

Daryl kicked pebbles with a foot as he walked down the road towards the forest.

It was close to the evening. He had already finished homework long before then and told his parents that he'd be out and about. They acquiesced easily, for getting kids outside these days could be a challenge. The boy had brought with him a small, black drawstring bag. It fit in with his clothes well enough, but it contrasted against his vibrant, light green skin. There weren't many cars out on the streets today.

When Daryl hit the edge of town, he made his way off of the sidewalk and started to head into the woods. He specifically chose a section that wasn't favored for play, because he wanted privacy on this day. The plant kid made his way through the underbrush, brushing branches and leaves and more out of the way. Finally, he reached a small clearing that he had scoped out earlier. The dirt was soft and loamy, and a small stream gently trickled nearby. The child made his way to a large rock by a tree, sitting down on the flat surface that it provided and taking off his bag. He open the black bag and started to pore through it, searching for a few key items of note.

He pushed away a spare diaper. He wasn't wet or dirty yet.

There was a little wand that he had crafted, but he wanted something more fine today. After a little more searching, he found the folding knife that he had packed.

Where was the...ah, there it was!

Daryl pulled out a small, haphazardly carved wooden icon, one which had a poorly-cut out sigil on one side of it. It had taken the kid days of going through the occult section of the library to find the right one. He carefully placed it onto the ground, gripping the dagger in his right hand tightly. Setting down his bag, he began the rite without any further ado.

The first part was the concentration. The young magician went through a stitched-together power building exercise that he had formulated. He made sure that the auric centers were visualized in just the right colors.

At the climax of the exercise, Daryl suddenly thrust the knife forth with deadly force. He started to carefully sketch something in mid-air, something which very much appeared like the symbol that rested on the icon before him.

“Come to me now, spirit, in clear and visible form, and bearing no ill will. You shall not so much as touch a single leaf upon my head, or I will castigate you by the glory of angels. Come in peace, and we shall discuss.” Daryl spoke clearly and strongly.

The child kept his eyes closed for a fair while. Then he opened his eyes, and his maw opened.

Standing there before him was a child with impossibly perfect features. He looked as though he was a living being, but Daryl saw the shimmering about him, and perceived the faint aura of glory that radiated from him. He actually looked to be a little younger than Daryl himself, perhaps six, although the magician knew that age did not mean much when it came to spirits. The figure was actually smiling at him, giving a little wave, and that was when Daryl noticed other things. For upon the spirit's head was a crown of daisies, each delicately tied together with the precision of a master artisan. And down below was the strangest part. For the child was wearing a white cloth diaper, one of simple design, but

still of such thickness and exposure that one could not think that the spirit was trying to hide it. Daryl blinked a little as he looked on the figure, but it was the spirit who had the first word.

“Heya little guy! Sorry if I’m not exactly the kind of spirit you were looking for, but I heard your call and I just *had* to see the precocious little magician doing an evocation out in the woods...” the spirit drifted off, giggling lightly to himself.

“I...it is an honor to meet you.” Daryl lightly inclined his head. “May, may I ask of your nature?” the child asked, forcing himself to go with the plan that he had previously formulated despite his significant confusion.

“Oh yeah! Don’t worry, I’ll just give you the ol’ rundown, I tend to shock a lot of people at first, hehe...” the spirit quietly scratched the back of his head a little.

“My name is Venai! I’m a spirit of diapers! And I don’t mean to brag, but I *am* a pretty old one, been around the neighborhood before your ancestors had even taken up farming...” Venai said, looking off for a moment and smiling.

“You’re...a spirit of diapers?” Daryl tilted his head a little.

“Well, yeah! Surely an occultist like yourself knows that literally everything in the universe fits into the Tree of Life! Even the really silly ones...” Venai shook his head to himself, again laughing a little. “I thought that *you* of all people would know that, not least of which because of what underwear you are packing...”

Daryl blushed a little, but his face stayed mostly firm. He was reminded for a moment of the plastic that was rubbing a bit against his back, and of the sweat that was starting to develop close to the leak guards of his diaper, but he continued to speak soon after.

“...Why, why did you come to my call?” he asked.

“I mean, it was an open call! You were pretty much just askin’ for any old spirit to come up and say hello. I will admit, though, that I *did* pay attention to you for a pretty specific reason.” Venai spoke, looking upon Daryl’s face more intently now.

“...Because I wear diapers?” Daryl asked.

“Well, indirectly, but I really came to you because you were incontinent! I’m actually the patron of incontinent people, it’s a pretty cool thing...” Venai said, and stood proud for a moment, before his eyes opened.

“Oh right! Forgot to check your etiology! Oooh, this part is always fun...” Venai said, and he looked upon Daryl for a moment before he continued speaking.

“Eeee! So glad to see that you have congenital incontinence! You never even got the chance to toilet train, little guy...” Venai screeched a little, coming up toward Daryl in a moment, and patting him on the head. Daryl felt his blush redouble, but he still found speech difficult to manage.

“Sorry if I’m a little excited, but people with congenital incontinence are *especially* beloved of me, so

you can count yourself as even luckier!” Venai spoke in a quick, excited manner, his bright eyes taking in every aspect of the child's form.

“I, I'm glad that you like the genetic condition that I have? I mean, in any other situation this would be weird, but I will take favor from a spirit.” Daryl spoke, nodding after a few moments.

“Well, glad to hear! Speaking of which, I'm totally down to lend you my powers and become your familiar and yadda yadda, *but*...I do have a task that I want you to do first. Trials are always fun.” Venai spoke, stepping back a little from Daryl.

“Well, that sounds fair. What kind of task did you have in mind?” Daryl tilted his head a little.

“Just wanted you to head to that condemned house about two blocks away from your house! You know, the one that has been abandoned for like a decade now. There's a ghost there who could really use some cheering up, he hasn't had company in ages.” Venai nodded his head vigorously, both edges of his maw curved upward.

“I, okay, yeah, that sounds good.” Daryl eventually started to nod.

“Oh, and you don't need to give me your name Daryl, I already know it! Being a spirit is pretty cool, y'know...” Venai said, drifting off.

“Well, yeah, that checks out.” Daryl said. Honestly, it was pretty difficult to even be creeped out by that kind of stuff, it was just standard.

“Well then, that sounds great! Wish you luck on your adventure! Just give that shade some company and I'll be sure to reward you!” Venai said with a deep smile on his face, opening and closing a single hand rapidly as though saying goodbye.

“H-Hey, wait, how will I get in contact with you once I finish the task?!” Daryl asked a bit quickly.

“Don't worry, you'll seeeee!” Venai said excitedly, and then promptly vanished from Daryl's sight.

The child just blinked for a little bit in the clearing for a while. Then, a wide grin started to develop on his face, and he quickly stored away his tools, put his bag back on, and started to rush out of the forest. Straight up physical manifestation, that was a *really* good result for that kind of working...

Obviously, Daryl was thinking a lot while he jogged along the road back to town. He had really thought that he would have just gotten some sort of telepathic communication after performing the ritual, so seeing a spirit visibly was certainly amazing. It even seemed like the guy was willing to become a familiar of his, which was pretty damn cool. He had been reading a lot of books about magic, and apparently having a familiar spirit was always good, they could help teach you magic, and they could use their powers to aid you. And he was pretty young by the standards of occultists! So many people thought that kids couldn't do magic very well, that they were too worldly and distracted. Heh, well, he was certainly showing them!

The excitement was such that Daryl could overlook the fact that he was apparently going to be patronized by a spirit of diapers...

It did not take Daryl long to get back to town. He had started to head toward the abandoned house by his place when he started to feel a warmth develop around his loins, and he soon realized that he was peeing himself. He had voided a fair amount, so the child decided to stop by his house for a quick change before continuing the quest. His parents did not bat an eye at his return and departure – they were used to him stopping by the house to change his diaper in the privacy of his room.

After the stop, Daryl continued the journey to the building that Venai had mentioned, reaching the place after only a little bit of walking. It looked the part of a condemned house; run-down, with the windows boarded up and the paint flaking off. Daryl looked around for a bit, and after determining that no one was around, he started to head for the back yard of the place. Luckily there was a hole in the rotted wooden fence that allowed him entrance, and after passing through the tall grass that had grown like a wildfire in the back, he approached the back door. He had dearly, dearly hoped that someone else had already broken into this place, because he did not know how to pick locks. Luckily for him, the door was unlocked, and carefully, the child made his way inside.

Things were pretty bad inside, as one could imagine. Bits of broken glass littered the wooden floors of the house, the lacquer coating having been slowly worn away over the years. As Daryl made his way through the delapidated kitchen and toward the living room, he noticed graffiti on the walls in a multitude of colors, presumably having been left by some of the previous inhabitants of the location. It was a small place, and it was only a single story building, so there was not too much space for Daryl to cover. He passed by the living room, where a glass coffee table covered in dust stood. He entered into a small hall by the living room, one which led to a series of doors. Guessing that they were the bedrooms, Daryl started to check each door. He found two seemingly average bedrooms – perhaps one of which had been a guest bedroom – before he opened the third door and stopped for a little while.

The bedroom was small, all things considered, and painted purple. There was a small wooden bed in the corner of the room, right by a boarded-up window, with rumpled, tattered old sheets adorning it. There was a little structure of cubbies close to the end of the bed, along the wall, and Daryl could still spy a fair amount of toys stuffed into each one. There were wooden blocks, little action figures, a couple of toy robots, rubber bands, bouncing balls, and more. The place almost seemed to be better preserved than some of the other rooms in the house, Daryl thought, but that did not provide comfort.

Daryl took a seat on the ground after a little while. He set down his bag, and got his knife from it, but he did not do much beyond that. He just played with the knife in his hands, looking around. He sighed.

Daryl looked at the wall at the back of the room for a while. It was around a minute into staring at the violet expanse that he got a sudden feeling. Almost automatically, the child started to turn his head toward the left, toward one of the corners of the room. He did not know precisely how he had gotten this feeling, but he followed it nevertheless. It was when he had finished doing so that he noticed an ashen figure in the shadows of the corner. There was a kid curled up there, his skin as grey as ash and his body shrivelled, seemingly dehydrated. He couldn't quite make out his eyes in the shadows, but he was able to see the mouth move.

None of this frightened Daryl.

“What do you want?” the voice was quiet and firm.

“A friend sent me.” Daryl replied. He just held the knife in front of his body, away from the figure.

"You didn't answer my question." the being responded, the edges of their shape seemingly to flicker for a moment. "And I don't really care if someone sent you. I don't want you here."

"You're not even the least bit curious about how someone has remained so calm in seeing you?" Daryl asked.

"I know your type. Magicians aren't too rare, and sometimes they start young." the figure snorted lightly, and a little puff of shadow emanated from their obscured face.

"I just want to talk. I'm not here to bind you or whatever. Necromancy isn't on the schedule today." Daryl said. His eyes were hovering over the spirit in the corner. At times, he almost thought that he could see gleams of light from the head.

"Could have fooled me with that knife." the being said tersely.

Daryl went still for a moment. Then he dropped the knife, and turned the rest of his body toward the shade in the corner.

The being did not speak for a while then. They stayed in the corner, just looking at the child before them. After a minute of thought, they spoke.

"How old are you?" they asked.

"Eight." Daryl responded simply. He examined what he could see of the being's face carefully, before continuing to speak. "How old were you?"

"...Seven." the shade responded after a few moment's silence. They looked away from the Daryl then, gazing towards the wall of the room where the window stood.

"...You should count yourself lucky, you know. You lasted longer than me." the being said coldly. They still were not looking at Daryl.

For a brief time, Daryl also looked towards the wall at the end of the room. Then he looked back at the spirit, and spoke again.

"My name is Daryl. What is your name?"

The spirit was quiet for a while, but eventually, he did respond.

"...Connor." he said.

"It's good to meet you, Connor." Daryl just lightly inclined his head forward. Connor tilted his head a little.

"Hmph. Well, you make better company than squatters, but I still don't get what you're getting at it. Why are you here?" Connor spoke. For a moment, Daryl saw two orbs of white shine in their head, ones positioned like eyes.

"Heard you were lonely. Wanted to say hi. I was also just kind of curious about what this place looked

like.” Daryl said. He looked around the room a little bit before his eyes settled once more on Connor.

“Not much to look at. Abandoned houses are usually pretty boring.” Connor said.

“Well, I get to see you today, so I would count that as a plus.” Daryl responded.

For a moment, Daryl saw one of the edges of Connor's maw curve upwards almost imperceptibly, but it vanished as soon as it came.

“Hmph. Seriously though, where'd you hear about me from? I don't haunt anyone, there aren't any well-known ghost stories about me out there...” Connor trailed off.

“Well, to be honest, I hadn't actually heard about you until today. Another spirit told me about you and recommended that I pay you visit. Y'know, magician stuff.” Daryl said, a faint smile at the edges of his maw.

“Heh. Well, it is certainly *interesting* to hear that the neighbors are thinking of me. Were, were they like another ghost or something, or, like, what kind of spirit were they?” Connor tilted his head a little.

“I, uh, not sure if I'm allowed to reveal that information, actually...” Daryl trailed off for a moment, looking from side to side awkwardly. That was when Connor heard a certain crinkling, and started to look toward Daryl's pants.

“You're...wearing a diaper. Huh.” Connor said, and Daryl saw the orbs in his head vanish and reappear briefly.

Daryl felt his cheeks grow warm, but he did speak soon after.

“Medical reasons. I was born incontinent.” he said quietly, but firmly.

“That's, that's understandable.” Connor nodded.

The ghost looked away from Daryl for a moment, before he turned his head to face the mortal once more.

“...Sorry, I didn't mean to embarrass you or anything. It's really messed up when people make fun of people for things they can't control...” Connor trailed off.

“You're fine dude. I understand that things must be pretty weird, being dead and all...” Daryl responded.

Daryl saw Connor briefly shake for a little bit, when he heard the word, but the ghost did nod, just barely. He looked off toward the window again. There was a quiet sigh.

“...Would, would it be okay if I asked-” Daryl was cut off.

“Don't want to talk about it.” Connor said quickly, he tightened up his body a little more.

Daryl nodded lightly. He looked toward the door for a moment, before he faced the ghost again.

“Could I ask about how this place got abandoned, at least? I must admit that I'm kind of wondering what happened to your folks...I never really heard much about this house...” Daryl trailed off.

After several seconds of silence, Connor started to nod.

“...After I...passed...Dad got really sad. He, he couldn't really live here without thinking of me, so he sold the place and moved somewhere else.” Connor spoke, and Daryl noticed inky shadows begin to drip from his face as he did so. The ghost stopped talking for a moment, but then his voice returned, stronger.

“He *didn't* abandon me. I know that. He...he was very nice, and I saw what he was like deep in the hours of night. He didn't abandon me.” Connor nodded to himself.

Daryl looked on at the ghost. His chest was starting to feel...weird, and his eyes watery, but he pushed it down. He nodded back at the shade before him.

“I understand, Connor. I'm sure he hoped that you would too.” Daryl said.

Connor went still, then, and he turned his gaze from the boarded-up window to the boy who was sitting right by him. The shadows were dripping down from his face, but still he looked on at the child with bright white eyes. He spoke.

“...Can I hug you?” he whispered.

Daryl just gave a nod.

When Connor saw the response, the shadow-tears just dripped faster, and he crawled up to the boy quickly before hugging him. Daryl felt himself in the presence of a cold vapor, and he did not mind it one bit.

The hug lasted a solid minute. Daryl had to admit to himself too that he had started to cry as well, as babyish as that was. When it was over, Connor was nowhere to be found, but Daryl was not disturbed by that, not at all.

Daryl gave one last goodbye to the ghost, before he got up from the ground, and began the journey back home.

The trip to the house was uneventful. Daryl just went to his room and unpacked his bag, putting everything away into their proper places. He still did other stuff at the house, of course, like playing a little with some toys and having dinner, but he was largely silent for the rest of the day, something which his parents took note of. Eventually, the child went to bed, and when he did so, it was with thoughts of Connor on his mind.

Daryl found himself in a field.

The plant child blinked his eyes a little.

There before him was Venai, a soft smile on his face, but with a certain weariness to his eyes.

The knowings came immediately. Daryl knew that he was in a dream.

“Heya. Just thought I'd check once you were done. Thanks for meeting with Connor.” Venai said softly, his gaze drifting away from Daryl and towards the endless expanse in front of himself.

“It was nothing.” Daryl said firmly, looking down at the ground for a while. Eventually, his gaze drifted back toward the spirit before him.

“Why, why'd you have me do it?” Daryl asked. His head was tilted slightly, but the question itself was simple Sincere.

“I just thought that he might respond better to you. You are mortal, after all. I have never been alive.” Venai said. Daryl noticed that the spirit's gaze had drifted away from him, and that there was a certain discoloration to his eyelids, as though he had not slept in a while.

“...You were afraid of how he would react to your domain, weren't you?” Daryl asked. His eyes narrowed lightly, but they weren't hostile.

The smile of Venai fell into the plain line of dejection. He kept looking away from Daryl, and his hands started to move to cover his diaper, but he did nod.

Daryl's brow was furrowed for a little while, but then the edges of his maw curled upwards, and he shook his head a little.

“If you want to be real with someone, then you just have to take that chance. You can't just be unwilling to help. And besides, I think you really overestimate just how much people care about that kind of stuff. Connor noticed my diaper and he didn't care...” Daryl said, laughing to himself a little.

Venai's gaze was drawn away from the field and back toward Daryl. The spirit looked on at the child for a while, his head tilting a little, before a small smile returned.

“Heh, well, I guess that we can both help each other out...” Venai said, rubbing at the edge of his eyes a little. “So, um, I'd count that as fulfilling your end of the deal, so, would you like to, well...formalize things?” Venai asked, holding his hands together and looking at Daryl with something between trepidation and excitement.

“In what way?” Daryl asked.

“Well, I could teach you magic in exchange for us...being friends.” Venai said softly, awkwardly looking away a little.

Daryl just stared at the spirit for a little while, before he smiled.

“Heck man, I'd take you as a friend even without that deal!” Daryl chirped.

Venai stood speechless for a little while, his face vacant and his eyes wide, before something lit up in his eyes, and a smile started to etch itself onto his face.

"We're, we're friends?" the spirit tilted his head.

"I mean, yeah!" Daryl almost shouted, giggling to himself.

"That, that's great! I, um...I have lots of ideas...and maybe we can get through some of them before you wake up!" Venai exclaimed. The spirit looked toward a blank patch of the field, and in an instant, a small playground immediately appeared, with swings and playstructures and sand and more. Daryl's eyes widened at the sight.

"Woah..." Daryl mumbled to himself, slowly starting to walk forward.

"Heh, yeah, my powers are pretty cool..." Venai scratched the back of his head and grinned awkwardly.

Daryl just started to smile and make his way forward, when he felt a sudden pressure in his bowels. His body started to poop automatically, and the child could only remain paralyzed as he pushed out a sticky mass into his diaper. When the child had recovered, he looked down, and realized that he didn't have any pants on in this dream. He looked down sort of awkwardly, before he turned back to Venai, whose reaction indicated that he had seen the whole thing.

"Oh, um, sorry Venai, sometimes I poop in my dreams too..." Daryl scratched his head leaves a little awkwardly.

"It's, you're fine Daryl!" Venai nodded, giggling to himself a little. "Can't say that I didn't expect it..." the spirit trailed off, before speaking again. "I will tell you though that you *did* just poop yourself in real life too, so you should be ready to deal with a messy diaper when you wake up..."

"Yeah...I am used to that..." Daryl looked off, feeling a warm come to his cheeks, but he was still smiling. "Say, um, could you use your powers to change me? Kind of curious about what you can do..."

"Sorry, but there's not really much point to me doing that, since your diaper would still be dirty in the physical world." Venai shrugged a little. "Y'know, speaking of which, you should really appreciate just how much diaper technology has advanced over the millennia! I remember when people were using leather filled with moss, and even weirder things!"

"Man, I actually just realized that I have a lot of questions I can ask you, come to think of it..." Daryl said, scratching his head leaves a bit. "Like...can you actually, pee? And well, y'know..."

"It's...in a way but it's not worth getting into at the moment, heh..." Venai said, a small blush developing on his face. "Look, let's just play for now! We don't have all night..."

"Heh, alright." Daryl said, giving a quick nod. He moved forward a little awkwardly, getting used to his messy diaper, but soon he and the spirit were walking along to the playground. Daryl felt excitement gripped him as he hit the sand, the perception feeling exactly like it did in the physical world. As Venai started to dash up the steps of the play structure, Daryl could only smile as he started to dash to catch up with him.

The two children, one mortal, one divine, had a long night of play ahead of them, and neither was going to waste one moment of it.