

Blood, sweat and tears

Healing room – Night time:

“What are we doing here at this time of the night?” RM pondered.

“We’re here to cure you” Lucy replied “Remember when I used to come here every now and then after curfew?”

“What about it?” he inquired.

“This was my personal escapade” she unveiled “The surveillance cameras are still on but nobody’s monitoring the screens. I come here to meditate and think about things I may have missed or misunderstood before”.

Her calm spirit appeased him “And how is that going to work for me, exactly?”

“It’s simple” she announced “We’re going back in time”.

“Say what, now?” he looked dumbfounded “Are you sure your trauma hasn’t affected you?”

His remarks were starting to get on her nerves “My trauma is killing me as we speak. Now, are we going to do this or do I have to keep listening to you whining?”

Sensing her frustration piling up, he tried to calm the tension “What do I have to do?”

Lucy took a seat on the floor and ushered RM to sit in front of her as she extended both her hands “Don’t squeeze, just hold them gently”.

Following her instructions, RM urged “Now, what?”

“Now, you’re going to close your eyes and concentrate on my voice only. I will be asking you random questions and I want you to answer them by saying the first thing that pops in your mind” she took a deep breath and advised him to do the same “Don’t think, just answer truthfully”.

The next hour took Q&As to a whole new level; reviving distress, frustration, and guilt.

L: When was the first time you started isolating yourself?

R: It feels like forever. Being short-tempered, I must have lost it and, being regretful, I kept my distance from my entourage.

L: Why do you think it has something to do with your anger issues?

R: *I don't remember.*

L: *Just try.*

R: *I am trying, I can't remember.*

L: *Moving on. Have you ever thought of hurting yourself intentionally?*

R: *I don't recall my past, but I thought of it daily ever since I was locked up in here.*

L: *Why would you want to do that to yourself?*

R: *For the same reason I tried isolating myself, I guess.*

L: *Don't fight it, embrace it.*

R: *Next question, please.*

L: *Have you ever felt unlike yourself?*

R: *Every day. It's like I'm haunted but at the same time I am fully aware of my surroundings.*

L: *What do you think draws the line between the real you and the pretentious you?*

R: *Pretentious? Are these questions meant to be asked on an amnesiac patient? Do you realize how silly you sound?*

L: *I may have used the wrong word, but you're getting worked up; that's a good sign. Let's move on.*

R: *Can we take a break? I'm starting to get a headache.*

L: *Have you ever felt regretful?*

R: *Are you listening to me?*

L: *Guilt, remorse ... anything, really.*

R: *Well ... I guess. I mean I always feel like something's killing me inside. It has got to be regret.*

L: *Have you ever betrayed someone's trust?*

R: *This is getting ridiculous. If this is what you learned from your damn book, then it's worthless.*

L: *Answer the question.*

R: I must have for receiving such a horrendous treatment on a supposedly healing session. Can we stop now?

L: One more question. Have you ever felt ashamed?

R: Okay, this ends now.

L: Are you feeling ashamed right now?

R: Lucy, please ...

L: Things are starting to add up, aren't they? What are you seeing?

R: I swear to God ...

L: I know you can remember. Follow the tie.

R: GOD DAMN IT, LUCY!

Blinded by rage, RM opened his eyes and grabbed her hands, alarming her of his unstable state. She knew better not to push him, but she also knew that she couldn't take it slow anymore, not after the fact that he started retrieving his memory bit by bit.

"Let go, RM" Lucy pleaded her partner who met her with nothing but a dead glare. She tried to loosen his grip but her hands were firmly tied up. Frightened, she helplessly pushed him and tried her best not to scream in order not to alert the staff. When all attempts failed, Lucy kned RM just hard enough for him to free her wrists. She ran as fast as she could to escape him but he managed to grab her blouse from the back, ultimately tearing it and revealing a secret that she has kept for the longest time.

Petrified by the scene before him, RM gradually calmed down and went back to his usual self. In the meantime, Lucy fell on the floor in panic while trying to put her ripped cloth back together.

Filled with remorse, he couldn't shake the sudden detail revealed before him "Wh-What was that?"

Lucy crawled backwards until her back met the nearest wall "Don't come any closer".

"Are you okay?" he added "When did that happen?"

"I don't want to talk about it" she replied.

"Lucy, you've been evading the subject ever since you set foot in here and all this time, you had an imprinted reminder all over your body" RM pleaded "Talk to me, please".

Unknowingly, Lucy lost control of her tears “I just want to go back to my room. Can you please respect that?”

Seemingly nonchalant to her request, RM started unbuttoning the top of his PJs, putting her over the edge. He slowly approached her as she started shaking uncontrollably, unable to read his mind.

“Don’t be afraid” RM gave her his hand “You trust me, don’t you?”

Unwilling to take his hand at first, his stillness made her realize that she wasn’t in danger anymore. Hesitantly, she stood on her feet while holding together her torn dress.

Asking for permission to come closer, RM covered her back with his top and buttoned it “Can I walk you to your room?”

Ward R – Night time:

On their way to the dorm, and after coming back to her senses, Lucy realized that her roommate was walking shirtless beside her, and it was ... distracting, to say the least. Trying to keep her mind off of it, she eyed the floor until they reached her room.

“Here you go” RM said as he stood by her doorstep “Get some rest, you worked hard today”.

He nodded apologetically and turned to go on his way. In that moment, Lucy gathered her courage and called out his name.

“RM, would you like to stay a bit longer?” she shyly asked.

Taken aback by her bold move, he checked his bare chest and crossed his arms “I’m kind of undressed”.

“I have an oversize hoodie that you can borrow” she cautiously held his hand and pulled him inside her room “I want to tell you my story”.

The previous line was everything RM has ever hoped for ever since the two of them ended up stuck together. He couldn’t fathom the secrecy behind her past and he couldn’t even trade his unknown story for hers. RM took a seat while Lucy was facing the window as she internally browsed her life events.

“Before I came here ...” she initiated “Before I came to the institute, I was abused”.

Wishing he didn't hear her right, RM knew deep down that this was the only explanation for the scars on her back. Although she was expecting him to ask her about whatever caused her wounds; instead, he asked her the following "How are you feeling?"

"Strong at times, and weak at others" his question comforted her "Sometimes, I tend to believe that I deserved it".

"Don't" RM interrupted her "Don't you ever think that. Whoever did this to you deserves a fate worse than death".

His intervention drew an unnecessary smile on her face "It was an unlucky accident. He didn't mean to".

"Bullshit" he stood up, enraged "There is no such thing as unlucky accidents. I hope he received his punishment for leaving you damaged like this".

"He's far gone now. I haven't seen him since it happened" she let out with bitterness while examining her reflection in the window.

Soon after, a second reflection appeared next to hers. A mild panic attack started building up when she felt his hand resting on her shoulder "It's just me, Lucy. There is nothing to be afraid of. As long as I'm around, nothing bad will ever happen to you".

Hearing his soothing words brought her inner peace. Questioning the sincerity of his claims, she gently removed his hand from her shoulder and turned to face him "Do you promise?"

"You have my word" he swiftly pulled her towards him and held her closer. Confused at first, Lucy tried to break the hug, but she noticed that something has changed about RM : for the first time in over a year, his heart was beating steadily and his embrace felt warm. He was serene.

The intimate moment lasted a while before RM tucked Lucy in bed and was getting ready to leave.

"Can you spend the night?" Lucy pouted, hoping to get a positive reply.

"You need to get some rest, it's been a long day" RM was still rewinding what happened during the day inside his head "Besides, I don't sleep anyways so I will just be a burden".

"I don't sleep either, remember?" Lucy managed to convince him "Come on, keep this young fragile lady company. You owe me one".

"I owe you one? Since when?" the statement took RM by surprise.

Lucy giggled “Well, you know my story but I still don’t know yours. You owe me that much”.

Her slyness entertained him “You sure know how to play your cards right, young lady”.

“It’s a survivor’s curse” she told herself while genuinely smiling at him.

RM joined Lucy under the sheets. Wearing her black hoodie, he put his arm around her waist and pulled her back against his chest. As their bodies intertwined, he held her hand and rested his chin on her shoulder. She could feel his breathing heighten with every passing minute, but she didn’t mind.

“This feels oddly pleasant” her voice obviously showed that she was enjoying the moment.

“Oddly?” he exclaimed “How so?”

“Well” she elaborated “Three months ago, you could barely look me in the eye without wanting to strangle me”.

RM chuckled “True, but then again, so did you”.

“I can’t argue with that logic” she snickered.

While in his arms, Lucy could feel his embrace tighten. Human touch always brought out the worse in her, but for the first time in a while ... it felt nice.

“I guess we were having a love/hate kind of relationship, huh?” she asked in cynicism “RM? Are you awake?”

The radio silence insinuated that the resident monster finally overcame his insomnia. Turning to face him, she was mesmerized by how peaceful he looked in his sleep. His plump lips were resting against one another in a compelling way. Unable to resist, she slowly tilted her head up to meet his lips. To her disappointment, a loud noise cut her off: the sleeping beast was sound asleep, and snoring.

“I get it, you’re playing hard to get even in your slumber” Lucy softly whispered in his ear “Remember this tomorrow, will you?”