This feeling, New Zealand, them.

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This feeling, New Zealand, them.

by afra_schatz

Summary

This is a collection of pretty much all my LotR RPF one-shots that I’ve written from 2003 to 2014. They are all non-AU stories, most of them set in New Zealand or in Malta and some of them after that. Most of them rate NC 17 and are between 1k and 5k in length (or around that). - Featured pairings include Viggo Mortensen / Sean Bean, Orlando Bloom / Karl Urban / Harry Sinclair, Orlando Bloom / Sean Bean, Orlando Bloom / Eric Bana, and the odd other couple. - There is a table of contents of sorts at the beginning, giving an overview of the titles.
Chapter 1

Fic Titles

It makes him feel like this is forever, that there is no possible way this could ever not be. This feeling, New Zealand, them.

– Set in NZ, filming LotR –

Close enough
Please enjoy responsibly
The Cautionary Tale of Sean Astin
Fine art of romance
Daft bugger
Love is blind? Bullshit.
Envy
Percolator
Stupid Frog
Spare
Doesn’t feel that bad
Flirtation (noun)
Four times Orlando kisses Karl
www.get-the-truth-from-daisy.com
Elocuence
Lovestruck fool
Knecht Ruprecht
If love is blind then why is lingerie so popular?
Pretty thing
Lovestruck fool of epic proportions
Piss Artist
Mended
A king’s ransom in dime
TMI is the new gold

~.~.~.~.~

You need all three, all the time, to create that kind of crazy ass, long lasting fire that singes your eyebrows and keeps you warm at night.

– Karl/Orlando/Harry – NZ and beyond –

Genesis

That pink Mûmakil is totally cockblocking me
Like dangling from a hot-air balloon

~.~.~.~.~

It makes him feel like this is forever, that there is no possible way this could ever not be. This feeling, New Zealand, them.

– Set in NZ, filming LotR –
Close enough

It’s half an hour of you just watching him from across the room. He drank his mate like it was a religious experience (not even Dom does it like that, and he makes a point of being British). Now he’s completely focused, painting flowers onto the poster for little Alex’s birthday (since Astin’s daughter is the reason why you’re all here tonight).

All you did in the last half hour was smoke, stare at him.

"You should try talking to him," Bernard says as he's leaning next to you. "You might enjoy that even more than your voyeurism."

The look on his face, pure concentration, the tenderness with which he holds the crude brush – he could be restoring the Mona Lisa.

"Once you get close enough to see the brushwork, everything loses its perfection."

Right now, he is perfect. Completely submerged in his work, untouchable, safely out of reach. You feel Bernard’s eyes on you. You know what he is thinking. You’re talking about yourself, you’re cynical.

As he’s leaving, Bernard replies, "Love is most perfect in its perfect imperfection."

You were talking about yourself, maybe. All you will do for the next half hour is smoke, stare, want. Maybe.

Please enjoy responsibly

It's a widely known fact that Sean and Viggo hang out whenever they can. It has nothing to do with them thinking the hobbits too immature however, it's more that the hobbits think Viggo a little too weird, also Bernard and Karl say that they can only spend so much time with Sean before they get depressed.

Sean and Viggo are secure enough in their self-esteem to face these ludicrous allegations and call them, well, ludicrous. They like spending time with each other and none of the other actors really understands them anyhow, so there. Which may or may not have to do with Viggo's love affair with weed and Sean's Kramer-vs-Kramer relationship with booze.

Most of the evenings they hang out (which are followed by a day off) end with one of them stoned and the other completely plastered. So much that they sometimes can't even tell which one is which, not even the next morning.

They have a talk about this over breakfast at Sean's place where Sean makes breakfast eggs that are so runny that Viggo's face is sickly green for the duration of the talk which makes it no less important and meaningful.

They discuss their substance abuse ("Don't say such things about my weed! Your eggs are substance abuse!" - "Shut it Viggo, I'm being a sensible adult here, damnit.").

They agree that a. they won't mention it in public (or to Dom, which given his chatterbox nature, would be like calling up The Sun personally and telling them "Hello, this is Sean Bean and I am pretty sure I am an alcoholic and by the way, I occasionally have buttsex with this stoner bloke. Cheers!") and b. it is probably better that they don't remember anything that has been said and done during one of those nights.

Oh, yes, the buttsex - wondered when you'd ask about that. That is one of the things that they
are pretty certain to have happened. They feel rather clever about their deduction skills, too, the evidence they collect is as follows:
- Viggo's butt hurts, Sean feels like he has strained a muscle in his thigh.
- Also, it's a clue that they wake up in Viggo's bed together, tangled around one another sort of like the human version of the Gordian knot.
- Plus they are naked and in his fist Sean is holding a giant bottle of lube that neither of them recalls owning but that is half empty already.

The possibility that sexual intercourse happened (of which the room smells btw, and not just subtly so either. More like the cage of pumas in heat) is very high and it's almost as likely that they had sex with each other, given the fact that there is no one else present. Sean reasonably argues that they might have called a hooker and that she stole their clothes and left while they were sleeping (which has at no point whatsoever happened to him before, no sir). But Viggo points out once again that his butt really hurts and that therefore either the hooker or Sean must have a monster dick. Sean tries to look scandalized but ends up looking about as smug as he feels (and a little hung over).

So yeah, there is occasional buttsex and they are both more amazed by the fact that they can still get it up when being completely out of it than the actual gay thing itself. Responsible grown ups that they are they have a talk about it anyway while still in bed. It mostly consists of Viggo saying “Hmpf, next time I'd like to be able to remember when someone takes my virginity,” and Sean, being the kind and caring friend that he is, does not point out that NO part of Viggo has been anything closely resembling virginal for at least twenty years. Instead he offers to make Viggo breakfast eggs as a consolation. The conversation takes a slight detour from its original topic because Viggo feels the need to hold a half hour monologue about disgusting runny eggs, poor imprisoned chicken and the perversion that is Easter celebrations. Sean doesn’t mind, mostly because he dozed off again and Viggo has to raise his voice a little against his loud snoring.

They are pretty certain that most of their substance abuse nights end something like this, too. Viggo has a tendency to go on and on about complete random stuff and Sean has specialized in going on and on about women, and ex wives in particular. Again, they are sort of glad that they don’t remember what they said.

Only that sometimes one of them does remember. For example this one Monday morning, around 11 in the morning, Sean finds himself finally sober from the rather excessive Saturday night that he and Viggo spend in the Cuntebago. He is just sitting in the catering tent, mourning the absence of proper tea, when all of a sudden he hears Viggo’s voice in his head. When Vig comes back to the table, in full Aragorn outfit and munching on a cupcake with pink icing, Sean asks, “Is it possible that you composed a twenty stanza poem on Argentinean tea last Saturday?” Viggo blinks and looks somewhat awkward which is not due to the pink icing sticking to his messy beard stubble.

Or this late afternoon, take that for example. They film a scene in the Riddermark and it’s not all that surprising that Orlando falls off his mount again and drags Viggo with him, which is quite the feat given that they sat on two different animals. While Orlando somersaults down a small hill, Viggo bumps with his head against an inconveniently placed rock and that shakes something loose in his brain. When Sean rushes towards him (not that he had any business on that set but he had nothing to do and yeah, so Viggo looks hot when he is in charge and bossing people around even when they are just whiney lads from Canterbury and wannabe dwarfs), Viggo still lies on his back and looks up at Sean with amusement and bemusement.

“I just recalled,” he says, “that last weekend you spent half an hour planning on how your perfect wedding dress would look like. I think you complained about your lack of breasts and wanted something frilly.” In response, Sean mumbles something about having to see whether Orlando is alright and strides of purposefully slash in panic.
This keeps happening. Viggo remembers that Sean was inclined to sleep in the bathtub because he always gets such a sore throat from drinking and hey, lookit, there is plenty of water handy there. Sean recalls that Viggo made them roll around in the dirty dirtpit that he calls his backyard so he and Sean and the mud can form a spiritual union. Viggo is sure that Sean called him ‘my precious honeybutt’ for an entire evening (a nickname which, given the stickiness and once again waking up together the next morning, doesn’t seem all that randomly chosen). Sean remembers that Viggo liked it. This keeps happening oftener and oftener, and they feel less and less embarrassed by it. Just one of those things, hah.

Viggo also remembers how devastated Sean was when he finally got his divorce papers in the mail and that he kept saying “I just don’t know how to do it right, do I” all evening. Sean recalls how sometimes after a phone call with Henry Viggo just wants to catch the next plane home and when he remembers that he can’t he sits there and cries, feeling foolish and childish and fucking lonely. Yeah, they do remember those things as well.

One morning, Sean wakes up and spends the next five minutes with his eyes still closed, bathing in the amazing feeling of not having a headache of doom. Sleepily he wonders whether he finally managed to drink the right mix of alcohol that miraculously skips the hangover. Then he notices three things: 1 – he is having slight trouble breathing because he keeps inhaling something that smells of orange shampoo, horse poo and Viggo and is most likely Viggo’s hair, 2 – either someone dropped Viggo’s corpse onto Sean to suffocate him or Viggo is using him as a mattress and 3 – there is no hangover because there was no boozing the night before.

“Viggo,” Sean grunts and spits out strands of Viggo’s hair. He contemplates pushing him off of him when Vig doesn’t react but for that he’d have to move and also Viggo is making quiet happy noises which are both hilariously ridiculous and strangely arousing. Viggo shifts to get more of himself on top of Sean and pretends to be asleep. Sean experimentally says, “Good morning, my precious honeyarse” and Viggo snorts ill concealed laughter against his shoulder.

“So,” Sean says quietly because Viggo’s face is right there, “I remember that we had sex last night.”

“That’s great for you,” Viggo answers without opening his eyes. “Congratulations.”

“Thank you,” Sean says. “In case you forgot about it: It was great. I have the stamina of a horse and made you mewl like a kitten.”

This time Viggo opens his eyes and raises his head just so he can look down at Sean. With uttermost seriousness – well, or as much as you can muster when your hair looks like a birds nest anyway – he says, “Seriously Sean?”

“Yeah, well, you’ll just have to believe me, since you probably don’t remember.”

Viggo leans closer until their noses almost touch and Sean is a bit cross eyed, then he says very slowly, “I fucked you. You think I’d forget that?”

His breath ghosts over Sean’s lips and doesn’t smell minty fresh or of weed but Sean leans up and presses his mouth against Viggo’s anyway.

“No,” he says after that, his hands gliding down Viggo’s naked back under the crisp sheets. “Like I said, stallion and kitten.”

“I’m glad that you never thought of becoming a poet,” Viggo says and shifts again, so he can lie properly between Sean’s spread legs. “Otherwise I think I’d have to stop hanging out with you.”
Sean laughs quietly and obediently turns his head when Viggo nudges his cheek so he can kiss down Sean’s throat. One of the upsides of waking up without having boozed the night before is that he can actually get it up before 10 in the morning. He helpfully points out to Viggo and Viggo thanks him profoundly for that vital bit of information before he wraps his hand around that part of Sean’s body that “just keeps getting bigger and bigger every time I see it; I have a riding scene tomorrow there is no way you’re gonna stick that thing into me, I’m just saying.”

The cautionary tale of Sean Astin

Hello. My name is Sean Astin, but you can also refer to me as ‘the one sane person on the set of this movie’. Or, and personally I think this is the most appropriate, think of me as ‘the cautionary tale of why one should under no circumstances (not even under the danger of death) take up one’s friends’ offer to room with them’. At least not if all your friends are serious nutcases.

As it is, my week of horror, the one that nearly brought my sanity down to its knees, started with my youngest daughter sneezing into her fruit loops. While being unsanitary all on its own, it also posed a larger problem for the Astin household. You see, my wife says that under no circumstances can I get sick while shooting a movie. Before you put this down to protective support: My wife claims that I am (and I quote) an ‘absolute pain in the behind’ when I am have a runny nose, and more than once she has promised to throttle me personally when I complained about off-handedly mentioned a slightly sore throat.

Very soon after the fruit loop sneeze, it was very obvious that my youngest had a serious case of the flu and that I had to be (again, I quote) ‘temporarily evacuated’. However, since Elijah and Billy were currently homeless because they accidentally (or so they claim) set their hotel rooms on fire, and Dom had moved in with what we all agreed was Wellington’s only streetwalker, my only other choices were Orlando, Ian and Viggo. Ian didn’t answer his phone or the doorbell, even though I am almost certain that I saw someone moving behind the curtain. Orlando generously offered me his sofa, but it turned out that he adopted five or more stray cats without telling anyone of us. I nearly died of anaphylactic shock the second I stepped over the threshold.

This is the reason why I took up temporary residence in the house of the King of Gondor And Its Adjoining Plains Of Madness and the British pet he adopted. I’d like to use this moment to point out that I really had no other choices at this stage of my evacuation.

If you’ve been around our movie set for a while (or really, if you have internet access and follow the fanpages), you’ve probably all heard about Viggo’s overly artistic streak and about Sean’s continued attempts on fellow actors’ lives that he calls ‘pranks’.

Let me tell you one thing: These stories aren’t true. The truth is much, much worse.

Personally, I think the day that Viggo suggested to Sean to move in with him has the same historical significance as the day Ren and Stimpy decided to do the ‘Adult Party Cartoon’. At least it is as emotionally damaging to onlookers and/or sort-of-involuntary house guests.

Don’t get me wrong, working with Viggo and Sean on a film is one of the true pleasures in life. They are intense and professional, always on time and perfectly prepared, inhumanly patient and enduring. They are excellent actors, trust me. Too bad that – once PJ called it a wrap for the day – they are both such complete weirdos.

I don’t know if you are all familiar with the concept of courtly love in the middle ages. Basically, it says that a man (per definition an uncivilized brute who yells at the television, farts in public and has no appreciation whatsoever of Christian Values) is tamed through love. His fair maiden makes him jump through enough hoops on the way to her heart to make a perfectly house-trained show-poodle
of chivalry of him. You might’ve guessed what the problem with this equation is if one tries to adapt
it for Viggo and Sean. Yes, right. No fair maiden in sight anywhere, instead you got not one but two
uncivilized boors with no inducement to change whatsoever.

For example, neither of the two apparently knows how to operate a dishwasher or a washing
machine, and they both think the kitchen sink has only two purposes: Storing beer cans and rinsing
paint brushes. When (for reasons that shouldn’t be surprising after this, but, somehow, are so anyway
if you ask Sean and Viggo) there are no more clean plates or clothes, Viggo keeps staring into the
empty drawers like he can hypnotize them into magically filling themselves again. Sean takes the less
complicated course and simply blows a fuse. Surprisingly, both strategies aren’t successful, so
usually by the end of the week Viggo starts re-using the least dirty plates and randomly re-wears
dirty clothes (his as well as Sean’s), while Sean exclusively eats take-out food and walks around the
house in increasingly worrying states of almost-nudity.

Among their favorite past times are the usual hobbies you’d expect from an American and a British
guy housing together: Yelling abuse at the television while a match of football (of whichever variety)
is on, fishing (usually in the miniature pond in the backyard that certainly has no fish in it but beats
all other ponds in terms of proximity to the fridge), finding a stupid random game to fixate on and
take way too seriously until it naturally escalates into a wrestling match on the living room carpet.
This week it was ‘Mouse Trap’, which personally I find more than a little disturbing.

Aside from those fairly normal hobbies, their repertoire also includes the following:
create elaborate sculptures on the living room table that are solely made out of shoes (Viggo),
sing horribly off-key football songs to already withering pot plants until they are ready to commit
suicide (Sean),
unhinge all doors in the house in order to experience (and I quote) ‘real freedom’ (Viggo, of
course),
replace the door to the study and nail it shut with a pot-smoking Viggo still inside (Sean),
shave one’s head and possibly other areas of the body out of sheer boredom (Sean as well),
spend an afternoon catching crickets in order to fry them and coat them with chocolate to serve
them for dinner (Viggo),
knit a woolen hat because for some strange reason one’s head is cold (Sean),
have loud and noisy sex in the middle of the night, possibly only so one’s house guest who has a
really early call doesn’t get any sleep at all (Sean and Viggo).

Yes, I know there are two points on that list that might need a little elaboration.

First of all, imagine how utterly and completely bewildered I was when I found out that Sean Bean,
man’s man and self-proclaimed ‘bit of rough’, is able to knit. With several colored yarns and
seriously intimidating complicated patterns. He even made me a pair of socks (because the tiles in
their kitchen are really cold in the morning), and I know from my wife how difficult socks are.
Uncanny.

Secondly – I knew you would ask – the sex. Again, if you have internet access and follow the
fanpages (don’t you have any real hobbies?), you might have read something about the whole male
bonding experience that is the ‘Rings’ filming and suspected that this includes some bonding without
clothes as well. Generally speaking, you are completely wrong.

Billy and Dom for example are far too busy being clinically insane to have sex, least of all with one
another. Elijah is clearly too young, and that is the least we speak of that. Orlando (who is, of course
hopelessly in love with Liv) may have tremendous success luring homeless cats into his house, but
since his way of wooing Liv consists of acts like sending her elf ears in the mail (that guy worries me sometimes), I am pretty sure he has not yet succeeded in bedding her.

Sean and Viggo, however, have been boinking each other since the day that Viggo arrived on set. He introduced himself to Sean by saying, ‘You may kneel if you wish, I am Aragorn, your rightful king and ruler’ to which Sean replied, ‘Yeah, whatever. I have the bigger cock’. After this quite singular example of romance and wooing, they have been inseparable.

That’s not saying that there isn’t still wooing going on anyway.

If you think that being an unwilling audience to nightly orgies puts you in a slightly uncomfortable spot, I’d like to see your face when you walk into the kitchen one morning and find a giant cake the shape of a penis on the counter. With pink icing and the words ‘Who’s got the bigger dick now?’ in surprisingly neat handwriting (Viggo’s). Sean usually reciprocated any of Viggo’s slightly over the top gestures by quoting Chaucer at him, preferably the juicier bits, and by getting him flowers. There was a huge amount of truly exceptional bouquets all over the house, and Viggo’s choice in oil paint shades was clearly influenced by the color of Sean’s favorite flowers of the day.

None of that was really new to me because Viggo’s and Sean’s ideas of PDA have always bordered the grotesque. What was new, were all the little things. Viggo sneaked out before dawn because Sean had off-handedly mentioned wanting croissants for breakfast. Sean gripped Viggo’s hand wordlessly when the heli was about to take off, and when Viggo was about to nod off while we were watching a movie, he would do the same. Sean (who bitched about once more being out-voted by Viggo and I and forced to ‘watch some arty French crap again’) sat completely still throughout the entire film to not wake him. After a fifteen hour shoot, Sean ran Viggo a bath and sat on the floor with his back against the tub, reading a newspaper, to make sure Viggo didn’t fall asleep and drown himself.

I liked to think that the first three days of my staying there it was my calming influence that caused them to woo one another like fairly normal people. I made the mistake of pointing that out to them on the morning of the fourth day when we were waiting to get picked up for more hill-top filming. Both Sean and Viggo looked at me like I had grown real hobbit feet, and that was when I realized that they had actively been trying to tone it down for my benefit. I also realized (from the mad glint in Viggo’s eyes and the way Sean immediately started fondling Viggo’s bottom right there on the front porch) that they wouldn’t bother anymore.

So, you could say that it was all my fault. Hubris is an unforgiving bitch. Especially when you are forced to live in the den of two middle-aged men who could co-star in a Spiderman spin-off, only instead of the infamous accident in a lab filled with radioactive material as the location, you have Viagra Headquarters. And may I remind you that someone (Viggo) made sure that there were no doors and hence no privacy at all?

Also, I did mention already that I had the suspicion that the later the hour the louder the frolicking? I might add that this also included quite detailed descriptions of who was doing what to whom, including detailed feedback (with the words ‘Christ, ‘baby’, and ‘harder’ most prominently featured, and I have yet to decide which of the three I find most baffling). You would think that certain things are rather self-explanatory. Which body part interlocks with what is not necessarily something that needs pointing out, does it?

Now, I won’t bore you with the details as I am sure you are far more interested with my emotional state than descriptions of Viggo’s and Sean’s sexual endeavors. Let us just say that over the course of the next days I learned to announce myself – first I tried a polite cough before I entered the room but since that didn’t work out so well, I then proceeded to yelling ‘I am coming in, please don’t be naked
and on top of each other’. I also stopped eating food directly from the kitchen counter, the dining table and the living room bar for sanitary reasons.

Don’t let my emotional scarring fool you, however. Sean and Viggo were always very hospitable. They shared their take-out, let me have a vote during movie night and I am pretty certain that they didn’t use the guest bed I was sleeping in for any of their sexual experiments, at least not for the time I was sleeping in it.

Also, and I thought that truly heartwarming, they threw me a party when I announced that the sniffles in the Astin household were dealt with, the kids were out of quarantine, and I could safely move back in. And if there is one thing (aside from public sex, fearsome pranks and knitting) that Sean and Viggo are absolute experts, it’s throwing a party.

I kind of lost track of what was happening after Sean shoved British beer brand no 8 into my hand (there was a tasting contest of some sort going on). But I am pretty sure that one of the last things I remember is Harry and Karl showing up in the backyard. My temporary memory loss might have something to do with them, since they are always at least partially stoned when I meet them, and they are very generous with their weed. I also think there was a wet t-shirt contest later, and I might be mistaken, but it could be that at one point of the evening Orlando used me as his magic seahorse in his battle for dominance of the pool against Dom.

In any case, on the next morning, I woke up in pink swimming trunks that I am pretty certain belonged to Liv. Elijah was using me as his mattress while I was lying on the kitchen floor, every one else who hadn’t made it home was still in a sort of coma. I got dressed, found my suitcase, and with one eye closed as a precaution, I peeked around the corner into Sean’s and Viggo’s bedroom (nope, still no door in case you wondered) to say goodbye. I didn’t catch them in the act for once but peacefully sleeping. Viggo was lying on his back and snoring open-mouthed and peacefully, and Sean lay on his stomach, his arm possessively slung over Viggo’s chest, with a pillow draped over his head.

I didn’t wake them or any of the others but just sneaked out of the house, thankful for such a great send-off. But it seems, taking midnight swims in the pool and camping out on the kitchen floor isn’t too good for one’s health. I had barely set foot into my house when the first sneeze hit me like a freight train. My wife sighed ostentatiously, and my daughter eyed me skeptically and told me to better not sneeze into her fruit loops or else.

I am sure once I regain full access to the memory of that last night, I will find a way to blame this on the rightful heir to the kingdom of Gondor and his well-hung and foul-mouthed steward.

A lesson in the fine art of romance
“Seriously, Sean?” Viggo halted in the doorframe and arched one slightly mud covered eyebrow.
„When you said ‘come over’ I actually thought –“

Sean, who’d walked into his flat in front of Viggo, turned around on his heels and shot the other man a confused look.

“What? What’s wrong?”

Viggo looked past Sean into the flat which kind of looked like someone had invited a horde of Orcs plus Dom to party there. Empty pizza boxes lay around on the floor, some piled into crooked stacks and adorned with empty cans of beer. Different parts of clothing lay around everywhere, and not all of them looked like they even belonged to Sean. And while some of the bits and pieces of left over food on dirty plates on the coffee table appeared like they were not very far from being alive, the two plants on the window sill looked very much dead.
“Vig?” Sean prompted again, oblivious to the utter mess that was his home. He stepped up and put a hand on Viggo’s arm, concern on his face.

“It’s just –,” Viggo said, a little pained. “A romantic evening together? Uhm.”

Realisation dawned on Sean’s face and then he grinned broadly.

“Don’t worry. You go shower and I’ll clean up. It’ll be perfect.” He nuzzled Viggo’s cheek. “Trust me.”

Viggo closed his eyes and leaned into the touch briefly before he let Sean usher him into the bathroom.

When he returned he had scrubbed off Strider’s broodiness with Sean’s lemon scented shower gel. His hair was still a little damp when he walked back into the living room. Viggo had to give him credit for making the best of the last twenty minutes – most of the trash and clutter had been made invisible (probably better to not peek under the couch though), and Sean even had put up one single candle onto the uneven wooden surface.

“Didn’t I tell you this’d be super?” Sean boasted as he came back into the room, carrying boxes of Chinese takeout.

“One single candle is your idea of romance?” Viggo replied, a smile on his face, and Sean rolled his eyes dramatically.

“We got food, we got light, we got a place to put our bums on,” Sean said, with the fitting gestures at the cartons, the candle and the couch. He slumped down on the upholstery and patted the place next to himself. “I think this is the ultimate of romantic wooing.”

Viggo sat down next to Sean and snatched a pair of chopsticks from his hands. “You have no idea of the true concept of romance,” he teased good naturedly.

“Oh yeah?” Sean arched his brows, challenge rather than offence gleaming in his eyes. “You think you can do better?”

Viggo just snorted, already digging into the Chop Sui, stomach rumbling. With the warmth of Sean’s thigh against his own, he looked at the other man, slurping a stray noodle into his mouth.

“’Course I can.”

“Great,” Sean said. “Next Friday, same time, your turn. I’m biting my fingernails. But the really important question –”

He inhaled more of his duck dish, so he had to repeat his words after swallowing.

“The really important question is whether you’ll still put out tonight?”

Sufficient to say that Viggo did. Twice.

But a challenge was a challenge.

Alright, so first thing Viggo had to do was deciding on a location. He given it some thought over the weekend but to be honest, when he stumbled into the makeup trailer in the wee hours of Monday morning, he hadn’t gotten very far.

Which was in no way proving Sean right, he assured himself as he forced himself to relax in the
chair and let his makeup guy work his magic. He had ideas, plenty of them actually, but that was sort of the problem. Which of them was the best, the absolute ultimate romantic set up? He had to prove a point here.

A nice restaurant with exquisite food and quiet music in the background? No, Wellington was not too big a city and all the places he knew were filled with cast and crew over the weekend. And having Billy or Sala practically on your lap sort of ruined the romance.

Absently wandered over to costumes and started putting on Aragorn’s layers.

He could cook for Sean. He did quite a decent fish and he figured he could come up with some nice decorating ideas even. But his kitchen was just being re-done, there was no way he could brew up something more complicated than hot water in the next few weeks.

The morning went by and Viggo was lucky that his character was supposed to be introverted at this point of the story because damn, he really couldn’t have pulled of ‘chipper’ right now. While Billy, Orli, Dom and Elijah were playing some game in between shoots and Sean was deep in conversation with Astin, Viggo prodded Rivendell earth with his sword and brooded.

A picknick? – Too cold.

A posh hotel? – Oh, Viggo could practically hear Sean mockingly humming the ‘Pretty woman’ title melody to that.

“Hey Vig,” perfectly in character, Astin offered him a piece of his apple when he sat down next to him. Trust Samwise to come with the comfort food. “How was your weekend?”

“Nothing special,” Viggo answered, thankful for the distraction. “I spent it sleeping, doing some reading. How about yours?”

Sean’s face lit up and tiny dimples appeared on his cheeks.

“You know, it was fantastic. Thanks for asking. – Yesterday was our wedding day, so Christine had booked this cabin just outside town, near the lake, you know? And Fran and Peter offered to take the kids, so we –” A blush spread over Sean’s face, saying rather a lot about the course the weekend had taken. Viggo felt quite a lot of compassion thinking about what poor straightlaced Sean had to put up with from the other hobbits sometimes. But the other actor’s smile was firmly in place when he concluded, “So, anyway, we had such a wonderful time – it was so romantic.”

Huh, Viggo thought, and made Sean promise to get him the address from his wife once they were done shooting for the day.

On Tuesday morning, Viggo had fixed up the cabin first thing and was in an exuberantly happy mood and random-hugged quite a lot of people just because of that. He guessed he was lucky that at this point none of the stunt guys was around because they usually answered a hug with a headbutt, and Aragorn with a black eye during Elrond’s council? Might have given Boromir a good reason to be so very skeptical towards him.

Speaking of Boromir – it always surprised Viggo, how Sean could switch his character on and off within the blink of an eye. So very different from him – and from John, he figured. But maybe it wasn’t really Gimli’s doing that John liked to spend most of his breaks teasing the elf, but John finding it just as entertaining as Sean. Not that Orlando didn’t give as good as he got, judging from the randomly drifting over ‘shortass’ and ‘Northern git’ from where Orlando, John and Sean stood
and laughed.

Viggo had made a quick dash into his trailer after they stopped filming for lunch and when he entered the catering tent, the hobbits were busy force feeding Hugo mashed potatoes. John patted the empty seat next to him, and gratefully Viggo slumped down there.

“Have a good meal,” he said, putting his tray down.

“You, too,” John boomed.

However Orlando, on the other side of the table, poked the food on his plate and murmured, “I’d kill my own father for a decent steak.”

“Such words from an elf?” Viggo attempted to look shocked. “How low a cultured race can sink.”

“The Woodland Realm might’ve been lovely and all,” Orlando agreed and skeptically put a piece of potato into his mouth. “But even Leggy would get fed up with it if there was no proper food.”

“I would agree,” John said, laughing, “if I didn’t know your eating habits. But yes, imagine we could have some of that lobster we had in the restaurant last week –”

“- or the filet –“ Orlando agreed, practically purring.

“ – or the boar.” John added. Viggo looked back and forth between the two of them and grinned at their blissed out expressions from the mere memory of that culinary delight.

“Maybe you should call them and ask whether they delivered,” Viggo suggested.

“Oh, they do,” John assured him. “They even prepare you complete meals to take home with you when you don’t want to cook yourself.”

“Or can’t,” Orlando added and laughed at Viggo’s arched eyebrow.

“They don’t have wine, though,” John added, glancing at Viggo while he continued to eat, “you need to buy that somewhere else. – Would you like their telephone number?”

Vig thought of the pictures of the cabin he’d seen, of the lovely fireplace and the big bed – and the lack of a restaurant nearby. They couldn’t spend the evening with an empty stomach, could they?

“Actually,” Viggo replied and licked gravy off his fork, “I would.”

On Wednesday, Viggo drove his already beat up car against the outer wall of WETA workshop. Admittedly, this sounded not like a very sensible thing to do but it was either that or run over a stray dog in the parking lot. So Vig looked at his write off with a certain amount of satisfaction even when he stood next to it in the warm afternoon sun.

“I think it’s dead,” a high voice remarked and when Viggo turned around in shock, Liv waved at the car. “Your transport.”

“Yeah,” Viggo agreed and scratched his head. “I suppose it is.”

“And there I was thinking I shouldn’t be driving,” Liv teased and then put on a fake snobbish tone of voice. “I suppose I have to ask my chauffeur to take you with us later.”
Viggo grinned at her as they started to walk towards the back entrance of the workshop.

“Your chauffeur?”

“Well, Sean dropped me off.”

“God save us all.”

Liv giggled and lightly hit Viggo’s chest with the back of her hand. One of her rings got caught in the wool of Viggo’s red pullover and, now both of them laughing, it took them a bit to disentangle themselves.

“Don’t take this the wrong way,” Liv said when she’d finally freed herself. “But your dress up looks worse than your car.”

Viggo looked down at himself. Admittedly, the pullover was a bit scratchy and he guessed that the knitted blue pattern of leaves on it didn’t really match his well worn muddy jeans.

“We can’t all look like we’ve just fallen of a catwalk,” he gave back, and held the door open for Liv.

“No, we can’t,” Liv agreed and looked over her shoulder back at Viggo. “But maybe sometimes we should.”

Liv usually didn’t speak in riddles and it took one confused look from Viggo for her to pat his arm comfortingly and add, “How about this: After we’re finished here, I’ll take you shopping. I won’t walk into the changing cubicle when you’re in your underwear, promise. – You do wear underwear, don’t you?”

Viggo actually had to give that a moment’s thought and they’d reached Richard Taylor’s office by the time he nodded before. Liv beamed at him before she slipped into the room.

It wasn’t like he actually forgot to put on underwear, more that sometimes he had no idea where Sean had tossed it the evening before, and to be honest, sometimes the going commando thing was rather helpful for quick but satisfying grope in the back alley behind the pub.

Viggo was smiling when he remembered the last time that had happened, and absentmindedly picked up the sharpening stone he came for. Sex in a back alley was about as mature as it was romantic, but most definitely ended up with him and Sean satisfied and happy.

‘Romantic’ – now that triggered something in Viggo’s mind and his smile broadened when thinking about the cabin and the excellent food he’d pre-ordered, all outlaid on a perfectly set table, and Sean’d be blown away when even having his chair pulled back for him by Viggo – in a red sweater and a ratty pair of jeans.

When Liv spotted Viggo waiting for her outside, Liv hooked her arm through his decided, “Now, I think we’ll start with some nice new pants.”

On Thursday, Viggo and Sean were almost late for work thanks to a badly timed (but very nice) shared shower. It turned out that only Viggo was almost late, however, because Boromir wasn’t required until noon – and Vig’s eyes enviously followed Sean as he threw his arms over Billy’s and Dom’s shoulders amiably before disappearing into the catering tent for precious coffee.

Maybe it was the lack of caffeine or the rush in the morning, but Viggo’s brain today had a bit of a
problem differentiating between himself and Aragorn today. So he was drifting in and out of character all morning, patiently repeating his lines over and over until Peter was satisfied, and in between takes in one second contemplating the fate of Middle Earth with the same intensity as San Lorenzo’s latest game a moment later.

Which was probably why he looked at Merry and Pippin with honest bafflement when they halted in front of him.

“We were wondering if you could help us with something,” Dom said with the dangerous lack of precision to his words which usually meant something stupid and possibly offending would follow. Billy nodded earnestly and looked down into the box he was carrying.

“See, we were practicing, for the sake of all hobbit women you see,” Dom said and pulled a candle as well as a squared foil package out of the box. He quickly tore the foil open and pulled out a bright red condom. He put it onto the tip of the candle and then asked in all seriousness, “Does the rim of this have to face outwards or inwards?”

He could’ve spoken Chinese for all Viggo understood.

“What?!”

Dom thrust his condom candle right under Viggo’s nose before rolling the rubber down.

“Is that about right?” Billy asked innocently and with the sweetest of smiles.

Viggo looked back and forth from Dom to Billy to the latex covered candle.

“What?”

The two hobbits shared a look and sighed in unison before facing Viggo again. Billy stretched out his hands and placed the box into Vig’s lap. It was filled with at least two dozens of candles and at least as many condoms.

“Here. You probably need those more than we do anyway,” he said with a tone of voice usually used to talk to slightly slow children. This time it was Dom’s turn to nod. Then the two of them turned on their heels and left behind an utterly confused Viggo, holding a first aid kit for wooing.

On Friday, Sean had fighting practice the same time that Elijah had, and Elijah later came up to Viggo, volunteering to swap Frodo’s and Aragorn’s close ups, so Viggo could get off early. Sean shared a cuppa hot strong British tea with Ian, and just before Viggo was about to leave, Ian offered to lend him his brand new Land Rover, ‘just in case you have something special planned for the weekend’.

Viggo was barely able to bite back a smirk when, seven sharp, he stood on Sean’s doorstep, the key’s to Ian’s car as well as the cabin securely in the pocket of his new coat.

Sean opened and looked Viggo up and down with appreciation and ‘huh’ed in pleasant surprise when Viggo held out a single red rose.

“Where does that come from?” he asked and held the flower under his nose, humming in appreciation.

Viggo shook his head as he placed his hands on Sean’s hips.
“You interfering little shit,” he growled affectionately. “You’re actually surprised that I thought of something all by myself?”

Sean lowered the rose enough to look at Viggo with innocent eyes.

“I have no idea what you are talking about,” he said, then pulled up his eyebrows as if just remembering something. “Say, isn’t tonight the night you wanted to show me how well you do romance?”

“I’ll show you something alright,” Viggo half growled, half laughed and leaned forward to capture Sean’s mouth in a searing kiss.

“Hmm,” Sean hummed and pressed his body against Viggo’s. “I think there’s a good chance you might get lucky tonight.”

Viggo snorted. “A can of beer and a slice of pizza is enough to get into your pants.”

Sean gaped at him in mock indignation while pulling his front door shut. “Minus points for total lack of sweet talk skills, my friend.”

Viggo managed to regain those points when he held open the car door for Sean. And the way the other man shifted on his seat and almost wanted to climb out of the window in order to better see where they were going. It was (though Vig would never say that to Sean’s face) almost endearing and made Viggo feel accomplished and happy already even before they’d reached the cabin.

They both got out of the car and while Viggo fetched the bags with food he’d picked up earlier, Sean strolled around and took in the view. The sun was just setting and spread a rich golden glow over the landscape in midst the cabin stood.

Sean took a plastic bag from Viggo, so he could replace it with his own, their fingers entwined as they walked the short distance. “This is pretty nice,” Sean judged. “Definitely worth a blow job.”

Viggo cackled at Sean’s less than subtle system of measurement and pulled him in to kiss him on the doorstep.

“I’m glad you like it,” Vig said quietly against Sean’s lips and the plastic bag in the other man’s hands bumped against Viggo’s ass when Sean wrapped his arms around him.

“I’m glad that you like it,” Sean replied with that sort of gentle earnestness, bare all joking, that Viggo loved so much. Of course, being Sean, he managed that for about two seconds before he had to add with a grin, “you romantic sissy.”

Vig growled and bit Sean’s chin in mock punishment before he let go of him in order to open the cabin door. Sean pushed up next to him, his curious eyes taking everything in at once – the sparse but inviting furniture, the thick curtains in front of the windows, the fireplace and –

“Fuck,” Sean said with emphasis and beamed at Viggo. “If that’s a bearskin in front of the fireplace, we can skip dinner and you can shag me rotten right now.”

“Easy, easy,” Viggo replied, chuckling, and took all the bags to the small kitchen. “You might wanna re-think your reward system! There has to be something left for the food and the bedroom!”

Sean kneeled in front of the fireplace and was busy stacking up wood and accelerators, matches already waiting at his side. “Ah,” he said, somewhat distractedly, “I can always top that ‘n’ ask you to marry me or something.”
“Or something?” Viggo crouched down next to Sean, his knee bumping against the other man’s thigh as he lit some of the stubby candles from Billy’s box and stuck them onto the coffee table. Sean glanced into the box and Viggo saw him bite back a grin as he saw the assorted collection of condoms in it.

Then Sean shifted, tossing the lightened match almost carelessly into the fireplace, all his attention already focused on Viggo. His eyes gleamed with something more than the reflection of the instant fire as he pushed Viggo back onto the thick bear skin and his voice was a dark growl when he repeated, “Or something. Lemme show you.”

Viggo’s hand closed over the back of Sean’s neck to hold him close when he rolled both of them over so he came to lie between Sean’s parted legs. “No,” he said, “let me show you how this is done properly.”

Sean grinned and arched up against him, the hard line of his cock proof enough that he felt ready for anything Viggo wanted to dish out. Usually, passion overtook them almost every time, clothes flying in every direction as they tried to devour one another.

This time, they took their time undressing and Viggo took his time kissing Sean’s lips until he had licked the amusement from them and replaced it with quiet moans. He placed open mouthed kisses onto Sean’s neck, his collar bone, traced the lines of muscles in Sean’s arms with the tip of his tongue until he felt them quivering underneath his touch.

He licked down Sean’s chest, tongue swirling around Sean’s nipples as his fingers teasingly gently followed the lines of Sean’s ribs down to his sharply outlined hips. He placed his outstretched hand against Sean’s flat belly and looked up when Sean started pleading, his words as heated as his skin.

A sheen of sweat covered Sean’s body, the flickering flames of the fire made his skin glow and the small pool of precome on Sean’s stomach glistened silvery. Viggo lapped it up, sucked at the outer line of Sean’s cock and was answered with a dark groan and an only half aborted thrust of the other man’s hips.

“Viggo —” so much need in Sean’s voice that Vig felt almost cruel for having made him wait for this long. Sean repeated his pleading when Viggo took him in, the darkness in his voice intensified not lessened. He pushed Sean’s thighs apart, his palms firm against the soft skin, and growled when Sean’s hips thrust upwards, almost choking him.

“Vig, I swear,” Sean rumbled and pushed himself up to his elbows, “if you’re not inside me within the next two minutes, I’m gonna flip you over and fuck you raw.”

Viggo let Sean’s cock slip from his mouth in order to grin up at him. “Is that supposed to be a threat or a promise?”

Sean groaned in frustration, then fixed Viggo with a dark gaze, pupils fully dilated. “Fuck me. Now.”

“Turn over then,” Viggo replied and Sean’s almost frantic eagerness to follow that instruction was almost amusing. Almost. But Sean’s blessed out groan, when his oversensitive skin came into contact with the rough bear skin, the sight of all this perfection, quivering muscle beneath smooth skin – Sean’s need was highly infectious and fever took hold over Viggo, made his entire being so very thirsty for Sean.

He sank into Sean without much preparation, the tightness, the burn just enough to keep them grounded. He rocked his hips in a few hard thrusts, a bit too early, a bit too forceful, and Sean
keened but the quivering stopped, his body pliant under Viggo’s now, his skin soft under Viggo’s teeth.

They found a rhythm then, see-sawing between slow and hard, shallow and quick. They communicated with rumbling groans and short gasps, fingers entwining, lips searching and finding one another. Eyes open when they both came.

Later, they had warmed up some of the delicatessen Viggo had brought and fed them to each other in front of the fireplace.

“Christ, this is delicious,” Sean purred around a mouthful. “Pheasant this good? You’re so allowed to ride my cock for that.”

“Yay,” Viggo replied which caused Sean to half snort, half laugh.

“Seriously though,” Sean said and crawled over to Viggo to place a slightly greasy kiss onto his cheek. “This is lovely. Thank you.”

He returned to devouring food. Viggo knew that Sean would have been just as happy with a pizza on his couch, hell, most of the times that was exactly what Viggo wanted as well. He knew also to what lengths Sean had gone to make sure Viggo could set up this ridiculously romantic evening, and that Sean would refuse to take any credit for it.

He crawled over to Sean who had his long legs outstretched and his feet just within comfortable distance of the fire. Sean sat up when Viggo straddled his thighs, wrapped his arms around the other man’s waist.

“You’re very welcome,” Viggo murmured and Sean’s lips were smiling when he leaned in for another kiss.

Daft bugger
Viggo tied his shoes. Yes, he not only owned shoes but also knew how to attach them to his feet so they didn’t come off when he started to walk. Viggo, against popular belief, also owned a hair brush that he now put to good use, or as good as possible. Damn, his hair really had grown long.

He leaned nearer to the mirror, furrowed his brows, raised them, leaned a little closer yet checking whether maybe they had grown together above his nose. It always distracted him when he sat across people who didn’t seem to have two eyebrows but only one big one. But his were as neatly separated as Eastern and Western Germany up to 1989.

A hand came to rest on his shoulder, squeezing lightly as if its owner was prepared to hold onto him if some sort of primeval flight instinct should kick in. But Viggo could smell him, inhaled a little deeper because of it and turned around. He looked at the hand as it moved over his shoulder and down, elegant fingers straightening the collar of his jersey shirt.

“You really dressed up, mate.” A dark rumble more than a voice, amusement softening the rough edges. As always Viggo’s gaze drifted up to the source of that sound. As usual he got distracted on the way by the throat. It took him a bit of self restraint to not bend forwards and lick the vulnerable curve of the Adam’s apple.

“Got my shirt buttoned up correctly, too,” he replied, lips curling into a smile, and Viggo’s eyes finally met Sean’s.
“I’ll teach you how to tie a tie yet.”

Viggo almost protested when Sean dropped his hand and buried it in the pocket of his pants instead of touching him. Viggo’s skin really needed touching apparently but Sean already leaned against the door of the Cuntebago, pushing it open. Fresh air came in and ever so lightly brushed passed him which was nice enough but a rather disappointing consolation price.

“You coming, mate? I’m bloody peckish,” Sean said and walked down the small metal staircase, expecting Viggo to follow. Viggo did, of course as always, but just as predictably Sean slowed his tempo after a few steps to glance over his shoulder, as if to look out for him.

Viggo caught up with him, jogging a couple of paces. Sean cuffed him with a shrug of his shoulder and Vig returned the amiable gesture by putting an arm around Sean’s shoulder and giving the other man the softest of head butts. The response was indulgent, Sean leaned into the embrace briefly before taking out his car keys.

Would it earn Viggo just another chuckle and a friendly headshake if he’d just give in to that feeling? The one that rushed through him like a whirlwind in spring, scattering apart his thoughts like they were paper clippings without an order. Whenever he was close enough to Sean to smell him.

If he’d just kissed him? It probably would be Viggo, not Sean, who’d freak, and then he’d do something slightly mental, American style, just to not have to face the consequences. ‘Oh, that’s just Viggo being Viggo, don’t think much of it.’

“Get in the car, Vig,” Sean pushed the door open for him and gestured for him to get a move on. And with a hint of worry in his voice when Viggo had to mentally shake himself before following the order, Sean added, “Too rough a day, then? Want me to just drop you off?”

“No,” Viggo replied quickly and almost indignantly which earned him another odd glance. How was Sean to know that he’d been looking forward for their shared dinner, for every evening spent together, so much that the mere suggestion of skipping it came close to an insult?

“I mean,” he added, hickupping on what he really meant, “long day, yeah.”

They drove back to town in companionable silence for a while, Viggo trying to tell himself that he needed a bit of time to get rid off Aragorn. As if it had nothing to do with suppressing the growing urge to put his hand on Sean’s thigh possessively.

“That sunrise today,” Viggo’s mouth said eventually and the rest of him was sceptically interested in what was going to follow, “so subtly hinting the hope still remaining in them.”

What? Viggo rubbed his ear and tried to figure out where that nonsense had come from. He gave up after a moment or two and added, “I’d like Mexican tonight. That alright with you?”

“I’m good with that, I reckon,” Sean said, a lopsided smile enough of a comment on Viggo’s randomness and his own sometimes a little sensitive digestion, “if that’s what you want.”

Sean halted in front of the tiny place where you could get a few Mexican dishes and suggested Viggo might wanna pick up some wine in the store opposite. Viggo did so, even found something that would go with whatever food Sean would choose, but then he had to wait for Sean to pick him up anyway because he’d forgotten his wallet again. Shop owners didn’t chalk up for a forty something boy who, half dressed up as a mythical hero, had got lost in the mall.

Sometimes when things like this happened, the orderly and neat, trustworthy looking Brit who had to vouch for his mate would say something like “I should put ye on a leash, really” and ruffle his hair as
if indeed Viggo was his eccentric street mutt. Sometimes Viggo would bark, first like a good puppy, then with laughter, and jump his master like any other untrained dog, throwing them both to the ground, even if that happened to be in the middle of Wellington.

Today, tough, Viggo scratched his belly, shrugged uneasily and didn’t meet Sean’s eyes when the other man paid for their wine. Sean shook his head and they drove back to Viggo’s and Vig thought he got away with it until another time. Until they’d reached his kitchen.

“You,” Sean said decisively and put down a plate with food in front of himself only, “won’t get anything until you tell me what’s wrong with you. And don’t give me any ‘Aliens abducted me and experimented with my brain’ Elijah story, yeah?”

Viggo eyed the spicy meat and the beans on Sean’s plate and wondered whether a radical diet was indeed a route of escape. If it meant not having to confess he could go quite a while without any food at all. Native Americans, he’d read, sometimes hungered in order to receive hallucinations of their future, brought to them by messengers in the forms of wild animals. But Viggo’s eagle or bear or David Lynch like road kill even would probably roll their collective eyes at his thickness and just silently point at Sean anyway.

Spending an hour or two just longing for his handshake, for a wink in between takes, for anything really. Viggo was easy by then. Or desperate, depending on how you looked at it. He’d write poetry, would paint if thinking of Sean didn’t fill him with so much nameless yearning that he was almost paralysed and unable to do anything. Well, besides wanking off in the shower of the trailer occasionally. Desperate, then.

Sean had finished his first round of food and sat back, a glass of wine in his hand, elegant fingers curling almost tenderly around the smooth surface. He studied Viggo’s face, tilting his head to the left. Maybe Viggo looked on the brink of starving, feeling like it for different reasons, because Sean, stubborn as a mule usually, caved in and got up, probably to get him some dinner after all.

Sean walked past the table that was scarcely decorated with a candle stub directly stuck onto the wood and deformed by Viggo’s playing fingers in earlier nights. Viggo looked at the peculiar waxen sculpture, his mind blank, but then, suddenly, a gentle hand is buried in his strands and Sean, leaning over him from behind, places a light kiss on top of his hair.

Somehow this gesture of care and companionship, of concern and friendship shreds something inside Viggo. Something that up until then he’s managed to protect from the havoc that wanting Sean has wreaked in the rest of his being. That flimsy blanket of himself, of pride and sense of self preservation, falls off him and leaves him naked and shivering, literally shivering under Sean’s light touch.

Sean bows down a little and wraps both of his arms around Viggo’s quivering shoulders, as if to shield him now that Viggo can’t even manage that task on his own any longer. For a moment Viggo just gives in and leans back and doesn’t care about here and now, about consequences or how naïve the wish to stop time and the concept of ‘eternity’ sound.

He lets himself fall, fall apart and trusts Sean to hold him up and together. He can hear Sean’s even breathing close to his ear and will Sean always sound like this, just like this when he sleeps, when he moans, when he holds him like this for always? Sean’s position can’t possibly be comfortable but nevertheless the deeper Viggo falls, the tighter Sean holds onto him, clutching his body against his chest, never mind the back of the chair, muscles, strong from hours and hours of swordplay practice, tense against Viggo.

When eventually Sean lets go he crouches in front of Viggo on the not really clean kitchen tiles. His
fingers dig into the flesh of Viggo’s thighs, pressure felt even through layers of fabric.

“Please, Viggo,” Sean says, quietly but louder with distressed urgency than Viggo can bear hearing, “tell me.”

His hands reach out for Sean. They are practical and calloused, unsteady and frantically wanting to be tender. And despite everything they almost choose the coward’s, the fool’s way out yet again to merely come to rest on Sean’s broad shoulders.

If it wasn’t for Sean’s eyes to widen. Their green change from a bright, almost lime colour, that has been mixed by worry and confusion, to a shimmering emerald. Sean looks up at him, waiting patiently and at the same time wanting so much for Viggo to see, to see himself, Viggo, there in those eyes finally.

And sometimes, Viggo realises then, it is good to lose yourself. To lose yourself to an extent in which you don’t even remember ever having had worries and fears and hopes and dreams. When you simply can’t go on pretending any longer as if everything is as per usual. When you solely exist because it is you who loves the man kneeling in front of you, love him so much that there is no room for anything else nor should there be.

His hands cup Sean’s face, the strong jaw in his palms, the stubble of his beard prickling his skin and curved cheekbones under his thumbs, and Sean still gazes at him. One of Sean’s hands leaves Viggo’s thigh and grabs his shoulder, really grabs it, holding him in place and clinging onto him at the same time. And no ‘as if’ this time.

Sean whispers, so quietly Viggo barely hears him even though he is so close to him.

“Ye daft bugger,” he whispers and Viggo can feel the faintest of head shakes in his hands where Sean’s head is still cradled, “ye daft bugger.”

Viggo has always thought that if he kissed Sean after all it would be spur of the moment, rushed, before he lost his courage again.

When he leans in now, though, everything slows down, and there is no haze whatsoever. On the contrary, Viggo is hyper aware of everything, of himself and of Sean. He can feel himself almost smiling when Sean licks his lips unconsciously as he realises what Viggo is about to do, a habitually calming and eager reaction. He can taste Sean’s spit on his lips when he’s closed the distance and it tastes of Mexican spices and cigarette smoke and dear Lord, he tastes just like he smells, only ten thousand times more intense.

His fingers are trembling against Sean’s skin and regularly breathing becomes an effort and he is kissing Sean and Sean’s hand slides up from his shoulder to his neck – ‘Don’t ye dare to shy away from me now’ – kissing him back with so much self assurance that there would’ve been enough to share it with Viggo even. But Viggo’s body might shake and he might be too occupied with moaning deep in his throat to take up the playful challenge of Sean’s tongue, pushing past his lips, but he doesn’t need borrowed confidence now.

Sean’s fingers curl in his neck and dig into his thigh and Viggo understands the sudden urgency that in him feels like he is imploding, a vacuum with the sole purpose of sucking in the world, Sean, and he slides from his chair because he isn’t close enough.

His kneecaps protest at the fall onto hard tiles but he just shuffles a little closer yet, his thighs trapping Sean’s and his hands move to the back of Sean’s head, finally, finally getting a grip, both metaphorically and literally, burying themselves in soft short strands. Sean groans and Viggo
swallows the breath, the sound, the taste, all of it. He licks Sean’s mouth, lets his tongue curl around Sean’s, the dominance of the kiss see-sawing back and forth between them just like Viggo is shifting above Sean, unable to hold really still.

A strong arm wraps around his waist and Viggo feels delicate for a short moment when its embrace pulls him closer, properly up onto Sean’s lap, and it feels so fantastically right. His breathing hitches when Sean’s hand brushes against naked skin, gripping his loose shirt tightly.

Kissing Sean, touching Sean, being so blissfully close to him. It is too much, not enough, the ancient paradox and it isn’t one if anyone asked Viggo right now. It is right and perfect and the most logical and craziest thing ever and he doesn’t care whether kissing Sean on the floor of his kitchen costs him his last remaining grip on reason.

‘Cause Sean tastes like New Zealand and Sheffield, like everywhere Viggo has been to and ever wants to be. And if that is lunatic there is always Sean to lightly bite his lower lip, growl at him, wordlessly telling him that he is the daftest bugger he’s ever met and that it is alright and fine with him.

Love is blind? Bullshit.
Maybe you would call Sean wise. Maybe you’d be right. Because Sean? He doesn’t believe in love at first sight. He doesn’t believe in loving someone so much you sometimes don’t know where you end and the other person begins. He doesn’t believe in love overcoming everything else. He doesn’t believe in blind love. Maybe you would call Sean cynical. Maybe you’d be right.

Then there is Viggo.

Sean is right about everything, in a way.

He doesn’t fall in love with Viggo the first time he sees him. He likes the new bloke’s firm handshake and his soft voice, but then he turns around to Billy and they resume their conversation about last weekend’s matches and that’s it. He can’t really tell which time it is that he looks at Viggo and feels stupidly in love with him, but it’s definitely not the first time, so there.

He can tell where he ends and where Viggo begins, thank you very much. It’s right easy when you only have to differentiate between cigarette stained fingers and those bearing splotches of yellow paint, dead easy really, even if those fingers are interwoven under the table, or in the darkness of the cinema, or when Sean wakes up in the morning in a bed that isn’t his own.

He sometimes wants to bash Viggo’s head in when the stupid fucker first goes on and on about bloody American politics and then forgets to buy milk. And a kiss on the cheek and a just-that-bit-too-tight hug don’t make up for that. Love doesn’t cream your tea, does it? Sean still has to go to the grocery store. While he’s there, he picks up a copy of that day’s New York Times for Viggo as well.

He still doesn’t believe in blind love. Love’d be right stupid to close its eyes when there’s that toothy grin, that lank body, those blue eyes, that pretty cock, those strong and caring hands, those always dirty naked feet to look at. Seriously.

Envy

Sometimes Sean envies Viggo. He doesn’t like that particular emotion that crawls up his spine and settles somewhere in the back of his throat, making everything taste slightly bitter. Envy twists something inside you that originally was a good and fine thing and turns it into something else that makes you dislike yourself and eventually you might also end up with a grudge against the other person involved. Sean really doesn’t like to envy Viggo.
Most of the times what he feels for Viggo – other than lust and love and that wonderful combination of the two that only ever his Dane has evoked in him – is going back and forth between head shaking amusement and awe that makes his jaw drop.

He’s fine with the fact that Viggo sometimes forgets to ‘switch’ Aragorn off after shooting and Sean didn’t even mind almost losing his left eye once because Viggo had brought that ridiculously long sword of his to bed and Sean woke up next to it. Besides, he reckons that as nuts as Peter is he’d have found something appealing in the idea of an eyepatch-wearing Boromir.

Anyway.

Sean carefully keeps out of politics and certainly doesn’t want to exchange places with Viggo whose easy going composure crumbles whenever he sees something on the news that is against his political beliefs. Sure, Sean could do without the rant that usually follows and easily goes on an entire evening and has sometimes switch Viggo from speaking English into Danish because he’s so agitated. But that fire in Viggo’s blue eyes, expressing the intense belief in his ideals, is something that Sean loves and wishes he had himself.

But he doesn’t envy Viggo.

He actually likes sneaking up on Viggo when he’s painting in his studio – not that this needed some special skill, an army of orcs could stampede through Viggo’s studio and the Dane wouldn’t even notice them if they didn’t lurk around between him and his canvas. Watching Viggo paint is, Sean supposes, a bit like being inside Viggo’s brain during sex. There’s this randomness in his art as well as this completely unexplainable mixture of contentment and excitement that makes Sean feel whole when he’s looking at it because he feels so fucking connected to Vig then, bordering a religious experience. Well, also he likes that Viggo usually works with his shirt of and has paint all over himself, even worse than Sean’s girls when he bought them fingerpaint.

No, Sean doesn’t feel envy when it comes to those things. He respects and even admires Viggo’s method acting and his ability to think of nothing else but his canvas for hours and then be so involved in politics as if he’d never done anything else.

Usually.

When it was Orlando’s birthday Sean was jealous enough to go insane. He likes Orli and his sweetness that works like a sugar rush in his own system whether he wants it or not. But the week before the lad’s birthday the boy couldn’t do anything right in Sean’s eyes. Because there was Viggo, quiet and yet so intense – and Sean hates it that the word is so overused and feels stale on his tongue when it should be the perfect word to describe Viggo - and Sean was getting along really well with him, just talking and hanging out and being the brothers in arms against the whirlwind of youth that was the hobbits and their elf.

But the week before Orlando’s birthday Vig was absentminded, always thinking about something that didn’t involve Sean at all, and even when the Dane – two days before their elf’s birthday party – showed him what present had been occupying his mind Sean wasn’t happy. Because that secretive, boyish smile on Viggo’s face wasn’t for him.

And as stupid and low as Sean knew this was he still hated Orlando a little bit for it.

When it was Astin’s birthday and Sean felt the same emotion creeping up in him he spent a very troubled night in which he questioned his own self esteem – what did it say about him that he who slept next to Viggo, brushed his teeth next to him, shared breakfast with him and a ride to location, that he was jealous of Sam?
He woke up pretty moody that morning, but Viggo made him breakfast and didn’t even burn the eggs. Viggo told him about the poem he’d been working on for the birthday boy and that evening at the Astin’s estate, when Viggo read it to their friend and the rest of the fellowship present, they all listened to the Dane’s quiet and a little raspy voice that made every single word sound like a gem, like it was especially brought to this earth to serve this very purpose. The Brit saw tears forming in Sean A.’s eyes and a smile on the younger man’s lips that spoke of such heartfelt thanks.

The nagging feeling was still there and Sean drank quite a lot of whiskey that evening, trying to come to terms with the fact that he was a real bastard. Because he apparently begrudged Viggo this.

It’s Sean’s own birthday today and the situation is becoming ridiculous. Sean knows that Viggo is up to something and if he’s honest with himself he’s a little afraid. - Okay, he’s scared shitless. Because he feels guilty for the jealousy and the envy and he’s generally crap at saying ‘thank you’ anyway. He really doesn’t think he deserves the attention and the obvious dedication with which Viggo not-so-secretly crafts his birthday surprise.

Of course, Sean has invited everybody over. Or, to be more precise, when last week Dom asked him about his date of birth and he confirmed that it was in a few days, he didn’t kill the noisy hobbit straight after. Hence he put up with the certainty that there _would_ be a big party at their house.

However, Viggo waits impatiently for Sean to finish his shower after they’ve come home from filming, even though their guests aren’t due for quite a while.

Sean feels bad. In fact he feels worse every second he keeps Viggo waiting by telling him he has to towel his hair first and finish shaving and that he needs to put on some proper clothes.

He looks at Viggo who’s leaning against the frame of the bathroom door and watches every of his moves. And he knows Viggo well enough by now to see through that façade of calmness and idleness, sees the nervous excitement in his lover’s eyes that threatens to turn sour by disappointment. It’s like Sean’s put an open box of sweets on the table, right in front of a little boy, and has told the kid that it was okay to look, but not to taste.

But when Viggo notices him staring and flashes him a smile, Sean finally understands.

He stops being jealous because of the love other people get and he doesn’t begrudge Viggo the love he receives in return anymore. Because he understands now that Viggo is both almost altruistic and the most selfish person he knows. He’s seen the simple joy in Viggo’s eyes and he knows that what causes it is not the attention he gets. It’s the simplicity of making other people happy.

Sean walks over to Viggo who’s still standing in the door. He kisses him fiercely and murmurs against kiss-swollen lips how much he loves him. Because the happiness in Viggo’s eyes works like a charm on him, makes him drunk from one second to the next and once and for all erases all memory of those stupid emotions called jealousy and envy.

It makes Sean happy in return.

“I love you, too,” Viggo answers with a chuckle and adds jokingly, “but isn’t that supposed to come _after_ you unpacked that truckload of British beer I got you?”

“No,” Sean says and leans his forehead against Viggo’s, “it doesn’t. I just realised –,” he stops and pulls back, eyes widening in mock fear.

“British beer?! - Christ, we have to hide it from the hobbits!”

Percolator
Sean is great at falling in love. Fucking fantastic, actually. If falling in love was, like say making coffee then Sean could self-advertise with being the quickest and most efficient way of brewing / falling for someone. Seriously, it takes a few seconds max and Sean is head over heels, on cloud number nine and marries the object of desire within a heartbeat. And he really means it, he is in love and honest to God thinks he’s found the right one.

Problem is, Sean’s pretty shit upholding all the stuff he’s vowed in front of the altar. In coffee machine terms, he doesn’t measure up to the satisfaction guarantee, and it won’t take long till he develops a few faults – boiling over, blowing a fuse, leaving a foul aftertaste on the tongue because he’s been out boozing with his mates again (Sean, that is, not the brewer). So, in due course, Sean’s special someone realizes that he’s faulty and returns him to the store – usually cussing him and the inventor of filtered coffee on the way. Sean and happily-ever-after don’t go well together.

“I’m a broken percolator,” Sean whines, slightly slurry, and downs the puddle of beer still in his glass.

Viggo, who’s sitting next to him, nods slowly, then sips from his drink and replies, “Yes.”

Which can mean a lot of things, starting from ‘Yes, and I feel your misery’ to ‘Yes, I really should redecorate my kitchen’, it’s a bit hard to tell with Viggo. Rummy bastard. Sean eyes him skeptically, then decides to ignore him, because Karl and Sala just stopped next to them and look at him curiously.

“I would’ve called you a lotta things,” Karl says promptly, and with that grin that makes people (Sean) let him get away with the rudest insults as well as the most shameless flirting. “Y’know, football fanatic British stud and all these things, but a broken coffee pot?”

He glances at Sala who has his mouth full of peanuts he just stole from Viggo and hence just shakes his head and grunts affirmatively around his booty. Sean explains the simile rather lengthily (he gets distracted by wishing former Mrs. Coffeemaker to hell repeatedly) while Karl slumps down on his right and sips his beer and Sala shoves Viggo off his stool so he can sit to Sean’s left and eat the rest of the peanuts.

When Sean has finished his lament, Karl orders him another beer.

“Better keep the parts well lubricated, for future use,” he says and thrusts the glass in Sean’s hand, nodding encouragingly.

“That doesn’t make the least bit of sense,” Sala says. “You don’t fix a coffee maker by pouring beer over the wiring.”

Sean, who’s lifted the glass to his lips already, hesitates for a moment, because Sala has a point.

“Shut it,” Karl laughs and pats Sean on the shoulder. “Don’t listen to him, he doesn’t even drink coffee.”

Sean’s eyes dart back to Sala who shrugs and nods, “True.”

After that, they stop talking ‘bout beverage in favour of mindlessly drinking it, while discussing sports. Safe haven and all.

The next morning Sean wakes up with a major headache, an off key earworm of ‘Staying alive’ in Karl’s voice, and the distant memory of Sala face-licking Viggo, as he futilely tried to claim his chair back. He drags his half-dead self out of bed, to make up and costumes, to set where he slumps down on his chair and never wants to get up again.
An enticing smell creeps its way past his defenses and brings a part of his brain back to life. Looking up he finds a fuck scary Orc towering over him, holding two plastic cups that seem tiny in his huge hands. Sean’s vocal cords decide on a rumbling sound, that means ‘Hello’ and ‘Can I have some of that, please?’ and promptly one of the cups is pushed into his hand. He raises it to his nose and savours the smell of home and calm and happy.

“Thanks,” he grunts before taking the first sip of the strong black tea.

Sala nods and raises his own cup in a mock toast, “Fuck coffee.”

Stupid Frog
Sean likes watching people. Okay, some people might call that kind of thing ‘stalking’, but he figures there are worse things in the world than being stalked by Sean Bean. It’s not like he’s hiding in the bushes behind Sala’s house or that you can wake him up at three in the morning and he remembers not his name but Karl’s phone number, because he’s not doing any of that, you hear?

Anyway. Sean likes looking closer, he likes to see how other people structure their days – hey, maybe he can learn something from it.

Karl has to show up in make up at the same shitawful early hour, just like Sean, and still he’s all smiles and chatter whereas Sean doesn’t even remember he owns facial muscles until well after eight. Sean also knows that Karl’s always one of the last people to leave the pub (and by ‘leave’ he means getting thrown out kicking and screaming while Sean sits on the kerbside, snickering himself to tears) – so he definitely doesn’t get more hours of shut eye.

“Why’re you always so goddamn cheerful?” Sean asks him one morning when Gino has to pause in his work because he’s laughing so hard due to some joke Karl told him.

Karl turns his head to look at him questioningly and Sean exemplifies with a slightly impatient/uncoordinated wave of his hand. “Always –“ he tries to mimic Karl’s custom facial expression, but hey, it’s before eight, so he exemplifies (after stopping to grimace), “- grinning? You go running before you show up here? Some shit like that?”

“Are you serious?” Karl laughs as if suggesting that he works out to keep that body of his fit was offensive. Sean looks at him expectantly, so Karl reaches for his backpack, fishes something out of it and tosses it at Sean, hitting him right in the chest.

“Actually, I get up early, have breakfast and read for half an hour,” he says and grins at Sean, trademark devil-may-care. Sean glances down at the book that’s now in his lap. Voltaire.

“All is for the best in the best of all possible worlds,” Karl quotes and bites the head off of a jelly baby.

Fucking Voltaire. Sean slumps back in his chair – he has unresolved issues with that Frenchman, and it’s not like they could sort it out like civilized men (with a good and honest fistfight) since the stupid Frog is dead and all.

He’s out shopping for groceries on his free afternoon and might’ve stared kinda longingly at the honey melons on display because they remind him of breasts when Sala steps up behind him. Sean knows that it’s him without turning around because that man is a fucking giant and blocks out the sun – well and also because there’s a mirror right in front of him, yeah.

“You always fondle fruit in public?” Sala asks.

“Bad habit,” Sean replies and turns around, hugging a honey melon against his chest. “Beats
“Yeah,” Sala agrees, “better to taste of melon than of ashtray. Hey, is there any scientific research about what your spunk tastes like after melon?”

Sean looks at the fruit still cradled in his arm like a baby, blushes and puts it back down. He makes a mental note not to ever talk to Sala about fruit – or probably any other kind of food – ever again. When he looks up again Sala has wandered off to grab the most giant sack of potatoes and has already half disappeared into the aisle for dairy products when he turns around once more.

“Hey, you wanna come over for some steak later?” he hollers and nearly beheads an elderly lady with his potatoes. “I told Karl to bring that marinade…” He waggles his eyebrows, knowing perfectly well that Sean wants his last anointing to be performed with that stuff.

“Yeah,” Sean shouts back, picking up the melon again. “Can we still throw the fucker in your pool though?”

Because Sean loves the man, but Karl reads fucking French philosophy for breakfast and that is just wrong.

Sala doesn’t ask for Sean’s reasons but just grins and nods before leaving him to his melon fondling.

Spare

Okay, so maybe Sean isn’t the most coordinated person when out in the middle of the night. That doesn’t mean he doesn’t know what to do in a crisis, though. Quite the opposite. He stops his car, gets out and kicks it, curses a blue streak. Then he calls Sala.

He is rather crap at giving directions (every street in Wellington looks the same to him anyway) so the time it takes Sala to get to him, he chainsmokes and phones Karl, who is perfectly capable of having a conversation with him even though Sean doubts he’s really fully awake. Doesn’t matter, it makes it all the funnier when Karl tells him in detail about the threesome he’s been dreaming of, involving him, Lucy Lawless and Smurfette.

Sean blows smoky circles into the warm night air and listens to Karl mumble nonsense when Sala’s car pulls up behind him. His ‘good night’ is answered with a hiccupped snore and Sean stays leaning against the hood when first thing, Sala gets out and inspects his vehicle critically.

“You got a flat tire,” Sala gestures at the offending object.

“No shit,” Sean replies.

Sala rubs the ball of his palm over his tired eyes before he looks at Sean again.

“And you got no spare?”

“Course I do,” Sean says dryly, “I just called you so you could hold up my car while I change it.”

Apparently, Sala is a bit too tired for irony, and besides, Sean supposes he really could just lift up his Ford one-handedly, it’s probably less than what the guy bench-presses. So Sean says, crushing his fag beneath his heel, “No, there is no spare in the trunk. It was either that or space for another case of beer last weekend, remember?”

Sala hums fondly and a smile softens his sleep softened features even further as his thoughts back to that weekend. Sean wouldn’t mind a heads up himself, all activities past nine are somewhat blurry in his mind and some stuff doesn’t make any sense at all - he can’t possibly have spent the better part
of an hour tying Karl’s hair into pigtails, can he?

“Yeah,” Sala sums it up. Then they get Sala’s spare tire, crouch side by side on the still warm asphalt and change the damn thing as quickly as possible. Which is not all that fast since the light is crap and they constantly get into each other’s way and are far too amused by that to work all that efficiently.

After Sean fit the bolts back in, he sits back on his heels, his knee against Sala’s thigh as the other man adjusts and tightens them. When Sala is done, he rolls his shoulders, trying to get a kink out of them, and says, “You know what would be good now?”

Sean opens his eyes – he doesn’t remember closing them, sleeping like a goddamn horse on its feet it is now? – and replies, “Reading my mind, mate.” He gets up and fishes two bottles of beer out of his trunk, offering one to Sala. They sit on the deserted street, legs stretched out and backs against Sean’s car, greasy fingers wrapped around their bottles. A cat in heat laments somewhere in the neighborhood, making sounds like a tortured toddler. When that stops, there’s quiet and moonlight.

“Thanks for coming.” Sean idly rubs a dirt stain deeper into the fabric of his jeans. He can feel Sala shrug, shoulder bumping against his own.

“Anytime.”

“I’m usually not that much of a mess.”

It feels like a bit of a stupid thing to say but Sala doesn’t comment. Sean takes another sip of beer, rolling the bitter-good taste of it on his tongue. Belatedly, he raises his head, searching for Sala’s eyes, and finds them already on him. Like he not only believes him but has known it all the time, maybe even when Sean himself hadn’t been so sure. Sean nods slowly, then he says,

“Karl wants to fuck Smurfette. Reckon we need to do something ‘bout that?”

Again, he can feel Sala’s shoulders moving against his own when the other man laughs silently to himself and then kicks Sean’s foot.

Doesn’t feel that bad
The first time Sean saw Sala, Sala was trying to kill Karl. At least that’s what it looked like, but then Bob's training camp was known to produce some casualties even before breakfast. So, Sean sat down on one of the benches on the side of the large training room and watched.

Sala was, no doubt, more experienced with a sword and he was huge and agile and Sean had honestly no idea how anyone (Boromir in particular) could survive more than five seconds of confrontation with him. So far though, Karl held his ground, even if that looked like it was at least partly down to sheer luck and maybe due to it being fuck early in the morning. But the longer Sean watched he decided he wouldn't want to have to face either of them in a fight - Karl was quick as lightning and what he might lack in skill he surely made up for in enthusiasm.

Sean, on his bench and still somewhat jet lagged and perpetually tired anyway these days, decided privately that he would do his best not to piss either of them off because he sort of disliked the thought of one of Bob's practice swords being smashed over his head. Fierce, that's what they looked like, and real, so very real - whereas Sean never could shake the feeling that at every point of the day he was very certain that he was just acting that he was just playing the mighty warrior, the defender of his people, the righteous man who was certain where his place in the world was. All he had in common with Boromir was this sort of misplaced righteousness, it seemed.

So far this was a usual morning then - not even ten and Sean was already on the best way of feeling
That nagging feeling - quite similar to perpetually having gone without breakfast - vanished the second Sala and Karl stopped fighting. Bob just nodded at them (about the highest praise from the little man) and considered their training session finished. The moment he'd said that, both Sala and Karl relaxed and slapped each other on the shoulder, grinning broadly at one another as they wiped sweat from their foreheads. And Karl whom Sean had met right on his first day of arriving in New Zealand turned around and saw Sean sitting there. The rest of the tension still that still had remained on his face from the fight was gone instantly and replaced by the hugest of grins in Sean's direction. For a second Sean was tempted to look over his shoulder, to make sure this really was aimed at him of all people (not really the normal reaction he got from people these days, this wasn't) but Karl had already gripped one of Sala's massive arms and was pulling him over in Sean's direction.

And Sala, who Sean suspected not even the incredible Hulk could drag anywhere if Sala wasn't a willing follower, just went along with him, didn't shake Karl's hand on his arm off even when they'd reached Sean. Karl was making introductions, that smile still on his face, this slightly crazy too broad, too happy grin he always aimed at Sean and that made Sean's heart flutter stupidly while at the same time in his mind he could hear the usual warning bells (too much, too soon, not safe, beware). Sala let Karl talk, and when Karl's introduction of Sean veered into completely ridiculous, he just smiled a little broader, a little softer and Sean couldn't help but smile back.

So, his life was still pretty much in shambles and it wasn't like anything could so easily glue those parts back together. But this morning, in Bob's training centre, with Karl being his usual maniac self, making Sean laugh out loud, and Sala towering over Sean and looking down at him with that softness in his eyes that completely belied his massive form, with that softness to his voice as well when he made fun of Karl, making Sean smile - Sean's life didn't feel that bad for just this moment. And that, he guessed, was something at least.

Flirtation (noun)
Flirtation (noun) a form of human interaction, usually expressing a sexual or romantic interest in the other person. It can consist of conversation, body language, or brief physical contact.

Karl has looked it up. And thrown the encyclopedia out of the window, almost hitting the trash can even, because that was a shit definition. No one, Karl decides, should be allowed to publish an encyclopedia if they haven’t met Orlando Bloom. Because there was a world ‘before’ and ‘after’ meeting Orlando. Orlando has about the same impact on your view of the world as the enlightenment had back in the 18th century. Only that the enlightenment couldn’t make you hard and fucking embarrassingly leave a damp patch in the cotton of your briefs when they merely walked past you. Or won a belching contest in the pub. Clipped fucking fingernails during a break of shooting. Enlightenment surely never had Karl emergency-wank in the Viggo’s bathroom during a party, brought on by banana eating.

Orlando, on the other hand? Had.

Orlando is not covered by the encyclopedia. To flirt, he doesn’t need to talk to Karl, doesn’t need to say charmingly dirty things to him in that highlow voice of his. Orlando doesn’t need to sway his narrow hips, oh-so-accidentally bend over and show off his tiny firm arse. To flirt, Orlando doesn’t need to hug Karl and press his nose against the place where Karl’s neck meets his shoulder, doesn’t need to let his hand brush Karl’s arm only just when they walk past one another in full costume.

To flirt with Karl, Orlando just needs to exist.

Four times Orlando kisses Karl, and one time he doesn’t

One
Karl isn’t really sure how exactly this newest bit of insanity started (he’s quite sure about the location – it’s usually the hobbit trailer). What he has puzzled together over the course of the evening is that in some very weird crowning ceremony, the fellowship officially announced Billy the cast slut for kissing everyone (and everything) that moved – including, so Dom insisted, Treebeard.

While Karl is still trying to come to terms with the fact that Billy is actually very proud of his new title, Lijah, Liv and Orlando have obviously decided that a coup d’état is in order. Of course it’s Dom (Billy’s faithful steward) who announces that simply running around and shoving their tongues down other people’s throats doesn’t count. No, it has to be done with finesse – and by finesse, Dom as per usual means something wicked, distasteful and embarrassing.

There is a bit of alcohol involved at this point and Karl figures it is their own damn fault that they decided on a pub with a fairly large menu to choose from. Because Elijah, Liv and Orlando order the most disgusting things on it before they start overthrowing the rule of Boyd Sluttism.

Which is how Karl ends up with Orlando’s in his lap, tasting beer and Orlando and (very prominently) peppered onions while his mouth is being violated for power political reasons.

In the end, Liv wins by acclamation after having stuck her tongue not only into the former ruler’s mouth but into Elijah’s ear as well. Karl isn’t sure he agrees with the newly installed regime, though.

Two

Just like he always seems to know exactly what’s going on with Karl, Karl has noticed that something is off with Orlando, even if Orlando tries to hide it. So, Karl does what he does best in a situation like this, he provides distraction – coming up with stupid pranks against the hobbits, dragging Orlando out to the pub with him and Bernie, showing up at his doorstep with a sixpack and all of PJ’s old work on DVD.

It’s during ‘Meet the Feebles’ that Orlando starts talking and it is surreal that Karl’s heart threatens to break while in the background a hippo with a machine gun wreaks havoc. Still, the TV provides the only light in the room as he listens. Listens to Orlando telling him that things hadn’t been so good between him and his girl friend for a while, so, wasn’t it stupid that he still has been suffering from insomnia since they broke up last week?

Karl does what friends do, he calls her a bitch and cuffs Orlando’s shoulder when he starts trying to defend her. Orlando hits him back and defends her anyway as well as himself, and with each of his quietly spoken words it seems he’s able to let go of a bit of that gloominess that has overtaken him lately.

When Karl leaves some time after midnight he makes Orlando repeat that his ex is an evil witch and that she should be the one crying her heart out. Orlando does as Karl tells him – repeats it word by word – and then rolls his eyes at this black and white take on the world. Still, at the door when Karl hugs him good night, he places a kiss on Karl’s stubbly cheek and says, “Thanks, mate.”

Three

Bean has been gone to England to get divorced and Viggo, Orlando and Karl used the time of his absence to plan an unwedding party to cheer him up. It speaks both for the tightness as well as the craziness of this cast, that once Viggo had explained it (“It’s like the unbirthday parties in ‘Alice in Wonderland’…What a gorgeous book…”)) almost everybody is on board.

Viggo reads a beautiful even if rather mental anti-vow to Sean (kneeling), but it’s Orlando and Karl who really organized most of the big picture stuff.
The divorce dinner actually consists of Chinese take out instead of wedding cake and no one is really dressed up (not counting Ara-Vig) but Orlando insists that there has to be a proper first dance at least. Sean, who has tears of laughter running down his face by then, stubbornly refuses to be the un-bride to Orlando’s anti-groom. He forces Karl to do it in his place while he deflowers fortune cookies.

The real surprise here is that Orlando is actually a good dancer – as far as you can dance to “Don’t go away mad (just go away)” anyway. Karl gets swirled around pretty nicely, and he doesn’t think anything could surprise him anymore until the very end of Motley Crue’s wailing. There, Orlando’s hand finds the small of Karl’s back and Karl leans into the hold instinctively, until his back is bowed and Orlando leans over him, smooching him right on the mouth as a dramatic finish.

Four

Next time, Karl vows to himself, he’s gonna sign up for a movie where all he has to wear are pajamas. Seriously, how could Éomer run around in all this shit? Karl is sweating like an ox under the stupid hot lights.

He doesn’t even have to say anything, he’s decoration in this scene, really, while Aragorn and Gandalf go on and on (and on) about how to distract frigging Sauron. And it’s not just that. Because those two are nothing compared to the deadly combination of Viggo, Ian, and Peter having a go at it during takes.

He slumps down into his chair, heavy armor catching on the flimsy material, and allows himself to (very discreetly) roll his eyes when Vig starts talking about his character’s motivation again and waves his arms around.

He can sense more than really hear the low chuckle and berates himself for so obviously showing his own impatience that someone has noticed. When he looks up, though, he’s glad to see that it’s only Orlando – Karl’s alright with that because Orli always notices everything, even if he doesn’t let on very often and plays the whole ‘pretty and a bit dumb’ part almost to perfection.

Compassion and amusement shimmers behind Legolas’s blue contacts, and while brushing strands of his blond hair out of his face, he gestures towards the three musketeers, still deep in conversation. Karl gives a little nod and another eyeroll, this time a small smile takes the edge out of his impatience.

Legolas’s even features are being hijacked by a smile that is purely Orlando and he raises his hand to his mouth. He kisses his fingertips and in slow motion he blows the kiss towards Karl.

Karl snorts with laughter, all his restlessness gone in a flash.

And one time he doesn’t…

One

They’re sitting in Karl’s car and Orlando is practically naked. Well, he is naked safe for the broad scarf he’s wound around his hips. In comparison, Karl really is overdressed in his boxers and socks.

Of course there is a perfectly reasonable explanation for this. It involves a day off from filming due to heavy snow fall, two sleighs and steeply hills just outside town. Summing the afternoon up is easily done – Orlando won the races, Karl the revenge snow ball fight that followed suit, and both of them were soaked down to their underwear (and in Orlando’s case even that was dripping) and trembling like leaves at the end of the day, and they couldn’t wait to get out of the wet stuff.
The heating in Karl’s car is running full force, it’s snugly warm, and Karl has told himself for the last half hour that they have parked in Orlando’s driveway, that it’s only because of this warmth that neither of them wants to call it a day.

They talked about the movies, extraordinary Christmas plans (Orlando says when there’s snow there need to be presents, regardless of the time of the year), all the usual silly and meaningful stuff they end up discussing for hours. But now Orlando is silent. With a small smile on his face he straightens his makeshift pink-orange sarong, says that he should probably get inside, and doesn’t move.

Karl agrees – they should get themselves home and into a hot tub etc. – but doesn’t turn the key in the ignition. I should get out – I should drive home both of them grin and fall silent again.

Funny, how time can fly by when you’re having fun, and how still, moments stretch into eternity when you’re waiting for – something.

When they move, they do it at the same time, that brings another smile to their lips, and they lean closer to one another over the handbrake of the car. Orlando hesitates when Karl can already feel his breath on his skin.

So really, this time, he doesn’t kiss Karl.

It’s Karl who closes the final, tiny bit of distance, it’s Karl whose hand closes around the back of Orlando’s neck to pull him in.

This time, Karl kisses Orlando.

www.get_the_truth_from_daisy.com
“So, Miranda is having Bernie’s lovechild.”

Karl doesn’t even bother looking up from his book. But though the protagonist has just been mortally wounded, he smiles down at the cheap paper. A knee bumping against his, that little bit too close where he sits, Indian style. And that soft voice again, so very fitting to the light evening breeze at the lake and the quiet pre-dusk light. If you don’t listen to the words.

“If it’s a boy, they’re gonna name him Peter Pippin.”

“Hm,” Karl acknowledges, turns the page of his book. He doesn’t really know whether the hero survived the last paragraph. “What if it’s a girl?”

“You know,” and there’s so much earnest contemplation in those two words, that Karl finds himself turning his head after all. Dave looks at him wistfully. “I didn’t think about that.”

A grin commandeers Karl’s lips before he ‘tsks’. It’s probably a lie anyway, because Karl is pretty certain, that Dave thinks about and knows everything. At least all the unimportant things in the world, like 1950s rugby stats, how to make real punch, and the missing line of the song that has been stuck in your head for days.

And he’s always collecting more data – no, that sounds wrong. If Viggo, bless the fucker, is a mutt dragging random junk into his dog house, Dave is the one who neatly arranges all he’s collected on the shelves and in the cupboards, always knowing where to find it.

Dave reaches over and turns the book in Karl's hand so he can see the title.

“Ah,” he hums, recognition so well faked in that one-syllable exhalation, “isn’t that the one where the librarian turns out to be the killer?”
Karl scowls, snatches the book from Dave’s fingers to swat at him with it. With David still chuckling, he puts it aside.

“There isn’t even a librarian in the fucking book, you idiot. You probably can’t even read.”

“How do I learn my lines, then?” Dave asks back, again in that voice of his as if he’d really like to know an answer to that puzzle.

“Why, when did they give you a speaking part?” Karl replies, snarky, one eyebrow raised. Thing is, he kinda wants to take it back the next second, wants to beg for forgiveness and buy Dave a huge icecream cone, because Dave’s turned his sad look at him.

“For that,” Dave decides. “I’m gonna start a rumour involving Éomer and women’s ears in buckets.”

“Make sure you tell Miranda and Bernard about it.” Karl picks up a lonely, flat pebble right next to his elbow that looks like it would be much happier at the bottom of the lake. “And Dom, so everybody knows by tomorrow.”

He tosses the small stone towards the water, and it skips three-four-five times before it disappears.

“Nah. Dom’s too busy shagging Billy to be of any help”, Dave says and picks up another pebble. Karl searches his face for a clue for a moment, because that story actually sounds kinda solid.

“Is he really?”

Dave tilts his head and licks his lower lip, considering it. Then he lets his stone skip as well (three).

“Maybe.”

See, that’s the thing with Dave. Or maybe, Karl’s thing with Dave. He never really knows when to take him seriously. All the others, Karl had figured out quite quickly – Orli? Never. Bean? Mostly, excluding women advice. Sean? Always. Viggo? Nevereverever. But Dave?

The evening at Peter’s house, when Karl first met him, Dave told him a half hour long hilariously funny story about how he played a one armed zombie in ‘Braindead’ and met his wife there. Not an iota of that was true. Dave also told him that Faramir is the best thing that’s ever happened to him, that his personal hero is Robin from the 1960s ‘Batman’, that he believes in love at first sight and that his tongue has orgasms when presented with Subway sandwiches. Karl has seen him devour a steak sub more than once, and he does look pretty happy about it – but the other stuff? Karl has no fucking clue.

“Once I get paid for this here,” he eventually says, when his skipping record is up to nine. “I’m gonna invest a bit of it to get you a website - www.get_the_truth_from_daisy.com.”

His eyes only meant to glance quickly over to Dave, honestly, just to see whether he’s got another stone ready. And really, Karl is certain that David is not looking at him all fondly as if he’s just given him a diamond ring, or what’s that middle ages symbol for commitment? A handkerchief? Isn’t important anyway because he hasn’t meant it like that and Dave doesn’t look at him affectionately either. Karl is very fairly nearly certain of that.

“You know why I never spread any rumours about you?” Dave asks.

“Because you don’t like me?” It actually does say a lot about Dave and his special kind of interacting with people that, generally speaking, telling outrageous lies about someone is a sign of friendship with him.
“Don’t be stupid,” Dave says and his next pebble breaks the record – eleven skips before it is swallowed by the black lake. “Of course I like you.”

Karl looks down at Dave’s knee that is still bumping against his own whenever either of them moves. Sometimes he really wishes Dave would give him a straight answer to – well, to any question really.

“Okay,” he says carefully and after a moment he adds, “Because I got a mean right hook and could break your jaw?”

Dave chuckles and pushes himself half up to his knees.

“I told Lawrence I saw Sala cry during ‘Bambi’.”

There’s a strip of skin showing between his jeans and his t-shirt when he stretches, picks up another stone from far right and then gets to his feet. Karl has to shift a little to see past his long legs to count the skips in the fading light.

“Two. Now, that was lame.” He pushes himself up as well, brushing his hands on his thighs.

“Shut up,” David lightly elbows him. “You pick me a better one.”

Karl does, a flat white stone, hands it to Dave and watches him throw. It makes it up to fourteen and when Dave shoves his hands into the pockets of his jeans, lightly see-saws on his heels, his lips curl up at the corners. Pure and utter delight, couldn’t be shown any clearer, Karl knows that with absolute certainty. When he responds to it with his version of joy (way less subtle and more with the broad grin and the almost-brutal-shoulder-thumping) he briefly wonders whether he’s happy because this is something where he understands Dave, has gotten him from the first second on. Or whether it’s just because Dave’s happy period.

“This is awesome,” he states and grins.

“Really?” Dave’s voice has this odd seriousness to it again, despite his smile, and this time Karl wants to grab him and shake him, because of fucking course it is.

“Yeah,” he confirms instead and adds with a wink. “Though we might need you to come up with a cover up story.”

He picks up a fairly big rock, its edges digging into his palms, and tosses it into the lake. It produces a huge splash and the rippling waves almost reach the tips of their shoes.

“Actually,” Dave says and contemplatively weighs a shiny flat pebble in his palm, “I think I’ll have to pass. I don’t think I can come up with anything more entertaining than this.” He places the pebble into Karl’s hand.

“You try.”

“Well,” Karl replies and stops.

He looks at the stone in his hand that might as well be something else (he’s fairly certain it were handkerchiefs, in the middle ages). Thinks about the nonexistent rumours about himself, and carefully crafted amiable but artificial anecdotes about others, thinks about Dave’s smiling eyes when he came up with most of them in his make up chair next to Karl, or in between takes or in his kitchen.
Fiction steps in where reality is that little bit too pale. Yeah.

“Well, I can,” Karl says lightly because he gets it now.

Dave’s eyes meet his and Karl just grins because he is an open book to the other man anyway, and all it’ll take Dave is a second, maybe two. Right now, and there’s that smile in his eyes and his hand closes over Karl’s, the one that still grasps the pebble. If possible, Karl’s grin grows even broader, it’s ridiculous really, and sorta stupid, because you can’t kiss properly when you beam like this.

Dave’s fingers weave into his hair and he pulls Karl closer, licking the smile right up, and Karl offers more, laughs and pulls Dave into him by his hips. Their tongues meet messily and their teeth clash, there’s maybe a bit too much spit and Dave’s stubble is burning against Karl’s skin - the entire setting is so ridiculously romantic and completely unfitting.

No one’d ever believe this rumour, honestly.

Eloquence
Dave is not an artist. Sure, he is an actor and thus could fall into that category, but he’s always figured there are two kinds of actors: the method-acting-pour-all-your-soul-into-it kind and the ones that are more craftsmanlike. He’s the latter.

He is not an artist, can’t paint or write novels or poems, or even do interpretive dancing. And this is, frankly, shit. Because commiserate with Viggo all you like for having to bear the burden of a true renaissance man; but the stupid nutter at least has a way of expressing himself. Even if the results of that are sometimes a bit questionable and he obviously has an obsession with photographing Bean’s nose. Still.

Dave isn’t sure whether his own lack of eloquence influences how he feels, to be honest, and sometimes that mere thought scares the shit out of him. There’s this story about the Inuit having a hundred words for snow because it is really important to them. Your language reflects your world and that must be vice versa as well.

If he has no means of expressing his feelings for Karl, does that mean they are worth less? If he could paint Karl when he comes out of the ocean after a swim and the sun is forming a halo behind him, would that mean he likes him more? If he could write poems about Karl’s generosity, his philanthropy, his smile, would that change anything?

Secretly, he fears that it might. He just seems so damn oblivious when it comes to Karl. If Karl hadn’t all but bullied him into going out with him, Dave, even today, probably wouldn’t even know that this is really all he wanted all along. He can’t even say that in hindsight he had been sporting the typical symptoms – he just doesn’t have anything to compare his feelings for Karl to. And when one night, after a really nice evening they had spent together, Karl just had leaned in and kissed him, Dave had forgotten the entire English language just like that. The idea of writing poetry about that moment is just plain ridiculous.

It probably says a lot about him – if not his capability or his worthiness – that there is only one form of writing done on the Rings set that doesn’t scare him into muteness, and that’s Dom’s and Billy’s drunken blogging.

He thinks about that when he wakes up really early in the morning and can’t go back to sleep. He owns a computer of course and uses it for the purposes it was created for (emailing, playing stupid games, downloading porn). Not being completely intimidated from the start means something, doesn’t it?
He stares out of Karl’s bedroom window for a while, and as dawn is approaching, he can make out the shapes of leaves against an orange-grey sky. He leans back in his pillows and Karl makes something like a small happy sound in his sleep and blindly reaches out for him. Dave looks at the hand that is curling in his t-shirt and thinks about how today’s entry in his imaginary blog might sound:

3/3/2000
I woke up this morning and I looked at trees. I like trees. What got me distracted from my appreciation of nature was of course Karl. Karl and his glorious nakedness, a result of late night showering and stumbling into bed already half asleep because I made him come three –

At this point he pulls a face and decides definitely to not have a blog. Because he certainly is not going to post sex details about himself and Karl on the internet. In fact he wouldn’t want to share any details about them on the internet. Or anywhere else.

He shifts onto his side, facing Karl, and he can’t not touch him. He knows that Karl is a light sleeper and that they have a long day ahead of them; he should let him sleep. He thinks that one thing he has learned about loving Karl (that he can put into words) is that it makes him incredibly short-sighted and selfish.

He runs the back of his fingers over the curve of Karl’s neck, barely touching, still feeling the warmth of his skin. His hand molds perfectly around Karl’s upper arm and he can’t resist gripping a little tighter just to feel the strong muscles underneath. He feels them flexing even before Karl is really moving and something that feels a lot like relief runs through him like a current when Karl wraps his arm loosely around him without waking.

He runs his hand down Karl’s side to let it rest in the curve of his hip; Karl twitches a little before he settles again and Dave bites his lower lip in amusement because of course he knows that Karl is ticklish there.

He manages to lie still like this for a while, grounded by the heavy arm draped over his side. He manages not to run his finger through Karl’s hair, not to kiss every inch of his face, not to pull him into a hug that would probably crush him in his sleep. He thinks of all these things and tells himself that it has to count for something that he still has that much control over himself. Dave’s feelings for Karl have not turned him into some kind of mindless thing that takes what it wants because it has no concept of how to ask for it nicely.

He is quite aware that this control will only last until Karl opens his eyes.

Eventually, he does shift a little closer and places a kiss onto Karl’s forehead. Again, it’s a pretty selfish thing to do because Karl might wake now, yes, but he’ll also keep his eyes shut for as long as possible. Letting him know that Dave’s here merely serves that purpose, Dave lies to himself. Let him slumber a bit more, glide into the day easily.

Dave might not be able to be poetic about it, nor could he ever just write some casual remarks in an online diary. He has, however, all the research material now it would take to write a scientific thesis about loving Karl. He is a bit obsessive with his mental snapshots, and he keeps them all.

He knows that for it to make any sense at all – for him alone even – he would have to sort through all the impressions and all the little things, would have to pick an assortment of snapshots and reduce it to that, to make it manageable. Probably things like Karl’s desire to keep his eyes closed, preferably until he is sitting at the coffee table, would have to be ditched. How there is only one song he ever sings in the shower, how he asks whether Dave likes the meal Karl’s cooked when Dave hasn’t even had a chance to taste it yet. There is nothing really you can conclude about Karl from these things, is
there? It only says something about Dave that he holds onto these things like some OCD pack rat.

Karl shifts now and presses his knee against Dave’s thigh. Dave lets himself be rearranged and ends up with Karl wrapped around him, oddly warm and familiar. If Dave were really invested in being a stuffy professor and writing an essay, he’d try to measure exactly how warm and familiar, and how not odd this, in all honesty, feels. As it is, he is too flooded with impressions of Karl, his feelings for him, to do anything but just lie still.

When Karl sleepily murmurs, “Morning,” against his shoulder –

“I love you,” is the response that tumbles out of Dave’s mouth.

Three words, that is all he can come up with, and even then, he doesn’t even have any control over them. Atop of the feeling of how very right they feel, he is surprised by the extent of his absolute lack of eloquence.

“Took you long enough,” is all Karl replies, voice soft and breath warm against his skin, not surprised at all.

Dave opens his mouth to correct him – to tell him that he’s really been in love with him all along – but feels Karl’s light kisses on his shoulder, travelling up his neck, feels the lightheartedness and the joy in them like it is directly transferred to himself.

“Shut up,” he says, but more to himself than to Karl. Not that Karl would ever listen to him anyhow. He never does when Dave has requests that might be considered a little stupid.

“I love you, too,” Karl says right on cue and yeah, he still has his eyes shut but his mouth finds Dave’s without any problem at all.

Lovestruck fool of epic proportions
Sean, he's something of a sneaky character. Yeah, yeah, I totally know what you're all gonna say. "What? Sean BEAN? You're kidding, he seems like the most open and outright person!"

Well, tell you what - he's definitely not. He is so sneaky, you don't even notice it (which really is the whole point of it if you think about it) until he pounces. Okay, pouncing may not really be the word (that's more what Viggo does but Viggo is a crazy person and I'm not talking about him), it's more like luring you in a trap with his honeyed voice and his to-die-for-smile and then, when you find yourself arse first in Bernard's swimming pool (completely dressed because you definitely weren't planning on swimming, especially not in your clothes) Sean will stand next to it and snicker like a school boy - seriously, like he was five or something and you'd totally buy that if it weren't for the whiskey glass in one and the 100th fag of the evening in the other hand.

Like a little boy, I mean it, and I (because it ALWAYS happens to be me who is on the wrong end of his idea of fun) can't help but feel totally old and wise and shit when I look up at him. That usually lasts about five seconds until I find a way to drag him into the pool with me or at least completely soak him by splashing half of the pool in his direction, okay, but for those five seconds I feel all protective and glad and it's kind of freaking me out, to be honest.

Sean, if you call him sneaky outright, he'll look at you all doe eyed (no kidding, it's unreal how he manages to pull that off) and say "I have no idea what you're talking about, Orli." Which is so much of a lie that no one witnessing the conversation even bothers to pretend to buy it and just points at Sean and laughs. Sean then will blush and I will have forgotten what we were talking about because I'm too busy being a lovestruck fool of epic proportions or something. And then Sean'll do this thing where he touches my arm, my elbow, my shoulder, the back of my neck or just some other random
part of my body that suddenly turns into an erogenous zone by just that one touch, and he'll say something like "I'm just more subtle than you, Orli. 's that a problem?" and I'll be like "No it's not, of course it's not, it's great, Sean, really."

People like accusing me to be a massive babbler but I tell you what, a. it's not my fault that Sean is, well, SEAN and b. the babbling and constant quick repetition of one simple thing helps me keeping inside what I really want to say and what's maybe not all that appropriate - in the middle of a shooting day and dressed up as Legolas, mind you.

"Can I kiss the blush on your cheeks?"

"I want you to smile at me that way all day, every day."

"Oi, don't pull your hand away from me, man!"

"Seriously, Sean, why are you so damn pretty, even all grimed up? It's just not right. Wanna roll in the mud with me maybe?"

See? Totally a good thing that I babble instead.

Maaaaybe my own babbling confuses me brain though, okay, that's a bit of a blow. Especially since we've been shooting Rings for half a year now and Sean's been all subtle and sneaky and Dom just punched me in the face.

These things are related, yes.

"Orlando," Dom says, in that accusing tone of voice of his that really cracks me up every time because Dom? Being serious? Please. "Orlando, you are by far the stupidest motherfucker in the world."

"Even stupider than Elijah?" I ask because only two minutes ago we watched Elijah try to climb through the window of his trailer after locking himself out.

Dom just nods though and looks like he is about to punch me again, so I quickly move a couple of steps back.

"Stupider than Elijah. You're so stupid, your stupidity can easily match Viggo's insanity."

"Oi!" I protest because, man, that is a shitload of stupid then. "What have I done to you?"

"You know how you're always going on and on about Sean being a sneaky bastard?"

"Yeah? He is, isn't he."

"Yeah, I know, you told me about ten times. Today alone. In between girly sighs and really weird things like 'Doesn't Boromir have the greatest sword of all, look at it, all thick and thrusty'."

"So?"

"For one, thrusty isn't even a word, and also even I am uncomfortable with the phallic symbolism of that," Dom says, like he is a walking dictionary or something. "And secondly, for someone claiming to know all about Sean's sneakiness you're pretty much completely ignoring EVERY important sign. - He had flowers delivered to your trailer today, Orlando. FLOWERS!"

"What? I like flowers," I defend myself, seriously not knowing what I am defending myself against. "And Sean does, too. And we share a trailer. What is so stupid about that?"
Dom rubs his hand over his face, smearing some of his make up because he is rubbing so hard. I stare at him all confused like and it's that moment that Sean happens to walk by.

"Bean!" Dom calls out, his voice curiously desperate. "Can you help me out with something?"

I don't like it and Sean's eyebrows arch as well but he comes over and looks at Dom questioningly. Dom takes a deep breath, like he needs all the calm he can get and then he addresses Sean.

"If someone sends flowers - say, uh, a dozen red roses - to someone else," he looks at me pointedly, continues, "on VALENTINES DAY, what does that mean? Huh, Sean?"

I feel my forehead crinkling in a frown and Sean looks at Dom, looks at me, at Dom again and then finally settles on me.

"Probably," he says, "it means that the flower sender wants to tell the recipient something with that."

"What exactly," Dom says, "would that be, the thing he's saying?"

Sean shrugs and his arm brushes against mine and again I have spontaneously grown a new erogenous zone.

"Prolly that he's been in love with the recipient for quite a while and is sorta tired of waiting for him to figure it out?"

"Let me get this straight," I say and grab Sean's elbow so he can't run away. "From your pushing me into every pool in a twenty mile radius, from the fact that you taped my front door shut and from your brilliant idea of having pizza delivered to my place at fuck early in the morning twice this week and have the pizza boy SING Celine Dion to me, I was supposed to get that you are IN LOVE WITH ME?"

Sean shrugs. Dom buries his hand in his face and staggers away, like someone (or someone's stupidity, though certainly not mine) has punched him in the face.

"Pretty much," Sean says and hasn't pulled his arm from my grasp. "I'm subtle like that, you see."

"Yeah, I see," I say, and do the mature thing - it's not like I can expect anyone else here to do it, can I. "So how about we go out for dinner tonight and instead of pushing me out of your car mid-drive and laughing while I roll headfirst into a ditch, like you did last week, you come home with me afterwards and have mindblowing sex that will have you walk bowlegged for the next two weeks?"

Sean grins. "Subtle."

"Man," I say with feeling and grip his arm harder as his grin does orgasmic things to my heart, "I am SO done with sneaky."

How Knecht Ruprecht got the girl err hot Northern bloke

"Ho Ho –" the door is half opened and Santa Claus stops in the middle of his greeting. Blue eyes, peeking out between the massive hat and the even more voluminous beard, look Orlando up and down. Then Santa finishes pointedly, "Ho."

"Funny, Vig," Orlando replies dryly. "Ha, I'm a whore. Delightful."

"Is it really my innocent little elf-boy?" Viggo-Santa enquires.

"Who? Me?" Dave asks, appearing in the doorway behind Viggo. He is dressed as a Christmas elf
and jingles with every motion, little bells attached to about every bit of him. He drapes an arm over Viggo’s shoulder and a bell on his jacket catches in Santa’s beard. When he yanks his bell free, the rubber band on the beard stretches and Viggo gets slapped in the face by his own facial hair. It’s rather like seasonal idiot-slapstick, if anyone asked Orlando.

“Ouch, fuck, stupid elf!” Viggo mutters.

“Oi!” both Dave and Orlando reply in unison. Orlando tells himself to remember that he is NOT the elfboy tonight.

“Oh and hey there, Orli!” Dave greets him belatedly and a grin spreads over his face as he notices Orlando’s outfit. “Wrong door, the BDSM club is a few houses down the street.”

Orlando rolls his eyes and says very slowly, “It is not my fault that you don’t recognize a brilliant costume when you see one.”

Santa Claus and the green elf exchange a glance and look back at him without moving out of the way. Orlando could push his way into the house but chances are that he’d get stuck between the doorframe and Viggo’s massive pillow shaped belly, so he merely crosses his arms in front of his chest and says, “Your invite said ‘Costume mandatory’, so I came in a costume.”

“A Christmas related one; you were supposed to – ” Dave clarifies, still not moving. Santa’s eyes seem permanently glued to the rim of Orlando’s trousers that cling to his hips with determined desperation.

“This is a Christmas costume,” Orlando insists. “Get with the programme.” He points at his red t-shirt that has “RUPRECHT” printed onto it. “I’m fucking Knecht Ruprecht, you philistines.”

“Who?” Dave asks in that voice of his that indicates that he is searching in the scattered drawers of his brain for knowledge.

“St. Nicholas’s evil twin of sorts,” Viggo explains absentmindedly. “Of Germanic origin, bit of a sadistic streak. – Is that a whip on your belt?”

Orlando loves the man, really he does. But he is not drunk enough to let himself be molested by a stoned Father Christmas. Besides, he has plans for tonight (of course he dressed up like Christmas’s superslut for a reason; duh.).

“You lot better not started with the Secret Santa without me,” he says, and in the end decides that pushing his way past Vig and Dave is at least better than standing on the front porch for the rest of the evening.

Due to Orlando’s slight inability to tell the cabbie where Viggo’s house is exactly, he is one of the last guests to arrive. The place is stuffed with people. Horrible 1980s Christmas music blares from the speakers in the living room (and damnit, now Orlando will have the melody of “White Christmas” stuck in his head all week) and indeed everyone is in costume, dressed for the season – from Philippa, deeply in serious conversation with Bernie, despite their matching turkey hats, to the stunt guys who are in the middle of a reindeer arm wrestling contest.

Dom, Billy and Elijah have dressed up as chubby angels and sit in Viggo’s bathtub, claiming that for their Christmas carols the acoustics there are better than anywhere else in the house. But other than that Orlando is quite surprised to find not everyone stupidly drunk already. Not that with these guys you really could tell a difference…

He runs into Karl on the way to the kitchen. Karl is wearing a dress. Again, not necessarily a sign of
inebriation, even though Orlando has to say that he has seen him in less revealing clothing. The other man’s dress not only clearly has been made for a person about half his size and hence is suitably tight and rather obscenely short, it also is made out of golden sequin.

“Tasteful,” Orlando remarks after Karl has released him out of one of his bone crushing hugs. “Who are you supposed to be? The Virgin Mary? Jesus Christ Superpoof?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Karl replies with a mixture of honest indignation and dignity. “I’m obviously the Star of Bethlehem.”

Orlando beams. “If I had a uterus, I’d insist you impregnate me this instant. Genius, mate.”

“I think you’re confusing stuff there,” Karl says and rubs his hand through his hair. Golden glitter sparks into the air.

“Star or not,” Orlando says, a lot more serious again. “I reckon you still should have shaved your legs.” Which in all honesty is a total lie because Orlando likes Karl’s hairy legs and he doesn’t even want to bend Karl over or anything. It’s just that his legs are a thing of beauty not to be messed with – sort of like the Mona Lisa, if she were a set of gorgeously long and muscular thighs and calves.

“Everyone’s a critic,” Karl gives back and starts pushing Orlando into the general direction of the kitchen. “Speaking of legs, are your pants painted on or are they just much too tight?”

“You wouldn’t believe it.” Automatically Orlando reaches down to his crotch and adjusts himself in his trousers. Through the soft leather he can feel the outline of his cock against his palm and he isn’t even remotely hard. “I have no idea how to get out of them again.”

Karl laughs abruptly and loud enough to cause half of the people present in the hallway to spill a bit of their drinks in surprise. “I bet Bean’s willing to help you out.”

“Shut up,” Orlando grumbles and lightly shoves Karl’s shoulder. “You say that to him and he’s gonna clam up on me again. So keep your trap shut. Where is he anyway?”

Karl gives a half shrug that makes the small strap of his dress slip over his right shoulder. Pushing it back up he says, “Just look out for the one person not in costume that Vig allowed to come in.”

“What?” Orlando turns his head and stares at Karl in mock shock. “I thought he wanted to go with my brilliant ‘Dress up as Adam’ idea. Wait… I only dreamed that.”

“You’re delirious, mate,” Karl replies, “and that comes from the bloke in the mini-dress without underwear.”

“Seriously?”

“Nah,” Karl sounds briefly very pained about that but his face lightens up again when it’s his turn to fill his cup at the impossibly big bowl of eggnog on Viggo’s kitchen table. “Girlfriend made me put some on.”

“Your girl is an arse.” Orlando commiserates and wishes he’d brought a proper sized mug for the eggnog. “I can’t believe Sean didn’t dress up, man.”

“Don’t shed tears over it,” Karl says, knocking back his cup while he’s directly at the refill-source. “I think that’d cause your mascara to run.”

“I’m crying on the inside though,” Orlando sighs, sips from his eggnog and – just like every year –
nearly has to retch. That stuff is disgusting!

“Your obsession with him is starting to frighten me,” Karl observes wistfully. “You really need to do
something about that and soon.”

Orlando arches one eyebrow. “What do you think I have been doing the last three weeks, huh?”

Karl takes another sip from his drink and looks at Orlando over the rim of his cup. “Let’s see…
Write love poems for him, follow him around like a falsely imprinted duckling, send him anonymous
letters with your underwear in them –”

“Hey,” Orlando cuts in without much heat in his voice, “that last thing wasn’t me, that was Bernie,
the fucker. And besides, I didn’t write poems for him so much as… errr – Viggo… I…”

“That’s what I thought,” Karl laughs, steals a bottle of beer from the cooler on the counter and hands
it to Orlando who takes it gratefully.

“All part of the game plan,” Orlando says and just that moment catches a glimpse of Sean out in the
hallway. He is laughing at something that Richard (dressed up as half Orc, half elf) said to him, and
his face is all smiles and easy happiness. He really sticks out, not looking completely ridiculous like
everyone else. Ah, who is Orlando kidding; Sean sticks out, period. In his eyes Sean walks around
with a halo any day of the week, who needs a costume.

“Man, I want him something desperate,” Orlando says quietly against the cool neck of his beer bottle
and then shakes his head and asks Karl, “What were we talking about?”

“You,” Karl says promptly. “In desperate need of a shag. Or a proposal, probably.”

Orlando flips him off, but without much enthusiasm or concentration since he decides that he needs
to focus all his attention on stalking Sean now. Which isn’t all that easy when you’re dressed up as a
hooker with a leather fetish. Just saying.

Over the course of the next couple of hours Orlando forgets that he doesn’t like eggnog three times
and litters the area around the kitchen with deserted half full mugs. He also sings a duet with Dave,
has a very intense discussion about the evilness of shoes with Viggo and mentally composes another
poem about the to-die-for’ness of Sean’s hands. Also he drinks what feels like a year’s supply of
beer and ends up pissing in front of the hobbits in angel disguise twice because they refuse to leave
the bathroom.

It’s about then, Orlando just having won the struggle against the zipper of his trousers for the second
time, when Peter-the-walking-Christmas-tree announces that it is time for Secret Santa.

In a perfect world Orlando would (when Ian walked around set and let people pull names out of
Gandalf’s hat) have drawn Sean’s name for the exchange. He would have gotten him a ticket for a
cruise on Love Boat TM or a pink teddy bear saying “Shag me already, you sucker” or something
equally perfectly subtle and romantic and wooing. Sean would have had tears of joy in his eyes (hard
to distinguish from the ones shed when cutting onions and really, Sean can cry on command, so it
wouldn’t be that big a thing) and would have given Orlando his present, consisting of lots and lots of
sweaty sex so perfectly filthy that – Orlando needs to stop thinking about it right now because his
Ruprecht leather pants don’t hide anything as it is.

Ahanyway. It isn’t a perfect world and so Orlando got Bernard whom he hates and fears and
presents with a bottle of mouthwash for which he promptly gets kissed on the mouth, much to
Viggo’s delight.
The neatly wrapped box Liv in turn put in his hands turns out to contain ornaments, and lots of them. A tiny glittery elf is smiling up at him from the top of the pile and it is about the kitschiest thing Orlando has ever seen.

“An elf for an elf,” Liv explains and honestly, it’s kind of a dense comment, isn’t it, but Orlando doesn’t mind a bit.

“More like an elf army,” he agrees and rummages around in his box of glitter and sparkles, finding that there are fairies included as well. “Brilliant,” he says, and means it right this moment.

Liv smiles at him and as per usual Orlando can’t help but grin back – even if he hardly ever understands what she is on about and doesn’t get her high pitched voice sense of humour, her happiness at his surprise truly is infectious. He hugs her, she giggles, and for a moment Orlando feels like he got the best present of them all.

Well, maybe except for elf-Miranda who got a bright red kid’s skibob from Billy, one that she’s currently trying out in the living room, pulled by one of the reindeer stunties (Lawrence probably, judging by the way he is cussing).

When Orlando releases Liv again, his and Sean’s eyes meet across the room. The other man leans against a wall, and next to Sala he looks almost petite. Orlando holds up his gift for him to see and shakes it a little just for show. Sean smiles, casts his eyes down, looks back up after a second, so confident and at the same time with this blushing-virgin-appeal to him.

Orlando has been an actor long enough to have named most of his own smiles, but the one that spreads over his face now, seems to seep into his skin and reaches down bone deep, that one doesn’t have a name yet. It’s not the indulgent one for Liv, the grin for Karl, or the smirk/eyeroll combo reserved for Viggo; to be able to categorise it would mean he’d have even the littlest bit of control over it. As it is, he finds himself standing right in the middle of the crowded living room, clutching a box of junk to his chest while sweating into his too tight t-shirt, just staring and smiling back. Until Dom pulls the whip from his belt and smacks him on the arse with it.

“Oi!”, Orlando complaints, shielding his arse with his hand while trying to catch Dom.

“Naughty kids get spanked,” Dom laughs and dashes around Ian and Fran.

Orlando is right behind him, pressing his box of ornaments into Sean’s hands as he rushes past him.  
“Yeah, by me, you cunt,” he announces right before he pounces.

In all fairness, Dom would have escaped him (Orlando isn’t really all that good with tackling, what with all the limbs he has to take into consideration – which makes him sound like an octopus, but whatever), if it hadn’t been for his strapped on wings. They get caught in the handle of the open veranda door and this is Orlando’s chance.

A second later, he’s on top of Dom, under him, on top of him again, as they roll around on the warm grass, and Dom is screeching like a speared pig and tries to whack Orlando with the whip. Predictably, he manages to hit him twice or thrice before about half the Christmas party decides that a ruck is a splendid idea and they get buried under flying bodies.

Orlando is fortunate enough to end up under Viggo’s pillow belly but Dom is making small wheezing dying sounds under him and Orlando has to laugh so hard he thinks he might suffocate from that.

“Children, enough!” someone bellows (Orlando reckons it’s Christopher because he’s the only
person to manage so much righteousness with merely two words) and the weight gradually gets lighter as people climb off of one another.

Orlando manages to roll off of Dom eventually and the first thing he sees is Christmas-tree-Peter peering down at him.

“So much for Elven elegance,” Peter remarks, “I’m not sure how you’re planning to kill a Mûmak like that.”

“He just crunches it with his fat arse,” Dom replies, still a little breathless, and Orlando takes that opportunity to grab his whip back and smack Dom a good one with it. He smiles up at PJ, feeling just a bit like the school kid that got caught brawling by the headmaster.

“I’ll manage,” he promises earnestly.

“You better,” says Santa-Viggo who appears right next to Peter, fresh drink in his hand. His voice is all grave and look-at-me-I-am-a-serious-actor, as if he hadn’t just partaken in their kinda pointless idiocy. “And I better not catch you trying to molest my Christmas tree like you did it with Dom there.”

He gestures at the small pine tree, decorated with a bit of glittery stuff, only a metre away from Dom’s head.

“I reckon I cracked my rib,” Dom whines in what he probably believes is an acceptable Southern accent.

“Better you than my tree,” Viggo says dispassionately and offers his hand to Orlando to help him up.

Orlando just shakes his head and he and Dom end up lying on the grass even after everyone else goes back inside.

“What do they call people who fancy trees?” Orlando ponders, his eyes following Viggo.

“Pinophiles?”

“There are people who want to shag trees?” Dom asks, then corrects himself. “I mean aside from our mighty leader?”

“Is that objectophilia? I mean the tree is alive, isn’t it? But it doesn’t move. Difficult.”

“I think I’m going to have sex with Karl,” Dom announces out of the blue. Orlando turns his head to look at him, frowning.

“Karl is as straight as Sauron is evil,” he replies skeptically.

Dom looks at him and pulls a face, making his already slightly asymmetrical face look even more crooked. “I know that, Orli.”

“Huh,” Orlando replies and because he knows that Dom wants him to ask and because he is a good mate like that, he enquires, “I love you, man, but you’re not that hot that you can turn straight blokes. Honestly, why?”

“Well, someone,” Dom says and reaches out to poke Orlando’s shoulder with his pointy index finger, “needs to have gay buttsex around here and as neither of you two seem to be up for it after all, I thought I should take one for the team and do Karl.”
“As if Karl would let you top,” Orlando replies and grins when he thinks about Karl’s most probable reaction to that. Belatedly, he adds, “And fuck you, too, arsehole.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Dom says and rolls onto his stomach. His left wing is broken and hangs over his shoulder looking like a bird that chose this as a good spot to die. “Oh, by the way, I meant to ask: I was discussing it with Bills the other day; are you a bottom? Like an exclusive one? Would fit the picture, is all I was saying. But Bill said if a guy has a dick he wants to stick it into places, gay doesn’t change that.”

Orlando just looks at him, blinks. Dom idly rips out a small patch of grass and tosses it at him.

“Exactly how much eggnog did you have?” Orlando asks.

Dom shrugs but he doesn’t look all that pissed to be honest. “All I’m saying,” he says, “is that you need to get your dick into Bean’s arse. Or vice versa. Whichever, I don’t care.” He looks at Orlando like he was his slightly retarded kid brother, then tosses some more grass at him and sighs dramatically, “Sean is like this delicious apple pie sitting there on the table, smelling delicious just for your sake and chirping ‘Eat me… eat me…’ at you. And you’re being all,” he continues with a high pitched voice, “‘Nono, I am on a diet, kind Sir!’ – Dig in already, you fuckwit!”

“You are an insane person,” Orlando points out after a row of furious blinks that didn’t achieve anything. “I hope you realise that.”

Dom groans and abruptly gets up, announcing, “I need to tinkle.” He looks like a half plucked chicken, his wing now dangling aimlessly from his side, his hair sticking up in about every direction. “Or my bladder will burst and drown you in –“

“Ta, I got it,” Orlando interrupts and gestures him to scram.

Dom attempts to brush the worst of the grass and dirt of his white costume and ends up looking all the more disheveled. “If I see it I will send the gay sex fairy right your way.”

“Go and tend to your bladder already!” Orlando says and manages to kick him on his way back to the house which feels kind of nice.

The sky finally turns completely black and it all feels a bit surreal to Orlando, Christmas outside in a t-shirt. This entire world here is arse backwards, isn’t it?

In a perfect world, Orlando thinks as he looks at the stars, Sean would come out here right now, and there’d be just the two of them. He’d sit down and not be his too shy self (really? Orlando loves, loves that reticence, just that it’s been damn unhelpful so far). Orlando wouldn’t for once talk with his foot in his mouth, maybe say how his Ruprecht costume may be ridiculous but that he put it on for Sean and that should count for something. Sean would laugh and then he’d lean down to kiss him. Orlando’d let him and be so pleased, kiss him back and it’d be perfect.

Only that, Orlando reminds himself while he picks grass off his t-shirt, they don’t live in a perfect world. And even if Sean’d come out here (because he got tricked into it by Dom or something) there conversation would be more ‘Uhm,’ ‘Ah’ and ‘well’ on Sean’s part and ‘I dream of you coming in my face sometimes and it is really hot. Sean, Sean? Did you just faint?!’ on Orlando’s part.

Yeah.

This entire world here is arse backwards.

Orlando sits up and rubs his face with his hand, shaking his head a little as for some reason laughter
bubbles up in the back of his throat. Then he’s laughing full out, alone in the dark with the distant chattering from the party like crickets singing in the background. And it isn’t funny, it really isn’t but he is laughing anyway, until his shoulders are shaking and his sides start hurting and he’s glad that he is already sitting down.

When he is done – when the laughter has finished with him – he wipes his face again, solitary tears catching on the backs of his hands. Then he gets up and decides to do something about it.

The warm glow of the living room lights illuminate the merry party and Orlando snorts quietly and unheard as his eyes pass over Viggo and Karl both on the skibob (and it’s good that Karl’s girlfriend insisted on underwear).

Then his eyes find Sean who is quietly watching the spectacle. As if he didn’t really belong. Just like Orlando, outside alone. – Orlando knows that Sean is a feared prankster just like he himself is definitely more life-of-the-party than lone wolf most of the times; and all that’s good.

He’s done standing on the sidelines anyway.

He pushes the veranda door open and slips inside, past the perverted re-enactment of the Christmas tale. There is determination in his steps, he knows, feels that, and this is important, only that no one knows because no one really pays attention to him. Only Sean. Sean’s eyes found him about the moment he came back inside, like they had been searching for him. At least that’s what Orlando tells himself, firmly and believingly for these few strides that it takes him – eyes locked to Sean’s – to cross the room and get to him.

“Hey,” Sean greets him and the gentle smile in this one syllable is the last forceful push that Orlando needed.

“Merry Christmas,” Orlando says in a tone of voice that he meant for something different, and Sean’s looks at him with confusion. Orlando doesn’t cast his eyes down and the determination he feels is reflected in Sean’s surprise.

“I’m going to kiss you now,” Orlando announces quietly, getting the words right this time and doesn’t give Sean a chance to object because he knows Sean doesn’t want to. He just places a hand on Sean’s shoulder and closes the small distance, pressing a kiss onto his lips.

As far as kisses go, this doesn’t even qualify as anything big. Just a peck with closed lips and both he and Sean have kissed half the cast much dirtier for laughs before. But that’s just it, isn’t it, Orlando thinks as his heart thunders and the blood rushes in his ears, as he keeps his lips touching Sean’s. All the other stuff was for laughs whereas this is anything but.

He pulls back a little when he can move again, leans in once more before looking Sean in the eye, because he can’t resist. Just another peck. Just another shudder running through him, shattering him and putting him together at the same time. Then he draws back and looks at Sean.

Sean’s eyes flutter open and his lips are a little parted, as he stares at Orlando wide eyed.

“That was a kiss,” Orlando says so there be no misunderstandings whatsoever. “And I meant it, you know.”

“That – ,” Sean says and Orlando can see his shoulder twitching, as if he consciously needs to tell his hand to stay down, not to touch his mouth.

“That,” Orlando nods, “was a kiss. Yes. Because you know, I’m done waiting and trying to tell you because you never – I mean I never seem to get it right so – so this is it. A kiss. You have to
understand this.” He looks at Sean and belatedly, sort of like when the pain only hits you long moments after you stubbed your toe, belatedly he realises: He’s just kissed Sean! He blinks and then asks, “Do you? Understand, Sean?”

“I, uhm,” Sean says and this time he does raise his hand and touches his lips. “I – you. You kissed me.”

“Yes,” Orlando affirms and nods. It’s ridiculous. Ridiculous how very important it seems to both of them to get this fact right. “I kissed you. I can kiss you again so there’s no confusion about it.”

Sean drops his hand and his eyes look normal again, not hazed or so surprised they can’t focus. Orlando sees them getting a little guarded, that tiny twitch around them announcing it. He can guess what flashes through Sean’s mind – whether Orlando’s drunk, whether it’s a joke. It should maybe be hurtful, but it isn’t. He knows that Sean is careful (once burned and all) and that’s alright, that’s one of the reason why he loves – why he wants to kiss him. He can be patient.

“Okay,” Sean says after a long moment and there’s a small single nod accompanying that one word. Orlando frowns a little, background noises of the party rushing back to him all at once, and he’s a little disoriented by how intensely all his senses have been able to focus on Sean.

“Huh?” he asks. His hand on Sean’s shoulder lightly grasps the collar of his shirt.

“Okay,” Sean repeats, and raises his hand again. This time it comes to rest on Orlando’s arm. Orlando gets it. He gets it even before Sean leans forward this time and brushes his lips against Orlando’s. It’s just that his brain is slightly too overwhelmed to deal with it for a moment, for the moment that Sean’s soft smiling mouth touches Orlando’s own. Then he catches up and something implodes inside of him, like a void that sucks in every other feeling, leaving nothing but this one thing behind. This fierce want, this almost painful tenderness, as he slides his hand into the back of Sean’s neck to pull him closer and not (never) let him go again.

That lasts for about five seconds (or maybe Orlando fell into a coma of happiness and it just felt like that when really it has been years of kissing Sean, he isn’t sure) then they both pull back again.

“Err,” Sean says, but not with irritation or embarrassment.

“Sean,” Orlando replies, just because he can. Sean’s fingertips trace the collar of his red shirt. “We should prolly not do this here.” Orlando says quietly, “I’d hate us to become the next party entertainment thing.”

Sean chuckles quietly and replies, “Yeah, I can see you wouldn’t like that, drawing attention and all.”

Orlando looks down at himself, gets a little distracted by the sight of Sean’s hand still resting loosely on his hip. But he gets the joke and can’t say how glad he is that Sean is still taking the piss. Means they’re alright, definitely.

“I’m only being less-that-subtle for people like you who don’t get the message otherwise,” he responds in kind.

“For people like me?” Sean arches an eyebrow and through the thin material of his shirt, Orlando can feel the other man’s grip on his hip tightening a little. He’s not sure Sean is even aware of it.

“Fine,” Orlando sighs ostentatiously, “for you. I only dress up like a slut for you because you’re too dense to understand it otherwise.”
“I resent that. And you’re supposed to be nicer to me than usual now.”

“Oh Jesus,” Orlando says and arches his brows. “Don’t tell me you’re one of those romantic people! Does that mean I’ll have to buy you flowers and write you poems?” Because if that’s the case, this is totally made of win since Orlando already has written – anyway! He looks at Sean a bit scandalized, his fingers playing with the short hair in Sean’s neck.

Sean shrugs and looks down and when he glances back up at Orlando, there is both ‘I so am’ and ‘Gotcha’ in his eyes. Orlando desperately, desperately wants to kiss him again. For hours.

“Alright,” Orlando promises and nods in affirmation. He clears his throat, so much tenderness inside of him that he feels full to the brim, and changes the subject. “Why didn’t you dress up anyway?”

“I did!” Sean says, giving Orlando his patented evil look that makes shivers run down Orlando’s spine. “I’m the Grinch.”

He takes a half step back and pulls up the rim of his pullover, half revealing a green t-shirt, a smirking face printed onto it. Still, Orlando grins at him, shaking his head.

“The bloke that ruined Christmas?” he laughs, grasps Sean’s hand and squeezes it. “Man, think again.”

If love is blind, then why is lingerie so popular?

So, Karl is a sexy beast. Sean knew that. Knew that even before Orlando pointed it out (in detail) for him and made lewd gestures in the process, thank you very much. Not that Sean minds Orlando or anyone else noticing the obvious, they got eyes, they can't help but see it, right? And it's not like Sean is jealous.

Or possessive.

Or intensely interested in having Karl's gorgeousness all for himself.

Or obsessive.

Well.

At least not much.

"You're staring at me," Karl states in that voice of his as if maybe he isn't sure whether Sean is even aware of his actions. "Again."

"Well," Sean grumbles and crosses his arms in front of his chest even though he tries not to seem defensive. "You're naked."

Karl laughs and looks down at himself. He doesn't seem too surprised by the fact that he is nude, nor does he seem particularly turned on by the sight. (For the record, Sean isn't surprised by it either because Karl is something of a nudist or at least comes from a country where you're not required to wear thermo trousers and five pairs of socks to bed to survive the night. Also, Sean is turned on. He's just trying to not let it show.)

Sean blinks when Karl snaps his fingers in front of his face.

"When did you get here?" Sean asks in honest bafflement because hasn't Karl just been on the other end of the room? Now he is kneeling above Sean on the couch and how did Sean not see that coming?
"Ah you know," Karl replies and places his hands on Sean's shoulders. He must feel the heat his touch is generating through the soft cotton of Sean's shirt. "Sometime while you were staring at my crotch like you were hypnotizing a snake."

"Don't be crude," Sean chides and he means it. Yes okay, the fact that Karl is not only on top of him, pressing him into the sofa, but that he is also still naked, is incredibly appreciated but Sean's not much into dirty talk especially if it includes strange animal similes.

Karl leans back a little, knees on either side of Sean's thighs, and cups Sean's chin with his right hand. "It's quite sweet that you can stare at me like I were porn come to life and that you fuck like a stallion," he waits for Sean to frown at that (Sean does, he can't help it) before he continues, "but that you can't even say 'cock' without blushing."

Sean pulls a face and tilts his head to the side, determined not to look away or blush and he at least manages the first of the two tasks.

"It's just," he says and notices the defensiveness in his own voice, he clears his throat and growls now. "I prefer doing things instead of talking about them."

"Doing things," Karl echoes and slowly nods as if in agreement. His hands have wandered down to the collar of Sean's shirt and have started to undo the buttons. Sean's skin crawls where Karl's fingertips touch it. "Doing things. Like intense staring. I see. - Or threatening to throw Orlando out of the heli."

Sean stares down at his hands that have found their favourite spot on Karl's thighs. "I didn't say a word to him."

"Didn't have to," Karl chuckles and opens the last button before he slides his hands under the fabric and around Sean's waist.

"It's not what you think," Sean says. Karl leans in and nuzzles his jaw, kisses the spot under his ear but doesn't reply. Sean however, can't keep his mouth shut and wants to explain. "I was just, you know, thinking about well, you. I mean, us. I mean, this," he says stumbling over his words. The heat of Karl's skin against his isn't helping. Still, he tilts his head and closes his eyes when Karl starts sucking on the tender skin on the side of his neck. "Helps me relax," he murmurs, "on that blasted heli. And Orlando just wouldn't shut the fuck up."

"He does that," Karl agrees. His beard stubble is rough against Sean's skin, tender from the sucking (he thinks he might get a hicky from that and makeup will just love that).

"Yes," Sean says, slides his hands up Karl's thighs now, in slow circling motions and can feel Karl's responding purr. "And all of the sudden, in my err sorta dirty fantasy you know, there was Orlando, too. And he kept falling off the bed and breaking my favourite Tiffany lamp on the nightstand. - And this is not funny."

Karl's entire body trembles against his own and Karl doesn't even stop his silent snickering when Sean's hands have reached the top of Karl's thighs and his thumbs press against the sensitive skin right next to his cock.

"It kinda is," Karl says after a moment, laughter still in his voice, and he pulls back enough to look at Sean, kiss his mouth, say against it, "You're imagining a threesome and all you can come up with is a reenactment of the three Stooges."

"One Stooge, and that's natural. It's Orlando," Sean corrects him, breathing hard just from the feel of
"You were just - well, you."

"So, you're gonna tell me about that fantasy, pre-Orlando?" Karl's fingers have wandered down to his fly.

Sean feels the zipper being pulled down, taking some of the pressure off his erection. He groans, half because of the casual touch of Karl's fingers so close to his cock, half because Karl's waiting for an answer.

"You're already full enough of yourself," he grumbles. "And no matter how much you're entitled to that, I'm not gonna add fuel to the fire."

The heel of Karl's hand presses against Sean's hard cock and he sighs in relief, pushes against the offered hand and buries his face in the crook of Karl's neck.

"But mostly," Karl whispers against his ear, "you don't say anything because you're endearingly shy and proper."

Sean's hand finds Karl's cock hard and heavy, it's so hot when he wraps his hand around it. Fits perfectly and so does Karl's pleased exhale against his hair.

"I reckon I liked it better when you just thought I was stupidly jealous," Sean says, mostly because talking back is the last thing that keeps him from drowning in the sensations now. Karl pushes into his hand, the wet tip of his cock leaves slick smears on Sean's fingers, droplets falling onto his naked belly.

"I don't," Karl says quietly, just that bit of strain in his voice that makes Sean think that it's alright to be dazed and that it's okay to lose himself in the feel and smell and sound of Karl. The sofa creaks under the unrhythmical motion of their bodies and Sean is wearing too many clothes, can't touch Karl properly, feels himself get so greedy for more that this just isn't sufficient.

"Bedroom," he growls and lets go of Karl's cock to push against his thighs impatiently. Karl growls in disagreement but Sean keeps insisting, shifts under him and lightly bites Karl's shoulder. "C'mon, get off. I wanna -" he breaks off and feels himself blush when a myriad of images flood his mind, every single one of them completely filthy. "- you know."

Karl grins broadly against his mouth when he presses their lips together, but he moves, stands in front of Sean the next moment, hard cock right in Sean's eyeline and so damn hot Sean thinks he might faint from the overstimulation.

"Yeah, I know," Karl says and holds out his hand to help Sean up. "Endearingly shy and dead fucking sexy."

Sean rolls his eyes but takes the offered hand, pulls up his trousers with the other to not stumble over them. "Yeah, yeah," he grumbles. "If you shut it now, I'm gonna show you what I were fantasizing about on the heli."

Silently Karl makes a motion as if he were zipping his lips before he leads the way to the bedroom.

The vow of silence lasts for about two minutes after they've stumbled into bed. Might have been three minutes. Sean can't be sure, he's too focussed on having Karl's cock so deep in his throat that he can't breathe.

Thing is, yeah, so Sean is a bit of a possessive arse who also can't manage even a single word of dirty talk. He's also afraid of helis and might've threatened to kick Orlando out of it even if Orlando
hadn't been saying dirty and inappropriate (and hot, okay) things about Sean’s boyfriend. Alright.

But Sean figures, as tears of satisfaction (God, he feels so full) run down his face but he still doesn't pull back, Karl’s hand shaking on the back of his head as he tries so hard not to come and begs Sean to let him, well, he figures that he sort of has some redeeming features after all.

Pretty thing
Karl bites back a groan, the only sound escaping his lips is a dark little sigh. With every of Sean’s thrusts he exhales like this, slowly, deliberately, softly, and both of them hold back. It’s like flirting in a way, a dance around one another, with little teases and affectionate bites and fingernails that dig into sweaty skin. They can do this for hours, Sean inside of Karl, Karl inside of Sean. They have in fact been fucking since the early dawn, no matter that Karl’s house has been invaded by an inebriated Fellowship the night before. The winter sun that sneaks in through the white curtains tells that it’s almost midday now.

Sean shifts a little, a fluent motion that brings his thigh between Karl’s and pushes the younger man further onto his belly. Heavy blankets still cover them and Karl feels deliriously hot.

“You’re cheating,” Karl says with a voice that wraps rising lust in gentle chiding and moans a little louder when now his erect cock rubs against the soft sheets as Sean pushes into him.

“Doesn’t qualify as cheating,” Sean argues and his breath, his words curl in Karl’s ear. “Cheating’d be my hand round your prick. My fingers in your mouth mebbe, shutting ye up when I start fucking you properly.”

Karl’s eyes flutter shut and he licks his lips, saliva pooling on his tongue when he imagines that. Sean licks his earshell, teasingly tender, and fucks him harder at the same time, his slick cock opening Karl up further with each thrust.

“Promises, promises,” Karl breathes, making it sound like a demand and a love declaration at once. “I wasn’t such a fucking tease before.”

Bitemarks and pleasant soreness, damp sheets and satisfied laughter echoing in the hall prove him right. Sean remembers, too, and humours Karl for a while with sure, steady thrusts. Pleasure laps at them like tame waves on a shoreline, the tides inevitably but unnoticed bringing them closer to release. Karl lets himself drift, trusting Sean.

From downstairs comes a shattering sound, following curses are muffled by thick walls but it breaks the silence nonetheless. Sean rests his head against Karl’s shoulder and groans in frustration.

“Bloody marauders.”

“Knew they were not housetrained when you let them in,” Karl says with a grin, meaning the hobbits and Viggo.

“Hm,” Sean murmurs distractedly, and Karl knows that when Sean pulls back a little his eyes are on Karl, watching his muscles twitch under the touch of his warm hand that strokes over his back. Karl looks over his shoulder, smiles when Sean’s eyes drift to the muscles of his neck that tempt him to lick them, bite them, claim Karl.

“What’d ya say, I’m quite pretty, eh?” Karl says cheekily, without the least bit of modesty. Predictably, Sean is torn out of his contemplative awe to roll his eyes and speed up again. Fucking the insolence right out of Karl, or rewarding him for it. His hand closes around Karl’s neck and Karl lets himself be pushed down, some of his curls trapped between the cushion and his cheek, scratching him.
“Mmm, good,” he pants, eloquence less fun than listening to Sean’s elaborated breathing.

“Yeah,” Sean agrees and presses his thumb against Karl’s pulse as if to check, to match Karl’s heartbeat with his motions. A smile in his voice, amusement atop the pleasure. “Pretty thing.”

Karl snorts and stretches, fully on his belly now, and his hands touch the wooden headboard, sun tanned skin over hard muscle. Sean’s chest touches his back as he leans over him, craving the contact just as much as Karl.

“My pretty thing,” he says again, with tenderness now.

Karl twists underneath Sean because lips saying such lovely things need to be kissed right away. Sean’s tongue slides into his mouth and Karl sucks on it with a rush of sudden urgency. He wishes he could get Sean closer, no matter that not even air could squeeze between them now.

“Want you,” he says between kisses and a frown creases his forehead because that sounds stupid and doesn’t come close to what he means.

“Got me,” Sean replies in kind, and with a growl, “don’t ever doubt that.”

A smile mingles with their kiss and Karl’s fingers weave into Sean’s hair. “I’m not stupid,” he says, meaning ‘I love you’.

“Huh, is that so?” Sean grunts with playful scepticism and lets Karl rearrange their position again. Karl ends up on his back and his fingernails leave punishing red strokes on the other man’s chest when the older man bites his lower lip. Sean purrs approvingly when Karl wraps his legs around his waist and pulls him closer.

More kisses and licks, shared breaths and murmurs. Sean forgets to move for a while when Karl’s hand cradles his head and he rains kisses over his face, so achingly tender that they both have to chuckle because it’s ridiculously girly and just right. Nuzzling, and Sean tastes Karl’s sweat where his shoulder meets his neck, Karl inhales the faint trace of Sean’s shampoo when he kisses blond strands. Green eyes lock with brown ones and both smile – “Darling” mouthed against full lips when they no longer can resist.

A soft knock on the door interrupts, both hear it and both ignore it. Another one, a little louder, even more hesitant, follows.

“What?” Karl calls out, not unfriendly though, while Sean merely growls as if that would make the intruder go away. The door is pushed open a bit and Viggo pokes his head in. His eyes find them on the bed and he grins, making Karl wonder whether he’s still piss drunk, or high, or just being Viggo.

“Morning, guys,” he says, as if he is totally oblivious to what he interrupted.

“Morning, Vig,” Karl answers in kind, hand leaving Sean’s shoulder long enough to add a distracted wave. Sean growls again. Karl laughs and leans up to bite Sean’s shoulder, earning a low groan from his lover and a contemplative gaze from Viggo.

“Anything you wanted?”

“Huh?” Viggo makes and looks confused for a moment as if shaken out of a daydream. “Oh, yeah. Just saying that now that everyone’s sober enough to walk, we’re off to the beach. Ah and there was a little accident involving Dom’s head and your cut-glass vase.”

“Good riddance,” Sean comments and strokes a stray curl out of Karl’s forehead. Karl just hums
noncommittally and closes his inner muscles around Sean’s cock, still buried to the hilt inside him.

"Dom survived,” Viggo says.

Sean curses under his breath. Viggo laughs in response before he pulls the door close. He pushes it open a moment later again, though, smirking.

“Oh and,” he says, “– any hope I can come back with my camera?”

A well aimed pillow hits the door frame a moment later.

Lovestruck fool of epic proportions
Sean, he's something of a sneaky character. Yeah, yeah, I totally know what you're all gonna say. "What? Sean BEAN? You're kidding, he seems like the most open and outright person!"

Well, tell you what - he's definitely not. He is so sneaky, you don't even notice it (which really is the whole point of it if you think about it) until he pounces. Okay, pouncing may not really be the word (that's more what Viggo does but Viggo is a crazy person and I'm not talking about him), it's more like luring you in a trap with his honeyed voice and his to-die-for-smile and then, when you find yourself arse first in Bernard's swimming pool (completely dressed because you definitely weren't planning on swimming, especially not in your clothes) Sean will stand next to it and snicker like a school boy - seriously, like he was five or something and you'd totally buy that if it weren't for the whiskey glass in one and the 100th fag of the evening in the other hand.

Like a little boy, I mean it, and I (because it ALWAYS happens to be me who is on the wrong end of his idea of fun) can't help but feel totally old and wise and shit when I look up at him. That usually lasts about five seconds until I find a way to drag him into the pool with me or at least completely soak him by splashing half of the pool in his direction, okay, but for those five seconds I feel all protective and glad and it's kind of freaking me out, to be honest.

Sean, if you call him sneaky outright, he'll look at you all doe eyed (no kidding, it's unreal how he manages to pull that off) and say "I have no idea what you're talking about, Orli." Which is so much of a lie that no one witnessing the conversation even bothers to pretend to buy it and just points at Sean and laughs. Sean then will blush and I will have forgotten what we were talking about because I'm too busy being a lovestruck fool of epic proportions or something. And then Sean'll do this thing where he touches my arm, my elbow, my shoulder, the back of my neck or just some other random part of my body that suddenly turns into a erogenous zone by just that one touch, and he'll say something like "I'm just more subtle than you, Orli. 's that a problem?" and I'll be like "No it's not, of course it's not, it's great, Sean, really."

People like accusing me to be a massive babbler but I tell you what, a. it's not my fault that Sean is, well, SEAN and b. the babbling and constant quick repetition of one simple thing helps me keeping inside what I really want to say and what's maybe not all that appropriate - in the middle of a shooting day and dressed up as Legolas, mind you.

"Can I kiss the blush on your cheeks?"

"I want you to smile at me that way all day, every day."

"Oi, don't pull your hand away from me, man!"

"Seriously, Sean, why are you so damn pretty, even all grimed up? It's just not right. Wanna roll in the mud with me maybe?"

See? Totally a good thing that I babble instead.
Maaaybe my own babbling confuses me brain though, okay, that's a bit of a blow. Especially since we've been shooting Rings for half a year now and Sean's been all subtle and sneaky and Dom just punched me in the face.

These things are related, yes.

"Orlando," Dom says, in that accusing tone of voice of his that really cracks me up every time because Dom? Being serious? Please. "Orlando, you are by far the stupidest motherfucker in the world."

"Even stupider than Elijah?" I ask because only two minutes ago we watched Elijah try to climb through the window of his trailer after locking himself out.

Dom just nods though and looks like he is about to punch me again, so I quickly move a couple of steps back.

"Stupider than Elijah. You're so stupid, your stupidity can easily match Viggo's insanity."

"Oi!" I protest because, man, that is a shitload of stupid then. "What have I done to you?"

"You know how you're always going on and on about Sean being a sneaky bastard?"

"Yeah? He is, isn't he."

"Yeah, I know, you told me about ten times. Today alone. In between girly sighs and really weird things like 'Doesn't Boromir have the greatest sword of all, look at it, all thick and thrusty'."

"So?"

"For one, thrusty isn't even a word, and also even I am uncomfortable with the phallic symbolism of that," Dom says, like he is a walking dictionary or something. "And secondly, for someone claiming to know all about Sean's sneakiness you're pretty much completely ignoring EVERY important sign. - He had flowers delivered to your trailer today, Orlando. FLOWERS!"

"What? I like flowers," I defend myself, seriously not knowing what I am defending myself against. "And Sean does, too. And we share a trailer. What is so stupid about that?"

Dom rubs his hand over his face, smearing some of his make up because he is rubbing so hard. I stare at him all confused like and it's that moment that Sean happens to walk by.

"Bean!" Dom calls out, his voice curiously desperate. "Can you help me out with something?"

I don't like it and Sean's eyebrows arch as well but he comes over and looks at Dom questioningly. Dom takes a deep breath, like he needs all the calm he can get and then he addresses Sean.

"If someone sends flowers - say, uh, a dozen red roses - to someone else," he looks at me pointedly, continues, "on VALENTINES DAY, what does that mean? Huh, Sean?"

I feel my forehead crinkling in a frown and Sean looks at Dom, looks at me, at Dom again and then finally settles on me.

"Probably," he says, "it means that the flower sender wants to tell the recipient something with that."

"What exactly," Dom says, "would that be, the thing he's saying?"

Sean shrugs and his arm brushes against mine and again I have spontaneously grown a new
"Prolly that he's been in love with the recipient for quite a while and is sorta tired of waiting for him to figure it out?"

"Let me get this straight," I say and grab Sean's elbow so he can't run away. "From your pushing me into every pool in a twenty mile radius, from the fact that you taped my front door shut and from your brilliant idea of having pizza delivered to my place at fuck early in the morning twice this week and have the pizza boy SING Celine Dion to me, I was supposed to get that you are IN LOVE WITH ME?"

Sean shrugs. Dom buries his hand in his face and staggers away, like someone (or someone's stupidity, though certainly not mine) has punched him in the face.

"Pretty much," Sean says and hasn't pulled his arm from my grasp. "I'm subtle like that, you see."

"Yeah, I see," I say, and do the mature thing - it's not like I can expect anyone else here to do it, can I. "So how about we go out for dinner tonight and instead of pushing me out of your car mid-drive and laughing while I roll headfirst into a ditch, like you did last week, you come home with me afterwards and have mindblowing sex that will have you walk bowlegged for the next two weeks?"

Sean grins. "Subtle."

"Man," I say with feeling and grip his arm harder as his grin does orgasmic things to my heart, "I am SO done with sneaky."

You can just be glad that I love you so much, you piss artist

"Man, this is starting to get annoying," Orlando says, only a little breathless, without really meaning it.

"Which's why Blades rule," replies Sean, with his very reasonable I-am-totally-not-shitfaced voice, without making any sense at all. His arm is draped over Orlando’s shoulder and he’s leaning heavily against him.

Their little caravan of four stops in front of Orlando’s house and Billy – the one closest to sober of their merry bunch of drunks (safe for Orlando) – asks, “Need any help?”

Orlando glances down at Sean’s blond head that is now resting on his shoulder, then over at Viggo who seems to be wooing the rosebushes in the front yard.

“Nah, got it,” he replies and adjusts his hold around Sean’s side. “Please just get Viggo out of Mrs. P.’s roses.”

Billy salutes and Orlando watches the two men stagger down the street. Sean makes a snoring sound against his shoulder and wakes himself up with it.

“Where’s my pillow?” he asks and Orlando has to growl at him because Sean’s trying to drape himself all over him, like he usually does. Only that they’re not in bed yet but in Orlando’s driveway.

Getting Sean up the two steps that lead to his front porch proves to be a pain in the arse because Sean’s ability to climb stairs seems to have drowned in the 3 gallons of beer he drank. Also, Sean almost falls asleep on him once they have reached the front porch.

“For fuck’s sake,” Orlando grumbles and kicks the front door open, dragging Sean with him. For a moment he ponders whether he should just lean the older man against the hallway wall and leave
him there, sleeping standing up like a horse. But then Sean makes a small happy sort of gurgling sound against Orlando’s neck and something inside of him tells Orlando that he really couldn’t sleep without Sean right next to him. He looks at the staircase and feels Sean’s drool seeping through his thin t-shirt.

“C’mere then,” Orlando murmurs quietly, lifts Sean’s other arm up to drape it over his shoulder as well and lifts him up into his arms. His grip around the other man’s pliant body is firm, Sean's bent legs fitting perfectly over Orlando’s left arm as he wraps his right around Sean’s back. Sean instantly clings to him, all too happy to be done with this nasty walking on his own business. Orlando takes a deep breath and tackles the stairs, bumping Sean’s leg against the banister.

“Ow,” Sean complains and kicks the stair-rail, almost causing Orlando to trip.

“Stop shifting about,” Orlando chides, gripping Sean’s thighs tighter. “You’re gonna kill us, stupid.” He sighs but starts climbing again, Sean’s body warm and still against his chest now. Quietly he adds, just before he reaches the second floor, “You can just be glad that I love you so much, you piss artist.”

Sean snores once and mumbles, “Goal!” against Orlando’s neck which is really exactly what Orlando wanted to hear.

Mended
The temperature is mild and this sort of mellow night is what Sean will always associate with New Zealand. In the secrecy of twilight the ocean’s spray continues attempting to reach his naked feet but never does. Under his soles the sand is warm. It feels nice, just like the faint voices coming from Ian’s beach house are a background noise he’ll miss once he is back in England.

He sits up a little straighter and closes his lips around the stub of his fag while he fishes for the crumbled package of Silk Cuts in the pocket of his shirt. He lights the new cigarette with the old one and flicks the tiny stub towards the ocean. For a moment the red ashes gleam and spark in the night like fireflies, then they disappear in the ocean like they never existed.

If he was Viggo he now probably would scribble down something about the symbolism of this. Viggo would write a poem about it maybe and Sean would comment that the light isn’t good enough. Viggo’d ruin his eyes, and Sean’d expect the flashing grin of white teeth as a response and wouldn’t be disappointed.

Viggo is fast asleep though, lies right next to Sean in the sand with his head pillowed on Sean’s jumper. It’s a trait in their profession, being able to sleep anywhere and at any time, and Sean has yet to meet someone as gifted as Viggo when it comes to that. Well, maybe there’s Elijah, but Sean is pretty sure the boy is narcoleptic.

He smiles to himself when it occurs to him that he’s watching over Viggo’s sleep like Boromir would over Aragorn’s. He’s got no sword or armour anymore. On the outside there not much left of the righteous Gondorian except for the beard. There are no Orcs to be on the lookout for but with Billy and Dom nearby Sean figures standing guard is just as advised. And he doesn’t mind, this little bit of Middle Earth and its camaraderie that has seeped into his and their real life and feels like it intends to stay there permanently.

A crashing noise comes from the house and interrupts the silence. It is followed by a howl that sounds suspiciously like Orli and laughter, John’s booming guffawing being the loudest. Sean looks over his shoulder but the house is still standing and he isn’t getting up for anything less.

When he looks down again Viggo’s soft snores stopped.
“Reckon Orli finally broke his neck?” Sean asks.

Viggo opens his eyes and, like it was him not Sean who spent his evening chainsmoking, his voice is rough when he answers, “Nah. He usually finds someone to fall on top of.”

“Good thing elves weigh next to nothing then.”

With a quiet grunt, Viggo pushes himself to his elbows, if only so Sean can see his arched eyebrows even in the semi darkness. “If my time here has taught me anything then it’s that this is definitely not true. For the rest of my life ‘the grace of an elf’ will bring pictures of a potato sack to my mind.”

Sean chuckles and sees Viggo’s tiny satisfied smile in response to it. When he reaches out and offers his cigarette to him, Viggo takes it and inhales its smoke with the same hedonistic attitude he approaches most minuities of life.

He hears himself ask, “So that’s the memories you’ll take with you then, is it?”

Viggo regards the gleaming tip of the fag in his hand contemplatively for a moment. “Are you feeling nostalgic already?” he asks then.

Sean shrugs lightly. It’s not exactly melancholy but it’s close enough and he doesn’t feel embarrassed to admit it. He used to be easily uncomfortable when it came to these kinds of things, but around Viggo he isn’t.

“Less than a week to film, a bit of pensiveness, I reckon it’s normal.”

“Who cares about normal?”

Now it’s Sean who arches his eyebrows when he looks down at Viggo. “I knew you’d say that. Makes you just as predictable as the boring rest of us.”

“Ah, but I’m not drowning in wistfulness, am I?” Viggo mocks amiably.

“Well, at least I’m not writing poems about the dirt under my fingernails or take artsy black and white pictures of my friends’ nose hair.”

Viggo laughs quietly and takes another deep drag from the fag before he hands it back to Sean, sitting up to do so. “I told you I was trying to capture the spirit of a resting warrior, not your nose hair,” he defends himself.

“Yeah, yeah,” Sean concedes peaceably. “Let’s see what you’ll say ten years from now when you look at that photoalbum of yours. Bet it won’t be the resting warrior bollocks.”

Ten years. Approximately a fourth of his lifetime as of yet.

He looks out at the ocean and thinks he gets a bit dizzy from the everchanging shimmer of the moon on the waves. Viggo is sitting close enough that their thighs and shoulders touch and Sean knows that when he moves his hand back up to the cigarette in his mouth, Viggo can feel every flex of his muscles.

“Ten years, huh?” Viggo repeats and the way he says it – so full of easy excitement, of uncomplicated wonderment – is possibly the thing Sean loves most about him. Viggo’s eyes are focused on something on the horizon, blue-grey so clear and seeing, and Sean wonders whether he’s ever told him that. Wonders whether he even has to.
The soft wind changes subtly, enough to carry another wave of laughter from the house over to their quiet spot. The breeze catches in Viggo’s hair, too long brownish strands getting even messier, and he glances back in the direction of the house.

“I’m pretty certain that Pete will host this enormous reunion party ten years from now,” he says, then one of his sudden mad grins commandeers his face. “And Elijah will almost be allowed to buy beer for himself by then.”

Sean laughs and feels Viggo’s matching chuckle in the way his shoulder twitches the littlest bit. “Doubt that,” he says, plays along. “He’ll still have Bernie do it for him while he and Orli return to their one-upmanship like they haven’t been a day apart.”

“Only it won’t be ‘dare you to eat that’ but serial killer roles by then.”

“Elijah’s got that one, I already reckon his eyes are a wee bit psycho.”

Viggo enjoys that and it’s probably because he’s a little mad himself, at least compared to Sean. He nods in agreement and offers yet another titbit of future tabloid headlines. “And Dom will have his own Late Night programme called –“

“The Dom Show,” they finish in unison.

It’s an old joke, or as old as things can be in New Zealand. Sean likes old jokes best because they are comfortable and familiar, deeply engraved into your memory so there’s no danger you’ll ever forget them.

Viggo laughs and the little lines around his eyes, the softness of his eyes? They speak of so much fondness that Sean only hears that, even when Viggo tries his best to sound ironic as he announces, “An hour every night, nationwide, and it’s all about himself.”

“Dream come true.”

Sean takes a last drag from his fag. It has burned down almost to the filter, he can feel the heat against the back of his fingers already. He flicks the butt of it into the ocean and watches Viggo watching it, head tilted and eyes narrowed a bit. As if squinting enough could really turn ashes into fireflies or fireworks or the first spark of a phoenix reborn. Sean sits next to Viggo and wonders whether he’s thinking the same thing that Sean is right now, wonders what Viggo is contemplating. For all the time he has known him (feels like so much more than just a year) Viggo has been a tactile person. Sean’s not. But when Viggo places his hand on Sean’s knee, easily, loosely, it feels right. Just like every one of Viggo’s touches answers a question before Sean even knew that he had it. Viggo’s hand moulds a little more around his knee, like he’s trying to pull him back from wherever he’s drifted off to. And as ever, Sean follows willingly.

“Do you think that John will have his restaurant by then?” he asks. “In ten years I mean?”

Viggo shrugs. “He is always talking about it, isn’t he?”

“If so, I expect –

“Lobster for the reunion party?” Viggo cuts in with a grin and a hint of Yorkshire lilt in his voice.

Sean chuckles and why does Viggo mocking him feel like flirting? Maybe because everything they do is. He’s not used to it and hopes he never will get used to it, won’t ever take it for granted, this feeling of lightness, of blushing, of uncomplicated happiness sparked so easily.
“You know me too well,” he says.

“Well, it doesn’t feel like too well to me,” Viggo answers in a soft voice and he is coaxing, asking, knowing.

“Just the right amount of well then,” Sean concedes and settles in this feeling of contentedness that follows. “It’s nice,” he admits. “In all this chaos here, and as wonderful as it is it’s still bloody chaos, it’s nice to know there’s someone who gets it. Who I get.”

He said the last bit quietly, very quietly, even though it’s not a secret. Doesn’t have to be louder because Viggo has leaned in or maybe Sean has spoken so softly just so Viggo would.

“Yeah, it is nice,” Viggo murmurs and leans his forehead against Sean’s, his hand in the back of Sean’s neck. Sean smiles and can hear the responding smile in Viggo’s voice when he asks, “So, where do you see yourself ten years from today?”

Sean could answer where he sees himself, them, an hour or two from now. In the little house Viggo still rents, in Viggo’s bedroom, between sheets that may still carry the smell of last night. He could tell Viggo that when they have fuck or make love or both, it’s the look in Viggo’s eyes that grounds him. It makes him feel like this is forever, that there is no possible way this could ever not be. This feeling, New Zealand, them, Viggo.

But Viggo hasn’t asked this and he probably doesn’t even need to and that’s good. So Sean doesn’t say any of it, just pulls back the littlest bit and licks his lips, tests whether he can taste the flavour of days to come already on them. Thinks about what Viggo has asked. He looks at Viggo, then looks at the ocean where the moonlight is still dancing on the rippling water.

“I’m going for a swim,” he decides.

“In the ocean? Now?” Viggo asks, eyes curious and the littlest bit see-sawing between surprise and mockery. “Without your beloved swimming trunks?”

“Yes, yes,” Sean answers and gets to his feet, “and yes. I’m not a prude, you git.”

He pulls his shirt over his head, drops it where he stands, and starts unbuttoning his trousers. When he’s done, thumbs already in the waistband of his boxers and ready to pull down, he looks back at Viggo. Viggo is still sitting in the sand, looking up at him, and isn’t moving.

“What? You’re not coming?” Sean asks. “Don’t tell me Orli’s oddly timed bashfulness has finally rubbed off on you.”

“I wasn’t sure whether I was supposed to join you,” Viggo replies but gets up in one swift and graceful motion, stands right in front of Sean.

Sean arches a brow. “You figured I want to go skinny dipping all on my own in the middle of the night? Why would I do that?”

Viggo shrugs but starts undoing his shirt. “Because you need to follow a deeply rooted desire to become one with the sea and be cleansed by her waters?”

Sean arches his other brow. Then he shakes his head, pulls his trousers down and steps out of them. “Hippie.”

“Communing with nature is good for the soul,” Viggo argues and, faced with Sean’s nakedness, quickens his undressing-pace.
“Bollocks. You don’t even believe in any of that new age crap. Why’d you think I would, all of a sudden?”

With that he shakes his head again, fondly though, and takes a couple of steps backwards until the spray curls around his ankles. He sees Viggo’s hands fumbling with his belt and laughs when Viggo calls after him “Oh, you couldn’t wait for ten seconds, could you,” as he turns to run into the water.

In comparison to the mild night it seems bloody cold and for one bonechilling moment as waves crash against him he is robbed of his breath. Water embraces him around the waist, and it’s like breathing in fresh morning air – harsh, cold, makes you feel so so awake, so alive – with his entire body. He hears Viggo reach the water to come in after him, and he fully dives into the breakers.

The sounds of the night is gone as water all around him, dancing lights, too. And like a switch being flipped this feels like his element. He dives under the wave, lets himself be pulled back with it, he re-surfaces just a couple of feet further, swims further out, muscles straining to work against and with the tide.

Eventually, his feet find solid ground again. He wipes thick water drops off his face and looks for Viggo but can’t spot him, he lets himself fall back against the next wave and allows himself to be carried forward by it again.

Viggo suddenly emerges, not more than three feet from him and stars swirl on the disrupted water surface all around him. Moonlight pales his skin, his hair and beard are wild, but his eyes calm and trained on Sean.

“So this is how it is now, huh?” he asks and circles Sean slowly, mockery warming his voice. “I ask you a question and you run off into the ocean? Who do you think you’ll be in ten years and your answer is ‘A seahorse’?”

Sean laughs and futilely tries to grasp Viggo who paddles back just in time, water splashing. “A seahorse? You couldn’t go with something a little less girly? Like Poseidon, God of the sea?”

“Who’s vicious and moody and you couldn’t be less like him if you tried?” Viggo shakes his head and slows to a halt, standing rather than swimming now. “Forget it. That’s not who you’re gonna be like and we both know it.”

“You know what?” Sean says and a wave crashes against his upper chest just after. He sways but finds back balance and Viggo is still there, looking at him. “In all honesty, when it comes to the future, anything beyond next week, I haven’t got a clue. And for once in my life I don’t care.”

Viggo doesn’t resist the next wave’s push that drives him closer to the shore, to Sean again. “Carpe diem, my friend,” he says wistfully. “I get it. Vanitas and memento mori.”

Sean laughs, shoulders shaking with it and splashes water in Viggo’s direction. “Oh, come off it. Couple of Latin words don’t actually make you seem wise, you know. At least try a language that hasn’t been dead for a millennium.”

Viggo’s boyish grin is accepting, amused, and he lets himself fall back, so he can splash back at Sean with his feet. Sean growls but as Viggo swims backwards, he of course instinctively follows him further into the ocean once more. Wonders that this is what sailors feel like when they hear the sirens’ songs. Viggo’s teeth abruptly flash in the moonlight and not for the first time it seems to Sean like Viggo can read his mind. He’d feel caught red-handed if it weren’t for that sensation of ease, washing over him just like the waves. Not the sirens’ beckoning then, neither deadly nor harmful.
Viggo stops swimming where the water is deeper, calmer. And again, Sean tries to reach out for him and this time Viggo doesn’t pull away. He moves closer, furrows his brows and regards Sean curiously.

“So it’s wisdom that you’re looking for, Sean, huh?”

“Doesn’t necessarily need to be wisdom, don’t strain yourself.” Sean feels playful and his feet find the ground, smooth sand soft under his soles as he stands still, water up to his chest, reels Viggo in. “Simple truths would do, in any language.”

Chest to chest with him, Viggo licks his lips and Sean draws a slightly trembling breath in response, in anticipation even. The things Viggo does to him. Viggo’s fingers find his hip under water, glide over it weightlessly and Sean wants to close his eyes to lose himself in the simple tenderness in that touch. But he doesn’t, looks at Viggo’s lips instead. Soft, tempting, familiar, just like his words when he finally says them.

"Aprecio tu compañía, querido amigo."

He places his hand against Sean’s chest, right over his heart. It feels warm even as water closes over it, surface playing around his fingers. Viggo lightly presses them against Sean, an affirmation just like his nod, just like the look in his eyes now.

Sean knows what he means, beyond the words he knows what Viggo is saying. His body responds instinctively to it, like it’s been hardwired into his system, belatedly-just-in-time bred into him by New Zealand sun, late nights with bonfires and the sound of Viggo’s voice. He leans in, both of his hands touching Viggo’s chest, gliding over his shoulders, leans his cheek against Viggo’s and he feels the roughness of his beard against his skin, the warmth underneath, the familiar shape of his jawbone. He inhales, breathes in Viggo and the heavy smell of the sea, hears and feels Viggo do the same.

“Y siempre lo hare,” Viggo whispers with affection, with utter conviction warming his voice. His lips touch Sean’s skin when he adds, “Is that true enough, my friend?”

Sean smiles at the wordplay, feels the truth of it deep in his soul and knows that he always will. Contentment. The simple manifestation of it.

Gently he nips at Viggo’s earlobe and whispers back, “Eres la mujer más hermosa del mundo. ¿Dónde están los baños?”

They are the only two Spanish sentences that Sean knows. Viggo snorts with laughter – it’s an old joke between them – and presses a wet sloppy kiss against Sean’s cheek before he buries his face in the crook of Sean’s neck. An old joke, the best kind. Comfortable and familiar, deeply engraved into your memory so there’s no danger you’ll ever forget it.

He wraps his arms around Viggo a little tighter, the smooth slickness of his skin and the water making him want to hold on tighter so he won’t slip away. With the usual fluid grace to his motions, even to the tiniest one, Viggo returns the embrace. It’s Sean’s turn to chuckle when Viggo’s hands inevitably slide down his back and cup his bum with the same appreciative possessiveness that Sean has grown so accustomed to. Viggo squeezes and Sean laughs, water splashes between them as Viggo looks at him without even thinking of letting go and smiles. Again there is so much understanding and love in that easy curving of his lips that Sean just has to kiss it.

He tastes salt water on Viggo’s lips and the faint aroma of his own cigarette brand. He cradles Viggo’s face with both his hands, savours this small moment, this collecting-himself before Viggo
nips at his lower lip and he parts his lips in response. Viggo kisses him with the same easy selfassurance with which he does everything else, makes the same little sounds of contentment and wonderment that Sean always seems to elicit from him. Sean curls his tongue against Viggo’s, the taste of them and salt and cigarette smoke mingling, Sean exhales it with a pleased hum when Viggo deepens the kiss like he can’t get enough of Sean, can’t have him close enough.

They kiss like this for a long time, breathe the same air. The quiet words of affirmation that they pass back and forth between them imitate the languid caresses they share. Sean feels Viggo’s hands on his back, Viggo’s thigh against, between his own. He cups the back of Viggo’s head with his own hand so he can lick into Viggo’s mouth and just keep them like this, surrounded by calm, deep, silent water.

“Viggo,” he murmurs. It’s a question as much as it’s an affirmation, as it’s reassurance as it’s faith.

“Hm?” Viggo hums, fingers curling in the back of Sean’s neck, responding to the question as well as everything else.

Sean confesses quietly, “I don’t think I ever want to leave this place.”

Viggo’s eyes reflect that wish and his hands caress Sean’s shoulders. “I believe none of us ever will. Not really.”

“Now who’s the sentimental git?” Sean mocks with tenderness something else, something rougher that makes his voice crack a little. “I was just talking about this beach and skinny dipping.”

Viggo chuckles, “No, you weren’t.”

“No, I wasn’t.” Sean agrees easily, raises his hand to stroke Viggo’s wayward strands from his forehead. Viggo lets him, only to wink at him the moment he’s done and sink down into the water.

Sean lets him go, lets himself drift with the waves, too. Viggo resurfaces and swims further out, strong strokes of his arms carrying him out far and fast. Sean watches the sky and listens to the rhythmical sounds of the sea and knows Viggo is right. None of them will ever really leave New Zealand behind. He hasn’t been worried but it still feels like relief when the gravity of that sinks in.

Viggo returns but his eyes are trained on the beach rather than on Sean. Automatically Sean turns his head as well but due to the darkness Viggo’s voice reaches him before he can see anything.

“I think a bunch of rogue hobbits are in the process of stealing our clothes.”

Sean groans and now that Viggo has said it he sees hasty shadows on the beach, hears suppressed giggles that the waves carry like seagulls’ cries.

“Again?”

“I know,” Viggo laughs as he’s reached Sean, anchors himself by draping an arm over his shoulder. “You’d think that they’d get bored by the repetition of their pre-school pranks.”

“Or at least get marginally better at executing them,” Sean agrees. Two shadows – probably Dom and Orli – stumble over their own feet as they scuffle over their booty. “What is the appeal of nicking other blokes’ pants anyway?”

“I suppose it’s not so much the pants themselves but the reaction it usually gets out of you. You’re pretty impressive when pissed off and naked.”
“Oh, whatever, side with them, will you” Sean replies and fully turns to him again, his arms around Viggo’s waist. Viggo chuckles and arches an eyebrow. Sean rolls his eyes but it’s simple pleasures, right? So he calls over to the beach, “Oi, guys!”

The shadows freeze, a second passes, then they relax again when obviously they see that they aren’t in imminent danger. It’s unmistakably Billy’s voice that answers him then, “What’sit, Beanie?”

“When I get my hands on you?” Sean hollers back in the darkest of his villain voices. “I’m gonna make you wear your own testicles as earrings! Just FYI!”

Viggo throws his head back and his barking laughter carries over the waves. Sean presses his smiling lips against Viggo’s exposed neck and licks away the salt there, feels Viggo’s pulse under his tongue.

This feeling, New Zealand, them, Viggo.

Y siempre lo hare.

A king’s ransom in dimes
The empty piece of paper is folded into a little boat, crookedly sitting on the polished wood. It is not really quaint or calming, though.

My fingertips tap down next to it, quiet thud thud too loud for my sleep deprived brain. Just like the dim yellow light of the table lamp is too bright.

I unfold the ship again, straighten it carefully (as if the rishrashing of paper could worsen my headache). And so I stare at the white emptiness again, clicky top shaky in my hand.

I don't even know what I am doing here. Why I got up, thought I could really write something. Anything - it doesn't even have to be good, just anything to capture this moment in order to tame that restlessness.

The snoring from the couch gets louder again, Sean must've shifted onto his back. I write down very carefully

Don't go drinking with Bean. Don't let him crash in your room.

only to crumple the paper right after.

Truth is, it's never a good idea to write in the middle of the night; not when I am drunk and homesick.

Fuck poetry. I switch on my cell and send you a text. I'm asleep on my feet, right in the middle of the unfamiliarity of my room, when my phone beeps, announcing your reply.

"R U feeling sorry for yourself again? Go 2 sleep."

I fall into bed, know all I'll be dreaming of this all consuming trilogy, and be frustrated that you're not in the first part. That you're not here with me now.

***

With ironclad fists I wake up, Anduril gone from my hands. Hazy dreams of battles that I fought in the night, they leave me battered and bruised. War drums are still pounding in my head, and they get louder, spears piercing the inside of my skull, as my cell starts ringing.
God, my mouth. Something has died in there, something foul like an -

"- Orc."

A low chuckle on the other end of the line, cellphone cold against my ear.

"Good morning to you as well," you rumble, the sound of your voice is like honey to my sore throat. "Don't you have to get up for that press thing?"

I growl at you, the world in general, still too groggy to form words. Don't take it out on the messenger. You don't seem to mind, you talk to me softly as I drift in and out of wakefulness for a while as the war drums finally quieten down a little.

"You drunk-texted me last night," you say.

"How can you tell I was drunk?" I ask as if my sandpaper voice wasn't hint enough.

"You spelled 'miss' wrong. Double S, Viggo."

"I do, either way. Miss you."

"Yeah," you say and that little sigh, the pause right after? I want to huddle up in that small space and stay there forever.

"Been too long," I reply. Been forever. Press conference after press conference, interviews with always the same questions only in different languages. Premieres, photo calls, yet more interviews. I don't know how I'm supposed to do this for much longer. The Fellowship is supposed to be everywhere, I am everywhere, just not where you are.

"Not for much longer," you say in that confident voice of yours. "You just have to take one day at a time."

My response equals a broken record. Missyoumissyoumissyou.

"Me, too," you say quietly, and bit louder then, "Now, I think you really need to get up now, you lazy ass."

That's not really what I need, but yeah.

***

"Karl? Which continent am I on again?"

"Europe. You just told me that Lijah wanted to pee from the Eiffel tower this afternoon, remember?"

"Oh, yeah. Maybe I should write that on the back of my hand with a marker, so I don't forget again."

"Nah, the pace you're traveling you'd be scrubbing your hands with scouring agents constantly. Better just call me and ask."

"Any reason to call you is fine by me."

"Since when do you need a reason?"

"With the money we spend on cell phone bills, we could buy a tropical island."
"You'd rather carry a sackful of dimes for a payphone with you?"

"Hell no. Quality of life that I can call you from my bed at night. Public phonecalls would make half our conversations awkward."

"Which half? The one in which you're homesick, or the one in which you're horny?"

"The first. - You think it'd be bad publicity if Aragorn was caught jerking off in a phone booth?"

"Dunno. I'd kick your ass, though. I have an exclusive right to that."

"You're gonna do something about it, too?"

"- Damn phone calls. I hate this."

"Me, too. Won't even matter if I'd fly east or west, either'd be homeward bound."

"I think I'll go insane if I don't get to touch you soon."

"- Want me to do it for you?"

"Fuck, Viggo -"

"That a 'yes'?"

"Stop teasing. Tell me."

***

I am not the only one collecting frequent flyer miles to insanity. Everyone copes their own ways, the lucky ones (Astin for one) can just take their family with them, but usually the new hotel's bar is crowded with men from Middle Earth.

It's not as if I don't have anything else to do - sleeping would be an idea, a shower beforehand maybe - but of course, I find myself with a drink in my hand and Orlando, Billy sitting at either side of me. I eat peanuts and nurse my whiskey, try to remember whether I even have one single clean shirt left for the photo thing tomorrow.

The elf and the hobbit - Orli is tipsy again already and Billy is always acting like it anyway - argue about who called dibs on the bar tender and what her best feature is (tits vs. lips) and want me to judge. I can't look past the slightly crooked blond wig she's wearing. She's everything you aren't - well, as if anyone could ever compare to you anyway. But Orli still takes it personally when she winks at me flirtatiously. He starts tossing peanuts at me, while Billy laughs so hard that he falls of his stool.

Fellowship perks, having food thrown at you as well as busty blondes.

***

Again, I have no idea what time it is exactly in New Zealand. It's late probably, or very early. Seven here and I'm all dressed up, for some reason not a single wrinkle in my elegant black suit and hey, I even managed to tie my tie without it looking totally askew.

I smile wryly at myself in the huge mirror, don't I look a picture right now? This time it's for a fancy dinner - but I suppose if you were here, we wouldn't even leave the hotel room (why you have this liking for tearing elegant clothes off me only to fuck me on the carpet is something I haven't ever
questioned so far. The logic of libido, that’s it for you.

As it is, I have about ten minutes before I get picked up and I can’t say that I'm not looking forward to it. This is supposed to be enjoyment and 'networking' of the better kind after all, and isn't part of the fun of this job that you get to meet up with other people just as intensely crazy about a book adaptation, about the right lighting, about camera angles and character motivations?

I am looking forward to this, an evening in interesting company, I really am. Inspiration swirling in the air and outdoing even the smell of expensive wine.

Of course, given the choice, I'd still rather dress up in sweatpants and a ratty t-shirt to watch TV on your couch.

My fingers curl around the cell phone in the pockets of my pants, but I don't pull it out, resist the urge to call you once again. You're fast asleep right now and you know anyway that I'll be thinking about you throughout the whole evening.

Someone's knocking at the door, kicking the heavy wood a second later, so I guess it is Dom who has been sent to collect me.

Just a few more days. Take each day at a time, you said. Just another week and then -

Dom blinks at me in confusion when I open the door. Maybe it's the unusually elegant outfit which prompts that, maybe it's the huge smile that threatens to split my face in two.

Silence is… actually, TMI is the new gold

I. One day, Armor looked down onto earth and saw the sacred arse. Naturally, he took out his bow and arrows for some target practice.

Basically it all starts with Orlando having a pint with Sean Bean. Well, this is not actually something Orlando really has gotten used to so far. One day he is in drama school and hoping to score a commercial job for hairgel (don’t ask) and the next he is in New Zealand, starring in the biggest trilogy of all times and having a pint with Sean frigging Bean.

Each evening, after PJ has kicked them out of Middle Earth a bunch of them regularly goes out for a drink or two. However, he and Sean are on their own tonight because Karl, Sala and Lawrence have offered to show the new guy around. What’s his name again?

“Viggo,” Sean says and Orlando (not for the first time) has to ask himself whether he’s taken up saying his thoughts out loud.

“What?” he replies intelligently.

“Veeggo,” Sean repeats and takes a swig from his beer. He has foam on the tip of his nose when he talks on. “He is quite the nice bloke, isn’t he?”

“You got –“ Orlando replies and rubs his nose by way of explanation. Sean dries the beer off with his collar and looks at him expectantly. “Uhm, I guess?” Orlando agrees noncommittally.

“Watched a couple of his films,” Sean says and inspects the beer stain on his shirt.

“And?”

“They were crap, mostly.” Sean grins at him and drinks up, orders another pint from the barman with the same motion. “But he is good.”
“Better be.”

It has shaken them all a little to see Stewart leave and some of them remain skeptical towards his last minute replacement. Most of them actually, except for Karl (which is unsurprising because Karl likes everyone) and apparently the usually so reticent Sean.

“Talked to him earlier,” Sean interrupts Orlando’s musings. “He is a football fan. San Lorenzo, I think.”

Which explains a lot, Orlando thinks and smiles into his beer.

“That scar on his upper lip,” Sean ponders. “Wonder where he got that.” Orlando opens his mouth to answer but the other man already continues, “And did you hear how he reacted to the welcome Bob and the guys gave him?” Orlando was there when Sala told them but he doesn’t get the chance to say as much. Sean’s already in the middle of retelling him the tale of brave Sir Viggo. At length. With rather dubious parts of reenactment and even stranger little sighs thrown in. Orlando is nursing the last puddle of beer in his glass when Sean finally finishes, “My kind of bloke, that is.”

“So, slightly bonkers, good with a sword and able to make Boromir drool in .2 seconds flat,” Orlando sums up and grins broadly. “Exactly the qualities our Aragorn needs.”

“Shut it,” Sean laughs and cuffs Orlando’s shoulder amiably almost causing him to fall off his barstool. “He’ll fit right in, you just mark my words. He’s a decent guy,” he traces the rim of his glass with his index finger contemplatively, “and he has quite remarkable eyes.”

“Gosh, I was just about to say the exact same thing,” Orlando replies dryly and this time he falls off his stool when Sean shoves him. While he picks himself up from the floor and notices that his legs are slightly wobbly already, Sean orders a refill of crisps and starts talking about the dimple on Viggo’s chin or something.

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“Oi, Urban, you still not back from that tour? Man, I hate answering machines – I always talk myself into knots and in the end don’t know where I started off. Are you sure you’re not there? I reckon I’m a bit sloshed… Anyhow, I kinda envy you the night off as it were. I got stuck with Bean and man, he nearly chewed my fucking ear off. ‘Veeggo this and Veeggo that and hasn’t he got gorgeous eyes, hands, feet, nose hair?’ I’d be laughing my arse off if my ears weren’t bleeding right now. Anyhow, gimme a call when you’re back. It’s no fun slagging people off like this, you’re a far better audience than this stupid machine.”

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II. The Goddess of love Aphrodite is both very delusional as well as one track minded. Hence it is not surprising that her latest lovechild (a Dane born in NYC) has a strong liking for weed.

Karl likes to bathe with rubber ducks. He also sleeps naked even in the chilliest winter, believes in aliens and plays rugby without having his ears duct taped to his head. Karl also believes and does several other things that entitle him to call himself at least a little whacked. Okay (considering that time when he let Orlando talk him into naked bungee jumping), a lot whacked. Point is Karl knows
what he is talking about when he says, “Vig, you’re completely mad.”

Viggo turns his head and looks at him with that funny, uncomprehending expression on his face he has reserved as response to sensible suggestions. Then he beams. “This is gonna be fun!”

In the river rapids hunt each other down like rabid dogs and Karl suffers from shrinkage merely thinking of the water’s temperature. Fun. Yeah, right.

Viggo however is serious and after yet another powwow with Peter and the Stunties he goes for a dip. “Aragorn needs this”, he says merrily though Karl privately thinks that Viggo is just a good old fashioned masochist who probably sleeps in the fridge just for kicks.

Viggo, in the meantime, has waded into the water, and – after the loud ‘ACTION’ – has gone under. Thing is, so far he hasn’t resurfaced. Karl brushes some blond strands out of his face and watches the crew at the shoreline go mental. Still no sight of Viggo. Huh. Karl goes and gets himself a coffee.

When he comes back, carrying an extra cup with no milk and two sugars, Viggo sits in his chair very much alive. He’s completely soaked and the bits and pieces of him that stick out from under the silver thermo blanket look kind of blue.

“I think in my next life I’m gonna be a walrus,” he announces. Karl hands him his spare cup of coffee. Viggo practically inhales the content and then goes on seamlessly, “And I think Sean would make a really good polar bear.”

“Because he is a grumpy antisocial bastard?” Karl asks as he sits down, getting river dirt all over Éomer’s armor.

“Because he’s majestic,” Viggo corrects him. “And he’d have really warm fur.” His teeth clatter on their own accord behind his blue lipped smile.

“Don’t polar bears eat walruses?”

“We all have to die at some point or other,” Viggo says wisely and the stunt coordinator next to them looks a little sick. Viggo licks the last remains of coffee out of his Styrofoam cup and then says, “But I suppose you have a point. I’ll change to Inuit then.”

“Eskimos kill polar bears,” Karl points out reasonably and tries to scratch some mud off his boots with the tip of his sword.

Viggo snorts which sounds like he has been taking lessons from Brego. “Sean is an Inuit as well. We go hunting together, keep each other warm at night, and drink maté together. Or cod liver oil since I doubt that Argentinean exports reach the poles.”

Karl’s eyebrows rise, apparently trying to reach the glueline of his wig. Viggo on the other hand looks inside of him, ignited by his twisted idea of domestic bliss, keeps him warm and saves him from shivering himself to death. He looks over to Karl and he has that glimmer in his eyes that usually is the ring card girl for something very wise or something very silly.

“I had sort of a near death experience just there,” he says slowly as if only now coming to terms with it. “And I realized something important.”

“Does it have to do with you and Sean and no clothes on?” Karl asks with a half smile because somewhere underneath the silver blanket and the thick layer of crazy Viggo is actually serious.

Viggo grins crookedly at him. “Mostly, yes.”
“Is there a hetero friendly version of this?” Karl asks without much hope.

Viggo answers by calling Sean the Sundance to his Butch and explaining to him en detail how the two of them would be perfect bank robbers together. For a moment Karl is distracted because Philippa hands him a few rewritten pages. When he focuses on Viggo again the other man has developed a God complex atop all his various other quirks – now he is Zeus and Sean is his Ganymede. Karl really wishes that right about now PJ would show up and demand a repetition of Aragorn’s near suicide.

“How about our future together?” Viggo asks when finally he has finished his epic tale of epicness and on top of that looks less blue and more human and alive again, “mate, have you even kissed him yet?”

Viggo just gives him that strange uncomprehending look again as if Karl is the one with a sanity problem. Karl figures that translates to ‘no’ and shakes his head in resignation.

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“Orli, where the hell are you? No reception – the fuck? I figured out why Viggo is so wrong in the head: No sex. Think not jerking off for a couple of weeks and then multiply that. Explains it all. We need to get him laid and soon – I’m pretty certain that Tolkien wouldn’t approve if suddenly Aragorn rides Boromir instead of Brego. Let’s keep it simple and just lock him and Sean up for as long as it takes. Throw in some Viagra just to make sure. Call me – or better just get Sean to tag along to that bbq at Harry’s tonight, yeah? – Zeus and Ganymede… my ass.”

****

III. Ever since Sean and Viggo got together Eros, the God of lust, is so in for an overtime premium.

Orlando hates Karl. He hates him more than back pain, early calls and tea without milk. He even hates him more than he hated his sister when she ripped the head off of his He-Man action figure and he was left with a hunk of meat who couldn’t lead his troops into battle against Skeletor.

Sean has cornered him at the London premiere of ‘Fellowship’ and Orlando knows all the press call photos will have him looking doe eyed and shit. Mostly because he feels like a deer in fucking headlights. Sean has his arm around Orlando’s shoulder and Orlando knows that he’s not safe from anything. Karl is the one responsible for all this with his ‘Oi, mate, let’s help Viggo and Sean have their happy ending’ bullshit. Karl is thousands of miles away in New Zealand. Fucker.

“I like your shirt,” Sean murmurs, lips not moving while he and his perfectly tailored suit stand next to Orlando. “Very posh.”

“Sod off,” Orlando grins and elbows Sean in the side, causing that Bean grin to freeze momentarily.

After the movie (which is frigging aces, no matter how often Orlando watches it) he and Sean leave the theatre together.

“Let’s get ourselves some proper beer,” Sean suggests with a pat on Orlando’s shoulder. “I’ve had it with the bubbly.”
And Orlando couldn’t agree more. Of course they have to attend the party – which is not really a
duty, Orlando still hasn’t gotten used to all the fuss that is been made and he really doesn’t need any
champagne to feel giddy. Viggo is off to do some sort of mating ritual / Spanish dancing with Liv,
Sean gets Orlando a pint of bitter and they talk about the movie with Bernard and Ian. Then someone
calls Sean away and Orlando thinks he might’ve just gotten away lucky and goes dancing with Dom
and Elijah.

Of course, Orlando is wrong and this is why he hates stupid Cupid-playing Karl. Because later that
night, Sean and he find themselves at the bar again and Sean has that look to him, like he has taken
too many Viagra pills and this has not only caused him a perpetual boner but also some brain
damage.

“Uh –” Orlando says and tries to think of something to distract Sean with. “I really, really liked
Boromir’s death scene. Very uh – intense. You’re a great actor.”

Surely, talking about acting will keep Sean from oversharing… other stuff. There’s just one thing
Orlando (who is on his forth beer by now) has forgotten to take into equation. Stupid Aragorn.

“Ta,” Sean says. “Viggo ate garlic that day.”

“Uh-huh,” Orlando replies weakly, knowing all hope is lost. “And Lawrence, he was fantastic as
well. Super job, make up did, didn’t it?”

“Sure,” says Sean and nods. “Viggo also was hard as a rock. Which I suppose I should take as a
compliment, right?”

“Meep,” Orlando says. He really does. Sean ignores it.

“’course I was, too. But we weren’t filming porn, were we, so that was a bit inconvenient.” Sean and
rub his chin at the memory while Orlando contemplates whether he can drown himself in his
remaining beer.

He dares to look up again when Sean’s quiet for a moment and he finds the other man looking at him
fondly.

“Thanks,” Sean says, and his voice is gentle and tentative, like he usually talks when he’s amongst
friends and doesn’t need to play it up. “I know it were thanks to your nudging that Vig and I - ,” he
smiles and it’s such a broad and boyishly happy smile that for a moment Orlando feels mean and
jaded for ever thinking low of his friend. “- that we got each other.”

“Cheers, mate,” Orlando says, equally quietly in midst the still buzzing party around them, and raises
his glass. He nearly chokes on his next mouthful of beer, when Sean steers back on track.

“Though I could’ve done without the sore arse during all that horseback riding,” Sean says merrily.
“Prolly should’ve known that Vig were using a double headed coin when we were flipping for it.
You remember that night when you and Dom borrowed my car and hid that fish in the boot?”

Orlando knows now that he’s being punished. He hates Karl and he hates Dom and he’d swear on
his headless He-man that he’d never ever pull a prank on someone again if he could just get some
earplugs right now.

“Sean, I –,” he tries.

“Nevermind,” Sean purrs and Orlando knows he has seen that grin before. It belongs to that maniac
MI6 agent that he played in Goldeneye. “I had a good night there. Did you know,” he puts and arm
around Orlando’s shoulder amiably, “that Viggo’s feet are really sensitive? Just lick them a bit and if
you bite the arch while fucking him he’ll cum just like that. Quite amazing trait, that.”

“Please,” Orlando begs pathetically and frantically tries to keep the mental image of gay sex, Sean’s
cock and Viggo’s dirty feet from growing roots in his brain. “I want to die.”

“Did you know,” Sean prattles on and tightens his headlock on Orlando a little more, “that the
French call orgasms ‘little deaths’? Remember the night you and Karl played knock and run at
Vig’s? He fucked me unconscious that night. One minute I was a bloody mess under him and
begged him to never stop doing that thing with his hips and then it was suddenly fifteen minutes
later.”

“Oh God,” Orlando whimpers and flails a little like a fish on land. “Can’t you simply kill me? Or sell
me into slavery, I don’t care.”

Sean booms with laughter, lets go of Orlando’s head and then tells him en detail which places Viggo
likes having licked best and in what order.

Orlando hates his life. And Sean. And Viggo’s armpits.

------

“Hello?”

“Someone knock me over the head with something heavy so I lose my short term memory.”

“Orli? Are you crying?”

“It’s Bean’s fault. I hate that man.”

“I thought he was your personal hero?”

“Yeah, that was before he forced me to listen to a detailed description of his and Viggo’s private
time.”

“A bit homophobic there, Orli?”

“Fuck you, I’m not. I mean I love you like a brother –“

“Naaw –,“

“Yeah, yeah, whatever. But anyhow, I love you but I still don’t want a minute by minute account of,
say, Hunter’s birth. Know what I mean?”

“Mate, Viggo made me proof read a love poem for him. He spends his free time coming up with
rhymes and creative metaphors for ‘cock’.”

“Quit whining, you pussy. I know now where he sticks that metaphor.”

“Lalala I can’t hear you.”

“Exactly. I mean I’m real thrilled for them and all. I just want to think of them as holding hands and
know nothing more. Is that too much to ask?”
“You know, ‘sock’ rhymes with ‘cock’…”

“I hate you.”

****

IV. “What?! I’m not invited to the wedding?” screeched Eris, Goddess of discord. “Gay marriage isn’t even legal in most states,” the narrator points out. “Like I care!” Eris huffs and stomps off.

For an actor, Viggo is pretty useless when it comes to pretending. Karl has always known it and always found that quite endearing – if anything about this strange man (who easily took lead of their fellowship within a week and who reads Kierkegaard and graphic novels during his lunch break) can be called endearing.

And it’s not that Karl can call himself a particularly sensible person. He’s not one of those people that can tell when something is up, he hasn’t got this inner seismograph for his friend’s feelings or anything. In fact, every time when Orlando tries to have a meaningful conversation with him he already starts it with ‘listen, jackass, I need you to be compassionate and understanding now, got that?’ so Karl doesn’t miss his cues.

But Viggo? Man, Karl would have to be a fucking blind and mute Vulcan to not be able to read him. Viggo is pretty expressive about everything – instead of saying hello he fucking head butts you, instead of saying ‘I like you’ he rugby tackles you to the ground and shit like that. This stuff is widely known, everyone in New Zealand made fun of it and by now the whole world has to know how to read Viggo Mortensen like a fucking picture book.

Which is why, when Karl meets Viggo in the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, he only needs to take one look at the other man to know that something is wrong.

“Hey, Karl,” Viggo says quietly and smiles quietly and Karl wishes he’d just jump him like a monkey and embarrass the both of them in front of the polite Japanese hotel staff.

“Come here, you, and say hello like a man,” Karl laughs and pulls Viggo into a hug whether the other man wants it or not. Viggo feels small in his arms for a moment and Karl has this weird thought of him shriveling into nothingness right here. Then finally Viggo’s hands clasp his shoulders.

“It’s good to see you,” Viggo murmurs against Karl’s shirt. “I’m glad you could come.”

“Sure,” Karl says and squeezes Viggo’s slender frame once more before letting him go again.

“Anytime. Especially since I’m not paying for it.”

A weak smile curls Viggo’s scarred lips – they work too much and too long during the promotion for Two Towers but at least they get to raid mini bars and steal hotel towels.

They have a late night snack together and talk about this and that. But with Karl’s slight jetlag and Viggo’s apparent absentmindedness they call it a night pretty early before Karl is able to put his finger on why all of this feels wrong somehow, on what’s missing.

The next day they have this press thing with a little bit of everything and Viggo’s still too quiet. Karl finds himself automatically counterbalancing it by being a little too much of everything – too loud, too tactile, too chatty and he even manages to accidentally start to sing while standing on a chair
For a moment he thinks he might have figured out what is up with Vig when they pose for the press and Viggo reveals his self made propaganda clothes. Karl has always admired Vig for his passion for politics but right now? Viggo rambles away about the war and how wrong it is and still seems so depressed and sad that Karl just wishes for some blissful ignorance for his friend. But he has a nagging feeling that this isn’t the heart of the problem anyhow.

All this reminds Karl of the time when they were filming Two Towers, and Sean left for England. They were all but tiptoeing around their leader and for two weeks Astin couldn’t be called by his given name because the mere word ‘Sean’ made Viggo zone out and be distracted for the better part of two hours. Then something shifted, Karl’s still not sure what it was and whether it had something to do with PJ’s complaint about extraordinarily high phone bills. But after that there was no stopping Viggo. He filled the space that Sean’s departure had left by constantly talking about him. While that was getting old pretty quickly it definitely beat the moroseness.

So, Karl tries to nudge Viggo into that direction – he mentions Sean during an interview for some local radio station, he orders some disgusting British food just to ask Vig whether Sean’d like it, and when he gets in bed with Viggo for yet another photo shoot, he jokes that Sean’d better not kick his ass for this.

And Viggo? Doesn’t say a word.

They’re still in bed after the photographer left and Karl feels slightly weird with his boots under the lily white sheets. He turns to his side and faces Viggo whose eyes are hidden under the rim of his cowboy hat.

“What’s up with you, mate?” he finally asks and gives Viggo’s hat a little playful nudge with a flick of his fingers.

“Hm,” Viggo replies, though this is hardly a reply at all. He doesn’t do anything else either, plays possum for all Karl knows. Well, Karl’s not having any of that.

“Is something wrong with Sean?” he asks and there’s a flicker of emotion – something like a splitsecond of fear – in the way Viggo’s body stiffens. “Usually you don’t stop talking ‘bout him and now?”

When Viggo speaks it’s so much of a murmur that Karl has to lean in get it. “All that work; should’ve maybe talked more to each other a bit more before everything went –“ Viggo shrugs.

Karl waits for a second but Viggo apparently is done talking again. “And that’s it?” he therefore asks a little incredulously.

“Well,” Viggo mutters and pulls that hat further down again because nothing is ‘well’, “all good things –“

Karl interrupts him by snorting loudly. “That’s just bullshit, Vig,” he says and shakes his head, “and you know it.”

Viggo’s eyes fix on his again and fucking hell, Karl had been sure that stubborn and cranky were two looks he’d never see on this man’s face. Anger, hurt, melancholy – yes, sure, Karl’s pretty certain that Viggo’s poet’s heart is prone to those. But this doesn’t look like it. It looks like one of those schoolyard fights that just end in black eyes and expulsions because both parties were too obstinate to back down. Karl looks at his friend and sighs quietly. Then he steals Viggo’s hat and
puts it on, getting up. “C’mon cowboy, I know just what to do.”

Viggo looks at him warily. “I’m not gonna –“ he mutters stubbornly.

“Alcohol,” Karl says, “I meant alcohol.”

Of course he’s lying like a trooper and will get this stupid fuck to clean up this mess eventually. Because Karl is not all that perceptive when it comes to feelings but he sure knows when something needs fixing something desperate.

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“Wait, you’re in Japan? The fuck are you doing there, Karl? – Listen, have you talked to Vig recently? ‘Cause I ran into Sean just now and man, he’s a mess. Tired and blotchy eyed and what have you. We got talking over lunch – bloody football Nazi, he is – but not a word about Viggo. Not the usual ‘let’s see how I can scar Orli for life’ shenanigans; nothing. And when I asked ‘bout Viggo just muttered something about his ‘inspiration having been ripped away’ or somesuch bollocks. And then he tried to pick a fight with the waiter who was, like, 7 feet tall and looked like a war criminal. Just the thing I need, getting beaten up before filming starts. – Anyway, you got something on Viggo? Stupid geezers start to worry me. If sodding Bean would at least talk to me; that’s just so bloody typical… Call me, mate, and give my love to Natalie and Hunter and all that.”

****

V. Harmonia has moved back into the neighborhood. She likes the vicinity; the rent is low because the couple next door is rather vocal in bed.

Orlando’s life sucks. Okay, okay, this may be a little harsh. The part of his life where he has a beautiful girlfriend, earns tons of money and has a profession he loves, that part doesn’t really suck. But as for the rest of it? The ancient Goddesses of fate amuse themselves by sending spitballs his way. Bitches.

This was supposed to be his weekend off – no more whiney brat-prince who keeps making faces at the world from behind his brother’s broad and protective back. He loves playing Paris, he really does, Eric is a big goof and Orlando’d adopt him, brother-like, in a second. But this was supposed to be his free three days, dammit. He made plans and all. Karl related, booze involving, surfing plans. And now – thanks to frigging Brad and his frigging taking-method-acting-to-a-whole-new-level hurt heel – he is trapped on set. With Bean, no less.

He closes his eyes behind his shades but his fingers keep nervously fiddling with the armor of his skirt as Bean talks on and on. And on. Orlando’s life sucks. And Sean tells him how wonderful his own is – how much of an inspiration Viggo provides for his sculpting, how much he misses him already, how much he’s looking forward to spending more time with him, not just a quick visit on set but some quiet time with a glass of wine and some piano music, and how much he misses him, has he already mentioned that? Orlando’s life sucks big dinosaur balls.

Something hot and huge and hand-shaped is pressed against his neck and he jerks awake, turns around. His eyes first catch on his P.A. whose fingers play with the car keys in his hand, then they fix on his visitor.
“Karl, you motherfucker!” he exclaims, maybe a little too loudly, and jumps up. He accidentally gets a little tangled up in the linen of his chair and sends it (and very nearly himself, too) down crashing before he all but stumbles against Karl.

“Whoa,” Karl laughs and his arms wrap around Orlando for a splitsecond, then they fly away again as if burned. Well, no ‘as if’ there because Paris’s armor gets really frigging hot in the midday sun.

“So, you’re too high maintenance to pick up your guests from the airport yourself now?” he asks, ruffling Orlando’s hair for lack of other options.

Orlando grins at his P.A. apologetically but the other man just smiles and shrugs and leaves, all in one go.

“His presence is definitely required here,” Sean cuts in, irony lacing his words. Because yeah, Orlando had an early call to shoot about two seconds of film before someone messed up the sound and it was all waiting from then on.

“Sorry ‘bout this,” Orlando says to Karl, meaning the shooting schedule and probably Sean. Karl, who made a de-tour during his trip through Europe just to see Orlando, merely grins and waves it aside. “No problem, mate. I’ll just sit in the shade and watch you guys sweat.”

As if on cue, Wolfgang’s megaphone breaks the silence (why can’t the man send a frigging errand boy? Orlando feels like he’s in grammar school again, schoolmaster’s loudspeaker announcements and everything) and Orlando is called to set. He shrugs apologetically at Karl but the other man gestures him to get lost already, picks up Orlando’s chair and sits down next to Bean.

“So,” Orlando hears him say to Sean as Paris’s sandals carry him towards the cameras, “how are you?”

And he can’t help but smirk when he hears Sean’s happy first sentence, “Great! You just missed Viggo and he –“

“Orlando,” Wolfgang barks, appearing right in front of him like he has the annoying habit to do, “not that smile, yes? Far too mean.” He glares at Orlando and pokes his chest lightly. “You remember you’re the lover, not the villain, yes? So, stop that.”

So, Orlando spends his supposed-to-be-free Saturday crawling in the hot sand in the vicinity of Eric’s huge and slightly sweaty feet. Still, whenever he looks over to his two friends, Sean is talking for the both of them, and Karl just gets to scratch his head every once in a while as his part of the conversation. Then Orlando thinks he has the better end of the deal for once. Sean’s probably right in the middle of telling Karl how Viggo used his back to compose a sonnet on it or something.

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“Fucking hell.”

“I second that with all my heart, Orli.”

“Penis sculptures? I mean, really? I reckon we made a big mistake, getting them back together and all. Like, epic big.”

“They’re gonna force us to come to their exhibition, you know.”
“If I have to hear one more word about love and inspiration and creativity and muses I’ll kill myself.”

“Said the actor and heartthrob.”

“Shut it, assface.”

“Hey, it’s not me you’re mad at. It’s the love birds. ‘I want to drown in your ocean green eyes for they lead to my private paradise’. – They are rather adorable.”

“If there only was a patron muse of shutting the fuck up.”

“No objections from me.”

“Wanna grab some grub now?”

“Hell, yes. – How’s your girl by the way?”

“Oh, things are great. She’s so gorgeous. – You know when I told you about…”

You need all three, all the time, to create that kind of crazy ass, long lasting fire that singes your eyebrows and keeps you warm at night.

– Karl/Orlando/Harry – NZ and beyond –

Genesis

There are different versions of the beginning of all of this. Think about it as the genesis – no mere mortal was there to witness and the one / ones (never rule out polytheism, right?) that were involved, they won’t tell.

Only that in this case, they do, if you get them high nice and proper.

In Harry’s case, it takes rather expensive pot (because Harry’s a bit of a snob when it comes to these things) and an evening with fellow Gondorians that are recently divorced or otherwise slightly deranged and in need of a good story.

“So, it all started like this,” Harry says and sprawls on the lawn of his backyard, his elbow knocking against Sean’s foot.

“I don’t want to know”, Bean says weakly. The joint between his lips makes his words barely understandable. “ ’m not stoned enough fer any of yer buttsex stories.”

A disbelieving cackle from Harry’s right, and Viggo pushes up to his elbows, patting Harry’s belly encouragingly. “You go on, Sinclair. Tell us the epic tale of –”

Bean reaches over to hit Viggo over the head, shutting him up, before he hands Harry the joint.

“Whatever,” he grumbles, but looks at their host curiously.

“So,” Harry says, “it was like this –”
When Orlando first sees Karl, Karl is in full Éomer costume and on horseback, looking like a fucking Northern God, one of those who fires a lightning bolt up your arse if you don’t obey him and drop to your knees in front of him.

But Orlando is nothing if not restraint and subtlety personified, so he doesn’t really drop to his knees to nuzzle the blond hunk’s crotch. Instead, he walks over, pats the horse’s neck, squints his temporarily blue eyes against the sun.

“I’m Orlando,” he introduces himself. “You can call me Orli. Anyone ever tell you that you look like Thor?”

Okay, not so much with the subtlety.

And up until then it was merely Orlando appreciating PJ’s casting choice, but then Karl looks down at him, does this thing with his eyebrows, throws his head back and laughs out loud. Orlando grips the horse’s mane and stares up at him, New Zealand sunlight around him like a halo, or like the fucking epiphany Orlando seems to be having right now.

He invites Karl to the bar with the rest of the Fellowship that evening, and somehow they end up in a sketchy joint that Karl picked, just the two of them. Orlando discovers that Karl has a way of ruining his own jokes by trailing off and forgetting about the punch line. He also discovers that snorting beer through his nose (because Karl is hilariously funny nevertheless) leaves him smelling of booze with a huge wet patch on his favourite orange shirt.

“You know,” Orlando slurs and drops his head onto the bar, looking at Karl. “I really like you.” He points at Karl so it’s really one hundred percent clear who he’s talking about.

Karl leans in and his breath smells of whiskey and peanuts.

“I don’t put out on first dates.”

“How ‘bout the second?” Orlando asks and pats Karl on the shoulder. “Coincidentally, are you free tomorrow night, sevenish? Cause I’m planning on taking you out on a posh date. – By the way, I wonder what candles taste like…”

Orlando is versatile. They drink till three in the morning and Karl already thinks that he must’ve imagined the official wooing plans Orlando announced. Because, aside from the candle tasting (Orlando wasn’t joking about that – Karl doesn’t really understand what motivates him to eat a whole damn candle, especially since it gets them thrown out of the bar), because Orlando actually behaves nothing but amiable and, the later the hour, even docile – he listens to Karl’s stories about filming in New Zealand and whatnot while they stroll through the streets of Wellington.

So, yeah, Karl almost thinks he has imagined it all, and it leaves him with the bitter aftertaste of something missing.

The next day after filming, Karl has barely stepped out of his shower, hair still wet and a towel around his waist, when his doorbell rings.

Of course it’s Orlando.

He is dressed way less exuberantly than Karl expected (though the slightly mad smile makes up for that), one hand leaning against the doorbell and the other holding a bouquet of mismatched flowers.
“My,” he says, in his best charming voice, and looks Karl’s almost naked body up and down, “I thought we were gonna do dinner first, but –”

Karl’s hands are still a little damp against Orlando’s cheeks when he frames his face and kisses him hard.

Orlando, surprisingly, seems stunned for a moment, as if his mouth has problems shifting from talking to kissing. But then he (and his flowers) are everywhere, his tongue is in Karl’s mouth, his body against Karl’s.

Orlando just tastes too good, feels too good, and it’s hunger, greed, that makes Karl find his own footing and kiss back equally hard, tilt his head to suck Orlando’s tongue deeper. He pulls him into the house, they slam into one another, into the wall as the door crashes closed. The Brit’s hand tangles in his wet hair, grasps what it can get to pull him closer and rub himself against him.

Orlando lets Karl control the kiss, yields. Or so Karl thinks for a moment, when it’s his tongue inside Orlando’s mouth but it’s merely a second to catch his breath – and only so Orlando can steal it again the next instant, as his hand finds its way between their bodies to cup Karl’s cock through his towel.

Karl growls in response because this is so fucking good and he shoves against the offered hand demandingly, hard enough to push the other man backwards. When Orlando’s back connects with the wall opposite, he rips Karl’s towel off his waist, leaving him completely naked against a fully clothed Orlando.

“I want, I want – please -?” Orlando’s voice is barely recognizable, stripped of the tease and the soothing-purring undertones, and he seems much younger, even less resistible, and Karl doesn’t even know what he’s agreeing to when he growls, “Yes, God, yes.”

Orlando licks his earlobe, purring promises without words, and that has Karl spurting against his will.

He swallows his frustrated groan as the grip around his cock doesn’t loosen, as Orlando pushes hard against him and follows suit, biting Karl’s neck as he comes as well.

“Shit.” Orlando pants, curse and praise both, when he comes up again, his body still plastered against Karl like really persistent poison ivy and he shivers in the aftermath of his climax. Slightly uncoordinated he accidentally hits Karl over the head with the rumpled flowers which he is still holding, but Karl barely notices.

“Orli – ?” he asks and there’s an urgency in it, an edge to the growl despite the fact that he’s come mere moments ago.

Orlando looks at him like he wants to tell him that that is a fucking stupid question. But instead he leans in to kiss Karl again and lets his body reply to the unfinished proposal. Then he pulls back and announces,

“My knickers are sticky.”

He grins winningly in response to Karl’s snickering, leans against him, “I mean – fuck, yeah. Bedroom?”

Posh restaurants and romantic wooing are overrated in any case. Though Orlando still holds on to his bouquet and some of the marguerites’s petals end up in Karl’s hair.
“… and that’s the story of how Karl and Orlando met.” Harry ends and strikes a match to re-light the joint. He lays his head back, smiles up at the sheep shaped clouds in the sky and exhales smoke after a few moments.

Sean slowly shakes his head, lips pinching as he takes a drag. He obviously decides he really, really is not queer enough for this, three failed marriages or not.

Viggo though, he grins toothily and looks from Sean back to Harry. “Yeah, okay. But that still doesn’t explain how you came to –“

“Oh fer Christ’s sake,” Sean whines, with a smile despite himself. “Tits, cunts, womanly curves. Football. Can we talk about something regular, please?”

***

There are different versions of the beginning of all of this. Think about it as the genesis – no sorryass mortal was there to witness and the ones directly involved, they won’t tell.

Okay, in this case they totally do, because Orlando is the president of the international TMI syndicate, especially when prompted accidentally.

They are at the beach, Orlando, Lij, Billy, and Dom, and they’ve spent the morning surfing. It’s just that after their trip to the nearest Mc D’s for lunch (with Orlando’s fancy new sports car – red and shiny and shaped like a penis), the waves decide to take a midday nap. They paddle around on their boards, bellies full and general laziness taking over as they talk about girls.

“All I’m saying,” Elijah says and pushes himself up to a sitting position on his board, “is that you gotta listen to what your gut feeling tells you. – That’s way more accurate than all this observe and learn shit.”

“You’re shortsighted,” Dom reminds him as he moves closer to the group, “you wouldn’t even know a fucking hint if it was seven feet tall and made rude gestures in your face.”

“A good hint,” Orlando says in that voice of his he uses when giving you advice you usually really don’t want to follow, “is when a bloke looks at you and you can hear him thinking ‘Hey, I really want his cock so far up my arse I can taste his spunk’.”

“Really?” Lij replies, eyebrows raised.

“Yeah,” Billy weighs his head from side to side, undecided. “That could mean all kind of things aside from ‘oh my God, you’re so gay’. “

“Okay, you asked for this,” Orlando says (although no one actually has, but whatever). “You wanna hear the whole story?”

“Is this about Harry and Karl?” Elijah asks slowly.

“Again?” Billy adds.

“Spill already,” Dom says encouragingly.

So, Harry and Karl.

Sure, they have met before, New Zealand’s film community is a small incestuous bunch after all.
Sure, they have talked – about projects, Harry’s favourite rugby team, Karl’s most embarrassing foot-in-his-mouth incident, you name it.

It’s just that once the dirty talking starts, everything else sort of becomes white noise.

“I wanted to fuck you for so long now,” Karl purrs into Harry’s ear, way after midnight at that party of Astin’s, “it hurts just to think about it.”

Harry licks his lips deliberately slowly, the fucking tease. Even if Karl can’t see it in the semi darkness, he can hear the smacking sound above the music and the distant chattering, and rewards Harry with a deep intake of breath.

“Aw,” Harry’s tone of voice is mockingly affectionate, “how bad does it sting, if I say that all you had to do was ask?”

Karl wraps an arm around his chest, pulling him back against him, and his arousal is hard and hot, trapped between their thighs. “You feel that?” he growls into Harry’s ear, “it’s that bad.”

“In that case,” Harry relaxes against Karl and tilts his head back a little so his words are just for Karl, no one else, “I’d like to see you beg for it.”

Harry chuckles, a deep and rich sound, when Karl’s teeth bite his neck in response, and he hisses in pleasure when his wet and warm tongue licks over the mark, up to Harry’s ear.

“I’m gonna fuck you so hard, you’ll be the one begging,” he promises. “Begging me to stop, because it’ll be you hurting then.”

“You think I can’t take it?” Harry responds, jumping to the challenge, lets Karl hear it, too.

“I’ll break you in slowly,” Karl says, a smile in his voice over his own words, and Harry is aroused and amused both and both emotions linger in his eyes and on his lips as he turns around. He bites his lip and looks into Karl’s eyes, tilting his head, seemingly in indecision.

“Promise to be gentle, stud?”

Karl’s responding laughter is too loud and should break the mood, just as Harry’s cheesy contribution to their overall clichéd conversation, but it doesn’t. He still holds Harry close and his laughter resonates in both their bodies. There is no teasing, no fucking around in his voice any longer, when Harry leans in and says in a low voice,

“We’re gonna get out of here. Now.”

Karl leans his forehead against Harry’s, suddenly serene and so very Karl again.

“’bout time.”

They get their coats and really try to make it all the way to Karl’s house. Harry doesn’t really care to end up in some dark alley in plain view of every bloody one who walks by as they – focus, Sinclair, focus.

Karl laughs at him, Harry knows that, and that’s enough. He slams Karl against the nearest wall and just grabs his crotch right there on the fucking street – satisfied, though, when he feels the other man’s rock hard erection – and Karl lets him.

“Can’t wait to get my dick inside you, huh?” Karl growls, pushing into Harry’s hand like a bitch in
heat and still so fully and completely in control.

“Who says,” Harry replies and licks Karl’s chin, “that you’re the one doing the fucking?”

“I do.” Karl pulls him back by his hair, Harry’s saliva on his skin shimmers in the pale moonlight.

“We could argue ‘bout that,” Harry says and snarls in annoyance when Karl’s button fly won’t open instantly.

“Yeah, we could,” Karl answers calmly. “But we won’t.”

He leans forward to capture Harry’s lips in a bruising kiss – and Harry hadn’t really been objecting in the first place, but now about every thought flees his brain, every thought except for embarrassing, wordless needy pleas that translate to dark groans, as Karl spins them around, traps Harry against the wall and undoes first his own, then Harry’s fly, without even once coming up for air.

Harry’s hands fist in Karl’s hair, he sucks on his lower lip hard enough to hurt, when Karl wraps his hand around both their cocks and – fucking hell, combined slickness already, and the cold night air and, God.

Harry growls, impatient and even a little annoyed when Karl pulls back enough to break the kiss, complains, “Hey!” and pushes into Karl’s hand demandingly.

Karl’s strokes slow down as his dark eyes search Harry’s in the dim light of the night.

“Last chance to back out,” he says quietly, challenge and his unique brand of honest concern toning his words. Harry cups the back of his head, locks curling around his thumb, licks his lips, tries to think of an adequate response to that. Something about want and need, and having waited forever for this already. Something about this, between them, being the best, the hottest thing ever.

“Fuck me, dammit,” he sums it up. He groans happily, eyes snapping shut when Karl spins him around, pulls Harry’s jeans down, one hand on his naked ass while he fumbles for something in the pocket of his coat.

Slickness against his opening, Harry’s voice is thick due to fingers pressing into him, when he asks, “You got supplies with you? You fucking planned this?”

Again, Karl’s low chuckle, against his ear as his fingers are pulled out again already, are replaced by something so much better. “C’mon, you know me. – ‘Course I did.”

Harry doesn’t complain about the presumptuousness, in fact he does quite the opposite, he groans way too loud, and pushes back against Karl.

“Fucking exhibitionist,” he curses, and when Karl doesn’t instantly reply, other than with a slow, yes, careful (typical) rocking of his hips, he adds, “You get off on this, don’t you? Anyone might see us; you fucking – Christ, yesss – me?”

Karl presses his full body weight against him, licks his ear slowly while he thrusts into him. “Harry,” he murmurs, dark voice like gravel, “God, Harry.”

Karl’s hand finds his cock – and fuck, he is so close already, he wants to push it away, beg Karl to not end this so soon. But he hears the hitch in the other man’s breathing, feels him – so fucking hard – inside himself, motions jittering and unsteady-hard already. So, he lays his head back, just like before, and closes his mouth over the thundering pulse of Karl’s neck, bites down hard.
Karl shouts his orgasm into the night and pushes him over, too, and Harry doesn’t, can’t stop sucking. Until Karl starts mumbling soothing nothings and there is a dark blue bruise of ownership on his neck.

“That wasn’t a hint”, Billy says after Orlando has finished his story, “that was full on porn, Orli.”

Orlando grins proudly.

Dom hasn’t really any objections against the NC17ness of his friend’s mind, he is rather practical about it.

“That requires a certain amount of bendiness,” he comments. He tilts his head back to try Harry’s position out himself and almost loses balance on his surf board, barely avoiding falling into the ocean. “Is anyone really that flexible? Maybe Gollum.”

“He is an animated character, cunt,” interjects Elijah as he paddles closer to Orlando’s side, belly down on his surf board. “He doesn’t count.”

“And would you please not insert him into my wanking material? Thank you.” Orlando agrees with all seriousness, and shoves Dom off his board into the ocean.

Ignoring the loud splash and indignant complaints, Elijah turns to Orlando again. “And you? How do you fit into that?”

“Mate,” Orlando says, the leer taking over his face in a nanosecond as he stretches on his board, “in every possible way and from every possible angle.”

Which says about everything and nothing, and sums up Orlando’s special kind of discreetness pretty nicely.

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There are different versions of the beginning of all of this. Think about it as the genesis – yeah, yeah, you get the drift.

And in this case, it’s Karl’s turn and his version sounds true and right, like everything he says. He is a pretty down to earth bloke, and a bottle of wine – even if it’s a good strong red that Bernard chose – doesn’t make him drunk. They’ve been sitting here for a good while now, a bit aside from the insanity that is their travelling circus’s idea of a camp out to get a good shot first thing the next morning.

“In vino veritas,” Bernard says and toasts Karl with his wine glass / plastic cup.

“You’re drunk,” Karl states and pokes him with a stick, conveniently lying next to him on the clearing’s ground.

“I’m most certainly not,” Bernard replies, sips from his wine and then says with the random depths of the slightly inebriated, “I met my wife at a wine tasting, we both held the same Merlot in our hands. Very classy.”

“Orlando and Harry,” Karl replies and refills his cup, “met in a men’s room. They both held their dicks in their hands.”
“Very them.” Bernard nods, though not believing it, and looks at Karl in the moonlight. Amusement and interest twinkle in his eyes as he waits for the story.

“You don’t say. But seriously now, – “

He meets him in the Gents of Jerry’s bar. Orlando is minding his own business, and yeah, maybe sighing a little too blissfully when he finally gets the chance to relieve his bladder, when a low chuckle makes him look up. The guy standing next to him looks amused and goddamn, Orlando always had a thing for salt and pepper hair, and he is a sucker for that kind of smirk as well.

So, he smiles his own winning smile at the guy and makes conversation while they take care of business and then wash their hands – and somewhere between that and the next five minutes something happens that he can’t really suss out later.

‘Cause he finds himself with his back to one of the stall doors, kissing the gorgeous salt and pepper bloke and grinding against him.

His brain zones out again and he floats, no, fucking drowns in a wave of endorphins – he is close to hyperventilating because he doesn’t get enough air, it’s rough enough to leave bruises on both their bodies, there’s no finesse to it, really, just a good honest hard fuck between two strangers.

With their pants still around their thighs and the other’s saliva and semen still not dried on their skin, they lean against one another, panting for oxygen. Orlando cups a strong jaw in his palm and gets a responding smile as the man runs his fingers through his Mohawk. And again, Orlando finds himself smiling broadly, the kind of smile you greet your mates with.

“I’m Orlando by the way,” he says and holds his hand that had just minutes before been used for way more intimate introductions. The guy laughs but takes it, his grip firm as he pulls Orlando closer again for a last kiss.

“Nice to meet you,” he says and introduces himself, “Harry.” Before their ways part again.

Orlando shouldn’t have time to think about him, really, not with production starting and everything, but hey, that’s what wet dreams are for. Okay, and the fifteen minutes wanks right before getting up. And the ones before going to sleep. Shut up.

They start shooting Fellowship and everyone is enthusiastic and overworked at the same time, crow feet from smiling meet dark bags under the eyes, and there are new faces every day. So, Orlando at first doesn’t really pay attention when Pete introduces the guy playing Isildur. Well, until he hears his name and for a second thinks he is caught in one of his daydreams again.

But no.

Harry, gorgeous salt and pepper, making little mewling sounds when he comes, Harry is standing right in front of him and smiles broadly, recognizing him instantly. Orlando responds in kind (how could he not?) and shakes the offered hand with a memory of that firmness.

“Hi, I’m Harry,” Harry says, for the second time.

“Hey,” Orlando replies, still holding on to that hand, grinning, “nice to meet you.”

And Harry understands that Orlando really means it because they end up fucking in his trailer not thirty minutes later.
It’s not that Harry has a rule against on set fucks or anything (hell, Harry doesn’t have that many rules in general) but usually, they tend to fuck up a shot right along. Which isn’t that good, and he really, really wants to be a part of this movie. But with Orlando it doesn’t seem to be a question – they just tend to fuck against and on every available surface whenever they have ten minutes spare time, and that’s that.

They fuck in Orlando’s car on Harry’s driveway, in Harry’s hallway, on the stairs, in the bedroom. They fuck in one of WETA’s broom-or-whatever closets while Richard and his team explain prosthetics only a few feet away.

They fuck during shots and Orlando smacks Harry afterwards when he makes fun of his blond wig. And when they don’t, they hang out or talk on the phone. Or they don’t.

It’s no big deal.

At first.

But somehow, Harry can’t really remember when he’s last thought a complete thought that didn’t involve Orlando. There is just something about the way Orlando laughs and smiles, he reassures himself – no, the way he laughs and smiles at Harry.

Sometimes, Orlando doesn’t even seem to realize that his arm is still around Harry’s shoulder even though they hugged hello several minutes ago. Sometimes, Orlando’s thigh presses against Harry’s on Pete’s couch (when they’re watching dailies) and Orlando doesn’t even seem to notice that there’s no real need to sit this close.

Harry knows exactly what that means. Well, okay. He knows what it means for him, but let’s face it, he is a bit of a stalling coward and doesn’t do big romantic – huh.

Lost somewhere in his thoughts, it must have slipped his notice that it’s raining like fuck and that still, he’s walked over to Orlando’s place and rung the doorbell. Huh.

Before he can turn around, the door opens.

Orlando rubs his eyes and his hair is an even bigger mess than usual. He blinks sleepily.

“Hey,” he greets, surprise in his voice. “What are you doing here?”

Harry scratches his head. Actually, he has no idea. He isn’t good at this kind of thing – pictures he can do, but words? They don’t scare him, really, but they make him feel uncomfortable. Sneaky fuckers turn on you all the time. Sort of like right now, when he has still to answer to Orlando’s question and can’t think of a single thing.

“I happened to be in the neighborhood?” he tries, unconvincingly.

“Bullshit.” Orlando replies and gestures him to come into the house, talking on as he walks ahead of him towards the living room.

“Let’s see, we shagged only a few hours ago, so you can’t be that desperate.” When, untypically, Harry doesn’t cut in, Orlando goes on after the shortest of gaps. “It’s the middle of the night, and we have early calls tomorrow, you smell of Dutch courage and are soaking wet.” He tosses him a spare t-shirt. “What’s up?”
“I –.” Harry starts. Dammit.

Orlando, who has busied himself picking up some of the random clutter and scattering that always follows his wake, stops. He looks at Harry – wet and fidgety and silent and a whole bunch of other things he usually isn’t – , and maybe the intensity of that look should make Harry feel uncomfortable, too. A frown darkens his always cheery features and Orlando says, “Cut it out, Harry. You’re starting to scare me.”

“Sorry”, Harry replies – and finally a word he means. Awkwardly he dabs his face with Orlando’s t-shirt. “It’s just that – I think –”

Fuck that. He drops the shirt and Orlando doesn’t move away when he clasps the younger man’s face with both his hands. The kiss that he breathes onto Orlando’s mouth is wordless and too soft and oddly unfamiliar so far, but it’s the best he can do. He licks Orlando’s slightly parted lips, pleads, “You know?” before he kisses Orlando again.

They kiss wet and a little hungrily, but unhurried.

They kiss until Orlando’s low rumbling purr of appreciation makes Harry draw back enough to say with a smile, “Hi.”

“Hi,” Orlando echoes quietly in a low voice, and for a third time he says, “Nice to meet you. I’m Orlando.”

Harry snorts, and Orlando grins in response, a smoother edge to that now, though. He tugs at Harry’s wet shirt, amiable mocking, before he looks him in the eyes again and replies,

“And I might just be falling in love with you as well, asshole.”

“And that’s the story of how Harry and Orlando met,” Karl concludes and leans back against the bark of his tree.

“Which one? And what about you?” Bernard asks. “What does a guy have to do to get the truth out of you three?”

Instead of a response, Karl pokes Bernard with his stick again. The older man swats him before he tosses a handful of leaves in Karl’s direction.

***

Most of this isn’t true.

The general idea of it though, that is right.

Like how Harry might appear to be the mature and grown up one but in fact has the most ludicrous sense of humour. Like how Orlando may seem like the most innocent and pure creature on God’s green earth, but really has a fantasy that would make the seven sins blush. Like how Karl may converse mostly by shouting and throwing stuff, but is the sensible (and sensitive) one.

Take wood and gasoline and a match. Leave out the match, you got great potential, but no real fire. Leave out the gasoline, it’s merely a smouldering, slow burn. If you leave out the wood, you got instant flames but they won’t last.
They trust Karl to make the important calls, they trust Harry to lighten up their lives with affection, they trust Orlando to keep them moving forward. One of them always flavours every of their days, one of them always listens, conciliates, encourages, one of them always pulls them closer together after sundown.

You need all three, all the time, to create that kind of crazy ass, long lasting fire that singes your eyebrows and keeps you warm at night.

That’s how it is with Karl, and Orlando, and Harry.

And they know, even if they don’t tell.

That pink Mûmakil is totally cockblocking me

So, Harry, Karl and Orlando they own this house together. If you thought that a couple would have problems fitting the stuff that came from their former two flats into one place, then you have no fucking idea how it is with them.

Harry is so fond of all the stupid crap he has collected over the years that each and every single bit that Orlando and Karl put on the roadside he drags right back. Including the stupid ancient toilet lid he claims he got from Keith Richards.

Karl doesn’t own that many things but they are all huge and they are all pretty awesome, they all agree on that. So obviously they take the food processor that can cook coffee as well and the giant football field of bed with them.

Orlando doesn’t mind losing, like, half of his stuff, or maybe even more; problem is that he turned big time earning movie star at the easily impressed age of 20 and hence owns everything that money can buy. So there is still pretty much a whole fucking lot of Orlando’s stuff to fit into their house.

They pay a company to help them move in because yeah, they do have friends who’d give them their livers without asking twice, but surprisingly not one of them was free for the weekend they decided to move. By the end of the day, they reduced two of the bulky moving company guys to tears. But all their shit is in the new house, so yay.

The only thing that is missing is a proper couch. Each one of them has had one but Orlando decided that Harry’s was probably caustic, Karl’s accidentally died when Harry torched it (don’t ask) and Orlando (and his miniature bum) owned this tiny little thing that was about the size of a cushion.

So sofa shopping they go and since they argue so much that it gets them thrown out of IKEA (Orlando may have instigated a pillow fight in the mattress section), they get royally shitfaced instead. All three of them suffer from a kind of blissful 24 hours amnesia after that, but since they wake up in their own house in their own bed in various states of undressing (Harry is, in fact, wearing one sock and his boxers which however had been converted to a hat) neither of them really worries about that.

Four weeks later, however, a guy from some shady furniture store stands on the doorstep at fuck early in the morning and shoves a clipboard into Karl’s face. Karl hasn’t had his morning coffee yet and more importantly he hasn’t had his morning waffles, made by Harry with Orlando’s deluxe Belgian Waffle Maker WM700P. So, he doesn’t even ask what this is all about, he just signs his name (or ‘Orli Sinclair’, he isn’t really sure about that later) on the dotted line, leaves the front door open and stumbles back to bed.
He is rudely awoken later by Orlando screaming bloody murder. When Karl runs down the stairs he can just make out Sidi’s tail that looks out from behind the old Juke Box in the hallway that had belonged to Harry’s grandfather. Instead of joining the dog in his perfect hiding place, Karl goes to investigate and finds Orlando in the living room, close to hyperventilating.

The reason for Orlando’s outburst (not that he actually needs a reason to start jumping around and flailing like an insane person but anyway) is the huge sofa that takes up the better part of the room.

The huge pink sofa.

The huge pink furry sofa.

Actually, that thing looks like it has come out of a crack induced nightmare of Walt Disney. It is the size of a Mûmakil but looks like a fluffy kitten. That is pink. – Karl doesn’t really think there are any proper similes in the English language that can fully describe the sofa and gives up searching.

Orlando takes one look at Karl’s face and Karl makes a sound very closely related to that of a dying frog. Orlando’s mood changes from hissy to laughing fit which means he isn’t really master of his own body any longer. Stupid coincidence that he is holding a huge mug of hot tea and when he topples over, the contents of the mug spill all over the dead pink Mûmakil in their living room.

When Harry, armed with his waffle spatula, comes in a few moments later, there is already no way that they cab still return the sofa and get their money back.

So they keep it.

It’s actually not all that bad, if you look past the outer appearance. Its size has definitely its advantages. All three of them, plus Sidi, can lie sprawled over it while they watch TV and even if one of them happens to fall asleep on it because their idiot of an agent sent them a script that is fuck boring, they never wake up with back pain. Only maybe, in Harry’s case (who prefers to nap on his belly) with a mouth full of pink fluff. Basically, it’s a good, comfortable sofa and they like it.

Of course, then Orlando goes and ruins it all. Not by spilling more stuff over it, they are pretty used to stains of all sorts, no. But by insisting on watching a Steven King movie marathon.

Orlando has this thing for horror that any psychologist would probably explain very eloquently and at length, but it’d all translate to this: Horror makes him horny. This is the only reason why Harry and Karl bear with his weird love for Stephen King; Harry never understands the plots and Karl secretly has nightmares for a week afterwards. But anyway, they watch that shit scary movie with the clown, then the weird one with Emilio Estevez and the trucks that come alive and then they watch ‘Carrie’.

Orlando turns to them, right cheek stuffed with popcorn, and says, “Man, inanimate objects coming alive. Awesome, huh? It’s like,” and he pats the sofa cushion next to him like it was Sidi, “you do have a mind of your own, don’t you, Britney?”

At that moment, Harry just looks at Orlando with his complete blank expression and Karl merely secretly swears that he’ll never fall asleep on Britney the sofa again.

But in hindsight, this is definitely what started it.

From that moment on, the sofa tries to terminate their relationship. They are going to end up miserable and alone and then Britney will eat them.

The first one to suffer from Britney’s wrath is (fittingly) Orlando himself.
One evening he comes back from some press thing completely and utterly beat. He honestly just survived the afternoon of ‘Orli, pleeease sign here!’ and ‘Orliii, please make me a baby!!1!’ by telling himself what he has to come home to.

Because you have to know that Orlando loves Karl and Harry and awful lot. A ridiculous amount of ‘lot’ actually. So much that in comparison it would make Will Turner look like a hardcore rationalist, Paris like a cold fish. So, obviously whenever he is stressed out, nothing can help him relax more than Harry and Karl.

All through the afternoon, while Orlando is smiling for the cameras and signs photos of himself, he tells himself that in the evening, Harry and Karl will be there for him. They’ll welcome him with open arms and a ready meal, they’ll listen to him ramble a bit about stupid press things and then they’ll shut him up by kissing him and making Goddamn earth shattering love to him.

Orlando comes home to a dark house. Frowning, he lets himself in, switches on the light in the hallway, calls their names. Nothing. He drops his jacket where he stands and checks Harry’s study and the kitchen. Still nothing. Then he enters the living room and switches the light on.

What awaits him there is the sofa Britney and a jumble of naked body parts draped over her, like some weird Beuys exhibit.

Orlando clears his throat. Nothing. He clears his throat again. Karl shifts and Harry rolls off of him, coming to lie next to him. His mouth is open and he is drooling a bit. Karl’s stomach and his chest are splayed with come, making the dark hairs on his skin and some loose pink fluff stick together.

Orlando doesn’t bother with the throat clearing again and instead shoves one of the vases Harry bought on some garage sale from the table. The loud shattering echoes in the living room. Harry falls of the sofa and Karl’s eyes shoot open.

“The fuck?” Orlando demands.

“Ugh,” Harry says. Karl rubs his face with his dirty hand.

“I’m just gonna ask one thing,” Orlando growls. He is not a possessive person and certainly has no problem with his lovers having fun on their own. On a normal day that hasn’t fucked Orlando up completely anyway.

Harry groans on the floor and manages to raise himself up to his hands and knees. Karl’s eyes already have a difficult time trying to stay open.

Really, usually? No problem for Orlando. Except for –

“Will anyone of you two dickheads,” Orlando asks, “be able to get it up again tonight?”

Harry crumbles into himself and rests his head onto the upholstery of the pink sofa, and apparently plans to spend the night. Karl looks down at his cock and whines pitifully. Orlando crosses his arms in front of his chest and taps his fingers against his biceps.

“The fuck, guys?” he repeats, accusingly.

“Ngh, Orli,” Karl says and in his state he obviously thinks this is explanation / excuse enough.

“The sofa made us do it,” Harry mumbles against the plush.

“I hate you,” Orlando announces and stomps out of the living room. “I’m gonna take a bath now and
use all your bubble stuff.”

Orlando slams the door dramatically and tosses off in his overflowing bubble bath while thinking of Bean slowly killing Harry and Karl. Well, okay, not really. His fantasy started out that way but somehow it ended with Harry and Karl making Bean beg for their cocks. Anyway.

Orlando goes to bed still pissed off and even though Harry makes it upstairs during the course of the night Orlando doesn’t snuggle up to him. Much.

However, the evil pink Mûmakil of evil does not stop by cockblocking one of her owners. It is determined to ruin them socially as well (and then it will eat them).

Regarding social activities and social skills it’s always been a bit of a challenge for them before in any case. Harry has this tendency to become completely distracted and people are known to become rather irritated when he walks out on them in the middle of a dinner party because he’s just thought of something. Karl’s humor and his sometimes slight miscalculation of who might find which prank funny alienates people sometimes as well (he still doesn’t really get why Dom is scared of him. All he did was put his drunken ass onto the hood of his car and drive him home). Orlando, well, he’s Orlando and no one (including himself) knows beforehand whether he’ll be his kind and attentive elf like self or that one’s evil twin that gets drunk and starts demolishing stuff like a demented rock star.

But of course they have friends who don’t mind their little oddities (because that’s what friends are for, right?).

Harry for example, he has his friends bundled to interest groups. There is the flee market bunch that Karl and Orlando only allow him to meet every other month because, well, they go to all kind of sketchy garage sales and whatnot and there’s only so many iron bedpans on the wall they can stomach.

That night he decided to go out with his fellow oenophiles. Which basically means they are getting hammered on wine and eat a lot of cheese during the course of the evening. They agreed to meet up at Bob’s house but there, when they’d all been there and had a few, Harry remembered that he’d bought this fantastic Pinotage and dragged everyone back to his place.

“It’s a fantastic wine,” Harry promises again as he opens the front door to his house. “It has this excellent sweetness to it that you wouldn’t want to miss.”

He holds the door open and lets everyone step over the threshold, coming in last, and continues. “That merchant I found last week is honestly worth checking out, if only for the South African wines.”

“Uhm, Harry,” Bob says in his quiet voice, like when he’s whispering one of his wine secrets. His nose is already a little red.

“Didn’t ask whether they delivered though,” Harry muses while he tries to remember where he’s put the wine in question.

“Do you realize that uhm,” chimes in Rita and she looks a little white around the nose.

“Yeah, I know,” Harry waved her off. “Everyone delivers these days. I still don’t understand why people would want to miss out on –”

“Sinclair,” Brent interrupts him. “There are people copulating on your couch.”
Helpfully, he points towards the glass fronted living room door.

Harry steps forward, for a second actually afraid that some random fan / stalker broke into their house and is tossing off to the smell of Orlando’s socks or something. He is extremely relieved when he finally manages to look through the glass.

The room is dimly lit with candles, solely the white ones that Orlando likes to play with, and in the darkness the plush of the sofa isn’t as hazardous to the eyes for once. On its upholstery lies Orlando, hands tightly gripping Karl’s hips. Karl is riding him, one hand wrapped around his own cock while he fucks himself on Orlando’s, leaning back on the other man’s thighs to allow deeper penetration. Orlando bites his lower lip like he always does when concentrating really hard on trying not to come. His cock is pistoning in and out of Karl’s body with a frantic violence that has already reduced Karl to mindless gasps while he stares down at Orlando like he was a revelation from –

“Harry,” Cloe says and taps him on the shoulder, “don’t you think we should uhm, go back to Bob’s place?”

“Huh?” Harry grunts distractedly. The flames of the candles closest to the sofa flicker and the shimmer dances erratically over sweat covered skin, illuminating them like –

“I’m all for free porn,” Bob announces, somewhat boisterously, “but this one is lacking boobs.”

“I really think we should leave now,” Brent says calmly.

“Huh?” Harry repeats and drags his eyes away from the glassed front.

“Yeah, right. Of course,” Cloe agrees, somewhat reluctantly though.

With various degrees of relief the wine club starts turning towards the front door again.

Harry however, lingers and while everyone else is trying to sort themselves out, he opens the living room door. Heat, the smell of sex and low grunts flood out. Harry sticks his head in and asks,

“Care if I join you?”

The reaction of the two men on the couch is immediate. Both of them freeze and look at Harry (and the people still standing behind him) with wide eyes. Then Karl groans and buries his face in Britney’s fluffy pink backrest. With a voice deadly calm and still rough from sex, he enquires, “Harry, is that your wine club in our hallway?”

Harry turns his head, somewhat confused, and when he turns back to Orlando the other man’s face has changed from flabbergasted to concentrating-not-to-rip-Harry-a-new-one.

“I can’t bloody believe it, you wanker. Don’t you ever use that fucking head of yours for thinking?” Orlando curses, his accent thickening in the process, anger pronouncing every fiber of his naked body. “Only you and your fucked up logic could fucking think this a good idea! Get these poor people out of our fucking house! NOW.”

Harry pulls the living room door shut and turns to his traumatized guests. “I suppose this is a No. – We’re heading back to Bob’s?”

The wine club nods rather frantically and they can barely hold themselves back not to elbow one another out of the way, trying to get out the door.

Harry thinks for a moment, almost on his own in the hallway now, then he opens the door to the
living room again. Orlando is leaning up on his elbows now, kissing Karl with feverish need while still cussing a blue streak.

“Has either of you seen my case of Pinotage by any chance?” Harry asks.

This time, a fluffy pink cushion hits him right in the head when Karl throws it at him. It feels like being attacked by an angry dead cat. Harry takes this as the second disappointing ‘no’ of the evening.

Stupid fucking Britney.

Intermediate result: Thanks to the couch Orlando has – for the first and very scarring time in his life – had to experience sexual frustration and Harry has to search the web for new drinking buddies / wine friends. This, by the way, will never work because Harry for some reason always manages to nuke his pc within fifteen minutes and Orlando, always helpful, is never really a help but just shows Harry where to download videos of people sticking weird objects into their asses.

Which leaves Karl. And Britney. His strategic carefulness against her fluffy pink evilness.

Karl does not try to torch the couch, no matter what Orlando says. He has just been smoking some weed in the living room and even if Orlando claims that he came back just in time to wrestle the lighter out of Karl’s hand, that’s just because he is a filthy liar who enjoys to LIE.

Karl is not happy with Orlando rolling his eyes at him and appointing Harry as his babysitter. Especially not after, during dinner that night, Harry cries tears of laughter when he tells Orlando the story of how Karl, slightly high, told Britney in his firm!voice that she’d either behave or they’d give her up for adoption. Harry is a fucking liar as well and he and Orlando can just go to hell with their stupid lies.

Karl is not scared of a sofa. He is not a nutcase who believes in Orlando’s Steven King fantasies. He most certainly does not insist on sleeping in the middle of the bed so that Orlando and Harry can guard him against the sofa of doom.

Harry wakes in the middle of the night, the lightest sleeper of them all, because Karl has curled up against him and is mumbling mumbo-jumbo into his t-shirt. Harry tries to make out any actual words, but Karl’s monologue is slurred and Orlando’s background snoring is rather distracting.

Harry runs his hand down Karl’s back, rubbing slow circles and the other man’s breathing evens out, turns into a half awake pleased purr. Harry kisses his hair and when he lays his head back onto the pillow, Karl looks up at him with unfocussed eyes. He lets himself be pulled up for a slow kiss and they both laugh when it turns out a tad difficult to arrange their sleep heavy bodies.

“Shush,” Karl snickers, “or we’ll wake sleeping beauty.”

The snoring abruptly stops right on cue as Orlando shifts onto his side. Harry and Karl hold still for a moment, waiting for him to start again, but after a moment, Orlando grunts, “Too late, fuckers.”

The other two men ignore the insult and return to their kiss, teasing tongues enough show for Orlando to grumble, “Sod sleeping, ‘m pretty enough already,” before he joins the fun.

No one ends up with an elbow in his face or a knee in his privates, thanks mostly to the late hour of the night and the still a little sleepy libidos. The sex is still good, though. A little disgusting (as per usual Orlando is the one ending up with cum all over his face), a little rough (Harry thinks he might feel Karl’s cock in the back of his throat for the next month or so), a little romantic (“Wouldn’t know what I’d do without you”) and a lot of oh-yes-God-fuck-please-harder-more-Jesus.
Karl collapses onto his back afterwards, his chest heaving as he is trying to catch his breath.

“Lovelie” he says and slightly awkwardly pats his partners’ thighs.

“You only ever say that after we’ve fucked your brain out,” Orlando observes, a little breathless himself.

“Good thing that you make sure we do that at least three times a day.” Harry laughs and kisses Karl’s naked and salty shoulder. “Night.”

They all fall silent, and again two thirds of them wait for Orlando to start snoring again. Instead, he shifts a little back and forth before he presses himself against Karl. He kisses up the other man’s neck, then falls very, very still.

“Did you hear that?” he whispers, breath hot and loud in the other man’s ear. Karl strains to listen. When he shakes his head, Orlando pushes a bit closer against him yet and whispers urgently, “I definitely heard something downstairs!”

He waits for a moment while Karl stops breathing. Then he whispers, drama a bit overdone in his voice, “Fuck, it must be Britney!”

Karl growls and slaps the back of Orlando’s head, but relaxes again.

“Oh God, she’s coming up the stairs!” Orlando shrieks quietly and spastically clings to Karl. “She’ll EAT us!!”

“Orlando,” Harry rumbles, half way in dreamland already. “Stop fucking with his head. I wanna sleep.”

“Bastard,” Karl mutters to Orlando and cups the back of his head to pull him closer.

“Love you, too, you giant pussy,” Orlando replies, and not five minutes later he’s snoring again and Karl happily falls asleep.

They figure, they’ve reached a sort of truce with the sofa. Or Orlando thinks so, Harry calls him an idiot and Karl still doesn’t trust the damn thing. Anyway, they sort of get used to her pink and fluffy presence in their life and go back to appreciating her largeness by slouching about in the living room a lot.

Two weeks later however, someone forgets to put Harry's bean chili tacos somewhere dog-safe. Sidi eats all of them and five minutes later vomits them out all over the pink glory of Britney.

They have to get rid of the sofa after that.

Officially, they are damn glad that they now can buy a proper manly black leather sofa.

Secretly, all three of them are a bit bummed about Britney’s death.

Like dangling from a hot-air balloon

“I realized something,” Harry says out of the blue and switches the telly off. The epiphanies Harry has while watching crappy daytime TV are usually to be treated with caution. Sort of like appeasement suggestions made by Adolf Hitler.

“Has it to do with the size of your dick?” Karl therefore asks back skeptically from the sofa without looking up from his paper.
Orlando’s feet are shoved under Karl’s thighs and he inspects the joint between his fingers contemplatively before he says, “Because we know about that already, donkey.”

“Fucker,” responds Harry with about the same heat to his insult and elaborates anyway. “It is intensely lovey-dovey-couply of us that we have routines for everything.”

“Routines?” asks Karl.

“Lovey-dovey-couply?” asks Orlando.

Harry exemplifies, raising his hand and counting points, “We got a routine for sex, loading the dishwasher, fighting –”

“Very fitting,” interrupts Karl dryly, “since the only arguing we ever do is about whose turn it is to do the dishes.”

Orlando snorts at that blatant ignorance of anything resembling reality. Harry focuses on the more practical part of that sentence.

“Not mine,” he instantly replies and demonstratively props his feet up on the coffee table.

Orlando takes another deep drag from his joint. His voice is even smokier than before when he adds, “Also very fitting because the solution to all our fights usually is sex. It is very zen of us, this whole dishes-fighting-sex thing.”

Karl and Harry look at one another across the room. Then they decide that Orlando had enough pot and that it’s his turn to empty the dishwasher while they are making out in front of the fridge.

All kidding and cruel sexual teasing involving Karl’s lips, yoghurt and Harry’s dirty sex noises aside, they really do have a routine when it comes to fighting. To borrow a comparison Karl drew once, it’s about as complicated, odd and sexy as ballet dance routines (Karl has a rather weird obsession with "Swan Lake" which naturally prompts Orlando to regularly ask him to wear a tutu because that would be sexy. And weird, as Harry adds unconvincingly).

Being who they are, they fight rather often. They fight about sports, about which jobs to take, about whether it is okay of Harry to post doodles of naked Karl on his website, about Orlando waking up their entire postal code by shouting at the telly in the middle of the night, about the leaking tab in the kitchen, about sports, about Georgian women sending Karl their underwear in the mail, about whose responsibility it is to find them a gardener (or kidnap Bean as Orlando keeps suggesting), about sports. Seriously, they fight a lot about sports and they are not even following the same kind of sport. – Cutting this a bit shorter, there is most probably not a single subject they haven’t temporarily declared war over.

When they fight, all three of them have intensely different strategies of engaging and coping.

Orlando (not that this will surprise anyone who has ever met him) loves throwing huge hissy fits. Though the word ‘hissy fit’ is probably the least bit appropriate phrasing for the amount of completely filthy swear words that spice his argumentation. At some point he normally ditches the arguments altogether and mutates into the personification of Tourette’s. When really pissed off he also starts throwing things. Preferably coffee mugs, sex toys or telephones (depending on the location) but on this one occasion he tried to hurl a waffle iron at Karl’s head. It was still plugged in though and Orlando nearly strangled himself with the cord which did fuck all to calm him down.

No matter that every relationship counselor on the planet could tell you that it is completely unhelpful, Harry always drops back to biting sarcasm when engaged in a heated discussion. Despite
evidence pointing to the opposite (i.e. Orlando actually hauling himself at him and promising to ‘punch the fucking smugness of your fucking face’) he remains convinced that his strategy of smirks, derisive laughter and ‘Oh really?!’ is the way to go. Even when Karl tells him that it isn’t. Even when Karl holds up a cardboard sign reading ‘sarcasm free zone’ which he made years back and keeps behind the sofa (Karl likes to be prepared. Both Orlando and Harry (and their arses) truly appreciate it, which doesn’t stop them from calling Karl a highhanded tosser on occasion).

Karl though, Karl is the worst of them by far. On that Orlando and Harry usually agree, even when they are currently in the middle of ripping each other’s throats out. Karl stays completely calm at all times. And uses logic on them. It’s like showing up to a proper manly gunfight with pockets full of Anthrax. Honestly, who does that? In addition to that he’s really big with the silent treatment. It’s something that could slip one’s attention (what with Orlando and Harry shouting at each other) if it weren’t for Karl’s meaningful silences to be so incredibly loud. When he is really, really angry he shuts up completely, crosses his arms in front of his chest and just glares. Death ray quality. If that doesn’t work, he just walks out. Which is just plain cheating.

As a consequence from their different approaches the nature of their fights changes depending on who is involved.

When Harry and Karl fight it’s like listening to two altogether different conversations – Karl doesn’t react to Harry’s irony, Harry ignores Karl’s reasoning. In the end either Harry smacks Karl over the head with his sarcasm-banned sign or Karl makes Harry admit that he is a fuckhead and also wrong as wrong can be. Sometimes Karl just can’t help it and starts laughing (because Harry’s sarcasm is the opposite of constructive but also funny as hell) and Harry just joins in.

When Orlando and Karl fight, Orlando does 95 percent of the talking while Karl just shakes his head for an hour or so. Sometimes he even turns on the telly which is so very passive aggressive that Orlando’s usual reaction (throwing the zapper out of the window) is maybe a bit over the top but absolutely understandable. It either ends with Orlando sulkingly admitting that Karl was right or with Karl claiming that what Orlando said has been his, Karl’s, opinion all along. Orlando usually lets him get away with it.

When Orlando and Harry fight, it’s to the bone, it’s loud and nasty, no punches pulled. But it’s over rather quickly, leaving Orlando with a raw throat and Harry with a headache. And then there is this moment of silence. It’s sort of like being in the eye of a storm only totally not like that. Once they are over this certain peek, measurable in decibel, they calm down, find the middle ground, make up.

They all have different ways of showing they’re sorry. Orlando tends to generously offer bottoming for a whole week, Karl gets Orlando flowers and Harry booze (mostly lifted from Harry’s own stock, mostly because Harry is a total wine snob and only really trusts his own palate). Harry says ‘I’m sorry, I was an arse’ with total irony-free earnestness and in return usually receives a ‘You don’t say’ from Karl or a huge grin from Orlando.

All three of them also do things like that when they haven’t even been involved in the fight. Orlando’s and Karl’s one-sided shouting matches for example not too seldomly are followed by a display of Harry’s cooking skills. Karl’s silent suggestion of going to catch some waves has peacekeeping qualities that should be adapted by the NATO (no surprise, if you’ve ever seen Karl in a wetsuit). And Orlando is known to cut fights between Harry and Karl short by starting to play ‘Michael Jackson – The Experience’ on his Wii in the the same room. That makes it a bit hard to argue. – If you’re in a threesome you don’t need a marriage counselor or a referee. Not if you own a state of the art kitchen, three surf boards and a Wii.

Strangely enough however, the make-up-sex routine mentioned in the beginning only is put into
action when the fight involves all three of them.

It’s not like they never have sex – as Orlando, the king of wooing and subtlety, puts it – with just two dicks and two arses involved. Their lives are so packed with appointments like filming gigs at the other end of the world that they could just as well open up their own celibate monastery otherwise.

They like one-on-one sex just fine – sometimes Orlando and Karl both like it a bit rougher than Harry usually does, Karl and Harry can draw it out for hours while Orlando’s gold fish attention span includes sex, Orlando and Harry have this ongoing one-upmanship regarding the title of the world’s greatest blowjobber and for some reason Karl finds keeping score during sex unromantic. So seriously, even when one of them isn’t even in the country they could probably keep a mid-sized porn company afloat with the stuff happening in their bedroom. They like it best when it’s all three of them, yes, but they manage just fine one-on-one as well.

But. But it’s different when they had a fight.

It doesn’t happen all that often, a serious fight involving all three of them. They know each other’s idiosyncrasies and (mostly) love them as well and even if they don’t they have found a way of working around, say, Harry’s slightly pathological raids on flea markets or Orlando’s oddly timed (and seemingly uncharacteristic) security consciousness that regularly clashes with Karl’s need to throw himself off high altitudes for no apparent reason. They respect that, talk about it if necessary, find compromises without it ever being a real issue. All three of them are strong minded, essentially egocentric and neither afraid to take their stand nor too stubborn to back off on occasion. All of this is exactly why they work.

When they start fighting it’s mostly about completely mundane stuff – like, indeed, whose turn it is with the dishes. But it escalates when all three of them are overworked, frustrated with their momentary jobs or the lack of free time. Tempers rise.

Like three weeks ago, when for what felt like an eternity they hadn’t the time to just spend a weekend on the couch, watch old black and white horror movies from Orlando’s scarily big collection and just be. Karl was on break from filming, Orlando returned from a particularly exhausting promo tour and Harry had a major disagreement with one of the suits financing his new project on exactly that day. Of course, with Harry’s generally belligerent nature, Orlando’s fuse being as short as your average panda penis (1.2 inches, in case you wondered) and Karl’s unbudging stubbornness that is envied by even the most steadfast glacier? They don’t just sit down on the couch, turn the telly on, order in and play Florence Nightingale for one another. No, they fight with the intensity, stamina and volume that make Mohamed Ali’s legendary title fights seem like schoolyard scuffles in comparison.

Somewhere during Round 15 or something, Harry calls Orlando a sleep-deprived toddler with a Red Bull addiction. Orlando gapes, Karl tells Harry to shut the hell up if he hasn’t got anything constructive to say. Orlando yells at Karl that Harry at least is saying something, albeit seriously stupid, while Karl apparently is a fucking mute Buddhist zen master. Harry snarks that Orlando should go and find himself some Buddhist monk to shag then, Orlando (jumbling religions) threatens to strangle Harry with a rosary. Harry insinuates that Karl would love that since necrophilia would go along great with his utter lack of emotion. Karl leaves the house, slamming the door with a bang.

When he lets himself back in, some twenty minutes later, his bare feet are dirty from the damp sand. He hears his own footsteps on the tiles because it’s so quiet in the house. He’s tired and exhausted enough to let that worry him for a second, like he doesn’t know that Orlando and Harry are always there when he comes back.

But of course when he enters the living room Harry is demonstratively reading a magazine.
Unsuccessfully he pretends that duty free perfume (as offered in the magazine Orlando brought back from his flight) is the most interesting thing ever. Orlando sits in his favorite arm chair, feet on the coffee table and arms crossed, the proverbial raincloud still over his head. Orlando loves the concept of holding grudges, it’s just that he is completely shit at it. The wrinkles on his forehead smoothen out the moment he lays eyes on Karl, like he’s just been waiting for an excuse to not be mad any longer. Harry lowers his magazine.

“So, I’m back,” Karl says.

“You don’t say,” says Harry dryly but without malice.

“You’re such a drama queen,” says Orlando with a good-natured sigh and that, coming from him, makes both Harry and Karl grin. For Orlando even running out of dog food is a reason to nearly have a heart attack. Still, with raised eyebrows Orlando looks at Harry, expecting to be backed up. “What? Like storming out isn’t the most diva thing ever.”

“Please,” says Karl and relaxes. Banter is fine with him as long as there’s no object throwing involved. “Getting caught up in a fight with you two is like being stuck in the trenches in the First World War.”

“I don’t have lice though,” remarks Harry. “Can’t speak for Orlando.”

“My P.A. made me shower twice a week, I’ll have you know.” Orlando flips him off easily but then ruins it by scratching his groin. Of course.

Again, Harry and Karl laugh and Orlando joins in. Orlando gets up and squeezes past Harry in order to get to Karl. He brushes his hand over Harry’s shoulder with exactly that easy familiarity that Karl has craved like mad while he was away. Harry smiles and lightly kicks Orlando’s shin in response, his way of showing affection is usually followed by light bruising.

“I missed you two idiots,” says Karl before Orlando can open his mouth. Orlando reaches out for him and lays a hand on his arm, exactly like he’s just done it with Harry, only that he lets it linger. A smile plays around his lips but Karl shakes his head, adds quietly, “Don’t say anything, Orlando. You’ll ruin it.”

Harry’s barking laugh, sounding strangely relieved, bursts into this bubble of instantaneous sappiness that was about to form. He gets up, pushes between them and grabs Karl’s head with both of his hands, lightly knocking their foreheads together.

“Wise man, Karl,” he says with easy amusement.

“Zip it, Sinclair,” replies Orlando. He’s leaned into Harry’s space and lightly bites his earlobe. It’s common knowledge that his murmured orders are enough for ovaries to explode all around the world. That neither Karl nor Harry posses a set of those doesn’t mean they are immune.

“It’s been too long,” Harry says as he leans back against Orlando, curls his fingers possessively in the back of Karl’s neck.

“Yeah,” Karl agrees, cups Harry’s hip with his right hand and locks eyes with Orlando. “Let’s agree to not do this again.”

“What? Fight or leave the country?” asks Orlando against Harry’s neck. He wraps his arm around Harry’s waist and tightly grips the front of his shirt, trapping him between Karl and himself. “How about we never leave the house again and burn all our clothes for good measures?”
“Agreed,” says Harry instantly.

“Fine with me, too,” says Karl. “That will get rid of that lice problem of yours as well.” He laughs when predictably Harry and Orlando give him the exact same look of indignation and snort derisively at the same time.

And just like that their fight is over. They’ve known all along that there hasn’t been a real reason for arguing, that being overworked and tired that made them thin-skinned. But still, after a fight like this it’s different for a little while.

Sort of like when you fall out of a hot-air balloon – which is seriously the perfect metaphor for a good relationship, what with the steady calm and the exhilarating height, not because of the amount of hot air, thank you. So anyway, you fall out but manage to hold on to one of the sandbags on your way out. You hang out in the open, just your firm grip saving you from being a big dead splotch on the ground below. But you still wave your fist in the air and shout ‘Fucking Hallelujah’ or something like it. Because you know how stupidly lucky you are to be here, to have this, because you can feel it in the rope burn on your hands, feel it in every pore of your body. And since the two people you love most in the world are dangling right there next to you, you do the only sensible thing: You seize the day and start making out. Preferably after you got back into the basket. Or, you know, your kingdom sized bed.

They’ve been together long enough to feel secure in their relationship. They can go without seeing each other for weeks, without worrying that it just might not be the same afterwards. Of course they know they can rely on one another always. Whether one is in need of a sympathetic ear, a good talking to, an easy distraction or helpful advice, the other two are there to listen, to shout, to sweet-talk, to discuss. Of course they know that the moment they are in the same time zones again, the sex is mindblowing, fun, exhausting in the best of ways; just what you need to feel comfortable in your own skin again (even if Harry’s bites leave bruises).

But for some reason it’s only really after a fight that all three of them realize once again and at exactly the same time how fucking precious and unique this is. They feel it, they all know without saying a word that it’s exactly the same for all three of them. It shows in the way their joined laughter echoes with this strange mix of amusement and relief and gratitude and arousal. The way their kisses are urgent and savoringly slow at the same time, the way skin-on-skin ratio wins over the best I’m-gonna-fuck-you-senseless positions.

It’s all the little things.

Harry breathes ‘you two, man, seriously’ against Karl’s neck and for once Orlando doesn’t rib him for his inarticulacy in romantic situations. Nor does Karl but maybe that’s because Harry is in the middle of sucking a huge hickey into his skin.

Karl looks up when he has his lips wrapped around Harry’s cock and finds both Harry and Orlando next to him staring down at him with something like stunned awe. Sort of like when he got them ‘Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3’ for Christmas. He flicks his tongue, makes Harry curse and winks at Orlando challengingly. Predictably Orlando scoffs and retaliates by kissing Harry in the dirtiest way possible, all open mouthed and groaning. But his hand cups the back of Karl’s head with enough careful tenderness that it makes Karl forget the best of his wicked moves.

Orlando lets Harry fuck him all slow and sweet and for once doesn’t complain about either the pace or the fact that he has a cock up his bum (seriously, if sexual preferences were crappy 80’s movies, on any other occasion Orlando’s would be ‘TOP Gun’ in allcaps). He is too busy jacking Karl off, gasping into his mouth and repeating ‘love you, love you’ over and over again.
They end up in a rather disgustingly sweaty mess, all tangled up, and hug each other close with every limb available. They fall asleep like that, completely content, even though normally all three of them prefer cleaning up and and sleeping on their backs to waking up with a stiff neck and uncomfortably sticky pubic hair (who doesn’t).

Why?

Seriously, how often do you meet your soulmates – mates, plural, try wrapping your head around that – and they are your best mates, your most honest critics, all your wet dreams personified, they are the ones with whom you want to share a cold beer as well as the rest of your life?

Once in a lifetime. That’s how often. Every other day Karl, Harry and Orlando might spar like charged up roosters in an illegal cock fight. But they definitely agree on that thing.
Obsessive movie bonding

Chapter Summary

Continuation of my assorted stories

Fic Titles:

 Fucking hell, if I’d been obsessed before, I’m addicted now, a fucking junkie for you. Every piece of you, I want. I want to rip it from you and not give it back.
– Sean/Orlando – NZ and Malta –

Be good, son
The whole gay stalkerdom period of your life
Orlando Bloom is not a pervert
Face paint
Five times Orlando doesn’t have sex with Sean
Junkie
Pre-ordering dreams**
Picture perfect
Impertinence
If I weren’t so frigging fond of you**
Bibliophilic
Inner organs – splatter!
Tinkerbell and other bullshit

~.~.~.~.~
Of course there are some people who took the whole bonding thing more seriously than I did – and by that I mean bordering obsessive, really.
– Set in Malta and Mexico, filming Troy –

But if we are wise
Obsessive Compulsive Behaviour aka love
Obsessive Compulsive List-making aka 51 reasons
Fragile Stuff and sacred things
You’re still the one I run to
Protégé of Aphrodite, my ass
Hyena
Butterfly effect
Interested instantly
Nothing says I love you**
Proposal
The gun powder plot
Give them to me
Center of the universe
“I’m pretty certain that you are sort of the love of my life. Like, if you needed a kidney I’d gladly give you one. But I am not going to look at fabrics for curtains with you or carry the thousand miniature picture frames you intent to pick up.”
– One-Offs set in the real world–

Fucking hell, if I’d been obsessed before, I’m addicted now, a fucking junkie for you. Every piece of
you, I want. I want to rip it from you and not give it back.

– Sean/Orlando – NZ and Malta –

Be good, son

Sean has been a good kid in school. His grades were good to average, depending not on how much he was interested in the subject but on how much he actually understood. He took part in discussions, loved drama most of all but found something in each neat bite-sized bit of knowledge handed to him. He wasn’t top of his class, he wasn’t a nerd either but he did his schoolwork faithfully, let his mates copy it sometimes and he never was late for class. Not because this would’ve meant repercussions (though it probably would have) but because his Ma had taught him to “be good, son” and that he was. Well, most of the times…

Orlando has been every teacher’s worst nightmare. His grades ranged from aces to mega-bad, depending entirely on whether he was keen on the subject and hadn’t spent the night before the finals out drinking. He wasn’t top of his class, nor was he a complete loser, but school life to him always was more about the social networking and less about the homework bit. He doe-eyed his way through primary school, flirted his way up to 8th grade and while you would never hear anything (neither affirmative nor denying) on that matter from him, there were quite a few rumors about him and that sexy young lit teacher in 10th grade. Ritually after parent-teacher-night, his mother grounded him for a month and asked him to “at least try” to be good for once. Orlando never bothered. Well, hardly ever anyway…

Sean has been not so much of a good kid after school. All the polite-and-quiet needed some kind of counterpart and so young Sean – once the school bell had rung – spend his afternoon doing questionable things involving his earlobe and a golden ring, tried to save money for a motorbike but ended up spending it on cigarettes and Molly Hunman who blew you if you paid for her drinks. He got into a few pub brawls, started a few on his own and when he came to school on Monday morning, his teachers wondered from where the quiet and shy boy in the first row had got that black eye.

Orlando has been such a good kid after school. He brought out the trash once, for example. He also… uhm… there was this one time when he… No, sorry, I got nothing. Orlando was a terrible flirt during school hours but his behavior outside – once the school bell had rung – could only be described as downright promiscuous and possibly liable to corrupt the young (well, other young). He charmed his way out of bar fights and found it perfectly reasonable to come on to his previous opponent seconds later. And when on Monday mornings he tumbled into second period – late as per usual and obviously hung over – the teacher didn’t really ask himself why he was sitting down so carefully. Nor where that smug smile came from.

When they meet for the first time – Sean is reading through his script, a highlighter in his hand, and Orlando comes (only!) two minutes late for that script reading – Orlando beams at Sean full on and blushes pink at the same time. Sean gives a small smile back (promising, quiet, so unlike Orlando in with his radio-active smile and his godawful ManU t-shirt) and tugs at his earlobe because it’s prickling all of a sudden before he returns to his script.

The whole gay stalkerdom period of your life

Sean fucking Bean ruined you for life. Damn him.

Yeah, yeah. Everyone feels like a pervert when they’re 16, right? It’s the time of your life when all
of a sudden you’re more interested in how to get into a girl’s knickers than your own football team – and isn’t that a thought to make every boy feel deeply ashamed.

Thing is you sort of have it all; you’re aces in math and drama and your club rules the universe. And you also have good taste in who you pick to be your own private teen idol. Because Sean Bean has got everything – he’s a brilliant actor, has darn good looks and is as much of a football hooligan as you can get away with when you’re a celeb. Problem is that he supports the wrong team (seriously, you think that no one could be proud of a team that is so fucking SHITTY but you suppose they put something in the water up North). Oh yeah, problem also is that while all your mates have the hots for Kylie and whatsherface Milano you keep lusting after Sean Bean. Who is (not that you need to especially point that out because it’s pretty obvious what with him strutting around naked in most of his movies) a bloke.

So, you’re gay. Not a problem. At least that’s what you tell yourself after you came so hard in the shower that your cum could’ve could shot a hole into the wall and spend the next fifteen minutes sitting on the tiled floor, shivering and coming to terms with that. Gay. Huh. Well, okay.

Not so great is that you just happenend to fall for a fucking movie star. Which is so, y’know, thirteen year old girl of you that it’s embarrassing. You still kind of want to have his poster over your bed – which beats hiding porn under the mattress anyhow since your mom is damn fucking nosey but would never guess that you toss off to thoughts of Richard Sharpe.

But yeah, you suppose that you’ll get over it. And mostly you do. Really. Honestly.

In drama school you sleep with a few guys (and a few girls because really what’s the difference – strawberry blond hair and a Northern accent work as much for the female gender as for the guys). And you’re just waiting for the perfect someone to come along to steal your heart and cure you of your obsession (because it is that. Sean Bean. Seriously. And he still supports the wrong team).

But what happens? One day you do this peculiar one day acting job for some artsy fartsy Wilde movie (which is good and pays the rent) and the next you’re on a plane to New Zealand and Billy Boyd tells you that he is frigging excited to meet Sean Bean. You act all surprised and agree with him because it’s not like you follow the man’s work religiously or anything.

You just think that maybe, just maybe, having to work with him for a year might not really help with the whole project of ‘getting over the whole gay stalkerdom period of your life’.

Orlando Bloom is not a pervert

Orlando’s prone to day dreaming. Especially when Sean’s around. He can’t help it, the man’s voice is like the one of these snake hypnotizers. Sean starts talking and Orlando’s mind starts rising out of its basket and sways in the breeze.

So, Sean’s talking to John in between shots and bits and pieces of their conversation drift over to where Orlando’s sitting.

“… those frigging lice pretty much inhaled my rose bushes…” says Sean.

Orlando doesn’t care much about gardening (at even less about vermin) but he closes his eyes behind his shades and it’s easy to picture Sean in his garden tending to his flowers once this movie is done. And that somehow, in this fantasy Orlando’s the one sitting in a garden chair and sipping a cold beer while giving (unasked for) advice in order to get Sean to bend a little lower? Not Orlando’s fault.
Bean’s. And his darn voice.

“...just wish I had a bit more time, could do wonders with the rhododendron…”

Orlando doesn’t doubt that. He firmly believes that Sean has not so much a green thumb but healing hands in general. And he certainly wouldn’t mind having them all over himself, thank you. They could do wonders there as well. To all those aches and pains Orlando has, especially in his trousers as it seems, whenever Sean’s around. Orlando slumps a little lower in his chair and purrs quietly to himself as he pictures them – without the rushing schedules of movie making breathing down their necks – on Sean’s neatly trimmed grass, spending the afternoon just touching and touching some more.

“…You got any ideas for my compost heap? – No, ‘course it’s not beneath me, you bugger…”

Orlando kind of loves his brain. It instantly scratches the reference to composting and focuses on the really important bit. Sean saying “beneath me” and “bugger”. Yeah. Orlando really prefers to top if there’s a ticky box choice. But he, his cock and his arse really agree that “beneath Sean” and “buggering” sounds fantastic.

So, while Sean faithfully repeats John’s tips on how to lure earthworms into one’s compost heap Orlando is maybe getting a little hard in Legolas’s breeches.

What? That doesn’t mean he’s a pervert, fuck you very much. A man gotta start planning his future some time, doesn’t he?

Face paint

So, of course Sean thinks of himself as the most important person in the universe. It’d be stupid not to. Not because he’s a half way famous actor and a more-that-half-way infamous bloke who keeps marrying random people. It’s because he has to spend all his days and weeks with himself and that won’t change (other than if that lunatic Bloom is right with his “You totally can have out of body experiences when you’re really drunk, fast asleep or just had an amazing orgasm. Trust me.” Sean’s not sure he believes any of that. Orlando’s response is “You just didn’t have sex with the right person.” And someone as sweet and innocent looking as him shouldn’t have any right to have the ability to leer like that. Anyways.)

Sean is his own most important person in the universe and while he thinks that he is rather subtle about it, Orlando has just plopped down next to him with that curios expression on his face that never bodes well.

“Would you marry yourself if you could?” he asks as he hands Sean his part of the huge McDonald’s bag he (or, well, his P.A.) got for them during lunch break.

“Wha’?” replies Sean and disappears from waist up in the giant bag, searching for his burger.

“I mean you’re definitely in love with yourself and I’m sure you wank to fantasies involving your own arse, so why not make it legal and all?” Orlando has the ability to talk nonsense and inhale a burger at the same time. That it leaves his face looking like he were from some native tribe – red and yellow ketchup-and-mustard face painting extraordinaire – doesn’t seem to bother him.

“Excuse me?” says Sean and tosses a handful of French Fries at Orlando’s head. One sticks in his curls. “How would you know that I masturbate to images of myself?”

“Wild guess,” Orlando shrugs and takes another huge bite of his burger. “Makes sense, don’t it?” He mumbles around the better half of a dead cow. “I mean, I do it too. Have jerk off fantasies starring
myself.” He hides his face behind his burger but his eyes peek over the rim of the wrapping when he adds, “And you, obviously.”

Sean has no idea how it would be obvious that Orlando has sex fantasies about him. He really doesn’t – never mind how much he’d definitely marry himself, to answer the initial question. So he looks kind of dumbfounded at Orlando and his peculiar make up, and Orlando grins at him around his burger and toasts him with his 1L container of Coke. And Sean thinks that he might just consider marrying someone else beside himself.

Five times Orlando didn’t have sex with Sean

Sean’s watching Orlando. There’s not much else to do – but Sean’d be doing this exactly even if the apocalypse was happening next door. Maybe even during a Blades match (possibly during halftime, though). Sean’s watching Orlando and it’s more entertaining than Animal Planet.

Because fucking hell, Orlando is as adaptable as a chameleon. And Sean, who considers himself rather streetwise and knowledgeable, just sits back and stares. And possibly enjoys. And asks himself how it’d be if - .

Orlando spends most of his free time flirting with everything that moves. Sean’s not sure in how many cases this is more than just flirting because Orlando – for all his chattering nature – is quite a gentleman in the kiss-but–don’t-tell department. But Sean doesn’t need him to talk, he’s got enough imagination to be able to picture it clearly all by himself.

Orlando doesn’t have sex with Sean

That cute girl from makeup who has pink clips in her hair? Orlando takes her to the movies and holds the popcorn for them and he actually pays attention to the film so they can talk about it on the way home. They laugh at the jokes that have been not all that amusing but the clear night is intoxicating and she blushes a little when he puts an arm around her shoulder.

That guy in the pub last night that spent his night kicking the pinball and leering at Orlando? Orlando corners him afterwards, in the dark alley behind the pub, growls at him whether he has something to back all that behavior up. Depends on the contents of his trousers how the rest of the night goes.

Liv? Orlando drinks wine and goes swimming with her regularly. Adrenaline is high, their breathing quick, they try to fit in some giggles as well. Just a matter of time and sunshine till those bell high sounds are licked from eager lips and the salty taste of ocean mingles with shared sweat.

Dom and Lijah? A drunken dare is more than enough to lure in one of the two, the other shakes his head but lets himself be drawn into this – them, whatever – with a conspiratorial wink.

This one person back in England? The one Orlando keeps leaving the room for whenever his mobile shows who is calling. Sean doesn’t know what happens behind closed doors, with just a phone line and strings of dirty words (like rope tied to a headboard) connecting them. But Orlando’s voice turns rough and gravelly and predatory even when he merely didn’t get his morning coffee – so Sean doesn’t really have problems imagining that either.

What leaves Sean confused and maybe just maybe a little impatient is that, for the love of God, he can’t figure out how it’d be between him and Orlando. How it’d be between them if they - .

Orlando’s eyes meet his own across the set. Sean rubs his chin. Orlando’s tongue licks the corner of his mouth.

If?

No.
When.

Junkie

Under me, to get you under me. Dominates my thoughts, fucking haunts me. Feels like an addiction sometimes (like fags only worse, with them there’s always distraction, something else to push between thin needy lips to keep them occupied), most of the times – always when I see you. I talk to you on set, in the pub, on the phone and it’s always like this:

Something in me screams to be let out and it rattles the cage of friendly chitchat, gives me headaches. Do you ever feel that way? Think not, don’t think you could be so bloody oblivious if you did. Sure, I catch you watching me – and there’s something in your eyes. Or is there? I’m going fucking insane over this and all you do is smile and wave at me and you don’t even possess the decency to blush. Love that smile and your slightly imperfect teeth – bite my own tongue trying to keep myself in check, trying to imagine how the ragged edge of your teeth would feel against my tongue, invading your mouth when I make you –

At night I wake up confused – no, that’s a lie. I wake up too turned on to think straight, think anything but your name, unable to get that echo of your heavy breaths out of my fucking skull. Vivid dreams, wake me with my hand around my cock and your name buried under a growl in my throat.

You’re a friend - isn’t that word totally unworthy, incompetent but desperately trying to capture something that’s too vast (daunting sometimes) to be named. I value your opinion above anyone else’s and maybe it’s that. Fucking typical. Bloody coward, that’s me. Not to ruin a good thing. As if this isn’t ruined already. You can talk about football, acting, your kids and all I can hear is that passion in your voice, all I can see is that little bit of everything, of life erupting in your eyes and I want you, want you, want you.

Late in the night, early call tomorrow, don’t ruin a good thing – scattered bits of thoughts like clothes strewn all over the place, leaving me naked. This is it. This, here. Now. I can’t take it anymore. Your smile is loose from a beer or two and I can taste it when I finally (Finally) kiss you, my fingers tangled in your hair, grip too tight and I swallow your wince and grunt. Kiss you, invade your space – you – and let you have mine (me) if you want it. Feel your heat against me through layers of t-shirts, warm, hard press of chest against my own and I hiss as your fingers grip my sides, a little too hard, tickling a little no less.

You bite me in response and fucking hell, if I’d been obsessed before, I’m addicted now, a fucking junkie for you and everything you are, every little bit you got. I want it, every grunt and groan, smile and purr, smacking of lips, exploration of tongue. We crash into the wall, your back against it, hands fumbling with my fly as I try to push into them already. Every little piece of you, I want. I want to rip it from you and not give it back, want to make you beg. Naked – parts that are important anyway – fingers scratching conquerors’ marks into flesh. Wet, hard, hot, and my fingers dig into the soft roundness of your arse, impatient just like your growled openmouthed whoimpers, your saliva that wets my chin. Can you take it like this? I know you do, know you can, need you to anyway.

Every little piece of you. Wanna tear you apart, make you beg so I can make you whole again with parts of myself – my thrusts, my pain, my mouth, hands, heart – make you mine, make you cry for me. Like I ache for you, always longed for you, always will, even now that I got you.

Under me.

Pre-ordering dreams, now there’s an idea

Oi, Sean?
Mmpf?
Are you asleep?
Mhmm.
Liar.
What’s it?
Nothing.
C’mon, spill.
It’s alright, go back to sleep.
Don’t make me lie on top of you.
That’s not really a threat…
Hmpf, fine, don’t make me fart at you.
‘n this is supposed to make me wanna confide in you? Seriously, Sean?
Out with it already. What’s got your panties in a twist?
My hypothetical panties you mean? Because lookit, I’m naked!
Nice try. If this is the reason why you woke me up you’ll better do something with that nakedness of yours.
I just had this dream about you. Not about nakedness, sadly. I wish you could, like pre-order dreams or something. Like in hotels? When they leave you that sheet of paper with which you can order breakfast in bed?
Would you prefer not dreaming at all? Terribly dull.
Yeah. No. Not if that spares you dreams of car accidents and shit.
So, I was in a car accident?
Yeeah, sorta. And it was all your fault because you were driving like a dickhead and then you were dead.
Huh.
Yeah. Is what I thought. And then I woke up and I was so fucking furious that I wanted to kill you myself.
Some logic.
Be glad that I didn’t have my ice pick handy.
I’d have hated to wake up dead.
Me, too. So, be a pal and stop dying, yeah?
Hey, you’re the one who flings himself out of airplanes.

Are you trying to one-up me here?

I’m glad that we’re on the same page. Taking all of this seriously. Just for the record, I’m not planning on dying any time soon. Kindly relay that to your subconscious.

Consider it done.

Can we go back to sleep now?

Actually, I wanted to have some juice just when you woke…

When you woke me, you mean.

When you conveniently woke just in time to get up and fetch me that juice.

Dream on.

Nah, I’d rather not.

Don’t be silly, c’mere.

Do I get comfort sex now? That’s even better than juice!

I was gonna tell you a good night story, you one track minded slapper.

Boring. A stupidass story, pfft. What good is that gonna do, eh? I want sex.

God, fine, fine. You really are trying to kill me, aren’t you?

I’ll suck your brain right out through your dick.

Such a sweet talker. Why don’t ye put that filthy mouth of yours to better – mmm, yeah, there’s a good boy…

Pedophile.

Shut up and suck my cock already.

Or what? You’ll make me?

Or I’ll go back to sleep, Orlando.

Outch, emotional blackmail. I might cry.

You do that. Mouth? South. Now.

Picture perfect

“I love you,” Orlando says and Sean stops dead in his tracks. Which is quite an accomplishment since nothing short of an earthquake can usually interrupt him in his post-match frenzy. If his stupid team has won there’s off key football songs, preferably sung dead drunk in the garden (and the middle of the night), and that broadest of broad grins engraving itself seemingly permanently into Sean’s face. If his stupid team has lost, there’s the rant storm coming (completely with flaring nostrils and totally overdone Sheffield accent) and Sean practically reeks of hurt pride and frustration so that Orlando really wants to lick him all over to taste that manly sweat.
“Wha’?” Sean grunts.

“I think,” Orlando replies and looks directly into Sean’s red and white painted face. “I think you heard me.”

It’s pretty obvious as well – Orlando hangs out way too much at Sean’s anyway, and if you find it sexy that a grown man is getting a boner over a goal (an undeserved one at that), it’s pretty much granted that you’re head over heels. Orlando only just now fully realised it.

Sean pushes his handful of crisps into his mouth and looks at Orlando thoughtfully.

“I love you,” Orlando repeats and wants to suck the salt off of Sean’s fingers.

Sean carefully swallows. Then he grins. “Aren’t you quick on the uptake,” he says.

Orlando rolls his eyes.

Sean shakes his head and his fingers toy with the red and white scarf round his neck. “Took you a bloody lifetime to realize that.”

Orlando slaps away Sean’s hand and grabs the scarf himself, pulling Sean in. He presses his mouth against Sean’s and taste beer and cigarette smoke along with leftover crumbs of vinegar crisps. It’s rather unromantic, even before Sean starts snickering. This isn’t their first kiss, by far it isn’t, but it’s probably the worst so far.

Sean starts, “You always need your team to lose before you –?” but Orlando cuts him off, determined, by kissing him again and pushing his tongue into Sean's mouth. Sean lets him in willingly enough and his arms wrap around Orlando. But he keeps sneaking more insult-complaints past their fused lips – how Orlando is as fast as ManU, how no one in their right mind could resist Sean’s incredible hotness, how he should spank Orlando for taking so bloody fucking long.

Orlando bites Sean’s lips but knows what he’s saying (what his hands, his fluttery-with-gentleness fingers give away so clearly). He pulls him closer, gripping the back of his neck, and keeps kissing him. Hard and demanding and a little angry at first (because this was supposed to be romantic, dammit), then slower and messier, with little moans lacing around their tongues. He keeps kissing Sean until the insults and the mockery are replaced and the hooligan becomes pliant in his hands, whispers Orlando’s name against wet lips, and yeah, me too, thank Christ, finally, love you.

Impertinence

I usually don’t walk my dog this late, see. But Chancellor has been sick and he needed to tend to his business one more time – and I couldn’t deny him that, could I? It’s dark in Hyde Park, despite the pale moonlight that reflects in the fresh layer of snow. It is dark and quiet and I sit down on a bench while my darling goes to do what we came here for.

“Bet you’d’ve got top notch grades at calligraphy.”

“Shut up and do your own.”

Obviously the park is not as deserted as I thought. As I hear the voices drifting over to me I instinctively clutch the leash a little tighter in my hands. But I tell myself that these are just two men on their way back from the pub. Two slightly tipsy men, yes. But I got my Chancellor to protect me.

“You do the plus.”
“Why? That’s bloody difficult – do it yourself.”

Two bookies maybe? In which case I’d not think they make much money if they argue over the simplest of additions.

“You do it. I already gotta do the heart. Frigging difficult, all that symmetry. Fuck.”

Heart? Now I have to say that I am not a cowardly woman. I dare any man to come and try to rob my purse. I will hit him with my umbrella, without a second thought. But ‘doing the heart’? You read stories in the paper, don’t you? About illegal trafficking and forced organ donations. This is London after all. I call out for Chancellor very loudly and the two voices behind the bushes are shushed immediately. But something like an evil snickering from one of them still reaches my ears.

Chancellor comes immediately but he isn’t the youngest anymore either, it takes him a moment. I pat his head and attach the leash to his collar just as two men stumble onto the path in front of us.

One of them is still fastening his trousers and my mouth is open in shock as the other, the older one, waves at me and calls out, “Evening!”

The first one shoves his companion and the older one grunts, “What? I’m just being polite.”

“You’re being importune... you’re being pushy,” grumbles the other. “Pushy pushover, you.”

“I’ll show you pushover, Mr. Big Words,” replies the older one, amused rather than offended, as they walk off.

I shake my head and get up from my bench. Drunkards. Tsk. Chancellor walks ahead and sniffs the path and the bushes – he is such a bright dog, always taking everything in. He stops at a patch not very far from my bench and my eyes adjust to the light again. And what do I see right in front of me, written into the snow?

“S + O <3” in crooked yellow letters.

What in heaven’s name -? Chancellor barks and lifts his leg on the tree closest, leaving a puddle in the same colour.

The impertinence of some people!

If I weren’t so frigging fond of you, I’d hate you.

It’s not so easy to get a birthday present for you, you know. I mean a blow job is a nice thing to wake you up with (especially since I’m pretty certain that somehow you fucked away my gag reflex) but that’s not really a proper present now, is it? I’d go with the sex-vouchers but let’s face it you just have to say “How ’bout a screw?” and I’m spreading my legs (or yours, whatever) – so that’s out as well.

Also, there’s only so many gag gifts until it gets decidedly unfunny – something that the majority of our friends still hasn’t really understood which is why we could have a garage sale solely with gifted dildos and shit like that.

‘Romantic gesture’ is next on my metaphorical gift list. I called several people for advice there (my mom, your mom, Viggo) and the general vote went out for a dinner for two and violin music. Yeah... no. Roses? You got those in your garden (although... getting them from there would be cheap and easy for me...). Jewellery? Despite my constant pleas you remain adverse to the idea of nipple piercings. I suppose I could get a tat for you – something real subtle like “Insert Bean ↓” as a
tramp stamp. But my arse is still a little pissed off because you called it 'barely there' and I’m siding with my behind on that one. So, romance is out, too.

A pet? Sidi wouldn’t approve of the competition. A stripper? I wouldn’t approve of the competition. A watch? A jumper? A DVD? Fuck, I’m boring myself into a coma merely thinking about these.

I swear if I weren’t so frigging fond of you I’d hate you for your stupid frugality. Pretty selfish of you to be already content with what you got, y’know.

But hey, I’m Orlando fucking Bloom and I’m like that donkey from the Grimm’s fairy tale (hehe). I practically shit money. So, I go and buy you a car. A midnight blue AC Cobra that purrs like a kitten after a good orgasm. Pretty little thing, innit?

And ‘cause it’s you, you get the blow job as well. I’m generous like that. And probably addicted to your cock, but that’s neither here nor there.

Bibliophilic

Sean likes books. He has this almost reverent (Orlando calls it ‘pervig’) fondness for the printed word. Whenever they got a few minutes on set or anywhere else but on a plane (Sean’s too busy pissing his pants) Sean has something to read in his hands. Orlando can spend whole afternoons sitting next to him, watching his fingers idly stroking the back of his current object of affection and listen to his running commentary.

Because here is the other thing about Sean and books – while he has the most fucking perfect reading voice he doesn’t actually do it all that much. It’s more like when Orlando watches TV and constantly bitches about what the programme. Sean does that with books, only that usually no one but him has got any idea what the fuck he is on about.

Orlando bought this book for him, thought it fitting and everything. A brief summary of Greek mythology. Now, Orlando knows his bit about the Greeks (he has done his prep for the role of Paris and that didn’t just involve getting a flawless tan, thank you) and he just knew that Sean would love it.

So here he sits now and he’d be bored out of his mind if it weren’t for Sean.

“So, you pair the god of the sea with – huh, now that’s something… - A frigging horse?! How can anyone give birth to a… through their neck no less... Christ, really? Wings?!”

This book, Orlando did read and he’s pretty certain that Sean’ll appreciate Zeus’s determination to get the girl in the next chapter. Sure enough, a minute later, Sean’s booming with laughter and turns his smile-crinkled eyes to Orlando next to him.

“A bloody ant?! How can he possibly mate when he’s a fucking – oh. Ooh.”

Inner organs – splatter!

Sean?

What now?

Have you read a good book recently?

This is a trick question, isn’t it?
Whatever makes you think that?

Because you only ask me random weird questions like that when you want to tell a long and possibly boring story and need a helpless audience.

Oi, that’s kinda mean, don’t you think? My stories aren’t boring.

Is that right? May I remind you of the tale of the banana and the honey bee story that you told me yesterday over breakfast? Honestly, there should be a law that forbids food theatre. I’m gonna talk to Wolfgang about it.

You know, for someone not liking conversation and all you sure do talk a lot.

Aye, but that’s only so I don’t have to listen to your blabbering.

Don’t even think that this is gonna work. Not even for a second. Because I see right through your cunning plan. Which is not so cunning after all.

Uh huh. Whatever. Come on then, hit us with your stupid story.

Hey, I’m not Eric. I’m not gonna act all offended now because you deliberately try to hurt my feelings and run off to cry to my wife.

Mostly because you don’t have a wife. As if any woman would have you.

Superlame thy name is Sean. Talk to all my adoring female stalkers, will you? They send me nude pictures every day and sometimes bananas are involved. So shut it. And now let me tell my story because I read a book and it was so fucking bad that I need someone to suffer with me.

Oh joy.

So, I read this vampire book –

Christ, what are you? Five?

I think I was drunk when I bought it and it had a screaming woman with huge tits on the cover.

You’re excused then.

Thought so. So, it was about vampires and I think they wanted world domination or something like that. Because really, it’s not like they’d do it for anything under that, right? I wish I could read a book in which the protagonist’s only wish is to have more chocolate ice cream and that’s the end of it.

Or pistachio.

Or that, yes. We should maybe co-author it.

Do vampires eat ice-cream?

I have no idea, man. I don’t get how the whole food processing thing works in any case. I mean the blood they drink, does it go directly into their veins? Is there some sort of redirecting happening between stomach and circulation? And speaking of circulation, do vampires get hard ons?

Please tell me that we’re not having the discussion about vampire sex again, Orlando. Because I will hit you.
Okay, okay, calm down. Jesus, what’s it with you? Who pissed on your grave?

You. And then you settled down for a picnic there and started a campfire right in front of my gravestone complete with off-key cowboy songs.

Bullshit, you love my singing voice.

You go on telling yourself that.

I know that. Why do you think I dedicate all my Tom Jones songs during Karaoke night to you?

Because you get off on torturing me?

That, too. But also because you’re a sexbomb, sexbom – Ow! Bastard.

I warned you. Now, get on with your idiotic story, so I can do something more meaningful with my sparse free time.

Like poke your nose? I bet that takes a lot of time what with it being so fucking huge.

Funny.

I know. I should do stand up comedy. Anyhow, this vampire story – there was this one tortured bloke –

What a surprise…

And he was all “Man, my life doesn’t have any point to it. Woe.” –

Because he couldn’t get it up?

Dunno. Probably. Anyhow, he made up for it by slaughtering villagers for about 400 pages and then he committed suicide by walking into the sun. Or did he stake himself? My memory is a bit fuzzy there.

And you read all that?

I might have skipped those parts where he was whining about the unfairness of an immortal life. The massacres were really entertaining though. All blood – whoosh! And inner organs – splatter!

Keep your hands to yourself or I’m gonna slap you again. What’s it with you and acting out everything?

You just be glad that I didn’t find myself a banana to re-enact the staking myself bit.

Oh, go ahead, please do.

You know my ghost would totally stay here to haunt you and stalk you under the shower.

As long as your ghost don’t mind the molesting that’s sure to follow.

Man, ghosts are incorporeal. Get with the programme. Jesus, it’s like explaining the world to a six year old who spent his first half decade flinging himself off high altitudes, head first.

Go tell Brad your story then. He’ll appreciate it, wasn’t he in that vampire flick once?

I’m not talking to Brad at the moment, thank you very much. Fucker nailed my hotel room door shut
this morning. I had to climb out through the window.

And you’re letting him get away with that?

Well, -

C’mon let’s find ourselves a more quiet spot to plot your revenge.

You’re my most favourite person on the planet, sexbomb. – Ow, dammit! Stop that!

Tinkerbell and other bullshit

To set things straight right from the beginning: I’m not a homophobe. Nor am I xenophobic or however you call it when you hate the British. Also, I have an awesome sense of humor. Just ask Clooney.

But this shoot is close to turning me into a publicist’s nightmare regarding that. Damn political correctness and all that bullshit. Times like these you’re not even allowed to call two guys perverts even if though it is a gross understatement if anything.

Sean and Orlando are like these monkeys, the ones with the huge noses? Or were it the chimpanzees? I don’t remember. Anyhow they are like these monkeys – not the ones who throw shit at one another (though… but let’s get to that in a sec) but like the ones who solve all their problems with sex. Sean accidentally stepping onto Orlando’s foot? Shouting, followed by a making out behind the make up trailer. Orlando eating Sean’s last pickle? Bellowing, followed by a blow job in the men’s room. I shit you not, there’s no subject whatsoever, no matter how utterly idiotic, and they fight over it just so they can traumatize the rest of the world by screwing in semi-public places ten minutes later.

As for throwing shit (the monkeys, remember?) – as I’ve said, I’m very good humored, you can ask anyone. Though if you do, don’t ask George and especially not when he’s drunk ’cause he has no shame and will probably tell you things about me and his pet pig that are NOT true. Anyway.

Practical jokes, great to pass the time on set, yes. No. Bean and Orlando have this personalized prank war / vendetta thing going on and it’s like I’m Poland and they are Nazi-Germany and Stalin Russia – I’m bound to get trampled over (wait, scratch that remark about Poland, I suppose it’s not really all that pc). Bana (who apparently spends his free time not baking cookies for his wife but making pie charts of random happenings) told me that there’s a pattern to these constant escalations. Duh, it’s called “One-upmanship for crazy people”.

It starts with something seemingly harmless on Monday morning – like Sean sticking a note to Paris’s costume, reading “Will screw anything for shiny things” – and by some law of nature Orlando can’t just laugh it off but has to get back at Sean. And if you think that by now Sean should know that and should be a little more careful, well then you’re wrong. Of course he gets shitfaced the next evening in the bar, sleeps like the dead and shows up next morning for make up only to discover that someone has used his back as a Sharpie playground. Sean Bean is not a person who can pull off Tinkerbell wings in colourful marker, just so you know.

I should call my manager and tell him to put something about that into my future contracts, right under the bit about my junk wanting to be covered with underwear if I have to wear skirts (what? That’s totally reasonable. I get cystitis.).

Addendum no. 53323: “Brad Pitt doesn’t work with Sean Bean if accompanied by Orlando Bloom and vice versa.”
Today, Orlando came to set with big fat letters on his forehead that hollered “PENIS!”. Bean had to sit down on the floor because he was laughing so hard.

I rest my case.

Of course there are some people who took the whole bonding thing more seriously than I did – and by that I mean bordering obsessive, really.

– Set in Malta and Mexico, filming Troy –

But if we are wise

Orlando is 23, and his head is full with concepts of how life and love maybe are supposed to be. But none of that matters when Sean pushes him against the fridge and kisses him. It’s perfectly simple then. Sean is suffering (Orlando would never say it, Sean would never admit it, but he is, and Orlando knows). And there is something Orlando can do to make it better. It’s just temporary, and it doesn’t solve anything – snogging your co-star in your kitchen hardly ever solves marriage problems –, but this moment that doesn’t matter. Sean is in pain, and Orlando helps out. It’s what a good mate does. So he grips the collar of Sean’s shirt and mutters ‘stop biting me, wanker’ before pressing his mouth against Sean’s once again.

Everyone else has left already. Orlando doesn’t mind getting fucked against the kitchen counter, his jeans pooling around his ankles. Having an audience wouldn’t be so much his thing, though. Sean keeps his eyes closed, and Orlando ponders for a moment who Sean is thinking about right now, whether actively not-thinking even works. Then this becomes completely unimportant, like it’s supposed to, and he doesn’t think at all, just wants, needs, needs, gets.

It’s a couple of weeks after that that Orlando hears Sean mentioning to Viggo that he got his divorce papers in the mail. He’s standing a few feet behind them in the catering tent. Sean sounds composed and mentions it matter-of-factly, like it’s something you usually talk about while you wait in line for mashed potatoes.

Orlando’s doorbell rings, late in the night. Insistent, angry, impatient. Orlando opens and finds Sean there, no surprise. He is completely drunk, every ounce of concentration spent on staying upright and on glaring at Orlando at the same time.

They make it to the bedroom, but no thanks to Sean. All of it is a bit like driving a tank truck down a steep hill with just a vague idea on where the breaks are. Orlando likes it rough, hell he’s done it rougher than this with Elijah. But the look in Sean’s eyes tells him Sean doesn’t, that he is gonna hate himself for every bruise he left on Orlando once he got this out of his system. So Orlando makes use of the fact that he is not utterly sloshed to steer this thing. Sean growls at him – he’s not stupid, not even when drunk and desperately unhappy – but he lets Orlando ride him, doesn’t try to pull his wrists out from Orlando’s tight hold.

Neither of them even mentions it again. Not that Orlando feels the need to. Being there for a bloke doesn’t include a detailed feedback afterwards. It’s just that Orlando talks about everything else with Sean. Or rather he talks at Sean, and Sean listens. Orlando can’t really help it. NZ is overwhelming, and he constantly feels the need to tell someone about it, check whether he isn’t just imagining the
whole thing. Dom and Lij are good mates, but they are just as dumbstruck by this as he is, and no one in their right mind would go and talk to Viggo if he wanted something like elucidation. So Sean it is. He listens to Orlando’s bitching, to his raving and (more often than not) complete awe that is so epic that it fucks with his grammar. And honestly, sometimes Orlando is so fucking grateful for this that he wants to get Sean a complimentary fruit basket. Only that that’d be odd, even for their standards.

Helm’s Deep is designed to drive him completely insane. He is so tired he can’t even think straight, takes everything personal even though he shouldn’t and just generally hates the universe. It’s the complete opposite for Sean, Orlando is vaguely aware of that. Sean has practically nothing to do. Orlando would kill for a couple of hours of downtime, Sean uses his to think too much.

Orlando has barely made it home when his doorbell rings, and he knows it’s Sean. For a moment he just doesn’t want to open, then he is disgusted with himself right after. Sean looks guilty, and he isn’t drunk but still here. Orlando gestures him to come in, Sean just walks straight into the bedroom. Orlando tries to remember whether he’s got lube and condoms in the nightstand. Sean’s taking ages with his shoes instead of just toeing them off. He’s stalling, and it’s too complicated for Orlando’s momentary state of mind to suss out why. Instead, he rolls his eyes and crawls under the blankets. Sean follows. But he doesn’t kiss Orlando, doesn’t even touch him. He curls up on his side, face just a few inches from Orlando’s. He exhales with a sigh, and he smells of too many cigarettes but not of vodka. Orlando commiserates with a hum. Sean sighs again, and maybe this time it doesn’t sound quite as raw.

In the morning Orlando has sword practice. Even though his body protests like mad when he rolls out of bed, he is glad almost. Glad that this means Sean can wake up on his own instead of to Orlando and his snores crowding in on him. He is a bit surprised, but only a bit, when he finds Sean in his kitchen when he returns. They talk about Shearer’s announcement to retire from pro football after the Euro while they eat the disgustingly runny eggs Sean prepared.

After principal photography ends, Orlando has a fucking hard time re-adjusting to the so-called real world again. He still talks to Lij and Dom, and to Sean regularly. But then life happens and weeks become months. The reception ‘Rings’ gets is insane, and ‘Pirates’ follows suit. He meets Kate. And then one day he gets a phone call from Sean, and Sean talks about Homer and the Iliad of all things. Twenty minutes pass before Orlando can even get so much as a word in to ask what the hell? It’s about ‘Troy’ of course, and Sean is so enthusiastic about it that Orlando instantly gets sucked in.

He’s done a couple of movies after ‘Rings’ now, and of course nothing has been like NZ. Filming ‘Troy’ maybe comes close. Wolfgang is maybe as obsessed as PJ was, and Eric and Brad are the slightly saner version of Bernard and Viggo. And of course there’s Sean. Life is aces.

Then Kate breaks up with him, and Orlando realises how very much in love with her he is.

He drinks himself into a stupor. There’s the off-chance that the inevitable vomiting afterwards will flush out these feelings as well. It doesn’t work. He calls in sick and spends the day lying on his bed in darkness, wishing his splitting headache to stay with him forever. It doesn’t of course. It leaves him like Kate did, and he’s so miserable, even drowning in self-pity seems like a good way to go.

There’s a knock on the door. Orlando hopes it’s the firing squad and actually moves to open.

It’s Sean. Of course it is. He leans against the doorframe, and when Orlando glares at him he raises his hand, holding a bottle of vodka. Orlando groans and shakes his head.

Sean looks at him for a long moment. Then he tilts his head, and his tongue darts out to wet his lips. Another silent proposition. It’s what makes a good mate.
Orlando steps back into the room, Sean follows.

Obsessive compulsive behaviour aka love
Sean is a fan of lists. A big fan. If you could be an official list enthusiast and join a club and get a button for it, Sean's would be club president.

He makes lists out of everything and no, it's not in any way weird, at least not in the obsessive compulsive writing way that one of his ex wives did. Besides, that wasn't about lists at all but just resulted in diaries full of "Why does my husband who can be so gentle behave like a football hooligan?!" and has nothing to do with anything anyway (and just for the record: Sean - who of course has never read any of his wives' private diaries - would just like to say that "gentle" is female speak for "damn fantastic shag").

Anyway. It's not obsessive compulsive though Sean does have a list that is titled "What to do when meeting a future ex-wife" (he is not exactly what you'd call a relationship optimist). It includes reminders of how to excuse himself from a conversation ("That is very interesting, ooh, I need to go to the loo!") and reminders of how to exit public events without being seen ("Do NOT climb out through toilet windows, you WILL get stuck."). It also reminds him that not marrying again means he never again has to buy female hygiene products in the grocery store.

Sean has a list for absolutely everything in his life. Grocery lists of course because there is nothing more annoying than standing in the middle of the frozen foods section and having to run back through the whole store to get some tomatoes, especially if that leads you through the female hygiene section of said store (and yes, Sean IS scarred).

Other important lists include "How to use your dish washer without causing flood catastrophes", "100 reasons why the Blades rule", "Ties/shirts/suits/track pants/swimming trunks that I owe and that I look gorgeous in" (5 separate lists of course), and "Scripts to read". The last title is an abbreviation and should really say "Scripts that I promised to read, which is a waste of time because I'll sign for anything anyway and why hasn't my stupid twat of an agent realised that by now" but that title is obviously too long.

There is a special category of lists and if Sean is really honest with himself this category does put him in the vicinity of his weirdo ex wife with her obsessive compulsive writing.

The Orlando lists.

He has a special book for those lists but that is only because Orlando, who knows about Sean's fondness of lists and is a fucker, bought him a girl's diary with a unicorn on it and wrote "1000 reasons why I love Orlando" with black marker onto the first page.

Even attempting to try to find a proper, list-y order for Orlando is sort of like sitting on a Thai beach with a kids' shovel and attempting to build a dike against the next tsunami (that comparison wasn't all that politically correct, was it? It goes straight onto Sean's "Things to not say during a press conference" list; right underneath "I think a woman's place is at home with the kids". Uh, yeah.). Simile aside, Orlando is a force of nature and leaves not death but destruction and confusion in his wake.

Orlando gives Sean the pink unicorn book of love (as he calls it) during the first week of shooting in Malta and by the end of the week, it already features the following lists:

Things Orlando can do with a straw and a handful of blueberries
Reasons why Orlando needs to wear briefs under his skirt
Animal noises that Orlando's laughter reminds me of
It's never a good idea to let Orlando drink a pot of coffee all by himself and here is why
Useless rubbish Orlando bought on eBay because he was bored and Brad showed him how to
(including a leopard print leotard, a used Boromir doll and a necklace made of nuts)
Parts of his body that Orlando wants to have tattooed
Orlando's "five minutes or less" strategies to make Brad storm off in a strop
Parts of his body that I want Orlando to have tattooed
Orlando's tells in poker (including shouting "I RULE this game!")
Orlando's tells in I spy (including accidentally pointing at the thing in question)
Sensible arguments why I should not be attracted to Orlando

The last list doesn't contain anything and the title is crossed out repeatedly. Because Sean can't think
of a single argument is not attracted to Orlando.

Every time Sean leans back in his chair and pulls out the unicorn diary, Orlando slows in whatever
he is doing and looks over, trying to peek over Sean's shoulder.

"Go back to scratching sand of your sweaty feet," Sean says without glancing up from his page.

"You should look at them," Orlando replies, "I scratched a pattern into the dirt with my fingernails. -
I could also have used the sword of Troy which is so dull it's boring, or one of Wolfgang's toothpicks
for the finer lines. Are you writing that down?"

"No," Sean lies and turns in his seat so Orlando can't see the page titled 'Things Orlando does to his
feet'.

Orlando subtly (Orlando-subtle. Bull-in-China-shop subtle) drags his chair closer to Sean and his
unicorn diary. "I bet Paris hated this dirt and dust."

"You are a bit of a pansy," Sean agrees.

"Paris is a fictional character," Orlando says in a very slow voice and when Sean looks up from his
book, Orlando gestures at himself and then at the script in his hand. "Me – real person. Paris –
fictional character. Not the same person. Get it?"

Sean turns to a blank page in his diary and reads out while he writes, "Things Orlando Bloom and
Paris the Pansy have in common: One - They like shiny things."

"True," Orlando confirms.

"Two," Sean continues, biting back a smile, "they are afraid of spiders and climb the nearest piece of
furniture and / or person to escape it."

"First of all, that wasn't a spider, that was Shelob’s big sister and it tried to EAT me," Orlando shouts
the ‘eat' so loud that it turns some heads. Unperturbed by that he continues, "And secondly, don't tell
me you never felt the urge to climb Eric. He's like one of those scratch and climb trees you can get
for your cat."

"Three," Sean says and writes, "both of them really are big pussy cats who just made the wrong
choices in their lives."

"Yeah, like being mates with you," Orlando grumbles and kicks sand into Sean's general direction.
Some of it sticks to the sweaty skin of his naked shin and Sean glances up disapprovingly. From the
look on Orlando's face, Orlando wouldn't mind scratching the sand off of Sean's skin as well.

"You love me," Sean says lightly.
"You got a list of that, too, I know." Orlando nods. "Must have a thousand reasons on it by now already, easily."

Sean blinks. Huh? Which list?

Orlando is silent for a moment then one can see the gears shifting. The grin is back on his face when he points at Sean's book enthusiastically and says, "Hey, I can burp my name, did you know? You should write that down, Sean."

Sean doesn't. Partly that is because at that moment Orlando gets called to set and swaggers away (how someone without any hips OR arse can manage swaggering is really beyond Sean) and leaves Sean to bake in the sun on his own. Partly that is because Sean's list of reasons to love Orlando a. doesn't exist because he is NOT in love with Orlando and b. doesn't start with burping skills.

So what if Sean's aforementioned list of "identifying future ex wives" has some points on it that may apply to Sean's reactions to Orlando. Heart fluttering for example (but it is really hot in Malta and it's no wonder Sean's body has difficulties to adjust) or saying stupid things just in order to please Orlando, but that's just because Orlando's silliness is as infective as the plague. Or smiling broadly despite himself when he spots Orlando at the breakfast buffet in their hotel. But really, Sean is just a big fan of food and that's all. Honestly.

Sometimes, Sean wakes up in the middle of the night and vividly remembers dreams of Orlando. And then he is almost glad that his raging hard on and the urge to toss off this very instant remind him so clearly that he is not a thirteen year old girl who should get her unicorn diary and write down odes of love to the curve of Orlando's shoulders, or the sound of his laughter or the smell of his armpits or something. Or poems about that leopard print leotard that for some reason keeps showing up in Sean's dreams.

There most definitely is not a list titled "Positions I'd like to shag Orlando in" either.

Orlando is a bad influence, Sean decides. For one, before Sean reunited with Orlando in Malta he had this list business under control, thank you, and now he feels the need to write down every single thing that Orlando does. Sometimes it helps sussing out the reason for Orlando’s behaviour but most times he just does it so won't forget a single thing.

Secondly, and probably even more importantly, Orlando is a horrible enabler, worse than any drug dealer. Not only does he provide Sean with list material by sitting next to him in the decent pub they found and counting Shakespeare characters he'd like to shag, or by lying next to him on the beach (on one of those rare days off) and telling him about the countries he’d like to visit. He also gifts Sean with the most hideous unicorn biro, a monstrous scrapbook set and – after another computer lesson with Brad (who from this point on will be referred to as “Lucifer”) – printouts of photomaneuvaluations that feature the two of them in most compromising positions ("It's for your book and it's called Fanart, Sean. ART. You can't bash artist, you philistine. And lookit, how big my cock is! Aces!").

"Why do you write these lists of yours anyways?" Orlando asks from the passenger's seat and pokes Sean's thigh. "The only reason why you're not scribbling right now is because you're driving. Hey, I could take over!"

"The last time you did we got caught in a mudslide, ended up stranded in the middle of nowhere and had to be flown out with a helicopter," Sean says and grips the steering wheel possessively without taking his eyes of the road.

"Yeah, the last time we weren’t just driving to the nearest Mc Donald’s because you got a craving
for cheeseburgers in the middle of the night.” Orlando shifts next to Sean and props his flipflop clad feet against the dashboard. From the corner of his eyes Sean can see his ankles peeping out from his slightly too short pajama bottoms.

“You’d get lost in a Mc Donald’s drive in,” Sean counters good-naturedly. “And then your head would explode when you looked at the menu – ‘oooh, lookit Sean, they got burgers and fries and salad and oooh, more burgers, and ICE CREAM! And can I get a toy?’”

Orlando snorts and rolls down the window so he can spit out his chewing gum. The air of the night that floods in through the half open window smells of the ocean and is a memory of the day’s heat.

“You though,” Orlando replies after a moment of shared silence, “you must love the neat menu. List heaven, like. Right?” Sean feels Orlando’s eyes on him now when he repeats his question, “Why do you write them?”

Sean shrugs. “Habit I guess. I like keeping things in order.”

“What were you doing with my underwear?”

“Stealing some of your knickers to sell them on eBay,” Orlando replies easily. “Brad showed me how to.” Sean laughs and when he glances over to Orlando, the other man looks happily satisfied with his strange excuse before he returns to the original question, “But order? Really?”

“Maybe I am just a bit boring,” Sean says with a shrug.

“And I am Princess Diana,” Orlando replies and pokes Sean’s arm to get his attention, pointing at the large neon “M” against the black night sky that Sean nearly missed. As Sean turns the car, Orlando says, “I like chaos, you know.”

“I wouldn’t have guessed,” Sean says dryly but Orlando ignores him.

“I always thought… you know that proverb? The one about genius and conquering of chaos and such? Like that. But you know what? I happen to like your lists, too.”

They’ve reached the drive in and even though it is the middle of the night and this is Malta for heaven’s sake, there is a cue and Sean has to slow down to a halt. He looks at Orlando who is staring out of the window and absentmindedly scratching his big toe. Then Orlando turns his head and grins at Sean as if he’s just sussed out the world’s biggest mystery.

“You do realise what that makes you, don’t you?” he asks and when Sean looks at him in confusion he laughs and continues. “You make order kind of fun. – You’re Mary Poppins!”

“Thanks ever so.”

Orlando’s hand is on his arm and he looks at Sean with that innocent, eager expression on his face that he wore so often back in New Zealand; trying so hard to please. “But you’re much, much sexier of course,” he says reassuringly. Only the twitch of his lips gives him away.

“I’d make the perfect wife,” Sean announces with conviction.

Orlando snorts with laughter. “You should make a list out of that; planning a wedding is like list making heaven.”
“You haven’t even proposed yet,” Sean points out and drives up to where they can place their orders.

Orlando pretends to write on his thigh, murmuring, “Ways to make Sean see that I am wooing him since day one without making him look like a twat.”

Sean blinks in confusion and then is asked to place his order.

Later that night, Sean dreams of Orlando again and if his dream hadn’t left him speechless (breathless) he’d maybe have sat down to finally man up and write that list, titled “Reasons why I am falling have fallen in love with that stupid git”.

As it is, the last list in his unicorn book is “Nicknames Orlando would adopt for himself”. That is before Sean goes to have a late lunch the next day while most of the others are already busy shooting again. When he returns to his trailer his book lies open on the steps to the door.

“Reasons why Sean Bean is woo-worthy,” the title of the new list in Orlando’s handwriting reads. Sean picks up the book and sits down. If his heart beating a little faster it’s because he walked back to his trailer real quick, that’s all.

“Reasons why Sean Bean is woo-worthy”. The list reads as follows:

He may be from the North but still washes regularly,
Buys me Mc D’s toys,
Makes lists,
Is a decent and kind bloke with a great sense of humour and while sometimes a little slow on the uptake, is generally wicked smart,
Has a nicer arse than Mary Poppins.

Sean isn’t sure how long he sits there, staring at the list, but at some point his P.A. comes to fetch him for the next scene. It’s one of the huge ones that take ages to shoot and the others have been at it the entire morning already. And all Sean has to do is stand behind Brian and look cunning while Brendan beats the living hell out of Orlando.

Sean’s lists have a purpose. They keep his world in order, remind him of important things. There is a reason why he wrote that list about how to use his dish washer; after all he didn’t want his kitchen to be flooded (again). Granted, the list didn’t help all that much since no one had told him that dish washer tabs and detergent weren’t interchangeable, but there was a reason for that list. And there is a reason for the one about identifying future ex-wives as well.

Sean puts his hand on his sword’s handle and tries to look a little fiercer when Wolfgang tells him to.

He is not a cynic when it comes to love, really he isn’t. It’s just that by now he knows that he has always liked having a crush a little too much. Now warning bells sound as soon as he feels his heart clench when he is with someone, red-alert is announced once he thinks he doesn’t want to be without said someone.

Sean shifts his weight from one sandal-clad foot to the other. He watches Paris go down to his knees, look up at Menelaus with utter terror in his eyes – and when Wolfgang shouts “cut” because he’s not happy with the light or the background action or whatever, Orlando effortlessly gets back to his feet and grins at something Brendan says while brushing dust off his armor.

After the nth take (real sweat is running down Sean’s back now and the actors that have to do real work look utterly exhausted) Brendan pulls Orlando back to his feet after a particularly nasty exchange of blows. Orlando sways a little but smiles and shakes his head when his P.A. holds up the
His eyes find Sean’s over the heads of all the other people present and their gazes lock. Orlando knows that Sean must’ve read his list by now. Sean knows that his confusion and yes, probably reticence must be written all over his face. Still, with the same patient effortlessness with which Orlando gets back to his feet after each take he looks at Sean now. No fear in his eyes, but no recklessness either. No doubt there, but certainly no simple naïveté either.

Their eyelock lasts for merely a second or two, then new instructions from Wolfgang demand Orlando’s attention and he turns away.

For the rest of the day Sean dutifully performs his standing-around-and-looking-in-charge role and maybe it’s the sun that keeps shining down onto them mercilessly. In any case, he feels slightly dazed when he gets back to the hotel. Back in his room he orders something to eat from room service and spends a bit of time in front of the telly, all on autopilot – too much sun and too much thinking.

Only when he steps under the cold shower it feels like bathing in the fountain of youth. With all the grime that he washes off, the day’s haze and his own lethargy get rinsed off as well. He stands under the cold water for a bit too long and has to turn on the hot water in the end, still his teeth chattering when he gets out of the shower. The steam has fogged the mirror and while waterdrops fall from his body onto the fluffy bathmat he draws small bullets onto the foggy glass.

Best start for a list, these bullets. Gives you something to focus on. Only that Sean isn’t sure about the title of his list – “reasons why this is a very bad idea” comes to mind but doesn’t make it onto the mirror. “Reasons why this is an absolutely fantastic idea” is another one but he doesn’t dare to write it down. “Things that prove that I am a huge coward” seems to be very popular in his head as well.

He decides on “Orlando”, plain and simple, but he has only written the “O” into the fog when there is a knock on the door. He takes his bathrobe from the hook on the wall and ties the belt while he crosses the room, wet footprints on thick carpet.

It’s Orlando. Of course.

“I came up with this list,” Orlando says instead of a hello, his hands stuffed into the pockets of his jeans. “It’s called ‘Reasons why you should have come to my room about two hours ago’. Originally, I wanted to email it to you.”

“Who taught you how to email?” Sean asks, of all things.

Orlando shrugs and steps into the room. “Easy. You open your email thing and type that-bloke-from-Sharpe at yahoo dot com into the field for the address. I’m not completely retarded.”

Sean closes the door and leans against it, finding Orlando still so close. Only a step or two away; and he smells of shower gel, fresh sweat and nervousness, but Sean’s probably imagining the last bit.

“Yeah. I am a bit slow though,” Sean says after a moment and feels stupid because this is the best he can do in terms of apology and bravery.

Orlando takes a step closer, his hands still unthreateningly buried in his pockets, and squints at him. “Yes, you are,” he agrees, “at least for someone who is otherwise so smart.”

“I’m not –“ Sean automatically objects but Orlando interrupts him.

“Oh shut up,” he says with friendly exasperation, “you are. And you’re funny and handsome and unreasonably modest and – do I need to go on?”
Sean shuffles from one foot to the other and looks down at the wet footprints he’s leaving. “Uh-“ he says. He knows Orlando is looking at him, waits for him to say something sensible. Do something.

“So you’re all these things and smart,” Orlando repeats and his voice drops a little. “And I think I made it painfully obvious in that completely non-subtle way – and before you say anything I can do subtle if I want to, alright?”

Sean can’t help but chuckle and when he glances up there is a similar smile on Orlando’s lips. Orlando’s eyes catch his now and do everything to keep Sean’s gaze from sliding back down again. Orlando brushes his curls out of his face and his hand lingers somewhere between them for a moment before he soldiers on.

“But you still don’t get it…” Orlando’s voice trails off and his eyes grow huge when suddenly he thinks of something. Sean sees the shock and embarrassment taking over his features and shakes his head instantly.

Still, Orlando stumbles back abruptly and gasps, “Oh fuck, fuck. You do and you were just letting me down easy because you are a decent –“

Sean grabs Orlando’s upper arms before the other man can retreat any further. “I’m not. I’m really not. I’m not decent and I haven’t been letting you – I mean I have, I reckon, but I didn’t mean to. I mean –“

He falls silent, confused by his own words, but he needs Orlando to know that he was just being a coward and an idiot.

Orlando stares at him, some confusion in his expression but that is at least better than the hint of mortified shock that is still lingering somewhere close. Then he swallows, his eyes firmly fixed on Sean, straightens his back and with just one low self-deprecating chuckle he rids himself of that doubt and reticence that crippled Sean for so long.

“Oh okay,” he says and nods. The familiar smile is back on his lips when he says, “So, I got another list for you: ‘Ten reasons why you should kiss me now’.”

Sean laughs and his grip on Orlando’s arms tightens a little. “You can stop mocking me any time now.”

“One – “ Orlando says anyway, “you really want to. Two – I really want you to. Three – I really am an awesome –“

Sean stops Orlando mid sentence by pressing their mouths together.

“Four – About bloody time,” Orlando mumbles against Sean’s lips.

“Five,” Orlando pulls Sean closer to him by hooking his fingers in the belt of his bathrobe, “I like your lips.”

“Six –“ Sean continues and feels Orlando’s instant responding smile against his own, “I like yours better when they’re not talking.”

“Liar.”

But Orlando shuts up now, for the first time since Sean has known him. Willingly, Sean parts his lips
when Orlando’s tongue demands entrance and it’s just his breath catching a little, he’s not panicking but Orlando pulls him closer anyway. Orlando kisses him with easy confidence and so much barely contained hunger and Sean can’t decide which one is more enticing.

He finds himself barely hanging on, desperate to keep up and it’s a push and pull and they almost stumble over their feet as they cover the short distance to the bed. It just barely registers that they changed from laughing against each other’s lips to breathy, open mouthed moans in a battle for dominance, their bodies pressed together.

When Orlando pulls back, just barely so, his chest still pressed against Sean’s, it’s to catch his breath and his skin is hot against Sean’s hands, his eyes are glowing. Sean feels the frame of the bed against the back of his calves, is breathing open mouthed as well.

“Tell me why we haven’t been doing this for the last four years,” Orlando says, his hands running up Sean’s sides.

“And we’re back at me being a bit slow,” Sean jokes, something that feels so delightfully easy all of a sudden. “Well, and you never shutting up long enough for this.”

“Oh, I’m like that guy from ‘Life of Brian’,,” Orlando objects, the indignation in his voice undermined by the way his entire body presses against Sean. “You know, the one who kept silent for, like, twenty years until Brian stepped on his foot.”

“The bearded old git that complained about his berries and jumped around completely naked?”

Orlando nods solemnly, lips tightly pressed together. That lasts for a second or two, in which Sean brushes back some stray curls from his face. Then Orlando says, “Speaking of naked, are you wearing anything underneath that robe?”

“Subtle.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Even for you.”

“New top one on the ‘Orlando’s subtle ways of making genius suggestions’?”

Sean glances down between their bodies, Orlando’s fingers play with the belt that holds his robe together, confident and eager. He curls his hand against the back of Orlando’s neck, licks his lips. Then after a moment like this, he sits down on the bed, looks up at Orlando.

He confesses quietly, “You know that I’m going to have a nervous breakdown about this tomorrow, yeah?”

Orlando just nods and waits.

“I’m shit at this relationship thing,” Sean continues, his hand smoothening out the bedspread next to him. “I’m notoriously apprehensive and crap at ‘sharing’ all that emotional stuff, and I can’t help flirting with other people and I’m insanely jealous.”

He could go on. These are merely a fraction of all the faults on his character sheet, he knows that. He’s so aware of these ‘traits’, has been for such a long time, that he even found ways to disguise them temporarily. It’s not what he wants to do right now, though. His heart is beating so hard it’s like he can feel it putting pressure on his lungs, making it hard for him to breathe. But he looks up at Orlando anyway because for once he’s not being a coward.
Orlando kneels down in front of him, hands loosely resting on Sean’s knees. He leans in and kisses Sean again, close mouthed and quick, but it feels more intimate than any of the previous times.


“It’s not obsessive compulsive, it’s –“

“Whatever, it’s bonkers and we both know it,” Orlando laughs and his hands grip Sean’s knees a little harder. “I probably have something like ADD, and I’m completely unreliable, and most of the times I don’t even notice when people flirt with me because I am so self-involved.”

He shrugs and that’s that. He hums in appreciation when Sean cups his cheek with his hand and places a kiss onto the ball of Sean’s thumb.

“So, what you’re saying,” Sean replies after a moment of silence and even quieter touches, “is that you secretly write idiotic lists as well.”

“Wonder where I got that from,” Orlando murmurs as he leans in for another kiss. Sean pulls him up, their lips never parting even when Orlando rearranges them to his liking and finally exhales happily, settling in Sean’s lap.

Now, even as Orlando manages to undo the belt that holds Sean’s robe together, even as Sean pulls Orlando’s t-shirt over his head and there finally is no more fabric between them, even then Sean is aware that he is a huge fuck up. But Orlando (who feels so good against him and Sean can’t stop touching him, wants to spend hours just doing this, just lying here with Orlando, touching him) is just as much of a fuck up apparently.

His arms hold Orlando’s weight on top of him as Orlando struggles to get out of his trousers without losing too much skin contact, without having to interrupt their kiss; and Sean realizes that he’s always known about Orlando’s faults. Long before Orlando has given him a pink diary and bought him a nut necklace on eBay. Hasn’t stopped him from ending up here, with Orlando on top of him and breathing heated kisses against his neck, his jaw, his chin until he’s reached his mouth again; on the contrary.

He hooks his leg over Orlando’s side, pulls him closer and murmurs against his lips, “You might want to tie me to the bed.”

Orlando laughs in surprise and delight and as much as Sean loves (Christ, yes) the shiver that runs through Orlando’s body, he feels the need to clarify.

“I mean, so I can’t run off tomorrow morning. Forecasted nervous breakdown and all that.”

“Whatever the reason,” Orlando replies, licking sweat from his own upper lip, “I approve of that plan.” His voice drops to a low murmur and again he kisses Sean, as addicted to this just like Sean is. “Just not tonight. And no more lists either, just for tonight, alright?”

Sean feels Orlando’s thigh pressing between his legs, feels his weight on top of him, their sweat mingling, feels Orlando’s heated and yet so focused gaze on him. Feels grounded. This might work out, he allows himself to think. It doesn’t feel like bravado or a white lie, if anything it feels like the biggest understatement.

“Alright,” he agrees.

Then it’s him who claims Orlando’s lips, his hands taking what feels like it might become rightfully
theirs, it’s his confidence and trust and optimism that guides their actions.

Obsessive compulsive list-making, or 51 reasons why Sean loves Orlando

#1 - When Orlando is under-caffeinated and Sean asks him which tattoo he wants next Orlando doesn’t lift his head from the kitchen table. He mumbles, “Your name across my collarbone please oh please I beg you give me coffee” like it’s one word.

#2 - Orlando says about himself – publically and repeatedly – that he is terribly self-involved, and he usually smiles a little self-depreciatingly. Sean knows that smile is bullshit. Orlando isn’t ashamed of his egocentricity and Sean doesn’t think he should be.

#3 - Orlando believes Sean when Sean says he is going to stop smoking. He buys him patches and doesn’t even mention cigarettes in Sean’s presence for the three days it takes Sean to find an excuse to start again.

#4 - Orlando still is an utter lightweight when it comes to alcohol. Everyone knows that. But really Orlando hardly ever drinks a drop because he doesn’t like taking a cab home. So, instead he just acts like a totally shitfaced moron which in his case means even broader smiles, even more body contact and sharing embarrassing details about his puberty with the entire party. Sean’s the one who drinks and Sean’s the one who usually barely makes it into the car before Orlando drives them home.

#5 - Orlando is a sound sleeper. He barely wakes when Sean nudges his knees apart in the middle of the night. His breathing pattern changes subtly as Sean slowly pushes into him. He moans lowly when Sean nuzzles the back of his neck and starts thrusting but he doesn’t open his eyes. Blind trust and blind lust fuel Sean’s own desire.

#6 - Orlando still has the He-Man toy from McDonald’s that Sean bought him that one hot sleepless night in Malta.

#7 - Orlando laughs out loud at the stupid cartoons in the newspaper every single day.

#8 - Orlando kisses Sean when Sean doesn’t know what to say. Sometimes Sean looks at Orlando and he is sure he needs to tell him how much he means to him. But in his head there are too many words, words that sound over-the-top and are still just a string of understatements, words that demand to be repeated over and over until they sound odd, sentences that stumble and fall and bruise their knees because they ran too fast, were too eager to reach their destination. Before Sean can start stuttering and stammering that he believes there are no words Orlando leans in. He brushes his lips against Sean’s, his hand cups Sean’s cheek, he murmurs, ‘Me, too, darling.’

#9 - Orlando is still an awful poker player. He still hasn’t given up on himself though he even has tells when playing online poker, however he manages that.

#10 - Orlando can always tell the difference between Sean’s moods, always knows when to offer to kiss it better and when to leave the country within the next half hour.

#11 - Orlando has gotten way better at playing ‘I spy’. Which is mostly due to him a. not pointing at the thing in question anymore and b. making up new names for things which makes it virtually impossible to guess them.

#11 - Orlando tells Sean that he loves him approximately 4.3 times a day. He compliments Sean on his arse 2.1 times, rolls his eyes amicably at Sean’s pernicketyness (which Sean still doubts is a proper word) 3.3 times a day. Sean made a chart.

#12 - Orlando doesn’t make fun of Sean when once again it takes Sean three days to pack a suitcase
in a way that won’t make his pernickety self have a heart attack. For someone whose packing consists of stuffing his toothbrush into the backpocket of his jeans Orlando is infinitely patient.

#13 - Orlando still holds Sean’s hand whenever they are on a plane. He grips it the second they have fastened their seatbelts and only lets go when they have landed safely. In between his fingers play with the band around Sean’s ring finger, his thumb strokes over Sean’s soothingly.

#14 - Orlando plays matchmaker between people he met while filming. He introduces Dom to Johnny and the entire Western hemisphere threatens to implode, he introduces Keira to Hugh Dancy and sexual tension is crackling like fireworks. Not everyone is lucky enough to meet their perfect match not just once, but twice on a movie set.

#15 - Orlando can come up to six times a night. As a result he’s pretty much useless the entire following day and insists on holding an icepack to his crotch even when they happen to have guests. It’s still pretty awe-inspiring.

#16 - Orlando paints his toe-nails when he is bored, usually black. When it’s World Cup time tiny bottles of nail-polish in the colours of the Union Jack find their way onto the bathroom shelf.

#17 - Orlando is ridiculously arachnophobic. When he spots a spider he jumps onto the nearest higher surface and hollers for Sean on the top of his lungs. And there is honest to God adoration and hero-worship in his eyes when Sean has put a glass over the monster the size of a jaffa cake.

#18 - Orlando loves sex and has yet to say no to a suggestion Sean makes, however non-mainstream. He did say, ‘I don’t think that’s anatomically possible, darling’ once. The muscle Sean pulled in his thigh proved him right but they agreed it was still worth it.

#20 - Orlando can prepare spinach but that’s as far as his cooking skills go. But he eats whatever Sean puts in front of him, even if it should be a little burned or too hot.

#21 - Orlando is never offended when Sean calls him a bloody treacherous and selling out whore when the Blades happen to play on the same day as ManU and ManU is once again the only team scoring.

#22 - Orlando’s favourite insults for Sean are – in order of frequency of use: ‘Stubborn bastard’, ‘cunt’, ‘wanker’, ‘Northerner’ and ‘two-timing troglodyte’. The last one says less about Sean’s faithfulness (he doesn’t even stray in his thoughts and it scares him a little sometimes) and more about Orlando’s odd infatuation with Captain Haddock as of late.

#23 - Orlando charms the kitchen staff when they are both staying in the same hotel until every single member adores him. Just so Sean gets his bacon extra crispy in the morning and a good British meal in the evening, wherever they are.

#24 - Orlando gets lost in New York every single time he is there. Sean bought him a smartphone so he can navigate his way back to wherever he’s staying. Orlando still preferably calls Sean, no matter the time of day, and opens with ‘So, I’m in front of this skyscraper. Where are you?’.

#25 - Orlando doesn’t make Sean buy female hygiene products. Or any kind of hygiene products, come to think of it.

#26 - Orlando always forgets to bring back the books he checked out from the library. Sean has to do it for him and pay the overdue fine. Orlando is ridiculously thankful and offers to pay him back in sexual favours.

#27 - Orlando asks Sean to look at every movie script he considers maybe worth his time, despite
Sean’s slightly questionable track record when it comes to picking roles for himself.

#28 - Orlando wrote Sean love letters when they were filming ‘Troy’. Well, they weren’t really letters, he wrote them on whichever scrap of paper he could get his hands on without having to get up from his chair during a shooting break. Also, he wrote them as Paris aka the Trojan sex addict which means that they entail less love declarations and more graphic descriptions of what Orlando wants to do to Sean’s arse. Sean still has all of them and sometimes he reads them to Orlando until Orlando nearly falls of the bed because he is laughing so hard.

#29 - Orlando calls Sean on his bullshit. Loudly or with just an arched eyebrow, unrelentingly and directly and usually rightfully so.

#30 - Orlando has stopped forwarding Sean Brad’s links to porny fanart featuring Odysseus, Paris, Achilles and Achilles’s ‘spear of glory’ as Brad calls it.

#31 - Orlando gets massively twitchy when he’s overworked. It doesn’t show over the day because despite rumours to the contrary he has a self-control that outclasses any soldier’s. But in his sleep he shifts about ten times a minute. He only stops when Sean rolls on top of him and pins his arms down, buries his face in the crook of Orlando’s neck. Then Orlando stills and breathes ‘Sean’ in his sleep and it feels like ‘I need you’, means ‘I need you’.

#32 - Orlando is intensely self-indulgent and thinks it only fair if other people (Sean in particular) are, too. However, sometimes when Sean is just that little bit too deep in that swamp of needing-everything-to-be-perfect Orlando pulls him out by the collar and shakes some sense into him before dusting him off carefully.

#33 - Orlando can get fiercely jealous from one moment to the other. His tone of voice suddenly is hard when addressing whoever Sean is talking to and he is telegraphing ‘piss off or else’ loud enough for the entire room to listen up. Sean’s not sure where that comes from, whether his own jealous streak has rubbed off, but he can’t help but feel pleased, relieved even.

#34 – Orlando’s most extreme reaction during a fight between them was to pour out Sean’s socks drawer. Measures more radical than that would have Sean’s OCD causing serious trouble. And for all his exuberance Orlando knows that, would never step over that line.

#35 - Orlando absolutely loves giving gifts. He’s intensely generous and donates huge chunks of his paychecks to charity, his friends receive cars or five star hotel vacations for their birthdays. When Orlando is away filming, Sean gets a gift in the mail practically every day. Orlando buys them on eBay, preferably used. Rather frequently Sean has no idea what prompted Orlando to get him, say, a broken Art Deco watch, a shower curtain with tanks on it, or a ratty edition of “A manual of etiquette in good society” from the 1870s. It’s a tiny, solid piece of Orlando’s considerate randomness on Sean’s doorstep every day and Sean doesn’t question it.

#36 - Orlando flirts with random people at parties and Sean hates it. He hates it and he can’t do anything against it. Orlando drops every stranger like a hot potato when Sean steps up to them. Even in a room filled with a hundred people it’s just the two of them again and the tension in Sean’s shoulders disappears.

#37 - Orlando honest to God has no gag reflex. He likes to show that off quite often. He swallows Sean down whole and sticks out his tongue, hot and wet and pressed against the underside of Sean’s cock. The look on his face is so complacent that Sean would call him a smug bastard if he wasn’t preoccupied.

#38 - Orlando owns about twenty pyjamas and other clothes perfectly suitable for wearing in bed.
However, when in a hotel he claims he can only sleep when he’s wearing a terry cloth supersoft bathrobe. After a night of his usual twisting and turning and fighting anacondas in his sleep he always wakes up naked.

#39 - Orlando rarely refers to Sean by his given name when he’s talking to other people. Instead he calls him ‘the scruffy one’, ‘that Northerner’, ‘006’, ‘the missus’, ‘Mary Poppins’, ‘my footie hooligan’, ‘my considerably better half’, ‘the bloke with Tourette’s who I’m shagging’, ‘darling’ or ‘tall, blond and mine’.

#40 - Orlando plays for hours with Sidi until they both fall asleep on the lawn, the dog draped across his master’s chest and Orlando cuddling him like a stuffed animal.

#41 - Orlando regularly bursts into the bathroom when Sean is brushing his teeth in the morning, claiming he can’t wait for five more minutes, he has to pee now. Sean pointed out once that someone urinating right next to him is maybe not the image he wants to start the day with. Orlando still comes in when Sean is brushing and he still pees. But he’s doing it with his eyes closed now, claiming he’s not even there. Sean can’t help but love Orlando’s sleepy attempt at logic and consideration as well as his miniature bladder.

#42 - Orlando’s an actor through and through. Some part of Sean’s roles always rubs off on him temporarily and when he tries to get into the right mindset he might not talk for days, become intensely irritable or so fussy it’s obsessive. Orlando notices, doesn’t comment, reacts accordingly and suddenly their house is an impromptu stage.

#43 - Orlando eats blueberries with a reverence like they are the last in the entire universe.

#44 - Orlando makes sure that the gardener, under no circumstances ever, touches Sean’s pruning shears or the rose bushes.

#45 - Orlando sometimes calls Sean late in the evening when either of them has been away on location for too long. He doesn’t want to talk, is usually too exhausted to. Sean puts the phone on speaker and goes back to whatever he was doing – washing up, watching football, reading the newspaper and muttering to himself – and Orlando, curled up in a bed on the other end of the world, just listens.

#46 - Orlando is not only the most handsome bloke Sean knows, he’s also the least vain. He doesn’t care what he wears, except that least one item on his body is usually nicked from Sean’s wardrobe. He also doesn’t give a shit what his hair looks like or what state the shrubbery on his face is in and he usually only showers when Sean tells him to.

#47 - Orlando adores Sean’s daughters. He spoils them rotten and offers a shoulder to cry on when they are heartbroken, have trouble at school or just need to vent because their Dad is being an idiot again.

#48 - Orlando has never sold any of Sean’s underwear on eBay even though he claims otherwise.

#49 - Orlando regularly ambushes Sean in the hallway when Sean comes back from filming. Sean has barely time to drop his bags before his back connects with the door and Orlando embraces him in a full-body hug, expecting him to hold him up.

# 50 - Sean still has these urges to write lists. When he’s really stressed out and desperately trying to get back in control his OCD occasionally gets the better of him. Sometimes he has to write entire exercise books full of the same two or three sentences. One afternoon he has reached page thirteen when Orlando slumps down on the bed next to him, holding a biro and an exercise book of his own.
Orlando writes thirty two pages, all filled with just one sentence in his bold handwriting – I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you I love you

#51 - Orlando loves Sean.

Butterfly effect

Basically, all of the following wouldn't have happened if Brad hadn't broken his leg when he was ten. If he hadn't, he'd have spent his summer outside, surfing, playing football or doing other stereotypical American things. He wouldn't have had to spend it in bed, and he wouldn't have read this awesome, awesome book on Greek mythology, and he wouldn't have become the biggest Greek Myth Geek in the history of Hollywood.

If he hadn't insisted on riding his bike down that hilariously steep set of stairs, he wouldn't have known Achilles from anchovies. When his agent sent him the script for Wolfgang Petersen's latest pet project, he'd maybe shown a mild interest, maybe he'd even still have agreed to play that Greek dude who got shot in his heel. He wouldn't have proposed to (a slightly confused) Wolfgang on the phone, wouldn't have professed his undying love for everything Iliad. He also wouldn't have gotten into serious trouble with Jennifer who still thinks it was an insane risk to not only finance Wolfgang's film, but to convince him to make this into a three-parter, LotR style.

Wolfgang would've had the Iliad scripted, but without Brad's insistence he'd foolishly have stopped there, would have made one flimsy film about the greatest story ever told. - Thank fuck for steep stairs, luckily grabbed textbooks and the impressionable mind of a ten year old. Because theirs was set out to be the greatest trilogy ever made. The story of Achilles' wrath, framed by Odysseus cunning himself through Greece, the Trojan shores and back to Greece, and the history of the Trojan royal family.

If Brad wasn't such a geek - well, no, let's face it. In every universe, Sean Bean would have been cast as Odysseus. Brad is firmly convinced that he is the reincarnation of the famous king of Ithaca. And while he loves the man like a brother (or at least a British cousin), he is also fucking scared of his scheming ways to be honest. Sean brings Orlando along like a major bringing his trusted sergeant - only that the military metaphor is slightly stretched because both of them are clearly insane. And Orlando, now Orlando is the one who insists he knows the absolutely perfect person to play Deiphobos, Paris' and Hector's brother, the embodiment of the proverbial short fuse.

When Karl Urban arrives on set, Sean and Orlando greet him like a long lost bodypart. The joy over the reunion is so intense that Wolfgang actually has to take Sean aside to ask him whether he remembers that he is supposed to be the Trojan's mortal enemy and because that doesn't really show on the dailies. Sean does what Brad expects him to - he growls at Wolfgang, only to then hastily get himself under control again and promise to remedy that.

Brad still isn't sure whether the blame for what happens next still is on him (and his Greek Geekiness) or on Wolfgang. As it turns out, as great as the off-screen friendship between Orlando, Karl, and Sean is, the on-screen chemistry between Odysseus and Deiphobos is now so scorching that this alone should be enough to burn Ilion down to the ground. After a couple of weeks of smouldering looks across the battle field and one-on-one combats that are really just badly concealed metaphors for really kinky hate-fucks, Brad asks Orlando about that. Specifically about his role in this threesome of doom. Orlando laughs at him and tells him that no way he is gonna get between Karl and Sean. For one thing he likes his sex non-greek, with just one cock involved, that is. And secondly, Paris might be the uncrowned king of seduction, yes, but Orlando can really do without bitemarks along his tanning lines and soreness all over. No way he is hitting that.

Wolfgang seems slightly worried for a while, but then he is slightly worried about EVERYTHING,
something that Brad doesn't really get. It isn't like it was Wolfgang's money is financing this kinky
matchmaking trilogy.

Brad himself? He takes one look at the dailies, glances at the three of them in the pub after work -
Orlando and Sean bitching about football, Karl and Orlando finishing each other's sentences, Sean's
hand resting calmly on Karl's thigh - and he considers it money well spent.

Good thing he broke his leg that one summer when he was ten.

Fragile stuff and sacred things

There’s something seriously wrong about filming movies, beginning with the end. It’s a bit like if
you put a box with the label ‘this side up’ upside down and only then notice that the fragile stuff
inside wasn’t even bubble wrapped.

‘Fragile stuff’ translates to my mind here, in case you wondered.

All I’m saying is that it’s not fucking right that, come afternoon, I’ll have half a dozen of arrows
decorating my chest (and my heel) before I even know most of the cast and crew’s names. Makes
dying a really pitifully meaningless and by far not as heroic as I prefer it.

Of course there are some people who took the whole bonding thing more seriously than I did – and
by that I mean bordering obsessive, really. Seriously, it’s kinda unprofessional to go around on a film
set and just randomly pick new family members. This is no pet shop with puppies up for adoption for
heaven’s sake. And yet some people do that and call each other ‘brothers’ and let me tell you that’s
not just while the cameras are rolling.

I mean, I get Orlando’s part in the deal, you know, since now he has someone who by family
obligations is for all eternity doomed to make him coffee because he can’t manage on his own. Or tie
his shoes or buy milk in a Moroccan Tesco. But Eric? Honestly, I think he should’ve become, I don’t
know, a child’s nurse or something instead of an actor. Obsessive, see what I mean?

Oh, and don’t get me started on Orlando and Bean. Come to think of it, it must be Orlando.
Something he sends out, like, signals or something in his sweat, I don’t know. It’s like Orlando’s in a
boat on the ocean and dripping blood into the water. No wonder a shark in the shape of 006 is
always close by. Not that I’m scared of Sean who makes even Eric duck his head when he glares,
even if only in jest, and Eric is, like, two heads taller than him.

Everyone on this frigging set is insane, I tell you.

But since no one asked my opinion on this – on anything really, come to think about it, I don’t even
get to decide what clothes I wear (Jen and the girl from make up have joined ranks, I swear) – I just
say ‘hi there, pal’ to Bana who sits around on set in cut offs and a t-shirt that is too narrow and who
isn’t even in the fucking scene. Technically he’s dead already, Hector not Eric of course, but that’s
the whole upside down messing with Brad’s head thing once more and let’s not go there again.

Relaxing in my chair while the crew is readjusting the cameras I wriggle my toes in my flip flops and
wonder whether I will have sunburn on them in the evening. They look sorta lobster already.

Suddenly there is shadow and for a moment I am grateful that finally one of those personal assistants
they hook you up with takes his job serious enough to think of Brad Pitt’s feet, too. My gratitude
ends rather abruptly when I look up.

‘Cause the walking shadow is Sean and he smiles down at me, full costume somewhat ridiculed by
the ultra modern sunglasses on the huge thing he calls his nose. And even though I’ve known him
only for a total of seven days now I know that this smile is dangerous. ‘Cause, you see, it has a certain effect on people. Not me of course.

“Hot, innit?” he asks and when I frown at him he exemplifies, “the sun, mate.”

“It’s not the arctic,” I respond, belatedly, “but I suppose that depends on what you’re used to.”

We’re having a conversation over the weather. Who said I didn’t know how to bond?

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Sean Bean, the evil fiend.

What? I know I shouldn’t judge people from their performances in movies. I mean I played Chopper, didn’t I, and I’m not about to cut my ears off and thank you, spare me any further comments on my ears in general. And I don’t really identify people with the characters they play. I mean look at Orlando for example – say, Legolas drinking that dwarf under the table? Orlando couldn’t even out-drink one of Snow White’s midgets and I have it on good authority that they are strictly anti-alcoholic.

And it’s not that. Up to now, Sean seemed to be a nice guy. Easy going and decent and all. But this? Evil, if I’ve ever seen it.

“And then,” I say conversationally to Orlando, who is sitting next to me. “I took my Falcon and drove it off a cliff,”

Patiently I wait for Orlando’s reaction and it comes, a tiny part of his brain registering that I have stopped talking and probably wait for an answer.

“Uh-huh, that’s great, mate,” he says absentmindedly.

Ignoring the fact that my supposed to be adoring little brother has just approved of my death, I look in the direction Orlando’s facing. Across the set, Brad sits in his chair and seems deep in conversation with Sean who has just come out of the costume tent in full Odysseus regalia.

“And you know what?” I say, giving my voice a joyous tone, “I died a very, very painful death there.”

Orlando still doesn’t look at me, his eyes seem to be glued to Sean’s naked legs.

“Oh, that’s,” Orlando mumbles, not listening at all, “fantastic.”

He swallows audibly what must be in my estimation about ½ a litre of drool and I watch his eyes travelling over Sean’s ankles, up his muscular calves. They move a little higher and Orlando rubs the back of his nose with his thumb though he looks like he’d rather rub his nose against the back of Sean’s knees. Reluctantly his gaze drifts up further, lingering at Sean’s thighs now and Orlando gnaws at his lower lip.

“Isn’t it?” I agree, doing my best to suppress a bubble of laughter forming in my belly, “Picture my surprise that only afterwards I gave birth to a baby dinosaur!”

Sean chooses that exact moment to look over his shoulder. It takes him less than a second to find Orlando amongst all the people rushing around us and that alone is a dead give away. His eyes fix on
the younger man, they do, I swear, you can feel it even though they are hidden behind sunglasses. And besides, who’d that devilish smirk be for if not Orlando?

“Baby dinosaur,” Orlando’s mouth repeats on auto pilot and his voice is wavery, though not in sympathy for my decidedly not child bearing hips, “uh-huh.”

I shake my head in amusement, stretch out my legs and scratch my belly.

“Too bad though,” I continue this conversation that I could just as well have with Orlando’s empty chair for all the attention he’s paying me, “that just this morning it came to set and bit Wolfgang’s head off.”

Orlando whimpers in response. Well, not really in response to our director losing his head, I guess, but reacting to – oh, come ON, Sean! Could you at least try to pretend you’re not just totally doing this to kill my poor baby brother? With his back to us, Sean keeps talking while he’s seemingly absentmindedly rubbing his ass with his left hand. Orlando whimpers again and I swear no ass scratching should make anyone utter such completely pathetic sounds, not even if we’re talking about the sacred arse. And no, you don’t want to know about the conversation between a drunken Orlando and me in which that phrase came up.

“Orlando?” I ask, prompting him, and he manages to tear his eyes away for a second to turn his head to me again. He may face me but I still can see it in his eyes, like the Dollar signs in Dagobert Duck’s eyes, only that in Orlando’s there is reflecting a rather pornographic image involving Sean and him.

“Really?” he says and it’s only then that my latest words about Wolfgang and my dinosaur offspring register. First he frowns, trying to make sense out of my nonsense, then he grins at me, “Bit his head off? Does that mean I get the day off?”

“I think,” I reply, “it’d be rather respectless if you celebrated Wolfgang’s beheading with a fucking orgy.”

Orlando blushes and there it is again, this urgent unidentifiable need for me to ruffle his hair. Until he hits my shoulder rather hard. Outch.

“It’s not an orgy, you ass,” he says, eyes cast down, “it’d be only me and Sean and,” he hesitates for a moment and then adds with a small voice, “mebbe that costume of his.”

“Costume?” I reply, my voice bearing rather well acted ignorance, “Which costume, little bro?”

He looks at me wide eyed, like a religious fanatic looks at an atheist, and then apparently decides I’m not worth the attention. We go back to ogling the enemy, namely one King of Ithaca.

Brad grins at something Sean says, a rare sight on set for the Myrmidon turns the amiable American into a brooder once he’s in costume. Sean’s answering laughter is to be heard and he raises his right arm, illustrating something. The sun is hot and real sweat mingles with the red applied by make up on his flexing muscles.

“I want to lick that sweat and blood off his skin like it were cherry juice,” Orlando says quietly. I blink.

“Uhm, Orli?” I enquire.

“Huh?” Orlando grunts, indicating that he’s listening even if not looking at me.
“You do realise that you said that out loud, don’t you?”

Orlando tears his eyes away from Sean and says with a downright dirty smile, “Also, I bet he’s not wearing any knickers and mmm, I can almost smell the rich leather of his skirt when I –“

Too much information for the married man. I stick my fingers into my ears and hum the tune of the first song that comes to my mind which happens to be ‘I'M not a girl, not yet a woman’. Orlando’s gleeful cackling easily outdoes my inner Britney, though.

Shit.

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Orlando’s strange brand of snort-giggling interrupts Sean’s tale of how he futilely tried to order some kind of pudding from Yorkshire in his hotel and we both look to where the two princes of Troy sit.

“Why has Eric his fingers in his ears?” I wonder out loud and Sean shrugs, still looking at the pair of them.

"Prolly ‘cause Orlando told him about his smelly feet and what sort of cheese they reminded him of today."

The look on my face must have given away some of my emotions because now I get the Sean Bean version of a reassuring smile (not comforting at all, I think now I am a little scared of him).

“Uhm,” I say, “that’s interesting. Should be great to be working with him for the next months.”

Sean hooks his thumps in the front of his skirt like normal people do it with their belt loops and says, “Once you get over the gross issue he’s rather endearing.”

“Like a puppy that peed on the carpet?”

Sean laughs out loud and at the other end of the set Orlando’s attention snaps back to him, Bana and his pains completely forgotten. To normal people (in this case: me) Sean’s dark, rumbling laughter might sound pleasant enough, to Orlando, apparently it is like the siren’s song.

“You know how it is,” Sean says and looks for something to drink. I hand him my water bottle. “you never give up hope of housetraining them eventually.”

“Not until they grow up and bite your leg off, no,” I agree dryly and my eyes wander back to Orlando who watches Sean’s every motion and indeed seems close to physically attacking the man.

“Ah, but he wouldn’t do that,” replies Sean with confidence, smiles a strangely private smile and then looks down at me again, “he bites only if asked nicely.”

I’m not sure which image freaks me out more, the one of Orlando biting Sean or the one of Sean asking nicely for it – probably the latter because that’s just wrong, like order-of-the-universe kind of wrong, Bean pleading for anything, y’know. In any case: I freak out. Inside. Outside I clear my throat.

“Uhm, interesting.”

Sean chuckles again and drops my water bottle and I don’t say ‘unintentionally’ because there was absolutely nothing accidental about it, nor about his bending over to pick it up again.
It’s a bit like driving by a traffic accident – it’s horrible but you can’t help staring – and so I find myself witnessing how Orlando’s eyes turn comically huge and he drops out of his chair onto his knees. Like he was praying in front of an altar.

My pained gaze meets Eric’s and briefly I think I have found someone who commiserates. But then I get the distinct impression that Eric is just staring at Sean’s bend over body as well.

How long does it take this man to pick up a water bottle, I ask you?

Is everyone on this frigging set insane?

Wait, I already know the answer to that one.

You’re still the one I run to

I know, I’ve said it before. But honestly, it needs to be said again. And possibly engraved into some bigass stone, the size of the Trojan Horse:

Sean and Orlando are fucking weirdos.

Eric looks at me now when I say it out loud (no use bottling that kind of shit up, guaranteed to give you an ulcer). He looks at me like I was on the slow bus, just catching on to something that is as obvious as the Mexican sun rising every morning.

But guess what, every day they really do surprise me anew with the sheer purity of their fucking weirdness.

This morning over breakfast – I really should stop eating in the hotel’s restaurant – it started; the ‘Sean and Orlando Drama Class’, part four.

Yes, before you ask, they’ve been at it for four days now. Jesus fucking Christ. Apparently it all started (or so Eric tells me) when one of their weirdo friends, probably the insane one with the crooked nose, prompted them to do improv theatre with movie genres.

You should’ve been there yesterday, it was War Movie day. And you’d think ‘neat, you’re already filming this huge war flick anyway’. But no, Orlando and Sean chose to turn it into a food fight. Two grown men flinging bread rolls at one another. Seriously. I told Sean to be a fucking adult after five minutes (more precisely, when a bread roll hit my head), but he just gave me a completely fucked up version of an innocent face (that man cannot pull of innocent, I tell you). ‘Orlando started it’ he then said, and that was roughly when Orlando fell from his chair because he was laughing so hard. Sean used that to his advantage by throwing himself on top of him and forcing him to eat a banana. Orlando, as it became fairly obvious, had some objections against performing fellatio on fruit in public. So I think what Sean then proceeded to do to him can be considered rape of sorts.

Anyway. Today apparently is Romance Movie Day. Breakfast was used by British Idiot No. 1 and his faithful companion Imbecile Boy to shout lines from ‘Gone with the Wind’ at one another. Orlando ate on the patio by the way, and Sean never lets the buffet out of his sight. Thirty feet distance between them easily. Great for hollered love declarations apparently.

They also managed to rope some of the hotel’s personnel (poor, poor creatures) into delivering love letters written on napkins and (in Orlando’s case) an orange to one another. Sean read the orange declaration and then proceeded to eat it which caused Orlando to nearly lose it.

Which brings me to right now, actually. We’re waiting for the lights to be adjusted and the extras to be herded just the right way. Normal people (such as myself, Eric and, to some extent (read: when
he’s not completely shitfaced) Peter) use that kind of spare time to relax, catch up with their scheduled beauty naps, or even do crosswords.

Not Sean and Orlando, obviously. Currently they entertain (and by that I mean ‘completely freak out’) most of the rest of the cast and crew, Orlando in tears and Sean on his knees in front of him.

Yeah, I think you might want me to elaborate on that a bit. So, Orlando is a freak of nature who apparently has no gag reflex (he proved that to a stunned audience and a violated banana yesterday). There is also something very wrong with his lachrymal glands. He can cry on demand, and by that I mean Niagara Falls quality. The full waterworks are on right now and he is pulling off the accompanying wailing so convincingly, that Sean is receiving stink eyes from all over the place. His part of the dialogue mostly consists of sobbed ‘but I loved you’s and ‘how can you do this to meeeeee’ (yes, he’s doing four ‘e’s easily).

Sean, now I’m not sure if I counted that right, but he is divorced three times, right? Explains some of the expertise he’s showing here. He already swore his endless devotion half a dozen times, once I think it might have been in Elvish or whatever weird made-up language Lord of the Rings people speak. He also quoted several poems, all of which are definitely featured on greeting cards you get at the florist. Right now I _think_ he’s trying to serenade Orlando, but man of many talents that Sean Bean is, singing is not amongst them. He’s mangling an already horrible song that sounds vaguely familiar (Shania Twaine, seriously?) and has passer-bys look at him in horror. Even Orlando calls a time out on his sobbing to look at Sean. Only in his case it is with the glee a demented psycho reserves for watching a complete train wreck.

When Sean has finished with a very disturbing (and not very true to the original) ‘You’re still the one I shag goodnight’, Orlando is close to conceding and clapping. Sean, however, overplays his hand by standing up and looking down at Orlando sadly.

“I hope,” he says and his voice is honestly cracking, “that you’ll forgive me some day.”

He nods once, poster boy for resolve and bravery, and turns to walk away from his broken relationship err (dammit, I am not gonna get caught up in this again) from this sorry charade.

Orlando quickly recovers from his momentary doe-eyed trance and throws himself out of his chair and at Sean’s feet. Well, to be more exact, he catapults himself against Sean’s lower legs, grabs them and hence causes the mighty Odysseus to faceplant the Mexican sand.

“Noooo, don’t leave meeeee,” he wails.

Sean (with sand in his beard) twists around in order to punch Orlando. That, in case you were wondering, is his usual reaction to Orlando tackling him. I have no idea why Orlando still does it so regularly despite that. And I don’t want to know.

But before Sean can even so much as make a fist, Orlando has crawled up and smashed his face against Sean’s in what I _think_ is supposed to be a passionate kiss. Given the sand on Sean’s face and Orlando’s less than delicate technique, it looks more like he’s trying to lick the sprinkles of a fiercely protesting doughnut.

Sean starts laughing loudly and open-mouthed, and Orlando uses that to his advantage and frenches him. Sean just laughs even harder, and he pushes Orlando’s head away, his hand nearly covering all of Orlando’s face. Orlando rolls off him, and they lie in the sand side by side (two fucking grown men for fuck’s sake). Sean is snickering helplessly, and Orlando is, rather unsuccessfully, trying to wipe tears from his face.
This is when maybe the weirdest thing of all happens. Wolfgang’s voice sounds through his megaphone (no idea where he is, but then, nothing like a disembodied voice to demand respect), calling for all of the leads to get back to their places.

And Sean and Orlando? Get to their feet, and are 100% professional again. Orlando’s not crying anymore but picking up his sword and swirling it through the air, muscle memory easily recalled. And Sean mumbles something that most definitely must be his part from the script, while he absentmindedly wipes remaining sand from his face.

I get to my feet as well and shake my head. Eric, still next to me, grins.

“Fucking weirdos,” I say.

“Duh,” is all Eric replies before he, too, draws his sword and toddles off, expecting me to follow.

I shake my head again. You’re still the ones I run from. That’s what someone should be singing. Protégé of Aphrodite, my ass.

“You should put on some sunscreen.”

Sean stood over Orlando and wore that particularly weird expression that couldn’t decide whether to be exasperated or greatly amused. Orlando shaded his eyes against the sun with one hand and flipped him off with the other.

“Man, Sean, ease up. You make Astin look like a daredevil.”

“Astin?” Brad asked and when Orlando didn’t instantly explain he kicked his shin. Bastard self-involved movie star.

“Fucker.”

“Who, Astin?”

“Astin as in Sean Astin,” Sean explained patiently while Orlando politely returned Brad’s kick and got an elbow in his ribs for his trouble. “Rings. Christ, will you two stop it already?”

Sean had raised his voice slightly and Brad instantly let go of Orlando’s head which he had been about to stuff into a conveniently nearby hole or something. Orlando was intensely grateful for Sean’s sergeant-voice, to be honest, because he hated getting sand into his ears. The minor inconvenience of a Bean-porn-voice induced hard-on was something he had long come to live with.

“He started it,” Brad muttered.

“Really?” Sean was back to exasperated in 0.2 flat.

“Yeah, I did,” Orlando admitted with a shrug. “I run around stealing other people’s wives, nick your sun lotion and kick unsuspecting movie stars. I’m badass like that.”

“You also mix up real life and script when you’ve been in the sun too long. You ever notice that?” Sean asked.

“You think that’s due to the sun?” Brad asked. “I thought it was about being British.”

“You want to get kicked again?” Orlando asked, laughing, and with another glance up at Sean he added, “I’ll get Sean to do it for me, this time. He makes my kicks feel like, I dunno, gentle flaps of a
fairy’s wings.”

Brad looked at him, then at Sean. “I see where you got the whole sunstroke idea.”

“I don’t mix up my life with Paris’,” Orlando said, only a minute or so late with his reply. “Not my fault that Wolfgang modelled him after me. Irresistible and unforgettable, I get that a lot.”

Brad got to his feet, making sure to sprinkle Orlando with a good deal of sand in the process. He rolled his eyes and arched a brow in Sean’s direction.

“I still don’t get how you’d want to work with that dude for a second time. Did he follow you here?”

“He’s an acquired taste,” Sean said, sitting down on Orlando’s other side. “Like schnitzel.”

Brad barked with laughter. “I’ll leave you two to it then. I’m off to find Bana.”

With that he wandered off. Orlando’s eyes followed him for a while, then he settled back in the sand with a contented sigh.

“You know, he only searches out Eric ‘cause Eric does a halfway believable impersonation of me.”

“Of course he does, your delusional holiness.”

“I like that. Way better than schnitzel, anyway.”

“Look at yourself. You’ve got sand coating all over you. And you’ve been in the sun long enough to be well done, too.”

“I honestly have no idea how you managed to lure three wives in front of the altar with that routine of yours.”

Sean chuckled. “Wouldn’t you like to find out.”

“I would, actually.”

Sean wasn’t an actor for nothing. For the moment that he contemplated Orlando’s reply, Orlando couldn’t for the hell of it tell anything from his features. But then that small smile crept back onto his lips, the one that made Orlando want to jump him and hide behind the next conveniently close random warrior for cover. Maybe he was overidentifying with Paris just the littlest bit.

“Was that you or Paris talking?” Sean asked then, like he could read Orlando’s thoughts.

“Paris would so be past talking by now, man,” Orlando replied laughingly. He pushed himself up to a sitting position and squinted at Sean. “What if I told you that this goes back way to NZ?”

Sean tilted his head.

“I’d be reassured that this isn’t just character-bleed. I’m pretty sure we all agreed that Leggy was asexual.”

Orlando gaped at him.

“Asex- excuse me?! When did we vote on that?”

“You didn’t. Elves and hobbits were excluded from voting. Lack of maturity.”
“That is racism. I can’t believe I fancy an Elf-racist. Who is complete rubbish at wooing, too.”

Sean chuckled and patted Orlando’s knee, letting his hand rest there.

“Don’t worry. I make up for it between the sheets.”

Orlando opened his mouth to reply, looked at the hand still on his knee, shut his mouth again. He turned his head to look at Sean, wide-eyed no doubt and somewhat feeling like that kid who just got off the plane in New Zealand again. Protégé of Aphrodite, my ass. He was so completely on his own with this.

Hyena

In his life, there had been quite a few occasions in which Sean had hoped the earth would swallow him and neeverer spit him back out. Like when he was cussing like a lunatic at the telly when the Blades lost only to find his three year old daughter standing in the doorway with wide eyes. Like when he came home drunk night after night when his marriages neared their ends and was greeted with his wives’ disgust and even fear sometimes.

Hell, in Sean’s opinion, generally was a place that you furnished yourself and Sean's own special one was sadly well equipped.

The worst of all things, though, was one he couldn’t even be held responsible for. He’d tried, really he had, to no avail. When it got him, it scared his reason away, made his blood boil, his body hurt. Jealousy was a hyena that tore you apart after you’d been slain by somebody else, that laughed at you with knowing cruelty.

Eric and Orlando. Orlando and Eric.

He’d walked in on them and they had been kissing in a way that spoke of familiarity and of aftermath, their faces flushed, their bodies radiating tired-excited contentment. He couldn't get the fucking image out of his mind, didn’t sleep without dreaming of two bronze bodies writhing together, strong hands buried in thick brown curls. Smiles and moans and gasps, and even before the pain hit him Sean knew that those sounds were loud enough to draw the predators in to feast on his heart for yet another time.

Having to go to set each morning – seeing them laugh, finish each other’s sentences - was a Prometheus task, only that it wasn’t his liver at stake.

Sean wanted him so much, he couldn’t think straight. He tried to tell himself that it was only because he couldn’t have him that the craving increased in strength each day. Sean tried to be a mate when he squeezed Sean’s shoulder casually, when he tried to lighten Sean’s mood with a joke and a wink, concern and obliviousness in his brown eyes. Sean really tried. Only to fall harder for him each day.

‘Tell him,’ Peter said to Sean one evening in the bar. Sean looked at the older man as if he didn’t know what he meant but Peter’s blue eyes drifted to the pair of them at the other end of the bar, two sets of tousled curls close together as they whispered secrets to one another that weren’t brotherly.

‘Tell him,’ Peter repeated and the look in his eyes spoke of knowledge, of a missed opportunity decades back that was still fiercely regretted.

So now here Sean stands, in front of a closed door, in the middle of the night, his hand raised already, as he plucks up the courage to knock. He does it eventually, tentatively and yet with the boldness of a man who’s realised he has nothing to lose.

The door opens, and there he stands, his clothes rumpled from sleeping in them, his eyes blinking
tiredly. When he sees Sean, though, there’s a dawning of surprise and something else in his dark brown eyes. Sean feels the hyena retreating, making way for something even more potentially deadly. Hope.

‘Hey,’ Sean says quietly, almost a whisper, ‘I need to talk to you.’

And Eric smiles and nods, retreating into the room and expecting Sean to follow.

Butterfly effect

Basically, all of the following wouldn't have happened if Brad hadn't broken his leg when he was ten. If he hadn't, he'd have spent his summer outside, surfing, playing football or doing other stereotypical American things. He wouldn't have had to spend it in bed, and he wouldn't have read this awesome, awesome book on Greek mythology, and he wouldn't have become the biggest Greek Myth Geek in the history of Hollywood.

If he hadn't insisted on riding his bike down that hilariously steep set of stairs, he wouldn't have known Achilles from anchovies. When his agent sent him the script for Wolfgang Petersen's latest pet project, he'd maybe shown a mild interest, maybe he'd even still have agreed to play that Greek dude who got shot in his heel. He wouldn't have proposed to (a slightly confused) Wolfgang on the phone, wouldn't have professed his undying love for everything Iliad. He also wouldn't have gotten into serious trouble with Jennifer who still thinks it was an insane risk to not only finance Wolfgang's film, but to convince him to make this into a threeparter, LotR style.

Wolfgang would've had the Iliad scripted, but without Brad's insistence he'd foolishly have stopped there, would have made one flimsy film about the greatest story ever told. - Thank fuck for steep stairs, luckily grabbed textbooks and the impressionable mind of a ten year old. Because theirs was set out to be the greatest trilogy ever made. The story of Achilles' wrath, framed by Odysseus cunning himself through Greece, the Trojan shores and back to Greece, and the history of the Trojan royal family.

If Brad wasn't such a geek - well, no, let's face it. In every universe, Sean Bean would have been cast as Odysseus. Brad is firmly convinced that he is the reincarnation of the famous king of Ithaca. And while he loves the man like a brother (or at least a British cousin), he is also fucking scared of his scheming ways to be honest. Sean brings Orlando along like a major bringing his trusted sergeant - only that the military metaphor is slightly stretched because both of them are clearly insane. And Orlando, now Orlando is the one who insists he knows the absolutely perfect person to play Deiphobos, Paris' and Hector's brother, the embodiment of the proverbial short fuse.

When Karl Urban arrives on set, Sean and Orlando greet him like a long lost bodypart. The joy over the reunion is so intense that Wolfgang actually has to take Sean aside to ask him whether he remembers that he is supposed to be the Trojan's mortal enemy and because that doesn't really show on the dailies. Sean does what Brad expects him to - he growls at Wolfgang, only to then hastily get himself under control again and promise to remedy that.

Brad still isn't sure whether the blame for what happens next still is on him (and his Greek Geekiness) or on Wolfgang. As it turns out, as great as the off-screen friendship between Orlando, Karl, and Sean is, the on-screen chemistry between Odysseus and Deiphobos is now so scorching that this alone should be enough to burn Iliion down to the ground. After a couple of weeks of smouldering looks across the battle field and one-on-one combats that are really just badly concealed metaphors for really kinky hate-fucks, Brad asks Orlando about that. Specifically about his role in this threesome of doom. Orlando laughs at him and tells him that no way he is gonna get between Karl and Sean. For one thing he likes his sex non-greek, with just one cock involved, that is. And secondly, Paris might be the uncrowned king of seduction, yes, but Orlando can really do without
bitemarks along his tanning lines and soreness all over. No way he is hitting that.

Wolfgang seems slightly worried for a while, but then he is slightly worried about EVERYTHING, something that Brad doesn't really get. It isn't like it was Wolfgang's money is financing this kinky matchmaking trilogy.

Brad himself? He takes one look at the dailies, glances at the three of them in the pub after work - Orlando and Sean bitching about football, Karl and Orlando finishing each other's sentences, Sean's hand resting calmly on Karl's thigh - and he considers it money well spent.

Good thing he broke his leg that one summer when he was ten.

Interested instantly

“So nice to see ya, mate,” Orlando said in a hushed voice and after hugging Karl briefly, he looked over his shoulder with a sort of haunted look on his face.

“Likewise,” Karl said, following Orlando’s gaze. “You alright, though?”

“What?” Orlando’s head turned back and he smiled at Karl, “Yeah, I’m just sorta on the run. Trying to hide, you know.”

Before Karl could ask what exactly had Orlando impersonating a fugitive the younger man shrieked and fell down, tackled to the ground by a fucking huge – and flying – human body. Karl arched both brows, crossed his arms in front of his chest and looked down at the pile of human limbs and a very nice arse – not Orlando’s – right in front of him on the ground. A short leather skirt, sun tanned skin and unruly dark brown curls – for a moment Karl thought he was having a hallucination, a bigger version of Orlando tackling Orlando.

Until from underneath the huge man who wriggled nothing less but gleefully a pitiful curse sounded and Orlando’s hand came out to swat at the man’s broad shoulder.

“Jesus Christ, Bana,” Orlando struggled indignantly, “get off of me! I hate it when you go all duck and cover on me.” To Karl’s amusement, the taller man cackled in response and rose a little only to grasp Orlando’s face with his big hands and place a sloppy kiss onto Orlando’s protesting mouth. “Eeek, Eric, stop with the kisses, you pervert!”

Karl watched for another moment how Orlando in vain tried to rid himself of the other man. The tall man – Eric – just kept licking Orlando’s face, holding him pinned down underneath his huge frame like a large, overeager dog would do it with a beloved pack member. Karl’s eyes drifted over his broad back, muscles twitching while he struggled with Orlando playfully, his battleskirt riding up and exposing long, strong thighs. Karl licked his lips and while Orlando continued protesting, kicking now, Karl said calmly, “You know, Orlando, I’d take him off your hands.”

“What!” came from underneath Eric.

“Your 6’2’ puppy there?” Karl exemplified.

Said puppy, err man, stopped wriggling for the moment and looked over his shoulder up at Karl. Interested instantly.

“Name’s Eric,” he said and gave Karl a brilliant grin, ”Hi by the way.”

Orlando continued swatting Eric’s shoulder until he managed to get the other man off of him. Eric came to sit back on his heels while Orlando scrambled away from him, giving him a weary look, not
trusting the sudden withdrawal. Eric, though, had lost all interest in molesting his co-star and looked up at Karl at whose feet he was kneeling.

“Hi,” he repeated, lower this time, not with a grin but a slow smile that reached his dark eyes once they’d travelled up Karl’s body. “And you are?”

“Karl,” Karl said, the same smile on his lips as their eyes were already negotiating whose legs would be wrapped around whose body while he got fucked into oblivion. Without taking his eyes of Eric Karl prompted, “Orli?”

“By all means,” Orlando said with exasperation, rising to his feet and brushing dust off his costume, “you can have him. Put him on a leash or something.”

“Hm,” Karl said and his eyes travelled down to Eric’s neck that he would lick first. Eric tilted his head back a little, exposing his throat. His Adam’s apple bobbed as he swallowed. “Not a bad idea.”

Eric purred low in his throat and had Karl wondering what other nice sounds he could make him utter within the next hour. Karl’s hand twitched as he could barely keep himself from burying it in Eric’s thick hair. Eric smiled knowingly and placed his big hands on his naked thighs. Karl knew they’d be tense and taste of sweat when he bit their insides.

Orlando groaned and shook his head, “Christ, get a room, you two. There’s straight people around, yeah?”

Nothing says “I love you“ like…

From: obloom1977@hotmail.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: Departure

Hi Karl,

two things:
One - If you talk to Viggo some time in the near future (as I KNOW you do) tell him to check his fucking email. Hell, even Bean is more available and he needs help switching his computer on.
Two – Next time when you come visit, please remember uncuffing Eric from the bedframe. The hotel now wants to sue for disturbance of the peace and I have seen much more of Eric’s anatomy than any hetero bloke would want to.

Hope you’re well,
Orli

---------------------------------------------------------

From: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: You

Are SO DEAD.

DEAD.
From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: obloom1977@hotmail.com
Subject: Re: Departure

Hey Orli,

I had a good flight – watched “Two Towers” and had a nice chat with the girl sitting next to me who sighed dreamily every time Legolas pranced on screen. Told her I could forward her number but for some reason she didn’t give it to me. – Viggo owns a computer?!? Sorry ‘bout the accidental eyeful you got. I was certain I told Eric where the keys were. Hm.

Talk to you soon
Karl

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
Subject: Me

If you wouldn’t behave like a puppy dog on uppers, people wouldn’t have to put you on a leash. Think about that for a bit, mate.

From: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: Think about that for a bit

Sorry, no can do. I’m completely occupied planning your slow and painful death. And learning Hector’s new lines about how much of a fuck up Paris is. But mostly: You+torture. Harhar.

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
Subject: Re: Think about that for a bit

What exactly is your idea of torture? Tie me up and make me watch the Wallabies?
P.S. Australia lost btw.
P.P.S. Harhar.

------------------------------------------------------------------

From: obloom1977@hotmail.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: Bana?

Hey mate,

just wondering whether you have any idea what’s up with Eric? He keeps muttering about “fucking all blacks” (= Hatred for Myrmidones? New sexual preferences? I have no idea) and waves his sword about all Viglike. This morning at breakfast, he nearly beheaded Brad. Thoughts?

Cheers,
Orli

------------------------------------------------------------------

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: obloom1977@hotmail.com
Subject: Re: Bana?

Hello Orlando,

do you really think that Pitt needs his head for anything in particular?
I talked to Vig btw, he says he is terribly sorry he hasn’t been in touch and promises to knit you a scarf for Christmas.

K.

------------------------------------------------------------------

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
Subject: Sore loser

= You.

------------------------------------------------------------------
From: obloom1977@hotmail.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: No news on the Western front or whatever

Hey,

Brad needs his head to smile prettily from the movie posters and sell the damn movie so I can finance my new Porsche!
Eric hasn’t killed anyone yet. This is about as far as the jolly news go however… but you prolly know that better than I do, right :-)?

Cheers,
Orli

P.S. Scarf \o/!

---------------------------------------------------------

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
Subject: Yesterday?

Was that party for O’Toole yesterday? I called four times but you didn’t pick up. Well.

---------------------------------------------------------

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
Subject: enemy

Btw, Orlando told me about your near decapitation of the enemy. Bet Homer would’ve approved.

---------------------------------------------------------

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
Subject: Re: Think about that for a bit

Eric?
From: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: My poor team

I'm not talking to you.

---------------------------------------------------------

From: biggestbanana@yahoo.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: My poor team

Meanie.

---------------------------------------------------------

From: auto-shipping@amazon.com
To: karl_urban@gmail.com
Subject: Your Amazon.com order has dispatched

Dear Customer,

Greetings from Amazon.com,

We are writing to let you know that the following items have been sent to:

Eric Bana
Sunshine Hotel
Los Cabos, Mexico

Your order #202-9242277-5346712

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Thank you for shopping at Amazon.com
From: hewhorulztheuniverse@yahoo.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: DUDE!

Hello Karl,

Orlando gave me your address to forward all complaints directly to you since “the Kiwi owns the behemoth” (!!). Bean says that this means you two are screwing (why didn’t he just say so? Fucking Brits). Anyway: In the name of all that is holy, come over and take care of Bana’s urges. If you need money for a plane ride or something I’ll gladly send that to you as long as you keep that fucking retard from dry humping me on every occasion.

Thanks in advance
Brad Pitt

From: obloom1977@hotmail.com
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
Subject: Wedding planner

Hi Karl,

given the way Eric hops around and generally behaves like Jennifer Lopez (shutup, Lijah made me watch that movie), I just wanted to ask whether I can be your best man for your big gay lurve fest wedding?

Impressed,
Orlando

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz
To: hewhorulztheuniverse@yahoo.com
Subject: MATE

Hi Brad,

sorry bout that.

Karl
P.S. The invoice for my flight is attached. I reckon they take credit cards.

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz  
To: biggestbanana@yahoo.com  
Subject: Plans for the future

You could have dropped me a line, asshole.

I take it, that’s a yes?

From: biggestbanana@yahoo.com  
To: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz  
Subject: Re: Plans for the future

Duh. :)

From: urbanlegend@surf.co.nz  
To: obloom1977@hotmail.com  
Subject: Re: Wedding planner

Sure.

Proposal

“You know what? You’re completely crazy – like boy-got-dropped-onto-his-head-too-often crazy. Cause, damn, you can be moronic sometimes, and that random hugging? And I swear you squeal when you’re happy. Crazy. But there’s also your dedication to all the little things that take your interest, like how a single verse of a song can make you happy for a whole day. And there is your compassion and your intensity, your stubbornness and your gentleness. When you came to me, there was all four of those in your eyes when you looked at me. How was I supposed to resist that? You’re a sneaky bastard, that’s what you are. And sometimes, you know, I wake in the morning and want to go back to sleep – until I realize that I am not dreaming, that you’re really there, still there. I love that you seem to listen even in your sleep, that little frown on your face. Know what that tells me?”

“That you sound like Legends of the fucking Fall again?”

Orlando’s voice is slurry and he opens one eye, and one eye only, to look at Brad. But that eye is sharp and not sleep foggy at all. Lying on his back, he fixes Brad over the rim of his pillow.

Brad is propped up on one elbow, and his lips are still slightly parted as if he wants to go on talking
any moment now. His hand is stretched out as if it was about to touch the little crease on Orlando’s forehead that always appears there when he frowns. Instead, it strokes over Orlando’s messy dark hair.

“Morning.”

Orlando’s eye drifts shut once more when Brad’s fingertips cup the shell of his ear.

“Hmm,” he responds and basks in the warmth of Brad’s body, close to his under the blanket, patiently waits for more of his eclectic, delightful little touches, pliant under Brad’s hands even if his voice is gruff when he asks, “Why aren’t you sleeping?”

He feels Brad shrug one shoulder. “No reason.”

“No reason, yeah?” Orlando enquires and exhales contentedly when his body curls against Brad’s, just so. “You weren’t making weird love declarations again then, were you?”

Brad leans in and a chuckle makes his lips tremble as he nuzzles Orlando’s temple.

“How long have you been awake this time?”

Orlando opens his eyes again and he finds Brad looking down at him.

“Insanity epidemic,” he prompts, which is from about where he begun to wake. Knowing Brad and his tendency to go on a bit, the other man might as well have been muttering to himself for an hour at that point. Brad’s a big fucking movie star, it’s not often that anyone ever dares to interrupt him. And really, Orlando’d be stupid to do so, if the babbling is full of massive praise for him, right?

“I don’t think,” Brad says contemplatively, “I ever want to be cured from you. Not that there is an antidote to Bloom, you’re like the plague.”

“Thanks bunches,” Orlando asks back with affection in his voice. “Y’know, I’d marry you in a heartbeat, but you’ll have to be a bit better in your vows than ‘until I realize that I am not dreaming’ and ‘boy, you’re like the black death’, Brad. Seriously.”

And right there, there’s the reason why there won’t ever be anyone else for Orlando but Brad.

Because Brad, he doesn’t blush, doesn’t look away or try to find any kind of excuse – none for the sappiness of his words, none for their allowedly flawed shape. Brad, he just holds Orlando’s gaze and grins down at him, his perfectly silly grin, because he gets it. Orlando reaches up and his palm caresses Brad’s chin before he slides his hand around the other man’s neck to pull him down, their mouths almost touching.

“Morning breath,” he rumbles, Brad’s soft hair curling over his fingers.

“I think I love that as well,” Brad replies before he closes the distance between them. The tip of his tongue was just tracing the seam of Orlando’s lips when he pulls back a bit again. Orlando’s eyes flutter open once more, and so he sees Brad licking his own lips carefully before he looks down at Orlando and asks,

“Say, was that a proposal?”
“I’m pretty certain that you are sort of the love of my life. Like, if you needed a kidney I’d gladly give you one. But I am not going to look at fabrics for curtains with you or carry the thousand miniature picture frames you intent to pick up.”

– One-Offs set in the real world–

Deltiology

Orlando figures that they, he and Viggo, can probably be considered nomads. He isn't certain for how long you have to stay in one place to be disqualified -- they do stick around in some places, like New Zealand for example that was a whole year, or that time when Viggo had this film gig in Spain and just hung out there till Orlando flew over in order to lead a search party for one missing American. But generally speaking, being an actor is a lot like being a nomad.

At the end of the day, Orlando supposes that it has something to do with how much stuff you own. A proper nomad can’t have, say, five lorries full of crap, couldn't possibly all fit onto the back of his camel. They definitely are nomads if that should be the crucial point. They really don't own that much.

It's a bit surprising actually when you think about it because Viggo has this thing of collecting rubbish that he finds and call it 'memorabilia of everyday life' or some shit like that. If he was actually able to hang on to his stuff then his proverbial camel would long ago have been crushed under all the crap. Luckily, Viggo tends to lose the random stones in the shape of dinosaurs' heads he found on the beach of New Zealand, the homebrewed gin he got from some dubious street corner shop in Venezuela, the ancient horse shoe he found when he was visiting Orlando in Morocco. Granted, Orlando maybe had something to do with some of the losing, in so far as that he trashes tons of stuff when Viggo isn't looking. When Viggo remembers that he owns a green pullover with a reindeer on it, or did he... Orlando just looks at him innocently and shrugs and doesn't mention the bag full of clothes he gave to charity just the week before. Instead he says that it's Vig's own fault for misplacing things and Viggo frowns at him and doesn't even remember he's lost his pullover, like, half an hour later.

Orlando figures the most he himself has ever owned for a longer period of time was when he was still living with his mom. Since then, it's sort of like the tide with him and stuff, random flotsam included. He pays attention that he doesn't lose his passport (there's something he learned the hard way, sort of like: never go out drinking with Brad Pitt if you don't want to wake up with 'penis' written on your arse or never lend Dom your credit card...). So, he hangs on to his passport and... well, that's about it.

Well, if you don't count the postcards, which Orlando doesn't. Mostly, because nothing says 'nomad' more than a stack of various location snapshots, or so says Viggo.

There are obvious reasons for why Orlando likes postcards -- they have pretty pictures on them and this shiny surface you want to touch maybe just to see whether you can even leave fingerprints on it. Also, they are cheap and don't take up much space. He has got quite a collection by now. Some of them aren't that shiny any longer because he has carried them around in his backpack (underneath damp beach towels most probably by the look of them), and at some of them he has looked for too long to actually still find them pretty.

He has some that he didn't buy himself or had Viggo pick out for him (Viggo, if given the choice, usually goes for the ugliest ones you can find. He says because they are artsy or something but Orlando just replies that Viggo is planning on giving him eye cancer and kill him off so that he would inherit Orlando's big fat pile of cash). Orlando got a few cards that he picked up from hotels
and some he nicked, like the one with greetings from some far off place from a complete stranger on its back, just because he fancied the pissed off donkey on its front.

It started way back in New Zealand, his thing with the postcards. Viggo -- in that case the press is totally right -- is the definition of renaissance man as well as the greatest show off of all times. So, when this romantic thing or what-you-call-it between them started, Orlando suddenly found himself being the subject of frequent poetry bombs. Rather sweet that was actually, even if Orlando only understood only about half of the sonnets and odes and whatnot that he was on the receiving end of. Viggo had this thing for comparing him with rays of sunshine and shit like that. And seriously, Orlando kept the postcards not only because they made his heart skip a beat in the silliest of ways but also because Viggo, once sober, was always a tad embarrassed about his lack of originality etcetera. Hilarious. And sweet.

Viggo wrote his instantaneous miniature literature on random postcards he got in that little shop where they usually bought booze. It meant that sometimes Orlando would get rather raunchy sex limericks on the back of the photo of a swishing tail fin of a whale. Awesome.

That was the beginning -- Orlando started to respond, mostly during breaks and in full Legolas costume, which prompted some in hindsight slightly weird postcard roleplay moments. Seriously, have you seen Lord of the Rings? If you think Legolas is random there, you haven't read Orlando's postcards. Love declarations, short 'be at Harry's 8 sharp or else' messages, on the spot rants about Bean's smelly feet, quotes from Dom and Billy and Tig high scores, more love declarations (Orlando doesn't care how they all sounded the same, burst of spontaneous love need to be put to paper) -- they all found their way onto postcards that were traded back and forth between them, sometimes with a befuddled John used as currier.

Orlando also keeps most of the cards that he or Viggo actually get in the mail. Viggo's mom keeps sending him Christmas greetings with cooking recipes even though everyone and their mother knows that Viggo is less of a cook and more of a scavenger. They still haven't got a recipe for how to properly prepare roadkill which (Orlando keeps saying) still pains Viggo.

Orlando also has quite a few postcards that are addressed to him, filled with tiny bits of yesterday's news. He is pretty sure for example that Karl doesn't even recall writing a postcard from some Japanese pub completely shitfaced with Viggo by his side, lamenting about how he misses the soft insides of Orlando's thighs or somesuch bullshit. Orlando does, because he still has the card, and it's great fun to remind both Viggo and Karl of it since they both can't even recall writing it.

Aside from these postcards and aside from the stolen donkey one from a stranger named Vali, most of the cards in Orlando's collection bear his or Viggo's handwriting.

There are some cards that were actually intended to be sent to someone. They are addressed to Orlando's mom, or to the owner of Sean's favourite pub (because however often Bean moves -- or, to be more accurate, flees spontaneously from some big breasted blonde who wants to marry him -- his local is a constant in his life), to P.J., wishing him a merry Christmas 2004.

Some of these cards just lack stamps, some only have partial addresses, some aren't fully finished because Orlando got distracted. That's the thing, too, about writing them, you actually have to post them right away -- Orlando thinks there is something deeply wrong with the idea of still sending a card that he has written two weeks ago. It'd be like having a bowl full of the last cereal and then spilling overdue milk over it. Which is how they end up in Orlando's collection again. Sometimes he comes across them when he's searching for a new card to send and he tells himself that he'll just deliver them personally, next time the occasion presents itself. He knows perfectly well that intentions like these are what keep his postcard pile growing.
Aside from the received ones, the stolen ones, the ones almost-but-not-really sent away with messages to other people? There still are quite a lot of postcards left, handwriting on them as well. Viggo's, too.

For one, Viggo keeps mistaking Orlando's postcards for grocery lists, despite the fact that Orlando gave him about two kilos of Post-its for specifically that purpose last Christmas. Still, Orlando ends up walking through the supermarket in Mexico in search for cheese, carrying a card with a scantily clad beach bunny, while Viggo (the lazy bastard) lies fast asleep in Orlando's hotel room snoring like a freight train. Of course Orlando can't trash the card afterwards, the pain of the bunny would hunt him in his dreams.

Sometimes Viggo uses them as bookmarks and writes the passages he'd like to remember on their backs. Shakespeare and Ontario, Hemingway and Alhambra, Beckett and the king of Denmark -- Orlando thinks Viggo couldn't be more random even if he tried. Viggo also makes various notes on the cards, mostly concerning the character he's playing at the time. Orlando finds it rather amusing that he owns postcards from Frank Hopkins, Nikolai and Sigmund Freud, about horses, ways to kill people and penis envy.

Orlando likes looking at his postcards before he goes to sleep, on his own or together with Viggo. Viggo usually starts making up stories about the places shown on the cards and Orlando either ends up with his face hurting from laughter, especially since Viggo's stories miraculously almost always end up with some detailed sex description that would make anyone with more delicate sensibilities blush to no end. When Viggo wakes in one of those rare nights they manage to be on the same continent and even in the same city, he makes notes of what his subconscious came up with in his dreams. He uses Orlando's postcards as writing surface in the darkness, before he is able to go back to sleep. Orlando keeps those postcards, too, even the ones that have accidental writing on the picture side, Viggo's neat scrawl decorating mountains and clouds like ancient messages from the Gods.

Sometimes when Orlando is alone in a hotel room after a long day of shooting in God-knows-where he lays them out and sorts them -- chronologically, by place, by subject, by sender -- and he ends up with this individualized string of snippets from other people's lives, all somehow connected to him.

Still, it's Viggo's cards he cherishes the most. Partly because of the drunken kitschy poetry, yeah, but also quite frankly just because they are from Viggo. Viggo's handwriting keeps him company when they are at completely different parts of the world, in totally different time zones and phone calls are usually executed with at least one party half asleep. Viggo's sometimes a little odd choice of words, his peculiar observations keep him guessing sometimes and that's like having Viggo (slightly weird and both slightly autistic and utterly open minded) right there with him, talking random shit and giving Orlando one of his broad smiles when Orlando rolls his eyes and smacks him.

Viggo's contemplative snapshots of the world, his careful phrasing of what he thinks, what he feels prompt Orlando to call him in the middle of the night -- even years after originally receiving the postcard -- just to tell him duh, he feels the same way, always. It doesn't matter that they haven't seen each other for weeks because of fucked up filming schedules.

Orlando loves his post card collection to a degree that could arise suspicion, yes. Hardcore sentimental deltiologist, that's him. But honestly? Ever since he got a hang of the internet (which, to be completely honest, happened way later than it happened to the rest of the world) e-cards started replacing proper postcards more and more. It's sad in a way, because of the feel of real cards, because of the handwriting and the crumpled edges, because e-cards make it real hard to leaf through them while you're treating yourself to a soak in an obscenely large hotel tub.

Still. Nowadays Orlando sends Viggo an e-card, preferably one reading something as subtle as "My
junk is your junk", and asks him when the hell Viggo is coming home, he MISSES him (not afraid of using allcaps, is Orlando, because subtlety is overrated). E-cards prove to be so much better than traditional cards.

That's not just because Viggo's response card is entitled "You had me at 'I'm so lonely'", although Orlando appreciates how big of a romantic Viggo is. It's because the card arrives in Orlando's mailbox about five minutes after Orlando sent his own. And it just reads: 'Already on my way'.

Nothing can beat that, right?

Coming home to you
I glare up the front of your house, but behind none of the big windows shines a light. That doesn't have to mean you're not at home, I tell myself, you could very well sit on the carpet of the living room in the dark, listening to psychedelic rock music and getting caned. Or you could simply be asleep in your bed.

I set my suitcase onto your doormatt and bang the door with my fist. Yea, I could use the bell, but I'm tired and jaded, taking it out on the door. Sue me.

You don't open, which means you're either stoned in the living room, asleep in your bed or not at home. 2:1 chance for me.

I eye the disastrously ugly and huge flower pot next to your door under which you hide the spare key in case you shut yourself out again. The number of times this has happened to you since you live here is so ridiculously high that you should get your key on a ribbon and bound round your neck like they do it with little kids. I don't know how you manage to lift that piece of crap anyway, bloody heavy it is. Lucky me that I have the spare-spare-key in the pocket of my pants. The metal is warm for I have fumbled with it the entire ride from the airport to your house and I let myself in.

With a loud thump my luggage falls to the floor and I call your name through the dark hall. You don't answer. Bugger.

I turn the lights on and search the living room anyway. No luck. I call your name again and still you don't reply. I grunt in disappointment. Only because you didn't know that I was coming doesn't mean that you're allowed to be gone when I arrive. Yea, I could have called before I took the plane to here instead of Britain, but that'd have ruined the romantic surprise, wouldn't it. And besides, it was either to make that call or to watch the crucial last minutes of that football match they had on the huge screen in the airport.

I chant your name silently as I make for the kitchen as if you'd appear if only I summoned you often enough. My mood lightens up when I find a bottle of my favourite beer in your fridge. The momentary high lasts until I drink and - amazing effect cold beer has on my brain activity - remember you told me this morning that you had a meeting this evening. Which is now. Bugger.

I take me and my beer back to the living room and try the 'memory' button on your answering machine. Just in case you left a message to yourself, reminding you to be home early for phonesex with your boyfriend. No message and the machine automatically switches to the last calls and I get to listen to sappy boyfriend talk. God, I do sound pathetic when I've just woken up alone, don't I?

I switch on the telly and once again learn that twohundred channels are no guarantee that even only one decent programme is on. Your DVD player tells me I can chose between "Finding Nemo" and "Sharpe's rifles". You're a nutter. When are you coming home so I can tell you?I want to tell you how my week was, how neat it is to work with the southern softie again and how nice a chap Eric is. Cause at least one sentence small talk before I throw you onto the couch and fuck you senseless
counts as a polite gesture, right?

I'm tired and lonely and you're not here to make it better. After a minute of pitying myself I grow restless and take a tour through the house. All the doors are wide open - I wonder why you have any at all - except for the one with a poster of some rock band plastered onto it. I know Henry told me their name several times, but I just can't bring myself to remember. I find myself staring at the stupid poster for a while already and decide that time could be better spent with staring at your art, so I climb the stairs up to your gallery.

Oh, look, you've finished the giant blueish one, didn't you? I stop right in front of it and as I look it up and down I scratch my chin in best I-get-dragged-to-art-museums-and-pretend-I-actually-get-it manner, even though nobody is in the room with me.

I still think it looks like two greyhounds chasing the Blob, but I won't be so foolish to tell you so again. I guess it's just my subconscious pouting anyway, since you want to hang it onto the bedroom wall and for that turned down my two brilliant decoration suggestions (a ubersized picture of you naked or a huge mirror. - Though I kinda get your point when you said that not even you were self-involved enough to wank to giant pin up versions of yourself).

Thinking of wanking automatically leads me to remembering that I should be taking a shower. Because I smell of a long day.

How long exactly this day was tells the fact that I - once under the spray - don't even jack off but try to find out if that new shower gel you bought blends with my favourite shampoo.

Just as I get out of the shower and leave wet puddles on the greyblue tiles, I hear the distant sound of my mobile ringing. I curse and go to get it, the large amount of time I recently spent in hotels causes me to automatically wrap a towel round my waist as I stumble down the stairs. My phone's in my jacket, my jacket is on the kitchen table and I'm out of breath when I reach it.

"Yea?", I answer breathlessly.

"What took you so long? And why are you panting? Don't tell me you started wanking without me on the other end of the line?", you say in a rush, the obvious exhaustion from the meeting overshadowed by enthusiasm.

"I wouldn't dare.", I assure you with a smile, "Just got out of the shower."

I hear you honking at some poor driver, who had the bad luck of being in your way, before you say: "Oh, good. - Are you naked then?"

I chuckle. "Isn't it illegal in the US,", I investigate, "to wank while driving a car?"

"Well, fuck.", is your reaction.

"How long until you're home?"

"Two minutes."

"How was your meeting then?"

You sigh overly dramatic but still obviously tired. "I'm currently busy with erasing all memory of it from my brain. - Are you still wet or did you towel yourself?"

Picking up that idea, I use my towel to actually dry myself as I leave the kitchen and head for the
bedroom. "In the process of toweling."

"I should do that for you.", you say with so much open need in your voice that it makes me shiver and I start to get hard.

"Among other things.", I agree and let myself fall back onto our king sized bed.

"You're in bed already.", you state, hearing it creak. "Are you touching yourself?"

I smile and hum affirmatively. "You should do that." I add when I hear your car pulling into the drive.

"I'd prefer fucking your wits out.", you turn off the engine. "But simply touching would be nice, too."

"You know, I rather like the idea with the fucking." I say with a smirk and hear your keys turning in the keyhole.

"Now, in that case -" you stumble over my suitcase in the hall and I can hear your Danish cursing in two voices, over the phone and through the door.

A second later the swearing stops and you call my name in wonderment.

I click my mobile shut and answer.

Hooped socks
Like all people and particularly men Viggo turned into a bit of an anti-social bastard when he was sick. He blew his nose and let used tissues drop to the floor right where he stood because he couldn’t be bothered to trash them. Muttering to himself, he lay in bed naked because his skin was fucking hot and itching but his feet were icedcold despite the hand knitted woolen hooped socks he’d stolen out of Sean’s drawer. Sean had said that only proles and people about to die wore socks in bed, so Viggo blamed him for his uneasy dream about mass murderers trying to kill him with stockings. Of course it was Sean’s own fault, too, that a feverish Viggo tried to smother him with his pillow in the middle of the night only to be stopped by a coughing attack that had him wheezing pitifully. Sean cursed under his breath, his accent broad from sleep and momentary panic, but he sat in the dark next to Viggo in their bed and rubbed his back in soothing circles.

Like all people and particularly men Viggo knew exactly what had to be done to get rid off that cold and whined and bitched when things didn’t happen exactly the same way he wanted them to. He just knew that a hot bath would be good to sweat out the cold and get better sooner and he glared with grey and swollen eyes at Sean until the other man ran him one. After a few minutes in the steaming water Viggo climbed out of the tub to retrieve a roll of toilet paper for his damn nose. But the hot-water-cold-air change made his knees buckle and he found himself sitting on his naked arse on the bathroom mat, dripping water and sneezing, vision very blurry at best. Sean crouched down in front of him, the fabric of his jeans turning dark blue where he knelt in one of the tiny Viggo-foot-shaped puddles on the tiles. He shook his head at Viggo’s pout before he towelled him off and practically carried him back to bed.

Like all people and particularly men Viggo had a spot of bother concentrating on anything but his own misery when he was sick. So, he might have insisted on watching a Danielle Steel adaptation on TV when Sean wanted to watch football, only to drift off to sleep every five minutes and force Sean to sum up for him what had happened during his naps. And yeah, he might have accused Sean of not loving him when the other man left him all on his own, wallowing in self-pity, only because the Brit for some stupid reason insisted shopping for groceries was a necessity. Sean rolled his eyes and
patted Viggo’s tousled hair indulgently which lead to one of Viggo’s sock clad feet kicking Sean’s thigh very hard. Sean growled at him and was still limping a bit when he came back from the grocery store, carrying Viggo’s favourite chocolate and flowers.

Viggo woke up in the morning and his nose wasn’t blocked anymore. His head had stopped feeling like an elephant was taking a nap on it and the red fire ants had vanished from his throat. Tentatively, with his eyes still closed, he stretched a bit and his muscles didn’t protest indignantly, his body didn’t clam up in objection. He rubbed sleep from his eyes and blinked in the semi darkness, grateful to just be for a moment. Then he turned to his side and found his lover fast asleep next to him.

Sean lay on his back, softly snoring and clutching a box of tissues to his chest protectively. Viggo felt like he could use a shower and a scrub, a bit like a snake ready to shed its old skin, and he really longed to get this foul taste off of his tongue. But before he spared this a second thought his body had already shifted to the comfortable and familiar place right at Sean’s side, moulding into the other man’s ever warm body. Feeling his lover’s presence Sean instinctively wrapped an arm around Viggo’s shoulder and lightly whacked him in the head with his tissue box. Viggo snickered and replied to the clumsy offer with a raspy, “No thanks, snotty nose’s gone.”

“Huh,” Sean huffed and carelessly tossed the box to the floor, raking his fingers through Viggo’s hair. “Is it now? About bloody time.”

Viggo hummed noncommittally and apologetically at the same time and nuzzled Sean’s naked shoulder. He shifted a little again and let his leg drag over Sean’s, stopping and resting his inner thigh over Sean’s waking cock.

“Sorry for being such an ass.”

“Tis alright,” Sean grunted and pushed his hips up a little to meet Viggo’s soft touch.

“Thanks for the flowers,” Viggo murmured and pushed his foot between Sean’s legs.

“You’re welcome,” Sean said, opened his eyes and smiled down at his lover. “You really feel better? Fever gone?”

“Uh huh,” Viggo nodded, a boyish smile softening his cracked lips, and his eyes sparkled in a completely different kind of heat.

“Bloody lose those darn scratchy socks then,” Sean complained and pulled his thigh away from the tickling of Viggo’s prodding foot while clutching the rest of his lover closer to him.

Cupcake

Seriously, Sean, that is totally ridiculous.

What? It's not like you have a better idea. Ouch.

Careful, lover.

Ouch, me poor toe.

Comes from running around in the dark. Haven't got night vision after all?

If I had night vision I wouldn't be stumbling around in the darkness searching fer candles.

If you had, you'd be Superman and could fly, too, and then we could fuck in the skies.

You're drunk.
Very. And blind, too.

And not the good kind of I-fucked-ye-blind ouch! Damnit!

Was that your head?


Why don't you just come back to bed? It's not like we need the light anyways, do we? You can check the fuse box tomorrow morning, can't you?

What if I need to go to the bathroom in the night, like? I'd stumble all over the furniture without light.

You mean like you do right now?

Shut up. If I could only find me bloody lighter.

It's in your pants.

Trousers. And I couldn't find those either...

Sean? Where in God's name have you wandered off to now? Do you plan to sleep in the tub just in case you need to piss urgently? I may be drunk but even in an inebriated state I can tell that that is nonsense. Sean?

Jesus, you do go on a bit, don't you?

Hey there, I can see you! Candlelight looks good on you. All warm and golden and shiny and golden.

I kinda love you when you're drunk.

Don't you always love me? Or do I have to become an alcoholic to make sure -

Shut up. Of course I always love you, silly. Fuses have all blown, we'll have to get someone tomorrow morning.

Can I have a candle, too?

No, you'll set the bed on fire.

Those are tiny candles. Very tiny candles.

Only ones left.

Aren't those birthday candles? The one from the cake for your daughter?

Yep.

The Cupcake candles?

Would you stop giggling?

Sorry, sorry. It's just... You, naked, with a glowing cupcake?

What?
I so want that for my next birthday, too!
Evidence
Sean would be pissed off but Viggo couldn’t really say that he cared. Beside the fact that he actually liked Sean all growling and cranky, it was Sean’s own fault for staying under the shower for so long. Viggo was hungry and there was no food in the house so he volunteered to go and buy some and, apart from a single black sock, he really couldn’t find any of his clothes. And it had been Sean tearing them off last night and scattering them all over the place and Viggo really couldn’t be bothered to remember where they landed when all his concentration was on feeling Sean’s mouth on his body.

Anyway, pragmatist that he was he’d simply put on Sean’s clothes and walked out of the house the moment the water spray in the bathroom had stopped. Aside from the fact that like this he made sure that Sean was still naked when he came back, stealing his lover’s clothes always was fun because of the things he could find when he put his hands into the pockets. Not surprised that the first booty would be a pack of cigarettes, Viggo lit one and when he put the lighter back into the jacket, his fingers felt crumbled paper.

Curiously he fished a small and battered coaster out and looked at it. His own handwriting was all over it, quite a mess of crossed out and underlined words from their evening out the night before when inspiration had struck him in the middle of the restaurant. Sean had let him write in peace and only when they were about to leave the place he had asked why Viggo didn’t take the coaster with him. Because by then he’d known the few lines by heart, Viggo had replied.

Viggo didn’t need real evidence of his poetry but looking at the small coaster in his hand he knew why Sean liked it.

Bored properly
"Don't move!"

 Though not really planning to obey this order for any longer period of time, Sean does sit still for the moment. He only raises his gaze over the rim of his reading glasses to look at Viggo questioningly. Viggo, taking obedience for granted, is not looking back at him, in fact, the only parts of him that Sean can see are his bare feet and the lowest bit of a pair of faded blue jeans. The rest of his lover is effectively hidden by the monstrous aisle with a canvas the size of Scotland right in the middle of their living room.

"Viggo" Sean says, speaking his lover's name with that kind of suspicion that lingers somewhere between amusement and terror "what are you doing?"

From somewhere behind the intimidating canvas Viggo snorts softly. "Taking a good long bath. - What does it look like? I'm painting."

"Huh" is Sean's reply and he spares himself the trouble to say that painting is the activity you do in the bleeding studio, aka the painting room. He shrugs and turns back to his book, immediately drawn back into the plot developing in front of his eyes (well, his glasses to be precise but who cares). So, it startles the fuck out of him when Viggo interrupts his journey to fantasy land by barking. "Don't move, dammit!"

Once he's partly recovered from the shock, Sean realises that he's gotten up from the sofa while reading. Probably to get himself some tea, he tells himself, his subconsciousness being the most British part of him and insisting on a nice cuppa regularly. Anyways, now he stands in front of his sofa, book in his hand and finds himself obeying to some stupid order from the man without an upper body.
"Why the fuck not? Am I stealing your light?" Sean shakes his head and attempts to move - out of the way, that is - but Viggo repeats his order and now his head becomes visible at the side of the aisle. "Stay right where you are. On the sofa, that is."

Sean whines a "But why?", knowing the answer already, but Viggo says it anyway. "You're my muse. So sit the fuck still, Bean. Rule number eight: 'Sit still when Viggo paints.'"

"Rule number eight, Mortensen, is 'Don't buy geraniums 'cause Viggo doesn't like their colours."

Sean knows since he's the one actually remembering all the crazy guidelines Viggo has come up with over the last week. "And besides, I don't follow your rules. I'm" he sits down again "a free spirit and all, you know."

Viggo makes 'uh huh' to that distractedly and Sean can hear him squishing new amounts of acrylic paint onto the canvas. Sean shakes his head and lifts his book to read on. It's not unusual that Viggo speaks of himself in the third person, in fact Viggo does it that frequently that Sean suspects the Dane thinks himself at war with personal pronouns or some such. Anyways, the third person is not new, the rules are. Viggo wouldn't strike you as an organising freak and by all means, he surely isn't. Wasn't, to be precise, because ever since that little 'incident' involving Sean, his beautiful car and a nosy cop, leading to Sean behind bars, Viggo has developed this 'thing' for law and order. Not that Sean minds, really, he is the one in their relationship that can actually read and understand manuals for the VCR, following rules of programming the stupid thing. And anyways, Sean quite likes Viggo's way of punishing contraventions...

He catches himself smiling a private smile and clears his throat. Dammit, he was supposed to be angry with Vig for ordering him around! For good measures he lifts his gaze from the pages of his book to scowl at Viggo. Or at Viggo's feet, since the rest of the Dane has disappeared behind the aisle again. Scowling at a pair of naked and not really daisy clean feet might sound a bit unrewarding, but Sean likes Viggo's feet. Especially now, because he can see the toes of the right foot moving, tapping a little onto the parquet in obvious excitement over what Viggo's fingers currently do on the canvas. Speaking of, Sean likes Viggo's fingers, too, even better than his feet, if he ever had to do a ranking list. Compared to Viggo's hands Sean thinks his own small and almost too rangy - he loves their roughness, loves all the tiny scars covering them, loves their idle precision. Even more so when they're touching Sean's skin, stroke through Sean's hair, close around Sean's cock.

Currently, though, they are holding a brush and paint and the longer Sean thinks about that the more he thinks it a waste. He hears the light scratch of the bristles on the already dried first layer of paint, hears Viggo's happy humming, oblivious to anything but strokes and spots and scratches on canvas and very, very silently he draws his feet up onto the sofa, hoping that the mad artist won't notice the change of position.

Sean doesn't know much about art and would definitely prefer a prop's sword over a brush any time, but yeah, Viggo's paintings are very arty and full of inspiration and all. Only thing is that Sean doesn't get the point in his having to sit around, bloody motionless for hours, bored properly - and did he mention near to starving? Viggo sometimes is so caught up in his art that he forgets to feed his muse, for heaven's sake! - And for what? Last time Viggo claimed to paint him and made him sit still for four hours, Sean couldn't recognise even the slightest resemblance to a human form in the finished work, let alone any alikeness to himself. Lots of blue paint and green tones mixed into the darkish chaos? Yes. Sean Bean, well known and having his face in the yellow press way too often? Nope.

Viggo moves behind his aisle and a second later grey blue eyes look Sean up and down. Sean shifts on the sofa and smirks daringly and Viggo answers with a blindingly bright grin. Making use of
Viggo's flying visit to reality, Sean offers him a bargain - a cuppa tea for him in exchange for a few hours of reading out loud for Viggo.

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"No looking at the painting, Sean." Viggo says for the third time before Sean pushes him out of the door, chuckling. After the grumbling sound coming from Sean’s stomach had reached a volume too loud even for Viggo to ignore, the Dane offered to take care of that. His own fault that he left it too late to get supplies from the supermarket 'round the corner and now has to drive to the next take out. Personally, Sean thinks Viggo’s swearing about 'stupid British closing times' justified - after all, if the great Sean Bean obeys to Mr. Mortensen's orders, the British supermarket chains can very well do the same, can't they? But then, he is probably better off with Chinese take out than with Couscous or with whatever crazy cooking idea Viggo gets into his head, straying through the grocery store.

'No looking at the painting'. Sean smiles as he walks back into the living room to set the table. Seriously, Sean probably wouldn't even have thought about that, but now that Vig has put that idea into his head... After all, Sean wouldn't even know whether the painting was upside down or not. Viggo's abstract art is completely wasted on Sean, who has ages ago stopped looking at pictures more complicated than the daily cartoon in his newspaper. But forbidden fruits and all that...

Sean straightens the cutlery for a third time, reads the label of the wine bottle, switches the telly on, switches the telly off, brings his book and glasses from the sofa to the bedroom and accidentally walks by the painting. And he doesn't close his eyes in his own living room just to deliberately not-look at something, does he?

'Huh' says Sean's brain, surprised that for once he can tell that the painting is not upside down or anything. He doesn't dare to touch the canvas, afraid that the paint has still not dried properly, so he takes a cautious step back, crossing his arms in front of his chest. Frowns and smiles at the same time as only his gaze traces the strokes of intense colours, focuses on the eyes knowingly staring back at him from the canvas. He hears the front door opening and clicking shut and moments later Viggo steps up behind him.

"Tsk, tsk," he makes and Sean can feel his breath puffing against his neck, "seems like you really have gotten a taste for being a criminal element these days, haven't you?"

Sean smiles but admits. "Caught me in the act."

"Too bad. Now you won't get any dinner" Viggo steps closer yet and licks a wet path of saliva up Sean's neck "before I've punished you."

Sean sighs in overdone, mock desperation but nods. "Aye, I reckon I deserve that."

He attempts to walk towards their bedroom but strong arms, closing around his waist, stop him.

"No better place for punishment than the actual crime scene." Viggo decides and moments later Sean finds himself facedown against the smooth and cool parquet with Viggo's weight pressing him down. He winces a little because the floor is hard against his kneecaps and his elbows but instantly starts to breathe heavily when he feels Viggo's jeans clad erection against his arse.

He bites down on his lower lip to stop himself from urging Viggo on, knowing that this would set off hours of merciless teasing that he couldn't take at the moment. He only wriggles a little, feigning a bit of resistance against the authorities. Viggo's chest is heavy against his back now as the Dane lifts up
his hips to drag down his and then Sean's pants just enough.

"Fuck" Sean curses happily when Viggo lowers himself again and he can feel his lover's hot flesh against his naket butt now.

"You" Viggo finishes the sentence, a little breathless already, "Yeah, that's the plan." He pushes one of his hands under the soft fabric of Sean's sweater to stroke Sean's back up and down, making the Brit hum in pleasure at the roughness of Viggo's palms.

"Lube" Viggo whispers against Sean's ear and spoken in that voice Sean decides this to be the most erotic word of the year. Sean reaches out and unceremoniously pushes over the little table with drawing stuff and the ever present little bottle of lube right next to the aisle. Brushes and tubes of acrylic paint scatter all over the parquet and the lube lands conveniently close to Sean's elbow.

"There you are." Sean manages to say very politely. Viggo chuckles softly and bites Sean's ear shell as he reaches out for the bottle in question. The Dane licks his neck soothingly when Sean hisses as the cold liquid touches his heated skin but otherwise waits patiently. Only when he feels one of Viggo's digits gently probing his entrance, that's it for his self control. He growsls and whines at the same time, "Viggo, I've waited all bloody afternoon for this. I _am_ bleeding ready. Give me your cock right now or I swear, I'll kill you!" Viggo's tongue stops fucking his ear and Sean thinks it necessary to add: "Please?"

"And there I was thinking you were only bored properly." Viggo replies and Sean feels him withdrawing his fingers and coating himself. "But sexual frustration in this house? Can't have that, can we?"

The latter clearly was a rhetorical question because no one could expect Sean to be able to remember language right now. Not with the head of Viggo's cock finally bloody finally pushing into him, breaching him with that exquisite mixture of pleasure and pain. Sean gasps and reaches behind him to cup Viggo's butt, holding him close as the Dane's cock has slid into his body completely. His muscles relax quickly and they both groan as he now closes them around Viggo's erection deliberately, silently pleading him to move.

Viggo rocks his hips, slowly but still it makes Sean whimper in pleasure and the Brit gets a low groan from his lover as a reply. Sean knows that all that arty stuff sets free a lot of energy inside his usually ever calm Dane and with the first harder thrust of Viggo's Sean practically howls in anticipation.

One hand firmly grasping Sean's hip, Viggo's other entangles in Sean's blond strands and yanks them back. Forced to arch his neck Sean screams his pleasure into Viggo's open mouth now, that lovely mouth that muffles every following scream triggered by Viggo's cock effortlessly sliding in and out of his ass now.

Sean's entire body starts trembling in what feels like too intense pleasure and he tries to suck the oxygen out of Viggo's lungs since breathing through his nose doesn't supply him with air sufficiently anymore. He struggles to break the kiss and when Viggo finally lets him go he gulps down what feels like entire cubicmetres of precious air. Viggo licks his cheek as Sean pants helplessly and shakily starts to beg, "Don't stop, never stop, please, please, Viggo."

Viggo growls quietly but his voice sounds almost teasing as he whispers into Sean's ear, "No? And there I was thinking you'd like me to come in your mouth..."

"Viggo!" is all Sean can reply, very near to weeping by now, not able to think properly anymore, not able at all to make such a decision.
"Poor baby." Viggo chuckles and thrust hard at the same time, making Sean forget to make a note to himself to kill Viggo later for calling him stupid pet names. "How 'bout," he licks Sean's ear once again and waits until at least a minority of Sean's braincells has taken up work again, "I fuck you till you come and _then_ let you taste me."

"Please, please" is Sean's answer and he nods affirmatively. Viggo shifts on top of him and turns them to their sides. Sean blindly reaches out behind him to touch Viggo's sweaty skin as his lover starts to pull out almost completely before thrusting back into Sean's ass. Sean turns his head, not having to wait long until Viggo's tongue invades his mouth again. Socloseoclose already and every forceful thrust, every tiny moan vibrating on Viggo's lips, pushes him closer to the edge.

He lowers his hand to close it around his too long neglected cock, groaning as his thumb glides over its leaking head. It doesn't take more than three or four strokes before he has to submit to his climax approaching and he groans and whimpering as he comes, Viggo's tongue down his throat, Viggo's hand on his hip, Viggo's cock buried deep inside of him.

His lover breaks the kiss to let him catch his breath and Sean instantly starts chanting Viggo's name over and over again, this being the only possible focus in his momentarily haziness. He feels Viggo's breath hitching against his cheek, mingled with quiet curses, feels Viggo's thrusts growing erratic, waits.

"Now, Sean." Viggo orders with a shaky voice and groans as he pulls out of Sean's arse. Even though Sean shifts quickly, turning around and sliding down a little, the first spurt of Viggo's come hits his chin and only the second, third and forth reach their destination between Sean's lips, on Sean's tongue, down Sean's throat.

"Fuck" Sean hears Viggo whispering as he licks the last traces of come of Viggo's cock and from his own chin. Chuckling softly, he pushes himself up a bit, dragging his pants at least half way up his hips again, too - his own come has made a right mess of his clothes already anyway, not speaking of the living room floor...

Viggo's arms draw him close and Sean purrs contentedly as his lover's chin rests on top of his head and he can hear Viggo's loud and healthy heartbeat pounding right next to his ear.

"Vig?" Sean asks after both of their pulses are back to normal and Viggo's finger idly stroke through his damp hair.

"Yeah?"

Sean rubs the tip of his nose against Viggo's chest and feels his lover chuckling. Snuggling closer yet he asks, voice completely conversational again: "The painting, that isn't me."

"No?" Viggo's voice bears amusement and mock surprise as his fingers straighten Sean's blond strands.

"Arsehole" Sean elbows him as best as he can in their current position, "I might not be able to tell when you're going all blue-explosion-of-colours, claiming that chaos to be me, but I'd be damned if I didn't recognise that portray. That scar on the upper lip? The blue eyes?" He pulls back a little to find said blue eyes looking down on him now. "'tis you, all cubist, like."

"Yeah." Viggo nods.

Sean scowls at him, his hand running down Viggo's exposed side gently betraying his grumpy expression, "Why the fuck did you make me sit still for that bloody eternity then? When you were
painting yerself?"

Viggo takes his time in answering this, knowing perfectly well the plus points of rhetorical breaks. "'Cause looking at you makes my cubist self feel whole and paintable?" he finally offers with a smile right between honesty and mockery.

Sean tilts his head and arches an eyebrow, grinning as well, "Yeah, right. Got nothing to do with deliberately torturing me for fun's sake, eh?" Viggo just gives him his patented innocent 'who, me?' look and Sean growls at him again: "Fucker."

"Rule number twenty seven:," Viggo says very seriously, "'Never call Viggo a fucker - even if he is yours - only because he fancies to stare at you with your reading glasses.'"

Sean tries to keep a straight face, but Viggo beats him in their acting-serious contest and he starts laughing. Resting his head against Viggo's chest again they both listen to the silence for a while before Sean mumbles: "Vig?"

"Hm?"

"Rule number twenty seven is 'Don't talk back when it comes to breakfast flakes.'"

Erica
Sun made Eric sleepy. Not always of course, but add the smell of sunscreen, a soft towel in warm sand and the rhythmical splashing of waves as background music to two low British voices discussing football and it took less than five minutes for him to close his eyes behind his sunglasses and drift off.

He woke when oddly he felt heavy and cold and his sleepy brain couldn't really explain that to him. He heard Orlando's suppressed giggling somewhere above him - strange how someone with such a smooth baritone and such a filthy vocabulary could laugh like that - and he could sense the closeness of the other man. That would explain the weight because in whichever position they fell asleep Eric and Sean usually woke with at least one of Orlando's lean limbs draped dramatically over them. Didn't explain the coldness though because Orlando's body usually was as hot as Sean's snoring was loud. And Bean could saw oak trees in a hundred mile radius with that. Anyway.

Reluctantly Eric opened one eye and sure enough he could make out Orlando straddling him. He hummed in general appreciation and the Brit grinned, turned his head to the right and said, "Oi, Seanie, I guess he's awake."

"Splendid," replied the rumble of Sean's voice, "can't wait to see his approval of your plastic surgery."

Eric frowned so deeply that the furrowes of his brows nudged against the rim of his sunglasses but otherwise he was too lazy to move. Instead he only stirred a bit and asked, "Why is it so cold?"

Orlando leaned over him and cooed, "Don't move, ducks, or you'll destroy it."

"Huh? What?" Eric asked intelligently.

"Such ignorance over such beauty," said Sean in that mocking voice of his and Eric could hear him sipping from his ale. Dammit, now Eric wanted beer.

"Dickhead," Orlando answered affectionately.

"Huh?" Eric offered and after a moment added, "Can I have beer, too?"
Out of experience he knew that Bean wouldn't surrender his supply of alcohol without a fight, not when he'd carried it all the way down to the beach at least. So, he tried to move to reach out for the cooler and found that he couldn't really shift his arm because it was buried underneath a thick layer of sand. As was the rest of his body.

"Orlando!" he demanded.

"Oh, oh," said Orlando with the glee of a ten year old rascal who had just mooned the 90 year old neighbour next door.

"What have you done?" Eric asked and glared at the younger man, not really realising that his sunglasses were still hiding his eyes. There was movement to his left and a moment later Sean towered over him, beer can in one, photo mobile in the other hand. Click.

"Your baby brother got bored," Sean said and crouched down next to Eric's head, "I told him to build a sandcastle."

"This is much better," Orlando cut in, tried to snatch away Sean's beer and got growled at. The older Brit shook his head and took pity on Eric who by now made pitiful noises of 'huh', looking back and forth between them in confusion. Sean leaned over him and showed him the picture he had just taken.

Eric's head was the only part of his body not buried. Over the rest Orlando had, with the care and dedication of a beach boy psychopath, piled up sand and patted it flat so the outline of the huge Australian's body was still visible. Only that Orlando had taken the liberty to add two gigantic tits on top of his chest.

"Meet Erica, mate," Sean chuckled, "Pam Anderson of Moroccan beaches."

"The fuck?" Eric said.

"They got nipples, too," Orlando informed him with the ignorant pride of someone not realising how close to death he was. "I found you two seashells."

"Looks good on you, love," Sean said with his bedroom voice, only that he snickered into his beer. He rose to his feet and approvingly patted Orlando's head. "Maybe you have been bottoming a bit much lately, eh?"

Erica, the sandwoman, was sadly destroyed a second after that when Eric, in a rather good impersonation of the Hulk (the sand-breaded version not the green one, mind you), broke free and chased after a squealing Orlando and a laughing Sean. He tackled both of them just when they reached the first waves of the ocean.

Needless to say that sand was washed off in the tide and quite a few fish got treated with a free show when revenge turned into peace negotiations.

What happens in Vegas
#1
They arrive in the middle of the night, Eric and Orlando dog tired and Sean still a bit shaken from the flight. Eric’s eyes light up anyway when, in the hotel lobby, they hear the telltale jinglejangle of the one armed bandit. Orlando bitches about needing his fucking beauty sleep but still fishes a quarter out of his pocket before making a bee line for the reception.

Eric flips it merrily, catches Sean’s eye.
“Be my lucky charm?”

Sean shrugs, nods and tags along. Eric, being Eric, cracks the jackpot with one single try.

#2

Sean never really asks explicitly for anything. It’s not really modesty or even shyness, but still, it requires finesse to get Sean to speak his mind when it doesn’t concern football or sex.

But Orlando’s and Eric’s sneaky con man skills go beyond those of Ocean’s Eleven (… twelve… thirteen… whatever). So, the morning after the boozing-and-boxing in the MGM Grand, they wake up in their ridiculously large hotel bed and all it takes is them taking one look at one another.

Sean stirs when someone pulls down his pyjama bottoms, inhales sharply when a talented mouth encircles his morning erection, opens his eyes when strong hands trap his over his head. Orlando licks his ear, curling up beside him, Sean’s eyes meet his own in the huge mirror on the ceiling. He stares at Eric’s broad shoulders pushing his thighs apart, at the dirty sexy smirk on Orlando’s lips that darkens his almost baritone even further when he asks, “What do you want?”

Sean’s hips buck up, he flexes his wrists under Orlando’s grip. “Fuck Eric’s mouth ‘n’ come over both yer faces.”

The suction stops and Eric looks up, grinning. “What do you wanna do today? Vegas style, mate?”

Sean groans a little tortured, Eric licks all the way down his cock and Orlando bites his earlobe. “C’me on, Seanie, tell us.”

“Fine,” Sean huffs, beaten. “Always wanted to see those white tigers.”

He is prepared for the mockery which doesn’t come. Both his lovers smile and when Eric mouths “Done” and resumes licking, Orlando murmurs affectionately, “All you had to do was say something.”

#3

Eric is flirting with the waitress (a young brunette, more Orlando’s type than his) when Sean slumps down on the bar stool next to him. Eric’s quick glance-and-smile of acknowledgement lingers when he notices the distressed expression on the older man’s face. Sean ignores the calming hand on his thigh and his face shimmers sickly in the green light of the bar.

“For heaven’s sake,” he murmurs intently, “do something!”

Eric’s eyes follow Sean’s worried gaze to the Blackjack table.

Orlando sits hunched over, a look of intent concentration carved into his features, and holds on to his cards like a drowning man would to his rubber boat. Said boat, in this case, is riddled with holes and surrounded by sharks – Eric isn’t sure whether Orli has grasped the significance of the number twenty one as of yet. To say Orlando has a little gambling problem is like saying David Copperfield does shell games in back alleys.

Orlando nods for another card.

“Oh Christ,” Sean groans and looks like he’s about to heave.
Ten minutes later they get thrown out of the MIRAGE for causing a racket. It wasn’t so much because Eric strutted over to the Blackjack table and threw Orlando over his shoulder, but Orlando screaming bloody murder and throwing his (very few) remaining chips at Sean’s head. Which still counts as successful damage control, thinking about it.

#4

Sean likes his sex quick and hard and considers foreplay an insult to his manliness. It’s not sex if you don’t almost strain something.

Orlando is every bit the cliché teen magazines make him. He likes soft music playing in the background and you can sweet talk him into coming, he’s that much of a romantic.

Good thing Orlando considers a gruff “Get naked” sufficient wooing if said by the right someone, and Sean will punch you if you’d point out that kissing every inch of his lovers’ body strictly speaking is foreplay. And besides, they both agree 100% that between the three of them, Eric is the sex freak anyway.

He’s the one who buys toys and gets all excited about them even though half the time he has no idea what they’re for.

In their hotel room in Vegas they got a hugeass bed and a hugeass television. Orlando finds himself on his back, covered by an already partially naked Sean in five seconds flat. Eric? Is glued to the TV set. Two dozen adult movie channels are bliss for someone who firmly believes that a busty blonde being dp’ed is edutainment.

He gets blisters from flipping back and forth between the flicks, and Orlando’s moans joins the chorus of cheaply dubbed porn when Sean gets impatient and skips the prep altogether.

Sean tries to time his orgasm to the nightly fireworks but his thrusts into Orlando lose their rhythm when Eric starts taking notes as soon as the orgy scene begins. Sean’s booming laughter and Orlando’s helpless snickering make him snap his head around.

“You mind?! I’m doing research here!”

# 5

Sean has gotten married four times; he might not know how to keep a woman, ta, but he has the whole wedding routine down. The butterflies in your belly, the expensive clothes, the solemn vows, the rice and the bouquet.

Still, he can’t help but feel a little gobsmacked and entirely out of his league when Orlando and Eric drag his slightly hung over self out of the hotel into a tacky chapel.

Sean Bean might be an expert at marrying, but a horizontally challenged fake Elvis is a first for him, too. Orlando beams at him, huge tits printed onto his cheap t-shirt, and Sean feels Eric’s large paw on his arse, when he answers the King’s question.

“Aye, ’course I do.”

#6

To let Orlando loose in Vegas is about as dangerous as to give a starved five year old a free run in
the sweets section of the supermarket. Eric wants to put him on a leash or stuff him in Sean's front shirt pocket or something, so they can keep track of him.

"Ooooh, look! Jackpot!" Orlando chirps and wanders off.

"Noooo," Eric whines, rubs his face in his palm, and watches over the rim of his hand how Sean hooks his finger in Orlando's hoodie, almost choking him.

"But Seeaaan!" Orlando complains, when he can breathe again. "There's money to win and -" he interrupts himself, enthusiastically gesturing at the next bloody sparkling sign. "Look! FREE - uhm, something!"

Sean shots Eric a slightly helpless look and shrugs as Orlando stares up into the sky and to the blinking advertising. Orlando trails off again and promptly bumps into a group of scarcely dressed young women.

His beaming smile and sweet apologetic words charm them instantly, of course. Trust Orlando Bloom to chat up a bunch of Vegas show girls right there on street.

Which is all kinds of great, since ten minutes later, Eric not only has to watch out for Orlando to not touch all the sparkling but hot lights in the CHEETAHS, but for Sean to not touch all the hot girls. Free drinks and magnificently bendy and topless women aside, being Eric Bana sometimes really is a hardship.

Etiquette
Orlando flops down on the couch, a pout on his lips. Well, it would be a pout if he had the lip fullness to back it up, y'know.

"I have ass pain," he says dramatically and he would totally rub his bottom tenderly if he wasn't currently sitting on it.

"Why?" comes the call from the kitchen. "Did you run into anything arse-forwards? Again?"

Orlando grumbles and on the whole is glad that he is wearing baggy pants (as per usual) because he might not be able to caress-fondle his own behind right now but they totally allow him to give his cock a sympathetic squeeze without having to get his zipper down or any of that strainy business.

"You still alive, or did you die of arse-pain?" hollers it - not at all concerned, damn him - from the kitchen, trying to outdo the shrill sound of the kettle.

"Fuck you," Orlando huffs and his cock jumps a little. He accidentally pavlovian-trained his dick, someone mention mattress action and it is starting to drool. Very inconvenient. "I'm being serious here. I feel like a whore."

Which, come to think about it, is quite the good explanation for his trained cock and his trousers that can slide over his arse without even the top button undone. But whatever.

Water's being poured in the kitchen and like every good little British boy, Orlando sniffs the air and detects the good strong smell of tea. A minute later, the reason for all his woe comes walking out of the kitchen, bearing only one single cup of PG tips.

"Seriously, man," Orlando says, brows furrowing in his best pained expression, "I spread my legs for you without even knowing your name -".

"It's Richard," tea-bearing man supplies, strangely not at all offended, and sits down on the coffee
"Though you can go on calling me 'Thornton'. I don't mind."

"Richard?" Orlando forgets about his grumpiness as well as his hurting ass for a depressingly-six-year-old giggling second. "So, Dick it is, yeah? Dick, heh."

Dick arches a brow and Orlando watches him sip from his cup. The heat of the tea brings out the dark Britishness of his voice (what? that totally happens) when he speaks again, "You were saying?"

Orlando, who has been slightly distracted by trying to imagine what those thin lips of Richard's that on top of it glisten from the tea now, must feel around his cock, blinks and then remembers that he's supposed to be in a huff. For dramatic effect he crosses his arms over his chest, only partly hiding the letters printed onto the front of his t-shirt.

"Right. I was saying that my arse hurts because I thought I was picking up a nice British gentleman in the pub and what do I get? That 'bit of rough' stuff again. What do you think how often I've been through that routine?"

Richard looks at him from behind his cup and even though this symbol of utter Britishness hides half his face, he is staring pointedly down at Orlando's t-shirt. SLUT it says. Uhm, yeah.

"Anyway," Orlando says when Richard doesn't reply. "My arse hurts, I'm still gagging for more and I don't even get a fucking cup of TEA? That's just... Dick, that's just bad manners."

Richard slowly lowers his cup and Orlando watches him rubbing his (fucking sexy) nose with the back of his fingers. His catlike eyes narrow even further when he leans forward and rumbles, "Hurt your delicate feelings, did I?"

Orlando gulps and gets a little hard(er), then remembers that he is the one who has the aggression thing going for himself in this conversation, and leans forward as well. "I'm thinking," he growls in response, "you need a bit of a refresher course in shagging etiquette."

Richard smirks. "Why don't you teach me?"

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Hyena
In his life, there had been quite a few occasions in which Sean had hoped the earth would swallow him and never spit him back out. Like when he was cussing like a lunatic at the telly when the Blades lost only to find his three year old daughter standing in the doorway with wide eyes. Like when he came home drunk night after night when his marriages neared their ends and was greeted with his wives' disgust and even fear sometimes.

Hell, in Sean's opinion, generally was a place that you furnished yourself and Sean's own special one was sadly well equipped.

The worst of all things, though, was one he couldn't even be held responsible for. He'd tried, really he had, to no avail. When it got him, it scared his reason away, made his blood boil, his body hurt. Jealousy was a hyena that tore you apart after you'd been slain by somebody else, that laughed at you with knowing cruelty.

Eric and Orlando. Orlando and Eric.

He'd walked in on them and they had been kissing in a way that spoke of familiarity and of aftermath, their faces flushed, their bodies radiating tired-excited contentment. He couldn't get the fucking image out of his mind, didn't sleep without dreaming of two bronze bodies writhing together, strong hands buried in thick brown curls. Smiles and moans and gasps, and even before the pain hit him Sean knew that those sounds were loud enough to draw the predators in to feast on his
Having to go to set each morning – seeing them laugh, finish each other’s sentences - was a Prometheus task, only that it wasn’t his liver at stake.

Sean wanted him so much, he couldn’t think straight. He tried to tell himself that it was only because he couldn’t have him that the craving increased in strength each day. Sean tried to be a mate when he squeezed Sean’s shoulder casually, when he tried to lighten Sean’s mood with a joke and a wink, concern and obliviousness in his brown eyes. Sean really tried. Only to fall harder for him each day.

‘Tell him,’ Peter said to Sean one evening in the bar. Sean looked at the older man as if he didn’t know what he meant but Peter’s blue eyes drifted to the pair of them at the other end of the bar, two sets of tousled curls close together as they whispered secrets to one another that weren’t brotherly. ‘Tell him,’ Peter repeated and the look in his eyes spoke of knowledge, of a missed opportunity decades back that was still fiercely regretted.

So now here Sean stands, in front of a closed door, in the middle of the night, his hand raised already, as he plucks up the courage to knock. He does it eventually, tentatively and yet with the boldness of a man who’s realised he has nothing to lose.

The door opens, and there he stands, his clothes rumpled from sleeping in them, his eyes blinking tiredly. When he sees Sean, though, there’s a dawning of surprise and something else in his dark brown eyes. Sean feels the hyena retreating, making way for something even more potentially deadly. Hope.

‘Hey,’ Sean says quietly, almost a whisper, ‘I need to talk to you.’

And Eric smiles and nods, retreating into the room and expecting Sean to follow.

Hold the line
The first time, it is an accident. Karl comes home and finds the answering machine blinking and while he stuffs the groceries he's bought into the cabinets he listens. A message from his mother reminding him of his Dad's birthday, one from his agent, cancelling an appointment, and then silence.

Rustling. Muffled sounds.

Karl frowns, family pack of spaghetti in his hand, and listens closer. The rustling continues, interrupted by a sort of clanging sound, as if someone shoves something metallic - keys? - against the speaker. Belatedly, there's talking, and Karl can only make it out because by now he stands right in front of the machine.

"...something beside the gas?"

"Nah, thanks. - Wait, you got ice cream?"

And Karl recognises that tone of voice anywhere. He shakes his head at Eric's inability to enable the key lock on his phone before he shoves it into his pocket, and listens to his lover's muffled voice and some anonymous woman discussing brands of ice cream at length.

He only mentions it to Eric because the fucker didn't think of bringing Karl some as well when he comes home.

"Seriously, mate, ten minutes to decide on Nogger?"
Eric looks at him strangely and Karl just figures it means he already wants another one.

"You listened to the entire 15 minutes of that?" he asks and arches an eyebrow.

Karl just shrugs and returns to watching rugby.

***

The second time, it's due to Eric's butterfly-attention-span. Karl's shopping for groceries again - because you can't let Eric loose anywhere near food, he'd just sit down in the middle of an aisle and wolf down everything within reach; so it's Karl = groceries, Eric = laundry - and originally he just called to ask whether Eric wanted rib eye or t-bone. Ten minutes later, they're still talking. Or, Eric is, to be precise, giving him an audio commentary on the Nascar race he's watching.

" - oh, that was risky! Man, Ambrose really cuts it close right now, not sure whether -" Eric stops mid-sentence. "Damn, someone's at the door. Be right back."

Karl opens his mouth to say that they could just hang up, but Eric's already gone. He piles beer into his shopping cart, phone jammed between his shoulder and his ear, and listens to faint cheers from the television and Eric's distant chattering with the postman. He decides on super hot tacos and Chili sauce when the door is slammed shut.

"Where's that fucking - ah, there you are!"

Karl rolls his eyes, ready to mock Eric for misplacing his phone (again), but then he hears Eric's triumphant 'hah' a few seconds later, as the TV is switched off. So, apparently it hasn't been the quest for the phone -

"Sneaky little fucker. Bad zapper! - Now, what was I... ah, right."

Karl patiently waits in line at the cash desk and listens to Eric's continuous prattling to himself as he talks to the shirts he resumes ironing. He ignores the cashier's slightly disgruntled look when he can't help but snicker while handing her his credit card because Eric begun to whistle the Sesame Street theme song.

When Karl comes home, Eric is still behind the ironing board.

"Who are you talking to?" he mouths, gesturing at Karl's cell.

Karl briefly asks himself what it says about the state of your relationship when your lover forgets you on the other end of the line. Eric beams at him and holds up Karl's favourite, freshly ironed pair of boxers, waving it in greeting.

***

The third time doesn't really count, because Karl doesn't let it happen. He's in the kitchen when his cell rings.

"So, what are you wearing?" Eric asks without preamble, his voice a low rumble full of sin and promise of sex.

"No", Karl replies.

"Don't you love me anymore?"
"Right, that's it," Karl dries his hands on the dish cloth. "Forgot to tell you - I'm planning on running off with Mathilda from the bakery."

He can hear Eric's pout over the line. "We could still have phone sex."

"No."

"Is it because I forgot you on the line the other day? That wouldn't happen during phone sex!"

Karl's not sure about that but still is a little amazed that Eric can switch from slightly indignant to dirty in under a second when he continues talking.

"So, you still wearing those low riding jeans? Love those, God, your hips -," Karl hears him licking his lips, "But I know you look even better out of them, darlin'..."

"Bana -",

"Mmm, I love it when you growl at me," Eric practically purrs into the phone. "Do it some more and touch yourself for me, yeah?"

"For fuck's sake -" Karl mutters, abandons the dirty dishes and leaves the kitchen.

"You know you wanna," Eric coaxes and, despite himself, Karl feels a shiver running down his spine as he climbs the stairs leading to the bedroom. Eric can tell, he knows that, because his voice is even lower and even more confident when he continues, "So, I'm naked and so fucking hard for you. You wanna know what I'm doing right now?"

"Jerking off," Karl says deadpan and pushes the bedroom door open, "on my side of the bed."

He stares down at Eric, who is sprawled over the bed, his fist around his cock, not five feet away from Karl.

"Seriously, this is so< not the time I wanna have phone sex with you -"

***

The fourth time, it's not really anyone's fault. Karl's in Wellington for family stuff and Eric stays home and they both have had fucking long days when they talk on the phone. Karl recalls a lot of yawning and mmh hm'ing on both sides before he fell asleep.

He wakes up with his cell having imprinted itself into his cheek. Eric's loud and rhythmical snoring comes out of the miniature phone's earpiece.

Karl figures that another half hour of connection won't ruin either of them and doesn't switch his cell off before he dozes off once more.

Somewhat arse-backwards

When people ask ‘And how did you two – ?’ – like people at parties sometimes do, especially when you introduce yourself by all but rugby-tackling me like you were a bloody 15 year old on steroids, and not a 50 something in a tux – I usually just shrug and say ‘ah, the usual’.

And that's kind of true. Well, okay, it's a lie I suppose. It'd only be true if ‘the usual’ involved thinking of the love of your life as a bloody poser slash dime novel protagonist at the beginning, and having everything else arse-backwards as well.

The first time I heard of you? Now there is something worth remembering. Everyone knows the
story where you just stepped off the plane and Bob had an entire battalion of orcs charge you, just to see whether you’d fit in. And you can imagine how Orlando reacted to that – barged into the trailer we shared and nearly knocked me out with his gesture filled re-telling of the story, so many details even though he wasn’t even there himself. And Christ, that was some instant hero worshipping if I ever witnessed any.

First thing I thought? Was maybe something a bit uncharitable – ‘Now, there’s someone needing the attention’ was what I thought. But there you go, I never said I was a particularly nice person – not now, and certainly not back then. Anyhow, I know you’d get a good laugh out of it (good thing, you’d say, that your ego can take it especially since I changed my mind about you somewhere along the way).

I changed my mind alright, didn’t I. Mind, it took me a while.

Because there you were, not only doing the job better than anyone could have expected from a late-comer but also better than anyone else – and professionally I never had a problem admitting being bettered. But from day one on you were also kind and generous, funny and insightful, passionate and easy-going. And doesn’t that assortment of words sound like an excerpt from a harlequin novel?

Thing is, I’m not exaggerating, not even a little bit. You’ve always been all these things, all of them at the same time even and completely effortlessly as well. Like the bloody hero of a dime novel – how could any average person compare to you? And given that back then there were days when thinking of myself as even so much as ‘average’ would have been a euphemism, I kept my distance. Like a bloody moth that scraped together the last bits of its wit to not fly directly into the burning light.

But of course that didn’t put you off, quite the contrary. There were times I thought I were your little social science project – integrate the loner into the boys’ club and all that. I sometimes felt like I lived with the MI6, you kept watching me that closely.

You called me your muse (jokingly, but as the evenings progressed and the wine kept coming, there was more and more seriousness in your voice), you said that you just liked having me close because I was a walking and talking inspiration. I never asked how it could be possible that you could find someone to be inspirational who was as carefully trying to fly under the radar as I was.

So, one thing led to another – I’m sure you’d put it much more poetic than that if someone ever asked you. But you make doing the laundry sound like a hero’s quest, write pages-long poems about the weeds I plucked from our garden. You and your words. That first time (dutch courage running through our systems like fuel in that hot New Zealand summer night) wasn’t all that poetic anyway. Instead it was flawed, quick, fumbled, didn’t end with satisfaction as such but with a craving so bad, made even worse by the stolen orgasms.

Looking back, we kind of had all of it arse-backwards, didn’t we? At least from my point of view – call me old-fashioned but I usually like the talking and getting to know each other bit to precede the sex.

But with us? I knew how you sounded when gagging on my cock, when desperately fighting down your urge to come just because I told you to, when being entered while you were still half asleep – all before I even learned that you had a kid, that you felt this film was the opportunity of a lifetime, that you still missed home something fierce.

When we talked, really talked, it was when the lights had been out for long enough to allow all the embarrassing admissions and maybe somewhat awkward requests creep out of the corners of our minds. I told you secrets that I hadn’t even known I kept and you offered your own in return, the air
surrounding our naked bodies still heavy with sweat but otherwise quiet.

But as honest with yourself and me as you normally were, there was this one thing we didn’t talk about.

It was something you (of all people) didn’t seem to have words for and I was too busy gasping and screaming and begging to try to find any. It never was an issue back in New Zealand, only happened after we’d left that fairy tale continent and found ourselves back in the real world, with its big premiers and parties where getting plastered and flirting seemed mandatory. So, I spent the evening with strangers that touched and kissed me without asking first and I just kept smiling because enjoying myself was obligatory, too.

I never cared much for these nights and I certainly could have done without the mornings after. Not because I didn’t like the sex after the party being rough but because of the confused and apologetic frown on your face the next morning when you watched me sit down gingerly, when you saw the marks of your teeth peeking out from under the collar of my shirt.

Arse-backwards, as I’ve said. Because in the end it was me – not you, the poet, the thinker – who addressed it and called it by its name.

In that anonymous hotel room, I was on my belly with my hands tied high on my back and my legs held spread open by your knees, couldn’t move much, still achingly hard and feeling empty. Fucking completely at your mercy. And yet it was you who looked at me helplessly, shocked over my question and your own realization; your come drying on my arse and the small of my back and my hands was a visible reminder of your excess.

You got up and disappeared in the bathroom, leaving me like that. It was almost funny really (being left tied up in a hotel room isn’t all that horrible, at least you know that someone will untie you eventually). Funny because it was you who had the grasp on words, it was you who liked to understand things before committing to them, it was you who was always so zen and in control. And all it took was one question to make you flee?

Viggo, are you jealous?

I wiped my face on the pillow and shifted onto my side, half way comfortable despite the bounds. If it hadn’t been for the come drying on my skin and the nagging feeling of worry that replaced the arousal and the smugness over my own deduction skills. You’d looked like it was you, not me, who was bound. Who didn’t have control over what was happening to him.

And yet I didn’t call out for you. Still don’t know whether that was the right thing to do. It was one thing to ask you, this kind of sex always simplifies things to a degree where I can think clearly, where I can just say outright to which conclusion I came. But after that? I told myself that one doesn’t try to catch someone who is running, not if one is considerate enough to respect the reason for the retreat. But maybe I was just too afraid that words would fail me, that you’d look at me like that again.

You came back of course. Untied me, helped me up because my arms had fallen asleep, helped me get cleaned up. And my hands still felt numb, pins and needles, when you took them in yours and said you were sorry.

Sorry.

I wanted to tell you that I could very well do without your apologies.
You said that you couldn’t help feeling possessive, that you hated being held captive but still wanted to have me all for yourself.

And again, I wanted to tell you that I could very well do without your apologies. But there was something I realised that night, in that hotel bathroom, naked with you and your hands in mine. What angered me, what alienated me. It wasn’t the rough treatment, the reassertion of ownership. It was the fact that some part of you thought that it was necessary.

So I said ‘I am yours’ and meant it. And added ‘Christ, you’re an idiot’ and meant that as well.

Mind, it wasn’t that this solved all the issues (all your issues, because strangely enough I never had any objections against being treated like you owned me). And I’m not sure what it says about me that I find it kind of comforting that you are – despite what everyone else thinks – not perfect. I can’t deny that it is relieving to know that I’m not the only bumbling fool in this relationship.

Though generally speaking, one would probably love someone despite his faults, and not because of them, right? And still, knowing that I love you doesn’t stop you from being an idiot on occasion either, nor does loving you ever stop me from calling you on it.

It’s maybe not the average definition of a solid base for a healthy relationship. But then I look at you across the room and only when you arch an eyebrow I notice that this pretty blond actress at my table practically sits in my lap by now. There’s a smile crossing your face in response to my surprise, and even from this distance I can easily read the look in your eyes. There is the solid promise of a good rough fuck once this party is over, but no insecurity anymore, no awkward apologies.

So, I guess we’re doing alright, arse-backwards or not.

Ten years
1999

„Stop right there.”

Instantly Sean stops dead on Viggo’s doorstep when Viggo calls out from behind him. Pranks like the one they just pulled on Orlando taught him that.

“Have you booby-trapped your house? Viggo, I’m not gonna live in a –“

Whatever he was gonna say – loony bin probably – is cut off by Viggo’s hand on his shoulder. Curiously, even though Viggo is the craziest bloke in entire New Zealand Sean always relaxes when Viggo touches him.

“Just wanted to give you this first,” Viggo says, presses a brand new key into Sean’s hand, smiles. “Welcome home, my friend.”

***

2001

“I like what you’ve done with the place,” Viggo says and carefully piles his holdall atop a couple of boxes Sean never bothered to unpack. Sean watches him look around and is suddenly very conscious about the lack of wallpaper or actual furniture in his London flat.

“Sort of never really bothered unpacking,” he says and scratches the back of his neck.

Viggo hums, still his blue eyes dart around the place. “I notice you got no couch. Where am I
crashing?”

And just like that all embarrassment is gone and Sean smirks.

“So, your bed maybe?” Viggo suggests innocently.

***

2003

Sean likes living in hotels because there are people cleaning up after him who don’t expect him putting a ring on their finger. Viggo doesn’t either, but then if Sean’d ever rely on him in the cleaning department he’d die in an avalanche of his own shit.

Viggo likes living in them because he says hotel rooms contain vibes of all their previous occupants. Sean tells him he is a loony and shouldn’t even reside in a hotel but in some institution. But for some reason every time they are in the same town at the same time they share.

***

2005

“I’d tell you to remove your shoes but I know how proud you are of your boots.”

“You gave them to me. I said I don’t want to look like sodding John Wayne and you made me put these… things on anyway.”

“Things? I am deeply offended. Those are original Tony Llamas, Sean!”

“They have the American flag on them for Christ’s sake!”

“And yet you’re wearing them.”

“Viggo, you stole my shoes while I was sleeping in your car, damnit.”

“Tomato, tomato. Come on in already, Cowboy.”

“Thought you’d never ask.”

“Welcome to Idaho.”

“Yeah, yeah, where’s the bedroom?”

***

2007

Viggo has framed poetry that Sean wrote on a coaster while being sliightly plastered and seriously lovesick hanging in his kitchen.

That is about it though, about all he has permanently. Viggo doesn’t mind that and he knows Sean doesn’t either. Viggo is pretty certain that he’s realized for the first time that he’s in love with that messy and sort of choleric man when Sean showed up unannounced on his doorstep with flowers.

Red roses, how clichéd.

And just now, he let Sean in, carrying one single crooked dandelion and that same crooked smile.
Funny thing, steadfast love.

2009

“Can’t believe it took us ten years to do this. And entire decade, Sean, think about that.”

“Just tells me that you’ve grown old and wrinkly.”

“Why are you still moving in with me then?”

“Because – “

“Aw, did you just say I have a beautiful soul?”

“I most certainly didn’t.”

“You can deny it all you want, Sean. This house here is proof enough.”

“You need real estate to be convinced that I love you? Now, who is being shallow?”

“Shush, don’t ruin it. You want me to carry you over the threshold?”

“No! – Viggo, put me down, dammit!”

Old3

Sean comes home to a quiet house which for twenty-eight years now has either meant Orlando is out or asleep. He finds him napping in the living room in his comfortable armchair. There’s a documentation about hiking on Mount Everest on telly and Sean smiles as he switches the programme off, thinking that it’s funny. Funny that at seventy Sean’s the one still playing golf and footie sometimes while Orlando has proclaimed to be too old for sports of any kind other than sex. Sean thinks, as he bows down to place a kiss onto the sleeping man’s forehead, that maybe it’s because Orlando’s tried out everything and doesn’t get a kick out of any of it anymore, like with so many other things Orlando did with a passion and later never again. Easy to enthuse, easy to bore, that’s Orlando, always has been. Orlando opens his eyes at the kiss, the wrinkles around his brown eyes deepen as he smiles up at Sean in hello and Sean finds himself still amazed that in all those years Orlando never got tired of him, of them.

* Orlando wears his hair ultra short since his father’s genes have kicked in causing his hairline to recede. Eric says that in German you’d call it ‘Geheimratsecken’ and that this makes Orlando look way more dignified than he actually is. Orlando says that Eric is a silly old meanie and really, Eric can’t object to that even if he had listened instead of being busy stroking over the short stubble and kissing the thinker’s brow.

* They are in a posh hotel – fittingly comfortable for old geezers like themselves – and Sean has put his feet up while Viggo’s in the bathroom to take a shower. But instead of running water, Sean hears a little bit of clothes rustling and then a gasp and the sound of Viggo’s unique brand of giggling. ‘Vig? You alright in there?’ Sean calls out and when he doesn’t get an answer he gets up to investigate, as curious as he was as a lad sixty years ago. When he opens the door to the bathroom Viggo stands there, very much alright and very much naked. The bathroom, Sean notices now, is
one of those with mirrors on every possible surface, so it seems very crowded in there, lots of naked Vigs from all angles.

‘What’s so funny?’ Sean enquires, bemused.

‘Thanks to those mirrors I just realised,’ Viggo says and gestures vaguely at himself and his reflections, ‘that I have wrinkles in places that I didn’t even know existed. Fuck, I’m old.’

He scratches his still flat belly right above the now grey happy trail, looks down at himself and back at Sean. He grins and his eyes shine with ageless humour, making him look like the boy Sean has never met but has always been in love with.

Even though you are a golddigging skank, I am happy to share my köttbullar with you

Orlando’s gaze freezes and he’s left staring wide-eyed and unblinking. His lips are still slightly parted from all the heavy open-mouthed gasping but his breathing has stopped now as well. Just for this one second, the one that Sean knows, an image of this burned into his mind long ago, this one second right before he comes.

As the first shot hits Sean’s stomach, he grips Orlando’s hips a little harder, pulls him down just that bit further on his cock and watches Orlando’s eyes regain focus, his breath rushing back into his lungs as his cock continues to spurt, his hoarsely and quietly whispered “Sean” pushing Sean over the edge as well.

Orlando collapses on top of him and Sean exhales shakily but wraps his arms around his sweaty back as Orlando’s knees push a little nearer to his hips to be closer yet.

“Great, Bean,” Orlando says, his voice already back to his permanent tender bantering tone even if he still struggles with his breathing, “I reckon now all our new neighbours know that we’ve moved in. You roared like a bloody lion.”

“Hey, I wasn’t the one hollering ‘oh my God, Sean, yes, right there, harder, harder’ like a cheap tart getting her brains fucked out in a back alley for a tenner.”

Orlando raises his head from where he let it fall onto Sean’s shoulder to look down at him.

“You know one of the reasons I’m with you is your incredible classiness. Granted, a younger bloke might get it up more often than once a week but sophisticated remarks like this one right there are what bind me to you.”

“I’m flattered and impressed,” Sean replies deadpan and absentmindedly strokes Orlando’s thigh. “Especially by your ability to mock my virility while you still got the effing proof for it shoved up your bum.”

“Yeah,” Orlando agrees but his eyes go sort of soft before he leans down to place a close-mouthed kiss onto Sean’s lips. “I’m special like that.”

Sean lets himself be kissed for a while, his heart rate returning to normal and his skin beginning to remind him that it doesn’t exactly appreciate the feeling of sweat and spunk drying on it. While he is thinking these deeply romantic thoughts and already subtly starts to shove Orlando’s shoulder to get him to move off already, Orlando suddenly stops kissing him and says against his lips,

“We need to buy furniture.”

Sean arches an eyebrow and pushes Orlando up enough so he can appreciate said arched eyebrow. Orlando smiles down at him, that sort of slightly deranged, slightly retarded smile that tells Sean that he is not going to get to watch footie this afternoon.
“We have all we need”, he tries to argue anyway. Orlando gives him his own version of ‘the eyebrow’ in return and finally climbs off of Sean, nearly falling out of the bed in the process, klutz that he is.

“All we have”, Orlando then says, flopping down next to Sean on the mattress, “is a bed, a telly, a fridge, a camping cooker and that buttugly lamp that you inherited from your obviously blind and bonkers grandmother.”

“We also got a toilet”, Sean says, mostly because he sort of needs to piss. Not his fault, it is morning and Orlando attacked him (and by that Sean means woke him up with a mind-blowing blowjob) before Sean could go about his usual morning business. Belatedly he notices Orlando staring at him. “What?”

“A toilet? We have a toilet because it is installed in the bathroom, you dolt, like it would be in every proper flat for rent. How is that furniture?”

“You can sit on it”, Sean says with a shrug, pokes at the dollop of spunk on his chest and pulls a face. “And read the paper in peace, like.”

“You’re a moron”, Orlando states the obvious. “Remind me again why I agreed to live with you?”

“Mostly because your previous landlady evicted you due to your late-night extended showers with arias”, Sean provides helpfully and wipes his chest and belly clean with a paper towel which he wants to toss into the bin only to remember that right, they don’t own a bin yet. As an afterthought he adds, “Oh, and because you’re in love with me.”

“Hm”, Orlando hums. “And you with me.”

“Obviously”, Sean agrees and drops the dirty paper towel before giving Orlando a quick affirmative peck on the lips. “Now, can we get up and have breakfast now?”

“Nope”, Orlando says but contradicts himself by swinging his feet out of the bed. “I mean yes to the getting up. No to the breakfast.”

Sean makes a sort of whining sound.

Orlando turns around and crosses his arms in front of his chest, the poster-boy for naked resolution, stress on the naked.

“We’re going furniture shopping today.”

“No, we’re not”, Sean says and gets up, too.

“Yes, we are.”

“No, we’re – I refuse to get dragged into that kind of argument again. Are you trying to punish me for not letting you top just now?”

“Shopping.”

“We should’ve gotten a furnished flat anyway.”

“Get dressed.”

“Orlando”, Sean starts firmly as if saying his name with decision would be argument enough. “You are a filthily rich movie star. A fucking movie star! You pay people to go furniture shopping for you
and let me watch footie this afternoon.”

“What does my filthy richness have to do with your obsession with men in shorts and stockings?”

“What does your furniture obsession have to do with me not getting any breakfast?”

Orlando rolls his eyes, like Sean is the slowest person on the planet. Then he pulls a pair of fresh briefs out of the stacked moving boxes and tosses them at Sean, or tosses them at his face to be more precise.

“Because, Sean, we’re going to go furniture shopping and have breakfast at the store.”

Sean, who has his right foot raised and was just mostly focusing on getting his underwear on correctly, stops dead in his tracks and looks up.

“Orlando”, he says slowly, trying to hide his terror, “we are not going to IKEA.”

***

An hour and twenty minutes later Orlando parks Sean’s Range Rover on IKEA’s car park.

Sean, defiantly dressed in his Saturday-footie-kit (a pair of tracky bottoms and his Blades shirt), looks like a bloody dressman in comparison to Orlando who once again decided that looking like an unwashed tramp was the new black. He sits with his arms crossed on the passenger seat, grumblingly chewing on the leftover Mars bar that he found in the glove compartment because Orlando was completely serious about this whole not feeding him at home.

Orlando smiles like a simpleton and gets out. Sean’s mind is firmly set on staying in the car; that is for about five seconds which is when he loses sight of Orlando in the crowd for a moment, panics, jumps out of the car and nearly gets run over by a ridiculously huge shopping cart.

“Oi, watch where you’re going, you daft wanker!” shouts the tiny woman pushing the cart and actually seriously waves her fist at him. Her daughter, looking exactly like her (only in even tinier), imitates the gesture and waves a miniature fist at him, squealing, “Wanker!”

Sean stands there and tries to remember how to close his mouth until a hand rubs his shoulder blade.

“Did you make friends with the locals already?” Orlando asks. “I’m so proud of you. Now, let’s do some serious money spending!”

“I hate my life,” reflects Sean wistfully and then follows Orlando into the store.

“There, there,” Orlando coos at him while they stand side by side on the staircase, a family with screeching kids in front and behind them, blinking lights and bargain offer posters flanking them. “You’re gonna feel better once you ate something.”

“Which I could’ve done at home,” Sean grumbles and kind of wants to stuff his hands into the pockets of his tracky bums but would have to let go of Orlando’s hand for that so he doesn’t.

“Eating here is part of the IKEA experience,” Orlando insists cheerfully.

“Which is why I wanted to avoid it.”

“I’m buying!”

Sean turns his head to look at Orlando incredulously.
“How cheap a date do you think I am? Breakfast at IKEA?” And quieter, due to the fact that he is surrounded by minors, he adds, “I sure as fuck am not going to put out for that.”

“Bullshit, you’re as cheap as a ten quid tart in a back alley,” Orlando replies as he steps off the staircase. For the benefit of the glaring father that is looking back at him now he points innocently at Sean and says, “His words, not mine. Terribly crude, innit?”

“Jesus Christ,” Sean groans. “There’ll better be hard liquors available in this so called restaurant.”

Orlando, already partly distracted by the random shit stacked at the side of the aisle (paper towels, pillow cases and what Sean guesses could be terry cloth slippers), replies off-handedly, “You can’t get plastered before noon, baby, it makes you look like an alcoholic.”

“Beer for breakfast I’ll have you know,” Sean says very seriously as he inspects one of the possible slippers, “is not a sign of alcoholism but a lifestyle choice. Born out of sheer desperation, yes, but still a choice.”

“So, why don’t you just choose to be cheerful and happy instead?” Orlando asks and obviously disagrees with Sean’s terry-cloth slipper theory because he takes his beanie off and tries to pull the terry-cloth thing over his head. Then, from under his makeshift ugly new headwear he smiles at Sean.

“Why don’t I indeed?” Sean asks with a responding smile on his lips and lightly tugs at one end of the terry-cloth, making it even more crooked, before brushing the backs of his fingers against Orlando’s cheek and down to his shaggy beard. Then as an afterthought he adds, “Oh, right, because I am starving to bloody death right now!”

The restaurant is pretty full when they enter and in response to Sean’s astonishment about that Orlando explains to him that quite a lot of people regularly have their weekend breakfast over at IKEA’s. While Sean struggles with this, yet another piece of his belief in humanity having been ripped away from him, Orlando pushes a tray into his hands and they enter the self-serving area. After a brief argument – “Orlando, in which universe is yoghurt a substitute for booze?” – they pay and look for a table.

Sean sits down at one of the large ones in the middle of the restaurant area and holds out his empty coffee cup to Orlando who takes it as well as his own and saunters to the coffee machine like someone who has done this plenty times before. Sean still can’t believe it but is sort of happy that he doesn’t have to figure out the coffee machine by himself.

“I can’t believe you seriously bought meatballs,” Sean says after Orlando’s return. “Who eats meatballs for breakfast?”

Orlando holds up his fork, one meatball sticking on its end.

“They aren’t meatballs, they are Köttbullar.”

Sean squints and examines the thing on Orlando’s fork.

“What are they made of then?”

“Well, meat.”

“Ah, I see, ball-shaped meat. So sorry I mistook them for meatballs.”
“They are delicious. Do you want to try one?”

“It is a quarter past ten in the frigging morning, you nutter. Of course I don’t.”

In response Orlando shoves his first meatball into his mouth, chews open mouthed and makes such loud noises of delight that the young family sitting to their right gives them confused glances. One of the girls, about six years old, stares with fascination at Orlando’s display of bad manners and meatball shenanigans but when Orlando smiles brilliantly at her, she blushes and looks away.

Orlando proudly looks back at Sean, obviously thinking this argument won, but Sean is a bit too busy adoring the living fuck out of Orlando’s way with kids to still remember what they have been arguing about in the first place. Some of that must show on his face because Orlando stops chewing like a waste disposal machine, gently nudges Sean’s foot under the table and covers Sean’s hand with his own for a moment, squeezing it affirmatively. Then he continues to eat.

“So, what do you want to buy then?” asks Sean a while later while licking bacon grease from his lips.

Orlando shrugs. “Dunno. A couch and living room furniture? Definitely bedroom furniture because I am not gonna keep my underwear in a cardboard box any longer than I have to, a kitchen, preferably white, a couple of rugs and one of those cupboards for shoes for the hallway. Oh, and a new bed maybe?”

Sean takes another forkful of egg and chews it carefully because this already might be a complete nightmare but he also knows that Orlando is by far from finished. So, unsurprisingly Orlando continues,

“We also need bookshelves and curtains for the bedroom because having our neighbours watching us going at it is only entertaining for so long. Oh, and we need new sheets and stuff for the bathroom and something for the coats in the hallway, and I suppose we could do with new china and towels and a couple of lamps – and light bulbs obviously – and picture frames and that sort of thing.”

Sean finishes his eggs and takes a sip of coffee, then silently he butters his bread roll and puts jam on it. After that he puts his knife down and says,

“You know, I’m pretty certain that you are sort of the love of my life. Like, if you needed a kidney I’d gladly give you one of mine. And maybe, just maybe I could be talked into buying and even putting together a wardrobe or two. But I am not going to look at fabrics for curtains with you or carry the thousand miniature picture frames you intend to pick up.”

Then he starts eating his roll. The jam tastes like a cherry committed suicide in a pool of liquid sugar.

After a moment Orlando asks slowly, “I am sort of the love of your life?”

“That’s what you took from this? Christ, you are a romantic mug.”

Orlando’s forehead crinkles up as he frowns at him.

“Never mind romance. What do you mean ‘sort of’?”

A smile tugs at Sean’s lips but he replies nonchalantly, “Well, don’t know yet, do I? For all I know I could meet the proper love of my life right here in the knickknack section and forget all about you.”

“Nah you won’t.”
“Because you’re such a catch? Always smell of roses and never flush things like dirty socks down my toilet and flood my entire bathroom?”

“Oi, you were the one telling me to get rid off Dom’s dirty laundry after that booze-up and that was back in, what, 2004? Ancient history,” Orlando remarks off-handedly. “And obviously you’re lucky to have me, yes. But you’re not meeting another love of your life – you loveslut, by the way – in the marketplace because I’m going there on my own. Can’t have your whining spoiling my joys of picking out curtains.”

Now it’s Sean’s turn to frown.

“You’re leaving me here?”

“Well, I asked in Smaland, but they said they only take kids up to ten years.”

“What am I supposed to do here while you drown yourself in useless shit to buy?”

Orlando grins broadly at him and from the chair next to him he picks up his army jacket that looks like it has already seen a couple of skirmishes, some in the First World War, and aside from that is at least three sizes too big for Orlando. He rummages around in its inner pockets and temporarily disappears behind a curtain of dark green before he reappears triumphantly, holding a rolled up paper in his hand.

“I thought of that,” he says happily and puts the booty down on the table, “so I bought your sports paper.”

Instantly Sean’s mood brightens considerably.

Orlando drinks the rest of his tea and gets up.

“So, I’m off then,” he announces. “You promise me to still be here when I come back?”

“Possibly,” Sean says and adds, “Hey, one thing before you go.”

Orlando who has already turned around to leave, turns back.

“No, I am not going to by a thousand miniature picture frames,” he promises pre-emptively but Sean shakes his head and gestures at his empty cup.

“You need to show me how to get the free refills before you leave.”

“Oh God, I’m gonna come back to an over-caffeinated monster, aren’t I?”

“It wasn’t my idea to come here, remember?”

***

Sean is slowly working his way through his sports paper while the mass of breakfast-and-then-shopping people around him bustles about.

“Sorry, mind if I sit with you?”

Sean looks up from his article about the evilness that is ManU to find a man, about his own age, gesturing at one of the free chairs at his table. Somewhat surprised Sean notices that the majority of the rest of the tables is indeed taken at the moment, families, couples – old and young – and the occasional single person populating the big restaurant with their conversation and chewing and
slurping.

“Sure,” he agrees a second later to the question and the other man grins and noisily pulls back one of the chairs. Sean has just returned to his article when the man says,

“Nothing like a good healthy breakfast, is there?”

Sean seriously questions the ‘healthy’ bit when he looks at the meatballs on the bloke’s tray but nods and hums noncommittally before looking at his paper again.

His mobile beeps, announcing a new text message. From Orlando, obviously. Doesn’t surprise Sean that he can’t go knickknack shopping without telling somebody all about it.

“We’re getting flowery curtains for the bedroom,” says Orlando’s text.

“No, we’re not,” Sean texts back.

Right when he has finished his article a small boy, belonging to the young family opposite, starts chasing his sister around the tables. Sean doesn’t even look up when the little boy starts screaming bloody murder, the girl screeches like she was a knifed pig and the father starts hollering “Stop it, you two retards!” He just pushes his coffee cup further onto the safe middle of the table.

He does however glance up when there is a bumping noise, a screech and a shattering noise all within one second. The mother of the two kids is still standing but the boy who ran into her is sitting on his arse now, obviously after running into her. He starts to wail and Sean isn’t sure whether that is because he hurt his bum, or because of his mother’s instant bitching or because there’s a shattered glass right in front of him and the jello it contained spilled all over the floor like particularly disgusting green vomit.

Sean arches his brows, takes a sip of his coffee and turns his eyes down again.

His mobile, sitting next to his coffee cup on the table, beeps.

“I just saw the most awesome fluffy pink bathmat.”

A second after Sean has read this, another message arrives.

“They got matching pink terry-cloth robes, too! I’m gonna get U one!”

“No, you’re not,” Sean texts back, hits send, then writes another message, stating the obvious. “Idiot.”

He stares at his phone for a moment but when there is no instant reply, he gets up to get a refill of his coffee.

“Your mobile beeped, twice even,” informs him the man at his table when Sean comes back. With interest in his eyes the man gestures at the abandoned phone. “Probably got text messages, eh?”

“Cheers,” Sean says with a nod even though he’d rather say ‘would you like to read them as well, you nosy bastard?’.

Orlando wrote, “I’m talking to this shop assistant and she says you should be nicer to me and buy me things, you cheap bastard.” And his second one says, “I think she fancies me something rotten btw.”

“You little trollop,” Sean says half-loud in response, his hand still cradling his phone as he shakes his head and chuckles.
“Women, eh?” the bloke opposite chimes in.

“Sorry?”

The man shrugs and his face contorts into something which Sean supposes the guy thinks of as his conspiratorial wink. He wipes his mouth on his napkin and grins at Sean.

“They bitch at us all day to take them shopping and when we do, we don’t even get a say in it, do we?”

“I suppose,” Sean says slowly which is about the most noncommittal thing he can think of.

“But hey, what doesn’t a bloke do for a nice pair of tits, eh?”

“Hm,” Sean grunts. “Doesn’t even have them, mine.”

“Ah,” the guy makes, understanding flashing over his fleshy face. “Married her for the money, did you?”

Sean, who really has to use not a small amount of his acting skills to not just burst out laughing by now, nods sagely.

He could say that aside from being really loaded, Orlando also has a ridiculously beautiful cock and fucks like a stallion on Viagra, that for all his klutzy tendencies he is extraordinarily talented when it comes to building things and fixing them, that he has the sharpest wit and a tongue to go with it, that he likes holding hands with Sean and writes him love letters, actual love letters, when he is away to film. Sean could say that all these things to this complete stranger who seems to be a bit of a misogynist and a lot of an idiot. But he doesn’t. He isn’t Orlando after all. Instead he just grunts again and replies,

“Something like that, mate.”

The guy winks at him again, or maybe he just has a nervous eye twitch, and returns to his extra large helping of meatballs. Sean’s mobile beeps again.

“It’s no fun making U jealous. What R U doing?”

Sean replies, “Slagging you off in front of strangers, the usual” and doesn’t bother putting the phone down because he knows he’s gonna get a reply instantly.

“You cunt! For that I’m gonna buy a billion scented candles and lacy doilies!”

Sean takes a moment to picture Orlando in his mind right now. Carrying two of these huge yellow shoulder bags that look like trash bags with handles, filled with the most hideous curtains, bathrobes, rugs and china and stinking of cheap vanilla and wax.

When Orlando does return he still looks like a tramp, even if he shoved his hideous woollen beanie into the front pocket of his ratty jeans by now. His hair is making up for it by sticking out in every direction. He isn’t however carrying two yellow holdalls filled with shit, in fact he doesn’t even have one bag. The only thing he brings with him is a rather tiny flower pot which he puts down in front of Sean on the table. It contains a miniature cactus.

“Here, I found this for you. At first sight it appears a bit spiky and unapproachable but if I’ll nurture it enough it will sprout the most beautiful pink blossoms. Come to think of it, I’ll name it Beanie.”
“Is this one of the pick up lines Dom taught you?” Sean asks, looking up at Orlando. “How this guy ever manages to have sex is one of the world’s great mysteries.”

“You’ll thank him once you have blossomed under my loving nurturing.”

“Not if I choke to death on my own vomit first.”

Orlando laughs and ruffles Sean’s hair affectionately. Sean catches the man opposite looking, obviously trying to put the pieces together but failing. So he decides to be a nice person and clear up all possible misunderstandings by pointing at Orlando and introducing him.

“My cash cow.”

The man looks trapped between confused and some other place, so it’s Orlando who speaks next,

“I always knew you were a golddigging skank. Can we go and pick out a hugeass sofa now?”

Without really waiting for Sean’s reply Orlando takes the tray with the dirty dishes and wanders off with it. Sean picks up the cactus and half-raises his hand in silent goodbye to the man before hurrying after Orlando, afraid he might lose him in between all the ravenous families.

***

They enter the first show room that is filled with – well, first and foremost it’s filled with what feels like thousands of people, all of them hanging out in front of the furniture, making that a bit hard to detect really. But Sean’s a smart one and deducts from the coffee tables that toddlers try to crawl under while their parents discuss the sizes and colours of the cupboards that it’s the living room section they are in.

Orlando of course knows the way – probably could sleepwalk it (and yes, he does that sometimes, yet another reason why Sean doesn’t get why Orlando wants more furniture which only translates to ‘more stuff he can stumble into while being asleep and strolling around in the flat before Sean wakes up and goes to find him and bring him back to bed’). Again Sean has difficulties keeping up but finds Orlando sitting on a three-seater sofa. Although sitting is not really the appropriate word for it, wriggling is more like it. And he won’t stop.

“What are you doing?” Sean tilts his head contemplatively. “It looks like you’re trying to ride the sofa, you know.”

Orlando stops shifting about for a second to look up at Sean. Then very slowly he just shakes his head but doesn’t bother with responding but starts butthumping the sofa again.

“Seriously, if you keep that up we’re gonna get thrown out of the store,” says Sean and adds, “On that thought – continue with whatever it is you’re –”

“For pity’s sake, I’m trying out the sofa,” Orlando interrupts him with exasperation. “Whether it’s comfortable.”

“So you’re choosing a sofa by its arse-friendliness?”

“Of course I do. How else do you pick out a sofa, huh? I mean what would you do?”

“First of all,” Sean replies and instead of looking at Orlando he now looks at the sofa. With the hand that is still holding the miniature cactus he gestures at it, continues, “I’d discount all sofas that have huge sunflowers printed onto them.”
Orlando instead of looking closer at the huge flower on which he is sort of sitting just stares at Sean with pity in his eyes.

“Have you ever shopped at IKEA? They have, like, a thousand fabric choices for each one. You can get this in any colour you could possibly think of.”

“Huh,” Sean makes, somewhat surprised. “So, do you want this one then, the model I mean?”

Orlando wriggles around one last time, eyebrows furrowed in concentration, then he gets up.

“Nah, not comfy enough.”

Sean rolls his eyes.

“Here, let’s try this one,” Orlando suggests, already plopping down on the next couch, slightly larger and somewhat roundish around the edges. He pats the space next to him after wriggling once or twice. “Sit down. I need your expert opinion.”

Obediently Sean sits down and leans back carefully. “My expert opinion? How am I an expert?”

Orlando shrugs, bouncing a little up and down on his cushion. “Got the finest arse in the Kingdom, I figure it has a few opinions on what it wants to be pressed against on Saturday afternoons.”

“It does, but it’s not a sofa of any kind,” Sean says with a leer which turns into a smile when Orlando both chuckles and rolls his eyes.

“I can’t take you anywhere, can I?”

“Says the bloke who’s humping sofas.”

“I’m not humping – whatever, this one is shite as well.”

Orlando gets up again and wanders off, pointedly looking over his shoulder after a moment. With a sigh Sean heaves himself off the couch and follows. He dutifully sits down on the next choice as well and the one after that but then he refuses to take part in Orlando’s stupidity any longer and just stays on that last couch, a large one in brown leather that is soft to the touch, and puts the cactus onto the coffee table. Of course his mutiny doesn’t stop Orlando from continuing to arsetest all the other couches in the vicinity, even scribbling down notes onto a pad he got somewhere. And of course he hollers his test results over to where Sean is sitting, pretending to read the IKEA catalogue and not know that insane person with the messy curls and the scruffy beard at all.

Orlando eventually heaves a sigh so loud that Sean can clearly hear it despite the good ten metres and fifteen people between them, and disappears. Sean is just about to get worried that Orlando might just leave him here and drive back to their flat on his own – which wouldn’t be beyond him – when he feels a hand on his shoulder.

“Can we move on already?” Orlando asks and arches his eyebrows. “Seriously, going shopping with you is torturous, you always need fucking ages.”

Sean contemplates throwing the cactus at Orlando’s head for a moment.

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It doesn’t really surprise Sean that it is right in the middle of the children’s furniture section – in between miniature stools with elephant feet and all pink bedroom ensembles – that Orlando gets
A girl, age fourteen or something close to it – slightly too old for the little princess display surrounding them, but not by much – approaches them as Orlando is telling Sean about how spectacular a bed canopy would look in their flat. Sean spots her before Orlando does, mostly because Orlando has the tendency to go on and on especially when he is talking bullshit and over the years Sean has developed this amazing coping mechanism called ‘Uh-huh, I am totally listening to you even if my eyes are closed and I snore a little’.

So he is looking around while Orlando is droning on about the loveliness of pink crowns on the curtains and he notices the girl. She’s as shifty as if she was planning a bank robbery or something equally daunting, and her hands are fiddling with the rims of her sleeves as she finally steps up to them.

“Excuse me,” she says, kind of breathlessly, her eyes glued alternately to Orlando and to the tips of her shoes, “aren’t you by any chance –?”

Sean looks at the redness of her cheeks and the proverbial hearts in her eyes and at Orlando who hasn’t even showered for two days and looks (as well as smells) like it. Love is blind indeed, and apparently has a blocked nose.

Orlando shots Sean a quick glance – the mild warning one because on a previous similar occasion Sean might or might not have answered the ‘Aren’t you Orlando Bloom, the movie star?’ with ‘No, he’s Orlando Bloom the egoistic prick who thinks his dimples allow him to steal the last beer’ – before he turns to the girl, smiles and nods.

She blushes even harder and Sean thinks she might faint from the blood rush.

“Oh my God, this is so cool!” She exclaims and hastily adds, in a specially hushed voice, “But of course you want to be incognito!”

Apparently she is under the impression that Orlando’s outfit is a cleverly chosen disguise and not simply proof of his enormously bad taste.

“No, it’s alright,” Orlando says, smile still in place.

“Are you furniture shopping?” the girl asks and Sean wants to give her ten points for cleverness. He glances around and smirks to himself, since they are still standing in the dream-come-to-life of your average seven-year-old girl and apparently Orlando Bloom, the movie star.

“Can I maybe please get your autograph? Or maybe would you even let me –,” she blushes again and fumbles out her mobile, obviously one that acts as a camera as well.

“Sure,” Orlando says and nods and before he can do anything else, the girl’s face splits into a huge smile and she can barely keep herself from jumping up and down. She turns around to where Sean is standing and looks at him.

“Excuse me, sir, would you take a picture for me?”

She holds out her mobile expectantly and her eyes are wide and excited, practically telegraphing ‘Because in case you didn’t know, this is Orlando Bloom, the movie star, omg!’ . Sean nods sagely and takes the mobile and she hastily explains to him how it works while Orlando waits with his hands in the pockets of his jeans, a huge grin on his face as soon as she has turned her back to him.

But he puts his arm around the girl’s shoulder as Sean takes the picture with his professional smile
back in place and the girl looks a bit cross eyed due to sheer happiness. Then she thanks him profoundly and repeatedly, takes the phone back from Sean without even looking at him and runs off in lightning speed.

Orlando’s eyes follow her and it’s only when she has disappeared behind a couple of wardrobes that he turns back to Sean.

“Sir, would you take a picture for me?” he parrots, voice high pitched but only gently mocking, and then asks in his normal voice, “Man, how does it feel to only be recognized by people over fifty, sir?”

“I can’t believe that you are mocking me. It is not my photo in a pink princess bedroom that will show up all over the internet.”

“Whatever. I look good in pink.”

“You don’t own a single thing that is pink,” Sean points out as they walk on towards the next section. “The only colour in your wardrobe is ‘dirty’.”

Orlando looks scandalized and shoves Sean so that he nearly stumbles into a particularly ugly wardrobe.

“Hey, you are the Nazi who picks my clothes out of the dirty-laundry basket and only washes his own shit.”

“How am I responsible for your washing? Besides, you’re only miffed that I figured out that you kept smuggling your clothes into my laundry.”

Orlando grins broadly. “Only took you what? Four years? And guess what, now it’ll be impossible for you to do that because, my friend, now we live together.”

“I’m still not your housekeeper, Orlando,” Sean grumbles even though he is pretty sure he is, has been for the last ten years, at least ever since that day they returned from the pick ups in New Zealand and Sean spent an entire weekend alternating between shagging him rotten on native soil and cleaning his shithole of a flat with mordant.

In response Orlando raises his arm and makes a show of sniffing his armpit. He crinkles his nose a bit but then shrugs. He’s sporting a shit-eating grin when he throws and arm over Sean’s shoulder, rubbing himself against Sean.

“You’re the one who has to live with the consequences.”

Sean makes a thoughtful face but doesn’t shrug Orlando’s arm off. He stops in front of a couple of hip high cupboards. Off-handedly he asks, “Say, does IKEA sell these scented trees for hanging onto one’s rear-view mirror? I’d like to buy a dozen of them.”

Orlando laughs, critically inspecting the cupboards and he drops his arm to write something down onto his notepad.

“Don’t lie to yourself,” he replies, without looking up. “You love my manly musk.”

“They should make nice necklace pendants…”

Now Orlando does look up, brushing a few curls out of his forehead with the hand that is holding the pencil stub.
“I’m not going to wear a tree around my neck, you bastard.”

“That coming from a man who thinks that mismatching flip-flops are a fashion statement. Astounding.”

Sean keeps his smirk to himself and walks on to the next exhibit without waiting for Orlando’s reply. Of course he hears the partly amused, partly scandalized huff as the younger man follows.

***

An hour or so later Sean seriously doubts Orlando’s navigational skills. Well, that’s not right – he seriously doubts them ever since that time in New Zealand with the landslide and Orlando’s “Ooops, I had the map upside down for the last hour; that explains quite a bit…” – right now he thinks that Orlando wouldn’t find his own feet on his own.

Fact is that Sean is pretty certain that the giant arrows on the floor are there to point you in the right direction and that Orlando ignores them willy-nilly repeatedly because of which they end up in the sofa section three times before Sean announces him unfit for leadership and takes over command.

Like that he plans to avoid running round in circles until one of them starves to death. Instead they finally (and fittingly) find the kitchen section. Sean is still dutifully carrying the miniature cactus while Orlando is on his third or fourth notepad sheet and has also shoved a rolled up copy of the IKEA catalogue into the back pocket of his jeans. Sean points out that the additional weight might just cause Orlando’s trousers to finally rip apart or alternately slide down his non-existent hips but unsurprisingly Orlando ignores him and practically climbs into a kitchen cabinet.

“You won’t find any food in there,” Sean says, leaning against one of the fake walls and watching Orlando’s bottom wriggle around as Orlando ‘inspects’ the cabinet. A light bump and an “ouch” later, he reappears, rubbing his head.

“You’re so not funny,” he grumbles. “I’m checking how much stuff you can fit into these.”

“Once again, first thing I’d say is that I don’t really fancy having a baby blue kitchen.”

Orlando rolls his eyes and pokes Sean in the belly with his pencil.

“Fine, you pick something that you like.”

The time that Orlando has so far spent climbing into cupboards Sean used to look around, so he doesn’t even have to think about it. Followed by Orlando he walks back to the beginning of the section and points at the displayed kitchen. The furniture is cleanly cut, nothing fancy or extravagant about it. The colour scheme consists of a very light beige and steel appliances, it looks functional and spacious.

“This one,” Sean says and points. “I like this one.”

Orlando steps up next to him, their shoulders brushing together.

“Hm,” he makes, sort of noncommittally.

“It’s a proper kitchen,” Sean replies, convinced of his choice. “No extra crap, enough room for everything.”

“Hm,” Orlando hums again, leaning a little against Sean.
“We could put an additional table in. And I suppose at least three chairs since I won’t have your dirty feet resting on my chair all the time.”

“I don’t –“

“You always put your feet up when you read,” Sean points out. “And since I’m pretty certain that I’m gonna be the one doing all the cooking and you’ll hang around in the kitchen like the codependent lazy bum you are –“

“Fine,” Orlando chuckles, “I have no objections against three chairs. And I’m not lazy. I just like watching you work.”

“Which is sort of the definition of lazy.”

“No, it’s not. Not if I spend great concentration on appreciating the curve of your back and your bum.”

“Flattery won’t get you out of having to do the dishes afterwards, you know.”

“Damnit.”

“Which pretty much sums up the thanks I get for slaving over your dinner day in and day out,” Sean says and has difficulties staying serious.

Orlando bursts out laughing and Sean can feel the tremble of it running through him where their shoulders touch.

“Could you sound a little more like a pregnant woman?”

“That is fucking sexist and I am nothing like a pregnant woman! Does this look like a baby bump to you?” He lifts his Blades-Shirt, freeing the view on his perfectly flat stomach. Unsurprisingly Orlando licks his lips in response but Sean adds, “And even if that were anatomically possible, if I were expecting your child I would –“

“If your next words are going to be ‘have an abortion’, I’ll be seriously pissed,” Orlando says, still tilting his head to stare at Sean’s belly even though it’s covered again. “My sperm is seriously superior.”

“I was gonna say ‘call an exorcist’ because it would clearly be a demon baby.”

“But I’d take good care of both of you,” Orlando says with all the earnestness he can muster. “I’d even marry you so you won’t have to give birth out of wedlock and become the village’s laughing stock.”

“You’re a real hero,” Sean laughs and lightly rubs the small of Orlando’s back. “So, this kind of kitchen?”

Orlando looks at it again, and Sean can’t help but thinking that his mind is drifting off for a bit before he nods and starts scribbling once again.

***

“You seriously are a genius and I bow to your superior intelligence and skills,” Orlando manages to say before he starts laughing so hard that he needs to steady himself by holding on to the back of a sofa.
“Sod off,” Sean grunts, crosses his arms in front of his chest and glares at the arrows on the floor. “Clearly, this system has been invented to trap unsuspecting shoppers in here for eternity.”

“Right,” Orlando replies in between bursts of laughter. “It’s the first circle of hell. Has nothing to do with you having no fucking clue where you were going.”

“Sod off,” Sean repeats. Because what else is there to say? The fact that somehow they ended up in the effing sofa section of the store – for the fourth time now – clearly speaks against him.

Orlando continues chuckling for a good two minutes but of course wanders off at the same time, since apparently they haven’t looked at enough sofas so far, no matter how often they have been here.

“Oi, Sean, you gotta see this!”

Sean instantly follows the call, if only to keep Orlando from starting his hollered running commentary again. He finds him on a very plain and kind of smallish sofa, grinning at Sean like he was high on something.

“So?” asks Sean.

“Don’t you recognize it?” Orlando asks and strokes the sofa’s cushions kind of fondly.

“Should I?”

“Sit down, maybe your arse has a better memory than you do.”

Sean lets himself fall down next to Orlando and yes, there is something nagging at the back of his mind, something like motion-memory or whatnot, but he can’t place it and it’s gone a second later. Orlando doesn’t seem to mind, seems rather happy to explain.

“It’s the same sofa I had in that tiny flat in New Zealand,” he says. “Exactly the same. Even the colour and the fabric and everything.”

“Huh,” Sean makes and pats the arm rest to his right. “There was a stain from red wine right here, wasn’t there.”

Orlando grins broadly, leans back and nods. “There was. Never again am I allowing Viggo to balance a wine glass on his nose in my place.”

“Seconded,” Sean says because he figures since Orlando’s place is his as well, their place, he needs to have a say in it as well. They sit in silence for a moment and Sean tries to suss out whether this sofa is particularly arse-friendly or whether fond memories cloud his judgment.

“There’s definitely no doubt about one thing,” Orlando muses, apparently on the same page. “This is a sofa easy to shag on.”

Sean chuckles quietly and wriggles a little, Orlando-style, to get comfortable. “Are you planning on re-enacting good memories?” he wants to know, mostly jokingly.

“Well, dunno whether a fumbled first time with both of us drunk off our asses is all that re-enact-worthy,” he replies with a small smile.

“I’d say it definitely is,” Sean says, thinking back and smiling to himself.

“Did I ever tell you that I only regained the memory of that night, like, half a year later?” Orlando
asks, voice both amused and private. “When I woke up that morning I was all ‘dude, why am I lying naked on my living room floor with a guy next to – holy fuck, it’s Sean! OMG, score!’”

He lowers his arms, that he raised in a gesture of supreme success, and his eyes turn back to their normal size, though the huge smile on his lips doesn’t lose any of its brightness.

“You’re as much of a dork as you were ten years ago’ Sean means to point out. Ten years. Instead he says softly and with much more tenderness than IKEA’s sofa section seems to be suited for,

“God. Orli.”

Instead of the rather comically over-done theatrical astonishment from a moment before, Orlando’s surprise is much subtler now. Everything about him has gone a little quieter, like Sean is talking in a hushed voice (which maybe he has, he doesn’t know) and Orlando doesn’t want to miss a thing even though he knows exactly what Sean is saying.

Then he shifts on the sofa, his hand lightly brushing over Sean’s shoulder, wiping away an imagined speck of dirt just so he can touch him.

“Mommy, Mommy, Mommy, I want this one!” someone shouts in a very high voice and the next moment a small boy jumps onto the sofa between them and instantly starts bouncing up and down, round face lighting up with glee.

“I’m so sorry,” says a young woman, obviously the mother, and rushes towards them. “Jimmy, you can’t just – this place was taken, and besides, we don’t bounce on sofas!”

Sean extracts himself from where he sits almost under the bouncing little boy and smiles at her.

“It’s a good way of testing whether the sofa is worth buying,” he says. The woman blushes when he smiles at her. “Or so I’ve heard.”

Orlando looks at the little boy next to him and seems like he really, really wants to start testing the sofa’s springs right along with him, but then he gets up as well.

“I’m really sorry about this,” she repeats. “My son and personal space have a bit of a troubled relationship.”

“It’s fine,” Orlando assures her. “We need to get going anyway.” And to Sean he adds, “Are you ready for the market place? We need to go through there to get to the exit but I promise not to make you look at curtains.”

“You say that now,” Sean says but he chuckles as Orlando places his hand over his heart and raises the other in a silent solemn vow.

***

“You are an arsehole,” Sean says, for about the fiftieth time since Orlando drove off IKEA’s car park, shamelessly honking families out of his way. Mind, it’s not Orlando’s driving finesse that makes him say that – he’s gotten used to that and besides, there’s nothing that can top that one time in Mexico where the car Orlando chose had neither bonnet nor windscreen. Anyway.

“You really are.”

“Oh, get over yourself,” replies Orlando in the same sort-of-but-not-seriously grumbly tone of voice. He fishes the keys to their flat out of his jacket’s pocket and for that pushes the cactus back into
Sean’s hand. “Like you suffered so hard today, you giant pansy.”

And the cactus sits there on Sean’s palm like the spoilt single child that it turned out to be, silently mocking him.

“You’re an arse,” repeats Sean, this time mostly to the cactus, and walks after Orlando into the wasteland that is their flat. There, in the middle of the living room he puts the cactus down on the parquet, right in the middle of it, so it stands there like a silent accusation. Orlando will probably stumble over it within the next five minutes but Sean doesn’t care.

The fucking cactus was the only fucking thing they bought. And Sean had to pay for it. With his credit card. Because Orlando needed to try out the fancy self-help cash register thing. Arse.

“I’m going to watch football now,” Sean announces, kicks of his trainers, grabs a beer from the case on the floor and disappears in their bedroom where, aside from the bed, their giant flatscreen TV is located. Raising his voice to makes sure Orlando can hear him he adds, “You just live to torture me, don’t you?”

“Obviously!” Orlando hollers back from somewhere else in the rather big flat.

“Don’t dare to continue with that in the next 105 minutes!” Sean shouts and undresses down to his boxers and his strip.

“Not even with a blowjob?” Orlando yells back.

“Stop bellowing sex stuff at the top of your lungs,” Sean bellows as he plops down on the bed and switches on the telly. “What will the neighbours think?”

He is pretty certain that Orlando’s response is a chuckle but he can’t be sure because he has already turned up the volume of the footie commentary.

About ten minutes into the game Orlando turns up in the bedroom, chewing something that turns out to be a cheese sandwich when Orlando pushes the other half of it into Sean’s mouth. He lies down on the bed next to Sean and one minute he is suggesting that someone should kick the ref in the head to get his brain to work again and the next (poser football fan that he is) he has fallen asleep.

As per usual he doesn’t wake, even when Sean starts shouting abuse at the telly because the ref seriously is blind, deaf and retarded. Sean rolls his eyes when instead of waking Orlando starts snoring obnoxiously, and he pushes at him (sort of gently, but he can’t be sure because he is not really taking his eyes off the telly) so Orlando shifts and the racket stops.

Around minute 68 Orlando wakes suddenly, stretches luxuriously, yawns loudly and sits up. He places a wet kiss on Sean’s bent knee and Sean is just about to warn him that he meant it, no funny sex distractions during football time, when Orlando is out of the bed and the room again. Sean smirks when from the living room he hears a clattering noise and Orlando’s “Fuck, damnit!” (so predictable) and a few minutes later the shower starts running. Sean returns his full attention to the match.

When that and the post-match discussions are over Sean thinks that he might just enjoy a lazy wank now. Then he remembers that he is not living alone anymore and can’t recall what the etiquette regarding the whole tossing off issue is when your flatmate is in the next room. Heaving a sigh, he drags himself out of bed to find Orlando and ask him.

“Orli!” He shouts, his voice echoing in the empty hallway. “What is your opinion on –“

He doesn’t finish his sentence, a bit too puzzled by what he sees when he enters the living room.
Orlando sits on the floor (well, where else), with his back against the heater and not only is he holding an IKEA catalogue in his hands, the floor around him is littered with notepad pages and a couple of other furniture catalogues as well.

“You kept all your notes?” Sean asks redundantly.

“Course I did,” Orlando answers without looking up from behind his catalogue. “Why else would I have taken them?”

Makes sense, Sean has to agree, and he walks over, of course accidentally kicking the bloody cactus that Orlando has left right in the middle of the room.

“Crap.”

“That’s what I said. Wonder who put it there.”

“Shut up,” Sean ends that particular argument. He has reached Orlando now and his sock-clad foot nudges Orlando’s. When the younger man looks up, Sean gestures at the notes on the floor. “I thought one was just supposed to write down the row and rack of the stuff one wanted to pick up in the storage.”

“That’s right.”

Sean frowns. “But we didn’t buy anything.”

Orlando mirrors Sean’s frown and lightly kicks Sean’s ankle for emphasis. “We are fucking movie stars,” he says, once again pronouncing every word as though Sean was slow. “We pay people to do that kind of shit.”

Sean stares at Orlando, mouth open. But what he privately thinks of as a perfectly valid expression of utter outrage, Orlando obviously interprets as further proof of Sean’s slowness and returns to his catalogue. Sean crouches down, grabs the catalogue, rips it from Orlando’s hands and tosses it into a corner of the room in a slightly less subtle display of indignation.

“I fucking said the exact fucking thing this morning!”

Orlando has his head tilted and is still looking to where the catalogue has landed. Unimpressed by Sean’s put out tone of voice he replies,

“Yeah, but if we just paid some posh bird to do the interior decoration for us without any input, it’d look like it was freshly out of ‘Homes and Gardens’ or I don’t know, some other stupid magazine.”

“And now it’s gonna look like a page from the IKEA catalogue?”

“No,” Orlando says patiently. He leans forward and rests his hands on Sean’s naked knees, their palms cupping them perfectly. “Now it’s gonna look like you and I want it to look. Like someplace we like spending time in. Like a place that feels like it’s ours.”

“Oh,” Sean replies.

Orlando looks at him all serious for another moment, his eyes slightly squinted as if he was searching for something in Sean’s. Then he grins broadly and chuckles, gripping Sean’s knees a little tighter.

“You’re seriously the thickest person on the planet. I have no idea why I am so fucking in love with you.”
Sean could tell him about twenty-thousand reasons why he is in love with him off the top of his head, starting with the way Orlando’s fingers dig into the sensitive and slightly ticklish flesh right next to his knees. And it’s probably because his brain is busy keeping tabs on all these reasons that he can’t remember why they haven’t moved in together long before now – no matter the scheduling difficulties, Orlando’s frequently questionable BO and Sean’s talent to behave like complete tosser at times.

“I liked the brown leather couch, the big one,” he says, maybe a little belatedly. “You remember the one? It looked like a place that we could spend entire Sunday afternoons on.”

Orlando’s smile is softer than usual and he nods.

“So got the official sacred arse approval?” he asks, deliberate crude stupidity nicely counterbalancing the way his fingers gently caress Sean’s thighs. “Your bum wouldn’t mind being pressed against that?”

“Second favourite thing on the list,” Sean replies in the same tone of voice and thinks of how Orlando’s lips taste, licks his own. “I already told you.”

“Really, you need to stop popping Viagra like it were candy.”

“On a related topic,” Sean says, grinning as he remembers his original reason for leaving the bedroom. He kneels down properly now, tugs Orlando closer by the draw strings of his hoodie. “What are your thoughts on wanking etiquette?”

Orlando grins against Sean’s mouth, all teeth and hickuped laughter that make the kiss awkward as fuck.

“Go ahead whenever, even when I’m having, say, a wine tasting with cheese. As long as I can watch.”

Sean kisses Orlando for a moment, feels strong hands settling on his shoulders as Orlando lets him in and moans quietly. He’s licking his lips when he pulls back for a moment, fully intending to continue right where he left off, but there’s just one thing that his mind wants to have pointed out.

“I reckon I’m not all that comfortable with tossing off in a room full of cheese.”

Orlando laughs out loud. “Which is the only disturbing thing about it, yes,” he says and his hands, as eager and impatient as ever, already have moved again, slip under Sean’s strip and push it up. Sean obediently raises his arms. Orlando rises just enough so he can pull the shirt off and discard his hoodie, then settles half in Sean’s lap and Sean can already feel the press of Orlando cock, feel the heavy, intentional weight against him.

“We’re not having sex on the bare floor,” he protests inanely before Orlando kisses him again, pushes him back. “At least let us buy some bloody carpets first!”

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