

ONE MONTH LATER.

CHRISTMAS EVE.



THE BRADBURY HOTEL

VERMONT.





"...she says a zombie snuck up on them in the woods--and surprised them--and Jason threw himself at it to protect her..."



...although, hearing myself say those words out loud, it doesn't exactly sound like something Jason Blossom would do...

There you go, Arch, that's my whole point. Occam's Razor.

The simplest answer is usually the right one...



"...Jason and Cheryl went into the woods--only Cheryl came back alive--covered in blood, holding a bloody machete--ergo, Cheryl killed Jason..."



"Or--or--devil's advocate, it's like Cheryl said, and the zombie killed Jason--then Cheryl killed the zombie--and that's where all the blood came from..."



Come on, Dude, stop trying to convince yourself.

In your heart of hearts, you know what you believe.

sigh

...I guess I do, Jughead, even though it's not what I want to believe.

Yeah, it sucks to imagine that one of the hottest girls in town is *potentially* a machete-murderer...

By the way, you want another of these?

FRAN
CIVIL
LA. 15

"Betty said she followed Cheryl into one of the hotel's parlors, where the other girls--only the girls and my mom--were waiting..."

Well, now that all the Pretty Little Liars are here...



...
Look, I, I know you guys think I'm crazy--



Stark raving, in fact.



...I...

...I don't want to tell the boys, I don't think I could handle the jokes--and believe me, Reggie would have a *field day* with this--but I, I do think...



(...sorry, I'm...)

(...sorry, this is just...)



...it's hard, but...

...I *do* think you deserve an explanation, and--

--and to hear the *truth* about me and Jason...

WALKING THERE:

...worried Mr. Lodge may have been right.

That maybe it was a mistake to leave Riverdale...

Because of all this Cheryl business?

It's so messed-up and confusing, Mom...

It was so safe-- Riverdale, I mean-- and then--

I know it seemed that way, but...

Oh, Archie, I'm not sure it was ever as safe as you'd like to believe.

No, that would've happened no matter what, Archie. In the woods or in Lodge manor. There was only one way that story was going to end, Son...

--then... it just wasn't.

There was a story...

No, never mind.

What? What story?

...

My grandmother told it to me, once.

It was a snowy night like this one, right after Christmas, I was playing with the puppy Santa had just brought me, Spotty...

"And Grandmother Beatrice declared, out of the blue--"

You don't know how lucky you are, Mary.

You don't know what that luck cost our family...

"And she started telling me about the war, when all of Riverdale's young men were drafted or enlisted..."

"Some of them hadn't even finished high school when they boarded the bus that would take them to the army base, in Centerville, and then, six weeks later, to the battlefields of Europe..."



"It's what young men did, back then," my grandmother said...

"Riverdale was barely a town, just starting out, and--"

"--and so many of those young men died, Archie, it must've felt like Riverdale died with them, the promise of it..."

"...the hope of it..."

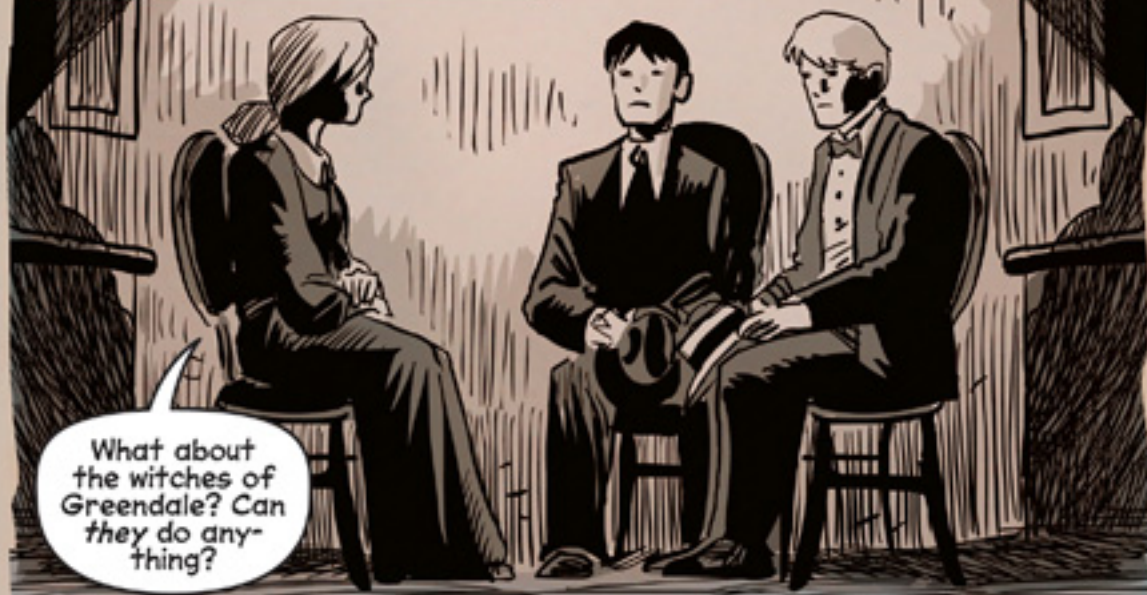


My grandmother said that some of the mothers and fathers of Riverdale's founding families met one Christmas night...

...in the basement of Town Hall, when there were more children buried up at the cemetery than on the streets, caroling...

"...and they wondered what could be done to protect Riverdale, to protect its children..."

"And one of them asked--"



What about the witches of Greendale? Can they do anything?

And the grown-ups... agreed it was worth a trip.

So Agnes Cooper, Franklin Andrews, and Forsythe Jones the First went to Greendale...