

Healing

An alternate season finale

Von Handtuch-Queen

Kapitel 4: Heisting

Tom and Sierra, still newlywed, left Riverdale about two weeks before. Officially, it was for their slightly belated honeymoon to Hawaii. They had organized Myles McCoy and Kevin's mother to watch their kids for a week each. With their tickets booked and suitcases packed they drove to Albany International Airport where they posted a couple selfies together on social media and checked in their luggage.

They've never gotten on the plane though. Instead, they've gotten a rental van under a fake name with a pair of burner phones and drove nearly all the way back. They were investigating the small-town Athens, where Griffins and Gargoyles had resurfaced and devastated the place for quite some time before it did in Riverdale.

Tom, always the police man even if he stopped working for the force, couldn't help collecting clues on who might be behind the new rise of Griffins and Gargoyles and the death of Darryl Doiley's son. He didn't keep a full-blown murder board but a small inconspicuous notebook. He didn't trust this town not to break into his house again.

When FP had found a couple disturbing pictures his son took while he and Fred's son were travelling through the area, he knew that was their chance to find clues about the identity and plans of the gamemaster. Trusting Fred with the information but not confident they'd be able to figure everything out by the two of them, they took a leap of faith. They were sure Tom was working the same case they were and was unlikely to be the Gargoyle King.

They started to work together. They wanted to take on the town's problem by its antlers and keep their kids safe.

FP planned to go visit Athens himself and so did Fred. They would have made a good team, but Tom was the voice of reason. Together with Sierra he could not only leave the town without arising suspicion, their kids also didn't have quite the same knack of getting into life threatening trouble Fred's and FP's sons had. In addition, FP was the town's sheriff and if Riverdale ever needed one, it needed one now. All left for them to do was hope the ruse about Tom's and Sierra's honeymoon was enough cover from the Gargoyle King.

It didn't turn out that well. They barely found anything worth of notice during their first week and called FP every day to report nothing in. When they finally found something, they couldn't phone in.

Certain Tom and Sierra could hold their own but worried nonetheless, FP visited Fred meaning to ask him to keep an eye on his kids and received a strict rebuttal. Riverdale and his kids needed him there. Fred called his wife to check on their son, claimed work-

related circumstances and took off with his truck.

He found their van a day in and soon discovered who was responsible.

The town was pretty much deserted. Most houses stood abandoned and the streets were empty. Save for a pair of elderly women and a dozen young girl scouts, everyone had left. Later, he finds the newlyweds in the local elementary school, chained to the armatures of a shower stall. He frees them both and waits.

They didn't fight the kids or the old women. Fred talked with them. He asked them what had happened and what they wanted. He tried to help and made them see reason. They discussed options. He promised to take the grandmothers and the girls back to Riverdale and that he would do everything he could to find their lost families. No one would be left alone to take care of themselves again. Not under his watch. They'd be taken care of.

The girls agreed keeping a set of stand-in parental figures chained in a bath wasn't their best option and they decided to leave Athens the next morning, together, after everyone got a good night's sleep.

Early that day, Fred wasn't quite awake yet, his phone ringed. FP needed them to come back.

The regional police forces and the FBI were working hand in hand on all their cases for the time being. Agent Ardelia and the FBI seized everything the Farm owned and another FBI team from out of state was deployed that day to Riverdale to comb through everything they found on site and interrogate everyone they held in custody as well as practically everyone else in town. The horrors unearthed at the Farm made the case deemed a federal one.

They of course had tons of obvious evidence, including the walk-in fridge full of organs. It was already enough to send Edgar Evernever to prison for life. Then, there was a lot they needed to examine carefully and what might indicate blame on some of the farmies, too. They found weird chore rosters and members' guides stating what everyone was expected to do for the Farm, as well as meticulously kept books meant to document the movements of the Farm's financial matters and merchandise, also explicitly stating who did what and when. Then there were the tapes upon tapes of what the cult called testimonies. They hoped it'd help determining who had known and assisted in the organ farming and who was a to-be-harvested victim.

Agent Ardelia and her team were still officially working Hiram Lodge's case but had prioritized the emergencies for the time being. The Riverdale Police arrested the Gargoyles and recovered the body of the Gargoyle King before doing a quick sweep through the woods to see whether they had left additional clues or had a camp somewhere.

FP oversaw the Black Hood being sent back to Shankshaw Prison's security tract with a couple new murder charges on his record. Hiram Lodge and Edgar Evernever as well as his nurses were on the same prisoner's transport as him for their further imprisonment upon trial outside of the town of Riverdale.

He stared after the transport for a couple minutes, deep in thought.

Tom, Fred and Sierra headed straight to the Sheriff Station when they arrived back in Riverdale, driving the Andrews' truck, the rented van and a small bus they found on site.

With them, they brought a dozen young girls and two elderly women.

FP awaited them at the entrance, looking tired and drawn. "It's good to see you back."

"It's good to be back, brother." Fred wrapped him in a manly hug, patting his shoulder.

"How're you holding up the fort?"

"The town still stands." He sighed and stopped them from getting in the station. "Let's head next door. The accounting company lets us use their conference room. In here it's still crowded hell." He looked over at one of his deputies. "Jack, can you have breakfast brought over? For about twenty people. Kid-friendly options, not just coffee."

"Is it too much to hope for a breakfast from Pop's?" Fred jokes.

"Not today. Probably for the last time in while though. This last night was crazy. I'll tell you later."

They headed over and were greeted by Ms. Weiss, the social worker.

The girls were nervous and a bit scared, the elderly ladies exhausted. Taking their statements after a big hearty breakfast to break the ice had been Ms. Weiss idea and it worked out well.

The girls spoke open and freely and the elderly ladies added what information they could. The case was still very odd, but they'd figure it out. For the time being they would be staying at the Riverdale Youth Hostel, the same place the boy scouts were staying at. Ms. Weiss would ensure they'd be taken care of until their families were found, and a deputy was deployed to guarantee their safety.

When they were just about done, FP got a call from Jack, it was for Ms. Weiss. They found another lost boy in the woods. His name was Ricky.

Sierra stayed after, wanting to offer Ms. Weiss her help as both a mother and an attorney.

The men waited outside in the corridor, and FP had a list of things burning in his mind he needed to catch his old friends up to speed with. He should wait for Sierra to join them for most of it, but there was one thing- "I know you've resigned from the job, Tom. But I need you on the team. I want you to lead the G&G investigation."

"Me? Why? I'm out." Tom said, leaning against one of the walls. "I coach boxers now."

"And you helped instruct the Serpents. It needs to be one of us. And you're the only one capable."

Tom laughs. "You are. You're the Sheriff."

"And I'm drowning in cases. I need you. It's pretty bad right now."

Just then Sierra left the conference room and viewed them worriedly for a moment. Her court poker face in place, she smiled at Ms. Weiss and waved her out. She turned back to the men. "What is going on?"

They moved back into the conference room and FP got another cup of coffee.

"First off, your sons are okay, and Josie wasn't involved in any of this." FP said it to sooth any incoming uncertainties, but his sentence had the opposite effect. Instantly all three were worried and at the edge of their seats they just took again.

"It's- Hal Cooper escaped from a prisoners transport two days after you two left town." He said looking at Tom and Sierra. "Then last night, as far as I know, Archie, Veronica and the FBI made up a scheme to get Hiram Lodge caught. There was a boxing match involved, Archie looks a bit worse for wear but he's okay. It worked out, Hiram's back in Shankshaw Prison. I got the call he arrived and was behind bars half an hour before you showed up. So is Hal Cooper. Sometime last night the Poisons and Archie met him at the Blossom Estate and subdued him and Penelope. She's in the Greendale Jail for now. Early this morning they and the Serpents took on the Gargoyle King and his goons. The King is dead, and we have incarcerated the others." He took a calming breath. That was the easy

part. "Later yesterday evening I got a call from Jughead. About the Farm. It's- It's been bad. Real bad. They're an organ farming cult." His friends lost all posture. "We were just in time to save Betty's life. We have detained everyone involved and all their victims. We're still trying to sort through who's who."

They were speechless, nodding along, listening, thinking, but unable to voice their thoughts.

"Tom, Kevin is one of them."

Tom felt as if the chair he was sitting on and the floor underneath his feet just disappeared. "What?" He croaked.

"He appears physically okay, but he seems to be under the influence of drugs and hypnosis. Most of them are and a few have already snapped out of it. I think it's just a matter of time."

Tom nodded and held on tight to Sierra's hand, trying to ground himself.

"He's still at the station. He was a bit hostile before but maybe seeing you will help to calm him." At Tom's nod he went on. "I should try calling your ex-wife again. She didn't answer the phone when I tried earlier."

Sierra jumped in. "I can do that. I'll have to check on Josie anyway."

FP smiled in thanks. She took one of their burner phones out and tried their house phone. No one answered. She sighed. "I'll just head home and talk to her in person." Checking up on Tom once more she added in a softer voice: "Will you be okay without me here?" He nodded.

"We'll keep an eye on him." Fred said.

Sierra found their home empty. She didn't quite get it at first, but it had been vacant for almost the same time as she's been gone with Tom. There was old fruit out on their table and a single glass of milk in the sink, that seemed quite solid. Where was her daughter?

Grabbing their house phone, she tried calling her on her mobile, but the call didn't connect. She tried calling Kevin's mother, but the call went straight to voice mail. A robotic voice told her she couldn't reach her for the time being as she just left the country on an urgent short-notice tour and to try again in May.

Sierra looked stunned at their phone. Kevin's mother should have been in Riverdale this week. What was going on? She remembered they had an emergency number for her, somewhere. She was looking it up when the phone rang. It was Josie.

"Hey Kev, I was wondering when you'd finally call." She sounded relaxed and happy.

"Josie?!" Sierra sounded distraught.

"Mom? I thought you'd be coming back tomorrow?"

"Where are you Josie?"

Seeing Kevin in the cell was a shock.

Dressed in an off-white the Farm-themed shirt, he seemed relaxed and held hand with Fangs Fogarty, the Southside Serpent wrongfully accused for murdering Midge Klump. He looked in his direction and should have seen him, but even when Tom waved at him, he didn't react. Only his lips were moving constantly.

Tom stepped closer and heard everyone in the cells murmur over and over the same phrase.

"May the one become many, and the many one."

It was chilling.

"May the one become many, and the many one."

Since when was Kevin with that cult? He heard him sneak out at night all the time, but every time he assumed, he was meeting up with Moose and decided to turn a blind eye on it. Did he stop dating Moose? When did Kevin stop telling him such things?

It wasn't making anything easier, when his wife called and told him that his ex-wife never showed up and her daughter left town with Myles on day three to finally get a head start on her music career.

Why had everything worked out so horribly wrong?

"May the one become many, and the many one."

There was the sound of steps on heels behind him.

"God. Get those cultists to shut up! Sheriff Jones, finally."

He turns. It's Cheryl Blossom, hair a mess, pissed and tired.

"It's nearly noon. I really need to get my girlfriend home. We've been awake for over 30 hours and we're tired. You've seen her twelve hours ago. I'm worried she could get sick." She looks over into one of the bureaus used as interrogation rooms and back at FP. "And all your deputies do is treat me like a crazy person. I told them twice now that they have to separate those farmies. They can't have them infect each other again and again with Edgar's bullshit. Any sane thought they could have get instantly drowned in the others' insane mumblings. The only reason Betty got me to sanity again was that she talked to me on my own. Or maybe because she brought me a human heart as proof. That was really sobering come to think of."

The two of them watched the people in the cells for a moment together.

"The redheaded one over there is Evelyn Evernever. She's Edgar's wife. She's 26, but she went to Riverdale High pretending to be seventeen. To lure students to their chop shop." She looked directly at FP, invoking his compliance with honesty. "Please. Get her away from them. She's poisoning their brains with more mind control crap." She paused, rethinking. "Or get my LGBTQIA friends as well as my aunt and cousin out of there."

"Noted." FP smiled in thanks. "Jack." He called his left-hand deputy over. "Why is the redhaired one in the corner still with the others? Has she been interrogated yet?"

"We're still working on the statements of the girls from the woods." Jack explained.

"Why? I thought that case was clear four hours ago?"

"There stories didn't align-" Jack started but was interrupted by Cheryl.

"Your deputies were doubting every single one of my words ever since I told them I shot the Gargoyle King but couldn't identify the man under the mask. He claimed he was Jason. And you know as well as me that my brother is dead. It was dark and he stood in front of the fire. I couldn't see much more but shadows." She explains and obviously has done so a couple of times. "But it was the same guy the cult used on me during their hypno-abuse. They made me believe Jason was still alive and was talking with me. I even believed that murder video with my father was fake. The room they did that to me in was dark and they only lit a few candles. I've never seen his face without shadow. But I know what I saw. It was the same guy."

FP nodded and looked at Jack in question as if to ask where the problem was.

"Yeah. No one believes her because she said she shot him with an arrow between the eyes." Jack stated.

FP waited for a moment, but when he said nothing more, he couldn't help but ask. "And?"

What's the deal?"

As if the problem was obvious, Jack said: "There was no arrow. And who shoots anyone with an arrow?!"

"A skilled archer? And you said the upper body was burned, Jack. Wood burns."

"Maybe. But she's not a star archer, she's what? A cheerleader?" Jack said hot tempered. FP sighed. "I know you're tired Jack, but don't be ignorant. If that's the only issue you've got, let the girls get home. Now." He groaned. "And Jack, for the record: Ms. Blossom would have better aim right now than you on a good day."

"And to think I didn't believe Alice when she said sexism was still a problem today." FP cursed under his breath, shaking his head.

Cheryl smiled in thanks. "Can I use a phone to call us a car?"

"No need." Fred jumped into the conversation, having been privy to it as everyone else in the crowded corridor. "I'll drive you. Then, I'll check on everyone waiting at the hospital."

"Thank you, Mr. Andrews. Have there been any news on Betty?"

Fred drove Cheryl and Toni home to Thistle House where Nana Rose was happy to see them again and then drove on to the hospital to check on the kids.

They're sitting close together in the waiting room and some were so obviously exhausted. Jughead looked up and gave him a forced smile. "Mr. A." Which caused most others to look up, too.

Archie sat on one side of Jughead and stood up to greet him. Both looked worse for wear, Archie's boxing match and a brawl or two on Jughead's side apparent.

"Dad. You're back." They hugged.

Jellybean was fast asleep and lay across a few seats on the other side of Jughead with her head nestled against him. Across from them sat Veronica and Marty Mantle's son, greeting him friendly. Mary sat next to them, two napping toddlers in baby car seats in front of her.

She smiled at him and he couldn't help smiling back.

"Polly's?" He mouthed in question and got a nod in return.

He sighed. The poor kids.

"Are there any news yet?" He asked quietly but got a mutual headshaking in return.

"Not really." Jug answered. "She's stable and out of surgery. They keep promising I could see her soon, but..." He sighed.

Fred put a hand on his shoulder in support. Looking at Jellybean he asked. "Shall I drive some of you home? Jellybean looks as if she's in need of a bed."

Jug nodded. "That would be great Mr. A."

"Good. Who else? The twins, Mary? I only have a three-seater, but I can take multiple trips."

"Oh." Reggie said. "I should have offered before. I've got a fiver. I can drive."

Before Jug can shake Jellybean awake, Archie's up and in front of him, offering to carry her to the car. Reggie and Mary take the twins and head the way.

Fred said he'd look for a doctor and try to find out what was going on and left them too, for the moment.

Just the two of them for the time being, Veronica got up and sat next to Jughead.

"I'm so scared for Betty."

He grabs her hand. "Me too."