

Cheryl Doe, Episode Seven (Part Two)
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There was an atmosphere of sterile tension that gave way by decompression to a wash relaxation as Jamie played with her hair in her bedroom; it was one hour to midnight as the deepening autumn air carried browning leaves whose frequency ebbed and flowed – the occasional gust chilling the doe's bedroom, causing her to shiver in her pajamas, her back to the cracked window, scrawling in her notebook. It was poetry – lines and stanzas struck through with single lines:

*And how! ~~My love!~~
Do you so pull me into your clutches
Bleeding, coughing, burning,
Without the slightest remorse?*

*And then leave me
To waste away
~~In your cage~~
Draping over it – a cloth
As I ~~lay~~ lie ~~crying~~ weeping.*

Jamie grimaced at her writing: her calligraphy, if she could consider it such, broke into cursives, and back to print – messy, and riddled with stray marks. The subject matter she found trite, and her meter – uneven. She shut the cover of her notebook and transitioned back to daydreaming in full, losing herself again to reverie – one centered around Fran, infatuated by being with her more than she was of her, herself. The chills that shook her from the ideas aligned with a frigid gust from her open window – snapping the doe back to reality, and prompting her to finally shut it.

Eventually, the doe got around to unplugging her phone from a full's day charge; her notification light was blinking: "5 unread messages". Her inbox showed that two were from Nat, and three from Fran – sifting through them and responding as she felt appropriate.

Nat: Ayy, Jamie~

Nat: Omg, someone set a trash
can on fire at school!

Jamie: Lol wat

Fran: Hi cutie ;)

Fran: Jamie?

Fran: Text me when you can.

Jamie: Sorry! xwx I was atwork and left
my phone at home to recharge!

Fran: Oh, ok

Fran: But it's 11:30, did something hold you up?

Jamie: Yeah. I was at a friend's house.

Fran: That's cool. Did you have fun?

Jamie: Mhmm, played video games.

Fran: Nice! :) Hey, I forgot to tell you where I wanted us to meet. How does Perdu Place sound?

Jamie: That works. :)

Fran: Read it wasn't the best on this website, and the name sketches me out, but a lot of my friends said they love it, so I thought it was at least worth a try.

Jamie: Alright, sounds good. Can't wait!

Fran: See you then?

Jamie: Definitely!

Fran: :D

Jamie proceeded to text Jim.

Jamie: She wants to meet up at Perdu Place. D:

Jim: Shes trash

Jamie: Don't say that! >:(

Jamie: But she's at least aware of the name.

Jim: The name

Jamie: Nvm, but yeah, I'm going there Saturday! I have a dateeeeeee!

Jim: Your ass will regret it

Jim: Litarally

Jamie: I hope not. :\
Jim: No hope only pain
Jim: Good luck tho i guess

Jamie decided to change the subject, and the two conversed on what they may play

Saturday night when she gets back.

The remainder of her work week had slugged on by, but felt like only an hour in hindsight come Saturday. It was a few minutes past noon, and the doe hadn't slept the night – having subsisted on cola to keep herself awake. She was preening herself in her bathroom mirror, meticulously pulling at locks of her hair as she prepared for her date. Starting off, dressed in a matching bra and panties – lacy and dark violet, she added to them with a lighter shade of eye shadow and deep red lipstick. She applied her mascara with the utmost precision with her outfit for the meeting neatly waiting for her on the bed: a solid black jumper skirt that came down to her knees, a black-and-white horizontal striped shirt (with a red heart in the center under the low cut), and short white platform wedge sandals in a cross strap style waiting in a box thinly coated with dust.

The doe was scrutinizing her reflection. “Nope,” she declared in stark critique, wiping the stain from her lips using wet wipes, and in its place wore a pink gloss leaning red. She scanned her face again. “This, this is alright,” she declared, somewhat relieved, “I can live with this – I like this.” Her self-assuring nodding felt heavy, and came to realize, and cursed herself: “Shit...”

From her messenger bag, she took two anti-anxiety tablets, inhaling and exhaling, deeply and slowly to calm her nerves. She dressed herself, and bounced a little to test out her balance in her shoes – keeping it well, giggling as it looked to be a resounding success. She took off the wedges squealing “I got this! I got this!” with confidence almost foreign to her. Still excited and elated, she took a couple extra steps to prepare herself, perfuming her body in a vanilla body mist, to then reach into a drawer containing a wide breadth of nail polish colors she had stockpiled over the years – many which were coated in a thick layer of dust. The doe scoured the diverse palette, indecisive on which to use: what would work, and more importantly – what won't clash. She logged onto her computer and searched for color palettes. Struggling to find a third color in addition to the two she was wearing, she selected a “compound” option that included the two colors (somewhat) she was using. “Yellow...” she mused while taking corresponding tones of a bright yellow scarf and darker yellow nail polish, methodically removing the chipped purple from her fingers and toes, and went over the nails with a fresh coat of yellow, and waited at her computer watching cartoons until they dried.

Now prepared, and ready to go with half an hour to two, Jamie gave herself a final inspection in the mirror. “Hm...” she mumbled, looking to her bosom: the cream spot of fur on her right breast was mostly covered. She pushed them up, adjusting her cleavage so the spot would display more prominently. She then slapped her cheeks with both hands and took herself outside, messenger bag in tow.

In spite of wearing platform sandals, Jamie managed to bike her way to the plaza where Perdu Place was located. Not a bead a sweat rolled down her body by some miraculous happenstance. And with five minutes to spare, Jamie stood awkwardly outside the entrance, appearing to be lost.

Fran approached her from the left – dressed casually in jeans, a button-down blouse,

and high-top sneakers: all contrasting black and white.

"Jamie! Great to see you made it!" Francine greeted. Her hands were tucked in her back pockets, her movements languid and slow – opposite of Jamie: even though her face was beaming, and cheeks burning, her stance was rigid, and was clutching the strap of her messenger bag for dear life. The cat continued, brushing loose pearl bangs from her face, "Haha, were you waiting for me all this time?"

"N-no, I only waited out here five minutes!" the doe stammered, adding, "You look great!" feeling her cheeks were about to fall off.

"You look lovely, too!"

"Ah! Thank you!" replied Jamie, giving a slight bow and squealing inside.

"Well, let's go inside," Fran invited. The doe opened the glass door by its lustrous brass knob, and held it for Fran, following her inside, still nervous of what was to transpire.

It was four in the afternoon; Jamie was doubled over in tears, having failed to hold down her meal from earlier. Several "Oh God"s and "Fuck"s later, she was limp on her bed. Her phone was under the pillow, the notification light blinking as she took hold of it: Jim had replied.

Jamie: You were right...

Jim: Whats up

Jamie: My as is punishing me.

;w;

Jamie: ass***

Jim: ROFL

Jamie: Don't laugh at me, it was
gooey...

Jim: DONT TELL ME ABOUT THAT

Jim: TMI

Jamie: It is?

Jim: YES

Jim: TMI

Jamie: Sorry.

Jim: Its k how was the date

Jamie: It went great! I've got
so much to tell you! :D

Jim: Save it for the game
tonight were gonna play a
coop shooter

Jamie: First-person?

Jim: Nah

Jamie: Cool! :D

Jim: See u at 8

Jamie took another shower: the consequences of staying up the night finally catching up with her, as she headed straight to bed right after drying off. Moonlight shone into the doe's window as she began to stir again. Her gingerbread alarm clock read "21:17", immediately cursing herself as she sprung from her bed. She tripped over her bag, and fumbled to her computer. Hair in her face, the doe haphazardly logged into her game client and booted up the game. Jim, Nat, and Priscilla were waiting in a lobby: she had caught them between rounds, and requested to join the chat.

cyldoe: Sorry Im late! x.x

natalus: Nerrrrrrrrrrrd!

p_kitty719: heyyy

HydroCannonAbs: u fuckin casula

HydroCannonAbs: casual*

cyldoe: Can I still join?

HydroCannonAbs: no

HydroCannonAbs: jk yea u can were not
playing rn

cyldoe: Woo!

natalus: We don't have any
support. Can you pick a
healer.

cyldoe: Sure

HydroCannonAbs: cool beans

The group engaged in four levels with increasing levels of success; Jamie and Nat carried synergy in keeping one another alive with continuous use of support items. Jim and Priscilla held their ground as well, but through brute force – the pair teasing each others' play-styles between levels. It was a fun night for the four as they closed the game, but kept their group chat microphones open at Jim's request.

"Story time!" Jim bellowed over the mic.

"Story time?" repeated Nat, "By who?"

"By Jamie! She was on a date today."

"Oooh," went Nat and Priscilla in unison.

"Yup, yup!" began Jamie, "I was on a date with the wonderful Francine! It was a good date," she paused, "I think."

"Compared to the others?" inquired Priscilla.

"Uhm..." Jamie uttered blankly. Furious typing was heard over the chat.

"Oh, never mind!" said Priscilla, suddenly.

"Uh, okay! So..." Jamie told the group of her date. Francine was in her senior year of

college for computer science, and has been working as an intern at a software development company not too far from Jamie's workplace. She continued with details: the way Fran smiled at her when she talked about her various interests, how her ears perked up when she took a sip from her glass. She was enamored with the cat already, justifying her endearment within the nuances of the cat's various idiosyncrasies. No one else made a peep as she recounted – save for the infrequent striking of keys.

“...and just, oh my gosh, she's just so wonderful.”

“That sounds great,” Priscilla spoke up, “You seem to be really into her, but you seem a bit too invested after only a first date?”

“Uhm... I dunno,” Jamie replied.

Furious typing came up again. Then silence. A few more sessions of typing, and Priscilla spoke again: “Well, at least you're happy with her, so that's good.”

The keyboard sounds came back, and conversation hadn't picked back up, not for minutes. And Jamie began to suspect they were all talking about her.

“Oh, sorry!” Jim blurted, “We were just looking at a link.”

“Oh, okay.” Jamie hinted at unease saying this.

“Would you like to see it?”

“No thanks.”

“But, really, I can show–”

“I'm fine, Jim.”

“Are you–”

“Yes.”

“Alright.”

Jamie signed off from her PC, and left her desk, clinging to what was still left of the reverie from her date. The way the group reacted was worrying to her, but she could look past that; her heart was blooming for the first time in years, and she wasn't going to allow doubt or angst to upset it. She lied in her bed, letting her wild fantasies manifest to dreams, wondering – without any real thought – if this love would last.

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