

21st century illness

Healing room – Day time :

“You’re here early!” Lucy exclaimed as she entered the room.

“It’s your fault for making me wait a whole week!” RM shouted from his seat next to the window.

The current scene entertained her, “Who said you were only going to wait for a week?”

“Come on Lucy, this is killing me.” he wailed, “If it’s begging you’re looking for, so be it.”

“Needy much?” she twitted him, “You just downgraded yourself to a Resident Munchkin, how cute.”

The look on RM’s face obviously indicated that he wasn’t enjoying this chaff one bit. His empty gaze quickly turned the room’s atmosphere into a cold and deadly aura.

In an effort to redeem herself, she put her hands up calling a truce, “You don’t need to glare at me with your killer eyes for me to speak. Shall we begin?”

For some reason, his presence was anything but threatening. If either of them knew better, he was softening with every passing day and it scared him. It scared both of them.

“When you came to me that night, I was stuck in one of my worst nightmares,” Lucy initiated. “You saved me from myself. But, instead of being grateful, I pushed you away. I’m sorry about that.”

“If I had a penny for every time I heard you apologize, I’ll probably have enough money to bribe the guards to let me out,” RM snickered.

“You don’t understand. I’ve been burying my most aching trauma for as long as I could, and you brought it all back with one touch,” she explained, “You brought back the pain, but you also brought me back to life.”

Her monologue troubled him, “You’re not making any sense, woman.”

“Does anything in life ever make sense?” she countered.

“Touché,” he answered. “But if you know exactly what’s wrong with you, then it’s settled. You can work on it now, right?”

She could feel the bitterness in his question but she still chose to ignore it. “You only woke me from half of my nightmare. It’s up to me to awaken from the other half.”

“What’s stopping you, then?” he asked.

“My promise,” she revealed. “I gave you my word that we’re leaving this place together, and I am not backing away. You’re next.”

“Listen, Lucy,” he interrupted her, “I’ve been here longer than you, and I couldn’t even get a glimpse of how my life was before. You shouldn’t halt your life to save someone else’s, this is not how things usually work.”

“In my book, this is exactly how things work,” she told. “If you managed to unintentionally unveil my issues, the least I can do is intentionally trigger yours. Don’t you agree?”

“I don’t like where this is going,” he speculated.

She let out a devious smile, “You don’t have to like it, just follow my lead.”

After finally receiving her roommate’s approval to proceed, Lucy took out a notebook from under her dress.

“Again with the journal ...” he complained, “Aren’t you shameless!”

“If that’s what it takes to get you out of your bubble, so be it,” she winked at him. “Here, this book now belongs to you.”

“What am I supposed to do with it? Other than getting the creeps every time I remember its content,” he taunted her.

“That is precisely what I wanted to hear from you,” her response puzzled him further. “I want you to fill your own entry.”

He looked at her in shock, “A-Are you telling me that this sociopathic act has now become a legacy to pass on? Are you trying to drive me crazier than I already am?”

“You’re not crazy, you’re just grumpy,” she shushed him. “When I was observing the other patients, I always knew what was wrong with them. But to validate it, I wrote down all of their habits, symptoms, and every other detail that could define their illnesses.”

“But I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” he stood, flustered. “Did you catch some of my amnesia?”

“That would’ve solved so many problems, trust me.” she tied her hair in a loose ponytail, “With you, we’re going in the opposite direction : symptoms now, illness later.”

RM was impressed with her plan to shake his memory. “But we’re going to need a shrink for the final diagnosis.”

“Baby steps RM, baby steps,” she assured him. “Ready for a trip down memory lane?”

Doctor X’s office – Night time:

For the past few weeks, RM meditated through his scrapped memories. In the beginning, the process was time-consuming and fruitless; but with his partner’s encouragement, he managed to gather some pieces together, eventually pinpointing his symptoms and internal struggles.

This is the individual assessment of Patient John Doe, Registration Number R1209, August log.

Please be seated and face the one-way mirror, your assessment will begin shortly.

You will be put under hypnosis to allow the evaluation to go smoothly.

Feel free to talk about your feelings and condition according to your current situation.

You may remain silent if you do not wish to share.

“I still don’t have a name, but I go by Resident Munchkin at times.

“This past month was life-changing.

“For the first time in a year, I upgraded from being a “nobody” to becoming “somebody”. The images are still blurry inside my head, but I am getting there. Baby steps, indeed.

“I turned from being indifferent to changing someone’s life. In return, that person is helping me get back on my feet.

“Still, I have no idea why I keep having this feeling that I don’t deserve anything she’s been doing for me lately, but I can only be grateful for not being left alone.

“I haven’t prayed in a while, but I pray for her. Every night, I pray for her well-being. Seeing her smile everyday makes me believe that God is answering my prayers.

“Her will has become my own. She promised me to leave this place together and, although I have never told her directly, I promise her that I will get better.

“I think I am ready.

Ward R – Night time:

It was the hottest night of summer. The air conditioner was out of order, and everybody was kept awake that night. As if losing sleep wasn't already enough, breathing fresh air also became impossible later on.

Dressed in her light pajama robe, Lucy fought the heat by swaying her fan while lying flat on her stomach, reading a book that she has recently picked up from the asylum's library. Every time she felt a little breeze lifting her robe, she felt slightly amused and hoped the feeling would last a bit longer.

"Well, if that isn't a sight for sore eyes, I don't know what is!" a husky voice teasingly announced.

Startled by his sudden remark, Lucy got up in a hurry, "RM! Have you ever heard of knocking?"

Albeit being embarrassed, her reaction amused him, "The door was open, and so were ..."

"Don't you dare!" she warned him.

"The curtains, so were the curtains!" he teased her, "Where did your mind wander off to, miss?"

His answer caught her off guard, "Very witty, mister."

"Thank you, I try my best," he sniggered in mischief. "What are you reading?"

"21st century illnesses," she replied. "I thought it would come handy to complete your profile."

"You've been doing your homework, that's pleasant," he praised her.

She nodded her head in response, "Shall we pick up where we left off last time?"

"Sure thing," he said as he took out the journal and started reading.

Every time I try to reminisce about my old life, a certain pain starts building up. The only image I visualize when I try to focus on my past is myself in a suit. The more I try to analyze the suit, the faster all of my symptoms heighten at the same time: I feel exhausted and inefficient. My lifestyle seemed to have been draining my energy because I always think about it with certain skepticism. I don't know what job I was occupying at the time, but one thing is certain: it was stressful as hell. I think that my stress kept building up, which ultimately led to my insomnia. I don't know which specific factor caused my anger, but as I try to pinpoint it, it always ends with a heavy feeling of grief. Whatever my job was, it was weighing on my conscience.

“RM in a suit, allure of the month. It must be as fancy as the pajamas you’re wearing now,” she joked to lighten up the mood. “Sorry, that was unnecessary. What job do you think you were undertaking?”

He looked at her just as confused, “I don’t know ... A company man? Like a lawyer or a banker, maybe? Or even a real estate agent? These jobs are anything but light on the mind.”

“Funny.” she replicated, “You don’t seem like the type.”

“Oh yeah?” he asked, “What do you think I am?”

“I can’t say, but you’d pull an architect or a novelist position better,” she shared.

Pleased, he met her proposition with a joke, “As long as you don’t think of me as a politician, we’re good.”

“Now, now,” she scoffed. “Are you recalling your roots, young man?”

Her teasing was not taken lightly, “If my guilt piled up from all the mess that’s happening in the world right now, I rather keep my amnesia, thank you.”

She smiled at him diligently, “Either way, we’re making progress. Although most symptoms you’re showing are shared between many illnesses, if we can go deeper into your memories, we might get the answer we’re looking for.”

“How are you planning to do that?” he inquired.

“I know just the thing,” she retrieved the journal from his hands. “Follow me”.