelley," Jenna said.

"I was watching you," Shelley whispered.

"What?" Joel said. "What was that? You were watching us? You were fucking watching us?!"

"I'm sorry," Shelley said, sounding very small. "I was just having fun."

"Fun?!" Joel said.

"Joel!" Jenna said. "She's clearly scared out of her mind! Be nice."

"No," Joel said, "I'm not going to be nice! She's been spying on us! Who knows what she's seen."

"You mean did I see you touching your friend's dick?" Shelley said, suddenly angry. "Yeah, I saw that! It was hilarious."

"Why you..." Joel said.

He clenched his hands into fists and bit his lower lip enough to draw blood. Jenna turned Shelley away from him, shielding her with her body. She could hear Joel sigh in frustration.

"Unbelievable!" he said.

"What else did you see?" Jenna asked. "Huh?"

Shelley looked up at Jenna, eyes at half-mast, shrouded. She smiled a rather wicked smile.

"I saw you with your girlfriend," she said.

"Oh, did you?" Jenna said.

"Yeah, and I wanted to be you."

Jenna shook her head and sighed herself. "You're not exactly innocent, are you?"

"None of this matters!" Shelley said.

She untangled from Jenna's hug and stepped a few feet away from the both of them. She pointed at Jenna, then at Joel.

"She's gonna be after you!" she said. "She's gonna kill you! Don't you understand?!"

"Stop making up stories, you little whore," Joel said. "It's ugly on you."

"How do you know it's Hachetface?" Jenna said.

"I..." Shelley began before lapsing into silence.

"You see?!" Joel repeated. "She doesn't know shit! She's making it all up."

"I am not!" Shelley said. "I just know! I can feel it."

"What do you mean?" Jenna said.

"I grew up in this town. I've been out here a lot. And something is wrong!"

"Nothing's happened to us!" Joel said. "Nothing!"

"Well..." Jenna said.

"What?" Shelley said, the fear large in her eyes. "What happened?"

"Our friend's dog was killed," Jenna said. "And a few of our friends have been gone for a while now."

"It's Hatcheface!" Shelley said. "She killed your dog! It's just the kind of thing she would do! You have to listen to me."

"It's that old pervert who assaulted Kirsten back in town," Joel reasoned. "When we first met you."

"Old Tom?" Shelley said.

"Yeah," Joel said.

"He's a pervert, sure. But he'd never kill anyone."

"What was all that talk about, then?" Joel said. "All that 'you'll all die' shit?"

"He was talking about Hatcheface!" Shelley said.

"Bullshit."

"It's the truth. You gotta believe me."

"I want to believe you, Shelley," Jenna said. "I really do."

"Then just do it! Your friends are all in danger! If they aren't dead already!"

## 2

Bree and Henry approached the large central building in the campground and shared a look. Bree didn't really like Henry but she respected him, respected his strength, respected his physical prowess. He was someone she wanted on her side if something went down. Something bad.

"We goin in?" Henry asked.

"I expect so," Bree said with a crooked smile.

Henry nodded, then shook his head, obviously conflicted. Bree led the way, pushing the big double doors open. They weren't locked - nothing they had encountered so far had been - and they creaked as they swung wide and open. What was revealed inside was a large dining hall, a mess hall as it were, mostly shrouded in darkness. Remembering the generator in the camp, Bree looked around on the wall near the door, found a light switch and flicked it on.

The lights came up one by one, pulsing to life and illuminating the expansive hall. It's ceiling was high and Bree looked up, expecting bats or some kind of birds to be nesting in its rafters but there were none. It was surprisingly clean, as if someone came through and cleaned it up every once and a while. At the back of the hall, Bree could see the doors to the kitchen: little windows looked in on the still

darkened space. Shadows flickered in there and Bree felt a chill run up her spine.

"Looks like it was a nice place," Henry said. "You know, when it was open."

Bree nodded but remained silent. She walked through the space slowly, cautiously, lost in thought.

She had gone to camp at a place quite a bit like this one when she was a kid. Camp Geronimo it had been called and little Bree had found it both awkward and wonderful at the time. Looking back, she was glad that she had gone, despite some of the issues she had encountered there.

Little scout Bree, with her hair in pigtails, trying to fit in with the other girls. They would talk about boys every chance they got and Bree remembered picking out specific boys to talk about, usually by listening to the other girls. She never felt anything for the boys but she wanted to be included, wanted to be accepted by the others, so when the conversation came around to her she would blurt out a name - Lyle, perhaps, that was a good one, another girl or two had mentioned him - and the other girls would ooh and aah. Sometimes they would blush or cover their mouths.

But at night...

Yes, at night - after a particularly scary campfire story had been told - more than one of the other girls would seek safety in Bree's warm embrace, would share her cot. And Bree was not above taking advantage of moments like these.

At first, she didn't know what to do - how to react - but it didn't take her long to figure it out. She may have been confused by her feelings in those early days of summer but not by the end. No, by the end she knew who she was, knew what she liked. And she liked girls. Many different kinds of girls: skinny ones, sporty ones, fat ones, beautiful ones.

She would start by touching them on the thigh, then waited for a reaction. Most of them stayed with her - Bree only remembered one girl who fled her bed on the first sign of intimate contact - so she grew bolder and touched them on the belly. After that, she would rub them, sometimes between their legs, sometimes just above that spot, where some of them were already beginning to grow hair. She lost quite a few girls about this time in the proceedings - many of them were shocked or just scared - but those that stayed were amazing. Those that stayed she would kiss and bring them to orgasm with her mere touch.

So much power. Bree became addicted to it.

It was all over after that. She was seducing girls left and right. Didn't matter how straight they were: many girls just simply melted under Bree's bedroom eyes, her intense, passionate gaze.

She disappeared down a hole of sex and all-night partying all through high school. Drinking played a large part of this: she was drunk most nights and felt that she had to take a girl to bed with her every single night, if possible.

It was only during college, when she had met Jenna, that she had begun to change. Jenna made her want to be a better person, made her want to get her life together. Jenna enjoyed the occasional drink, of course, but she didn't like the passed-out drunk that Bree would turn into around 1am in the morning. They found some common ground on pot. Bree had liked the drug, of course, but Jenna was new to it and quite enjoyed it. It was a mellow, calming exercise for Jenna, Bree knew, and she started buying more and more of it, spending more time with Jenna.

This was new. Bree never used to go out with a girl more than a couple times in the past. But Jenna was different. She remembered the night that she realized that she loved Jenna.

There was this girl that they both had classes with: Beth Harcourt, an incredible redhead with tits out to here. She was drop-dead gorgeous, up there with many of the models on magazine covers. And, though she had never shown an interest before, one night she was all Bree's. Her boyfriend had broken up with her and she was drunk and needed companionship. Bree was more than happy to oblige and felt lucky, like she had won the Arizona Lottery.

It was at a big party at some guy's house. Nice guy, totally clueless, but sweet enough. Bree and Beth were upstairs, secreted away in a room that had been forgotten in the chaos of the party. They had progressed to kissing, making out on a large bed in the room. And it was glorious. Beth was so hot that it should have been illegal.

But...

But she was boring. All she wanted to talk about was getting back at her boyfriend, making him pay for breaking up with her, making him pay for cheating on her with some bimbo. Bree found herself becoming more and more disinterested with every touch, every kiss. It was frustrating.

And she started thinking about Jenna more and more. Couldn't get her out of her head.

Finally, she couldn't take anymore of it, pushed Beth Harcourt away and told her that she was a conceited bitch who was only using Bree for shock value, so that when she told her boyfriend about the encounter, he would be both angry and aroused. And, as much as Bree wanted to fuck Beth, it wasn't worth it.

Bree left Beth laying on that bed, a shocked look on her face, and walked out, a big smile on her face. It had felt so good. She went right from that party to Jenna, and they had the best sex that Bree had had in her life. And, since then, it had been less alcohol, more pot and more Jenna. They were inseparable.

And now she was here. In this accursed campground, an echo of that old campground where she had first discovered who she really was. It was eerie, off-putting.

"Everything all right?" Henry asked, clearly seeing some distress on Bree's face.

"Yeah," Bree said. "I'm okay. Just miss Jenna. Hope she's okay."

"You really do love her, don't you?"

"Yeah. Did you not believe me before?"

"I don't know what I thought before, other than I wanted to fuck you both at the same time."

"That ain't happening. Sorry."

"I can see that. Well, that's okay. Love at first sight, huh?"

"Not exactly. Well, kinda. Sure, let's call it that."

"Wish that would happen to me."

"Well," Bree said, "you sure fucked it up with Rachel."

"You think?" Henry said.

"I do."

"No way to fix that?"

"Unlikely. I don't know her that well, but she doesn't strike me as the kind of girl who wants to mess around with..." Bree struggled to find the right phrase and twirled her finger around, indicating the both of them, "all this shit."

"Yeah, she's pretty straight, I guess."

"And what about you?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you? You straight?"

"Naw," Henry said. "Fucked more than a few white boy asses in my time. Like girls more, mind ya, but those white boy asses. Mmm."

Bree chuckled. "And Joel?"

"Oh, he'll be mine soon enough, believe you me."

"You surprise me, Henry."

"Oh, I'm full of surprises, m'lady."

"I'm no lady."

"Don't I know it."

They were silent for a moment. Both of them had instinctually stopped before they hit the back wall, neither of them wanting to enter the darkened kitchen. Bree looked at Henry.

"I wanna check out the kitchen," she said.

"Do ya?" Henry said.

"Yeah, I do."

"Something's not right in there."

"Yeah, I know. I can feel it."

"Then why do we need to go in there?"

"Cause Marta and Greg might be in there."

"What makes you think that?"

"No sign of them so far. You called out for them. And nothing."

"I don't want to go in there," Henry said.

"I'm afraid of what we'll find there," Bree said.

Henry shook his head. He wiped sweat off his brow.

"I guess we go in, then," he said.

"Right," Bree said.

They both walked towards the kitchen, slower now, methodical. Once again, Bree led the way and pushed open the door to the kitchen. It was so dark inside that it felt to Bree like it was actually pulling the light from the mess hall in with it, eating it like a black hole. She shivered unconsciously but stepped inside.

She reached out to find a light switch, just like before, but this time she was sure that something was going to grab her hand. Yes, something in the dark, something crouched and clutching out with an unnaturally long arm.

At Camp Geronimo, one of the campfire stories that stuck with her, that gave her more than one sleepless night - after bringing a cute girl to a shattering orgasm, of course - was about a boogeyman called The Fleshsmith.

The Fleshsmith was a hulking beast with big, unblinking, saucer-like eyes, white and pupil-less. It wore the skin of its prey - mostly Indians - and wandered the woods at night looking for children who weren't asleep.

The story went that if you opened your eyes and saw The Fleshsmith staring down at you, leaning over your bed - its unblinking eyes staring into your very being - you belonged to the beast. It would take you and skin you alive, adding your skin to its hide, growing ever bigger. Your fleshless body would be devoured - bit by bit - by the beast.

Boy, did that story bother Bree as a kid. She hadn't thought about it in some time but now, in the dark of this kitchen, it was on her mind and she was sure - simply sure - that The Fleshsmith was waiting for her in the shadows, waiting to look into her eyes and take her from this place. Her teeth clattered in fear and, desperately, she floundered for the light switch.

After what felt like an eternity, she found it, sighed and flicked it on. Nothing.

It was still dark.

Bree flicked the switch off and on again. Still nothing.

"What the fuck?" she said.

"Light doesn't work?" Henry asked.

"No, it fucking doesn't work."

"Calm down. Probably just a short or something."

Bree was on edge, scared. She wasn't proud of herself and bit her lower lip, drawing blood and causing her adrenaline to rise. She huffed and pulled her flashlight out of her pocket, turned it on.

The flashlight seemed to barely penetrate the darkness of the kitchen. It was a large kitchen, meant for preparing meals for hundreds of people at a time. Bree imagined that, at one time, at least a half-dozen people would be working here, probably much more, all of them cooking for a bunch of troublesome brats. But now it was dark. Now it was the domain of The Fleshsmith.

Bree shook her head. No. There was no monster here. Only darkness.

She walked fully into the kitchen and found that it was circular, meaning that there was one large structure in the middle that held several grills and sinks, deep fryers and the like and, around that was space for storage, on both the side that Bree and Henry were on and opposite them, in a place currently blocked from their sight. Bree turned her flashlight one way then the other. She didn't see anyone. Or anything.

They slowly made their way to the right, meaning to head around and check out the backside of the kitchen. Bree could feel Henry pulling back, moving slower. She made herself move forward, push through it. It was tough. All she could think about was The Fleshsmith, hiding in a corner. He would look - at first - like a pile of old rags but when the flashlight beam found him, he would rise to his full height and stare at them. Just stare at them. And they wouldn't be able to move. They would be frozen in place, unable to do anything as he slowly moved towards them. And he would take them.

But none of that was real. She had to keep telling herself that.

They both rounded the corner of the kitchen and Bree trained her flashlight beam down the whole length of it. There were shelves for storage on both sides here, rows and rows of them. There were also more than one storage cabinet: full length, from floor to ceiling. Anything could be hiding in one of those.

And there was something at the end of the hall, something standing against a wall. It looked human in shape but the flashlight beam wasn't strong enough to reveal anything else about it.

"Oh, Jesus, Mary and Joseph," Henry said.

Bree squinted. "I think it's just a few mops leaning against the wall."

"No way. That's a Goddamn body."



"Let's check it out."

"Fuck that. I'm gone."

And he started to leave. Bree grabbed his arm.

"Stay," she said. "Please."

Henry stopped and looked at her hand. "Okay."

Bree nodded and let go of him. She started down the hall and it wasn't until she was almost all the way there that she realized that Henry wasn't with her anymore. She turned around and found his running form darting around the corner.

"Coward!" she called out. "I'll be right there! At least check on Kirsten!"

Then she turned around and confirmed what she had suspected: the shape was just a few mops piled together. She smiled then frowned.

The mops were concealing something. They were piled over something.

Not wanting to but knowing that she had to, Bree reached out with her free hand and grabbed hold of the mops. They instantly started to fall over, revealing what they had been hiding.

It was Greg.

He was dead, his body propped up against the wall. The entire underside of his jaw and part of his neck were torn open, a massive gaping wound. And his body was broken and water-logged, as if he had been beaten then dragged through the water by something very strong.

*By the Fleshsmith! It was that thing!*

*No!* No, there wasn't any such thing. And yet now - in the dark, in this kitchen - she heard something behind her. One of the tall cabinets had opened and something had stepped out of it. No, not something. Someone.

All at once, Bree knew who it was.

Hatchetface.

She was real. She was here. And she was going to kill Bree where she stood.

Greg's body started to fall forward and Bree had to get out of its way. The body slumped to the ground in a heap, so much dead flesh now.

Bree whirled around but she wasn't fast enough. She was hit over the head with something hard and strong. Something that clanged when it connected with her skull.

Instantly, she went down, dropping her flashlight. The beam spun 360 degrees, over and over again. As Bree's consciousness started to fade, she looked up into the face of her attacker, expecting either The Fleshsmith or Hatchetface.

But it wasn't either of them. She frowned. She knew this person.

Then her vision started to fade and she passed out, dropping into a troubled, unwelcome sleep.

"We have to go!" Shelley said. "Just go! There's no reason to stay. Your friends are all dead! She's killed them all."

"Will you shut her up?" Joel said.

They stood around the campfire, Shelley hysterical now, terrified. Jenna kept trying to comfort her, to placate her, but it wasn't working.

Joel paced back and forth, a cigarette in his mouth. He shook his head and put both palms against his ears.

"I'm tense!" he said. "So fucking tense. This bitch is getting on my nerves. Do something about her."

"What do you want me to do?" Jenna said. "Huh? Give her some pot? Give her one of Rachel's Valiums?"

"That might do, yeah," Joel said, then he got right in Shelley's face. "We already told you, you bitch, somebody slashed our tires. We can't go anywhere. Get that through your thick skull."

"My bike, then," Shelley said. "I can ride away on my bike if I have to. Just walk me to it, okay? Just get me there, all right?"

"No," Jenna said, "if there is anything out there, you're safer with us."

"Oh, God," Shelley said, "I should have never left the house. I should have stayed with Mom. She drinks a lot but she means well! Really, she does!"

"I know," Jenna said. "I know, Shelley. Hey, wanna play a game? Maybe beer pong or something. Without the beer, of course."

"There's no time for games!" Shelley said. "How long have your friends been gone now?"

Jenna looked at her brother, who looked back at her with an unreadable expression. He finished the cigarette that he was nursing and threw it into the fire.

"It's been a while," he said.

He was quiet, almost whispering. He didn't look at Shelley and kept eye contact with Jenna.

By Jenna's calculations, Bree, Henry and Kirsten had been gone for more than two hours. Marta and Greg longer than that. She was well and truly worried right about now. There was something on the wind. Something bad. Something that made the hairs on the back of her neck stand up.

That was why when all three of them heard a car approaching on the road, coming from the east, they all looked at each other, then started to run towards it. Joel stayed back a ways, shaking his head,

thinking all this was nonsense. It was a mad dash but they made it.

It was a nice car, a big, long boat of a Cadillac, white. It stopped when the three of them approached it.

The driver's side window rolled down and a smiling face greeted them. It was Dr. Travers, who Jenna and Joel had met when they had met Shelley, back in town.

"Trouble, kids?" he asked.

4

Kirsten liked a hot shower even more than she liked sex.

She found it a mystical, orgasmic experience. The hotter the water, the better the feeling. She wasn't happy until her skin was red with heat.

She stood under the water of the shower in the girls' restroom and really enjoyed herself. The showers were simple: a row of about six shower stalls each open but separated by a semi-translucent plastic shower curtain. Kirsten was roughly in the middle stall at the far end of the restroom. It didn't even occur to her to wonder about the generator and the heating of the water, stoned as she was. She was just glad it was here.

On this terrible night, after the death of her dog, Kirsten just wanted to forget, just wanted to feel something that was real. She touched herself under the hot water of the shower and closed her eyes. It felt so good.

Joel would never have her again, and neither would Henry. She was done with them. She would find a new boyfriend, someone better than both of them combined, someone who would respect her. Hell, maybe she would find a girlfriend! Wouldn't that just piss them off?

The more she thought about Bree, the more she wanted her. She wanted to have her come in here right now and fuck her brains out. Wouldn't that be great? She so desperately wanted this.

She thought about Bree and Jenna together and was jealous of Jenna. Wanted to take her place. She would be a good lover to Bree, probably. She would only want to be with a man every now and then. Not too often.

Maybe with that Luke Stringer in track. He was pretty beautiful.

Kirsten had only ever been with one woman in her life. A girl named Tracy that she had met when she was a freshman at the University. Tracy was one of those activists, one of those people that marched on campus and shouted at people in power. Kirsten had liked her passion but really she just wanted to party. And Tracy had provided the best weed so Kirsten had followed.

And they had made love a few times during the semester. But Tracy had drifted away, got involved with some Black chick who was even more radical than she was. And Kirsten had drifted back to men, got back in line, as it were.

But it had been different with Tracy and Kirsten missed her a lot, especially lately. Joel had become more forceful, more domineering as of late, and Kirsten didn't like it. She liked when people took the lead in bed but not in other aspects of her life. It just didn't feel right.

And it had all come to a head this weekend. Joel forcing her to have sex with Henry and joining in himself. It just felt wrong. She thought that Henry was an attractive guy but she had never wanted to nail him before. So to be coerced into it... That hadn't sat well with her.

But now there was all that good weed that Bree let her have! And this shower! This was definitely the best shower that she had ever taken. It was wonderful: hot and pounding, her skin pink with excitement and heat, a natural massage from the great force of nature funneled through a small, metal tube.

Her sight was so bad that she couldn't really see anything outside the shower, just shapes and impressions of objects. It was all a blur.

She got the impression that someone was in the stall next to her, on her left, but she couldn't be sure. Who could it be?

Maybe no one. Her vision was horrible and she could just be seeing things.

Then something moved in the stall to her right and she looked over there. Yes, there was definitely someone in the stall to her right. She could see the outline of a person in the shower next to her and, after a moment, she could hear that shower turn on.

"Who's there?" she asked.

There was no answer. She stepped closer to the shower curtain to try to get a better look at the person. It was a woman.

That much was certain. She could see the outline of breasts, a rather large pair. She squinted harder and saw that the woman didn't have long hair.

"Bree?" she said.

It was almost too good to be true. It was as if she had conjured Bree into being and called her to the shower next to her.

"Oh, God, Bree," Kirsten said, "you scared me there for a minute. But I'm so glad you're here."

Again, no response. Kirsten smiled.

"Being coy, huh?" she said. "Shy? No need. I want you just as much as you want me."

Bree stepped closer to the shower curtain and Kirsten could just make out her strong abs. She didn't

know that Bree was so strong. It was a major turn-on.

"Why don't you join me?" Kirsten asked.

Bree didn't respond with her words but she did respond with her body. The woman put a hand to the shower curtain, touched it. Kirsten could see the palm of Bree's hand as she ran it along the shower curtain, wiping away the condensation and creating a virtual slash in the plastic. Kirsten didn't realize that Bree had so many scars on her hand. She must have had a fairly tough life. Still, all of this just turned her on even more.

"Please kiss me," Kirsten said. "I wanna feel you so bad. I need your touch. Come in the shower with me. Please."

Bree stopped moving, keeping her hand in place, and Kirsten reached out and touched her through the plastic. First, her hand, then her stomach. Her abs were so hard, so strong. Kirsten felt her juices flowing and her breathing speed up.

"I need you," she said.

Then Bree swept the shower curtain aside and Kirsten realized that it wasn't Bree at all. It was someone else, some other woman that she'd never seen before.

The woman was nude, her tall strong body totally revealed to Kirsten. She was sexy. From the neck down.

But her face.

Oh, God, her face! There was a horrid scar slashed across it, taking out one eye entirely. It was terrible.

Kirsten backed away, to her left, and fell through the shower curtain into the next stall over. She ran right into Marta's body. It had been strung up with rope, tied to the shower head. Marta had been stripped nude and there were strange welts on her body. Her eyes were open, staring down lifeless at Kirsten.

Kirsten's eyes widened in obvious terror and she opened her mouth to scream. But Hatchedface - coming through the shower curtains with hands outstretched - silenced her, covering her mouth with one strong hand. With her free hand, she grasped hold of Kirsten's neck and squeezed. Kirsten started to lose her breath but it wasn't quick enough. She was going to scream and alert her friends.

So Hatchedface started to push her hand into Kirsten's mouth.

Kirsten had never been in such terror before. It was awful. The woman who was attacking her, the woman who she had wanted to have sex with just seconds ago - Hatchedface, she now realized - was forcing her hand down her throat.

Kirsten started to lose consciousness. Black bugs began to crawl in at the edges of her vision as

Hatchetface's hand went further and further down her throat. It was painful and yet...

It was also pleasurable. She could feel an orgasm beginning to build up inside her. It was strong, intense.

The pain was intolerable but the orgasm was extraordinary. She felt her knees buckle and fall out under her. She slumped down in Hatchetface's arms, twitching, spasming, dying. She grasped hold of Marta's body, her hand clutching one of the dead girl's breasts - the right one - as her brain began to go.

Her orgasm was the best she had ever felt and, at the very peak of it - as Hatchetface's arm was down her throat to the elbow and Kirsten's bladder let loose and she pissed all over the shower floor - she died, letting go of Marta's body and collapsing into Hatchetface's arms.

## Chapter Ten, "The Rachel Problem"

1

"We are in trouble, Dr. Travers," Shelley said. "I'm so glad you came along."

"Of course, Shelley," Dr. Travers said. "What seems to be the problem?"

He was calm, collected. That fashionable silver hair of his was perfectly kept, every follicle in place. His smile was wide, sympathetic: loving, even. He leaned through the window, arm resting on the edge.

"Uh..." Jenna said, "there might be something wrong out here. Our friends--"

"It's Hatcheface, Dr. Travers!" Shelley said. "She's out here and she's killing people!"

"Is that so?" Dr. Travers said.

He sounded as if he was humoring the 13-year-old. In fact, he sounded a bit patronizing. Jenna felt that she had to speak up again.

"Well," she said, "it may not actually be Hatcheface, but something is wrong. A dog we brought with us was killed."

"A wild animal, perhaps?" Dr. Travers said.

"No, wild animals don't hang their prey up in trees. Certainly not by noose."

"I see. You said you're missing some of your friends?"

"Yes, that's right."

"You have to help us, Doc!" Shelley said.

"I certainly will, young lady. Let the grownups talk now, won't you?"

"There's no time for that! I found something out in the woods."

"Oh? And what was that?"

"A coffin."

Jenna expected the good doctor to take this remark in the spirit in which he had so far taken everything that Shelley had said: with attention but amusement, not really believing any of it. But this time he frowned and was silent for a moment. Jenna looked back over her shoulder at Joel, who was several feet back, arms folded across his chest, just watching everything.

"Well," Dr. Travers finally said, a hand to his chin, "we should probably find your friends, I suppose."

Get everyone to town. You all get in."

"Wait," Jenna said.

"And why is that?"

"Not all of us are here. Rachel is asleep in her tent."

"Trying night?"

"Trying day. Should we wake her up?"

Dr. Travers thought about it for a moment. He looked past Jenna - almost through her - to Joel.

"What do you think, young man?" he asked.

"I think this little bitch is lying to us," Joel said.

"Not a very nice word, son, but I see your point. Why do you think she's lying?"

"Really? A coffin? It's bullshit."

"Another unpleasant word."

"I call 'em like I see 'em."

"Wise phrase," Dr. Travers said with a smile. "Wise phrase, indeed. All right. I understand your position but I do think we should go collect everyone and get out of here."

"I'm gonna stay here and have myself a nice vacation," Joel said. "None of this shit is going to ruin my weekend."

Dr. Travers' smile darkened at the use of the word "shit" but he nodded. He looked up at Jenna.

"All right," he said. "I'll take you girls with me and we'll find your friends. Get in the car."

The locks in the car popped up with a loud click: automatic. Shelley immediately got in the backseat and closed the door behind her but Jenna hesitated. She looked at the car, then back over her shoulder at Joel - who looked back at her with something akin to contempt - then at Dr. Travers, who smiled wide. After that, she headed around the front of the car and got in the passenger seat next to the good doctor.

Dr. Travers revved the car to life, shot a smile at Jenna, then looked back at Joel through his window. He pointed to him.

"You look after your friend, now, you hear?" he said. "Make sure she's all right. I'll be coming back to get you two and I won't be long. Less than an hour, I expect. Maybe sooner."

"Right, doc," Joel said with a shake of his head.

Dr. Travers nodded and got the car moving. Jenna turned her head slowly to track her brother as the car pulled away. She even looked over her shoulder at his disappearing form. He could be such a pain sometimes.



Joel returned to camp, shaking his head. Unbelievable! All of them! Every damn woman in his life: his sister, his girlfriend, that little 13-year-old bitch. They were all the same. All of them were cock-blockers. Every last one of them.

There was a girl that Joel had liked when he was 14. Her name was Lisa Harrod and, man, was she a cutey! Her brown hair was about shoulder-length and her skin was a creamy pink. She had full lips and a sway in her hips.

She looked a little like Jenna, in fact. This memory - this particular detail - came to his mind unbidden and he frowned. Looked like Jenna? That was ridiculous. Why would he be attracted to someone that looked like his sister? It was preposterous.

Anyway, Lisa was a little teen dream in a black skirt and white blouse. She was the object of many a boy's fantasies: at least in Joel's neighborhood. She worked on lollipops like she was sucking dick and tended to bend over much farther than what was completely necessary when picking things up off the ground, letting the boys see her panties (if she were wearing any, that is.)

Joel was sure - simply sure - that Lisa was completely and totally in love with him. She always laughing when he told jokes. She hung around him when she didn't have to. She sat next to him during lunch. She walked home with him after school.

She wanted him.

Simple as that. Or so he had thought.

It was during school one day. Joel had had to take a leak during one of his classes. There was practically an ocean of piss pressing against his abdomen and he had to relieve himself in the worst way. He got a pass and ran to the little boy's room.

The boy's restroom at his school was like many boy's bathrooms across the entire country. That is to say, filthy. One of the toilets always seemed to be broken, shit piled high in the bowl. Puddles of piss always gathered around the urinals. Mud was always being tracked inside. Their school's janitorial staff was just awful, it seemed.

Greg - who had been his friend then just as he was now - always got a laugh in that bathroom. He would stand next to Joel at the urinals - both of them taking a piss - and gaze at the shoe print that was imprinted on the wall in front of his face.

"How the heck did that thing get on the wall?" he would say. Every time. They both had quite a few laughs out of it.

But there was no laughter in the boy's restroom that day - the day that Joel rushed in to relieve

himself - and it would be some time before there would be again. Joel rushed in and immediately realized that he wasn't alone. There was someone in one of the stalls.

Now, there was nothing inherently strange about that. Not at all. No, what was strange was that it sounded as if there were two people in the same toilet stall. Joel frowned.

Was that a girl?

Yes, it was. A girl's voice. High and lovely. Not actually forming any words but making sounds. Pleasured, delighted sounds.

Joel investigated further. He approached the toilet stall, which was - of course - latched shut. But the way these things were designed was cheap and flimsy. There was a fairly large seam around the edge of the door which one could easily spy through. Joel peeked through the seam and grit his teeth.

It was Lisa.

Lisa with someone else. Lisa was pressed up against a wall of the toilet stall and whoever she was with was rubbing against her. Hard. They were dry-humping. They were so into it that they hadn't even noticed that Joel had entered the restroom.

Joel shook his head, rage building up inside him. Lisa had obscured the face of the boy she was with with her kisses.

"Oh," she said, "isn't it exciting? Knowing that someone could find us."

"Uh..." said the boy with her. "Sure. Yeah."

And Joel knew that voice. Oh, did he ever.

It was Greg.

Greg was in that stall dry-humping the girl he loved. *That mother-fucker!*

And, coming shortly after that: *that bitch! That heartless whore!* Why would she do this to him?!

Joel began to shake standing in place, spying on the two pseudo-lovers. All at once his bladder let go and he pissed himself. A huge dark patch spread across his crotch. It was one of the most humiliating and painful moments of Joel's life.

He whirled around, heading for the urinals, but it was, of course, too late. The damage had been done. He would have to go back to class having pissed his Goddamn pants. Jesus H. Christ, he would look like an idiot. A total buffoon.

He and Greg had had it out shortly thereafter. It was an epic tussle, a schoolyard fight that stories were told about for years afterwards. Greg had lost a tooth and Joel had been left with a scar on his chin that had never gone away.

But they had made up. Of course they had.

Because it was that bitch's fault. She had seduced him, used her feminine wiles to try and separate

the two of them, to break up their friendship. It was deplorable. The nerve of her.

Joel had started a rumor that she fucked the whole soccer team at once: a gangbang. It wasn't true, of course, but he didn't care. It did the trick. She was shunned by most people at the school. She may as well have worn a red "A" on her chest. She had transferred to another high school during their junior year and Joel had never seen her again.

He hoped she had killed herself and was currently rotting in Hell. The bitch.

And they were all the same. *All of 'em!*

Joel sat himself down around the campfire once again and breathed deep. He opened up the cooler near him and fished out a beer. It was lukewarm now but he didn't care. He popped it open and started drinking.

He tried not to look at the closed tent near him. Tried his damndest. But it was no good. He felt his gaze turning towards it.

Rachel's tent.

She was in there, asleep, doped up on Valium. His for the taking.

God, she was gorgeous. That red hair, that skin. She was kind of like Bree but more ladylike. And not a dyke.

Joel scoffed. Dykes! Who needed 'em? If they wouldn't put out, what good were they?

He patted his knee and hummed tunelessly to himself. The hum turned into a whistle. Then a few actual sung words.

All this to distract himself from the raging hard-on that had presented itself between his legs. It wasn't working.

She would barely feel it, Joel reasoned. Hell, she was all doped up. Probably wouldn't even stir.

All he had to do was go in there, look at all her naughty parts, then pull his pants down and fuck her brains out. It would only take a minute or two, as backed up as he currently was.

Just a minute or two. Nothing more.

What harm could it do?

He held out for a few more minutes, humming and singing snatches of words. Snatch. That was a good word. Rachel had a snatch. Oh, yes she did.

And that was it. He threw his beer into the dying fire and stood up, his hard-on creating a tent in his pants. He stretched, moaned and then turned towards Rachel's tent. He walked towards it, taking large, theatrical steps.

When he reached it, he paused, listened. Nothing. She was dead asleep. Smiling, he began to unzip the tent door.

"Ah, the old campground," Dr. Travers said.

They pulled up on the road above the camp and Dr. Travers stopped the car. He looked down at the grounds below, a sad smile on his face. Jenna watched him, frowning.

"Used to be a great place," Dr. Travers said. "Once. But that was a long time ago."

"Looks like there are lights on down there," Shelley said from the backseat.

"Really?" Dr. Travers said. "Where?"

"There. See?"

Dr. Travers looked, frowned and turned to the girl. He nodded slowly.

"It appears so," he said. "Good eye, my dear."

Shelley blushed and looked away. Jenna looked down at the old campground herself and found that it was true. A few lights. How strange.

"Someone is living there," Dr. Travers said. "Think your friends are down there?"

"Could be," Jenna said.

"Then, I expect we should go down there and check it out. You'll excuse me, young lady."

He reached across Jenna to get to the glove compartment. Jenna made room for him, leaning back in her seat as far as she could. Dr. Travers opened the glove compartment and fished around inside. He came out with a flashlight, which he handed to Jenna.

"You can take that," he said.

"All right," she said.

"And..."

He fished around some more and pulled another object out. It was a gun. A pistol, to be precise. A little .38 caliber snub-nosed revolver. To Jenna, it looked like it was at least twenty years old, but still in good shape.

Dr. Travers flicked open the cylinder, checked the ammunition, then flicked it closed again. He looked at Jenna and smiled as he stowed the pistol away in his pocket, then clapped his hands together. The sudden loud sound made Jenna jump.

"Shall we go, then?" Dr. Travers asked.

"Sure," Jenna said.

"I'm staying here," Shelley said from the backseat.

"Why in heaven's name?" Dr. Travers said.

"I'm not going down there. No way. That's where Hatchetface lives."

"Shelley, we've been over this. Her name was Annie Blade. Not Hatchetface. And she's dead. Been dead for almost twenty years now."

"I don't care. I'm staying here. You two can go down there, do whatever it is you're going to do, get your friends, whatever. But I'm staying."

"Shelley," Jenna said, "you'd be safer with us."

"Who says?" Shelley said.

"Well... I do, I guess."

"You can't protect me. No one can. So I'm staying in the locked car. Is that okay?"

Dr. Travers sighed and shook his head. "I suppose it'll have to be." He pointed at the teenager. "Now don't you touch anything, young lady. This is a very expensive car. Very expensive. I don't want you breaking anything."

"God, I won't touch anything, okay?!" Shelley said.

"Okay, then. Let's go."

He and Jenna left the car. Dr. Travers closed and locked the doors behind him. He knocked on the window and Shelley knocked back, smiling. He rattled his keys at her, waved and turned around to face the camp.

"Sweet girl," he said to Jenna as they started down. "Not the brightest bulb in the bathroom if you get my meaning."

"I guess," Jenna said.

There was a large crack in the sky above them and Jenna looked up. Clouds gathered in the heavens, dark ones. It looked like rain. A storm was coming.

"Looks like it'll be a good one," Dr. Travers said.

"Yeah," Jenna said.

"Don't have a lot to say, do you?"

"I guess not."

"Good. That's good. Sometimes, pretty girls say far too much."

"Oh, yeah?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. They talk and talk and talk without really saying anything. Nothing of value, anyway. No, mark my words, the quiet ones are the prettiest. I should know. I've seen plenty of beautiful, quiet women in my time. My, aren't you just the sweetest thing?"

"Me?"

"Yes, you, dear. Like an angel, you are. I mean, you're not perfect, but who is?"

"Not perfect?"

"No, no. That gap in your teeth there, for example. I could fix that, you know?"

"What, are you, a dentist?"

Dr. Travers laughed as if she had uttered the funniest joke he had ever heard. Just belted one out, head thrown back in hysterics. Jenna looked at him, truly confused. It was a strange display, off-putting to say the least.

"Oh," Dr. Travers said, "that was a good one. My, my, funny, too? Don't see too many funny ones. Pretty girls aren't usually funny. But funny is good, funny will get some by, especially if your looks go one day. Mind you... I'm not sure they'll have the chance to go."

"What the fuck does that mean?" Jenna asked.

"Oh, nothing. Nothing at all. Look at that."

They had reached the bottom. The campground was laid out before them. It was quite a sight: a half-functioning, old scout camp. Eerie and majestic at the same time. Jenna could hear music, an old 50s song. It was coming from one of those cabins.

She turned her attention back to Dr. Travers to ask him a question but stopped in her tracks. The good doctor was dancing to the old song, eyes closed and skipping along to the music.

"Dr. Travers?" she said.

There was no answer. He was lost in the song. In the strange dance.

"Dr. Travers?" Jenna repeated.

"Oh, I'm sorry, my dear!" Dr. Travers said.

He stopped dancing as if coming out of a spell. He smiled at her and shook his head.

"The old tunes," he said. "They sure can get to you. Especially someone like me. I'm an old romantic, really. My wife and I used to love that song. Oh, it was the bee's knees!"

"Used to?" Jenna asked. "You don't anymore?"

"Ah, no, I'm afraid not."

"She doesn't like dancing anymore?"

"She's dead, my dear. Dead as a doornail."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Dr. Travers said with a sigh. "It's been a long time. She died in childbirth."

"That's terrible," Jenna said.

"It was. Yes, it was. There was blood everywhere. Mind you, blood doesn't bother me. Seen a lot of it, of course, but when it's your wife..."

"I understand."

"No, you don't."

"What?"

"You don't understand. How could you possibly understand?"

"Well, I--"

"Don't say that you understand when you don't understand! Ladies don't act like that! Ladies act in a certain way! So... act that way! My God, you and your friends..."

He let the sentence hang in the air between them and shook his head, frustrated. Jenna turned the flashlight she was holding on and turned away from him.

"Ladies are quiet," Dr. Travers said behind her. It was almost a whisper.

"Help!"

The voice came from one of the buildings nearby. Jenna turned her flashlight beam towards the source of the sound, a large building in the central area of the camp.

"I can hear you out there! Help!"

"Dr. Travers..." Jenna said and turned back towards him.

But he was gone. Simply gone, like a ghost. Jenna looked around but didn't see any trace of him.

But her flashlight beam did pick out someone. Someone in the shadows. Someone hidden.

The figure was tall and strong but clearly feminine. Jenna stood in place, not moving. Something about this person. Something.

She heard the car up on the road come to life. She looked up and was just in time to see it pulling away, leaving her and heading back in the direction of their own camp.

"Wait!" she called. "Where are you going?!"

But it was no good. The car was gone. Jenna looked back at the figure.

The figure began to walk towards her.

Joel crept silently into Rachel's tent. Lovely Rachel was asleep in the very center of the tent, amid a pile of blankets spread over a sleeping bag. Joel remembered Henry and Rachel packing a shitload of bedding. Apparently, the both of them were no fans of woodland ground. Joel stifled a laugh.

Rachel was on her back but her head was turned to one side and covered in hair. That was okay: Joel didn't need to see her face, lovely though it was.

And, to Joel's delight, she was already naked. The blankets she slept in were bunched up on either side of her hips but she was most definitely just as nude as the day she was born. Joel looked at those

breasts, at that neatly-trimmed red pubic hair between her already-parted legs, and licked his lips.

Man, Henry was a lucky guy. Well, he had been a lucky guy. He supposed that Rachel wouldn't ever let him put his dick insider her ever again after this weekend. Willingly, anyway.

Suddenly Joel was upset that Henry wasn't here with him. To share in this glorious moment.

He so wished that Henry were beside him, naked, his big dick hard and raring to go. Joel imagined it now and his own dick got noticeably harder, twitching in his pants.

He pulled his shirt off over his head and tossed it aside. After that, he unzipped his jeans and pushed them down to his knees. His underwear followed, his penis springing forth, at attention.

Henry would have good ideas right about now. He would have all kinds of stories, all manner of experience. He could teach Joel a thing or two: had done, in fact.

Only men knew about sex. Really knew. They were the masters of the bed, the innovators. Women just had to lay there and be still, occasionally moving a body part or maybe her mouth.

But it was men.

Men that led. Who stated what they wanted and got it, every time. Joel smiled and got down on his knees, getting himself ready.

The only experience that he had had that was anything like this was once, about a year ago, at a party. He had found this girl passed out at the party, up in a bedroom. Completely smashed. Joel remembered seeing her at the party and thinking that she wasn't all that attractive but now, passed out as she was, he thought she looked great. So he had helped himself.

She had come to consciousness once during the deed and had fought back a little but she was no match for Joel. She was quite drunk and much smaller than he was. Finally, she had stopped fighting and simply let it happen. Let him have her way with him.

It was incredible.

On those rare occasions that Joel had to resort to masturbation to satisfy himself, he would return to this moment again and again. Just the thought of her under him, not moving. It was definitely the best. The greatest time he had ever had.

He had never seen the girl again. She had remained quiet about the whole thing, of course. What could she do? It was her word against his. And she was just a little nobody. A girl. Who would believe her?

Now here was another chance. And Joel was going to take it.

He straddled Rachel's prone form and grabbed hold of one her breasts. He paused and looked at her. She didn't move, didn't stir. She was out. Completely out.

This was great. Joel felt her up, really kneading her breasts now with both hands. She was fairly



cool, which was a little weird, but he was into it. Just as long as she didn't wake up.

And if she did? So what? What could she do about it?

He leaned down and took one of her nipples - the left one - into his mouth and sucked on it. He had been breast-fed until a fairly late age and always found himself returning to the tit, always wanting it in his mouth.

Rachel tasted great. A little on the gamey side, perhaps, but still good. Joel sucked and sucked, trying with all his might to draw milk from the tit.

He was rewarded with a liquid of some kind. It tasted strange, though: slightly metallic. He swirled it around in his mouth and swallowed it, a small frown on his face.

He let go of the tit and looked at Rachel again. Something was off but he didn't know what it was.

Oh, well. Time for the main event!

His dick was twitching, really wanting to get in there. And he let it have what it wanted. He pushed his ass in, guiding himself to the sweet spot and pushing in. Oh, man, it was great. So tight, so resistant.

He went shallow at first: just soft, questioning thrusts. But then he got harder, deeper. Really getting into it.

He was covered in sweat but Rachel was still cool, still unmoving. He grabbed hold of her neck, wanting to kiss her, all the while thrusting away, getting deeper each time.

He turned her head and the hair fell out of her face. Joel began to scream.

Rachel's eyes had been poked out. They were just empty, bloody sockets. Her mouth was open in a silent scream.

It was at that moment that Joel sunk his dick into her, hitting something deep inside her, something cold, something hard, something metal. There was a click and the Rachel Trap was activated.

Huge jaws rose up on either side of Rachel's thighs, previously hidden by the blankets. They were the jaws of a bear trap. A huge, strong, sharp bear trap on some kind of powerful spring. He had triggered it with the tip of his dick, when it had touched the tongue.

The jaws tore right through Rachel's thighs and pelvis and snapped closed on Joel's dick. His scream became a screech and he instinctively pulled away, rose up off the dead body he had been fucking.

This was a mistake.

His dick came right off, tearing away and leaving a string of flesh caught in the metal jaws of the trap. As he was pulling away, his leg brushed against the jaws and he was slashed along the inside of his right leg by one of the teeth. It started to bleed right away.

He fell against the door of the tent, tearing through it. He held onto his crotch which was spraying blood upwards in a strong arc. His leg was spraying blood as well. Must have nicked an artery.

Joel flailed back and forth, rolled around on the ground at the base of the fire. He screamed and screamed and screamed but it was no good. No one was listening. No one was there. No one alive, at least.

It took him more than twenty minutes to bleed to death. It was the worst feeling he had ever experienced. He was conscious up to the very last moment.

He died alone and in horrible pain.

No one was watching.

## Chapter Eleven, "Henry's Run"

1

Sometime before Jenna and Shelley had arrived at the old campground with Dr. Travers, Hatchetface stood in the shower stalls in the girl's restroom, looking down at the dead body of Kirsten. Another pretty girl gone.

Like Marta, like Rachel, Hatchetface hadn't wanted to kill Kirsten. But Marta had seen too much. And Kirsten, like Rachel, had been terrified when Hatchetface had tried to initiate sexual relations with her. Spooked by Hatchetface's frightful unmasked appearance.

She had come upon Rachel much earlier in the evening, not long after Jenna and Bree had been making love in their tent and Hatchetface was spying on them. She had entered Rachel's tent, taken off her mask and laid next to the beautiful redhead. She started to touch her soft skin, her hair. Rachel had stirred, smiled and turned towards Hatchetface, expecting someone else, perhaps. When she saw who was with her - saw that hideous face - she had opened her mouth to scream.

Hatchetface had wrapped her strong fists around Rachel's throat and squeezed, quieting her. She had strangled her to death, put the mask back on and left her there in the tent, closing the door behind her.

And now the same thing had happened with Kirsten. Hatchetface stared down at Kirsten's body, genuinely distraught. The hot water pelted down on Kirsten's skin. Droplets landed all around her on the hard concrete. Hatchetface was spellbound.

The killer extended a hand palm-up into the spray of water. She looked at it pool and flow out of her hand and to the ground below, eventually disappearing into the metal grate to parts unknown. A little of Kirsten's blood, flowing from her mouth, joined the water.

Hatchetface looked at the body of Marta near them. It hung on the shower head, swaying slowly back and forth. The killer approached the body and puzzled at the strange red marks that dotted the flesh. She reached out to touch one of them.

Where had those come from? It wasn't from her death, that was for sure. And they weren't there the last time Hatchetface had seen the body. So what had happened to lovely Marta's body? What was going on?

Hatchetface kept her hand in place on the body for longer than necessary. She felt up the corpse, grasping one of Marta's breasts like Kirsten had in the last moments of her life.

*No!*

She pulled her hand away tucked it under an armpit. Trapped it there.

No, this was wrong! She had been taught better. These feelings were not the right feelings! They were bad!

Hatchetface looked longingly at Marta's body, wished she could touch it again but knowing that she couldn't. If she did, she would have to tell, would have to be punished. Would have to spend time in the Box.

There was a sound behind her and she turned, caught off guard. Then rage filled her entire being.

## 2

Henry left Bree behind in the darkened kitchen. He simply couldn't be in there any longer and stormed out the very second that Bree turned away. He headed out through the mess hall, barely hearing Bree's shout after him - "Coward!" - and proceeded through the large double doors and out into the open air. He took a deep breath and put both hands on his knees.

"Check on Kirsten," he muttered to himself. "Right. Check on Kirsten. Sure she's up to no good."

He started walking through the campground, looking about. He cracked his neck with one hand and shook his head vigorously.

He was picturing Coach reprimanding him. Coach Brackett, that was, their college football coach. He knew what Coach Brackett would say about this situation.

"Get back in there, boy!" he would say. "What are you, some kind of fuckin' coward? That girl is braver than you. That dyke girl! Aren't you any kind of man?!"

But he didn't listen to the voice. It was defeatist, that voice. Coach Brackett had never been in a situation like this. Well, as far as Henry knew, he hadn't been. And, if he had, who knew how he would have acted? He may have ran screaming the other way, like a little girl.

Henry chuckled to himself. He was a good coach: hard but fair. Henry had never detected any inherent racism in the man, just a desire to push his students, a desire to win at all costs.

Sure, he called Henry "boy" most of the time - that old master/slave phrase - but that was about it. Mostly. None of the other players were "boy", certainly not Joel.

But this was all a distraction. He had to find Kirsten. That was the end zone here. It may not have been a touchdown but it sure was an extra point.

If he were Kirsten, where would he be?

That stumped him. Earlier today, he would have been able to guess something, at least, but now? Now he had no clue whatsoever. The girl had gone off her rocker. She could be anywhere.

"Girls like stupid shit, boy." It was Coach again. Inside his head. "They like bullshit. Stuff that you and I don't care about. Pretty things. Menial stuff."

Henry nodded and looked around. He spotted the girl's restroom before he heard the sound of running water. Shit. That's where she was. She was taking a Goddamn shower. Right now, when all this shit was going on.

"Ain't it just like a woman," Coach said, scoffing.

Henry walked towards the restroom, a bit of a swagger in his step. Coach came back to him in his head, a mishmash of speeches that he had given the team over the past couple years.

"Women ain't bad," he said. "Nope, nothing wrong with women. You just gotta know when to draw the line. They're a distraction. They can't do what we do. Ain't no girl's football, let me tell you. And, if there is, well, I can assure you that there ain't no one watching it. Damn sure about that. They're not athletes. Not like you or I, no siree Bob."

Henry reached the restroom and hesitated for a moment. He was an adult, a college student, and yet there was still that taboo in his mind: you don't enter a woman's restroom. It just wasn't done.

He shook it off and pushed the door open slowly, quietly, not wanting to disturb Kirsten but knowing that he had to go in. He took a step over the threshold. It felt weird.

"Athletes they ain't," Coach continued. "Now, sure, we seen some good track-and-field girls, I'll give you that. But you think that they can run like you all can run? Hell no! Think they can run and take a hit like you can? Damn sure can't! They ain't built that way. God didn't make 'em to take hits like that."

Henry entered the restroom and looked around. The first thing he noticed were the clothes. Two sets of them. He recognized Kirsten's shirt and incredibly small shorts. They were on the ground near the sinks along with her panties. But what about these other clothes? Who did they belong to?

"Now," Coach continued in his head, "my wife is pretty tough. Some of you have met her, actually. At the Christmas party last year? Yeah, you remember. She's tough. Absolutely. I wouldn't say one Goddamn bad thing about her. Hell no. She's a Goddamn saint. And she's been through some shit. So, can women be tough? Course they can! Anyone can be tough. Anyone can go through shit they didn't want, didn't ask for. Human beings are adaptable. You understand? They can survive just about anything if pushed hard enough."

Henry frowned. The second set of clothes consisted of an old, worn pair of jeans, boots, a normal, white pair of underwear, gloves and an off-green shirt, cut short. And there was something else,

something that was embedded in the wood wall of the restroom. Henry approached it cautiously, one hand extended towards it.

"But women ain't like men," Coach continued. "They don't fight wars, do they? No, they don't. They're more fragile than men. They're soft. Malleable. They bleed, every month. Some people say that makes 'em tougher than us. I don't think so. It's a weakness. We don't bleed out our assholes, do we? I should hope not."

Embedded in the wall of the restroom, between two of the mirrors over the sink, was a hand axe. A hatchet. A real, live hatchet, with one end a sharp blade and the other end a blunt hammer. But there was something else, something hanging off the end of the hatchet. Some kind of cloth bag. Henry reached out and grabbed it. A rope was threaded through the seam of it to tie it closed and there was one hole cut out of it.

"And they don't play football!" Coach said. "I can't express this enough. They do not play this glorious sport. They can't! Just isn't in 'em. But you all can! I know it. I've seen it. Sure, you ain't always good. Fuck, sometimes you act like you've never even seen the sport, let alone played it. But when you're good, you're amazing. Best team I've ever had the pleasure of coaching. You're winners. You hear me? Winners! Now you're gonna go out there and you're gonna beat Tampa's ass! Understand? You're gonna pummel 'em! Drive 'em! Get 'em on the run! Now get out there!"

Henry looked at the bag with horror, realizing what it was: a mask. A bag that someone would wear over their head to conceal their face. *A Goddamn mask!*

And Henry knew who this mask belonged to. Knew even before he looked over the mask to the far end of the restroom. Knew before he saw her standing in the showers over the body of Kirsten. Knew before he saw her reach out and grab hold of the tit of his dead friend, Marta. Knew before she pulled her hand away as if mad at herself. Knew before she turned and saw him. Knew before he saw the rage written large on her face.

It was Hatchetface.

She was fearsome. Tall and strong. Henry could see every inch of her - naked in the shower as she was - and saw her abs and her legs and her arms. She was tough. Stronger than any woman Henry had ever seen.

And her face!

She had cut her hair extremely short. It looked to Henry as if she used clippers on the lowest setting. A buzz cut.

"You're gonna get out there!" Coach said.

Her face was a mess of scars. There was a huge one slashed across it, taking out one eye, and

another lower, going into her lips. Her upper lip was no longer all there. Part of it was pulled up hideously, revealing some of her teeth.

Henry dropped the bag/mask in one of the sinks, then turned and ran. He darted out of the restroom and could hear her behind him.

*"And win,"* Coach said.

3

*He saw!*

Hatchetface stormed out of the showers and grabbed her mask and her hatchet in one swift movement. She ran out of the restroom and hastily put on the mask.

Storming out of the restroom not far behind Henry, she was quite a sight: a strong, naked woman wearing a cloth bag over her head and brandishing a hatchet above her head. The night air was cool on her still-wet body and every muscle was getting a workout now as she chased after Henry.

He had a head start on her, but not much of one. He was a good runner, though, dodging and weaving through the campground. Hatchetface got close several times, swinging her axe at him.

*He saw! He saw! He saw!*

This, over and over again. And, then:

*He has a Weapon! He hurt Kirsten! He hurt her!*

She was a whirlwind of terror, a monster on his tail. She wasn't going to let him get away.

She had rarely felt this angry. Something about Henry being one of those that had harmed Kirsten coupled with the fact that she had just killed Kirsten and Henry had discovered her. It was just too much. Too much for Hatchetface's relatively simple brain. She would make him pay. Not just for what he had done, but for what she had done. What she had done to Kirsten. To Rachel. To Marta.

Henry began to scream as he took a look behind him and saw her fearsome shape gaining on him.

4

"Run!"

It was Coach again. His tone was different now. Panicked, like they were near the end of a game and were on the verge of losing. He screamed from the sidelines now as Henry ran down the field as if his life depended upon it. Which, at the moment at least, it did.

Normally, Henry would be thrilled to have a naked woman running towards him but the situation

was a little different now. None of the naked, running women that Henry had encountered previously had been brandishing an axe. A hatchet, no less.

"He's gonna take you down! Hustle, boy!"

He ran a circle around one of the cabins and hid in the shadow made by the building. Hatchetface lost him for a moment. Henry could hear her breathing. She had stopped on the other side of the cabin. Henry was covered in sweat, out of breath.

He couldn't believe it. Hatchetface. In the flesh. The strong, exposed flesh.

She was real. All those stories - the ones he had gobbled up as a kid - were true. Well, some of them, anyway. She was a real person, she was alive and killing. Had killed Kirsten.

And Marta.

Jesus Christ, Marta was dead. It scarcely seemed possible. He was lusting over her earlier in the evening. How could this even be possible?

*And it's my fault.*

This thought, circling around his head. His fault. He had been the one to suggest that they all come up here, to Lilith Lake. He wanted to see the old campground, to see where the legend had begun, and he wanted to bring his friends.

Well, they had come with him, had said, "Okay, Henry, let's go." Hadn't they? It was all his fault. All of it.

"Get your head in the damn game, kid!" Coach screamed at him from the sidelines.

Hatchetface poked her head around the corner of the cabin, saw him and rushed around. Henry got running again.

He vaulted over a large picnic table set out in front of one of the cabins and Hatchetface clambered up onto it as well. Henry tripped as he was going over the other side, hitting the dirt.

"No!" Coach screamed.

Hatchetface stood above him on the picnic table and swung her axe down at him. Henry dodged out of the way at the last minute and the axe hit the seat of the picnic table harmlessly.

"Get up!" Coach screamed.

Henry got up and acted. He punched Hatchetface, right in the center of her bag/mask. She seemed taken off guard, losing her balance momentarily. Henry seized the moment and brought a fist down on her arm, trying to dislodge the axe. It worked.

Hatchetface was bringing the axe up for another strike when Henry hit her. She let go of the axe and it went sailing into the air, whirling end over end. Henry started to run again. The axe landed on top of the picnic table, hammer end first. It landed in a hole in the table top, blade sticking up in the air.



Hatchetface left it there, not wanting to lose ground on Henry.

"Run, run, run!" Coach screamed.

When Hatchetface was distracted by her axe, Henry rolled under another picnic table a little ways away and hid once again. This was incredible. He had never had a run like this. No game had ever pushed him this hard. And this woman! What was she? Some kind of wild animal? She was tougher and more driven than any man he had ever met.

He was fighting for his life. His actual life. This was no game.

Hatchetface got off the picnic table and looked around. She looked one way, then the other, not seeing him.

Henry began to creep slowly out from under the table he was hiding under. Sliding out like a snake.

Hatchetface suddenly turned and saw him. She came for him.

"Get out in front of him!" Coach screamed.

Henry finished sliding out from under the table and ran. He headed for the dock, not having any idea what he would do when he got there but just wanting to put some space between the two of them.

It wasn't working. She was right on him. The way he was running now - faster than he had ever run on a football field - would have left any defensive lineman in the dust. They would have had no chance at all. But this woman was different. She was stronger and faster than anyone Henry had ever met.

Henry stumbled, went down on one knee and winced in pain. Hatchetface was nearly on top of him now. Her strong arms were outstretched, reaching for him.

Henry gambled and stayed where he was. When she was close, he dropped and rolled away from her. He got up and started running again, doubling back to the cabins and picnic tables. He could see the road ahead of him, could see the hill up to it.

That was it!

"Thatta boy!" Coach screamed.

That was his escape. He would head straight up that hill and onto the road. He would get out!

His feet moved like mercury: long, strong strides. Coach would have been proud if he could see him now. He moved like a god, like some kind of Nubian deity, graceful and powerful.

And it wasn't enough.

Hatchetface caught him right by the picnic tables. She grabbed hold of him and wrapped a fist around his neck from behind.

Henry fought back. He punched and kicked to no avail. She was just too strong.

"No!" Coach screamed again.

Henry struggled but Hatchetface just moved with him, adapted to his movement. She grabbed one of

his arms with her free hand. Henry felt her bend it back. Way back. There was pressure and pain. A crack as the arm broke. Shattered.

Henry screamed in pain. On the field, he would have been seen to. On the field, he would have gotten medical attention right away. No question. But out here, in the woods, at night, there was no one to help him. He was alone.

Hatchetface forced him towards one of the picnic tables. She bent him over it like she was raping him from behind.

Henry saw what she was heading for. Her axe was on the table, blade sticking up into the air, stuck in the table top, secure and in place. Ready for a kill.

Hatchetface held his broken arm behind his back - applying pressure to it, making him scream in pain - and pushed his head down towards the axe blade. Henry could feel sweat drip from his forehead and then saw a bead of it hit the axe blade. The blade split the bead in two. He began to blubber, began to cry.

She was just too strong. She forced his head down on the blade.

Henry felt the blade as it scratched against his front teeth, slicing a tiny layer of enamel off. A moment later, he felt it start to cut into his gums.

The tears came streaming down his face and his screams became louder. The axe blade started to strip off his gums, exposing his teeth and jaw itself. From his position, he could see blood begin to run down the blade of the axe and pool on the table top around it.

The blade started to cut into his lips. He could feel them start to be sliced off like ham in a butcher's shop.

With one last surge of energy - one last fight - he pushed back at Hatchetface, knocking her away a few inches. His face slid off the edge of the blade, lips almost totally destroyed now. Blood was entirely covering the front of his shirt. He shook his head as if to cry out, "No! Please God, no!" but nothing came out. He was too terrified to make a sound.

Hatchetface regained her balance and kicked out Henry's legs while pushing his head down with one strong hand. Henry's face landed on the edge of the axe. It entered his skull right between his lips and his nose and drove upwards, diagonally, through his sinuses, just under his eyes and into his brain.

He twitched and flailed for a moment, gurgling up fountains of blood onto the table, then went limp. He was gone, dead.

Hatchetface pulled him off the edge of the axe with some contempt and threw his body down into the dirt. After a moment's contemplation, she grabbed his body by the hair and started to drag him away to parts unknown.

## Chapter Twelve, "Jenna's Gamble"

1

Bree came to consciousness all at once. There was no slow, waking-up process. She simply was out one second and awake the next. The first thing that she felt was pain. Intense, throbbing pain at the back of her head, presumably where she had been hit. She immediately moved to cradle her wound but found that only one of her hands could get all the way there. It took her a moment to figure out why. There was light, from her fallen flashlight, but her eyes just simply didn't work yet. They needed a moment.

After that moment passed, she examined her surroundings. She was still where she had been when she had fallen: in the back supply area of the large kitchen. She was on the ground, of course. The flashlight was within reach and was presently shining half on her person and half on a rack of - rather new-looking - canned food. And one of her hands - the left - was handcuffed to a strong pipe that led down the wall and disappeared into the ground. Gas line, maybe? Bree squinted, frowned, but didn't know.

Her right hand had completed its examination of the back of her head. She didn't feel any major lacerations but there was a bump there, along with sticky wetness which Bree assumed was blood. She brought her hand back into view and confirmed this: her hand was red with the stuff.

Well, at least she was alive. That was something.

She grabbed the flashlight and looked around. There, behind her, was one of the tall cabinets that lined the wall. It was standing open. The person who had attacked her had obviously been hiding there.

She shook her in amazement.

That doctor. What was his name? Dr. Travers, that's right. Why would he have attacked her? It didn't make any sense.

Yet there was something. Something at the back of Bree's mind. Perhaps if she hadn't taken such a hard knock she may have been able to figure out what it was.

Her flashlight beam found a sturdy metal pot nearby. There was a few drops of blood on it. This was what she had been attacked with.

He must have handcuffed her here. Why? Why wasn't she already dead? Why hadn't he simply

killed her?

Was she being kept alive for some kind of purpose? Bree didn't know so she continued searching.

The flashlight beam found Greg's body, now lying on the ground not far from her. His body had knocked most of the mops out of the way as it fell and Bree saw that they hadn't simply been stacked against a blank wall. No, they had been concealing a door. A backdoor out of the kitchen. Bree smiled and nodded.

If only it was of any use to her right now. She sighed and laid on the ground, looking up at the ceiling.

*Think!*

Maybe she could think her way out of here. Idly, she shook the handcuff, testing it. It was sturdy and tight around her wrist. There was no way she was going to slip out of those. Not any time soon, that was.

After some considerable time had passed, she heard voices outside. They were faint and somewhat muffled, but they were definitely voices. And was one of them? Was that Jenna? She wasn't sure.

"Help!" she called out.

The voices became quiet. She frowned and waited. Then she called again.

"I can hear you out there!," she said. "Help!"

Then she heard a scream. A shriek. And that was definitely Jenna. In trouble.

Frantically, Bree started pulling at the handcuff, becoming frustrated. The damn thing wouldn't budge!

Jenna was standing in the girl's bathroom, holding onto one of the stalls, terrified. Across from her, standing by the sinks, was Hatchetface.

The killer simply stared at Jenna, her expression unreadable under that blank bag/mask. Jenna wiped away a tear, not wanting to show as much fear as she was feeling at the moment, wanting to put up some kind of mask of her own, one of confidence.

When Jenna had seen who it was that stepped out of the shadows and came for her - when she had seen that it was Hatchetface, real and in the flesh - she had screamed. Hatchetface had grabbed her and dragged her by the hair into the girl's bathroom.

And now they were here, just standing in the restroom and staring at each other. It was eerie and Jenna didn't know what to do. She was scared, more scared than she had ever been in her life, but she

was willing to fight, willing to do anything to save her life.

As Jenna watched, Hatchetface started to move. She walked towards the far end of the restroom, where there was a wall of shower stalls, open to the restroom but separated by clear plastic shower curtains.

As Hatchetface moved, she pointed at Jenna sternly. The message was clear: "Stay where you are. Don't run." Jenna didn't intend to. It was clear that Hatchetface was much faster than she was. She was tall and strong. Her exposed abs were incredible.

She was, in fact, beautiful. All of her but her face. That face, under that sack, must have been horrible. Scarred, hideous. Jenna shuddered, thinking about it.

Hatchetface crossed to the shower stalls, reached in and turned one of the shower heads on. She let it run for a moment, put a hand under the spray, then started towards Jenna.

Jenna cowered and backed away as far as she could into the bathroom stall she was hanging on - which wasn't far - and waited for it. Waited to be killed.

But it didn't happen.

Hatchetface stood close to Jenna and held her place, looking into her eyes. Then she pointed to the running shower.

Jenna looked at the shower, then looked at Hatchetface. She shook her head.

"I don't understand," she said.

Hatchetface pointed again, starting to get angry. Jenna was puzzled.

"You want me to take a shower?" she said.

Hatchetface nodded. Jenna was surprised. Hatchetface pointed again.

"All right," Jenna said.

She stepped towards the shower and started to strip, pulling her shirt off. She had got the shirt up to her neck, plunging her sight into darkness, when it came to her and she stopped, holding her position.

Companionship. That was it!

It all came to her in a flash. She had been speculating about this very thing just the other day with the girls, beside the lake. She supposed that they must all be dead by now, which brought her spirits down considerably. But it was still exciting. She knew what Hatchetface wanted.

She just wanted to be with someone. She just wanted to feel something. Someone else's touch. And maybe Jenna could provide that.

It was a gamble but it was her only chance. She wasn't going to get away from the killer but maybe, just maybe, she could distract her. Occupy her mind and body, get her onto Jenna's side.

She finished pulling off the shirt and, by the time the action was completed, her expression had

changed, like a silent comedian passing his hand across his face. Presto! Sad to happy!

Jenna's face now dripped seduction. She looked back over her shoulder at Hatchetface and winked. Hatchetface cocked her head to one side, not knowing what to make of this.

Jenna threw the shirt aside and started to unzip her jeans, kicking off her shoes as she did so. This was a show. A striptease.

She and Bree had gone to a strip club once in Phoenix. Jenna had been incredibly nervous, worried that someone she knew would catch her there, but she found it exciting, too. It felt dangerous, naughty.

The girls had been pretty, though none of them were beautiful, but Bree had been gorgeous that night. She wore a stylish suit - almost a man's suit but with pink highlights to give it a feminine edge - and her hair simply shined in the fluorescent glow of the strip club lights.

And the girls had loved them. Bree had told Jenna that at least a third of all the strippers she had met in her - admittedly short - life had been either gay or bisexual in their personal life. And they really did respond to Bree and Jenna's attention, really bending over to accept the dollar bills that Jenna would slip into their g-strings. The other patrons were a different matter. Some of them had loved Bree and Jenna, as well. Whistling out cat calls and clapping whenever one of them got close to one of the strippers on stage. But some of them were quiet and embarrassed: middle-aged men who didn't want to be around any women in this kind of place unless said women were onstage, getting naked. Then there were the few patrons who had taken one look at Bree and Jenna and had simply left. Who knew what their problem was. There was more than one man who had approached the both of them, trying to hit on them, trying to talk them into a threesome. Bree would tell them to go take a hike or, occasionally telling them to go fuck themselves. It was adorable.

It had been an incredible time, something she had wanted to do again, soon. Well, now was her chance to be one of those girls on the stage. She was going to strip for Hatchetface, put on a show. She would do this to get back to Bree, who she knew was alive. She had heard her voice call out for help earlier, right before Hatchetface had caught her. Shelley was out there somewhere, too, she supposed. She had to get back to them. And Joel and Rachel, of course.

She turned away from Hatchetface and pushed her jeans down below her ass, taking her time, really exposing the soft curve of her butt to the strange woman in the restroom with her. The jeans were soon around her ankles and they joined the shirt in some corner of the room.

Down to just her bra and panties now, Jenna turned back to Hatchetface and put a finger to her mouth, shushing the already-silent woman. Jenna watched Hatchetface's one good eye blink repeatedly behind the bag/mask. It almost would have been cute if it weren't for the circumstances.

Jenna reached behind her back and unhooked her bra. She brought her hands back around to front

and covered her breasts as the bra fell away, dropping to the ground. Hatchetface watched it fall, followed it with her whole head.

Jenna waited, made sure that Hatchetface was watching her again - and not the bra - before removing her hands from her chest, exposing her small, beautiful tits. Adrenaline pumped through her body. She was enjoying this! Actually enjoying it! What was wrong with her? Was she sick? She was certain that at least a few of her friends were dead - their bodies rotting somewhere nearby - and yet here she was, stripping. Enjoying it. Maybe wanting to take it further.

She turned around again, standing right before the running water of the shower. She hooked her thumbs into the hem of her panties and prepared to pull them down.

She heard music in her head - her own little internal soundtrack - The Kinks, "Superman". She could feel the heat of the shower, could see the steam rising up to the ceiling.

She pulled the panties down incredibly slowly, really showing off that ass, revealing it. That gorgeous ass, as Bree had called it. She didn't even need to see Hatchetface's reaction, but she looked over her shoulder anyway: the strange woman was wrapped around her finger. She was her's.

Kicking the panties aside, she turned to face the killer again. Her well-trimmed pubic hair made a pyramid between her legs, which she now pushed together, concealing the folds of flesh there and smiling.

"Want me to take a shower?" she said. "Huh?"

Hatchetface nodded slowly. Jenna walked backwards into the hot flow of the shower and gasped in pleasure. She was exaggerating her feelings, emphasizing them. It looked almost as if she were having an orgasm right there.

She stood under the spray of the shower and lulled her head back, letting the water spill down her front. She gurgled some in her mouth and spit it out in Hatchetface's direction, then giggled.

"Gonna join me?" she said. "Huh? Gonna come in with me... Annie?"

It took her a moment to remember the woman's real name but she recovered quickly and continued on with the seduction. She turned around again and put her hands on the back wall of the shower. It was basic tile, cool in contrast to the hot water pelting down on her. She pushed her ass out, swayed it from side to side to that internal music, speeding up, really getting into it. Yeah, pure disco!

Behind her, she heard Hatchetface start to disrobe herself. Jenna closed her eyes. Now came the hard part. She was going to see Hatchetface's true face, unmasked. She must not react. Must not gasp in horror. She had to prepare herself.

She started imagining the most horrible things she could think of to happen to the human face. Missing eyelids. Missing nose. Half a face actually gone, like those WWI veterans that Jenna had seen

pictures of.

Soon, the sound of dropping clothes had ended and Jenna heard feet approaching her: slow steps that got closer and closer. Now they were in the shower with her. And then, softly, a hand caressed her arched back. Jenna moaned in pleasure.

She turned around, opening her eyes. She held back a gasp, covered it well.

Annie Blade's face looked back at her. Her hair was cut very short, much shorter than Bree's hair. There was a massive scar running down her face, taking out one eye entirely. There was just a bent, empty socket left. Another scar dug into the woman's lip, partially destroying it, pulling it up and exposing teeth.

It was horrible, but Jenna's mental preparations had worked: she had imagined much worse. Tentatively, Jenna reached out and touched Annie's abs, then reached lower. She didn't go for it all the way but she wanted to make her intentions known. She looked Annie straight in the mutilated face before she spoke.

"You're beautiful, Annie," she said.

And then she did it. She would do just about anything to survive, she had discovered: something that she didn't know about herself before. It was strange. And exciting, too.

Jenna leaned in and kissed Annie Blade. She looked past the scars, looked past all the horror that this woman had inflicted and just saw her as a person. A real person, damaged and destroyed by the world.

She saw this fragile human being and connected with her. The kiss soon became more and Jenna let it happen.

She was thinking about Bree as it started to get more serious.

Shelley had been lying at the bottom of the hill, near where Sheriff Parker's body had fallen, among the underbrush. She had come to rest here after a tumble down the hill and had simply stayed there, frightened and emotionally wounded.

She had been waiting in the car, not long, before Dr. Travers had returned. She could already tell that there was something wrong with him before he had even opened her door. It was how fast he was moving, and that look on his face. It gave it all away. She found herself drawing back into the faux leather of the seats before he swung the door open.

He had pointed his pistol at her and said, "Out." That was it. Shelley tried to talk back but he cocked



the gun and she had done as she was told. When she got out of the car, Dr. Travers had smiled at her and said, "Annie will take care of you," and kicked her in the ass, making her fall down the hill towards the camp.

She was so startled by this turn of events that she hadn't even screamed. She had been utterly dumbfounded.

Now here she was, on the ground. As she lay there, she heard Jenna scream so she sat up.

In the distance, near the big central building in the camp, she could see Hatchetface approaching Jenna. Shelley started to scream then covered her mouth.

She had been right!

There was Hatchetface! She was real! All that talk from the kids at school, all those stories, and here she was. It was scary, truly terrifying and Shelley was too frightened to move, to do anything to help Jenna. Hatchetface grabbed Jenna by the hair and dragged her away, towards the girl's restroom.

Once they were in the restroom and out of sight, Shelley felt like she could breathe again. She took her hand away from her mouth and blubbered, tears rolling down her face.

What was she going to do? Could she do anything at all?

Well, Jenna was dead, that much was certain. She didn't hear anything coming from the girl's restroom anymore so Hatchetface must have chopped her head off or something. But there were others out here. They might still be alive.

Slowly, she got to her feet, gathering her courage. She could do this. She could. If anyone was alive in this camp, she would do what she could, would help them if possible.

She started into the campground proper and kept looking back and forth, and occasionally, behind her, imagining that Hatchetface would pop up unexpectedly and chop her in half. It didn't happen and she crept between two cabins, staying as low as she could.

As she crept around the front of a cabin, she heard a squeaking noise. Cautiously, she looked towards the source of the sound - the door of the cabin - and her eyes widened with terror as the door swung open. Nailed to the door by at least twenty large camping spikes was the body of Sheriff Parker. His dead eyes were open, staring at her, his mouth hanging agape, tongue lolling out. His head had been split almost in two and his brains were leaking out of the wound.

Shelley clamped a hand over her mouth once again. That creepy old 50s song came drifting out of one of the other cabins nearby, creeping her out even more.

She managed to stop herself from screaming but, then, almost did when she saw through the open door what was in the cabin itself. The bodies of Henry and Marta were piled on top of each other. Both of them appeared to be looking at Shelley.

The 13-year-old still somehow managed not to scream but she ran from the cabin, stealth now totally forgotten about in a mad dash. She ran all the way to the dock and hid under it, at just the point where the beach under the structure started to turn to water. She wrapped her hands around her knees and began to shake.

*What am I gonna do?* she thought. *What am I gonna do?!*

4

Jenna had made Annie Blade climax at least five times by now. Most of them had been quick, hard orgasms that had rocked the woman's body, made her quiver with desire. This most recent one - accomplished while Annie was up against the back wall of the shower, one leg up over Jenna's shoulder while Jenna herself slammed her fingers inside her over and over again - was long, drawn-out, and earth-shattering. Annie looked like she was about to die and her one good eye rolled up in her head, her mouth open in silent ecstasy. Jenna leaned in and kissed Annie as she came, slipping a thumb into the woman's anus as she did. The hot water pelted her back. She was red from the heat, pruned by the damp. She was a mess but it was working. Annie belonged to her. She would now do whatever Jenna ordered her to do.

She might just survive this.

Then it all fell apart.

"Annie?" a voice said.

Annie's eye righted itself and she looked past Jenna, shocked and terrified. Immediately, she untangled herself from Jenna's body and pushed her away. She curled up into a ball on the floor of the shower and started to cry.

Jenna looked down at the pathetic creature, confused, then she turned to see who the intruder was. Dr. Travers stood in the restroom near the sinks and stared at them, shock written all over his face. Jenna grit her teeth and prepared to charge the man. She meant to push him over, smashing his head against one of the sinks in the process, but she didn't get the chance.

Dr. Travers must have sensed her plan and he pulled his pistol from his pocket and aimed it at her. He looked at her like she was a smear of dog shit on a nice Persian rug.

"Don't do anything stupid," he said.

Jenna put her hands up and stayed where she was. She had to survive, had to get back to Bree somehow.

"What are you doing, little lady?" Dr. Travers said to Annie, now ignoring Jenna.

He took a few steps forward, contempt written large on his face. But there was also something else there. Something like compassion. Love, even.

"What have you done?" he said quietly. "This is evil. You know this. You know how wrong it is."

Annie suddenly moved, grabbing out for Jenna, pleading, wanting to touch her again. But Dr. Travers shook his head: curt and final.

"No," he said. "You can't have her. She's bad for you. A bad influence. Like all women. Your mother was the same way. She knew the touch of another woman. I had to beat it out of her."

"Dr. Travers," Jenna said.

"Drop the Travers!" the good doctor said. "My name is Blade. Owen Blade! And I'm no doctor, not really. Are you so dumb that you haven't figured it out by now. This is my daughter! She's mine!"

"But..." Jenna said. "Hatchetface's father died. She killed him in the massacre. You're dead."

"Do I look dead, my dear?" Blade said. "I think not. You can't always believe legends. At least, not every little detail. I wasn't even on my daughter's scout trip when she snapped and killed all those people. I was down south making corpses look pretty. I was good at it, believe me. The best. Then my daughter had to go and murder a bunch of brats. How inconvenient!"

He took another step towards the showers, resting his free hand on a sink. He chewed his bottom lip nervously.

"They told me she was dead," he continued. "But I knew. She wasn't dead. Not my little girl. So I left that life, came up here and reinvented myself. Do you know how easy it was to fool these local yahoos into thinking I was an actual doctor? Easy as pie, my dear, easy as pie. I made a good living. And, in the meantime, I looked for Annie. And I found her! She was eating a squirrel raw when I found her. Can you believe that?! Raw! My little girl! Well, that couldn't stand."

He shook his head and popped his jaw on the right side. Jenna could hear the air escape violently through his teeth.

"I set her up here," he continued. "Made sure she had water, some food, electricity. Made sure she had her music, didn't I, honey?"

Jenna looked down at Annie, who was nodding furiously, her hands to either side of her head as if in pain. Jenna could see blood running down Annie's chin from her mouth, as if the woman had bit her tongue.

"She loves that song," Blade said. "It's just the kind of song that her mother would have loved. All the same, you see. She has a good life down here. Has everything that she needs. And if she kills a few sinners in the process? So be it. They deserve it! All that sinning. The girls especially, but the boys, too. All of them! You're the problem!"

He pointed his pistol at Jenna, who still had her hands raised above her head. She shook with fear but didn't let it get to her eyes. Her eyes were steely, resolved, staring into Blade.

"You," Blade said. "All the girls like you. The bible doesn't like your kind."

"You mean lesbians or just women?" Jenna said. She couldn't stop herself.

"Both," Blade said. "Women can't lie with other women. It just isn't done. So you have to die, like all of them."

"What about your daughter?" Jenna said.

"What about her?"

"She's a lesbian, too. Obviously."

"No!" Blade said. "No, she isn't! You've tricked her! Seduced her!"

"Maybe. But she liked it. Really liked it."

"I'm this close to shooting you. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Jenna said quietly.

"Good. I don't want to shoot you. It's unpleasant. Annie does the killing. I do everything else. I know about bodies. Know how to display them. Know how to work on them. Your little friend... Rachel, was that her name? Yes, that's what it was. I trapped her. Annie here killed her, some time ago, and I went in shortly after and did what I do best. Displayed her. Trapped her. And your brother..."

"What did you do to my brother?" Jenna said.

Blade laughed. "He just couldn't resist putting his diseased penis into that woman. That dead woman. And when he did... Well, let's just say that he won't be having any children and leave it at that."

"You bastard," Jenna said. "Son of bitch!"

"Not so rude, young lady. That kind of language is uncalled for. Didn't your mother teach you anything? I bet she didn't. Probably some kind of whore. Well, it doesn't matter. Annie! Get up!"

Annie did as she was told and stood up, head bowed, not looking at her father. Blade kicked his daughter's clothes towards her.

"Put those on, girl," he said. "You have work to do. I left that other lesbian sinner handcuffed in the kitchen. She's waiting for you. And you'll find that little teenage voyeur in camp, too, I'd expect. You have some cleaning up to do, I think, little lady."

Annie put on her clothes, becoming Hatchetface once again. She stood in front of her father as he looked her up and down, inspecting her.

"Good," he said. "Now go to work."

Hatchetface nodded and walked out of the restroom. She was slow, taking her time. And she looked over her shoulder at Jenna just before she exited. Jenna allowed herself a small smile.

Blade shook his head and popped the other side of his jaw. His pistol was still aimed at Jenna.

"I don't trust her to kill you, whore," he said. "She's got too close to you. No, as unpleasant as it is, I'll have to do it myself."

## Chapter Thirteen, "Camp Blood"

1

Bree had found a screwdriver on one of the shelves near her and was working on the handcuffs. She had just about come to the conclusion that she could pick the lock when she heard someone enter the kitchen. The sound was faint - very faint - but Bree had become attuned to every little sound around her, so she stopped work on the handcuffs and listened.

Yes, those were footsteps. Slow but unrelenting. Coming straight to the back. Coming for her.

She switched off the flashlight and waited in the dark. Time seemed to stretch out, every second becoming at least a minute long. The footsteps seemed to echo throughout the whole building. They were in time with Bree's heartbeat, which was calm, unnaturally so. Bree had discovered something in herself in these last few hours. Some kind of resolve. A drive.

As the footsteps reached the kitchen, Bree imagined the Fleshsmith stepping around the corner and peering at her from the end of the hallway. But if that was the case, then so what? Bree could deal with that. A monster was a monster, no different than Hatchetface.

Her breathing was steady, easy. She did not panic. Whatever emerged from around the corner, she could deal with it.

That's when Hatchetface stepped into view at the end of the hallway. She was just a figure - just a Shape - but Bree recognized her at once, even if she had never seen her before. That tall figure, lean but strong, some kind of sack over her head. It had to be her.

For a moment, neither of them moved. They just looked at each other. Bree wondered whether Hatchetface could see her, here in the dark at the end of the hallway. Would her eyes have adjusted to the dark already?

Slowly, Bree put the screwdriver down and grasped hold of her flashlight. She pointed it towards Hatchetface and switched it on, hoping to blind the killer, at least momentarily.

Hatchetface reared back, shielding her eyes, and Bree made her move. She put the flashlight on the ground, grabbed the screwdriver and put it between her teeth like a pirate stowing away a dagger and grabbed hold of the sturdy pot that Dr. Travers had used to brain her over the head.

She had to get out of here. Had to save Jenna. And she had come up with a plan.

It wasn't a good one but, at the moment, it was the only one she had. The only one she had time for.

She swung the pot up high into the air, bit down on the screwdriver and brought the pot down. Right onto her trapped left hand. Hatchetface started to move towards her faster now.

Bree winced in pain and brought the pot up again. Her thumb was broken already but it wasn't enough. She had to break the first finger as well. She slammed the pot down onto her hand once again, this time letting out a pained cry around the screwdriver.

She heard her hand crack in several places, dropped the pot and pulled her now-broken left hand through the handcuffs. She was free.

Immediately, she stood up and ran to the hidden backdoor. She pushed Greg's body out of the way, then knocked aside a few mops.

Hatchetface was right on top of her. She had her hand axe ready to strike and, when she reached Bree, she brought it down at the younger woman.

Bree managed to duck out of the way and the hatchet came down on the wall right beside the door, sticking in place for a moment. Bree used the time to open the door as violently as she could. Hatchetface was in the way and was knocked in the head by the edge of it. Bree punched the killer in the face and slipped under her arm and out the door.

Hatchetface reached through the doorway at the last possible moment and caught Bree by the back of her head, grasping hold of the girl's short hair. Bree tripped and nearly fell backwards but she kept in place and moved forward, a few tangles of hair ripping out of her skull in the process.

She turned around and slammed the door shut on Hatchetface's outstretched arm. The killer reacted instantly, her hand grasping the air in pain. Bree pulled open the door and slammed it shut again, really making a mark on Hatchetface's wrist. Finally, the killer retracted her hand and Bree slammed the door shut.

In the precious few seconds she had left before Hatchetface came rushing through the door, Bree looked around. She heard it before she saw it. Something swinging in the wind. She turned to the sound.

There was a tree behind the building - an old, sturdy one - and hanging from it were two bodies. Bree choked back a scream.

A rope had been tied up in the old branches of the tree. On the end of the rope was a big, dangerous-looking meat hook, one with hooks on two sides. To Bree, it looked like it came from a slaughterhouse. Each body had been stuck on one of the points through the neck, back to back.

Hanging on one side was Kirsten, her eyes open, her mouth as well, chin touching the end of the hook that emerged from her neck. On the other side was Rachel.

Kirsten's body looked relatively unharmed other than the hook through the neck but Rachel's body... Her entire bottom half was simply gone. Torn away at the waist. No blood dripped from either body: they had been dead for sometime now.

There was a crack of thunder and a crash of lightning above. Dark clouds had gathered and now they opened up and rain began to pour down on the little drama playing out in the campground.

Bree didn't have time to panic. Her heartbeat had risen somewhat but her resolve was steely. She could get through this. And perhaps she couldn't outrun the killer - she was fairly certain about this - but maybe she could hide.

She found a sheriff's patrol car parked by the tree, just under the hanging bodies. Several branches had been piled over it to conceal it somewhat. Bree smiled.

And hid.

A few seconds later, Hatcheface burst through the backdoor of the kitchen. She looked around, right then left, and didn't see Bree anywhere. She took a few cautious steps out of the door, presumably expecting a trap, and pulled out her hunting knife. She now had the hatchet in one hand and the hunting knife in the other, ready for anything.

She started to leave the area then stopped. She looked at the hidden patrol car and cocked her head. She was still for several seconds and Bree held her breath the entire time.

Hatchetface started to move towards the car, just a few steps. Then a few more. She was standing at the car now, looking up at the hanging bodies. She reached out and prodded one, making them both swing more. Then she turned and left the area, presumably deciding that Bree had left and ran to another building. Bree allowed herself to breathe but stayed where she was for a few moments.

After that, she slid out from her hiding place: she had been under the car, holding onto the underside of it, the screwdriver still held between her teeth. Slowly, she grabbed the screwdriver and looked about. Her hand was in such pain but she ignored it. Didn't have time for it right now. She didn't see Hatcheface so she turned her attention to the car.

A quick test confirmed that it was unlocked. She opened the door as quietly and as slowly as she could and got inside. She had noticed that the tires had been slashed on this car just like the ones back at their camp but perhaps she could use it for some kind of short trip. It could come in handy.

She sat in the driver's seat and closed the door behind her. Immediately, she became interested in the shotgun mounted between the seats, pointing at the roof. It was locked there and so she started to pick at it with the screwdriver. She became frustrated. Obviously, she wasn't any good at picking these kind of locks.

The passenger door opened and Bree gasped, bringing the screwdriver up for an attack. She stopped



herself at the last possible moment, the edge of the screwdriver no more than an inch away from the chest of the teenage girl who was now sitting in the patrol car next to her. Shelley looked at the screwdriver, mouth agape. Then she looked up at Bree.

"You coulda killed me," she said.

"That was the idea," Bree said. "What the Hell are you doing here?"

"I'm trying to help."

"Wait... You're the girl from town. How did you get here?"

"I've been kinda following you guys around, watching you."

"You... Watching us?"

"Yeah," Shelley said. "I think you're the most beautiful person I've ever seen."

"Well," Bree said, "thanks, I guess. We don't have time for this."

Shelley sighed and fell back into her seat. The sudden movement dislodged something in the backseat, which fell forward, hitting the metal grating separating the back seat from the front. It was Joel's body. His eyes were open along with his mouth, his forehead now leaning against the metal, blood running down his face.

Shelley began to scream and Bree reached out and slammed a hand over the girl's mouth. She held tight, making sure that no sound escaped.

"Shelley," she said. "Shelley? That's your name, right? I need you to be quiet, okay, Shelley? Shut the fuck up. Now."

Shelley began to calm down. She relaxed in Bree's grip.

"Now," Bree said, "if I let go, will you be quiet?"

Shelley slowly nodded.

"Okay," Bree said. "I'm letting go."

Then she did, slowly unclasping her hand from Shelley's face. Shelley remained quiet but she looked scared. She stole a glance at the body once again as rain pelted down on the car from the heavens above.

"He's dead," she said.

"Yep," Bree said.

"That's a dead body."

"You got it."

"How did it get here?"

"I don't know. Maybe Hachetface put it there."

"Yeah."

"Look at me," Bree said. "Come on, look at me."

"Okay," Shelley said.

"You said you were watching us. What did you see?"

"I saw you... and Jenna."

"Little perv."

"I kind of am, I guess."

"Well, I need your help, little perv. Don't think about the body. There's nothing we can do for him.

We have to get this car started."

"Do you have the keys?"

"No."

"Then what are we gonna do?"

"I've hotwired a few cars in my time, believe you me."

"Jesus, can you get any sexier?"

Bree smiled and shook her head. She spun the screwdriver in her hand and gave the teen girl a dashing smile.

"Sit back and shut up," she said. "And keep an eye out for Hatchetface."

"Aye, aye, captain," Shelley said.

Bree nodded, popped off the ignition panel and got to work. All the while, she thought about Jenna, hoping that she was all right.

## 2

Owen Blade forced Jenna out of the restroom at gunpoint and into the cool night air. He had made her get dressed before she left, considering it distasteful to leave her naked.

It was raining pretty hard now and Jenna was almost instantly soaked. She sighed.

"From hot to cold water in under a minute," she muttered.

"What was that?" Blade asked.

"Nothing."

"Well, it couldn't possibly be nothing, my dear. I mean, they might just be your last words."

"Nope. See? There you go, I've said a few more words. Ruined your plans. Guess you'll just have to let me go now."

Blade laughed. "You're funny, girl. It's a real shame that you have to die for your sins."

"How are you going to do it?" Jenna said after a moment. "I don't think you'll be able to explain it to

your precious daughter. Not without seriously pissing her off in the process."

"That's where you're wrong, whore. I'm going to make you walk into those traps there."

He indicated a path through the woods, a path west. Jenna could see the remains of some animal there. A jackrabbit, maybe?

"Killing you may upset her," he continued. "May just make her lose it, in fact. But killed by a trap while trying to escape? That's another story."

Jenna nodded slowly. Blade pushed the short barrel of his pistol into Jenna's back and made her move forward, towards the path. And the traps.

"What did you do to her?" she asked.

"To whom?" Blade said.

"To Annie. To your daughter."

"I didn't do anything to her. I merely provided her with some kind of life out here."

"No, before that. What did you do to her before that?"

"I don't have any idea what you mean."

"You can tell me. Doesn't matter now. I'm going to die anyway. Come on, tell me. I know you're dying to tell someone. To brag."

"I..."

"You fucked her, didn't you?"

"That is--"

"Yeah, you raped her. When she was young, right? Before she was scarred, I mean. When she was a sweet, pretty little girl and you were the poor single dad. You raped that innocent little thing. Didn't you?"

"You couldn't possibly know a--"

"You did, didn't you?! Raped her! She was just a little girl! That's why she's so afraid of sex. That's what happened to her. You messed her up far worse than what that maniac did to her in that carnival funhouse all those years ago. The damage had already been done, hadn't it?!"

"She..."

"What?" Jenna said. "Huh? What?!"

"She was so sweet," Blade said. "So beautiful. How could I not..."

"Rapist. Degenerate. Hypocrite."

Jenna whirled around, a finger pointed in Blade's direction. The false doctor - the mortician - actually took a step back, alarmed, even though he was the one who was armed.

"You took a little girl and warped her!" Jenna said, furious.

Lightning flared in the sky. Thunder cracked above. The loudest one yet.

"I..." Blade said.

"And what about now, huh?" Jenna said.

"I provide her with a life."

"Yeah? And what else? Shelley told us that she found a coffin partially buried in the ground in the woods. A coffin with chains wrapped around it. You wouldn't happen to know anything about that, would you, doc?"

"It's there for..."

"You lock her in there, don't you? Don't you?! Whenever she does something that you think is bad. Like if she feels something for another woman. Something sexual. Right?"

"Quiet."

"And what about you?"

"Me?"

"Yeah, you? How do you get your jollies off? Huh? After the death of your wife? What is it, doc? Whores?"

Blade was silent. Jenna prodded more.

"No, that's not it, is it?" she said. "It's something else."

"I'll have you know--" Blade said before he was cut off.

"It's the bodies, isn't it? Jesus H. Christ, you fuck the dead bodies, don't you? That's what you were getting at before, wasn't it? You rape Goddamn dead bodies, don't you, doc?"

Blade was quiet again. Jenna had her answer and she shook her head.

"And, yet, I'm the one who's perverse," she said. "I'm the degenerate."

"You are!"

"I'm more natural than you, it seems. Annie loved my touch."

"You have to be quiet!"

"All it took was a little compassion and my fist. My touch. That's all it took, doc. And she was jelly in my arms. I fucked the shit out of her. And she loved every second of it. That's all she needed. And if you weren't around--"

"Shut up!" Blade said. He was in tears and pointed the pistol right in Jenna's face. "Just shut the fuck up!"

"Oh, such bad language, doc," Jenna said. "There's no call for those kind of words."

"I'll kill you! I'll blow your Goddamn brains out, whore!"

"Then do it!!"

She stretched her arms out wide, to their full length. The rain pelted down on both of them, creating large pools of water all about.

"Just do it!" Jenna said. "You don't have the guts. The balls! You're a coward. A fucking coward!"

Blade pressed the barrel of the pistol against Jenna's forehead. She could feel it digging in and pushed her head towards it.

"Come on!" she said. "Shoot me! I'm not going to walk into those traps! I'm not going to do it. You're going to have to shoot me. And then you'll have to explain it to your daughter. Everything. All of it. You're a bad father, Mr. Blade. Fuck, I thought my dad was bad but, compared to you, he's a Goddamn saint. A fucking angel. And you?" She pressed her head harder into the barrel. A single drop of blood ran down her forehead. "You're the devil."

"I'll shoot," Blade said.

There was another violent crack of thunder in the sky and both of them looked up to the heavens. Blade's pistol slipped off Jenna's forehead. It was slick with rainwater and blood.

Then there came the sound of a car engine revving to life. It came from behind them. They both turned to see what it was.

A pair of headlights flicked on. It was the sheriff's patrol car. And Jenna could see Bree and Shelley sitting in the front seat. She smiled. Bree smiled back.

And gunned the car towards them.

Jenna jumped out of the way as Blade turned his gun towards the oncoming car. He fired once, the shot going wild. From her position on the ground, in the mud, Jenna could see someone else watching what was going on.

Hatchetface.

She was standing by a cabin, observing them. How much had she heard?

Blade fired again. This time, the bullet went right through the windshield, missing Bree's head by less than an inch. The glass spider-webbed around Bree's face. Shelley ducked down, out of sight. And now, as the car was almost upon them, Jenna could see someone else in the car, someone in the back seat. It was Joel. She smiled, then frowned. He was dead. Just by the look of him, she knew he was dead.

The patrol car slammed into Blade, catching him in both legs and dropping him onto the hood of the vehicle. His gun went flying from his hand and he screamed as the car propelled him towards a group of three trees right near the trapped path out west. The car slammed into the trees, crumpling the hood.

There was a horrible cracking sound as both of Owen Blade's legs were shattered on impact. They turned into jelly: bits of bone floating in liquid, bound up in flesh.

Bree backed the car up, off the false doctor. He fell to the ground. Bree put the car into drive again but it stalled. She fiddled with it but it wouldn't budge.

"Fuck!" she said.

Blade started to move, crawling through the mud, dragging himself away from the car. He looked back over his shoulder, in pure terror. Jenna saw that his crotch and the whole back of his pants were now stained yellow and brown: he had shit and pissed himself.

Frantically, he elbowed his way through the mud, passing the dead jackrabbit and not noticing it. He was still looking over his shoulder in fear at Bree and the car when his elbow landed squarely down on one of the traps.

Immediately, it sprung, both jaws coming up out of the mud like a leviathan. His arm was instantly shattered and pinned to his head on one side. On the other side, the jaws penetrated his skull, driving into his brain and locking his own jaw open. It broke off on that side, blood spraying from his mouth as his jaw swung in place, dislodged.

He was alive for another moment, screaming in abject pain, before the sweet relief of death took him. After that he moved no more.

3

"Stay down, Shelley!" Bree said.

They were still in the car. No one moved for a moment. All parties were still as the skies cried out in pain and water deluged all.

Bree looked around and found Jenna in the mud. She was alive. Bree smiled. She looked behind her and saw Hatchetface standing in the rain, not moving.

What was she going to do?

The killer slowly starting moving forward. She passed the car, passed Jenna and stopped at the edge of the path through the woods going west. She stared down at her father's dead body, head cocked to one side.

At first, she didn't react at all. She just stared. Then Bree could hear her breathing increase, could see her chest rise and fall swiftly.

A sound came from her.

It wasn't a word. No, nothing so prosaic. But everyone present could understand it. It was a scream. A primal yell. One of despair, pain and confusion.

Her father may have been just about the worst person in the world, but he was still her father. What

was she going to do now? And they - Bree, Jenna and Shelley - had been responsible for his death. And now they had to die.

All this just from a scream. The first time any of them had heard her voice.

Hatchetface turned towards Jenna, her axe at her side. She started towards the girl.

Jenna tried to get up out of the mud but she was having trouble. The mud kept making her fall. She wasn't going to make it.

Bree started honking the horn of the car, then leaned out the window. She screamed at the killer.

"Hey!" she said. "It's me you want! I killed your father! Me! Come and get me!"

"Don't bring her here!" Shelley said.

"Shut up, Shelley!"

Hatchetface turned towards the car, her one good eye staring daggers at them. She came for them, not running, not hurrying. She had all the time in the world.

Bree started on the car again, trying to bring it to life. It kept stalling.

"Shit," she said. "Shit, shit, shit!"

Lightning flared as Hatchetface jumped onto the car. She stood on the roof and brought her axe down on the windshield, shattering it with one powerful blow. Shelley screamed. Bree frantically tried to get the car started again, but it wasn't working. Then inspiration struck.

"Cover your ears," she told Shelley, who did as she was told.

Bree grabbed hold of the shotgun which was pointing up towards the roof, cocked it - hoping against hope that it was loaded - then pulled the trigger. There was an incredible roar as the shotgun fired up into the roof.

Hatchetface took more than a few pellets up her side and she was blown off the roof, dropping behind the car into the mud. Bree and Shelley frantically looked out back to see if the killer was dead.

Their silent question was answered when Hatchetface sat up, shook off the blow and started to stand up. Bree turned back to the wheel and simply willed the car to life.

"Come on!" she screamed.

The car roared to life. She shifted it into reverse and slammed on the gas. The car backed up right into Hatchetface, hitting her and sending her flying back at least twenty feet. She landed in the mud and was still.

The patrol car came to a halt and sputtered a few times, then died. There was a horrible banging sound coming from the engine. The car was dead. It wasn't moving any further.

Bree immediately got out of the car. Shelley stayed inside, too scared to move. Bree ran towards Jenna, who was now on her feet.

They were perhaps thirty feet from Hatchetface, who still hadn't moved. Bree looked at Jenna. Her girlfriend was holding something in both hands now. It was the doc's pistol.

"She's not done," Jenna said. "Not yet."

"Right," Bree said.

They looked and Hatchetface sat up. She grabbed her axe out of the mud beside her and stood up to her full height, which was considerable. Started towards them.

Jenna took aim and fired. The shot missed, hitting the cabin behind Hatchetface. Jenna fired again. Miss. Again. This one hit a picnic table right by Hatchetface, blowing a chunk of wood to pieces.

"We have to run," Bree said.

"Running's no good!" Jenna said.

She fired one more time and Hatchetface flinched back and dropped into the mud. Neither girl moved.

"Is she dead?" Bree asked.

"I don't know," Jenna said.

Shelley came running out of the car and stood between Bree & Jenna and Hatchetface, blocking their view of the killer. She looked down at the killer, then turned to the other girls, a smile on her face.

"Shelley, get outta there!" Bree screamed.

"It's okay," Shelley said. "She's dea--"

That was when the hatchet slammed into her right shoulder from behind. The teen gasped in pain and surprise. The hatchet had dug into her body about two inches and blood began to flow from the wound.

As Bree and Jenna watched, the axe blade began to dig in further, traveling down Shelley's body through her chest, beginning to split her in two. Shelley coughed up blood, a veritable fountain, and began to sway in place.

The axe blade was now in her lower stomach, on the other side of her body from where it had started. There was a deep V shape in her body now as the wound widened and her torso began to fall off. Through the wound - peeking through the V cut - was Hatchetface. She was crouched down behind Shelley, her hatchet digging through the girl's body.

"No!" Jenna screamed.

She brought the pistol up again and fired but Hatchetface moved the teen's body at the last moment and the shot took Shelley in the forehead. The back of her head was blown out, her brains showering her killer.

Hatchetface slowly stood up, taking hold of Shelley's body and staring at the two survivors. Jenna



pulled the trigger of the pistol again but it was empty.

"Oh, shit," Jenna said.

Hatchetface hurled Shelley's body at them. Bree and Jenna had to duck to get out of the way. Shelley's body landed behind them on the path west and was immediately caught up in a trap which folded her in half, breaking multiple bones in her lifeless corpse.

The killer ran towards them at full speed, leading with her axe. Hatchetface was screaming once again. Bree got in front of Jenna but the killer batted her aside, knocking her into the dirt. She was focused on Jenna.

Jenna lifted the pistol above her just as Hatchetface brought her axe down in a stunning strike. The blade hit the gun and it shattered in Jenna's hand but the force was strong enough to send Hatchetface off balance, allowing Jenna to duck out of the way.

She dropped the useless pieces of the pistol into the mud and tried to get out of the way. Hatchetface wasn't delayed for long and brought her axe up and down once again, just missing Jenna.

From her position on the ground, Bree could see a bloody groove in Hatchetface's left arm: the bullet had simply grazed her, doing no more damage. She could see little dots of bloody wounds up her side, maybe a dozen of them: the results of the shotgun blast.

Hatchetface kicked Jenna's feet out from under her and the girl went down into the mud again. The killer raised her axe up to strike once again.

Jenna's eyes widened in terror.

Bree jumped onto Hatchetface's back and plunged her screwdriver into the killer. The shaft penetrated the woman between two ribs and she arched her back, lifting up Bree as she stood and backed away. She whipped from side to side, trying to shake Bree off.

Bree held on for dear life but it wasn't enough. Hatchetface reached around her own body and grabbed Bree by her broken left hand. Bree screamed in pain and Hatchetface flung her away.

Bree slammed into the patrol car and was momentarily out of it, trying to shake it off.

Hatchetface left Bree where she landed and came for Jenna again. All of her rage was focused on her. Jenna supposed it was because Jenna had exposed something to the killer, something she didn't know she had in her. And now she was confused and angry, not knowing what to do now that her father was dead and simply lashing out at Jenna, wanting to cut her out of her life.

Jenna looked at Bree, saw that she was still breathing and ran, knowing that Hatchetface would

follow her. She also knew that she couldn't outrun the killer. But she had to try, had to give Bree time to recover.

She ran to the row of cabins. Hatchetface was right on her tail.

Jenna was something to behold: covered in mud, a bloody mark in the middle of her forehead, soaked in rain water. She moved like the very devil himself - or herself - and reached one of the cabins. It was the cabin that the eerie, repeating song was coming from. She bolted inside and tripped over something on the ground.

She came face to face with the corpse of Old Tom. Well, face to bloody stump would be more accurate. His pants were around his ankles, dead dick hanging out and covered in maggots, his head gone, just a bloody stump where it had been. Jenna yelped in terror and stood up instantly.

Hatchetface was now framed in the doorway. Behind her, lightning flared up, making the killer a silhouette for a moment. The lamp in the room flickered as the power surged through the camp. The song slowed down for a moment, then started back up again.

Jenna backed into the cabin as Hatchetface slowly entered the room. She seemed calmed by the song and simply looked around the room, confused. She looked down at the body as if she didn't know what it was.

Jenna continued to back away, towards the little nightstand under the window, the one with the record player on it. Catching something out of the corner of her eye, she looked up above the window and was startled to see a head mounted on the wall just below the ceiling.

Old Tom's head. It hung on a nail on which his hair was wrapped around.

Jenna banged against the wall as she was startled and the head swung in place for a moment, then ripped away from the nail. It fell onto the record player. The needle scratched across the record, causing a terrible noise that made Hatchetface grasp either side of her head, then was quiet.

Old Tom's head was now spinning on the record in place of the needle. It was a hideous display and his dead, open eyes kept revolving around and around, still watching her, a voyeur even in death.

The music now over, Hatchetface looked at Jenna, enraged. Jenna gasped in terror as the killer came at her, leading with her axe.

Jenna jumped through the window. It was open but the opening wasn't large enough for her to get through without shattering what remained of the window in the process.

She hit the ground in a heap. She had cut herself on glass but she kept going, rolling and getting up.

Hatchetface followed her through the window and pounced onto the ground like a hunting cat. Jenna headed for the next cabin over but Hatchetface caught her. She missed with her axe but was also ready with her hunting knife. She grooved a cut down Jenna's leg, slicing her jeans open and making her

bleed. Jenna kicked out with her other leg and Hatchetface's knife went flying out of her hand.

Jenna kept going. That was when the skies opened up. There was a flash of lightning which hit the old tree which stood next to the cabin that Jenna was heading to, followed by an incredibly loud crash of thunder.

Jenna rounded around the front of the cabin, followed by Hatchetface. She was looking for a weapon, something to fight back with, but there was nothing. This cabin was old, rundown, had gone unused for decades.

There was a rushing sound and Jenna turned just in time to see Hatchetface's axe whirling through the air towards her, turning end over end. She moved her head out of the way just in time and the axe stuck in the far wall, vibrating in place.

Hatchetface jumped through the doorway at Jenna, knocking her to the ground. They struggled on the floor of the cabin, Hatchetface wailing on Jenna and Jenna fighting back, kicking at the killer.

Above them, Jenna could hear one of the branches of the old tree that had grown intertwined with this cabin buckle and begin to break. It was a loud, yawning cry. The branch crashed through the roof above them, opening a huge hole in which rain began to flow through.

A large chunk of roof hit Hatchetface and knocked her off Jenna. Jenna saw her opportunity and got up. She had to get over Hatchetface to get to the door, so she went up instead, climbing onto a section of the collapsed roof. She was halfway up when Hatchetface grabbed her ankle, raking her nails into Jenna's flesh.

Jenna yelped in pain but kept going, forcing herself onto the roof. Up here, the storm was brilliant. Large, violent clouds swirled about, flashes of lightning flaring up within them. The old tree that had become entwined with the cabin was near, one of its branches broken, its trunk scorched black, but the rest of it intact. A noose hung from a strong, sturdy branch and swung back and forth in the wind.

Jenna felt her leg begin to be yanked down but she grit her teeth and started hammering on Hatchetface's hand with both her fists. It didn't stop Hatchetface from climbing up to join her on the roof.

She clambered up, swinging her legs onto the surface until she had joined Jenna. She was breathing heavy, a wheeze in her chest.

The two women just looked at each other for a moment, both of them utterly exhausted. Hatchetface pulled her mask off and threw it away contemptuously. Jenna saw Annie Blade again, saw the girl that she once was, even though she was now at least in her early thirties.

The moment was short-lived, however as Hatchetface returned in her one good eye and she attacked Jenna. She clawed and hit with her fists, her axe still stuck in the wall of the cabin below them. The

killer wrapped her hands around Jenna's throat and squeezed. Jenna fought back, kicking and punching at the killer but it was no good.

She was losing. Her strength was leaving her. She was going to die up here in the rain.

That was when she heard it. That beautiful, strong voice.

"Jenna!"

It was Bree, calling from the ground below. Jenna looked around and saw Bree standing in front of the cabin. She held something in one hand.

"Catch!" she said.

And she tossed the object up into the air, right towards her beloved. Jenna watched Hatcheface's hunting knife head towards her, turning end over end. She didn't know if she could catch it, not with the life being slowly choked out of her, but she was going to try. Had to.

She reached out, expecting the knife to land blade down in her palm, spearing her, but it landed perfectly, and Jenna gripped it hard in her fist. She immediately slashed out, carving out a chunk of flesh in Hatcheface's side.

The killer let go of Jenna and reeled back in pain. Jenna didn't let off and attacked again, slicing a groove out of the killer's arm.

Hatcheface got to her feet and danced around the roof, her back up against the tree now. She looked at Jenna, pain and confusion on her face. Jenna almost stopped right then, but then the anger inside of Hatcheface reared its ugly head again and she came at Jenna.

Jenna slashed out again, cutting open Hatcheface's open palm. It bled like a stuck pig and the killer stopped dead in her tracks. Jenna cried out an incredible war cry and slammed the knife down on Hatcheface's right foot, impaling it and sticking it to the roof. It was driven deep into the wood.

Hatcheface was clearly in pain and she grabbed for her foot, trying to pull the knife out. She got hold of the hilt of the knife but Jenna didn't give her anymore time.

She ran behind the killer and grabbed hold of the swinging noose and dropped it over Hatcheface's head. It settled around the killer's neck.

Everything stopped. Jenna was still for a moment. Hatcheface - Annie - looked up at Jenna, sad and confused. Even the storm seemed to stop for a moment.

Thunder crashed nearby and Jenna pulled the noose tight on Hatcheface's neck. She rounded around the woman and pushed her - with both hands - off the roof. The knife, still stuck in the wood of the roof, cut right through Hatcheface's foot, splitting it open between two toes.

Hatcheface seemed to hang in the air for a split second before falling, like some kind of bloody, insane cartoon character. Then she dropped down the side of the cabin, her hands instinctively going

for her neck. She managed to get a few fingers under the noose before she reached the end of the rope.

Jenna heard a snap but it wasn't Hatcheface's neck. It was the fingers she had slipped under the noose. They instantly broke when she reached the end of the fall.

Her feet hung above the ground by inches, so tall was she. She twitched in place, choking. She had landed right next to Bree and stared into her eyes for a moment.

Bree stared back, watching the woman die. It took a moment but she was finally still.

Jenna hung over the side, bleeding from multiple places. She breathed heavy, exhausted.

"You okay, baby?" she asked.

"Me?" Bree said. "What about you? You okay?"

"I'll be fine."

"That's good because I wanna go to--"

Suddenly, Hatcheface came alive again and grabbed hold of Bree with her one good hand. Bree screamed. Really screamed. A girl's scream, loud and high. It was as womanly as Jenna had ever seen her.

Hatcheface found Bree's broken hand, clutched it and the scream turned from one of fright to one of pain. Adrenaline pumped through Jenna's veins once again and she stood up, looked at the situation and decided on an action.

A crazy one.

She jumped off the roof, tracing the path of the rope down. Almost at the bottom, she reached out and grabbed hold of Hatcheface's waist, pulling her taught.

This time Jenna thought she heard the killer's neck snap, but she couldn't be sure as a huge crack of thunder roared through the sky. Hatcheface went limp again and Jenna let go of her, dropping to the ground in a heap.

Bree dropped to the ground and grabbed hold of her love and pulled her away from the hanging killer. They both looked up at Hatcheface's body, waiting to see if she would pounce again.

But it didn't happen.

The killer was still.

Quiet.

\*\*\*

The two survivors took a few minutes to look through the camp, making sure that there wasn't anyone left alive. All they found were bodies. Jenna was sad about her brother's death, of course, as well as her

other friends, but she wept over Shelley's body. Somehow, that was the worst. A young girl, not even a woman yet, cut down before her time. And with such brutality. It was tragic.

They splinted Bree's broken hand and patched up all their wounds. As Bree's hand was bandaged, Jenna told her that she had slept with Annie, explained that she had to, to survive. Bree nodded, understanding. She would have done the same.

They retrieved the keys to Owen Blade's car from his body - making sure to be very careful in the trap zone - and headed up the hill to the road. They checked the car, inside and out, both of them too paranoid to stop themselves. They found a few heavy-traps in the trunk of the car, waiting to be implemented, but nothing else.

Just as they were about to leave, Bree stopped them and suddenly dropped to the ground, looking under the car. She half-expected to see Hachetface there, reaching out for her, but of course there was nothing. Hachetface was dead. Really dead now, back at the camp, swinging on the noose in the wind.

They got into the car and started it up. They looked at each other for a moment. Jenna was driving, as tired as she was.

They kissed. And it was good.

Both of them started crying as the kiss ended. All their friends. Some family. It was all too much.

But they had survived. They had made it.

And, as the first rays of dawn peaked over the Rim, they got the car moving and headed down the road, not knowing what the future would hold for either of them. They resolved to stay together, for as long as possible. They knew they were better with each other than without.

## **Epilogue, "An Empty Campground"**

It was well and truly morning, the storm now passing slowly away, and a squirrel made its way through the empty camp. It was searching for food, for something to stow away in its home.

The animal came across many dead bodies, most of them already claimed by insects, which swarmed about them, slowly beginning to eat away at them.

But that was life - and death, as it were - and the squirrel paid the bodies no mind. It came across nuts and berries on the ground and grabbed them, eating some, stowing others away.

It reached an old cabin, one in which a tree had grown up beside. Some nut on the ground interested it.

Above, the last bit of the storm surged, a crash of thunder echoing across the Rim. The squirrel was startled and looked up at the sky. There were no predators near, that much was sure.

There was only that old tree. A bit of rope hung from the tree, swinging in place.

It was empty.

The squirrel looked at the tree, looked at the rope. Something disturbed it. Something about that empty rope.

Suddenly, it wanted nothing more than to get out of that camp, get out of there and return to the woods, return home. It bolted through the camp, heading a different direction than it had come, heading west.

It made its way to the path west, passing by the bodies of Owen Blade and a jackrabbit. It almost made it through when its strong, fast legs triggered a trap.

The jaws of the trap snapped up, instantly ripping it apart. There was nothing left of it but blood and fur.

And, back in the camp, an empty noose swung slowly in the wind. Somewhere, a forest animal cried out an eerie call.

That was all.

**THE END**

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## HATCHETFACE SUMMER SOUNDTRACK

- 1) Deep Purple - "Hush"
- 2) Harry Manfredini - "Return to Chez Jason/Titles"
- 3) Blue Oyster Cult - "(Don't Fear) The Reaper"
- 4) The Ramones - "Judy Is A Punk"
- 5) Rick Wakeman - "Theme from The Burning"
- 6) Foreigner - "Jukebox Hero"
- 7) John Carpenter & Alan Howarth - "The Shape Enters Laurie's Room"
- 8) Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers - "Even the Losers"
- 9) Brad Fiedel - "Just Before Dawn - Main Title"
- 10) Syreeta - "Happy Birthday to Me"
- 11) The Clash - "London Calling"
- 12) Pino Donaggio - "Coed Frenzy Disco"
- 13) Phil Collins - "In the Air Tonight"
- 14) The Chordettes - "Mr. Sandman"
- 15) Gary S Scott - "Final Exam - Main Title"
- 16) The Guess Who - "No Sugar Tonight/New Mother Nature"
- 17) Daryl Hall & John Oates - "Rich Girl"
- 18) Harry Manfredini - "Prowler"
- 19) Rick Springfield - "Jessie's Girl"
- 20) Nowherefast - "View Through a Tear"
- 21) Arthur Kempel - "Graduation Day End"
- 22) John Beal - "Sunrise/The Funhouse End Credits"
- 23) The Kinks - "(Wish I Could Fly Like) Superman"
- 24) John Carpenter & Alan Howarth - "Operation Room"
- 25) John McDermott - "The Ballad of Harry Warden"
- 26) H Kingsley Thurber - "Don't Go Out Into the Woods"