

Healing

An alternate season finale

Von Handtuch-Queen

Kapitel 2: Dying

After digging out Jason's casket, Jug tried to call Betty and when she failed to answer, he knew to worry right away. He wasn't a fan of her being at the Farm in the first place, and with her explicitly telling him to call right after... He tried calling her a second time and took off on his motorbike.

On the shortcut to the Sisters of Quiet Mercy from the Blossom Estate right through the forest, using barely-there paths and the good will of his bike, he met Toni. Clad in nothing but a hair band and a thin hospital gown, she was still running from farmies that gave their chase up long ago.

Concerned, he stopped and gave her his jacket, still heavy with grave dirt.

Toni was panicked and confused and struggled to catch her breath. She spoke as if she still had to sort her thoughts and what had happened.

"Cheryl told me I had to flee. Because maybe Betty was right after all. They were-" She stopped, finally getting what was going on and stared right into Jughead's face. "It's an organ farm. They already took Kevin's and Fang's kidneys. Oh god, they've got Cheryl."

Jughead couldn't breathe for a moment. He couldn't reach Betty.

He grabbed his phone, called his father and while it rang told Toni to put the jacket on and get on the bike.

Just having put Hiram Lodge behind bars, FP still had a smug smile on his face when his phone rang. It was his son. Preparing to tell him how finally something good had happened in their town, he answered the call and stopped short at the panicked tone in Jug's voice. Listening he became more and more disturbed.

Agent Ardelia who was still at the sheriff station to finish the paperwork for Hiram's incarceration observed him with growing apprehension.

"Toni and I are taking off now. We need backup." Jughead finished and immediately ended the call.

FP made eye contact with Ardelia. "Worst case. I need all the help you can get."

Somehow, they organized a raid in moments.

Toni and Jughead left the bike at the edge of the woods and crept towards the back of the Farm, planning to get in through one of the doors. They were all locked. Without Betty and her bobby pins they busted through a wonky looking one by sheer force. It

turned out to be not quite as wonky as they thought. Jughead had to ram his body -left shoulder first- against it a second and a third time, then the door opened with a clang and for a moment they worried it would bring the farmies upon them. They went in and when it stayed quiet, they move on.

They were in a cellar; it was quiet and dark and there was no one in sight. They made their way up, Toni leading the way and used what appeared to be a seldomly used staircase. They checked the dormitory floor, first Betty's and then Cheryl's rooms, but both were empty. What wasn't empty was the room across from Cheryl's: Kevin and Fangs were home and, having heard them run in, stood in the door waiting.

"Toni. Jughead. Edgar won't be happy with you disturbing the peace like that."

FP and Agent Ardelia were the first of the combined FBI and Riverdale police taskforce to arrive, their colleagues not far behind them. On their way, FP told her everything he knew about the building and the Farm which honestly wasn't all that much.

"All of this sounds absolutely... ridiculous, Sheriff Jones. Gay conversion therapy? Nuns testing drugs on orphans? Organ farming cult? Are you certain any of it is true?"

"All of it. This is Riverdale."

They secured the exits, stormed the grounds and took everyone into custody they found on sight.

"You're looking for Betty? She really wasn't feeling well today. We brought her to Edgar, so he's helping her right now."

"A treatment? She must be in the infirmary!" Toni was turning to another staircase, but before she could take off, Fangs had his hands around her upper arms and held tight.

"Not so fast Toni. Betty needs his help. And so do you."

She clawed against his hands, trashed and kicked her naked feet against his legs. Jughead balled his fists and planned on landing them in Fangs' face, but Kevin was there, caught his hands and turned them with the rest of his body until he had Jughead held tight and unable to move. In vain, he tried to smash the back of his head into Kevin's face or throw him off.

Fangs transferred Toni to a single arm and used the fist of his other to smash into Jughead's face. He screamed. Toni used the new position to ram her foot into Fangs' healing side, forcing him to release her. Kevin looked up, worried, and let his guard down for a single moment, so Jughead could throw him over and land a kick into his healed organ removal wound.

They took off towards the infirmary.

The orderlies who caught her locked Cheryl into a tiny windowless room on the ground floor. It was dark and insanely quiet. The only source of light was coming from the corridor through the keyhole and from underneath the door. She needed to get out.

The door was old but sturdy. She tried kicking against it, but nothing happened. She was sure Betty could easily pick the lock with a bobby pin, but she didn't even have one on her.

Betty. She hoped she managed to make Kevin and Fangs see reason and run. But then, when did something work out the way they wanted? And weren't Fangs and Kevin much longer with the Farm than she was? What if they were deeper in than her? What if Betty

needed her help right now?

Cheryl stumbled a step back into the room and started to feel around in the dark, hoping to find something, anything that could help her get out of this room. She needed to get out. She found shelves full of bottles and cans. Somewhere amid them she found a few tools and grabbed something heavy and metallic.

She held it tight and started to crash it against the door, again and again. It wasn't fast working, it didn't seem to help at all, but she figured either the door would break, or someone would find her and let her out. Nothing really happened.

When she rearranged her grip on it she figured out what the tool was: a crowbar. Crowbars weren't for smashing; every kid knew that. And leverage would help. She positioned it just above the lock and pressed with all she had. Nothing, but she wasn't giving up. She leaned her upper body against the door and pressed the crowbar away using her feet and every ounce of will she had. She wasn't head cheerleader for nothing. This door was nothing against her. It would give. It would.

When it did, it crashed open with a bang. She lost all equilibrium and fell after it and right into the arms of a very surprised Sheriff Jones. The man that covered for her brother's murderer and that welcomed her with open arms in the Serpents. Now a cop. She blinked. This was good.

"Check the damn infirmary!"

The girls leading the way, they met in front of the door to what was ridiculously named the infirmary. It wasn't locked. No one here would dare to open it without explicit permission.

Jug stormed in first, headless. FP drew his gun and was right after him. Toni and Cheryl who had picked up the crowbar stood behind him in the door and Agent Ardelia, professional if still disbelieving this actually was a case, gun in hand stood behind, securing their exit.

They found Edgar mid operation, arms-deep in Betty's guts, flanked by two nurses.

"Get away from the girl! I'll shoot." FP had his gun aimed at Edgar's head.

But he had no chance to react because Jughead already jumped him, pushing him away from Betty and towards a wall. Edgar, scalpel in hand, struggled and fought, trying to throw Jughead off and slashed his arms and hands.

FP used the grip of his gun to knock one of the nurses out.

Toni, having the better angle, grabbed Cheryl's crowbar and smacked the other nurse with it. She fell to the ground, stunned.

Jughead punched Edgar's face over and over until he stopped struggling.

There was blood everywhere. So much blood.

It couldn't all have been Betty's blood. There couldn't have been that much blood in her body. Never. Edgar's disgusting apron was red. So were Jughead's hands and arms and clothes, the floor and the stretcher Betty was still tied to.

Edgar had cut Betty open, meaning to take what organs he could and leave her to die.

She was dying. Someone screamed. Likely Cheryl but maybe it was Jughead or all of them, no one knew. They were so scared.

Agent Ardelia, the only one without personal stakes, made a call.

"I need an ambulance this instance!"

Once they had done for Betty what they were able to and had her safely in the back of

an ambulance, Jughead tagging along, the FBI led by Agent Ardelia began rounding up everyone on the grounds.

Some of the farmies weren't really comprehending what was going on and some just stared with wonder and awe at the strangers on their grounds. Most acted timid and frightful but followed instructions or were so unresponsive, making them follow those worked fine. A few responded with aggression and violence, earning handcuffs and severity in return. All were taken into custody.

FP stood in the courtyard, starring after the car for a second. Toni stood next to him, still barefoot but clad in Jughead's jacket and the first blanket FP could find. Cheryl was right beside her, arms around her girlfriend, trying to give her additional warmth.

"Get into my car, the FBI has this under control. I need to get you to the hospital, too." Just when they moved over, they heard a baby cry and all three of them stopped and looked up.

"Juniper,"

Cheryl acted first, rushing towards the officer carrying the child. "I'm her aunt. Please, let me take her."

The officer looked at her and stepped back, holding the baby safer and out of reach.

"It's fine, Jack. She's sane." FP said and the officer let Cheryl take the child. "Where's the twin?"

"Oh, Dagwood's safe. He's with my mother." Cheryl suddenly sounded elated. "He's so lucky! I never understood her, but Dagwood will! Edgar said-"

She stopped abruptly, horrified, and would have screamed angrily if she hadn't been holding a crying child she tried to sooth. "That horrible gnome and his brainwashing. Not enough I endangered Toni, he even screwed with that! Get into the car. We're needed at the hospital."

On the way Cheryl checked her pockets, looking for her phone but coming up empty handed. "Can I borrow a phone? We need a second rescue mission."

Toni offered her Jughead's that somehow found its way back into one of the pockets of his jacket. It naturally didn't have Cheryl's contacts, but landing on Archie right away, she messaged him first, typing rapidly.

"Emergency. Baby Dagwood is alone with Penelope Blossom. The left barn. Try the side-entrance. Save him, please."

Choosing a messaging app and logging into her own account she sent the same message to all the Pretty Poisons, following it up with an apology for abandoning them for a brainwashing organ stealing cult and ensuring them they were sane again. She thought aloud and narrated that she typed.

"Call Jellybean and give me the phone."

FP originally planned on being home by now. His daughter needed checking on.

Cheryl sent a last text with a plea to check on Nana Rose, who they left all alone at Thistle House, and did as she was told.

Archie told his mom he had a message from Jughead and had to go take care of something and was gone. His father took the car for the business trip he had spontaneously taken off for, so he only had two options to choose from: his old bicycle and the car he hadn't driven since he confessed to a murder he didn't commit. While it was cold, it wasn't freezing and the streets were clear, so he took the car to reach the Blossom Estate as fast as he could.

Right at the gates he met the Pretty Poisons, who were sent there with the same task by Cheryl. Were she and Jug working together? What was going on?

They teamed up assuming their best bet was to just pressure Penelope into giving the baby back, though they were all sure the Pretty Poisons would be fine on their own. Leaving their bikes and his car behind at the gates, the girls led the way to the barn in question. They were just turning a corner when a door was opened and all of them ducked into the shadows. It was late, nearly midnight. Who was still out and about here? They peeked around the building they used as cover and were shocked to be presented with the sight of Hal Cooper, the Black Hood. Archie clenched his hands into tight fists. Betty told them he was back but seeing him face to face felt different than just knowing he was around. They couldn't let him flee or endanger anyone else.

The Poisons made eye contact with each other and had a plan ready within seconds. They knew their way around the Estate, Cheryl used to have them over for archery lessons and tea dates with Nana Rose whenever they were in the mood. They split up into pairs, everyone armed with bows and arrows and crept in the shadows until they had Hal surrounded. Archie sneaked closer too.

They took aim and on Peaches' sign they shot. Hal screamed.

The Poisons had hit him in a shoulder and both legs. He grabbed for a gun he carried with him and of all the directions he could have taken stumbled towards Archie.

Archie knocked him out cold with a single punch into his face. Hal crumpled to the ground.

Peaches smiled. "Good teamwork, Poisons, Red."

She turned around and came face to face with Penelope Blossom, who came out of the barn after hearing the scream to check on Hal. Seeing the girls all over the place, she tried to run but didn't come far. The Poisons were on her and pushed her to the ground.

"No running night-hag." One of them said. "Not just a horrible mother but also living with a serial-killer? Nice."

"This is a civilians' arrest." Another Poison took her arms and twisted them to her back. "Get me some rope. She's a kinky one, I'm sure she has some on hand."

With the Poisons having both stunned and bound tightly, Archie took out his phone to call the sheriff station. No one answered.

They took Penelope's car and loaded them both into the trunk, locking after them to make sure they couldn't flee. With them out of the way, one of the Poisons went to fetch Dagwood, who was peacefully sleeping in a crib somewhere in a backroom of the barn while another went to check up on Nana Rose who was found peacefully sleeping in her bedroom.

Peaches supervised the trunk and had other Poisons trying to call Cheryl, Toni and the sheriff station once more while Archie tried to reach first Jughead and then Betty. When both didn't connect, he tried calling his mother and was surprised to hear she was over at the Joneses' house and watching over Jellybean.

"Archie, Betty is hurt. Can you come and take us to the hospital?"

Betty? How could Betty have gotten hurt? Of course, he'd be going there.

He must have said something, because Peaches called him and told him to take Dagwood with him if he was going there. The Poisons who couldn't reach anyone, would take the criminals to the sheriff station themselves.

Not wanting to take the baby in his hoodless car, he borrowed Cheryl's.

Once FP drove them to the hospital and they got to check in with a distraught Jughead

-Betty was in actual surgery now but there was no news yet- their agency left them. They stood lost in the corridor to the operation room as a nurse spotted the still shivering Toni. She advised the others to move to the waiting area and led her to a room to get checked up in and warm up. Cheryl left the now sleeping child with FP and tagged along.

FP, one arm full of Juniper, put his other hand on Jughead's shoulder and steered him towards the seats. "She's a strong one. She'll pull through."

He sighed.

"It's what she always does."

She shouldn't have to. Not so often.

They sat for a while, silent, staring at the ground or the clock at the wall and watching little Juniper. When Jughead leaned over to poke one of her chubby cheeks and left a filthy smudge in his wake, FP sent him to the bathroom to get cleaned up.

It was a good call. Jughead was filthy. There was the dirt of Jason's grave still and then there was blood. He knew some was Betty's, but he vainly hoped most of it was Edgar's or his own. He washed his hands and face and discovered shallow cuts on one of his lower arms. His shoulder throbbed. He was sure he was green and blue under his shirt. He didn't take it off.

When he stepped out of the bathroom, he saw his father speaking with a doctor. He rushed over and got to hear the tail end of their exchange.

"The surgeons are still working on saving her left kidney. She has lost a lot of blood, but she's stable now."

He stood next to his dad and kept listening, not fully processing what else was said. Stable wasn't dying. Stable was good. She'd surely be okay. Right?

Next he knew, he was seated again and Cheryl was leading Toni towards them, now dressed in a simple set of clothes with hospital slippers on her feet. Between the hem of her pants and those slippers bandages were visible. Right, she was barefoot when he met her, running through the damn woods. Last week they still had snow.

Just then, Archie and Jellybean came through the door and stormed towards them, Mary with Dagwood in her arms a few meters behind.

"Mom told me what happened. Any news on Betty?!"

Jughead's on his feet and nodded, Archie's arms warm around him. "Yeah. She's still in surgery. But stable. She's stable."

"Surgery." Cheryl sounded like she thought aloud. "Oh god. Did anyone check the twins for surgery scars? What if Edgar took their organs, too?"

The idea sounded crazy and it probably was. But so was Edgar. They frantically scrambled to check both kids over. They didn't find anything.

Jellybean seemed a bit lost in between them, so Jug smiled at her and patted the seat next to him in invitation. She took it.

Wanting to pass the time waiting for news on Betty, FP started taking everyone's statements and was promptly interrupted by a sheepish Archie.

"Mr. Jones. The Pretty Poisons and I have detained Hal Cooper and Penelope Blossom. The Poisons drove them to the sheriff station."

"The Black Hood? Call me when you get news." FP slapped his son's shoulder in support and left for the station in a hurry. A few steps away he turned back and made eye contact with Mary. "Take care of the kids."

Hearing the name of her mother, Cheryl stared at Archie for longer than she realized, before she shook her head and stared at the retreating form of FP.

They watched after him long after he was gone. They only stopped because suddenly Mary had brought them all hot drinks. Consequently, their gazes transferred to the cups

in their hands, the clock, the ground or the two tiny toddlers they had in their midst, both peacefully sleeping.