

Daylight Darkness

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Mrs. Day

"Come here little guy," I said as I held out acorns to a fawn. The fawn had only a few white spots on its back and looked very unique compared to others. I wondered where its mother was. The fawn crept towards my hand and hungrily ate the acorns. I suddenly heard leaves crunching and saw movement out of the corner of my eye.

"Hello? Who's there?" I questioned into the dark woods.

"Payton Hollow, is that you?" I heard a males voice ask.

My best friend Hank Wilson then emerged from the woods and gave me a big hug. He said he saw a dead doe a few yards back into the woods and that the fawn was probably alone. He said the doe looked like it had been dead for a couple of days since it had maggots feasting on its flesh.

Questioning Hank, I asked, "Well, do you think the others would mind if we brought it with us?"

"It's only a reunion."

"I'm sure they'll be fine with it. We need to head to the lodge anyway. I'm getting hungry."

So Hank carried the fawn and we walked together to the lodge that was just up the snow-covered hill.

We walked in silence with the fresh snow crunching under our boots. I bet we were both thinking about what happened at last year's reunion. At least I was. We passed by the big rock that has given me chills ever since the incident. That is where we found Quinn's lifeless, brutally beaten body.

We arrived at the lodge and waited for our other friends. It would probably be awhile since Hank and I always arrived early. I made myself a cup of hot cocoa and gave the fawn a small bowl of water, assuming it was thirsty. I stared at the steam coming up from my cocoa and remembered how foggy and dark that day was...just like today. Last year's winter reunion was awful. It was December 13, 2014, on a Friday. We were all arriving at the lodge and of course I was early. Hank was sick so he couldn't make it. Everyone started to arrive and we decided to play a game we had all made up a long time ago - a small Santa toy is buried in the snow and everyone tries to find it. It was like a treasure hunt game. Whoever found the toy got to go inside and drink hot cocoa after reburying it. The game continued until there was only one person looking for the toy. Last year Quinn was the last one. We all knew she was scared of the dark and didn't want to be the only one out there, but we made her anyway.

"You're all jerks for making me do this. What if I get killed or die of frostbite?" Quinn said before furiously storming out the door.

Those were her very last words. We should have taken what she said more seriously, but that was always what Quinn did. She was paranoid that something or someone was going to get her. It was freezing cold that night and Quinn still wasn't back. I decided to go outside and call her to come in, get warm and call it quits for the day. When I went outside, she was nowhere to be found.

"Quinn! Where are you? You can come inside. It's too cold to be out here for this long."

She was nowhere to be found. I started screaming her name hoping for an answer back, but only got the harsh whistling wind responded to my yells. I then noticed footprints on the ground, and I

followed them. After a few feet the footprints started to turn a soft red color and they deepened in color with every footstep. That's when i saw her lifeless body. I remember

screaming and the others came running to see what what wrong. We still have no idea who did it or why. Quinn was innocent and—

“PAYTON!” Hank exclaimed snapping me out of my thoughts.

“Sorry I fell asleep.”

“Yeah, well I repeated your name like twenty times. Anyway, I came to tell you I'm going to go hunting. Maybe I'll see a squirrel or deer.”

“Yeah maybe...well have fun I'm going to go make soup.”

Hank then headed out the door and I got up and headed towards the kitchen. I hadn't noticed how hungry I was. I got out the bowl and looked around for a can of soup. Hank's family owned the place and they always had soup. I opened a cabinet door and saw the shiny can on the very top shelf. I realized I couldn't reach it so I jumped, but when I came down I heard the floor break. Thank goodness I was standing on a mat or my foot would have fallen through! I bent down to the floor and tossed the mat aside to look at the damage I had done, but when I did I saw something else. There was a small door in the floor looking like it lead to a basement or something. I, being curious, decided to check it out, but this was a mistake. I walked down the steps and was greeted by various spider webs and fat cockroaches. When I finally reached the bottom I was horrified. There were dead squirrels hanging on ropes, and deer heads laying on a counter. Quinn's neck...when I found her it looked like someone had tried to behead her.

“Well, looks like you've found my man cave,” Hank said coming out of a corner.

“Hank...this...this type of hunting...it’s not normal.

“Maybe it’s not real to everyone, but it’s normal to me. Why are there animals in this world? I think of them as toys. Humans are like toys too you know.” Hank calmly stated.

“You’re...you’re the one that killed Quinn. I thought you were interested in her...why would you kill her? You need help!” I yelled attempting to run back upstairs.

Hank grabbed me and—

“PAYTON WAKE UP!” Hank yelled. I suddenly jerked up from my pillow and looked at my surroundings. It was only one in the afternoon, but due to the snow storm it was very dark and gloomy outside. The way it looked outside gave me chills, but not as many as my dream.

Everything about Hank was a dream. If only Quinn’s murder had been a dream.

“Payton you were talking in your sleep. Is everything alright?”

“Yeah, everything’s fine...just a bad dream. Are the others here?”

“No not yet, but look. I caught a squirrel!” Hank said grinning wildly while holding up a lifeless squirrel on a rope.