

Some Other World

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Some Other World

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Summary

Abigail's life was defined by an utter lack of agency, lack of choices, lack of power. She was dealt with the worst hand and forced to bet on it. Everything she tried was too little, too late.

She was ready for her life to end on a tragic note, as the sad tale of the girl that didn't know what else to do.

And then, for the first time, she was given a choice.

(or: Abigail goes back in time, and this time she'll make things go her way, no matter the cost)

Notes

Unlike my other works, where I switch around POVs, this one here will be narrated exclusively in Abigail's POV, both because I feel it fits the story better, and because I love writing her so much.

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Prologue

It wasn't like this, the first time. When her father, her biological father, had held a knife to her throat, she had been very present in the moment, aware of her imminent death and the words whispered in her ear.

She remembered the fear. Even when she heard the voice announcing the arrival of the FBI, she didn't feel hope, she assumed she would die on her kitchen floor, watching her father either get arrested or shot.

She fell to the floor; she heard the gunshots. She felt cold, but even in that state she was aware enough to feel the hands in her throat trying to stop the bleeding, she could see the blurry face of a man with dark hair and glasses above her, soon joined by another man. She then lost consciousness; it all went black.

At first, it felt the same this time. With Hannibal having a knife to her throat, she was sure she would die on the kitchen floor. She looked down at Will, who was trying to delay his own bleeding, knowing this time he wouldn't save her. Just as he couldn't save himself.

She was afraid, but most of all she was sad. The first time she had been in this situation, the fear was almost cathartic, the arrival of something she knew would come. She knew the other girls wouldn't be enough forever, and eventually her father would kill her. In a way, being faced with the moment she had dreaded so much had a feeling of finality.

This time, there was not such a feeling. She knew now she had been naïve, believing Hannibal's promises that they would all run away, leave this life behind, that she would have a family again.

She had been studying Italian, looking up universities in Italy and thinking about what she would like to study. Hannibal had been teaching her how to cook and play the harpsichord. She had been reading about fishing online, after Hannibal told her about Will's dreams of teaching her; she had never been interested in fishing, but after a while she had gotten attached to the idea of sharing that with Will, that it would be their thing.

Her mother had never liked pets, she said they were too much work, but now when she thought of her future, she had seen herself teaming up with Will to end up with multiple dogs, even if Hannibal complained.

The last time she had been dying, she had felt almost relieved that she could stop being afraid. This time, she was getting her dreams for the future taken away from her. Maybe a bit like with that first girl her father killed, but back then Abigail hadn't felt the full weight of the situation, unlike now that she was painfully aware of each one of her dreams being ripped away from her.

The biggest difference between the first time and this one, though, was that this time after the knife cut her throat, she felt immediately detached from the situation.

She was standing there, watching her body fall to the floor. Watching Will crawl to her.

He had to know he couldn't save her, the only reason she had survived the first time around being Hannibal, but still, he tried. He took his hand off from his own wound, which was very much still bleeding, and put it on her neck.

She didn't feel his hand. She didn't feel anything at all. She wondered if this was how it actually felt to die, and it was different from the first time because back then she wouldn't die, it wasn't her time.

Hannibal had already left, she hadn't paid attention to anything he said. She wondered how long it would take him to understand he couldn't just leave Will behind.

She wasn't sure if Hannibal was aware of just how gone he was for Will, that was one topic she was always too afraid to touch, not knowing if it would make him lash out. Maybe she should have, maybe she could have made him understand, and maybe then he would have stopped his stupid games and they wouldn't have ended up here.

"Will, don't be stupid! Stop your own bleeding! You can survive long enough for help to get here, I don't! Stop trying to save me, I never did anything to save you!" She screamed at the scene in front of her, but Will, of course, couldn't hear her.

She wished she could cry, but whichever state she found herself in, she didn't feel capable.

She could hear now the ambulance in the distance, so she assumed Agent Crawford had managed to call for help. Will's hands eventually lost all strength, leaving their place in her throat to end up on the floor next to his body.

Abigail wondered how long she was supposed to stay there, when she noticed Will was looking at something. Following his gaze, she jumped in her place, because just a few steps away from her corpse and Will, a giant stag was also bleeding out on the floor. A black stag... with feathers. It was a very surreal animal, but she guessed not more surreal than watching her death in third person.

She knelt next to the animal, putting a comforting hand on its stomach where it was bleeding. Same as Will.

The paramedics entered the house, quickly surrounding Will, who somehow still had a pulse. Someone checked her pulse, but she already knew they wouldn't find anything.

"Should I follow him?" She asked the stag, not taking her eyes off Will until he was on the stretcher and rushed to the ambulance. "I don't know the protocol for being dead, but I'm not disappearing, so I don't know what else to do."

I didn't know what else to do, so I did what he told me. Those had been her words to Will merely minutes ago.

She had been telling the truth. She couldn't bring herself to truly regret any of her actions, except maybe digging up Nicholas Boyle, because what else was she supposed to do?

Maybe she could have told the police about her dad, but that first time she wasn't even aware of what was happening until the girl was dead and her father convinced her she would end up in jail if anyone knew.

She had believed him at the time, not thinking clearly. By the time the fourth girl was dead, she knew that had been a lie, she hadn't known what was happening the first time. But by then, three deaths later, she was definitely an accomplice. She didn't want to go to jail, so she just kept going, knowing they would either get arrested, or her father would eventually kill her.

But then she didn't die and now there was this man that she was sure had called her father to warn him, but he was friends with Agent Crawford and with Doctor Bloom and with Will, so who would believe her?

And he told her she would be arrested for Nicholas Boyle, and this time she knew he was right. He was manipulating her, sure, but he was right. Doctor Bloom, Agent Crawford, Freddie Lounds, all of them would take it as proof she had helped her father. She would have ended up in jail.

So she knew Hannibal had called her father, she was reasonably sure the man was a serial killer, but he also helped her stay out of jail, and accepted her even when she confessed to helping her dad.

She also had Will, but he kept saying that murder was wrong and ugly and Abigail was afraid he too would turn on her if he knew the truth. He stayed by her side when he found out about Nicholas Boyle, but self-defense was very different from active participation in seven pre-meditated murders, even if she hadn't wanted to.

She understood now that he would have accepted her too. He tried to convince himself that she was innocent because if she was guilty, then he had to accept he cared more for her than for justice or morals, and that he would put her first. She knew that now, but how was she supposed to know that back then?

Even Hannibal, who somehow had known of the darkness in Will from the beginning, assumed he needed to have his brain fried and be incarcerated before he could accept it.

And then Will was going crazy, and she was going to get caught for Nicholas' murder and she only had Hannibal left and what else was she supposed to do?

Hannibal had kept her away from jail, away from her own guilt, and he talked of a bright future, just the three of them. Abigail could only believe him and hope for that future to come.

She thought it would work. Will clearly was in love with Hannibal, so much that he called to warn him the police knew. Why couldn't he just give in a bit before, enough for them to leave together? Why did he wait until it was too late?

She hoped it wasn't for her. That it wasn't some idea that he had to get justice for her death, that he couldn't run away with the man that killed her, even if by now he must have known

she helped his father.

When she first met him, Will had been mostly moved by guilt. He felt he needed to catch serial killers because he felt guilty for thinking like them, for enjoying being in their heads. This new Will was moved by revenge, by wrath, by bloodlust.

But if he chose Hannibal in the end, he must have also been moved by love. She wondered if that would have been enough before, if accepting her would have made him accept himself earlier. Accept Hannibal. Accept their attempt at a family.

But she hadn't known. And now that she did, it was too late. Her life had been defined by a lack of agency that was more frustrating even than the heartbreak and the loneliness.

"I think we could've been a good family," she told the stag. "Not a perfect one, even murder aside, but probably a good one. What a waste that we all realized that too late."

As if on cue, the stag began standing up. Abigail copied him, wondering if maybe it was like in those ancient cultures where an animal would take her to the other side or whatever.

It walked out of the kitchen, and she looked back one last time. Her body was still there, and she remembered Will's comment about only taping the silhouette of the body when it was still alive when removed from the scene.

She was dead, there wasn't any hurry in moving her, so her body would lay there until it was moved to a morgue and then... she wasn't sure what would happen then, she didn't have any more family. Whatever it happened, she would be wasted.

Her father would hate that. She hated that, and she couldn't help but be angry at Hannibal, which was ridiculous because he had just killed her and she was finally managing to summon some anger at him but it was because he let her go to waste. Abigail understood that he didn't exactly have time to do anything with her body, she was still alive when he had left, but it still hurt.

She followed the stag upstairs and to the end of the hallway. Before, there had only been one door, to the bathroom, but now there were three, none of them from the same design as the ones in the rest of the house.

"Is this a heaven or hell thing?" She couldn't keep the fear from her voice. She had never thought much of what the afterlife would be like, but she had accepted that if there was a heaven, she wouldn't go there.

That still meant there was an extra door, though. Hannibal had mentioned that the notion of Purgatory as a physical place had been conceived in the late Middle Ages, and that there were branches that didn't believe in the existence of Purgatory at all, so she doubted that whichever force had power over where the souls went after death would take so much input from humans.

The stag was looking at her. Waiting for her. Not wanting to disappoint, she opened the first door.

She didn't step in, but she could see her bedroom back in Minnesota, with her asleep on her bed. It was still night, but she had left her curtain open, letting in enough light to see the college brochures on her nightstand. The brochures of one college in particular.

Moving around, careful of not stepping in, she managed to get a look at the calendar on her desk, all the days before one circled in red crossed out.

The day of her first visit to a potential college.

"The day before my dad killed the first girl," she realized.

She closed the door immediately. She wasn't sure what any of this was, but she wanted to see her other options.

She opened the second door. It was a hospital room, and this time she was slightly less surprised when she saw herself in the bed, still intubated and connected to all those machines.

She was still in the comma. There was nothing around that gave her any idea of what day was it, but going by the previous door, it probably was the day before she woke up. Moving her eyes from her body, she saw Will sleeping on the sofa in the room.

She closed the door. She was getting an idea of what this was.

Abigail opened the last door, but this time there was just darkness. An endless void. Either because that was the afterlife, or because she wasn't allowed to know what the afterlife was like before making her choice.

And that's exactly what it was. It was a choice. She stepped back and opened the two other doors again so all three of them were open in front of her. She stood there, looking from one to the other.

The stag was still next to her, waiting, not making a sound. She had a pretty good idea of what this meant, though.

"I never had more opportunities because I didn't know any better. Now that I do know better, I'm getting a chance to change things?" She wasn't waiting for an answer, she didn't get one.

Abigail thought of the first door. She could go back to before her life went to shit. She could go to the police after his father killed the first girl, get him arrested. Maybe she could even stop him from killing her at all; knocking him out or stabbing him in the leg, letting him get just far enough so she could have evidence.

She could be without blood on her hands, her mother would live, and she would never get entangled with the FBI. She could go back to her simple life and forget any of this ever happened.

That wasn't her anymore, though. She could pretend all she wanted, but she would remember, and she would spend her whole life trying to hide who she truly was. No one would ever truly know her, because she was a murderer and a cannibal and she was more or less okay with that, but she would need to pretend to be someone who cared.

She would probably end up like Will: alone, hiding from the world, hiding from herself, trying day by day to be someone she wasn't, hoping one day it would become true.

She closed the first door. Hannibal, for all his defects, had thought her better than trying to deny her true self; only madness lay that way.

She looked between the two remaining doors.

She could take the third one. She was tired, she could just choose to end Abigail Hobbs' story here. A tragic tale with a high kill count. No more stress, no more people trying to manipulate her, no more lies.

Or she could take the second door. She could trust Will this time, making him get even more attached to the idea of their little family, and forcing him to accept himself faster. Convince Hannibal he didn't need to frame Will or hide his encephalitis from him. They could either stay in Baltimore or start a life abroad. She would be stressed as hell, and she would have to lie and manipulate, and she was risking ending up dead again, or even in jail.

They would understand her. They would know she was a killer and a cannibal, and they would accept her like that. Hannibal would teach her how to hide from the world without denying her true nature. She could have the wonderful life she had been dreaming of the last few months, perhaps one even better.

With time, she knew she would be able to even tell them of this. Of the stag with feathers and the choice she was presented and how last time it ended all in blood. Hannibal would believe her, maybe Will too.

She would tell them of this other world where it all ended badly. But it would be just a distant memory for her, something that never even happened to them.

She knew she was being naïve again, too optimistic. There were a thousand ways this would end badly, even worse than it had already ended, but the mere idea of having all the information, of being for once the one in control, of having the tools to make her own future, they were all she had ever wanted.

She looked at the stag. "Thank you."

No answer, but as if reading her mind, the stag walked through the second door, Abigail just a step behind it.

Potage

Chapter Summary

Abigail starts with her second chance at life, and discovers things won't be as easy as she would like.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Waking up from a coma was as horrible as Abigail remembered. Waking and having a tube shoved down your throat, which hurt when you moved, wasn't pleasant, and even after they removed the tube, she knew her throat would be sore for days.

Once the preliminary medical check passed, she remembered this was the first moment she needed to change.

Hannibal had explained to her while she was in hiding that Dr. Bloom had been suspicious of her behavior from day one, her manipulations had been too obvious, and she had been too practical. She looked like she was hiding something.

In her defense, her shock had been genuine, as was that her response to trauma was to become as practical and detached as possible, but if genuine made her look suspicious, then she could act different this time.

"My parents are dead, aren't they?" Abigail asked one of the nurses helping in her transfer to the mental facility.

"I'm afraid we were instructed to wait for your assigned psychiatrist before discussing any of the events with you," informed her. Abigail nodded; she had expected that answer.

Last time, she pretended not to remember because she didn't want to talk about it until she had time to calm herself down, and only later she found out the nurses weren't allowed to talk to her about it anyways, and so it hadn't been necessary.

But the fact that her instinctive reaction had been to lie about it hadn't sat well with Doctor Bloom, so hopefully this would look less suspicious for her.

She spent the rest of the time in silence, but was not unresponsive. She would nod and maybe give monosyllabic answers, enough not to seem catatonic, but she didn't look good.

When Doctor Bloom finally came in a few hours later, Abigail had reached for every memory she had about this conversation, preparing herself to make it go as smoothly as possible.

"Hi, I'm Alana Bloom," introduced herself Doctor Bloom.

"Are you the psychiatrist I'm waiting for?" Abigail couldn't remember exactly what she said the first time, but now that her approach wasn't to fake ignorance for things she is supposed to know anyways, it was as good a beginning as any.

"I am. Did they tell you I would come?"

"They told me they didn't want to talk to me about what happened before I could talk with you. What do you specialize in?"

"I'm sorry you had to wait," she answered first, probably thinking of how disorientating it must be to wake up from a coma and no one is willing to talk about what happened. It was, the first time. Not so much the second, as she couldn't talk of what happened before she woke even if someone was willing. "I specialize in family trauma, among other things."

"What happened to my parents?" Asked Abigail.

"Your mother was cremated, per her living will," Doctor Bloom started explaining. "Your father is... more difficult."

"Because he was crazy?"

"How much do you remember of what happened?" Asked the Doctor instead. Abigail let out a sigh, it was exhausting talking to people that only answered with more questions.

"We were making breakfast. Someone called and asked to talk with my dad. After that, he started looking nervous, my mom was trying to ask him if he received bad news." Abigail took a deep breath, thinking of that day. It had been so long ago, but she knew she wasn't expected to recall it in perfect detail. "Then he just... exploded. Suddenly my mom was bleeding and he had a knife to my neck. I heard the FBI coming in, I heard a gun, so I guess my father was shot, although that is a bit blurry. The two men tried to stop my bleeding."

And after that, nothing. She didn't say it, but it was obvious. Doctor Bloom nodded, understanding.

"What questions do you have? I can't promise you I can answer all of them, but I will try."

"Why was the FBI there? Even if the neighbors had heard something, they would have called the police, and I'm sure it would've taken them longer to arrive."

Doctor Bloom looked conflicted. She knew they couldn't avoid the topic forever, but she may have wanted more time to assess Abigail's state before bringing it up. She had been very clear in her question though, and it wouldn't build trust if she refused to answer something so basic.

"It was mostly a coincidence. The FBI was in Minnesota for a series of abductions, and one of the potential suspects was your father, so one of the agents and a consultant went to your house to ask some preliminary questions. They arrived just as your father injured your mother."

"Just as he killed her, you mean," corrected Abigail, because no matter what she pretended to be, she didn't like to be treated as fragile.

Abigail didn't push for more information, knowing she probably wouldn't get it. Doctor Bloom wouldn't want to overwhelm her.

Not the best approach, of course, as Freddie Lounds would get in here in a few hours and get her a much less careful version of the events, but only she knew that.

"And what will happen to me? It's still almost a year until I turn 18, and I don't have any more family."

Doctor Bloom looked a bit more comfortable with that question. Maybe a bit practical, but not avoiding the topic, it was still a question born from fear of the general situation.

"For now, you'll stay here. You've been through a traumatic situation and need time to heal. After that, we will work so you can rejoin the outside world."

It lacked a lot of facts, like the fact that Abigail was currently a suspect for being an accomplice in her father's murders. Also, that she was currently a social reject and most everyone assumed she was not only a killer but a cannibal, so even in that hypothetical future she wouldn't rejoin society in Minnesota, where it was most likely for someone to recognize her.

Abigail nodded, accepting the answer. She let her eyes wander through the room until his eyes landed in Doctor's Bloom bags. It probably wouldn't be suspicious to ask now, she would just look like she wanted time to process all this 'new' information.

"What are all those bags?"

Doctor Bloom jumped at the chance to try a more innocuous topic, and Abigail let herself be guided away from more morbid conversations for the time being.

Abigail needed less time than she would've thought to reach a decision on what to do with Freddie Lounds.

The first time around, she had stubbornly clung to the journalist, desperate to clear her name. During her time in hiding, she had enough time to reflect that it had been a poor decision.

It was impossible to convince the world, there would always be those that would never trust her, who would remain convinced she was guilty, and not all the books in the world or apparitions in podcasts would change their minds. On the contrary, the more she remained in the public eye, the more the True Crime community or internet forums would look at her story, looking for the smallest clue that she had been lying all along.

She now understood that she only needed to convince the FBI of her innocence and disappear from the public eye, and it would not help her with Agent Crawford to talk to Freddie Lounds.

Away from Minnesota, that would be enough to build her life again, and if not, maybe she could convince Will and Hannibal they should leave the country anyway.

Not on the run this time, hopefully.

And so, she would keep Freddie at an arm's length. Not openly antagonistic, as Will was a good example of how petty Freddie was, and part of disappearing from the public eye included letting her name be buried in dozens of others that cycled daily in Tattle Crime.

Her conversation with Freddie went more or less the same as it went the first time around, at least as far as Abigail could remember. It was too soon for her to give the journalist a firm no without it looking like she had something to hide, and she needed to have an excuse for knowing many things Doctor Bloom skipped over.

"How did my father become a suspect?"

"A man named Will Graham. Works for the FBI but isn't FBI. He catches insane men because he can think like them. Because he is insane."

Abigail stopped herself from frowning. The first time around she hadn't questioned the harsh election of words, but knowing what she did now, she was a bit surprised the woman hadn't ended up in Hannibal's dinner table, she was very rude.

Will, at this time, had been just working as an agent for a bit over three weeks, and he had already caught two serial killers. Abigail had no idea what the average number of serial killers getting caught in any frame of time was, but Will must have been setting a record. To an outside viewer, he was as close to a real-life Sherlock Homes as it could get.

Abigail knew perfectly well what Will was truly capable of, she saw the photos of Randall Tier's corpse, and Hannibal revealed to her that Will had killed him by beating him to death. The man was even more insane than Freddie could speculate right now.

But not because of his empathy thing, and that was really all Freddie had to go off right now.

Thankfully, Abigail had timed correctly the conversation, because at that moment Will, Hannibal, and two orderlies walked through the door.

"Speak of the devil," murmured Freddie when she saw who had arrived.

"Would you excuse us please?" While his words were polite, Will's voice basically screamed fuck off. Abigail had to stop herself from smiling.

"I'm not leaving you alone with her," argued Freddie. She looked genuinely defensive, and Abigail understood how she could have thought Freddie really wanted to help her.

She knew better now though, Freddie wanted a story that would sell, if she was truly guilty or not was of little consequence.

Right now, only Will and Alana wanted to help her, even if for the wrong reasons. She would eventually fix Will's image of her for one more accurate, and add Hannibal to the list, but that would be later.

"I'm special Agent Will Graham," introduced himself Will.

"By Special Agent, he means not really an Agent. He didn't get past the screening process. He was deemed too unstable," made sure to add Freddie, before extending her business card to her. "If you want to talk..."

Will snatched the card out of her card without saying anything.

"Miss Lounds, I insist you must leave the room," finally interjected Hannibal, giving the orderlies the sign to force her to leave.

Abigail had prepared herself since she first woke up for this. It was vital that she didn't react to Hannibal's voice, as she knew that if the man had the smallest suspicion that she would tell anyone about him being the man on the phone, she was as good as dead.

It was hard, though. Hearing his voice briefly took her back to his kitchen, his knife cutting through her neck.

Maybe she had underestimated her trauma over her own death

"Abigail, this is Doctor Hannibal Lecter, do you remember us?" Asked Will once Freddie had been escorted out.

"I do," she answered, then took a moment to think of her next words, not wanting to scare Will off as she had done last time. "You were the ones that arrived at my house when my dad was about to kill me."

Neutral, not rubbing Will's murder of her father in his face but making sure he knew she did know.

"Abigail, you've been in bed for three weeks, why don't we take a walk?" Suggested Hannibal. This time it was easier to hear his voice, which she was glad for since unlike the first time, when he was mostly looking at Freddie, this time his eyes were fixed on her.

She nodded, and then rejected the offer when Will asked if he should call a nurse to help her change. Once both men were out of the room, she changed into some of the clothes Doctor Bloom brought her, and the woman had an amazing eye, because most of the clothes fitted her perfectly.

She hesitated for a second with the scarves. She didn't feel the urge to cover her scar anymore, she grew out of it after spending months with only herself and Hannibal for company, but the fact that Doctor Bloom had the initiative to bring them before even talking

to Abigail meant that covering the scar was a standard and expected behavior. She didn't want to give the Doctor any reason to suspect, so she chose one and put it on.

She stepped out of the room and reached immediately for the arm Will offered her; if she hadn't been proud enough not to accept she still needed a bit of help the first time, she wouldn't be now.

They walked in silence to the inside garden. It was a beautiful place, but it had never helped her feel less trapped.

"I'm sorry we couldn't save your mother. We did everything we could, but she was already gone," started Will while helping her sit down on the bench.

"I know, I saw it. I barely survived, and just because you stopped him halfway through." A small push not to make him feel like he had to feel guilty.

After Matthew Brown, after Randall Tier, she wasn't sure she could hear his forced guilt without laughing in his face. Killing clearly wasn't something ugly for him, at least not if he thought the person deserved it.

She would need to work her way into making him admit it, but a good first step was not letting him say those lies out loud in the first place, maybe it would prevent him from believing it himself.

"You saw it all?" Asked her Hannibal.

"Kind of. I know it happened, but most of the events are fuzzy in my head. I do remember his voice. He kept telling me he was sorry and to hold still, that he was going to make it all go away." She looked down, even when as she said the words, she could hear her father's voice. She had dreamed about it so many times.

"He was genuine when he told you he was sorry, he thought he was protecting you from his mistakes, it was what you brought out in him."

Abigail closed her eyes, it was hard hearing that from Will, because she knew he was right.

Didn't mean she liked it.

She resisted the urge to look at Hannibal, though she wondered what Will would make from what happened in that other world. Hannibal had been punishing Will for his betrayal by killing her, that much she could tell, but she wondered if, in his own way, he had also been protecting her from his mistakes: Medea killing her kids so they wouldn't end up slaves.

She had no idea if that would make her feel better or worse about it.

"It's not all I brought out in him," she finally said.

"Did he tell you about the young women he murdered?"

Abigail stayed silent, knowing Will would come to her rescue from having to answer that.

"You don't have to answer that right now, if you don't want to," Will reassured her, looking at Hannibal with a small panic. It was almost funny.

"But we will have to ask you those questions eventually," Hannibal added.

"Do you really have to? Isn't the case closed already?" She asked, not wanting to leave place for Will's pity party. She would eventually let him talk to her about his nightmares, but only until he could be more honest with her about them.

"Your father was found guilty, but the fact that he isn't alive to confess leaves a lot of loose ends that need resolution before closing the case," explained Will.

Abigail sighed, letting her discontent be clear.

"I want to go home," she finally set for. Agent Crawford wanted her to go, so it may not be necessary for her to say it, but if she could make them feel less guilty about having to drag her back there...

"Are you sure is not too soon?" Asked her Will.

Abigail stopped for a moment. He hadn't asked that the first time. That meant that with just a slightly less confrontational attitude, Will wasn't as scared to try and care for her.

It was a bit sad, how low the bar was, how little she had to do to make Will cling harder even though he didn't know her, how desperate he was deep inside for someone to connect with.

She didn't let herself feel bad for exploiting his loneliness, after all her end goal had him ending up with a family other than his dogs that accepted all of him, even what he himself didn't accept yet. It was for his own good.

"I'm sure. I know I can't ever go back to Minnesota, people there are more likely to recognize my name, but I need to say goodbye to my home," she remained firm, but her tone was appreciative of Will's concern.

"In that case," it was Hannibal who answered, "we will do everything in our power to give you that opportunity for closure."

The next day, Doctor Broom came early to pick her up. Technically, it was only on weekends that she should be allowed to leave the hospital with someone authorized, but as this was official FBI business, there was no trouble in taking her and a small bag with some of the clothes Dr. Bloom had brought her before taking her to the airport.

In the taxi, Doctor Bloom tried to stir up conversation.

"Are you still sure you want this? Will and Hannibal said you thought it could bring you closure, but you've had little time to put your emotions in order, it's okay if you change your mind."

It was the kindest way Abigail had ever been told that someone didn't trust her state of mind to make decisions, she couldn't even be mad.

"I'm still sure," she promised. "Are we getting an FBI escort? Is it still a crime scene?"

Doctor Bloom tensed, before forcing herself to assume a relaxed position. She was uncomfortable with one of the two questions.

"It's no longer an active crime scene, the techs already took all the possible evidence they could find," she answered the second question. It didn't look like she struggled with the question, in fact she looked as if she was expecting it. She had been uncomfortable with the second one. "Hannibal and Will are coming with us, so I guess Will is our FBI escort."

Abigail knew Alana wasn't really on board with Will being an FBI agent, but she felt there was more to it. She wasn't sure what more there was though, so she put it aside to analyze when she got more information.

"Really? I feel a bit bad now. The three of you look like very busy people, and I just made you do a complete reschedule of your week."

Doctor Bloom smiled at that, like she thought it was a cute thing to say.

"Don't worry about that, Abigail, we are glad we can be there for you. Besides, working for the FBI, even as consultants, we get used to last-minute changes of plans. At this point, Will must have his dog-sitter in speed dial," she added to make lighter the situation.

"He has a dog?" Abigail already knew the answer, but she needed to have a reason to know it.

"Try seven," she corrected conspiringly. Abigail let herself look surprised, and then made a dramatic frown.

"Now I feel bad for taking him from his seven fluffy kids, that's even worse than taking him from his work."

Doctor Bloom laughed, and let the conversation be put to rest until they reached the airport.

There, they met with Will and Hannibal, who had already arrived.

Abigail let the three adults have their conversation while they waited for their plane. Eventually, Doctor Bloom announced she would go for coffee for everyone, and Hannibal offered to accompany her, which left her alone with Will for the first time.

Originally, she had planned to ask him about his dogs, something easy that wouldn't scare him off, but her eyes set on his glasses, and the question she had been carrying for months left her mouth without a care.

"Are your glasses even real? You also had them on when you arrived to the hospital, and then took them off. And now you have them on again." It had always bother her a bit how there never seemed to be a pattern on when he would put them on or take them off.

She hadn't planned to ask about it, but now she would have to work with it.

Will looked affronted, he wasn't expecting to be asked about it, especially considering it was only her third time seeing him. Another reason it was weird she would catch up so soon, she really needed to think more before speaking.

"They aren't real. It's just easier to avoid eye contact with them, especially in places with a lot of people," he confessed. Abigail hummed, it sounded honest, and it fitted with Will's oddness.

"What does our psychiatrists friends think about that?" She teased, and Will looked even more confused about what to do. He looked around, but Hannibal and Doctor Bloom weren't coming to his rescue any time soon.

"Doctor Lecter has been gracious enough not to mention it, even though I know he knows. Caught him checking them when I left them in his desk." Will shook his head, not yet used to Hannibal's invasive shenanigans, but Abigail knew he would get used to them eventually. "Doctor Bloom still thinks I'm in denial about my myopia."

That pulled a surprised laugh out of Abigail. Will looked proud of making her laugh, even if it was by confessing something he clearly never discussed with anyone.

"Doctor Bloom told me you have seven dogs," said Abigail to change the topic to one less dangerous, "are you the kind of dog dad that has photos of all his dogs?"

"What do you think?" He retorted.

Abigail took a moment to think of it. He hadn't ever seen Will a lot with his phone or anything, but he gave a proud dog dad vibe.

"I think you are."

Instead of answering, Will took out his phone, it had a pre-determinate background and no password, and opened the gallery. There she was greeted with dozens of dog pics. She took the phone out of his hand and started scrolling, seeing the mismatched set of previous strays. She never had a chance to meet them before, but they were so cute. She found a photo with five of them in it and leaned in so Will could see the screen too.

"Introduce them, all of them."

Finally looking relaxed, Will started to name them, giving her context of how old they were, how long he had had them, and a bit of their personality. He totally was a proud dog dad, she knew it.

That's how Doctor Bloom and Hannibal found them, cooing over dog pictures. At their arrival, Will sat straight again, putting a bit more of space between him and Abigail. She let

him do it, he had already introduced all the dogs, but she didn't give him his phone back yet, there were still a few pictures she hadn't seen.

Doctor Bloom looked at Will with vague disapproval, but he hadn't done anything wrong, at least not that Abigail could think, so she remained quiet while giving them their coffee. Hannibal looked amused, which gave Abigail even more certainty that she was missing something.

"Have you met his dogs?" She asked Doctor Bloom and Hannibal, trying to retain the light atmosphere, but it was too late, Will had retreated into himself again, and just gave a vague acknowledgment when Abigail gave him back his phone.

"I have," answered Doctor Bloom, finally taking his eyes from Will and looking at Abigail instead. "It's incredible how well-behaved they are, if you ignore all the hair, you wouldn't be able to tell seven dogs live in his house."

"I haven't had the honor yet," complemented Hannibal. "But I have heard wonders of them from both Will and Alana."

"You don't look much like a dog person," prodded Abigail.

"I like them well enough," he defended himself, "I like most animals in fact, I've just never felt my life is adequate for a pet."

"If you miss being around animals, feel free to feed and take out my dogs next time Jack calls me for an out-of-state case," suggested Will as a joke.

What surprise was for him and Doctor Bloom when they heard Hannibal's answer.

"I would be delighted to do it." Nothing about his answer indicated he was joking, because he wasn't, but Will still didn't look sure if he should believe it or not.

Abigail knew Hannibal had more nefarious intentions than just met the dogs, which probably included looking around like a creep in Will's house, and maybe make a copy of his key. She wasn't sure if Hannibal was already thinking of framing Will for murder, but the man would want to be prepared.

But he also never said anything about Abigail feeding a stray cat that sometimes came around the house on the cliff where she stayed at times. He also spoke fond of Will's dogs when telling her about them, so she was partially sure he was telling the truth about liking animals.

Before anyone could think of how to revive that conversation, they were called to board their plane. Abigail's seat was next to Alana, while Will and Hannibal were on other sections of the plane, so she could only sight and hope that a small nap would make it go faster.

“I was sort of expecting a body outline in chalk or tape,” Abigail commented at the entrance to her house.

“They only do that if you're still alive and taken to the hospital before they finish the crime scene,” explained Will.

Abigail forced herself to look away from the floor. Last time, she had felt guilty that she hadn't been able to help her mother, now she was in an even worse situation where she decided to come back to a time when her mother was already dead. She would eventually let go of the guilt, just as she had managed for everyone that had died in her name, but she would still need a bit longer.

Thankfully, her watery eyes weren't suspicious in the situation she found herself in.

“Does that happen a lot? Or do tv shows only do it so it looks more morbid?” She asked, wanting to get distracted from the fact that her mother's blood was as much in her hands as in her father's.

“Happens less than TV would lead you to believe. I worked in the homicide department when I was still in the police, most of the time people were already dead when we arrived, no point in making chalk drawings.”

Abigail nodded and opened the door without looking back. The house was as she remembered it, scrubbed clean and with all the pictures turned over.

“If you ever want to go, you just have to say so and we will go,” said Doctor Bloom once again. Abigail had to resist the urge to roll her eyes. This wasn't even concern anymore, Doctor Bloom clearly had been against this trip, and now she just wanted to be proven right in that Abigail wasn't ready to come.

“I don't have any urge to go back to the hospital yet, I have a feeling I'll see enough of it in the near future.”

She walked to the kitchen, looking at the floor where her blood had been once. It didn't look as intimidating after all she had been through.

“So, what exactly is that you do?” She asked, turning to Will, “Come to these places and think about killing?”

“Yes, make myself think like your dad, and people like him. It's easier for me to follow their train of thought, understand what made them do what they did,” he tried to explain.

“And what does it feel like? To be them?”

“It feels like I'm talking to their shadows suspended on dust.”

“And what did my father's shadow tell you about what happened here?” She looked around the kitchen, trying to remember where everything had been.

Will looked slightly taken aback. He had expected the confrontation about him thinking like killers, he had heard what Freddie had told her, after all, but maybe he hadn't expected she would be interested in what he thought.

"That these attacks were desperate, different from all his previous ones. He knew he was running out of time, someone told him we were coming."

"The man on the phone?" She asked on cue, without looking back to Hannibal.

"It was a blocked call. Did you recognize his voice?" He asked, looking vaguely in her direction. He didn't look hopeful, assuming that her choice of words of *the man on the phone* implied she didn't know how it was.

"I had never heard it before."

"Was there anybody new in your father's life?" Asked now Doctor Bloom. "Someone you met or someone he talked about."

"Not that I remember."

"He may have been contacted by another serial killer, a copycat," added Will.

"Someone who is still out there," she pretended to guess.

Will nodded, he looked ashamed. Abigail had to resist the temptation to look at Hannibal, wondering what was going on inside his head.

With an awkward silence, everyone walked back to the living room. Abigail took one of the boxes left by the cleaning team, opened it and started looking. It had many books, some which hadn't even been on this floor.

Last time she hadn't tried to take anything because she had been overwhelmed by the situation. This time she wouldn't try to take anything because she didn't want it. The least attachments to her previous life, the easier it would be to concentrate on her future one. She couldn't afford distractions, and she didn't have Hannibal's capacity to just not care, so out of sight out of mind would have to work.

She took another box, looking for something more interesting. This one had small ornaments that used to be on the furniture.

"Was my father delusional?" Asked Abigail the three adults watching her. Doctor Bloom had at least tried to look around in other boxes, but Will and Hannibal weren't trying to dissimulate the fact that they were looking at her.

"One cannot be delusional if the belief in question is accepted as ordinary by others in that person's culture or subculture. Or family." Hannibal looked very satisfied with his answer, even if it was hardly one.

She looked at Will, he nodded in an automatic way that indicated that he was either not paying attention, or he felt Hannibal's answer was perfectly logical and adequate. Doctor

Bloom, on the other side, looked a bit conflicted. In the end, she also nodded in agreement.

Probably a worship complex over Hannibal. She may not really agree with what he was implying but respected him too much to say so.

“Well, he didn’t seem delusional to me. He was a perfectionist. After he skinned a deer, he would pluck the loose hair. Most people use a torch, but dad would remove all the hair by hand, he wanted to make sure he got every one of them,” she sighed, pretending she was trying to make sense of the mess she was being presented.

“Your dad left almost no evidence,” murmured Will. The only indication he had been paying attention to the previous conversation was the opportune timing of his comment.

“Is that why you brought me? To look for evidence?”

“It was one of many considerations,” answered Hannibal, to Doctor Bloom’s relief because she looked ashamed of that question.

Abigail took a deep breath; she remembered this part well. The first time around, she had done it impulsively, a risky move that could’ve gotten her killed.

Now, though, she knew it wouldn’t.

“Are we going to re-enact the crime? You can be my mom, you can be my dad” she enlisted looking at Doctor Bloom and Will respectively, “and you can be the man on the phone.”

She made eye contact with Hannibal and held it for a long moment. Enough so Hannibal would understand that she knew, but not enough so Will and Doctor Bloom suspected something.

“I don’t think you will find any of those girls,” Abigail resumed when it became clear she would get no answer to that, as she went back to looking through boxes.

“Why do you say that?” Will sounded genuinely curious.

“He’d honor every part of them. He used to make plumbers putty out of elk bones, you know, to seal threads, or at least that’s what he told us. Whatever bones were left of those girls are probably holding pipes together,” she explained.

“Where did he make this putty?” Asked now Hannibal.

“At the cabin, I can show you...”

“Abigail,” interrupted Doctor Bloom. Abigail hadn’t even noticed when the women had stood up and gone to the door, “there’s someone here.”

“Hey, Abigail.”

Marissa. Abigail felt her heart stop for a moment. She had somehow completely forgotten about Marissa.

She felt panic rise in her, but she didn't let it show.

"Hey, Marissa," she said as she stood up to greet her friend. "Can we go outside to talk?" She asked Will. As their FBI escort, he probably had the most authority on how much supervision she must have.

He just nodded, and Abigail took Marissa's hand to lead her to the back of the house.

She didn't know what to do. If she didn't do anything, Marissa would die *again*, just because she was a bit rude when talking back to her mother.

If she didn't do anything, it could be Abigail who died. She wasn't sure if the Copycat making a re-appearance was always the plan Hannibal had, or if he was merely inspired by Marissa's rudeness. If it was the first, then she should be able to save Marissa, but if it was the second, and she saved her friend, then there would be no more Copycat, Nicholas Boyle wouldn't come, she wouldn't kill him, Hannibal wouldn't help her hide the body, and if he didn't have any power over her now that he was certain Abigail had recognized his voice, then the most logical path would be to kill her.

She half followed her conversation with Marissa, just paying enough attention to answer, but her brain was screaming at her to do something.

But she didn't know what to do. She couldn't risk not killing Nicholas, it was too dangerous to make Hannibal feel he wasn't in control. Was letting things happen, knowing it would kill Marissa, any worse than choosing the door she did, letting her mom remain dead?

It felt worse. Abigail loved her mom, but they were never close. Marissa had been her best friend for *years*.

"I don't think you did it," assured her Marissa. Just as in cue, a third voice came from behind a tree.

"I do," said Nicholas Boyle.

"This is private property," intervened Abigail, knowing it wouldn't be of any help.

"You were the bait. Is that how it worked? Lure 'em back to daddy for dinner? How'd you trap my sister? Chat her up? Say things girls say?" He looked very worked up, and he was so very sure of what he was accusing her of.

And yet, he came to her to try to explain it wasn't him who killed Marissa. Such a coward.

"Piss off!" Marissa took a small rock from the dirt and throw it his way, just missing for a small distance.

Her almost scream had alarmed Will and Hannibal of the third presence, Abigail saw them coming their way.

"You help dad cut my sister's lungs out while she was still using them?"

Marissa kept throwing rocks at him until one hit him, just as Will and Hannibal got there. Abigail could see Doctor Bloom coming with Marissa's mother.

Abigail didn't have any time left.

Nicholas, seeing all the adults coming, turned around and ran.

"Who was that?" Asked Will. He sounded angry, although not too much.

"Somebody's brother," Abigail answered, remembering she shouldn't know who he was.

Marissa's mom finally reached them; the woman looked livid. She'd never been Abigail's biggest fan, so Abigail wasn't surprised at how opposed she was at Marissa seeking out Abigail.

"Marissa, come home now," the woman ordered.

Abigail had a second at most to do something.

She did nothing.

"Stop being such a bitch," snapped Marissa. Abigail looked down, not wanting to see Hannibal's face, afraid of seeing his decision being made, even if she knew Hannibal would never let something so serious show on his face. She felt the hand of her friend in her shoulder, giving her a small reassurance. "See you later, Abigail."

"Goodbye, Marissa." If she sounded more solemn than normal, no one seemed to notice. She kept her eyes on her friend, watching her walk next to her mom until the house blocked her view.

When she finally turned around, Hannibal and Will were coming back from the forest, having already tried and failed to locate Nicholas.

"He's gone," announced Will. "You've never seen him before?"

"No." Abigail felt relieved at hearing her voice didn't tremble, didn't break. "Have you?"

Will shook his head.

"We should report this, yes?" Asked Hannibal, already taking out his phone, probably to explain the situation to Agent Crawford. Will nodded and took a few steps closer to Abigail.

"We should take you back to the hotel, we can look at your father's cabin tomorrow."

"How did he know I would be here?" Asked Abigail instead of nodding, as she could remember doing last time. "How did Marissa know I would be here?"

Without the overwhelming feelings this day had given her the first time, she could see clearly the situation, and understand how many things didn't fit with the information she had.

“Someone either found out or let it out. I would check TattleCrime, Freddie Lounds seems to have a penchant to get you into trouble by letting her mouth lose.” He looked angrier than he after seeing Nicholas, the mere idea of Freddie Lounds making his blood boil.

Abigail couldn't blame Hannibal for having believed Will had killed her if he always looked like that when thinking of her.

“Will,” reprimanded him Doctor Bloom, and only then did Abigail notice Will's choice of words.

“A penchant? So it wouldn't be the first time?”

“I don't think this is a good time to have this conversation,” insisted Doctor Bloom.

“Are you forbidding him from telling me? Or is it just a suggestion?” Questioned Abigail, wanting to know how much authority the doctor would be willing to show in front of her.

Doctor Bloom looked at her, disapproval clear in her eyes, but Abigail was supposed to be a difficult teenager, it wasn't anything that made her step back. Doctor Bloom turned to Will, trying to get him on her side.

Abigail took a step in his direction, so she could really be next to Will. He wasn't looking at her, nor was he looking at Doctor Bloom, but the fact that Abigail had stepped closer to him meant a lot, she was trusting him.

Hannibal was still on the phone, Doctor Bloom understood she wouldn't get support on this.

“Just a suggestion,” she finally conceded. Abigail sent a kind smile her way, not wanting her to feel like Abigail was deliberately going against her wishes. She looked back at Will.

“So, when did she get me in trouble before?”

“We had a case, a bit over a week ago,” started blabbing Will, halfway between glad Abigail trusted him to ask, and half feeling guilty for bringing up the topic in the first place. “The man was looking for a connection with his victims, inducing a diabetic coma before burying them. Lounds chose that moment to publish an article that implied... it wasn't very flattering. He somehow got the idea that I would understand him, so, uh, he tried...”

Will looked very troubled, looking for the words. Abigail hadn't heard of anything of this, so she didn't know what was making Will so reluctant to tell her. It must have been related to the article, and it's not like Will wasn't being vocal about his distaste for Freddie Lounds, so that left...

“It's okay, I won't blame you for it. It's not like you can control what she says.” Abigail kept her eyes on Will, looking for any sign she had hit the nail, and got it when Will answered with a smile. It was not a happy one, more like an indulging one, but it was something, and it gave him the courage to continue.

“Lounds somehow found out I had been visiting you in the hospital, and told him about it, so he tried to kidnap you from the hospital to bury you too.”

“So that... I could connect with you?” Abigail wasn’t sure how burying someone alive could make people connect, but a quick glance at Doctor Bloom and she was sure it was not a train of conversation that the psychiatrist would approve of.

Will nodded, not knowing what else to say. Abigail could understand his guilt now, even if it had been Freddie’s article the direct culprit, it was Will that the killer had wanted to bury Abigail for.

She knew Will was lonely, so she couldn’t help but wonder if, even for a second, Will considered it. He had been so sure she would reject him once she woke up, and by some logic that she couldn’t understand, but Will surely did, this man had offered him an opportunity to connect with her.

“Thankfully, Will was in the hospital at the time, so he managed to stop Stammets before he even got you out of the building,” finished Hannibal. Abigail gave a small jump, having not realized the man had finished his conversation and was listening to theirs.

“What did Jack say?” Asked Will, jumping at the opportunity to get out of the spotlight.

“He said it would be better if we stay at the hotel, lest someone less easily scared off that our mysterious intruder recognizes her. Tomorrow we’ll get a police escort to the cabin.”

“Great, I went from being trapped in the hospital to being trapped in my hotel room,” complained Abigail. *As if I hadn’t spent the last months hiding from the world already*, she thought. “Do any of you know any game? I suppose internet access is still a no-go, and I didn’t bring any books.”

“There was a small mall near the hotel, maybe we can get a deck of cards or something,” suggested Doctor Bloom.

“We should get some food first,” added Hannibal, and they all started walking to the car.

In the end, they did get a deck of cards, and some ingredients to do some easy sandwiches in the hotel. It was simple, but Hannibal looked like he would just go on a hunger strike if they ordered fast food, so it would serve as a compromise.

Once they reached the hotel, Abigail dragged everyone to her room. Will tried to get out of it, claiming he felt tired and wanted to go to sleep early. It may have been true, Abigail couldn’t know, but she still pulled out the sad puppy eyes and Will magically changed his mind.

They played for a while and Will showed unknown, at least to the three of them, abilities in every game: go fish, poker, blackjack. Which was a bit annoying because they were supposed to also be luck games, and yet Will lost just once to Doctor Bloom in blackjack.

"If you ever get bored of the FBI, you should try your luck in Las Vegas," joked Abigail, which got a chuckle out of everyone.

The first one to retire was Hannibal. It was still early, around seven, but he said he received an urgent call from a patient. Doctor Bloom was understanding, making a passing comment on how demanding it was to be as available as possible to patients.

Abigail knew the call was a lie. He was going to prepare for the Copycat kill. And yet again, she was in a situation where she could potentially stop him, make something up so he was forced to come back to the hotel room. But that would stop a kill from happening at all, and that meant no Nicholas Boyle and no hiding the body.

She had been so confident she would be able to fix everything this time around, but she was now learning the painful lesson that even if she had all the information, she couldn't fix everything. Horrible things would have to happen for the greater good that was her happy ending.

She wondered if that was how Hannibal justified everything he did to Will. Hiding the encephalitis, framing him for murder, if those were just horrible things that had to happen for the greater good that was Will's shedding of his sheep clothing. It was frightening, thinking that Hannibal not only would approve of what she was doing, but that it was something he would do too.

It was also empowering. Hannibal was the ultimate monster, the apex predator, the serial killer that was never caught. He knew how to make things go his way, and Abigail needed things to go her way now.

It was with that understanding that she let Hannibal go, not letting it show in her face that she knew the man was going to kill her last friend.

Doctor Bloom eventually left to call her mother, who apparently had called her earlier and she had forgotten to call back. She didn't say she was coming back, but the glare she gave Will spoke loud enough. He wasn't trusted with Abigail.

"Maybe I should go too..." suggested Will not even five minutes after Doctor Bloom left, just as they finished a round of poker. Abigail glanced at the clock.

"It's not even nine o'clock, are you really falling asleep already?"

The resistance was expected, but Will still looked unsure how to answer it.

"It's just that Doctor Lecter and Alana already left," he pointed out, as if it was an explanation. To be fair, it kind of was, but Abigail was not above playing dense.

"They left because they had stuff to do, do you?"

"I... brought my students essays, in case I had time to grade them," it sounded weak, even to him, Abigail knew she could convince him to keep playing if she wanted to, but she saw a better opportunity.

"You can grade them here, I'll just entertain myself," she proposed.

Will looked at her, she could hear the grains turning in his head.

"You don't want to be alone," he concluded.

Abigail almost laughed. She had sentenced her best friend to death, and what else would she think of if she was alone? Of course she didn't want to.

"I don't want to be alone with myself, if that makes sense," she elaborated.

"Yeah, it does," he sympathized, and not in the way he did when he was feeling too many of the other person's feelings. He sympathized in a way that talked of personal experience.

"Then you can grade the essays here. Can I use your computer?" She knew it was too much to hope he would just comply, but she had to try.

"I don't think Doctor Bloom will like that, what do you want to look up?" He stood up, went to his briefcase to take out the essays and a red pen. He didn't come back, waiting to see if she could convince him to risk getting in trouble with Doctor Bloom.

"Will you believe me if I say I just want to watch makeup tutorials?" She tried, to give him the opportunity of plausible deniability.

"I won't pretend I know what teenagers do in their free time, but for some reason, I don't believe you."

Abigail smiled at that. Will said for some reason, even if they both knew the reason was that Abigail wasn't making the least attempt at being convincing. He wasn't choosing plausible deniability, and he still hadn't rejected her petition of using his laptop. It was moment to try for honesty.

"You said it may have been Freddie Lounds who gave away I was back in Minnesota. And it turns out it is the second time she puts me in a potentially dangerous situation. Yet, she came into my room and introduced herself as my potential savior, as the one I should trust."

Will's face showed immediate understanding. He didn't look pleased with the idea, but he still wasn't turning her down.

"You want to look up TattleCrime."

Abigail gave a guilty smile and knew she would need to make a good case.

"Look, I understand that Doctor Bloom is the professional in child trauma, but even if I'm a minor, I'm not a kid. In fact, I'm under a year away from being eighteen, and I don't have my parents anymore, I'll be on my own, so maybe what I need to stop feeling so helpless is not to be kept away from the world but knowing what the hell is happening."

Will looked reticent but took the laptop out of his bag. He kept looking between it and Abigail.

"I'm pretty sure this is a terrible idea."

Abigail smiled, taking that as her win. She moved the chairs they were using closer and put them looking at the door.

"Don't worry, I'll have a second tab with the makeup tutorials and will switch immediately if Doctor Bloom comes back, you won't get in any trouble." She extended her hands to take the laptop from Will's hands and let him sit next to her and arrange the essays on the table to work.

Abigail lost no time opening the computer and connecting to the hotel's internet. She prepared the YouTube makeup video tab, halfway through a video, to make it more natural, and opened another tab to look up TattleCrime.

The most recent article was indeed about her. It was not much, just that she had woken up from the coma she had been in, and how the FBI immediately sent Will to talk to her; how it raised questions of whereas the FBI had reason to believe she knew something, which was stupid because if the FBI had any substantial evidence, she wouldn't be running around Minnesota.

Scrolling down, there were a few articles about random murders, mostly crimes of passion or muggings gone wrong, until she arrived to an article describing how the "Mushroom Killer" killed someone in front of her and forced her to tell him about Will.

She then went on a rant of how Stammets must have felt the affinity to Will because "psychopaths recognized each other" which was just stupid, because Abigail may know very little of psychopathy, but she was pretty sure Will met little to no criteria.

Hannibal, on the other hand...

"Did you really tell her that she shouldn't piss off a guy that thinks about killing for a living?" She asked, unable to contain her laughter, it was the most impulsive thing she had known Will to say. Or anyone.

Will, who had been immersed in the essays, took a moment to process the question, and then groaned.

"Don't remind me, my boss wasn't happy with me," he confessed. He thought a bit more of it. "I think Doctor Lecter found it funny."

"It's hilarious," she assured him, her laugh finally dying down.

Kept scrolling, she found the *Takes one to catch one* article, and after that, she was a bit surprised Will hadn't been worse with Freddie back in the hospital. The woman really made him sound like a bomb with a timer about to go off.

An article about her father's death, making a recount of all his victims.

And then a strange picture she didn't recognize. The article was titled *The Minnesota Shrike strikes again?* , but Abigail knew that hadn't been her father.

The picture was of a girl mounted in a stag's head, particularly in the antlers. It took her a moment to realize this must have been Hannibal's first kill as the Copycat.

"I thought none of my father's victims were found," she prompted, so Will told her more of the general case. He took a glimpse at the screen and made a face that could be read as offended. He was offended on her father's behalf because he wouldn't do that to his victims. It was so weird.

"Incorrect, we found one. She had liver cancer, and your father took her back to her house because he couldn't honor her," he explained as he rubbed his eyes. "But that one you are looking at wasn't your father's. That one is Cassie Boyle, that's the work of a Copycat."

"The one you suspect called my father to warn him?"

"Yes. The modus operandi was completely different from your father's. This girl's lungs were cut while she was still alive, and her body was left for public humiliation."

Abigail took a moment before keep talking, enough to make it seem like she was processing the information, but not enough to let Will convince himself he had said too much.

"The guy from earlier, he asked me..."

"...he asked you if you helped your dad cut his sister's lungs out while she was still using them," completed Will. "Cassie Boyle had a brother called Nicholas. Guess that's one mystery solved."

Before Abigail could answer anything else, she could hear the door's handle turning, so she closed the tab and put play in the video. Will kept checking the essay he had been in, both looking like the perfect picture of boredom.

"Sorry for taking so long," apologized Doctor Bloom. Her eyes fell on them. "What are you looking at, Abigail?"

Without pausing the video, she turned the laptop so Doctor Bloom could see.

"Makeup tutorials. Under adult supervision, I'm pretty sure Will is paying more attention to the video than to his students' essays." She looked like the perfect picture of innocence, like she didn't mind being asked because she knew she had done no wrong.

"The woman in the video knows what she's talking about, I'm afraid that's more than we can say for my students," joked Will without taking his eyes from the paper. Abigail looked at the current essay, and there was more red ink than black, so maybe it wasn't completely a joke.

Doctor Bloom relaxed immediately. Abigail was right that it was innocent enough for her to let it go, and even if she didn't trust Will not to speak too much, she did trust him not to lie to her about what they had been doing.

"I didn't know you were into makeup," she commented, sitting on the bed. Abigail shrugged.

"I'm not, or at least not really, but the videos are relaxing, and we assumed it was safe enough so that you would approve it." Making it seem like they prioritized Doctor Bloom's opinion.

"It's okay, I understand you must be bored by now. At least the noise will stop Will from falling asleep while grading," she joked.

"My anger at the fact that some of these trainees have somehow come this far with some of the most obsolete and ableist takes on mental illness I've ever seen is enough to keep me awake."

"I can understand that," sympathized Doctor Bloom. "I've gotten some questions that seem more like something a true crime fan would ask rather than actual FBI trainees."

"Are you also a teacher?" Asked Abigail, not having known about that.

"I'm a guest lecturer, and I sometimes cover for Will when he's called away on a case. It means I don't have to grade essays."

"My students like her more than me," added Will, although he didn't seem bothered about it.

"That's because I talk to them, not at them. I've also read that grading with a red pen is detrimental for the student-teacher relationship."

As if taking it as a dare, Will circled something in the current essay about three times, before writing something next to it and turning the page.

Abigail laughed, and even Doctor Bloom looked amused, clearly not having expected her comments to be taken into consideration.

She eventually moved to the bed so that Will could have all the small desk, and Abigail sat next to Doctor Bloom in the bed watching some more makeup videos and hair tutorials, until almost midnight, when Doctor Bloom decided they all should go to sleep.

Doctor Bloom left first, not having anything to pick up, which left Will and Abigail while he put all the papers in order and she turned off the laptop.

"I'm in the bedroom next door, in case you need anything," said Will as he walked to the door.

"You'll keep shooting bad guys to save me?" She joked, but the joke fell terribly short, and she could see Will close off. "Sorry, that was a poor taste joke."

"Don't worry," he tried to brush off, and left.

Abigail rolled her eyes, Will really needed to relax a bit.

She looked at the clock. It was almost midnight. She wondered if Marissa was still alive, or if she had been bled out already. If she would haunt her dreams.

It had been so long since she had nightmares. Once she was dead to the world, they seemed to stop, and it was just then that she had realized how they hadn't been reflections of fear for what she had done, but fear that everyone would find out.

With that threat neutralized, she had gone back to mostly dreamless sleep.

She put her pajama on and laid in bed. She closed her eyes and prepared for anything her brain could be preparing for her.

Nightmares were a small price to pay.

In her dream, Abigail is bleeding out. What's happening surrounding her changes as quickly as she can make sense of it. She goes from her house in Minnesota to Hannibal's kitchen. Sometimes she's hanged on the antlers of a stag, sometimes she's being gutted.

She can hear Hannibal and she can hear shooting, and she can hear Marissa screaming, and she can hear Nicholas Boyle telling her to calm down.

Sometimes Will is next to her, trying to stop her bleeding, sometimes she's all alone. She prefers it when she's alone, it makes her feel less guilty.

She can't say anything, can barely breathe without feeling she's drowning, but in her head she just keeps repeating,

I failed again. It will always end like this. I can't save myself.

Next morning, they reunited again in Abigail's room, all four of them. Hannibal had found some half-decent bakery and bought enough for all of them, along with some coffee. He and Doctor Bloom looked well rested, Abigail and Will, on the other hand, looked like shit.

"Are we in some kind of competition of who can look more like a zombie?" She asked Will, trying to break the tension he'd had since he appeared. He refused to even look in Abigail's direction.

He clearly had nightmares. If she had to guess, probably something related to her. If it was about not being able to save her, he would look guilty, but she didn't think he would refuse to look her way.

He probably dreamt he was her father. Maybe even that he killed her.

How fucked up it was that he was dreaming of killing her while in Abigail's dream he was the only one trying to save her.

"Don't think you can beat me there, I haven't had a good night's sleep since I was a teenager," he joked back, but it felt more like he said it because he didn't want to make her feel bad about her comment that because he saw something funny about it.

She gave up trying to make conversation, which left once again Hannibal and Doctor Bloom to fill the silence. Abigail intervened here and there, but she was tired, and she knew she had a very long day ahead of her, so she decided to save her energy.

It wasn't long until two police cars arrived to escort them to the cabin. Abigail knew what was waiting for her there, but she was still anxious. They followed the police cars in their rental car, with Hannibal driving, Will as a copilot and Doctor Bloom next to Abigail in the back. The radio was all the noise in the car, but only because separating Doctor Bloom and Hannibal left each of them with very uncooperating speaking partners.

When they arrive, Abigail stepped out of the car first, followed by the rest of them. The policeman removed the 'crime scene' tape from the door and opened it, allowing them to go in.

It was a matter of seconds until it became obvious that everyone was waiting for her to take the first step, which sucked because she wouldn't have anyone to look at instead of looking for the blood slipping through the upstairs floor, but she walked in.

"He cleaned with care everything; said he was afraid of germs. I guess he was just afraid of leaving evidence," she told them, knowing she was expected to at least try and help the investigation.

"No one else ever came up here with your dad? Except you?" Asked Will, and his voice said he already knew the answer, but he still waited for Abigail to shake her. "Ever help him make plumbing putty?"

"Until a few months ago, we wouldn't even let me help cleaning the animals we hunted, he was very particular in how everything must be made. He made everything by himself: plumbing putty, glue, butter. The pelts were sold in town or ebay, made the pillows with the fur, carved knives out of leg bones." She took a deep breath, even after all these times repeating his father's words was difficult, it felt as if part of him was still there, haunting her. "Can't let anything go to waste, otherwise it's just murder."

Will was very concentrated looking at the worktable, Abigail guessed he was imagining all the victims laying there before being cut in parts and used for anything Abigail's father could think of. Doctor Bloom's eyes were full of pity, although she was trying to hide it.

Hannibal had a completely neutral expression, nothing that would let slay that he knew there was a dead body just above them. He eventually felt Abigail's eyes on him and looked back. Instead of pretending in vain she wasn't looking at him, she asked the next question directed at him.

"He really was feeding them to us, wasn't he?"

"It's very likely," answered Hannibal without missing a beat. Abigail nodded, accepting the answer.

She walked to the table, on the other side from where Will was, so they were in front of each other.

"Before he cut my throat, he said he hadn't wanted it to come to this, that he killed those girls so he wouldn't have to kill me. If he had just killed me first, none of those girls would've died, right?" She asked the last part looking directly at Will.

Where Doctor Bloom would've tried to gently pacify her, Will did what he was best at: being inappropriately honest.

"Not necessarily, he could've ended up killing them anyway trying to relieve the moment where he killed you, it is not an uncommon pattern after crimes of passion." He kept looking at the table, willing it to give him more evidence than he currently had, Abigail wondered how much of his attention was in his answer.

"Will, you can't just say that—" Started Doctor Bloom, horrified at the bluntness, so Abigail gave a shaky laugh to defuse her anger.

"Is it wrong if that does make me feel a bit better?"

Will's proudness at helping was almost visible in his new stance, and even if she still looked a bit pissed off, Doctor Bloom also calmed down, it was Hannibal, however, who tried to answer.

"There is no wrong way to feel after a traumatic situation like the one—" he was interrupted by something falling in Abigail's face. The abrupt pause was enough to make Will look up as Abigail took her hand to her face, trying to take the blood off.

She retired her hand to look at it, and once the blood was in her range of vision, she ran upstairs, followed by Will, who was trying to stop her.

Marissa's body was just as she remembered. Naked, impaled in a rack of antlers, blood covering all her body. She felt tears fill her eyes, at having to watch her friend once again like this, having had all the chances to stop it and having taken none.

She turned around and hid her face in Will's chest, forcing him into an awkward half hug while he retrieved his phone from his pocket to call for help.

Abigail could feel herself losing control of her breathing, it was getting faster and faster.

"I need ERT at the Hobbs residence."

By this point, Hannibal and Doctor Bloom had reached them and were watching the horrifying scene. She was drowning, no matter how much she tried to breathe, air just didn't reach her lungs.

A gentle pair of hands, Doctor Bloom's, tried to move her away from the body, but she kept clinging to Will. She couldn't let go, everything was happening again, and Will was pretty much her only chance at not dying this time. She couldn't let go.

"Will, take her out, she's having a panic attack."

Will complied and carefully walked with her clinging to him until they reached outside.

Finally feeling the fresh air on her skin, she regained control over herself. First starting to breathe normally, then finally letting go of Will's shirt.

"Sorry for that," she apologized with a shaky voice. She was ashamed of herself for reacting like that. She knew what was waiting for her there, she shouldn't have let her emotions take control of her like that. How was she supposed to make front to everything ahead of her if she couldn't deal with one death?

"Don't worry, I don't think anyone can blame you for reacting like that," he responded, not taking a step back, but also not touching her to comfort her. She wished he did.

She finally took a step back, finding Doctor Bloom next to her, and Hannibal waiting on the threshold of the door. Will nodded at her, deeming her okay enough for him to go back, and walked back in.

"Physically, how are you feeling?" Asked her Doctor Bloom, and Abigail could only be glad for the clarification.

"I'm breathing okay again, so I guess the panic attack was averted," she answered. Trying to get her thoughts in order, she realized she hadn't given time to reveal the identity of the victim, so she gave a broader explanation for her panic. "She fit the profile, didn't she? Long brown hair, light skin, she looked young too."

The *like me* went unsaid, but it was understood, nonetheless.

"Your father didn't kill this girl, Abigail, the cabin had already been searched."

"Yesterday you told me there was a Copycat, is this him again?"

Doctor Bloom looked unsure, knowing denying it could anger Abigail, but fearing the truth could upset her again. It wouldn't happen, Abigail knew the answer, and she had gotten herself back together.

"Yes, most likely," she finally settled for.

Abigail accepted that and decided to climb inside the rental car to wait sitting, remembering it would take around four hours for Agent Crawford to arrive.

When the FBI team finally arrived, Agent Crawford sent her a glance that could make a lesser person cry. Fortunately, Abigail wasn't a lesser person, and she wasn't intimidated by the man. She knew there was no evidence, if they hadn't found any last time around, they wouldn't find it this time.

He went inside and was there around fifteen minutes until Hannibal came out and walked to the driver's sit.

"Will is not coming?" Asked Doctor Bloom, putting on her safety seatbelt.

"Jack required his presence for longer, we are going back to Abigail's house so she can pick up some of her things, and then going back to the hotel. We leave tomorrow morning," he explained, turning on the motor. As the car began to move, he added "We managed to identify the body."

"So soon? Was there an ID left behind?" Doctor Bloom was clearly surprised. Abigail supposed she was used to helping at crime scenes, and that identifying the bodies usually took way longer.

"No, but we knew her." He paused for a moment, before revealing the truth. "It was Marissa."

Abigail put her face between her hands, a sign she didn't want to talk about it. At this point, she couldn't be blamed for a wider range of reactions, as it managed to leave even Doctor Bloom without words, the psychiatrist resigned herself to try soothing Abigail by touch, putting a hand on her back.

The rest of the way home was silent, but the moment they turned the corner to her street, she could hear the crowd of reporters outside her house. She sighed, something she was finding herself doing worryingly frequently, and prepared herself to reach the perimeter the police were maintaining.

Most of the reporters were screaming questions at her. If she knew her father was feeding her human flesh, which was a stupid question because if she wasn't in jail was because her version was that she didn't know, if she wanted to say something to the families of the victims, she even heard someone asking how human flesh tasted like.

"Why come back here? Why did you come back?" Screamed Marissa's mother at her, but before the woman could reach her, Hannibal stepped between them to serve as a shield.

Doctor Bloom took Abigail by the shoulders, trying to steer her to the house without walking into anyone.

They were almost in the house, when Freddie came out of nowhere, having been hiding in the shadow of the garage.

"Abigail," the journalist greeted her.

"Miss Lounds, you're on the wrong side of the police line," announced Hannibal, flagging down one of the police to come to escort her out of there.

"This is my tale to tell. I've been covering the Minnesota Shrike long before you got involved." The cop grabbed her arm and tried to drag her away, but she was persistent. "I want to help you tell your story. You need me now more than ever."

"Yes, look at all the good your covering has done to me," Abigail said just loud enough for Doctor Bloom, but not Freddie, to hear, before storming into the house.

She knew Hannibal and Doctor Bloom would stay outside for a few minutes more, talking to the police.

She took a deep breath. She walked to the sofa and sat there, just as she had done last time. She started looking through the boxes until she found the one with the gutting knife, and while waiting for Nicholas' appearance, she cut open the pillow next to her, letting the hair fall to the ground.

She could at least give them that.

She stayed put, looking at the hair on the floor, until she finally heard steps coming from behind. With all the acting skills she had acquired in the last few hellish months, she put on her more frightened face, and turned back.

"I'm not going to hurt you. I got to talk to someone. I didn't kill that girl. I swear I didn't." Nicholas basically begged to be heard. Abigail could understand that desperation, but that didn't shake her resolution.

She stood up and ran as quickly as she could, until Nicholas caught her and pushed her against the wall.

"I swear I didn't—" Abigail didn't let him finish before sinking the knife in his sternum, then pulling it down to make it much bloodier. She needed to impress Hannibal after all.

She let the body hit the ground and prepared herself for a much more difficult part. She would have to lie to Hannibal, one to one, with all his attention on her.

This one was the hardest part. After this, Hannibal would become fonder of her, he would be less predisposed to dispose of her at the first inconvenience she caused, which was important because she planned to be very inconvenient for his plans in the near future.

Putting on now a blank face that showed pure shock, she started walking to the entrance.

She could hear feet coming in, and she started praying she had timed everything correctly.

She did.

She heard something hit the wall and turned around the corner to see Hannibal lowering Doctor Bloom to the floor.

"She'll be alright," Hannibal reassured her before she could say anything. He looked up at her, and with a very gentle voice, he instructed her, "Show me what happened."

Abigail almost cried at hearing that voice. Hannibal used it frequently with her, it made her feel safe and cared for. And it shouldn't work still, considering everything that happened, or that would happen, but it did. She wanted Hannibal to hug her and tell her everything would be alright, even if it was all lies.

She hoped her feelings would get less convoluted and complicated with time.

They walked back to the living room, where Nicholas' body was waiting for them.

"He was going to kill me," she murmured, remembering how afraid she was to raise her voice the first time.

"Was him?" Asked Hannibal. There wasn't any judgment, but he also didn't sound convinced. He examined the body. "This isn't self-defense, Abigail. You butchered him."

"I didn't," she argues, still in a low voice, looking confused at the body in front of her.

"They will see what you did, and they will see you as an accessory to the crimes of your father.

"But I wasn't," she tried to argue again, but it sounded weak even to her. It didn't matter though, with one look at Hannibal, she was relieved to see there the determination. He made his choice.

"I can help you, if you ask me to," he offered. "At great risk to my career and my life. You have a choice: you can tell them you were defending yourself when you gutted this man, or we can hide the body."

Abigail looked at Hannibal, and back at Nicholas. She did it a few times, enough for the shock to be believable, and in a voice slightly higher than before, she gave him her answer.

"Please, help me."

Everything was just as exhausting as she remembered.

Once they got rid of the body, which was honestly more Hannibal's doing than hers, and cleaned up the living room, which was more her doing, the interrogation began.

Abigail had to strike Hannibal in the back of the head to solidify their story. She made sure not to take off the blood from under her nails while cleaning.

She ran outside and told a cop to call for an ambulance and to call Agent Crawford, before running back inside, where Doctor Bloom was still not waking up.

"Are we sure she's okay?" She asked, trying to look unsure of the situation.

"I would bet on a mild concussion, nothing that will have lasting effects." He was calmed, a bit too calmed, and Abigail wondered why she hadn't found that suspicious before.

Well, thinking more of it, she had a theory. She had been so scared and nervous, that Hannibal's calmness in addition to his gentleness was too tempting to cling to. A solid rock on unstable ground. Abigail had been too thankful to question it.

The paramedics arrived quickly, and Abigail saw Doctor Bloom start waking up as they took her to the ambulance.

Agent Crawford walked straight to them, Will following closely behind.

"What the hell happened here?" Asked Agent Crawford.

Abigail looked down to her right hand, the one with the blood under her nails, and let Hannibal answer.

"Nicholas Boyle got past the police line, I assume he came for Abigail. He knocked Alana by hitting her head against the wall, then struck me in the back of the head with a fireplace poker," he narrated. He had a confidence when talking that Abigail envied him, she wasn't that confident even when telling the truth. "That didn't knock me out, and with both Abigail and I aware of his presence, he decided to run away."

"I tried to stop him. Scratched his neck," added Abigail.

"That's his blood?" At her affirmative, Agent Crawford instructed her to go with another agent so they took the blood sample from her nails.

When the agent was finished with her, Hannibal and Will came to her.

"Let's go back to the hotel, Abigail," indicated Hannibal, but that's when she remembered something else and turned to Will.

"Before he came, I realized something. The pillows, they are full of hair. Human hair." She passed her saliva with difficulty, trying to project disgust. "I cut one open; I think the hair is on the floor."

Will looked surprised at the news and promised he would tell the agents to check every pillow. That meant he would have to stay a bit longer, so Abigail and Hannibal left alone.

Last time, they hadn't talked during the whole journey, but Abigail just wanted to finish with all of this, so she decided to skip having to climb out of the hospital the next day.

"I didn't honor any part of him, so it was just murder."

"Most would argue self-defense," he defended. They both could hear how *some* didn't include *him* .

"Then why not tell the truth?"

"Most would argue. There would still be those who would say you were taking after your father."

"Would Agent Crawford argue for the second option?"

Hannibal spares her a quick glance, before turning his attention back to the road.

"I believe so, yes. He has been suspicious of you since the beginning, for him a gutted body would be as good as a confession of guilt."

"You keep using that word, gutted. Like a deer."

"Nicholas Boyle is more important for the gutting, more important than the life he clamored after." He said it just like that, as if it was an absolute truth and the world was the crazy one for thinking differently than him.

"You're glad I killed him." It wasn't a question; Abigail saw it clearly. So clearly, in fact, that she was sure Hannibal wasn't trying to hide it.

"What would be the alternative? That he killed you?"

"I don't know if he was going to," she pointed out.

"No, you don't."

Abigail let the silence take hold for a minute, preparing herself for the next part. Even if she logically knew it should go well, confronting a serial killer about his habits was never a safe move.

"You're the one who called the house. You talked to my dad before... What did you say to him?"

If Hannibal was surprised that she finally brought it up, he didn't show it.

"A simple conversation, ascertaining if he was home for an interview." Abigail was looking carefully at his face, but even paying attention and knowing it was a lie, she couldn't detect anything that would give him away. A perfect liar. "Then why not tell the truth?"

"They think whoever called my dad is the copycat."

"I made a mistake. Something easily misconstrued. Not unlike yourself." He parked the car, having finally arrived at the hotel. "I'll keep you secret."

"And I'll keep yours," echoed Abigail, knowing she was making a pact with the devil for the second time.

"Reassuring to recognize when the bolt of our fates slides home." He walked out of the car and walked to her door to open it for her and help her climb down. "It's time to go to sleep,

you've had a long day and our flight is early tomorrow."

Indeed, the next day they woke early to go to the airport. Will had arrived late to the hotel, but Doctor Bloom had been sent to the hospital for overnight observation, so she would catch a flight later that day.

So, for their breakfast of mediocre airport food, it was just Hannibal, Will and her. She preferred it this way, as she was sure Doctor Bloom would be all over her wanting her to talk about all this new trauma next time they saw each other. At least this way she had a bit more time not having to answer her questions.

The flight had Will and Abigail sitting together, with Hannibal on the other side of the plane, which was fine by her, as she needed time to talk with Will without him being able to run away.

They took their seat, the one other passenger next to them a middle-aged woman that pulled out her book and earphones immediately, and therefore Abigail wasn't concerned about disturbing her. She let Will get comfortable, or at least as comfortable as he ever seemed to get, which was clearly anxious and in dire need of a distraction, and the moment they were allowed to put down the tray table she took the card deck from her pocket.

"Will you give me a rematch?" She asked, already shuffling the cards.

Will looked surprised at the fact she asked him, which Abigail couldn't understand because she hadn't shown any sign of not liking Will's company this time around, and he was supposed to be the one that could pick up people's feelings.

"Sure, maybe this time you'll get lucky." He still looked unsure, and so the fact that he was jumping straight to teasing was just confusing. Maybe he was pushing boundaries? Trying to figure out how much of the situation he was misunderstanding?

Maybe he thought that Abigail feeling comfortable around him had to be wishful thinking on his part, and he was just now considering that it might not be.

"I don't need luck to beat you, you just got me on a bad streak yesterday." His smile, a bit awkward, but more confident by the second, assured her that he didn't believe her, and he was right not to do so, Abigail sucked at poker, but she didn't mind losing.

Her head was in another place, anyway.

Last time, Abigail didn't see Will until weeks after they went back to Baltimore, she had been half convinced that he wasn't coming back by the time she saw him again. She hadn't been sure how to feel about that, a mix of relief and betrayal where she couldn't distinguish which

one dominated, and so she had ignored it with the thousand other feelings she had been ignoring at the time.

She couldn't be sure if he had done it for what he thought was her benefit, which she could appreciate, but wouldn't be necessary this time, or for his own sake, which she could respect but not allow, as she didn't have time for Will to try and have space. She wasn't sure how she would clean this mess before it even got done, but she was now determined, and for maximum effectiveness, especially considering she would still be trapped in the hospital, she needed to have as many people close as possible. She had sessions with Doctor Bloom two times a week, and Hannibal visited her around three to four times every month, but she was sure that would go up if he noticed Will was getting more attached to her, so she only needed to make sure Will would also come frequently.

The question was now which one would be the best approach to get her what she needed.

A direct approach, meaning just asking him to, probably wouldn't work. It would make him want it more, but Will could have whatever he wanted right in his reach and would seldom extend his hand to grab it, he had a philosophy of self-denial that made him a pain to manipulate, but until he became more confident of the fact that he could and should work to get what he wanted, Abigail would have to work the other possible angle, at least the only other she could think of.

Guilt. Abigail had noticed long ago that what looked to move Will was the guilt he felt most of the time. That was easy enough.

"I probably won't be of any help in the rest of the investigation of my father's... or the copycat's kills. Will you keep coming to visit me in the hospital? Or did the guilt expire with my usefulness?" She asked him while he shuffled the card for the next round, hoping that giving him something to do with his hand while they had this conversation made him less likely to follow his flight reflect.

"I don't care about your usefulness, I wanted to go visit you the moment you woke up. The only reason I didn't was that Doctor Bloom didn't think it was a good idea, but once Agent Crawford decided he wanted me to go, even she had to give in." It seemed her plan worked, because while he felt reluctant to have the conversation, he didn't try to avoid it. "And I don't feel guilty either, this is far from an ideal situation, but at least you're alive, which you wouldn't be if I had made any other choice."

He flinched at his own words. Abigail didn't stop the chuckle that left her, letting him have the reassurance that his lack of tact didn't offend her.

She briefly wondered about all the time he spent as an agent. Was he like that with the families of the victims? That couldn't be a good approach, at least she didn't think so. Maybe he let someone else do the talking.

"That didn't answer my first question."

He dealt the cards, and she once again had a shit game.

“Do you want me to keep visiting you? I understand if you don't, I'm sure Doctor Bloom would agree that my presence carries an unhealthy number of negative connotations for you by now, you could use more neutral and positive presences in your life, especially while you're still healing.”

Abigail almost called him out on his tendency to hide behind Doctor's Bloom advice and opinions, but she stopped herself, knowing it wouldn't lead her anywhere. But she now wondered; she had found out that Will was her most constant companion while in a coma, checking on her almost daily and had been found out sleeping in the couch of her room more than once. Now she knew that Doctor Bloom had advised him to step back before he even met her after she woke up.

Could it be that his reluctance started there? She knew those two were friends, and Hannibal even told her that their friendship had some romantic undertones that Doctor Bloom ignored because she didn't think Will was stable enough for a relationship, and that he ignored it because he knew he would get rejected, so surely Will must respect her opinion as a professional.

Which meant Abigail would need to get Doctor Bloom to back off if she wanted Will to stop being so insecure about his presence in her life. That meant she had one more clear goal, which she was glad for because most of her mission currently felt like stumbling in the dark.

“You need to stop hanging out so much with Hannibal and Doctor Bloom, you're starting to sound like a psychiatrist. You can't even answer a question without asking me another one.”

That pulled an honest laugh out of Will. He had never hidden his antagonism towards the profession, and so it must have been ironic for him to be called out like that.

Abigail wondered how many times she had heard Will laugh the last time around. Maybe a pair while playing scrabble, but she must be able to count them with one hand.

“I wouldn't say I spend too much time with either of them, especially not with Alana, but I guess they do are the only people outside of my coworkers I regularly speak to.”

And Doctor Bloom reversed to Alana the moment the conversation became more casual. Hannibal probably would be able to make something out of it, but Abigail couldn't and so she just took advantage of the slightly more relaxed and compliant Will to formulate her wish as a fact not up to discussion.

“I guess that means you need to fit 'regular visits to Abigail' into your extremely full social agenda, we can keep each other from forgetting how not to talk like them.”

Will tensed for a second, looking vaguely at Abigail's face, not her eyes, but she knew he didn't need to in order to get a good read.

Whatever he found seemed to convince him, his body relaxed again, and he was almost smiling.

He revealed his hand, he had a poker of eights.

Abigail had a pair of twos. She pretended to be mad about it.

“Yes, I guess I'll have to.”

Chapter End Notes

Please guys don't expect every chapter to be this long, the next one is already written and is like 7k, this one just got out of hand. I thought about dividing it into two parts, but if you read my other works you know I'm not afraid of long chapters every once in a while, so there it is.

I had more positive reactions in the first chapter than I expected! In my experience, Abigail-centric fics take a bit longer to take off. so thank all of you who decided to give this fic a chance from the beginning <3 Your kind comments and kudos mean the world to me <3

Oeuf

Chapter Summary

Abigail starts changing the events around her, even with her limited reach inside the hospital.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Abigail found herself walking next to Doctor Bloom in the garden. Her original plan was to be a less difficult patient this time, but time had somehow made her forget how horrid group therapy was.

"Sharing will help you normalize, I don't want you to isolate yourself," tried to plead Doctor Bloom.

"Some of these women aren't even sharing, they speak in little girl voices telling everyone what was done to them and how they hurt without saying a word." It wasn't that Abigail thought badly of those women, they were clearly suffering, but she didn't understand why would sitting around with them two times a week in a feeding loop of misery was supposed to help her.

"Certain traumas can arrest vocal development. Victims can sometimes broadcast victimhood involuntarily."

"Hopefully group therapy does more for them than it does for me," she bickered, but knowing already she wouldn't change Doctor Bloom's mind, she changed the topic. "Is Will back from wherever he got dragged to yesterday?"

Doctor Bloom tensed at Will's mention, as she did most of the time.

"Yes, did he tell you he was called for a case?"

"Yes, he usually comes on Monday and Wednesday, because his classes end early enough for him to get to the visit time. So when he was called he let me know he wouldn't make it, so I wouldn't worry."

"And would you have worried? Don't you think you may be getting a bit too attached?"

"Not really. I don't mind that he couldn't come, but he usually really sticks to his routines when he can, that's why I proposed he came to visit me regularly. It makes it easier for him to see it as an appointment and not a spontaneous visit. If he hadn't come without warning, I would have worried because something could have happened to him."

Doctor Bloom thought about that for several moments. It all sounded very innocent, because while Abigail was indeed trying to foster codependency, she was very careful with what she said to the older woman.

"If I may ask, how do you feel when Will visits?"

The question took Abigail a bit by surprise, Doctor Bloom usually didn't prod more into that relationship except to say that she disapproved.

"I feel... normal, I suppose. He just treats me like a normal person. Even when I look a bit tired, he accepts it as normal because he has nightmares all the time too."

"And why do you think you can't find that same feeling with other people in your group therapy?"

Abigail resisted the temptation to grunt, she should've known Doctor Bloom wouldn't let the topic go.

"Because for him what happened to me is something he sees every other week, on the other hand, I'm a freak even for the people here," she explained. "If it was just that my dad had tried to kill me, maybe I would relate to some of the girls here. But my father being a serial killer that killed girls who look like me? Someone asked me if I kept my stained clothes, like some collection piece from a true crime fan. I can't even talk about the cannibalism part without all the group and a few nurses looking about to throw up."

"So you cling to Will because he has a wider frame of reference for violent experiences?"

Doctor Bloom was actually very close with that. Abigail clung to Will and Hannibal because they understood violence in a way that was even more fucked up than hers. She couldn't understand why anyone would want to do a whole art statement with a dead body, but she could accept it, just as they could accept that her definition of killing for her survival was a lot broader than what would be acceptable.

However, she could see a trap when it was being laid in front of her, and she wouldn't fall for it.

"I'm not clinging to him. I'm a bored teenager trapped in a mental hospital, and his visits are something that I enjoy and can look forward to. The only two other people I feel I can talk freely to are you and Hannibal, but you are my psychiatrist, so I can't just hang out with you, and Hannibal hasn't come seen me since we came back from Minnesota, which I suspect is on deference to your professional opinion, so I appreciate Will's company all more."

Quite a few lies there, because Abigail didn't talk freely with anyone, she had too many secrets, but while she aimed to remedy that with Will and Hannibal, that would never be the case for Doctor Bloom.

She didn't need to know that, though.

"Hannibal has quite a busy practice, and he now does occasional consults for the FBI, he has quite a busy schedule, have you considered he hasn't had the time to come?" Her voice was a bit too condescending, and so Abigail heard the *have you considered he just doesn't want to come?*

"I have, yes, but I don't think that's what is happening. Unless, of course, you tell me outright that you haven't told Hannibal he shouldn't visit me because it wouldn't be beneficial for either of us." Abigail stopped walking, forcing Doctor Bloom to do the same and look at her.

Abigail's eyes met Doctor Bloom's. If the Doctor wanted to lie to her, she would have to do it looking her in the eyes, and Abigail would immediately know the truth, which would in turn just be detrimental to the trust between them.

The doctor realized all of that and understood she had been caught.

"Let's make a deal, I will give Hannibal the green light to come to see you more often, if you give the support groups another chance. An honest chance."

Abigail smiled at the compromise. She knew the support groups would still be hell and wouldn't get better, but she could endure them with minimal complaining if it made Doctor Bloom more complacent.

She had to wonder if Doctor Bloom budged because Abigail seemed more stable than last time, or because the Doctor was afraid of her stronger bond with Will and hoped that more influences in her life, especially one she trusted as much as Hannibal's, would help her let go.

"Sounds fair," she agreed.

"There's no way that's a word, you are cheating," accused Abigail, but she started counting the points.

"It's a branch of chemistry that studies the fermentation, so those are eighty-seven points," explained Will, but he looked a bit too satisfied for Abigail's taste.

It was the third round of Scrabble that he won by using exotic words she had never even heard of before.

"Cheater," she repeated.

"Photographic memory isn't cheating."

Abigail just circled Will's column to indicate the winner, not bothering to make the sum of points, it was an embarrassing defeat.

"Next week we're playing something else," she decided.

"What do you want to play? I think they have Marathon, Chess..." This time Abigail was certain he was making fun of her.

"Rummy, we're playing Rummy. You can't cheat by being smart there." She knew she sounded a bit childish, but Will was smiling, clearly amused, and Abigail was having a great time, so neither of them minded. "At least they don't have Clue here."

"Which one is that?"

"In that one you have to solve a murder mystery, that's basically your job."

"I agree it wouldn't be an appropriate board game for a psychiatric facility."

Abigail laughed and began picking up the tiles. She glanced at the clock and saw there were still another good twenty minutes before Will had to go, so she decided to seize the chance to poke a less innocent topic.

"How did the case on Monday go? Caught another bad guy? Probably not, you look like you haven't slept since then."

"We think it's a group of middle children that ran away from home months ago, and now they are coming back for a final visit," Will took off his glasses, to then leave them on the table. "They are not to blame for my lack of sleep, though, I always have nightmares."

"We have that in common."

Will looked momentarily startled by her words, and she could just guess he might have been thinking something either similar or the opposite.

"It hasn't gotten better?" He finally asked, genuine concern in his voice.

"Of course not, and I don't think it will while I stay here. This place is like madness and anguish concentrated. Remember me when can I leave?"

That pulled a smile out of Will. It was easier to do each day.

"Either when you turn eighteen, or when someone authorized signs for your release."

"And who is authorized?"

"For small leaves up to a few days, Alana, Doctor Lecter and I are authorized. Alana and I because we work your case, she as your psychiatrist and I as an FBI agent, which may require us to pick you up, like when we went to Minnesota. Doctor Lecter because he's currently the closest thing to a legal guardian that you have, and so I think he's the only one that could sign you out permanently."

"How did that happen? He's not related to me in any way," she was confused, she hadn't known about that.

"He's a renowned psychiatrist with lots of money and probably very good lawyers. When you work in law enforcement you learn that kind of people get away with a lot of crazy things," he explained. Then, as if to clarify he wasn't talking badly of the other man, he added, "It worked in our favor, this time. I feel better knowing that you aren't completely left in hands of the State."

Once she finished putting all the tiles and the board inside the box, she left that to the side, so she could rest her elbows on the table. She made a mental note of all of the details Will gave her, they would be useful eventually, but at the moment she was looking for a more innocent goal.

"Will you sign me out for a day? You can take me to meet your dogs, or to a museum, or honestly anywhere, I really want to go out again."

It had been a bit over two weeks since she came back from Minnesota, and she was getting claustrophobic, no matter how big or nice the hospital was.

"Alana would be pissed off for doing that without her permission," he said as a way to turn her down. Abigail didn't understand why that was an explanation though, sometimes following Will's train of thought proved too difficult for her.

"And you can't ask her for permission?"

"She wouldn't give it. I'm too unstable, remember? She barely trusts me with myself, there's no chance she'll trust me with you. At the very least, she would ask to come, and I think that would defeat your purpose of getting away from all of this."

"Seriously? She wouldn't even trust you to take me to some McDonalds near here?" Abigail was a bit surprised at the distrust Doctor Bloom had in Will.

It did explain how she was so convinced that Will had committed the Copycat kills, but that he hadn't been in his right mind. That seemed to be her opinion of anything Will did.

"No, she wouldn't. And that would get me killed twice, first by Alana for not getting her permission, and then by Doctor Lecter for taking you to a McDonalds."

That startled a laugh out of Abigail. She hadn't forgotten how picky the man was about food, but she hadn't known Will had already picked up on it.

That was also when she remembered when Hannibal had taken her to his house. It had also been mid-January, hadn't it? And if this time she had softened Doctor Bloom in the idea of letting her bond more with Hannibal...

"Do you think Hannibal can get permission from Doctor Bloom? He once told me he wanted to cook for me one day."

Will didn't have to think long about it.

"I'm sure he could."

"Then I will ask him." She delivered for a second, and then added, "Will you come with us?"

At that, Will became much more reluctant.

"I can try, but my work tends to mess up my plans, especially when we have an active case."

Abigail thought back to the last time. She had been too high on mushrooms to pay much attention, a mistake she wouldn't make twice, but she could remember Hannibal trying to call Will, and he never answered. Abigail couldn't remember the exact day, but there was a big chance it was during this same active case.

"I'll tell Hannibal to call you to give you the details, can you promise to pick up your phone?" The question seemed to take Will by surprise, like much of what Abigail said. Will moved around in his chair until he achieved a more formal posture, which remind her of Hannibal or Doctor Bloom about to answer her question with another question.

"You don't think I would?" And there it was, she didn't bother to fake any surprise at that. She had picked up on that habit of his this time around, so it was free reign.

"You look like someone that will ignore the outside world after a bad day."

Still avoiding her question, he gave her an impressed glare.

"Impressive, you just did a better job at psychoanalyzing me than most of the professionals that have tried." That seemed to soften him a bit. He liked being understood, but only by people he trusted not to reject him. As far as she knew, that list included just Hannibal last time, but this time she was also there. "I promise I will pick up my phone."

She smiled, having gotten her way. It wasn't that Abigail was afraid of being alone with Hannibal, although she was a bit, she just didn't like that Will isolated himself from them.

"Have you had many professionals trying to psychoanalyze you?" She was curious, she actually knew very little about Will's life, especially his life before he met her and Hannibal.

"When I was young, my dad and I moved around a lot, I changed schools constantly, that lands you with all the school's counselors," he briefly stopped but got distracted from continuing by another thought that made him laugh, which in turn confused Abigail. He explained himself, "It's just that, I don't think I had talked about my life story to anyone in the last ten years, and now Doctor Lecter and you got me telling it two days in a row."

"Well, it's just fair, you know all about my teenage trauma," she joked. "Aren't school counselors just there to give you anti-smoke and anti-alcohol brochures? I never saw one do any actual psychologist work."

"Wouldn't know, once they saw something was off with me, they pulled me to their office more than the kids with behavioral issues, just so they could keep pocking." He threaded his finger through his hair, suppressing the annoyance that was very much still alive in him. "But there's just so much they could do without an official diagnostic, and we didn't have money for a psychiatrist, so I never got one until I was a police officer."

"Your empathy disorder, right?" She remembered that was what Hannibal had called it.

"Yes. Probably autism too, but I never went back to actually do the tests, the doctor made me feel like a circus animal," he complained. Abigail could empathize with that, she had plenty of experience feeling like a circus animal. "When I eventually tried for the FBI but was deemed too unstable, the cat got out of the bag. Now I avoid every psychiatrist specialized in criminal psychology because they all have heard of me and want to dissect my brain."

Hearing that, Abigail could only wonder how he ended up with only two psychiatrists for friends, Abigail would be so petty to anyone with that profession if she was Will.

"Hannibal and Doctor Bloom included, or excluded?" She couldn't help but ask.

"Yes, I think is the answer to that."

The nurse came in announcing visiting hours were over, and Abigail resigned herself to a boring rest of the week.

Her boring 'rest of the week' came to an end when on Friday afternoon there was a knock on her door.

"Come in," she answered, putting down the book she had been reading, one that Doctor Bloom had brought for her.

"You have a visit," announced the nurse, before turning back and leaving.

It was weird, because usually nurses did the whole 'do you want to see them' before allowing anyone into your room, an important protocol considering how delicate the mental states of some of the girls here were.

She understood why the nurse did that when she saw Will walking in. Although for the more volatile patients the protocol was stricter, for more stable girls their regular visitors were

automatically let in most of the time.

That didn't explain what he was doing here.

"Hey, Will," she greeted. He stood awkwardly by the door, as if he felt he was intruding. He probably felt he was intruding.

If he was here on official business, he wouldn't be uncertain, that meant it was a personal visit. That meant that even if he felt insecure and was afraid of being turned away, he wanted to see her enough to come anyways.

"Hey, Abigail." Instead of providing an explanation for his presence, he extended his hand, where the box with the Rummy pieces was.

Abigail had noticed that Will had an easier time talking to her about a difficult topic if they were playing something, that way he had something to do with his hands and where to rest his eyes, and so she had made sure they were already playing every time she wanted to bring up what she suspected could be a difficult topic.

She hadn't known if Will noticed, but clearly he had. She couldn't say she was surprised about that. What she was surprised about though, was that this meant Will wanted to voluntarily explain why he was here, even if it was a difficult topic.

She took the box and started preparing for the game.

She let a few rounds go, they didn't talk, but eventually, she realized Will had done as much as he would without more incentive.

"So, what brings you here on a Friday? I thought you had class at this hour."

"Jack pulled me out of class to go over the new evidence we got yesterday, had to call someone to cover my classes." He decided to start with the easy part of the question. "He let me go early enough to come, but not to return to my last class."

He was frustrated, but she wasn't sure if it was because of the case he was working or the disruption of his class. He wasn't a passionate teacher, but he had a schedule to go over everything he needed to teach, it had to be annoying to have to readjust every time he got pulled away.

But she didn't think he would be here if it was about his classes.

"How is the case going? Is it still the one about the kids?" She asked casually.

"Yeah, still the kids. Same modus operandi, they went to the house of one of them and killed all the family," he sighed, sounding exhausted. "It made me angry. I'm still a bit angry."

"Is anger not one of your usual emotions during cases? Aren't killers angry most of the time?" She put down more of her pieces, noting how somehow Will was still winning.

"Yes, but I don't mean I'm angry because they're angry, they aren't. The anger is all mine, that is strange. My own emotions rarely act up. Except maybe some frustration."

Abigail nodded, expecting him to continue, but when he didn't, she gave him a small push.

"Then why does this one make you angry? Is it because they're kids?"

Will looked unsure of how to answer, looking at Abigail and back down multiple times, as if he was expecting her to be upset with the answer.

"Because they had a family that loved them, and they just threw it away. I guess in some way I resent them."

Abigail finally understood: it was Will's family issues acting up. A man who spent his whole childhood and adolescence longing for a family had to see kids throw theirs away.

No wonder it was so easy for Hannibal to bring that longing back to life, Will hungered so much for a family with someone other than dogs.

"I refuse to ask the question, I can't handle the irony."

That made Will laugh, both because it was funny and because Abigail hadn't reacted badly as he expected. The fact that he had expected it at all meant he was aware he was projecting this intense desire of acting like her father, which Abigail wasn't sure if she was surprised about, Will's self-awareness seemed to oscillate between very high and nonexistent.

"Doctor Lecter beat you to it anyways, it was hard to keep a straight face when I heard him say *tell me about your mother*." Will's imitation of Hannibal's accent was impressive, and Abigail let out a chuckle. "My mother left when I was a baby. My father and I were never close."

And so now he had seven dogs and was making himself a family with his pseudo psychiatrist and the girl he orphaned.

"I think I understand. I also think they are wasting something precious they have. One should always do anything to protect their family," she agreed. God knew she was doing everything for a family that never quite got to be.

Will looked at her with curiosity, and Abigail made a conscious effort not to freeze when she realized. Could it be Will thought she was talking about her father? She wasn't sure yet how to tell him that she helped her father, it was something she never got around to doing last time, but right now was not the moment, what if Will figured it out?

"I bought you a gift." Will turned around to grab his briefcase and took a gift-wrapped box. He immediately put it on the table, leaving it up to her if she should open it or not.

Abigail was still trying to understand what was happening. She was used to Will doing strange jumps in conversation, but her confusion had less to do with why he chose that moment to announce he had gotten her a gift and more with the fact that the gift existed at all.

She made herself grab the gift before asking, not wanting to give Will the impression she was thinking about rejecting it. Upon further thinking, she decided questions should wait until after she gave a positive reaction to the gift.

She tore the paper until she could see what was inside. She couldn't recognize what it was at first glance, so she looked around for the description in the box. Magnifying glass and fly-tying gear.

A smile grew immediately on her face. Hannibal had told her Will dreamed of teaching her to fish, but she assumed it was some abstract bonding idea from a man that didn't know how else to do it.

But this time it was an actual plan. They learned to bond over board games, and yet Will wanted to teach her. And she knew what fishing meant to him now, it was one of the few things that brought him peace. He wanted to share it with her.

Without thinking, she put the box back on the table, stood up, and grabbed Will's arm to make him stand up too, to finally hug him with excitement.

She gave him a few seconds to process the situation and hug her back before verbally answering.

"Thank you, Will. I love it." Then, to lighten the situation up a bit, she added, "But you do remember that you will have to convince Doctor Bloom of letting me out with you for you to teach me to fish, don't you?"

It made Will laugh, as intended, and she felt him relax in the hug.

"I'll start working on it, I promise."

Abigail stepped back, going back to her seat. She didn't want to overwhelm Will.

"Why did you get me a gift? Christmas already passed. I was in a coma." For good measure, she played her turn, giving Will time to pull himself together.

He tensed again, but not as much. His gift had been accepted, which gave him a bit more confidence.

"I was angry when I bought it. I wasn't decided if I would give it to you or not, I was afraid it would be weird." He played his turn. Abigail could see he was about to win, but she was using all of her focus to try and piece that together.

Will bought the gift because he was mad. He had been angry at these killer teenagers because they were throwing their families away.

An attempt at holding what he felt was his family together? It was a bit weird. She would've been weirded out last time, but fortunately for Will, she was all for doing unconventional things for family now.

“I’m glad you decided to give it to me. I don’t mind if it’s weird, it’s now something I can look forward to.” It was liberating to be able to be somehow honest about her feelings, and she was sure just today she had made enough progress to make a drastic change in her future. She just had to have faith that it would be a positive one.

Will decided to ruin the wonderful moment by putting down his last pieces, the smile never leaving his face, but it turned from something more innocent to one Abigail wanted to punch.

In the end, she sighed and started thinking about what game she knew how to cheat in, personal honor be damned.

Abigail’s week kept getting more interesting when, on Sunday, she finally got a visit from Hannibal. First, a nurse arrived and did the whole “Are you feeling up to visits? Doctor Lecter is taking you out for today, do you feel comfortable with that?”, and once Abigail showed the proper enthusiasm, he came through the door.

“Hello, Abigail. Put on your shoes, we’re going out,” he instructed her. She looked around for shoes and started putting them on, but she couldn’t resist prying about how different the circumstances of this small trip were this time around.

“Hi, did Doctor Bloom authorize the outing?”

Hannibal looked amused, Abigail deduced it was because she was already getting ready before hearing the answer, prioritizing her opportunity to leave for the afternoon over respecting Doctor’s Bloom authority.

“As a matter of fact, she did. She went to my office to suggest it would do you good to see more people, and when I proposed taking you out for the evening, her reluctance was minimal.” He paused for a moment, waiting for Abigail to stand up and take her jacket before he started walking out with her behind. “I must say her sudden change of heart about my presence in your life during your recovery was unexpected, do you have any idea what provoked it?”

Abigail let a self-congratulatory smile appear on her face. She had no reason to hide her proudness.

“A reward if I promised to give group therapy more chances.” She hurried her steps until she was next to him, so the next part she could tell it like a new secret they were accomplices in. “It’s making her uneasy that Will comes so often, I think she sees you as the lesser of two evils.”

Hannibal hummed in acknowledgment but didn't say more about the situation. Abigail was sure he must not be surprised, but she wondered if he was surprised she had figured it out. Sadly, she still couldn't read him most of the time, so she would have to keep wondering. It was only after she climbed into his car that she realized she had forgotten once again she wasn't supposed to know where they were going.

"So, where are we going?" She finally asked. If Hannibal thought it odd that it took her so long, he didn't comment on it.

"Home, my home. I thought you might enjoy it if I cooked for you. I'll have you back before bedtime," he reassured her.

"Can I spend the night? I hate sleeping here, the collective trauma and misery are like fuel for my nightmares." She knew he wouldn't agree, she could remember having asked the same question last time, but she knew Hannibal would ask about her nightmares.

She couldn't be completely truthful about those, but she could at least explain them partially. Maybe it would do her good, and she couldn't share them with Doctor Bloom because she didn't want to risk looking more traumatized in front of her.

There was no point, Doctor Bloom couldn't even begin to imagine the type of trauma she was dealing with.

"You have to sleep on your own bed," dismissed Hannibal.

"That's not my bed. I don't have a bed anymore, just places where I sleep." Closing her eyes, she thought of the last time she had thought of a bed as hers, and the one in the house next to the cliff, where she spent most of her time in hiding, came to mind.

It hadn't felt like home, but the room and the bed had been hers in a way the ones in the hospital never were.

"Tell me about your nightmares," changed the topic Hannibal, exactly as Abigail knew he would. Considering how much her relationship with Will had changed in the last few weeks, it felt exciting to be again in a situation where she knew most of what would happen unless she changed it.

"I'm dying, bleeding out on the kitchen floor, or hanging on antlers, or I'm being gutted. Every time I close my eyes, it's a different scenario, but the ending is always the same." Even leaving details behind, it felt good to put it out there.

"All your encounters with death," Hannibal summarized.

"It's a cycle I'm trapped in, where I'm powerless to do anything but die. I'm afraid everything I've done to get here will be useless, and I'll end up dead again. Like it's something inevitable." She hadn't realized when her voice got so desperate, but by the end, she sounded like that one girl in her therapy group that always said she was afraid she would one day wake up and realized she was still trapped, and everything that had happened since

she escaped her kidnapper had been a dream. Abigail tried to calm down her breathing, she hated looking so weak. “Sorry, can’t exactly talk about it in group therapy.”

“Some people there who open their mouths and every sin against them can come tumbling put. You don’t have that luxury, Abigail.”

“I know,” she responded, slightly annoyed at being reminded of that. Of course, she knew. Her whole life was a never-ending pile of secrets. “I don’t care I have to lie, it’s just nice being able to talk about it with someone.”

“I’m glad I can give you that respite. When you’re with me, you don’t have to lie about anything.”

Oh, how Abigail wished that was true.

“In my dreams, I wonder if I even deserve a better ending, after what I’ve done to get here.”

“And when you are awake?” Hannibal sounds genuinely curious, and Abigail had to remind herself Hannibal was still exploring new territory, wondering how much work had to be done to groom her into the perfect daughter for the family he intended to create.

Lucky for him, the work was already done, and she could rationalize her feelings into understanding that this Hannibal had yet to do something too terrible to her, and so she held just a small resentment. She was hoping that messing up with most of his current plans would be enough to satisfy her.

“When I’m awake, I know I don’t care about deserving. I also know that I would do far worse to give myself a chance to be happy.” She turned to him and was sure she saw something like satisfaction on his face. He had liked her answer. “Does that make me a sociopath?”

“No,” he reassured her, finally starting the car, “it makes you a survivor.”

When they finally arrived, Abigail got out of the car, wanting to get as much outside air as possible. Even the garden in the hospital felt claustrophobic to her.

“I almost forgot; can we invite Will? I told him that he could join us if you got me out, since he is sure Doctor Bloom wouldn’t trust him to be adult supervision on his own.” She hadn’t forgotten at all, but she had wanted to have some time with Hannibal so he didn’t think she was avoiding being alone with him, it wouldn’t do her any good if Hannibal thought she was afraid of him.

“I’m inclined to agree with Will’s assessment. Let’s give him a call,” he accepted as he opened the door to the house.

Abigail followed him to the kitchen, where he had a few supplements out already.

A deep breath. *I'm not dying this time.* Another one. *Hannibal isn't planning to hurt me.* A third one. *I'm in control.*

She could do this.

On the corner of her eye, she could see the psychedelic mushrooms. She had to avoid that conversation at all costs, she couldn't trust herself not to let out something important.

Hannibal pulled out his phone and dialed Will's number once. Twice. He didn't try to hide his disappointment.

"He must be busy, hopefully, he'll return my calls when he sees them," said Hannibal with resignation. Abigail already knew that wouldn't happen.

"Can I send him a text?" She asked, extending her hand. Hannibal raised his eyebrow, but Abigail didn't elaborate, knowing that picking up his curiosity was the most effective way to get him to comply. Not seeing any danger, he passed the phone to Abigail, who immediately went for the text message app. Hannibal didn't have any old chats, and Abigail wondered if he had erased them, or if he just didn't text.

Probably that he just didn't text. He didn't seem like the type.

After finding Will's number in his contacts, she wrote a small text and pressed send, then gave it back to Hannibal. Not trying to hide his curiosity, Hannibal immediately read the text.

You promised me you would at least answer your phone. -Abigail

"When did he promise you that, if I may ask?"

"On Wednesday. I told him he could come when you eventually got me out of there, but for that, he needed to pick up the phone," she explained.

"Will's job is erratic at the best of times, rubbing the promise in his face will make him feel guilty, even if he was indeed too busy to pick up," Hannibal pointed out. There was no disapproval or reproach in his voice, he was just making sure she knew it.

"Hardly the worst I've done."

She met Hannibal's eyes, her words from before resonating between the two of them. *I would do far worse to give myself a chance to be happy.* Before any of them could say something to break the silence that had formed, Hannibal's phone started ringing.

They both looked down at it, and it was Will's name on the screen. Abigail smiled, victorious, as Hannibal gave the phone back to her. She picked it up and put it on speaker.

"Hi Will, I hope I didn't interrupt anything," she greeted him, but her voice wasn't in the least apologetic.

“You didn’t. We just arrested the kids we were after; I was writing my statement.” The implied truth was that he only called back because it was Abigail was there, but she was kind enough not to point it out. Hannibal looked intrigued at the whole situation, but in an amused way, so she wasn’t worried.

“Nice, what do you think of coming to dinner as a celebration? Hannibal got permission to get me out and he’s making me dinner.”

She stopped at that. The kind thing would be to give him an out, but only if you aren’t too tired. Abigail had no intention of getting a no, though, so there wasn’t an easy out. When Will eventually realized he couldn’t reject the invitation without going against her wishes, he sighed.

“I’m about two hours away, are you sure that’s not too late? I’m not sure at what time you must be back.” He didn’t sound like he was trying to get out of it, just his usual concern for not being an imposition or a bother.

Abigail looked at Hannibal and got the phone closer to him, his signal to speak.

“You will get here just in time for dinner, how fortunate.”

“Hello, Doctor Lecter,” greeted Will not sounding surprised at being on speaker. Away from the phone, Abigail heard a second voice, a woman.

“Hey Will, you need a ride back to Quantico?”

“Yes, thanks, Beverly. Just give me a minute to give Jack his paperwork.”

If she said anything else, Abigail didn’t hear it. It took her a moment to place the name, until she remembered Will’s coworker that had found her way to Hannibal’s basement. Abigail had helped set up the tableaux.

She hadn’t felt guilty, back then. She had found out the truth, there was just no letting her live, but she had felt a bit bad that they had taken Will’s last friend from him, even if it was him who probably sent her looking in Hannibal’s direction.

All in all, another unnecessary death she will avoid if everything goes her way. It was nice, knowing that even if she was being selfish, she was improving someone’s future too.

“I’ll be there in two hours, then, goodbye,” confirmed Will, before hanging up without giving Abigail a chance to say goodbye back.

Abigail gave Hannibal his phone back, satisfied with the way everything had gone.

“Well, that’s done. Can I help you with dinner?” She asked Hannibal. They had cooked together a few times while she was hiding, and it was something she liked. Hannibal did most of the cooking, but he would give her easy tasks and let her taste whatever they were making.

Just like that, Hannibal gave her some herbs to cut as fine as possible. Hannibal being Hannibal, couldn't help but tackle the next topic as soon as possible, as if he was making up for the weeks he hadn't visited her.

"It's important to know when it's time to turn the page. Have you thought about applying to schools?"

Abigail gave a humorless laugh.

"My dad killed girls at all the schools I applied to."

Hannibal thought that over for a moment, considering.

"Perhaps that can wait, then."

"I have the time, I'll probably have to repeat this last year. I don't think I'll get out of the hospital soon enough to make up for the lost time." She hadn't thought of that the last time. She hadn't thought about lots of things. "Doctor Bloom doesn't want me to think too hard about it yet, said it was adding unnecessary stress and the idea of the hospital was having a stress-free clinical environment to heal."

"But you have thought of it anyways," guessed Hannibal.

"It's useless to tell someone with as much free time as me not to think of something." She put the cut herbs on a plate, before picking up the next branch. "Most of my dad's money will go to reparations for the victims, so my future is looking a lot like a part-time job and community college. I wonder what kind of part-time job I'll get when the first thing that comes up when you google my name is a serial killer."

"I can appreciate the forethought to any eventuality, but don't worry yourself too much about that, I promise you we won't leave you to your own devices," reassured her Hannibal.

"Who's we?" Asked Abigail, already knowing the answer but wanting to hear it all the same.

"Will and I, of course, or did you think he would abandon you once you left the hospital?"

Abigail gave herself a moment to think about her answer, wondering if she could get Hannibal to give her more of his professional opinion.

"I think Doctor Bloom would say Will has an unhealthy emotional attachment to me," she settled on.

"It doesn't sound like you share that opinion."

"My opinion is that an unhealthy attachment was my dad going on a killing spree when he felt I was too close to leaving the nest. I don't see Will doing that any time soon." She turned to look at him. "What would your opinion be?"

"I'm inclined to agree with you. Alana can be overprotective of Will, but from what I can see your relationship has done both of you good." He went to the fridge, getting some ingredients

out. Oranges, eggs, sausage.

“You’re making breakfast for dinner?”

“Not just breakfast. High-Life eggs. A chef in Spain called Muro claims he invented it in the 19th century,” explained Hannibal, always so eager to talk about food history. Abigail couldn’t say she had cared for that before, but after getting a brief history lesson with each meal she had learned enough to impress pretty much anyone other than Hannibal. “Taste is not only biochemical, but it’s also psychological, evoking memories of places and experiences.”

“Eggs and sausage was the last meal I was making with my parents,” confirmed Abigail.

“It’s also the first meal you’re having with me.” Hannibal looked up at her, looking for something. “I must say, you don’t seem distressed at all at the memory.”

Abigail gave a sad smile. Every nightmare brought her back to this kitchen. If she let her mind wander for even a second, she could see blood staining the floor. Hannibal hadn’t noticed she refused to look at a particular corner of the kitchen; she didn’t need to see herself bleeding out again. Didn’t need to see Will trying so hard to save her again. It resembled her nightmares too much.

After all of that, she couldn’t bring herself to care what they were eating. Her father was the least of the demons she was facing.

“My dad destroyed my life, left me a scar. For the next few years, every step I give forward will be met with all the trouble that being the daughter of a serial killer brings.” A big breath, calming herself down. She hadn’t let go of her anger, she couldn’t; it was the emotion pushing her forward. She couldn’t let her dad win and have her life ending with him. Still, she wanted to control her emotions, she had seen the price of it being the other way around. “But I like eggs and sausage. It’s a good breakfast, or dinner. I’m not letting him ruin anything more in my life, including food.”

“Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless. You’re taking your power back.”

“I don’t think Doctor Bloom would like it. She says I don’t let myself feel enough, that I’m trying to repress my trauma.”

“She and I often have a difference of opinion. This will be another secret for us.” While talking, he had been preparing his working space, so he gestured for Abigail to come closer. “Now come, I’m teaching you how proper brioche’s dough looks after rising.”

Just as Abigail finished setting the table, there was a knock on the door. Abigail hurried to open it, knowing Hannibal was finishing plating the food in the kitchen.

“Hey, Will. You arrived just in time, the food is ready, Hannibal is just making it look fancy.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less from him,” joked Will, while taking off his jacket and hanging it in the closet by the door. He looked tired, but not particularly resentful about being forced to come, so Abigail wasn’t worried.

“You have tried his food already?” She asked, walking next to him to the dining table.

“The day after we met. He, uh, decided it was a good idea to ambush me in my hotel room in Minnesota to bring me breakfast after I was an ass on our first meeting,” he recounted. Abigail chuckled, it was such a power move that she couldn’t bring herself to be surprised.

“I mean, you’re friends now, so it seems it was a good idea,” she pointed out.

“Hello, Will, how did the arrest go?” interrupted Hannibal, walking into the room balancing their three plates.

“Hello, Doctor Lecter. It went fine, we got there in time to save the O’Halloran family. Only the father and the woman that abducted them got hurt, but nothing lethal.” Abigail could tell Will wasn’t telling them all, as she knew Hannibal could, but she had already dragged him here, she wouldn’t force him re-live his day.

“Sounds like the celebration dinner is in order.” She took her seat, where Hannibal had already put her plate. It looked amazing, and now that she wasn’t all drugged, she was excited to try it.

Will sat down and looked immediately amused at the food.

“Are eggs and meat your version of comfort food, Doctor? Or was Alana too generous when praising your varied repertoire of recipes?” Teased Will, to then take a bite. His face immediately lighted up. “Not that I mind, this is very good.”

Abigail took a bite too, and grunted in agreement, it was delicious. She was delighted with this night; she’d had few chances of spending time with both men together last time, and even those never had the light atmosphere this dinner had.

Hannibal was trying hard to look annoyed, but Abigail could only see fondness.

“Maybe if you start accepting my invitations for dinner, you’ll find out if I have more diverse recipes,” answered Hannibal. Will’s face was taken over by mortification, knowing he had dug his own grave there.

Abigail just looked between the two men, so clearly comfortable with each other. She tried to engrave the moment in her mind, how content she felt. In this light, everything she wanted

seemed to be within her reach.

“Abigail?” Asked Will, and by his tone, it wasn’t the first time.

“What? Sorry, I got distracted,” she apologized, shaking her head.

“What were you thinking of?” Hannibal always seemed to know when to ask that question, when it was beneficial for him to do so.

Thankfully, it was also beneficial for her to say it.

“I just hadn’t realized how much I had missed family dinners,” she confessed.

Will froze in his place, trying to understand the implications of what she had just said. She resumed her eating, soon followed by Hannibal.

They would let Will figure it out on his own.

On Tuesday, Doctor Bloom didn’t wait to interrogate her about her outing.

“How was dinner with Hannibal? Did you feel okay leaving the hospital? I trust him to know how to act, but I do think it was a bit precipitated.”

“It was amazing,” Abigail answered, not addressing the woman’s concerns. “Hannibal’s food is really delicious. He only let me help with the orange juice and cut some fancy herbs, but I’m sure I’ll get him to teach me to cook one day.”

“He truly is a great cook. He throws dinner parties every once in a while and I’ve never heard but compliments of his cooking,” recalled Doctor Bloom. She seemed calmer now that she knew it had gone well, so Abigail decided it was as good time as any to reveal their additional guest.

“Will wasn’t as impressed. Apparently, the meal was quite similar to the breakfast Hannibal had prepared for him before, he accused him to be resorting to comfort food,” recounted Abigail, a light tone that didn’t show she saw Doctor Bloom’s face turning more skeptical.

“I didn’t know Will had gone too.”

“Of course, he went.” Abigail kept acting as if it wasn’t a big deal. “They had just finished with a case when we call him, so he arrived in time for dinner.”

“I’m a bit surprised he accepted, he usually avoids anything that resembles a social setting,” her tone wasn’t accusatory, but the doubt was there. Unlike with Hannibal, she couldn’t explain to Doctor Bloom how she emotionally blackmailed Will into going, but she could just give a more optimistic view of the truth.

“Because he’s usually not comfortable around people, but he feels comfortable with us, so he doesn’t have a reason to avoid it.”

“It’s a bit unconventional,” intervened Doctor Bloom, “for him to be so close with his psychiatrist.”

Abigail refrained from smiling. This was an opportunity she had been looking for. A perfect chance to push Doctor Bloom away from Will and Hannibal, which was good for everyone involved. She had pushed Will to have a conversation with her a few visits ago so she had a reason to have the knowledge for this moment.

“But he’s not his psychiatrist,” answered Abigail, feigning confusion at the accusation. “Will told me Hannibal just did a psychiatric evaluation for him a month ago, surely that doesn’t mark him as his psychiatrist.”

It was Doctor Bloom’s turn to look confused.

“They have regular appointments in Hannibal’s office.”

“Will calls everything an appointment. Pretty sure he calls his visits to me an appointment too. And maybe they meet there because it’s closer to Quantico, while Hannibal’s house is in the exact opposite direction of Will’s.”

Doctor Bloom was about to reply, when her face went back to a more neutral expression, remembering this was supposed to be Abigail's therapy session, and therefore Hannibal and Will's relationship was of no concern.

“I think we've talked enough about them, why don't you tell me how group therapy went this week?”

Chapter End Notes

Happy 10 Anniversary of the Hannibal premiere!!!!

Lets pretend this update isn't almost 7 months late, okay? okay. I love everyone who left a comment, I love how many of us Abigail stans are there!!! Hopefully, you are still interested in the story lol.

Coquilles

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

For once, Abigail was winning. In fact, it was the third round she was winning, but she couldn't be sure if it was because Will wasn't lucky at Uno, or if it was because he was at risk of falling asleep every time he blinked. At first, she didn't think it was worthy of bringing up, as sleep-deprived was Will's more common state of being, but he looked particularly tired, and the fact that they had spent enough time together so that Abigail could tell the difference was incentive enough to mention it.

"I know looking like you haven't slept in a week is your thing, but you are almost falling asleep, and I know for a fact that chair is very uncomfortable, are you okay?"

It took a few moments for Will to react, which just proved her point, as even when he took his time to answer, one could see the turns in his brain immediately starting to work.

"We have a new case, that makes sleep seem more unappealing," he answered, but Abigail could tell that was a half-truth at best. She wasn't sure how she could tell, as Will was a very good liar and didn't have any physical tick that told on him. Perhaps it was that he didn't look troubled, like he did when a case was taking a toll on him, just tired.

"You know, in group therapy, they always say that pretending the problem isn't there only makes it more difficult to process." As direct as she could call out his shit without outright saying it. "Not that I see much processing in those sessions, but they are the professionals, so...."

"Are you still having trouble in group therapy?" Abigail wondered if Will was purposely diverging the conversation or if he was just that invested in her therapy progress. Probably both. "Doctor Lecter and Doctor Bloom agree it should be helpful for you, but you never sound like it's helping."

Abigail took a moment to consider her next course of action. She wasn't going to let herself get distracted, nor was she going to say group therapy was useless, as she wanted to keep as much goodwill of Doctor Bloom as possible, knowing eventually she would have to push back there. She could, however, turn the tides to Will.

"I'm not used to talking about my problems with other people, my family was never into that. You could help me practice, why don't you tell me what's really going on with you?" She gave a satisfied smile, and Will had a suffering glare that was all she needed to know she won.

"I began sleepwalking two nights ago, and was woken up by a patrol in the middle of the street, about ten minutes from my house." He left his cards on the table and put his hands over his eyes instead. "Nothing happened yesterday, but I couldn't sleep well, I was too afraid I would walk out again."

Abigail hoped her expression showed the appropriate amount of surprise with perhaps a mild concern, instead of the panic she was currently feeling. She knew Will eventually had sleepwalking episodes. That, in addition to the frequent loss of time he experimented, was the most compelling argument for the fact that he had committed the copycat murders even between those who didn't believe him capable of doing that in his right mind.

That would all happen months from now, though. The fact that the encephalitis was already showing symptoms made the fact that he had survived that long nothing short of a miracle in her eyes.

She wasn't sure if Hannibal knew already, and if he did, Abigail suspected that he had been much more reckless with Will's health than she had thought, she didn't believe he could have something like that under control for so many months without actual treatment.

"Should we be worried about that? Maybe you should see a doctor," she intervened, without thinking it through. Fortunately, it seemed to have been an appropriate reaction, for Will just shook his head.

"I asked Doctor Lecter the same, he is convinced it's just my brain trying to cope with the trauma I'm putting it through."

Abigail knew she was walking on thin ice right here. She didn't want Will to suspect Hannibal in any measure, nor did she want him to think she distrusted Hannibal's opinion, but she could only think of the Will that took her back to Minnesota trying to find any sign that he wasn't losing his mind.

He had been so sick, his eyes barely focused on anything. It was scary how out of it he looked, it was nothing like the Will in front of her, still so full of life. She didn't want him to end up like that again, but she needed a more careful plan for that, she couldn't risk Hannibal intervening and just pushing Will away from medical help.

She had thought she had more time, and so that hadn't been her priority. That changed now.

For the moment, however, she decided to humor that explanation.

"Did that ever happen when you worked in homicide? I can imagine you put yourself through a lot back then too," she prompted. Nothing that showed she didn't trust Hannibal's judgment, but still questioned the situation a bit.

"No, but it was different back then. I could keep a certain level of detachment between the killers and me. But now that I..." he stopped in his tracks, remembering his company. Abigail had no difficulty following that train of thought, and so she concluded.

"Now that you killed someone yourself, it's more difficult to separate your feelings from theirs." She waited until he gave a shy nod before continuing. "You don't have to tiptoe around that, I'm perfectly aware you killed my father to save my life, it's not something I compartmentalize when I spend time with you."

“Most people would consider it a delicate topic, to say the least,” he defended himself. Abigail just shrugged, not interested in pointing out the obvious, that they weren’t most people. Instead, she was more interested in what Will was suggesting as the root of his problems, too much identification with the other killers.

Abigail couldn’t know what his empathy disorder was like, but she honestly was a bit confused about how having killed someone himself could make it worse.

“It must be different how it felt for you to kill than it does for them, though. My father must have felt possessiveness when he killed those girls, the lost boys from your last case must have felt resentment towards their families.” I felt afraid every time the first time around, she thought, like every life I took was just postponing my inevitable death. “I doubt you were feeling any of those things, killing must be different for everyone, couldn’t you try to cling to that?”

When Abigail looked at Will, he was staring at her with an expression that terrified her. At that moment, Abigail knew Will had seen something in her, in her words, and she could only hope it wasn’t something that would make him run away and never come back

Just as she was about to say something else, she wasn’t sure what, but she knew she couldn’t take the tension any longer, something else passed through Will’s eyes. Exhaustion, mostly, and just the briefest moment of that lack of lucidness that he had worn when his encephalitis was at its worst.

And just like that, the moment was gone, Will was back to a more relaxed state, and Abigail felt like she could breathe again.

“That was very good, maybe try that level of out-of-the-box thinking in your next group therapy session,” he joked, and she gave a half-hearted laugh.

They went back to their game and kept the conversation light until visitors’ hours ended and Will had to go.

Abigail knew she had to bring attention to Will’s encephalitis soon, hopefully, before Hannibal got many ideas with that, she knew that. But the way that Will’s thinking had been derailed just minutes before reminded her that part of the reason Hannibal had exploited Will’s illness was that it made him more malleable to outside ideas.

She hadn’t planned to use that in her favor, she really hadn’t, but since it was there already... It was still a while to go until Will was ready to confront the truth about himself, and even further until he could confront the whole truth about Hannibal, but he could confront the truth about self-defense, especially if it was her.

Yes, that was it. She needed time to come up with a plan for the encephalitis anyway, so it was reasonable to take the chance in front of her to start pushing him.

It was time for her to tell him about Nicholas Boyle.

Hannibal's visits were awkward in a way Will's were not. After enough exposure, Abigail had stopped getting the urge to flinch every time Hannibal made a sudden move, she stopped fearing her breathing could somehow give away her game, but there was the fact that while her relationship with Will was something new, she did have a relationship with Hannibal before.

She had trusted him, he was her only company for the months she was in hiding, and in the end he killed her. Even once she had compartmentalized her resentment, there were a lot of emotions, some of them even positive, that colored her idea of Hannibal, and trying to pick them apart so they don't influence their interactions was a lot of work.

That didn't mean, however, that she didn't enjoy them. Hannibal would bring her food he cooked, which was a much-needed respite from the bland hospital food. Once she showed an interest in art, Hannibal was happy to give almost full lectures on whichever topic he chose, and he even brought books with photographs so she could see what he was talking about.

Maybe not something she would have considered fun before, but it was now familiar in a comforting way. She was almost remiss to crush that familiarity with the topic she was about to bring up, but losing Hannibal's feeble trust so early on could be fatal, and so she needed to tell him what she intended to do.

She waited until Hannibal had finished introducing each dish and they started eating. They were in one of the rooms designed for visitors, where cameras recorded video but no audio, and they were alone, so it was as good an opportunity as she would get. The camera was mostly to her back, so her face wasn't on it, she could speak more freely, but she would be careful not to put Hannibal in a position where the answer, were it to be read from his lips on the video, could be incriminatory.

Not that she believed Hannibal would say something like that, but he would know she was being careful, he would like that.

"I want to tell Will what happened with Nicholas Boyle."

Hannibal kept chewing the food in his mouth, not looking surprised. Maybe he had expected it, after all, he must know from Will that they were close, or maybe he just didn't want her to know she had surprised him. After he finished with the food in his mouth, he addressed her words.

“That is not just your secret to tell, Abigail. I stand to lose as much, if not more, than you if it gets out.” It was not a no, so it was already going better than Abigail had expected. It sounded like Hannibal was intrigued, and so she just had to pick his curiosity further, and his thirst to know what would happen pushed him to approve it.

“I know, that’s why I’m telling you I want to, instead of just telling him.” An explanation, but still not justifying her wish. She wanted Hannibal to ask, make him more invested in her answer.

By the look in his eyes, Abigail suspected he knew what she was doing, but there was the vaguest pride in them, and so she wasn’t too worried. Hannibal may be aware she was trying to manipulate him into agreeing, but that didn’t mean it wouldn’t work, just that he would be more mindful of the possible implications.

“And why do you want to tell him?” he asked, indulging her by playing into the game she was trying to set.

“He doesn’t feel bad about killing my father, he may even feel good about it, and the guilt about that is eating him alive. I can tell him that killing isn’t always the wrong thing to do, that he is allowed not to feel bad, but he won’t believe me now.” She took a breath and didn’t look up at Hannibal, lest she lose her nerve. “If I tell him what happened, he will tell me I did the right thing, that I have no reason to feel bad about what I did, and if my life is worth killing for, then he has nothing to feel bad about.”

She then looked up at Hannibal, feeling like a little kid because before she could stop it, she was looking for approval. In the end, this was her real plan for Will, using his protectiveness for her to manipulate him into not feeling guilty for killing until he stopped needing her as an excuse.

Using his love to break him instead of his anger, like Hannibal had done. Her whole plan depended on that being possible, and if Hannibal believed it could be done and let her try, she would feel much more confident about what she was doing.

Hannibal looked pensive, and for once Abigail was sure it was genuine. She continued eating, letting the man contemplate her words, thinking about how he could use them.

“Will is protective over you, I agree, but he’s still FBI, and before that, he was still law enforcement, don’t you think he would also feel obligated to do his job?”

And just like that, Abigail was at a loss for what Hannibal was thinking. If he was still asking her, it meant he was sure Will wouldn’t turn them in, he had already decided he would let her do it, but he wanted her to convince him, he wanted something from her.

She would have to play into the game of answering his questions now.

“He didn’t go into law enforcement because he cared about the law, he did it because he feels drawn to violence. He killed my father to save me, so you could say I’ve done more for him in that regard than his job ever did, why would he put it over me?”

For a moment, he saw the approval in Hannibal's eyes, but she knew he still hadn't gotten whatever he wanted.

"That case is still active, you would put him in a position where he may have to lie in court. That's not just putting you over his job."

"Do you really distrust Will that much?"

"Maybe I just don't want him to carry that, keeping the burden to ourselves would be kinder to him"

Abigail really wished she could just call bullshit on that. Hannibal didn't care about being kinder. What Abigail was realizing was that Hannibal wouldn't concede. He wanted her to do it against his advice so he could hang that over her head, even if it did work.

She refused to accept that. If she wanted Hannibal to be able to play that card, she would have just told Will without asking him.

She would have to give him something else, though, and she felt her stomach drop in realization of what she would need to do.

"What if I tell him something else first? Something that has nothing to do with you. I'll make him an accomplice, and then, what's one more lie?" She let the words fall out of her mouth, even while still unable to process their full weight, her voice much lower, but still firm.

The change in Hannibal's expression was immediate, he knew what she was talking about, and he hadn't expected her to confess it so soon.

"What would that be?"

"You already know," she answered, not wanting to give him the satisfaction. Then, as an afterthought. "Will would also know if he wasn't so in denial about it. Agent Crawford knows for sure, and I highly doubt he's smarter than Will."

"I still need you to hear you say it."

Abigail really hated that psychological bullshit, but took a deep breath anyways, knowing it was necessary.

"I helped my father." Her voice was quiet, but not enough to require repetition, it didn't tremble, but without her permission, tears started running down her eyes again.

She wasn't sure why she was even crying. She had come to terms with what she did, she had already told Hannibal once, and it didn't hurt to think of it. Perhaps she just cried because that's the only thing left to do when talking about the moment that ruined your life.

Hannibal stood up, and she ran into his arms as she did the first time. It didn't give her the same feeling of safety, but it was better than nothing, and she just could think of how unfair was that Hannibal gave some of the best hugs she had ever had.

Her mother, while plenty loving, wasn't one for hugs, so even when they did, it was stiff. Her father had been okay, once upon a time, but in the last year all his hugs became uncomfortably long, it was obvious he didn't want to let her go. She sometimes thought he would kill her then.

She had only hugged Will once. It was nice, but it was obvious he was tense and didn't really know what to do.

So perhaps it was something about the comfort such a hug gave her, that made her look for further reassurance.

"He won't think I'm a monster, won't he?"

"No, Will and I know what true monsters are, and you, Abigail, are a victim."

Not anymore, she wasn't, but she accepted his words anyway.

So, Abigail had her permission and Hannibal's reassurance that Will wouldn't think she was a monster.

It didn't make the nightmares that haunted her the rest of the week any easier to handle.

Hannibal decided it would be better if she told Will in his house, as they would have more liberty to talk and Will would have the opportunity to have a small breakdown, if necessary, not that he said in those words. He explained that he was busy that weekend, but that he would organize a dinner for the next one.

Abigail knew that 'busy' was code for the fact that he wanted to go hunting. She didn't care, she was mostly sure that Hannibal wouldn't do anything reckless to stop her, but it gave her a small satisfaction for it was a reminder she knew, that she was no longer ignorant of his doings.

She told Hannibal she would invite Will, and he acquiesced to her request, having been impressed by her results last time, so when Monday arrived and she only received a call, it was disappointing.

"Sorry, I can't make it today, we got a lead on the current case, may catch the guy. I'll see you on Wednesday."

And that was it. He gave her just enough time to wish him luck before he hung up the phone.

On Tuesday, he found herself walking around the garden with Doctor Bloom, glad that at least her therapy session didn't have to be sitting in one of those depressing white rooms in the hospital. They went in the normal circles, Abigail trying to sound as optimistic as possible about group therapy and Doctor Bloom appreciating the effort, even if she looked skeptical of how truthful she was being. They also talked about Abigail's nightmares, and she truthfully said that she kept having them, but it had become easier to go back to sleep after them.

When the conversation ran its course, Abigail decided it was safe to ask about the case.

"Will told me yesterday that they had a lead on their last case, did they catch the guy?"

Doctor Bloom, aware now that Will wouldn't be able to visit her and so he would call her, didn't seem surprised about her question, and indulged her in a bit of non-therapy related conversation.

"Yes, they closed the case," she answered. Abigail immediately noticed the careful wording and had to stop herself from rolling her eyes. They were the only ones outside, so it was just for Abigail's benefit that Doctor Bloom tried to censor herself.

"That's not the same as catching him, what happened?" Then, thinking that perhaps she should put a violent option out in the air so the Doctor wouldn't worry about her having an adverse reaction to a violent event, she added, "Got shot while resisting arrest? One of his would-be victims got the upper hand and killed him?"

Abigail had mostly expected the Doctor to be put off by that, but she gave her an indulging smile.

"Sorry, I know you don't like to be treated as if you can't hear of anything violent," apologized the Doctor. Abigail was positively surprised about that, having never heard the Doctor give such an acknowledgment of her capability of dealing with such before. "He killed himself, had a brain tumor, and decided to take it into his own hands."

"A bit anticlimactic," joked Abigail, and then in a more serious tone, "At least it's one case less, I know Will was losing quite a bit of sleep over this one."

Doctor Bloom looked a bit unsure then, an internal battle deciding if she should say whatever she had thought of taking place in her mind.

"Yes, he looked like he was having a rough time. He actually asked me to cover for him in his classes today, felt too tired to drag himself all the way from Wolfstrap." If Doctor Bloom said to her that Will 'looked like he was having a rough time', Abigail could only assume he looked about to pass out. "Don't feel bad if he cancels on you again tomorrow, he really needs his rest."

Abigail promised she would be understanding, and with that, they parted ways.

She was a bit nervous that Doctor Bloom would be right and Will wouldn't show up, as she wanted a last, purely positive interaction with him before having to tell him the truth, but she knew there was nothing she could do about it except for waiting.

To her relief, when Wednesday came around, a knock on her door came at the exact time, and once she gave permission Will entered her room and walked directly to the chair, he usually sat in. Abigail had known Doctor Bloom was being kind when she described Will as 'having a rough time' but it was evident there was something wrong with him. It was not only the exhaustion that was so usual in his expression, but something deeper and more distressing. If Abigail had to put it into words, she would say he looked haunted.

She had originally thought they could play a few rounds of Rummy again, but he didn't look like he was up to doing anything that required thinking. Instead, she took two of the pages on her buro with mandalas on them and the colored pencils she got. All that stuff had been a donation from the mother of one of the other girls here, apparently, she got dozens of coloring mandala books for a really good price, so all of the girls that were deemed safe enough got pencils and pages to color. The ones that were deemed riskier were also given some, but they used the pencils under supervision.

She put one of the pages in front of Will and sat in front of him with the other one, leaving the colors at the center so he could reach them too.

Will looked a bit skeptical for a few seconds but decided not to say anything and picked up the green pencil before starting to color. He never said no to anything Abigail wanted to play during his visits.

"Shouldn't you look more rested now that the case is closed? Doctor Bloom told me the man killed himself, and something about a brain tumor." It had occurred to her that they, Will, Hannibal, and even Doctor Bloom, shouldn't tell her so much about active or recently closed cases for legal reasons, but it was not as if she had anyone else to tell, she wasn't friends with anyone here, no one else visited her, and she didn't have any internet access, so they probably saw no danger in doing it.

Perhaps they would be more careful if they knew Freddie Lounds had visited her again, but Abigail hadn't told anyone. The visit had been brief, and Abigail managed to dodge the topic of writing a book without antagonizing Freddie, which she didn't want to do for several reasons. After that, she had told the head nurse that they should keep an eye on who they let in, and she hadn't been back since, whether because of the stricter vigilance or because she was letting Abigail get paranoid about the lack of answers about the outside world so she would be more easily manipulated into trusting her, was anybody's guess.

"It was a tough case, I'm having trouble leaving the killer behind." It was a very honest answer, more than she had expected, so she took her time to pick it apart and decide what the best question was.

“Because he killed himself?” She asked, but even then, she knew that it mustn't be that. Will had more trouble leaving behind killers he could identify with, and for all his problems, he had never seemed like the suicidal type to her.

“Because of how he chose his victims,” he answered. “The victims were all violent criminals; it was as if he had known, but he couldn't have interacted with them more than once before deciding it, it was too quick. In his delusions caused by the tumor, he somehow believed that he could identify the worst sinners, that he was given that ability to turn them into angels.”

There were a few things Abigail didn't understand there. She wasn't sure what turning them into angels meant, and it was strange that Will suddenly spoke of criminals as sinners, so she assumed that was him speaking from the point of view of the killer. She could see a lot of religious imagery around that case, and she would normally ask more about that, but this time her attention was elsewhere.

“But you say all his victims were violent criminals, so he was right, correct? It was not only a delusion.” Her current situation as a whole meant that Abigail had a bit more trouble discarding such claims, especially from a dying man who could have been guided by something like what had guided Abigail back here, but if she tried to accept anything strange as paranormal then she risked losing the touch with reality. “Could you do that? If you, to say something, had a small conversation in a gas station with a violent criminal, would you know?”

The answer was no, obviously, Hannibal and she were the evidence of that, but she did wonder what Will would think about that.

“No, I rebuild the thoughts of the killer based on evidence, anything you could say to someone in such a small interaction wouldn't be enough.” He stopped, gave himself a moment to think, and then added. “Depending on how good at masking the person was, I could work out that they had a personality disorder, or even detect some violent tendencies, but there's a lot of people that have those without becoming criminals. What this man did has no explanation to my knowledge, it pisses me off.”

It was very strange, she had to admit. She thought about the haunted look in Will's eyes though, and assumed that to some degree, Will did believe that man just knew, that he wasn't just lucky or that he saw something or had a way to acquire the information in such a short time, he just saw them on the street and knew.

Understanding that, Abigail agreed that it was terrifying.

“Do you think he could only see if someone was a criminal? Or that he could see anyone's soul and see who had tainted theirs with violence? In his delusion, of course.”

“I haven't even considered that,” Will admitted, and he looked mildly amused at the question. “How did it occur to you?”

“It feels scary, to imagine that someone could just look at you and see all your wrongdoings, all the sin in your soul. What would they think when they looked at us?” She knew Will was doing that thing when it looked like he was reading too much into her words, but she wasn't

afraid of that anymore. Let him have his suspicions, he would soon know the truth anyway. “I don't think I would like what they saw when they looked at me.”

She took a different pencil and kept coloring, not looking back at him. If he wanted to ask her anything, he would, but she didn't think that would happen. Will's capacity for self-deception was enormous.

“I wouldn't like what they saw when they looked at me either,” he finally said, and Abigail let that conversation go, instead deciding to broach the topic of the dinner.

“Hannibal is making me dinner again this weekend, can you go? You do have to make up for the fact you didn't come on Monday,” she reminded him in a teasing tone. Right now, she didn't need to make him feel guilty, she just needed to avoid his self-doubt stage, which usually was easier to do when he felt like she was bossing him around instead of asking.

A smile creped on Will's face, he was aware of what she was doing. He accepted the push anyway.

“Sure, which day?”

“You two can decide that, it's not like I have a busy schedule.”

They kept a more light-hearted conversation for the rest of the time, and when Will finally left, Abigail felt almost relaxed. That was until she saw the mandala Will had been coloring.

She had seen one of Will's clock drawings he had made for Hannibal, how none of the numbers were even inside the circle. This wasn't as bad, but it was impossible for her to ignore that with how much color was outside the lines, it looked more like something a six-year-old child would do, rather than a thirty-six-year-old man.

She hid her face behind her hands and took several deep breaths in order not to scream.

She really needed to come up with a plan for that.

Hannibal called her on Friday to tell her Will would pick her up the next day for dinner, and so she had the next twenty-four hours to live in blissful denial in case anything went wrong. She didn't try to plan what to do, she already knew her story and the angle she was trying for, there was nothing more she could do.

As much as she repeated that to herself though, it was difficult to just not think about it alone in her room, so by Saturday morning she found herself voluntarily in the common room with some of the other girls.

She usually avoided them because of how weird they acted around her, they always seemed afraid, like the smell of violence clung to her even here. There was also the fact that Abigail didn't act traumatized. She knew she was, and that her compartmentalization of emotions was an example of that, but she could sit in group therapy and talk about what happened to her with a straight face and she never cried in front of anyone, so the other girls felt uncomfortable around her.

The first time she was there, it had never really gotten better, but now that she talked more in group therapy and she sometimes tried to help with advice, which was seldom useful because it usually included rationalizing feelings, which not everyone could do, some other girls were more open to spending time with her.

Mary, a twenty-five-year-old who spent six months locked inside a basement by a man she had gone on one date with, and Carmen, a fourteen-year-old who was the only survivor of an accident with all of her friends, were the ones she gravitated the most to. They were both in her group, as most girls there were dealing with PTSD, and both seemed to appreciate Abigail's stoic attitude. Abigail wasn't sure if she could say she liked them, as spending time with them was exhausting, and she was still a bit annoyed when they would start broadcasting victimhood, as Doctor Bloom so eloquently had put it.

Abigail had discussed those feelings with Doctor Bloom enough to know that it was because she hated that people saw her as a victim, and so that she had problems when other patients did that, but while she was trying to be more patient with it, her immediate reaction was still one of disgust.

Today was a good day for them though, and so Abigail was sitting on the floor with them as Carmen was trying to teach her and Mary how to do a dragon out of origami. Abigail had never been one for origami, but it was fun, and Carmen was plenty patient when she had to explain the same step multiple times.

"I have a book with instructions for over a hundred origami animals, I'll see if I can have my mom drop it off, I'll ask her today when I see her," promised Carmen, to both Abigail and Mary's delight.

"My mom is also coming today; she's taking me to my grandma's house for her birthday dinner," added Mary. Unlike Carmen, whose father had died a few years ago, Mary did have one, but he only came to visit her at the hospital, never when she went out, she would still panic if a man approached her outside of the hospital, and so that dinner party would probably only include her aunt, her grandmother, her mother and her.

Abigail knew Mary missed spending time with her father, and was frustrated with her lack of progress, it was what she talked about the most in group therapy.

"I'm having dinner with Hannibal and Will again, so I guess we'll all have an exciting day." Abigail had spoken about both men in therapy, and so the girls knew who she was talking about. Mary had once asked if she wasn't afraid of being alone with two men whom she barely knew, and once Abigail stopped her first impulse of making a joke about how unlucky

she would have to be to cross paths with yet another serial killer because those were the type of jokes she could absolutely not do with the girls, she reminded Mary that unlike her, she didn't have any more family or friends, so she had to either risk it or resign herself to not leave the hospital until she was released.

Mary had made a face that told Abigail that she would choose not to leave the hospital, but the girl had still nodded in understanding. They all dealt with trauma differently, that was one thing they never stopped hearing.

"Tomorrow we can all complain together at having to come back to boring hospital food," joked Carmen, and Mary and Abigail laughed accordingly.

Abigail had her doubts about it, as usually post-outing days tended to be sensitive days for both girls, and no matter how good today went, she doubted tomorrow she would be in any mood to deal with one of them having an emotional breakdown in front of her, but that would be rude to point out.

They spent a few more hours together, Carmen having decided they should try some easier origami before trying the dragon again, and so they stuck to paper cranes and flowers. By the time they each left to get ready, Abigail had succeeded in the cranes, even if she was sure that by the next day she would have forgotten the steps.

She was ready just in time for Will to knock on her door, and she immediately walked out of the room. Her anxiety about what she was about to do came back in full force now that she had nothing to distract herself with.

"I guess I don't have to ask you if you're ready," Will joked, and Abigail had mixed feelings at seeing that he looked better than he had in at least two weeks. It meant she would ruin a good day, but it also meant he was less likely to have a dangerous or impulsive reaction.

"Believe me, I'm always ready to get some fresh air," she answered, swallowing down her nerves and starting walking to the reception so they could check her out for the day, and then to the parking lot.

As soon as she sat in Will's car, she had to laugh at how much dog hair was in it. He looked a bit ashamed about it, but Abigail quickly went on to ask him about how his dogs were doing so that he would feel less self-conscious.

The drive from the hospital to Hannibal's house was short, and once they arrived Abigail felt a switch being flicked inside of her. The nerves were gone. Actually, most of her emotions were gone, she felt quite empty inside. Dissociation, Doctor Bloom had once called it. It was a bit surreal, feeling both that she was and wasn't there.

It didn't matter, she had a job to do, and so she put a smile on her face and went inside the house as soon as Hannibal let them in. There was nothing she could help with for dinner, and so she just went quiet as Hannibal and Will debated back and forth about some recently published article by Doctor Chilton.

Although in honesty, it wasn't much of a debate, it was more like taking turns dissecting and destroying everything it said, word by word. It was good that Abigail wasn't supposed to understand, and she didn't, because she was having trouble concentrating at the moment.

It was a shame that not even the food tasted like anything to her, even if she hid it well behind deserved compliments because she could trust the food was excellent. She managed to ask a few pertinent questions when the discussion turned to Will's classes.

Will was catching up with the fact that she was acting weird, he kept looking at her trying to puzzle what was going on, not even trying to dissimulate it.

Hannibal picked up the plates and said that the dessert would be ready in a minute. He could hear from the kitchen, and so Abigail decided that this was the best moment to act.

"I have to tell you something." She said, dropping the smile and carefree attitude she had tried to keep up. Her voice sounded distant to herself, but she wasn't sure how it sounded for an outsider.

Will, who had been sitting next to her, turned his full body to her. On an uncharacteristic move of him, he looked Abigail in the eye. That's when she knew that he was ready for the truth, he was knocking down all the lies he had told himself.

She just needed to say it.

"I've been lying to you," she began, and every word was harder to say than the last one. "I knew..." A deep breath, but the words wouldn't come out. She tried again. "I helped..." She was getting short of breath, and her heart was beating faster. She still wasn't feeling, at least she didn't think so, but she was shaking. She tried again. "I..."

She couldn't do it. She had to do it. She looked down at her hands, she couldn't stand looking at Will, flashes of when they had gone back to Minnesota coming back to her. There was water on her hands, and even though she knew it must have been her tears, she couldn't remember when she had started crying. She felt her stomach turning. This wasn't how she wanted it to go, this wasn't how she wanted anyone to see her.

Jack Crawford was right about you.

"I knew because... I was there when..."

You lured them. You killed them. Who else have you killed?

How could she think this was a good idea? It didn't matter that Will had tried to avenge her, that he had wished for another chance with her, he only did it because he thought she was dead. He could only stand the thought of what she did because as far as he knew, she was dead.

She was very much alive now. And he would hate her. And he would get her arrested. And she honestly hoped Hannibal would kill her before they got her to jail because she couldn't stand to be alone with her thoughts for the rest of her life.

She was close to a panic attack, that much she knew. She couldn't hear anything, her eyes couldn't focus, and so she was startled when she felt a hand carefully laid on her arm.

Following the blurry image of the hand, she saw it was Will's. He was still looking at her, and even if she couldn't quite see his face through her tears, she could tell he wasn't angry. He must know what she was trying to say, but he wasn't angry.

That was enough for Abigail to get the words out.

"I knew my father was killing those girls. I helped him, I was the lure." To her relief, her voice was steady. She knew she looked like a mess but at least her voice was steady, and it wasn't unnecessarily higher nor was she just whispering it as if saying things out loud somehow made them more real. "It was them or me, I chose myself."

She waited for Will to say something, but he was kept quiet as the time continued to pass. Abigail was no longer at risk of a panic attack though; she had gone back to that empty feeling inside. She had said it, there was nothing more to do but wait to see what would happen.

"Are you angry with me?" She asked because Will was looking in her direction, but she could tell he was no longer looking at her. He was lost in thought, even if he still had a reassuring hand in Abigail's arm.

"Shouldn't your first question be if I'm going to arrest you?" Asked back Will, avoiding answering her.

He had a point, maybe that's what she should've asked, but the emptiness inside her allowed her plenty of logical thinking, and she didn't feel like pretending at the moment.

"I already know that you won't. I'm more worried that you will try to pretend I never existed." She stopped for a second, then decided to elaborate. "I know you, remember? I know you don't care about the victims. And you do think my life is worth killing for, you don't blame me for that. But you wanted me to be innocent, you should've known from the beginning that I wasn't, but you wanted to believe it so bad that you convinced yourself of it. Now that you know I'm not, I'm not sure you want to be around me."

Will went back to his silence, and Abigail could see the fight happening in his brain. She was afraid of even moving, in case that was the trigger for Will to flip out and run away. At one moment, Will's eyes on her felt so heavy, that she almost wondered if she had something on her face, on her hair. It felt like Will was seeing something, she just didn't know what.

Thankfully, Hannibal came into the dining room with the desserts, and Abigail hoped he would start asking questions that Will should be asking so that he could hear the answers.

He didn't say anything, though, which was an odd choice, to say the least, and Abigail wasn't the only one who noticed.

"You don't look surprised, Doctor Lecter," accused Will. Abigail wondered if Hannibal would say she had already told him, she wondered how Will would take that, but that was not

the direction the psychiatrist took.

“Should I be?”

“Why wouldn’t you?”

“We discussed Jack’s theory about Abigail’s involvement before she even woke up. If you remember, Will, I told you I found it entirely possible. There had been nothing that changed my mind about that,” he explained. Abigail realized that it had never occurred to her that Hannibal had been ready for her to be arrested before she woke up. He hadn’t known her, as far as he knew she would crack at the first investigation. She wondered just how many other times her life had been on the line without her even knowing.

“And yet you never brought it up again,” Will accused. Abigail wondered if he was angry, but after Abigail’s question, he didn’t want to be angry at her, so he was redirecting his feelings.

“I saw no point in doing so, you had made your choice on what to believe, and once I met Abigail, I decided that what she needed was help, no matter what she had done to survive thus far.” A beat of silence. “And no matter what she had done since. Seeing as we are coming clean, I do think there’s something more you should know, Will.”

Abigail felt lightheaded, perhaps she was about to pass out. She had no idea Hannibal planned to kill two birds with one stone and have her confess what happened to Nicholas Boyle that night. She thought that they would give Will a bit of time to process what he just found out.

In hindsight, it was naïve of her to think Hannibal would make it easier for them.

Perhaps if she threw up she could distract Will long enough for him to forget about what Hannibal had just implied. It wouldn’t be too hard, she felt nauseous enough.

“Abigail,” began Will, with a voice so tender and careful that Abigail almost thought she was imagining it. But she wasn’t, Will was talking, and he had his suspicions already, “do you know where Nicholas Boyle is?”

She couldn’t even begin to understand how had he jumped to that, and she knew that Will sometimes just knew things but how could he decide it was about that guy. Did he suspect he was dead? Had he suspected all along? Just how much did he lie to himself on a daily basis since she came into his life?

“Buried in the forest near her house,” answered Hannibal when it became obvious she wasn’t going to answer.

“And why do you know that?” It was unclear who he was talking to, so Abigail decided to speak up before Hannibal could get her into an even bigger mess.

“He helped me hide the body.” Breathing in, breathing out. “I thought Nicholas Boyle was going to kill me, I had a knife in my hands. I didn’t know what I was doing until he was

bleeding out.”

It had been the truth, at least the first the first time it happened, and that was all that Abigail needed.

“If it was self-defense, why didn’t you admit it?”

“They wouldn’t have believed me, for everyone else, it would have been as good as an admission of guilt.”

“And they wouldn’t be wrong.”

Abigail flinched at the words. She knew Will wasn’t trying to be cruel, he was just pointing out the truth. His hand was still carefully holding her arm, she hadn’t lost him.

Hannibal, who until that moment had been hovering in the dining room, and only now did Abigail realize he had truly brought out the dessert, finally stopped next to Will, putting a hand on his shoulder.

“Abigail is trusting us to protect her, as families are bound to do. We are her family now, Will.”

Abigail thought for a moment that Hannibal was being too pushy, his intentions on how he wanted Will to perceive this dynamic too obvious, but just as if on command, that same foggy look in Will’s eyes came back, she could see that for a few seconds, Will mind wasn’t really there. When he came back to himself, Will nodded, and to her utmost surprise, he then pulled her into a hug.

Her first instinct was to hug him back, and so she did, and then she felt the heaviness of all that just happened coming down on her. The pressure on her chest made it hard to breathe, and this time she didn’t try to stop the crying, didn’t try to control her breathing, and didn’t mind that she looked less than perfectly in control.

It had worked. Her plan had worked and now she had one less secret and she was one step closer to avoiding an awful future dead or in jail or all alone.

She could do it, she really could do it.

She just had to survive everything else that was to come.

Chapter End Notes

This is the first chapter about an episode where Abigail originally doesn't appear, so as you see there is a lot more of room for me to play around. It also brings us to Mary and Carmen; I'm not usually one for OCs, but the truth is that Abigail still has a long way to go and since she is most often at the Hospital, I need to actually build a story in there.

None of the OCs will be really relevant to the story, but there will be frequent interaction. Also, even though Abigail is currently avoiding processing any and all feelings, as you can imagine that won't hold up forever, so her life in the hospital will become more relevant later on.

Thanks everyone for their kind comments, it really warms my heart to see how much people are enjoying the story :)

Extra note: lmao that last scene was soooo difficult I basically had to draft the scene in Will pov too to keep track of what was he thinking and how he should react, basically did double work, hopefully it was worth it

Entree

Chapter Notes

Quick PSA, this is NOT an Alana bashing fic. This chapter may be a bit aggressive towards her, but let's keep in mind that our narrator is biased and has an agenda. Yes, Alana has flaws that are pointed out, but I don't think in any way that she is a bad person or deserving of the misogynistic hate she gets in this fandom sometimes.

See the end of the chapter for [more notes](#)

The Monday after Abigail told Will about helping her father, and about Nicholas Boyle, he didn't come to visiting hours. In his defense, he had warned her during the mostly silent car ride back to the hospital to drop her off that he needed a bit of time to process the new information.

It didn't make it hurt any less, but at least she wasn't as worried.

On Tuesday, she detailed Hannibal's delicious food, which she couldn't remember the taste of, but she had sat at his table enough to make a polite guess about the menu, to Doctor Bloom. She did mention that Will had been absent the previous day, but then brushed it off as him just being tired.

Abigail expected Doctor Bloom to just accept her explanation and continue on to her questions about how group therapy had gone yesterday. To her surprise, Doctor Bloom's face fell to something sadder, more somber instead.

"He has been very tired lately, hasn't he? I'm worried about him, I'm afraid he's getting sick."

Abigail was taken aback by the honesty, Doctor Bloom seldom let herself talk about personal concerns, which Abigail understood as her professionalism. If she was bringing it up, she must have been desperate to share said worries, to have someone listen.

That boded bad for Abigail. Doctor Bloom's genuine care for Will was an inconvenience at best, one she needed to curb as soon as possible. She also needed to deal with what was worrying Doctor Bloom, the encephalitis, but that plan was still a work in progress that would have to wait until Will was comfortable with her again. For now, she would have to act like she saw no reason to worry.

"The nightmares, I'm sure. They can be unforgiven, and Will doesn't strike me as the kind of person able to fall back asleep after a nasty nightmare," she placated the doctor, not even lying. Will was having nightmares, and he had told Abigail that he could never fall back asleep. In his own words, he was living on less sleep than he had when he was a college student.

The mention of nightmares seemed to shock Doctor Bloom out of her casualness, and Abigail could see her straighten her shoulders back, her expression closing off, her eyes showing no other emotion than compassion.

"Can you relate to that?" the doctor asked, turning the conversation to Abigail's problems once again.

"I don't think so. My nightmares are about dying, Will's are about killing. I would say we have quite different problems," she explained.

She liked it when she could tell the truth. Abigail didn't mind lying, but there was something empowering about saying the truth, knowing she could be herself without getting exposed. It was the exact reason she had decided to come back to this time, instead of before her father's first murder.

Doctor Bloom was much less content with her response, although Abigail couldn't point out why. She knew about her nightmares, after all.

"Do you talk to Will about his nightmares?" She sounded both put off and curious. Her professional curiosity about Will shone through, but also her refusal to see him as anything other than a man with a delicate mind.

"Sometimes, I guess, but he doesn't like to share much. I don't need him to, though. His problem is that he's good at getting inside killer's heads, not so good at getting out." She was paraphrasing what she had heard many times from Hannibal, minus the part where he said the reason Will had that problem was that his subconscious was sinking its claws into the rush it gave him to be in the head of the killer, to make up for the fact that he didn't dare to do it himself.

She had thought back then that it was a bold assumption to make, but as Will kept working cases during and after jail, he indeed seemed to no longer have that problem. Of course, there was also the external factor of the encephalitis, but she had to agree that it hardly could have been affecting him that much that early. Probably.

Abigail could tell Doctor Bloom was getting increasingly uneasy about the conversation, and she thought about sidestepping the topic and shutting down the doctor's train of questioning, but Abigail could feel an opportunity there. An opportunity to push her away from Will, if she played her hand right.

"And that doesn't make you uncomfortable?" Questioned the Doctor.

"Why? Because one of his nightmares might be of him in my father's place? Maybe even slashing my own throat?" She looked at the doctor and waited until she nodded to answer.

"No, it doesn't make me uncomfortable. I know some people see him as a time bomb about to go off, but I wouldn't do him the disservice of assuming he's anything other than in complete control of himself. Dreams are just that, dreams."

A bit of a stretch in some places, although Abigail did believe Will was currently sound enough of mind, and she didn't intend to let him get to a place where he wasn't. More

importantly though, she could see the vague guilt on Doctor Bloom's face, they both knew she was included in those "some people".

Doctor Bloom sighted, and finally asked how group therapy went.

On Wednesday, Abigail made sure to keep her expectations low, and spent the entire morning waiting for the phone call where Will would cancel on her again, if she even got that. She also was prepared for him to just not come.

When the visitor's hour finally began, there was a knock on her door, and after she gave her permission, Will walked into her room.

He had a chessboard in his hands. Abigail thought it was quite mean to choose a game she had said she only knew the basics of, and the basics consisted of how to move each piece, but he was there instead of locked away in his house, so she gracefully accepted the passive aggressiveness.

One of her worst weaknesses at the time was that she depended on people coming to visit. If Will decided to stop, she couldn't do anything about it, and she lost all influence over him, so it was vital that he kept coming.

They set up the game without talking, and Abigail wondered if they would have a silent day. If so, she could deal with that, better to have Will processing his complicated feelings about her involvement in eight murders where she could see him than in private. She wondered what his session with Hannibal would be about.

Soon after they began the first game, Will spoke.

"You don't need to keep quiet so I don't get scared off, I get enough of other people walking on eggshells around me," he grunted. It was evident he wasn't in a good mood, which made Abigail want to keep quiet even more, but she forced herself to go against that instinct.

"Would I be wrong to assume Doctor Bloom is one guilty of that? She seemed worried about how tired you've been looking. She fears it may go beyond nightmares." Will's grimace is answer enough. Doctor Bloom is many things, but quiet about her concerns is not one of those.

"How are your nightmares going? I assume you were telling the truth about having them, you look tired enough," he asked, turning the conversation back to her.

So, he didn't want to quietly process this, at least not anymore. He came because he needed to reconstruct his idea of her, and the best way to do it was with her in front of him, answering all his questions now that she had no reason to lie. At least, no reason he would understand.

"They got worse after I came back on Sunday. The general idea was the same, me dying over and over again, but now I wasn't alone. It didn't make it better though, I felt they were watching, as if they had first-row seats to see me fail, see me die anyway after everything I did to escape that ending," she shared. She could still feel it when she closed her eyes, all those eyes on her. Waiting, ready to enjoy her failure.

"They haunt you," he summarized.

"Sure, if that's what you want to call it, although I would say what haunts me is the fear that I will end up like them. Or behind bars. They are just an easy reminder of both." She moved her knight, just for Will to move his rook and,

"Checkmate." Abigail cursed under her breath, a glance at the clock told her she lasted around five minutes. She reset the pieces while Will kept talking. "It's not that they are dead at all, or that you helped kill them, that bothers you then?"

"No, at least not anymore. I made peace with that. It was them or me, I chose myself, I can live with that." This time Will had the white pieces, so he made the first move. Abigail decides to just copy him, wondering if it would go better than whatever she had tried before. "What would your professional opinion about that be? A psychopath? You have plenty of experience with those."

She was baiting him, to see if he would admit to seeing her the same as all those other killers inside his head. He had no way of knowing she had had months already to, if not get over, put away the guilt, enough that it didn't wear her down anymore. He chuckled and found something that made her angrier than she had expected.

"No, not a psychopath. A traumatized teenage girl groomed by her father and desperate to survive, who is also a bit too good at compartmentalizing. You, Abigail, are still a victim, even if not only a victim." He looked her in the eye, aware of how much she hated being reduced to a victim.

It was a low blow, but she had to admit it was not an inaccurate one.

"I don't think those six girls would agree with you," she retorted, knowing she was just being difficult.

"Just six?"

Abigail frowned, then remembered she had never actually told him about that first time. The girl that had died because of her, but that she never thought of as her as her victim.

"Maybe the first one would agree. I met her on the college tour, my dad insisted I should go talk to her and invite her for a coffee. I thought he was just worried about me being alone and wanted to help me make a friend, even if neither of us had decided on going there yet." If only she, and how horrible of Abigail it was that she couldn't even remember her name, and she refused to ask Will, had declined. Had told her she had other plans, but she seemed nice and hadn't been opposed to making a friend. "We walked out of the coffee shop; my dad offered her a ride to her hotel. Next thing I knew, the girl was dead in the trunk, and I was in the copilot seat. We drove all night until we got to the cabin. I was still in shock, made it easier to just follow whatever instruction my father gave me. And then when he dropped me back home and reminded me that I couldn't tell anyone because I helped him, I just kept quiet. I was afraid."

"You weren't an accomplice, most people would comply after seeing a murder in cold blood, it's a survival instinct," he pointed out, chess game mostly forgotten in front of them.

"Yes, that did occur to me after the third girl was dead. By then, it was too late. I think my dad was counting on that, I just needed to believe him for long enough." She moved her tower but was left waiting when Will didn't move any piece.

Abigail looked back at him, and he was looking straight at her. His sight didn't look focused though, so she assumed he was somewhere inside his mind.

"Stop that."

"Stop what?"

"Stop trying to get into my father's head. He's dead, you caught him. If you want the details so you can sleep at night, I can give them to you, but I don't want you to keep trying to think like him," she demanded. While it was true that it didn't make her nervous or even uncomfortable, it was useless. She wanted Will to bond with her, the real Will, not whatever shadow of her father remained up there.

"I was not trying to get in his head," he assured her.

"Then what are you doing?"

"I'm trying to understand you. I maintain that you are traumatized, and I promise you meet next to no criteria of psychopathy, but your emotional removal from the situation is unusual. You are detached from some parts, and extremely sensitive about others, and I can't quite see the pattern." Abigail tried to catch his eyes, but he looked down at the chess chessboard. He still didn't make a move.

Abigail stomped the impulse of rolling her eyes. Will's reconstruction of someone's mental state heavily depended on him having enough context clues. Unless he somehow could read in her face the outlandish situation she found herself in, he would never have enough pieces to see the full picture. It must have been frustrating for him, being so much closer to her than to so many others he had read like a book, and still feeling blind half the time.

It gave her some twisted satisfaction.

"How can you be sure of that? You have let your fondness for me blind you for weeks, aren't you afraid you are making the same mistake?" She asked, because she needed to push more, she needed a confirmation of anything, and because sometimes even she doubted. She knew she was not Hannibal, but she also knew he was not a normal psychopath if he could even be categorized as one.

"Despite my previous shortcomings, I still have an empathy disorder. You can't fake a panic attack in front of me," he explained, putting her on check on the board.

She moved her king out of check, cringing on the inside about the reminder of her breakdown on Sunday.

"I was afraid of how you would take the truth; I spent days thinking of worse-case scenarios, I'm surprised I kept it together as much as I did," she confessed. And then, in a lower voice, not really wanting to verbalize it, she added, "I hate losing control of my feelings."

"I know," Will said with understanding. "But that wasn't the one I was talking about."

It took Abigail a second to understand what he was referring to, until she remembered finding Marissa in the cabin, how she had broken down at the evidence that she had let her best friend, her only friend, die because she was too afraid to risk it and save her.

Abigail made a daily effort not to think about that, just as she avoided so many other things, but this one was the most difficult. Abigail loved Marissa, she really did, her best friend was perfect. The first time around, Abigail had burrowed all her grief under the thousand other things she worried daily about, but back then she hadn't known much about her death, and she had even believed that Nicholas had killed her. By the time she found out it had been Hannibal, she had locked all her feelings away.

This time, however, after being close to her one last time, after having her defend Abigail and smile at her once more, and after she basically signed her death sentence, it was impossible to ignore. She had two whole days to at least try and think of an alternative, but it hadn't even occurred to her.

Abigail was aware she had started crying. Her breathing was steady, her voice firm, but she couldn't stop the flow of tears.

"Have you ever been afraid that you are in a nightmare you can never wake up from?" She asked but didn't wait for a response. Abigail still remembered her first time seeing the body, she plucked the words from that memory. "That's what seeing the body felt like. When I woke up from the coma, the nightmare was supposed to be over, my father was dead. And yet there it was, a new dead body."

"And then you found out it was Marissa," Will prompted.

"And then I found out it was Marissa, and I realized I got my best friend killed because she wanted to see me." For a second, Abigail was afraid she had said too much, but then she remembered that, if she believed that it had been Nicholas Boyle, then he would've chosen

Marissa for defending Abigail, and so it was not a suspicious statement. "I feel so guilty about her death, and I try not to think about it at all, but it still hurts."

She didn't know what she had expected from Will, he sucked at being reassuring, and he wasn't very happy with her either, so she doubted he would even try. She did know that she wouldn't have guessed his next words in a thousand years.

"Maybe you should try to talk about that in group therapy."

Abigail first assumed that Will was still just being bitchy, but his expression seemed honest.

"You think it would help?" She felt skeptical about it. Being vulnerable in front of others wasn't something she wanted.

"Maybe. I think at least more girls should be able to relate to the survivor's guilt, in a way they can't about the involuntary cannibalism." That made Abigail laugh, even if it wasn't funny at all. Will seemed satisfied with her reaction. "Worst case scenario, it just helps you win points with Doctor Bloom, she's not happy with your lack of openness in group therapy, even if you have been more of an active participant. Everyone is waiting for you to have a breakdown, so you can build from there."

"Do I need to have a breakdown? What happened to 'everyone's trauma presents in different ways, and they are all valid'?" She mocked, imitating the, at least in her opinion, condescending voice nurses and psychologists used.

"You are repressing too many emotions not to have a breakdown eventually, even if I can see it won't be this one. Maybe it will be about something you can't talk to them about, but right now it will make you look more normal to give them this." He stopped for a moment, weighing his words. Abigail wondered if he was just realizing he was helping her get out of the suspects list. "Also, we both need extra points with Doctor Bloom if we want her to let you come fish with me any time soon."

Abigail let a smile, the first one of the week, grow in her face. It must have looked strange, in between fresh and dry tears and probably red eyes, but it was the genuine happiness you can just feel when you get exactly what you wanted. The promise of a future where Will taught her how to fish, a reassurance that their relationship hadn't been destroyed by the ugly truth.

Her plan was still on track, she could do this, even if she had to have another hundred conversations as difficult as this one.

"Checkmate," announced Will, moving his queen.

She cursed again. Stupid game for smart people.

She knew Will was right, no matter how much she tried to be supportive and helpful to the other girls in her group, she still hadn't opened. She sometimes shared her mild frustration, but nothing that she felt genuinely affected by.

She didn't like people looking at her and seeing her weak spots, Abigail felt like it was asking for people to hit her there. Besides, showing weakness invited pity, once someone saw you cry, they never looked at you the same.

She lay awake all night, trying to remember the last time she was willingly vulnerable without any ulterior motives, just to realize she couldn't remember. And it was not as if she thought she was doing something wrong, she was doing what was necessary, but thinking about Marissa made her think about all she had lost and...

"It has come to my attention I am struggling with feelings of regret," she explained when it was her turn. All the girls looked surprised at her deviation from her usual mild complaints about nightmares and boredom. The psychologist who directed group therapy did a much better job at dissimulating, but Abigail could see the spark in her eyes.

Looking for a less annoying reaction, she glanced to her right, where Carmen was smiling warmly at her. Across the circle, Mary gave her the thumbs up. A bit too much excitement, made it harder to keep going than Will's nonchalant attitude, but it was better than everyone else.

She took her time before continuing, knowing they wouldn't push her.

"Ever since I woke from my comma, I have avoided showing too many emotions, especially when I think it could make me be perceived as weak or delicate. That means that when I was back in Minnesota and my best friend escaped from her house to see me, I didn't ask her for a hug, even though she was the only person left from my old life, and even though I really wanted to hug her." She kept her eyes on her hands, not wanting to see anyone's reactions. She made sure her voice was still normal; she didn't want anyone else to see her cry.

"Now she's dead, and I will never hug her again, I lost that opportunity. And I can see how the moral of that story should be that I shouldn't deprive myself of the comforts that being emotionally vulnerable can bring, but I can't just do that because I'm still part of an active investigation of the FBI, and this tabloid reporter keeps bugging me about how I need to clean my image because everyone thinks I helped my father, and even in this hospital I feel eyes on me all day long, I don't feel like I can be vulnerable."

The last part had been a runoff, she knew it. She hadn't sounded as neutral and meditative as she had intended, instead her more genuine fears had come out.

Carmen extended her left hand to her, an offer that Abigail rejected with a shake of her head. That was exactly what she didn't want, people feeling like she needed comfort or to be handled as a fragile object.

Abigail wasn't sure what more to expect, but one of the girls, the one that always did that little girl voice Abigail complained about so often to Doctor Bloom, was the first to break the silence.

"Regret is for when there was a better option you didn't take, but if the way you were holding up, especially so soon after you woke up, was to put a strong front, then you did what you could to cope." She had that tone they all acquired when repeating the same affirmations their psychiatrists reiterated all day long, but Abigail could tell she was genuine anyway. "I know usually when we talk about not blaming ourselves for the ways we naturally cope, we think about the ones of us that do it louder, but it applies to everyone."

All the girls nodded, a safe agreement of things they heard daily. Abigail wasn't sure why would she find that reassuring, since even though it was an automatic reaction, it was one she could override, she just hadn't thought of it in time.

"How did it 'come to your attention'?" Asked Mary. At Abigail's evident confusion, she elaborated. "You don't think much about your feelings, and this was quite the introspection."

Almost involuntarily, she nodded in acknowledgment. Mary was quite right about that.

"I was talking with Will yesterday, Marissa came up, and he has a way to see through people. Once I stopped crying, he said that while he understood the impulse of closing up, I couldn't keep bottling up all of my feelings forever, and this was as good place as any to start," she explained, more or less maintaining the original idea of that conversation, except for the part where they both agreed it would make Doctor Bloom more likely to be compliant.

"Sounds to me like there do is a place where you feel safe enough to be vulnerable," concluded Mary, looking satisfied.

After a moment, Abigail nodded again. She could admit it was true; she felt safe to look weak in front of Will, knowing he wouldn't exploit it as Hannibal would, wouldn't turn against her as most of the world would, wouldn't even pity her, having too much first-hand experience on how enraging that was. It was to her benefit that he saw her like that, especially while their relationship was still in a tumultuous place, but when he had brought up Marissa, Abigail didn't have any angle or plan on how to use that conversation, she had just talked.

"I think it's wonderful you are finding moments where you can start working through your feelings," added the therapist. "If you find it difficult to open up to other people, maybe you could try a diary? Some of the girls find it easier to process feelings on their own first too."

Abigail knew that it was an immediate no. Writing down what she was thinking was leaving evidence of her crimes, one she would be hyperaware of. Paranoia of someone reading that diary would drive her mad.

She couldn't explain that, of course, but she would prefer to not have to maintain a facade of doing it.

“I don't think it would help, if I'm left to my own devices, I end up not thinking about my feelings at all.” While not the main reason, it was true that even without the paranoia, she wasn't sure she was the type to write down her feelings.

The therapist frowned a bit, maybe fearing that this session would be an anomaly in her progress and that she would go back to not talking about anything important if she couldn't find a tool to help her.

“Well, try it anyway. You don't have to necessarily write down your feelings, just whatever you feel like. I've met a few girls that have developed quite the passion for creative writing, especially poetry, while trying to keep a diary.”

Abigail nodded, knowing she would now have to do it. That's what she got for trying to be genuine in here, stupid homework that wouldn't take her anyway since she couldn't do it in any significant way. She was complaining about it to Will the next time she saw him, this was his fault.

The next morning when Doctor Bloom arrived, Abigail could immediately tell the woman was tense. Considering it was barely nine in the morning, it was quite impressive that it was obvious she was having a bad day, and Abigail said so.

“Having a bad day already? Did you even have breakfast yet?” She joked. Doctor Bloom gave a brief smile, probably not finding the joke funny but not wanting to inflict her bad mood onto Abigail.

“Yes, I had breakfast. While on the phone with Jack Crawford and Frederick Chilton, not my favorite way to start my morning,” shared the doctor. Abigail didn't know Agent Crawford beyond her place as his suspect, but she had the idea that he had a more friendly relationship with Doctor Bloom. Of course, if he was calling her so early... Abigail could imagine it wasn't to catch up.

“Who's Frederick Chilton?” Asked Abigail. She was sure she had heard the name, it was on the tip of her tongue, but she couldn't place it.

“A colleague of mine who works in the Baltimore Hospital for the Criminally Insane. He's an accomplished psychiatrist, but he can be a bit tiring, especially before six in the morning.”

Yes, she now remembered. Doctor Chilton was the psychiatrist in charge of Will when he was incarcerated. If Hannibal was to be believed, which in this case he was, the man was exactly the type of psychiatrist who gave Will plenty of reason to feel an instinctive rejection of anyone who worked on the field. And if Agent Crawford was involved, it was likely Will would be too, which augured a long week in his future.

“You had a long day already,” commiserated Abigail.

“Yes, but let's not waste time with that, how was group therapy?” Doctor Bloom changed her posture when she assumed her role as a psychiatrist, she sat with a straighter back, but just barely. Not enough to look unapproachable, just to have a more put-together aura. You could barely tell she looked tired now.

Instead of her usual complaining round, Abigail took the notebook, a pastel pink ugly thing she had been given by the group therapist after the session, and put it on the table of the room, one of the several rooms available for the patients' appointments with whatever professional they needed.

“I wasn't aware you were interested in journaling,” commented the doctor. Unlike the group therapist, she didn't show her eagerness for Abigail to finally do something other than act as if nothing was wrong with her.

“I'm not, but I was a bit too honest in group therapy, I'm afraid, and now I have homework. The therapist originally said I try to use it as a diary, but when I explained I wasn't the type to write down whatever I'm feeling, she suggested I just write whatever I want. I didn't have the heart to tell her I'm not into poetry either.” She ended with a joke, not wanting to look too put out by her new assignment, that could be counterproductive.

“Do you feel like telling me a bit more about that honesty? Maybe if I know why she felt you could benefit from a diary, I can help you brainstorm other things to do with it other than writing poetry,” prompted Doctor Bloom.

Abigail didn't feel like it, not really. The last two days had been too emotionally grating on her, and she half regretted having talked at all, but she was now in too deep, and if she had already gone through all of this, she would at least reap the benefits of the brownie points with Doctor Bloom.

“I acknowledged my unfortunate habit of being allergic to emotional vulnerability, which comes from my fear of being seen as weak. I explained I sometimes regret that it stops me from getting the comfort I want. The therapist said that if I have problems opening to people, it may be easier for me to process my feelings first writing them down for only myself to read,” she summarized. She had talked about her best friend two days in a row already, she refused to make it three days.

“What kind of comfort do you feel you are missing out on?” Asked Doctor Bloom, but Abigail shook her head. It was a rare occurrence where she outright refused to talk about

something, instead of just touching the surface to then deflect the topic, but just the idea of saying her name again made her feel sick.

If Abigail had to guess, she would say the process of grieving had finally begun, and she didn't want to share that. Grieving, she knew how to do, she had grieved her own life several times before, she could grieve her best friend alone.

Doctor Bloom accepted that, knowing that if Abigail refused to talk about it, she wouldn't budge. She wrote it down though, just as she wrote down most of what Abigail said, so she would probably bring it up in the future. Maybe by then, Abigail would feel ready to talk about it again.

“Okay, can I ask then what brought your wish to share that? You have been very reticent to group therapy, and while I know that you have tried to be an active participant, the nurses have shared that with me, I know by your own account that you hadn't felt like you could share your feelings with them before.”

Abigail smiled at that.

“Mary asked the same thing, more or less.” Doctor Bloom smiled at that too.

“Well, you've told me that, even though you spent quite a bit of your free time with her and Carmen, you avoid emotional conversations with them, so she would be more aware of your patterns than other girls you only talk to twice a week.”

Abigail rolled her eyes playfully at that. Fine, her emotional repression was borderline pathological, and everyone could see it, she hadn't been subtle enough about it, she understood.

“Yeah, whatever. I was talking with Will about it on Wednesday, there was a bit of crying on my part, and in the end, he said it could be useful to talk about it in group therapy.” After a beat, since Doctor Bloom was receptive to their dark humor in a way the other girls weren't, she felt it safe enough to add, “He said that since my problem was that no one else could relate to the involuntary cannibalism, I could at least try with my other feelings, that it might be common ground with them.”

Abigail had expected a bit of reproach about the non-serious talk about cannibalism, something Doctor Bloom hadn't even tried to touch yet, maybe even an agreement of the overall idea. What she hadn't expected was the absolute disappointment on her face.

“So it was because of Will that you did it?”

Doctor Bloom honestly sounded like she would have preferred if Abigail had said she had just done it to test the reaction of her fellow patients at her showing actual symptoms of trauma, and Abigail was running out of patience for Doctor's Bloom reaction to anything Will-related.

“No, he suggested it, explained why he thought it could be good for me. I slept on it, decided he might be onto something, and tried it. It was not the first time he, or you or Hannibal for

the matter, said something similar to me. I did it because this time I saw merit to the idea.” She knew she was being a bit aggressive, but she didn't appreciate the implication that she would do something she didn't think would help just because Will said it.

Abigail was way past going with other people's ideas just because. She was careful of everything she did, thought it over and only did it if she thought it was a good idea.

Doctor Bloom looked at her for a long minute. Abigail wondered if she would try to push, or if she would retreat and change the topic, as she often did.

“I know we had implicitly agreed to disagree on this, but I'm afraid I can't just keep not saying anything. Will is bad for your recovery. I think it would be for the better if you stopped seeing him.”

And so she took the first option. It was evident, though, that she hadn't planned to have this intervention today, she wasn't prepared to have this argument with someone as good at hitting where it hurt as Abigail was. And, to add to her disadvantage, she had already annoyed Abigail, who had been thinking just days ago that she needed to push Doctor Bloom away from Will.

The doctor didn't know it, but this was an argument that she had already lost.

“Everyone in the circle agreed that it was good that I had someone that I felt safe enough with to be vulnerable with, you know? You could try to be happy about my progress for a change,” she bit back, carefully picking words that would push Doctor Bloom into tricky territory she was even less prepared to fight in.

Her “professional” opinion about Will.

“They don't have the additional knowledge I do. You aren't being vulnerable with Will because you feel safe with him, it's just the effect he has on people,” the older woman argued. Abigail had to stop herself from smiling, that had been almost too easy, she had expected a bit more direction would be necessary.

“Wow, you really said that about him. Aren't you supposed to be his friend? You don't even talk about him like an actual human.” Abigail made her best offended expression, looking at the doctor as if she was just realizing what kind of person she was. “I mean, what is 'it's just the effect he has on people' even supposed to mean? He's a person beyond his empathy disorder, Doctor Bloom. A person perfectly capable of having normal human relationships. I can feel safe with him because he has shown to care about what happens to me as a person, no need to get his mental disorders into the mix.”

The doctor looked horrified at the accusation, but just as Abigail expected, she wasn't prepared to refute it, and so she tried to steer the conversation back to safer places.

“This is not about Will's condition; this is about your relationship with him. You are becoming dependent on him and his ability to understand you, you need to be able to connect with nor- with other people.” She did quite the save, but Abigail had been waiting for her to slip, so she hadn't missed it.

“To normal people, you wanted to say?” She didn't give Doctor Bloom time to deny it. “Well, I made wonderful progress with that yesterday, but you are more interested in my friendship with Will than in that, I fail to see how's that his fault.”

“Because you only talk about what is bothering you after you discuss it with him, you need to be able to take those steps by yourself.” Her arguments were becoming weaker, she couldn't keep up with Abigail's accusations, exactly as the girl wanted.

“Then why am I locked up in a hospital surrounded by nurses and psychologists and psychiatrists, supervised all day long? It doesn't feel like the steps I take to the bathroom are by myself.”

“You are here because you need a clean, neutral environment to heal, which Will is also disrupting, he's too closely related to your trauma, a constant reminder of what happened to you.”

“Only as closely related as Hannibal, and while, yes, you aren't a big fan of that relationship either, you are much less reticent there. You have gone as far as to give him permission to take me out for the evening, away from this clean, neutral environment that is oh, so necessary. Just admit that you have a problem with Will,” she provoked, knowing she was close to Doctor's Bloom wits' end.

“I don't have a problem with him, he's my friend, but he's also a man in a permanently difficult situation and, yes, I also think this is bad for him.”

There it was.

“You keep saying he's your friend, but you don't act as such. To me, it looks like you think you are his keeper, and he accepted it because he didn't have any other friendly relationship. Except now he does, he has me and he has Hannibal, but he still allows you to treat him like a child because he doesn't want to confront you about it.”

“Did he tell you that?”

“He doesn't have to, I can see it, as can anyone who knows you both and has seen you interact, even if they respect you too much to say anything about it.”

While a very general statement, she said it with a certainty that would make Doctor Bloom wonder who ‘anyone’ could she be talking about. And, since Abigail had a very limited social sphere, there was only one person she could have talked about that with.

Doctor Bloom looked genuinely upset, not just in the way when you get called out for something you did, but in a more personal way where Abigail could tell that the idea that Will just put up with her hurt. She also looked ashamed at the idea that more people could be thinking the same about her.

“I'm just trying to help you set healthier boundaries,” tried to refocus Doctor Bloom, knowing she had lost not only the battle but also her cool.

“I love the idea of healthy boundaries,” agreed Abigail. “Let’s start here: you are my psychiatrist; you are helping me because I went through a traumatic situation. I respect your opinion and make sure to always consider your advice, but ultimately you can’t tell me how to live my life, and I shouldn’t blindly follow whatever you say just because you think it’s the best for me.” She took another breath before concluding, “Therefore, I will continue accepting Will’s visits, because I appreciate the comfort he provides and I like to spend time with him. You are, of course, free to discuss your concerns with him, but you should consider you are the one overstepping boundaries.”

Abigail stood up, and after waiting for Doctor Bloom’s nod, she left the office, walking back to her bedroom. She doubted the Doctor would dare to approach Will, and so Abigail decided she could reward herself for a work well done with a nap.

Her Saturday passes without much notice. /Carmen/ got the origami book she promised from her mom, which gave her something to do in their free time. Despite Abigail’s slight but noticeable isolation the last few days, or at least as isolated as she could make herself without having the staff forcing an intervention, neither of her friends acknowledged any of her out-of-character behavior of the week, which Abigail very much appreciated.

Sunday came, and with that a visit from Hannibal. He wasn’t as constant as Will, at least not yet, but after the previous week, Abigail wasn’t surprised he had come. He and Will had their pseudo-therapy sessions on Thursday, so he must have already had a chance to see up-close how Will was dealing, he would now want to also check on her.

“Hello, Abigail, you look well rested,” he greeted her.

“Opposite to how I usually look dead on my feet? Maybe I’m finally getting better, do you think that means I will be out of here soon?” She joked. At least, she joked about getting out of here, since she knew she had long to go there.

She had never actually gotten out last time, but again, she had been a suspect in Nicholas Boyle’s murder, so perhaps Agent Crawford had wanted to keep a closer eye on her. Either way, she had at least a few months to go, that much she was certain of.

“Not yet, I’m afraid. And I meant more like you look relaxed, you usually look more tense,” he explained.

Abigail thought about it. She was still figuring out the best way to deal with Will’s encephalitis and, sadly, that was as far as a solid plan that she had. She knew he eventually

would have to know about Hannibal being The Chesapeake Ripper and the Copy Cat if she wanted a chance at a good life, but she was nowhere near an idea of how to get that done without disastrous results.

However, Will knew about her, about all of her murders, and he was still next to her. She was sure that after feigning enough regret the next time she saw Doctor Bloom, she would have an easier time getting permission to go out of the hospital with Will, so deepening that relationship would be easier. And Hannibal had allowed such a deviation from his plans, without her or Will dying, so that front looked promising too.

She was in as good a position as possible at the time.

“I guess I am. Things have been going my way lately, that’s a foreign feeling, but I like it,” she accepted. “How are you doing?”

“Good, keeping myself busy. Our friends in the FBI are currently with a new case, so I suspect Will may require someone to bounce off his ideas with,” he explained. While it wasn’t unusual for the adults currently in her life to speak to her about FBI things she had no business knowing, the offered information was a bit suspicious.

She couldn’t put her finger on any particular emotion in Hannibal’s words, so she had to do a blind search on why he would tell her so.

“Oh, do you think Will might need to skip his visit tomorrow?” She still wasn’t sure that was what Hannibal wanted to get at, but she could already feel the disappointment setting in.

“I don’t think there’s a need, as the suspect is already in custody. In fact, he was already in prison.”

He brought out the tupperware with food he had and put the first one in front of Abigail. It was a wonderful stew, and she gave herself a moment to try to determine if it was lamb or human.

After the first taste, she came to the disappointing conclusion her paladar wasn’t developed enough yet to tell the difference.

“Then why do they need Will? Isn’t his whole thing catching the killers? Sounds to me like the work is already done there.” The conversation was reminiscent of the ones they had before when she was living in the house next to the cliff. He would tell her about Will’s current cases, but just piece by piece, forcing her to try and fit together the pieces, to ask the right questions.

It was curious. Hannibal had, at the moment, a long-term interest in her, especially since her relationship with Will was developing so quickly, but now that the cat was out of the bag with all of her murders, he didn’t have any short-term plans for her, so the only thing left for him to do was to push her to keep improving herself and her mind. It would be wasteful to let her wither in the not-very-stimulant environment of a psychiatric hospital.

“The patient, Abel Gideon, was arrested for murdering his wife in a crime of passion. On Thursday he killed a nurse, recreating the last confirmed murder of another serial killer. The

wound patterns of this last murder were not released to the public, so his psychiatrist, Doctor Chilton, thinks he may be that serial killer after all.”

That’s when a light turned on in Abigail’s head. While she hadn’t been told much, she could remember Hannibal mentioning that an inmate had claimed to be the Chesapeake Ripper, a few months before she had faked her death. This must have been him.

Internally, Abigail smiled. While Hannibal gave no outward sign, she knew he must be pissed off. Offended, even. The fact that not only someone tried to take credit for his art, but that people believed it? His ego wouldn’t stand that. It was a nice reminder that Hannibal’s emotions were sometimes as predictable as anyone else’s.

Since Abigail didn’t know much about the case, except for the fact that Abel Gideon was not the Ripper, she still had to concentrate to try and find the small blanks in Hannibal’s explanation. She felt a bit like a dog performing a trick, but at least it was better than the monotony of the hospital.

“Since the wound pattern was never made public, I have to wonder how Doctor Chilton knew to flag the FBI about it. I doubt that a murder in a hospital for the criminally insane usually requires much investigation, and from Will in particular.”

“Two important points you touched. Doctor Chilton is also a colleague of Alana, so he has done the occasional consult for the FBI, in particular, he helped with the current profile of the Chesapeake Ripper and therefore had seen pictures of the murder. The fact that Will was called could be attributed to the fact that the Ripper is Jack’s white whale, as soon as he hears the name, he wants all hands on deck.”

Abigail nodded, digesting the information. If she knew Will, she was sure he had already determined that Gideon wasn’t the murderer, copycats won’t fool him, so she decided to pry somewhere else.

“And how has Will taken to be put on another’s psychiatrist orbit? Especially one specialized in crazy criminals, it sounds a bit like his personal hell.”

Hannibal looked funnily at her, taken aback at the change of topic, so Abigail went back to close the previous one.

“You said Will may need to bounce ideas with you and, since everything else fits so well, that must mean he doesn’t think Abel Gideon is the Ripper. From what I’ve heard, his rate of being right since he was recruited is pretty high, so I believe him. I’m more interested in how he is doing.” Almost a perfect rate, except for her. And maybe Hannibal, but it was possible that there just wasn’t any evidence pointing that way yet; despite what it sometimes looked like, Will couldn’t do magic.

“I’m sure he hated it. Frederik is not a smooth man; he wouldn’t dissimulate his hopes to write about Will’s mind. I haven’t talked to him yet though,” he admitted. “I have plans to ask Alana and Frederick to join me for dinner on Tuesday, so I may ask her how it went when I call her.”

Abigail stopped with her spoon halfway to her mouth. She had to warn Hannibal about what she had implied the other day.

“Talking about Doctor Bloom,” she intervened, sounding every bit as reticent as she felt. “We had a bit of a discussion the other day, she might react strangely to being asked about Will. Especially if you ask her,” she explained.

Hannibal looked somewhat impressed at the revelation, but not necessarily surprised.

“Can I ask what did you say to provoke that?”

“I told her that anyone who knew her and Will, and had seen them interact, could tell she treated him more like a child and less like a friend and adult that could care for himself, even if they respect her too much to say so. That last part probably implied you thought so, since I don’t know that many people that know both of them.” She didn’t apologize, at least not yet. She first wanted to see if Hannibal thought she needed to apologize.

“Carefully chosen words to hurt her, which I assume was your intention,” evaluated Hannibal. “I can see Alana losing control of the conversation when Will was brought up, but you wouldn’t just say that in the heat of the moment. So, why did you tell her that?”

“Because it’s true, and because I was annoyed that all she ever seems to want to talk about is how my relationship with Will is detrimental to my recovery. Her personal feelings are getting in the way of her role as my psychiatrist, I don’t think it was wrong of me to confront her,” she justified. To her immense relief, Hannibal nodded.

“I agree. Alana is very good at her job, and keeping it separated from her personal life, but it seems Will is the exception on both fronts. Hostility, however, is seldom the most effective path to achieving what you want.”

Abigail crossed her arms, defensive. Those were bold words from a man who reacted to rudeness with murder. Doctor Bloom was still alive, and Abigail intended for her to stay that way, so really a bit of hostility wasn’t too drastic in her book.

“I’ll apologize when I next see her,” she conceded. “But do you think it will work? She’s getting on my nerves.”

Hannibal took a moment to consider it.

“If Will doesn’t dismiss your words, then yes. Do you think she will bring it up with him?”

“No,” she answered without hesitation. “She’s too ashamed that she let the session escalate like that, and that it got so personal.”

“Then I believe you will get away with it. Do you plan to tell Will?” He asked.

Abigail wondered what would happen if she said no; if Hannibal would try to convince her otherwise, or if he would jump at the opportunity of another secret just between them. Or a third option she couldn’t visualize because Hannibal’s actions only made sense to him.

“Of course. I’m sure she’ll be avoiding him as much as possible for the next few days, the least I can do is tell him why.” She wasn’t even nervous about it. He would deny she was right, but Abigail remembered the bitterness in the accusation that she was now too walking on eggshells around him.

She realized Hannibal never actually denied or confirmed that he agreed with Abigail, and while she knew it was the latter, she wondered if she could get him to admit it.

“What would you tell Doctor Bloom if she confronted you about it?” She asked, not seeing a less direct way to get him to say it.

“I would tell her that I think Will is not a danger to you, and that you are right that she’s letting her personal feelings taint her professionalism.”

“Doctor Bloom is not a dumb woman, she would read between the lines,” pointed Abigail out with a smile. “She already knows I’m right about that last part, and by not addressing her real question, you may as well be confirming it.”

Hannibal smiled back, and took her now empty Tupper back, before pulling out the next one. He began a monologue about the history of the dish and the method of preparation.

Abigail paid the attention it deserved. After all, she had already gotten what she wanted about this conversation.

When Will came into her room the next day, he was angry. Not moody, not grumpy, not even in a bad mood, as he had been last visit, but genuinely pissed off.

He hadn’t even picked up a board game, he just let himself fall into the chair, running his hands all over his face.

For a moment, Abigail considered he could be mad at her, maybe she had miscalculated and Doctor Bloom had approached Will about their fight, but she discarded the idea when she saw his shoulder relaxed minimally as the seconds passed. Whatever had him so angry wasn’t in here, it was outside.

“Good afternoon to you too,” she greeted him, to which he only gave an answering hum. “Looks like you’ve had a shit day. Care to share what happened?”

“Freddie Lounds happened,” he gave as an answer.

“Really? I was betting on Doctor Chilton, he sounds like a nightmare, and I wasn’t even aware you were currently dealing with Freddie.” Abigail felt a bit bad for him, he had a very stressful past few days.

Will gave her a surprised look, but then let out a small smile. His mood was improving by the minute just by being there.

“Glad to see I’m not the only one running my mouth around you. What do you know of the current case? Wouldn’t want to bore you by telling you things you already know.”

“Abel Gideon is in jail for a crime of passion, but now he recreated the last murder of the Chesapeake Ripper, with details never revealed to the public. Doctor Chilton, who had worked as a consultant with the FBI for that case, sounded the alarm, but you don’t believe he’s the real deal,” she summarized. “Is your bad mood because they don’t believe you?”

Will shook his head.

“No, they believe me. Alana agrees with me, she was Gideon’s psychiatrist for a time. She suspects Chilton may have planted the idea on Gideon’s head; accidentally, of course.” His tone said everything needed about what he thought about the accidental part.

“Is Freddie publishing the story about him being the Ripper anyway? How did she even know that was a theory?” The journalist clearly had her sources, but for something that happened inside the BSHCI? One would think they would be able to keep that under wraps.

“Yes, she is publishing it, because Jack Crawford has decided that, if Gideon isn’t the Ripper, then he is an opportunity to bait the actual one into the open, since he’s been inactive for years.”

That made a lot more sense. Abigail couldn’t say it was a bad plan, certainly Hannibal wouldn’t just let someone take credit for his art. Will was visibly upset explaining it, though.

“And you don’t like the idea... why? You don’t think it’ll work?” She doubted that, Will wasn’t one to be so off the mark, but it was difficult to follow him at the moment.

“Not like Jack is expecting. The Ripper will come back, and he will kill again, but Jack is under the delusion that he will for some reason mess up. As if someone who spent years killing without leaving any evidence will become careless just because.” Abigail could recognize Will’s expression, it was the same one he wore when reading some of his student’s assignments. The especially dumb ones. “He’s just going to make a fool out of us again.”

“You’ll look like fools twice. Once because Freddie will say the FBI does believe Gideon is the Ripper, and twice because you are just angering him without an actual plan to catch him.” Now she could understand why Will was mad. He was used to be the smartest person in the room. “Agent Crawford believes you can catch him?”

She placed an emphasis on *you*, talking about Will. As far as she could appreciate, he was the only significant difference between the last time Hannibal was active as the Ripper and

now.

“He knows what I do isn’t magic tricks, I need evidence, and the Ripper doesn’t leave any. Most likely, he’s just not thinking clearly. He lost a trainee to the Ripper during his last cycle, it’s personal for him.”

Abigail took a moment to feel bad about Miriam Lass, who must currently be trapped in the house by the cliff, drugged out of her mind, like she was when Abigail met her.

“And now you’re stuck working with Freddie Lounds and getting the brunt of Agent Crawford’s frustration when this comes back to bite you in the ass,” she completed. “I imagine Doctor Bloom was concerned about the inevitable victims if the Ripper comes back.”

She didn’t point out that such concern hadn’t crossed Will’s mind, no need to remark on the obvious.

Will looked mildly chastised, until he looked up to her face and saw the lack of reproach. It must have been an automatic reaction, because she doubted Will would expect her to care. Either way, he nodded.

“Yes, it was nice to see someone else voicing this was not a good idea, but her concerns were also pushed aside.” A frown took over his face. “I think she might be avoiding me. She was acting strange around me, she felt uncomfortable.”

Abigail rolled her eyes. She knew Doctor Bloom wore her heart on her sleeve, but being that obvious?

“That’s on me. She had a problem with you pushing me to open up in group therapy, then the whole thing escalated.”

“I thought that was what she wanted.”

“It was, but not if you were involved, because that means it wasn’t me making progress, but you using your empathy disorder to make me talk about my feelings.”

“That’s... not how that works.”

“I know. I think she knows too, she said many things I’m sure she doesn’t mean, but she said them anyway because she doesn’t like that you keep coming. I told her off for treating you like an incompetent child, and I said the only reason you haven’t told her off for it was because for years she has been your only friend.”

“That’s also not true,” he tried to explain but Abigail just dismissed it with a hand gesture.

“I know that too, but she pissed me off, I wanted to hurt her. Besides, I wasn’t completely off the mark. You never told her because you care for her. After all, she’s one of the few people you actually like.” Will looked at her with skepticism, to which she shrugged. “Feel free to tell her I was wrong, and that you weren’t at all angry last week that she kept treating you like glass.”

Will's face took a strange expression, one that Abigail had trouble reading. It wasn't that he was too inside his head, but she could feel the gears turning either way. She decided next time she would tell him to pick up a puzzle to do, just to confirm her theory that he would have this same look in his eyes looking at it.

After that, she wasn't sure what to expect from him.

"Are you trying to alienate me from Alana Bloom?" He chose his words in a funny way, as if he was repeating them. Abigail couldn't remember him ever saying anything of the like, though.

It was almost enough to distract her from the fact that she was being called out. Almost. But she had known this was a risk with Will.

"I'm trying to help you, this way you can build a friendship with her where she sees you as a capable adult, an equal." Abigail took a moment to ponder the risk of making Will close up, and decided it was worth it to make sure he didn't dig further. "She was never going to date you either way, you know? I do think she likes you, but she also sees you as a patient."

She mostly expected him to deny liking Doctor Bloom at all, saying they were just friends, but it seemed he knew it was useless.

"Yes, I am aware." He sighed, before looking back at Abigail. She expected a more resigned look in his eyes, but he looked almost amused. "You know, the point of this was for you to get on Doctor Bloom's good side, I don't think you helped your case."

Abigail's jaw dropped at the accusation, she hadn't expected that, much less the fact that Will seemed amused about it. He probably enjoyed that, at least for the moment, both were equally to blame for Doctor's Bloom animosity.

Seeing as he was done complaining about his day, Abigail decided it was now her turn.

"Ugh, don't remind me," she groaned. "Your dumb idea only got me the ugliest notebook where now I have to write down my feelings..."

The following day, Doctor Bloom asked Abigail to go on a walk for their session. Knowing that removing them from the room was a good choice to begin the conversation in a less hostile mood.

“I’m sorry for how I talked to you last time,” apologized Abigail as soon as they were out of earshot. “I got angry and said unnecessarily hurtful things. I know you are trying to help, and don’t deserve to be talked to like that.”

She had given ample time to decide how to word her apology. She wanted to sound genuine, but not to say or imply that the things she said weren’t true, just that she hadn’t adequately said them.

Doctor Bloom nodded, Abigail assumed she had heard the message loud and clear.

“Thank you. I also want to apologize, both for my unprofessional behavior last session and in general. You were right that my prejudices have tainted my opinions.” Her words, just like Abigail’s, sounded rehearsed, she had thought long about what to say, but they felt genuine just the same. “The truth is that Will hasn’t stopped your progress in any way, that was me projecting my fears. I promise I will do better.”

Abigail smiled. This had gone exactly as she had wanted. It seemed her good luck was still ongoing.

“Thank you,” echoed Abigail.

They walked around for two minutes in silence, allowing them to metaphorically walk away from the now-resolved problem.

“Did you bring your journal?” Asked Doctor Bloom, restarting their usual routine.

Abigail grunted.

“No. I haven’t written anything in it, it feels so awkward,” she explained. She knew she eventually had to write, give the therapist something so they would think she was getting better.

“I assumed as much. Don’t worry, I have some ideas for you to try, but first I must give you something.” From the pocket of her coat, she pulled out a notebook.

It had a hardcover, but what Abigail noticed first was the beautiful painting on the cover. It was a watercolor painting of a fawn drinking water from a river, its reflection visible too.

It took Abigail back to when his father taught her how to hunt. Actual animals, that is. Those were good enough memories, and the little fawn looked so peaceful.

“A peace offering?” She guessed.

“That wouldn’t have been a bad idea, but no. Will gave it to me this morning so I could give it to you, he went to a bookstore yesterday after he left here to find one to your tastes.” There was a soft smile on her face, and her voice was fond. Abigail was beyond impressed by the

change of attitude; Doctor Bloom had truly done some self-reflection. “He said that it won’t help you to write if you feel offended by the ugliness of the journal every time you look at it.”

Abigail snorted. While it was true that the notebook they gave her was kinda ugly, she was mostly just frustrated by its existence. She couldn’t deny though, that this one was too pretty not to use it, it would be a waste.

“Thanks. I’ll thank him too when I see him,” she promised. “You said you had ideas on what I could do with it?”

The rest of the session was friendly in a way they hadn’t been in weeks.

Chapter End Notes

I took a year off and cut you bitches some slack. Tell a friend to tell a friend. SHE’S BACK.

(I experienced the worst author block since I’ve had since I was seventeen for real) (The +30k young royals fic I dropped a few months ago doesn’t count, I have no idea where that came from I was POSSESSED.)

Here I am now, back to whoever is still here. Which I don’t think will be many people because, again, it’s been a year, but oh well, better late than never.

Worst part is that I finished writing this like over two weeks ago but between my classes, the social service and having to work on my thesis, I hadn’t had time to edit it. And since like 90% of this was written in public transport (so a lot of typos every time the bus moves) or at 2 am (where my english is already on sleepy mode), I really can’t skip the edit part, that would be unreadable.

Anyway, to whoever is still out there, interested in this fic, thanks for waiting! And for anyone new joining this journey, yes I’m a slow writer but I promise that a one year hiatus is an anomaly.

Thanks for all the kind comments I’ve been getting on this fic <3 I love y’all.

(Also, in my country is still technically september 13th so it’s still my birthday, so happy birthday to me)

End Notes

If you liked this, maybe you'll like my other works, so feel free to check them!

You can talk to me in my tumblr, @espejonight28738

I love interacting with fellow hannibal fans <3

Kudos and comments mean the world to me, so please leave on if you're enjoying the story!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!