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Meet Me in the Closet

written by

Author

OVER BLACK.

The SOUND of keys being dropped on a table, followed by non-rhythmic footsteps, and three knocks on a door.

INT. RAT SUPPLY CLOSET

CIGARETTE DEITY (pale, muscular, middle-aged man with a beard but otherwise bald, dressed in a white and gold security uniform) strolls in.

He is visibly nervous: his steps are wonky, his actions are like static, but he sways his shoulders and holds his head up high in an act of rebellion against his own awkwardness.

CIGARETTE DEITY

So I hear you got a problem with your door?

SALLY (pale, middle-aged blonde woman with saggy skin, wearing a blue denim jacket over her black and grey work uniform) crosses her arms and looks at him, one of her eyebrows raised.

SALLY

(sarcastically)

Yeah. Did you also hear your keys fall outside before you came in here?

CIGARETTE DEITY whips his head around to face the door with no window. He looks at the door for a few seconds, and throws his hands down in shame.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Ah, shit.

CUT TO:

TITLE CREDITS

TITLE: *MEET ME IN THE CLOSET* [INTRO THEME]

INT. RAT SUPPLY CLOSET

Sally rests her back against a wall, repeatedly tapping her left index finger against her thigh.

SALLY

(bluntly)

So what now? Do you have a plan?

CIGARETTE DEITY

You know, ma'am, I really don't.

SALLY

That's what I thought.

Sally puts her head in her hands and slides down until she hits the floor. Her limbs follow suit.

Cigarette Deity whips his head to the side. The SOUND of a unique KNOCK.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Did you hear that?

SALLY

Hear what?

CIGARETTE DEITY

Oh, uh, nothing. Go on.

A mysterious grey powder falls on Sally's pants. She brushes it off and looks back up at Cigarette Deity.

Cigarette Deity whips his head to the side again. The SOUND of the same unique KNOCK.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Did you hear *that*?

Sally stares him down.

SALLY

No.

More grey powder falls on her pants. She looks at it and curiously squints her eyes before she brushes it off again.

CIGARETTE DEITY

If that's what I think it is-

SALLY

What? A little dust got you down?

More grey powder falls on Sally's pants. She looks up to the ceiling to see where it's coming from.

A small ring of flame and ash, about 4 feet and 10 inches tall, forms on the wall.

SALLY

Hm.

She steps back.

SALLY

Now what is wrong with y'all campus safety officers? Why can't you just use keys?

CIGARETTE DEITY

What?

The SOUND of a blast. A white light overtakes the entire closet for a moment, and Sally takes cover. Dust motes fill the air.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Shit.

A slight clearing reveals a lit cigarette as it falls to the floor. A long black boot puts it out.

A figure strolls in, confident and slow, through the smoke.

The air clears and we see KENDRICK (4'10 man in his early twenties, dressed androgynously in all black with curly hair, colorful eye makeup, and a silver septum ring).

KENDRICK

Been a while, huh?

CIGARETTE DEITY

You know you don't have proper jurisdiction to be here, right? They could demote me for this.

KENDRICK

Isn't your office a chair?

CIGARETTE DEITY

(snapping back)

First of all, it's a hut-

KENDRICK

Look, I'm bored. I'm just practicing portals. How'd I do?

Cigarette Deity stares at Kendrick for a few seconds before they hear the SOUND of metal CLANGING and falling to the ground.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Oh shit. Sally.

KENDRICK

New pull?

Cigarette Deity rolls his eyes.

CIGARETTE DEITY

No. I work with her.

KENDRICK

Hm. Aspirational pull?

CIGARETTE DEITY

No. It's not like that.

KENDRICK

Sure, sure. So why are you two locked in a closet together?

They both hear what sounds like shuffling, scraping, grunting. They turn their heads.

Cigarette Deity walks toward the sound, Kendrick follows.

They walk around a stack of to-go boxes to see Sally behind it, trying to unscrew an air duct with an open pocket knife.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Hey, ma'am, what are you doing?

KENDRICK

Respect.

SALLY

Yeah, I gotta get out of here.

Sally grunts, carving the pocket knife into the grooves. She accidentally cuts her hand.

SALLY

Ugh.

Sally sighs and closes the pocket knife, placing it back in her pocket. She looks up at Kendrick.

SALLY

Kid, could you pass me the to-go box with a sticker on it?

Kendrick looks around. He picks a to-go box and hands it to Sally.

Sally opens the box and takes out a joint.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Wait what are you doing-

Sally digs into her pocket for a lighter, but comes up empty.

SALLY

Kid, you got a light?

CIGARETTE DEITY

Open flame is a violation of the-

Kendrick kneels down to Sally.

KENDRICK

Oh now we're talkin'. Open out your palm.

Sally places her open palm in front of him.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Kendrick. Don't.

Kendrick looks up at Cigarette Deity and shrugs his shoulders.

KENDRICK

Sorry, dad.

He closes his eyes.

KENDRICK

(slowly, ominously)

I call upon you, Cigar,

To lend me my right,

To dismantle me from the ache of my plight,

For I may sit frightened in the shadows of the night,

For I may be a victim of a love not requite,

For my complexion may be too sore of a sight,

Hear me, Cigar,

Give me a temporary respite,

Hear me, Cigar,

Let there be light.

A lighter appears in Sally's hand. She looks at it in silence for a second and then looks up at Kendrick.

SALLY

Y'all have to say all that every time?

KENDRICK

Oh no, I just did that for fun. I'm a bit of a poet.

SALLY

Hm. Well, thank you.

Suddenly, they hear the faint sound of someone yelling, coming from the ducts.

A VOICE (V.O)

(falling, progressively louder)

AHHHHHHHHHH!

A size 5 women’s shoe sole hits against the air duct cover, repeatedly, until it busts through.

The shoe hits the wall opposite to the air duct, again repeatedly, bouncing off of it. A very skinny leg emerges from the shoe and lays parallel to the floor, being held up by the duct. The figure holding the leg's torso is still in the vent.

A VOICE

(muffled, echoey)

Uhhh, how small is this room?

ALL THREE OF THEM

Small.

A MAN'S VOICE

Ah, nooo! I really wanted to get to hang out with you guys!

KENDRICK

Uh, who are you?

A MAN'S VOICE

I'm Johan. Cue theme music!

The SOUND of silence.

Then, Johan starts beat boxing.

JOHAN

I'm eighteen. I'm an open-air basketball player. I never fit anywhere standing up so I like to travel through air ducts so I can get into a room without bumping my head.

(beat boxing pauses)

Super sweet of you guys to loosen the screws for me by the way!

Sally, Kendrick, and Cigarette Deity look at each other, confused. Sally takes another hit.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Okay Johan, I know you're in a bit of a tough spot, but can you show me your ID-

JOHAN

(ignoring the question)

Oooh I love that smell. Could you guys blow some into the vent so I could get a whiff?

Sally and Kendrick look at each other for a second.

SALLY

You know what? Sure.

Sally sits up on her knees and exhales into the vent. She plops back down and rests her back against the wall.

INT. RAT SUPPLY CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

SALLY

Man, I'm too old for this shit.

KENDRICK

I hear ya. Mind if I take a hit?

Sally nods and passes him the joint.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Kendrick, you're twenty-two. And this is a smoke-free buildi-

KENDRICK

Dad, you need this more than anyone I've ever met.

SALLY

He's your dad?

KENDRICK

It's complicated.

CIGARETTE DEITY

It's complicated.

SALLY

Wow. Like father like son.

Kendrick laughs.

KENDRICK

(loudly)

Hey Johan, how ya doing in there?

JOHAN

(giggly)

I'm goooood. Hehe. A little cold though. Is there a blanket in there you guys could use to cover my leg?

KENDRICK

Hmmm no I don't think so. But don't worry, I know a guy.

Kendrick pulls out a 20-pack of cigarettes from his pocket, the edges painted to look like a dial phone. He presses in ten numbers with the tip of his finger, each press emiting a small flame that quickly disappears without leaving a trace.

KENDRICK

Hey man, could you come help my friend Johan? He's feeling a little cold.

Kendrick nods.

KENDRICK

Awesome man, thanks.

INT. RAT CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

The closet shakes slightly, as if hit by a tremor. A collection of muffled sounds emerge from the duct, mostly indecipherable.

KENDRICK

You good in there Johan? He should be here in a second.

JOHAN (O.S.)

Doing great! Thanks again, Kendrick!

INT. AIR DUCT

The sounds get clearer: clanging, claws scratching against metal, the faint roar of a lion and a faint eagle call.

JOHAN

Uhhhh, what is that?

Johan clutches his stomach.

JOHAN

Oh, this doesn't feel good.

KENDRICK

I'm not sure either. It's muffled from down here. What do you hear?

Johan

JOHAN

Well I *know* I heard a lion roar a couple seconds ago.

KENDRICK

Yeah, and I think *that* was an eagle call, but my ornithology isn't so hot. Hmmmmm.

Kendrick rubs his chin in thought and darts his eyes around, until they land on a spot. He puts his head in his hands.

KENDRICK

Oh. *Shit*. It's Griffin.

JOHAN

A GRIFFIN???

KENDRICK

No, my friend, his name is Griffin.

JOHAN

(exhales in relief)

Ohhhh okay. Thank god, you had me worried.

KENDRICK

Oh well, he *is* actually a Griffin. It just happens to be his name too.

JOHAN

WHAT

KENDRICK

Yeah uh, gimme a minute.

Kendrick whips out the cigarette phone and dials a number on it. He puts it to his ear.

KENDRICK

GRIFFIN. NO. WRONG PERSONA. WRONG PERSONA.

The clanging and everything stops. Griffin pauses and lands on the side of the vent, slightly above Johan.

He transforms -- he shakes off his wings and grows arms from his back, he loses his beak and grows a nose, his claws become legs and he sits cross legged in front of Johan.

Johan clutches his stomach and shivers, strongly.

JOHAN

(hesitant, begging)

Please don't hurt me. I read that murderers are less likely to kill people if they know personal facts about them. So here.

(weak beat boxing)

I'm Johan. I'm eighteen. I'm an open-air basketball player. I never fit anywhere standing up so I like to travel through air ducts so I can get into a room without bumping my head.

GARTH/GRIFFIN (male with snail eyes) pats Johan's head and gently pushes his eyelids shut.

JOHAN

What the-

Garth starts humming *Fire Burning* by Sean Kingston.

JOHAN

Oh I love this song! What's happening though?

Garth's humming gets louder. He brings in *Girl On Fire* by Alicia Keys. Plot twist: it's a mashup.

Johan still appears confused, but sways back and forth to the music.

Garth rubs his hands together. They gradually turn to a warm yellow.

JOHAN

Oh. Are you okay?

Then orange.

JOHAN

Did you eat too much citrus today? You know I do that too sometimes. Bad habit.

Then deep and firy red.

JOHAN

Oh. Devil? Tomatoes? Wait. Please don't kill me. I can do my spiel again. I'm Johan, I'm eightee-

Garth moves his hands so they hover a few inches above Johan, and he sways, sending rays of warmth over to Johan.

Johan stops shivering and calms down.

JOHAN

Ahhh. Thank you.

INT. RAT SUPPLY CLOSET

Cigarette Deity leans into the vent.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Hey, bird guy, can I see your Rhodes ID?

Kendrick, who is now extremely high, lays on the floor and looks at the ceiling. Sally sits beside him and continues to smoke.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Also just letting y'all know open flames are a violatio-

SALLY

They won't listen to you.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Excuse me?

SALLY

The kids. They don't respect you.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Listen, ma'am, with all due respect-

SALLY

Look, I've been here long enough to know how this place works. It's like this: we're at the bottom of the chain. We wear uniforms so they know who we are to them because they wouldn't care about us otherwise. We're replaceable, tens of us leave every year and new ones come in and people remember for a couple minutes and then forget. Nobody knows your name here, because it does not matter.

Cigarette Deity looks down at his feet, tapping them.

BEGIN FLASHBACK.

INT. HOSPICE CARE FACILITY

Cigarette Deity (early twenties , dressed in all white with a gold robe and a light brown crown) kneels at the bedside of an old man. The old man appears to be ill.

CIGARETTE DEITY

Hey, dad.

CIGARETTE DEITY'S DAD (old man, sickly, even more pale) looks at him and says nothing. He stares deeply at his face, like he's studying it.

CIGARETTE DEITY

It's me. Your son, remember?

The staring continues. Cigarette Deity's face grows hopeful.

Cigarette Deity's dad turns his head away.

CIGARETTE DEITY'S DAD

Who is this?

He asks the air.

CIGARETTE DEITY

I'm your son, Cigarette. Remember?

CIGARETTE DEITY'S DAD

I do not know that name.

(still talking to the air)

Take him away at once.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. RAT SUPPLY CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

KENDRICK

Hey, you good?

CIGARETTE DEITY

Yeah. How are you, son?

KENDRICK

Awww, you called me son.

Cigarette Deity smiles.

From the ducts, the sounds start again: clanging, claws scratching against metal, the faint roar of a lion and a faint eagle call.

JOHAN (O.S.)

Uhhh, Garth, hey, stay with me buddy.

The sounds continue.

JOHAN (O.S.)

(loudly)

KENDRIIICK! I think Griffin is here.

KENDRICK

Oh word. Hey Griff!

JOHAN

(under his breath)

Oh, for fuck's sake.

Garth becomes GRIFFIN (griffin) again. His wings shoot out of his back. He gives Johan a kind stare.

JOHAN

Uh, heyyyy buddy.

Griffin points his talons toward Johan.

JOHAN

Okay I'm your friend, remember?

Griffin grabs Johan by his shirt collar and lifts him up.

JOHAN

Oh wait this is kinda fun. Wee!

Griffin keeps flying until they escape the duct and get outside. They fly away together. Johan smiles.

INT. RAT SUPPLY CLOSET - LATER

Sally takes another drag.

THE END.

POST-CREDITS SCENE

MONTAGE

A. Johan meets Griffin's family, they hug him and invite him in.

B. Johan and Griffin hold hands under a wedding arch

C. Johan and Garth hold griffin eggs in their arms, looking over a nest

poster

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character descriptions

Sally

- Jean jacket, fifties
- Likes thriftbooks and autism, presumably leftist, presumably voted for Kamala
- Hates immaturity, is always around college students

- Unapologetically mean to the people she doesn't like in a respectable way, like she's seen too much to care anymore
- Actually quite kind and down to earth

Cigarette Deity

- He's a god but forced into it, hates his life as cigarette deity
- His dad was named Cigar, because he was tall and fat and unwilling to change. Cigarette got the uselessness from Cigar, and nothing else (introduce this in a flashback scene of ppl bullying him or his mom yelling at him)
- His dad was too much to live up to, felt burdened by this weight he had to carry so he left and came to Rhodes to live a normal life
- He can be hard on the kids but it's because he wants us to succeed, like his father was to him
- Sally: but you're a campus security guard
- Cigarette deity: yeah so?
- Sally: and you don't know how to keep track of your keys. Like your main job is guarding places and you don't know how to keep track of your keys.
- CD: …
- Sally: so are you really successful?
- [cue spiral] [CD loses his mind]

Introduce new characters through portal that cig dei conjures with an exhale? (badly)

Note: CD code switches as southern around sally

Flashbacks

- Cigar got his memory erased and didnt remember cigarette. Sad

Kendrick (kahlila)

- Implied that cig deity's illegitimate child (bastard)
- Smokes w**d w/ sally?

Bella (billy)

- Really into plain sweaters

- Subtly Sally's sister
- On the seniors swim team

Ned (nessa)

- Athletic and buff
- Super senior — failed classes
- Passion for knitting

Johan (yasmine)

- Size 5 feet in women's
- Super super tall

Neil (neema)

- Tall gay goth twink
- Crazy about Shakespeare
- Scottish accent #international kid

Griffin/garth (greta)

- Mute but can hum anything in that week's top 100 hits
- Warm hands (puts on shoulders frequently)
- Cannot shave well

outline

annotations

Cast

Sally - Meryl Streep

Cigarette Deity - JK Simmons

Scene 1:

"Shit!"

That was the first time Sally ever heard Cigarette Deity curse: as the door slammed shut behind them, locking the pair inside the cramped, stuffy closet.

For a moment, under the dingy glow of the singular light bulb, Sally and Cigarette Deity just looked at each other. The closet was silent except for the buzz of electricity overhead. Dust motes floated in the inches between them.

Finally, Sally scoffed. Throwing up her hands, she stormed away from the Campus Safety officer–or as much as she could storm away from someone in a tiny storage closet.

“Of course,” she murmured, snatching her phone out of her pocket and tapping out the Campo number for the second time. Sally pressed it to her ear as it rang, the glass warm against her skin.

Scene 2: (backstory begins) (flashback sequence? Or just a prequel cut)

The debacle had begun with a misplaced box. Sally was shoving a stack of to-go containers into a storage closet late one Halloween night, tucked deep in the underbelly of the Rat. Suddenly, the box propping the door open slipped, and she was trapped, closet locked from the outside. Immediately, she called Campus Safety. Cigarette Deity was there in minutes, but he fell victim to the same mistake as Sally–he unlocked the door, set his keys on a nearby table in the hallway, stepped inside, and released the door for a millisecond too long.

Sally pinched the bridge of her nose as she waited for the call to go through, shooting Cigarette Deity a sharp side-eye.

In her moment of irritation, she couldn’t contain herself. “Why did you leave your keys *outside* the door?” Sally snapped, bitterness dripping from her tongue.

Cigarette Deity stood as still as a statue, eyebrows slightly scrunched and mouth a thin line. He opened his mouth to speak, lips curled, then closed it. Under the bulb, Sally saw red spread across his cheeks.

Instead of replying, he forced his face into neutrality and grabbed the walkie-talkie from his waistband, grunting “hello?” into the mic every five seconds.

Sally rolled her eyes and turned away, pulling her attention back to her buzzing phone.

However, five minutes passed, and neither of them got a “hello” back.

[Cut to: scene 3 with coopa troopa]

[Cut back]

Sally finally gave up, ramming her cell phone back into her pocket with an angry huff.

Of course this happens on Halloween night, the busiest night for Campo, she thought as a current of panic hummed through her.

“No luck?” Cigarette Deity spoke for the first time since locking them inside. Sally looked up. The officer leaned his back against the wall, shoulders stiff and arms crossed, his walkie-talkie tucked back in its holster. He quickly broke eye contact, glancing at his shoes.

Sally observed him for a moment. While there were worse people to be stuck in a closet with, Cigarette Deity definitely wasn’t her first choice. Across the years, the pair had exchanged maybe two dozen words, a majority of those being “excuse me” and “thanks.” She had always found his demeanor to be cold and curt. From the way she caught him looking at her on occasion, Sally could tell he thought the same thing about her. Their tense, strangely-minimal history was thick in the air, its weight pressing on their shoulders. Cigarette Deity looked back up; now it was Sally’s turn to break eye contact.

Pushing another annoyed huff of air through her nose, she shook her head no, crossed her arms, and slid down the wall opposite of the door, plopping into a sitting position on dusty concrete.

Cigarette Deity sighed as a response. He took a final, longing look at the useless doorknob. Then, he strode toward the far wall and dropped beside Sally, joining her in staring at nothing.

Sally let out an even louder exhale, not bothering to hide her frustration. *Fantastic*.

…

Scene 4?:

Half an hour passed. Twenty minutes back, Cigarette Deity finally got a response on his walkie-talkie. It was a disappointing “hold on, we’ll be a bit.” At the news, the pair had let out a collective sigh.

The closet was uncomfortably warm, heat pervading every pore on Sally’s face. She leaned her head against the wall and stared at the flickering lightbulb. Then, she looked over.

Cigarette Deity had slipped off his jacket, its dark fabric sprawled across the floor. He was in the process of rolling up the sleeves on his button-up. Sally watched as he bended the material into meticulous folds, cloth sneaking up his skin until it rested above his elbow. Against her will, she noticed how muscular his forearm was. As she traced the blue lines of his veins with her pupils, she stopped at an unnatural shape on his wrist, one that made her eyes bulge.

“You have a tattoo?” It was a half-question, half-exclamation; Sally was so shocked that she couldn’t help but blurt it out.

At the abrupt inquiry, Cigarette Deity’s shoulders jumped, the officer snapping his head toward Sally. He looked down at his tattoo with her. After further inspection, it seemed to be a paw print.

Cigarette Deity took a second to respond. “Yes,” he answered, the syllable slow and terse.

“Is it like, a…” Without thinking, Sally reached a finger toward his arm. She remembered herself and immediately snatched it back, hoping he didn’t notice. “What is it?”

He pursed his lips, keeping his eyes down. It might have been the lighting, but Sally swore she saw another flash of red on his cheeks.

“Um.” Cigarette Deity started, then stopped.

Sally waited.

“It’s for my cat.”

Sally blinked. “Your cat?”

“Yeah.”

“You have a cat?”

“Yeah.”

Sally cocked her head to the side, studying the man with a surprised smile. “Why did you get its paw print tattooed?”

“I, uh.” He stopped again, then exhaled through his nose, like he was resigned to his fate. “I’ve had her for fifteen years, and I really love her. So, I got her paw print tattooed.”

Sally looked at him for a few silent seconds, staring like he was a stranger. Then, she let out a loud, full laugh, bending over as she giggled.

“What?” Even with her eyes shut, she felt the embarrassment wafting off him.

“Nothing, no, nothing bad,” Sally quickly said, wiping her eyes and sitting back off. The giddy smile was still stuck on her face. “It’s just, I don’t know, unexpected.”

*“*From you*”* was unspoken, but they both got the message. The pair looked at each other.

“It’s sweet, that’s all,” she admitted.

At that, Cigarette Deity's scrunched eyebrows relaxed, and a smile played on his lips. Finally, he laughed, and then she laughed, and they were laughing together for a single, golden moment.

After calming down, they let out a breath in unison, the tension lifted from the room. The duo leaned back against the wall and looked at the closet door, grins still intact.

"I'm sorry."

Sally glanced at Cigarette Deity, who fiddled with his walkie-talkie. He didn't make eye contact. "For what?"

"For getting us stuck in here." He dipped his head, hanging it slightly below his propped up knees. "I should've been more careful."

Sally watched him for a second. Her pride withered in her chest. *I was wrong about him*.

"No worries," she replied casually, stretching her arms above her head. "I'm the one who got us here."

Cigarette Deity snickered, an infectious sound that Sally couldn't help but imitate. They giggled in unison, tilting their faces toward each other.

Their knees bumped. Even through multiple layers of fabric, Sally felt electricity surge between them, sparks twinkling around the point of contact.

Suddenly, they weren't laughing anymore. Cigarette Deity and Sally stared at each other, expressions frozen and breaths drawn. Their knees stayed connected, neither of them pulling back.

Sally didn't know she was leaning in until she felt his shoulder press against hers and noticed the shrinking centimeters between their faces. His expression remained stony, but his eyes trickled down her face, resting at her mouth. She wondered what he was thinking about.

Before she could find out, the doorknob jingled, and when the door flew open, the pair jumped up and apart, putting a solid two feet between them.

While the Campo officer exchanged pleasantries and beckoned them out, Sally still felt a sizzling heat under her skin, an energy coursing through her veins. The officer pulled Cigarette Deity aside as she walked away, leaving her to escape alone. Before she turned the corner in the hall, Sally took a final glance back, only to find Cigarette Deity's eyes already on her.

For the rest of the night, she felt his gaze on her skin, and wondered what might have happened if the door remained shut.