The way he looked like they were best friends

by Bersenev

Summary

Jeremy and Michael have been best friends since they met each other while playing a shitty game online. Even though they have never met each other they tell each other everything, that includes meeting the cutest barista they have ever seen.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Jeremy and Michael have been friends for years, since Jeremy got his first PC actually.

Back when Jeremy played a shitty mmorpg because it was popular with his peers and he wanted to fit in. Which didn’t actually work because he got really invested in the game and ended up playing it so much that he was at least 30 levels above everyone else which just made him look like one of those geeky game addicts that would choose warcraft over a girl.

So playing this game didn’t make Jeremy popular but it did make him meet Michael, a boy his age, who was equally invested and ready to stay up until 4am on a school day just to go collect the right materials with Jeremy to get a new shiny armour, that wasn’t actually better than the one he had but it was a limited edition event so he needed it anyway.

He and Jeremy ended up being great friends, even after the inevitable shut down of the server they were playing on. They just moved on to different games, then to chat clients and years later to phone calls. Michael might not have been popular but he had Michael and that was enough. Even if that meant spending all his bar mitzvah money on a new headset and weird special events in games to keep up with their weekly game nights.

Things haven’t changed much over the next years, even as they both entered college and had less time to talk because of part time jobs and the amount of time they spend studying. Michael was still the first person to know about everything that happened in Jeremy’s life, even if that was that he met the cutest barista he had ever seen.

This was exactly what had happened the Monday after their usual game marathon. The coffee shop called “Digital Silk” Jeremy frequented was a rather small one. It had opened just as he had entered college and was therefore more of a secret gem around campus. The dark hardwood floor looked old and homely, while the retro 80’s and 90’s decor perfected the nostalgic atmosphere. Now that Jeremy was in college people called places like this “hipster” like, which could be both taken as an insult or as a sign that this shop was cool.

Jeremy chuckled at the thought, thinking back to his freshman year in high school. He was unsure and geeky and for most people that was a reason to ignore him. It was horrible for his self confidence to be an outcast just because he liked retro games. He had told Michael about it later, how he felt like he had to change to fit in and Michael called bullshit on that, saying guys like them would be cool in college. He’d just have to wait for a while and being himself would pay off and either way Michael liked him better the way he was.

Now Jeremy could appreciate the advice. He might not be cool or popular in the high school definition of the word but Michael was right that it added to his charm now. He actually made some friends since College started that had similar interests.

Said friends where the once to introduce him to this particular coffee shop. It was a little overpriced so the owner could pay the bills, but it wasn’t too bad. As in it didn’t keep Jeremy from getting his coffee from this exact shop nearly every day.

So he entered the small shop before his first lecture of the day as always, barely paying attention to
his surroundings, since he knew the interior by heart as this point. He took out the exact change to
get the specific mocha with caramel he only got on Mondays and went to the register to tell the
barista his order.
“One tall Caramel Mocha.”, he said finally looking up to what he would later describe as “the cutest
most handsome barista I have ever seen omg Michael you should have seen him he’s an angel! He
looks better than the new playable character in Apocalypse of the Damned! And his smile!”

His face went red. His face always did that when he was nervous and god was he nervous. How
would he be able to keep getting his coffee from here if this barista was the one taking his order? If
he had looked up before ordering he would have probably forgotten what he wanted to get and
started stuttering.

Jeremy turned around and ran out of the Café without looking back. “Well done.”, the thought. “It’s
just like that one time Christine started talking to you in the hall and you were so embarrassed you
just went away because you didn’t know what to answer. Very smooth Jeremy.”

He nervously raked his hands through his hair, slowly approaching his Campus.

Since he didn’t take his time drinking his coffee he now had about 20 minutes before his course.
“Enough time to write Michael I guess...”, he mumbled to himself, taking out his phone to text his
best friend.

Player1: You’ll never believe what just happened to me.
Player1: Wait you’re probably at your part time job and can’t answer fuck.
Player1: I’ll just tell you anyway because okay I’ve just met the cutest most handsome barista I have
ever seen omg Michael you should have seen him he’s an angel!
Player1: He looks better than the new playable character in Apocalypse of the Damned!
Player1: And his smile!
Player1: Srsly he’s fucking gorgeous and I just ran away without even paying like a tool
Player1: I can’t ever go there again
Player1: Wait what if he goes to my college? Do I have to move to not have an embarrassing next
meeting with him

The sudden flood of people reminded Jeremy that he would have to go soon.

Player1: Fuck I need to go but you need to help me with this later bro I’m kind of low key freaking
out

That would have to be enough venting for now if he wanted to get a nice seat in the lecture hall.
Sadly he wasn’t able to focus on much during the next few hours. Not like he needed to the semester
had just started and most professors just talked about what the next few months would be about,
nothing he couldn’t look up online later or ask one of his friends about.

Still it worried him that this interaction if you could call it that with the barista threw him of his game
this much. It wasn’t like he hadn’t met really good looking people before. He totally did but none of
them caught him quite as off guard as this one.
Maybe it was his smile?
The way he looked like they were best friends?
His dimples?
His styled hair that just looked slightly messy?
His weird hipster glasses that would look ridiculous on anyone else?
Suddenly Jeremy’s head was flooded with small things about the nameless barista he didn’t even remember having noticed during the few seconds he had stared at him. In a way it was kind of embarrassing how many things you could remember and only notice when you were far away from the person.

The dude probably wasn’t even that handsome. Yeah Jeremy probably just imagined it because he was tired and stressed and something. That had to be it, he told himself while packed his backpack, ready to go back to the café to see if the mystery guy was still there. If he was Jeremy would be able to confirm this idea that had formed in his head, if he wasn’t he’d probably see him again soon enough.

With a practiced swagger he made his way of campus, trying hard not to slouch and look more confident than he felt. However that got harder and harder the closer he got to Digital Silk. Only one more turn to the right and he’d be right in front of the big window besides the door.

And there he was standing behind the register looking up at Jeremy who stopped dead in his tracks again just starring at the man. They starred at each other for a moment in which Jeremy noticed that his memory didn’t do the real deal justice at all and then something snapped him out of his thoughts. The barista winked at Jeremy with a huge grin. Which was all that it took for Jeremy to blush yet again and take of running as his nerves got the best of him.

He really couldn’t come here anymore if this would be his reaction every time he saw the other.

Chapter End Notes

Update schedule : Every Saturday
Beta schedule: chapter 4 has been betad (the rest... will... eventually)

Tumblr stuff:
me: "the-corpses-were-fake"
brainstorm buddy: "natethegreate"
beta: "sewlovelyyyy"
ask blogs for this fic: "jeremia-heere" and "michaelangelo-mell"

Also thanks so much for your views, comments and kudos! I honestly appreciate them a lot and they make my day!
Jeremy even Michael thinks you're overreacting please get a grip

Chapter Summary

After freaking because he met the cutest barista imaginable Jeremy decides to ask Michael for help.
What he doesn’t know is that Michael is currently shaking his head because Jeremy is a gay mess.
(also this is a kind of chat heavy chapter, just so you know)

Jeremy’s backpack landed on his bed with a loud thump, followed by him only seconds later. He let out a pained groan as he covered his face with his hands, which were kind of sweaty from running all the way to his dorm room.
His dorm wasn’t that far away from Digital Silk so the actual reason Jeremy was so sweaty wasn’t the distance he had run but that he was horribly out of shape. He had always been rather scrawny instead of athletic like his popular peers.

That reminded him...
He had probably looked horrible both times he had seen the cute barista.
The first time because he was tired and groggy and had huge black rings under his eyes and the second time because he had just finished classes in the way too warm lecture halls and his hair had probably been slightly sweaty which made it stick to his forehead and somehow this train of thought just made everything even more embarrassing for him.
He let out another pained groan as he fished his phone out of his skinny jeans pocket, something that sounded easier than it actually was, to see if Michael had answered him over the course of the day. He had.

Player2: Whoa slow down there buddy!
Player2: I’m gone for like five minutes and you’re already freaking out
Player2: To be honest I doubt the dude was that handsome. You sure you didn’t just smoke too much last night?
Player2: gtg again boss caught me with my phone
Player2: I want to know everything about this guy later though

Jeremy frowned as he read the messages. He had hoped to get some tips on how to approach the stranger not whatever this was.
A quick look at the clock told him that Michael was most likely done with his work for the day, so he decided to take the chance and text him back now instead of getting a head start on his reading assignments.
He knew himself well enough to realize that he wouldn’t be able to concentrate before this conversation was over anyway.
There just was something about talking to Michael that made calming down and letting things rest a little easier.

Player1: No Michael I didn’t smoke too much because I don’t bring weed to my dorm like some other people
Player1: I’m pretty sure my roommate sometimes smokes ? But that’s besides the point
Player1: The point is I did question the whole thing too so! I went back to the coffee shop

Player2: So you admit to smoking outside of your dorm? Wow Jeremy aren’t you a bad boy
Player2: Also you went back to the coffee shop and then?

Player1: I’m just going to ignore your comment
Player1: So I stood outside
Player1: and we looked at each other and he winked at me
Player1: but that’s not the point again!
Player1: The point is I went back to confirm that he wasn’t actually as handsome as I thought at first
Player1: But he was actually even more handsome
Player1: I’m fucked Michael

Player2: Okay but that’s great man! He winked at you that’s a good sign right?
Player2: So what did you do? Did you wink back? Give him your number?
Player2: Try to literally get fucked like you just insinuated?

Player1: WHAT NO
Player1: I blushed like a virgin and ran away
Player1: What do you think I did???

Player2: Well at least you looked at him! That’s progress!!

In actuality Michael already knew what happened because he was the barista.
A real shocker, right? Just that it actually wasn’t and somehow Michael was kind of embarrassed for
his best friend because he was probably the only person on earth that would run away before he was
able to greet him and tell him the good news that he apparently moved into the same city.

Now Jeremy had never seen pictures of Michael.
When they first met they were both still tiny teens and Michael had just realized that he was trans and
Jeremy was the first person he had introduced himself to as Michael.
At first it was easy enough to hide the fact that he wasn’t a cis guy but eventually he told Jeremy
about it because Jeremy used to send him silly pictures and some selfies and at some point he asked
Michael why he never sent any of himself and since Michael didn’t feel like lying he just said that he
was very self conscious about the way he looked because he hadn’t started transitioning yet.
He then explained the whole thing a little more, but he didn’t quite remember what exactly he had
said back then.

The thing that stuck with him was that Jeremy was fine with the whole no picture thing. He told him
that he was probably the most handsome guy anyway but he respected his decision.

What Michael didn’t do was telling Jeremy how he had a huge gay crush on him and how he was
afraid that seeing a picture of him would somehow make him less of a guy to Jeremy. He was afraid
that maybe Jeremy would see him and see a girl that liked games and just he didn’t feel like his best
friend seeing him as anything else than a guy.

So the years passed and Michael started transitioning and once his voice was deep enough to get him
to pass as male he agreed to call Jeremy.
It was amazing if you asked him because he loved Jeremy’s voice and his laugh and how he’d
sometimes stumble over his words or get so embarrassed that his voice cracked.
Maybe he also liked it because it was higher than his voice once he started taking T which made him a little more confident.
But really most of it was just how very Jeremy it was, how well it suited the pictures Michael had seen and he would never admit it but hearing Jeremy made his crush even worse.

So how does this relate to the present situation?
Well Michael had just moved out.
He had started college at the same time as Jeremy but since his parents were wealthy he didn’t feel like he had to move out just yet, at least that’s what he told himself. He mostly was just very afraid of living by himself and working to support himself.
Now this didn’t last long.
He hated the thing he majored in and his parents kept arguing with him over his gender identity and after one bad argument he decided to move out, go to a different college and start anew.

His parents still covered the cost of his education but the rest was up to him, which meant that he needed to take a part time job.
This ended in him finding a little coffee shop called Digital Silk which had been looking for part time employees.

It was a nice shop, the other employees were extremely nice and the pay was decent enough so he applied and got the job.

What he didn’t know was that Jeremy lived in the same city and frequented in this café.
In itself this wouldn’t be a problem. Michael has been taking testosterone for several years now and was rather confident that he passed and looked at least okay, so he had been playing with the thought of maybe asking Jeremy to meet up with him.
The universe seemed to have taken that decision from him with this meeting.

So he got lucky enough to move into the same town his crush since seventh grade lived in and meet him on accident and... Jeremy didn’t recognize him.

Michael rubbed his temples in frustration as he saw the three dots appearing and disappearing at the top of his screen, indicating that Jeremy was writing.
A part of him just wanted to tell Jeremy that he was the mystery stranger, but another wanted him to notice it himself.
So he waited until the next message appeared.

**Player1**: Okay but what should I do Michael? You gotta help me buddy!

Sometimes Michael wondered what exactly made Jeremy retype sentences like this five times but right now he had a different thought.
There was an easy and amusing way to get Jeremy to realize who he was and it would hopefully settle the matter tomorrow.

**Player2**: Okay here’s what you’ll do
That feeling when you don't notice how gay you are for your best friend

Chapter Summary

Michael tells Jeremy how to approach the cute barista and Jeremy doesn't get anything done as always.

Player2: You’re in that coffee shop every day right?
Player2: So you’ll just go there tomorrow as everyday and strike a conversation with the barista
Player2: Like “Hey I’m Jeremy, I haven’t seen you around here. Are you a freshman at the local college” or something

Player1: You say this as if it was easy to just talk to the literal embodiment of Adonis!
Player1: I mean I couldn’t even give him the money for my coffee how am I supposed to actually talk to him???
Player1: What if he thinks that I’m a huge loser and then he just quits his job or something?

Player2: I’m pretty sure you don’t wink at people that ran away as soon as they saw you if you don’t at least find them cute or something
Player2: Just trust me on this man
Player2: Also I’ll never let you live this down if you don’t sooooo you better talk to him

Player1: uuuurgh I hate it when you’re right

Player2: Love you too~

Once the topic was out of the way they kept texting for a while, talking about their courses and their plans for the next few weeks and then games that would come out and whether they’d have enough time to play them during this year.
So just the normal stuff you talk about when you’re both procrastinating so start your work.

Jeremy vaguely remembered that Michael had currently changed majors because of some family trouble.
He didn’t really remember what exactly it was. Something with music and composing but Jeremy didn’t know enough about music to have remembered what this exact thing was called.
Jeremy himself was an acting student since he had been in quite a few school productions and felt like it was something worth pursuing. At least Michael had told him so after seeing a crappy video from one of their productions.

Jeremy was never too sure what to do after school. Part of him wanted to do something that would get him a lot of money and a good reputation but another part of him just wanted to do something that made him happy.
Now the list of things Jeremy had liked back in high school wasn’t that long.
It mostly consisted of acting, Michael, video games and things like star wars.
Most of that wasn’t something he could base a career on however.
So one evening he and Michael were talking on the phone and he brought up the topic, asking what Michaels plans were. He said he’d study something at the local university like law and it sounded like he didn’t mind that at all but when Jeremy brought up that he thought about doing the same Michael suddenly became extremely passionate about how Jeremy shouldn’t settle for something like that when he had a hobby that he enjoyed. “Who cares if you have a rough start!”, he had said “People will notice how great you are soon enough and then you’ll make the big money Jeremy! I know you’ll be great common!”

Now Jeremy would probably never say that out loud but in the end it was Michael encouragement that made him choose the acting school he applied to over all the other universities that had accepted him.
He just trusted Michael a lot, enough to base his career on his thoughts and honestly? Michael’s reaction when he had told him about being accepted was worth it.

So if he trusted Michael to know what he should major in he’d also trust him on something as insignificant as talking to a barista.
What’s the worst thing that could happen anyway?
Actually forget that thought a lot of things could happen and some were highly unlikely but that wouldn’t stop him from worrying over them endlessly.

Deciding that he had procrastinated enough he texted Michael that he’d start studying now and put away his phone to not get distracted by all of the new apps he had downloaded during his free time.
The good thing about his current dorm mate was that he was barely there. Not that he wasn’t nice to be around he was just... a little weird sometimes? Mark was into games as well so they had a shared interest but their personalities often seemed to clash a little so overall Jeremy was glad that he had the room to himself most of the time.

It was also nice because people playing games tended to get loud as in frustrated yelling when someone couldn’t beat a certain level and then loud arguing over who was responsible for that, which tended to annoy Jeremy even though he was guilty of that too.
Lastly Jeremy liked to listen to music while studying.

Not because it helped him focus. Who could even focus better while listening to Bob Marley?
No Jeremy just liked to listen to it because Michael liked it and even though they didn’t have the same taste in music more often than not Jeremy would end up listening to the things Michael recommended anyway.
You know because he liked it and it kind of made him feel closer to his best friend.

While scribbling down some notes about the chapter he was currently reading he idly wondered whether the mystery stranger also liked Bob Marley.
He looked like someone that would like that kind of music to be honest, but Jeremy couldn’t quite pin point why.
Maybe it was his carefree smile that made it so easy to imagine him lazily moving his head to the beat.

Sometime during his daydreaming Jeremy had stopped taking notes and suddenly as if no time had passed at all it was dark in his room and he had to blindly search for the light switch.
The sudden flood of light made him shield his eyes with his hands, while he sighed in annoyance.
In the end he hadn’t gotten anything done anyway.
A quick look at his phone told him that it was 10 pm and another quick look at his schedule showed him that he had an early class tomorrow.
He raked his hands through his hair, noting that they were slightly greasy already from how much he had done that today, before he got up to wash them and get ready for bed.

As much as he wanted to scold himself for not having gotten anything done today it wouldn’t change anything. So he might as well just go to sleep and get the embarrassment of introducing himself to someone way out of his league out of the way.

He made his way to the bathroom groggily, eyeing himself in the mirror for a moment, frowning at what he saw and got done with his evening routine as quickly as possible to not waste even more time.

Once that was done he changed out of his clothes while skimming the contents of his wardrobe. If he wanted to have even the slightest chance at impressing the guy he had to dress right, but that was easier said than done. With another sigh he pulled out his favourite outfit, a dark blue cardigan, a striped shirt and some beige pants and put it on his chair for easy access in the morning.

Now that that was done he just had to go to bed and hope for the best or write Michael again to tell him to kick his ass in case he chickened out. To his surprise he didn’t have to do that, Michael had taken it upon himself to motivate him.

Player2: Btw I have a great surprise for you in case you actually go through with talking to that dude tomorrow
Player2: like a really amazing surprise
Player2: and you know I wouldn’t lie about stuff like this so stop worrying and look forward to that

Jeremy smiled to himself, as Mark opened the door to their room, eyeing him warily for a moment before he shrugged and decided that Jeremy creepily smiling to himself wasn’t any of his business. They exchanged a court nod before they both went back to their own activities, which for Jeremy meant answering Michael and then kicking the hay.

Player1: Thanks Michael
Player1: You’re the best you know that right? Like you’re my favourite person

Having said that Jeremy quickly pulled his blanket over his head despite the summer heat and went to sleep. Everything else could wait until tomorrow. With that in mind he fell asleep quickly temporarily unaware of his phone vibrating on his night stand because of the new message.

Player2: Same you’re my favourite person too Jeremy.
Michael contemplates his life while he's waiting for the gay disaster

Chapter Summary

Michael is very groggy after not having slept much but that doesn't keep him from being gay.

Michael woke up way ahead of his alarm the next day. He hadn’t slept well either, with the anticipation of finally meeting his best friend in real life keeping him up way longer than he would have liked, while also occasionally waking him up once he finally had managed to fall asleep.

So it didn’t come as a surprise that he’d be downright groggy once he stood up. Nearly forgetting to do half of his morning routine, because his brain just wasn’t at its usual processing power, he sighed out loud while stretching. Nothing I can do about that now I guess, he thought as he made his way to the bathroom in hopes of a cold shower being able to wake him up at least a little.

It did but it was also very uncomfortable considering that he just came out of his warm comfortable bed. He decided to ignore his body’s yearn for more rest and the fluffiness of his blanket in favour of finally getting dressed. Once that was done he noticed that he had forgotten to brush his teeth and the rest of his morning went on in a similar manner until he was finally ready at his usual time (and now with an extra bruise from running against his table while he had dried his hair).

All in all, not the worst morning he had.

Now, at least he didn’t have to worry about what to wear for his first meeting with Jeremy, since even Digital Silk had a dress code. Despite how lax it was it still limited his choice of clothes a lot. (As in he had to buy his own uniform once he started working there which consisted of black jeans, a t-shirt with the Café’s logo on it and the usual apron.)

Normally he’d have to wear a white t-shirt because the owner of the small shop insisted on the fact that a clean white shirt made the whole establishment look more clean and trustworthy, but he made an exception for Michael, as the shirts were usually rather see through and therefore didn’t hide the fact that he was wearing a binder underneath them. It didn’t even take a lot of convincing. Michael just casually mentioned that his binder would be visible underneath which made the owner offer him to choose a different coloured shirt immediately a fact that Michael was more than glad about.

He honestly got really lucky to have found an employer that was as accepting and welcoming as his current one.

Michael had already been really happy with his decision to move out before he had the chance to meet his best friend in real life thrown in his face. He loved his new college and the fact that he was now able to actually pursue a career he enjoyed, which meant composing music for video games and the like, and he loved the new people he met that shared his interests and that found him and his extensive knowledge about the 80’s and 90’s
He loved passing and being in an environment where everyone only knew him as Michael and only saw him as Michael.
He loved not constantly having to justify that he was male and just the whole thought of meeting his best friend (his crush)? That was the bonus level.

A little less awesome was the fact that Jeremy hadn’t realized that the “cute barista” was Michael. Now, Michael couldn’t hold that against him since Jeremy had never seen a picture of him, and he didn’t really seem to even have registered that Michael had tried talking to him after Jeremy had tried to order.
So there wasn’t really a lot to base his identity off of.

But that didn’t mean that it didn’t bother him a little. Part of him just had hoped that Jeremy would realize it due to the power of friendship or some equally ridiculous concept.
That somehow he’d look at him and realize that this was his best friend standing in front of him.

Not that Michael would complain about what Jeremy saw instead, though. It’s not every day that your crush gushes about how amazing you look, right?
Then again, he couldn’t be too sure that that lasted.
Maybe Jeremy would just start noticing small things about how Michael looked and moved and behaved and stop finding him attractive?
Or maybe he’d just stop finding him attractive because they’ve been friends for years or because somewhere deep inside the knowledge that he was trans would just make him less attractive.

Or maybe he’d still think that he’s good looking but just nothing changed at all because Michael was his best friend.

Michael shook his head in frustration as he put on his work clothes. These thoughts have lasted him all the way to his part time job and if Jeremy’s arrival yesterday was any indicator he’d be there shortly today too.
Of course he was nervous but no matter what happened he didn’t want his crush to come in the way of finally meeting the one person that got him through high school with his presence.
The person that called him when he was panicking and that helped him when he was too dysphoric to leave the basement.

He couldn’t decide whether the thought of him and Jeremy staying best friends no matter what was comforting or a little sad.

Then again he didn’t have time to really entertain that train of thought in this very moment, as he actually had to work and it wasn’t a good idea to make a bad impression on his second day.

So Michael finished changing and started getting everything ready to open up the shop, his Customer smile in place and the anxiety of meeting Jeremy pushed back to the back of his mind.
He could do this.

Or not.

Maybe he couldn’t do this because Jeremy didn’t show up because he was running late for class as he had just told him in a few “quick” messages. He probably had sent those during the seminar right?
What kind of dork comes too late to a seminar and then decides to write a friend just because he couldn’t keep a promise of sorts?
Michael snorted amused, reading through the messages again once he was sure that the café was empty and he wouldn’t get in trouble for slacking off again.

**Player1**: omg Michael i overslept and now I’m late for my first seminar and that means I can’t go and get a coffee and just

**Player1**: fuck i won’t chicken out I swear I just have to hope that he’s there later right??

**Player1**: like the shop will probably be kinda full and it will be really embarrassing because then people can watch my futile attempt at flirting or something but

**Player1**: I’ll do this! Also good luck at work!

Really, Jeremy was such a nerd sometimes and Michael loved that.
Of course he loved that, just the whole fact that Jeremy seemed to prioritize him and seemed to genuinely care about what he thought and just...
Michael loved Jeremy.
He wouldn’t be able to say which parts of that were platonic and which were romantic / all he knew was that he genuinely loved his dork of a friend.
The friend that got so nervous around some people that he bolted out of the building.
The friend that once gave him the limited edition armour that he had worked days on getting just because Michael wanted it too and couldn’t get it because his parents had confiscated his laptop.
The friend that described him as better looking than the new playable characters in their favourite game.

He smiled fondly as he thought about all the small things that made him fall so hard for Jeremy, while he wiped of the counter to at least seem like he was concentrating on work.

His anxiety about the whole situation lessened a bit as he remembered all the small things he had learned about Jeremy during these brief meetings and the way they just fit perfectly into everything he had already known about him.

No matter what would happen in a few hours, he’d always be his player one and he was pretty sure that was enough.
Maybe things would change at some point but right now, as he took a costumers order and made their coffee while he smiled softly it seemed like things couldn’t go wrong.

**Player2**: Don’t sweat it buddy you can just try it later today

**Player2**: You’ll have more time to talk to him then anyway so maybe that’s a good thing

**Player2**: Also you shouldn’t write me when you’re already late dude good luck at college!

He put his phone away smiling in anticipation.
College professors couldn't care less about whether you ran to be on time

Chapter Summary

It's just like Jeremy to oversleep and therefore not be on time for his coffee or his lecture. But it wouldn't be Jeremy's life if things stopped going wrong there.

Normally Jeremy would fret over whether he should take the bus or walk to college but today wasn’t one of those days.

He had overslept and was currently running very late and the running was in fact meant literally. The next bus wouldn’t have arrived in time so the only chance to arrive on time he had was running like his life depended on it, even if that meant that he’d arrive sweaty and smelling like he just came from football practice.

Not that he ever did football practice to be able to judge how accurate that comparison was, he had just met enough jocks after school to feel like he probably wouldn’t be any better of smell wise after several hours of pushing people around in the sun. Maybe the smell would make them think that he was one of them?

These and some equally nonsensical thoughts went through his head as he kept racing towards his inevitable social death as he called it. If he was a better liar he’d come up with some amazing story about how he was late because he had helped an old grandma pass the street or something but he wasn’t a good liar. He actually sucked at it a lot because he tended to go all Shakespeare, raising his voice and overarticulating like he was on the stage.

So yeah that wouldn’t save his skin from barging into the lecture late.

Now the universe didn’t always play against him like he thought it did, which was very apparent in the fact that his professor wasn’t there yet when he arrived, giving him not only the time to catch his breath and act like he had been there on time from the start, but also to send Michael a few quick texts.

The panic had momentarily made Jeremy forget about the plans he had for the day, though now that he had time to calm down it was back at the front of his mind.

He started chewing on his lips nervously, avoiding eye contact at all cost to reduce his anxiety. Nobody paid attention to him at all, because most people around him weren’t off much better. They looked tired or like they didn’t have time to shower or just generally miserable because that’s just what college did to some people. So really nobody would care that Jeremy was late or sweaty, it’s not like they were lucky enough to never have experienced that.

Still it didn’t keep Jeremy from feeling self-conscious and the knowledge that he was intent on talking to the barista today didn’t make it any easier. Maybe he’d just postpone the whole thing?
But then he might have missed his chance. Then again did he even have a chance?

The taste of iron made him snap out of his thoughts. He hadn’t noticed that he had been biting the inside of his lip that hard while worrying.

He also hadn’t noticed that a different professor had walked to the front of the lecture hall announcing something, which meant that he had missed everything they said so far.

The people around him started packing up their things again, much too Jeremy’s confusion, prompting him to ask the person that sat next to him what was going on.

“Um e-excuse me?” he tapped the person on the shoulder lightly. They turned around immediately, smiling at him “Yes? Jeremy, right?” Jeremy nodded “Yeah that’s me, wait you’re...” his eyes widened as he recognized the all so familiar face of “Christine. I didn’t know you go here. But that’s not what I wanted to ask, not that it’s not interesting or that I don’t want to talk to you. I just wanted to ask what the professor just said?”

He was pretty sure he couldn’t blush any harder if he tried. It was just like him to accidentally sit down next to his high school crush without even noticing. But then again he got over that crush a long time ago, back when they were both in the same play and he confessed during the break and got rejected. He ended up forgetting all his lines and his teacher took that opportunity to steal his role and send him home.

It was one of the most embarrassing days of his life but he ended up being friends with Christine afterwards, who found the whole thing rather cute even if she didn’t return his feelings. They didn’t talk much once they finished school though.

This train of thoughts however was interrupted by Christine’s answer. “Oh she came in to tell us that the professor just called in sick and that all his lectures for today have been cancelled. She also said that he put some things online for us to read so we can do that here if we want to.”

Jeremy looked at her dumbfounded. Of course lectures would get cancelled on the exact day he had raced here to be on time. Normally that would be great but he couldn’t back out of going to Digital Silk and now he was sweaty and gross and his pits leaked and god Christine probably didn’t want to talk to him ever again.

“Hey, Jeremy would you like to go grab some coffee with me sometime? Not necessarily now because I really want to use the time to revise a little for a local play I’m in but just in general. Catch up on each other’s life a little you know?” her voice snapped him out of his thoughts once again, making him scramble for the right words.

“Yes, sure! I’d love to. But yeah I also have plans? But I’d love to talk to you again.” he said while smiling a little. It might have been an awkward smile but it was still genuine so that was probably progress?

Christine seemed to think so at least seeing how she happily swayed back and forth on the top of her heels saying: “Cool! I’ll just text you later then? I think I still have your number if you didn’t change it.”
“Yeah I didn’t change it so feel free to text me.”, he answered.
They exchanged some more pleasantries before she waved at him briefly and excited the lecture hall
(which was nearly empty by now, Jeremy noted) leaving a slightly confused Jeremy behind.

So now Jeremy had several hours of free time that he could potentially use on meeting the barista.
He looked himself up and down briefly, deciding that he didn’t feel like wearing these clothes for the
rest of the day.
He’d probably have enough time to take a quick shower, change his clothes and then go to Digital
Silk before his next lecture was if he ran back to his dorm now.

So he ran again, despite his legs still aching from the first time he had done this today.
He would definitely regret this tomorrow but if the pain in his legs and lungs kept the gnawing
anxiety from his plans out of his thoughts it would be worth it.

Back at his dorm he was to his surprise met by his roommate. “Does he even actually go to any of
his lectures?” Jeremy wondered briefly , before he went into the bathroom with a quick “Gotta
shower will be out soon.”.
He didn’t get a reply.

One cold shower later, he finally felt like maybe this meeting wouldn’t be the death of him.
A look into his closet however brought that feeling back from the dead.
“Welcome back anxiety, what’s it like to be one of the living dead?” he thought angrily grabbing
some black jeans and his favourite Star Wars shirt and put them on.
His hair would probably dry on his way to the Café and it’s not like styling it would really do
anything in the summer heat so he’d just leave it as it was.

Now all that was left was to actually get going and start the conversation.

So he started walking while he counted down things he saw and heard and felt.
Five things he saw, heard, felt then four then three etc.
It calmed his nerves a little, sometimes. Not now.

But it did pass the time so before he even knew what happened he stood in front of the glass door of
Digital Silk which enabled him to look right to the counter.
Just that the barista he looked for wasn’t there.

He let out a frustrated sigh and entered the small shop anyway, quickly getting his usual drink and
sitting down at one of the small tables.

Today just wasn’t his day, he thought as he took a sip of his cold chocolate-coffee hybrid to ignore
the person that just sat down in front of him.
Didn’t they know that sitting down at a strangers table while there were still empty tables was rude?

Now he felt annoyed enough to tell the person that but he stopped short when he looked up and saw
a very familiar smirk.
And suddenly he could feel his heart skip a beat as all his blood rushed into his cheeks.

“Hi.” the handsome barista said, leaning his head on his hand while looking at Jeremy with a sort of
knowing smile.
It honestly was as pretty as it was infuriating.

“Ehm...”, he didn’t know what to answer this was bad. What had Michael told him to say again?
Ah yes “I-I’m Jeremy? I mean. I’m Jeremy. I haven’t seen you around here before, do you study here?”
Real smooth.
But then again at least this wasn’t his first impression because the first impression he had made was when he ran out of the shop.
He really wanted to do that again.

But then again he kind of didn’t because the barista smiled even more, as if Jeremy had just said the perfect thing and offered him a million dollars on top.
“I do actually, I’m a music student. My name is Michael btw.” He winked at him. Again.

Jeremy snorted, looking at him amused, if still a little flustered.

“You’re called Michael? That’s funny my best friend is also called Michael... wait”and then it hit him like a red shell in Mario Kart.

Jeremy looked at the barista, who was currently grinning at him widely, as if he had just won the lotto, with wide eyes.
“Michael!?” Jeremy exclaimed, starring at the barista aka his best friend since seventh grade in confusion.

Now this honestly wasn’t one of the scenarios Jeremy had contemplated during the long hours he had spend worrying about this.
Hell this wasn’t even one of the scenarios he had made up about what meeting Michael would be like and quite honestly it was a bit overwhelming?
Scratch that it was very overwhelming and combined with how stressful and nerve wracking the entire day had been Jeremy started crying without noticing.

Michael noticed this immediately and looked at him worriedly asking him if he was okay.
Jeremy nodded.
Michael asked if he could or should hug Jeremy.
He nodded again.

So Michael pulled the other into a hug over the table until he had calmed down a little.

“You fucking dick why didn’t you tell me that it was you!” Jeremy muttered once he calmed down a little.
But then the ridiculousness of the situation soon caught up to him as well making him laugh a little.

“Since when do you even live here?? Just what the fuck man?” Jeremy grinned, letting go of his best friend to look at him again, his embarrassment forgotten for now.

He could worry about all the things he had written Michael about himself later, for now he wanted to catch up with his best friend and maybe get him to pay for another coffee.
He owed him that much.
Michael gains a new friend and actually isn't as chill as Jeremy thinks

Chapter Summary

Michael thought that he'd be really bored and nervous until he met Jeremy. He however would soon notice that his co-worker had other things in mind.
(also called "let's see what Michael was up to before he met Jeremy")

Since Michael knew that Jeremy wouldn’t come to the shop until his classes were over he didn’t bother looking at his phone anymore, concentrating more on making a good impression at his new part time job.
Not that there was much of an impression to make when his boss was currently in his office doing whatever someone that owned a Café did.

He knew that he’d meet another one of his co-workers later, since he took on another shift in the evening, because another barista was sick and it was rather hard to not meet each other while you chilled in the staffroom.

Why did he stay in the staffroom during his break? Because he was worried that maybe Jeremy would show up during his break and then they’d miss each other again, something that wouldn’t happen if Michael could prevent it, because he was getting more and more nervous and he didn’t want to suffer for any longer than absolutely necessary.

Sure it would probably be funny to watch Jeremy’s expression while he figured out the obvious, if the ten different emotions he saw on his face when they first saw each other was anything to go by, but then again it was still nerve wracking.

It was still the first time they officially met and Michael didn’t want to ruin it.

Michael let out another sigh, before he flinched a little at the sudden feeling of a hand on his shoulder.

“You okay there?” the person asked him.
“Yeah sure, everything is fine!” he squeaked, turning around.

He came face to face with a rather small guy with a red streak in his hair with a lot of burn marks. Well he didn’t actually come face to face with the guy because of how small the other was. Michael eyed him a little warily, he was handsome and apparently the co-worker he had waited for, unless the person had stolen the Café’s uniform, which was possible because nothing in the shop was ever actually locked.
(He had personally tried accessing every room in the building without a key on his first day and he wasn’t surprised when he found out that he had no problem entering any of the rooms.)

“If you say so,” the other started looking him over a little questioningly “In case you need something just tell me, you can’t always deal with stuff yourself, you know? Anyway I’m Rich.”

Rich looked extremely strong for his small built and quite frankly a bit intimidating, but if his words
were anything to go by he wasn’t a bad guy.

“Thanks for that, but it’s honestly nothing just going to meet my best internet friend later? And I’m Michael nice to meet you Rich.” Michael tried to be friendly but he honestly didn’t really feel like talking to this guy right now, at least he didn’t at first.

“Oh why didn’t you say so from the start? Sit down man sit down.” and then Rich started telling him about this guy Jake.
He had been into Jake for all of high school but they’ve never been more than friends, if popular people that hung around together could be called friends, he said.
But then he had accidentally burned down his house during a Halloween party and Jake had to move, because his parents thought the neighbourhood was too dangerous or something.

They also didn’t allow him to keep texting anyone from their school so he thought that that was the end of it, until he met this really cute guy in a forum for bisexual people.

Since Rich had been out for most of high school he decided to message the guy because he was really insecure and unsure and just Rich wanted to help.

And they really hit it off, so they talked more and decided to meet because he was going to visit some colleges and would be in town.
Now they hadn’t known each other long by then, but it sounded like a good idea.

Turns out it was actually Jake.
He had changed a lot after high school, Rich said, which is why he didn’t recognize him at all on the pictures.
Rich then told him some more about the whole meeting but he mostly just told him about how nervous he was and how they’re dating now.
Long distance but it’s the best they currently managed, he said.

In turn Michael started telling Rich about Jeremy and the whole situation and at one point Rich started laughing so hard that Michael had to take over his spot at the counter while the other tried to not suffocate from how hard he was wheezing.

Time passed quickly with Rich giving Michael advice and telling him about his boyfriend excitedly and before he knew it he was already officially on break.
As he hadn’t eaten anything this morning, because of how nervous he was, he excused himself and told Rich to go get him in case Jeremy walked in.

He hadn’t deemed it possible but talking to Rich had actually calmed him down a lot, maybe even made him fairly confident that the meeting would go well.
With that in mind he bit into the sandwich he had just bought from Rich (he had never noticed how expensive these were jeez) ,smiling a little at the thought of all the things he could do now do that were never possible while he and Jeremy were only online friends.

Like kicking his ass in Mario Kart again, now that the game was too old the online modus didn’t work anymore, so they sadly had to stop playing Mario Kart for the Wii together.
Or going to the arcade together. He really wanted their first date to be at the arcade. Just lazily sitting on the couch together while making fun of people on casting shows.
His thoughts were rudely interrupted when Rich barged into the room to inform him that “Your one true love entered the Café, so go get him tiger!”

It’s now or never, Michael thought making his way into the costumer space, looking around to find Jeremy, despite the fact that he hadn’t anticipated him to be here yet, fuck. But it was too late to back out now, because Rich was giving him a thumbs up, mouthing things at him that Michael didn’t understand, while pointing at a person excitedly.

Jeremy was sitting on a table next to the window alone and he looked like he was sulking, which was quite frankly weirdly adorable. So Michael made his way over to the table and sat down in front the slightly crouching boy. From the way his shoulders tensed in annoyance Michael could tell that Jeremy had noticed him, so now he just needed to wait for him to look up.

And if Jeremy’s confused and flustered expression didn’t rank as one of the cutest things Michael had ever seen then he didn’t know what did.

At first Jeremy had just looked ready to punch him in the face, but as soon as they had locked eyes his cheeks and ears went red and his eyebrows scrunched up a little and Michael was sure that Jeremy didn’t know that but his mouth opened slightly as if he wanted to say something or just take a deep breath and scream.

But Michael didn’t want to make him uncomfortable and it didn’t look like Jeremy would be able to speak first so he decided to just take the first step (again) and at least say hi, as he shifted a little to prop his face on his hand.

He really didn’t want to look as smug as he did but it was just so interesting to watch Jeremy’s face because everything he felt was so obvious from the subtle changed in expression he went through. It was honestly amazing and Michael was afraid that he’d never get enough of looking at Jeremy. How had he managed to go that long without being able to see this?

“Ehm...” Jeremy’s confused voice made him snap out of his trance and focus back on the task at hand, but that really wasn’t as easy as it sounded because Jeremy just nearly cited the very thing Michael had told him to say and he kind of wanted to laugh because he didn’t think he’d actually do that.

He also didn’t think that Jeremy still had that Star Wars t-shirt they had both agreed to buy a few years ago to be able to have a partner look of sorts, but apparently he did because Michael could clearly see the washed out design now that Jeremy tried to sit up a little straighter. (Michael still had his too, it was his favourite shirt)

But Jeremy had asked him something and despite the fact that Michael knew that Jeremy actually knew this already he answered anyway. He still took the liberty to wink at Jeremy, which was both a genuine flirty wink for obvious reasons but also just meant as a small nudge to make Jeremy understand that he was talking to him and not some random Michael.

And then Jeremy seemed to understand that too and Michael just figured that he didn’t have the luck of having a really long talk to ease his nerves because Jeremy started crying and Michael felt awful because maybe he had overdone it and he started panicking too.

But he couldn’t panic now because he had to be calm and help Jeremy and that was hard because,
sure Michaels social anxiety had gotten better over the years but that didn’t mean that making someone cry in public and the thought of his best friend hating him now didn’t make him want to hide in a bathroom.

No, he really wanted to hide in a bathroom and he could later but for now he had to make sure that Jeremy was okay.
Which he was, Michael could work with that.
He also wanted to hug and now that was just perfect because Michael also needed a hug.

So he started hugging Jeremy and he hoped that he didn’t notice that Michael was slightly trembling and close to crying too because he didn’t want Jeremy to think badly about him.
Michael just pulled Jeremy even closer, hiding his face in the crook of his neck.

Jeremy smelled like dandruff shampoo and something sweet Michael couldn’t quite place.
Quite frankly Jeremy smelled nice, calming even and before he knew it they had both calmed down and Jeremy had started talking again.

His eyes were a little puffy and Michael was sure that his shirt was a little wet, but it was all worth it when he finally saw Jeremy grin.

Scratch everything he had said before, this was his favourite expression on Jeremy and even better was the fact that Jeremy grinned at him as if they had been best friend in real life forever.

Quite honestly, Michael looked forward to making Jeremy looking at him like this again.
Jeremy is a jealous gay

Chapter Summary

Jeremy and Michael talk face to face for the first time and Jeremy slowly realizes that he actually is kind of a gay disaster.

„Wait. I know how long you’ve been living here, since you told me but still, what even? How did I not know that my best friend is living in the same town as me?” Jeremy was still smiling, looking Michael over once again, now that he didn’t feel the urge to hide or run away from him.

He still looked amazing, Jeremy noted, trying not to blush again. He had tried to imagine what Michael would look like several times over the last few years, just small things like his eye and hair colour and how tall he was.

Actually Jeremy had asked Michael about that at some point, but he didn’t pay it too much attention after that. Or maybe he did but wouldn’t admit it now because in a way it was kind of lame to admit that you were really interested in what your friend looked like and that you were slightly annoyed that your best friend had always been a little taller than you.

Not because it wasn’t okay that Michael was taller, Jeremy just sometimes felt like somehow Michael was superior in every aspect.

Michael was the more experienced player in every game they both played (something Jeremy had complained about in the past too, which is why Michael laughingly offered Jeremy to use the chat name player1 so he wouldn’t feel too bad about it).

He was somewhat of a music prodigy, from what Jeremy had gathered, confident and okay with not being popular and on top of everything else he was also taller than Jeremy.

So maybe Jeremy had kind of hoped that Michael was at least not looking like a model because how was he supposed to keep up with that?

Michael was already the coolest person Jeremy had known before he found out that Michael had gorgeous and expressive brown eyes and the sweetest smile and really nice fluffy black hair.

And Jeremy was... average at best if you asked him.

He was skinny, but not fashionably skinny, just good metabolism, can eat whatever he wants, kind of skinny.

He was okay at games and he was really into collecting things.

He was above average at focusing on repetitive tasks and details (such as looking at beanie babies for an entire hour without a single problem), but that was usually perceived as nerdy or weird so it was debatable whether that was actually a good thing.

Just all in all Jeremy didn’t feel like he was even remotely on Michael’s level and back in high school he would probably have done anything to be popular and somehow feel like he and Michael were equals.

Where did that leave him with the current situation?

He was... excited and confused mostly.
In front of him sat the single reason he got through a few of the worst things of his life but also the
guy that singlehandedly made his insecurities worse and also the guy that made him realize that he
was anything but straight.
Which in itself wasn’t a problem because they were best friends and Jeremy thinking that being more
than that would be nice too wouldn’t change that, ever.
But, well, it was kind of weird to see the most handsome person imaginable and then find out that
they also had the best personality imaginable.

Just that wasn’t really fair now, or was it?

Right now wasn’t the time to have an existential crisis though, so Jeremy had to get it together and
focus on what Michael was saying.

“I don’t know man; I guess we just never really talked about where we lived? Also we probably
didn’t live anywhere close before anyway. But now we do! And that means we can finally
get—”Michael lowered his voice at the last part of the sentence, a mischievous glint in his eyes “-
stoned in my basement. Or play games, your pick.”

Jeremy laughed at the thought. He already knew that Michael could be a bit carefree, but at least he
had the decency to not outright yell that he smoked weed ‘occasionally’ in the close vicinity of his
employer.

“Sure. I mean I didn’t think you’d still have a basement now that you’re living on your own, because
who can even afford that, but I’m always up to play Apocalypse of the Damned. Gotta make up for
all the time we didn’t get to play it together, right?”Jeremy grinned at Michael, who just smiled back
at him fondly.

“You know, it’s honestly nice to finally see you. Even though I didn’t think it would happen this
way.”Michael chuckled, before glancing at the clock behind the counter, standing up quickly
“Oh shit, I need to go back to work. I’ll be off at five, want to meet up then?”

“Sure. You owe me a coffee for the whole not telling thing though!”Jeremy stood up too, grabbing
his still nearly full drink, before he pulled Michael into another quick hug as a sort of goodbye.

“Yeah yeah, I’ll make you the best coffee you’ve ever tasted, just you wait!” with that Michael
derparted, walking backwards into the staffroom, while skilfully evading the tables and chairs.

*Show off*, Jeremy shook his head grinning, leaving the Café to get back to campus.

This definitely wasn’t what he imagined this meeting to be like, but in a way he was way more
content with this turn of events anyway.
Meeting a cute barista was one thing, but meeting Michael?
Now there really weren’t a lot of things that could beat that.

They hadn’t even talked much and Jeremy already felt like the good mood he was in would never
fade.
Maybe it actually wouldn’t?

He spend so much time writing Michael and calling Michael that if all that time was exchanged with
meeting Michael instead he might literally always feel this content.
Sure he was also insecure but for once that wasn’t the driving force behind what he did.
He loved being around Michael and now he could actually do that. Well not right now because they were both busy but later. Later they could start getting to know each other in a new way, like finding out whether Michael was the kind of person that leaned their body to the side in order to drift better in racing games, and finally do all the things they had talked about doing but never did, like playing Apocalypse of the Damned, and honestly Jeremy was stoked.

Maybe that’s why it didn’t come as a surprise to him when he smiled all the way back to campus and still smiled when Christine sneaked up to him from behind, poking him in his sides, making him scream in a way he would later deny.

“Holy shit!” he turned around to face the person that just ambushed him “Christine! Not again!” Back in high school she had repeatedly greeted him this way. She said it was just so easy sometimes, because he spend so much time in his head that he sometimes didn’t even hear it when she started talking to him.

Apparently his reaction was still to her liking because she just giggled while she walked past him, motioning him to walk with her.

“You know you’re smiling a lot for someone that looked like he said Mac Beth before a play earlier. What got you into such a good mood?” she beamed at him, clearly pleased, making Jeremy smile once again.

“You know the thing I mentioned I would be doing during the cancelled lecture?” she nodded at him “Well I was actually going to... ehm flirt with a barista?” Christine’s eyes lit up at that. “No way! Jeremy Heere actually flirts?” she said in fake shock, putting her hands in front of her mouth as if she just found out something really surprising.

“Ha ha.” Jeremy rolled his eyes, deciding to ignore the comment for now. “Anyway then I found out that it was my best friend that I told you about back in high school and apparently he lives here now and we’ll meet later.”

“Oh! That’s great Jeremy! Of course you’d smile in that case. Does he know that you like him?” Christine said, eyeing him curiously as if she hadn’t just asked him whether he was interested in his best friend.

“W-What?! No of course not I mean I don’t... You’re... just... How?” Jeremy was a blushing mess and not even remotely able to form any coherent thoughts, as he frantically looked around to see if anyone was listening in on them.

“So he probably doesn’t and neither do you, okay. Well I guess right now wasn’t the best time to ask about that?” she smiled at Jeremy apologetically.

“No, not really” he admitted, trying to look angry but failing miserably, which made Christine laugh a little.

“Sorry, but if you want to talk about it you can tell me, okay?”

Jeremy didn’t know whether he’d ever accept that offer or not, but he smiled at Christine anyway, less pained then he had done just a few hours prior.
“I will. Thanks Christine.”

After that they walked the rest to the lecture talking about Christine’s play rehearsal, both smiling yet again.
Michael in the Bathroom

Chapter Summary

Michael really wants to be happy about meeting Jeremy but sometimes your mind just won't let you have nice things.
(Warnings: -lots of dysphoria, feelings of guilt, abandonment issues and kind of a panic attack)
(like basically this entire chapter is angst)

Michael was very aware of the fact that Jeremy still blushed a little every time he looked at him; despite the fact that he looked way more relaxed now that he had cried.
If only Michael were able to feel that relaxed too.

He had somehow thought that this would be easy after his talk with Rich but it wasn’t. His heart was beating way faster than he would have liked and his hands were kind of sweaty and because he had changed into his own shirt earlier when his break started he now had a tear stained shirt.
Now the heart thing was honestly just him sitting in front of his crush, which was both a wonderful experience and truly heinous for reasons like his shirt being wet and him worrying about everything endlessly.
The sweating was because of said worrying.

Just why wasn’t this easy?
Jeremy had told him that Michael looked good in his messages and he had used male pronouns without having known that it was Michael so he obviously passed as male.
But that somehow didn’t make him any less nervous.

He was way too aware of Jeremy’s eyes on him and suddenly he wasn’t sure if his binder worked properly and he was afraid that maybe his voice would break again.
It hadn’t actually done that in forever but somehow right now it felt like it was possible that it would happen again and Michael hated it.

Hated how uncomfortable he suddenly was in his own skin and how tight everything suddenly felt and that he couldn’t enjoy this as much as he thought because, sure he had felt awesome when he had made Jeremy smile, but as soon as he had seen the other check him out while frowning slightly he just started feeling bad again.

But he couldn’t risk Jeremy noticing that, so all he could do was put on a smile and start being his usual goofy self, that offered Jeremy to get stoned in his basement, because really what other chance did he have?

Now let’s be honest here, Jeremy was his favourite person, hands down.
He had been for years, because Michael had basically fallen for him immediately.
Back then it was just a silly teeny crush, but over the years it just got more and more serious and Michael always thought he could handle it, but that was before he sat in front of Jeremy and noticed more and more things about him that just made him fall harder.

It was before there was the very real chance that Michael would somehow end up acting inadequate or revealing that he liked Jeremy as more than just a best friend and make him want to have nothing to do with him anymore and Michael didn’t think that he could take that.

Michael had always been afraid that at some point Jeremy would leave him behind because nothing ever seemed to be enough for Jeremy.

While Michael had been content with being a loser and just doing his own thing Jeremy always wanted to be popular, always wanted people he couldn’t have, always wanted to be the best at everything and Michael was afraid. Afraid that at some point he’d be one of those things Jeremy sacrificed to get to greater heights.

That fear wasn’t as big back when they were still in high school, because back then they both only had each other, but now that they were in college things were different.

Jeremy wasn’t a social outcast anymore. He had new friends and he was pursuing a career as an actor and Michael wanted him to be happy and he’d always encourage and help Jeremy but that didn’t mean that he wasn’t insecure.

It didn’t mean that he wasn’t deeply aware that he was a first year at college now because he had changed majors while Jeremy was already in his second year.
It didn’t mean that he wasn’t aware of the fact that he moved in with 11 other people, because he couldn’t afford more than that without his parent’s financial aid.
It didn’t mean that he didn’t wonder when Jeremy would leave him behind.

So even though he really wanted to enjoy the fact that Jeremy was smiling at him and talking to him and that they could finally be more than internet buddies, he just couldn’t stop himself from slowly starting to hyperventilate, because of how overwhelming everything was.

The positive feelings, the fear, the guilt, the dysphoria it all just started to blend together into one big monster that kept Michael from being able to breathe right.

But he still couldn’t let Jeremy notice any of this so he just smiled as fondly as he could, telling Jeremy how happy he was about all of this.
And then he looked at the clock and his break was still fairly long but Jeremy didn’t know that, so Michael lied and said that his break was nearly over and that they could meet up later.

Later, when Michael had some time to ground himself, but he didn’t mention that.

Right now he just wanted to get to the staff bathroom as quickly as possible and calm down without an audience, because everything was too loud and bright and all the sensory input made him want to puke and his heart was still racing and he hadn’t thought that the butterflies in your stomach when you were with someone you liked could make everything worse, but they did and Michael just had to go.

And then Jeremy hugged him and Michael wanted to cry because it showed him that Jeremy probably really enjoyed this brief meeting and Michael hadn’t and it made him feel guilty all over again.
If he couldn’t genuinely enjoy this right now, he thought, at least I’ll do my best to act as if I did. In his case that meant being ridiculous and walking back to the staffroom backwards, partly because that way he could see if Jeremy somehow looked disgusted or anything.

He didn’t. Jeremy just smiled as if Michael was the best thing that had ever happened to him. Michael didn’t think he deserved that look right now.

Once Michael was back in the staffroom he grabbed his mobile and headphones and practically bolted towards the bathroom, locking himself in it immediately. He sat down next to the vanity basin and started listening to music, putting his head on his knees as he rocked back and forth slightly, trying to regulate his breathing again.

He could do this. It wasn’t anything new to him anymore, the whole getting overwhelmed and hiding away thing. It was just something he had learned to deal with to an extent.

That didn’t keep the thoughts away though. The gnawing guilt that told him that Jeremy deserved better, that he was such a failure for doing this again, that he would probably lose his job.

He just turned up the volume of his music, trying to drone out the thoughts, but it didn’t help. At least it didn’t until a very specific song started playing.

Michael smiled a little, listening to the hesitant singing and the shakily played ukulele. It was a song Jeremy had recorded for him during the summer of their senior year.

He had said that he had tried learning to play the ukulele for the past two years because Michael was into music and he thought that maybe he’d like it if Jeremy understood more about it. Of course Michael loved that, not necessarily because Jeremy could now kind of play an instrument, but because he tried so hard to understand one of Michael’s interests.

But they couldn’t play together so Michael had asked him to play for him during one of their calls, which Jeremy refused, saying he was way too nervous to actually play anything right there and then. He did however send Michael this song a week later, saying that it took him the whole week to get a recording he was kind of happy with.

Michael loved it. It was his favourite song and despite the fact that it just oozed uncertainty and nervousness he had never listened to anything he liked more in his life.

He put the song on repeat after that, listening to it until his break was nearly over and once he came back out of the bathroom he felt less horrible, even if part of that was due to how exhausted he was.

Things would be fine, he told himself, as he changed back into his work t-shirt and went back to work, where Rich greeted him worriedly.

Rich told him that he knew the feeling. That he had the same problem after he had set that fire and that Michael had nothing to feel ashamed off.

They kept talking after that until they were both done with their shift and Michael noticed that his normal shirt was still wet. It would probably dry quickly once he was out in the sun, but he still accepted when Rich offered him his spare t-shirt, which miraculously fit Michael, because Rich apparently didn’t really pay
attention to the clothes he bought.
Not that that wasn’t already painfully obvious by the strange prints on his clothes.

The only thing that Michael had to do now was wait for Jeremy to arrive so they could plan what they wanted to do and he could already feel himself getting nervous again when Rich put his hand on his shoulder.

It quite frankly looked a little ridiculous with the height difference but Michael didn’t have long to think about it as Rich was currently talking to him.
“‘You know I don’t usually give my number away that easily, but I’m going to make an exception here. Anyone would be able to see that you’re super uncomfortable bro, so if you need to vent or something just text me.’”
With that Rich pulled Michaels phone out of his pocket for him and told him to unlock it so he could put in his contact information.

At least Michael thought that that was all he wanted to do. He knew better once he had his phone back and saw that Rich had changed his background pictures and some of the contact names. Somehow he thought that he should have probably anticipated that.
They say you always meet twice

Chapter Summary

Jeremy is on his way back from College to meet with Michael and meets someone he didn't really expect.

The rest of Jeremy’s lectures went by quite unspectacularly, as it was still only the second day and therefore there wasn’t too much new information, due to a lot of his professors revising topics from the last semester briefly as well as going over some basics again to make sure that everyone would be able to keep up later on in the year. (Whether they had been fortunate enough to practice their skills during the break or not)

Jeremy personally hadn’t been lucky enough to get a role during his break, but he had helped out at the local theatre anyway. They always needed the extra assistance and sometimes he got lucky enough to talk to one of the more experienced actors, which were usually nice enough to give him some advice. When they liked him enough they even asked him to practice with them sometimes.

So all in all it hadn’t been a completely wasted break for him, which also meant that a lot of the things they were discussing in the lectures proved to be rather redundant. He took notes anyway. But it gave him the liberty to spend his free time with a little less studying for now.

In this case that meant going back to Digital Silk, to meet up with Michael. That had a nice ring to it, didn’t it? Meeting up with Michael?

Jeremy started smiling again, deciding that he definitely didn’t mind this at all. He was still nervous and had his own demons to argue with, but that wasn’t important right now, because he’d meet Michael again! Everything else could start bothering him again once he was back in his dorm, but right now this giddiness was all he wanted to focus on.

Quite honestly if he still had the energy to run he’d sprint to the Café to be there sooner and have an outlet for his feelings, but alas Jeremy didn’t have that kind of physical energy anymore and it would also be pretty gross, because he’d just start sweating again.

However he still walked a little faster than he usually would, which in the end resulted in him bumping into someone while he was rounding a corner.

“Oh sorry!” he scrambled to the side, looking down as to not meet the persons eyes. He’d just keep walking and hope that he hadn’t run into anyone dangerous, but the person seemed to have a different idea.

They grabbed his shoulder a little roughly and turned him around so they faced each other. “You’re Jeremy right? That friend of Michael?” the man sounded kind of pissed. Jeremy knew the guy from Digital Silk. His name was Rich, he thought?
He wasn’t actually sure, even though he had probably seen his nametag a dozen of times.

“Yes? I mean yes, but ehm why? Are you asking?” Jeremy still tried to look anywhere but Rich eyes, despite the fact that it hadn’t seem to help in any way so far, but even though he was taller than Rich he was still extremely intimidated, now that he faced the actual threat of getting into trouble in the lane behind a hipster coffee shop.

“Holy shit dude stop being scared. I won’t beat you up for lunch money, if that’s what you’re thinking. Just it’s not my place to tell you this but Michael had a pretty rough time after your meeting and I think you should sort that out with him. Just ask him what’s up or something. That’s all I wanted to tell you, so you can stop acting all scared and go meet him already. And don’t fuck it up.”

Rich just walked away after that without waiting for Jeremy to answer, not that he would have dared to reply anything with how tense Rich’s shoulders looked. He quite honestly still made the impression to be ready to rough him up, even though he wasn’t even facing Jeremy.

Jeremy wouldn’t have known what to answer either. He started biting on his lip again nervously, guilt washing over him.

He hadn’t even noticed that Michael didn’t feel well...
He was his best friend how had he not noticed it if even Rich was able to tell?

God he was so stupid. Here he was, thinking that everything was fine, while god knows what had been going on in Michaels mind.
What if he had another panic attack?
Jeremy knew that that still happened sometimes, but he hadn’t noticed anything so he thought it was fine.

Michael had looked so calm to him, like nothing bothered him.
But that didn’t matter. Maybe Michael had appeared fine on the outside, but who cared, the important part now was that Jeremy got his ass over to Digital Silk and asked him what’s wrong.
He could at least try to help him now that he knew that he had misread the situation.

His steps and thoughts suddenly seemed a lot heavier than they had before and somehow the last few meters felt longer than the whole walk before.
But he reached the Café eventually, seeing Michael sitting outside at a table, his head thrown back to face the sun.

He looked so comfortable, like he had no worries in the world and it made Jeremy smile, because at least one part of this scene seemed somewhat familiar. This was the Michael he had imagined all that time and sure it wasn’t all there was to his best friend but it still grounded Jeremy to know that there was something familiar about this whole ordeal.

This time it was him that sat down in front of Michael while he smiled; greeting him with a soft hi as to not risk to startle him now that he looked so relaxed.
Michael raised his hand slightly at that, not opening his eyes just yet.
“It’s so waaarm.” He drawled, sitting up to face Jeremy, while he yawned.

“It sure is.” Jeremy answered while smiling slightly “So what do we want to do? I feel like we both probably just want to chill right now.”
“Ding Ding! We’ve got a winner!” Michael grinned. He got up from his seat and grabbed his bag, waiting for Jeremy to do the same.
“So I’m pretty new to this town as you can tell.” He said now that Jeremy had gathered all his belongings “Which is why I’d say we go hide away from the heat in my basement, while I kick your ass in all your favourite games. Deal?”.

Jeremy laughed at that “Deal.”

Michaels place was surprisingly close to Digital Silk, which meant that they could walk there instead of taking the bus. That however meant that Jeremy’s place was also close to Michaels, something that came as a surprise to Jeremy, because they probably went to the same grocery store with how close the dorm was to Michael’s living community. Maybe we could go shopping together, Jeremy thought.

The walk itself was rather tense, as Jeremy was still worried about what Rich had said and now that Jeremy paid attention to it Michael also seemed more tense and exhausted. He was slightly hunched over, making him seem like he was around Jeremy’s height and whenever he thought that Jeremy wasn’t looking he seemed nervous.

It pained Jeremy to see Michael act... well, like Jeremy. The way he tried to make himself smaller than he actually was and his expression that indicated that he was prepared for something bad to happen. But the worst thing of it all was how he smiled like nothing was wrong whenever they looked at each other, intent on not letting Jeremy know that he felt unwell.

Was Jeremy not trustworthy enough? Did he not seem reliable enough for Michael to talk to him? Had he done something wrong?

Jeremy just kept getting more and more worried with every step, overanalyzing their whole meeting and their recent chats and just anything that could maybe explain Michael’s behaviour. He just wanted to know what had caused it, but he could hardly ask right now. They just kept walking in silence, while Jeremy waited for them to arrive and settle down a little, so he could try to get to the root of this dilemma.

They arrived soon after, to Jeremy’s delight, and the tense silence was broken by Michael showing Jeremy around, while he explained that talking in that heat had never been his strong point. It was just so exhausting you know? Jeremy nodded at that and jokingly saying that the only thing you’d want to talk about would be how much the heat sucks anyway, which Michael seconded.

The living community wasn’t anything special. There was a big shared kitchen, some bedrooms, which were yet again shared, with a bathroom each and then there was the basement.

The basement was a cold and uncomfortable looking multimedia room of sorts and also opted as a shared living room. In one corner of the room on the floor were two beanbags in front of a large TV and different kinds of consoles.

Michael said nobody really used the basement, because most of the people that lived here weren’t there much anyway and when they were they rather stayed inside their room or the kitchen, instead
of being down here. That resulted in the basement basically being his room, even if he shared it with the occasional stoner.

I guess I could just ask about it now, Jeremy thought, before Michael interrupted him by giving him a controller and plopping down on one of the bean bags grinning.

“So which game should I beat you in first?”
Michael had been staring at his phone in shock for a while before he had decided that he didn’t feel like changing back all the backgrounds and contact names right then. Most of it wasn’t actually that bad anyway. His former Pac Man lock screen had been changed to a picture of Pepe the frog and his other backgrounds where pictures of Jeremy. At least he had an excuse for that now.

He nervously turned on his phone again to look at how late it was, 8 past five, and sat down at one of the tables outside of Digital Silk. It was still way too hot for his liking, but the sun felt nice on his skin anyway. Actually it wasn’t even that hot, just warm enough to make his binder feel a little too tight and he didn’t really like that. Who would like wearing a tight restricting piece of fabric in this heat anyway?

Michael let out a small comfortable sigh regardless and decided to relax as much as possible. He could do this, probably. The sun was still comfortably shining on his face and he could hear people walk past him while birds where singing somewhere in the distance. It was nice.

It was still nice when he heard Jeremy pull back a chair and sit down in front of him, like Michael had done earlier. Maybe it was only nice because Jeremy sounded hesitant and that made Michael feel like it was okay that he had been nervous too? Or maybe it was just nice because he was still sitting in the sun like a cat.

Either way he’d have to acknowledge Jeremy’s existence at some point so he made a show out of stretching and yawning and acting like he had just taken the best nap in ages. And there it was again, Jeremy’s smile, small and hesitant and genuine and full of worry.

Did Jeremy know that his smile looked really sad in that very moment? Probably not, he didn’t seem very aware of how transparent he was too Michael, which probably was for the better, because Michael didn’t want Jeremy to try and hide his emotions like Michael did. He didn’t deserve to be alone with his thoughts like that, he thought.

Jeremy offered for them to just go and chill and Michael was fine with that, or at least as fine as he could be with being alone with Jeremy right now. God he still didn’t really feel good but he’d get through this. He had to.

A small victory was that they’d at least go back to his place. Michael was more comfortable when he was in a familiar environment, surrounded by his things, because in a way he tended to just feel too
much. He paid attention to every detail and he noticed what people felt and sometimes being outside would just get overwhelming and he was pretty sure he deserved a break from that after what had happened earlier.

So yeah, he was at least content with their choice of location and playing games together was also something he thought he could actually enjoy. Paying attention to what was happening on the screen would probably make it easier for him to be around Jeremy without freaking out and allow him to get used to this change slowly.

All in all, Michael thought, he liked things to be slow. Or maybe he just liked them to be relaxed. He’d always been the kind of person that kind of lived in their own head, going at their own pace. To him it didn’t matter from when a game was, or what was hip at the time or whether the music he liked was popular.

He didn’t feel ashamed for being who he was and that included the fact that he liked surrounding himself with things that made him feel calm and relaxed and spending as much time enjoying them as he wanted.

Jeremy might have been the only exception to that because Jeremy always made Michael want do more. He just made Michael feel alive in a way that made him talk too loudly and want to gush about their shared interests and just sing at the top of his lungs while he tried to experience as many things at the same time as possible.

And somehow that still used to feel relaxing.

Right now it didn’t. He still had the same energy but it just worked differently and resulted in his thoughts going into a thousand different directions of which most didn’t end well.

He didn’t trust himself to speak while he felt like this, so he just stayed silent, smiling at Jeremy every now and then, hoping that whatever Jeremy was worrying about could wait until they weren’t outside anymore.

As soon as they entered the small apartment complex Michael felt a huge wave of relief wash over him, so he started showing Jeremy around. There wasn’t really all that much to talk about in terms of his roommates or the building in itself, but it filled the silence and that was good enough for now.

He finally felt as if he was back to being himself, instead of the worried mess he had been before.

Still, the most comfortable thing was just sitting down on his beanbag chair and looking at his TV screen as it flickered to live and instantly showed the main menu of the console that was currently attached to it.

Out of the corner of his eye he could see Jeremy sit down next to him excitedly, a huge grin in place, as he rambled on about the different games he had thought about playing with Michael. They settled on Apocalypse of the Damned regardless.

Now playing games with Jeremy was still the same as it had been before and Michael was immensely grateful for that because that meant he knew how to behave. He knew how to reply to Jeremy’s jokes and what comments to make about the Zombies to make him laugh and at which point he should start complaining about the layout of a battle map.

It just felt natural and he had been right with the assumption that this would make him feel better, which was perfect, because he had wanted to enjoy this all along and now that he could he didn’t even remember what he had been so upset about earlier.

He was playing his favourite game with his favourite person and at some point they had started
sitting closer together which meant that sometimes their legs or arms would touch and it was just... nice.

It really was because next to him was Jeremy who looked like he didn’t have a single negative thought on his mind, while he tried to keep up with Michael, as they were fighting Nintendo zombies together.

And Michael thought he could get used to that, as he made his way upstairs to grab some snacks and soft drinks, but the thought didn’t last long because when he came back down Jeremy looked worried again and before he could even put his loot down, Jeremy had already stood up to confront him.

“I know we were supposed to start level nine now but... I met Rich, that was his name right, outside of Digital Silk? And he said you didn’t feel good earlier and I’m sorry I didn’t notice but just, I’ve been trying to figure out what was wrong this whole time and I just don’t know so... I don’t know please tell me what was up?” Jeremy looked miserable.

He probably felt guilty because he hadn’t been there for Michael, but that was the whole point of not telling him, right? Keeping Jeremy from feeling bad or guilty?

“Fucking Rich” Michael muttered under his breath, he appreciated that Rich was looking out for him but, god, he didn’t feel like doing this right now.

“Don’t worry buddy, its okay. It wasn’t anything big, just some first meeting hives, you know?”

Apparently that wasn’t the answer Jeremy had wanted, but he didn’t reply immediately.

He just took the snacks and drinks from Michael and put them away, before he sat down again, starring at Michael until he had done the same.

“We both know that that’s bullshit Michael and I can’t help if I don’t what I did wrong!” Jeremy sounded frustrated and sad and it annoyed Michael.

It annoyed him because he did everything he could so this wouldn’t happen and Jeremy just didn’t notice and he didn’t want to sound like he was mad at Jeremy but somehow he just couldn’t keep his own frustration out of his voice as he answered

“God damn it Jeremy, you didn’t do anything wrong! It’s me, it’s always fucking me, so just stop asking, okay?!”. 
Jeremy flinched at Michael’s sudden outburst, looking at him a little lost before he regained his composure. He had never before heard Michael yell or even raise his voice in the slightest.

Sometimes, when they played games, he thought that surely a certain situation was bound to make Michael angry but every time he thought that Michael had just calmly announced that he had to step out for a minute or that he was grabbing some food or another excuse and left the premise.

Maybe, Jeremy thought, he had just gone away before any of his anger or other bad feelings reached Jeremy. Wasn’t that what he had done today too? Just acted as if everything was fine around Jeremy until the emotions he had bottled up made him retreat, unable to suppress them any longer?

And if that was true, for how long had he been doing it?

How many times had Michael been alone and frustrated or sad or just miserable in any way and hidden it, just so Jeremy wouldn’t see it?

How many times had Jeremy been oblivious to that?

Why hadn’t he ever bothered to ask about this?

He had noticed that Michael went away when he should have been angry and that he didn’t talk about any of his negative feelings a lot.

Was Jeremy just too afraid to see that his best friend needed Jeremy’s help as much as he had always needed Michael’s?

That maybe if he asked about it he wouldn’t be able to help and make Michael realize how much better off he was without Jeremy?

Jeremy didn’t want to believe that he had missed out on being a good friend for reasons like that, but maybe they were true.

Either way he couldn’t let it go on this way.

Being frustrated or apologizing and saying that he was a bad friend would just make this about him when it wasn’t.

This was about Michael, his best friend, who had apparently been trying hard to not show Jeremy that he was in pain and Jeremy wanted him to feel better.

“Michael, what’s wrong?” he asked again as softly as possible, taking Michaels hands in his lightly, so he could pull them back immediately if he wanted to.

For a moment Michael was silent, still looking ready to burst any moment and just start yelling, but then the first tear formed in his eye and he just crumbled down crying, gripping Jeremy’s hands as if they were his lifeline.

Jeremy had no idea how to deal with this, so he tried to remember what Michael had done earlier.
“Do you want me to hug you?” he tried to sound calm and confident, he didn’t know if he succeeded in that.

Either way he saw Michael nod, but not make any indications that he’d move anytime soon so Jeremy got up and awkwardly kneeled in front of Michael as he hugged him tightly, swaying from side to side with him slightly.

When he didn’t stop crying Jeremy thought he should probably talk so he did.

“You know I’m not sure what I did wrong? Like this isn’t about me but it would be easier to fix things if I knew what I did. Did I make you uncomfortable? Or was me crying too much? Did that make you sad? Did I seem uncomfortable and upset you with that? Did-“

Michael interrupted him, his voice muffled by the way he hid his face in the crook of Jeremy’s neck.

“I already told you that you didn’t do anything wrong.” He paused and Jeremy assumed he was thinking about whether he should say more or not.

“It’s okay, man. You don’t have to tell me but... we’re best friends right? You’ve always been there for me and I think I should finally start being there for you too.” It seemed like that was all it took for Michael to finally open up, at least for now.

“It’s just-“ he took a deep breath, still not letting go of Jeremy and still sounding like he was crying a little “I don’t know it’s stupid like we saw each other for the first time and it wasn’t really at our own terms? Just suddenly we were meeting and I know you’re cool with me being trans but... somehow it’s still so nerve wracking? That maybe my binder isn’t sitting right or just that anything at all would make you stop thinking of me as a guy? And then I got so much dysphoria that I started panicking and started feeling guilty for not enjoying being around you because you seemed so happy and just... What if I wasn’t good enough? I’m always afraid that at some point I’ll stop being your favourite person because I just wasn’t enough...”

And for a moment nothing happened after Michael was done.

The room was still filled with the sound of their breathing and Michael’s uneven snivels but otherwise quiet, at least until Jeremy started laughing.

He didn’t want to laugh his body just acted on his own while he was internally debating what had just happened.

It just didn’t make sense to him and in a way he just seemed to instinctively always react in the worst way possible, which in this case meant laughing and then starting to cry at the same time.

At least it seemed to get Michael out of his head, as he pushed Jeremy away slightly with a frown asking “What are you laughing about dickhead?”

“But I don’t know!” Jeremy squeaked out, still laughing. “It’s just here I am! Having felt inferior for years and you tell me that you’re afraid to not be good enough for me? It’s just kind of ridiculous isn’t it?

I have literally been desperately trying to be your equal for years because let’s face it you’re just so much better? You’re a fucking saint Michael and a fucking talented and handsome one on top of that and I always thought one day you’d notice that I’ve just been cheating my way through life and leave me because I just can’t compete with that!”

They both just stared at each other for a while after that, then trying to calm each other down.
because they were both very visibly overwhelmed with the situation.

“So... we probably should talk about this some more at some point right?” Jeremy asked, looking at Michael with a crooked and sad smile.

“Probably...” Michael answered, smiling back a little.

Jeremy knew this wouldn’t be the end of this. Just telling each other how afraid they felt wasn’t going to fix this instantly. It wasn’t going to be some magic that made them feel better right now, but it was a start.

Neither of them actually liked having serious talks like these but they’d do it if that meant that the other didn’t have to feel as bad.

“Just please tell me when you feel bad? I know I might now always be able to help but you deserve to not be alone with that! You’re the best thing that ever happened to me Michael Mell and we’re not ever going to stop being a team. I’d just like to have a fair chance at actually being a good player two.” Jeremy knew that too wouldn’t fix this instantly but he needed Michael to know this.

“I’m not going to leave you alone for being human you know.”

Michael smiled back at him in return, nodding slightly. “I’ll try. Just... it might be hard to change? But I’ll try.”

“Thanks.”

“No thank you.” They were both quiet for a moment before they looked each other, with a slight smirk.

“Good talk.” They said in unison, chuckling slightly as this old joke.

It had started somewhere in high school, when Jeremy had told Michael about his father’s habit of saying ‘good talk’ after certain conversations. They had used that expression a lot after that for a while, often ironically when the other wasn’t really helpful. (Mostly when the other didn’t have an answer to a game related question)

It also still made them laugh in the same way it had back then, taking most of the rest tension from them that had remained from their impromptu feeling jams, leaving them almost relaxed.

Afterwards they pushed their beanbag chairs together so they could lean against each other while they played some easier games, until at some point they had abandoned gaming in favour of Michael putting his head on Jeremy’s lap while he gently combed through his hair.

It wasn’t like everything was magically alright but at least they were on the same page now and that was a start. They could actually get to know each other for real from here on out, starting with the fact that they both were extremely comfortable cuddling.

Everything else would fall into place from here on out.

Chapter End Notes
Hey-yo!

So I've taken the liberty of deleting most of the notes because they were just really long and repetitive I think? and since act 1 is finished I thought it would be nice to be able to read it without huge notes after each chapter!

You might have also seen that I changed the update schedule from daily to every wednesday and saturday, because I'll have to start studying again soon and that would probably get in the way of daily updates. However since I'll update less I might actually manage to run every chapter by my beta first which means better quality chapters for you guys!

I also updated some of the tags and that's pretty much it!!

Thanks for your amazing comments and I'll see you next saturday!
Got a Pac Man tattoo and oblivious pining

Chapter Summary

After their first meeting Jeremy contemplates some things for example Michael's Pac Man tattoo

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Player1: Hey Michael?

Player2: Yes?

Player1: I’m honestly sorry for earlier.
Player1: Like I never knew you felt that way? I just kind of... idk assumed you always felt okay?
Player1: Which is super weird in retrospect because no one is always fine so just... I’m sorry for having been a shit friend
Player1: and you’re definitely good enough for me you’re my favourite person and you deserve all the good things

Player2: It’s fine I mean
Player2: You can’t read thoughts right? So of course you wouldn’t have known
Player2: But thanks for trying, you’ll always be my favourite person too
Player2: Even though you totally ruined my hair dude there was still stuff in it and since you played with it it’s just sticking up in all directions and somehow washing it didn’t help????
Player2: like I don’t even use a lot of product and you still managed to somehow eternally make my hair look shitty, which you know was worth it but still??

Player1: Smooth change of topic but sorry? Your hair looked fine to me when I left?

It really had looked fine to Jeremy. But then again Michael generally still looked amazing and not like Jeremy would admit it but somehow he had looked even better with that slightly mussed hair? It looked dishevelled and just kind of sexy in a way only people with Michael’s confidence could pull off.
But Michael had generally looked so relax while Jeremy had played with his hair that there wasn’t any room to notice any flaws because in Jeremy’s mind it was just Michael Michael Michael.

Michael smiling softly, Michael closing his eyes in contentment, Michael making soft noises, Michael looking relaxed, Michael opening his eyes and grinning up at him to tell Jeremy a funny story, Michael looking nostalgic or sad for a moment before he starts starring up at Jeremy with big eyes like he’s so amazed and happy to be with him.
Michael blushing a little while he rambles comfortably.

Thinking about Michael this much wasn’t anything new to Jeremy but the content of his thoughts had changed a lot because before that it was just recalling stories Michael had told him or feeling
happy about their jokes etc and now suddenly it was... different?
He had always been so very fond of Michael but somehow sharing their weaknesses made him even
more so and the thought that he could make Michael look that relaxed made filled him with
happiness and pride.

But then there was also the blush that tinted his whole face red because Michael really was
gorgeous? Jeremy had always assumed that but just seeing him in person and touching him and
looking into his eyes just made it so much more real and Jeremy didn’t know how to deal with that
yet because he really wanted Michael to be happy.

He had wanted that before too but in a way he just wanted to be the reason Michael was happy a
little bit more now, wanted to make him smile more often than his other friends did and wanted him
to feel more relaxed around him and just...
In a way he really truly wanted to be Michael’s favourite person, which according to Michael he
already was.

Jeremy raked his hands through his hair in frustration because somehow that wasn’t enough for him
anymore?
He wasn’t sure if that had ever been enough?

The whole train of thought made his head hurt and Christine’s comment about him liking Michael
came to his mind again and that’s when he decided to leave the topic alone for now and go worry
about something else.

Something like his messages about how gorgeous Michael was that he had send to Michael.
Something like the fact that he had told Michael that he had wanted to flirt with him.
Something like the fact that he ran away from Michael twice.

Now that was uncomfortable.

What if Michael was really creeped out now because Jeremy had basically gushed about his good
looks to him and Michael wasn’t into him at all because Jeremy was mediocre?

Jeremy didn’t think that Michael had ever dated so his standards must be high, which means that his
best friend accidentally trying to flirt with him was probably really awkward and uncomfortable and
he just hadn’t said anything because he didn’t want to upset Jeremy.
At least Jeremy hadn’t told Michael any of the more explicit things he had thoughts because that
would have been an actual disaster.

His phone made a small sound next to him and he grabbed it with a sigh.

Player2: Well maybe you just need glasses I mean look at this.

Michael had sent him a selfie.
It looked ridiculously hipster-ish and exactly the way Jeremy had imagined Michael’s selfies to look
like.

But also Michael sent him a selfie, a picture of himself, which wasn’t even censoring his face.
Michael felt comfortable enough after meeting once to send him pictures and it made Jeremy smile
widely and want to show it around and tell everyone how handsome his best friend was but he knew
better than to do that without Michael’s permission.
He didn’t want him to panic again and anyway it wasn’t his place to distribute pictures of a person. On top of that Jeremy really hoped that his friends would get to meet Michael in person soon because in a way he just felt like sharing how happy he was with everyone and a lot of the time Michael was his happiness.

As in sometimes just thinking about Michael made Jeremy happy flap and it was the most amazing feeling ever and he’d also have to look for his phone in a few minutes because he had just put it away without paying attention to where because just flapping was more important right now.

Once he was done stimming for now (or as done as you can be when your friends just made you that happy) Jeremy looked around for his phone and looked at the picture again.

Michael was running his fingers through his hair and you could see part of his Pac Man tattoo. He had gotten it back in high school because of a stupid bet.

Now Jeremy still remembers the day he had found out about it. It had been another day of Jeremy hating high school and feeling miserable and Michael had said that guys like them would be cool in college and Jeremy called bullshit on that.
So Michael said “Okay let’s do this: If I’m right and we actually are cool in college you’ll have to get a Pac Man tattoo.”
“Why a Pac Man tattoo?” Jeremy had asked grinning, already up to the bet that he was sure he’d win.
“Because I got one today and what’s cooler than matching tattoos? Nothing dude, nothing is cooler. So are you up to it?”
And at that Jeremy had just started laughing because there was no way Michael had gotten a Pac Man tattoo, which was actually true in the end.

Michael had drawn one on his arm and Jeremy was actually kind of sad about that because having matching tattoos sounded amazing.
He told Michael that much and a week later he got a picture of Michaels arm while he got his tattoo.

Now Jeremy wasn’t allowed to get one while he still lived at home so maybe it was time to get the matching tattoo now?
With a quick google search he found a highly rated but affordable tattoo studio quite close that still had an open appointment the next day which he booked immediately before he could regret his decision.

He wouldn’t regret getting a matching tattoo but he might start being anxious about the pain so it was better too not think too much about that.

Player1: I still think you look fine? Also do you have time tomorrow at 3pm?

Player2: I think so, why?

Player1: Good! Also it’s a surprise but I’ll need you there so!
Player1: But it’s nothing dangerous or weird just I don’t want to spoil it!

Michael let the topic slip easily so they kept talking some more before they both headed to bed. In a weird way Jeremy really looked forward to tomorrow.
Here we go with the first chapter of act 2!

It's fluffy I swear and I didn't proofread it because I can't concentrate but! I hope it's nice anyway!

Also thanks so much for all your nice comments on the last chapter? I'm glad their small angsty talk was apparently nice to read!

(Btw advertising my own ask blog again, check out "jeremia-heere" and "michaelangelo-mell" on tumblr)

Have a good day and also! again! thanks for your nice comments!
Michael tried very hard to take a selfie that looks like he didn't try at all

Chapter Summary

Michael doesn't feel as bad as he usually does for once.
(warnings: mentions of self harm and just generally unhealthy behaviour, some angst but also so much fluffy feelings)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Once Jeremy had gone home Michael had flung himself back onto his beanbag chairs and smiled softly.
Normally he’d feel guilty about having been that open about his insecurities, pondered whether he should somehow... make up for it. “Making up for something” was a pretty euphemism for what he did he decided, because punishing himself just sounded more serious than it was.
He just sometimes ate less than he should, or forbid himself to write Jeremy or wore things that made him uncomfortable to... make up for doing something wrong.
Or maybe it actually was serious and he just didn’t like to admit it because he wasn’t allowed to feel bad, right? He was Michael the happy go lucky friend and wasn’t this the exact thing he had promised Jeremy to talk about? It was.
If he told Jeremy about how he usually felt, about how he harmed himself out of some weird sense of justice or whatever you would call it, he would probably say its bullshit.
“You didn’t do anything wrong Michael! You deserve help and love as much as anyone else and I want to help you!”
Something like that.
It’s not even like Michael hadn’t enjoyed talking about his feelings or the cuddling and affection that followed. He actually felt really okay with the whole situation; he didn’t even feel like punishing himself. It was just that some part of his brain said that it was what he’d usually do and for the first time in ages that felt wrong.
Rationally he knew it was bullshit and for once that voice was winning.
It was scary in a way. It was scary to smile and realize that he didn’t have to be alone with his thoughts and suddenly he couldn’t get enough of that feeling.
He felt strong and happy and so much closer to Jeremy than he had ever done before and he was so happy about it because Jeremy still liked him.
Jeremy still liked him after seeing this new side of him and was it even possible for Michael to love that boy more than he had before? Right now it felt like it was, with his heart thumping loudly and a smile on his lips.
He felt like crying for the third time that day, this time out of happiness. He and Jeremy had been a pair for so many years and Michael had been so afraid of being alone, of being left behind, of losing his player two that there were parts of himself that he had never dared to show Jeremy.
In a way he had always been flying solo despite proclaiming that the two of them made everything a
two player game.
For the first time in years he felt like that was actually true. Jeremy still had his back after having seen the worst of him and it felt liberating and absolutely amazing, like a huge weight had been lifted of his shoulders.

It felt like all those times Michael had been alone hiding in a bathroom but this time he didn’t have to deal with his anxiety alone because Jeremy comes in and hugs him and helps him through it.

So for once Michael didn’t want to retreat back into that small place in his mind, didn’t want to hide away his emotions. He really wanted to work on this, wanted to let Jeremy in and show him that he trusted him, the way Jeremy had trusted him for years.

However this wasn’t the only thing that made Michael happy enough to ignore his bad habits for once. Though finally being able to voice some of the things that had been plaguing him for years was a big part of what made him feel better, there was more to it.

Something really simple that actually seemed pretty stupid compared to that. Jeremy, ‘no homo’ Jeremy, was okay with Michael putting his head on his lap and actually played with his hair.
Jeremy his crush since he can remember played with his hair and looked at him with the fondest smile and didn’t mind him crying.

For most people this might not be much but Michael had long accepted that Jeremy would never like him back in the same way and maybe it was foolish to entertain the thought but something about the situation gave Michael hope that maybe Jeremy felt more for him too?
He already knew that Jeremy found him visually appealing, which was a miracle all in itself for Michael, but the amount of affection was something different.

Or maybe not the amount but just the way Jeremy had shown affection? Now they haven’t met in real life before but from the way Jeremy had acted before he came out as pansexual Michael had never thought that Jeremy was a very touchy-feely person.
He seemed rather awkward about touching people in any way actually?

So Jeremy being comfortable with having Michaels head in his lap and touching his hair either meant that his feeling were platonic enough for him to not have to go ‘no homo’ about everything, or that he liked Michael as something else than just a best friend. (or maybe Michael was just overthinking this, who knew for sure.)
Michael hoped that it was the later. Sure it was utterly ridiculous that Jeremy would ever like him but it wouldn’t hurt to just dream for a moment.

So that’s what Michael did. He didn’t intentionally hurt himself and he didn’t let the voice in the back of his head get the best of him and when Jeremy messaged him he really meant it when he said that it was fine.
Even though it still hurt and years of training himself to not show that he had weaknesses wouldn’t be instantly fixed he really did mean it when he said that it was okay that Jeremy hadn’t noticed. He didn’t resent him for it.

He was however actually kind of annoyed because of his hair. Not a lot, it mostly was kind of a joke when he had texted Jeremy about it but if he had to pick something he was currently at least a little unhappy with it would be his hair.
And even that stopped as soon as Jeremy said that he had still looked good.
But Michael wouldn’t be Michael if he dropped a joke this quickly and since he actually felt confident for once he took a selfie.
And then another and another until he had taken way too many, but at least he had the perfect selfie now.
At first he just wanted to show the damage that has been dealt to his hair, then he remembered the stuff Jeremy had said about him before he knew about who he was.
See, he wasn’t a very vain person and taking pictures that were supposed to look sexy or anything wasn’t his thing but... who could blame him for trying to look good in a picture he send his crush?

So what if he had spent a lot of time on taking one that he was happy with?
That wasn’t anyone’s business anyway and it also had the nice effect that Michael himself actually liked the way he looked too.
It was a small luxury he didn’t get to experience often.

Confident that Jeremy would probably appreciate what Michael had come up with, he slapped an aesthetic filter over it and sent it before he could regret the choice after all.

Jeremy’s reaction was... underwhelming but not unexpected.
Really Michael didn’t think that Jeremy would still fawn over him the way he had done before, but a guy could dream.

A guy could also be really confused because their now real life friend suddenly asks to meet him the next day.
In itself that wouldn’t have made Michael suspicious but the fact that Jeremy immediately told him that it was a surprise instead of playing it cool and just telling him that he wanted to hang out was as obvious as it could get.

So yes Michael was suspicious and not at all feeling more relaxed when Jeremy told him to not worry because how was it reassuring when the person had to tell you to relax?
But he didn’t feel like getting into that so he ignored it, accepted the change of topic and got lost in the comfortable routine of writing about anything and everything with Jeremy until they eventually had to go to sleep.

The next day Michael woke up well rested. He didn’t have to work today but he did have lectures pretty much up until he was supposed to meet up with Jeremy at the mystery location he had to promise not to look up.
That meant he didn’t really have time to worry about what was going to happen, at least until he parked his PT cruiser next to a tattoo studio.

He blinked a few times and tried to remember if he had smoked anything, but he was pretty sure he hadn’t in a while.
He pinched himself next to check whether he was still sleeping, but that also proved futile.

Michael was still trying to figure out what was happening when Jeremy came up to the window of his car, knocking at it excitedly.

“Let’s go inside I don’t want to be late for my appointment.” Jeremy spoke quickly, not even greeting Michael as he opened the door for him, basically dragging him out of the car.

“Your appointment?” Michael asked confusion obvious in his voice.
“Yeah. I thought it was finally time to get my Pac Man tattoo you know?” Jeremy grinned from ear to ear making Michael grin too.

God he loved Jeremy.

Chapter End Notes

Okay so I know I missed an update which I'm sorry for but also I'm in time with this! Yaaay like in germany it's nearly midnight but!! I've got this!

The chapter is also slightly longer than usually so that's something? To be honest I don't know if I'm happy with it but I just really wanted to update today so it might not be the best? Which I'm also sorry for

But yeah! Here's chapter 13 and I hope you liked it anyway!!

Also again thanks for all your amazing comments, I know I don't reply to all of them but I read them all (multiple times) and just appreciate them so much?
And I'm happy to announce that I finally have an idea on how to include Chloe and Brooke!! YAY
(and to announce that Brooke and Christine will be friends and hopefully get a significant platonic relationship)

That's it for these notes! Have a nice day <3 !
Jeremy had felt confident the whole way to the tattoo studio, had felt confident while he picked out the motive he wanted to get, while opening the door for Michael and even still when he went up to the register and asked where they should sit. Basically he had felt confident in his decision all the way until he finally sat on the chair, the tattoo artist next to him with the needle hovering over his skin.

That’s when he started feeling nervous, because sure he wanted this tattoo but people had always told him how much getting a tattoo hurt and despite the fact that he wasn’t usually very perceptible to pain he was still a little afraid. Michael must have sensed as much because he silently grabbed Jeremy’s free hand, rubbing soothing circles on its back with his thumb, which was... nice. Strangely intimate in a way but Jeremy wouldn’t complain about it since it did help ease his nerves a lot. (It also gave him a reason to hold hands with Michael, which was amazing all on its own.)

When the needle finally started gliding over his skin he felt... underwhelmed. Sure it hurt a little but it wasn’t really much. He has had hangovers which had been more unpleasant than this, not that he told anyone that, because if he told Michael that he might stop holding his hand and now that was an actually unpleasant thought. Jeremy did however decide to engage in some small talk with the tattoo artist: why he wanted to get the tattoo, the weather, what tattoos the other had and things of the like.

All the while Michael had been eerily quiet, just starring at Jeremy’s arm in quiet wonder. He didn’t stop rubbing soothing circles in his skin once as he watched the motive come to life on his best friends arm with the most amazed smile. It was still a little surreal for both of them, the fact that they’d soon have matching tattoos, their relationship, whatever it was, on display for the whole world to see.

It was more than that for Michael actually. The whole fact that Jeremy, his Jeremy, was getting a tattoo for him because of some stupid bet they had made years ago made his heart swell up with love all over again. Part of him was still convinced that he was dreaming right now, that this couldn’t actually be happening right now, but there he was, holding Jeremy’s hand and hearing the idle chatter around him and god this was overwhelming in the best way.

The tattoo itself didn’t take long to be finished since it was mostly easy geometric shapes and no shading involved, which meant that Jeremy and Michael were soon walking out of the tattoo parlour again, still holding hands.

“I can’t believe you just did this.” Michael muttered a huge dopy grin on his face. He had the urge to pick Jeremy up and kiss him but something in him told him that he’d probably die of heart failure if any more surprising things happened that day.
“I can’t believe I just did this.” Jeremy muttered in return, grinning just as much and wanting to kiss Michael all the same. Not that either of them was going to admit that right now, despite the fact that to any outsider it would be painfully obvious that the feeling was mutual.

“Jeremy we need to celebrate this!” Michael suddenly stopped in his tracks looking at Jeremy with huge excited eyes and Jeremy didn’t think he’d ever get used to the way Michael looked at him, with so much wonder and amazement like he was the best thing Michael had ever laid his eyes upon.

It has just been a few weeks ago when Jeremy sat alone in his dorm at night, messaging Michael when he was sad and realizing just how lucky he was to have Michael in his life. Michael had been the one constant in his life that kept him afloat through his parent’s divorce (a quite ironic one at that seeing how both of his parents were divorce lawyers), through his awkward middle and high school years, through his first break-up, through all of his anxiety, through moving out, all of it.

Through all of that Jeremy had never once stopped thinking that Michael was the most amazing person he has ever met. Sure, Michael and Jeremy didn’t always have the same priorities. Jeremy wanted to be popular and to be less anxious; Michael wanted to get stoned in his basement to see if it affected his Mario Kart skills. Wait no, that wasn’t a good comparison. Jeremy wanted to be more popular and would skip one of their game Saturdays in order to go to a party that he hoped would up his social standing; Michael skipped a family meeting just to be with Jeremy after his break-up.

Michael had done a lot of things for Jeremy over the years that he, as he realized now, had never appreciated the way he should have. Things he knew he’d have never done for Michael back then but would gladly do nowadays. He didn’t know when that had changed.

He didn’t know when Michael started being this huge comforting constant in his life that he could trust with everything he had, that he wanted to protect so dearly. The kind of person he got a Pac Man tattoo for just to see him grin like that.

It was in that moment, as Michael offered him to get stoned in his basement as a celebration, as Jeremy agreed because it made Michael’s eyes light up with that much happiness, that Jeremy realized that he was utterly fucked.

He was utterly smitten with his best friend, whose hand he was still holding as if that was the most natural thing to do.

They were just two bro’s chilling maybe 5 inch apart, holding hands because they’re not gay.

To Jeremy it was already apparent that he’d have to call Christine as soon as possible. His crush on Michael wasn’t actually any of her business but now that he had realized it so thoroughly he couldn’t forget it again and he felt like he was probably in need of someone to talk to. Or well, gush about Michael to.

Somehow that thought felt weird, Jeremy thought, because a few years back he had been gushing about Christine to Michael and now suddenly their roles were reversed.

Next to him Michael cleared his throat to get Jeremy’s attention. “You know if we want to drive back to my place I need both of my hands for the steering wheel.”

Of course, they had still been holding hands. Jeremy let go quickly at the revelation, blushing all the way up to his ears, his voice cracking slightly “Oh Yes, sorry.”

“Nah nothing to be sorry about; you can hold my hand again when we’re at my place.” Michael said smirking and Jeremy guessed that he was joking. Either way he really contemplated taking Michael
up on the offer because Michael had nice hands.

Not in that weird artist way Jeremy had heard people talk about, where the person has long slim fingers and bony wrists but in a “his hands were perfect for holding hands” way. They were rather dry, something Jeremy envied, and comfortably warm and bigger than Jeremy’s which didn’t come as a surprise but was still nice. They were also very soft.

He probably shouldn’t take Michael’s joke at face value, Jeremy thought as he got into the car. At least he thought so until he saw that one of Michael’s hands was just comfortably resting next to him, not moving even as he started driving with one hand. Jeremy observed Michael for a while, noticing how Michael send him a short worried glance from time to time until Jeremy, even more nervous than before and probably twice as red, took his hand again. Michael stopped looking his way then, a small smile on his lips as he started humming some tune Jeremy couldn’t place.

Maybe Jeremy had a reason to hope that he wasn’t making a fool out of himself right now, if the small blush on Michael’s face was anything to go by, Jeremy might even be able to hope that his pining wasn’t completely one-sided.

Chapter End Notes

(as you can see I kinda cheated around with the update days so now it's only saturday because... I... well I don't have an excuse? but I have a cute chapter!)

So I finally regained the right to call this a lot of fluff I think! But those of you that follow me on tumblr might have seen that I made a post about flower boy Michael getting his pac man tattoo from tattoo artist Jeremy? And oh god I didn't expect that to get notes. However it did get notes so I'm thinking about writing that as well? It would probably be shorter than this but I'd be really happy to hear your opinion on that idea! (I also have a dear evan hansen post with a lot of notes and just... a lot of stuff planned I guess?)

On another note you can also requests smaller prompts and drabbles on my tumblr "the-corpse-were-fake"!

And that was it! I'd be really happy about feedback as always and thanks so so much for all your nice comments!!
In which Michael isn't oblivious but also really cunning

Chapter Summary

There's weed my friends. Weed and pining.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Michael hadn’t actually planned on taking Jeremy’s hand to calm him down, he just kind of did it on instinct when he saw the worried crease between the others brows. Jeremy had looked on edge and the least Michael wanted was for Jeremy to regret this or puke from being nervous, so he had done the only thing that came to his mind, take his hand and rub soothing circles into his skin.

But he also wouldn’t complain about getting to hold Jeremy’s hand and seeing how the tension slowly left his body as he started to smile widely and he just looked so excited, like a small kid that finally was allowed to open their Christmas presents. It was endearing and inherently Jeremy in a way that made Michael’s heart beat faster and took his breath away all the same.

However that wasn’t everything that went through his head as he watched the motive slowly come to life on his best friends arm. It was the fact that Jeremy actually got this tattoo, that they’d match and be able to walk down the street in t-shirts with their tattoos on display together. It was the fact that Jeremy trusted Michael enough to get a tattoo that would forever remind him of Michael; fuck this was more permanent than a wedding ring.

All in all it was the gesture that made Michael this overwhelmingly happy, made him forget about the fact that he’d normally worry about holding hands, that he’d feel like maybe even his feelings of friendship weren’t returned, made him confident enough to joke about holding hands again later.

The best thing about this situation was that it just kept getting better though. Because not only did Michael get to hold Jeremy’s hand and see how he got a matching tattoo; Jeremy also agreed to smoke weed with him, which was a huge sign of trust considering that Jeremy reacted rather strongly to drugs of any kind and how he didn’t let go of Michaels hand and blushed at his not quite joke.

It was amazing and cute and made Michael feel butterflies when he entered his car and decided to just take the risk and drive with one hand to see if Jeremy would grab his hand. He did. Michael decided that he could die right there and then and wouldn’t have a single regret. Well except for the fact that Jeremy might actually like him and if he died that would ruin his chance at ever dating him.

Just... Jeremy did like him right? At least Michael was pretty sure that he wouldn’t blush about holding hands if it was a usual friendship thing Jeremy did. He also hadn’t gotten a tattoo for anyone else and he was pretty sure that Jeremy looked at him with the same heart eyes he always had while thinking about Jeremy or talking to him or just seeing him.

But he could be wrong, which was frankly a rather sad idea that he didn’t want to entertain right now so he had to come up with a plan to see if his hunch was right.

It took Michael nearly the whole car ride and some idle chatter about how this was Jeremy’s first time smoking weed before he had formulated the perfect plan.
Now Michael wasn’t a stranger to weed and shotgunning, but Jeremy probably was and even if he wasn’t it would still work out. Of course there were different ways of doing this, forming a tunnel with your hands, simply putting the lit part of the joint carefully into the others mouth, but there also were ways of doing it that were rather close to kissing. 
As in Michael inhaling and putting his lips on Jeremy’s so he could breathe out and make Jeremy inhale the smoke.

It probably was a fool proof plan. If Jeremy liked him too he would (hopefully) accept the chance to basically kiss Michael, if he didn’t he’d ask for a different way to do it.
All in all it was the best idea he could currently come up with to confirm whether his year-long crush might finally be returned without ruining their friendship if it wasn’t.

Somehow everything seemed to move very fast to Michael because one minute he was driving to his apartment complex the next he was sitting besides Jeremy while he sang along to Bob Marley at the top of his lungs, preparing everything they might need for Jeremy’s first time smoking pot.
Maybe it was the excitement and giddiness that hadn’t stopped since they first entered the small tattoo parlour that made everything just feel that much faster and rushed, the adrenaline of finding out if there was a future in which he could kiss Jeremy for real instead of just shotgunning.

“Okay, so are you sure you want to try this?” Michael asked Jeremy with the most serious face he could muster at the moment. He might be ready for this to happen but that didn’t mean that he’d force Jeremy into it. They had stopped holding hands a while ago and it was obvious that Jeremy was getting a little nervous despite still being in a great mood.

“Yeah, yeah I’m sure. I trust you and if you say we should celebrate like this we’ll do it.” Jeremy grinned back up at him and god, if his heart kept beating like this he’d really need the weed to calm it back down.

“Well if you say so.” He smiled back at Jeremy. It was now or never. “Anyway since it’s your first time I thought maybe we should shotgun? There are different ways to do it but it’s the easiest if I take a hit, you put your lips on mine, we open our mouths and you inhale the smoke, cool?”
Michael was very aware that he had probably rambled a bit at the end and that he was probably blushing a little but at least Jeremy probably couldn’t see that in the dimly lit room.

Jeremy looked at him with big eyes for a moment, seemingly contemplating what Michael had just offered to do with him and it only took those few seconds for Michael to start worrying endlessly. Maybe he had actually misread the whole situation, maybe Jeremy was grossed out by kissing a trans guy, maybe he just wasn’t okay with that much physical contact, maybe he just didn’t want to shotgun.
The possibilities were endless and had Jeremy taken even a moment more to make his decision and nod Michael would probably started hyperventilating.

But Jeremy did nod, hesitantly at first, then more fiercely. “Cool. You’ll show me what to do?”

“Yeah! Sure, let me just ehm…” Michael blindly reached around to find his lighter, before Jeremy offered it to him with a small grin.
It took him a moment to light the joint and honestly with what he was about to do he needed to just take a hit for himself first before he motioned Jeremy to come sit closer to him, blowing the smoke lightly in his direction to see if maybe that was already too much for him.

Jeremy’s nose crinkled a little at the smell but he seemed fine otherwise so Michael didn’t worry too
“Okay so once I inhaled you have to press your lips on mine and then we both open our mouths okay? Gotta stay connected until you breathe in and then close again. Still want to do this?”

Michael frankly had never actually done this, so he wasn’t 100% sure that it actually worked like that but he was pretty sure it would work somehow.

Instead of answering Jeremy just nodded again, basically climbing into Michael’s lap to be close enough for what they were about to do and if that didn’t do things to Michael he didn’t currently want to think about. He could replay this scene all he wanted later but right now he had to focus on inhaling and holding the smoke.

For a moment Jeremy stared at him, until he finally understood that this was his cue to move. He pressed his lips on Michael’s lightly at first, making Michael tap Jeremy’s shoulder because yeah no, the smoke would escape right away.

Jeremy seemed to have understood his concern however, as he sealed their lips tightly before he mimicked Michael’s movement, inhaling a little too deeply.

He started coughing immediately, much too Michael’s amusement who just started laughing until Jeremy hit him lightly in the shoulder. “Let’s try again.” Jeremy grumbled, clearly blushing with a big frown on his face that made Michael want to laugh even more.

Just Jeremy was adorable and sitting in his lap and Michael had never noticed before but... Jeremy’s lips were so nice and soft and yes, he could stop laughing if that meant being able to fake kiss him again.

Fake kiss Jeremy because he asked him too and maybe kiss him for real at some point.

But that could wait, everything could wait because right now all Michael wanted to do was put his lips back on Jeremy’s and share this experience with him.

Chapter End Notes

Okay so technically I'm still posting this on saturday because it's currently like 23:47 for me so!

YEP

I haven't proofread this yet so I hope it's okay???

I hope you like it!!

Thanks for all your amazing comments and feedback and just? I love hearing what exactly you guys liked even if you just quote my fanfic back at me tbh!

Have a nice day and also I always have drabble prompts open on my tumblr "the-corpses-were-fake"
The weed chapter or two lazy stoners on a couch

Chapter Notes

Soooo I'm aware the chapter is late but!! I have a great excuse!
Because I actually had my last final today (and got full points) and spend the week-end (trying) to study which is why I didn't upload anything on saturday ^^"

But now it's here and I haven't proofread it yet and my beta actually kind of doesn't have time so I'm hoping it doesn't have too many mistakes until I get around to check it more thoroughly.

Also as always thanks so much for your nice comments, the kudos and bookmarks!
I appreciate them a lot and I might actually start another boyfriends fanfic soon?
So that might be interesting!

Now with that said enjoy your weed chapter! (warnings: drug use, it's weed)

For a brief moment Jeremy wondered whether maybe Michael was a huge idiot because of course Jeremy knew how shotgunning worked. You weren't friends with Michael without getting curious and looking it up and Jeremy was very aware that the... technique Michael proposed wasn’t exactly the most common one.
So you couldn’t blame him for wondering that just either Michael knew less about smoking pot than Jeremy had previously thought or he knew less about Jeremy than he had previously thought and he wasn’t quite sure which would be worse.

Jeremy contemplated calling him out on his bullshit and then it hit him, or at least he thought it did? He wasn’t actually sure but either way he’d get to kiss Michael whether he was just genuinely clueless about proper shotgunning etiquette or just used it as an excuse to kiss Jeremy too.
In a way he felt embarrassed because it was entirely possible that he had been extremely oblivious to some of Michael’s behaviour until now, but at the same time he also still worried that he over interpreted things.

Even though Michael blushing and asking him to weed-kiss him seemed kind of like he liked him, right?
Right?

Either way he’d get to kiss Michael, so thinks would be good enough.
Now he just had to agree, so he nodded, before he decided that maybe he should actually say something so he added “Cool. You’ll show me what to do?”.
He knew what to do, but if Michael did actually just think that was the superior way to shotgun then it would at least be less embarrassing for Jeremy to act like he genuinely didn’t know any better, despite the fact that Michael would never laugh about him for something like this.

During this whole agonizingly long but actually short moment Jeremy felt himself get more and more nervous, at least until he saw Michael fumbling around for the lighter, tripping over his words. He didn’t feel as awkward knowing that at least he wasn’t the only one that was nervous and it made him smile, to know that Michael got so flustered about this, about weed kissing Jeremy.
It was actually kind of ridiculous and he felt like laughing about what a mess they were, but he didn’t want to startle Michael and make him feel like he was laughing about him so he opted to just smile quietly until things got really started. That meant he endured the weird smell of weed around him and swallowed down the embarrassment that came from climbing into Michael’s lab but honestly? If he was already doing this he might as well enjoy it as much as possible and be as close to Michael as possible.

His first hit was still horrible. The kiss wasn’t but the coughing and burning definitely was but then again, seeing Michael laugh like that and feeling the movement of his chest against his might have been worth it. No it was most definitely worth it. Michael’s happiness was worth anything, wasn’t that part of the reason Jeremy had even gotten this tattoo? Agreed to smoke weed despite how much more intensely he reacted to drugs of all sorts?

The second hit was better, less coughing, less burning in his lungs and Jeremy was actually able to focus on the sensation of Michael’s lips against his, which was an utterly amazing sensation. Even though it honestly wasn’t quite kissing, every movement was very focused on getting the job done instead of just being able to move however you liked, but to Jeremy it still felt perfect and romantic in a weird way that only really made sense while he was shotgunning with his long time internet friend that he has seen in real life the first time a few days ago.

Not that that stopped them from instantly being this close apparently, another fact Jeremy would never complain about. It was relieving to know that their closeness actually translated so well into their new relationship, even if it was still surprising to him.

The third hit was more about tasting Michael’s lips than it was about actually getting high.

By their last hit Jeremy was already giggling softly, starring at Michael with wide eyes, cupping his face with his hands softly. “You’ve got really pretty eyes.” He murmured and god he really wanted to keep kissing Michael but they were done with their joint so his excuse for that was gone, but that didn’t keep him from not moving away from Michael in the slightest as the other smiled at him a little confused. Their faces still were only inches apart and it would be so easy to just move a little closer but he wouldn’t.

“This works really quickly for you doesn’t it?”Michael questioned, grinning his font little grin that Jeremy loved so much.

He generally loved Michael and his face (and especially his lips after today).

Did he mention that Michael was really really handsome?

And funny too and reliable and interesting and Jeremy kept adding to the mental list of positive things Michael was, a list that seemed pretty much endless in that moment.

“Maaaybeeee~” he slurred while he put his head on Michaels shoulder, hugging him tightly. Michael was so very warm and comfortable and just so perfect to hug and Jeremy felt so drowsy and never wanted to let go, which apparently was funny to Michael, who giggled slightly at his friends antics.

“Common let’s at least lie down if you’re going to cuddle up to me, you’re heavy.” The sound of Michael’s amused voice was gorgeous too, Jeremy thought, while he let himself be heaved onto the couch in the corner of the room. In itself that wasn’t really funny but somehow it still made Jeremy giggle again, as he made grabby hands at Michael so he’d join him, already missing his warmth.

He was sure that he heard Michael sigh affectionately before he pushed him to the side a little to fit
next to him on the small couch, that really only fit two adult males if they were spooning, but he wasn’t sure because the aforementioned spooning was extremely distracting; in a good way.

Jeremy was generally more aware of sensory input, he felt like he could probably name the exact shower wash Michael used, was aware of every part of them that touched and the texture of the blankets underneath him and how the whole basement smelled like weed and he wouldn’t have thought that the mix of all those things would be this comforting, but it was. It felt like home and Jeremy giggled again.

“What’s so funny this time?” Michael sounded drowsy too now, as if he was barely awake and Jeremy wondered how long they had been lying there already.

“Nothing. Was just thinking that this is nice. You’re nice.” Jeremy sighed contentedly, moving closer to Michael, closing his eyes. They were supposed to celebrate but this was nice too and Jeremy kind of forgot why they were celebrating anyway. He just felt light and happy and disconnected in a weird mental way that he wouldn’t be able to describe until later when his high wore of.

Until then he’d just stay with Michael and cuddle and wonder how he managed to get this lucky.

And who knows maybe if he got even more lucky he’d actually get to kiss Michael for real at some point, even though he definitely wasn’t opposed to the idea of doing this again either, just maybe smoke a little less so they wouldn’t fall asleep again. Or at least not fall asleep as quickly.
In the end both Jeremy and Michael had fallen asleep on the couch, something that Michael would later complain about a lot because they had meant to celebrate, even though he personally thought that the evening couldn’t have gone any better.

However, at four in the morning, he mostly felt grumpy. Something hard and bony had just made contact with his face, making Michael open his eyes at once, frantically looking around for the cause of his latest zombie apocalypse dream. He could swear he had just been wrestled to the ground by a rotter. However to his surprise the cause of his sudden awakening had been something else entirely. Jeremy was lying all over Michael, tossing and turning in a way that made Michael afraid that this wasn’t the first time he had been punched over the course of the night.

Of course the only moment that Jeremy was stronger than Michael was when he wasn’t even conscious to witness it.

It was the middle of the night and he’d have to get up in a few hours to get to his morning classes, and so did Jeremy...probably. He didn’t quite remember Jeremy’s schedule right now, despite how often he went over it with Jeremy just a few days ago to ease his anxiety. At least he’d be able to sleep for a little longer, he thought, triple checking that his alarm for the morning was on and set on the right time; he couldn’t miss his classes so early on in the semester.

It took about half an hour of just lying still for Michael to give up on sleeping for the night, too aware of the fact that Jeremy was lying on top of him and that he could feel the rise and fall of his chest and...oh god, Jeremy had drooled on him, gross. He hadn’t minded at first, when he was way too tired to notice much of anything, but now that the feeling of wet drool on his shoulder and Jeremy’s gentle breathing against his neck was waking him up he slowly became more aware of the situation he was in.

In a way it was actually quite nice, he thought, smiling down at Jeremy. The thought that Jeremy trusted him enough to fall asleep on top of him was something Michael had only dreamed off, even more so after Jeremy had told him about his sensory problems, how certain smells and noises would keep him from falling asleep. It was also nice to see this part of Jeremy, the anxious crease between his brows gone, his body relaxed.
On the other hand, Michael noticed how one of his arms tingled painfully, he noticed that he hadn’t taken off his binder, making his ribs hurt slightly, something he had only started being aware of now, noticed that he had to pee and that he was also really hungry, also the fact that his crush was lying on top of him, wriggling around in his sleep.

In most other situations that would have been great, but as it was, it mostly caused problems for Michael, forcing him to make a decision.

He could either let Jeremy sleep and enjoy the cuddling and overall closeness, or wake him up and get some food.

A part of him thought that it wasn’t even really question when he kissed Jeremy on the top of his head softly before he started shaking him awake.

“Jeremy, bro wake up. I need food,” He said, a little annoyed when Jeremy didn’t react outside of tightening his grip on Michael. He tried moving his legs but to no avail, as Jeremy had just moved around again, somehow managing to get their legs even more entangled in the process.

“Just...five more minutes.” Jeremy mumbles against Michael’s skin, making him shiver slightly.

He was a man on a mission; he couldn’t be swayed that easily. With that in mind, he started tickling his best friend. He knew that it was technically foul play, but so was being wrestled to the ground as Jeremy jolted awake screeching.

“Michael!” Jeremy shouted. His brows were knitted while he looked around frantically, until they finally settled on Michael.

“Why are you under me and lying on the floor?”

A fair question, really, but not one Michael could answer immediately after he got the breath knocked out of him.

“You fell asleep on me and then catapulted us both off the couch when I tried to wake you up.” He wheezed, lightly pushing Jeremy off.

It was obvious that Jeremy was still too tired to really grasp the situation as he sat down next to Michael, taking in his surroundings. At least they were both shit at waking up, even though Michael had already figured that out long ago, the typos Jeremy made in the morning were an amazing feat after all.

A few more moments passed before Michael had caught his breath again and sat up, Jeremy eying him worriedly from the side.

“Sorry about that... are you okay?” Jeremy asked, sounding meeker than Michael had ever heard him before.

“Yeah no it’s fine... I just really need to take off my binder.” Michael rubbed his eyes tiredly. “It’s also nearly five am and I don’t know if you have classes.”

Jeremy nearly jumped at that, all the bleariness in his eyes suddenly gone. He took out his phone, nearly dropping it thrice before he tapped around on it frantically, his eyes scanning the content of whatever he was looking at. After a moment Michael decided to sneak a peak, his curiosity getting the better of him as he was craning his neck, seeing a schedule before the screen went black. Just like that Jeremy suddenly relaxed again, his muscles going lax, unfortunately for Michael who was
currently supporting all his weight, despite still not knowing what the sudden panic was about.

“I don’t have any lectures today apparently?” Jeremy muttered putting his phone away and looking back at Michael, grinning a bit. “You look like shit by the way, how about you go get ready and I make us some early breakfast?”

Michael nodded. “Sounds great Jer-bear.” He yawned before he got up, offering Jeremy a hand to pull him up too.

He didn’t notice how Jeremy stared at him with big eyes while he walked away, blushing at the new nickname, or how he quickly takes out his phone to text Christine.

Jeremy H : Christine I know it's really early and I don't know if you have classes but I really need advice asap!!!
Jeremy H : As in relationship advice?
Jeremy H : Oh god this must be so weird I’m sorry I just really need someone to talk to about this and you’ve always been great at this?

Christine C : Jeremy! Hi, I had plans to meet with some friends later, but you could join us if you want to? If this is about what I think Brooke and Chloe will probably be able to help!

Jeremy H : That’s fine with me just... thanks. I owe you one.
Jeremy H : Also... why are you awake right now?

He doesn’t get an answer to his last question as Christine sends him the time and place they’ll all meet at later.

Christine C : We’ll meet at that hipster Café that always hosts those photo contests at 10 am.
Christine C : Don’t be late~

Chapter End Notes

HI!!

Okay so this chapter is late... awfully late... and I'm really really sorry about that!
But I don't currently plan on abandoning this fanfic despite the fact that updates might be... more rare than before @-@

On a better note! Brooke and Chloe will finally be introduced in this fanfic!!
And I'll probably upload a small post bmc musical oneshot that will actually be done so no annoying waiting for chapters! Yaaay!

Also I'm really really thankful for everyone's nice comments and how patient you have all been with me!
it's honestly what keeps me wanting to work on this fanfic and makes me enjoy writing it even though I'm not really active in the fandom anymore!

So as always thanks for your kudos and bookmarks and comments!!
I'll try to work on this more often again!!

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Okay so!! This isn't exactly a new chapter But!!! It's completely betad (mostly) by my mentor "upsidearound" on tumblr who has been assigned to me by the "ff-writers-mentor-mentee-network"
Which basically means this chapter probably reads a lot better than the ones before!
Yay!

ALSO! I'll actually go and write a chapter rn and I'll probably upload it before any kind of proper proofreading because I want to get it out today but!
Yeah that's a thing :3

Sorry for the nearly month long wait though ^^"
Jeremy reached the Café Christine had talked about, his hands in the pockets of his cardigan and his head lowered at 9:30 am after a very awkward breakfast with Michael.

It hadn’t been awkward in a “tense silence” way or anything; it was more of a “I weed kissed you yesterday and woke up sleeping on top of you and I was actually already awake when you took out your phone but I enjoyed cuddling with you too much to admit to that” kind of awkward in which Jeremy blushed slightly whenever he looked at Michael and nearly burned the pancakes because he was just so very aware of the others eyes on him.

They had still talked naturally and joked about Jeremy suddenly getting a tattoo and smoking weed for the first time, both on the same day, and had discussed their opinion for the new “Apocalypse of the Damned” dlc but all in all there was a new kind of tension and no matter how much Jeremy had loved the events that lead up to him making breakfast in Michael’s kitchen he was also very happy about being able to talk to someone about everything.

Their time together had ended with Jeremy leaving the apartment complex together with Michael, trying desperately not to kiss him goodbye as they went their respective ways; Michael heading to his university and Jeremy to the so called hipster Café.

He wasn’t sure how he felt about spending his free time at Michael’s place of employment without him but at the same time it would have felt like some kind of betrayal to go elsewhere, so ultimately it worked out that Christine unknowingly made plans at Digital Silk.

Now his musing about breakfast and Michael did help him kill some time but not nearly enough to actually pass the thirty minutes until he was supposed to meet with Christine and her friends, so he opted to buying something for himself instead of just loitering in front of the shop like some hungover creep.

He regretted his decision immediately when he saw who was working that day.

“What’s up tall-ass.” Came Rich’s smug voice. He was currently wiping down the counter, before he lazily propped his arms on it, looking at Jeremy with an almost predatory grin.

The eyes that were fixed on Jeremy let him know that Rich was ready to run after him should he dare to run out of the shop.

“I- ehm... hi?” Jeremy winced at how unsure he sounded, even more so because it clearly amused Rich. He wasn’t nearly as intimidating now that his shoulders were relaxed and the frown gone but after their last talk Jeremy didn’t really feel comfortable around him.

“God are you ever not fucking awkward? Sit down while I make you your usual and tell me how things with Michael went, because, by the way you look, there’s definitely a story.” Rich didn’t mention that he had already gotten a long message from Michael about last night. He wanted to know if Jeremy actually cared about Michael and the best way to do that was to hear his version of the evening. To get that information he even was ready to play nice for once.
“Nice tattoo by the way.” He sneered while he watched Jeremy slowly come closer to the counter like a frightened animal.

Of course Jeremy didn’t feel like talking to Rich but at the same time he had waited to talk about his feelings for Michael and the potential of them being returned for hours so he figured he might as well indulge in Rich’s weird interest in his costumers personal life.

“Well...I talked to Michael about his eh panic attack in the bathroom? But that was a while ago already, but thanks for telling me about that-“, Jeremy paused for a moment to just watch Rich as he poured the syrup into his coffee. He wondered briefly if he had even ordered anything and put a five dollar bill on the counter before he continued “...we talked about what caused it and things are fine again I think. Or better at least. And we met yesterday?”

Maybe he shouldn’t tell Rich about this if he valued his life.

“We have matching tattoos now and we smoked together? It was nice. And I think he likes me but I’m not sure, but I hope he does and I don’t know why I’m telling you this.”

*Yep this was stupid*, Jeremy thought wincing, closing his eyes tight, waiting for Rich to punch him or something.

Instead of being somehow assaulted however, he just felt a cold beverage being held against his forehead. When he opened his eyes again he saw Rich grinning at him warmly “Might want to cool down a little, blushing that much can’t be healthy.”

He didn’t say anything else after Jeremy took the drink and just went back to checking up on several kitchen appliances, humming softly all the while. Jeremy took that as his cue to scatter. With his coffee in hand he went over to one of the bigger tables in the Café to wait the last, he looked around the room to look at one of the many clocks, seven minutes.

**Player1**: I’m still not sure how you manage to be friends with Rich
**Player1**: He scares the shit out of me even when he smiles...

In the middle of writing Michael a long string of texts explaining how and why Rich reminded him of a high school bully someone sat down in front of him, something that went unnoticed by him until the same person grabbed the coffee he had just been holding.

He looked up with a frown his mouth half open to scold whoever had just kidnapped his drink and was met with the sight of Christine grinning at him as she emptied the beverage he had spent 5$ on. Not as bad as a stranger doing this but still rude.

“Nice seeing you too.” Jeremy grumbled with his eyes still fixed on the remnants of his overpriced...he didn’t actually know what Rich had prepared for him. Huh.

“Nope no time for small talk Jeremy. I want to know everything and I mean everything, before Brooke and Chloe join and hog all your attention. So spill!” For a small moment Jeremy wondered if it was the right decision to tell Christine out of everyone he knew, now that he sat in front of her, feeling like a criminal that was being questioned.

“Okay okay so short version: I got this tattoo to match his and he wanted to smoke to celebrate it and he proposed that we weed-kissed, well shotgunned but I like the sound of it better and it was great. I
mean I’ve just noticed that I probably kind of crushed on Michael for years? And I mean you haven’t seen him probably, or maybe you did since he works here, but he’s hot. Like insanely hot. And he weed-kissed me and I think he likes me too? But I’m not sure so I wrote you to overanalyze this together with me.”

He took a deep breath, looking at Christine expectantly while she just stared at him with big eyes. At first she had just sat in front of him relaxed and grinning but over the course of Jeremy’s quick word vomit she had started leaning forward, her eyes widening in awe.

“You’re really clueless, aren’t you?”

Jeremy whipped around as fast as possible, nearly falling of his chair as it toppled dangerously on only one of its four legs for a moment.
A small and soft hand pushed him back, preventing his untimely death by falling of a chair before the person sat down at the table next to Christine, followed by another person.

“You’re here already, I thought you were going to be late.” Christine said, smiling at the girls that just arrived, hugging them both briefly from her space at the table.

“Jeremy! This is Brooke-” Christine pointed at a very pretty blonde girl that was playing with the end of her long sleeves while smiling at him softly “- and that’s Chloe.” She pointed at a taller brown haired girl that carried herself like she was better than everyone else and aware of it.

“Nice to meet you?” Jeremy wasn’t sure what the social protocol was for meeting your past crush’s pretty friends that might or might not have heard your story about making out with your new crush while smoking pot. It made him a little anxious how little he knew how to behave in this situation but fortunately Chloe started speaking again, giving Jeremy a moment to gather his thoughts.

“So you’re telling me you kissed a friend of yours and you’re not sure if he likes you? And we’re talking about that barista that always smiles at his phone while texting you?”

“He does what?!” Jeremy screeched, but Chloe ignored him.

“He does what?!” Jeremy screeched, but Chloe ignored him.

“From what I’ve heard that boy is madly in love with you, so what’s the problem?”

The problem? The problem is that we’ve been best friends for years and met what? Three days ago and everything is moving way too quickly, Jeremy thought with a frown, tugging at his t-shirt while he tried not to look anyone in the eyes.
“Hey Jeremy?” This time it was Brooke talking and Jeremy looked up slightly, not quite meeting her gaze yet. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Christine looking at Chloe angrily as she furiously whispered at her, without any effect on the brunette.

“How about you tell us what’s going on and how you feel about it and then we can devise a plan?”

Brookes voice was gentle and Jeremy couldn’t detect any ill will, making him smile slightly as he nodded, starting to retell everything that has happened since he had first seen at Digital Silk.
It's been nearly a month but! Here it is chapter 18!
It hasn't been proofread or betad yet because I just wanted to get it out as quickly as possible and I hope that's fine!

Anyway yes Brooke and Chloe finally made their appearance!
Some random informations about those two in my fanfic: Chloe is a journalism student and Brooke a photography student. They're both bi and might end up dating over the course of this story.

Brooke and Christine are good friends that have worked together during a local theater production that Christine played the lead role in and Brooke took photos off.

Chloe and Christine know each other from an interview for the same play.

And that's it for now! I hope to update this more quickly next time and as always thanks so so much for all your amazing comments and the kudos and bookmarks! They really encourage me to keep working on this even if my pace has become a lot slower ^^’

Have a nice week!
When your friends plan is bullshit but you don't get a say

Chapter Summary

After weed-kissing Michael, Jeremy starts thinking that maybe they're moving too quickly. Not knowing what to do he decides to meet up with Christine, Brooke and Chloe to ask for relationship advice. Little did he know that they suck at that.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“How about you tell us what’s going on and how you feel about it and then we can devise a plan?” Brooke’s voice sounded gentle and with no other choice but to trust the three girls in front of him Jeremy decided that he might as well try telling them what has been going on the last few days.

“So—“However that didn’t mean that he knew how to properly articulate anything that has happened so far. “-I have...had? This online friend called Michael and we met through this online game somewhere during middle school. He kind of never felt comfortable sending pictures and stuff so I never knew what he looked like and we both recently moved and started college and anyway...”

That’s the part where Jeremy started blushing madly. He still wasn’t all that excited about the whole gushing about Michael’s looks in front of Michael thing, even if it was all justified and probably nice to hear for the other boy.

“Well I started frequently visiting this shop and one day I saw this really cute barista...and told Michael about him just that the barista actually was Michael?”

Jeremy heard Brooke snickering slightly and looked down embarrassed. He knew that this all probably sounded really stupid and decided to avoid the three’s gazes until he finished his somewhat emotional explanation.

“Anyway we started hanging out after that and it just feels really natural. Which probably isn’t surprising because we have known each other for years but somehow everything is moving pretty fast? Like a week ago or so I thought we were internet friends albeit best friends and then suddenly I find out we live in the same city and that there’s so much to him I never knew about and that’s not even including the fact that he’s fucking hot.”

He wasn’t quite sure when during his little speech Rich had decided to join them but Jeremy guessed it was too late to back out now.

“Just...he’s really really great and I knew that already just that adding all the new things I found out kinda showed me that I have had a huge crush on Michael for basically forever? And there’s a chance that he might return those feelings but it’s really intimidating at the same time and I’m not sure what to do about that or whether he actually likes me at all and it’s just—“ Jeremy let out a frustrated long groan, opting to end his sentence with vague choppy hand gestures in all directions instead.
When he looked up again, his face as red as a tomato from embarrassment, he saw Chloe acting as if she had fallen asleep, Brooke and Christine quietly talking amongst themselves and Rich typing something on his phone quickly before he stood up to end his break, winking at Jeremy.

He wasn’t sure which of those reactions was the worst but he felt like either of them was reason enough to hide his face in his hands, damning his life choices.

He only looked up again when he felt someone put a hand on his right arm. In front of him was Christine smiling at him fondly.

“I just really don’t want to mess this up or move too quickly.” He admitted shyly.

Chloe rolled her eyes at that, eying Jeremy suspiciously before she nodded as if she had just found the cure for cancer.

“Listen up, I get why you’d think Michael isn’t in to you-“She held up her hand before Jeremy could even start to protest against that statement. “-but to anyone else but you it’s obvious that he’s into you. You don’t even want to know how many regulars here joke about how he smiles at his phone whenever he thinks no one is looking.”

Jeremy choked on his drink slightly at that. Chloe had hinted at something like this already earlier but the thought of Michael smiling softly while talking to him was still enough to catch him off guard. In the last few days he got used to a slightly cocky smile and obvious amusement and the few small fond smiles he was able to catch a glimpse off were enough to make his heart skip several beats.

Then again who wouldn’t find Michael’s sweet and loving expressions entirely adorable?

A loud obnoxious snapping in front of Jeremy’s face made him snap out of his day dreaming and squeak like a scared animal, making even Brooke hide a small smile behind her scarf.

“Now that you’re conscious again here’s what we’ll do and no you don’t get a say in this just yet. Brooke and I were planning to collaborate on some stuff for our university. Basically we wanted to do an LGBT+ photo exhibit and a small newspaper article plus interview featuring the models. Now lucky for you we still need models. You’re afraid that things are moving too quickly or that you’re not good enough or whatever? Model for us. Hell, maybe even bring Michael so he can see you at your best in real life too.”

That was...a really stupid plan.

“Wait, how is modelling and ridiculing myself supposed to help me with any of this?” Jeremy decided to voice his thoughts and regretted it instantly when he saw Chloe roll her eyes at him, her angry rant only to be stopped by Brooke who put her hands on Chloe’s brushing her thumb over the back of her hand softly.

“Well, it would give you a chance to boost your self confidence and a very unique experience with Michael. And we’d get some models, which I guess is Chloe’s main reason for that plan, sorry.” Brooke said, smiling at Jeremy slightly apologetically.

Said person looked in Christine’s direction with a desperate expression in hope of finding an ally, only to be met with her barely containing her excitement. She was downright vibrating in her seat, her hands already making barely contained flapping motions.
“It’s perfect!” She stage whispered, before locking her gaze on Jeremy, making him slide down his seat slowly, hoping to be swallowed by a whole.

“Are we all just ignoring the actual emotional problems I mentioned or?” Maybe just maybe he could get out of this by pointing out how utterly ridiculous this was.

“No, Jeremy it’s perfect! It will be like theatre just with still frames instead of a play! We can orchestrate you in a way that even if Michael wasn’t already 100% smitten with you he’d end up falling. Make-up, a gorgeous outfit, a nice setting and good lighting! And on top of that you get to spend a lot of time in close proximity to him to convince you of the fact that he likes you!” At the end of her little speech Christine had suddenly stood up, banging her fists on the table, attracting the curious glances of many other patrons.

“We’re doing this! We can’t help you with stuff like things moving too quickly because that’s a talk you’ll need to have with Michael but we can help you even get to the point where you need to address that. Right?” She looked at Brooke and Chloe, both who were nodding along to varying degrees of excitement, expectantly.

“I don’t get an actual say in this either way right?” Jeremy said, trying to get out of this one last time.

“Nope!”

With that Christine dropped the topic after putting the four of them in a group chat, opting to instead talk about the project in itself and how starting university had worked out for all of them and several other smaller topics. However, if asked what exactly was said Jeremy wouldn’t be able to answer.

He had felt extremely drained after the whole thing and even though he appreciated the well meant gesture he still didn’t feel good about the situation. For one thing he was afraid of the shoot itself and just...not looking good or being good in general despite the effort put into him.

On the other hand it just added on to the list of things that have been moving way too quickly for him lately and by now he wasn’t sure if things were really moving too fast or if he was just slowly but surely falling behind because he was too slow, not enough; either way, he couldn’t get himself to really focus on the conversation that transpired and when they all went their separate ways he nearly missed the new messages on his phone.

Player2: I heard from Rich that you’re going to model for some friends???
Player2: That’s amazing dude!!
Player2: You’ll probably look amazing I’m kinda jealous.

Jeremy smiled slightly. Trust Michael to change his mood in an instant with just one simple message. Maybe, just maybe it wasn’t so bad that things went a little quickly, if it managed to make him feel like this, Jeremy thought.

Player1: If you’re jealous, why not join me?
Player1: We could do the shoot together

He could do this, he could woo Michael Mell.
I think the last update was about two months ago and I'm horribly sorry for the long wait ;A; !!!
Starting college myself and moving kind of messed up my schedule and I didn't really get around to writing much and I'm not sure if this chapter was good but I really wanted to finally update again!

No, I didn't abandon this fanfic yet despite what waiting this long might have made you think.

I still have some plans for this fanfic and while I might try to wrap it up "rather quickly" I do still want it to come to an actually satisfying end!
So fear not, I will try to see this through to the end.

At the same time this chapter hasn't been proofread or betad yet so there'll probably be some changed at a later point but right now I just wanted you to be able to enjoy a new chapter!

Also thanks so so so much for all the nice comments I have gotten in the span of the last two months!! The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and on top of that the last time I checked this fanfic was the tenth most popular fanfic ranked my kudos in the bmc tag so! THANK YOU !!!

Having said that I'll try to update more frequently again from now on!!

Have a nice week <3
Michael keeps falling hard and at this point it might mess with his perception of time

Chapter Summary

It has just been a few days since Michael and Jeremy first met in real life and it's currently the morning after their first kiss. Well, weed-kiss. Even though it has only been a few days it feels like months to Michael. Maybe all the pining and daydreaming finally messed up his perception of time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It is suddenly quite some time ago from Jeremy’s perspective but not for Michael Mell. For Michael Mell it’s the here and now. You could even say it’s right now. Right now as in he just woke up after an amazing evening of weed-kissing his best friend and falling asleep together on the couch.

Right now as in sitting at his kitchen table, while Jeremy made breakfast. Michael didn’t know that Jeremy was able to make pancakes and for some reason finding out about it in this fashion made his heart ache in a weird but good way. There he was, the guy he has been pining after for years, in boxers and a T-Shirt, making pancakes.

It was just so domestic, that someone could have come up to Michael and told him that it was a dream and Michael would have been inclined to believe it. But no matter how many times Michael pinched himself the scene in front of him didn’t change and eventually he just rested his head on the table, observing Jeremy.

Jeremy, who was trying to flip the pancakes in the air.
Jeremy, who would turn back to look at him with that huge dopey smile whenever he managed to catch the pancake afterwards.
Jeremy, who was talking about how maybe Michael should sleep some more because he seemed awfully tired.

Just Jeremy.

In Michael’s head everything revolved around Jeremy and he couldn’t even say that he minded, because Jeremy sat down across from him and handed him a plate with such a proud smile that Michael’s whole stomach filled up with butterflies way before he could even eat anything.

He really had fallen hard for his best friend and in a way it felt like he had just never stopped falling. He just kept falling deeper and deeper with every stupid little joke Jeremy made and each small secret smile.

The whole breakfast passed in a sort of haze for Michael. Time seemed to slow down and speed up simultaneously as he observed Jeremy and kept coming back to the same thought.

I really do love this boy.
In no time at all they had both finished eating and Michael loaded their plates and forks into the dishwasher to be dealt with at a later date.

They made their way outside once they were both presentable because Michael had classes and Jeremy said that he promised to meet up with some friends.

Friends Michael didn’t ask about because he was kind of preoccupied with not showing how sappy he was that morning.

He told Jeremy they’d talk later, hugged him good bye because that’s not gay, no Sir and went around the block just to stop dead in his tracks as soon as he was out of sight.

His whole frame going rigid, Michael clutched his sweater right above were his heart was and put his other hand into one of the pockets of his pants.

Into the wrong pocket of his pants.

He grimaced as all he could find in said pocket were old bus tickets and some loose change and tried the other one, which held his phone. If he had focused on his pants instead of clutching at his chest like some movie cliché he probably could have gotten it right on the first try but what could he say, sometimes he just needed the drama.

Not that the whole gesture of dramatically clutching at his heart made all that much sense. Swooning, that might have been appropriate but no, he had went for the clutching. Maybe he wasn’t all that good at romcom reactions.

That said he was a man on a mission and said mission was texting Rich. His thoughts about the right dramatic reactions would have to wait.

**Nerd:** Rich this is an emergency and I need you to listen closely, okay?

**Nerd:** Rich.

**Nerd:** Rich I know you’re working but I also know that you use your phone during work hours.

**Nerd:** Okay fine I’ll just spam you with what happened last evening and you better help me later.

After four messages Michael gave up on the thought that Rich would reply any time soon and resumed walking towards his university, albeit still spamming Rich. He hoped there wasn’t an angry baby boomer watching him on that morning, because they would hate the way he looked at his screen while walking.

Then again what did Michael care about old angry people that disliked the way he navigated his way through the hords of other tired people around himself. It wasn’t like he nearly ran into others or really bothered anyone.

No really, he was a perfectly okay person to encounter, if you just ignored the furious tapping and the frown of concentration. Perfectly fine if you ignored said tapping for the whole walk to his lecture.

When he finally reached his destination he had just finished his long ramble about the last evenings happenings. He wasn’t quite sure when, but at some point Rich had started messaging him back as well and all in all that should have been enough to satisfy him for the moment. He had been in such a
good mood earlier so...

It really should have been good enough and maybe it would have been if it wasn’t for that last message Rich had send him.

**Jock**: Oh shit your loverboy just walked in brb I’ll ask him about it

Sure, Jeremy had told him that he’d meet his friends at a coffee shop but Michael didn’t remember him mentioning anything about said coffee shop being Digital Silk. Michael also didn’t remember that Rich and Jeremy talked but then again Rich seemed like the kind of person that didn’t mind striking up a conversation with someone he didn’t know well.

That wasn’t what made Michael sigh in frustration and rest his head on his desk yet again though. It was the fact that Rich was going to talk to Jeremy while Michael was sitting in some lecture. It was the fact that he even had to ask for help because he was so insecure he just... well he’d just keep pining forever without help.

He probably seemed so aloof and all towards Jeremy but he wasn’t. Hell, he had a panic attack at work and was currently getting all worked up because of some shotgunning. He was kind of a loser.

It wasn’t that he was putting up an act or something as much as he just decided to hide some things at the very back of his mental closet.

He could hear the voices getting louder. *Loser. Loser. Loser.*

Closing his eyes tightly Michael tried to will the negative thoughts away and sat up straighter after a moment. He wasn’t sure what the lecture was about at this point but maybe he could still learn something if he started listening now. Surely it couldn’t be that hard.

His eyes shifted from the slide show his professor had started to the clock in the front of the room and back. *Loser.*

To the clock and back. *Loser.*

To the clock...

The light vibration of his phone on the table shocked him out of his nearly trance like state.

His hand shoots out to grab his mobile and he nearly drops it as he quickly pulls it under the table and unlocks the screen with several rocky movements.

**Jock**: okay so i wouldnt worry if i was you

**Jock**: if i got a dollar for every time he complimented you id be...

**Jock**: rich

Michael closed his eyes again after reading the message and slowly counted backwards from 10 as he tried not to laugh, both from how relieved he felt and from how bad the joke he just read was.

Judging from the faces of the people around him he concluded that he probably did a rather bad job at hiding his amusement, but he finds himself unable to care yet again as the butterflies come back to set up camp in his stomach.
Jeremy didn’t hate him. Maybe Jeremy didn’t think that he was a loser.

Michael suddenly felt incredibly lucky that Rich worked at the coffee shop Jeremy was visiting.

**Jock**: but yeah not going to say anything specific but he definitely has a thing for you  
**Jock**: go get him tiger  
**Jock**: oh shit his friends roped him into modelling for them  
**Jock**: brb this is hilarious

Michael sobered up a bit at the last few messages but he felt as if the fondness he felt right then probably wouldn’t go away for a while. He shot back some short replies to Rich and opened his chat with Jeremy, completely ignoring the soft lull his professors voice created.

**Player2**: I heard from Rich that you’re going to model for some friends???
**Player2**: That’s amazing dude!!  
**Player2**: You’ll probably look amazing I’m kinda jealous.

And he meant it. Michael had always thought that Jeremy was handsome, even back when Jeremy was all long limbs and awkwardness. He had grown into that now and he carried himself with more confidence.

At least Michael imagined that he did. He had never seen Jeremy walk around as a teenager, but he could imagine it clear as day and it made him both want to smile fondly and cringe out of sympathy. He wished he could have been around back then and maybe helped Jeremy feel more comfortable in his own skin.

His phone vibrated in his hand.

He hadn’t noticed the screen turning off again, but his thoughts generally seemed to be somewhere far away today. He kept spacing out and-

**Player1**: If you’re jealous, why not join me?  
**Player1**: We could do the shoot together

- he couldn’t have read that right?

The words didn’t change, no matter how often Michael reread the messages and before he knew it he had already typed a reply.

**Player2**: Okay, sure.

All around him people were standing up and leaving the room.

His name is Michael Mell and he might have just signed up for death by posing for photos with the handsome guy he’s been crushing on for years.

Chapter End Notes
Okay so I haven't updated in ages and I'm rlly rlly sorry about that!
But also thanks so much to the few people that are still reading this fanfic and
commenting and just thank you so much!!!

Reading the nice comments really makes my day everytime and they're the reason I'm
still motivated to finish this fanfic despite the long hiatus so!

Yeah! To celebrate those people and Be More Chill coming to broadway I present you
with this non beta read version of chapter 20!!

Oh one last thing though:
Right now this fanfic is at a point where I could probably end it in a few more chapters
but I do technically have ideas for more things.
Now since this is a slow burn fanfic I don't want to cut things of too quickly, but I also
don't want to make anyone suffer from having to wait forever for another chapter.
Because of that I wanted to ask for opinions on this.
I'd really like to hear your opinions on the matter!
Chapter Summary

Michael might have agreed to the idea of modeling as if it wasn't a big deal. That doesn't mean that he can't internally freak out about it anyway.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Okay, sure."

It was such a simple message, yet it still left Michael staring blankly at his phone for way longer than he would feel comfortable admitting. All around him people were leaving the room, signalling that his lecture had ended and still he couldn’t find it in himself to follow their lead. It was as if some invisible force kept him down, as if he was the big bad wolf from red riding hood and he had just been cut open to be filled with stones.

The stones in his stomach kept weighing him down, all his former cheer over the nice evening and the morning that followed forgotten.

He wasn’t even sure what exactly made him panic like this right now. All he knew, was that somehow these two words resembled a grave that he had just finished digging for himself.

The room was nearly empty at this point and he could practically feel the disgruntled stare of the professor as they waited for everyone to leave so they could lock up and go back to doing whatever his professors got up to between lectures.

Numbly Michael started pocketing his spiral-bound notepad and the pen he had taken out at the start of the lecture, when he still thought he would listen to it and shoved them into his bag haphazardly. He stared into his bag for another moment, trying to gather his thoughts and then slowly stood up.

Walking out of the room felt awkward, but he barely recognized the feeling over the static that filled his head.

If he just thought about it for a moment, Michael thought, he would probably understand what was making him feel this way. If he could just stop for a second and slow down enough to not just let the sensations pass him by in a blur, he could probably find a way out of the haze.

"Okay, sure."

Someone ran into him and suddenly the world came back into focus; a little too bright and loud and generally too much, but it was enough to push aside everything he had been feeling, at least for now.

His body still felt as if it was operating on autopilot.

That was okay for now.
One step at a time, Michael made his way out of the building towards his next lecture. He didn’t feel like he would be able to pay attention. Despite this, he kept walking, kept trying to just function until the end of the day. He could think this through then, could check whether Jeremy said anything else, could find a way to deal with his most recent case of his mouth (or fingers, he corrected himself) being faster than his brain.

And wasn’t that generally the problem with him?

He was comfortable in his own skin. He didn’t care about being popular back when he was in high school, or generally about what people thought about him. He would consider himself and extrovert as well, maybe a bit eccentric.

However, that didn’t mean that he liked confrontation. Whether is was wearing headphones while eating lunch alone in the cafeteria, or preparing angry rants in his head just to never actually say any of the things he was so angry about; he just wasn’t good at dealing with conflict. He didn't even like the possibility of it.

He didn’t feel the need to change who he was, like a lot of his peers, didn’t think he had to be anything but himself, but none of that made him immune to the uncomfortable taste conflict left in his mouth.

Back when he contemplated whether he was trans or not it was the same. Already comfortable with the thought that the word described himself, yet not quite ready for the consequences, so he looked for the option that caused the least friction.

Not feeling like a girl didn’t mean he had to be male, maybe he was non-binary. He could still go by his birth name, was what he thought, he could just be trans... casually. Something he could mention when the word “girl” made his skin crawl too much to say nothing, without having to deal with the possible rejection of a new name or pronouns and the pressure of suddenly being gay on top of being trans.

Of course looking back none of that really made sense. Looking back, he thought, it was both a pretty shitty way to think and also horribly disrespectful to his actually non-binary peers.

It took a while to realize that, however. It took him trying it and still cringing every time someone called him by his birth name, called him “she” and a lot of other things for him to accept that it just wasn’t something he felt comfortable with.

Pretending to be someone else wasn’t worth being able to avoid some questions and comparisons to cis guys.

Considering this, Michael knew, that going with the flow and his anxiety induced attempts at fitting in didn’t tend to work.

Someone next to him asks him, if he could let them through and Michael looks up to see, that he had arrived at his next lecture at some point during his contemplation.

He stands up quickly, as he quietly apologizes to the person and sits back down once they get past him, to whatever seat they decided to occupy. The room was already pretty full and it was a small miracle that nobody had asked him to get up so far, considering that he sat at the outermost seat of the row. Or maybe, people had asked him and he just hadn’t noticed and rudely ignored them.
The thought of people just grumpily trying to squeeze into another row finally managed to put an end on the whirlwind of thoughts and feelings inside his brain. His notepad and pen were already on the small table in front of him, so Michael decided to look up which lecture he actually was in again, before the professor showed up.

“Introduction into the musical analysis”, his timetable supplied.

It was one of the required courses, but also one that Michael had been really excited about when he had read about it. He tried to focus on that feeling, to focus on how he wanted to learn this, how everything else could wait until later.

He pulled up the text they were supposed to read until today and started rereading it, slowly starting to focus on it more and more, until the lecture started.

The chance to actually verbally contribute to a discussion didn’t generally appear during a lecture, which made it harder to pay attention for Michael. It unlike his seminars, where the excitement of discussing something he was passionate about made him focus all on its own.

Difficulties with concentrating wouldn’t stop him today, he decided. Since he met Jeremy a few days ago his mood had been all over the place, changing from one extreme to another and today was no different, but he didn’t want to keep being swept along by his feelings.

Suddenly agreeing to doing a photo-shoot just to not disappoint his crush, despite not even being comfortable with taking selfies, was prove enough to him that he wasn’t completely acting like himself, that he had to try and even out all those ups and downs.

So he looked up when his professor entered the room, and he wrote down some notes, even though he could download the power point for the lecture later and he ignored the feeling of stones in his stomach.

Two hours later the stones didn’t feel quite as heavy. Michael knew, that he would have to face the feelings and consequences of his impulsive message, that all he did right now was to suppress the issue for a while.

It had to be enough for now.

He still had one seminar and a tutorial to go to and a lunch break before those, so really, later did have to be enough.

For now, he would go and get some food and do the reading for the seminar that he hadn’t felt like doing the days before. They were currently talking about different composers and while Michael was generally interested in them, he also didn’t really feel like learning the history of everyone his university deemed relevant.

Skimming the first few pages, he makes his way towards the cafeteria, trusting the people around him to see that he was reading and not run into him, trusting the words about some dead musician to keep the static from earlier at bay.

Loud conversations and the usual bustle of hungry university students greeted him as he entered the cafeteria on his campus. The crowd makes it hard to not run into one another, so he shoves his phone back into on of the pocket of his jeans and makes his way towards a random queue.
It takes some shoving and prodding and a look at the menu for him to decide that actually, he’d rather just go to the nearest 7/11 and get some comfort food.

He tries to ignore that he might just have wasted time unnecessarily.

Getting out of the building proves to be a bit harder than getting in, the flood of undergraduates on their way to get lunch not seeming to be about to stop for a while. Just another reason to get out of here quickly, Michael thinks bitterly, as he runs into another person.

Fortunately, Michael perfected the art of weaving through crowds back in high school, allowing him to get through at a reasonable speed as soon as he actually focuses on where he’s going.

He stops focusing as soon as he’s outside again, opting to make his way towards the nearest 7/11 on auto-pilot. Everything still seemed just a bit too bright and loud for Michael to be quite comfortable with paying attention to his surroundings. On top of that, fighting the left-over static in his brain completely takes more effort than he wants it to.

Focusing wasn’t really necessary anyway, since the short walk was one he had made quite often already, opting to eat away from the crowds that formed on campus more often than not.

Walk a while, turn left, keep walking, stop at the traffic light, keep walking, turn left again and enter the store.

He quickly grabs one of the sushi boxes, which never taste quite the way sushi is supposed to, but are somehow all the more comforting for it and then moves on to get the biggest slushie available. The girl at the counter seemed to sense that his day hasn’t been going all that great and gives him a generous pour, prompting him to smile at her gratefully.

Maybe this day would be okay, he thinks, as he leaves the store and makes his way back to the building in which his seminar will be held. Some people might call his habit of lounging in front of the closed lecture halls antisocial, but he didn’t care all that much. He just didn’t feel like social interaction, his slightly better mood notwithstanding.

Once he sits safely on the floor in front of his seminar room and eats his sushi, he feels like he might actually survive the rest of the day. The slushie settles cold in his stomach and gives him a brain freeze and it feels like just another day, albeit the static in the back of his brain doesn’t go away completely.

He finishes eating and gets up to throw away the trash, then goes back to his reading and takes part in the discussions once the seminar starts.

It’s good. Somewhere in the back of his mind he knows that he’s still not acting quite normal, that he’s ignoring his phone, ignoring the notifications on his messenger app, that he’s still a bit too distracted.

He tries to ignore it and instead focuses on taking notes.

The day passes quickly after that. The tutorial is uneventful and Michael gets to leave early, as he does most of the time, because a lot of the current topics are things he had already learned before university.
While he’s walking back towards his dorm, he feels the static growing a bit louder again, the stones getting a bit heavier, seemingly knowing, that he promised to deal with the issue of the photo-shoot once he was in his own four walls.

Knowing that he had to face whatever made him freak-out earlier nearly makes Michael decide to stop dead in his tracks and turn around, do anything else, just so he could avoid this a bit longer.

It doesn’t work like that, he knows. All it would accomplish would be to make the negative feelings grow until they overwhelmed him again. At least now, everything would happen on his own terms.

So he keeps walking, unlocks the door and briefly greets his flatmates, before he finally lets himself fall backwards onto his bed.

He stares at his ceiling for a moment, preparing himself, allowing himself to feel silly for a moment.

Because it was silly, wasn’t it? Getting so spooked about agreeing to some photo-shoot that his best friend was attending too. His best friend that had always been self-conscious about... well everything.

A sigh escapes Michael while he turns around on his bed to bury his face in his pillows.

It wasn’t that he cared what people thought, it was just that he does, kinda, sometimes.

He had never liked taking pictures of himself back when he didn’t pass, because he didn’t like looking at himself, looking at the reminder that he didn’t pass, that people saw him and thought of him as female.

Once he started hormone therapy, he tried taking pictures and just felt awkward about it. The transition was amazing and stressful at the same time, on top of that going through puberty a second time wasn’t always pretty.

So taking pictures still wasn’t his thing and once he started to pass he couldn’t just shake off years and years of feeling horribly bad about getting his picture taken.

Sometimes, he felt like maybe he still didn’t pass, like maybe, if people looked at him long enough, they would see some feminine trait and assume that he was a woman.

Sometimes, he felt like he couldn’t measure up to cis guys. Like people would look at a picture of him and say “Well, you’re handsome for a trans guy.” and not mean it as a compliment, just another reminder that some people didn’t see him as a “real” guy.

Sometimes, he was afraid people would look at photos of him and start mocking him.

Those fears weren’t rational, he knew that, but at some point, all the small offhanded comments people made about him over the years, all those thoughts that invaded his mind at night just manifested more and more in his distaste of photos of himself.

It didn’t help that everyone around him seemed to comfortable with taking pictures, even Jeremy, who told Michael about his own insecurities about the way he looked so often.

Jeremy, who now apparently modelled for friends Michael didn’t know, who seemed so far away from him just a few hours after he made breakfast in Michael’s kitchen.
Jeremy, who suddenly got a tattoo yesterday and smoked weed and who seemed so genuine and left Michael to run after him, trying to catch up with him.

When had any of those changes taken place?

Did Michael just notice it now, because he only now actually knew Jeremy in real life?

Or was it a change prompted by meeting Michael?

Was it even a change, or was Jeremy like Michael? Trying to impress? To be someone worth looking at?

Because that’s what Michael had been trying to do the last few days, he was aware of that.

Reading what Jeremy had thought about him, before Michael had revealed himself, it had made him want to make Jeremy keep thinking those things.

Michael had always just seemed to be Jeremy’s dorky best friend. The one that helped him get event items in games, that listened to his worries and his crushes. He hadn’t ever been at the center of Jeremy’s attention like this, hadn’t ever been complimented like this.

A part of him was afraid that if he was completely just his usual self, Jeremy might go back to not noticing him. He would find some gorgeous person and make new friends and forget all about Michael, because Jeremy was the kind of person that got asked to model for people and Michael was just the guy he played video games with on Sundays.

So Michael had agreed, because he didn’t want to show Jeremy that he was insecure and because he didn’t want to be left behind.

In just a few days his world had been turned upside down and he was struggling so hard to keep up with what was happening and he knew that he was probably worrying over nothing but the stress was catching up to him and it was getting harder and harder to think about anything rationally.

He had agreed, because he wanted to impress Jeremy, because he had meant it when he said that Jeremy was probably going to look amazing and he wanted that too.

Still, the anxiety of making a fool of himself in front of Jeremy and his friends, it didn’t just disappear. It was rolling off of him in waves and the fact that he hadn’t messaged anyone all day probably already alarmed Jeremy to the fact that something was wrong.

There wasn’t really a point in keeping up the charade, Michael thought sighing.

All these fears, all these insecurities wouldn’t go away from being ignored. He had to tell Jeremy, had to trust that Jeremy liked him for himself and wasn’t moving on without him.

Knowing that didn’t make it any easier for Michael to sit up again and fight against the static as he took out his phone to talk to Jeremy.

At least that was the plan until the messages Michael saw first were from Rich.

A lot of them where just general messages about his day, complaining about costumers, quite a few
of them however where asking if Michael was okay. Rich was worried, because Michael hadn’t been replying. He had asked if Michael needed anything and similar things.

Michael hadn’t meant to make Rich worry, hadn’t even been aware, that they had talked so much lately, that Rich would notice his absence and even though he felt bad for causing Rich stress, he also felt a little bit happy about the fact that he noticed.

**Nerd:** Sorry about not answering earlier.

**Nerd:** I kind of freaked out about agreeing to model as well and then just tried to get through the day. Didn’t really have the energy to look at my phone in case Jeremy wrote.

He wasn’t even finished with typing his second message, when he saw that Rich was online and responding. It made Michael smile a bit into his pillows.

**Jock:** yeah i kind of overheard that before but i didnt think it would be a problem

**Jock:** u know since people keep talking about u because apparently ure the hot barista

**Jock:** do u feel better now? should i come over or do u want to talk or something

The second comment came as a surprise for Michael. It was just so different from what his brain had been telling him all day long, that he wasn’t quite sure how to react. Still, he was grateful for it and it made the thought about writing Jeremy next a bit more okay.

**Nerd:** I’m feeling slightly better now actually, thanks. Maybe we can talk about this later? I feel like I should talk to Jeremy before I keep being anxious over nothing.

Michael waited a small moment so he could read Rich’s response and then moved on to look at his chat with Jeremy.

**Player1:** Wait, really???

**Player1:** That’s awesome!

**Player1:** But also you don’t have to if you don’t want to!

**Player1:** I know that pictures are a big deal for you and I don’t want you to be uncomfortable

**Player1:** I mean, the whole shoot is about lgbt+ people, so you’re probably not the only trans person there but just

**Player1:** It would be cool if you joined me because you look amazing and then I didn’t have to be nervous by myself but your comfort is more important

**Player1:** You’re probably busy with university, but I’m kinda worried because you haven’t replied yet so

**Player1:** Idk please message me when you have the time

**Player1:** I hope the photo thing didn’t actually make you super anxious

This...this wasn’t what Michael had anticipated. The whole day his anxiety and worries had been haunting him and just like this Jeremy (and Rich) turned his mood around again, making it all seem so silly.

There where some other messages in between, some pictures of memes and other things Michael assumed were attempts at cheering him up and just all of it made him feel kind of giddy.

The remnants of the static and the anxiety still clung to him, but now there was prove that so many of
them were unfounded.

Jeremy wasn’t trying to leave him behind. Jeremy was also nervous, he didn’t suddenly become a different person, he just wanted to do something new with Michael.

He said Michael looked amazing.

He had worried about him, he had remembered that he didn’t like his picture getting taken.

Maybe his emotions would continue being a rollercoaster for a while, Michael thought as he called Jeremy.

It would take a while to get used to their new dynamic, to establish a new routine and that was okay, because Jeremy trying to pay more attention to Michael was part of that change. The fact, that Michael could admit to having negative feelings and problems, was part of that change.

They could talk this through together.

Chapter End Notes

I know I haven't updated this in forever and this chapter isn't proofread but! This fic isn't dead yet!

Compared to the other chapters in this fanfic this one is quite the monster at nearly 4000 words and I really hope it makes the long wait a bit more worth it.

I really want to work on this more again and I hope that some of you are still interested in it and to the people that commented on the last chapter: Thank you so much, reading your thoughts and compliments is part of what makes me go back to this fanfic everytime.

It's just really encouraging to know that some people still enjoy reading this!

Also the BMC revival is amazing and Will Roland is going to be an amazing Jeremy! I still write this fanfic with the original cast in mind but to anyone that might end up here because of the revival: Welcome to the fandom!

And this note is already long enough so thanks for sticking around and if you felt like dropping a small comment I'd be extremely happy!

End Notes

Btw! I'm currently setting up a Discord for everyone that wants to talk about Musical Ships I mean it's also partially to share fanwork with each other but yeah! Here's the link if you feel like joining it https://discord.gg/4dHfjKJ
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!