

## A Lovestruck Lost Soul

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# A Lovestruck Lost Soul

by [FreyedFabrics](#)

## Summary

Adam and Barbara are willing to try a relationship with Beetlejuice. BJ does not know what that means.

Or: I deal with Beetlejuice's consent issues in the angstiest way I can

## Notes

The rape/non-con tag is for past assault and occurs off screen, I'm just playing it safe.

Detailed CW's: consent violation, references to past sexual assault, unhealthy views about sex and consent, a lot of panic attacks, past domestic abuse, past physical abuse, snakes, bugs, and canon typical body horror

I really like golden rat as a ship, but BJ has some big issues with consent. So what started out as a pretty simple concept spiraled into 10,000 words, four panic attacks and a tragic backstory for the ghost with the most.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

"Hey, Beetlejuice, could we talk to you for a minute?" Barbara and Adam had turned the corner on the landing just as the demon was about to walk out the front door.

"I just want to say that I had nothing to do with the snakes in Charles's bag and they were harmless anyway so it'll be fine if he just takes them outside or flushes them or something," he offered with his best beatific smile. The leg of a cricket stood proudly from between two teeth.

Barbara blinked. "...That's not what we wanted to talk about, but okay. It was actually about something personal." She fidgeted. "Adam?"

"Are they real snakes or ghost snakes" She swatted his arm. "Right, doesn't matter. Uh, do you want to come upstairs? Or we can do this in the living room, but Delia might come back soon..."

"Uh...I guess upstairs is good?" He had no idea what this was about.

"Cool! Uh, come on up then, BJ!" Adam gave a little dorky 'come along' wave like the sexy nerd he was.

Beetlejuice sighed and floated towards the stairs. He was definitely in trouble, but he didn't know what it could be at all. He'd been sticking to harmless pranks, as per the agreement they'd all come to when he showed up a few months ago, lonely and desperate. A few had maybe skirted close to the line, but it wasn't like it was his fault Chuck slipped on the nail polish bar of soap, and the dislocation healed quickly. He'd even apologized, and Chuck said it was okay so he really didn't know what was happening.

Barbara and Adam were sitting on the bed holding hands over a dorky floral quilt. Most of the house had been redone in some mix of Babs, Adam, Chuck, and Delia's style, a really impressive show of compromise, but this room was 100% Maitland, even the kitschy wallpaper. Of course the beautiful dorks had pink floral wallpaper.

He felt a little anxious in here, he hadn't really been inside much since he'd come back. If he was hanging with the Maitlands, it was probably in the attic, or maybe watching a movie as a house downstairs. This was their room, and they'd made it clear to everyone that they wanted that respected.

Actually, he'd assumed they meant the attic when they said "upstairs" and was really glad he hadn't just floated through.

He hesitated at the door, but Barbara gave a small smile and gestured him in. "Do you want to close the door? Just in case Delia or Lydia come home."

"Uh...yeah, sure," he closed it behind him with a gesture, but it closed a little harder than he meant it to and kind of...slammed. "Oops."

"Don't worry about it, I've got nothing better to do than home repair," Adam offered with a smile. "Sit down, please?"

Beetlejuice was incredibly nervous, but he never could say no to that doofus smile from either of them. He settled into the teal over-plush rocking armchair (Barbara had cooed when she saw it on the Ikea website) a little jerkily, and was immediately frustrated that the chair refused to stop moving. He reached out and held it still with a thought, but it still seemed unsteady.

Once the ghoul was comfortable, Adam cleared his throat to begin. "Barbara and I have been talking, and, well, we got to a point that we needed further input on the matter, since it doesn't just affect us and so we wanted to ask your opinion."

"Is this about remodeling again? Because I really don't need a room no matter what Lydia says. I *like* the roof, especially since the bats are out again. All their little bones are so crunchy and-"

"Ookay, no," Adam cut in. "It's not about remodeling and also not about bats or anything else you like to eat up there. Though I'd prefer if you stuck to bugs, since bats can help get rid of those. And also might have rabies."

Beetlejuice rolled his eyes. "I think I'm smart enough not to eat a rabid bat, A-dog." He paused. "On the other hand, I wonder if it would taste any different? Probably a bit more feisty going down."

"Alright!" Barbara interjected. "Let's at least *try* to stay on topic?" She shot a glance at both Beetlejuice and Adam, silently seeking their agreement.

Admittedly, the demon was very curious about this conversation, but the bat banter had settled some of his tension and he felt more comfortable with whatever this would be. Also, hungry. He ran his tongue over his teeth beneath his lips, looking for snacks. Score! Found the cricket leg!

"Okay. Now, as Adam was trying to say, we have something we'd like to ask you, and it's okay if you want time to think about it." Her cheeks were glowing redder and redder as she spoke. "It's kind of a big ask, and we want you to be comfortable and--"

"Babs, you both are waffling so hard I feel like I'm at a shitty motel's complimentary breakfast." Adam flushed deep enough to match his wife. "I can't think of a single thing either of you could say that would make me uncomfortable and I do have some snake business, snusiness if you will, so could we get to it?" He was lying of course, but he now felt comfortable enough guessing they weren't kicking him out that it was an easy lie.

"We're interested in you," Adam blurted out. Beetlejuice...stared.

To break the growing silence, Barbara expanded, "We'd like to...well, *be* with you."

The demon gaped for a moment before holding up a single finger. He then banged his head to the side against his hand, hoping something might fall out of his ear. When it was clear he was only making things weird, he stopped and cleared his throat. "Sorry, guys I think I misheard you, what was that?"

Adam glanced to his wife, squeezed her hand for comfort, and turned back. "I-- that is to say-- we are attracted to you." Beetlejuice just stared. "And it's okay if you're not interested, or if you only want one of us. We're not saying this as a package deal."

"I wanted us both to say something separately, so it didn't feel like you were as outnumbered. But Adam thought it might be simpler to do it all at once."

Silence lingered, so Adam leaned over to lay a gentle hand on Beetlejuice's knee. "You can think it over as long as you li--"

He was interrupted by the chair beginning to rock forward suddenly, throwing the demon forward towards the floor. Adam reached out to grab him by the shoulders, keeping him off the ground.

Barbara was there in a blink, her smaller, cooler hand on Beetlejuice's shoulder next to her husband's. "Are you okay? Adam, I told you it would be too much at once," she whispered in a quiet aside.

"You were right, I'm sorry, I--" he cut himself off to hear the downward-directed and feverish mumbles of the demon, but couldn't make anything out. "Beej, what was that? I couldn't quite make it out," he said, encouraging and gentle. They were both being very sexy and it wasn't *fair*.

The ghoul braced himself and looked at first Barbara and then Adam's faces before drawing himself up to his full height. "If I did something, you should just tell me. I'm really trying to make this work, you don't have to punish me like I'm a stray dog." He closed his eyes as soon as he said it, not certain he could take whatever was passing on their faces. But it definitely wasn't a wince, it was just a really cool eye-close.

Since he was looking really cool with his eyes closed, he missed the surprised look that passed over both Maitlands, followed by a shared look of guilt.

"Beej, this isn't a punishment," Barbara began. "We've both seen how hard you're trying, and we've really enjoyed being around you, especially now that Delia has you on that weekly bath schedule."

She took a bracing breath: "And I'm sorry. Given that we were reasonably scared you'd kill us, I'm not sorry we did it, especially since you would have killed Charles otherwise. But I'm sorry it hurt you, and I promise I wouldn't do something like that again unless I was scared for myself or someone I love."

"Which we're not expecting," Adam tacked on hastily. "Honestly, you're doing so well, and I'm really proud. I'm sorry, too, and I promise to do what I can to avoid hurting you in the future."

"You guys don't have to apologize or shit like that. It's fine, and it even worked so yay! Maitland/Deetz household," he said, using every ounce of effort he had to keep his voice level and eyes closed. They were probably doing the wide-eyed earnest looks and he knew he

couldn't keep his composure if he saw it. "But like, for realsies what did I do? Because I'll fix whatever it is."

"Oh, BJ," Barbara murmured gently as she slid her hand onto his cheek, feeling the scratch of his beard and the unique softness of the patchy moss. "You didn't do anything that we didn't like *very* much." She slid her hand back to the nape of his neck, turning his head towards her, but paused. "Recently, but still." She pulled him down, slowly, giving him time to pull back, but he moved like he was made of clay and completely unable to resist.

Her lips were so soft against his, like silk catching over the cracks and splits in his own as she kissed him oh-so-gently. She pulled back only slightly and whispered against his lips, so close he'd have felt a puff of air if she still breathed, "I'd never do that if I didn't mean it."

He opened his lids slowly, her big green eyes looking so earnest as she looked up at him. The demon looked over to Adam, his pupils crowding out the brown in his eyes. His mouth was just a little agape, staring hungrily at his wife, but he turned towards the demon with the same look. The fire in his eyes didn't bank at all.

Beetlejuice reached forward for Adam, but the ghost was already crowding into his space, tilting his head up to meet Beetlejuice. It was softer than their last kiss, but the ghoul was better able to savor the taste of his lips, thin and just a little chapped. Adam opened up almost immediately into his mouth, warm and wet and *god* he felt almost giddy as he pushed his tongue between Adam's lips.

Adam met his tongue enthusiastically, running his down the side, then occasionally stroking it as the demon explored around his mouth. Beetlejuice felt four hands on him, the two of Adam's around his neck, and Barbara's reaching from around the back, stroking playfully down his neck, in his bright green hair, and even rubbing down to the top of his chest.

Her hands had just found his tie and began fumbling with it when Adam sucked and then swallowed around his tongue and that was it, he was definitely going to get a cock in that surprisingly dirty mouth, his mind was made up.

The ghoul pushed a knee forward, between Adam's legs and, yup, no surprise there. At the brush of contact, Adam gasped and arched his neck, practically begging the demon to mark it.

Barbara's clever hands had undone the tie and loosened his collar enough to slide a hand under the top of his shirt, playing with chest hair while she gently mouthed and nipped at his neck. She was pressed all the way against his back, He was having trouble coordinating his hands as it was, mostly just holding Adam by the waist, but he sprouted two more arms to hold Barbara even closer, holding her tiny waist through the thin floral sundress, hands splayed over the small of her back.

He ducked his head to mouth sloppily along Adam's jaw, feeling the eternal hint of stubble. Adam groaned loudly, a deep, guttural thing that went straight to BJ's cock. He licked his way down Adam's neck as Barbara found her way under his suit and shirt from the bottom, delicate fingers snaking between his and Adam's tightly pressed chests to play with his

treasure trail and circling one nipple before squeezing with her other, a hint of her nail making it just a little more exciting. Two could play at that game.

His mouth fell lower, sucking along the column of Adam's throat, he brought his teeth against skin and felt Adam shiver. He gave a gentle nip and Adam *writhed* . He moved a little lower and bit down in earnest, right on the tendon.

“Stop,” Adam moaned, just as his fangs broke the skin on the side of his throat, but they were barely getting to the good part so he soothed over it with his tongue before moving down, hands reaching for the hem of Adam’s shirt. Behind him, he felt Barbara tense and begin to withdraw her curious hands. He ignored it, teeth closing again around Adam's neck, even harder, blood flavored ectoplasm leaking into his mouth.

“Beej-- God, stop!” Adam seemed a bit more insistent this time, a thread of need and panic weaving through his voice, but he could still feel the ghost’s boner against his thigh. So that’s how he likes to play it he could work with-- *oww!!*

Barbara had slammed her foot down on his instep and then pushed him off, and in his surprise he fell all the way to the floor. What the hell? That fucking hurt what the hell was she doing? Everything was just getting really good and then...of course. Of course, he was so stupid. Of course, they had to sell it a little harder but they *promised* and God he was stupid he shouldn’t have fallen for it of course they didn’t mean it but why the fuck did they do it then an--

“Beetlejuice?” he heard an echo, like someone might have been throwing their voice, but then a hand was on his arm and **FUCK** no not again!!! He reached out for whoever the FUCK was trying to hurt him and threw them back towards the door, well away from him, he hoped they were dead good they deserve--

“BEETLEJUICE!! YOU NEED TO STOP!!” The floorboards rattled and shook in time to Barbara’s anger, and he snapped back to where he was.

Barbara.

Adam.

The kissing and then the- the *pain* . “ *I* need to stop?? I do?? You stomped me and shoved me to the ground and *I’m* the one that needs to fuckin’ stop himself who the HELL do you think you are?!?”

But she was ignoring him. Before he’d even finished trying to tell her off, Adam made a little noise from over by the door and she was over to him in a rush, fussing over his head and neck as though he could seriously get injured and wasn’t already, y’know, **dead** .

How did that happen, anyway? They were kissing and then--crap. Adam, shit. He must have checked if Beetlejuice was okay, but he'd thrown him against the door. Only because Barbara hurt him first, though! If she hadn't shoved him he never would have freaked out and he wouldn't have hurt Adam in the first place so really everyone should be mad at Barbara for

ruining a good thing as it was getting going. They could be halfway to naked *at least* if she hadn't decided to go all psycho on him.

"I'm really fine Babs, it's not like I'm bleeding or anything," Adam's quiet voice drifted over. "And I shouldn't have touched him without asking. Really, you should stop fussing."

"I'm your wife, I'm allowed to fuss." He heard her running her fingers through Adam's hair, probably looking for some sort of injury. "Are you really okay?" she asked, even quieter than her already hushed tone. "Do you want him to leave?"

"No, really, I'm fine. See, I'm fine." He was a little louder this time. "How about you, Beej? Are you okay?"

"Me? I was doing just fine till Bombshell here went all Fatal Attraction on me." He moved to his feet, a bit more shaky than he thought, but hey, no reason to draw attention to it. "Seriously though, what the fuck Babs? Is the whole ghost thing getting to ya? Spending too much time around Daddy dearest here?"

Barbara, still hunched over Adam, turned to face the demon. Her glare could melt ice caps, make hordes of demons quiver in fear, and make Anne Rice stop getting litigious with fan creators. "I will not apologize for stopping you assaulting my husband." She paused. "Again."

Beetlejuice paused for a long moment, trying to parse what she had just said. "Nope, no idea. What the hell is your problem?!?"

Her eyes glinted black like obsidian and it occurred that maybe he shouldn't antagonize her too much. "'What is my problem?' My problem is that minutes after we say we might be interested, before we can talk about things like boundaries, Adam told you to stop. Twice. And you didn't."

**What.** "I don't know if you two noticed but this is a Mature rated one-shot. It's porn, guys, why aren't you porning me already?"

She stood suddenly, and probably would have hit him if Adam didn't grab her wrist to hold her back. "Sweetheart, you're upset and I understand that, but you're too angry to talk this out. We wanted to try this, I still do, and I think you should go up to the attic to cool off? Beetlejuice and I can talk about it between the two of us for now."

She visibly melted as Adam addressed her, which makes sense since he was doing his whole boring/sexy thing really hard, but still seemed tense. "Adam, this isn't okay. We can't just let it slide, especially with some of the things he's done to you, me, and Lydia. If you're going to talk to him alone, you need to stand up for yourself, okay?"

He took both of her hands in his, and looked in her eyes. "Okay," he said solemnly. She nodded, and stormed off through the closed door.

"Jeez, what crawled up her skirt? Now, where were we..." Beetlejuice took a step towards Adam, but the ghost held a hand out in front of him, giving the ghoul pause.



"No, we are actually talking about this, Beej."

"Talking about what, the kissing? The sex we're not having? Because you both just told me you were into it and we're not making a beast with three backs so I'm very confused. Maybe offended? Definitely something in the tight chest department because what the hell is going on??" His voice raised toward the end of that and he kind of didn't want to do that. He didn't feel angry, and he was pretty sure he didn't sound angry so why was he getting so *loud* and he didn't breathe anyway why did it feel like he was choking?

Adam's eyes tracked up to his hair, drooping with streaks of purple and sickly yellow and he looked at Beetlejuice with soft eyes. He stood as well and opened his arms wide. When the demon made no move, he asked "Do you want a hug?"

"Yes," he choked out, throat constricted around the word, but he couldn't move, it might be a trick he might fuck it up like he always did and -- *oh*.

Adam was hugging him, both arms wrapped around him loose but snug, going over his arms still hanging by his side. He smelled like the wood finish he'd been using before he died (tongue oil? Hard to say) and felt so *soft* and *strong* and *soothing* that, embarrassingly, the ghoulish sort of went slack and fell into Adam's embrace.

Adam stumbled a bit over the added weight, but adjusted his grip and kept standing. They stood like that for a moment, neither one moving or saying anything, just quietly holding each other, until the demon straightened and looked down at Adam sharply. He took a step back, and Adam dropped his arms reluctantly.

"What did I do?" BJ asked, almost shaking, hair completely yellow. "What did I do that you guys felt the need to *lie* to me about even after I asked?"

Adam sighed, and rubbed a hand over his face. "It wasn't a lie, no, we are actually interested in a relationship with you and we were absolutely not planning to hurt you. Neither of us, I swear."

"Then what happened, huh? We were well on our way to some solid PWP and then all of this plot showed up out of nowhere. I'm finding it a little hard to take your word when you just broke a promise!"

"I asked you to stop, BJ, and you didn't. That's a big problem." He looked serious. Was he serious? This already didn't make sense again.

"What's the problem? Everyone knows 'stop' means 'harder', was I not hard enough? I can do better next time, I promise I..." Adam had taken a step back and looked kind of sick. "A-Dog?"

"How many people have asked you to stop?" Adam asked, seriously looking green.

"What? What does this have to do with-

"How many people have asked you to stop and you didn't?"

"Look, I have no idea how we got here could we *please* get back to explaining what happen-"

"How many people have you...have you *violated* Beetlejuice?!?"

The words seemed to echo a little in the room, and both dead men stood still.

" *What* did you just ask me?" Beetlejuice said, snapping out of his stupor.

Adam turned and strode away from Beetlejuice, though still within the room. "God I feel disgusting this isn't okay I--" He reached the wall, turned and stared Beetlejuice down.

"Would you have... violated me, too, if Barbara hadn't been here?"

"I-I don't...I don't know what you *mean* , Adam I would never do that to you-"

"How can I believe that with what you said and what you *already* did, have done, *keep doing*. God I'm an idiot, a joke, this is some kind of cosmic joke...or-or-or hell. I'm in hell and-"

"You'd know if you were in hell," Beetlejuice said, voice flat and hair a dull brown.

"Excuse me?"

"You'd know if you were in hell. It would never stop, no matter what you said."

Adam was silent, staring the demon down, waiting for an answer to any of his questions, really.

Beetlejuice dropped his head into one hand, unable to look Adam in the eyes. "I haven't continued sex after someone told me to stop before, and I don't have sex with people who say no."

"But you *just said* -"

"It's never come up, okay? I don't have a lot of people who want me to have sex with them, believe it or not."

"I'm supposed to believe you don't do your best to get laid constantly? Really? One of the first things you said to me was to take off my clothes!"

"I *try* obviously but it doesn't work. And maybe I'll ask more than I should but I stopped touching either of you when you made it clear you didn't want me to."

Adam thought back through their first few meetings, and, yes, Beetlejuice did get less handsy the longer they knew each other. The more he made it clear that nothing was going to happen.

"Then why didn't you stop? If it's never come up, why wasn't your first thought that 'stop' means 'stop' BJ?"

Beetlejuice lifted his other hand to his face, covering his eyes like a mask as his hair drained of color completely, a stark white atop his brow. Adam thought he heard Beetlejuice mutter something into his hands.

"I really need this answer, Beej. I want to trust you but I need to understand or I can't trust you around me, Barbara or even Lydia--"

The demon's head shot up, hair leeching towards that same sickly yellow. "I would *never* hurt Lydia like that. I said it was a green card thing and I meant it. She's my BFFFF forever I would never even *touch* her Adam you have to believe me I would *never* Adam I mean it I-I-I..." His chest heaved and his hair was solidly the color of pus leaking from an infected wound as he took his head in his hands, pulling at the strands.

Adam meant to hold out until he had a final answer, but Beetlejuice was clearly distressed at the mere implication of hurting Lydia, and some part of Adam felt reassured by that. Slowly, he inched forward until they were close enough to touch.

"Beetlejuice?" Nothing.

"BJ?" No response.

"Lawrence?" The demon locked eyes with Adam. He looked...scared? It was an odd look for the self-proclaimed bio-exorcist.

"Lawrence, would you like me to hold you again?" The slightest of nods, and Adam had Beetlejuice encased in his arms once more. This time, though, the demon was shaking. Adam just held on, a growing, nagging pit of worry in his stomach.

Eventually, the shaking subsided, though the demon made no move to return the hug. His hair had faded back to dull, muted brown and he stood perfectly still within the circle of Adam's arms.

"If you really want it to stop, you stop it yourself" he said, finally, dull voice clearly echoing words long past. Adam froze. "Stop just means harder.' 'Don't just sit there taking it, if you really wanted it to stop you'd be a man about it.'" That last line had just the slightest inflection, but Adam would swear he was quoting Juno.

Oh.

Oh God.

Adam pulled him tighter, so tight against his chest. He knew Beetlejuice had an unhappy childhood and youth, but he'd never really contemplated the full consequences of being raised by a demon around demons. The implications were beyond grotesque.

"Sex is about control and power first," he still sounded numb, still so stationary for what felt like the first time since they'd met. "Then lust, that's how it worked. I hated it, hated feeling used and abandoned, so I told myself I wouldn't be like that. That's why I spend time here, around humans, because even if they can interact with me I'm the one getting things going and if I can't get their motor running I back off.

"I thought...I thought if we got as far as we did that you wanted it, that you wanted something harder too because you weren't stopping me yourself.

"Adam... I'm sorry. I totally get it if you want nothing to do with me, any of you. I should probably go ... You should probably let me go Adam."

"I'm only going to do that if you want me to let you go for your own sake. Do *you* want me to let you go?" His voice was all boring and soft and nice. And the scent of the tongue oil (or whatever it was) was honestly kind of nice, too. Plus his flannel shirt was really soft.

"..no..."

"I'll hold on as long as you'd like, then."

That seemed really nice, but he was pretty sure it wasn't the deal. "Dude, didn't your wife tell you to go hard on me? I feel like hugging me twice is not going hard, like at all."

Beetlejuice had started vibrating a bit with tension, hair streaking back with yellow, and Adam started to stroke up and down his back with gentle pressure, trying to reassure through touch. "She told me to stand up for myself, and to not just let you leave the conversation thinking what you did today was okay. Also, she'd give me a thorough dressing down if I didn't comfort you after pressuring you to talk about your history like this."

"Are you going to tell her?" His voice was definitely *not* thin and reedy and pitiful. It was very robust and sexy like always, obviously.

"Only if you want me to." He paused. "We don't need to talk about anything if you want, right now. We could just hug, maybe lay down and breathe together?"

"God/Satan, Adam, why are you so boring/sexy all the time?" He quipped, definitely *not meekly*.

Adam huffed a laugh. "Is that a yes, then?"

The demon didn't respond, beyond scooting them towards the bed until the back of Adam's knees hit the mattress. "Hmm, how are we going to.."

Beetlejuice rolled his eyes and floated them up before maneuvering them onto the bed gently.

"Right, ghosts." He laughed at himself, then waited a beat. "Do you want us to just be quiet?" There was no response, beyond the demon burrowing his face into Adam's flannel clad shoulder, his hair still worryingly streaked with yellow, but the dull brown had become dusted with pink. Adam settled down, and focused on deep, long breaths until Beetlejuice settled into the same rhythm. Eventually, soft snores could be heard, muffled against the flannel.

Adam was awake of course, and with BJ asleep against him allowed his thoughts to whirl.

Barbara was more than somewhat disappointed to see her husband cuddling a demon when she finally cooled off enough that she felt she could contribute to the conversation.

Adam heard the door creak open, and his eyes quickly found his wife's. He winced under her pointed look and gestured for her to wait with the hand not trapped under the ghoul's side. She saw him screw his eyes shut before just...melting through the mattress and out the other side. He floated around the bed, ushering her back out the door.

Once they had returned to the recently vacated attic, she rounded on him, disappointment fresh in her eyes. "What happened to not letting him slide? Standing up for yourself? Honey I want this as much as you but we can't just condone this kind of behavior."

"I did not condone anything, sweet pea, I promise you. We talked a bit about how much it hurt me, how it's unacceptable. And I'm pretty sure he knows this is the kind of thing that could end this-" he gestured between the two of them and downstairs to the sleeping ghoul "-before it gets started."

"You accomplished all that and settled him down for a nice cuddle? Adam we need to be firm here and-"

"He had a panic attack, Babs. Once from you hurting him right after we showed affection, for like the fourth time someone in this house did that to him, right after we said we weren't, and again from what we talked about."

She looked away, a bit ashamed, but she looked back quickly. "'What we talked about'? Sugarbear, it's not okay for him to panic about violating *your* consent. That's almost as worrying, it sound like emotional manipulation. Are we sure this is a good idea after all? Adam, I'm worried about you."

He shook his head gently, gathered her into his arms and planted a kiss on top of her head. "That's not what happened, really. I'd tell you more if I could, but it's very personal and he didn't tell me I could. It's...it put what happened in context in a way that makes me worried about him. He really needs a therapist. A dead therapist." He ran a hand shakily through his hair. "Babs, I think this is the only relationship he's been in."

"Adam, don't be silly. We've heard him tell all sorts of stories of his exploits-"

"Sex, yes, but a relationship? Did he call any of those people and otherwise partners, exes, anything? Were there even repeats?"

She paused, really trying to think. She'd heard plenty of graphic stories, but not really anything that seemed remotely long term.

"Okay." Whatever it was that Beetlejuice had told Adam had shaken him up more than a little. "That means this is going to be a big commitment. He's important to Lydia..." Adam gave her a knowing look. "He's important to *all* of us, and as much as I would very much like to pursue something," she blushed, "I'd rather do nothing than risk it falling apart because we rushed things."

"Barbara, what are you doing?" Adam sighed. "I thought we were done with this--putting stuff off because we feel insecure or-or scared of what might happen. It's a bit more complicated than we thought, but so is being dead!" He cradled her head in his hands. "Do you want this? Do you want him, regardless of me or Lydia or anyone--any *thing* --else?"

"Adam, you just told me it's more complicated than--"

"No, I said it would be hard to *do* . But it's easy to want."

She turned her eyes downward. "I-yes. I want this." She met Adam's eyes. "But I can't see him hurt you. I won't."

"Okay. Okay, sweet pea." He kissed the top of her head again, and then tucked it under his chin. "We'll make this work."

-

Beetlejuice awoke in an empty room and an empty bed. He sighed and sat up. They were probably talking about how to best get him to leave them alone, especially after he...after. Just after.

Of course he fucked it up right away. It was all he was truly good at, after all. He wouldn't be surprised if this crossed the line into hurting someone enough that they'd ask him to leave. It was probably for the best, after all.

Beetlejuice couldn't have good things without ruining them.

He'd done it to Lydia, and now he'd done it to the Maitlands. He needed to leave before he made things worse. After another deep sigh, he pushed off from the (incredibly plush) quilt. No need to hear whatever they'd cooked up, he'd just scam before he could hurt anyone else.

Of course, as soon as he resolved to this (and felt the relief of avoiding their disappointment) the door opened on Adam and Barbara, holding hands and looking so soft and tender.

One look and Adam's face twisted into a worried frown. "BJ, I wasn't certain when you'd wake up. I'm sorry I wasn't here." He looked over to Barbara. "We wanted to talk, if you feel up to it?"

"If neither of you mind, I'll just leave. You don't have to sugar-coat it for me, I get it. I'm not safe." The surprise evident on their faces just soured his mood even more.

"You really don't have to-" Barbara started, but BJ cut in again.

"I'm not just going to sit here while you tell me to fuck off in Minivanglish. Might as well get the show on the road." His face felt hot and his hands wouldn't stop fidgeting at his sides, but he stayed where he was. They were blocking the door, and he wasn't ready to dance around

the ashes of this burned bridge by shoving past them. Even if they seemed intent on rubbing salt into the wound.

Adam's eyes softened in a show of concern. "Beetlejuice, we're not going to make you leave. You've been doing so well and-"

"I SAID STOP LYING TO ME!!" His hands balled up in rage and his power coiled around them, singing hot and clear after it's recent disuse. It wanted *pain torture screams* so badly, so desperately. A part of him recoiled that he was doing this again, but it was distant, muted. Beetlejuice hadn't been angry in so long, and it felt *so good*.

He expected the Maitlands to cower, maybe even tremble a bit at the show, but Adam and Barbara both stood straighter, as though their spines were made of steel.

Adam stepped towards Beetlejuice, uncowed and face like thunder. "You need to calm down. We are not lying to you."

Beetlejuice didn't say a word, but floated upward and bared his fangs, power crackling like electricity around his fingers.

"Beetlejuice," he tried again. "*Lawrence*."

That got through. He faltered, and floundered a bit mid air before catching himself.

"Lawrence," he started, voice like iron, but still low and soft. God that nerd was sexy, and that thought was enough to get Beetlejuice back on the floor. "Would I sugar coat it *right now* if I wanted you to leave? Would I lie with you on the edge of lashing out at me?"

"Not if you know what's good for you," the demon growled out, fangs bared.

Adam took a step closer, voice gentle but firm like he was talking to a wounded animal.

"Then I need you to believe me when I say that we ***are not lying to you.*** You need to ***calm down*** so we can talk about today."

Beetlejuice felt himself deflate before he could even think about it. Something about Adam's tone, maybe the confidence, maybe the sincerity, maybe the thread of concern or hint of command, allowed Beetlejuice to just...release the power he had gathered and all of a sudden he was on his knees and crying.

God he was weak. He just kept *breaking* like this, but it made sense. He *was* broken, nothing but shards of pain and fear balled up in wads of sarcasm and violence. He felt two presences by his sides, hovering but refusing to touch him because he was *pathetic* and *weak* and disgusting.

"Lawrence," he heard, eyes darting up to Adam's. He had no idea how many times Adam had tried to get his attention. Still, he sounded fuzzy and far away; Beetlejuice's brain was very loud. It was hard to accommodate his thoughts by themselves, much less organize them for both Maitlands. Nevertheless, Adam said they needed to *talk* and that meant he had to calm

down and why couldn't he just stop why can't he *stop* and just act like normal fun BJ it's who they wanted anyway and--

"*Lawrence* ." Barbara this time. Her voice was soft, like the time a bird got stuck in the house and broke its neck against a window. She held it in her hands and murmured to it as it came to, and drew a door to let it loose. She had this look on her face when she did it, and he still didn't understand that look. It wasn't pity, or selfish worry. It had looked like she was legitimately concerned about a dead pigeon.

He was the dead pigeon.

His eyes flicked to Barbara, but locked there when he saw that same, raw concern etched onto her face. Her eyes and mouth were lined with signs of the wrinkles that would have come in time.

"You look old when you're worried," he blurted out, like an idiot. The only thing he had managed to say and it was an insult. But Barbara was so *fantastic* that her eyes gleamed in humor for a moment before sliding back into worry. It was oddly comforting, her concern and its resolve to just keep on pushing like aye yi yi.

"My mom used to say that," she confessed, voice just a little softer. "Can we touch you? Would that be okay?"

They shouldn't. He didn't deserve them or their comfort, not after what he had just almost done. In fact, just the thought of it made his skin itch, crawl and burn. He was probably contagious or something like that, and he'd just infect the boring, wonderful dorks. He was vaguely aware that Adam was about halfway through repeating the question before he had collected himself enough to shake his head violently.

They sat next to him, quietly, one on either side, giving him time for his chest to loosen and head to stop spinning. He couldn't remember when he had stopped crying, but tear tracks were dry and tacky on his cheeks and in his beard. A hollowness filled his chest, cold and dread, and he heard himself say, mechanically, "I should go now." His eyes were firmly planted on the braided rug he was kneeling on, eyes tracing individual scraps of cloth through the pattern.

Adam inched his hand into Beetlejuice's sightline. "Only if that's really what you want for yourself. Barbara and I won't stop you, okay?" His voice positively dripped with sappy concern, and BJ felt his heart stutter in his dead chest.

"I *should* go," he repeated, words echoing around in the empty cavity of his chest.

"We do want you here," Barbara said, answering the question he didn't know how to ask. "We want to work through what happened and try to approach this again, if you'd be alright with that."

He mulled that over, and she didn't sound like she was lying. On the other hand, it was completely too good to be true, so was probably still bullshit. Still...he wanted to believe it. He hated feeling like a schmuck, but still did. "Okay," he said. "Okay, talk." His arms felt



weak, so he laid his head down on the rug with his head turned to Adam, Adam's hand only a finger's breadth from his nose.

"Uh that isn't..." Adam began before trailing off. The Maitlands must have shared some kind of married telepathy, because he changed course. "I want you to know that I didn't say anything to Barbara about what you told me. She is aware that there is something, and it upsets you, but doesn't know what it is.

"I apologize for touching you earlier when you were panicking, that wasn't okay and I'm sorry. I also would like to apologize for pressing you to talk in the first place. There were certainly reasons I pushed, but it should have been something you told me in your own time and only if you felt comfortable, so I'm still sorry that happened."

Ooooooooookay. Not what he was expecting. "Uh...my dude I flipped shit and hurt you. You shouldn't apologize, I should."

Adam's offered a gentle smile. "I touched you when you were having a panic attack without asking for consent. That means I need to apologize to you. Do you accept?"

BJ's mind was reeling. "I...guess? Sure?" Adam let out a breath. He did that when he was relieved; was he nervous that Beetlejuice wouldn't accept an apology when he hadn't done anything wrong in the first place? Weird. "But uh...I'm sorry too. For y'know. The whole 'stop' thing. And hurting you. And uh...going all rage-y." He turned his head to face Barbara. "And I'm sorry I yelled at you. You were stopping me from hurting Adam." Somehow, it was easier to apologize to her even though he'd done less. Why did it suck more to say something when he really needed to?

Her face had turned from concerned to pinched with anxiety and some point when he was facing Adam, but it smoothed out before she spoke. "I accept your apology for yelling at me and losing your temper. You're right, I was defending my husband, so I won't apologize for what I did and said to keep you from hurting him, but I am still sorry it hurt you."

"I accept your apology, too," Adam started. BJ couldn't keep up with twisting his head back and forth, so he pressed his nose into the rug and migrated his eyes to the side so he could watch both of them. Adam paused, clearly a bit horrified by the imagery, but he swallowed and continued. "You were having a panic attack for two of those, and that doesn't make it necessarily okay, but you calmed yourself down before anyone got hurt so we'll call that a good thing."

"You keep saying that, what is that?" Beetlejuice had heard the phrase before, mostly from Delia when he popped out of something unexpected or from Lydia in jest, but really didn't know what it meant. Like, panic he was down, and attack he was super solid on, but they seemed to team up really weird when Adam used them.

They did their telepathy thing again, eyes meeting over his head. Barbara inclined her head first one way, and then after an eyebrow raise from Adam, in the other direction. She cleared her throat. "A panic attack is like feeling your chest got caught in a vice. It comes on quickly, and all of a sudden you can't handle whatever was happening. Your heart pounds, you can't breathe and it feels like my...your head is exploding."

She paused for a long moment to steel herself, but clearly wasn't finished. "I used to get them a lot. It's not always the same, either. Sometimes I'd get angry, when I really was just panicking. I've yelled at Adam more than I'm proud of when I'd get like that." She looked down at her hands, balled in the fabric of her dress.

Adam reached over the width of BJ's body, careful not to touch him, and squeezed her shoulder in comfort and support. "Does that sound similar, Beej?"

The demon closed his eyes, trying to associate what Barbara had described with his breakdowns and...yeah, they checked out. He nodded minutely.

Adam returned his tentative nod with a thoughtful one. "Okay, we can work with that, then. I've gotten pretty good at helping calm Barbara down, so we can work on some of those strategies together and find something that works for you."

"And I can show you a few of the things I use to calm myself down, and a few to keep calm. They might help?"

Beetlejuice just nodded again, really uncertain where this conversation was going. He felt a little bewildered and very lost.

Adam looked up from BJ, glanced at his wife, and then returned his gaze to the demon looking a bit sheepish. "Do you think you could clarify something for us?"

Alright here we go, the real shit was happening. They'd gotten through the bullshit apology crap and now they were gonna tell him what a fuck up he was and he'd have to sit there and take it. "Sure, yeah, I guess."

"Um...that is to say what, in your opinion..." He floundered, one hand loosely gesturing while he struggled to voice whatever the question was.

Barbara rolled her eyes affectionately and held a hand up to mark her interjection. Adam looked visibly relieved. "What he's trying to ask is: were you under the impression we asked for a relationship, or that we propositioned you for sex?"

This was a really weird way to tell him off, but he'd bite. "Uh...sex? Obviously."

But as soon as he said it, he knew he must have picked wrong. Adam's brows furrowed, and Barbara shot her husband a glance that Beetlejuice had no way of translating, but guessed was somehow along the lines of 'He's an idiot and a dumbass and we shouldn't let him anywhere near us, our bed, Lydia or the whole house in general for the good of everyone involved thanks be to God.' Or something like that. Probably.

Adam sent a glance towards his wife, this one even harder to translate, and she seemed to visibly concede. He spoke, and his voice came out low and strong. Each word was accounted for, considered, and weighed before use. It made the demon's senses buzz around the edges, but comfortingly so, and Beetlejuice found his focus unwavering. "Beetlejuice, Barbara and I would like to date you, and maybe form a permanent relationship with you based upon how that dating goes. Your participation in a relationship with either of us is not contingent on you

having sex with one or both of us, or even being in a relationship with both of us. We both like you, and would like to see how this goes. If it's something you want."

That was coming so deep out of left field that it was probably thrown from a hot dog cart somewhere in the nosebleeds, or maybe in an alley somewhere to the left of the stadium. All Beetlejuice could manage to do was blink numbly a few times, rolling the words over in his head continuously. He must have misunderstood. "I don't get it," he eventually mumbled.

"What don't you get, BJ?" Barbara asked, somehow balancing calm, helpful and devoid of pity with a seamless smile to top it off.

"I just fucked up. Again. A bunch of times. And instead of kicking me out, you're...asking to date me. I don't get it."

Adam looked sheepish, but Barbara seemed to turn over what was said, considering it meaningfully.

"Would it make you feel better if we talked about our reservations, especially the ones that have already come up? Maybe treated them as conditions of the relationship?"

A wave of relief crashed over him. They had hesitations, reservations, conditions. No one faked reservations for a prank, but nothing came unconditionally. He could believe what they were offering if there was some kind of price, a catch, and once he knew what it was, he could decide to pay it. He realized that maybe he'd been sagging in relief maybe a little too long and eventually nodded limply.

"Okay. I'll start, if that's okay with the both of you?" Adam and BJ both gave slight nods, and Barbara's face turned stony. "You have a very violent history. You've talked about it with us some, you've threatened violence, you've even murdered someone in this house. That's a major reservation of mine, because I need to know that if I want to break things off you won't resort to violence against me, Adam or any of the Deetzes. We can't do this if ending badly could threaten anyone in this household."

"Comin' in right out the gate aren't ya, Babs?" BJ quipped almost automatically. But he could see where she was coming from. She...wasn't wrong, and he could see why she was concerned. He paused. "I don't know what you want me to say here, though."

She shrugged lightly. "I guess you don't have to say anything. I feel a bit more confident I could banish you with what I know from the Handbook, and I'm willing to try this anyway. But I need you to know that if you intentionally hurt anyone in this house you will not get a third chance at being here and I will track you down and exorcise you."

Her eyes got steely and Beetlejuice felt a pit of fear in his stomach. She was not kidding. Where had this Barbara been when they were trying to scare the Deetzes out? Damn, girl.

"Uh, sweetheart, maybe back down a bit?" Adam's eyes darted meaningfully towards the demon's hair and then back to Barbara. BJ did not want to think about whatever embarrassing color he had just then, but Barbara did drop the look she had had, face softening in sympathy.

“Honestly, my biggest concern is communication. Barbara and I aren’t the best at that with each other, though we try to practice. We’re probably going to run into problems like today a...disconcerting amount. But that’s not necessarily bad! We’re learning a different way of being in a relationship at the same pace as you, so we all need to make sure we’re communicating what is making us happy and what is making us uncomfortable.”

BJ nodded along. That did make sense, and he knew he sucked at talking about serious stuff.

“Probably the most relevant thing to talk about, though, is consent. We should ask any time we go to do something physically, especially if it’s new.”

*What?*

“That’s a really good point, Adam.” She seemed to notice the stark confusion across the demon’s face. “So, for instance, when I put my hands under your shirt, I should have asked and waited until you said yes before I did it. And if that’s something you’re okay with under any circumstances, you can tell me that and I won’t ask again, but otherwise I should ask every time I want to put my hands under your shirt. And if I do have my hands under your shirt, even if you said yes earlier, you can tell me to stop or say no and I will. Does that make a bit more sense?”

“I...yeah.”

“So when it comes to that, I also messed up some today, and I’m sorry. Adam, you and I should probably practice this more by ourselves, too, so we get in the habit.”

Suddenly the room felt like it was spinning, and Beetlejuice was grateful he was already on the floor. It was one thing when this was just rules for him, ways to keep him in line, a price he had to pay to get to be close to these two wonderful people. But. They were going to follow these rules by themselves. *They were going to follow these rules by themselves. They were going to follow these rules by themselves.*

What the fuck. Why would they do that? They didn't mess things up, they weren't fuck ups like him, they were already married why would they risk changing anything just because of a fucked up piece of shit like him who kept fucking up again and again and again...

"...just listen to my voice, okay Beej? Listen to the sound of my voice, just focus on that if you can. Can you hear me Beej?" Barbara was murmuring a litany in that quiet, dead pigeon voice. But she'd asked him a question, and he wasn't answering. Desperately, he started nodding his head, hoping she wouldn't be mad at him for taking too long to answer. God he was a fucking mess.

"Okay, I'm glad you can hear me. Thank you for telling me. Could you take a breath for me?" She waited, and he nodded. He took a rushed breath in through his nose and almost choked on the air. "Okay, slow breaths. It's okay, take your time."

He tried again, slower this time, and the air actually made it down to his dead lungs before he blew it out again through his nose. He had no idea the last time he took a breath. "That was

really good, BJ. You're doing really well," Adam encouraged, and Beetlejuice felt himself taking another breath and another afterwards, both Maitlands gently encouraging him.

When he felt like he could speak, he croaked out a "Sorry." He just kept fucking this up.

Adam smiled warmly. "It's okay, Beej. You don't have to apologize for panicking." He paused for just a moment, eyes flicking to Barbara who nodded minutely. "Can I ask what it was you were panicking about? You don't have to, but it might help avoid it as we keep talking."

Beetlejuice mulled it over. Adam was offering him not saying anything, and he was really embarrassed about freaking out for what felt like the hundredth time that day. But they had just made a rule about talking, and Adam was right this might come up again.

"Why does this stuff matter to you guys? I'm the one fucking up, aren't these rules for me?"

"You're not the only one messing up, BJ," Barbara responded, and she looked like she meant it. "We've been messing up plenty, too. Like I said, I should have asked about consent, too. And Adam and I *both* started kissing you without making sure you knew we wanted to date you, not just...ahem...make love. So communication is definitely something we all need to work on."

"Plus," Adam cut in. "Even the first thing applies to all of us. If Barbara or I ever got violent with you, or anyone else, it still wouldn't be okay. In fact, please do stop us if you ever see that happen."

"But that wouldn't ever happen! I guess I see the rest of it, but you guys just aren't like that! And pretending like it's a rule for all of us when it's just for me feels like a lie!"

"Adam, he has a point. That is clearly something for Beetlejuice's sake. We wouldn't have that rule if it weren't for his history."

"It's still true. It's not okay for either of us to be violent, we just don't have a history with that problem. And I want to reinforce here, BJ, that if we hurt you that isn't okay and I want you to say something. Hurting someone, *especially* someone close to you, isn't okay. Obviously, defense is a little different, but still. We're not allowed to hurt you, Beej."

"Why not?" He asked, chest still feeling tight and it was all still a *lie*.

The Maitlands looked stunned by what he felt was a completely reasonable question. They held that for an almost comical length of time before turning to each other with matching horrified looks that only escalated as they did the whole married-telepathy thing.

"Do you...I mean... Have you had other...partners that hurt you?" Adam stuttered out, clearly stumbling on his own horror. Weird.

"Uh...yeah?" The twin looks of shock didn't abate, and both Maitlands seemed almost...afraid to say something. He started to get antsy, and eventually words just started coming out. "I mean, it's pretty normal isn't it? Some folks go pretty far, but I'm **dead** what're they gonna do, kill me? And I always deserve it, so..."

Barbara seemed to finally collect herself. "When you say that you 'deserve it', do you mean like people trying to stop you doing something they don't want you to do?"

He relaxed a bit. They were getting it. "Yes, *exactly* . Like, there was this opera singer who said I threw off her ear, so if I made a noise when we were going at it she'd either slap me or choke me. But I ended up getting a little loud, so afterwards she grabbed this hair pin and," he sat up at last and opened his mouth wide enough to demonstrate as the Maitlands shared a nervous look, "stabbed at my tongue and ripped it out." Towards the back of his tongue, there were clear signs of sloppy stitching to reattach the muscle.

They both recoiled, Adam looking green and clutched at his mouth and stomach. Barbara recovered first, shaking her head firmly while reaching out a hand to pat Adam's knee. "Beej, that's not the kind of thing we're talking about. There's a difference between asking someone to stop and then doing what you can to stop them if they don't and..."

"Horrific cruelty," Adam interjected. "She sounds like a terrible person and I hope she's rotting in hell." His fists clenched, balling up the fabric of his beige khakis. Beetlejuice had never seen Adam full of so much rage. Seriously, *this stuff* is what got them this heated? He could have skipped like half of act one if he'd known it was this easy.

"But that kind of stuff is normal!"

"It shouldn't be. And I'm telling you, it won't be with us."

Adam nodded, "We want you to feel safe with us, comfortable telling us if we've made you uncomfortable."

"And if we've hurt you, we need to make it right. This really isn't a list of boxes you need to check to be in a relationship with us, this is how you deserve to be treated, too."

"We know you've done a lot of stuff in the past, even to me and Barbara, but you still deserve kindness, so this is for you as much as it is for either of us."

"O...kay." They looked so sincere and earnest, and honestly Adam's righteous indignation was not only incredibly sexy but also made him feel warm in places like the inside of his chest and the front of his face. "Okay."

"Okay?" Barbara echoed, clearly dubious of his easy assent.

"Yeah. I...uh...do you guys mind if...um..." his thought wandered off, suddenly much less secure in what he was saying.

"I can't say for sure unless you ask, but if you want to add something as a guideline for all of us then I at least don't just 'not mind' but think it's a really good idea," Adam gently enthused, voice warm.

"Okay. I..." he braced himself and looked at the golden pair, looking so eager for whatever addition he might have. "I don't want you guys to lie to me. Or, I guess, none of us should lie to each other."

Both Maitlands split into beautiful, delighted smiles.

"Of course, Beej."

"That's a great idea, and definitely works with the rest of what we have."

Adam and Babs looked so...happy. Beetlejuice couldn't remember the last time someone looked so sincerely happy because of him in a long time. Even Lydia liked to hide behind snark and always had that same, deep sadness around her edges. But the Maitlands were just aching, painfully happy with him, and he couldn't help but feel he didn't deserve it.

Adam's eyes darted up, and his smile drooped. "BJ, do you still want us to stay hands off?"

"I guess not? Do what you want."

"Okay." Adam responded, nodding. "I'm going to hug you, then." And then he was, and he smelled nice and was really soft and-and-and--

"Shhhh it's okay, just let it out," Barbara soothed, suddenly by his side with a hand rubbing circles on his back as he was wracked with sobs. *Again* .

They held him there, on the floor in their room, for what might have been an hour or a day. He cried longer and deeper than he felt he ever could before, tears he didn't know he had and still a few more after that.

But for the first time, he felt as though he could feel like shit and cry and break down and they really might not mind, like it might be *okay* .

And when he was done, Barbara fetched a warm, damp towel and cleaned the tears off his face. Adam lifted him gently in his arms and brought him back to the bed. Both Maitlands bundled him up under the covers before squeezing in on either side.

He understood that, in some ways, they were still anxious about him. He knew he deserved that. But maybe these beautiful, boring people could convince him he deserved them too.

## End Notes

Comments are life. Thanks for reading this feels mess.

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