

CHARACTERS—

SPIDER: A bandit, feared by all who enter the forest of the Heaventree! Also an accounting major.

CORNYLIA MOONBEAM: A pixie who lives in a flower by the Heaventree! Also an education major.

SETTING—

An enchanted forest, home to jugglers and criminals, centaurs and princesses. This forest is close enough to a street to hear the cars go by and barely a quarter of a mile from the nearest Walmart.

(SPIDER and CORNYLIA MOONBEAM enter.)

CORNYLIA

I told you so, Spider.

SPIDER

I thought someone would have taken it apart or cleaned up after us.

CORNYLIA

They only cleaned up what they had to. They left the rest. And I suppose no one really wants to come out here anymore. Not after.

SPIDER

So you were right. The Heaventree has gone untouched.

CORNYLIA

I'm always right in this forest.

SPIDER

That was definitely the least fair of all of our rules. And we had some pretty bullshit rules. No using real names at the Heaventree. No using Heaventree names away from the Heaventree. No telling anyone about the Heaventree. We were a little intense about this tree.

CORNYLIA

Oh, please, it's a very cool tree. Besides, we were like nine when we made those rules. You could have changed them if you really cared.

SPIDER

How could I change your rule if you were always right, O Cornylia Moonbeam of the Heaventree flowers?

CORNYLIA

Well, I seem to recall you had a collection of very dangerous, very impressive weapons.

SPIDER

Most of which were actually sticks. Some of which were actually just imagination. Very scary.

CORNYLIA

It was scary to me! When you came after me with a fucking sword?

SPIDER

Stick.

CORNYLIA

Scary!

SPIDER

But we were always friends in the end.

CORNYLIA

Just in time to save the day.

SPIDER

Because seven year olds are terribly cliché.

CORNYLIA

Cliché? Doesn't cliché imply that something has been done before? I quite frankly do not remember ever having seen a movie or read a book where a bandit who was once a gargoyle on a church starts living in the forest because she hated civilization for rejecting her, spends weeks fighting with a flower pixie about who gets to live near a specific tree, eventually saves said pixie from an evil genie with the help of a stranded pirate queen, and then the three of them go on to solve mysteries and save multiple kingdoms multiple times together. If you have ever seen such a movie or read such a book, please tell me, because I would absolutely love to read that bandit-gargoyle-church-pixie-tree-genie-pirate acid trip.

SPIDER

You know what I mean.

CORNYLIA

Maybe. But we're in the Heaventree forest, so Cornylia Moonbeam is always right.

SPIDER

And Spider is always wrong.

CORNYLIA

That wasn't one of the rules.

SPIDER

Sure. More of a side effect of the Cornylia-is-always-right rule.

CORNYLIA

Don't get grumpy. You were a hero! Nobody but me and Rosie the Renegade knew you were a hero, but you were! You saved the day when that evil ghost took over the Kingdom of the Ghost Spirits and wanted to eat all of the little gnome children! Remember the faces of those little gnome children when you saved them? How they looked up at you?

SPIDER

Not really, seeing as they weren't real.

CORNYLIA

Not real? I did not steal garden gnomes from my neighbor and set them up in a dog kennel in the woods for you to rescue just for you to say they weren't real.

SPIDER

Yes, you stole those garden gnomes without my knowledge, yet somehow we both got yelled at for it. And Rosie too!

CORNYLIA

Oh, please, it wasn't that bad. Our parents yelled at us a little sure, but then all that really happened was we had to go apologize to the garden gnome man. And he was super nice about it. He didn't want us to get in trouble for it.

SPIDER

I guess.

CORNYLIA

I saw him today. While I was waiting for you to get here. He was working on his garden.

(She points in the direction of his house, which they can see from their tree.)

He got some new garden gnomes at some point in the last decade.

SPIDER

Oh, yeah. They look cute, I guess. For gnomes.

CORNYLIA

He recognized me, actually. I didn't think anyone around here would. I think maybe I was kind of hoping they wouldn't. But he did. He was really nice. And he didn't bring up Rosie. I was afraid anyone who recognized me would want to say something about her. About how sorry they were. About how tragic it was. He just said hi. Asked me how college was. He even joked that he was glad to see that someone remembered the Heaventree.

SPIDER

He said that? He said "Heaventree?"

CORNYLIA

Yeah. Come on, Spider. I'm not asking you to make a stick weapon or chase me around the woods. I'm just asking you to talk to me. We used to talk here. I'm pretty sure half of our Heaventree adventures were accidentally metaphors. I mean, you remember when my parents got divorced and our mission was to make sure the Snake Kingdom and the Griffin Kingdom remained allies? Or when your uncle had cancer and we went on a grand quest to get the Heaventree to give us the cure for the illness that had spread among the horses? I mean, for fuck's sake, you were a gargoyle who leapt off of a church and left society because they rejected you. Talk about a metaphor. We could tell each other

things here. Important things, stupid things—things that were both!

SPIDER

That was before.

CORNYLIA

Just talk to me, Spider.

SPIDER

I don't want to talk here! I don't want to be here! I thought maybe it would help, to see it again, without her here, but it isn't helping and I feel...

CORNYLIA

Feel what?

SPIDER

I don't know. Something's wrong.

CORNYLIA

Of course something's wrong. Our friend was murdered here. That's wrong. But it's been ten years and we never talked about it and I need to talk about it or I think I'll go crazy! I've talked to my parents a little and the police and all those therapists, but you're the only one who could understand. You're the only one who knew what this place meant to us. You're the only one who lost Rosie the Renegade with me. The stranded pirate queen of the Heaventree forest. You're the only one who lost this place. Please. I thought that one day I wouldn't think about it anymore. I thought that one day I wouldn't think about her anymore. I thought that one day I wouldn't spend my time wondering who could do such a thing to a child. But I still think about it every day. Do you not think about it?

SPIDER

I try not to.

(She sits down, takes out her phone. A moment of silence.)

You know, there's surprisingly good connection out here, considering we're in a world without phones and all.

CORNYLIA

Yeah, well it is a paradise.

(She sits down too.)

SPIDER

It was a pretty violent paradise. Even before. Barely a week went by without a war.

CORNYLIA

Meh. Most of them were over within a couple of days. Low impact conflict.

SPIDER

Then why do I recall several massacres? Massacre of the Knights, Massacre of the Lizards, Massacre of the Lizard-Knights...

CORNYLIA

To be fair, the Massacre of the Lizards turned out to be due to pollution in the river. It wasn't like we were actually killing any lizards.

SPIDER

What you said earlier. You said he told you he was glad someone remembered the "Heaventree."

CORNYLIA

Yeah. I thought it was sweet. Like remembering her without bringing up how she died. Remembering the game and not how she came out here alone one night and... You know, I can't imagine how her parents feel. They were fighting. That's why she left home at night and came here. I remember them saying it was their fault. It wasn't their fault, but I remember them saying it. I remember that we told them first. We didn't even call the police. We saw her. We tried to wake her up even though I think we both already knew. And we didn't know what to do. So we went

to her house and knocked on the door and her parents were already crying. They didn't know she was dead, but they knew she wasn't in her bed when they went to wake her up in the morning. And we told them. We were so calm. I don't think I would be so calm now, if I found someone. I think I'd be terrified. But then we were so calm about it. And her poor parents kept saying it was their fault. It wasn't their fault. It was our fault, wasn't it? Because we knew something was wrong and we kept playing. All those strange things were happening and we kept playing. We found our things moved from where we left them. We found little gifts for us in the roots of the Heaventree. We found little notes addressed to Cornylia Moonbeam and Spider and Rosie the Renegade. And we kept playing. We didn't tell anybody because that would mean telling them about our secret world and we didn't want anyone to know. We should have stopped playing in this forest the minute we knew someone was watching us. We should have told somebody. Then maybe Rosie...

SPIDER

He said "Heaventree."

CORNYLIA

What?

SPIDER

How did he know we called it the Heaventree?

(She stands up, looks toward the house with the gnomes.)

You said it yourself. We didn't tell anyone. Everything here was a secret. It was a secret game and we had rules to keep it secret. The only other person, besides the three of us, who knew we called it the Heaventree... Who was the only other person who knew?

CORNYLIA

Whoever was leaving the notes.

SPIDER

The person watching us.

(They get quieter.)

CORNYLIA

Spider...

(She stands.)

I can see his window from here. Which means he can see us from there.

SPIDER

On a quiet day, he could hear us.

CORNYLIA

Spider, I'm scared.

SPIDER

Yeah.

CORNYLIA

Spider. What if he's watching us now?

(Spider takes her hand. They both look at the house with the gnomes.)

SPIDER *(calmly)*

We are going to walk to the road. We are going to call the police. We are going to be okay.

(They don't move. They just look at the house. They can't look away, wondering if he is looking back at them.)

CORNYLIA

Why would he kill her?

SPIDER

I don't know.

CORNYLIA

She was just a kid.

SPIDER

I know. Some people just do bad things. Maybe he didn't know what he was doing. Maybe he didn't know it was bad.

CORNYLIA

He was so nice to us. He used to give us juice in the summer, if we walked by his house. He helped me with my science homework once, in fifth grade. Spider, I'm scared to turn my back.

SPIDER

We have to go. I'll protect you. Spider always protected of Cornylia Moonbeam, didn't she?

CORNYLIA

As much as I'd like to be comforted by that, nothing in our game protected Rosie.

SPIDER

Now you sound like me. Come on. Come on. We can't stay here.

CORNYLIA

I know. I know I'm being irrational I just really don't want to turn my back because I keep thinking that that's how he got her.

SPIDER

Cornylia. Cornylia Moonbeam of the Heaventree flowers, you need to trust me one more time. We are going to be okay. We just need to leave now. We need to call the police.

(Cornylia hesitates.)

You wanted me to talk to you, right? You brought me here for some honesty? Here's some honesty. I'm scared. I'm fucking terrified and I need you.