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English Comp 100

Prof. Sabatino

The Big Bad Wolf

“Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do.” (Mark Twain)

“What did you just say to me?”

“I said: F--- you, you f----ing asshole, you're an ugly human being.”

“WHAT?”

“I said you're ugly!”

“Ok, that's it.” *Bwak*- his fist collides with my face, as I tumble ass backwards onto the cold, hard ice, I see it- Red.

Its Halloween night, mischief is to be had, costumes to be worn and alcohol to consume. She and I are going in a couple's costume: she's Little Red Riding Hood and I'm the Big Bad Wolf even though we've never gone out and never will. She's excited. It's her very first Halloween and perhaps her last. She puts on her red shawl and adds some fake blood, crimson, to her face “to make it extra spooky.” She adds so much that it begins to look like makeup, smeared and caked on. I tell her it looks amazing. “C'mon, let's go meet up with the others.” The group of four meets up in the dimly lit kitchen,

Indiana Jones and Skrillex await. Skrillex is my longtime friend Zack and Indy a friend from the year before. We all share a warm laugh, some crack about the red on Red's face. This is going to be a good night. It's party time.

We meander to the party feeling the biting cold that seeps into your bones, typical of a Canadian winter which seems to have set in all too early here in Montreal. There is a greyness to the sky during the day, characteristic of Winter's icy grip, tightening by the day here. Red Riding Hood is beyond ecstatic, bordering on manic, not caring about the bitter wind blustering down the flat streets. She begins to chat up random people before we even arrive to the party, her words coming out at a 1000 mph; she is like a Coke can that's been shaken too much, practically about to burst. As we walk onward towards the party I start to reflect on how exactly we first met.

I'll never forget the first night I met this crew, it was oppressively warm, our shirts all sticking to us with summer sweat. I had just moved into my new dorm on Saint Catherine's Street, the liveliest place in all of Canada it seemed. Every night there were people singing, staggering, and occasionally fighting- for reasons that most would not remember. I recall being nervous, trying to meet new people for the first time in a new setting is not always easy. My first-time meeting anyone was in the kitchen. I went downstairs from my dorm, the steps squeaking and sighing as I went, I hung a sharp right and saw my hangout spot for the next year and some change. It was dimly lit, a slight breeze whispering through an open window, odd smells emanating from the stove as people bustled here and there prepping their meals for the night. Something with pasta and overbearing amount of garlic? I walked straight up to a kid with shoulder length dark brown hair and a girl with light auburn hair and intense hazel eyes. I said

“Hey you listen to metal? You look like someone who’d listen to metal.” He seemed somewhat taken aback by the question but also mildly amused, as if he had probably heard the question once or twice before. He grinned “No I really don’t. What’s your name?” I answered, “I’m Shane, you?” “Zack and this is Red.” We hit it off immediately, as if we had known each other for much longer. I didn’t know it at the time, but Zack would become one of my better friends from Canada that I still have contact with. We all decided to grab a drink at the nearest convince store, colloquially called the “Dep” short for Depannuer. I bought both Zack and Red a six pack of beer with red dancing elves on it called “Mad Elf”. We talked about everything and nothing that night, I remember the warm glow of making new friends more than what we talked about that night, that and laughter.

Finally, we arrive at the party. Standard fare for a college gathering: a grimy frat house lit with sickly yellowish lights, a floor somehow already stickier than superglue and the cherry on top, a crudely duct taped beer bong attached to railing of the stairs. Red immediately gravitates toward it, marveling at how “crazy North Americans are” and she decides that she must give it a whirl. A man with cat ears lazily taped to his head decides he’ll be the one to help her out. I recognize him as my old neighbor from last year, Eli. He and I had a somewhat begrudging friendship of each other, and this is the first time I’d seen him since the last semester. As the liquid rushes through the translucent tubes and into Red she visibly begins to sway after she is finished. “Oh boy this isn’t good.” A quick aside with Skrillex, “Let’s keep an eye on her, she’s kind of a light weight, you know how she gets when she’s like this.”

He sighs, “Yeah, I’ll keep an out don’t worry I’ve dealt with her when she’s like this.”

“Okay.” I shrugged knowing full well that she wouldn’t listen to either of us.

The night stretches on, grown children drinking from red cups. Red is enjoying herself, playing pong with the other ghouls and gremlins eventually becoming part of a mini team with Eli. The scene is straight out of what a high schooler thinks college is: red cups with the already fetid remains of cheap beer, ghouls and ghosts rocking back and forth emitting a cacophony of laughter mixed with Fetty Wap’s Trap Queen. It’s as if the movie *Animal House* had taken place in 2015.

Skrillex and I are both in a team for pong, determined to beat at least Red and Eli. “Listen Ears, just because you used to be my next-door neighbor in first year doesn’t mean I’ll go easy on you!”

He smirks, “You’re on”.

The match is intense, bringing out our competitive nature. Even Indy who is often nonchalant, seems to be enjoying the show. Eventually we are both down to the final cup. Neither team seems to be making any headway. Back and forth. Miss. Miss. Airball. Eli and I are both staring at each other, brows furrowed. I can’t let this prick beat me. Perhaps this is about more than just the game of pong. Out of nowhere Red throws the perfect basket, nothing but net. I look to Zack and we both exclaim:

“How in the hell did you do that? What???”

Red is beside herself, bellowing triumphantly and with more than a little slurring “Ha I knew I could do ish. You always doubt me! Me and the Catty won!”

She turns to Black Ears and hugs him. Skrillex and I both looking away for something else to do.

“Well, they seem to be hitting it off.”

Skrillex looks unamused. “Yeah whatever, let’s find something else to do.”

The Party is moving at an almost sluggish pace now, most costumes being peeled off for comfort. Red is greeting another Partier for the 4th time now. It’s time to go home.

“Red are you ready to go?”

“NO.” She’s clearly upset about something. “I don’t want to go back home with Zack. I hate him!!!”

I plead with her, “C’mon Red, it’s getting late the Party’s over.”

Eli appears from my side. “Hey Shane if you want she can just crash at my place, I have a futon all set up.”

I glance over to Red. “Are you sure you want to go with him?” I have no real reason to distrust Eli, having known him over a year now. I’m not a fan of it but I feel like I have no real say in the matter.

She insists, vocally, “I can’t be near Zack tonight I’d rather go with Eli.”

“Are you 100% sure?? I know you and Zack aren’t getting along but I think it’d be better if you went with us.”

“NO. I can’t stand to look at him. I want to go with Ears at least he’s nice to me.”

I go to find Zack. “Listen I don’t know if she goes anywhere, she seems pretty belligerent.”

He seems flustered. “Look I’ve tried everything to convince her even before the night started she’s been pissed with me. I don’t think we can stop her on this one.”

“Fine.” “I need to talk to Eli.”

I find him sitting outside on the stairs with Red, they seem to be chatting quietly and laughing.

“Hey Eli. Looks like Red needs to head home tonight. Your place is right around the corner?” He nods.

“Yeah mine is around the corner, not even two minutes from here.”

“Okay. Listen Eli, I really care about Red and so does Zack. If you take her to your place, she’ll be alright?”

He looks at me straight in the eye. “Yeah man don’t worry, I can tell you and Zack have a thing for her. She clearly needs a place to sleep tonight. I can even call you in the morning if you want just to let you know she’s OK.”

“Alright, sounds like a plan.” “Later Eli be seeing you around.”

“Night, man.”

The next morning. I wake up to the sounds of a light rap on the thick steel door, barely audible at first. I hear something else. Subtler, it sounds like sobbing, that short little snuffle someone makes when they've been crying for a while. I shudder. This can't be good. I open the door. Then I see it- Red, streaming down her face from last night's makeup. Red. My god, that awful red streaming down her face. How could I have been so naïve?

Not long after I saw Eli walking down the street on a bitter Thursday night. The hour was late and people were milling about, I just happened to pick him out of a crowd and I started hurling profanities on the other side of a cross-walk.

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