

# FLOODWATERS

By

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WARNING:

Contains mature, possibly upsetting scenes.

# **FLOODWATERS**

It was a late Autumn day when the red SUV pulled up to the rusty iron fence at the end of the unpaved road.

Within the red SUV were two young, pale-skinned women dressed in casual attire. The one who sat in the driver's seat was ginger, while the one who sat in the passenger's seat was blonde.

The two of them were looking straight ahead at the large white sign affixed to the fence. This sign read:

**DO NOT ENTER**

**ENTRY FORBIDDEN TO ALL NON-AUTHORISED PERSONNEL**

**NO CIVILIAN ACCESS ALLOWED**

Behind this sign could be seen a pristine river as calm as a resting cat on the windowsill. A large part of the fence had been peeled back so people could ignore the sign and squeeze through anyway.

“Right, let's get going,” the ginger woman said, unbuckling her seatbelt and throwing the door open. A gust of cool, crisp air struck her in the face, and she grimaced.

“B...But, um, the...the, uh, sign...” the blonde woman stammered. But the ginger woman had already made her way to the back of the car.

The blonde woman sighed, and checked their supplies in the back seat.

Here there were an assortment of items – these included life-jackets, a first-aid kit, water bottles, hand sanitiser, toilet paper, soap, an extendable shovel, tampons, a whistle, a thermal blanket, canned food, a can opener, a portable radio, and spare batteries.

“Brooke!” the blonde woman exclaimed.

“What is it, Willow?” Brooke asked.

“We forgot the emergency flares,” Willow said.

Brooke rolled her eyes, and said, “We’re only going to be gone for half an hour, I don’t think we’re going to need them. Now come help me get the kayaks down,”

A short time later, Brooke and Willow were in their kayaks, wearing their life-jackets, making their way down the river. Brooke was whistling a happy tune to herself, while Willow was scanning the area for any possible threats.

“This is nice, isn’t it, sis? I bet it’s much more exciting than staying in that stuffy old office all day,” Brooke said. Willow furrowed her brow.

“I like the office,” Willow said, “you always know what to expect in the office. Paper work. Printers. Coffee. I don’t have to worry about drowning in the office, usually,”

“Don’t think about drowning. That’s not going to happen with your life-jacket on,” Brooke said.

“What if the life-jacket doesn’t work? What if a crocodile--” Willow began.

“There are no wild crocodiles around here, calm down,” Brooke said.

“What if one escaped from the zoo and got into the river?” Willow asked. Brooke could see Willow growing more tense by the second.

“Willow, just calm down. Take deep breaths. The whole reason I wanted to go kayaking with you was to take you out of your comfort zone, to help you face your fears,” Brooke said.

“By kayaking on a river so remote my smartphone’s not even picking up a signal?” Willow asked.

“Yeah, I know how apprehensive you get around other people. I thought you’d be less scared if it were just the two of us,” Brooke said, as they rounded a river curve.

“You don’t understand me at all, do you?” Willow asked, staring straight at Brooke. Brooke just kept looking straight ahead. Her eyes had grown very wide.

“What, now you’re ignoring me?” Willow asked, annoyed. Brooke pointed straight ahead.

“Look!” Brooke said. Willow did so, and in doing so, instantly understood why Brooke had been taken aback.

The river had extended into a lake, but this was no ordinary lake. This lake had once been a small town – here and there they could see half-submerged buildings, fences, willow trees and so on. At each corner of the lake there appeared to be watchtowers. Near the centre of the lake was what looked like a dairy or coffee-house. To the east was a large cave. And at the very far end of the lake was a large building on the hill. This building was too far away to make out any details.

“This is so cool! I didn’t know there used to be a little town down here! Come on, let’s go exploring,” Brooke said, grinning from ear to ear. She began paddling.

Willow opened her mouth as though she wanted to speak, but then closed it again and began to follow Brooke.

A short time later, they came to the dairy which was only flooded by half a foot. It seemed it was on a higher incline than most of the other buildings. It had an old, rotting wooden sign atop of it, with the words **MAIN STREET DAIRY** written on it in washed-out letters. Behind this sign was what was left of some abandoned rescue helicopter. In the state it was in now, it was nothing more than scrap metal.

The front windows of this dairy showed that all the shelves had been plucked bare long ago. Here and there there were discarded candy wrappers and empty cans of dog food. Taped to the front windows were various old flyers. There were two in particular that stuck out to Willow. The first one had the words:

**PLEASE DON'T POLLUTE OUR BEAUTIFUL LAKE**

Followed by an image of a cartoony lake monster giving the thumbs up and winking, followed by the words,

**ELI SEZ DON'T LITTER**

The second one had the words:

**Are You:**

- Young?
- Inexperienced?
- Desperate For Work?

**Why Not Get A Job At Haphazard Co?  
We Work In – Forestry – Mining – Fishing  
- Other Industries Your Hippie Friends Don't Like**

**CONTACT US AT:**

The rest of the text had been smudged by water damage.

“Aww, look, a kitty!” Brooke said. Willow turned to the direction of Brooke’s voice, where, behold, there was a stray black cat walking along a half-submerged wooden fence. Its fur was ragged, and it looked like it hadn’t had a decent meal in years.

“It looks just like the cat *he* had,” Willow muttered gravely, her whole body shuddering.

“Come on, Willow. It’s just a cat, and you know *that man* is behind bars now. He can’t hurt you,” Brooke said, as she rowed her kayak over to the fence so she could pet the kitty.

Looking around, Willow could see a whole crowd of stray cats was beginning to gather around the half-submerged buildings. Willow began to feel filled with unease.

“I want to leave. Now,” Willow said, her breathing growing more panicked.

“Alright, alright,” Brooke said, giving the black cat a quick head-pat.

Meanwhile, over in the large building on the hill, two people, a tan-skinned woman and a pale-skinned bald man, watched the two from the window.

“Uh oh, we’ve got two new arrivals. And it looks like they’re trying to leave,” the tan-skinned woman said, biting her nail.

“They might be OK if they make it past the watchtowers,” the pale-skinned bald man said, putting his hand on her shoulder.

“You know nobody ever makes it past the watchtowers. Get the speedboat,” the tan-skinned woman commanded.

Back in the flooded town, Willow and Brooke were making their way back to the river, when a large blurry black shape sped through the water. Willow and Brooke stopped in their tracks.

“What was that?” Brooke asked. Before Willow could give an answer, Brooke’s entire kayak was dragged underwater, leaving Brooke splashing around in the open water. She and Willow both shrieked in terror.

“Brooke!” Willow exclaimed, frozen in fear. Seconds later, the kayak popped out of the water a few feet away from Willow, only now the kayak was in three torn bits. Willow couldn’t take her eyes away from the sight until she heard Brooke give another scream. Willow turned just in time to see Brooke pulled underwater violently by some shadowy black mass.

Willow felt like her heart was beating a million miles a minute. She hadn’t felt this terrified since she had been living with... *him*.

“You! You need to get on this boat, now,” a voice from behind her said. She turned to see the voice belonged to a pale-skinned, bald man. He was standing up in a speedboat; a tan-skinned woman was sitting behind the steering wheel.

“Here, take my hand,” the pale-skinned bald man said, leaning over, holding out his hand. Willow stared at the man. She found herself flashing back, back to when she had been with... *him*. In her mind she saw him raising his fist above his head, his face filled with rage.

“No...please...” Willow whimpered, cowering, “Don’t touch me!! Don’t touch me!!”

The pale-skinned bald man withdrew his hand and took a step back. Willow could feel the salty tears run down her eyes.

“Uh... she’s freaking out, Kiri,” the pale-skinned bald man said in the direction of the tan-skinned woman.

“Take the wheel,” Kiri said, jumping out of her seat and running over to where the pale-skinned bald man had been.

“Listen, woman, look behind you,” Kiri said. Willow did so, and saw that where Brooke had been was now an expanding puddle of blood.

“That’s going to be you if you don’t get the hell onto this boat in the next 10 seconds!” Kiri exclaimed.

Willow did not have to be told twice. Without looking back, she scrambled onto the boat.

“Go!” Kiri commanded the pale-skinned bald man, and he pushed down on the throttle. The speedboat roared down the lake, and off they went towards the large building on the hill.

Looking over the speedboat railings, Willow could see a terrifying giant black mass three times the size of the speedboat, at least ten feet under the water. It was keeping perfect speed with the speedboat. The shape slithered back and forth, like a giant snake.

The large black mass continued to keep pace with the speedboat until it had reached a small makeshift pier at the end of the hill where the big building was.

It abruptly changed direction, and sauntered off into the distance.

Now that they were closer, Willow could see that the big building was a large Gothic mansion. It was easily the largest structure for miles around and it looked imposing, like something out of a horror movie.



To the right of the mansion was a large glass greenhouse and a water tower. To the left was a small pasture with a number of sheep, chickens, and almond trees scattered about.

Directly in front of the mansion were the letters **SOS** written in rocks. The letters looked like they had been there a long time, and had moss growing around them.

Some time later, Willow found herself in a lavish lounge fit for a king. The room was filled with bookshelves and old paintings. Willow sat on a couch with Kiri, while the pale-skinned bald man put a log in the roaring fire. This fire was the only source of light in the room. Sitting on opposite sides of the couch were a young tan-skinned man, and an elderly pale-skinned woman, the latter in a rocking chair.

“Well, I suppose introductions are in order. My name is Kiri, I am the de facto leader around here. This is Alan,” Kiri said, gesturing to the pale-skinned bald man.

“Hi,” Alan said with a sheepish wave.

“That trouble-maker over there is Alfredo,” Kiri said, gesturing to the young tan-skinned man.

Alfredo laughed.

“And that’s Stephanie,” Kiri said, gesturing to the pale-skinned elderly woman, “she was the chef here before everything went to Hell,”

“Hello, dearie. It’s been so long since we’ve had a new arrival,” Stephanie said.

“I... uh, um, I’m W-Willow,” Willow managed to stammer.

“Willow. That’s certainly quite a coincidence,” Stephanie said.

“I came with my sister, b-but she... she...” Willow began, before bursting into tears.

“We’re very sorry for your loss, but there’s nothing we could’ve done. That thing will kill anyone that tries to leave. If it helps, many of us have lost someone to the monster, too. I lost the rest of my rescue team, Alan lost his father, and Stephanie lost everyone who used to live at the mansion,” Kiri said, patting Willow on the shoulder.

Willow drew herself away, and said, “What was that thing?”

“It’s a long story, my dear,” Stephanie said, getting out of her seat and grabbing a book from the shelf behind her, “perhaps this will be of help,”

Willow leaned over and saw the book was titled,

## A HISTORY OF WILLOW LAKE

Stephanie handed the book over to Willow, who accepted it gingerly.

Willow took a quick dive into the pages. She saw walls of text accompanied by photos of Willow Lake from before the flood. She noticed there were no watchtowers in any of the photos, unlike what she had seen coming into the village. She came to a page that showed a large cave opening a few feet above the lake, a willow tree growing atop the cave. This page was titled,

## THE MONSTER OF WILLOW LAKE.

“We used to get along with Eli. So long as we didn’t disturb him, he left us alone,” Stephanie said.

“Eli?” Willow asked.

“The monster,” Stephanie explained.

“This is so confusing. Why were there no watchtowers in the photos?” Willow asked.

“Well, those were built quite recently, only a month or two before the... flooding. We don’t know much about them,” Stephanie said.

“Listen, we’ve given you a lot to process; we should show you to a room, let you get settled in,” Kiri said.

“But what are we going to do?! We have to get out of here!” Willow exclaimed.

“We gave that up a long time ago, ma’am,” Alan said.

“You see, Willow, as long as we don’t try to leave, the monster tends to leave us alone. So, we’ve decided we’ll just live out the rest of our days here,” Stephanie said, in a resigned tone.

“What?! How can you possibly be OK living like this?!? Where the hell is that monster swims around waiting to kill us?? We have to get out of here!! We have to get out of here **RIGHT NOW!!!**” Willow screamed, almost bolting out of her seat.

Kiri grabbed a hold of Willow and said, “Look, let’s just settle down for now. We can talk about how we’ll get out of here tomorrow,”

“That’s not what you said yesterday. Yesterday you said we should give up any hope of ever escaping,” Alfredo pointed out.

“Shut up,” Kiri growled.

A short time later, Kiri was showing Willow around the mansion.

“So, this mansion has twenty bedrooms, and there’s only four of us. Well, five of us including you now. So you have plenty of options,” Kiri said.

“Thank you, I-I’m sure, um, I’ll find one,” Willow said.

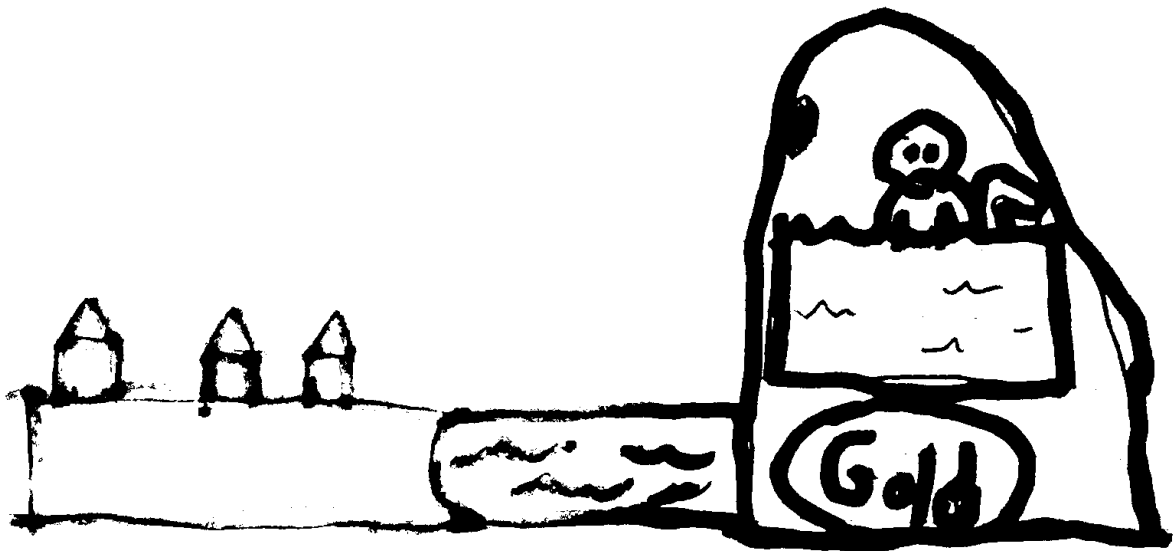
“You’re welcome. Toilets are to the east, lounge and dining room are to the west. Oh, and remember to boil the water here before you drink it,” Kiri said. Willow nodded as Kiri walked away. Willow began to wander around.

Eventually she came across a room she quite liked. It had a good spot in the sunshine and gave a good view of the horizon. It had tasteful paintings of flowers that made Willow feel calm. However, it was already occupied by Alfredo, who was at his desk, drawing.

“Hey! Willow! You’re just in time! I just finished some drawings, to help you understand what happened to Willow Lake,” Alfredo said, showing her the drawings he had been working on.

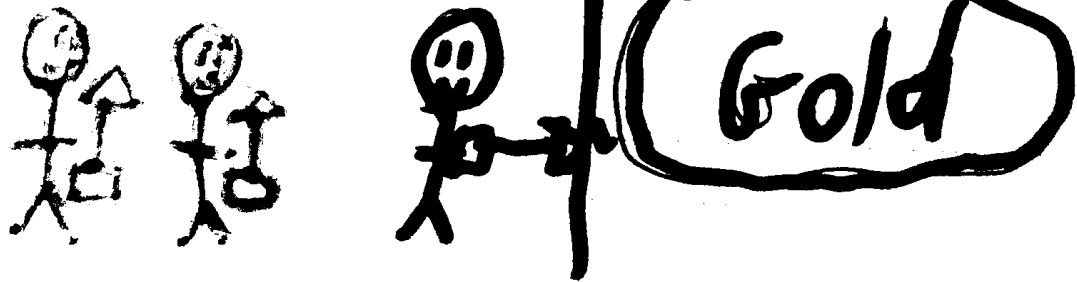
“Oh, um, y-you’re... um, quite the artist,” Willow said politely.

The drawings were stick figures.

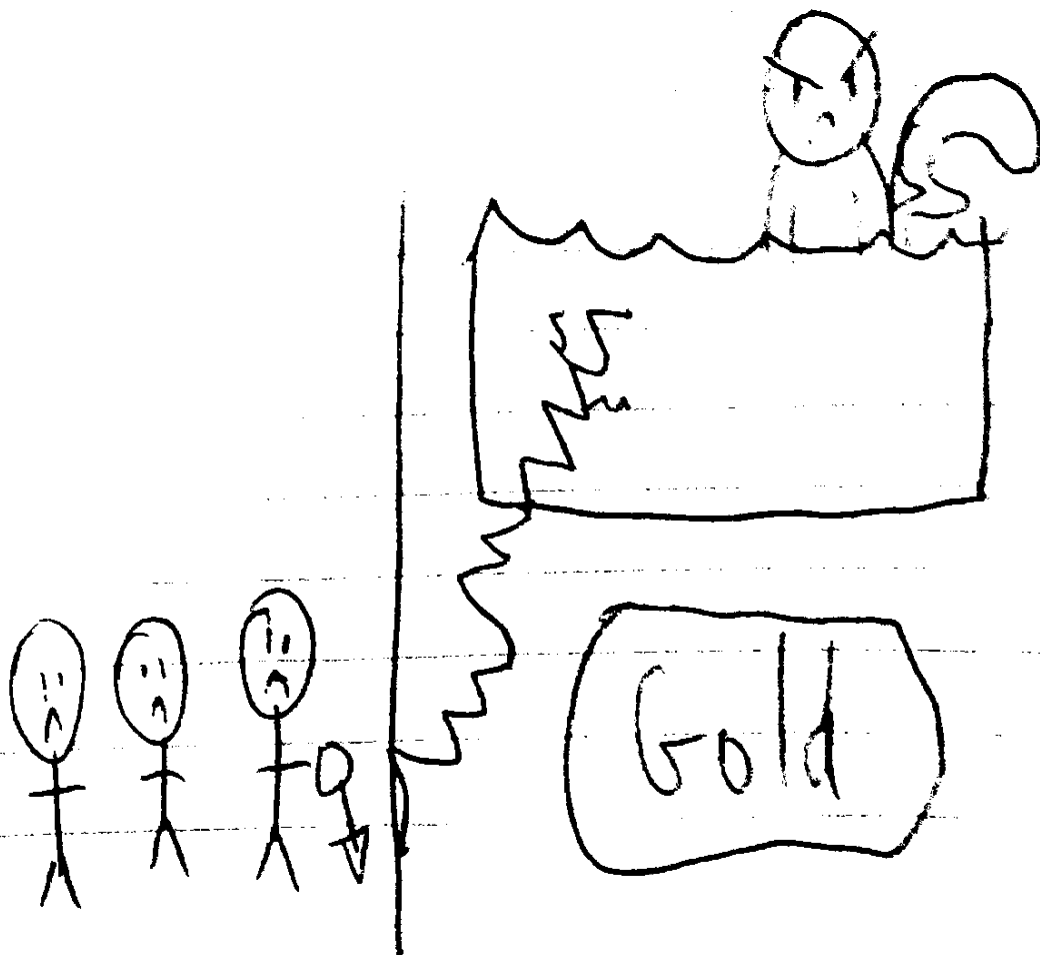


Alfredo narrated over the drawings, saying, “Willow Lake used to be this little village of some 90 or so people. The monster lived in his cave and people knew not to bother him,”

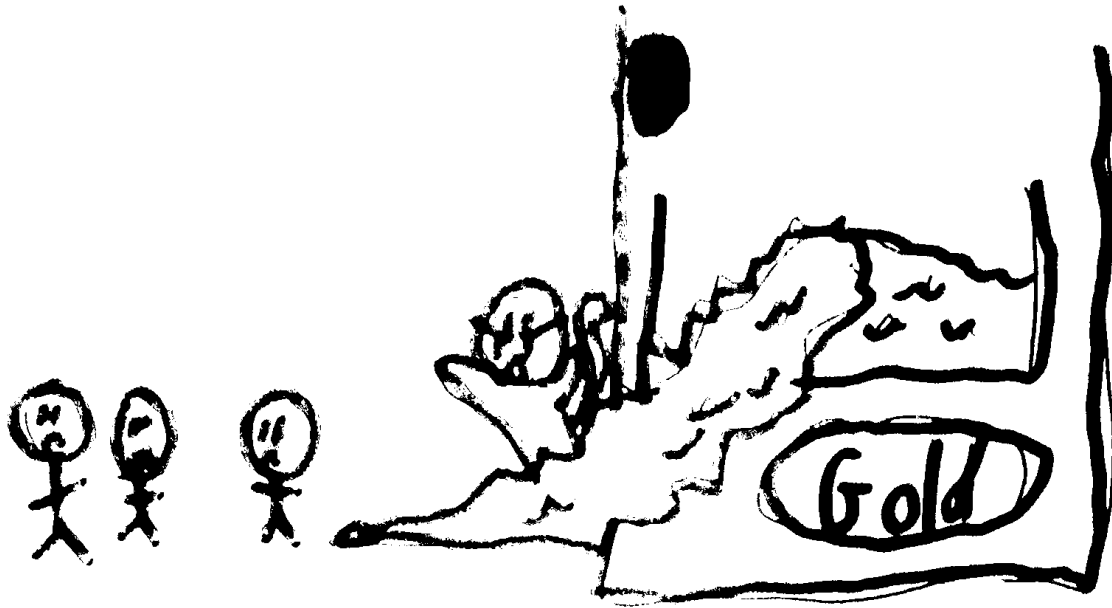
HAPHAZARD CO.



“Then Haphazard Co came along. They knew there was gold buried deep in the cave, somewhere under the monster’s reservoir,” Alfredo explained.



“So, they started mining. But something went wrong, and the cave collapsed. The reservoir burst open and flooded the town,” Alfredo said.



“And so the monster was unleashed, too. I think that’s why it’s killing humans. It’s mad because we destroyed its home,” Alfredo said.

“You say that so calmly, like it’s the most normal thing you’ve ever heard of,” Willow said.

“Well, I’d be mad too if some people came along and wrecked my place. I probably wouldn’t kill them, though,” Alfredo said.

“That’s not what I meant... and this doesn’t explain the watchtowers,” Willow said.

“We don’t know much about the watchtowers, the monster never lets us get close enough. We know they were built by Haphazard Co, though,” Alfredo said.

“How did you come to be here?” Willow asked.

“I like a bit of danger. I saw the sign that said nobody was allowed to enter, and I wanted to find out what the story was,” Alfredo said.

“I see. I’ll, um, be going now,” Willow said, walking off.

Eventually, Willow came across an empty room she liked. There was a wardrobe with a vanity mirror, and a painting of a willow tree. The room also had a single bed with a wide window that gave a full view of the outside pasture. Sheep and chickens milled about, while Alan tended to their needs. He looked good, his muscles glistening with sweat in the dim autumn afternoon light.

Willow felt a burning desire to get to know Alan better. She opened the window and shouted out, “Alan! I...I, um, I was thinking about you,”

Alan put down the feed bag and stepped closer to Willow.

“You were?” Alan asked.

“Yes. I’m so sorry about what happened when we first met. It’s just... I just came out of an abusive relationship. His name was Scott, and he looked alot like you,” Willow said.

“That’s OK, I understand. You don’t need to like me. I’ll just stay out of your way,” Alan said, turning back to feed the sheep.

“B-but, uh, I d-do, um, that is, I, wanted to g-get to know you better,” Willow mumbled. Alan turned back to face Willow, a neutral expression on his face.

“What did you want to know?” Alan asked.

“What’s your story? How did you get to be here? What happened to your father?” Willow asked.

“Well, you see, my father and I used to run a farmstead far away from here. We got along alright, no major dramas. Two years ago we went on a fishing trip down that very river, on that speed boat we brought you in on. It was really foggy that day so we didn’t see any warning signs or anything.

We made it to Willow Lake, tried to leave, and the monster jumped right out of the water and chomped my father right in two. I'd be dead too if I hadn't seen the smoke coming from the mansion's fireplace," Alan said.

"Oh, I'm sorry for your loss," Willow said.

"I'm sorry for your loss, too. Were you close with your sister?" Alan asked.

"Not really, we didn't get along that well. I'd told her about Scott, but she never took me seriously. She just said, well, that's just how men are, you just have to get used to it," Willow said, sighing, wiping away a small tear.

"Still, she didn't deserve to die like that," she said, shaking her head and adding, "let's talk about something else. Y-you're, um, really g-good, uh, with animals, which is, um... to b-be expected, because, you know, you're a farmer... and... uh, stuff..."

"Yeah, I find if you're real friendly with the sheep, they don't complain when you shear their wool off," Alan said.

"What, um, do you do with the wool? Make clothes?" Willow asked.

"Yeah, I made a really nice wooly jumper last year; let me show you," Alan said, running off. Willow waited patiently by the window-side. A minute later, Alan was at her door, holding the wooly jumper up for her.

It was a big white jumper, with a picture of a group of cats on it. At the very front of this was a black cat, just like the one Brooke and Willow had encountered. She flashed back to that very moment.

*"It looks just like the cat **HE** had,"*



“Wh-why did you sew a black cat?” Willow asked, eyeing Alan with suspicion.

“It’s one of the strays. Sometimes we get stray cats that wander around here. Are you alright?” Alan asked, tilting his head.

Willow’s heart began racing. She scoffed and said, “So I’m, uh, um, s-supposed to b-b-believe, um, that it’s just a coincidence? Th-that there’s, um, this bald man living here who looks just like the man who abused me? And-and-and-- owns a, um, black cat?”

She couldn’t believe the words that were coming out of her own mouth. She *liked* Alan. Why was she treating him like this? It was like the fear had taken control. She tried to close her eyes, take some deep breaths, and apologise. However, upon closing her eyes, all she saw was Scott, looming above her, ready to hurt her again.

“G-Get away!! GET AWAY FROM ME!!!” Willow screamed. Alan gave one last hurt look at Willow, then scampered off. Willow covered her face with her hands and began to sob.

She looked into the mirror to see her reflection. She looked dishevelled, her eyes were bloodshot. She felt the tears run down her cheeks.

She grabbed ahold of the mirror and, through heaving sobs, said, “Why? Why am I like this? Why can’t I stop being like this?”

It was then that she saw something startling in the mirror; the sight of a black cat watching her, on the windowsill. Willow gasped.

She turned around, just in time to see the black cat leaping off the windowsill and darting off into the distance, off onto the roof of some submerged house.

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