

UNCANNY VALLEY

Episode 1.04

"The Thing You're Running From"

Written by

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21. Audrey stands in a busy coffee shop, waiting for her order. There is a lot going on around her: people taking work calls, baristas brewing and blending drinks.

CODY

(softly)

Excuse me.

(beat, a little louder)

Excuse me.

AUDREY

Oh my gosh, I'm sorry! Am I in the way?
I can get lost in my own little world.

CODY

No, not at all. Actually, I couldn't help but notice your book. You're into art?

AUDREY

Oh, this? Yeah, it's kind of my thing.
You like Henry Moore?

CODY

I love England. We learned a lot about his sculpting when I visited. Are you an art student?

AUDREY

Oh, no. Just a nerd, actually.

CODY

(laugh)

I think that's amazing.

AUDREY

Oh. Well, thanks.

CODY

Of course. You can tell a lot about a person by the books they read. You're a smart girl.

AUDREY

I just like shapes.

CODY
(laugh)
You're funny, too.

AUDREY
That's, erm, very kind of you.

CODY
Don't mention it, sweetie.
(beat)
So, have you ever been?

AUDREY
What? To England?

CODY
Yeah. To see the sculptures you like.

AUDREY
Not quite in the budget right now, I'm
afraid.

CODY
I hear it's a very romantic place to
vacation.

AUDREY
Uhh, I heard it rains.

CODY
(laughs)
Of course. Hey, I wouldn't mind getting
to talk with you some more. I see you
around here all the time. I'm Cody.

AUDREY
I'm--

BARISTA
Audrey! Order's ready!

AUDREY
--heading out. Nice talking with you.

TRANSITION

22. Audrey sits in the Ice Scraper, fiddling with a straw wrapper..

LONNIE

Another one, Audrey? I'm going to have to cut you off here soon.

AUDREY

Lonnie, this is Diet Coke.

LONNIE

(half-chuckle)

Yeah, I know. It was a joke.

AUDREY

Sorry. I'm a little frazzled. I didn't sleep well. My heat's out.

LONNIE

Ah, so you just came to mooch off mine.

AUDREY

No, not at all! I'm sorry. I did buy a drink.

LONNIE

Another joke. I'll be back with your refill.

AUDREY

Actually, maybe you should cut me off. The caffeine isn't actually doing much for the exhaustion. Just making me jumpy.

IZZY

Hm, that's what happens when you don't eat. How is the one in this friendship without a body the only one who remembers how to take care of one?

AUDREY

Let me grab my card.

LONNIE

It's on the house. It's literally just Diet Coke...I do have to take care of

other customers, though. Stay as long as you like. And holler if you change your mind.

DOYLE
(from a distance)
AUDREY!

AUDREY
Thank you, Lonnie.

Lonnie walks away.

DOYLE
(from a distance)
AUUDREY!

AUDREY
(under her breath)
Ugh, what now?

DOYLE
AUDREY! IZZY!

IZZY
He's not going to stop, you know. Maybe you just need to talk to him. Hear him out.

AUDREY
(under her breath)
Because that worked out so well for me last time.

IZZY
I think he really just needs someone to talk to.

AUDREY
There's a huge difference between small talk and solving someone's murder for them.

IZZY
Come on, Audrey. If ignoring him was going to work, it would have by now.

AUDREY

I--

(under her breath)

--can't keep talking to you here.

IZZY

Then I guess we'd better go outside!

AUDREY

(under her breath)

Fine. Let's get this over with.

23. Audrey exits the Ice Scraper and trudges through the snow to the old cabin.

DOYLE

Audrey! Izzy! Over here!

IZZY

Doyle. We can definitely hear you. You can stop yelling.

DOYLE

Oh, Audrey, you found me. I thought you gave up on me.

AUDREY

Let's go inside so I don't look like I'm off my rocker talking to myself. Again.

IZZY

Ah, yes. Entering a long-abandoned cabin most recently occupied by a murdered newbie. Definitely the most normal you could look in this situation.

AUDREY

You're not helping.

They all enter the cabin

DOYLE

Okay, Audrey. I'm glad you're here. You've got to help me.

IZZY

We'd love to, Doyle, but at this point we're not sure how.

AUDREY

The whole credit union thing kind of backfired.

DOYLE

Didn't you say you were going to talk to the girl who knows everything about this town?

AUDREY

I'm sorry, Doyle. I did talk to her. But Dahlia didn't remember you.

DOYLE

Of course not. Of course, the nice guy, the unassuming guy. The one who never wished anything bad on anyone and got all the flack for it in return. Why would anyone remember that guy?

IZZY

To be fair, she might not have even been born yet when you died.

(beat)

But I know this is hard.

DOYLE

You don't know anything! You have a friend!

IZZY

Yeah, and you have her attention. We're here talking to you, aren't we?

DOYLE

Right, yes. I'm sorry. I just don't want to miss my chance to find out what happened. Maybe there's someone else you need to talk to. That guy that works at the bar? He always gave me the side eye when I was alive. For zero reason. But maybe that's enough. Maybe he'll remember me if you talk to him.

IZZY

Audrey can't keep burning bridges by bringing you up. Your name doesn't exactly inspire goodwill.

DOYLE

Audrey, please. You're my only chance. Do you know how long it's been since I've been able to communicate with anyone? I didn't do anything to deserve this. I haven't spoken to a soul in decades, you understand? And now I've found two that can hear me.

AUDREY

I'm glad we can be there for you, Doyle. I'm sure this hasn't been easy for you.

DOYLE

I don't need pity. I need help. You have resources, Audrey. You have a voice. You can use it. You can help me.

AUDREY

Okay, okay. We'll...brainstorm, I guess. Come up with something. Dahlia did say she would ask her grandmother about you. Something could come of that?

IZZY

You said you died like 30 years ago? Yeah, Dahlia may not have been much help, but her grandma had to at least have her ABCs down by then.

AUDREY

Ha. Ha. But yeah, she's very generous with her produce. I'm sure we'll run into her again at the Ice Scraper sometime soon.

DOYLE

The plant lady? Yes! Sage, right? Yes, she should remember me. Please, Audrey. Please make sure she asks.

AUDREY

I'll do what I can. But I really need to fix the heat in my house, or I'm going to be joining you two on the other side, and then I can't help anyone.

DOYLE

Sure, yeah. Do what you have to do. Just please don't forget about me, Audrey. Please remember you're the only one who can make this right for me.

IZZY

She'll remember, okay? We'll be back.

Audrey leaves the cabin.

IZZY

Uh, Audrey, babe, your snow machine is that way. Which is how we get to our house.

AUDREY

I was serious about fixing the heat. You think I can do that myself?

24. Audrey enters the store. Dahlia is stacking boxes.

DAHLIA

Hiya! What's good?

AUDREY

Not a lot.

DAHLIA

Uh huh. Not to play psychologist, but are you doing all right? You look kind of on edge.

AUDREY

It's...nothing, really.

IZZY

Nothing alive, anyway.

AUDREY

Well, okay, there is something. My heat's out. Which makes me feel like I'm going to show up on some Dateline episode when they find me in twenty years and my body is perfectly preserved in this ridiculous cold.

DAHLIA

(laughs)

Ice Cube Audrey!

(beat)

I'm kidding. I told you Rett can overlook some things. But don't worry. It's not really winter until the first storm. And I would come find you well before twenty years passed.

AUDREY

My hero.

DAHLIA

Anyway, it sounds like your propane is low. Or you're out. Does it smell like rotten eggs?

IZZY

Yes. To be honest, I thought you farted.

AUDREY

Yeah. Propane?

DAHLIA

I'm surprised Rett didn't check that when you moved in. That stuff's pretty integral.

AUDREY

Oh, he did go out to check...something? I think it was propane. He said he brought some but...it was weird. I don't know if he ever actually filled it.

DAHLIA

Weird. Well, Ice Cube Audrey certainly wouldn't look great for his business. Why don't I come take a look? I can haul out a tank.

AUDREY

Oh, I couldn't ask you to do that. Besides, you're working. I was kind of hoping there would just be a quick fix you could tell me about.

DAHLIA

You do know you're allowed to ask for help, right? You don't just have to suffer silently?

AUDREY

I guess I'm not used to having much of anyone around to ask.

DAHLIA

Well, I'm a bit of an obsessive DIY'er myself, so I can't give you too much shit. Let's get you fixed up, though. I was wrapping up here, anyway, on account of Roxanne being MIA. Off we go.

TRANSITION MUSIC

25. Audrey unlocks her front door, and the two enter.

DAHLIA

Hey, you have tons of tools around here! Are you sure you need me?

AUDREY

I did say you didn't need to come...but that's all for my art, actually. If I don't have free reign over how things are supposed to fit together, it all eludes me.

IZZY

Propane tank: 1. Audrey: Negative
eleventy billion and two.

(beat)

I appreciate that after all these
years, you still swat at the air like
you can hit me when I say funny things.

DAHLIA

Not to worry. You don't have to be Bob
the Builder to make it out here. It's
really cool that you're an artist,
though. Although I don't think any of
these fancy drill bits are going to
help defrost this place.

AUDREY

Probably not.

(beat)

I'm still selling in the lower forty-
eight. So I may actually have some
questions for you soon about packing
and shipping. And I may be increasing
your deliveries. Sorry.

DAHLIA

More time in the air? A travesty. But
it's freezing in here, so I'm going to
head outside and see if I can't get
your propane hooked up.

26. Dahlia goes to where the propane tank is
located.

WIND

Dahlia...

DAHLIA

What the hell?

WIND

Dahlia...

DAHLIA

I don't know who is out there, but I
will absolutely fuck you up.

TRANSITION

27. Dahlia re-enters the house.

AUDREY

(quietly)

I told you to shut it. I will lock you in.

DAHLIA

Yeesh. Twentysomething years here and those woods still give me the heebiejebies sometimes. Even during the day.

(beat)

Oops. Am I interrupting the creative process?

AUDREY

(startled)

What? Oh. No. Just a habit. Sorry.

DAHLIA

I like it. Most important relationship you have is with yourself.

IZZY

Or your dead best friend.

AUDREY

Fair. Especially out here.

DAHLIA

Indeed. Haven is good for a lot of things. Escape. An abundance of wildlife. Making a very small army of unique friends. But I hope you didn't move out here for the dating scene.

AUDREY

Uh, no, that's the last thing I need.

DAHLIA

I hear ya. I thought maybe that was your thing, but of course, I didn't want to ask, lest you go all Roxanne on me.

AUDREY

My thing?

DAHLIA

You know, the thing you're running from. Lot of the folks got one up here. But it's kind of like prison. What I've heard of it, at least. Haven't knocked that one off the bucket list just yet. You don't ask anyone what they're in for. If they want you to know, they'll tell you. Otherwise, you just keep your trap shut and cross your fingers the newbie isn't like, y'know, a mass murderer. Or worse, nosy.

AUDREY

Ah. I don't ask anyone much of anything, so I should be safe. But no, I'm not running from a relationship. At least, not from my perspective.

DAHLIA

Hey, I don't want to make you upset. You really don't have to talk about it. I hate when people pry.

AUDREY

No, it's okay. I don't mind. I guess I get sort of embarrassed. Like worried I'm being dramatic or something. I'm sure there are many people here escaping way worse issues.

DAHLIA

It's not a competition, Audrey. Whatever you're feeling...it's valid.

AUDREY

Thanks. Really, it's not some big secret. I guess I just don't know how to talk about it. I don't know how to talk about a lot of things.

DAHLIA

Have you told anyone else?

AUDREY

No.

IZZY

Ouch.

AUDREY

Well, except the police.

IZZY

Double ouch.

AUDREY

And, you know, I've done some...
internal processing.

DAHLIA

Internal processing done out loud.
Makes sense.

(beat)

Might those voicemails from the other
day be of interest in said
"processing"?

AUDREY

You heard that?

DAHLIA

I really tried not to.

AUDREY

I'm sorry, I--

DAHLIA

Don't apologize to me. I'm sorry. That
guy sounded like a next-level asshole.
I don't blame you for hauling ass to
Alaska to be rid of him. Seriously.

AUDREY

Yeah, I guess. I mean, don't get me
wrong, I like it here so far. But I
also feel like I should have been able
to do something more about the
situation.

DAHLIA

You said you talked to the police. You did what you needed to do. Moving here was doing something about it. People get so worked up thinking running is always avoiding. Like it's always choosing not to face whatever it is they have in front of them. But I think people forget running isn't a passive activity. It's a choice. It takes work. And it is "doing something."

AUDREY

I guess you're right.

DAHLIA

Don't get me wrong, a bit of artful back-talk has its own time and place. Like when some of the old-timers here get it in their heads that they can talk to folks however they want. Gareth and Roxanne, for example. Liberating as hell, sure, but it's not always the answer. Especially if your safety is a concern.

AUDREY

I guess that makes sense.

DAHLIA

'Course it does. We've had what, four, five conversations? I'm clearly high authority on the Life of Audrey by now. At least between the two of us.

Both laugh.

DAHLIA

But really, Audrey. I'm glad you're here.

AUDREY

Thanks, Dahlia. And thanks for fixing the propane thingy or whatever.

DAHLIA

Well, I hooked it up to refill. I've got to go check it and make sure all is going smoothly. But the tank could take a while to fill up. And I'm not yet dickish enough to flounce on out of meaningful conversations so I can go gaze at propane.

AUDREY

Oh, that's okay. I don't want to keep you here helping me emotionally and...constructionally? Gaseous-ly?

IZZIE

Ew.

DAHLIA

(laughs)

Environmentally? Maybe?

AUDREY

We'll go with that. But seriously, thank you. For both things. I think it'll take baby steps, but I appreciate being able to open up about everything.

DAHLIA

We can chat anytime. Although I do have the thrilling task of helping Gareth move some stuff today. Though with the way that man puts away liquor, it might be more making sure he doesn't topple over. But I'll get you squared away before I go.

AUDREY

Thanks, Dahlia. For real.

DAHLIA

(laughs)

You've said that a couple times now. But don't mention it. For real.

Dahlia pulls the front door shut.

IZZY

She's right, you know.

AUDREY

Thanks for letting me talk to her. I almost forgot you were there.

(beat)

But not actually. I hope I didn't hurt your feelings with the "not talking to anyone about it" thing. I just meant--

IZZY

You don't have to explain. I get it.

AUDREY

This feels like an appropriate time for a little hand squeeze that says "I love you" without having to verbalize it. But given...you know.

IZZY

Consider my non-existent hand squeezed. Love you, too.

(beat)

I actually appreciated Dahlia's perspective.

AUDREY

About what?

IZZY

The whole confrontation thing.

AUDREY

About running being okay?

IZZY

About it being liberating.

AUDREY

Izzy, you know I never would have confronted Cody. That could've been so dangerous.

IZZY

God no, of course. I may not have chosen Alaska, but I don't blame you

for just getting away. I was actually thinking about Doyle.

AUDREY

The shifty ghost in the abandoned cabin? Why?

IZZY

I know I advocated for helping him. And I still feel that pang of guilt when I think about how stuck he is. But he's also, like, really annoying. And I know you don't want to deal with it every time we pass his place going into town.

AUDREY

I'm no good at asserting myself.

IZZY

But if you're going to get better at it...

AUDREY

You're thinking a random dead guy feels like a good place to start?

IZZY

Hey, we do have feelings, too, you know. But...yeah, I'm thinking that's a good place to start.

AUDREY

I don't hate the idea.

IZZY

Whaaa? Moving to the middle of nowhere, not immediately shooting down my idea to confront toxic men...you know, I may be bored here, but I like this new Audrey.

AUDREY

Yeah, well, this new Audrey's gonna lose her courage real quick if we don't go as soon as Dahlia's done.

IZZY

I mean, I had so much on my schedule,
but I guess I can make the time...

TRANSITION MUSIC

28. Audrey pushes open the door to the abandoned cabin
where Doyle lives.

AUDREY

Hellooo? Doyle?

DOYLE

(from afar)

Yes? Yeah! I'm here!

(near)

Oh, thank God. You came back! I knew
you would come back. I knew it, Audrey:
you're one of the good ones. Now, I've
been thinking, maybe if we start with--

AUDREY

Doyle!

DOYLE

Huh? I have a new plan, Audrey.

AUDREY

I didn't come here to help you.

DOYLE

You...what?

AUDREY

I empathize with your situation. I do.
But I...

(deep breath)

I can't be involved in it anymore.

DOYLE

You're telling me you hopped on a
snowmobile and came all the way here
just to tell me to fuck off?

IZZY

Snow machine, dumbass. No wonder they never liked you here. You didn't even try to fit in.

(beat)

Sorry, you were handling this.

AUDREY

Right. Well...that's what I had to say.

DOYLE

This is absurd. Is this part of some "let him down easy" act? I don't deserve this. You just came here to see my reaction when you rejected me to my face?

AUDREY

I wanted to make sure you understood. And I wanted to stand up for myself. I have a lot going on, believe it or not, and I can't take this on right now. Not that you would know that, considering you never asked.

DOYLE

Amazing. You're not helping me because I didn't ask how you are? Thirty years in the theoretical grave and I emerge to find women haven't changed a bit.

AUDREY

Oh, trust me. Small talk isn't my thing. But you kind of just shoved all your problems on me just because I could hear you. With no regard to what else I might be dealing with. I can't be consumed with this. And frankly, I think you should try not to be consumed by it, either.

DOYLE

Try not to be consumed by it? Oh sweetie, this is my entire life. If you can even call it that anymore. I'm stuck here. I can't just travel outside

this cabin with my BFF that hears dead people and continue on my merry way like I never even died. I'm in this shithole cabin in this shithole town with no end in sight. You can go wherever you want. And you can take your dead pal with you. I just want that, too. And I think you're selfish for not using your advantages to help those who don't have what you have.

AUDREY

Yeah, well, I may not be as free as you think. And this isn't always a walk in the park for Izzy, either. Like I said, we empathize.

(beat)

But I don't think you're helping yourself. Seething in rage at these people who you never even gave a chance? Holding grudges, bathing in self-pity. I hate to break it to you, but you're dead. For good. No one around here is trying to keep you here. I don't know what happened to you, and that sucks. But the only one who seems to be perpetuating your torment is you. I've been pestered by dead people for years. So trust me when I say, whatever the trauma is that's holding you here, it's probably something you need to deal with.

DOYLE

But you don't underst--

AUDREY

Ah. See, I actually said what I needed to say. I'm not really interested in a response.

IZZY

Bye, Desd Guy. Hope you find your killer.

Audrey exits the cabin.

DOYLE

(muffled)

Whatever, you stupid bitches! I never needed your help anyway!

IZZY

This feels very reminiscent of the "you're ugly anyway" comments you get moments after rejecting a guy who just moments before would have kissed the ground you walk on.

(beat)

But seriously, Audrey. That was amazing.

AUDREY

I'm shaking. Am I supposed to be shaking?

IZZY

Adrenaline. It'll pass. But--and I mean this in the most sincere, least condescending way possible--I'm really proud of you.

AUDREY

Thanks, Izzy.

IZZY

And your ability to assert yourself while still managing to have probably the most therapeutic conversation that man has ever had.

AUDREY

Empathy is as much a curse as hearing dead people. Let's go home.

IZZY

I'm happy to go anywhere with you.

TRANSITION

29. Cody sits in a quiet restaurant, the gentle buzz of ambiance around him. Then, he stands, his stool skidding against the floor as he does so.

CODY
You must be Ellie.

ELLIE
You guessed it. Great to meet you, Cody.

The two sit.

CODY
I've never been here before, but apparently they give you a choice at the door: old-school Buzztime pub trivia or 20 questions cards. I went with the cards.

ELLIE
Ah, it's like they market this place specifically for people who met online and are bound for an awkward first encounter.

(beat)
Not that this is awkward.

CODY
It's totally awkward.

ELLIE
(laughs)
Glad we can agree.

Cody shuffles the cards.

CODY
Shall we?

ELLIE
Why not? Okay, this one's easy. Tell me about your first pet.

CODY
I've actually never owned an animal.

ELLIE
What? Never? Not even a fish?

CODY
Not even a fish. Where did you grow up?

ELLIE

Boring answer: Here, actually.
Kindergarten through college right in
the city.

CODY

Really? I can't imagine growing up in a
place like this. My childhood was
picket fences and overly friendly
neighbors.

ELLIE

I guess it's not weird if it's all you
know. I think my parents were a little
strict growing up because of it. My
high school was down the street, but my
dad walked with me every morning. I can
still hear him saying, "Have a good
day, Ellie Belly! Go Raiders!"

CODY

(laughs forcibly)

I'm sure that was embarrassing. Oh my
goodness, wait...Raiders? You didn't go
to Twin Valley, did you?

ELLIE

I did! Did you? Well, you said you
didn't grow up here, so probably not.

CODY

Not me, but my best friend, Audrey.
Hey, you two were probably about the
same year, I'd think? But I'm sure it's
such a big school.

ELLIE

No, I did know an Audrey.

CODY

You are kidding. What are the odds we
already have a mutual friend?

ELLIE

Well, she was a classmate. I didn't know her well. Actually, I can't say I've spoken to her since graduation. Or even since, well...

CODY

...since?

ELLIE

Just everything with her friend. She was much more quiet...after. But she was going through so much.

CODY

Her friend?

ELLIE

You know, Izzy?

CODY

Oh, Izzy! Of course! I believe they still talk often, actually.

ELLIE

Huh? Izzy died.

CODY

What?

ELLIE

Yeah. In high school. I didn't know her well, either. But I'll always remember it happened right after prom, because they cracked down on after prom parties the next year.

CODY

Well, shit, that's...I don't know how I didn't know that. I swore I've heard her talki--I mean, I swore she's said she talked to her recently. I must have been thinking of someone else.

ELLIE

Yeah, I mean...this was high school. Maybe she's just trying to move past it.

CODY

Man, I bet that was so hard on her. Did she ever seem to get back to normal after that? Like, how was she at school?

ELLIE

Uh, I'm not sure I'm the person to ask, really. I barely knew her.

CODY

Right, of course. I'm sorry.

ELLIE

Maybe that's something you can talk to her about? Maybe she just doesn't know how to bring it up?

CODY

Oh, certainly. I'll definitely do that. Unfortunately, we've really lost touch since she moved out of the city. In fact, I don't even quite know where she moved! Hey, you wouldn't know if there are any resources or something through the school? To get in touch with other alumni?

ELLIE

Didn't you say she was your best friend?

CODY

I may have mis-represented that a bit. Actually, we dated at one point.

ELLIE

Oh, okay, I see. So this is actually just a colossal waste of my time. Super.

CODY

No, no, of course not. I've definitely moved on. And I've really enjoyed getting to know you. And I feel like you thought the same about me.

ELLIE

Yes, Cody. I've loved learning about your non-existent pet and how you don't know how to choose flattering photos of yourself for your profile. It's been a treat.

CODY

Ellie, wait.

ELLIE

I hope you find whatever it is you're looking for.

Ellie walks away.

CODY

Oh, I will. She's not making it very fucking easy. But I will find her.

THE END