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What Are Friends For?

by Mia Sundby

"We shouldn't be here."

Cora rolled her eyes, adjusting the tightness of her rucksack straps. "Yeah, no shit." She muttered through the darkness. "What gave it away? The boarded-up windows? The 'condemned' sign? Or maybe it was the floor that gave out just as we stepped through the door?" Kris scowled.

Cora turned, waving her torch's light in Kris' direction. She resisted shining it in the other girl's face. Just. Illuminated in bright surgical-like whiteness, Kris' frizzy black hair flared like a storm cloud struck by lightning. She snapped, "No need to be a bitch about it. We're only here because of *you*." On the last word, she jabbed her torch in Cora's direction.

"*Me?*"

"Yes, you, Cora. It was your idea to get the stupid Ouija board out and it was *you* who said 'me, me, me, pick me, evil ghost, possess me!'" Cora's grip tightened on her torch. "I did not--"

"It's not *my* fault that none of your stupid friends believe that you summoned a vengeful spirit hell-bent --pun fully fucking intended-- on murdering you!"

Cora closed the distance between them, her torchlight bouncing erratically across the walls of the abandoned house. "They're not my friends!" Kris stopped, her brows raised.

Silence stretched out for a long moment.

Inwardly, Cora cursed herself. Why had she said *that*? That hadn't been what she'd meant. The others *were* her friends. Or at least they saw each other at uni every day, and they partied at weekends, and, and... Emily had once cried on her at a party and told her about her mum's sleeping around and how it pissed her off, and that was what friendship was supposed to be, wasn't it? That you, you... Shared stuff. Sure, maybe Cora hadn't really shared anything *back*, except vague shushing noises and promises that she'd be there, and she would absolutely go get a bucket if Emily needed it, and yeah she was pretty sure that Matt fancied Emily, yep, definitely, how could he not...

Cora cleared her throat.

Kris was still staring at her, her brows trying to climb into her hairline. Cora's jaw twitched as she said, "I have friends."

"I didn't say that you don't."

"You didn't?"

"Nope."

Cora realised that she was standing very close to Kris. Up this close, she could see that Kris' eyes had small flecks of bright amber in them, in amongst the dark brown. Like embers glinting in a banked fire that refuses to go out.

Kris opened her mouth. "Cora--"

They jumped as a voice sounded throughout the house. It was scratchy and accompanied by a soft crackling, like someone was tuning an old-fashioned radio. The sound of music echoed tinnily through the abandoned house, accompanied after a moment by a buttery male voice.

"Was there ever a June as glorious as that one...?"

It might've been pleasant if they weren't in a condemned building which was supposedly the haunting spot of a ghost which had apparently latched onto Cora. A lot of things might've been pleasant if not for that, Cora mused grimly.

"Come on," Kris said, "It's nearly midnight."

With that, she spun on her heel, her hair spilling behind her in a cloud. Cora smelled vanilla perfume, and found herself inhaling. She shook herself. What was wrong with her?

"Yeah," she said, blinking. "Yeah, I'm just coming."