Can A Snowflake Be Saved? (Sequel to Snowflake My Pretty Little Snowflake)

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Summary

This is the Sequel to Snowflake, My pretty little snowflake which you will need to read first in order to follow the story.

Niall had been tricked to travel to a remote area where he was kidnapped and taken to an hidden age play community. Given a regression drug, he was now in the headspace of a very new baby. His brother, Greg, is currently jailed for the supposed kidnapping and murder of Niall, but a detective has discovered things are not adding up. An attempt to get Niall and Harry out of the Community failed badly so will they remain there or is rescue possible?

This is an Ageplay story so please do not read it if it is not' your cup of tea' as the English say. Also English is not my first language and I do make mistakes so please don't be unkind.
"Tell me again!" the detective said, leaning forward over the desk that separated him from the man in the orange jumpsuit who sat facing him. "Come on, tell me"

"I've told you...over and over again. I've told you" Greg Horan replied, his tone exasperated. "I told you then, I'm telling you now. I didn't send that text and I haven't murdered my brother. I keep telling you. This is pointless." he threw his hands up in disgust. "You keep asking and I keep telling you. I didn't do it. I never hurt my little brother. I couldn't, I love Niall."

"Who was your accomplice then? Who helped you? If you didn't send that text, then somebody did. Who did you pay, Greg? Where's Niall's body?" the detective pursued relentlessly.

"How many f.cking times do I need to tell you?" Greg shouted. "I didn't hurt my brother, I didn't pay someone to hurt him. I don't know what happened to him. This is useless. I want to go back to my cell" he looked at the Correctional Officer who was standing silently by the door, watching the proceedings. "You don't believe me so why are you doing this to me. Do you get some kind of turn on by torturing me this way?" Greg stood up angrily.

"I do believe you, Greg" the detective said quietly. "I believe you didn't send that text but did you have an accomplice? That's what I need to know."

"You believe me?" Greg's voice was barely a whisper as he sat down, shock written all over his face. "You believe me".

Tucked away in a very remote area, the hidden community was running smoothly on well oiled wheels. Security had been tightened up to such extremes that it was deemed almost impossible to get in or out without notice. Even necessary trips to the 'outside' now had to be cleared by the community leader, Simon Cowell. They had escaped detection for so long that they were desperate to continue being safe haven for those people who participated in age play. There must be no breaches and the town was set up in such a way that contact with the outside world was very limited.

The weather was beautifully warm and sunny and Zayn was taking full advantage of the day by sitting out in the back yard with his small son. Niall lay on a soft blanket and was happily engaged in rolling over from his tummy, to his back, then back onto to his tummy again. He babbled to himself, small arms and legs jerking as he wiggled about. Zayn watched over him, a fond smile on
his lips. He adored the small lad and could no longer imagine life without the little Irish man in it.

"Bababa" Niall gurgled as he played, making Zayn's smile even bigger as he listened to the baby babbling. Despite Doctor Andrews having explained that, because there was a fully developed adult mind masked by the regression drugs, it still both a shock and a delight every time the two men heard their 'baby' son talk.

"Babe? Where are you?" Liam called from inside the house.

"Out the back" Zayn responded. "Come on, little man, let's go in and see Daddy, yeah?" He picked Niall up, cuddling him to his chest and breathing in the sweet smell of baby powder.

"Dada?" Niall reached a small hand up to Zayn's face, small fingers brushing against the man's neatly styled beard. "Dada?" he repeated.

"Yes, baby, let's go see Dada" and they stepped through the French doors into the coolness of the house.

"There you are" Liam said cheerfully, holding out his arms to take Niall and cuddling him. "I missed my little boy." He kissed Niall's forehead then leaned over and pecked Zayn on the lips.

"How did it go, babe?" Zayn wanted to know. Simon Cowell was getting together with various factions of the community to insure both safety and the ability for the town to run with as little outside contact as possible. This time it was the turn of all medically trained personnel and, though Liam was currently being a 'stay at home' dad, he was a very experienced Paramedic.

"Good, I think. Josh, Steve and Mikey were there. Mark Jarvis, the head nurses and Doctors Clarke and Andrews, and that Pharmacologist guy, Preston Mahon. Doctor Clarke has asked for the medical equipment to be updated as the hospital needs to be completely self sufficient. Preston has asked for the same regarding both medication and research. He has new drugs he's developing. Mark was happy with his situation, so were the nurses. And our Paramedic side is pretty tight. If everything goes through then we'll be able to deal with the majority of medical issues without ever needing to resort to outside help."

"That'll be a relief. It could be the smallest thing that endangers the community. If we block as many of the loopholes as we can, I'd feel happier." Zayn said seriously.

"Me too" Liam agreed. "The less contact with the outside world, the less risk of discovery. It's your
"Yeah, we're looking at all security and seeing if we need to alter anything. It's really tight but Simon wants to make sure there is no room for error. The incident with Patience could have blown the whole thing wide open. Simon also wants a tighter watch on everyone in the community. If Patience wanted to expose us, there might be others." Zayn was somber. He didn't like the idea of spying on his friends and neighbours but the safety of the community was paramount.

"Speaking of Patience" Liam suddenly said "I thought Louis and Serena were taking her in as a big sister to Harry. What's happening there cos I haven't heard from either of them to say how she was doing and if she was settling into the family OK?"

"Patience is still in the hospital, she hasn't been regressed yet but it will probably happen fairly soon now. Serena and Louis decided they wanted the all the physical adaptations done before the regression. And Doctor Andrews started her on hormone treatment to reverse puberty a few months ago. Lou and Serena haven't quite decided on the age they want her but are leaning towards 18 months to two years old. They really want a toddler who will be more interactive with them. Harry's staying tiny, like our Nialler." Zayn said as he mashed up an avocado for the baby. "Will you feed him or shall I?" he asked.

"I'll do it, Zee. I've missed being with him today" Liam sat Niall more upright on his lap, carefully supporting Niall's small body against his broad chest. "Thanks" he smiled at his husband as Zayn fixed a bib around Niall's neck then put the bowl of mashed up food in front of his husband. Liam expertly spooned the food into Niall's eager mouth, cooing as the small man smacked his lips and opened his mouth ready for the next spoonful. It reminded Liam of a tiny bird, anxious to be fed and he found it endearing.

"Awe, he is just so adorable" Zayn said lovingly as he watched. "And now nothing and nobody will take him away from us. He'll always be our little snowflake."
Flurry Of Activity

Niall had been crying on and off all night and both Liam and Zayn were exhausted. Liam had tried nearly everything to sooth the small lad but nothing seemed to help. The only time his cries died down was when he was being walked around by Zayn, but even then he was constantly whimpering.

"Maybe a warm bath would help?" Liam suggested as he ran his hands through his hair making it stick up.

"Anything is worth trying, Li" Zayn agreed and he carried Niall into the adjoining bathroom. Liam followed and busied himself running the water until he was satisfied with the temperate. Once it was to his liking, he put the plugin and added a squirt of the lavender-scented bubble bath that he hoped would soothe his baby. Zayn had started to undress Niall and pulled a face when he undid Niall's diaper to find it was messy and that Niall obviously had a very upset tummy. He quickly cleaned Niall, hissing softly when he saw the red skin. Zayn shook his head in wonder, they had only changed Niall into a clean diaper less than an hour ago and already his poor area was red and sore looking.

"Ow!" Liam exclaimed as he took in Niall's sore skin. "Poor lamb. Sshh, little man" he cooed at the boy who was sobbing again "Dada will make it all better." He carried the boy over to the bath and lowered him in gently but Niall screamed even louder.

"Here, here's your duckie", Zayn said trying to distract the boy. Much to his surprise, Niall grabbed it and immediately put it into his mouth and chewed on it. Zayn and Liam stared at the boy, both seeing the tension in Niall's jaw as he bit down on the rubber duck in his hand. "I wonder" Zayn murmured. "Do you think he's teething?" He stopped and shook his head "No, he's got his teeth. Toothache, maybe?"

"Zee, you've hit on it. Well done. No, not toothache..he's teething!" Li replied, having a lightbulb moment.

"Li...really!" Zayn sounded skeptical.

"Really! I think he might be having trouble with his wisdom teeth!" Liam carefully lifted Niall from the bath and dried him quickly before carrying him back to the bedroom. Laying Niall on the bed, he turned and took the diaper and cream Zayn was handing him. Niall was soon diapered and back in his warm onesie, a soft blanket wrapped around him. Niall had begun crying again so Liam handed him to Zayn before dashing back into the bathroom and rummaging through the
medications and creams in the cabinet there. He returned quickly, a look of triumph on his face as he held up a small tube. "Teething Gel" he grinned. He put some on his fingers and the moment they were in Niall's small mouth, Niall was trying to bite down on them. Liam swiftly rubbed the gel on the inflamed gums at the back of Niall's mouth. "I can feel the edge of a tooth under the gum, Zee" he announced.

"I should have thought of that sooner" Zayn said guiltily as he looked down at the small lad in his arms who was now quietly sucking on a paci, his eyes heavy with sleep. Minutes after Liam had rubbed the red and inflamed gums right at the back of Niall's small mouth, the sobbing had ceased and Niall seemed very tired but pain-free for the time being.

"Poor lamb" Liam said. "I wish I had realised earlier. I'll take him to the clinic tomorrow. and get them to see. It may be he needs to have them removed. His jaw is so tiny, it doesn't look as if he has room for them to come through properly. Maybe that's the issue?"

"Yeah, I think that's wise. Can you manage yourself? I've got that security meeting with Simon and the other guys tomorrow" Zayn asked, concern in his voice.

"Yeah, babe, I'll be fine. And I think we both mean today" he looked ruefully at the clock by the side of the bed. It read 3:45am. "Let's try and get some sleep." and with that, he lay Niall into his crib and climbed into bed. Zayn carefully set the alarm, then got in behind his husband, pulling him into his chest and snuggling up to him. In minutes the room was totally silent except for the sound of soft breathing.

Niall was dreaming. Soft swirls of color, the faces of his Dada and Baba floated before his closed eyelids. Other faces, the sounds of a soft lullaby Baba sang ...."snowflake, my pretty little snowflake" which suddenly morphed into another song, achingly familiar..."I won't let these little things slip out of my mouth but if I do......." More faces, different faces. Faces he knew that he recognized as familiar and comforting, but.......he tried to remember..sweat started pouring from his tiny body as he got more and more desperate to hang onto those faces, to say their names." as the adult part of his mind, freed by sleep from the control of the regression drug, tried to breakthrough. He woke up screaming.

"Baba, Baba" Niall screamed as he was torn from sleep and his baby mind once again took control. "Baba". Zayn sat up hurriedly, throwing the bedclothes aside as he sprang from the bed and scooped the sobbing boy from the crib, anxious to soothe the lad and quell the tormented sounding crying.

"Hush, hush" Zayn whispered. "Baba has you, you're safe." He looked at Liam who had also woken up and was looking at them both with alarm. "Go to sleep, babe," Zayn said quietly. "I'll look after the baby." He laid a soft blanket on the bed and put Niall down on it, then swaddled him
firmly before picking him back up and cuddling him closely to his chest, all the time whispering soothingly. Niall's sobs died away and he looked up at Zayn, blue eyes still swimming with tears. Zayn carried him downstairs into the kitchen and soon had a bottle warmly in the microwave. Once the bottle was warm enough, Zayn sat down at the kitchen table and put the teat into Niall's mouth, watching as his son sucked slowly, the baby's blue eyes staring back up at his own golden brown ones.

Niall hadn't settled back to sleep so it was a very exhausted Zayn who sat in Simon's office, along with Louis and the other men charged with the security of the Community. Simon's desk was littered with blueprints and plans that the men were all studying carefully. Each system was examined for flaws and backup systems were put into place. Their town was going to be impossible to enter or leave without the security being alerted. It was Fort Knox.

"Louis, you are sure you have everything sorted, no loose ends?" Simon turned towards Louis.

"Si, it would take months to unpick the safeguards I have in place. And the moment somebody tries, I'll know!" Louis replied confidently. "If someone breaches our systems, it will be a miracle."

"Unfortunately, miracles do happen, Lou" Zayn said soberly. "We'll have to be more alert than ever. There is no telling what could go wrong." Zayn couldn't shake that uncomfortable feeling that they had missed something, something vital, that could destroy them all. He shrugged it off, he was tired, beyond tired, that was it. He pushed the feeling to the back of his mind.

"Quite" Simon agreed. "Well gentlemen, if that is all, I'll see you all at our regular sessions." The men all stood and filed out of Simon's office.

"G*dd, I'm tired," Zayn said, rubbing his hand across his face. "Niall cried all night. He's teething... wisdom teeth."

"Poor thing," Louis said, "Are you taking him to Doc Andrews?"

"Yeah, Li was heading there this morning. Has Harry had any testing problems?" Zayn asked then yawned.

"Mate, you need to get some sleep. Nah, Harry hasn't had problems there, his are all erupted through. Mind you, now you mention it, I get the medics to check Patience's teeth...forewarned and all that." Louis said thoughtfully.
"Wise" Zayn yawned again "When are you getting Patience?"

"Soon, today we hope. The hormone treatment is all done, just the physical adaptations to be dealt with and the regression. We've chosen 18 months to two years for her. Serena thinks that will be great as it will be a nice gap between her and Harry. Serena's already going mad buying these cute little dresses." Louis shook his head ruefully ." She's bought enough clothes to last a lifetime."

"Please, you have to let me go, I beg you. This is so f.cked up" Patience pleaded with the tall nurse that was leaning over the bars of the crib but Nurse Collins just smirked down at her.

"Naughty little munchkin, using those filthy words. But don't worry, Nurse will make your pretty little mouth clean again."The nurse reached out to the trolley next to the crib and picked up a bar of soap which she shoved into Patience's mouth. "Don't you dare spit it out" she warned the girl "Or you'll really regret it." She smiled again as she saw the look of terror on the young girls face.

"Nurse Collins" Doctor Andrews had entered the room and hearing her mother's voice, Patience tugged harder on the restraints that kept her tethered to the crib. " The PAC is ready to take Patience now. Please take her down there. Here is a list of the changes the Tomlinsons require. The regression will be done when you get back."

"Mom, please, mom" Patience begged her mother having spat out the bar of soap. What else could Nurse Collins do that was worse than what was to come? Patience held her breath in hope as her mother approached her crib and looked down at her distraught daughter. "Mom, please don't do this. Mom...." tears were pouring down her cheeks but her mother remained expressionless.

"I'm no longer your mother, Patience. You chose to break the community rules and you will now play the price" Doctor Andrews spoke coldly but her hands clenched slightly as she spoke. "I will be your grandmother when we speak again. Count yourself lucky that we are being so lenient with you." And she walked out of the room without a backward glance.

"Time to go" Nurse Collins called in Mark, one of the medical assistants and together they pushed the crib out of the room and down the corridors to the Physical Adaptation Clinic. Patience was crying, but quietly now. Her body was shaking with fear. She had already had puberty reversed by drug therapy and now she had to face more changes but not knowing what they could be.

"Hi, you're finally here. I've been expecting you" Pamela, the perky blond in charge of the PAC chirped as the crib was pushed through the door. "You have the list of what needs doing?" she
asked and Nurse Collins handed her the folder. Pamela opened it and read through it carefully.
"Just the normal procedures, it appears. Will one of you be staying to help?" she looked between
Mark and Nurse Collins.

"I will" Nurse Collins replied. "Patience and I are old friends and she knows what behavior I expect
from her, don't you Patience?" She glared at the young women in the crib who shrank back, her
eyes increasingly fearful as she tried to think what 'the normal procedures' entailed. Her body
already physically resembled that of a child, her breasts had disappeared and all traces of adulthood
almost entirely erased.

"Excellent" Pamela said the cooed down at Patience, speaking as if she was already a little toddler.
"Nurse is just going to give you something to make you sleep you undressed then when you wake
up from your little nap, you'll be done". Patience struggled against her restraints, making her wrists
and ankles bleed as she tried to get free but it was useless. She screamed as Nurse Collins
approached with the syringe but there was no stopping her and the needle was expertly plunged
into her thigh. Patience caught the sedation but it was too powerful and she was soon laying limp
and quiet. The two women began their work.

Patience woke up back in the room where she had been kept prisoner for that last few months. Her
head felt like it was stuffed with cotton wool and her skin felt tingly.

"I see my little munchkin is awake" Patience tried turning her head at the sound of nurse Collin's
voice. "Time to get you all ready" She lowered the side of the crib and pulled a trolley closer to the
bed, before pulling off the soft blanket that covered the Patience's body. The girl managed to lift
her head an inch, with a massive effort, her head and stared down at herself. Her body was totally
hairless, the final signs of adulthood had gone. A slow tear leaked out of her eyes. "Now then,
Nurse is just going to get you all clean and fresh" And the nurse immediately began washing the
girl's body, before rubbing in lotion over every inch of skin. She then lifted the girl's legs up, using
the restraints and slid a diaper underneath the girl, creaming and powdering her private areas before
fastening the diaper securely. The nurse then removed the bandages from around the girl's wrists
and ankles, cleaning the abrasions that had been caused by the girl's contestant struggles to escape.
These were then re-bandaged. Patience wanted to struggle, to scream but the remains of the
sedation she had received kept her compliant. Her eyes widened when she saw the frilly little dress
that Nurse Collins was maneuvering her floppy body into. She did start to struggle then but
received a sharp slap on her thigh. "Behave, or else" was Nurse Collins only remark.

The nurse had finally left the room and Patience lay there, willing her body to obey her. The
restraints had not been reattached making her hope that she could climb out of the crib but though
her mind was clear, her body would not obey her. She couldn't even make the smallest movement.

"Now, is my little munchkin ready for her bottle?" Nurse Collins was back, an oversized baby
bottle in her hand. She placed it down and lowered the side of the crib again, easily lifting the girl
out and carrying her to a chair, picking up the bottle of milk as she passed. "Time for your bottle"
Nurse Collins cooed obnoxiously. She pushed the teat into Patience's mouth. The girl immediately
tried to turn her head away but couldn't."It's all right Munchkin, Nurse gave you some lovely
medicine so you don't have to worry about trying to escape. Your body can't move until it wears
off." And she laughed nastily. "Now drink".

The iV was set up ready and Patience was once again back in the detested crib. Doctor Andrews
stood watching as the Nurse changed Patience into a clean diaper. Much to her horror, the girl
found that she had used the diaper then realization hit. There hadn't been just milk in the bottle that
she had been forced to drink. Her humiliation was nearly complete. The nurse pulled down the
frilly dress, put little frilly socks on her feet then covered her with a soft blanket before stepping
back.

"M….om" Patience tried a final time. Her mother cleaned the back of her daughter's hand and
inserted the cannula before attaching the iV. She removed the clip and let the solution start to flow
into the captive girl, adjusting the flow carefully.

"Let me know when it is complete," Doctor Andrews said. Her mommy and Daddy will be in
shortly. Once treatment is complete and I have examined her, she can go home with them" And
with that, she was gone.
Teething Troubles

Patience lay in the adult sized crib, watching helplessly as the fluid from the iV dripped slowly into her body. She whimpered in frustration, tears spilling from her eyes. This was it. Not only had she failed to get Niall and Harry away from this hell, she was now trapped in it herself. There was no way out. None. Zip, Nada. She could only pray that the Tomlinsons would be kind to her. She once thought she could get help. She begged everyone she saw but they either ignored her pleas or told her she had got what she deserved. A few were kind and listened but said nothing. It was hopeless.

He stood by the door, listening to the soft sounds of crying and it hurt his heart. He had watched her grow, from pretty child to beautiful young woman and now she was being forcibly regressed back to that helpless state of childhood. Glancing around to make sure nobody was watching, he slowly pushed the door open and let himself into the room. He checked the corridor again before letting the door click shut behind him then approached the crib. He put his fingers to his lips in the universal gesture of asking for quiet. Her eyes, swimming with tears, looked up at him but her crying stopped. Moving even closer, he stared at the iV, looking closely at it, frowning slightly at the label on the bag containing the regression drug. His fingers picked at the torn corner, pulling a little of the paper free. His face suddenly looked thunderous. He turned his attention back to the crib and the girl lying in it. Her eyes were closed now, tears drying on her cheeks. She had finally succumbed to sleep. Quietly and carefully he lowered the side of the crib and, mindful of the iV, lifted her up and cuddled her into his massive chest. She whimpered softly in her sleep and he murmured softly to her, telling her she was safe and loved.

Sounds in the corridor made him look uneasily over his shoulder so he hastily replaced her back in the crib and raised the side, locking it into place. He looked around the room and saw the trolley Nurse Collins had used earlier was pushed to one side. He grabbed it quickly as the door opened and Nurse Collins came into the room and saw him.

"Just collecting this, Nurse Collins" he said cheerfully.

"Good, I hate untidy rooms" Nurse Collins replied as she strode towards the crib then checked the iV. "Well, don't just stand there, man" she snapped as he stood there, looking between her and the crib. "I'm sure you have other work to do. The baby clinic is due to start in half an hour."

"Yes, M'am" he responded and hurried out, pulling the trolley behind him. Once the door had shut, he let out a sigh of relief. He'd come close to being caught, he could feel his heart was still pounding. He pushed the trolley into the preparation room and cleared it off, cleaning it then restocking it for future use. A quick glimpse of his watch had appraised him of the fact that the Baby Clinic was about to start and he would be needed. He dashed out, straightening his clothing as he went.

"Niall Malik-Payne" the nurse called out and both Liam and Zayn stood and followed her into the
examination room. Zayn had Niall in his arms and Niall was chewing on a teething ring, one of his cheeks looking red and slightly swollen. "Doctor will be with you shortly" the nurse said smiling at them. "If you'd like to undress baby, I'll get him weighed and take his temperature before she arrives." Zayn nodded and, sitting down, quickly undressed Niall who immediately began to get fussy.

"I'm sorry" Zayn said as he handed Niall over to the nurse. "He's really not well at the moment."

"Oh, poor lamb" the nurse cooed at the small blond boy. "Doctor will make you all better soon". She took him over to the scales and weighed him then wrote down the result before lifting him up again and carrying him to the examination couch where she flipped him gently onto his tummy and inserted the lubricated tip of the thermometer into his small hole. Niall screamed in outrage and tried to wriggle away from the intrusive feeling but the nurse kept one hand firmly pressed onto his back, keeping him in place. "There, there" she soothed as she removed the thermometer and read it quickly. "Oh poor little thing..no wonder you are being so fussy, you have a small fever." Both Liam and Zayn exchanged worried looks at her words.

"Is it bad?" Liam immediately asked as he picked Niall up from the couch and wrapped a fluffy blanket around Niall's small body.

"38.2" the nurse replied "And taking it rectally is the most accurate way, as you know." Liam nodded. Niall's temperature wasn't dangerously high but it was obvious that the small lad was not at all well.

"Ah, the Malik-Paynes" Doctor Andrews said as she sailed into the room..."Liam, Zayn, how are you both?" she extended her hand and both men stood and shook it. "What can I do for you today? I take it that baby is not well as he isn't due for his regular appointment for a few weeks yet."

"We're good, thanks" Zayn replied "But we were up all night with Niall. He has been fussy since yesterday, cried all night then had night terrors the one time we did get him asleep. He's been biting on anything and everything, too."

"His gums at the back of his mouth are red and inflamed" Liam added when Zayn finished speaking "I put teething gel on them which seemed to help a little but this morning his face was red and swollen on that side."

"Let's have a little look then, shall we?" the doctor waited until Liam laid Niall back down on the examination couch and Doctor Andrews immediately opened Niall's small mouth and peered in. Grabbing a tongue depressor, she put it into Niall's mouth then used a small light to examine the
back of his mouth, tut tutting as she saw the inflamed gums. "Oh dear, yes. His gums are very swollen. No wonder the poor baby is being fussy." She replaced the light and depressed back on the tray and unwrapped the blanket that was wrapped around Niall. "I'll just have a little look at him since he's here" she commented as she proceeded to examine Niall carefully, listening to his heart and lungs, checking his private area, and damaged knee before straightening up and looking at the notes the nurse had made. "He's a nice weight now but his temperature is up, no doubt due to the teething. Some Motrin will help there for the time being, and cool baths if it gets too high. Liam, you know the drill." she continued and Liam nodded.

"Nurse, would you please diaper and dress baby for his parents while we talk?" Doctor Andrews asked and the nurse smiling took Niall's clothing from Zayn and went to carry out the instructions. The doctor turned back to Liam and Zayn.

"Niall's wisdom teeth seem to be impacted. His jaw is very small and there just isn't the room for them to come through properly. That's the cause of his pain. You can keep rubbing his gums with teething gel but it's only a temporary fix. The ideal solution would be to have his wisdom teeth removed." the doctor concluded.

"Ummh, is that really necessary?" Zayn instantly asked. "I mean, he'd be petrified by a dentist."

"Zayn, it would be done under a general anesthesetic. Niall will be completely unaware of the procedure." The doctor said patiently, used to parents getting anxious over even the most minor things. "We would do it here. He'll be in pain for a time afterwards but we can manage that with medication. Really, unless the teeth are removed, Niall will continue to have these bouts of pain. And bear in mind, untreated problems with wisdom teeth do carry their own dangers. Removal would be best." She said firmly.

Zayn and Liam looked at each other then across the room at Niall who was now crying fretfully in the nurses arms as she swayed him from side to side in a bid to soothe and comfort him.

"When can you do it?" Zayn said, resignedly. He hated the thought of his baby having to face surgery and he knew Liam felt the same.

"Well, as I have just examined baby and he is quite well, apart from the teething problems, we should be able to go ahead with it this week." She turned to her computer and started typing rapidly. "Ah, yes. The operation can be done on Friday morning. I think if you bring baby in at 7am. Nurse will give you instructions regarding preparation for the operation. Doctor Whelan is an excellent oral surgeon. Baby Niall will be in very capable hands." Doctor Andrews said reassuringly.
"I can't believe she'll soon be how with us" Serena said excitedly. "It seems like we've been waiting forever".

"Yeah, it has been a long wait but at least everything has already been done.....all that hormone stuff and body modifications. We won't have to mess about sorting any of that out. All we'll have to do is get her settled into the family " Louis replied. "I wonder how she and Harry will be together?"

"Do you think Harry will be jealous? I mean, he's been the center of attraction for so long" Serena sounded worried.

"Serena, Hazzy is a baby. He's not going to feel jealous. He's too little. More likely we'll have to deal with Patience being jealous of H." Louis said reasonably. "I mean, things won't really change from his point of view as he's still need breastfeeding and so forth."

"True" Serena said thoughtfully. "I wonder if I should feed her as well?"

"NO!" Louis snapped loudly, then more quietly "No, Serena. We decided we were having a toddler. We have already have a small baby so be content with that." Louis said firmly then, to soften his words 'you will have so much fun dressing her up in frilly dresses and putting ribbons in her hair." Serena's face lit up as he spoke. Yes, she would enjoy that. She'd have a cute little baby and a pretty little toddler. Perfect!

"You are going to have a big sister, won't that be nice!" Serena said cheerfully as she changed Harry's diaper. "You'll have someone to play with". Once Harry was clean and fastened into his fresh diaper, Serena dressed him in a cute onesie that had little kittens all over it. He looked adorable. She then ran a brush gently through his soft curls. They had got so long they were brushing against his shoulders. Serena thought she ought to cut his hair but he looked so cute with all those curls, she couldn't bear to do it. Picking Harry up, she carried him downstairs and settled herself on the couch, opening her blouse and guiding Harry to latch on to her breast. There were no fights, no struggles these days. Harry always suckled immediately, his big green eyes fastened on Serena's face. She loved these moments and so wanted to have them with Patience but Louis was adamant and she knew better than to go against him.

"That's wonderful! Thank you so much......... Yes, I'll tell Serena now......... Yes, we are......... We'll see you then." Serena listened as Louis spoke to someone on the phone. He came into the room, looking happy and excited and she gave him a questioning look.

"That was Doctor Andrews. Patience has been regressed and had her final check up so Doctor
Andrews is going to bring her here. They'll be about twenty minutes." Louis said cheerfully. "We're all prepared so..yeah"

"That's awesome. Finally we have our complete family." Serena smiled up at Louis."It been such a long wait."

"Yeah, it has but at least we are totally prepared ." Louis agreed. "Once she's settled, we'll get Zayn and Liam to bring Niall around. Oh, and Josh and his little girl, Chloe. She's about the same age as Patience so they'll play well together. I'm just going to check her nursery" and Louis bounded out of the room, energised by the excitement of having another child in the family.

Patience cried as she was strapped into the adult sized carseat, hating the feeling of the restriction. Doctor Andrews popped a paci into her mouth and the cries became whimpers. The drive to the Tomlinson house was not a long one and soon they were pulling into the driveway. Doctor Andrews got out of the driver's side and had opened the door at the back to unbuckle Patience when Louis and Serena came out of their house, Harry in Serena's arms. The couple had big smiles on their faces as Patience emerged, held tightly in the doctors arms.

"Hello Sweetie" Louis said softly as he held out his arms "I'm your daddy". Patience stared at him and turned to bury her face into Doctor Andrews neck.

"Let's go in" the doctor suggested and get her settled." Louis nodded and they all went back into the house. Once in, Serena put Harry onto a blanket on the floor and he wiggled about trying to reach some toys that she had put near him. The adults all sat down and Patience watched Harry from her position on Doctor Andrews lap. She had stopped whimpering but she looked upset. "She'll settle" the doctor said reassuringly. The adults then ignored the children as they discussed the situation.

"I think that is everything" Doctor Andrews said. "Bring Patience to the Baby Clinic next week for her check up. Naturally you can come at any time if you have any concerns. Here is my private number as well" She handed Louis a slip of paper. "As I am now grandmother to both Patience and Harry, please treat me as such. Now I'd better go." She stood and handed Patience to Serena, making the girl instantly burst into tears and reach back to her. "No crying, now" Doctor Andrews scolded gently. "You have to stay with your Mommy and Daddy now. Grandma will see you soon." The doctor then said goodbye to Serena and Louis, bent down and ruffled Harry's curls before giving Patience a quick kiss on her forehead and entreated her to 'be good' then left.

"No, No" Patience screamed as Louis attempted to bath her. She had cried from the moment the doctor had left and nothing seemed to sooth her. Louis and Serena were being very patient but it
was wearing on them. Finally Louis managed to get her dry and into a diaper and pretty pink onesie then carried her downstairs where Harry was being fed. Louis took her into the kitchen, strapped her struggling body into the highchair then quickly mashed up some fruit. He pulled up a chair in front of her and began to feed her. Much to his relief she finally opened her mouth and accepted the food. Louis enjoyed the sudden silence as his head was aching. Once Patience had eaten everything, Louis wiped her hands and face then lifted her out and held her on his hip as he warmed a bottle of milk that Serena had prepared for him. Once the bottle warmer beeped, he pulled out the bottle and went into the den where he flopped down next to Serena and held the teat of bottle against Patience's mouth. She opened her mouth and began to suck quietly, obviously exhausted by her struggles. Eventually her head rolled back slightly and she slept.

"Thank g*d" Louis said. "I thought she'd never stop screaming."

"She'll sleep all night..I put calming medication in her milk" Serena informed him. "Tomorrow could be a long day."
Liam had dark circles under his eyes and Zayn didn't look much better. Niall had been crying on and off all day and night since his appointment with Doctor Andrews. Despite the Motrin and teething gel, Niall's tiny mouth had become more and more inflamed. His throat was also looking raw from the constant crying and screaming. Niall wouldn't even eat and was already losing the weight he'd put on. The only thing he would drink were the bottles of ice cold water that Liam gave him. It soothed him for a time by helping to cool his gums but the cold drink affected his delicate tummy and made him cry from the added pain of an upset stomach. Both adults were glad that it was nearly time to take Niall back to the hospital where his wisdom teeth would be extracted.

"He's finally asleep" Liam muttered, as he carefully transferred Niall's small body into Zayn's arms. "I'll shower and dress then take him back so you can do the same." Liam tottered into the bathroom that adjoined their bedroom and was soon under the hot shower. The water soothed muscles that ached from constantly having to hold Niall. He wanted to stay there all day but knew he had to give his husband a chance. Zayn had been fantastic, refusing to sleep himself and constantly walking Niall around the house in an effort to soothe the upset lad. Liam stepped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around himself. Once back in the bedroom, he dressed quickly then carefully took Niall back into his own arms. Zayn smiled gratefully, pecked Liam lightly on the lips, and hurried to take his own shower. It was only 5am but Niall had to be at the hospital very early so that the pre operative routines could be carried out.

"The diaper bag is ready, I've put it in the car" Zayn told Liam who nodded in acknowledgement. "Where's his stuffie, I don't want any unavoidable meltdowns if he hasn't got it. This past few days has been enough."

"It's in his crib" Liam replied and watched as Zayn dashed up the stairs, returning very quickly, the giraffe toy in his large hand. "Right, all set?" Liam asked. Zayn nodded and both men left the house, Liam cuddling a still sleeping Niall. Zayn hurried ahead of Liam and had the back door of his car open. He'd already got an adult sized carseat in place so Liam was able to buckle Niall safely in. Liam moved slowly and gingerly as he didn't want to wake Niall. The silence was wonderful.

When they arrived at Peter Pan Hospital, Liam bit his lip nervously. He hated that his baby was going to have to have surgery again. At least this time it was planned and not the life saving emergency surgery Niall had undergone when he fell out of the first floor window of the Tomlinson house when he and Harry had tried to escape. Even so, Liam couldn't stop feeling anxious.

"He'll be fine, babe" Zayn said reassuringly as he took in his husband's anxious face. "And Niall needs to have this done, he can't stay in pain like this."
"I know, Zee, But he's so tiny." Liam replied. "But you're right, he can't stay in pain. These last few days have been torture for all of us. Come on, let's take him in". Liam climbed out of the passenger seat of the car and opened the back door of the vehicle and carefully undid the buckles on the carseat. Unfortunately Niall woke up and his screams filled the air. Liam lifted him up and cuddled him into his chest. cooing softly to the distraught boy. Zayn, who had also exited the car, grabbed the diaper bag and Niall's stuffy, then closed the car doors.

"Come on, babe" Zayn urged, "Let's get him inside" and he led the way through the swing doors and walked up to the Reception desk. "We've brought Niall Malik-Payne in for his operation" he told the smiling lady at the desk.

"Ah yes, I have him on my list" She picked up the phone and pressed a button. "Niall Malik-Payne has arrived " she announced when the call was answered. She listened to the response then hung up. "If you'd just like to take a seat, a nurse will be with you shortly. Oh poor lamb" she cooed as Niall continued to cry "I hate it when small babies are in pain. Anyway, just make yourselves as comfortable as you can.

"Niall Malik-Payne?" a nurse called out before Zayn and Liam had even taken a seat. "If you'd follow me?" Both men hurried after her as she led them into a small bay. "If you'll just undress Niall for me, I just have to run a few checks." She stood back and Liam quickly stripped off Niall's Onesie. The nurse took Niall's blood pressure and temperature. Then, after writing something down on her charts, administered a pre operative sedative. Soon the room was blessedly silent. The nurse then swaddled Niall with a soft blanket then put him into what she told Liam and Zayn was a medical "papoose". "It will stop any movement from baby and it makes them feel secure." She told them. "Now if you'd like to kiss baby bye-bye and go and make yourself comfortable in the waiting room, I'll come and fetch you when baby is back from theatre." Both men complied, looking very upset and anxious. The nurse smiled at them sympathetically. "I know it's worrying for you, but baby will be fine. We'll take good care of him." She picked up Niall and took him away, leaving the two men to wait in the area they had been sent.

"How long does it take?" Liam asked Zayn for what seemed like the hundredth time.

"Babe, he's only been gone twenty minutes. Please calm down" Zayn said, rubbing his hand up and down Liam's back. "They have to do a few things before they begin, you know that, babe".

"Yeah, I know you're right. I'm just being a mama bear here" Liam admitted and sighed heavily, turning his eyes back to the clock on the wall, willing the hands to move faster.

"Mr and Mr Malik-Payne?" the same nurse that had looked after Niall on his arrival that morning,
appeared in the doorway. "It's all done and baby is now back in Recovery. You'll be able to see him soon. Would you like to wait in his room?" Both men nodded and stood up rapidly, following her along a short corridor and into a room where an empty crib waited. "Niall will be brought back shortly" she announced before leaving them.

Not ten minutes had passed before the nurse was back, this time with a short, muscular man who had Niall cradled in his arms. He laid Niall in the crib then vanished, giving everyone a strained smile as he left. Liam and Zayn turned to their son who was whimpering softly, his face was swollen and bruised on two sides. Liam ached to cuddle Niall and comfort him but the nurse was busy bustling about, removing the 'papoose' and blanket before swiftly changing Niall's diaper. Once this was done she expertly redressed the lad in a onesie. Just as she was finishing up, Doctor Whelan appeared.

"Good morning, gentlemen" he said. "Everything went well. I've removed all four wisdom teeth. The X-rays I took pre procedure showed that it would be the best option for baby. He'll have a sore mouth and swelling for some time but that will abate fairly soon. I've prescribed pain medication for him and nurse will give you instructions on caring for the mouth and a list of dietary suggestions until his mouth his healed. Any questions?" He raised an eyebrow at the two men.

"Will there be any side effects or..." Liam didn't really know what he wanted to ask. He just wanted his baby to be OK.

"No, I believe not" Doctor Whelan said cheerfully, used to anxious parents. "As a said, a sore mouth during recovery then everything back to normal." He smiled then continued, "Once baby has come around properly and been able to take a bottle, you can take him home." He shook hands with both men then left to deal with his next patient, leaving them to fuss over their son once the nurse had finished.

Zayn and Liam were so thankful that Niall had taken his bottle quite well and was deemed fit enough to be taken home. The small lad kept drifting in and out of sleep, curtesy of the after effects of the anaesthetic."He's so sleepy" Zayn said as he looked down at the small lad cuddled in his arms." Shall I put him in his crib or the Bassinet?"

"Bassinet, babe" Liam replied "I want to keep my eye on him, just in case".

"Bassinet it is then" Zayn said cheerfully and laid his small son down in a nest of soft blankets, tucking his stuffie into Niall's side. He stood and looked at the small lad, his face sympathetic as he took in the swelling and bruising that had resulted from the operation. At least it was over and done with now and hopefully Niall would make a speedy recovery. Once he was satisfied Niall was
going to stay asleep, Zayn collapsed onto the couch and closed his eyes, exhaustion taking over and he was soon asleep.

Liam 'awed' at the sight of his husband sleeping, his dark hair falling over his eyes. Liam gently pushed it off Zayn's face. He was as exhausted as Zayn but wasn't going to nap in case Niall needed him, so he sat down in the recliner and put some music on the radio, knowing it would help him stay awake. The radio station was a favorite of his as it often played the less recent music and Liam enjoyed listening to the older stuff as much as he did the new chart toppers. He sat back and relaxed as the DJ spoke.....

"And my next track is "This Town" from Niall Horan. As you will all remember, Niall known as the Pint Sized Pop star disappeared without trace over a year ago and despite people reporting they have seen him, no trace of him has ever been found. This is "This Town.........". Liam listened as Niall's soft voice sang. He had a wonderful voice and Liam felt some slight regret that Niall wasn't able to sing at the moment but then he remembered that he and Zayn had Niall safely with them, far away from the dangers of drugs and alcohol than blighted the life of so many talented musicians. They loved their baby too much to subject him to that type of lifestyle. He closed his eyes and listened to Niall's sweet voice.

Niall drifted in and out of consciousness, only vaguely aware of the pain in his mouth. Half remembered memories floated through his head, familiar faces and sounds. And music...he frowned in his sleep as he listened to the words. It wasn't his Papa or daddy singing yet the voice was so familiar, so real. Part of him knew the words and his lips started to form them soundlessly. He started to thrash about in his sleep. He wanted to remember, he tried to keep the images and sounds in his head but they kept slipping away from him. He whimpered in desperation. It felt safe, it felt home. He tried even harder to pull the memories towards himself but they faded and he fell even deeper into sleep.

Liam watched his son in shock as he watched the tiny body wriggle within the confines of the blanket he was swaddled in. Niall looked distressed. Was he in pain? Or was the music triggering memories that the amnesia from the car crash had buried so deeply. Liam switched the music off quickly then stood over the small form. Niall was laying perfectly still now, his breathing soft and regular. Liam let out a breath he didn't realise he'd been holding. That was close, too close.
"Li, calm the f.ck down" Zayn said as he shook Liam by the shoulders. "Li,now!" Zayn's voice was commanding and had the effect of stopping Liam's incoherent torrent of words. "Better?" Zayn's golden brown eyes stared into his husband's deeper brown ones. Liam took a deep breath, then another, and nodded. "Good. Now I'm going to back us both a cup of coffee, then you can tell me what's got you so worked up." Zayn's voice was quieter now, more gentle. He took a quick worried glance at the bassinet as he passed it on his way into the kitchen, but Niall was still sleeping seemingly quite calmly, apparently undisturbed by his daddy's meltdown.

"Here, babe" Zayn said as he reentered the den and handed a mug of coffee to Liam who took it with hands that shook slightly. Zayn sat next to him and put a comforting hand around his younger husband's shoulders. "Now, babe, what got you so upset? Niall's fine, we're fine, so.....?"

"It was the radio" Liam finally managed to say. "I was listening to the radio. You and Niall were both sleeping, and I wanted to stay awake, in case...you know...if the baby needed me." Liam's voice faded into silence and he twisted his coffee mug nervously in his hands. Zayn waited patiently but Liam didn't continue.

"You were listening to the radio and...." Zayn finally prompted.

"I was just listening, you know the station that does all the older stuff?" Liam replied. Zayn nodded and waited. Liam took a deep breath and continued. "Well, the DJ spoke about Niall, about his vanishing, then he played Niall's last song...you know..This Town. I had my eyes shut, just listening to him singing" Zayn nodded again then the dam burst and Liam whisper shouted. "I don't know, Zi, Niall started trying to thrash about, despite being swaddled and and his face, Zayn. The expression on his face!. What if he was remembering. Zayn " Liam looked into his husband's eyes. "Zi, I'm scared".

Zayn leant forward and placed his mug down on the coffee then pulled Liam's mug out of his hand and put it down next to his own, before pulling him into a tight hug. "Babe, Niall's sleeping off the anaesetic, he's in pain from the operation ,it was probably nothing." Zayn spoke reassuringly though he had to admit to himself that what Liam had just told him was a cause for concern. He'd worry about it later. Now he just wanted to calm down his husband. "Look, we'll see how the baby acts when he's awake. And make sure he doesn't hear any of his music. Disney and nursery rhymes only, yeah?". Zayn pulled back and looked into Liam's face and smiled comfortingly. "It will be ok, babe".

Zayn pulled a blanket off the back of the couch and tucked it around Liam's sleeping form. He had finally succumbed to sleep after Zayn had assured him that he was sure that there was nothing to be worried about and that he, Zayn, would look after the baby whilst Liam napped. "You need it,
babe" he had told Liam. "Even the bags under your eyes have bags!" Liam had laughed tiredly but had taken Zayn's advice and had curled up on the couch, unwilling even in sleep, to be too far from his baby. Once Liam was snoring softly Zayn went and stood looking down at Niall whose long eye lashes were fluttering and his small mouth opening and closing, his pacifier had long since been abandoned.

"Hey, baby boy" Zayn had said softly as he picked up Niall once the small lad's blue eyes were open and the boy was whimpering due to pain. "Baba's little boy needs some nice medicine to take the pain away," he cooed as he carried Niall out of the room and up the stairs to the master bedroom. He lay Niall down carefully on the bed, well away from the edge, then hurried to get the pain medication for his son. Niall had mastered the art of rolling over but he was swaddled and, though Zayn was confident the boy couldn't move at present, he was still cautious. When Zayn returned, Niall was exactly where he had been placed but was wriggling in an irritated manner. Zayn was quick to squirt the medication into the back of Niall's mouth then put in Niall's paci so that the lad couldn't spit it out again. Once he was sure that wasn't going to be the case, Zayn unwrapped the blanket from the boy whose arms and legs instantly started jerking about in the manner of small babies. Zayn cooed at the sight then lifted him up and carried him to the changing table that occupied a corner of the room. Zayn expertly stripped off the onesie then the diaper which was, by now, soaked through and leaking. Zayn winced at the sight of the reddened skin around Niall's area. Making up his mind, he carried Niall into the adjoining bathroom and, one handedly, prepared a bath, pouring in a measure of lavender scented bubble bath knowing the smell would soothe and relax Niall just as much as the warm water would. Zayn felt relieved as he watched Niall's face look calm, obviously enjoying the feeling of the water on his sore skin. Zayn let the boy lay back in the water, supporting his neck and head carefully. After a few minutes Zayn grabbed a soft cloth with his free hand and gently washed Niall's soft skin, being very cautious around his private areas. Despite his gentleness, Niall still cried at the contact on his very sore skin and Zayn spoke soothingly to him, making Niall look up into his face, blue eyes swimming with tears.

"Baba is going to take his little man out of the bath now" Zayn cooed at him, lifting him out as he spoke and wrapping him in the fluffy towel before carrying him back into the bedroom. Once Zayn had Niall laid on the changing table, he dried off the small body then rubbed lotion into the skin before pulling a jar of rash cream from one of the drawers beneath the table. He applied it liberally around Niall's area, rubbing it in as gently as he could. Niall whimpered but after a few moments, the cream seemed to diminish his discomfort. Zayn then lightly applied powder, patting it in gently, before taping a thick diaper around Niall's small waist. That accomplished, Zayn rummaged in a drawer, keeping one hand on Niall's belly to make sure the boy didn't wriggle off the table and fall. Zayn stood upright again, a sleeping bag clutched in his hand. Niall was soon warmly dressed then lightly wrapped in a blanket. Zayn carried him downstairs, passing through the den to check on his sleeping husband. Liam hadn't moved even a finger so Zayn smiled as he continued through to the kitchen. Liam had prepared several bottles which were stored ready in the fridge. Zayn snagged one and put it into the bottle warmer, swaying his body from side to side as he waited for it to 'ding' that it was ready. Niall appeared to be enjoying the motion and lay contentedly in his Baba's arms. His little mouth made open and close motions when he caught sight of his bottle and reached out a small arm towards it. Zayn smiled at the adorable way his baby was behaving. He took Niall back into the den and settled the pair of them in the recliner. Niall was soon sucking slowly on his bottle, a look of concentration on his face. Moments later, his small face went red and the look of concentration on his face increased. Zayn groaned quietly. "Baby, Baba just changed you". He sighed. He'd let Niall finish feeding then it was back upstairs. The poor boy
“How could someone so sweet smell so vile?” Zayn said as he pulled off the soiled diaper. The poor baby obviously had a very upset tummy, no doubt due to his recent surgery. Zayn held his breath as he meticulously cleaned Niall up, making sure his small butt was well covered in rash cream and powder. One he had diapered Niall, he dressed him in a fresh onesie and put another blanket loosely around him then they both went back downstairs. Liam was still sleeping and Zayn didn't want to risk disturbing him. He picked up Niall's stuffie from the bassinet and carried Niall through to his office. He lay the blanket on the floor then placed Niall down on his tummy before sitting next to him, making the toy giraffe 'dance' around the baby. Niall's face lit up and he giggled and smiled despite the swelling of his face. The pain medication was obviously helping. Zayn smiled down at the small boy, his mind on recent events as he mechanically played with the boy. Was there cause for worry? Maybe he should have a word with Doctor Andrews? She'd know what was best. That decided, Zayn turned his full attention back to Niall, his heart flooded with love for the small man.

Liam had sedated Niall at bedtime, anxious for all three of them to be able to get a good night's sleep, despite the naps they had all been able to take. Too many sleepless nights had left them drained and Liam knew they couldn't continue to run on empty.

"He's fast asleep" Liam tucked a warm blanket around Niall as he spoke. Zayn had brought the bassinet up to the bedroom and put it at the side of the bed. Liam didn't want Niall sleeping in alone in his nursery until he was sure the baby was completely recovered. Zayn was only too happy to agree, knowing that Liam wouldn't rest properly himself if Niall wasn't next to him.

"Good. Now you come to bed, babe. You need a decent night of sleep yourself. Will you be fine on your own tomorrow? I have to meet up with Simon and Louis, check security and stuff. You can call me if you get worried about anything." Zayn responded as he climbed onto his side of the bed and pulled the covers over himself.

"We'll be fine" Liam said, getting into bed himself. He sighed in relief as he laid back against the soft pillows. "This feels heavenly". He closed his eyes and felt his body start to release the tension of the past days. "Actually" he opened his eyes and turned his bed to look at Zayn. "Could you ask Lou how they are all getting on with Patience? I wonder if she's settled in OK. We've been so wrapped up with Niall that I haven't spoken to Serena. I feel bad, really guilty." Liam admitted.

"Babe, Louis and Serena would totally understand so there is no need to feel guilty. They have children and they appreciate a sick child, especially a baby, pushes other things to the back of your mind. I'll chat with Louis and maybe we can arrange a play date when Niall is feeling a bit brighter. Now you get some sleep" Zayn pushed himself up and bent over to kiss Liam gently. Liam hummed in pleasure then was suddenly out like a light, exhaustion finally taking over. Zayn smiled then, laying back down, swiftly followed his younger husband into sleep.
"So how is it going with the new little?" Zayn asked Louis as they sat together having a coffee break between meetings.

"I'd like to say it's going great but Patience seems to cry the whole time. We've had to up the dosage of her calming medication otherwise we'd get no sleep. Serena is taking her to the clinic this afternoon. It's upsetting Harry as well, he's not feeding well and Serena is so tense that I'm sure Harry picks up on it when he is being fed. He's throwing up after nearly every feed. I can't help wondering if we've done the right thing, taking her as a toddler" Louis said. Zayn looked at his friend, noting the stress lines on his face.

"Mate, there is bound to be a settling in time. Remember we all had to go through it with Harry for you, and Niall for Liam and myself. They have to settle in and I am sure Patience will be fine. Just give it time." Zayn said confidently.

"Yeah, I guess you're right. But don't you think it's a bit strange, considering Patience has had the Regression drug straight away. Neither Harry nor Niall did, if you remember?" Louis had a small frown on his face as he spoke.

"Mmmmmh" Zayn replied, a frown on his face. "Maybe that is a bit odd. But Doctor Andrews will know what to do. That woman is amazing. She'll get it sorted." Zayn reassured his friend then glanced at his watch. "We'd better get moving. Simon will be waiting." Both men quickly drained their coffee cups then stood then headed towards the Conference room where the meetings were being held. Now they had to focus on work and leave family concerns behind them for the rest of the day.

"I must admit, it isn't the type of behavior I would expect, given Patience has received the Regression drug" Doctor Andrews confessed. "And she obviously isn't thriving. There has been quite a weight loss." She consulted her notes. "No signs of any illness though…this isn't making sense." She tapped her pen against the charts as she continued to scan them. "How is Harry?"

"He's not doing well either" Serena sounded tearful, she felt really stressed. "He vomits after nearly every feed and he won't suckle for long.

"But no symptoms of any kind? No fever, no rashes or anything obvious?" the Doctor queried, raising her voice ho be heard over Patience incessant crying.

"No, none. He was fine the first day we had Patience but since then, he's not being himself."
Normally he suckles really well, and I top him up with solids. But now……" Serena shook her head sadly. "I don't know what to do."

"I think it would be best to admit Patience for a few days so we can monitor her and get to the bottom of the problem. We can also see how Harry reacts without Patience. It could just be that because she is upset, making you tense and upset, is affecting Harry. Breastfeeding creates a very close bond between mother and baby so it may just be your emotions are affecting baby. It is quite common." the Doctor said thoughtfully. "What do you think?"

"I don't really want to but if you think it is best?" Serena said doubtfully.

"I do. We can find out what the issues is, and you can relax and get Harry settled." The doctor said firmly. "Don't worry, dear, we'll get Patience settled. I'm sure it will only take a few days. I'll just get someone to come and collect her." She picked up the phone and spoke into as Serena tried unsuccessfully to quell the crying coming from the toddler in her arms.

"Enter" the doctor called out on hearing a tap on the door. A muscular man entered. "Ah , lovely. Would you take this little down to Nurse Collins and ask her to get her settled. I want her regularly monitored to see if we can find out why Patience is so upset. I'll be along later" She passed Patience over to the man who cuddled the little girl closely. He nodded and headed out of the room.

"Ssshhh, sweetie" he murmured into the girl's ear. "Don't you worry, it will be fine. He looked about the corridor then unlocked a door. Checking again, he entered, closing the door behind him. He lay Patience down on a long trolley then rummaged in a drawer, pulling out a syringe. Scanning the cupboards on the wall, he selected on and pulled out a vial of clear liquid, scanning the label carefully. Nodding to himself, he prepared the needle, carefully drawing the liquid up. Clearing the air from the tube, he plunged the needle into Patience's elbow, hoping there would be no suspicious bruising left. He was skilled at giving shots so he hoped he'd be lucky. The cries died away, as he disposed of the used syringe. He picked up the girl and soothed her, before opening the door cautiously, peeking both ways. It was all clear so he slipped out, locked the door behind him and headed towards the baby ward where the severe Nurse Collins awaited their arrival. Patience looked up at him, face tear stained. "I promise you, it will be fine. little one. " 
"Bye Bye Bubbles"

"Peek-a-boo" Liam uncovered Niall's face and the small lad erupted into giggles. Liam replaced the light cloth over Niall's face again. "Peek-a-boo!", he pulled it away again. Niall's arms and legs waved about as he continued to giggle. Liam's own face was wreathed in smiles. Niall had been in pain for some days after his wisdom teeth had been removed but now the bruising on his face was fading to a mottled looking green and yellow, and the pain had diminished. It had been a rough few days for them all but there was now light at the end of the tunnel. The door bell rang, interrupting the game and Liam started to push himself to his feet ready to answer the door but stopped when he heard Zayn speaking.

"Hey mate" Louis walked into the room carrying Harry, Serena following behind. "We were just headed out to the hospital to collect Patience and thought we'd see how little Nialler was doing." He sat on the couch, Serena joining him.

"Niall is heaps better" Liam told him as he waved some plastic keys above Niall's small face, smiling as the small lad reached up his hands to them. "But what do you mean? Is Patience sick?" he asked, concerned. He knew that they had been having problems with settling the girl but hadn't known she had been hospitalized.

"Not sick, not as such" Serena was the one to reply this time. "She just wasn't settling, just cried the whole time, so she was admitted for observation. It was affecting little Harry. He became unsettled and wouldn't feed well. Poor baby was vomiting after nearly every feed. But doctor Andrews says she's nicely settled now so we can bring her home. I must say, I'm glad she'll be back with us, we haven't had a chance to bond properly."

"The bonding stage is so important" Zayn had arrived in the room, bringing a tray bearing mugs of coffee and a plate of cookies which he placed on the small table near the couch, well away from the littles who might accidentally burn themselves if they connected with the hot liquid. "But I am sure Patience will be fine. Any idea why she was so upset? I mean, I thought she'd had the regression drug?"

"Yeah, she did, but the Doctors have no idea why she wasn't settling. They had sorted out the problems they'd had with that bad batch Harry had received, so they are clueless as to why she was not doing well with us. Still, she seems fine now." Louis responded.

"Well, she'll be home soon, that's the most important thing" Serena said then turned the conversation to the big play barn that the community had built for the children and that had been completed some time ago. They had planned a big opening ceremony at the time, but been forced to abandon the celebrations due to the possible risk of discovery that the community had been in when Patience had tried to abduct Niall and Harry. It was only when Serena caught sight of the time that they realised how much time they had spent chatting. so hurried plans were made for a play date for the children, then they departed to collect Patience from the hospital and take her to her new home.

"Do you think there is a problem with the drugs" Liam suddenly asked as he and Zayn were bathing Niall together, later that night.

"What drugs?" Zayn sounded confused as he lifted Niall out of the tub and wrapped him up in a warm towel. One moment Li had been blowing bubbles and making Niall giggle, next he was talking about drugs.
"The regression drugs, Zee. Do you think Patience might have been given a bad batch?" Liam clarified.

"Li, I think after the mess up with Harry, they'd be far more cautious, so I really doubt there could be any problem there. Maybe the girl was just upset because she's in a toddler headspace and she's suddenly moved from familiar faces at the hospital to less familiar ones. Plus being put into a new routine and stuff." Zayn said thoughtfully "I mean, think about it. It's quite a change, for example you have Nurse Collins who is an absolute stickler for routine, then you have Serena and Louis being far more easy going. Poor little girl probably doesn't know what is happening from one moment to the next with them."

"You're right" Liam felt reassured. Of course Zayn was right. "Always the voice of reason, babe" he smiled warmly at his older husband and got a peck on the lips as a reward."Let's get this little lad settled for the night. I'll go warm his bottle if you'll get him dressed." Zayn nodded in agreement and Liam left the room, now whistling cheerfully. Zayn smiled to himself, watching his husband leave. Liam was such a worrier, he thought, then he turned his attention back to Niall as he swiftly diapered Niall then manoeuvred his little arms and legs into a onesie.

"Wow, Ni was really hungry tonight, do you think we need to up his solids now? " Zayn commented as he lifted Niall to his shoulder and patted his back firmly. Niall burped loudly several times and both Liam and Zayn laughed at the shocked look on his face as he was apparently surprised to hear such a loud noise coming from his small body.

"I think maybe we should" Liam agreed "He'd got his appetite back now that his little mouth isn't so sore and bottles probably aren't enough. I've got some jars of baby food in the pantry. If he likes those, we can get some more."

"Li, I'd rather we mashed up stuff ourselves, babe. Don't they put junk into those prepared baby foods?" Zayn was anxious. He hated the thought of Niall eating foods that were not all natural."I think I'd really prefer him to eat all healthy foods, with no additives or colors added.

"That's fine, hun. We can do that. You're right, it will be much better for him too." Liam smiled at him "I'll mash up fruit, sweet potato and that type of thing, if you would rather I did."

"Please" Zayn returned the smile. "You're the best, babe. Now how about we get to bed?" he patted the pillows invitingly, making Liam grin.

Niall floated in his baby dream world of soft colours and the faces of his Daddy and Baba. Sometimes Harry and his green eyes were seen but with his face came strange memories that troubled him. Suddenly he was falling through a window, his body jerked as he hit the ground and he screamed in terror.

"Sssh, little one" Liam soothed as he rocked Niall gently in his arms. "Daddy has you safe, baby. Don't cry" He tucked Niall's head into his neck, rubbing the small back in calming circles, still rocking. Eventually the loud cries subsided to soft sobs and hiccups as Niall relaxed.

"Is he ok?" Zayn looked worried. "I hate it when he's so upset. I wish I knew what terrified him."

"Night terrors" Liam supplied "But I'm like you, I wish I knew what was going on in his mind. I must confess, I...I sometimes wonder if he's remembering things...like his past...you know." He frowned as he spoke.

"Me too, babe. Me too" Zayn's voice was emotional. "Look, Li, he's fallen asleep again." he nodded towards Niall. "Let's put him back in his bassinet."
Zayn had his head bent over the paperwork on his desk but his mind was not on the work before him, rather his thoughts were dwelling on Niall's nightmare of the night before. What triggered them, if anything? Should they worry about the cause or were they just the night terrors babies often experienced? He sighed heavily as his phone rang. Reluctantly dragging his mind back to work, he answered it. He'd think about Niall later.

Patience giggled as sat in the bath tub, splashing her hands in the bubbly water. Serena cheerfully watched her, so pleased that the girl seemed to have finally settled into the family. It warmed her heart watching Patience play with Harry. They really seemed taken with each other and that pleased Serena even more.

"Hazzy, look" Patience waved a plastic duck at the boy sitting at the other end of the tub, Serena holding him up in a sitting position. Harry smiled in delight, his dimples showing. Patience tried to pass the duck to Harry but his small hand didn't grasp it properly and it fell back down into the water, disappearing under the bubbles, making him cry. "Not cry, Hazzy" Patience cooed at her brother, retrieving the duck for him, holding it out towards him again.

"You're such a good big sister" Serena praised the girl, making her blush and smile at the praise. "Now, daddy is going to take your baby brother into the nursery and get him ready for bed and Mommy will get you all nice and dry and into your Pjs," She smiled at the little girl. "Louis" she yelled and her husband appeared moments later, a phone held to his ear. He held up a finger for silence, spoke a few years, then ended the conversation.

"Sorry about that" he told Serena. "We've been invited over to the Andrews for lunch tomorrow….grandparent bonding time."

"Cool" Serena then nodded as she lifted Harry from the bath. "Would you get this little man sorted. I'll deal with Patience.

"Come on then Hazzzybear" Louis chirped and bore the boy away to his nursery.

"Your turn now, little lady" Serena cooed, pulling the plug from the bath.

"Bye Bye bubbles" Patience waved at the disappearing water, making Serena 'awe' at the toddlers words.

"Come to Grammy, sweetie" Doctor Andrews cooed and Patience toddled towards her, the diaper she was wearing giving her a cute little waddling gait. The doctor held out her arms and Patience reached up to her, allowing the woman to lift her up and onto her lap. "Can Grammy have a kiss?" Patience obliged, placing a wet kiss on the woman's cheek making her smile. The doctor was sad she had had to regress her daughter to become another woman's child but at least she was able to see her regularly and stay in her life as a grandmother. There was the added bonus of little Harry too, who was such an adorable baby. "Here sweetie" she passed Patience a chocolate chip cookie and watched as the girl ate, chocolate and crumbs around her mouth. Yes, she was fortunate. She bent and kissed the top of her head.

"Harry is back to feeding normally" Serena said as she opened her blouse and undid her nursing bra. Harry was soon latched on, suckling contentedly, his bright green eyes fastened on his mommy's face."I hope he regains his lost weight soon."

"He will" the doctor reassured."Any more problems with this little one?" she nodded at the child on her lap.

"Absolutely none" Serena said "I have no idea what the problem was initially but she seems fine
now. And she has such a bond with Harry already. She calls him Hazzy and likes playing with him. They are so adorable together."

"I'm so pleased, Serena dear. I have no idea why she was like that. There have been no further problems with the regression drugs since baby Harry received that bad batch, yet is was like she hadn't completely responded to the drugs. I think we'll monitor her more frequently though, just to be on the safe side. Maybe bring her to weekly appointments at the clinic? If that isn't too inconvenient for you?" Doctor Andrews suggested.

"No, not at all. I'd be happier knowing she was thriving and that nothing was going on." Serena was only too happy that Doctor Andrews had suggested it. It would certainly give her one less thing to worry about. She smiled down at her son then remembered something. "We're planning on having a 'Grand Opening' for the Littles play barn next week and I was wondering if you had any ideas you think might be good?"

"I'm glad you asked. I think the Barn complex is a wonderful idea. I'm really delighted that it has been done as it will help keep the older children's motor skills going but also there is the soft play area for the littles in the baby headspaces. They can play in complete safety. I did think that we could have a clinic notice board there and also have handouts available on various little topics. Lists of safe babysitters, that type of thing, information on CPR training sessions and such." the Doctor then paused and looked at Serena enquiringly.

"That is a brilliant idea. I'll mention it to Louis and Liam and see if they'll set it up. We've organised a buffet, face painting, balloons and that type of thing for the day. And the very best thing is that we don't need to have good weather as all the everything will be in the Barn." Serena enthused.

"You'll mention what to me?" Louis asked as he entered the room, having just arrived. Serena and the Doctor filled him in.

"I believe lunch is now ready" Doctor Andrews said as her live in housekeeper stood in the doorway, smiling. "I've got highchairs all ready for these two little ones". She led the way to the dining room as she spoke. Conversation flowed during the meal and Serena and Louis both found themselves coming to like the Doctor as their children's grandmother. She already had their approval as paediatrician to Harry and Patience. Now they knew the more intimate relationship would be good.

"Come in, come in" Liam said cheerfully as he threw open the front door to admit Serena, Louis and their two children. Josh has just arrived with his little Chloe. We're in the back yard." Liam led the way through to the den and out the French doors to the huge yard. Zayn was alternately pushing Niall and Chloe on the swings while he and Josh chatted.

"Hey guys" Louis called out and walked over to the two men while Liam and Serena sat on garden chairs.

"How's it going with Patience now?" Liam asked.

"Really, really good. She's so settled now and she and Harry are adorable together." Serena gushed. As if his name had registered with him, on cue Harry began to fuss. "Awe baby, do you want to swing too? Louis!" one hearing his name, Louis hurried over and picked up his son, bearing him away to the swings and continuing his conversations with Zayn and Josh. A serious conversation, judging by their faces.

Liam and Serena gossiped back and forth as they watched their partners and children, plans for the
Barn opening being finely tuned until both of them were happy with the plans. They had done a lot of the fund raising and were only too happy that their efforts had finally bore fruit. It would be a wonderful asset to the community. The Mayor, Simon Cowell, was hoping the specialised facilities would be a draw for more like minded people to join the town though they would all be very carefully vetted to make sure no spies were allowed to know of their existence. They had all ready had one close call and that was enough. Simon was still concerned that the helicopter that had flown over the town months ago could still be a threat to them. Security was constantly monitored and improved, updating technology on an almost daily occurrence.

After the three children had woken up from their naps and had been changed and fed, Liam put all three into a large play pen and supplied them with soft toys. Patience seemed content to build towers with the soft blocks, giggling when either Niall or Harry knocked them down as they waved their arms and legs about. Patience started to sing to herself…

"Little tings, all oar little tings" she sang, not accurately but tunefully. The song had been her absolute favorite before her regression and somehow part of the song had stayed lodged in her memory. "Little tings, all oar little tings" she sang over and over to herself. Liam and Zayn froze as the expression on Niall’s small face seemed to change from happy to confused. Then he began to whimper, sounding very distressed. Liam raced to pick him up, his own face distraught.
Once cuddled into Liam's arms, Niall seemed to relax and become all smiles again. Liam bounced him on his lap gently singing 'Rock-a-bye your bear' to the small boy who gurgled cheerfully as his daddy sang. Liam raised his head and caught Zayn's eyes but Zayn just shook his head slightly. They'd talk about this later. Patience, fortunately had stopped singing her song and was joining in with Liam, rocking a teddy as she sang, while Josh clapped little Chloe's hands in time to the music. It was a cute sight and ordinarily Zayn would have taken a video of the children but he was too shocked to do anything at that moment. Fortunately Serena and Josh seemed oblivious to the small drama that had unfolded beneath her eyes but Louis exchanged glances with both Liam and Zayn. This was a matter for later.

Once Serena, Louis and Josh had gone, taking their littles with them, Liam sat on the couch cuddling Niall who was sleeping. Liam was deep in thought as he remembered his first sight of Niall and how much he'd wanted the tiny man as his baby.

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"Excited , babe?" Liam had asked "I think you'll like Niall Horan's music. And his concerts are great" He'd led Zayn into the huge arena and, much to Zayn's surprise, they had seats in the VIP area. "You'll get to meet him after the show, babe". Liam was desperate for Zayn to love Niall as much as he did and hoped physically seeing him would make what he wanted to ask his older husband easier.

And Zayn had enjoyed the show. Niall had been warm and funny, his songs ranging from Country style through acoustic folk and on to rock . And Niall was adorably tiny. Zayn had wondered how anyone with hands so small could so easily hold and play a guitar that seemed almost as big as himself. He watched as Niall bounced around the big stage interacting with the fans, making them laugh and sing along. Liam was equally entranced. He glanced at Liam and saw the absolute adoration in his younger husband's eyes.

"Pleased ta meet'cha" Niall had said as he looked up to the two men who towered above his diminutive frame. "Hope you enjoyed the show?"

Liam took the small hand offered and shook it gently , careful not to crush the fragile looking bones. He studied the pale face with the bright blue eyes and he felt something click inside him. This beautiful boy was his baby. He was completely love with the small man and had to have him for his baby.He'd become obsessed with the lad after seeing him on TV. After that, he'd searched the internet for anything and everything on the young star.

"Baby, don't you think you're too young to drink that beer?" Liam said chidingly, unable to stop himself , as Niall reached for a can of beer and popped the tab open. Niall had given him a big grin and commented he was older than he looked before politely thanking them for coming and turning to the next group of fans waiting to meet him. Liam frowned in displeasure. His baby shouldn't be drinking. He sniffed the air. Weed! He could only hope his baby didn't touch that stuff. But soon, if he had his way, his baby would be safe from these terrible vices.Liam would keep his baby safe….and innocent.

"Zee" Liam had said as they had driven back to the community. "He's our baby. I know he is. I have to have him". Zayn had stared at him, open mouthed. "Don't you see, he's perfect.'

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And Liam had constantly talked about the boy from that moment on. Pleading with Zayn and Louis, they had tried to tell him it wasn't wise. That Niall was a celebrity and his disappearance would cause trouble. But Liam was adamant. Niall was his, and so the elaborate plans were set in place and Niall's fete was sealed. Liam's joy was complete, and soon even Zayn had fallen in love with the small Irishman. He was meant to be their son.

Zayn and Liam had met when they were in their late teens. As soon as they were old enough, Zayn entered the Police Academy whilst Liam had trained to be a paramedic. It hadn't taken them long for friendship to turn to love, then the realisation that they both had an Age play kink as daddies. Both finally qualified, they married. Word of mouth had eventually led them to Simon Cowell. They had carefully been vetted and then allowed to move to the hidden Age Play community where Zayn became the town Police Officer and Liam joined Josh and Steve as Paramedics. Then it was just waiting for Louis to find them the perfect baby. Louis usually targeted homeless teens, children who could vanish and not be missed. But neither Liam nor Zayn had felt a bond with any of the littles. It was only when Liam had seen Niall, that he knew exactly who he wanted for his baby. And fortunately for Liam, Zayn had come to want Niall as well.

It had taken months until they had come up with the plan of luring Niall to them. In the end it had been so easy. Greg had openly been fighting his brother on twitter and that had played into their hands. It had taken just one hoax text and Niall disappeared, seemingly without trace.

"Li?" Zayn's quiet voice broke into Liam's memories and he blinked up at his older husband, eyes slightly out of focus, so lost in his thoughts had he been. "Li" Zayn reiterated "We have to talk about this"

"I know" Liam's voice sounded hollow. "I don't know what to do. We can't keep him away from everyone but we can't risk this happening again."

"Louis noticed" Zayn replied "Maybe Doctor Andrews can help. There has to be something."

"I hope so, Zee, I hope so" Liam said somberly. Niall woke up at that point and Liam rose with him in his arms. "I think my little boy is hungry".

There were no more incidents following Niall's distress on hearing the familiar song and the week had sped by. Today was the Grand Opening of the play barn and Liam and Zayn were rushing around the house trying to get ready.

"Where's the diaper bag?" Zayn called out to Liam. "I put it down and now I can't find it." He looked around frantically as he spoke.

"Babe, calm down. It's on the kitchen counter. I took it in there to put in a few bottles of milk, some juice and some snacks for Niall. Did you put in the extra diapers and wipes?" Liam sounded far more relaxed.

"Thank heavens" Zayn blew out some air and wiped his forehead. "I'll get his stuffy and blanket. We are taking the stroller, yeah?"

"It's such a nice day. The walk will do us good." Liam smiled at his older husband. "I'm just going to get Niall changed and dressed. Why don't you sit and have a coffee. Relax, babe. Today is meant to be fun." He kissed Zayn's forehead then carried Niall upstairs to the nursery. Zayn did as Liam suggested and had just finished his drink when Liam returned. Niall was dressed in a legless onesie with tiny chicks patterned over it. Liam had put him into yellow shorts over the top with little yellow booties on his small feet. Niall looked adorable. "All set?" Liam asked and got an answering smile from Zayn.
"In you go" Liam cooed as he strapped Niall into the stroller then covered his bare legs with a soft baby blanket. "We're going to have fun today".

He checked through the drugs carefully. Two new children were going to be regressed tomorrow so he had to make sure they got the real medications, not the ones he'd tampered with. He regretted he had to do it but he had to make sure he wasn't found out. Once he was sure the altered medication was well hidden, he got on with the second part of his task. He found the vial and prepared the syringe, drawing up the correct amount. He then capped the syringe and placed it in his pocket, praying he'd get the chance to use it. He'd seen her name on the list to see Doctor Andrew next week. Things would be still be OK then but it would be close. And he didn't want to risk it if it could be avoided.

"Wow, Serena..this is fabulous. You really have out done yourself" Liam looked around himself. There were balloons and streamers everywhere. Tables groaned under the wait of buffet foods and excited children were running around, using all the new play equipment. "Zee, let's take Niall to the baby swings. He'll love that."

Harry started to cry, fretfully. He had been a little under the weather the day before and had not nursed well but today he was hungry and making it known. Serena looked for Louis but couldn't see him anywhere. She'd have to find a quiet corner to nurse Harry but Patience wanted to play.

"You look like you need some help?" a quiet voice said and Serena turned to see a muscular man next to her. She didn't know his name but recognised him from her frequent visits to the baby clinic.

"Yes, I can't see my husband. I need him to watch Patience while I feed the baby" Serena sounded as harassted as she felt.

"No problem, I can keep an eye on her. You go feed the baby, I'll take little Patience to the slide." he said cheerfully.

"You are a life saver..thank you so much" Serena smiled at him and told Patience she'd be back very soon.

He led Patience over to the slide thanking his good luck. He had been wondering how he was going to do what was needed but this opportunity was god sent. He felt the syringe in his pocket as they walked towards the slide. Once under the steps, and slightly hidden from view, he swiftly pulled the syringe out of his pocket and pulled the protective cap off with his teeth. He wasted no time in plunging the needle into the girl's arm making Patience cry at the sudden pain. Picking her up he said loudly for those nearby "Don't cry sweetie. You don't need to go up if you're scared. Let's go to the swings." He picked her up and walked towards Liam, Zayn and Niall whispering in her ear "It's Ok, sweetie. You're safe.".

Serena said in chair, Harry's blankie covering her as Harry suckled contentedly. His little hand had reached up and was gently patting her breast as his big green eyes fastened on her face. Serena loved these moments and wished she could change Louis mind about Patience being breastfed. Maybe he'd allow it at bedtime. Harry finally finished and Serena lifted him to her shoulder to burp him which he did…loudly. Serena cooed at him. He really was so adorable.

After righting her clothing, Serena carried Harry over to the swings where the men were all talking together as they took turns at pushing the children on the swings. The man who had been looking after Patience smiled at her and unaccountably blushed scarlet when Serena thanked him for looking after Patience. He murmured something then left, disappearing in the hordes of people.
"Mommy, arm hurter me" Patience said, holding up her arm to be inspected.

"Awe, never mind" Serena said soothingly, not really looking where Patience was pointing. "Mommy will kiss it better." She bent her head and kissed the little girl's arm. "All better now".
"That went really well" Liam said as he tucked Niall into his stroller ready to take the small lad home. "How long to you reckon you'll be, Zee?"

"An hour, two tops. There is a whole gang of us helping with the cleanup, even Josh plans to stay until Chloe wakes up from her nap. I'll be back in time to bath this little munchkin" He bent down and kissed Niall's forehead, pushing the hair off the small boy's face. "Someone needs a haircut!" he said fondly as he straightened up. "I'd better go get started" Zayn pulled Liam in for a hug then hurried off, leaving his younger husband to head for home.

"Mark, Preston...thanks" Louis turned to the two men who had just finished heaving the trash bags into the dumpster.

"No problem" Mark responded . Preston nodded as he wiped a sweaty hand across his forehead. "It was a really successful day but back to normal tomorrow. Preston nodded again.

"Actually , Preston. I wanted to asks you something" Louis looked at the two men facing him. "The new drugs you are developing?How is that going?"

"Pretty good, actually" Preston replied "Once I have finished testing it, I'll know for sure. It will be make the results of regression last so much longer..parents will be able to go two or three years before needing to re-drug their Littles."

"Cool" Zayn said as he walked up, catching the end of the conversation. "Josh has headed home with Chloe now as she woke up." Zayn rolled back his shoulders to ease the ache caused by shifting chairs and trash into their respective places. "Preston, I have a question of my own" Zayn asked , knowing Preston was the man who developed all the specialist drugs used in the Community. "Ummh..my son, Niall..he 'ah. seems to react to music he heard in his past life.Any way that can be stopped? It's kinda upsetting us all, to be honest" Zayn admitted, fidgeting nervously."We're afraid it will jolt him out of his headspace."

"Well, actually, yes there is Zayn. It interferes with the Littles abilities to process memories. It won't work on children who are in the toddler headspace but it's 100% effective in the newborn to 6 months headspace . If you want to consider this, have a word with Doctor Andrews and she'll arrange for us all to talk about it and the side effects and stuff" Preston smiled at Zayn "There aren't any dangerous ones, but it means baby needs to stay a baby, really."

"Thanks, I'll do that. It would certainly take some worries off us" Zayn said. "Are we all done now?"

"Yeah, Zee. Let's go home to our families, yeah?" Louis agreed. The four men bid each other goodbye then left for their respective homes, both Zayn and Louis considering the information they had received from Preston.

Zayn stood in the doorway, watching as Liam bounced Niall on his knees, singing nursery songs to him. Niall was gurgling happily, waving his arms around.

"Bababab" Niall cooed, catching sight of his Baba. Zayn instantly held out his arms as Niall reached for him. Liam handed over the wriggling boy to Zayn , who immediately cuddled the boy to his chest.
"Have you been a good baby for your Daddy?" he asked the boy.

"Dadadadddddd" Niall replied

"I'm so happy to hear that. You're Baba's happy boy" Zayn cooed back at the boy, getting a toothy grin in response. Zayn carefully wiped away the drool from Niall's mouth. "Happy boy"

"Here" Liam appeared next to them, holding a bottle of milk. Niall made grabby hands at it as soon as he saw what his daddy was holding. "Will you feed him, babe? I'll start dinner...Chicken okay with you?".

"Yes, to both" Zayn smiled at Liam, taking the bottle and settling himself down in the recliner to feed the baby. Liam 'awed' at them both then disappeared into the kitchen to start dinner.

Later that night, once Niall was asleep in his bassinet, Zayn cleared his throat, making Liam look at him, eyebrows raised in question.

"Ummh, Li. Well, at the Barn Opening last week. I was talking with Preston. You know him, yeah? The Pharmacologist? Yeah, well, I ..ah..." Zayn stammered out as Liam's gaze became even more focussed on him.

"Zayn, just spit it out" Liam shook his head, frustrated at his husband.

"Well, yeah, I was asking him if there were any drugs that could mess with Niall's memories...stop him having a meltdown every time he hears one of his songs." Zayn spoke quickly, just anxious to get the information out.Liam stared at him, waiting to continue. Zayn took a deep breath " and, yeah, there is. He said there were side effects...not serious ones..but Niall had to stay a baby, like, always". There, Zayn had got it out. He stared at Liam who had sat down heavily next to him on the bed, his face a blank mask. "Li?"

"I...it's a bit of a shock to be honest" Liam finally spoke. "I mean, it would be great not to have the worry but..well...side effects? Zayn, we've already messed with Niall's body. I just....." he stopped.

"Babe, we'll go talk with Doc Andrews, yeah? Preston too. We'll get all the facts then we can make an informed choice for the baby." Zayn rubbed Liam's back soothingly. "You're real tense, babe. You need to relax. Shall I put Niall in his nursery?"

"No,...no, I need him here, Zee....please?" Liam begged quietly, his eyes on his sleeping baby.

"For you, love, anything". Zayn pushed him back on the bed so he was prone. "just be quiet."

Niall was so deep in his drug induced headspace that he lo longer resisted being stripped of his clothes and examined, with everything on display. He just lay there, gurgling happily and sucking on his fingers as the doctor checked his private areas then stepped back, allowing Liam to redress his small son.

"He's thriving nicely" Doctor Andrews commented as she resumed her seat." His little knee is very swollen again though. I still don't want to operate as the poor baby has endured enough surgery for the time being. I'll put in a hydrocortisone injection then get the leg splinted to allow it to recover."

"Will that be enough?" Liam asked anxiously as he joined Zayn and the doctor, Niall cuddled into his broad chest.

"For the time being, yes" Doctor Andrews said "Now about the problems you've been experiencing. Tell me more."
"Well, you know who Niall was? The singer?" Zayn responded and Doctor Andrews nodded, waiting for Zayn to continue. "Well, one day he heard himself singing..I had the radio on..then the other day we had a play date and Patience, well she was singing one line from his song, over and over...and Niall ...reacted."

"Reacted?" the doctor said mildly."In what way?"

"Well the first time, it was just after his surgery," Liam joined the conversation " I had the radio on and his song came one. Niall was asleep but he started thrashing about in his sleep, whimpering and all. I shut the music off and he calmed down but he's had night terrors a few times since. Then the play date, Patience was singing 'Little Things' and he got upset. He settled as soon as we sang something else but, well."Liam took a deep breath "I..we..are scared he's remembering. And Zayn told me that Preston had developed some drug that could wipe memories."

"And you are convinced that Niall is remembering things? That his music is the trigger? Persoanlly, I really there isn't enough reason to believe that at the moment." Doctor Andrews said seriously.

"But could we at least talk with Preston? Hear what he has to say?" Liam asked politely but firmly. He really wanted answers.

Doctor Andrews pondered a moment, then picked up the phone. "Preston, could you come in here?" She listened then hung up.

"Hi" Preston entered the room and shook hands with everyone before pulling up a chair."How can I help?"

"The Malik-Paynes want to know about the memory drugs" Doctor Andrews got straight to the point.

"Right. Well, the memory drug has the ability to wipe memories almost completely. It's not suitable for the toddler headspace as it can interfere with their ability to be toddlers as they'd forget skills. Now babies, they are by their very dependancy on their caregivers, not affected the same way. Their need to be fed, be cared for, remains the unaffected" Preston said as a brief outline.

"Okay, you say toddlers can't have the drug.Why?" Zayn asked curiously

"Toddlers have learned skills. They might be potty trained, starting to feed themselves, talking more. The drug could potentially revert them to babies. Now babies don't need those skills if they stay babies. It's that simple." Preston said.

"Side effects?" Liam pushed for more information.

"Well, say it was Niall. he'd not talk much more than he does now, he's be unable to remember how to walk, hand/eye coordination skills would diminish. He'd essentially be totally dependant..as he already has become.That's why it's only for babies."

"But he'd not remember his past?" Zayn persisted.

"No, that would be gone.He'd only know his life as it is now." Preston confirmed.

"Is it safe? I mean, what if it damages him?" Zayn continued

"No drug is safe, no drug is foolproof. Our tests are positive but..." Preston shrugged.
"Thanks, we'll think about this" Liam said, his head already buzzing with concerns.

"Please do. If you have more questions, just let me know." Preston stood and shook hands again before leaving.

"You do need to think about this...and very carefully" Doctor Andrews said. "The first time Niall reacted, he was recovering from surgery. Nightmares are not uncommon. And when Patience was singing...could Niall have been wet? or hungry? Are you use it was because he was remembering? Personally, Gentlemen, I am not convinced." Liam and Zayn looked at each other. Were they just assuming that Niall was remembering? Maybe Doctor Andrews was right, they were just jumping the gun.

"I guess it could have been" Liam finally admitted "Maybe we're just anxious and seeing trouble where there is none."

"Give it time" Doctor Andrews advised. "Don't deliberately shield Niall from the music but also don't intentionally allow him to hear it. Now, I'll book an appointment for Baby to have his knee braced again and the steroid injection done."

"Do you think she's right?" Liam asked his husband that night as they both curled up on the couch together after putting Niall to bed for the night.

"Well, it is possible" Zayn replied, forehead creased in thought. "We are bound to be over sensitive after all. We took a big risk kidnapping Niall. Look, Li...we'll just keep an eye on things and see what happens. Come on, I'm tired and I have the early shift tomorrow. Let's go to bed.

Patience woke up, her little tummy churning. She began to cry and Louis was soon hurrying into the room. He picked her up gently and cuddled her before carrying her over to the rocker where he sat down.

"Hey, hey..what's wrong with my little girl?" Louis cooed as he wiped the tears from her cheeks."Oh, sweetie, you're burning up" He stood and carried her back to her crib and laid her down, making her sobs increase. "Daddy is just going to get some things" he soothed and disappeared, returning very quickly with both a thermometer and some fever reducing medication. Patience cries increased as Louis pulled down her diaper then gently flipped her over. He soon had the thermometer situated and kept one hand on Patience's back to still her wriggling. "Oh dear, you've a small fever" he cooed at her as he cremated the instrument and checked it."Let's get you sorted". He lifted her up and carried her to the changing table where he quickly removed her PJs then wiped her body down with a cool, damp cloth. He then re diapered her and dressed her in a onesie before giving her some children's Tylenol. "You'll soon feel better" he soothed.

Despite Louis calming words, Patience wasn't better in the morning. She wouldn't eat and only wanted to drink small amounts of water. Her temperature would go down then suddenly spike. Serena had anxiously rung Doctor Andrews who reassured her that Patience was just suffering from a virus that had been going around since the Barn Playground opening and that all that was needed was Tylenol, plenty of fluids and lots of TLC. Reassured, Serena had abandoned the idea of taking Patience to the Baby Clinic and cancelled her routine appointment for that week. No sense in spreading the virus, she thought.

"Three more appointments cancelled since yesterday" Clare the Receptionist told the staff at their
morning briefing. "The usual tummy upsets going around. Looks like we'll have another peaceful day." He kept his face blank as he listened to her. It was an unexpected problem that he hadn't bargained for. He'd tampered with the regression drug and it was only the weekly booster shots that were keeping Patience from coming out of her headspace. What was he going to do. He hurried away under the pretence of doing stock control of all the medical supplies the hospital needed. He had to think, and think fast.
The Detective studied his notes. Greg had been in hospital, in surgery, at the time that he was supposed to have sent the text. So, if he didn't send it, who did? An accomplice? Maybe... but if that was the case, who was that person? And Greg said he's spoken to a Police Officer when his car overheated while he was searching for his brother for himself. But where did that cop come from? Greg described him, but the man seemed to have vanished... if he ever existed at all. Or was he part of an elaborate coverup plan Greg had in place? On the surface, Greg was as guilty as he...% yet there was something that continued to nag at the Detective, something he couldn't ignore. He reached for his coffee and took a swig...cold! He shuddered and started re-reading all the reports, right from the beginning, yet again. The answer had to be there somewhere.

He absentmindedly reached for his coffee mug as he read. Uuugh! Stone cold. What time was it anyway? Joe looked up from his notes and looked at the clock...10:30pm. He should go home. He stood up and shoved the closed file into his drawer. Something he'd read was buzzing on the edge of his mind. Something so obvious that he was ignoring it because it was obvious. He rubbed his temples as he walked. His head throbbed and all he wanted was sleep. Maybe the answers would come in the morning when he'd gotten some sleep. He pushed open the Precinct door and walked to his car. The air felt oppressive and it needed a good storm to cool it down.

He'd taken some time to fall asleep and even once he had, he was dreaming, everything disjointed. Niall Horan's face, Greg's constant protestations of his innocence, unexplained text messages, all melded together. He started up when the loud sound of thunder overhead cracked through the silence, then his room was brightly illuminated by lightening. And suddenly it was as if the lighting had turned on the light in his brain. If you need to hide something, hide it in plain sight! Maybe it was nothing, but then, maybe it was everything. Joe bolted from the bed and dressed rapidly. Now too excited to sleep he returned to the Police Precinct and the file on Niall Horan.

Joe shuffled impatiently as he waited for Greg to be escorted into the small room. Greg looked surprised to see him but sat down opposite the detective and a small woman who had accompanied him, and waited for him to speak. The Correctional Office moved away and stood by the door, watching his prisoner carefully.

"Greg, I have a question for you" Joe began and Greg interrupted him.
"A question? Or a few more, Detective? I don't know why you're bothering me. You don't listen, do you. I didn't do it and I didn't have an accomplice. CO Jordon, can I go back to my cell please?" Greg stood again, pushing his chair away.

"Wait!" Joe called and Greg turned back to look at him. "Greg, please. I want to know about the Police Officer you saw when you claim your car overheated."

"I didn't claim it did, it did overheat. He gave me water to top up it up." Greg sneered.

"Greg, sit please. This Officer, could you describe him to me and this young lady. She's a police artist. Greg, it would help, really help, if you'd cooperate. " Joe looked into Greg's eyes and held his gaze. Greg finally shrugged and sat down again.

"Okay" he agreed. The woman opened the bag that had been at her feet and drew out a large clipboard, laid a supply of pencils on the table and listened expectantly.

"He was real good looking, like a flaming fashion model. Short dark hair, designer type beard I guess. He looked Indian or something...definitely asian type...about late twenties, early thirties. And build man, like he worked out a lot...and I mean a lot. " Greg closed his eyes, trying to drag up the image of a man who he'd only seen for minutes and that meeting over a year ago. "I'm sorry, I know this isn't much, it was too long ago." They sat in silence then Greg suddenly spoke again. "He had some Tattoos, well definitely on his hands..a Lotus flower! I remember thinking it fitted him, his appearance, I mean.

"Face shape? Eyebrows" the artist prompted , but Greg shook his head regretfully.

"I'm sorry, it's just too long ago. The Tattoo is the only real clear image." Greg apologised.

"Not much to go on" Joe said equally regretfully. It wasn't Greg's fault, the trail was just cold. Maybe they could look through photographs of serving Police Officers in that area, maybe they'd get lucky.

Greg shuffled with embarrassment as he walked through the Police Precinct, cuffed and shackled. It wasn't like he would be able to escape with all those cops surrounding him, and he hated the stares of people entering and leaving the building as he arrived. Still, if he found the Police Officer who gave him the water, then he stood a chance of Detective Joe Ward believing him.
"Sit there" the Detective said as he waved a hand at a hard plastic chair in front of the computer screen. "I'll flash up the faces of serving officers from around this area and a few close counties. You see anyone who looks familiar, you let me know." He clicked a button and image after image appeared on the screen. Greg studied each face closely but none of them jogged his memory. After an hour, he sat back, defeated. "Nothing?" Joe asked, half hopeful, half resigned.

"No, sorry. Maybe it's been too long or maybe you don't have a photograph" Greg said, scrubbing his hands wearily over his face.

"Or maybe he exists just in your imagination" Joe said tersely "He doesn't exist, does he, Greg?"

"He does, I saw him" Greg snapped. It was useless, he thought. The man had disappeared into thin air and the Detective didn't believe him. It was no use.

"I'm just going to tell the boss it was a failure" Joe told the officer stood behind Greg "Keep an eye on this one" and he left. Greg looked around the office, bored, and caught sight of a picture on the wall, staring at it closely. He scanned the faces idly then froze.

"Detective?" Greg asked when Joe reappeared in the room "That photograph" he jerked his head towards it.

"Yeah, that's my Academy class" Joe replied "Why the interest?"

"The man next to you, the slightly arabic looking man? Who is he?" Greg pursued

"Malik, Zayn Malik. So what's your interest?"

"That's the officer, the one who gave me water, I'm sure" Greg turned in his seat and faced Joe Ward. "It's him."
"We've Got A Problem"

Chapter Notes

I am sorry for the slow updates. This pregnancy is really tiring and the heat is getting to me.

Joe stared at Greg. "Zayn? This is who you saw? Are you sure?"

"As sure as I can be. The guy I saw was really built though, very muscular. older. but..........." Greg trailed off. Was he sure? But the face seemed so familiar even though the man in the photograph was clean shaven and the man he'd met on the disused road had a well trimmed beard. He had to be the same guy. And after all the Academy photograph was taken some years ago. "Yeah, I'm sure."

"OK, I'll investigate. Officer, will you return Greg to the jail please." Joe nodded dismissively and started to type rapidly on his keyboard to see what he could find on Zayn Malik. He'd been fairly friendly with Zayn at the Academy and had even gone to Zayn's wedding to.....da*n, what was his husband's name? Good looking man, puppy eyes...Lional? Lance?....Liam! Yeah, Liam...Liam Payne. Joe became more focussed as memory returned.

She's still being sick, Lou" Serena said, her forehead creased with worry. "She's even vomiting water back up. I think I'll take her to the clinic tomorrow."

"Good idea, it's been a few days now and she'd not improved. Harry seems ok, though" Louis agreed. He hated it when either of the children were unwell. "I'll see if Liam can look after Harry and I'll come with you. "I'll just give him a call."

"Sure, no problem Lou" Zayn said. "Actually, I'm taking little Niall to the clinic tomorrow too. His knee is really bad and he's having to have it braced again, poor baby. But Li will be home as he wants to get some work done around the place. And Harry is no bother these days. " And that was the truth, Zayn thought, as he remembered Harry pre regression days. That boy had been a monster, constantly trying to escape, even making it to the outskirts of town once by hiding in a truck. Zayn grinned. You had to admire the boy's tenacity.

"Cheers, mate" Louis said thankfully. "I'll bring him over tomorrow then. I really appreciate this Zee as I need to go into work to do the security checks. I don't think we're in any danger but you have to stay on top of these things. Bye now" Louis hung up and went to tell Serena everything was sorted.
"I'm glad Niall's being seen today" Liam said tiredly "poor lad was whimpering in pain half the night." He passed Zayn a mug of coffee before taking a large sip of his own. He sighed as loud crying was heard over the baby monitor.

"I'll go, babe" Zayn put his mug down and hurried out of the room, taking the stairs two at a time as he headed towards Niall's nursery. "Hush now, snowflake, Baba has you." he cooed as he picked up a sobbing Niall and cuddled him into his chest. Niall's crying faded as he was gently rocked. "Let's get you all dry and comfortable" Zayn murmured, carrying Niall over to the changing table. He winced when he took off Niall's onesie and saw the sore and inflamed knee. "Awe baby..." he said "Don't worry, Baba is going to get that sorted out for you." He gently changed Niall's soaked diaper then dressed the boy in a legless onesie, anxious not to put any added pressure on the lad's sore knee. "Let's go see your Dada".

"The clinic is going to be very busy this morning" Nurse Collins snapped as she strode into one of the treatment rooms, a sheet of paper in her hand. "This virus going around really has made so many of the littles very unwell. I am assisting Doctor Andrews this morning, and you'll be with Doctor Clarke. Here's the list. You've some shots to give, Niall Malik-Payne needs a brace on his knee and then there is the clinic to run." She handed over the list to the muscular man who instantly scanned it, his face blank, as he nodded acknowledgement.

"Niall Malik-Payne?" Zayn stood up, Niall cradled in his arms, as he heard his son's name, and followed the nurse into a treatment room when a male nurse was waiting, his sweet expression at odds with his intimidating muscular frame.

"Hey Mark, how are you doing?" Zayn said cheerfully. He'd not seen Mark since the Barn Playground opening.

"Doing great" Mark replied "You and Li?"

"Yeah, we're great. It's just this little man" Zayn said as he laid Niall on the examination couch and gently unwrapped the blanket the boy was swaddled in, revealing the swollen knee.

"Ouch!" Mark frowned at the sight. "Poor thing, that's gotta be painful. It looks worse than when he first came here. I braced his knee then if I recall" He turned and pulled a trolley towards him. "Doc Andrews has prescribed a hydrocortisone shot and bracing so I'll do that now." He started to ready everything. "OK, will you hold his leg still while I put in a local anaesthetic? He won't like that at all." And he was right, Niall screamed loudly making Zayn instantly pick him up and cuddle him to try and soothe the distraught boy. "Let's just let that take effect" Mark said quietly.
"Not thought of having a little of your own, Mark?" Zayn asked conversationally as he rocked Niall gently. "You've been here all these years helping look after all these babies and you've never been tempted?"

"No" Mark’s voice was sharp making Zayn look at him in surprise. "No," Mark repeated, softer this time. "I have..had..my eye on someone who I love. If she'd wanted a little then…maybe..but"

"Playing hard to get, is she?" Zayn asked playfully.

"In a manner of speaking" Mark's voice was somber. "Zee, do you ever wonder if what we're doing here is wrong?"

"Wrong? In what way?" Zayn sounded puzzled.

"Well, we take kids away from their normal lives, turn them into babies. It's not even their choice." Mark looked down and started to fidget with the splints and badges on the trolley.

"No" Zayn's voice was firm "Look at Niall for example. He's so sweet and innocent. Do you think he'd have stayed that way if he'd been allowed to remain in that rockstar lifestyle? No, Mark, we give these kids a good life, a safe life."

"You're right" Mark spoke quietly "I'm just being stupid. Let's get this little man sorted. Lay him down. The anaesthetic will be working now, he'll not notice the next shot." Mark carried out his task swiftly and efficiently and was soon bracing Niall's knee. "There, little man" he cooed at the lad "all better now." Niall looked at him, blinking tiredly, before drifting into sleep.

"Awe, he's exhausted" Zayn cooed "He was awake half the night, in pain. Thanks Mark"

"Pleasure" Mark responded as he picked up the list and smiled to himself. He was now due to go in to assist Doctor Clarke whose next patient was to be Patience Tomlinson. He heaved a sigh of relief. He made a swift visit to the locked drugs cabinet and extracted what he needed, constantly looking over his shoulder to make sure he wasn't detected. He slid the prepared and capped syringe into the pocket of his scrubs, praying he'd get the chance he desperately needed.
"Babe, is he OK?" Liam flung open the front door when he'd heard the car pull into the driveway.

"He's fine, just sleeping" Zayn opened the back door of the car and carefully extracted Niall from the car, before handing over the sleeping boy to his husband. Liam sighed with relief. He hated it when his baby was sick. "Mark was brilliant with him and it all went smoothly. Maybe put him in his crib, babe" Zayn suggested. "That way Harry won't disturb him and he can have a long nap. He's exhausted." Liam nodded in agreement and bore Niall away to the nursery.

"Hi Harry" Zayn greeted the small boy and picked him up from the blanket he was laying on. He bounced him on his knees making Harry gurgle with laughter. Zayn lifted the lad up and blew a raspberry on the boy's soft stomach making the giggling even louder.

"He's been an angel" Liam said as he reentered the room. "I need to feed him though" He disappeared and returned moments later with a bottle which Zayn took from him.

"I'll do it, babe" Zayn adjusted the boy in his arm and put the teat in Harry's mouth. The boy immediately began to suck. He smiled at the boy but his thoughts wandered back to the clinic and Mark Jarvis. He cleared his throat. "Babe, you know Mark better than me..how did he get here?"

"Mark Jarvis? Nice guy. He used to be a fitness trainer for years then retrained as a nurse for some reason. Not sure quite how he ended here though. Good at his job, adores the children." Liam said. "Why the interest?" Zayn shrugged "Always wondered why he didn't have a little of his own."

"I got the impression he had eyes on someone but she wasn't available...not as a little" Zayn hastened to say. "Romantic" he clarified.

"Maybe..don't know who though. Mark is a very private man." Liam responded "But you didn't say why the sudden interest in Mark?"

"Dunno, just that he suddenly asked me if I thought this was all wrong." Zayn nodded towards Harry.

"Mark's a thinker, always has been so don't read anything into it, babe" Liam advised. Zayn nodded but he still had to admit to an uneasy feeling about his conversation with Mark. Maybe he'd just mention it to Louis. Yes, that's what he'd do.
Joe rolled his shoulders to ease the tension as he scrolled through in information he'd found. Zayn had stayed with the Department for over a year, marrying Liam Payne, before transferring to another County. He'd earned himself a few commendations along the way, Joe noted. He read on then stopped, his jaw dropping. According to this, Zayn Malik and his paramedic husband had both been on scene at a large apartment fire and had rushed in to attempt to save people. Both had died at the scene. The fire had been so severe that the bodies recovered from the scene had been so badly damaged as to be beyond identification, or not found at all. Greg had been wrong, Joe sighed. He'd obviously been so intent on clearing his name that he'd lied about recognising Zayn in that Academy photograph. And yet.....that niggling worry he was missing something still persisted and Joe couldn't shake it. It was apparent that Zayn was dead but...

Patience lay on the examination couch where Mark had carefully laid her down. He completed the checks that had been required and he was just waiting the arrival of Doctor Clarke. He was desperate to top up the drugs he'd been injecting into the girl but with Serena watching like a hawk, he'd have to wait and hope he got the chance. He cooed at Patience, playing the part of a good nurse keeping a baby happy. He suddenly looked shocked when Patience whispered "Mark". He placed a finger over her lips in the universal sign of 'quiet' but the girl's eyes returned to their slightly glazed look and she said nothing else.

"Did she say something?" Serena was instantly by Mark's side and looking down at her daughter.

"Mommy" Mark said swiftly "I think she wanted to know where you were". He smiled at Serena though his eyes remained cool. "These little ones hate being here".

"Awe, bless her" Serena responded. "Mommy's here, baby, don't worry." She smiled down at the girl as she spoke. Patience frowned slightly, her thoughts suddenly confused. She didn't realise her adult mind was trying to break through the regression. Patience began to cry in frustration and Serena swiftly picked her up to cuddle and sooth her toddler.

"Dear me, yes, the poor little thing isn't well" Doctor Clarke commented having completed his examination."I think we'll just give her a few shots that will help." He wrote down his instructions and handed them to Mark. "Mark, if you'd see to this". Mark nodded, thanking his lucky stars and immediately turned to carry out the Doctor's instructions, injecting Patience with the temporary regression drug now possible. He let out a breath he didn't know he'd been holding. He..and Patience..were safe for now..but for how much longer. He needed to advance his plans but there had to be no room for error. Patience had already paid the price for her own aborted attempt to flee the community with two of the 'babies'. He didn't want his own attempt to fail.

Louis idly worked his way through the latest security checks. Everything seemed in order but you could never be too careful. He hacked into the Central Police Computer and looked to see what was hot. He suddenly sat up straight and pushed his black framed spectacles up his nose as he leant
closer to the screen. Zayn Malik's name! Someone had been searching for him. He read swiftly. It seemed Detective Joe Marks had got interested in Zayn. Marks….wasn't he the guy who had investigated Niall Horan's mysterious disappearance? Louis reached for the phone, tapping his fingers against the desk as he waited for the call to be answered.

"Zayn, get here now. We've got a problem."
Mark breathed in the smell of the perfume that somehow still permeated the room. He glanced about himself, taking in his surroundings, hardly able to grasp that he was standing here, in her bedroom...or what was once her bedroom. It looked like it hadn't been touched since she was last here. He gave himself a mental shake. He had to get what he needed and get out fast, he didn't have long. Opening the bag he brought with him, he started to tuck clothing into it, underwear, Tshirts, a few sweaters, pants and toiletries. He zipped the bag up and quietly and carefully left the house, carefully turning the alarms off before sneaking out of the house. He scanned the area meticulously, he mustn't be seen. Mark jogged his way back to his car which he had hidden further down the street. His chest felt tight with tension and he forced himself to take several deep breaths, relief flooding his body as more air allowed his lungs to expand. Stage two of his plans was about to start.

Louis and Zayn had spent hours going through the Police computer to see what, if anything, Joe Marks may have discovered. Joe had obviously found the report of Zayn and Liam's supposed deaths and had tried other avenues to see if anything else had turned up but it looked like he had reached a dead end.

"Do you think he bought it?" Zayn's voice was rough with anxiety. Louis shrugged.

"Mate, we were thorough. You and Liam died that night and I made d*mn sure that all traces of your existence 'died'" he wiggled his fingers in quotation marks " along with you. You both are dead and buried. End of... Mate, even your families believe you were killed in that fire."

"But why the sudden interest?" Zayn pursued. He and Liam had given up so much to be where they were right now and now it looked like the whole thing could blow right open. Why? Why the sudden interest?

"Dunno, but I'll find out." Louis turned his attention back to the computer and his fingers danced rapidly across the keyboard. "A ha!" Louis pushed his black framed glasses further up his nose and leaned closer to the screen. "It appears that Greg has been re-interviewed and his sighting of you has triggered the new search." Louis glanced up at Zayn who was frowning.
"But why?" Zayn was confused. "Greg has no reason to connect me to my past."

"No, but I'll see what else I can find out." Louis fingers clicked across the keys as Zayn paced back and forth, too agitated to sit or stand still. Hours passed by and still Louis worked, occasionally muttering to himself. "Zee, any chance you know this guy, this detective?" he looked up at Zayn who looked completely confused. "Joe Marks?" Louis reminded him.

"Joe Marks, Joe Marks" this time it was Zayn who was muttering to himself as he walked back and forth. "Joe Marks" Suddenly his face paled beneath his tan complexion "The Academy...we were at the Academy together. I'd forgotten him, forgotten the Academy. We were never close but he came to the wedding. Half the Academy did, guess they were curious about a same sex marriage. It was still an oddity then. But he thinks I'm...we're...dead. So why?" Zayn felt even more confused."I never connected the name."

"Mate, I don't know but I'll try and find out. Look, you can't do anything here. Go home to your family. I'll keep you informed. Go!" he waved his hand at the door and Zayn trudged out, wondering what on earth he was going to tell Liam.

"Babababbbb" Niall babbled cheerfully as Zayn entered the room. The small man held out his arms and wriggled in Liam's hold as Zayn approached to take him. Zayn cuddled him closely to himself and peppered the soft cheeks with kisses, making Niall giggle.

"You OK, babe? Liam asked anxiously as Zayn went and sat on the couch, Niall cradled in his arms. "What's happening?" He sat down next to his husband and placed a gentle hand on his shoulder, rubbing it soothingly.

"Joe Marks" Zayn spoke just the name making Liam frown in bewilderment.

"He's the detective that investigated Niall's disappearance, isn't he? He got Greg for it so......" Liam was confused.

"Yeah, but it looks like he's got doubts. He's been investigating our deaths, Li. Joe Marks! I'd forgotten all about him, Liam. He's the same Joe that came to our wedding." Zayn looked at his husband's face and watched the color bleach out of it as Liam registered what he'd just said. "Babe, this could go bad". Zayn closed his eyes. He was exhausted.

"Zee, you're tired. Let's get some rest and we'll look at it tomorrow." Liam said quietly. He took
Niall out of Zayn's arms. "Upstairs with you."

Liam smiled down at his sleeping husband. Zayn was sprawled on the bed, looking oddly so much younger in sleep, the anxious expression of his face now relaxed and peaceful. Liam shifted Niall in his arms then carried him into the his nursery and through into the adjoining bathroom where he lay Niall down on the floor and prepared his bath, before stripping off Niall's onesie and diaper and lowering him into the water where Niall splashed happily. Liam played with his son but his thoughts were not totally on bathing the lad. He couldn't help but worry. Could Joe Marks find out the truth..that he Zayn and Liam were alive and well ? He sighed and lifted Niall out of the tub, wrapping him in a fluffy towel. "Let's get you dried off and we'll get a nice bottle" He cooed at the baby and Niall responded with delighted babbles.

Louis stumbled through his front door. He was beyond exhausted, his hair was a mess and his eyes red and sore from staring at a computer screen for hours on end. Serena hurried towards him, helping him off with his jacket and leading him to the Den where he collapsed gratefully onto the couch.

"Are we in danger?" she asked quietly. Louis shrugged, leaning back, eyes shut. They sat there in silence until the sounds of fretful crying could be heard over the baby monitor. "I'll go" she stood and hurried out of the room.

"Mammmma" Harry was sat up in his crib, tears flooding down his cheeks. Serena hurried to pick him up to comfort him but as she got close she saw the reason for his distress. Harry was covered with vomit and his onesie also bore ominous strains that testified to a badly upset tummy. She carefully lifted him up then carried him to the bathroom, expertly stripping off his soiled clothing and messy diaper before preparing a bath. Harry sobbed the whole time and Serena's attempts to soothe him failed.

"Awe baby" Louis stood in the doorway looking at his upset son. "Are you a sick little kitten?" He came in and picked up the boy cuddling him as Serena tested the temperature of the bathwater. "Have you picked up the same bug that your big sister has?" He rocked Harry slightly then passed him to Serena. "Babe, if you're OK, I gotta sleep." Serena nodded and Louis left to collapse onto their bed and let himself fall into a deep sleep. Serena took Harry to the nursery and sat down in the rocker, ready to nurse her son but Harry kept turning his head away and crying until finally he fell asleep.

Zayn looked up from feeding Niall when the doorbell rang. Liam went to answer it and Zayn heard him talking to someone. He looked up nervously as Liam reentered the kitchen, Louis hard on his heels. This didn't bode well in his mind.

"Zee, can we talk?" Louis asked quietly as Liam looked between the two men. "Your office?".
Zayn nodded, and stood up, allowing Liam to take his place then headed to his office, Louis close on his heels. Liam heard the door close then turned his attention back to the baby. Though he cooed and talked to the lad, his mind was far away, wondering what Louis wanted.

The door to the office had remained closed for over four hours before it finally opened and the two men headed to kitchen where Zayn began to make coffee and put together the makings for sandwiches. He could hear Liam's soft voice over the baby monitor as he sang to Niall, lulling the boy into sleep. Zayn smiled. He'd do anything to protect his husband and son and knew Louis felt the same about his own little family. Hopefully they were better prepared.

"So, are you going to tell me what this is all about and why you have been locked in the office?" Liam asked as he entered the kitchen and sat down at the kitchen table, opposite his husband and friend.

"Babe, things are getting dangerous. Louis and I have been making plans to leave the community. We've spent the morning moving funds around, organising a few safe houses. We can't take the risk of being found." Zayn said quietly, his face already looking drawn and exhausted.

"How bad?" Liam whispered.

"Truth?" Louis said sombrely. "I have no idea, to be honest. If the Detective accepts what he's found, then we're good. If he starts digging? I'm good at what I do, Li, really good, but if I have made a mistake or he gets lucky, then......." He didn't have to finish the sentence. There was no need, the other men knew. "I'll head back to the family. Hazza was really sick last night. I think he's picked up that bug Patience has been so sick with."

"She still sick?" Liam was sympathetic.

"Yeah, doesn't seem to be getting better. We'll take them both back to the clinic. I'd better head out. Zee, I think you and Li had better start making your preparations." Louis stood and Zayn walked him out. Liam turned back and looked at the small lad in his highchair.

"I won't loose you sweetheart. I can't" Liam unfastened the harness and lifted the boy out carefully, cuddling to him to his chest.

Joe Marks read and re-read the reports of the fire that had claimed the lives of Liam and Zayn. Nobody could have survived that inferno, and nobody had. So was Greg Horan lying? And if
he wasn't, what was he, Joe, missing?
Sorry

Chapter Notes

This isn't an update. I am sorry but the story is on temporary hold as my Da'ad has just passed away and we are going home for a time. I will come and write when I am able.

Thank you for reading my stories and making kind comments. I genuinely appreciate you all

Update soon
Thank you

I have been so touched by all your kind messages following the passing of my Daad. You have all been incredibly kind and I appreciate it. I hope to update very soon.
"Babe, don't wait up for me. Lou and I have a lot of stuff to get done and I'm not sure what time we'll make it back." Zayn hugged his younger husband close as he spoke. "I know you hate me being away, especially with everything so tense right now, but we've got to make sure we can get away. Love you, babe, you and Niall." He kissed Liam's forehead gently then broke away from him to go and stare down at Niall, who was sleeping peacefully in his bassinet, his paci wiggling gently as he sucked on it in his sleep. Zayn bent down and kissed his son then trailed a finger across the boy's soft cheek. Straightening up, he smiled at Liam. "I gotta go, Li." He left the house, Liam listening to the roar of the car's engine as it pulled away from the house, then there was silence.

Liam wandered about the house, picking up the den and generally straightening the room before going into the kitchen to prepare a bottle ready for Niall who was due to wake from his nap soon. A ring at the door interrupted him and he hurried to see who was there.

"Li, how are you?" Serena stood there, Harry cuddled into her chest. "I'm sorry, but I really need company"

"Come in, come in" Liam stood aside to allow her to enter. "Actually, I feel the same. These latest developments have really made me nervous. Make yourself at home, I'll make coffee" Liam waved a hand towards the Den. "Nialler is just finishing his nap."

Liam soon returned, a tray in his hands which he placed on the coffee table. Serena was sat on the couch, feeding Harry, who was looking up at her with his big green eyes. Niall was stirring in his bassinet and Liam then hurried over to pick him up and soothe him before he started to cry.

"How's Patience doing now?" Liam asked as he returned to the couch, Niall cradled in one arm, the warm bottle of milk that he had fetched, in his other hand.

"Much better, thanks" Serena said looking happier. "They have had so many Littles in the hospital with this virus thing and they all seem to be taking their time in recovering. I visited her earlier and Mark says she'll be able to come home soon. He's such a darling, that man. I mean, he's built like a
wrestler, yet he is so gentle with the babies. He's very attached to Patience and is taking wonderful care of her. You'd think she was his own Little the way he fusses over her. She'll be so spoilt by the time she comes home." Serena laughed lightly. Liam felt his eyebrows draw together in a slight frown as he tried to recall a recent conversation he'd had with Zayn, regarding Mark. Hadn't Zayn expressed some concern over something Mark had said to him? Liam shook his head and dismissed it from his mind. He was mistaken, Mark was a great guy.

Joe stared into space. He knew he was missing something, something important. Greg Horan was adamant that Zayn was the man he'd seen near the abandoned fuel dump. But Zayn was dead. He died years ago. Maybe the answer lay in Rexfordlea, the small town where Niall had been meant to meet up with his brother. Mind made up, Joe stood up and grabbed the thick file. Maybe he'd go there, go to Rexfordlea. After all, he'd nothing to lose and maybe something would throw some light on the case.

The drive was a long one and Joe found himself going over and over in his head, his last conversation with Greg Horan. The man was so sure that he'd seen Zayn, but described him as much more muscled and with visible tattoos on display, on a lotus flower that covered the back of one of his hands. Didn't that signify new beginnings? He chuckled to himself. Well, if Zayn had miraculously risen from the dead, that could definitely be described as a new beginning, for sure! Joe realised he'd finally arrived at his destination and, spotting a diner that appeared to be clean but rundown, parked his car and headed in, desperate for coffee and a hot meal.

"Hi, I'm Lucy and I'm your server" a chirpy voice pulled Joe back to reality. He'd been staring out of the Diner window, mind mulling over the case. "What can I get you?"

"Ummh... ah... Coffee, black and what's good to eat around here?" Joe smiled up at her.

"We do great hamburgers here, best in the town." Lucy replied cheerfully.

"Yeah, well then I'll sample one" Joe agreed pleasantly. Best in the town? he thought. Well the town was small and very old fashioned, like it hadn't moved forward in decades, so that wasn't much of a recommendation for the hamburger. Still, he was hungry and the diner was clean, despite being worn and tired looking. He might as well risk it. The hamburger turned out to be surprisingly good and Joe found he enjoyed it. Appetite dealt with, he settled his check, gathered up his paperwork and left the diner, deciding to walk around the town. He wasn't sure why, maybe get a feel for the place, maybe hoping that the illusive clue that was bugging him would miraculously appear before his eyes, putting everything into perspective. With that thought, he headed down the street.

"Hey, I'm sorry, I wasn't looking where I was going" the man said as he bent down to pick up the papers that had scattered when he had collided with the detective. "I must have been in a trance."
He straightened up and handed the papers to Joe, looking at the man properly for the first time. Joe found himself staring into eyes that were somehow a familiar buttery brown, surrounded by eyelashes as dense and long as those of any woman, the tan colored skin of the hand holding out the papers, had a beautiful lotus tattoo covering the back of it. Joe thanked the man in a distracted manner. He was so familiar to the long dead Zayn, more muscled, not the skinny lad who had been in the Police Academy with him, but a fully grown man.

"Ummh, I'm sorry..I ..ah" The man, the Zayn lookalike, suddenly looked extremely uncomfortable and hurried away, joining another, shorter man, and disappeared rapidly from sight. Joe staring after his retreating figure. Things fell into place. This had to be the man that Greg claimed had given him water for his car when it overheated near the abandoned fuel dump. He fitted the description exactly, right down to the lotus tattoo adorning his hand. Joe started to walk in the direction the man had disappeared but stopped himself. He'd obviously been recognised himself so he had to be clever. The game of cat and mouse was about to commence. Joe headed back to his car, his mind whirling.
Break Through!

Chapter Notes

My baby is due on the 14th so I am trying to update before as I may be missing for a short time. It's only a short one, sorry, but sitting for any length of time is very uncomfortable right now.

Joe raced to his car and drove out of the town as fast as he could legally go, searching for a spot where he could hide. He had no idea which way, if any, Zayn would take leaving the town. Maybe that's where he lived and Joe had blown the chance to locate him by not following him. He prayed luck was on his side. Eventually he found the perfect hiding place and pulled his car into the shadows of some trees and bushes that lined the road. He could see any traffic coming but he, himself, was hidden from view. He settled down to wait.

It was gradually getting darker and the road had remained empty. Joe sighed to himself, his plan had failed. He was just about to start up the car and pull out of his hiding place when the sound of an approaching vehicle was heard. He froze in place. Peering into the gloom, he saw a black Range Rover pass by, with Zayn at the wheel, another man in the passenger seat. Joe waited until the car was out of sight then he pulled out, speeding up just enough to see the vehicle in the distance. Joe kept his car lights off. Dangerous, he knew, but the road was deserted and he didn't want to attract Zayn's attention in any way. He followed behind and watched as Zayn finally turned down a rough and bumpy dirt track and disappeared from view. Joe slowed down and noted a faded and battered sigh declaring it was the site of a disused fuel dump. A fuel dump! And hadn't Greg Horan swore he'd seen Zayn at an abandoned fuel dump and been helped by him, when his car had overheated? Finally, he had a break through. Joe felt the excitement start to bubble in his stomach. He drove on, heading back to his home. He finally had something to go on!

Zayn had dropped Louis off at his home then crept into the dark and quietness of his own house. He felt sick to his stomach with anxiety. Of all the people to literally bump into, why did it have to be Joe? And Zayn had seen the flicker of recognition in Joe's eyes. Fck! He mounted the stairs slowly, shoulders slumped. They had to leave ......and soon. Zayn took a deep breath and slowly pushed open the bedroom door. Liam was asleep, his arm stretched out so his hand was resting on Niall's small tummy as he slept in his bassinet, beside the kind sized bed of his parents. Zayn went and stood next to the small lad and looked down at him, his eyes tear filled as he thought of the danger they were now all in, just because he carelessly bumped into Joe.

Zayn stood under the hot water of the shower, his thoughts a tangled mess. He knew they had to leave, and soon. They couldn't risk staying here, it was far too dangerous. He and Louis had nearly everything in place to leave. Just another day or two, then they could leave. But did they go back to the cabin in Montana or head for the small island they had bought. Both were off the grid and they'd be safe in either place. The island, Zayn decided, that was the best place. Mind made up, Zayn stepped out of the shower and wrapped a towel around his hips. He grabbed another towel.
and roughly dried his hair before returning to the bedroom. Liam hadn't stirred and Niall was murmuring softly in his sleep, his paci having fallen out of his mouth. Zayn picked it up and carefully slid it between Niall's plump lips, smiling as the lad instantly sucked on it, making it bob cutely. Zayn knew he couldn't let his baby go, he had to make sure they got away from here. He stood for a few more minutes watching Niall sleep then went to his own bed and climbed in carefully, so as not to disturb his sleeping husband. He snuggled up to Liam, spooning him gently. He was exhausted and tomorrow was going to be a long and stressful day. His eyes closed and sleep claimed him.

Mark crept into the small hospital room where Patience was sleeping soundly. She was gradually recovering from the nasty virus that had made so many of the Littles very sick. She was due to be discharged tomorrow and he knew that couldn't happen. He had to act now. He slowly and carefully lowered the side of the crib and lifted her swaddled body into his arms. He'd been tampering with the regression drugs and he knew she would soon be returning to her adult mind if he wasn't able to continue doing so. He couldn't let it happen, it would ruin everything. He carried her to the door and cracked it open. The corridor was empty, the lighting dimmed for the night. He cautiously walked along, praying Patience wouldn't wake and cry. Relax, he told himself, you sedated her, she won't wake. He released a breath he didn't know he had been holding as he turned the corner and saw the emergency exit ahead of him. Quietly he moved towards it then, glancing around to make sure they were still alone, he opened the door and slipped out into the dark night. He had to force himself to walk calmly and quietly to his car. He fumbled for his car keys and opened the back door. A baby seat was already in place and he swiftly buckled Patience into the seat before closing the door and hurrying to the front of the car. Climbing into the driver's seat, he closed the door and started the engine.
Hey, This is Rebekah. I am Harmony's cousin. So Louis Malachi arrived yesterday, September 13th. He weighed in 4lbs 9oz. Unfortunately both he and Harmony had a very rough time during labor and Harmony ended up having to have an emergency caesarean. Louis is doing OK, he is a real fighter. He's all tubes and wires right now but he is so gorgeous. Harmony isn't doing as well, lost a lot of blood, etc which they are dealing with, but I am sure she will be fine.
Bro, You Gotta Hear This!

Chapter Notes

Thank you so very much for all the kind wishes and prayers. I am very humble and thankful that people who do not know me have taken the trouble to pray for me. Thank you from my heart.

My little son is getting better. He's named Louis (as in OneD :-) ) Malachi

I am sorry this chapter is so short but I wanted to update as soon as I could.

Mark felt his hands shaking as he gripped the steering wheel. This was it. He drove steadily, wanting so desperately to speed as fast as he could away from this community of deranged people. He wanted Patience to be safe. He forced himself to maintain a speed that didn't attract any undue attention but he knew the dangerous part was yet to come. He knew security had been increased and that leaving the community limits would trigger the alarms but he had to take the risk. That would be when he hit the gas and drove as fast as he could. He just had to get out to where there would be other people. He took a deep breath. Old Turnpike was coming up. He stopped the car briefly and tried to steady his nerve. Foot down, he hit the accelerator and the car shot forward.

Zayn and Liam shot awake abruptly as they heard the warning alarms. Simultaneously, Zayn's cell phone indicated an incoming call and he hurriedly answered, hearing Louis agitated voice.

"Zayn, the hospital just rang. Patience is missing.....Mark too!. Surveillance showed him putting into his car and him heading off. He's just hit Old Turnpike." Louis was breathless as he spoke.

"I'm on my way" Zayn had leapt out of bed and was already starting to dress as he listened to Louis. He pulled on Joggers, then grabbed his keys. "Take Niall to Serena and then follow me. Hurry!" and he was gone.

Niall had been woken by the noise and was screaming fretfully. Liam tried to soothe him as he got dressed himself then he swaddled Niall tightly and headed out himself to leave the baby with Serena. She had her door open to admit me almost as soon as he had begun to hammer on the door and swiftly took the still screaming lad from his arms. Liam thanked her briefly then raced to join his husband, wondering just what the f.ck was happening.

Dust clouds marked Zayn's progress as he sped along Old Turnpike. His car was much faster than Mark's and he soon could see the escaping car in the distance. Shoulders tense, he coaxed his car to go faster, the distance between the two vehicles closing imperceptibly. Mark panicked, seeing
the other car gaining on him and he knew he had to get to a populated area if he was to escape. Zayn couldn't touch him then. The Highway was in sight now and he put his foot down even harder on the accelerator. Almost there! He turned the car sharply to the left and headed, not towards Rexfordlea, but towards the appropriately named Haven Town. His chest ached with his need for oxygen as he'd been holding his breath in terror. Zayn was still gaining, closer and closer. Mark raised his eyes to his rear view mirror and he felt his heart stop. Zayn was bearing down on him. There was an enormous bang as Zayn drove his car into the rear side of Mark's car in a perfect 'Pit Manoeuvre', a trick he'd been taught at the Academy, and Mark felt his car spinning out of control. His head hit the steering wheel and his world went black as the car hit some trees lining the road and stilled the car's progress.

Zayn leapt out of his vehicle and wrenched open the driver's side door with difficulty. He placed two fingers on the pulse of Mark's neck. The man was unconscious but alive though his face was covered in blood. Zayn then looked into the back seat. Patience, unlike Mark, had been wearing a seatbelt and Mark had also padded pillows around her. She seemed unhurt but was screaming in fright. He gently unfastened her and, lifting her out, cuddled her into his chest, speaking softly to her to calm her. Her sobs lessened and Zayn was then able to hear the sound of an approaching vehicle. He scanned both directions anxiously, sighing with relief as he recognised Liam's car heading towards him. Liam pulled up and jumped out, jogging towards them.

"Zee, is she OK? And Mark?" Liam asked anxiously as he turned back to pull his medic out of his car.

"She seems fine" Zayn said, "Frightened, but unhurt. Mark's alive but he's badly hurt." Liam dashed towards the injured man and began to check him over. Finally he stood back.

"He's got a strong pulse. Obvious head injury but he need a hospital. Do we take him back?" Liam asked.

"Yeah, can't leave him here. We need to move the car too. F.ck!" He turned his head, It sounded like another vehicle was coming, the sounds still distant but definitely approaching. "Li, let's go now, hurry!"

"But Mark!" Liam said. "We can't just…"

"Li, go. We can't get caught." Zayn yelled, galvanising Liam into movement. He picked up his medical bag and returned to his car as Zayn finished strapping an again screaming Patience into Niall's vacant car seat. Doors slamming, both men rapidly drove away, leaving Mark alone.
Joe Marks rubbed his tired eyes. He'd got very little sleep last night as his mind tried to make sense of the recent events. Unable to stay in bed, he had arrived at the Precinct before the sun had barely risen and was studying the files on Niall Horan's disappearance yet again. He was currently looking at a map of the area and was totally puzzled by the lack of a town being shown, yet not too long ago, pilots searching for a missing hiker had claimed to have flown over an unknown community. And that community had suddenly appeared on records, only to vanish again, a few months later. His head throbbed badly so he reached for his black coffee and took a swig.

"Bro, you just gotta hear this" James Corden told his fellow Detective Joe as he bounced into his office. "I bet you never heard this excuse before. It's beyond crazy" He pulled up a chair and propped his feet onto Joe's desk. Joe Marks eyed him with slight distaste. James was a great guy, but too enthusiastic at times. Still, the sooner he listened to him, the sooner James would leave him in peace.

"OK, what excuse have I never heard before." Joe asked indulgently.

"Well, some guy had an accident on the Highway. Went into trees. He wasn't wearing his seatbelt. They took him to the hospital and when he regained consciousness, he was shouting about this girl being in the car with him and that they'd been forced off the road to try and stop them escaping. He reckoned he was taking this girl from some f.cked up place where they kidnapped young people and regressed them into adult babies. Bro, he must either be high on drugs or the accident messed his brain up. Honestly! And the real kicker? He claims that the pop star that went missing, that Niall Horan? He's one of the babies. Bro, that man must be out of his mind!" James laughed so hard, he was crying and clutching his ribs.

"Where was this accident then?" Joe asked suddenly alert.

"Just passed the Old fuel dump, South bound." James said as he finally stopped laughing and pulled himself together.

The old fuel dump…what a coincident. Well, it would be if Joe believed in coincidence, but he didn't. "And was he forced off the road? What damage to the vehicle?" Joe queried.

"Joe, seriously. The guy is off his mind. He wasn't forced off the road, and there was no girl." James was dismissive.

"James" Joe shouted. "Get that car checked for any sign of damage that wasn't caused by the accident. And get forensics to check it inside out. Now!" Joe continued to yell.
"Ok, Ok. keep your shirt on" James was now irritable. Why the h*ll was Joe so worked up about some stupid accident caused by a man clearly off his mind with drugs or drink.. He stood up and stomped out, slamming the door behind him. Joe winced as pain shot through his head. He was furious with James. The whole Horan investigation hadn't been conducted properly, mistakes had been made that probably delayed them finding the truth. He wouldn't let it happen again. He went back to the file and then started drawing up timelines, locations and began to marry all the information together as he waited for the report. Eventually, he threw down his pen. He was going to visit this accident victim himself.
Mark stared up at the ceiling. His entire body was a mass of pains and aches. His head seemed to throb in time to his heartbeat. Only by laying completely still, was his pain bearable. "Mark Jarvis?" a voice broke into his thoughts and Mark turned his head cautiously to look at the man stood in the doorway of his hospital room.

"Yeah" Mark confirmed weakly. "I'm Mark. Who might you be? Someone else to tell me that I am insane, I'm imagining things?" Mark's voice was harsh, rough with both pain and frustrations.

"I am Detective Joe Marks, and I am definitely not here to accuse you of madness. Far from it, Mark. I have reason to believe that you are far from crazy and that, in fact, you may hold the key to a problem that's been plaguing me for some time. Do you feel up to talking?" Joe pulled up a hard plastic chair and sat down next to the bed, allowing himself to study the occupant closely. The man, Mark, returned his careful regard.

"Yeah, Ok, talk" Mark finally said. He pushed the bed control making the bed move him up into a sitting position, groaning slightly as his pain increased.

"I'm sorry" Joe said, sounding genuinely apologetic "I know you must be in pain but I need information and I need it quickly. You up for this?" He raised an enquiring brow at Mark who nodded slowly.

"Other officers you have spoken to tell me you claim that you had a passenger in the car with you. A young woman who was trapped in the mindset of a toddler. You also claim that you had escaped with this woman from a community where young adults had been forced into age play babies following their kidnapping. The name Niall Horan was also mentioned by you. Mr Horan is of great interest to me. So.........................." Joe looked at Mark and waited.

"Yeah, I was with Patience Andrews. Patience used to be a nurse at the community hospital until she tried to escape with two of the boys that had been kidnapped. One was that pop star, Niall Horan. Her parents are doctors at the hospital and they gave their victims these f.cked up regression drugs that made the adults act and think like genuine babies. Anyway, Patience tried to get two of them out though she never made it. She got caught and got regressed herself." Mark rubbed his aching head and fell silent, not sure how to continue.
"This nurse, Patience, why was she in your car?" Joe asked, needed to start the flow of conversation from the man. He didn't care how disjointed the information was, he'd sort it out later. It was just important to get as much information out of Mark as possible.

"I love her" Mark said quietly "I had always loved her and I wanted to ask her to marry me. I'd have helped her get the boys out but I guess she didn't have cause to trust me. I wouldn't have trusted me either. I was in full support of everything at the community until Patience was regressed. I knew then I had to get her out of there so I tampered with the drugs they gave her. It meant I had to drug her myself regularly, keep her under, until I was ready to make my move. I didn't want Patience to have her life ruined. I love her." Mark started sobbing. Joe sat quietly allowing Mark to compose himself before he asked further questions.

"This community, do the names Liam Payne and Zayn Malik mean anything to you?" The question suddenly popped out of Joe's mouth though he wondered why he felt there was bound to be a link.

"Liam and Zayn Malik-Payne?" Mark questioned. They're a married couple. Liam used to be one of the paramedics and Zayn, he's the community police officer."

"Bingo" Joe said in satisfaction "Tell me more about them." Greg wasn't lying, he thought with satisfaction, he really had been assisted by Zayn.

They've been in the community for years, no family, then last year they got a little of their own. Liam had got his heart set on that little singer, Niall Horan, and Louis, Louis Tomlinson, the community computer nerd and kidnapper arranged it." Mark shrugged.

"Do you know how?" Joe asked.

"Easy. Lou is a computer genius. He hacked into the system and put a false text out that Niall thought was from his brother. Niall followed the directions given in the text and, like you said, bingo. Niall was theirs and Greg Horan took the heat.

"How many "littles, did you call them?, in the community" Joe continued his questioning.

"About fifty or so. They are normally homeless kids. They are taken to the hospital, drugged then given to couples. The whole town is set up to run that way. Even the hospital is geared to preparing the littles for their new lives." Mark said, disgusted with both the town and himself. How could he have been happy to go along with it. "Apart from Patience and Niall Horan, they're all people that
wouldn't be missed."

Joe continued his line of questioning and Mark was more than happy to give the information. After a few hours a nurse appeared and sent the Detective away so her patient could rest.

"Mark, I'll be back but you've helped more than you realise. Get some rest now." Joe stood and shook the man's hand then left quietly to study all the information he had noted down. He was sure about one think, he needed to act and act fast. Mark's escape from the community had to be known. Patience had vanished so she must have been taken back or, being a 'toddler' got out of the car and wandered off.

"Boss, here is the report from forensics you wanted. Looks like another car did hit the Jarvis car, same place as a 'Pit manoeuver' would hit. Also the inside of the vehicle, they found strands of very long hair. Whether it has been there some time or not, they can't say, but the damage to the car's body was fresh, very fresh." the young officer held out the report to Joe who took it immediately and started to read, nodding in acknowledgement to the young man. He reached for his phone and punched in some numbers, chewing his lip as he waited for a response.

"You'd better be right, Joe" his superior told him. "If you got this wrong then we'll be the laughing stock of the entire Police Department from here to Florida. The whole thing, some town geared up to kidnapping young adults and forcing them to be babies is the stuff of fiction. You'd better be darn sure you know what you're doing because if I go down, you're going with me."

"Sir, nobody is going down except those perverts." Joe replied. "I'll set everything in motion." He turned and left the office.

"Li, we have to get out of here, today, tomorrow may be too late. Start packing, babe. I gotta go see Louis."

Chapter End Notes

I am so sorry for the slow updates but things are very busy here. Little Loulou is slowly gaining weight. He has his problems and he has been confirmed to be deaf..not unexpected unfortunately.
Joe bent over the rough map that Mark had managed to draw for him, despite the enormous pain he was experiencing.

"Here……....and here" Mark circled another two areas of the map. "These are where the security cameras are all based. It's really hi tech stuff. They'll know you're coming before you've got more than a few inches into the the area. Everything, and I men everything, will have time to vanish before you reach the town. " Mark paused, then added scarily "If they let you get that far"

"Vanish?" Joe asked, puzzled. "How can a town vanish?"

"Not the town itself" Mark smiled grimly "Just the so called children and every trace of them. You'd think children never existed there. I don't know all the ins and outs of it, to be honest. I just know they have ways of making the children disappear. Unfortunately, I was never included that far into the security levels to know how they did it. Louis Tomlinson, the computer geek, is a f.cking genius. You'll never beat him. Never!" Mark's warning was stark.

"Then I'll find a geek of my own" Joe said ."You just tell me everything you can and we'll do our bit."

"You have no idea what you are up against" Mark said bitterly. 

"Then tell me...tell me everything you can." Joe challenged. "Even if you think it isn't important." He settled back and Mark, after glaring at him for a few moments, began to ramble on about the community, who lived there, it's routines, how it functioned, security, the hospital...and the regression drugs. Joe listened attentively, his pen constantly scrapping across his notebook as he made furious notes.

"I think it can be done" . Alberto Alvarez said, scratching his head as he thought. "I mean, their security system is very sophisticated . State of the Art. Who ever set it up is a f.cking genius, man. Any idea who it was?"

"Guy called Louis Tomlinson" Joe replied as he surveyed the diagrams Alberto had drawn.

"I know him!" Alberto yelled. "At least I know that name. He's a computer genius in the true sense
of the word. I don't know anyone or anything that will defeat him. Tommo is the sass master."

"Then we'll need to be smarter" was Joe's response." Much smarter. Tell me everything you know about the man." Alberto responded immediately, and at great length. Joe listened carefully, nodding from time to time.

A few days had passed and there had been no security breaches at the community. Louis practically lived on the computer yet nothing had shown up. He was grateful. It meant that they had time, a precious commodity, to plan an orderly removal of everyone from the town who wanted to leave. The warning system had been extended so they would have even longer warning of intruders. Families were busy packing and planning where they would go into hiding.

"It's all arranged, Li, the plane is on standby. The house is all prepared." Zayn said as he walked rapidly into the room. "Louis, Serena and their littles will come with us. We've room. Nobody will ever think of looking there for any of us."

"There's just one snag, babe" Liam looked up into Zayn's eyes, his own soft brown ones serious. "The regression drug. If the children are not on it, what then?"

"Maybe we take some with us. Eventually the children must be so used to being babies, we won't need to continually drug them. And you can provide their medical needs, can't you." Zayn said.

"Babe, I'm a Paramedic, not a doctor. If we need serious help, we're f cked." Liam was sombre.

"Then we'll pray we don't need it. Or maybe Doc Andrews will come with us? She's the real mom to Patience after all." Zayn sounded confident. Between Liam and Doctor Andrews, surely the children would be safe, after all. "Come on, we haven't time to waste. Make sure we have everything we need, equipment as well, as we won't be able to get the right stuff on the Island. There is plenty of room in the cargo hold of the plane. More than we need, to be honest. Look, I'm going back to the station to help Louis." He kissed Liam then left the younger man to the packing.

"Anything, Lou?" Zayn asked as he strode towards where Louis was hunched over his computer monitor.

"I think we're running out of time. I've been trying to get into their system for hours but I think they are finally on to me. I'm being blocked. Unless I can bypass their security, I can't see when we'll be attacked. Zayn, we have to move and move fast." Louis pushed away from the desk and grabbed
his jacket. "Let's get moving." He ran out to his car, Zayn hot on his heels.

"Liam, where's Niall?" Zayn yelled as he raced up the stairs to the bedroom where Liam was carefully folding Niall's clothing into a plastic storage book. Another one, containing some toys, baby monitors, infant medication and sundry other small items, was full.

"I've put Niall out in his pram in the back yard" Liam told Zayn as the raven haired man raced into the room and hurried started packing everything men needed for themselves. "He'll be able to nap without us disturbing him."

"Good call, babe" Zayn replied. He stared at the box that Liam was currently packing full of baby clothes, ticking off a mental checklist of things they absolutely needed to take. Satisfied that Liam had that under control, Zayn reached for another bag, preparing to throw in diapers, wipes, bottles and pacifiers. Liam had already got the cooler packed with bottles and bottles of water to make up more feeds as needed. He glanced at his watch, anxious to get away before anything happened.

"What's the sudden panic?" Liam wanted to know, suddenly registering Zayn's tense movements.

"Time has run out" was the blunt reply.

"Finished?" Louis asked Serena and got a terse nod of the head. He pulled his phone out of the back pocket of his jeans and placed the call. Louis chewed his nails nervously as he waited for Liam to answer the phone.

Suddenly loud alarms screamed into the relative peace. Time had, indeed, run out.

"Right, thanks" Joe took the necessary warrants from the officer that had just arrived. "Make sure everything is ready to go." The officer nodded and disappeared, leaving Joe to sit back and take a few calming breaths. It was a risk, he knew, but he was convinced that Mark Jarvis had told the truth. If he was wrong, then it was the end of Joe's career, along with those of the people backing him up. But he could feel he was right. This was it.

Alberto set up the jamming signals. If he was right, then it would give them a few minutes extra time before the community knew that the Police were there. Even a few minutes would be a bonus. Alberto pressed the button on his control unit then nodded to Joe.
"Go! Go! GO!" Joe yelled and dozens of police cars moved towards the road leading to the fuel dump, not knowing that the extra security system Louis had installed was already shrieking its warning.

Just who was going to be the fastest as the net closed in on them?
Serena cringed as the alarms rang out, shrieking out their danger warning. Starting to panic, she hurriedly shoved a few more boxes into the back of her car then raced into the house to collect the children. Harry was crying in fright and she did her best to soothe him as she picked him up and carried him out to the car, strapping him into his seat before running back into the house to get Patience. The 'toddler' was quiet, eyes wide as Serena scooped her up. Soon she was also buckled into her seat. Serena scrambled into the driver's seat and hastily switched on the car engine. She was now in a high state of panic and slammed her foot down on the accelerator. The car shot forward and Serena lost control as the car powered across the street into the neighbours large tree. Serena hadn't put on her seatbelt and her body shot forward against the dashboard. The horn began to sound continuously and both children, trapped in the back of the now smoking car, screamed in absolute terror.

Zayn was just closing the van door when he saw vehicles driving down the street rapidly, lights flashing. He took a brief glance then raced into the house, locking the door behind himself.

"They're here. It's too late. We have to hide!" He shoved Liam and Louis towards the hidden basement door. "Go...." he yelled as he pressed the concealed button that allowed the panel to slide back, revealing the entrance to their lock-down hiding place. He could hear the shouts of the men outside as they began hitting the solid front door.

"Niall! Niall" Liam screamed, trying to pull free from Zayn's vice like grip. The pounding on the front door increased and Zayn knew they had just seconds, He had to take control or they'd be caught.

"No!" Zayn screamed back. "We need to hide. It's over, LI" He pushed Liam through the door and guided him down the steps, Louis closely behind. Zayn quickly turned and the panel slid back into place, hiding the apartment from sight. It was just in time as the front door gave away under the determined assault and men poured into the house, guns drawn.

The three men cowered in the small apartment under the house. They were safe but for how long? They stood there, almost holding their breath, as they heard the sounds of men tearing through the house, searching it.

"Now what?" Liam finally broke the silence. "We can't stay here forever. And what about our baby?" Liam felt tears pouring down his cheeks. Zayn stared into space as it fully hit him that they had been separated from their baby and that this was the end. Niall would be gone, if and when,
they managed to get out of this mess. Louis wandered about the small place, thinking of Serena and his two children. Had she got away? Were they hidden in their lock down apartment?

"Joe...we found him! He was in a giant pram in the back yard." a tall, lanky police officer entered the kitchen, the small body of Niall Horan cradled in his arms. Niall was screaming in terror. The noise was upsetting him and he was surrounded by unfamiliar faces. All he wanted was his daddy and his Baba. Where were they?

"Mark Jarvis was right" Joe said bitterly as he looked at the distressed lad, dressed in a onesie, a paci clipped to it. "They really have regressed these adults. Take him out to the paramedics and get him checked over. They'll be taking them to the hospital to be looked after. I just hope these drugs wear off." The officer nodded and carried Niall out to one of the waiting ambulances. "Right guys, keep searching". The men dispersed, fanning out.

"We can't stay here forever" Zayn said. "We need a plan."

"I may have one" Louis replied. He had emerged from the small bedroom, his arms full of clothing. Zayn and Liam looked at him in confusion."I think that I've just found the solution. We'll hide in plain sight."

"Zayn, buzz your hair short. Li, shave your beard. I'll do mine. Hurry!" Louis commanded and both men followed his directions.

"Why?" Zayn suddenly asked.

"We don't have time to alter your appearances much but this will have to do. Li, you put on your paramedic uniform, Zayn your police uniform. And I'm just going to......." He held up a diaper and a onesie. The two other men gaped at him, confusion on both their faces. "You are going to rescue a 'baby'. It's our ticket out.

Louis looked adorable, dressed as a baby. Being physically tiny, he was perfect for the role. Zayn wrapped him in a soft blanket then he carried him up the stairs, Liam following. Liam pressed his ear against the door. It was quiet. They had no idea if anyone was in the kitchen but they had to bluff it out if there was anyone the other side of the door. He pressed the button and the panel slid silently open. The kitchen was empty. Holding their breath, they hurried to the front door, which hung drunkenly on it's hinges. The police enter to the building had been aggressive. Outside, people were running everywhere and it was a state of confusion.
"Oi..where are you going?" a police officer yelled at Liam.

"We found another victim. He needs medical attention urgently" Liam replied. "He's experiencing serious breathing problems." The police officer nodded, taking in the paramedic uniform and Zayn's police attire. Neither man looked familiar but then neither appeared to closely match the descriptions he'd been giving. He turned back to his own search. Liam raced to a nearby ambulance. A paramedic was standing by the door, his back turned from them. Liam hit the man's head hard and caught him as he crumbled. He swiftly shoved the unconscious man into the bushes, screening him from sight. Zayn scrambled into the ambulance, holding Louis, Liam slammed the doors closed on them then dived around the front and into the driver's seat. Putting on the sirens, he pulled away, police officers waving him on, totally unaware that they were letting the three men they most wanted to detain, escape.

The ambulance tore up Old Turnpike and onto the highway, heading towards Rexfordlea. Once they reached the outskirts, they abandoned the vehicle. Louis pulled off the onesie and diaper that he had put on over his jeans a T-shirt, while Zayn and Louis stripped off their jackets and shirts, making their uniforms less obvious. The three men walked into town and found the nearest ATM where Zayn withdrew a large sum of money. They then got a taxi and were driven to the small airport. The plane they had already had arranged for their escape was ready and it was only a short time before they were airborne and heading towards the island they had planned on hiding out with their babies.

"We had to Li, babe" Zayn tried to console his younger husband who was distraught. Louis didn't look much better. They were separated from their children whose fates were unknown. Louis could only hope that Serena had got away with Harry and Patience but every time he checked his phone, there were no new messages. He was afraid to call himself, he couldn't risk a trace. He could only hope he'd hear from her soon.

"I need my baby" Liam said brokenly. "I need him, Zee." Zayn hugged him tight, close to tears himself. Both men loved Niall deeply, in their own twisted way, and now he had been taken from them. Zayn felt tears running down his own cheeks. Louis just sat silently, thinking of his own children.

"We'll get him back, babe, I promise" Zayn whispered. "We'll get him back!"

"No sign of them, boss" the young officer reported back to Joe Marks. "We've searched every single house. All the victims are being transported to hospital and the perps are all being processed. "We've had one woman transported to hospital following a collision when she tried to escape with two of the victims."

"Keep looking, check everyone again. I want those men, you hear me?" Joe snarled. He knew it
wasn't the officer's fault and he was attacking the messenger, but he didn't want Liam and Zayn to escape. "Find Louis Tomlinson too…I want him as well."

"Sir, I've a list of those under arrest, he's not on it." the officer gulped nervously.

"F.CK!" Joe yelled and stormed away, leaving the younger man staring after him, chewing his lip nervously. He followed after his superior, not liking where this was going. It was going to be a very long day.

The plane landed at the small island airport and the three men climbed wearily out. They shook hands with the pilot and then headed out. Money paid for anonymity and silence. The flight had been non existent to the authorities and the pilot well paid for his work. They were safe, safe from the law. They climbed into a waiting car and headed towards a luxurious house, well hidden from the general area, surrounded by thick forest. They needed time to lick their wounds and recover.

The doctors examined each victim thoroughly, unable to believe what they were seeing. Grown adults, regressed to the minds of helpless babies and toddlers. Who knew what damage had been done to their bodies and minds by the treatments. Even if they could revert the progression, would they be mentally damaged for life. They could only wait and see. They had been told that the man who created the drugs was amongst those arrested for the crimes and maybe he'd hold some of the answers. Meanwhile the hospital was full of adult babies who needed constant care, all upset at being taken away from those who they saw as their parents and suffering as a results. It was beyond horrific for the staff now responsible for their care and rehabilitation, if such a thing was possible to achieve.

"Answer me" Joe snapped at the man sat on the opposite side of the table. He glared at the man, who still didn't respond. "You created these drugs. Can they be reversed?" Silence was the only answer. "Take him back to the cells" Joe spoke quietly and the Officer stepped forward and led the man away. "F.ck" Joe murmured under his breath. Things were going from bad to worse.

Zayn, Liam and Louis were glued to the TV, watching as the blond reporter faced the camera, schooling her face into one of serious expression. She was enjoying her moment, breaking the news of the latest police raid.

"The singing sensation, Niall Horan, known as the Pint Sized Pop Star has been found. Along with over forty other victims, Niall was found in hidden community just thirty two miles from here. A community where young kidnapped adults had been taken and drugged into making them into adult babies. The police are currently investigating just how one this terrible crime had been concealed and many questions are being asked as to why it has taken so long to discover it. We will be talking to Detective Joe Marks shortly and be asking him to explain."
Nearly the end. I think I will actually miss writing this story.
Niall stepped out of the shower and rubbed the steam off the mirror, staring at his naked reflection. He sighed heavily. Despite trying several rounds of hormone treatment, his body still remained as smooth and hairless as that of a child. A permanent reminder of his time as an adult 'baby'. He turned away and wrapped a towel around his waist, grabbing another to dry his thick hair. He'd grown the blond color out and had reverted to his own natural brown once again. He needed to do everything he could to try and move away from the helpless victim he had been. And everyone said it made him look older, more mature.

"Nialler, baby bro, hurry up. You've got to get to your appointments." Greg yelled from the other side of the bathroom door. Niall winced and clenched his teeth at his words. He hated the word 'baby' with a passion, especially when used in relationship to himself, but Greg had suffered too, he reminded himself, and he hated to upset him by telling him not to use that term.

"I'm coming" he yelled. He unlocked the door and went into his bedroom. His clothes were already laid out on the bed so he dressed quickly, just wanting to get these appointments over with. After a quick glance at his reflection, he picked up his wallet and keys and left the room, taking the stairs two at a time.

"Ready?" Greg asked as Niall appeared in the hallway, and Niall nodded. "Great, Alberto is already in the car. Let's get moving. He turned, Niall following him out.

"Well Niall, how are things going for you?" Doctor Nomis asked genially. He indicated the couch and Niall sat down, crossing his arms across his body, his body language defensive. There was something about his therapist that made him very uneasy. The man was creepy, somehow. "Tea?" the doctor asked quietly and got an answering nod from the young man. The doctor poured two cups, passing on to Niall, before he sat down opposite his patient. "So, how has the last week been?"

"OK, I guess" Niall took a sip of his tea then continued "I'm back in the studio, done some recording. I'm writing again. Planning on touring again.....maybe"

"That's good, Niall, positive progress. And how are you emotionally?" the doctor pressed gently.

"I'm doing Ok. I still have nightmares, always the same one...the accident .. then flashbacks about
"Yes, that is normal, Niall. But they do seem to lessening. And I think the group sessions we have with Patience and Harry are helping. You seem to be really helping each other deal with this. Being able to share your experiences is an important part of your recovery." Doctor Nomis drank some of his own tea then continued "Your Physician is pleased with your physical progress and tells me that, if your next check up is satisfactory, he'll be releasing you from your bi-monthly appointments."

"I can't wait" Niall smiled slightly "I just want to be away from everything now. I want to concentrate on my music and stop having to think about the last two years. I want to move on...if I can." Niall's voice got quieter. Could he move on? Yes, he was physically back to being an adult, barring the lack of body hair. But would the nightmares ever stop? Would he ever fully get over it? He sighed mentally and tried to concentrate on what the therapist was saying.

"Niall?" The doctor was staring at Niall, a questioning look on his face.

"Ummh, yeah, sorry, I was thinking" Niall smiled slightly "sorry, what did you say?"

"I asked about the Giraffe stuffy. Do you still have it?"

"I...yes.... I can't seem to get rid of it. It's sort of comforting in a weird way" Niall admitted, blushing.

"Yes, Harry tells me the same. He says he can't sleep without his blue rabbit. It's OK, Niall. It was your comfort toy when you were, to all purposes, a baby. And as adults, even those who have not been through the traumas you've experienced, we often retain our comfort items into adulthood. There is nothing to be ashamed of, believe me." Niall nodded in relief. He hated to admit it but he always had his stuffy with him, hidden away. Even now the toy was hidden in the backpack at his feet.

"I just need it right now" Niall said.

"What are your feelings towards Zayn and Liam now?" the doctor continued. Niall just shrugged and looked away, staring unseeing at the rain lashing down the window behind the doctor."Niall?" the doctor spoke more firmly and Niall sighed. He had this question every session and still he hadn't answered it. He wasn't sure how he felt and his thoughts on the matter were too confused to
"I don't know, I just don't know, all right?" Niall stood up and started to pace the room. The doctor remained quiet, allowing Niall to try and process his thoughts. Eventually Niall returned to his seat on the couch. "Part of me hates them for what they did to me...to Greg...to my family. I hate them for what they did to my body, my mind. I want them caught but I don't want to see them again...but then I do. I'm just so confused" he admitted, tears beginning to slide down his pale cheeks.

"It's natural to feel that way. You want answers but don't want to relive the past. But believe me, Niall, revisiting the past can be healing. Now, how do you feel about finishing our session for today? Go and relax. Do something you enjoy, yes?" The doctor stood up, as did Niall, and the two men shook hands. Niall scooped up his backpack, bade his therapist goodbye, and returned to the waiting room where Greg was leafing through a magazine.

"Come on, bro" Greg said cheerfully "let's go get some food. You've talks with Management this afternoon." He flung an arm over his brother's thin shoulders and walked him out to the car.

"We'll increase security enormously, Niall" his manager said confidently. "Security will be with you every moment, even in your home. I promise you won't feel hemmed in by them but you should feel confident you are safe. What do you think?"

"Sounds OK, I guess." Niall was hesitant. "And Harry? You'll make sure he travels with me?" Niall and Harry had become very close friends following their rescue and spent as much time together as possible.

"Harry, too. And Security will keep an eye on him". Martin promised, smiling. He was very fond of Niall and he'd been devastated when Niall had seemed lying vanished. Even now, he hated knowing the young man was still traumatised by what he'd experienced. If having Harry nearby made Niall happier, then he, Martin, would move heaven and earth to make it happen. "Now, do you want to meet the crew that'll be touring with you, or leave it until nearer the time?"

"Later, Martin, please. Right now, I just want to chill, yeah?" Niall sounded weary. Therapy always exhausted him by stirring up his emotions.He just wanted to get out of there and sleep, even if sleep brought the dreams with it.

"Niall, good to see you." Doctor Nomis smiled cheerfully. "This will be your final session for a few
months. " Niall half returned his smile. G*d the man made his skin creep. "I want to try something a little different for this final session. I believe it will really help. Are you up for trying some regressive techniques?" He raised an eyebrow and Niall who shrugged, his face confused. What did the doctor mean by regressive? He felt his heart starting to pound. "Niall? Would you like some water?" The doctor had a look of concern on his face as he turned away, appearing to open the bottle of water as he passed it to Niall who accepted it gratefully. He grimaced at the slightly strange taste but still gulped the water down in an attempt to feel better. "Shall we?" Doctor Nomis indicated a couch and invited Niall to lay down and relax. Niall felt his eyes close though he still felt awake. Soon the doctor was talking in a soft voice.

"I'm sorry, I must have fallen asleep," Niall told the doctor apologetically.

"No problem, Niall, You're obviously tired. Perhaps we can try again after your tour is finished." Niall nodded in agreement and left as quickly as he decently could. He was anxious but he couldn't put a finger on the cause. Maybe he really did need to relax. Doctor Nomis picked up the phone and was soon speaking. "It's still safely lodged in his head. They think they've managed to clear everything out of his system. They just don't know that it is impossible." He laughed, and it was the sound of pure evil.

"Thank you Dublin. It's great to be here!" Niall grinned as he soaked up the love that seemed to be pouring over him. His first gig back from his enforced absence had gone brilliantly and, despite his initial panic, after the first few songs, he'd begun to relax and enjoy himself. Next stop, London!

As the 'Flicker' gigs progressed and Niall finished the European venues, he was actually looking forward to returning to the USA and performing there. He'd already had his LA home made far more secure, surveillance cameras everywhere, there was even man on the gates to his home. And Martin had engaged even more security. Niall couldn't move an inch without someone within call. He finally felt more relaxed. Management had found this amazing computer/surveillance guy who promised he could make the place safer than Fort Knox. Apparently William Austen was the best tech man in the world despite being so elusive. Nobody ever saw him but his work was legend.

"Hey, Patience. What's the craic?" Niall said cheerfully as he listened to Patience greet him. They rang each other regularly. Niall frowned slightly when he heard Patience tell him that Doctor Nomis was getting increasingly creepy. He always seemed to know far more than he'd been told. He'd felt that as well, but they'd been told that the man was the best. Eventually the subject changed and Patience told Niall she'd be at his next gig, she was excited to see him perform. After a few moment they said goodbye. Niall glanced quickly at his watch, he'd time for a quick nap before the gig.

"Hey Nialler, the stage is sick!" Gerry announced as Niall walked towards him. "Take a look." Niall walked out onto the stage where some of his crew were setting up for the show that night.
"F.cking sick" Niall agreed as he looked out over the auditorium. There seemed to be men everywhere. Niall felt small when he saw two large men heaving heavy sound equipment. They looked familiar yet..........somehow not. He must have seen them about the last few shows. That was it, wasn't that dark, tanned looking guy called Jav, or something? That's right, Jav and the other guy with the buzzed head was Jamie. He remembered now. "Gerry, I'm just going to grab a quick nap before sound check." He clapped a hand on Gerry's shoulder and turned away to his dressing room. Alberto stood at the door, standing guard. Niall smiled at him slightly then entered the room, collapsing onto the couch. He lay there a few minutes, unable to settle despite being tired until he finally sat up and rummaged in a backpack next to him. He frowned until his hands touched the soft fur of his Giraffe stuffy and he pulled it out. Cuddling it in his arms, he curled up on the couch again and was soon asleep.

Alberto heard the yelling and moved away from the dressing room door. The corridor was clear, yet it sounded near. It would only take a second to look. He walked towards the altercation.

He slipped quickly into the dressing room and stood looking down at Niall as he slept. His pale skin was flushed slightly and his mouth was slightly open. The man bent down and retrieved the Giraffe stuffy from where it had fallen on the floor and gently tucked it into Niall's arms again. Niall's blue eyes fluttered open and he looked up sleepily at the man.

"Baba" Niall whispered.

"Sssh, little snowflake. Go back to sleep. Baba and daddy will see you again, soon."

Niall obediently shut his eyes and Zayn disappeared out of the door, just before Alberto returned.

"See anything, Jav?" Alberto asked

"Nope. Nobody" Zayn smiled and disappeared. He and Liam had plans to make. One day they would manage to get their baby back.

It was hope that kept them going.

Chapter End Notes

I left the ending open. Maybe you'll want to leave it to your imagination or maybe you
want to know just what will happen. :-) 

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