Realizations and Complications

by Sanru

Summary

Ignis had assumed that his years in college would be lonely and busy. He had never thought he would end up in a swiftly becoming serious relationship. He sure as hell never thought it would be with his best friend.

But a violent attack one night makes Ignis realize that there are a lot of complications to consider when you become emotionally invested in someone.

Especially when that someone happens to be a vampire.

Notes

And now for something completely different and way outside my usual writing style: I give you, the plot bunny that has been chewing on the shoes in my closet for the past month.

As if I really need to be starting yet another story.
Ignis’ breaths came in harsh bursts, struggling to breathe even as he pushed himself to run harder and go further. His legs burned and his back ached as he tried to push himself onward but he was losing steam. Absolute terror and adrenaline could only carry one so far with such an injury. Several injuries to be exact. He didn't know what to do, everything had happened so fast and he just saw an opening and took it. He had been running ever since, trying to get away from… whatever the hell that had been about.

Trembling legs made him overbalance and he pitched off to the side. His satchel, weighted down with several text books, his notebook and tablet, only added to the imbalance. He staggered into the side of a large oak and, after a moment of debate, sunk down to sit amongst its roots. He couldn't keep running, he had to stop even if just for a moment. He needed to stop the bleeding.

His arm was a mess. Long jagged cuts went the length of his right forearm where that thing had scratched at him. His other arm hadn't fared much better. His left wrist was swollen and deep bruising was starting to appear on his pale skin. He was fairly sure it was broken.

The worse wound was in the right side of his neck where he… where it had bit him. That thing -creature- had nearly torn open his throat with its teeth. Its teeth! Blood was saturating his shirt all the way down to his belt and he could still feel it running in rivulets down his chest and back.

Looking over himself, he felt a wave of panic break over him. He wasn't even sure where to begin tending to his injuries or even how. All he had was the clothes he was wearing and his polo was mostly soaked through at this point. A trembling hand covered the wound on his neck as he tried to pull his scattered and terrified mind together enough to think of something other than he was bleeding to death in the woods that bordered the campus proper.

There was a faint rustle from the way he had come and he froze, looking up slowly with trepidation, heart beating faster than it ever had before as a fresh wave of terror crashed over him. He knew -thought he knew- the other man -thing!- who stepped through the bushes but now he wasn't so sure. He was pretty sure it wasn't even human.

“Gods,” he half whimpered to himself as he struggled to get his feet back under him. His heart was pounding painfully in his chest both in fear and exhaustion. He wasn't sure if he could run anymore but he wasn't about to wait for it to make its move.

“Iggy?” It wasn't getting any closer to him but it did drop to one knee, speaking slowly and calmly. It held up one hand, reaching towards him where he was frozen in place, pressing back into the dubious protection of the tree as he stared, wide eyed and panicked. Only its lips still moving as it continued to speak. “Ignis. I know you're scared, I know you probably not going to believe me, but I'm not going to hurt you.” He openly scoffed at that but it continued as if he hadn't done anything, “I want to help you.”

“S-stay away from me,” he managed to bite out as he finally got a foot under him. He had barely started to stand before wobbling and falling back against the tree. He felt dizzy and put a trembling hand to his forehead trying to will the sensation away unsuccessfully. “Don't…” he had to pause for a moment, swallowing thickly as he realized he couldn't stand like this. He couldn't even try to get away anymore. Now what was he supposed to do? “Don't come any closer.”
“Iggy, you need help.” It hadn't moved but it was watching him closely, eyeing him with a calculated look that caused a shiver to race up his spine. He was starting to feel like a rabbit, stuck in a snare, watching a hungry wolf approach. “Let me help you.”

“No,” he managed to keep his voice firm even as he put his weight back heavily into the tree. He tried to push himself up using the tree as a brace but his legs only trembled and refused to respond. He slid back down, legs folding under him and he knew he couldn't do it. There was no way he could get up. He was trapped, “Leave me alone.”

It moved then. He looked up as it stood and padded over to him on eerily silent feet. “No,” he tried to move and another wave of dizziness swept over him. His head lolled back against the tree and his vision faded out for a second only to come back spotted and warped around the edges. “No. No. No,” he whimpered as it knelt down close enough to touch him.

It didn't though, at least not initially. After a long couple seconds where he whimpered more to himself than actually trying to plead his case, it slowly reached out and gently caressed his cheek. He flinched back but he didn't even think he could lift his arm to try and slap away its hand. “Please no,” he said, making every effort to be heard despite the weakness he could feel trying to pull him down into darkness. “Don't do this. Please.”

It didn't say anything but the hand moved back along his jaw and cupped his cheek. The thumb wiped away the tear that he hadn't noticed tracking down his face. “Iggy. It's alright. You can trust me.” A fear so primal and harsh clawed its way into his psyche, destroying his rational mind along the way. A weak sound escaped him, a cross between a hiccup and a whine. He wanted to curl into a ball, hoping that this thing would just leave him alone and go away. “I'm going to help you. Just relax. You're going to be alright.”

“Gladio,” he was outright crying now, tears racing down over his cheeks as the thing that wore the face of his boyfriend pulled him against its chest. It moved slowly and methodically, telegraphing its movements as it cradle him, holding him as if he was made spun glass. “Please don’t…don’t do this…don’t hurt me.”

“I'm not,” it reassured him immediately, voice soft and calm. “I know it may not seem like it Iggy but I’m here to help.” His head was gently tipped to the side, exposing his wounded throat as his cheek settled against its shoulder comfortably. “Don’t be afraid, you’ll be alright.” thick arms wrapped around him, securing him unnecessarily as a pair of lips touched the ripped flesh in his neck. “Trust me,” it whispered against his skin. “Everything is going to be alright.”

A harsh sob escaped Ignis as its fangs slid into his already injured neck.

It sucked gently, pulling maybe a mouthful or two of blood from him before it began licking at the edges of the wound. With the broad flat of its tongue, it began lapping at his neck like a dog would lap at its own coat. Each sweep was slow and measured, hypnotic in a way. Ignis' harsh breathing began to slow, the tears drying on his cheeks as he realized that this thing was keeping its word. It didn’t hurt, it felt almost… pleasant. Calming. The exhaustion crept up over him then and his eyes fluttered shut before he even realized it.

He wasn't out long. His eyes struggling open only to realize he was now cradled against it with one arm, lying curled in its lap with his head being support by its elbow. Its tongue was lapping lazily at the wounds along his arm just like it had done to his neck. He blinked, too weak to move and watched it as it just went about its business licking his arm from elbow to wrist. He was at its mercy. He shivered despite the warm spring air.

It pulled away finally and looked down at him. Familiar eyes, glowing faintly and eerily in the dark
night, met his and he was distracted by them for a moment as he felt like he was pulled up into them. His heart and breathing calmed a fraction, the panic and terror receding a bit. It took him a moment too long to realize that the wounds on his arm were gone. The flesh neatly knit back together, just some dried blood along his now unmarked skin hinted at what had happened. There wasn't even a scar. That was impossible.

Then again everything about this night had been impossible.

"It's the same as on your neck," it said as it shifted its hand from holding his wrist to clutching his hand. It brought their joined hands down so his fingers could trace along the now unmarred skin on his throat. "I sealed the wounds but I can't replace the blood you've already lost. And I can't do anything about your wrist right now. Good news is it's just swollen and heavily bruised. Doesn't look like it's broken or dislocated."

He wanted to say something. He needed to ask what the hell that had been all about, what was it going to do with him, what was going to happen now, but all that escaped was a weak croak. "Wha-" he managed before his voice faded out. His mouth and throat were so dry.

"What am I?" It guessed incorrectly and gave him a toothy grin, sharp fangs clearly on display. The fear in him surged slightly only to be drained away nearly as fast. It wasn't normal. "Iggy, don't be an idiot. You know exactly what I am. Though I got to admit that most of the legends about us are highly overrated and sensationalize. Most of it just stupid and the rest are rumors." It shifted him around, sliding an arm under his knees and around his shoulders, and carefully lifted him to its chest. "I know you've probably got a lot more questions and are still completely freaked out but right now you need to get some rest. I'm taking you back to my apartment and get you cleaned up. Don't worry about anything for the moment. I'll take care of you."

He could only whimper in response, knowing for a fact that there was not a damn thing he could do otherwise.

**September 17th at 1302**

"Gladiolus Amicitia? Yeah, I know him. You'll like him. Seriously, he looks like a complete jerk and stereotypical jock or maybe a fuckboy but he's the largest book worm on campus. He's probably read more books than you." Ignis had raised an eyebrow at that but Noctis just gave him a barely there smile and continued. "Just give him a chance. Help him with his statistics homework and be nice for a change. You might be able to make a new friend for once."

Ignis did not want to make a new friend nor did he need one despite what Noctis comments about needing a friend other than himself. He had much more important things to worry about anyways. Besides, even though he was fairly certain the boy was terrified of him for some reason or another, he counted Prompto as his friend. Therefore, Noctis wasn’t his only friend and that invalidated his whole argument.

The only reason he took the tutoring position was so that he could have a little extra money coming in. It was not for him to socialize with other students on campus who happened to be struggling in their classes. Most of his college was paid for with grants and scholarships but that did not cover his room and board. He rented a bedroom in a house off campus with five other students living in it. It wasn't perfect or cheap but it beat living in the dorms anyday.

Just like Noctis said, Gladiolus Amicitia looked like the last person Ignis would ever get along with. Coming in around six foot five, he practically towered over Ignis who was not use to being towered over at all given his own six feet of height. Gladiolus looked more like a professional body builder
than a junior in an undergraduate program and was wearing a smirk as if he thought he knew everything. It did not give Ignis a good feeling about him at all. Ignis had braced himself, getting ready for arguments, eye rolls and mountains of frustration he was sure to face while tutoring him.

He was pleasantly surprised. Despite all his bravo and a bit of an ego, Gladio, as he preferred to be called, was rather studious and intellectual. He understood the principles behind the math but the math itself seemed to be his Achilles heel and he knew it. Their first tutoring session dissolved into a debate about classical literature within fourteen minutes after Gladio had compared his struggles with statistics to Othello’s temper in the Shakespearean play. It had been rather enjoyable and refreshing even if Ignis didn’t manage to help Gladio with his homework that session.

The next time they sat down two days later, Gladio laid out the law, looking rather regretful for doing so. “Look, last time was fun but I can’t afford to spend this session gossiping about Shakespeare and Arthur Miller. I need to get this stuff before I fall too far behind. So, we do this boring math crap and afterwards how about I buy you a coffee and we can rant about Hemingway’s Across the River and Into the Trees? My Advanced Drama class is actually being made to read that thing.”

“While that does sound appealing, I’m afraid I must decline.” He really had felt bad about declining what could possibly be a stimulating conversation on horrible literature. If the last time had been anything to go by, another debate with this man would have helped improve his abysmal day substantially. “I have to work this evening in the library.”

“You work five to two?” Gladio looked both disappointed and a bit worried surprisingly. “That’s a long shift.”

“No, I work four to two tonight. I go right from here to the library on Thursdays.” Ignis clarified as he pulled out some scrap paper. “Fridays is five to two.”

Gladio blinked at him owlishly. “When do you eat?”

“When I can. Between work and my own classes and studies I have very little time for anything else during the week.” Gladio was now looking downright distraught. “Oh relax, I've been doing this schedule for almost three years now.”

“You shouldn’t be skipping meals,” Gladio was pulling out his textbook and flipped morsely through the pages.

“Gladio please. I may have a busy schedule but I have been taking care of myself for almost eight years now. I know my limits. Now let's go through exercise eight dash fourteen together…”

He thought that would be the end of it but around seven that night Gladio marched into the library with a tupperware container filled to the brim with macaroni and cheese that had smoked ham and peas stirred into it. “Here,” he shoved the container in Ignis’ hands and gave him a fork. It was still warm. “It's not the best nutrition wise but it'll keep you full for tonight. I'll get you something better next time. I haven't had a chance to go grocery shopping yet this week so this is the best I could do on such short notice.”

It was probably one of the nicest things anyone had ever done for him in recent history.

September 20th at 0719

Naturally, Noctis found out and started teasing him about it.
“Sssssooo… rumor has it Gladio’s brought you a meal when you were working in the library last night,” Noctis said as they walked across the green the next morning. He was probably one of the most non-expressive people Ignis knew yet that was definitely a sly grin breaking out over his face.

“That is correct,” Ignis narrowed his eyes at him as he tried to figure out his angle. Noct was up to something but what mischief he could get into when they were crossing the grounds were beyond him. “He found out I generally skip dinner most week nights and decided to take matters into his own hands.”

“And what would happen if he found out you only have five cups of coffee for breakfast? Or that you work through lunch and dinner most of the week? Hmm? How do you think he would react then?”

He was up to something. Ignis out right glared at him hoping to nip whatever scheme he had going before it managed to take off any further, “Noctis I don’t know what you are up to but the fact the most of the time I sustain myself on nothing but coffee isn’t any concern for you or Gladio. It was nice of him to bring me something to eat last night and that’s that. I can take care of myself just fine without both of you harping at my dietary habits or lack thereof.” Noctis was out right smiling now and it took the strange noise from behind him to realize that he had fallen into a clever trap.

Ignis turned, unsurprised to see Gladio had been behind them and was giving him a look that was both worried and a little irritated. “You’re not eating? Like at all?” Gladio asked. He had easily four or five inches on him and used every one of them to loom over him. It was rather intimidating as far as Ignis was concerned but he managed to stand his ground. “You cannot go without eating especially after drinking nothing but coffee. That shit’ll rot your stomach. No wonder you’re so skinny.” He gave the travel mug in Ignis’ hand a downright murderous look, “You haven't eaten yet today have you?”

Before Ignis could say anything, Noctis jumped in, “No he hasn't. Want to help me drag him to the Crow’s Nest, big guy?”

“Gladly,” so that was Noctis’ angle. He had wanted to enlist Gladio in making sure Ignis took care of himself. The little rat would probably insist on paying for it too. Gladio's hand gripped his bicep and nearly pulled him off his feet. “Come on, place is probably packed by now. We’ll sit at the bar.”

“Prompto's got us a table,” Noctis had played his hand well it seemed. Maybe all those military tactic and history classes Noctis enjoyed taking were paying off a little too well. He checked his phone again, “He said that we’re down along the back wall and he’s already ordered Iggy a veggie omelet with rye toast and orange juice.” Noctis had the audacity to look over and wink at him, “That way you can still make it to your class in twenty minutes.”

Ignis sighed and hid the small smile behind his hand as he fixed his glasses. He only had a handful of friends but they were all the best in their own ways. “Very well, I admit defeat this time, Noct. Gladio, please unhand me. You don't have to actually drag me. I quiet capable of walking on my own.”

Over the next couple of weeks, his three friends seem to set up a rotation between themselves to make sure that he ate. It was both nice to know that they cared and slightly infuriating at times when he had a full schedule but one of them always waylaid him either with a meal in hand or hauling him to the dinner or over to the convenience store for something to eat.

Well, typically Gladio was the only one manhandling him, especially if he was being difficult with one of the others. Five to ten minutes later after shaking off Noctis or driving away Prompto, Gladio
would show up and put his bouncer skills to use. He threatened only one time to throw Ignis over his shoulder and haul him across the green to the pizza parlor if he didn’t come quietly. Ignis didn't believe him initially but dangling over Gladio’s right shoulder and five steps towards the parlor later Ignis believed him and managed to convince him to let him walk over there on his own two feet.

October 15th at 1826

Ignis had to admit that Gladio was a regular fixture in his daily schedule now and he enjoyed the other man's company immensely. Gladio was witty, could put up with his snark and was excellent at debating everything from classical literature to history to philosophy in the same conversation without missing a beat. It was refreshing to say the least and the conversations rolled smoothly between them without pause. He could seemingly talk to Gladio for hours and never tire of it.

Even if some of those conversations took a turn for the strange.

“You’ve never been drunk?”

It was a ludicrous statement, emphasized by Gladio's look of disbelief. They were in the library, Gladio having just dropped off a cold cut sandwich and a cup of fruit from the convenience store and was chatting idly on the other side of the service counter while Ignis ate. He had been busy once when Prompto had stopped by to drop off a Cobb salad and he had set it aside and hadn’t touched it until the next day. How the three of them found out he had managed to skip a meal -even though it had been an honest accident- was beyond him but now his 'delivery boy’ tended to stick around until he had ate at least half of the provided meal.

“I hardly see why that is such a big deal Gladio,” he remarked between bites. “I have never seen the point in losing such control over myself and I rarely have the time to over indulge as such.” The fact the he typically lacked the funds as well went unsaid. Noctis knew of his strict budget and that boy could barely manage to keep a secret when he was actively trying. Ignis didn't doubt that Gladio knew about his monetary woes. He hadn't been able to repay him or Prompto for any of the food they brought and he had long since given up trying to get Noctis to take his money.

“Still, it's like a rite of passage or something. I know you're not big on the whole social scene but everyone has at least tasted alcohol. You… you have right?”

Ignis gave him a blank look as he finished chewing. “One time, I accidentally had a sip of my Uncle's screwdriver which was on the table. I thought the orange juice was bad and told him so. He took them away and was extra cautious about his beverage choice around me after that. He was always after me about caution, control and dedication which alcohol only impairs from. I saw no need to experiment anymore with it.”

“Your childhood sounds strict and boring,” Ignis could tell Gladio was formulating an idea by how he was looking off into the middle distance. “It would have driven me up the wall.”

“Yes but after the legal battle it took for my Uncle to gain custody of me, he wasn't about to lose me to a technicality.” They had mentioned their family history in passing. Ignis knew that Gladio had a little sister and a father that lived somewhere in upstate New York. As long as he kept up his grades -his whole incentive for getting help in statistics- his father would pay for everything involving his college. Gladio worked as a bouncer at a local club part time as a way to save up money for when he graduated and give him something to do so he wasn’t to bored.

Likewise, Gladio knew that Ignis’ parents had died when he was very young and it had taken his uncle almost five years wading through a legal minefield to gain custody over his nephew. His uncle had recently died after a long battle with lung cancer. The medical bills had sapped what little
inheritance that Ignis could have received so he was essentially penniless, in a race to get out of school and get a job before he was buried under a landslide of crushing school debt.

“Yeah but you don’t live with him anymore and you could use a little loosening up.” Gladio’s eyes were practically sparkling as he turned to him. “Come on, Iggy. I know a couple of really good places-”

“I have no interest in getting drunk or letting others see me drunk,” he felt a little bad about cutting Gladio off like that but it was the truth. The last thing he wanted was someone from school catching him drunk off his rocker and dancing on a table or some such nonsense.

Gladio barely even paused, “Alright, you want to pay me back for the meal?” He kept going before Ignis could reply, “Then come over to my place after work tonight and get drunk.”

His dignity for a meal? He would have thought that the meal would have been a little more extravagant than this to go up against his dignity. “Gladio I-”

“Look, it’ll just be you and me. No cameras, no footage and no one else is going to know.” Both of them took a moment to look around the service desk to make sure that there were no eavesdroppers around. “It’ll just be you and me, completely judgment free zone. I won’t be laughing at you; I’ll be laughing with you. Promise.”

In a way it did sound appealing but more because he was getting to spend time with Gladio rather than hiding in his room while his roommates caused hate and discontent downstairs in the living room. Tomorrow was Sunday and other than some assigned reading and rewriting part of a paper again, it was shaping up to be a rather boring day. “I-I suppose…”

Gladio was already smiling, “Plug thirty four Forester Drive, apartment seven into your phone and don’t even think of trying to get out of this Iggy. I'll just hunt you down and drag you there if you try and skip out on me!”

Ignis was a bit astonished later when he realized that he didn't want to miss going over to Gladio’s for the world.

October 16th at 0118

Gladio’s apartment was a few blocks from the campus, tucked back a bit from the road and looked like it had at one time been a motel. It was at the far end of the building on the ground floor closest to the trees that separated him from downtown. Parked in front was an older model, dark blue, two door Ford mustang that Ignis was surprised Gladio could even fit in much less be able to drive given his height. He hadn’t thought the seat could slide back enough.

There were a couple stubby green plants sitting in the window box that ran the length of the curtain covered double windows next to the door. He thought that they might have been mums but without the blooms it was difficult to tell. He double checked the number to make sure he was at the right door and knocked, taking a step back politely.

“Good. I really wasn't in the mood to track you down and drag you here,” Gladio was all smiles as he opened the door. “Come on in. Booze is this way.”

Gladio’s apartment was small but cozy. The bathroom and bedroom were along the back wall, a small closet was directly ahead of him on the far side of a small galley like kitchen. An island separated the living room and the kitchen with two stools at it on the living room side. A couch sat in the middle of the floor with a large television sitting centered on the far wall. A weight set and
bench sat under the front windows and an exercise bike sat on the far side of the couch next to the door to the bedroom. Behind that were two overstuffed bookshelves with several of their shelves straining under the strain of so many books.

On the island was an assortment of gaudy colored bottles in various shapes and sizes with a neat stack of notebooks and text books having been scooted to the far end. Gladio pointed to the seat across from him as he began pouring the contents of various bottles in in varying amounts into a steel glass before him. “Since you haven’t had much in the way of alcohol we’re going to experiment with different mixed drinks until we find something you like. You tell me if it's too sweet or sour or what you would prefer instead.” He picked up another steel glass and Ignis felt a bit foolish as he realized it had been half of a Boston Shaker.

“I wasn’t aware you were into mixology,” Ignis said looking at the assortment of bottles on the island. Most of them were full and they didn’t even look like they had been open yet. He hoped that Gladio hadn’t bought all of them on his account. There was probably a small fortune in liquor sitting there.

“Not really but you aren’t a bouncer for almost three years without learning some tricks,” Gladio said over the sloshing coming from the shaker he was bouncing in his hands.

After hanging his coat and toeing off his shoes, Ignis went over to his appointed seat. He set his bag at the floor near his feet and perched on the stool, watching as Gladio tapped the shaker to the top of the island to break the seal and then poured the liquid into a stemware glass he had hiding in amongst the bottles. “Here you go,” he set the shaker aside and held out the glass, filled with a bright red liquid. “This is a cosmo. Try it and tell me what you think.”

All it took was one sip for him to wrinkle his nose. It was tart and bordering on too sweet for his tastes. “It's a little sweet. Almost too sweet but I like the tartness of it. Cranberries?” He tried to hand it back but Gladio shook his head.

“Yes, cranberries and lime. Now finish that and I'll make you something a bit more dry.” He took his shaker and turned to the sink to rinse it out before preparing the next beverage.

“Gladio, I really don't want to get drunk,” Ignis frown and looked at the drink in his hand.

“Just this once you are. Won't press you to drink after this but ya gotta experience it at least once in your life.” He came back to the counter and set his shaker down before going to the freezer and getting more ice. “Don't worry, no one is going to see you but me and I'll make sure you stay safe. Trust me.”

Ignis looked once more at the drink in his hand. He did want to kind of try it, at least once, but he also felt a bit like a naughty kid. That was probably the discipline that his uncle had instilled in him talking. Before he could talk himself out of it or really think he was doing, Ignis snapped back and chugged the remainders of the cocktail. Tears picked at the corners of his eyes as the tart sweetness nearly overpowered and gagged him.

Gladio had paused selecting the bottles for his next drink, giving him a look. Ignis had to take several deep breaths to dull the taste to a more manageable level. “Iggy, nothing I'm making you tonight should be chugged.” Gladio said sternly, giving him a pointed look. “You’d be hung over so bad tomorrow, I’d be surprised if you could make it to the bathroom to throw up. If you want to snap some back, I'll make you some shots but trust me when I say don't do that again.”

“I can only imagine,” his stomach was already rolling slightly from the amount of sugar and tartness that had just been rapidly introduced. Maybe it was just better to get this over with already.
“Perhaps I should try a few shots then?”

“Alright,” Gladio turned back to his cupboards and pulled down a dozen shot glasses. “I’ll make you some of the classics.”

There was nothing classic about the series of shots Gladiolus made him. They’re names were bizarre, ranging from a Japanese suicide attack, to a type of high altitude bomber and all the way to a snake bite of all things. The flavors all seemed to meld together into either tart, sweet or flat out burning hell.

“Guess you’re not much for Jagermeister huh?” Gladio asked as Ignis tried his best to cough the burn out of his throat. He gave Gladio the middle finger just to make sure that his point got across.

He also learned a lot.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” he deadpan even as he leaned some of his body weight against the counter. Five shots in and the world had started taking on a fuzzy tint around the edges but he was pretty sure he heard exactly what Gladio had said.

“Nope,” he smiled as he pulled a can of whipping cream from the fridge. “Bartender will get her to say it five or six times until she’s practically screaming she wants a blow job in the bar.”

“And this is drunk without your hands,” he eyed the small glass across from him as Gladio put a hefty amount of whipped cream on top. “How do you?” he gestured helplessly at the glass.

“How?"

“Well, there’s a bit more pomp and ceremony behind it.” Gladio set the can off to the side. “See after the bachelorette gets her blow job, she finds a hot young single guy in the bar, puts it between his legs, kneels in front of him and drinks it without using her hands.”

Ignis looked at the glass, at Gladio and then back again. “You’re joshing me. How does that even work?” He shook his head as he sat up, wobbling a bit as he did so. The booze was definitely getting to his head.

Gladio snorted and picked up the shot. “Alright, I’ll show you how.” Gladio rounded the island and turned Ignis towards him, making sure he was going to be able to sit up on his own before letting go. He nudged his knees apart and set the shot glass on the tiny bit of stool exposed. Ignis opened his mouth to say something but it fizzled out and died on his tongue as Gladio crouched before him, hands resting on Ignis’ thighs.

Gladio smirked up at him and gave his a playful, completely flirtatious wink. “Watch carefully,” Ignis couldn’t have taken his eyes off Gladio even if the world was ending. He dipped his head, lips wrapping around the shot glass before his arched his neck gracefully and swallowing the contents.

Well, at least Ignis was fairly certain that was what happened. The angle he had only showed Gladio’s head going down somewhere in the vicinity of his crouch and his brain promptly fizzled out after that. His eyes were fixated on Gladio’s throat as it tipped back and he watched with a sudden dry mouth as Gladio’s Adam’s apple bobbed with the large gulp of liquor.

Of all the things that he had expected to happen tonight, realizing he had a massive crush on Gladiolus Amicitia was not one of them.

Gladio stood up and took the glass from his mouth, licking the bit of whip cream stuck to his upper lip off with a quick swipe of his tongue. “Doing alright there, Iggy?” he asked with a knowing look. It was then that Ignis realized his mouth was still hanging open in shock.
“Y-you’ve got… that’s… Seriously?” he tried to save face by looking back at the glass in what he hoped passed as shock. He could tell he was flushed but hopefully he could blame the alcohol on that one.

“Yup,” Gladio grabbed the bottles he needed and a clean glass. “And now that you know how to drink one, you’re having one.”

He was going to have a blow job, which meant he was putting his head in Gladio’s lap and sucking down a mouthful of hard liquor in a harsh facsimile of actually giving him a blow job. He shivered faintly as he watched Gladio make another one in a different shot glass. He wasn’t sure he was going to be able to do this without making an absolute fool of himself.

Oblivious to his inner turmoil, Gladio sat in the other stool next to him and plunked the glass down between his legs. “Go on Iggy. Just like I showed you.”

Ignis blinked down at the glass and it held his gaze for a long second. Well, really he was staring at Gladio’s crotch imagining what was there. He sighed as he got off his stool, wobbling a bit as he moved over the half step it took to reach Gladio. He sunk to his knees, hands naturally resting on Gladio’s thighs for balance. He rose up a bit, moved his head so that it was in line with the glass and froze.

He could smell him, a faint musk with a hint of sweat that rose from between Gladio’s legs. Iggy blinked, long and slow, as he realized he wanted nothing more than to press forward a bit more and mouth at the seam of the pants in front of him. Part of him knew that it was the alcohol talking but that didn’t mean he wanted to throw caution to the wind and do it.

“Iggy?” A hand rested gently against the back of his head and Ignis felt like he might explode right there. “Are you alright?” He nodded his head but Gladio didn’t seem to buy it, “Nuh-huh, talk to me Iggy. I want you to say something. Are you alright?”

“Yeah,” As much as he wanted to ask for permission to suck Gladio off he decided to play it down on something a bit more believable. “Just a bit dizzy,” which was a true. The room was tilted at a slight angle by the feel of it.

“All right,” his free hand wrapped around one of Ignis’ biceps as the one that had been on his head went to his shoulder. “Let’s get you up for a second.”

As Gladio started to pull him up Ignis’ realized that the drink was still there. Without really thinking of it, he lunged back down for his forgotten drink, narrowly avoiding head butting Gladio square in the Junk as his lips wrapped around the shot glass’ rim and he jerked his head back so that the liquor could slide down his throat.

The world warped suddenly to the side giving him a feeling of vertigo before it faded to a strange brown color. He was pretty sure Gladio was talking to him but the words were jumbled. Ignis could still feel him as he slid off the stool and hefted him up easily in his arms as the now empty shot glass tumbled from his lips to shatter on the floor. Ignis blinked away the brown color in the air and focused on the concerned look on Gladio’s face. He received a barely there jostle from the other as he was gently shaken. “Ignis. Ignis talk to me. Say something.”

A chuckle bubbled out of him as he shifted his weight, trying to stand on his own two feet again. “I gave you a blow job,” he mumbled as a small smile broke out on his face as the giddy thought went through his muddled brain.

“Yeah you did,” Gladio held him close with one arm and pressed his fingers against his neck,
looking critically into his eyes. “And you’re done. No more alcohol tonight.”

“I’ll go home now,” he tried to pull away but Gladio just pulled him closer. He stooped slightly and rose back up with Ignis cradled in his arms as if he hardly weighted anything.

“Not after almost passing out like that.” He began walking somewhere, carrying Ignis with ease. “I was planning on keeping you here anyway just in case but now there’s no way in hell I’m letting you out of my sight.” He settled Ignis back onto the couch, partially propped up on the arm as he sprawled across the seat. “Sit tight a sec,” Gladio told him. “I gotta clean up the glass and put some stuff away.”

“Oh, he managed as he sank back onto the couch. His body seemed to be pulsing with the rhythm of his heartbeat and warmth had spread throughout his limbs and chest. He seemed to floating and overheating at the same time. The floating was nice but the heat was uncomfortable. He tried to unbutton his dress shirt with limited success.

“Okay,” He managed as he sank back onto the couch. His body seemed to be pulsing with the rhythm of his heartbeat and warmth had spread throughout his limbs and chest. He seemed to floating and overheating at the same time. The floating was nice but the heat was uncomfortable. He tried to unbutton his dress shirt with limited success.

“Here, I’ll help you with that.” Gladio was back, setting something on the floor before helping Ignis sit up more and started unbuttoning his shirt for him. “Let’s say we watch a show for a bit. I want you to drink some Gatorade anyway. Ever see any British comedies?”

“No,” he wasn’t much for comedies even sober. Gladio pressed a bottle of a bright yellowish liquid in his hands. “What’s this?”

“Gatorade and after that you should have some water.” Gladio slide the shirt off his shoulders and tossed it over the exercise bike as he moved over to the television to set up a DVD. Bare chested the heat receded and was more comfortable. He managed to unscrew the cap on his own and take a sip which seemed like a massive accomplishment at that point.

The television series Gladio put in made no sense. It was complete off the wall with its theatrics and had no sense of plot outside of ridiculous skits about the most innate things ever. It was poorly done, several decades old and seemed to relay solely on randomness for its sense of humor.

It had Ignis in absolute hysterics.

He tipped over, half collapsing into Gladio who was sitting next to him on the couch, laughing so hard he was wheezing. Gladio snatched the open, half full bottle in his hand before he could dump it on the floor. “Easy there,” his hand rubbed at Ignis’ back in long sweeping strokes. “Breath, you’re going to need to calm down or you’re going to be sick.”

“Sheep???” He managed to gasp out. He curled deeper into Galdo’s warmth. He ignored Gladio’s snort of amusement as he half crawled into his lap, straddling his legs and sitting up to look down at him. “In the wainscoting?! Wainscoting! Sheep!?? And it’s got a gun?!?!”

He threw his head back and laughed, leaving Gladio to scramble to grab him around the waist. “Whoa, Iggy!” The arm around his waist pulled his flush to Gladio’s chest. “Easy there, you could fall.”

Ignis looked down at Gladio who was still holding him close and became all too aware of his position. His earlier thoughts came back to him and before he could stop himself or even think about what he was doing, Ignis ran his hands through Gladio’s hair. “Iggy?” He didn't let Gladio say anything else, as he clutched fistsfuls of his hair to hold Gladio still and kissed him hard.

Gladio tensed immediately but didn't try to stop him nor did he try and reciprocate. Ignis moved his lips gently, trying to coax Gladio to respond but still there was nothing. He hadn't moved and hadn't
tried to stop him from stealing a kiss.

Ignis pulled back, blinking stupidly as his mind muddled through what he had just done. “Gladio?” He blinked down at his friend and in sudden moment of clarity realized what happened. “I'm sorry,” he tried to pull away but Gladio easily held him still with the arm still wrapped around his waist. He began mumbling as he tried to get up but Gladio wouldn't let go of him no matter how much he wiggled about in his lap. “I shouldn't have but... I wanted to and…. I'm sorry, it was wrong and… and let me go. Gladio, please let go.”

“Ah fuck,” Gladio said. Using one arm to keep him still, he snapped back the rest of Ignis’ drink and tossed the empty bottle across the room. “C'mere,” A hand grabbed him by the back of his neck and pulled Ignis down enough so Gladio could kiss him back.

Now it was Ignis’ turn to freeze but only for a moment before he was pressing his lips more firmly against Gladio's. Ignis stopped trying to get up and instead relaxed into the hold that went from restrictive to tender. Gladio held him gently, coaxing him closer with his hands as he played his lips gently across Ignis’, giving and taking the lead naturally as they enjoyed the moment.

Gladio was first to run his tongue over Ignis’ lower lip. It was light and quick, a timid question that Ignis readily agreed to. The next gentle flick of his tongue was met with no resistance and slipped eloquently into Ignis’, seeking out his tongue to slide against it.

Ignis moaned, deep in the back of his throat and shivered at the sensation Gladio's tongue was causing. The man beneath him moved slowly, keeping a firm grip on him as he rolled the two of them so they were lying across the couch. Ignis pinned beneath the warm body above him and he showed his appreciation for the change in position by pressing up into that body and mouth more insistently.

Gladio continued to kiss him, gathering Ignis’ hands in one of his own and pressing them into his chest. He sat up slightly, leaning back a bit more when Ignis tried to chase after him, easily holding him down against the cushions. “No Iggy,” he said softly his free hand gently cupping Ignis’ cheek. “Enough. I promised I'd take care of you and going any further is the exact opposite of what I said.” His thumb gently traced across Ignis’ cheek in a slow caress, “I already feel like I've taken advantage of you.”

“Maybe I want you to take advantage of me,” Ignis replied breathlessly wanting nothing more than to have Gladio kissing him again.

He just received a smirk for his troubles, “No, I'm not betraying your trust just to have one time romp in the sheets. If you like me, tomorrow when you're sober and nursing your hangover, you can ask me out.” Gladio smiled, his finger coming up to tip his head back a bit more on the cushion, making him expose his throat. “Trust me, I'll say yes.”

Ignis nodded as his head rested back against the couch, keeping it tilted back at the angle Gladio had put it in. “Keep kissing me?” he asked softly looking up at Gladio with hazy eyes. “You’ve already done it. I can’t get mad at you for doing it some more.”

He got another all-knowing smirk for his troubles, “Alright. If you remember enough to be mad at me, you’ll remember to ask me out as well.” He leaned back down over him and pressed their lips together in an achingly gentle kiss.

Ignis lost track of time as Gladio’s lips played over his and the gentle slide of their tongues against each other. He tried once to rub himself against one of Gladio’s thighs but was quickly pinned by the man above him. A weak whine escaped him as he tried to move again. “No Ignis,” Gladio
whispered against his cheek. “No more. Not yet.” His lips were a little harsher on his next kiss, a demand and a promise all rolled into one.

His lips were going slack, the alcohol in his system finally pulling him under even as he struggled to remain awake. “You’re exhausted,” Gladio’s voice seemed muted in his ears even as he kissed the corner of his mouth. “You should go to sleep Ignis. It’s alright. I’ll put you to bed. Sleep.”

And for a brief second he thought Gladio’s eyes glowed faintly but that had to be the alcohol’s doing. Eyes didn’t gl-

Ignis’ head rolled back on the cushions and he fell asleep before he had even finished that thought.

**October 16**

Ignis woke the next morning already struggling to get up before he had opened his eyes. His thoughts were disjointed and muddled, shrouded in a heavy cloud with only one clear thought process racing through his mind. Get up, get to the bathroom and hurl.

He had been wrapped in a blanket and tucked underneath a duvet on a rather soft bed that seemed intent on swallowing him whole. He had no intention of being eaten by an inanimate object nor staying in the sinfully comfortable bed any longer. He tumbled inelegantly off one side, only realizing that his socks had been removed when his bare feet met the chilled wooden floor, and made a mad dash for the bathroom as soon as he figure out which way was up.

He really didn't see where he was going as much as he moved purely by muscle memory. He took four stumbling steps and entered the living room, turned to the right and bolted into the open bathroom, half lunging for the toilet as soon as it came into view. He was already hunched over the bowl when he realized he had seen Gladio in the living room, shirt off and glancing in his direction with sweat dripping down his back and two absurdly large weights in either hand.

It was a pleasant view that reminded him of his actions the previous night but his embarrassment and desire was drowned out by the sensation of being miserably sick.

“Well I guess that takes care of the ‘how are you feeling this morning’ question,” Gladio said as he stepped into the bathroom. Ignis was retching too hard to even think if a suitable come back.

It seemed to take forever for his stomach to finally stopped contracting. It left him a panting miserable mess leaning heavily on the toilet as his muscles trembled from the recent effort. His hand trembled badly as he reached up and flushed the toilet. He wasn't sure he ever wanted to drink again if this was the result every time.

“Here,” a blessedly cool cloth wiped across his forehead, down one cheek, across his lips and back up the other side. It was refolded and settled on the back of his neck as Gladio crouched down next to him. “Are you feeling any better?”

“A little,” his voice was weak and a little watery. “If that happens every time, I never want to drink again.”

“That’s my fault,” Gladio gave him a sympathetic smile. “You managed to stay pretty sober even when smashed until you started moving around. Passed out on me for a sec and I barely managed to get any Gatorade into before you fell asleep on the couch. Had I been keeping a better eye on you, I would have gotten more water and Gatorade into you before you went to bed. You would have woken up with just a headache instead of all this.”
And wasn’t ‘all this’ just lovely.

Gladio stayed with him, holding the cloth to his neck until he felt up for moving again. The cloth was casually tossed into the sink and Gladio helped him his feet. As soon as he was out of the bathroom he started back for the bed only to be pulled towards the kitchen by Gladio. “I know it doesn’t seem like it but something in your stomach will help you get over it faster.”

Even the thought of food was enough for the nausea to rise in the back of his throat again. “Gladio, I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

“Oh some toast and water won’t hurt. Just eat it slow,” Gladio said as he lightly pressed Ignis onto one of the bar stools. “Lean on the island. I’ll get it for you.”

Ignis stared down at the faux marble counter that his elbows were perched on and listened as Gladio moved about in the kitchen. His thoughts strayed and he found himself wanting to just go back to bed and sleep until noon the following day. His aimlessly wandering thoughts came back to the disjointed memories of the night before.

‘Maybe I want you to take advantage of me.’

He bit his lip as his cheeks warmed slightly at the past echo of his own voice, breathless and wanton, in his memory. He couldn’t believe he said that in that tone of voice. Thankfully Gladio had prevented him from going any further…

… but he had been kissing him back…

… And his eyes had glowed. Regardless of what he thought and wanted, it had only been a dream. A dream where Gladio and he had shared a mutual attraction. A sweet one he would cherish and nothing more would come of it. There wasn’t anything about himself that Gladio would find attractive. He wasn’t even sure that Gladio was into guys.

“Here,” a piece of multigrain bread that was barely cooked enough to be called toast lightly smeared with butter was set in front of him. “Eat slowly,” Gladio reminded him as he took a glass down out of a cabinet and began to fill it with water. “I’ll get you some aspirin to take as well,” The glass was set next to his plate and Gladio headed towards the bathroom.

Ignis watched him go, shamelessly staring at the muscles rippling across his back trying not to think of how they would feel under his hands… It had only been a dream after all.

Several hours later, when Ignis finally felt up for heading home and not moping around his apartment, Gladio drove him over to his house in the mustang. There had been little conversation between them all day aside for Gladio coaxing him to eat the rest of his toast and him asking to borrow his shower. Ignis felt run down and exhausted but sleep seemed to elude him when he laid down again for a nap. Dreams of warm hands and gentle lips plagued him to the point of distraction.

“Thank you for the ride,” he said as he undid his seatbelt and climbed out of the car after it had pulled up next to his place.

“No problem. I’m sorry you have a hangover from hell but it was nice to see you relaxed and unwind a bit.” Gladio gave him a small smile, “You should come over and watch more Monty Python at some point. You were really getting into it.”

“Eventually,” he agreed with a small nod of his head. “Good day Gladio.”
“See ya Iggy.”

As he went to close the door, Ignis told himself that Gladio had not just heaved a deep regretful sigh.

‘It had only been a dream,’ he reminded himself firmly as he turned away and the mustang drove off.

November 28th at 1538

“Seriously Ignis, what’s wrong?” Noctis was glaring at him out from under a fringe of his hair. The faint shadows that it caused to lay over his eyes made him appear more angry than annoyed.

“You’ve been moping for the past month.”

“Nothing. I’m fine,” it was the best response he could come up with at any rate. How could he broach such a topic with Noctis when he couldn’t even bring himself to tell the object of his infatuation?

He hadn’t had a crush on someone this bad since high school. Half remembered dreams of being pinned underneath Gladio on his couch haunted him nightly. It was hard to talk to him sometimes when something he said or did reminded Ignis of Gladio’s hands holding him close, supporting his weight as a hand gently traced along his face and chin. It was so bad that he had to avoid the third floor lounge in the library, the one that had a couch identical to the one in Gladio’s apartment, so he wasn’t caught daydreaming about the phantom feelings in his mind.

Noctis sighed and ran a hand through his hair, momentarily disrupting the shadows over his eyes.

“And I’m the King of the entire city,” He grumbled giving Ignis a downright pissy look. “Look Ignis, we all know something is up and we’re going to figure out what. So keep you’re secrets for now but we will figure them out.”

“Don’t be surprised if you never do because there isn’t one to be deciphered,” that he wanted them to know. True he had been sleeping less and studying more. Taking on more tutoring jobs and signing up for two extra shifts was all but crippling him with fatigue but being busy meant he didn’t have much time to think about that dream. He fell into bed every night too exhausted to dream. “We’re two and a half weeks away from finals and I won’t say no to a little extra money.”

“My offer still stands,” Noctis said immediately bring up a long standing argument between the two of them since Ignis started his freshman year. “Seriously, the pay is good, I’ll let you camp out in one of the spare rooms at no cost and I’ll even give you the weekends off to go have a social life.”

Ignis just barely refrained from rolling his eyes. Ever since Ignis started tutoring him in High School, Noctis had been trying to hire Ignis as his personal tutor, assistant and chef for three and a half years now. Noctis was an only child with way too much money on his hands and next to no adult supervision as his business tycoon of a father flew around the world. He lived in a penthouse downtown in one of the sky rises by himself and only had a cleaning lady show up once a week to keep the place immaculate. Ignis was fairly sure that Noctis was only offering him a job to appease his sense of duty when in fact Noctis was really trying to fill the emptiness of a large penthouse with his friends. Prompto had moved in with him at the end of freshman year but it didn’t stop Noctis from hounding Ignis to move into one of the other spare rooms.

“And you have yet to offer me a worthy while benefits package outside of free room and board,” Ignis came back, half smiling behind his travel mug as he took a sip of coffee, continuing the traditional argument that they seemed to have every few days.

“You want something official? I’ll get one of my Dad’s lawyers to write you up a contract and get his assistant to put you on the payroll. You’ll even get a W-2. I promise,” Noctis was smiling to
partially in relief that he had got Ignis to relax enough to start joking. It was a small victory but better than nothing.

“I’m almost tempted to take you up on that offer. It would be amusing to see the human resource department try and term ‘nanny’ in a positive light. Particularly with it referring to a twenty year old man-child.”

“Hey-“

“Noctis, please, don’t argue. You pay Prompto twenty dollars a day to make sure you get out of bed. I don’t know many adults that have to go to such an extreme.”

December 6th at 1458

The week before finals week was always a trial in patience for Ignis’. This was the time of year that all the students he tutored would begin to panic or freak out in some way shape or form as they realized that the end of the semester is the following week and they aren’t even remotely ready for a comprehensive final, project or paper. The most memorable one was the freshman who burst into tears on him and spent a good ten minutes bawling into his shoulder while he awkwardly patted her back and tried to ignore how she was ruining his shirt.

Typically, they’d panic. Go on and on about how they aren’t ready while he was trying to keep them focused and on track so he could review their study guide with them. Of course, had they paid attention to him, their teachers, and kept up in their assignments they wouldn’t be in this mess in the first place. Then, as a final insult to him and a last ditch attempt to make it not their fault, they’d try and lay the blame on him.

This was probably the only time of year he drank tea instead of coffee in an effort to rein in his temper.

Ignis had one more student to deal with that day before he could go and hide in the library until closing. He rubbed at his temples in an effort to quell his headache and wondered if he would have time to stop at the corner store for pain relievers before he went to the library. The bottle that he usually kept in his messenger bag was empty and now sitting abandoned in a trash can on the third floor of Elmer Hall.

“Well now. You look like shit, Iggy.” Thankfully Gladio looked relaxed and at easy as he sat down next to him. He was looking critically at his hair. “Think this is only the second time I’ve seen you with your hair not styled.”

The first time being the day after Gladio had introduced him to the joys of drinking and subsequent hangover. Not one of his better moments. Especially since that led to the discovery of his crush on Gladio. Really he needed to just stop with his infatuation before he ended up damaging or destroying their friendship. “Yes, well, it's been a rather trying day,” he sighed as he adjusted his glasses to sit properly on his nose.

“I can only imagine,” Gladio gave him a sympathetic smile. “Honestly, you have more patience than a Saint while dealing with some of these kids.”

“Indeed. Are we just going to do a full review today?” Ignis asked as he gestured to the binder and textbook Gladio had just pulled from his backpack. “Or was there something in particular you wanted to go over?”

“Comprehensive should be fine. Was trying to come up with an area in where I struggled but
couldn't come up with anything.”

“Very well,” Ignis held out a hand and took the book from Gladio to find a suitable problem for them to work on.

“Hey, Iggy…” Gladio started and then faded out, rubbing at the back of his neck as if he was having a hard time saying something.

“Yes,” maybe if he prompted him it would help. Ignis turned the book towards Gladio, tapping at problem nine so he knew what they would be doing. “What's the matter?”

“I know…” he worried his lip between his teeth and it was all Ignis could do to keep from staring. “Look, I want to talk to you but all this stress from finals is kinda getting to me. Do you want to meet up next weekend before I head home for break? So we can talk? Just talk and maybe watch some more British satire?”

That was an odd request and one Ignis would have readily agreed to if he could. “If I wasn't working a shift in the library that evening I would say yes.”

“When you get off then? I don't have to leave until noon the next day.” Gladio seemed borderline frantic for some reason, eyes on everything but him. It made hope blossom for a moment before Ignis ruthlessly quelled it. There could be any number of things Gladio wanted to talk about. He couldn’t possibly-

“Alright,” he agreed before his thoughts could distract him but had to add on warningly. “But it'll be late.”

“It's no problem,” he relaxed back in his chair and some of the franticness left his eyes. “Remember you're not the only one who stays up almost all night.”

December 8th at 2348

Gladio 8:42pm: Iggy, going to have to cancel our talk. Dad's in the hospital, I'm leaving tonight.

Ignis was still staring at the text message he had received some five minutes ago. He wasn't sure what to say in such a situation. Thinking of you? I hope a man I've never met is going to be okay? Keeping him in my prayers? He didn’t believe in a particular faith so that just seemed awkward. Was Gladio even religious? Nothing he could think of sounded sincere. They were more condescending than anything.

Ignis 8:54pm: Let me know if there is anything I can do to help. I wish both of you the best.

It's what he finally settled on but still seemed lacking. Gladio didn't respond, he was probably already driving. Ignis sat back in the chair at his kiosk in the library and looked over at the empty lounge and then through the silent rows of bookcases. Despite it being finals week the library only had a scattering of students throughout, mostly down in the computer lab. It gave him time to think about a way to help Gladio with his situation.

And boy did he come up with a doozy.

December 14th at 1756

It had been easy. Too easy as far as Ignis was concerned and he found himself glancing over his shoulder all day expecting someone to be there, either haul him right over to the Dean's office or oust him in some other way, but nothing happened. He took his final in the afternoon and reported to the
library at four just like normal. Nothing out of the ordinary, he hadn't blatantly broken the rules that morning.

He hadn't walked into Gladio's statistics final and taken the test in his name.

He had been back and forth on it his entire shift last night and had paced in his room for the rest of it. It shouldn't have worked but it seemed to have. At least no one had said or done anything about it yet.

Ignis was surprised that no one had done this before. Professor McVoy hated proctoring tests and usually left that to his assistants and finals week was no exception. One of his teacher assistants was too stressed out by her biology final and the other would be too hungover to really care. Regardless of who it was, they’d be more caught up in their world to actually look at who was in attendance.

The class was also large, in one of the auditoriums closest to the math and science building, with about eighty three students enrolled in it. He had put in his hated contacts, didn't style his hair and nicked a hoodie from the laundry room at his place. He was fairly sure it was Casey's consider how it reeked of cigarettes smoke and booze. At least he hadn't thrown up on it.

He had kept the hood on the hoodie up and the proctor hadn't given him a second look as she handed him a blank test. He knew Gladio's ID number from the mandatory tutoring survey he completed at the end of each session and he knew where Gladio's strengths and weaknesses were in the course. He mimicked them as he filled in the circles on the multiple choice answer sheet, put in Gladio’s number on the top as directed, and turned it back into the teacher assistant who still had her nose buried too deep in her biology book to take a really good look at him.

He was fairly certain that he had managed to get Gladio a mid to high eighty on the exam. Had he not taken it, Gladio would have received an incomplete for the course and would have been made to take it again. After an entire semester of watching him struggle through his assignments and seeing his eyes light up when it finally clicked, Ignis would be damned if he’d let Gladio go through all that again because of a family emergency.

As long as no one became any wiser to what he had done neither of them would be thrown out of school. He pulled out his cell phone and shot off a quick text to Gladio, simply saying he had spoken to McVoy on his behalf and not to worry about the grade that he had taken care of it. As long as neither he nor Gladio said anything then they were both in the clear.

January 11th at 2345

Gladio 11:45pm: Just got back to the apartment. Been a rough break. Stop by when you're out?"

Ignis could only imagine how bad it had been. Other than a quick thanks the morning after he had taken Gladio final for him he hadn't heard from the other man. The Christmas break had come and gone. Ignis well wishes for a Merry Christmas had gone unanswered. The Spring semester was about to start next week.

It had been a rather long a lonely break. Gladio had had to leave to deal with whatever had happened to his father. Noctis had left to be with his father over in Europe somewhere, leaving Ignis a key and free run of the Penthouse while he was gone. He had also tried gifting Ignis with a new cell phone but Ignis made him take it right back to the store. No one bought him a top of the line phone for eight hundred dollars except himself. Though he did make sure that Noctis knew he had appreciated the offer, he took too much of an advantage of Noct’s generosity as it was.

Prompto had bought him a new winter jacket, giving it to him before vanishing to wherever he went
off to on the long extended breaks. The kid was a whole new level of thrifty that put even Ignis’ skills to shame. Going so far as to show Ignis the receipt so he wouldn’t make Ignis take it back like he was making Noctis and prove that he hadn’t bought the designer jacket for an arm and a leg. He found it at one of the local thrift stores he frequented. Just a lucky coincidence that had part of the lining ripped along one of the seams. A simple fix really and that had helped knock the normally three hundred dollar jacket’s price down below thirty bucks.

For his gifts to them, Ignis had kept it fairly simple. Noctis received a new strategy board game that he had been eyeing for a while now. He demanded that they all sit down and play it as soon as Gladio got back from his little family emergency and they all returned from break. He gave Prompto the accessories to go with the new camera that Noctis had bought him for Christmas. The kid was skilled at photography, specializing in Land and Seascapes and spent the next hour setting up and trying out his camera on everything in and around the Penthouse.

Gladio's present remained at his place, wrapped in a burgundy wrapping paper and a silver green bow, under his bed until it could be properly handed over to its new owner. He was going to have to go get it before swinging over to Gladio's place. Hopefully it would help to cheer him up.

Ignis 11:48pm: Of course, I'll be a little about 1:30

That would give him time to get home grab the gift and get over to Gladio to see how he was doing. He set his phone down and started pushing the cart of returns down the aisle to begin putting things away. He tried to ignore the clocks scattered throughout the library but time still seemed to drag even though he wasn't looking at the clock.

January 12th, at 0122

“Hey Iggy,” Gladio smiled brightly as he opened the door, almost immediately yawning as Ignis returned the greeting and stepped into the apartment. The door closed behind him with a dull click. “Sorry,” Gladio said as he walked towards the kitchen, zeroing in on a mug sitting on the island. “Been a long couple weeks. Want some cocoa or something?”

“I'm fine but thank you.” Gladio was clearly exhausted. His face paler than normal and he was slouching ever so slightly to relieve the stress on his shoulders. Even his smile seemed duller than ever before. And his eyes… Ignis couldn't quite put his finger on it but there was something off about his eyes. They looked… murky would probably be the best way to describe it. Unfocused and unusually dark.

“Okay,” Gladio said letting loose another jaw popping yawn and waving vaguely towards the couch. Ignis assumed that his eyes were clouded with exhaustion but that excuse didn’t seem right. Gladio flopped heavily down on it while Ignis sat primly on the edge, choosing to slide back more into its comfort than flop down on it.

Gladio took a long draught from his drink before staring at the mug’s contents obviously lost in thought. Ignis managed to stay silent for a whole five minutes before curiosity got the better of him. “How’s your father?” he asked softly.

Gladio started as if he had forgotten Ignis was there before giving his head a shake and started talking. “Better. Nearly cut his leg off with a chainsaw. Went right through the chaps, his coveralls and jeans. Stopped about three centimeters away from his artery. My little sister saw everything and she freaked. Was having nightmares about it every night I was home…” He let out a huge sigh and rubbed a hand over his face. “It was a long break.”

Ignis frowned, not knowing what to say about that. Instead he chose to act, getting off the couch and
walking over to retrieve Gladio's gift from his messenger bag. “I had intended to give this to you before you left but that obviously didn't happen. Here,” He held out the gift to Gladio who was staring at it as if he had no idea of what it was. “Merry belated Christmas, Gladio.”

Gladio blinked at the package once more before it seemed to dawn on him what it was all about. “Oh fuck! Iggy you didn’t… I mean I didn't-t” Gladio sat up straight, looking more awake than he had all evening and nearly spilling his hot chocolate all over himself in his haste. “Well, shit,” he said a bit calmer now that he had nearly spilt his cocoa. He set the mug down on the coffee table so he could properly accept his gift. “Thanks Iggy. I'll get you back.”

“Don’t worry about it. I understand. You had more important things on your plate to worry about.” He retook his seat on the couch and watched as Gladio tore the paper off his gift more like an errant toddler than an adult. After the wrapping paper finished flying, Gladio was left holding a leather bound book, engraved with golden letters.

“The Canterbury Tales,” he whispered as he traced over the lettering with his fingers.

“For such a classic literature buff, it was surprising to hear that you don’t own your own copy,” Ignis said as Gladio flipped open the book. Ignis had inscribed his name and the date he brought it into the top right corner of the title page so Gladio would know who bought him that book. Ingis’ didn't feel that he would have to remind Gladio of who bought him the book but he also knew it wouldn't hurt. Knowing that Gladio would see his name nearly every time he opened that book sent a small thrill through him. One he ruthlessly squashed before it got too out of hand.

“Iggy… I…” Gladio fell silent as he flipped through several more pages. Pausing for a moment on a full page picture that depicted bone of the scenes in the book, done in an art style to mimic the period Chaucer wrote the book.

Ignis opened his mouth to say something but he wasn’t sure what to say. Maybe he could point out how hard it was to find a book with art renditions matching the correct time period? No, that made it sound like he was seeking praise. It would be better to point out how the Knight’s Tale reminded him of Gladi-

Gladio snapped the book closed with a dull thump before setting it carefully on the coffee table. “Do you know what I wanted to talk about before I had to leave?” he asked staring at the book on the table as if it held some secret.

“Not really,” Ignis answered honestly. “I assumed that we would be watching more satire at some point.” Ignis had visited and watched more Monty Python with Gladio on several occasions. It wasn’t as uproariously funny as he had found it when drunk but still highly amusing and Ignis enjoyed the play on words found throughout the various skits. Even if some of it was utterly daft.

“Right,” he huffed out, clenching one fist in the other in a sign Ignis had grew to learn that meant Gladio was psyching himself up for something. “Not just that. I want to… I…” He shook his head as if trying to rattle whatever he was saying out. “Dammit Iggy! I want to ask you out.”

Ignis blinked at him in surprise, more at the outburst than what was actually being said. Then his mind caught up to what Galdio had said and he couldn’t help but say in an awed voice, “You want to go out with me?”

Though Gladio seemed to be as startled by his half shout almost as much as Ignis had been, he turned to him with eyes filled with determination and sincerity. “Yes,” he said composing himself a bit more. Ignis could see the nervous tension in him, “Iggy, I was wondering if you would like to go out with me?”
Ignis sucked in a breath and the small little flare of hope he had been struggling to bury for the past few months grew a little brighter. “You’re into guys?” he asked hesitantly, trying not to get too far ahead of himself.

“And girls,” Gladio added, the tension easing out of his frame as he sunk back into the couch. “Haven’t dated much lately. Never felt like I’ve had the time but I was hoping—”

“Yes,” Ignis sat up a bit more on the couch, leaning towards him subconsciously. “Yes, I’ll go out with you.”

Gladio didn’t say anything. He reached out, traced a hand along his jaw before sitting up and softly kissing him. “Good,” he said against his lips. “I was hoping you would say yes,” he swooped in again pressing his lips a little more insistently against Ignis’.

Not be out done, Ignis shifted closer, running a hand up Gladio’s chest to behind his head to thread through his hair and pull him closer. Gladio wrapped an arm around his waist, the hand still on Ignis’ jaw tipped it back slightly and a tongued licked over his lips. Ignis shivered and opened his mouth, letting out a small noise as Gladio’s tongue dipped in to touch his.

It was like before but so much better. This was no dream. This was real. There was no alcohol involved. His mind was clear and he was filled with happiness as the small flare of hope grew into a raging inferno. There was just him and Gladio and nothing else mattered.

Ignis let his free hand wander as Gladio’s tongue slid against his, wringing faint noises out of the back of his throat the more he explored. Ignis’ fingers slid up his arm, tracing the line of his bicep, before ducking underneath his arm and following down along the muscles on his back that he could feel through the tank top. He reached the hem of his tank top and fiddled with it in a moment of indecision and distraction as Gladio’s tongue wrapped up along one side of his and slowly dragged down along it. He shivered and moaned, hand slipping under the material and rucked it up as he slid it up his side.

Gladio squirmmed, slightly and broke off the kiss. “That tickles,” he whispered. His hand titled Ignis’ head back and Gladio’s lips and tongue descended on his neck. Fingers traced down along his jaw to his throat and fiddled with his collar before starting to undo the buttons on his shirt.

“Gah!” Ignis gasped as a way to talented mouth descended on him, his body jolting forward towards Gladio as he nipped lightly at his skin before soothing it with his tongue, his toes curling in his socks at the feeling. “G-Gladio…” he managed to wrap his arm around Gladio and claw at his back with one hand. Gladio groan against his neck and dragged Ignis along the couch and maneuvered him up to sit on his lap. Ignis moaned wordlessly and rocked down against the man under him, panting as Gladio shifted and pressed upwards when he rocked down for a second time. Ignis’ fingers tightened in his hair as he sought to keep his balance.

“Iggy,” Gladio breathed against his skin as he pulled back slightly. He sighed and bucked his hips up as Ignis ground down again. “Iggy how far do you want to go?”

As if a switch had been thrown, Ignis suddenly realized how far they had actually gotten. His shirt was half undone and hanging of his shoulder. His clawing at Gladio’s back had shoved his tank top up to his arm pits. He was sitting in Gladio’s lap, shamelessly grinding down against him and there was a rather impressive tent in both his slacks and Gladio’s sweats.

The slight hesitation seemed to tell Gladio everything he needed to know. He forcefully maneuvered Ignis off his lap. Pulling his head down and softly kissing his face and lips as he tucked the other close against his side. Every time Ignis tried to say something Gladio covered his lips with his own.
Softly peppering kisses meant to soothe and calm rather than incite anything more.

“Shh, hush,” he whisper softly to Ignis when he was sure the other wasn’t going to protest. “It’s alright. We both got a little carried away. Relax.” Gladio pressed a kiss to the tip of his nose, “I don’t want this to be a onetime thing so we got plenty of time.”

Ignis nodded in agreement. “Alright,” he breathed pressing a series of small, short kisses against Gladio’s cheek. “That’s fine.”

“Oh, will you indulge me though?” Gladio said, a small smile on his face as Ignis continued to press kisses to his jawline. Ignis made a questioning sound in the back of his throat, still too busy with raining gentle affection against what parts of Gladio’s face he could reach to respond verbally.

“Spend the night?” Ignis paused and Gladio quickly continued before Ignis could take it in the wrong context. “Just so we can cuddle, nothing more.” He sighed and pressed a gentle kiss to Ignis’ temple. “I just… I just want to hold you.”

Given the vacation he had and still feeling warm and comfortable against his side, Ignis pressed a soft kiss to his lips. “Of course. May I borrow something a bit more comfortable to sleep in?”

“Yes, I think I have sweats small enough for you to fit in.” Gladio untangled himself from the comfortable pile they had dissolved into on the couch and stood up heading for the bedroom. Ignis fixed his shirt so it was at least sitting up on his shoulders and glanced over at the clock. It was a quarter to three in the morning. Had they really been making out that long?

“Here,” Gladio returned, handing him a pair of gray sweats and a soft green tee shirt. “It’s pretty late so go ahead and get into those. I want to pick up in here real quick and I’ll be right behind you.”

“Alright,” Ignis took the offered clothes and got off the couch. Gladio took the now cold cocoa mug off the coffee table and headed for the kitchen.

The bedroom was much as he remembered it from last time he was there. The bed took up most of the room and had a forest green duvet cover. A single nightstand was on the far side of the bed from the door had a small blue lamp on it bathing the room with a soft yellow light. The head of the bed shared a wall with the bathroom and the other was taken up with a closet that ran the length of the far wall. It was partially open and Ignis could see the dresser in there tucked behind the partially open bifold door.

He changed quickly, folding his clothes and leaving them setting on top of the dresser in the closet before sliding into bed, setting his glasses on the nightstand. The sheets were several shades lighter color green than the duvet cover and there were two thin blankets hiding between the duvet and the sheets. One Ignis was fairly sure was an electric blanket and the other was the blue one he had been wrapped in when he had been hung over. Between them and the four pillows it made a rather comfortable nest that was only missing Gladio.

The lights in the living room clicked off and Gladio padded into the bedroom with another yawn. He peeled off his tank top and threw it at the hamper that was next to the dresser in the closet. He missed but didn’t bother picking it up off the floor as he rounded the bed and slid in next to Ignis. Gladio took his face in his hands and gave him a searing kiss that Ignis returned ten folded before they both broke off at the same time and smiled muzzily at each other.

“Night,” Gladio whispered before rolling away to turn off the lamp.

“Good night,” Ignis said as the light went out bathing the room in darkness. Gladio’s arms
immediately sought him out and wound around him, pulling him back against Gladio’s chest. He relaxed into the hold on him. The warmth and comfort of the bed and Gladio combined nudging him surprisingly to sleep faster than he would have thought. He sighed and relaxed, happier than ever before with how things had turned out.

He fell asleep to Gladio’s lips on his neck and the gentle press of teeth to his skin.
Realizations Hidden in the Past

Chapter Summary

Their relationship takes off but there are small 'details' that Ignis continues to rationalize as something else entirely.

Until he can't anymore.

May 23rd at 0212

Ignis woke to the thundering sound of water.

He shifted slightly as he frowned. He had been so deeply asleep that he hadn't dreamed. The darkness had cradled him softly and only now was he being woke to the loud, unforgiving torrent of water coming out of the faucet and filling the tub next to him.

He was partially sitting up, leaning heavily into Gladio as the other tested the water with his free hand. His arm was around his shoulders, holding Ignis up and to his chest gently. Ignis was still in his ruined clothes. He doubted that he would ever be able to salvage his shirt but his trousers might make it out of this night relatively alright.

He was fairly sure he was in shock or maybe just deep in denial. He was way too calm having just found out his boyfriend was a vampire in what had to be the most violent and traumatic way possible. He had nearly had his throat torn open and was now worried about the blood staining his clothes. He should be more worried that he was alone with it, sitting on the floor next to the tub in its apartment, being held comfortably to its body.

In all reality he should be freaking out, screaming, trying to get away from it before it hurt him even worse than he had been.

It was a vampire.

But… it was also Gladiolus.

He brought a shaking hand up to rub at his face. The skin around his eyes felt hot and his lips were trembling. His thoughts were so conflicted now that he wasn't sure what to do or even where to start.

Gladio wouldn't hurt him, he knew that, but what about the… vampire part of him? That sounded so lame but had enough merit to be a valid worry. What was going to happen now? Were their personalities even separated with such a black and white distinction? Was he safe here? Shouldn't he be telling someone? Notifying the police maybe? He really needed to go to the hospital. He was so thirsty.

“Hey,” His movement had attracted its attention. Gladio's attention. What was the proper pronoun to use when referencing a vampire? Did that really even matter? Gladio was talking just loud enough to be heard over the water filling the tub. “I'm surprised you're awake already. How do you feel?”
Ignis looked up into the warm amber eyes that he knew so well, the handsome face that was looking down at him with concern. Part of him wanted nothing more than to lean up and kiss him softly, reassure him that he was fine just tired and more than a little scare. The same face that not even an hour early had been twisted into a snarl, fangs extended and eyes burning red.

The same face on the same body that was currently holding him, that had been standing over Ignis defensively, protecting him, staring down the thing that had attacked him.

“It wasn't a dream?” He asked, his voice quaking slightly. He wanted it to be a dream. Everything would make sense again if only it was all just a bad dream.

Gladio's face fell slightly. “No, Iggy. I'm sorry. What happened was very real.”

“So you... you're a vampire?” Ignis hated how small his voice sounded. He hated that he was now scared of Gladio.

“Yeah... I'm a vampire.”

“What are you going to do with me?” A shiver went down the length of his spine as his imagination provided all kinds of horrible ways he could die in the next ten minutes by the hand of the man he had like for so long.

Gladio looked sad. His lips pulled down into a frown and his forehead pinched together in sorrow. “I'm going to help you take a bath,” his voice was small despite being loud enough to be heard. “Get you cleaned up, in some warm clothes and then tuck you into bed so you can sleep. Help you drink a glass or two of water with sugar and salt stirred into it to be in the safe side.”

He paused, then slowly, carefully as if expecting Ignis to shy away, Gladio brought his damp hand up and lightly settled it on his neck. Ignis couldn't help but flinch at the gentle touch and Gladio jerked back but kept his hand close. After a long moment during which neither of them move, Gladio put his hand over Ignis' neck, right over where the wound had been.

“And maybe, if I'm really lucky,” Gladio sighed, “You'll let me lie next to you and hold you for a bit.” He sucked in a ragged sounding breath, the thumb on Ignis' neck daring to shift against his skin in a gentle caress. “And just let me be fucking grateful for a minute that I got there in time.”

It sounded wonderful, it's what he would have liked to do before now but he couldn't get the expression on Gladio's face -with burning eyes and fangs and looking decidedly not human- to leave his mind’s eye.

“I have so many questions,” he whispered, trying to distract himself from what he had seen even as his mind clung to it.

“I'll answer as many as I can,” he promised. Gladio's hand slid up to cup his cheek and his lips lightly pressed against Ignis’ before he even realized Gladio was moving.

Ignis couldn't find it in himself to kiss Gladio back.

February 14th at 2019

Gladio's love for classic literature was only surpassed by his love for romance novels. They were the really cheesy, bodice ripping, dime novel style of romance that could quite possibly give someone sugar poisoning. Ignis had known that way before they had started dating but now that they were dating it was so much more obvious.
Gladio stuck little cards and snacks in his bag when he wasn't looking. The handful of times they would run into each other in the halls, Gladio would have either a bottle of water or a coffee from the cafeteria that he would insist Ignis take with him. He came to the library now to do his homework on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday with dinner for both of them. They'd eat together around seven, Gladio standing next to his kiosk by the east exit before leaving for his part time job over at the club. He'd meet Ignis for the walk back to his place most nights that they both worked and occasionally the two of them would go to Gladio's apartment instead. While they made out a couple more times Ignis would always freeze up when they got to a certain point feeling self-conscious about their actions. Gladio would immediately back off, reassuring him that they had time and there was no rush.

It was noble, chivalrous and absolutely annoying.

Ignis hadn't had many boyfriends in the past and only had one where they got past kissing each other. He knew he was more attracted to men than women in seventh grade but it wasn't until high school that he ever worked up the courage to kissed the boy who sat next to him in advance biology. They managed a couple dates disguised as study session where they managed to sneak several kisses and touches before his parents caught them.

To say it was disastrous was an understatement. Ignis never saw him again but his uncle never said anything negative about that encounter. He merely cautioned him on who caught them and gave him the safe-sex talk that he had already gleamed from several sexual education books. He just wanted Ignis to stay and be safe in his search for a companion. It was more than some kids in his situation ever got and he could never thank his uncle enough for his support.

Gladio on the other hand was well practice. Very well practiced. The things he could do with his tongue and lips were downright criminal. Ignis usually found himself on his back or pressed to a wall or up against the counter, trembling in a wash of pleasure barely able to hang onto Gladio as he slowly took him apart, piece by piece. Gladio especially like to kiss and lick at his neck which Ignis had no complaints about.

He wanted to see exactly what Gladio could do but he would always backed off at a certain point. Like there was some unspoken barrier when it came to dealing with anything below Ignis’ belt that went above and beyond Ignis’ own insecurities. It was frustrating to say the least but how did one go about talking to their partner about taking the next step in their relationship? It was vexing and not something that he could bring up in casual dinner conversation, especially since he was technically on the clock when they ate dinner.

Other than when he asked Ignis out, when they had made out and things had gotten rather out of hand, Gladio hadn't touched him down there since. Ignis wanted to go further despite some minor reservations on his part mostly due to feeling slightly inadequate when comparing himself to Gladio. Who wouldn’t feel inadequate when compared to him? He was smart, good looking, had a body chiseled from marble like a Greek statue, funn-

“Earth to Ignis?” Noctis waved a hand in front of his face

He blinked having wholly forgotten that Noctis was there to visit him on shift while pressing him to eat one of the messiest hoggies ever made. Ignis was fairly sure Noctis did that for his own amusement as he watched Ignis try to eat it without making a mess of himself. “Apologies Noct,” he took his glasses off to clean away the invisible smudges in an effort to hide his embarrassment. “I seem to be a little distracted this evening.”

“Distracted or tired?” Noctis gave him a searching look as he fitted his glasses back on. “Really Iggy, it doesn't look like you've slept well last night.” His eyes narrowed in suspicion, “How much
coffee have you had lately?"

Ignis rewarded him with a blank look. “I haven’t had any since three. As I stated two weeks ago, I am attempting to cut back.” He hadn’t realized how much he had been having until Gladio started in on him about it shortly after they began their relationship. He not so subtly pointed out the detriments such a high caffeine intake had on his health and then began harping at Ignis to cut back, going so far as to bribe him away from his travel mug.

Ignis rarely objected.

“I know but you’re really out of it.” Noctis glanced at the clock. “You going over to Gladio’s after you get out right?”

Ignis’ face colored slightly as he thought of the text he had received earlier. Gladio wanted to usher in the Lover’s Holiday with a bang so to speak. It made Ignis wonder if they were going to push their relationship to the next level or if it would stay the same. His thoughts had been spiraling downward since he got the message at two that afternoon and he wondered how he could go about expressing his carnal desires.

Fingers snapped in front of his face and he jerked backwards in reflex. Noctis was looking very unimpressed now, “I’m not sure what’s eating you but it seems to involve Gladio.” Noctis cut him off before he could say anything. “Look, if something bothering you, just talk to him about it.” He smirked as if at an inside joke, “It’s not like he can read your mind or something.”

True. Most miscommunications in a relationship were due to the lack of conversation in the first place. He had the utmost faith that Gladio would listen to him and react -hopefully- in a positive manner. He just had to figure out a logical and systematic way to express his desire without it being to crass and untoward.

Now he had something completely new to fret about.

February 15th at 0128

Of course any elegant discussion or argument that he had managed to decide to go with went right out the window by the time Gladio opened the door to his apartment.

His romantic boyfriend was pulling out all the stops it seemed. He greeted Ignis at the door wearing a beautiful red satin button up shirt that had the top four buttons undone, revealing his sculpted chest, and tight dark pants that almost appeared to be painted on. Ignis was fairly sure they were leather. In one hand was a glass of red wine and with the other he pulled Ignis over the threshold by the belt loop on his right side, the hand sliding around to his lower back as he pulled them tightly together.

“Wine?” Gladio asked in a deep rumble of a voice as he stared deeply into his eyes. Ignis was fairly sure the door was blown closed by both the sound and look as together they did a decent job of turning all his thoughts on their tail. More than likely Gladio had nudged it closed with the hand holding the glass of wine but he could hardly care at that point. He managed to reboot his brain enough to nod his head.

Not letting their eyes drift from each other, Gladio took a sip of wine. As the glass moved away from his lips, his tongue darted out to capture any loose droplets left behind. Ignis outright whimpered at the display, mouth partially open in astonishment at how sinful Gladio had just made the simple act.

Gladio took that moment to kiss him.
Almost immediately, Ignis picked up on the notes of cherry and rose petals from the Malbec. The

tannins’ taste gave way to the more quiet yet heady taste that was all purely Gladio. He moaned
unabashedly into Gladio's mouth as their tongues twined together. Ignis couldn't find it in himself to
move let alone hinder Gladio in anyway. That would have been a crime that there was no
punishment conceivable enough for.

Gladio took his time, seeming to savor Ignis’ own flavor, before pulling away so he could talk
against Ignis swollen lips. “Hungry?”

Breathless and off balance, all Ignis could do was nod in agreement.

Gladio wasn't done attempting to wine and dine Ignis, though after his greeting, Ignis hardly needed
much more in the way of romancing to agree to just about anything. Gladio led him to the couch
leaving a trail behind them that consisted of Ignis’ shoes, jacket and satchel. The room was lit only
by candle light as twelve of them in various shapes and sizes burned merrily from there scattered
places about the coffee table. They outlined a selection of finger foods that Ignis recognized from
one of the small cafes downtown and another glass of wine half full with the bottle sitting nearby at
the ready.

The hand on his lower back that had drawn him over there and encouraged him to remove his
outwear with light touches eased him onto the couch with a gentleness that was hard to believe for a
man his size. Gladio kissed him as soon as he was seated. It was heated from the beginning and
overwhelmed him until his toes curled in his socks.

“Wine?” Gladio whisper yet again against his lips.

Ignis could only nod breathlessly in reply but was slightly disappointed when Gladio pulled away
and handed him the other glass. “Don't look so upset,” he chided him with a smirk on his face as he
eased himself down next to Ignis in the couch, forcing him to scoot slightly to the side to make more
room. Ignis made it a point not to move to far so that the two of them were cuddled close together
near the one arm. “I want to feed you.”

Finally finding his words, Ignis managed to squeeze them out probably a little too fast to be
considered seductive. “I was actually going to ask if you wanted some wine,” he took a quick sip of
wine tongue moving a bit fast in his haste to copy Gladio’s earlier movements and get him to kiss him
again.

Despite his fumbling and nervousness, Gladio caught his chin with his free hand. “Gladly,” he
rumbled pressing his lips against Ignis and making sure to through taste the lingering traces of wine
in his mouth.

Their meal preceded in much the same manner with Gladio pressing morsel after tasty morsel to
Ignis’ lips while he lounged back against his chest. The only thing Ignis had to do was bring his
wine up to sip from, Gladio even pouring him another glass when he emptied the first one and then
the second. He was even courteous enough to undo the buttons on his shirt when Ignis felt like he
was overheating, leaving the shirt on his shoulders and arms but barring his stomach and chest for
Gladio to trace random patterns on with his fingers. Halfway through his third glass, Gladio pressed
a finger in his mouth and Ignis explored the ridges and dips in the digit with a curious tongue. He
didn't even realize what he was doing until Gladio shifted against him to relieve the pressure as
subtly as possible.

Suddenly self-conscious of what he was doing, Ignis froze. Sensing his hesitation Gladio slowly
pulled his finger back. Realizing this was it and given confidence from the wine he had already
consumed, Ignis captured the retreating hand by the wrist and brought it close enough so he could
press a light kiss to its palm. “I want you to fuck me,” he said bluntly, not even embarrassed by how forward he was being anymore.

Gladio paused before pressing a light kiss to his temple. “I don't want to hurt you,” he whispered into his hairline as he pressed another kiss to the area as soon as he was done talking.

“You won't hurt me,” Ignis rushed to assure him.

“No, Ignis, I mean I really could hurt you,” Gladio's voice firmed slightly as he tried to get his point across. “That's... not something that can just be rushed into. I could really hurt you on accident and I don't want to do that. It takes time for you to even be ready for that.”

Ignis pouted, thinking that that was the disheartening end of the conversation, only to have his mostly emptied glass taken from him. Gladio set both their glasses off to the side on the coffee table before sliding both of his hands up Ignis’ stomach and chest. He wrapped them around his shoulders in a hug and kissed his cheek. “But there are other things I can do to you if you want. Just relax and tell me if I go to fast.” Another kiss, “Just focus on feeling and let me do the work,” he insisted pressing several more quick kisses on Ignis’ face and neck as he spoke. “Let me take care of you.”

“Please,” Ignis whined turning his head enough to steal a quick kiss. “Please. Touch me. Kiss me. Just... Do something.”

“Trust me,” Gladio rumbled in his ear. “It'll be my pleasure.”

The arms moved again, gentle peeling the open shirt from his shoulders and from where it was trapped between them. Gladio tossed it away as he mouthed at Ignis’ ear and wrapped his arm possessively around his middle. “Gladio,” Ignis sighed his breath hitching as Gladio’s free hand returned and thumbed at his nipple.

Ignis wanted to reciprocate but Gladio held him still, keeping him facing away from him as his hands traced patterns over his body. There wasn’t much Ignis could do from this angle but he could improvise. He ran a hand through Gladio’s hair, gently fistng the strands and earning a pleased rumble from him. He draped his other hand over the one around his waist, tracing incoherent patterns slowly in the back of it with his finger nail.

“Gods Iggy,” Gladio whispered as he left off his ear and shifted down to pay attention to his neck.

Ignis gasped and tilted his head more to the side as Gladio’s lips traced down his throat. It felt like his heart was pounding so hard it would burst from his chest and that only made him want more. He tugged lightly on Gladio’s hair not exactly sure how to articulate words anymore. The arm around his waist tightened as Gladio shifted behind him, forcing him to sit up.

“Up. On your knees,” Gladio whispered against his neck in a deep surly voice. Ignis nodded breathlessly as he moved to obey. It was made slightly awkward by the way Gladio refused to relinquish his hold on Ignis or lay off his assault on the side of his neck but soon Ignis found himself kneeling on the couch. Gladio was a solid warm weight behind him doing the same, holding him close.

“Good boy,” Gladio’s whispered praise sent a thrill down his spine.

He tugged again at Gladio’s hair as the two hands on him moved, one sliding down the other moving up. The one moving up his body located a nipple and began to lightly squeeze and caress it. A nail lightly scratched at it and Ignis whined, leaning back more against Gladio.

The other hand with his still covering it began to slowly undo his belt. Though his nipple was a
delicious distraction of sensations, all of Ignis focus was on that hand as it went about undoing the fastenings on his belt and pants. His hand tightened sporadically on Gladio’s as his hand slipped down to start pushing the fabric on his thigh out of the way. Gladio froze at that motion, taking it for a sign of discomfort.

“Do you want me to stop?” he asked pressing a gentle kiss to Ignis’ jaw in a silent show of support.

“N-nOoo.” Ignis hadn’t even finish forming the syllable before the finger on his nipple pressed down and rolled it hard. Ignis panted, letting his head fall back onto Gladio’s shoulder. “D-don’t stop,” he choked out.

Gladio pressed another kiss to his jaw with more force than before, “Then help my push this stuff down.”

The hand Ignis has over Gladio’s moved to comply, the other still tangled in Gladio’s hair that he had no desire to release anytime soon. Together they pushed his clothes down to the middle of his thigh. Ignis barely had a chance to feel the air on himself before Gladio’s hand moved with lightning speed to warp around him and gentle squeeze. Ignis whines at the touch, his entire body twitching in response.

“Fuck Ignis,” Gladio breathed against his neck. The hand that had been torturing his nipple stopped and that hand went in between him and Gladio. There was a bit of a struggle on Gladio’s part to get his pants off and down enough to free himself but the first slide against Ignis’ backside was worth it. Gladio moaned in appreciation of the feeling while Ignis whimpered with the realization of what had just slipped in between his cheeks. Gladio gave a few lazy thrusts as his hand came up to support a wobbly Ignis better by wrapping around his ribs.

Ignis wasn’t sure what to do anymore, he felt limp with relief but keyed up more than ever before in his life. He hadn’t realized he was even panting until Gladio’s arm was sliding around his chest. He shifted, noticing a dull ache in his knees that he ignored, relishing in the feel of Gladio all around him, holding him both intimately and gently.

“Relax,” Gladio’s breath caused a faint chill on the skin he had been kissing. “Let me do the work.”

Ignis nodded his head, still resting on Gladio’s shoulder, and moved his free hand to hold onto Gladio’s hip. “I-I’m not made of glass,” he managed to say lightly pulling on Gladio’s hair. “Get on with it.”

“Oh? Since when did you become such a demanding little pet?” Ignis shivered as the hand around his cock stroked him once unhurriedly. “Are you sure you want it like that? I could take you apart so achingly slow,” Gladio purred stilling his movements and gently rubbing with one finger at the base of his cock. “Just a little pressure right here and you wouldn’t be able to come until I let you.”. Ignis could hear the smile in his voice, “Until I was done enjoying you.”

It was a wonderful idea and if he hadn’t felt like he was going to burst right then and there at any possible second he might have been all for more tender touches and light caresses with both fingers and lips. “Gladio, please,” he whispered, unsure what exactly he wanted. “Please just,” He tried to squirm in his grasp to get any sort of sensation but Gladio held his hips still. “Something… Please?”

“I think I like the idea of you begging for it,” Gladio groan, the arm around his chest sliding up so he could simultaneously support him and hold his chin in a gentle grip.

“Lean back a bit… there you go, now relax.” Gladio twisted his head enough so that he could plunder Ignis’ mouth with his tongue. When he pulled away Ignis was trembling in anticipation for
what that kiss promised as his head was forced forward again.

Gladio rocked his hips forward which in turn rocked Ignis forward, pushing his cock through the tunnel Gladio was making with his hand. He went slow, building up a gentle teasing rhythm. It was just enough to not be enough. Ignis whined and pulled at Gladio's hair again, he could get use to doing that, and tried to urge him into a faster pace with the hand on his hip.

“Don't worry,” Gladio panted in his ear, getting the message as he shifted his legs apart more. “Spread your legs a bit.”

Ignis did and nearly leapt forward as Gladio rocked his hips. His legs had been to close together to feel it before but now Gladio's cock could slid right along his entrance, teasing the sensitive skin that had never been touched before. Ignis moaned as Gladio began moving again pressing kisses and nips to Ignis exposed neck and shoulder.

Ignis closed his eyes as Gladio continued to move. His breaths were coming in sporadic pants that were in counterpoint to the cadence of their hips. Small noises -that he would have been embarrassed to be making if he realized where they were coming from him- were escaping him with every thrust. He wasn’t going to last long like this.

Suddenly, Gladio just stopped.

Ignis couldn't help the wordless cry that escaped him as Gladio suddenly stilled and the hand around his twitching cock vanished to dig around behind him. Probably in Gladio's back pocket by the sounds of it. “Shhhh,” Gladio shushed him, peppering his shoulder with small short kisses. “I know shhhhh… Trust me.” Something made out of cellophane was a ripped behind him. “Trust me,” Gladio pulled away from him slightly and panted a few times, the movements of his shoulder giving away that he was fisting his own cock slightly.

He then took Ignis back in his hand, which was now warm and slippery, and squeezed gently. Ignis jerked at the unexpected sensation and let out a small cry of pure pleasure. He had thought it couldn't get any better but obviously he was wrong.

“Figured you'd like that,” Gladio chuckled in his ear. He shifted his hips and brought his cock back up to drag against Ignis' entrance making him let out another little wail. “My, my you've gotten noisy pet.” He shifted the grip on his chin so that he could press two fingers into his mouth. “Suck,” he kissed Ignis jaw. “If it becomes too much just let go of me with both hands.”

Ignis nodded his head as he did as he was told, gently swirling his tongue around the offered digits in what he hoped was seductive. “Tease,” Gladio kissed his jaw again. “Hang on.”

Gladio might have been gentle and languid before but now he picked up the pace with seemingly little in the way of the reservation he had before. Ignis whimpered, nearly forgetting to suck at the fingers that were now pressing his tongue down. His breath hitched with every forward push and he distantly wondered if he was in the cusp of hyperventilating.

“Gods Iggy,” Gladio breathed, forehead resting in the crook of Ignis’ neck as he kept up the pace, snapping his hips forward like a man possessed. “You're glorious.”

Ignis moaned in response. Even if he hadn't effectively been gagged by Gladio's fingers he wouldn't have been able formulate a coherent sentence. He was so close. All his being was focusing down to the feeling on his cock and along his entrance. He was close… so close. He just needed a little more to be pushed over the edge.
Gladio's thumb suddenly moved, tracing over the top of his head and thumbing the slit. 

Ignis jerked hard in Gladio grasp, a muffled scream escaping him as he came harder than he ever had been able to make himself come before. Wave after wave seemed to crest over him, taking more and more out of him with every shuddering crash. Gladio milked him through it, massaging his cock even as he continued to thrust against Ignis’ back. He trembled at the sensation of Gladio still using him, still fully clothed against him, even as he slipped into a sated bliss. 

This… He could get use to this.

Gladio moved his head and bit his neck as he came hard. Ignis shivering began anew at the feeling of his come splashing against the back of his thighs and the sensitive skin between his legs. The hand on his cock was stilling as Gladio slowed his hips to a stop. 

He let go of Ignis’ neck after a moment and licked at where he had bitten him. “Are you alright?” He asked as he removed his fingers from Ignis mouth.

“Yeah,” Ignis sighed, feeling more tired with every passing minute. “Bit tired.”

Gladio chuckled warmly, gently releasing his flaccid dick after tracing along it's length one more time as if saying good bye. “Lean back then. Don't worry, I gotcha.”

Gladio coaxed Ignis' to down against his chest as he stretched the two of them back down to their original position. Ignis sighed as he laid there, cradled against Gladio’s chest with his face lightly pressed into the back of the couch. Gladio pressed gentle kisses to his neck as he cleaned them up with napkins he must've been taking from the coffee table. Ignis was really too tired to care where or how Gladio was tending him right now as long as they could stay like this for a while longer.

“We made a mess of the couch,” Ignis murmured sleepily into the fabric.

Gladio carefully took off his askewed glasses and twisted away with them. Probably to put them on the coffee table, “It’s just a blanket. I can run it through the wash. Same thing with our clothes.”

Ignis hummed in agreement, “Sleepy…”

“Rest then,” Teeth lightly pressed against his neck right where he had bitten him earlier. “We’ll worry about cleaning that up in a bit.”

Ignis drifted off to sleep utterly content with how the evening played out while Gladio continued to press light kisses and gently suck at his neck in turn.

March 5th at 1230

The campus library was open to both students and the public. It wasn’t unusual to see someone wondering through the bookshelves that was definitely not a student. Honestly, other than down in and around the computer lab and some of the reference sections, Ignis hardly saw students at all especially towards the end of his shift so the lady in the black blazer was kind of hard to miss.

She was a middle aged woman coming up to maybe about his chin. Her hair was graying and chopped shoulder length. She gave off an authoritative air even though Ignis never approached her or even spoke to her. It was all in the way that she stood, poised and seemingly at the ready for something as she moved through the bookshelves flipping through volumes occasionally but never pausing long in one area.

After seeing her flit around in the economics sections for a spell, Ignis rose and locked his computer
screen as he prepared to leave the desk. It was quite possible she couldn't find what she was looking for or she was simply just browsing. Either way, he should remind her that the library was only open for about another thirty minutes.

“Good evening ma’am,” he said in the low voice required for speaking in the library when he was close enough for her to easily hear him. “Is there something in particular you are looking for?”

She had warm brown eyes and as soon as Ignis saw them he didn't want to stop looking at them. Still he tried, it was rude to stare. “No, thank you,” she said smiling at him. “I'm just browsing.”

“Ah very well,” it was taking all he had to sound reasonably the same as he normally did. All he wanted to do was have his voice trail off in a breath sigh and stare into those eyes for the next century. “I will remind you however that the library will be closing soon.”

She seemed even more amused by that statement. “Yes, thank you very much Ignis. I'll keep that in mind. Please return to your desk and continue with your work as you usually would. I assure you that I'll be gone by then.”

“Very well, my lady,” he bowed slightly to her, his eyes never leaving hers. “Have a good evening.”

He turned to leave but only made it a handful of steps when her voice halted him again. “Oh and Ignis, please be a dear and forget that this encounter ever happened. Just go back to work at your desk until the end of your shift.”

“As you wish,” he agreed with a slight bow of his head before resuming his journey back over to his kiosk. He stepped around to his computer behind the desk and unlocked it, hurriedly bringing up the web browser to work on the paper he had due soon for his socioeconomic class. He kept his eyes fixed on the screen, busily working until minutes before the library closed when he began to work on shutting down his section of the library for the evening.

The gray haired lady never crossed his mind again, their entire conversation gone from his memory completely.

March 29th at 1745

“Hey, Ignis?”

While he wouldn’t say that they were friends, Dino was a rather useful acquaintance to keep despite the annoyance. The journalism major was a wealth of gossip knowledge and knowing who needed what, why, when, where and how. He had been the one to help Ignis get and even move into his current bedroom residence off campus. Dino had happened to know ‘a guy’, who knew ‘this dude’, who had ‘a friend’ that happened to be right about to post the spare bedroom in the house for a new roommate. It had worked out beautifully and while Dino said Ignis hadn’t owed him anything, he now occasionally showed up when Ignis was on shift and asked him for help on various homework questions or talked at Ignis to get him caught up on the past few weeks of school gossip.

No matter how much Ignis ignored him.

“Is something wrong?” Dino certainly looked like something was wrong. He was frowning deeply, almost like something was physically paining him going by the grimace on his face.

“Someone trashed the archive room,” he jabbed a thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the stairwell leading to the basement room. “Managed to knock over one of the big shelving units and
“What?” he asked rhetorically even as he stood from his chair and locked his computer with a practiced hand on the keys.

“Honestly it looks like the rugby team had practice in there,” Dino continued as Ignis came around the counter of the kiosk to join him. They started towards the far corner of Ignis’ designated area where the stairwell was. “And used the shelves as the opposing team.”

The two of them went down the stairs and into the small room the archives were in in a companionable silence which was amazing as far as Ignis was concerned. Dino must’ve been really upset not to be yapping about something. As soon as Ignis reached the foot of the stairs he saw what Dino meant, the archives were an absolute mess. One of the large bookcases full of binders had been tipped over causing the binders to be strewn across the floor. Thankfully all the newspaper sheets inside were laminated so they weren’t damaged but some of the binder themselves hadn’t been so lucky. Ignis was glad that only one bookcase had fallen and not another. As it was, he’d be cleaning and organizing this mess up for the next week.

“Come on,” Dino said looking uncharacteristically cross. “I’ll help you at least gather everything up on one of the tables.”

“That isn’t necessary,” Ignis assured him as he tried to figure out the best way to start the cleanup process. “This is part of my job after all. Bringing the mess to my attention was more than what most might have done.”

“Yeah well I like it down here.” He looked at Ignis and waggled his eyebrows at him, “For both scholarly and more pleasurable reasons.”

Ignis shot him a glare but other than that dropped the line of discussion completely. It was well known throughout the school that the archive room was the best place in the library to go for a ‘quickie’. It was back, out of the way, and private with a stairwell tucked around a corner and the room itself in part of the basement. Almost no one went down there except for journalism majors and the occasional history buff. At least for actually research anyways. It was good for a quick round on one of the large tables down there or possibly against the wall.

Or maybe one of the free standing double bookcases like the one that had been toppled over? Ignis wracked his brain trying to remember if he had seen anyone other than Dino over near the stairwell leading down here. He had thought he had seen Allen Bouchard, one of the school’s star football players over here earlier with his newest flavor of the week perusing the social science section. Ignis pinched his nose and decided not to dwell on it anymore. He honestly did want to know.

“Very well,” organizing this was going to take long enough, having help picking it up would not be unappreciated. “Thank you Dino.”

“Hey, what can I say,” he asked as he knelt and started gathering up some of the binders nearest to him. “I tend to be an all-around nice guy. I like helping others.”

“So that they can help you later no doubt.”

“Hey, never tend down a friendly gesture.” Dino had the audacity to wink at him knowingly. “Never know when someone can scratch your back when you need it most.”

That was a typical Dino response. Ignis managed to not roll his eyes as he stooped to gather up some of the laminated pages that had spilled from their binder. They were from the 1960’s, back
when the University had only been in existence for ten years or so, when men’s soccer had been their only sport. He quickly reorganized them by their pages numbers only stopping when he reached a picture of the soccer team at the time because a cursory look piped his curiosity.

Andrew Comitati, the team's left forward, looked hauntingly like his boyfriend. It was hard to make out the finer details on the grainy black and white photo, but Ignis was certain he could recognize those strong features anywhere. His hair was different, styled to match the times, as was his school uniform but other than that they appeared the same. All the way down to sculpted chest and easy, bright smile.

Ignis rationalized it as probably being Gladio’s grandfather or great uncle or some other descendant before moving on with his task.

April 6th at 0326

Ignis muffled his pleasured cry behind his hand while the other clung to Gladio’s shoulder for dear life.

If he had thought that Gladio’s skills with his tongue on his neck were criminal they had nothing on this.

Ignis’ chest was heaving as he stared blankly up towards the dark ceiling. The light from the street lamp out in front of Gladio’s apartment barely piercing the darken room casting it in a dark muted gray that was barely enough for him to discern outlines. Not that it really mattered whether he could see on not. Gladio was nothing more than a darkened lump and a solid presence on his lower waist and legs.

And it mattered even less as Gladio’s tongue swirled around his head again causing him to writhe on the sheets at the sensation.

He hadn’t expected this to happen tonight. He had come over to make Gladio and himself a light dinner and to watch some more British satire. It was a nice, rather domestic Sunday night that ended with him agreeing to spend the night if only so Gladio could cuddle him like an oversized teddy bear. He hadn’t objected, though he wasn’t much for affectionate displays in public and had never been a very touchy feely person to begin with, they were in private and this was Gladio. He always had a hard time saying no to Gladio and his apparent addiction to cuddling.

He had woken sometime around three in the morning to Gladio pressed up close to his back gently pressing his teeth to his neck. He’d hummed and exposed his neck a bit more in invitation and Gladio preceded to lave his tongue over the area after a barely noticeable hesitation. He’d slowly worked his way down Ignis’ neck, chest and stomach leaving a blazing trail of want with his lips, tongue and hands. Galdio coaxed him onto his back and to slip off the oversized shirt that had been loaned to him to sleep in before going back to mapping out his torso with his hands and mouth.

“Do you want me to stop?” Up until then there hadn’t been any words between them. The only sounds had been that of rustling cloth and Ignis’ small noises of pleasure. Gladio had paused at the waistband of the borrowed athletic shorts, lips hovering over the twitching skin of his lower belly.

“Don’t stop,” he gasped out even as his face burned in embarrassment at his wanton, needy tone. Without any fanfare or further prompting, Gladio sat up and stripped off the rest of his garments, leaving Ignis lying prone and naked on the bed. He was glad it was dark, embarrassed at the mere thought of what he probably looked like, but that train of thought was derailed as Gladio came back with a vengeance and a seemingly single minded determination to make him come.
The onslaught was relentless. Gladio’s mouth was a delicious combination of warm, wet pressure. He sucked hard, cheeks hollowing against him, hand moving to tease what wasn’t in his mouth. His tongue swirled and danced, up and down his length as he built up and easy rhythm. It traced up the vein and teased the underside of his head, causing him to choke back cries of pleasure as he twisted uselessly on the sheets.

He wanted to warn him, had tried to warn him, but all that escaped him was an incoherent babble as he stiffened and then trembled at the force of his release. Gladio didn’t seem bothered, easily working him through it, swallowing and lick at his spent cock until it was almost too much.

He was still trembling from the force of his release as Gladio gathered him up to his chest and pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead. He felt like he should do something, reciprocate the feelings that Gladio had just awaken in him somehow, but exhaustion clung to him. It was hard for him to form words at all.

It took him much too long to realize that Gladio was jerking himself off. Teeth lightly nipping at his collarbone as Gladio’s bulk hovered over him. “Gladio…” he whispered into the darkness which seemed to cause Gladio to come right then and there, stiffening as warmth splashed over Ignis’ stomach. The teeth turned to lips as gentle kisses were pressed to his collarbone. Gladio settled alongside side him careful not to spread the mess that covered Ignis.

“I’ll clean up in a sec.” he whispered turning Ignis’ head so he could press gentle kisses to his slack mouth. “Are you alright?”

“Yes,” he pressed as close as he could to Gladio without disrupting the mess on his stomach, he trusted Gladio would clean him up like promised. With a sigh he said, “Better than good.”

Gladio chuckled warmly, lips dragging down his cheek to press against his neck again. “Go to sleep.”

Ignis drifted off as Gladio lightly bit at his neck.

---

April 18th at 1900

He didn’t immediately recognize the middle age woman that was hovering around the back of the social science section but wrote it off as unimportant. The library was available for use by both the students and the public. She was probably someone the recently moved into the city or perhaps just learned that she could use the library’s facilities as if she was a student.

He only thought it was odd that she always kept appearing in his peripheral vision. He would go about completing his nightly tasks and she was always there. Hovering about a book shelf nearby or flipping through certain texts as he straightened shelves and returned books to their rightful spot. She even sat with an armload of books at the nearest lounge to his kiosk as he did some mandatory computer work before settling into his own homework.

It was a bit ironic as far as he was concerned. Ignis couldn’t help but smirk to himself as he began working through a calculus problem. He had an unintentional stalker following him around that night.

About an hour later he stretched in his chair and glanced over at the lounge. She was still there. Short cropped, gray hair falling forward to frame her face. She had a bright turquoise pendant on with a white shirt under a black blazer that had its sleeves partially rolled up to her elbows. She was wearing a pair of dark trousers that helped to give her an overall appearance of a business woman or maybe a new professor that Ignis hadn’t heard about.
Tucking away his homework, Ignis loaded up another round of returns in his small cart. Returning books to their proper shelves was a good way to break up the monotony of the evening sometimes. Wheeling the cart towards the elevator, he noticed that she and her material were already gone which was surprising given the amount of books that she had sitting on the table next to her. Ignis wondered if he would see her moving about the shelves again as he worked.

He wasn’t disappointed. Ignis put away several books that were in his arms as he moved through the bookcases, tucking away several economic books and a sociology book. He started back towards his now empty cart when he caught sight of her again. She was over in the psychology section, idly flipping through a book on dreams and their apparent meanings as if she was more bored than actually looking for something for a change.

“Is there something in particular that you are looking for?” he asked as he stepped up to her ready to aid her in finding whatever text she needed.

“No, not really,” she replied in an equally soft voice. Both of them were keeping their voices down despite the fact that there wasn’t even someone on this floor for them to disturb. “I was more or less browsing through this section.”

“I see,” he said politely ready to leave her to her perusal of the shelves. “If you have need of assistance please let me know.”

“I intend to,” she looked at him and he found his eyes immediately drawn to hers. There was something about her that suddenly seemed off though Ignis couldn’t quite put his finger on it. “Have a pleasant evening, Ignis.”

“You as well ma’am,” Ignis said as he turned around and walked back to his cart. He took it back downstairs and returned to his station. All thoughts of the odd woman and how she knew his name even though they had never met before vanished from his mind as soon as he tried to think more in the matter.

When Gladio asked later about how his night had gone, Ignis simply couldn’t recall the woman at all. He gave a benign answer that was all about monotony and the freshman trying and failing to fix the printer in the computer lab. A typical night really, with nothing out of the ordinary happening.

May 18th at 0015

It wasn’t often that Ignis managed to get out of work early but sometimes, on a rare occasion, he found himself out on the front steps of the library a full hour -or sometimes even two- before he usually was.

It had been an absurdly slowly week and the building supervisor decided that enough was enough and everyone should go home and sleep before they fell asleep on their keyboards solely from the persistent boredom they were all facing. Ignis wasn’t complaining. It meant he got a full additional hour of Gladio’s time. He use to just head home but now it was much more engaging to go over to Gladio’s place before retiring to his own bed.

Sometime he even stayed in Gladio’s bed.

Ignis hurried down the sidewalk on a path that his feet had long since remembered. It really didn’t matter what happened after he arrived at Gladio’s as long as he could get a kiss and a warm hug in greetings. He doubted that Gladio would refuse him on such a simple request.

The trip over to Gladio’s apartment seemed to take forever despite the building having remained in
the same spot and the different routes leading to it hadn’t changed. Ignis’ mind happily supplying
him with things they could do with an extra hour of time together. Part of him was embarrassed by
what he was thinking but the rest of him simply didn’t care. He was pretty sure that Gladio would
want to hear the details and possibly -hopefully- reenact at least some of them.

Finally Ignis was there and he rapped on the door with his knuckles a few times before stepping back
politely. He brushed the invisible dirt from his sleeves and shift his messenger bag enough to
emphasize the jut of his hip. He was still trying to learn and understand these ‘sexy’ features and
how to draw attention to them but Gladio rarely seemed to complain at his bumbling attempts.

The door opened and he looked up to greet his lover-

Only to realize that the man who answered the door definitely wasn’t his boyfriend.

He was a rather imposing man even though they were about the same height. Ignis blamed it in the
military style haircut and the slight frown on his face. He looked harden as if what he had seen in his
life made any hardship that Ignis would ever face look like an ill-timed party trick. Cool blue eyes
regarded him as if he was a puzzle and it was all Ignis could do not to recoil backwards.

There was something about this man that creeped him out.

“Um… hello?” Ignis looked over to see the number in the door as if he somehow got the wrong
apartment. “I-”

“You must be Ignis,” he had a deep voice that seemed resigned at the world in general. “Please,” he
stepped back and swept a hand into the room to invite him to enter. “Come in. Gladio mentioned a
text from you stating you were coming over early. He's currently indisposed in the bathroom at the
moment.”

“Very well,” He stepped into the familiar apartment, giving the stranger a wide berth. The door to
the bathroom was closed and Ignis could hear the shower running so he knew he wasn’t lying.
Hopefully “Um… who are you?” He asked the man trying not to watch him with an air of
suspicion as he removed his coat and toed off his shoes. He was fairly sure he was failing
spectacularly.

“How rude of me,” he said as he closed the door, the lock thunking shut ominously. Ignis shifted
uneasily. “My name is Cor Leonis, I am a close friend of Gladio’s father. I was in the area and
figured I would stop by to see him on my way through.”

“I see,” he walked into the kitchen trying not to make it obvious that he was attempting to put the
island between the two of them. He pretended to bustle about the kitchen, looking through the
cabinets as if he was looking for something to eat and then giving up on the idea to make tea instead.
Cor moved into the living room, his eyes still watching Ignis closely.

It was unnerving to say the least.

“How rude of me,” he said as he closed the door, the lock thunking shut ominously. Ignis shifted
uneasily. “My name is Cor Leonis, I am a close friend of Gladio’s father. I was in the area and
figured I would stop by to see him on my way through.”

“I see,” he walked into the kitchen trying not to make it obvious that he was attempting to put the
island between the two of them. He pretended to bustle about the kitchen, looking through the
cabinets as if he was looking for something to eat and then giving up on the idea to make tea instead.
Cor moved into the living room, his eyes still watching Ignis closely.

It was unnerving to say the least.

“Gladio has spoken highly of you.” Cor stated as he moved around to the far side of the couch and
picked up a beer bottle from the coffee table. A soccer game was playing on the television, the
volume muted so that it was just the images flickering in the background. “He also mentioned that
you were considering moving on to a graduates program when you graduated with your bachelors.
Have you decided what that would be in?”

He’d rather that Cor would be leaving rather than attempting small talk but it would be rude not to
engage him in a conversation that he started. “Not quiet. While a Masters in Business is a tempting
avenue from the sheer volume of jobs I would qualify for, I would prefer to get a graduates degree in project management.” It would put his analytical skills and organizational practices to work as well and he would earn more in the long run.

However he still needed to find a way to pay for it and the loans he had from his current schooling. Most of his tuition had been covered with scholarships and grants but there was more to school than just tuition expenses. Those costs he had had to put on student loans that were going to come due eventually. With no credit score there was a very low chance that he could further his student career as soon as he graduated.

Cor tilted his head to the side as if considering something before speaking. “If you do decide to go with the project management path, have Gladio get in contact with me. I know someone who may be willing to pay for your schooling if you intern with them during your studies.”

“Really?” Of all the things he had been expecting, an offer like that had not been one of them. He now felt a bit guilty about his undeserved paranoia towards the man. “Thank you very much Cor.” He took the kettle from the stove and poured it over the tea bag in the mug in front of him. “I… I don’t know what to say.”

“If you’re half as good as Gladio claims you are, trust me when I say you’ve earned the assistance.”

Ignis adjusted his glasses in an effort to hide his blush at the praise.

All further conversation was derailed as the bathroom door took that moment to swing open. Gladio stepped out in a pair of sweats and a loose white tee shirt. A towel was over his shoulders was helping to prevent his hair from soaking the shirt. “Hey,” Ignis was ashamed to say that all it took was a smile from Gladio for him to melt as he padded over to him in bare feet. “I was hoping to be out before you got here. Been keeping Cor company?” Gladio didn’t give him a chance to respond before sweeping him up into a gentle kiss.

Instead Cor answered for him. “Yes,” Cor was acting like Gladio wasn’t in the midst of kissing him so sweetly and gently. “In fact I was just telling him about how Regis and Weskham might have needs of services if he chose to continue his studies.”

“Really?” Gladio broke off their rather heated kiss to gawk at the older man in his apartment. “They’d be willing to do that?”

Ignis had been turning to apologizes for Gladio’s behavior, which had not been appropriate with a guest present when everything just… stopped.

It was like a switch had been thrown and everything had just froze mid motion. Ignis wasn’t even sure if he was breathing. He was staring off in the direction of Cor who looked… wrong. Ignis couldn’t describe it but there was definitely something off about Cor Leonis in that moment.

Like he was in focus while the rest of the room around him was out of focus.

A faint hiss, like that from an angry cat, reached his ears and just like that it was over.

“I thought they were talking about downsizing their workforce?” Ignis jerked and wobbled in Gladio’s grip trying to figure out what had just happened.

“They were talking about downsizing a sector of the business that was failing to meet costs, not the entire company,” Cor clarified. The conversation hadn’t paused while he had been out of it. Maybe it was just him?
Ignorant of Ignis’ internal confusion, Cor empty the last of his beer with a single swing. “Regardless it is late and I should be going to allow you two to enjoy the remainder of your evening together.” He moved to put the beer bottle in the sink.

“Here, let me get that for you,” Gladio held onto him a moment longer than necessary before releasing Ignis and moving to take the bottle form Cor. Ignis would have thought it strange had he not been more concerned that something was wrong with himself.

“It was nice to meet you Ignis,” Cor’s words jarred him out of his self-contemplation and Ignis turned to him embarrassed that he hadn’t even realized Cor was getting ready to leave. The man was already in his coat and shoes, picking up a briefcase that had been tucked close to the fridge that Ignis hadn’t noticed earlier. “I hope to get a chance to speak with you more in depth in the future.”

“Um… yes, yes you too.” He felt off balanced still glancing over at the television to make sure that time was still moving normally. There was a toothpaste commercial on the air showing someone vigorously brushing their teeth for the viewers. “I-It was my pleasure I assure you.”

“See ya later, Cor,” Gladio thumped the older man on the shoulder. “Tell Dad I said ‘hi’ and give Iris a hug for me.”

“Of course.” Cor seemed to sigh in resignation at that request. “Goodnight.”

Ignis was distracted from the goodbye’s by his tea. Absently and in a quest to calm his nerves, he had gone to take a sip of the green tea only to frown at the overpoweringly strong bitter taste. He looked at the cup even more confused now than before. It tasted as if the tea had been steeping for nearly ten minutes not just a few.

He had to be tired. That was it. The long boring nights at the library were finally getting to him.

A pair of arms suddenly slid around his waist and pulled him back against a familiar chest. “Now that he’s gone,” Gladio said as he held him close and took the mug from him to put it back down on the counter so he had Ignis’ sole attention. “What do you want to do tonight?”

Ignis could think of a few things, the strange sense of frozen time already leaving his thoughts.

Even though ten minutes had vanished from his recollection entirely.

May 23rd at 0118

It was often that Ignis would leave the library tired. Despite his friends best efforts and his insistence on being able to maintain his schedule, he was use to always feeling fatigued and run down by the end of the day. It was just par for the course and something he had grown accustomed to after several years of maintaining such a hectic life.

Total exhaustion and he, however, were not common bedfellows.

Ignis rubbed the bridge of his nose as he walked down the stairs of the library. It had been a long day mostly due to his housemates deciding to have a random party the night before until almost four in the morning. He had learned long ago that it was pointless to try and get them to stop so all he could do was endure.

Between the snatches of sleep he managed to catch the night before and his typical long day, Ignis was about ready to fall asleep on his feet. It was so bad that he had almost called and asked Gladio to come get him but he still had his pride and Gladio had probably had just as long a day as him but with more sleep on his side of it all. It had felt wrong for him to ask that of him even though he had
no doubt that Gladio would come to rescue him like a dashing white night in one of his bad romance novels.

Ignis smiled shyly to himself subconsciously as he thought of his boyfriend. Gladio was slowly becoming his everything and as scary as that was it was also a beautifully wonderful thing. Losing that for any reason was what he was terrified him not the actual relationship. Honestly though, he doubted that either of them were going to break it off anytime soon it was still something that would wake him up occasionally in the dead of night.

Ignis fixed his glasses to sit properly again as he started down the sidewalk. While he wasn’t about to have Gladio come pick him up, he was going to stop by his apartment. It was closer than his place for one and the idea of cuddling up against his boyfriend after his long day was too tempting to ignore. Like usual and just to be courteous, Ignis shot Gladio a quick text to make sure that it was alright as he walked.

He hadn’t even managed to put his phone back in his pocket before it beeped with an incoming text. Of course it was Gladio, who had sent a winky face emoji and a glass of wine.

_I’ll wait to open the bottle till you get here._

Ignis smiled at the message and sent off a quick word of thanks as he stepped up his pace. Since Valentine’s Day and realizing that Ignis was more into wine than beer or hard alcohol, Gladio now almost always had some on hand when he came over. A faint blush rose on his cheeks as he thought of how cuddly and handsy he tended to get when drunk... not that Gladio had ever seemed to complain.

Typically Ignis would stick to the sidewalk along the streets but tonight he chose to cut through the park. It would shave about ten minutes off of his walk even though he would have to go up a small hill. He wasn’t a fan of the university park after dark as trickster tended to prey on the unsuspecting but having walked this way before he knew they typically wouldn’t bother someone who stuck to the paths and walked quickly. There was a bit of a ghost story circulating the park which helped to add to the effect but Ignis was fairly certain that was from a misguided attempt to keep students out of the park at night more than some girl committing suicide in the forest back in the 1950’s. There was nothing in the papers about it at any rate so its credibility was in question. Also it was late even for them, they’d be off getting drunk or high or some other such thing by now.

He was halfway through the park when the sound of a snapping stick came from somewhere behind him to the left.

He rolled his eyes but kept walking. There was a first time for everything and Murphy's Law would say it would be on this day when he was just so tired. He sighed as he heard whoever it was following him scrambled back, probably to get behind a tree or something if he looked back. Ignis didn’t bother wasting his time. He just kept walking.

The person tried to stealthy follow him but his footsteps, now that he knew what to listen for, were stumbly and uneven. It was probably some drunk jock that had been dared to spook him or some such nonsense. He sighed again, deciding to just deal with this and be done with it. “If you are trying to startle me, you’re going about it a bit poorly.”

He didn’t stop walking as he said it but his stalker did. Ignis made it another six steps before a loud drawn out hiss reached his ears. It wasn’t like anything a human could make, it was to deep and drawn out, more of a growl really. Ignis couldn’t deny that it unnerved him. He glanced over his shoulder as he kept going but didn’t see anything off to his left where the sound had came from so he turned back to face forward.
Something in front of him, low to the ground and looking like a human down on hands and knees, scuttled like a crab back behind the bush it was next to.

Ignis froze.

That was… new.

Yes… new.

Ignis glanced back over his shoulder and forward again but there was nothing there. He listened closely to the area around himself, even going so far as to hold his breath in an effort to hear better. Still nothing. All he could hear was faint rustling of leaves in the breeze and his own, suddenly deafening heartbeat.

Ignis turned and hurried back to a side path that he had just past about ten feet back. It led down to a small parking lot and fountain that was easily accessible from Elm Street. As he went, Ignis pulled out his phone, dialing Gladio’s number even as he kept his eyes scanning the area around him. Whatever that thing was, it wasn’t human and he had no intention of being bitten by a rabid animal.

Because what else could it be?

“Hey babe, what’s wrong?” Gladio’s voice was warm and concerned.

“Gladio, there is some kind of animal in the park,” a branch snapped again and Ignis’ eyes flicked to that location only to see nothing out of the ordinary. “I think it’s rabid. It’s following me.”

“Where are you?” he could hear Gladio moving about on the other end of the line as he spoke.

“I’m going down to the lot just off Elm.” He turned the corner to start down to the parking lot.

“Come pick me up?”

“Of course,” there was the obvious sound of a door closing. “I’m leaving now.”

“Thank you Gladio. I’m sorry for—”

The strange growling sound came again, louder than before, and sounded like it was directly behind him.

“IGNIS! RUN! GET TO THE STREET LIGHTS!”

It was the fear in Gladio’s voice, not his scream over the phone line, that propelled Ignis forward into a dead sprint.

Ignis didn’t make it more than two steps before something grabbed his free wrist and twisted it hard behind his back. He cried out, dropping his phone even as he heard Gladio yelling his name. He twisted around to fight whatever the hell was holding him so tightly that the bones in his wrist were grinding together.

He stopped mid turn, mind shorting out in disbelief.

It was a rather thin human but not. It was hunched down, legs bent out enough so that they were splayed off to either side more like a frog than human. The hand on his wrist ended in long thin fingers with sharp nails that were digging into his skin as they grinded the bones together. Their hair was long and unkempt, twisted together and greasing looking in the dim light.

The face was what frightened him the most.
The skin was white and drawn, stretched too tightly over the skull. The lips were bloodless. Their eyes were sunken and dark, lacking irises and looking like two dark pools. It smiled at him then; the teeth were blunt and chipped except for a pair of fangs, pointed and sharp.

A sharp sound, a loud angry snarl, exploded from the phone on the ground, drawing him from his state of frozen paranoia and causing the thing to glance down at it.

Ignis punched whatever the thing was in the face. It stumbled back as if shocked, letting out a noise that sounded like a yip from a dog that had just been hit. Ignis twisted his wrist free from its failing grasp and turn to run again. He didn’t know why the street lights were so important but he really didn’t care much at the moment.

He only made it two steps before the thing grabbed him again, somehow recovering being knocked on his ass faster than a normal human ever could. This time instead of grabbing his wrist, it clawed down the length of his arm. The sharp nails on its hand tore through his skin like a hot knife through butter.

Ignis screamed.

There was another noise from the phone at his scream but Ignis couldn’t make it out as the thing chose to jump on his back. For something that appeared so frail it was heavy and that additional weight bore him to the ground. He hit hard, the wind force out of his lungs. Even as he gasped for air, he struggled to bring his hands up so he could flip over.

He never made it.

The thing grabbed his head and forced it to the side before sinking its teeth into his neck.

Ignis screamed again, all rational thought gone as he began to struggle. He could feel the blood leaking from his neck as his violent movements only worked the teeth back and forth in his neck. It made the wound deeper and the blood flow faster which only caused him to panic more. He couldn’t tell if he was making any headway in freeing himself. All he knew was that he felt weaker and weaker and it was getting and harder to find the will to move.

Additional weight suddenly landed on both of them. What air he had managed to pull into his lungs were forced out yet again. Something grabbed the creature, he felt the mouth on his neck forced open and then all the weight on him was gone. The creature’s hands that had been pinning him down let go and Ignis was kicked as the thing was literally peeled off of him. He had the impression of a wrestling match over him as two things vied for dominance but it ended just as swiftly as it started with the thing thrown away from them by the new arrival.

Ignis rolled himself over, trembling in a combination of pain and sheer terror. He wasn’t sure what he had been expecting but seeing Gladio standing over him, sweat dripping from his skin and breathing as if he had been doing wind sprints was not one of them. “G-Gladio,” he barely managed to get his voice loud enough to be considered a whisper as he continued to gasp for air. How his boyfriend -who had been almost an eight minute drive away- had managed to get here so quickly was beyond is ability to rationally comprehend.

“I got you,” his boyfriend snarled, clearly enraged at whatever he was glaring at. “Stay down.”

Ignis blinked up at Gladio. Now that he was actually getting a good look at his boyfriend it was apparent Gladio was as human as whatever that thing that had attacked him was. His fangs were bared. Fangs. Just like what that thing had… His boyfriend had Fangs!
His eyes were also glowing. A bright almost cherry red that looked like it should be on a piece of metal rather than as a part of a human’s anatomy. He would have laid there forever staring up at his boyfriend in disbelief, except the thing that had attacked him suddenly appeared in front of them.

Gladio swung, no more than a blur of movement that Ignis could barely keep track of, and punched it so hard in the stomach that Ignis could see the impact bowing out part of its back.

It was rocketed away from them, thrown back and right through one of the large oaks that filled the park. The tree’s trunk burst apart, teetering for a half second before falling towards him and Gladio. He didn’t even flinch as Ignis whimpered and tried to coordinate himself enough to roll out of the way. Trying to move was still a loss cause at the moment but it wasn’t like he had to worry. Gladio swatted the entire tree to the side like it was an irritating fly buzzing around his head.

That was just too much.

Even before the tree had landed with the loud crunching sound of splintering and breaking wood about ten feet away from them, Ignis was struggling to his feet. It was hard and took way more effort than he could have thought. His head pounded and he couldn’t seem to get enough air. Somehow in the attack he had gained two left feet and his balance was tipped so hard to the left that he staggered more than ran in a zig zag pattern off to the side.

“Ignis?” Gladio suddenly said from behind him. “No Ignis! Wait! Don’t run around! Get back here!”

Ignis ignored him and picked up the pace, running as fast as he could with his current injuries. As he stumbled off into the bushes, Ignis had an irrational thought to try and outrun this sudden development. That if he ran far and fast enough it would turn everything back to normal. Where everything made sense, where he wasn’t just attacked by a vampiric thing in the park, where his boyfriend was still a normal human and not a vampire himself.

A tear trickled down his face as Ignis ran.
A Complicated Mess

Chapter Summary

Ignis can't decide how he should feel.

He's with his boyfriend after what had to be the most violent attack he's ever experienced.

However... his boyfriend is also a vampire.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

May 23rd at 0216

Even after that one sided kiss, Gladio stayed true to his word.

He made sure the water was very warm but not scalding before helping Ignis to strip out of his ruined clothes. Gladio lifted Ignis up off the bathmat and lowered him into the water. He retrieved a hand towel from the shelf and folded it up on the edge of the tub so that Ignis could rest his head back against it like a makeshift pillow.

Throughout that entire process, Ignis couldn't meet his eyes.

“I'm going to get you some water to drink,” Gladio said after he made sure Ignis was curled up comfortably in the tub, everything but his shoulder and head covered by water as he lay on his side. “Holler if you need anything, alright?”

Ignis nodded but didn't say anything. He didn't dare to open his mouth. At this point he was fairly certain it would be either incoherent sobbing or panicked screaming.

He waited until Gladio stood and left before looking towards the open door. Gladio's back had just vanished through it. Ignis stared at the empty doorway for a long couple minutes and listened to the soft noises coming from the kitchen as Gladio moved about.

Honestly, he felt stupid. This was Gladio. This was his boyfriend, the man he had spent several months pining for and then was finally asked out by. The man he had kissed, who had taken care of him, who brought him dinner, lunches and lattes just because he could. The man who had brought him so much pleasure...

Who also just so happened to be a vampire.

Ignis closed his eyes and settled back to think. Was it just because he was scared of what he didn't know or understand? Was his irrational fear due to being attacked by that thing? Was it because his imagination was bring up all kinds of random trivia he knew about vampires and twisting it to be even more violent and awful and scary than it really was?

Gladio returned carrying a large glass of water in hand, stirring it with two bendy straws he had put in it. Ignis watched silently as he knelt down next to the tub. Gladio had promised to answer his
questions. He might as well start asking them.

“H-How,” his voice was scratchy and weak. Gladio was still stirring the cup in his hand but was watching Ignis as he continued speaking. “How old are you? Really?”

He shuffled a little closure to him, offering him the straws as he held the glass for Ignis. “I’m two hundred and seventy six years old.”

Part of him wanted to make light of that. ‘You don’t look a day over one fifty’ or maybe ‘talk about robbing the cradle’ or something similar but instead he didn't say anything. He leaned forward enough to sip from the offered straws, frowning as the water hit his tongue. “Why does it taste funny?” He asked. He glanced at the cup and wondered if Gladio had perhaps slipped him some-

No. He killed that thought before it could fully manifest. Gladio would never drug him. Never.

“You body is anemic and dehydrated from lack of blood. The salt will help you retain fluids. The sugar is simple enough for your body to process into energy. Obviously, the water is for rehydration.” He offered up the glass again and Ignis sipped again at the straws dutifully, “If you feel up for it after your bath, I'll make you a spinach and cheese omelet.”

Simple proteins and a heavy dose of iron. Maximizing the amount of nutrients he was getting without wasting a lot of energy to digest them. Ignis nodded his head against the towel it was resting on. Gladio shifted around so he was sitting next to the tub and no longer kneeling beside it. “I'm not sure where to start,” Ignis admitted with a small sigh. “I don't…”

“Take your time,” Gladio said offering Ignis some more water which he accepted. “I'm not going to rush you. I know that this is a lot to take in so suddenly.”

“Were you going to tell me eventually?” he asked, eyes flickering up to meet Gladio’s before he looked away just as quickly.

“Of course it's not like this is something I could've hidden from you indefinitely.” Gladio brought the straws back to his lips. “I was going to have to tell you soon anyways but I would have let you in on it a hell of a lot slower and gentler than all this.”

That statement stirred up a lot of questions. It was hard to choose just one to start with. “Why were you going to have to tell me soon?” He settled on before he sipped from the straws again.

“What you see now is known as a glamour,” he gestured to his face with a wave of his free hand, “A low level illusion that hides the physical distinctions that indicate I'm a vampire. When I become aroused or really tired I lose my focus on it.” He gave a little half shrug off his shoulders as a smirk titled up the corners of his mouth briefly, “Didn't want to be in the middle of doing you only to have you freak when my appearance suddenly changed.”

That would have been an understatement and it explained why Gladio was always behind him or the room was too dark to see anything during their romantic encounters thus far. It was also had to be why he was always up before Ignis in the morning when he spent the night. It was odd thinking that this wasn't how Gladio actually looked. “Can you… can you drop it?”

“You want me to drop it now?” Gladio paused for a moment before frowning as he spoke again. “Are you sure? I don’t want to scare you after what just happened.”

He hadn't thought of that. Was Gladio really that scary looking? His mind flashed to the burning eyes and twisted snarl with sharp fangs on a face he had come to adore. He closed his eyes and licked his chapped lips. “Please Gladio,” he said softly. “I want to see you.” If only to face his own
fear and prove to himself that Gladio wasn't as terrifying as his imagination was making him out to be.

“Right,” Gladio set the glass down and twisted to face him better. “Try not to panic alright? Close your eyes if it's too much.” Ignis nodded his head and watched with rapt attention as Gladio simply blinked.

It took Ignis a full minute to even realize that Gladio's appearance had changed. It was so subtle but impossible to ignore when he finally noticed it. His eyes were now silted like a cat’s but with a shorter slit of pupil intersecting it perpendicularly to give it a sort of elongated star look. His eyes seemed brighter, not glowing like they had been in the forest, but they had a faint glint to them almost like a dog or cat did in low light. It had to be something similar to the reflective quality in their eyes that allowed them to see better in the dark.

And then, of course, there were the fangs.

Gladio's incisors were about double the normal length and taper to a sharp point. The top two teeth were slightly longer than the bottom two but not by much. If he closed his mouth, they could easily tucked back behind his lips and no one would be the wiser to what he was except for his eyes. They were small enough that Ignis had never noticed them all the times they kissed or the times Gladio had gone down on him.

Overall he really didn’t look that scary...

Ignis looked from the eyes to the teeth and then back to the eyes. He worried his lip brief with his teeth before he reached up hesitantly with a trembling hand. Careful and ready to pull back if Gladio so much as flinched, Ignis ran a finger down the length of one of his fangs. Other than peeling his lips back to give Ignis better access to his fangs, Gladio sat eerily frozen during the slight touch barely breathing or blinking as Ignis carefully explored them.

“How,” Ignis paused trying to gather his scattered thoughts. He pulled his hand back down letting it slip into the warm water again. The air in the bathroom was colder than he thought. “How do they work? A-are they hollow?”

Gladio smiled at him, slightly amused. “No, nothing that fancy. They work just like regular teeth.”

The idea of Gladio tearing open his throat like that thing had done shook Ignis to the core. He brought a hand up to his neck covering where the wound had been. He was sure to have remembered that… Shouldn’t he? “Have you… have you drank from me before?”

Gladio frowned, shuffling a little closer so he could reach out slowly and lightly touched the side of his neck. Ignis hated how Gladio was treating him like a skittish animal but his flinch at the contact showed how much he needed it. The grief and hurt on his face was clear as day but it didn't stop him as Gladio pressed on, “I can't lie to you like this and say no.”

Ignis wanted to curl into a ball but couldn't in the small confines of the tub. Gladio had… just like that thing? He'd nearly ripped out his throat? How many times? Ignis would have thought he would have woke up during such a violent attack. Or had Gladio just removed those memories? Vampires had those kind of mental abilities didn't they?

“H-how many times have you…” he trailed off unsure if he really wanted to know how often he had been bitten and his mind played with. Once was completely unacceptable as far as he was concerned.
"Six times and only since we started going out."

Six times. Six times Gladio had bit him and nearly torn out his throat but he had never noticed anything? That was hard to believe. He would have at least noticed the blood sheets or bloodstains on the carpet being cleaned up. Or did Gladio's ability to control his mind that impressive? "Did you mess with my head every time too," he couldn't help but add bitterly.

"No," Gladio brought the drink back to his lips. Ignis didn't take any this time but Gladio held it at ready for him anyway. "It would take another century or two for me to learn how to manipulate someone's mind without outright destroying it. The best I can do is put someone to sleep and force them to calm down when they are panicked and scared. I've only done that to you once or twice before tonight."

Confused Ignis looked at him, or more pointedly at his teeth, "But how did you hide the clean up?"

"Clean up?" Gladio's face scrunched in confusion for a moment before lighting up with understanding, looking horrified. "No, no Ignis. Alright, look if the donor isn't fighting back it's not... it's not as messy or violent or... Alright look." Gladio set the glass down on that bathroom floor and brought his wrist up to his lips. He bit down on it, Ignis' eyes widened as he saw his fangs pierce his own skin.

Gladio pulled back and showed Ignis the two small pin pricks left behind slowly seeping blood. "See? When I've bit you, you weren't fighting back and I didn't take more than a sip or two at a time. I... I didn't want to hurt you," he said contritely.

"Didn't want to hurt me?" Ignis repeated giving him a look that spoke volumes. A sob escaped him as he choked out, "I think it's safe to say you failed at that."

"Iggy-" Gladio reached out to him.

"Don't touch me," Ignis snapped with venom seeing the hand reaching towards him again.

Gladio froze.

As soon as Ignis said it, he regretted it. The look on Gladio's face fell even more and the room was so silent Ignis was sure he could hear a pin drop. Both of them stared each other in the eyes before Gladio slowly retraced his hand and settled it on his thigh. There was a pregnant pause.

"Iggy..." Gladio sighed and tried again. "Ignis, look-". Whatever else Gladio had been about to say was cut off by his phone ringing from his pocket. Without breaking eye contact, Gladio took it out and brought it up enough that he could see who was calling him in his peripheral vision.

"I'm sorry but I have to take this," he said standing with a fluid grace that he always had but now it made Ignis wonder if this was somehow due to him being a vampire. "Stay in the tub, I'll be right back."

It wasn't until Gladio left the room, phone to his ear as he answered with a small 'yeah' as he closed the door behind him, that Ignis lost what little remained of his composure. It started with a single shuddering breath that quickly turned into a stream of tears. He tried to muffle his sobs into his closed fist which he pressed against his lips, his body jerking in time with each harsh breath.

Gladio entered the room at some point during his break down but didn't try and comfort him. He left Ignis in the tub where he was as he bustled around the bathroom, setting aside some clothes he had brought in with him and gathering up towels and a washcloth. He knelt back beside the tub as Ignis' tears finally dried up, leaving him feeling like a hollowed out shell of his former self.
“I'm going to help you bathe as long as you have no problem with it,” Gladio said softly as he reached for his body wash up on the recess in the shower where it was kept.

Ignis shook his head ‘no’ though he made no attempt to move other than that. Gladio hadn't seemed bothered by his lack of response, accepting it for what it was and moving to assist him. He kept his touch clinical. There were no playful caresses like Ignis was use to when Gladio touched him. It was just the gentle drag of the soapy washcloth over his skin. When Gladio did have to touch him to move him it lacked any familiarity. It was like there was a wall between the two of them now and Ignis hated that he was the one to have erected it.

“Here,” Gladio held the washcloth out to him. “Clean yourself.”

Gladio had never hesitated to touch him. Even when they had still been just friends he would find an excuse to touch him. Whether it was just a friendly jab to his ribs or throwing an arm over his shoulders, Gladio always made a point to touch him. After they had gotten together, the touches increased and after Valentine's Day Gladio rarely hesitated to touch him there.

Being ordered to clean himself struck a nail so deep into his heart Ignis wondered if he was the vampire and had just been staked through the heart.

With a trembling hand, he did as instructed. Clean between his legs as he tried valiantly not to break down again. He was only partially successful, sobs still causing his breath to stutter but no tears were leaking down his cheeks. He handed the cloth back to Gladio, trying to touch the side of his hand only for it to be swept away before he could.

“I'm going to wash your hair next,” Gladio wasn't even looking at him as he reached for the shampoo and conditioner. Ignis had no doubt that it was going to be just as clinical as before. He wasn't wrong, though gentle and thorough, Gladio didn't try to turning anything into a caress and the touches were so alien that it was like someone else entirely was touching him.

His breath was still coming in shuddering sobs even after Gladio was done with his hair and lifted his nude form from the tub. Gladio wrapped him in several towels, drying him quickly and effectively. The clothes he helped Ignis into were a pair of pajamas that Ignis had accidentally left there one night after bringing over some laundry he needed to do in afternoon. He never worn them despite them having a dedicated spot in Gladio's dresser. He always preferred to swipe something of his boyfriend’s to sleep in.

It hurt on so many levels. After several months of being in such a fairy tale kind of romance, to have it all swept away in the span of one night -a little over one hour from what he could figure- was downright torture. Ignis’ sobs were so strong now that they shook his body to the core. It felt like all he could do was squeeze his eyes shut and endure.

Gladio lifted him as if he weighed less than a feather, carrying him from the bathroom and into his bedroom. He didn't try to comfort him or offer any kind of support. The blankets had already been turned down and Ignis found himself snugly tucked in the already warm bed. The electric blanket already turned on and helped warm his chilled body.

“If you need anything just say something,” Gladio stood up and turned to leave. “I'll hear you.”

He knew he had to say something, anything to try and repair the damage he had done to their relationship, but it was almost a full minute before Ignis managed to calm himself down enough to be able to form words and string them together coherently. He knew there was no way Gladio could hear him now that he was out in the living room but he still whispered his boyfriend's name as he continued to grieve over what had happened in such a short period of time.
He didn't want it to end like-

“Yeah?” Ignis blinked in shock at the large silhouette in the doorway. Against all odds, Gladio had somehow managed to hear him, clear on the other side of the apartment and was there in barely the span of a second. “Did you need something?”

Ignis blinked watery eyes at him a few times before he whispered just as softly as before, “Hold me?”

He honestly thought Gladio would refuse him.

He sobbed again when Gladio did not.

“Of course,” his tone was warmer than before; closer to what Ignis was used to but still a little guarded. Gladio shushed him as he slid under the blankets with him, familiar arms wrapping around his waist and shoulders, holding him close just like Gladio always did when they slept together. Both of them ignored the full body flinch that ran through Ignis' when Gladio's hand first touched him.

Ignis clutched weakly at the shirt in front of him. Irrationally, he was fearful that if he let go Gladio would just disappear in a puff of smoke or would get up and walk completely out of his life. A large hand rubbed up and down his spine even as Gladio continued to try and wrap himself completely around him. “It's okay,” Gladio reassured him. “I'm right here. Everything is going to be okay.”

“I'm scared,” Ignis managed to choke out even as he buried his face into Gladio's collarbone.

“It's alright to be scared,” Gladio assured him nuzzling his head. “I wouldn't have expected any differently right now.”

“I don't…” Ignis let out a shuddering breath. His disjointed, panicky thoughts only adding to his confusion and he was silent for a moment as he tried to gather them together somewhat. “I don't know what to do.” He finally settled on. He was so tired, his body ached and despite the electric blanket and Gladio curled around him he was so terribly cold. His eyes fluttered.

“It's alright Iggy,” lips pressed to the crown of his head gently. “Go to sleep for now. We'll pick this up in the morning. I'll help you figure it all out then.”

Ignis let his eyes fluttered shut and slumped into the offered warmth and comfort, stubbornly trying not to overthink anything about just what he was leaning against. What was holding him close and had already admitted to biting him in the past. Instead he only chose to thinking of his boyfriend. His devoted, caring and considerate boyfriend just trying to calm him down so he could sleep. That thought was enough to lulled him deeply asleep almost instantly.

May 23rd at 0604

Ignis’ eyes snapped open, a half remembered dream of something grabbing him from behind and dragging him down still lingering in the back of his mind.

He could still feel the warm blood on his throat and chest, growing cold and tacky on his skin.

He took a moment to steady his breathing, closing his eyes again as he tried to will his heart to stop from going a mile a minute. It was still throbbing harshly, working at twice the normal pace, but he attributed that mostly to blood loss. He opened his eyes as he felt the bed dip next to him.

At some point Gladio had changed his clothes and most likely showered. He was dressed in a pair
of athletic pants and a tank top, his usual attire when he was lounging around his apartment. The eyes were warm and human again as he smiled. “Hey, bad dream?”

Ignis was laying on his stomach so his nod was mostly swallowed by the pillow. Gladio still seemed to understand though and Iggy preferred to save what little energy he had rather than trying to sit up like he wanted to. “Don’t remember much of it,” he mumbled.

Carefully Gladio reached over and smoothed back the hair that had flopped over his forehead in the night. “It’s just past six in the morning. You should sleep more.”

Sleep sounded good but the lingering memories of the nightmare were still too fresh for him to even think about being able to sleep. Besides that, he was terribly hungry. “I was promised an omelette earlier,” he reminded him.

Gladio smiled at that and started to get up, “Alright, stay here and doze for a bit. I’ll be back with breakfast before you know it.”

“Can I…” he paused trying to figure out a way not to sound so needy and insecure. In all honesty, he didn’t want to be alone. Not so soon after that dream. “Can I come out with you?”

Gladio frowned at that. “I’d rather you stay in bed.” Despite his reservation, he shifted the blankets back so he could lift Ignis into his arms. “But the couch will be just as fine.”

“I can walk,” at least Ignis was fairly sure he could.

“I know but the less energy you use for now the faster you’ll recover,” Gladio lifted him to his chest with ease, cradling him close as he walked from the room. “As it is I think we’re going to come up with a reason for you to miss the first half of the school week.”

“Wait what?” That was a new horror he hadn’t even thought of but with him this weak it would be viable. Missing nine classes, several tutoring sessions and several shifts at the library would put him far enough behind in his classes that he’d need several all nighters to catch up again. Not to mention what the lack of money coming in would do to his always precarious budget. “Gladio I can’t miss that much…” the rest of his sentence caught up to him. “Wait. What do you mean ‘we’?”

Gladio didn’t answer immediately, taking a moment to settle Ignis in the couch and cover him in the throw blanket, tucking it close around his sides. Instead of moving to the kitchen, he knelt next to the couch and ran a hand through his hair as he sighed. Ignis gave him the time he apparently needed to explain whatever it was he was going to tell him about.

“All right,” he started heaving another smaller sigh as he spoke. “I’m not the only vampire in the city. We take care of our own and anyone associated with them, which includes you even if you didn’t know it or anything about us until last night. I reported the attack on you before we even got back to the apartment. A full investigation has been launched into where the wraith came from and if this was a directed attack against you in particular or if it was just a random incident.”

“Investigate?” Ignis said as if he had never heard the word before, blinking at Gladio as if he was speaking a foreign language. “As in you went to the police?”

“No we’re keeping this as under wraps and quiet as possible. Only a handful of my clan members even know about it. We try not to involve humans unless we have no other choice. The less humans know about us the better. Otherwise we’d be all over the news, probably listed as a public enemy and have scores of groupies wanting us to ‘turn’ them,” he said rolling his eyes. “It’s one of the reasons why I hadn’t told you yet. You had to be interviewed by several other vampires and
Ignis stared, his mouth moving a couple times as he tried to figure out where to begin. There were so many questions in his mind now that it was spinning in circles. “Turn?” He finally settled on mostly because it was the shortest question to ask.

Gladio rolled his eyes, “Not sure how it started but humans tend to think we can turn them into vampires. Like say, drain them of all their blood and then let them feed from us or some other bullshit. It doesn't work, usually the vampire will tell them to take a hike or the human typically ends up dead when they try. Humans can't digest blood very well and it tends to make them sick as hell when they try.”

“So it doesn't work?”

“Nope. You're either born a vampire or born a human.” He shrugged, “You can't jump the fence either way regardless of what someone tells you.”

Ignis blinked in confusion, “You were born a vampire?”

Gladio’s smile had a slightly melancholy air to it. “Yeah, old man is a vampire, my mother was a human. Any offspring born from the vampire and a human is going to be a vampire. If a vampire and a vampire, both with pure bloodlines, have a child then you have what's known as a pure blood.” He shrugged, a sad look in his eyes. “There are only a handful of purebloods left. Most of the vampires treat them like royalty now.”

Ignis shook his head. This conversation had gone way beyond the scope of his imagination. He didn't want to think of procreating to create vampires or think about an entire group of them.

“So what this about interviewing me?”

Gladio stood up then and headed for the kitchen, “I'm going to get your breakfast started while we keep talking, alright?”

“Sure,” his stomach rumbled in agreement. Ignis tried to sit up more in the couch so he could better see him as Gladio began retrieving ingredients and the pan he needed for the omelet.

“Humans can be easily manipulated or controlled by other vampires from other clans or from inside the clan trying to destroy the current hierarchy.” Ignis could tell when the butter hit the pan. It sizzled and the fragrance of several herbs reached him. “It's been done more often than you think and it tends to be messy affairs. Also there are some humans that try to infiltrate vampire clans to carry out assassinations or gather intel.”

Gladio sighed, obviously thinking about something in the past by the way he paused for a moment, “My clan has learned the hard way to triple check humans we let know about us and even then we ward the ever living piss outta them to prevent them from becoming targets or attacked. We've lost too many good friends and family over the years not to take added precautions.”

“Like I was,” Ignis whispered more to himself than Gladio but the vampire responded anyway. He shivered at the thought of what could have happened to him. He would have been just another tally on Gladio's list of lost friends and family.

“Yeah. I'm so relieved that you managed to call me before that thing pounced on you. Wouldn't have known you were even under attack until it was too late.” There was a pause and Gladio let out a shuddering breath before continuing thoughtfully, “Going to have to mark you as my own after
this. Maybe get you access to a blood spell so you can defend yourself somewhat and let me know if you're attacked in the future.”

“Wait, spell? Magic real then?” Ignis put his head in his hands and took a deep breath. He had thought it was impossible but his headache had definitely gotten worse.

“Yup, just not in a context you'd understand. It’s… it's kind of complicated to explain.” Gladio sighed and Ignis knew he was rubbing at the back of his neck like he did when he was having a hard time explaining thing. “Basically you can access a… force shield kind of… thing by using some of my blood that I've given you... imbued with a... power word I guess you could call it, to activate it?”

Gladio sounded confused enough as it was and Ignis was partially sorry he'd asked in the first place. He ground his fists into his eyeballs, rubbing at them as if he could rub the thoughts right from his mind. He did not want to think of blood anymore right now. “So when are these interviews going to happen?”

“They already did.” He could hear the amusement in his voice as he said that. “Monica has done several while you were working in the library over the past few months and Cor interviewed you when you ran into him here the other night.”

That strange frozen fuzziness he had felt a few nights ago was still fresh in his mind. “How did they-” he stopped suddenly realizing two people -vampires- he hadn't even know had gone through his mind. He shivered feeling violated.

“Both of them are like two centuries my senior or older. Monica's never really been forward about her age but Cor’s been around for ages,” Gladio said misinterpreting his pause. “She’s really good at dealing with the human mind. I doubt if you even remember meeting her.” He couldn't recall meeting anyone named Monica in the past few days? Weeks? Months? When exactly had she met with him? Who even was she?

And Cor ha-

“What was that hiss about? When Cor… interviewed me?” He remembered that sound in sharp relief against the strange seemingly out of body experience he had the night he had met Cor.

“That was me basically telling Cor enough was enough and to leave you the hell alone. Ten minutes is a long time to shift through someone's mind regardless of how good you are. It's why Monica does it numerous times in small doses. Easier on the person she's reading and she tends to get more information out of them without them becoming aware of what she's doing. Vampires hiss at other vampires to warn then away especially if they're in the same Clan,” there was a snort of amusement, “It's more polite than punching them at any rate.”

He remembered the snarl that had come from his phone. “Then you snarling at the… wraith? Over the phone?”

Again there was a smile in his voice, “Translated into English that was 'back the fuck off or answer to me’. Wraiths aren't really attuned with their rational mind anymore. Snarling at them gets the point across a lot better than words do.”

Gladio came around the couch then with a plate in hand. “Here. Not as pretty as some of yours but should still taste fine.”

“Thank you,” it looked perfectly alright. Maybe a little lopsided in the corner but overall it was nearly a picture perfect omelet that tasted delicious too. He ate several bites while Gladio sat on the
edge of the coffee table watching him. Ignis had to keep reminding himself to slow down. The last thing he needed was to make himself sick.

Before he knew it, half the omelet was gone. Gladio had been watching him looking amused as he gobbled down the omelet probably a lot faster than he should have been. Ignis forced himself to put down his fork for a few moments but it seemed to be a monumental task. “So… what is a wraith exactly?”

Gladio sighed but dutifully answered, “They're a vampire that have become addicted to a certain kind of blood and basically go insane. They go on rampages draining blood from everything that matches their addiction whether they need the blood or not.” Gladio said frowning. “Their addiction is so powerful that they lose their rational comprehension and become completely animistic. Basically they're a loose cannon and a threat to everyone around them. We… when we know about them, we put them down quickly. Try to minimize the damage both to protect people and ourselves.”

Ignis thought back to the attack, when Gladio's blurred punch that bowed out the wraith's back. He had no doubt that Gladio could take them down swiftly. “Addictions? Why was it after me then?” A sudden horrible thought struck him and he sucked in a breath, “Did it attack anyone else?”

“If it was addicted to human blood, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time makes you a target. Same thing if it was addicted to deer, cattle or horses… It’s why most vampires go for a wide variety of blood types and donors when we feed. No one wants their Thirst to take over like that and loose themselves completely to it.” Gladio's face darkened, “That being said, no other victims have been found yet so unless there is evidence that say otherwise we are assuming that you were targeted because of your relationship to me.

Ignis forced himself to take another bite of omelet though he barely tasted it. “So… what happens now?”

Gladio leaned back a bit and sighed. “Now? All you have to worry about is getting better. Rest and recover, I'm here for anything you could possibly need and to protect you from anything that’s stupid enough to show up. Monica and Cor will deal with the wraith and figure out where it came from or if it sent after you with malicious intent. It's only a matter of time now.”

“Deal with…. Wait! That thing is still alive?!” Ignis half squeaked out that last word. Fear gripping him at the thought of it still being alive, the haunting imagery and ghostly feeling of the nightmare he woke from… of all this happening again.

“I had to choose between killing it or going after you before you bled to death,” Gladio gently took the empty plate from him and sat it next to him on the coffee table. “It was an easy choice.”

He was shivering even harder, “But… what if it comes back-”

Gladio's hand carefully caught his chin and lifted it so that their eyes met. His were glowing softly and Ignis felt the building fear and panic drain out of him. “If it's stupid enough to come after you again, it'll have to deal with me first,” the vampire swore.

Gladio then forced his head down a touch, just enough so that he could press a kiss to center of his forehead.

Ignis swallowed harshly, upset that he had started to pull away from such a tender and sweet act.

May 23rd at 0930
“Gladio!”

Somehow Ignis managed to sit up but it wasn't more than a foot up from the bed when his head spun and black spots clouded his still sleep hazed vision. He listed hard to one side, barely aware he was even moving and about to fall out of the bed when a pair of arms wrapped tightly around him. He was quickly and effortlessly laid back down and his legs scooped up off the bed to be held together over a broad shoulder.

“Easy Iggy,” Gladio’s voice was soothing and calm. A hand lightly touched his cheek and Ignis rolled his head towards it instinctively even though he was barely aware of his surroundings. “Easy. You're alright.”

The hand on his cheek cradled it and lifted his head slightly so he could meet Gladio's eyes. The soft glow to them calmed him as the fear and panic he woke up with melted away into nothing. He blinked tiredly a couple times before managing in a small voice. “I don't even remember it.”

And he didn't, just the sheer terror that had seemingly consumed his entire being.

“Not surprising,” Gladio lowered his legs back to the bed and began rearranging the blankets around him again. “Your mind is responding to the trauma of being attacked like that. It's natural.”

It may have been natural but it was also frustrating. It felt like he had only just fallen asleep and he was tired, so very tired, but he doubted he’d be able to sleep now. “What time is it?”

“Nine thirty. You've barely been asleep for two hours.” Now that Ignis’ bedding was fixed and he was comfortably tucked in, Gladio perched on the edge of the bed again. “You should go back to sleep.”

Ignis knew he needed sleep to regain his strength but so soon after such a dream meant he wouldn’t be sleeping anytime soon. “I don't think I can.”

Gladio watched him for a moment before standing and gesturing to the empty space on the bed next to him. “May I?” It felt weird to be the one giving permission for Gladio to get in his own bed but it did help him feel like he had some control in the out of control situation he was in.

Gladio laid down next to him, staying on top of the blankets as he curled close to him. Gladio used one arm to prop up his head and the other draped over his chest, the hand come to rest tentatively over the side of his neck opposite of Gladio. For a beat there was silent before Gladio gently rubbed his thumb across Ignis’ throat. “I'm right here,” he promised Ignis in a soft tone. “Nothing’s going to happen to you. Just rest. I'll protect you.”

Gladio's words were heavy with promise and despite the unease about being around a vampire, Ignis reminded himself that this was his boyfriend. His caring, considerate boyfriend who had promised to move the world for him on more than one occasion before this mess had begun. Finding out he was a vampire didn't change who he'd fallen for. He had to keep remembering that. It helped to keep the fear at bay.

Still, in the back of his mind, that quivering fear was still lingered. It made Ignis swallow as the thumb continued to trace a gentle path softly across his neck. He didn’t want to sleep this close to Gladio anymore but he still wanted to curl up in his arms and seek out the comfort and warmth therein. It was a vicious match of tug a war that he desperately didn't want to think about right then. He just wanted to sleep.

However, sleep seemed to be no more than a wayward thought at the moment. Something that
would be nice to have but something he had no way of achieving. Ignis realized he needed a distraction if he was to relax at all and avoid having another panic attack. The thumb tracing over his neck brought a question to mind and he mentally clung to the distraction with glee. “Why…” he kept his voice soft, trying to remind himself of rest even though he knew he wouldn’t be able to achieve it anytime soon. “Why do vampires always bite people on their necks to drink their blood?”

Gladio let out a quiet snort of amusement. “That's more a Hollywood movie thing. We typically don't feed directly from a donor unless it's in a very extreme circumstance. Usually when we feed from human blood it's from a bag that's been refrigerated for a bit. Same with livestock or anything else we feed from. Taking directly from the donor can be traumatic and stressful for them. We're not out to hurt those that are kind enough to let us feed from them.”

“But you said you…” he trailed off unsure of how he was going to finish what he was saying and if he wanted to know the answer or not. It seemed contradictory to say he didn't want to cause the donor trauma yet had been drinking from him.

“I only took enough to taste,” Gladio assured him in a warm voice, his hand moving up to trail his knuckles softly along his jaw. “If I were to feed from you, I'd be talking about two or three pints.”

“Out of my neck?” It seems ludicrous. That was a lot of blood to be losing in a short amount of time.

“Or anywhere else in major artery gets close to the surface of the skin,” Gladio agreed, his hand moving back down to stroke his throat. “The neck though, that's a special place for a vampire to bite.” Their eyes met and the usual warm look seemed to flare brighter for a second and Ignis wonder if Gladio was going to try and lean in and kiss him. He refrained which was probably a good thing because Ignis was fairly sure he would have panicked if had. “Only romantic partners bite each other's necks.”

Ignis didn't know what to say to that.

For a while they lied there staring at each other. The only movement in the room was their breaths and the steady motion of Gladio caressing his neck over and over again. The motion was hypnotic, which Ignis knew was an attempt on Gladio's part to lull him asleep. While he was more relaxed than earlier, he still knew that sleep a long way and coming. He was still lying next to a vampire…

He couldn't take the silence after a bit. It made him think too much and continuously reminded him of his predicament. “How much blood have I lost?” He assumed it was a lot. He doubted that he'd be this weak or lethargic otherwise.

“Almost three pints.”

Ignis’ eyes widened in shock and fear, “Gladiolus I should be in the hospital right now,” he tried to sit up but, even if he had the strength to do so, Gladio’s arm held him down with little effort on his part. “I'm fairly sure I need a transfusion.”

“Nah, you're not that bad off. Still have a ways to go before you’d be having a class three hemorrhage but your close.” His eyes grew sad, “If I had held off sealing your wounds another minute or two this all would have been different.”

Ignis shivered, both from the cold and terror he had felt only a few hours ago. At least he managed to tamp it down enough to ask “W-would you have taken me to the hospital then?”

“No,” Gladio took a second to shift next to him, moving a little closer and leaning heavier into his
side. “My clan and I wouldn't be able to protect you in there and we would have placed even more humans at risk. If the wraith was really sent after you, it would go through anyone trying to protect you. We could stop it easy enough but normal humans… not so much.”

Ignis shivered, remembering the attack on him, especially how violent and sudden it was. He didn't want to image how much damage it could do tearing through a hospital.

“If it had come to that, my clan has its own medical facilities in the city. I would have taken you to that clinic for treatment. We would have pulled your blood type from our food stores and given you a transfusion.” Gladio shifted then pressing closer to him as if his solid weight would help both ground him and warm him at the same time. The warmth was welcome but his mind wouldn't quiet.

“Do you want me to turn up the blanket?” Gladio asked.

They both knew that Ignis was only partially shivering because of the constant chill in his bones. He shook his head, looking away from the warm eyes staring at him and up towards the ceiling. Ignis sighed and closed his eyes, trying to will himself to rest.

Gladio spoke after several minutes of him trying to force himself to fall back asleep. “Do you want me to put you to sleep?”

Ignis didn't want Gladio -or anyone really- mucking about in his mind anymore but the air between them was tense and uncomfortable and he desperately wanted to escape it somehow. He opened his eyes again but kept looking at the warm eyes staring at him and up towards the ceiling. Ignis sighed and closed his eyes, trying to will himself to rest.

Gladio spoke after several minutes of him trying to force himself to fall back asleep. “Do you want me to put you to sleep?”

Ignis didn't want Gladio -or anyone really- mucking about in his mind anymore but the air between them was tense and uncomfortable and he desperately wanted to escape it somehow. He opened his eyes again but kept looking at the ceiling. “How do you do that?”

"Put someone to sleep?” He paused thoughtfully looking at the wall across from him. “It's kind of hard to explain but really it's like flicking a switch. You just need to know where to look.”

“And there's no way I can stop you from doing that is there?” Ignis couldn't prevent the bitterness from leaking into his tone.

Even though he wasn't looking directly at him, Ignis knew Gladio was giving him a hard, disapproving look. “No, there are ways for you to prevent it and fight back. Simply saying no would work. I won't force you to sleep if you don't want to. I was only offered to give you a hand.”

Ignis shrank slightly, feeling ashamed of himself for a moment. Gladio had never forced him to do anything and had always made sure he was alright with doing something new even if there was some minor teasing involved. This had been no different what with him asking permission.

Gladio continued without giving him a chance to apologize. “Closing your eyes work too. There's an old vernacular that say 'eyes are windows to the soul’ which is partially true. Most vampires can't do anything to your mind if your eyes are shut and the few who can would have you out before you even realize they're there. Closing your eyes is your best defense really. You can also fight the need to sleep but eventually you'll just run out of energy to stay awake and fall asleep anyway.”

“Gladio~” he turned to look at him, making sure to make eye contact with him if only to show that he did trust him even if his questions lately were saying otherwise, only to be interrupted by Gladiolus's cell phone going off.

Gladio didn't look away from Ignis, maintaining their eye contact as he reached down and pulled his phone out of the velcro pocket near his knee. He thumbed the answer button and answered with a quick 'yeah'. Ignis couldn't make out whatever the person on the other end of the line was saying but they couldn't have gotten out more than a sentence before Gladiolus sitting up and twisting around, putting his back to Ignis. “What's wrong?” Ignis asked, shifting about in an attempt to sit up but couldn't seem to manage it.
“Fuck,” Gladio half snarled out as he listened to whatever the person on the other line was saying. It was more animalistic than human and Ignis hesitated before moving forward. While Ignis wasn’t able to sit up, he did free a hand from under the blankets to lightly grip the back of Gladio’s bicep. For a long moment the apartment was silent and, when it was finally broken, Gladio's voice sounded more like a growl than actually speech. ’Understood. We'll be ready.”

“Gladio?” Ignis half whispered as Gladio slammed a thumb down on the screen of his phone with enough force Ignis was worried that the phone would crack. “What's wrong?”

Gladio didn’t answer him initially, taking a moment to run a hand down his face before standing up from the bed and heading to the closet. He opened the doors and pulled a black duffel off the top shelf and set it on the bed next to his feet. It was already full of stuff, like a ready bag he would expect from a national guardsman.

“Monica located a magic circle with runes inscribed with your name.” Gladio sighed and gave him a sad look, despite Ignis not understanding a thing he was saying, “I’m sorry... I'm so sorry I dragged you into this Iggy.”

“Dragged me into what?” He didn't look away, forcing himself to meet Gladio's eyes still, even though he was still a bit nervous at how easily Gladio seemed to be able to control him.

“The wraith was sent to kill you specifically. That circle that created it bound it to go after you and you alone. Probably because you’re dating me,” Gladio turned around and pulled several articles from the dresser, closing the drawers with a bit more force than was necessary.

Ignis stayed silent because it was the honest truth from what he could tell. He wasn't privy to all the details but why else would something he hadn't even know about until very early this morning be after him? There was nothing special about him. He was just an overworked, overstressed, perpetually poor college student trying to graduate. Really the only thing special about him was that he had apparently been dating a vampire for the past few months without his knowledge.

Wordlessly Gladio helped him into a pair of sweatpants and a matching hooded sweatshirt both with some kind of brand name sports logo on them that he didn’t know. Like usual when he wore Gladio's clothes, they swamped him. They were so loose they easily fit over his sleepwear. “It maybe chilly out but I doubt I'll freeze,” Ignis said quietly as Gladio went back to the dresser to retrieve a thick pair of socks.

“I don't want you to get cold.” He slid each sock on with a gentle touch, “You're already at a high risk for shock. I just want to play it safe.”

The caring tone, consideration and the touch was almost too much. It again reminded him that no matter what he was, Gladio was still the same boyfriend that he had been before this had all come to light. “Gladio I…” Ignis trailed off causing him to look over him worriedly as if he was in some kind of discomfort. He was silent a moment longer before settling on an equally soft, “I'm sorry. It's just... it's really all a lot to take and I feel like... like I'm just making everything worse.”

Gladio smiled at him, moving up enough so they were more level with each other. A hand slowly and carefully cupped his cheek so that Gladio pressed a chaste kiss to his lips. Ignis was immensely proud of himself for not pulling away or flinching at all during Gladio's careful approach and touch.

“I know,” Gladio said barely pulling back. “It's alright. You're taking this a lot better than I ever could have thought given the circumstance.” The thumb traced lightly along his cheek in a gentle caress, “We'll just take things one step at a time from now on Iggy. Recovery from being attacked like that is not something you can just overcome in a few hours. There's a series of steps to solving
any problem with almost no shortcuts.”

Ignis smiled at the saying he used numerous times on Gladio when he was stuck on his homework problems. He followed up with the rest of the saying, “Follow in the logical order of the steps and the answer will just fall into your lap.”

Gladio kissed him again lingering a moment longer before letting go and turning off the blanket. “Come on,” he said slinging the bag up into his shoulder and came around to lift him in his arms. “Cor’ll be here in a few minutes.”

“Where are we going?” Gladio helped him sit up so he could wrap his arms around his neck. He held on as Gladio stood, cradling him to his chest.

“We're moving you to a more secure location. My clan owns a sky rise in downtown where we base all of our operations out of. You'll be in the heart of our power with guards at every door and on every floor. There's no way that thing'll be able to get near you.” He smiled at him as he moved towards the front door. “Don't worry. I'll be with you every step of the way. I'm still under direct order to guard and tend to you.”

“By Cor?” Gladio nodded, eyes trained on the front window. Ignis followed his gaze out to the sunny parking lot, bringing to mind another question about his boyfriend physiology. “Turning into dust in the sunlight is another movie thing?”

Gladio gave a little shrug, still intently looking out the window. “If a vampire is weak enough and forced to endure direct sunlight, they shrivel up like a raisin and eventually die but it takes several hours. Hunters tend to use it if they have the time to torture a vampire because it hurts like hell but there’s no exploding into dust like in the films.”

“Does it hurt you to go out there?” Ignis asked thinking off all the times that he had seen Gladio outside in broad daylight. He practically lived on the Commons between his classes during the day, always in a tank top or tshirt—only because the school dress code didn’t allow him to run around topless—if the weather permitted. He was either a very good actor and could ignore the pain very well or sunlight didn't bother him at all.

“Not really. I'm a healthy vampire right at the peak of power so it's kind of like the same feeling when you hold your hand close to a hot burner. Uncomfortable but not painful or irritating.”

A large black SUV pulled up to the apartment complex, pulling into the empty spot next to Gladio's mustang. Gladio moved to the door, easily juggling Ignis’ weight so he could open and close the door behind him. Ignis stayed silent as he walked up to the vehicle. There was nothing flashy about it, nothing to make it stand out, and the tinted windows made it impossible to see through the glass. It reminded Ignis all too much of a vehicle straight out of the President's motorcade.

Gladio opened the back door, lowing Ignis’ legs so he could toss in his ready bag and then slid them both into the back seat, Ignis cradled in his lap. Their driver was a middle aged lady with grayish hair that seemed very familiar but he couldn't quite place her or why he knew her. Cor was in the passenger seat and as their eyes met a sudden wave of exhaustion passed over him. Ignis was barely aware of Gladio outright snarling as he went limp in his arms, falling into a deep dreamless sleep before he even realized it.

Chapter End Notes
I really tried to keep this to three chapters but with all the added details and loose ends that needed to be wrapped up, I was looking at a 30,000+ word chapter and that was just obscene by most people's standards. Especially when Cor provided such a nice split/small cliffhanger.

So go ahead and see this as chapter three part one if you desire. I have one more loose end and a quick intro to finish up so the next chapter (and final I promise!) should be out soon!
Moving Forward

Chapter Summary

There is no way to change the past and moving forward is about all Ignis can do now.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

May 23rd at 1120

Ignis started awake, a half remembered dream of his arm being torn into while he fought to keep something from biting his neck. He refused to believe it was actually Gladio even if that was what had seen, leaning in with fangs bared, his eyes blazing red. He blinked up at the rather familiar looking ceiling in disbelief. There was no way he was at Noc-

“I don't care if you did what you thought was right! Dad left me in charge of this city and if there is an attack on one of us -especially my closest human friend who happens to be dating my Shield- I want to know about it immediately! Not almost ten hours later when it's been confirmed that a wraith has been sent to hunt him down and it is still on the loose in my city!”

Ignis’ eyes widened in disbelief. That was definitely Noctis. Incredibly pissed off by the sounds of it but it was still Noctis. Gladio mentioned a sky rise in downtown and Noctis lived in a penthou-

“Noct, you said it yourself. I'm your Shield.” Gladiolus was sounding a bit tired and annoyed as if they had been arguing about this for a while as Ignis slept. “This could have been an elaborate ruse to get you to reveal your identity. I'm supposed to put myself in the firing line and I did. We had to be sure someone wasn't trying to exploit Ignis’ relationship to us especially if that meant getting to you.”

“I get that but you're still supposed to report to me about what happened.” They were talking on the far side of the couch from him, somewhere near the kitchen’s oversized island. Ignis was laying on the couch directly across from the television which was on the far side of the coffee table from him. He was in the open concept living room of Noct’s penthouse, wrapped in a blanket and with several throw pillows cradling his head and shoulders. “Not report directly to Cor and leave him to the investigation. He's supposed to be following my Dad's orders.”

“Which were to investigate Ignis Scientia and provide any assistance to you while I was operating within the city,” Cor's voice was calm and that only seemed to frustrate Noctis more.

“How am I supposed to learn leadership skills when everyone keeps treating me like a child?!” Noctis made a frustrated noise in the back of his throat. “This was so I could get used to being in charge, not so that everyone could run around behind my back!”

Ignis didn't bother pointing out the amount of leaders that happened to even in present day politics. Noct had taken political science and several history courses over the years that Ignis was aware of. He knew full well that things of this nature happened. A lot.

“Noctis,” Cor said calmly, not letting Noctis' antics affect him in anyway. “I can understand your
frustration but while I am here, Gladio is to report to me.”

“All I wanted,” Noct was working himself up into an impressive froth by the sounds of it. “Was someone to tell me what was happening but instead I get to learn about a wraith in my city after its nearly killed my friend!”

“Enough. As soon as it was deemed safe enough for you, Ignis was brought here out of consideration of your friendship. Gladio was only allowed to remain with him in light of the recent approval of their relationship instead of falling back to guard you as he should have. By all rights, Ignis should have been taken and left in the custody of another member of the Crownguard to protect while this situation was dealt with.” Cor voice was harsh and emotionless as he laid out just how the whole scenario should have gone. Ignis found himself immensely glad that none of that had actually happened. There was no way he would have been comfortable or calm around a complete stranger after what had happened. “Our number one concern is your safety. Everything and everyone else is secondary to that fact. Please remember that, your Highness. Now, if you’ll excuse Monica and myself, we have work to do.”

“Yeah,” Noct still sounded angry but his voice was settling back into indifference. “Yeah, go ahead already.” As an afterthought, he tacked on with a sigh, sounding resigned at the fact, “Not like I could stop you anyways.”

Ignis closed his eyes and pretended to be asleep even if he knew it was probably a moot point. Regardless if it worked or not, he heard the two walk out of the penthouse after a momentary pause before leaving the kitchen. Had they... bowed to Noctis?

The kitchen was silent for a long moment after their departure before Gladio sighed. “Look Noct-” he started but was cut off.

“I get it, Gladio. I know you were following orders. I'm not really mad at you, just the stupid rules... but next time, tell me, please?” The last part was more like a plea than actually asking.

“Not planning on there ever being a next time but as long as you promise not to haul ass down to my place and stay where you’re safe then yeah.” Ignis could practically hear Gladio's smirk, “I’ll give you a heads up.”

“Thanks,” Noct’s voice was soft but then became the normal tone that Ignis was use too. “Now I guess it's time to ask Ignis how he's feeling?”

Considering how easily Gladio had managed to hear him the night before, Ignis wasn't surprised that they knew he was awake. “Tired and a bit confused,” he looked down at the end of the couch as Gladio came around the end. His boyfriend walked right up to him and fell to one knee alongside the couch. “What happened? What is going on?” He asked his boyfriend, hating the slight panic still in his voice. Gladio didn’t answer right away, instead he made himself comfortable on the floor next to the couch, leaning against it so he put an arm across his chest.

“Welcome to the Nexus. The Lucius Clan's hub of power outside of the Citadel,” Noct said as he leaned over the back of the couch looking down at him. Gladio gently tipped his head enough so he could look into Ignis’ eyes, though he didn't seem to do anything but look. “I’m sorry you had to go through that Specs.” Noct continued, unbothered by Gladio’s actions, “I’ll have to go back through and review our sentries and scouts to figure out how we missed a wraith being created and then operating in my city without tipping anyone off. We’re usually a lot more on top of things than this.”

“It's alright,” Ignis said in a tight, reserved voice, being more polite than anything. He was far from alright. If that dream was any kind of indication, the attack on him may have permanently scared his
relationship with Gladio. “I'm not blaming you.”

“Well you should,” Noct withdrew from where he was leaning on the couch. “Do you want some coffee?”

“Juice would be better,” Gladio cut in gently letting Ignis head back against a throw pillow. Now that he was actually paying attention, it looked like Noctis had dragged the comforter from the guest room out into the living room for him to use. “Coffee will just dehydrate him more.”

“’Kay, we’ll save the coffee for later,” Noct’s voice was accompanied by the closing of a cabinet door.

“Gladio?” Ignis asked as he tilted his head better to see him. He hated how small and scared his voice still sounded. “What’s happening?”

“Easy,” Gladio shuffled closer as if his presence alone would help. It did but there was also that small voice that was whispering in the back of his head about his most recent dream. He shivered. “You’re alright. Cor put you to sleep in the car to conceal the fact we were going to Noct’s building. He was planning on putting us in a sealed room on one of the lower floors. When he called Noct to bring him up to speed on what was happening, he demanded that you were brought up here instead of being kept downstairs.”

“What is…” he trailed off as Noct reappeared behind the couch, a tall glass of orange juice in his hand.

“I told you pure blooded vampires are treated like royalty,” Gladio smirked and jerked a head towards Noct. “He’s a pureblood. The one hundred and fourteenth ‘King’ so to speak in the Lucian Caelum Dynasty.”

“Cut it out,” Noct said, a bit of pink tinting his cheeks clearly embarrassed about his title. “And help him sit up so he can drink this.”

Ignis was still embarrassingly weak and light headed. Gladio slowly sat him up and let him lean back against his chest for support as he sat behind him. He took a moment to rearrange the blanket about Ignis’ body before reaching up to take the glass from Noct. Ignis for his part just sat there for a moment in a stupor still struggling to catch up with things. Were all his friends vampires?

“Is Prompto a vampire too?” Ignis couldn’t help but ask the room at large. “Does he at least know?” He’d be lying if he wasn’t going to be a bit jealous if Prompto was already aware of the situation. Of course, considering he lived here, how could he not?

“Yeah he knows,” Ignis relaxed at Noctis’ admission. “And no he’s not a vampire.” Ignis sighed, a bit more in relief than he wanted to admit. “He's a werewolf.”

Ignis swallowed his tongue.

Gladio's hand began rubbing his stomach, trying to soothe him. It was only then that he realized he was trembling slightly. Of all the things he had been expecting that had not been one of them.

“E-excuse me?” He practically squeaked.

“’Iggy-’” Gladio said, obviously worried by how he was practically shivering.

“Gladio please,” Ignis glanced over his shoulder enough to see his boyfriend’s worried face. “I need to know.”
Gladio gave him a long searching look before twisting around and setting the glass of orange juice or the end table behind him. He then proceeded to gather Ignis up in his arms, holding him tight and pressing a gently kiss to the side of his neck before just holding his tight. The sudden kiss caused him to flinch but it was a lot more subtle than the full body jerks that they had been in the past.

“Noct, please continue,” he had been watching their whole exchange silently, waiting for the outcome. While Ignis was a bit embarrassed by the level of public affection they were showing, neither Noctis -and certainly not Gladio- seemed embarrassed by the fact. If he was completely honest with himself, Ignis knew he’d be curled up underneath the blanket sobbing into a throw pillow if Gladio wasn't holding him like he was.

This was really too much to take.

Noct put a hand on one hip while the other rubbed at the back of his head. “Well, he's a werewolf and… yeah. I don't know what else you want to know?”

“Maybe another time,” Gladio cut in. Ignis’ head had slowly dipped down so he was looking at his lap while Noct talked. His arms squeezed him gently as if trying to push his scattered pieces back together. Ignis wishes it was that simple.

“Is everyone I know something other than human?” Ignis managed to mumble, reaching up to clutch at Gladio's arm through the blanket.

“No,” Gladio's phenomenal hearing had to be because of his vampiric abilities. “You know all the supernatural players in your life now Ignis, I promise. Everyone else you know are regular humans.”

Ignis managed to acknowledge that with a nod but little else. He turned himself up into his hip, Gladio realizing what he doing mid motion and helped him twist the rest of the way. He immediately buried his face into his boyfriend's chest, curling into him as best as he could in the small confines of the couch. Gladio held him tighter, resting a chin on the crown of his head as they cuddled together.

Ignis wasn't sure how long he stayed like that. Noct, after a bit, turned on the television, flipping around until he found some kind of nature documentary by the sounds of it. Ignis was facing the back of the couch but the tranquil music and droning of the narrator helped lure him into light doze. The rest desperately needed but he couldn't just seem to fall fully asleep knowing that recurring nightmares lingered in his subconscious.

Gladio shifted him, tilting his head slightly off to the side so that the side of his head rested directly over his heart. The rhythmic thumping in his ear was soothing which he assumed was why Gladio had moved his head to that position. He sighed and leaned more heavily into his boyfriend.

“Sleep for a bit Iggy,” Gladio whispered into his hair. “I'm right here. You're safe.”

“Can you stop my nightmares,” he mumbled into the fabric of his shirt.

He paused a beat before admitting. “No I can't.”

“Monica or Cor would be able to strip the nightmares right out of you.” Noct said from the recliner behind him. “Some of my guys here could do it too if you want?”

The thought of someone poking around in his mind was just if not more disturbing then the nightmares that he was having. He shivered and shook his head, burrowing into Gladio as best as he could. “No. I don't want anyone else in my head.”
There was another pause. Ignis had a feeling the two vampires in the room were looking at each in silent communication. “I promise no one will be in your head without your expressed consent Iggy.” Gladio pressed his lips to the crown of his head, “On my Mother’s Blood, I won’t let them.”

The last part was partially a growl and Ignis found himself hoping that Gladio wouldn’t get into a fight on his count.

May 23rd at 1340

For once Ignis wasn’t woken by half remembered dreams of the attack.

The half scream snapped him out of his dreams. Had Gladio not been holding him Ignis probably would have jumped off the couch in fright. Instead he barely managed to jerk in his grasp. Gladio letting out a hissing like an angry cat at whoever had woken him.

“Sorry! Sorry!” Prompto’s voice was half an octave higher in distress. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to wake him it’s just… just…”

“It’s okay Prom,” Noct’s voice was soft. “It’s a lot to take in I know. Just take it in stride. Specs is alright and the wraith is being hunted down even as we speak. Everything is going to be fine.”

There was a strange muffled whine from the other side of the couch. Gladio’s hand began running up and down his spine trying to relax him. At some point Ignis had rolled more so that he was laying on his stomach against Gladio. His legs felt impossibly tangled in the blankets.

“Go back to sleep Iggy,” he rumbled soothingly, hand running up and down his spine again as he spoke. “It’s alright, nothing’s wrong.”

“Iggy?” Ignis cracked an eye open and turned his head enough so that he could see Prompto peering over the back of the couch. He also saw and ignored the sour look that Gladio was giving their friend for keeping him awake. “You’re okay right?” Prompto seemed to shy away from Gladio. Taking half a step away from him and dipping his head down closer to the couch then it had been but otherwise standing his ground. “Please tell me you’re going to be okay.”

“I’ll be fine,” it had to be his imagination and the new found knowledge that Prompto wasn’t a human, but Ignis could have sworn that Prompto perked up much like a dog would being told what a ‘good boy’ it was.

“Oh good,” with that beaming smile it also wasn’t all that difficult to imagine a tail wagging either.

Ignis sagged back down into Gladio, rearranging his head so that it rested over Gladio’s heart again. The gentle, rhythmic thumping in his ear soothing enough that he could have started dozing lightly against him right away. Instead another question graced his lips. “You have a heartbeat?” he mumbled into the fabric of his shirt.

“Of course I have a heartbeat,” he snorted in amusement before continuing, “Vampires are a lot like humans, Iggy. Just a hell of a lot harder to kill.” Gladio’s hand moved up and down his spine again. “Other than my instincts, I’m just as much a human as you are.”

Hearing Gladio say he was still mostly human was a relief that he hadn’t known he was waiting to have acknowledge. “Instincts?”

Gladio sighed, likely giving up on Ignis falling back asleep anytime soon. “Instincts refer to my superhuman abilities and flaws. All supernatural creatures have a list of boons and weakness that are hereditary to them yet they make us what we are. Prompto has a different set of instincts cause he’s a
were.”

Ignis bite his lip as he thought about the various abilities he’d seen from Gladio. He listed them out loud, “You have heightened strength, speed, senses and basic mind bending capabilities that’ll grow with time.” He twisted enough to look up at the warm amber eyes above him. “What are your flaws?”

“I also have heightened healing abilities, some of which I can pass on to those I’ve drank from like how I healed your arm and neck earlier,” Gladio smiled and gently pushed the hair back from his face. “My Thirst is my biggest flaw followed by possessiveness.” The arms about him squeezed slightly, “That’ll become more apparent the longer we are together.”

Ignis gave him a worried look, dreading the change in Gladio’s tone of voice. “Are you going to tie me to bed at some point and refuse to let me leave,” he tried to make it sound teasing but it failed to hit that mark.

“Only if I’m very upset and I’ll do everything in my power not to do that to you Ignis.” The fact Gladio was saying it so seriously, made Ignis even more nervous. “That being said, there is a good possibility that I’ll lose my cool at some point and essential take you prisoner so that no one else can get near you. So I can make sure you stay safe.”

For a moment Ignis was speechless. “You can’t be serious…” he finally managed to say.

“I am,” Gladio was looking at him apologetically. “Luckily that’s only an extreme case. Usually it’ll just be me standing close to you, holding you, hissing at others to keep their hands off you that sort of thing. Might make you sit on the couch and growl at you every time you so much as twitch.” Gladio shrugged, somehow looking even more upset than he had before. “If that ever does happen Ignis, don’t try and fight me. In that state of mind, I won’t take it well,”

“Would you hurt me?” he had to ask even if he dreaded the answer.

Gladio blew out a deep breath. “Hard to say,” he admitted. “A vampire in the Clan broke his mate’s arm because she refused to stay in bed once but there have been other times when a vampire just locks their mate in a room with them and refuses to let them out of their sight or let them leave.” He shrugged again. “I’ve never been in a serious relationship long enough to have that happen so I honestly don’t know what I’ll do.”

He should have known there would be some kind of danger that Gladio would poise to him since he was a vampire. Other than being attacked by a wraith. “But you haven’t been that possessive yet. Is it possible that it doesn’t affect you?”

Gladio gave him a bitter smile, “It’s not like it caused by normal humans. It’s usually only around other vampires and sometimes were’s.” He jerked his chin out at the room at large, “Why do you think Noct took Prompto out of the room?”

Ignis blinked, only then realizing that the large room was empty except for them. “Where did they go?”

“Probably Noct’s room,” Gladio said his shoulders twitching in yet another shrug. “Were’s tend to be touchy feely; all of them are massive cuddle bugs underneath all the fur and teeth. Prompto especially because he’s a stray, it’s what a werewolf without a pack of other were’s is called.”

Gladio added on the definition of the term before plowing right on with his explanation. “Over time he’s basically replaced us as members of his pack. The fact that a pack member -you- were attacked and are hurt means he wants to cuddle you, reassure you it’s going to be alright, tend to your injuries,
make sure your well fed and leap down the throat of anyone who might hurt you.”

In all honestly it sounded like normal Prompto behavior to him. The kid had always been out to please everyone around him and make them happier than when they first met. Ignis was pretty sure now that it was a coping mechanism for not having a pack. If werewolves were anything like normal wolves it was paramount for them to have a cohesive family unit to fall back on. Without one they were typically lost. “And he’s not doing that now because of you?”

Gladio sighed, “At some point I know I’m going to have to let him close to you so he doesn’t turn into a complete basket case. Just… not right now… It’s too soon.” The arms about him squeezed a bit but the pressure didn’t let up like it had in the past.

Ignis decided that maybe it was better to switch topics. He shimmied around in Gladio’s grip to see his face a bit better. “What’s this Thirst you also mentioned?”

Gladio seemed to perk up a bit as if glad the conversation was going elsewhere for now. “It’s a constant reminder that I need to feed and the force that drives me to drink blood. It’s like an annoying whisper that I can only half hear all the time. It’s how I know that you’re recovering, slowly but recovering, and probably in the next week it’ll be safe to feed from you if need be but it wouldn't be ideal. Not that I would!” he rushed to reassure him, his arms preventing Ignis from drawing further away. “It’s just always there, even in my dreams I can sorta hear it. Walking down a crowded corridor in the school, I know every pulse rate of every student there. I know who’s still drunk from last night or who just shot up with coke in the bathroom. I know if a girl’s pregnant or if someone has the flu.” He shook his head, “It’s a lot to take in at once, especially when I haven’t had blood in a while. It’s like a constant trail of patience that I can’t afford to lose without exposing myself or my clan to the world.

“As I get older it will become louder. Most Ancients choose to live in seclusion from humans especially because there’s something human blood makes the Thirst harder to ignore. It’s why Regis, Noct’s Dad, lives at the Citadel right in the middle of several hundred aches that he owns and has posted. Eventually, the Thirst will drive them insane and they usually end up taking their own lives rather than give in and become a wraith. The longer a vampire goes without feeding the louder their Thirst gets and the more likely they are to loose control.”

“You… feed regularly then?” The idea that Gladio regularly bit into a blood bag like the ones he saw at blood drives was still hard to believe. Or perhaps he stuck a straw in it like it was a juice box?

… he had to really be tired to be imagining such things.

“Yeah. As Noctis’ Shield I’m given priority over everyone else stationed here. Even if I don’t feel as though I need it I’m required to drink at least a pint every other week.” Gladio shifted then, bringing Ignis back up from where he scooted down his chest so that he could rest his chin on the crown of his head again.

“What’s a Shield? Are you his bodyguard?” The term was fairly common in referring to Noctis and Gladio’s relationship since he had entered the penthouse. If Noctis was considered royalty by other vampires it made since that he had some kind of personal protector at his side.

“More or less.” Gladio brought the blanket up to Ignis’ chin and proceed to tuck them both in. Ignis had a feeling that Gladio was going to try and get him to go back to sleep soon not that he was in any mood to fight him. “I’m with him at any fancy to do’s or anywhere really he’s supposed to make an appearance for the Clan. Typically while we’re here, I act as more of a distraction than anything. Noct has a small army between him and anyone that might hurt him here in Nexus. I basically dangle myself out there to lure hunters or anyone else that might go after him away from him by
making myself an easier and more appealing target.”

Ignis tried to look up to meet his boyfriend’s eye but he couldn’t. Gladio held him still when he tried to sit up and after another push to make sure it hadn’t been his imagination Ignis resettled. He couldn’t fight Gladio like this. “That explains why you don’t live here.”

“Yep.”

“Gladio…” he trailed off, his voice more worried now that he really began to think of it. “You’re out there all alone. What if they… catch you by surprise or something?” He really wasn’t sure who ‘they’ were but from what little he had gathered so far about hunters they weren’t a group to trifle with.

“Don’t worry Iggy. That’s not going to happen.” Gladio dipped his head enough so that he could press a kiss to the top of his head. “It’s classified to who it is but there is a vampire that lives in my apartment block. They’re there just in case I’m attacked. They can call for additional help and provide me with backup if it’s really needed.” Gladio seemed to puff up slightly as he admitted proudly. “Also, I’m an Amicitia. My family has been serving as Shield’s for the Lucian Caelum Dynasty since it was founded. The techniques that have been handed down through the generations have never been countered and we just don’t die.” A hand soothed down his spine again, “Trust me Iggy. It takes a lot to kill an Amicitia and we don’t go down without a fight.”

Suddenly it clicked. “Your father, back before Christmas break, it wasn’t a chainsaw accident was it? Was Noct’s father attacked?”

“No, someone went after him, likely to eventually get to Regis, but decided to try and take his Shield out first,” Gladio’s voice darkened. “We haven’t figured out who was behind it yet but they tried to have him killed when he was alone, sent a whole range of nasties after him. He managed to fight back and win but it wasn’t easy and he ended up burning through most of his reserves. By the time back up found him, he halfway to becoming a wraith and was barely managing to hold onto his rational mind.”

“So you raced back home thinking he was going to be… destroyed?” Ignis couldn’t help the shiver that passed through him. He remembered all too well that last race to the hospital to say goodbye to his uncle. He had barely made it in time to see him before he passed and even then he hadn’t been lucid enough to acknowledge Ignis in anyway. He was so glad Gladio’s race had a happier outcome.

“Yes and no,” Gladio hummed to himself as he tried to figure out a way to word it. “It’s kind of complicated but a vampire’s offspring can give back power to their parent in dire circumstances. Basically my sister and I let him feed off us which is typically not allowed. Vampires don’t feed from other vampires, it’s kind of an unspoken rule but we were given a pass this time around. Wiped both Iris and me out but it was enough to bring him back so it was worth it.”

It also explained why Gladio was so tired when he had come over that night after his return. “And you fed from me for the first time that night?” It only made sense, still weary from bringing his father back and having Ignis right there sleeping next to him? If this Thirst was as potent as Gladio claimed then it made perfect sense.

“Yeah, I took some from you that night but not too much. A bit more than could be called a sip but not any more than two ounces.” Gladio said hesitantly, hand drawing up and down his back again. He was probably worried that Ignis would panic about it again, considering what had happened last time, but he found himself feeling fairly okay about the omission. He was more upset that Gladio hadn’t asked his permission, though he probably couldn’t without revealing what he was before he
was given permission to talk to Ignis about it.

“That night,” he continued softly. “I was just weak. Mentally, physically and emotionally. I wasn’t even really awake when I bit you. I had just tipped off to sleep after you when I snapped back awake to your blood on my tongue.” Another sigh, “My Thirst had gotten the better of me, probably for the first time since I was a child.”

It still didn’t change the fact that Gladio had tasted, drank, sipped or whatever he wanted to call it without his consent. “You should have asked, for that time and the other times you took a ‘sip’.”

“I wanted to,” Gladio sighed. “Vampires don’t bite people unless they’re aware. Those that typically do are what’s known as Stalkers. A lone vampire that hunts and feeds primarily from humans. Usually their hunting grounds include college campuses, frat house, bars, anywhere where human senses are typically dulled by booze or drugs really. They masquerade as someone looking for a one night stand to lure the human off into seclusion before pouncing. They rarely drink and run though, usually they have sex with the partner and exhaust them until they fall asleep and then drink.” A small shrug shifted the shoulders that his head rest on, “It’s one of the reasons I work as a bouncer and pretend to be a college student. Better to keep an eye out for predators by being in amongst their prey.”

Ignis allowed himself to be distracted by his curiosity for a moment, fully intending on returning to the original topic in a moment. “You’re pretending to be a college student?”

He could practically hear Gladio’s smirk in his voice. “Iggy, this is the third time I’ve been through college and the thankfully the last. My looks are starting to age too much for me to be passed off as a young twenty something anymore. It’s why I am allowed to use my real name and finally get my tattoo. I won’t be running the beat much longer so to speak. Soon I’ll be promoted to attend to Noct like my Dad does for Regis, more like a security advisor than just a bodyguard. I’ll be his actually Shield in more than just a ceremonial capacity, it’ll be my duty.”

There was pride in Gladio’s voice but Ignis was to busy mulling over what he had just learned to comment on it. “You didn’t need my help passing statistics did you?”

“Guilty as charged,” his hand ran up and down his back again and there was a fond smile in his voice. “Iggy, this is the third time I’ve been through college and the thankfully the last. My looks are starting to age too much for me to be passed off as a young twenty something anymore. It’s why I am allowed to use my real name and finally get my tattoo. I won’t be running the beat much longer so to speak. Soon I’ll be promoted to attend to Noct like my Dad does for Regis, more like a security advisor than just a bodyguard. I’ll be his actually Shield in more than just a ceremonial capacity, it’ll be my duty.”

Ignis was a bit miffed at Noct for meddling but he couldn’t say he entirely hated the outcome. “Remind me to get after him for messing with my life again.”
“Do you regret it though?” there was some trepidation hidden in his words.

“Not entirely.”

“What don’t-”

“Why did you bite me the other five times Gladio?” He tried not to sound too accusing but a bit of ire still managed to work its way into his voice. “The first time I can understand and excuse as a momentary weakness on your part but about the other five times? It doesn’t sound like this is something really accepted amongst your clansmen.”

He felt Gladio inflate a bit as if Ignis’ words had angered him but he relaxed right back down again after a moment. “No it’s not,” Gladio said, resignation heavy in his voice. “A Shield that lost control of his Thirst, even for that brief second? Not allowed, I should have been demoted and removed from service immediately, sent back to the Citadel until I could prove I could control myself around humans again. Extenuating circumstances involving my Father wouldn’t allow for a reprieve from that rule.”

Ignis clutched at the shirt Gladio was wearing, suddenly realizing that Gladio could have been out of his life just as fast as he had come into it. He doubted that they would have been allowed to date if Gladio had been reassigned. The thought of what could have happened scared him more than he wanted to admit. “Then how… why weren’t you?”

“Noctis,” he sighed again, this time in relief. It was only then Ignis realized how tightly he was holding him. As if he was afraid to lose him if he let go. “When Cor isn’t around I report directly to Noct. I told him and he overlooked it.” He barked out a humorless laugh, “Threaten to disembowel me and strangle me with my own intestines if I ever lost control like that again but he was kind enough to give me a pass.”

“And the other five times?” Ignis wasn’t letting Gladio off the hook just yet.

Another sigh, “Honestly I wish I could claim it was my Thirst again but I… really just wanted to. Valentine’s day you were beautiful all sexed out and curled up with me on the couch that it just seemed right.” He felt Gladio shake his head, “I really had no other reason then to taste you the other four times. All I can say is that wanted to. You taste so good and I…” He sighed yet again, this time sounding a bit exasperated. “Sorry, I’m not trying to make excuses just... I’m sorry Ignis for biting you all those times. I was wrong. I shouldn’t have done it and I did anyways. If your mad at me, I understand just… let me…” he petered off with another sigh, this one more dejected than any of the others before it.

It took Ignis a moment to realize that Gladio was waiting for him to say something. Of course what could he say? Why did you give into a insistant whisper that drives you to drink blood? Why did you bit me right after we were intimate? Why couldn’t you tell me? Why couldn’t you trust me not to panic?

He kind of understood the need for secrecy with everything that he had learn in the past twelve hours or so but he was still upset. Not as mad as he thought he would be but definitely upset by the lack of trust from his boyfriend. “I’m not mad at you,” he said in a quiet voice that was softer around the edges than he had thought it was going to be. His throat was clenching up a bit. “I’m more upset,” his voice cracked slightly. Gladio immediately began rubbing his back again. “But I’ll forgive you, on one condition.”

“Anything.”
Ignis could tell he was about to start crying. He took a shuddering breath before pressing onward.
“Don’t you ever drink from me again without my expressed permission.”

“Of course.” Gladio said, sighing yet again but this time in relief. “I swear on my Mother’s Blood that I won’t bite you again with permission Ignis.”

He couldn’t say anything back. Ignis twisted his face into Gladio’s chest and let out another shuddering breath, trying gamely to hold back a flood of tears. Gladio said nothing only tried his damnedest to cocoon himself and the blanket around Ignis more than they already were. He tilted his head down more and pressed his lips to the crown of his head again, nuzzling his hair gently.

They stayed like that for what seemed like a long time. Gladio acting like a solid anchor for him to cling to as his emotions washed over him. His tears fell silently onto Gladio’s shirt as his mind went round and round with details and knowledge on just who he was dating. It was getting to be more than a little overwhelming.

It was exhausting and Ignis could feel sleep beckoning him more insistentially than it had before. However there was one question that he had to ask. Mostly because he was curious. “Gladio,” he was surprised at how exhausted his voice was.

“Yeah?” he asked softly, his face still partially buried in his hair.

“What do I taste like?”

“Uh… it’s kind of complex.” Gladio lifted his head a bit as he spoke, sounding a bit embarrassed by the question.

“Tell me, please?”

Gladio let out a deep sigh and is silent for a moment before speaking. “...You almost taste like a sweet wine,” he started out softly as if lost in memories. “Like a cross between a moscato and a riesling but there are hints of other flavors… the taste of grass after a spring rain…and a just bloomed tulip with a subtle hint of nutmeg…”

Ignis smiled into his shirt. “You are such a romantic. I can’t taste like all that.”

“You do,” he said with conviction. “And I’m only a romantic for you.”

That Ignis knew without a fact. Before he really thought about what he was doing, Ignis tilted his head up enough to press a chaste kiss to Gladio’s throat. It was only at Gladio’s surprised gasp that he realized this was the first kiss he had initiated between the two of them since the attack. He couldn’t help but smile as he burrowed back into Gladio’s chest. Maybe everything was going to be okay after all.

“Iggy,” Gladio whispered, his voice positively saturated with feelings.

“Do me a favor,” he whispered as he closed his eyes. He was tired and had fought off sleep long enough.

“Of course,” Gladio said immediately as he seemed to pull Ignis’ even closer to him.

“As soon as I’m better, I want you to drink from me.” Maybe it was due to how Gladio had described how he tasted or the innate curiosity that he had but being coherent and experiencing Gladio taking a ‘sip’ from him was suddenly all he could think about.
And maybe it was just one more way to prove to himself that Gladio hadn’t hurt him in the past.

“Ignis-”

“Please.”

There was a long pause before Gladio relented, “Alright but only when I say you’ve sufficiently recovered from this and only if you are absolutely sure you want me to.”

“Thank you,” Ignis finally let his eyes closed and almost immediately fell asleep.

May 23rd at 1655

“Ignis! Wake up!”

He blinked awake only to find himself nearly nose to nose with Prompto. The blond was looking distressed, eyes wide and brow pinched in concern. “Are you alright?” He asked, peeking up and shrinking down slightly at whoever was looming over the back of the couch. “He was starting to have a nightmare,” he said defensively at the person behind him. Ignis had a pretty good idea who that was.

“Iggy?” His suspicions were confirmed as Gladio's hand gently stroked along the back of his head. “How are you feeling?”

“Tired,” he had hoped that he could get more than a few hours of sleep but even he knew it hadn't been that long. “But other than that I'm alright.” Prompto was still sitting on the floor, leaning forward well within his comfort zone, but he made sure to give him a small smile rather than asking him to back up. Gladio's brief explanation about Prompto's behavior earlier was still fresh in his mind and the fact that Gladio was letting him near now and not laying with Ignis on the couch spoke volumes too. Best not to ruin the supernatural power balance in the room that he only half understood.

Gladio’s hand stroked down his back and shoulder. “Do you want anything?” He asked as his fingers gently scratched at his scalp.

Ignis sighed at the feeling. “I'm terribly thirsty. What happened to that juice from earlier?” He didn't bother lifting his head to see if it was still on the end table. He was enjoying Gladio's ministrations too much and doubted that it would have been left there for however long he had been asleep in the first place.

“I'll get it,” Prompto was on his feet as soon as he completed the sentence. “Noct put it in the fridge for later.”

As the were hurried off, Ignis rolled himself over so he could look up at Gladio. How he had managed to get off the couch and untangled from the blanket without waking him was a mystery in itself. Ignis had to have been dead to the world for all that movement not to have woken him.

“Hungry?” Gladio ask, his hand sliding around to cup his cheek.

“Terribly,” he hadn't eaten anything since the omelet Gladio had made him that morning. His stomach felt like a hollow pit inside him.

“Pizza should be here soon,” Noct was typing furiously on his phone as he walked around the foot of the couch. He flopped into his recliner, throwing one leg up over the arm as he slouched down in it. “I got you that vegetarian pie you like from the pizza house near campus and their steak bomb
parm bowl too.”

That was enough food for him for several days. “Noct, that's too much for me to eat.”

“Well you're going to eat it all tonight,” he said without looking up from his phone. “You need to eat.”

“Yeah, especially things that'll boost your iron,” Gladio added as he stood up and glanced over his shoulder. “Hey, Prom. Grab a multivitamin from the bottle on the counter.” He started walking around the couch.

“Gottcha!”

“Come here,” Gladio said softly as he crouched down next to him. Ignis tried to help but honestly felt like he was getting more in the way than anything as Gladio shifted him up so that he was sitting. His boyfriend settled behind him on the couch, propping up his upper half with an arm gently holding him in place.

Prompto came over as Gladio continued to fuss with the blankets. He waited patiently until he was done fixing the blankets to his liking before he offered Ignis the pill he held in one hand and then the large glass of juice in the other. “Thank you Promto,” though he wasn’t a fan of taking pills, Ignis dutiful took the multivitamin and washed it down with a large draught of juice. He was a bit surprised that it was some kind of tropical fruit, pineapple blend and not straight orange juice like he had thought.

“Hey Ignis,” though he was addressing him, Ignis noticed how Prompto kept glancing back at Gladio. “Is it alright if I…” he gestured helplessly at the couch next to Ignis’ thigh. Ignis wasn't really one for physical contact -even with Gladio he preferred to keep it private- but he had always had a hard time refusing Prompto anything.

“Alight,” the word had barely left his mouth before Prompto perked up and quickly moved to settle himself on the couch as if he was afraid that Ignis would take it back. Prompto did glance over his shoulder a number of times as if making sure Gladio was absolutely alright with this arrangement. Other than the arm about him tightening a bit, Gladio didn’t say anything.

Prompto heaved a huge sigh of relief as he settled onto the couch in what couldn’t have been a comfortable position. He was laying on the edge of the couch on his side, part of his torso was laying on Ignis’ legs with his knees brought halfway up to his chest so that he could drape his thighs over Ignis’ calves. His shins and the top of his feet were pressed into the couch back. Both arms were on either side of his hips and Prompto was essentially pushing his face into the side of Ignis’ stomach.

Cuddle bug indeed...

Apparently satisfied with how he was laying against him, Ignis relaxed back against Gladio. He moved the glass of juice from one hand to the other so that he could card his fingers through Prompto’s hair. That wrung a small whine from him and he pressed a bit closer to him.

“Watch out Ignis,” Noct said finally looking up at his phone to smirk at his friend. “You’re going to end up with a Prompto shaped burr stuck to yourself from now on.”

A muffled growl came from Ignis’ stomach and the arm on the far side of him came up to give Noctis a one finger salute.

Noct snorted in amusement but was cut off from retorting as the chime that served as the doorbell
sounded. He moved to get up but Gladio stopped. “Don’t even think of it Noct.” He kept a hand on Ignis’ back to help him stay upright and grabbed a couple throw pillows to help him stay partially propped up. “You know the drill.”

“Yeah whatever,” Noct pouted as he slumped down in the chair.

“Drill?” Ignis asked as Gladio lowered him back against the pile and pillows and turned to go answer the door.

“We’re in lock down.” Noct said with a shrug going back to what had to be a mobile game for his phone. “Until it’s lifted none of us can leave the penthouse or go outside.” His nose wrinkled as he half snarled, “And I’m not allowed near the windows or to answer the door which is just stupid.”

“It’s for your own protection Noct,” Prompto had levered himself up enough so that he could watch the way Gladio had gone. Again Ignis thought of a dog protectively watching his master and he mentally shook himself. He really had to stop comparing Prompto to a dog. He was fairly sure that it would be considered an insult.

“I know,” he grumbled, sounding partially defeated as he continued. “Doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

“Well pull your panties out of your ass,” Gladio said as he walked into the room again, carrying six pizza boxes in one hand and a plastic bag in the other that was practically bursting at the seams. “That’s the way things are and you complaining about them aren’t going to make any difference.”

Ignis choose to ignore the eyeroll that came with that remark. “That is enough food to keep the three of us well fed for several days… How long are we going to be here?” He was already dreading the amount of classwork he was apparently going to be missing tomorrow never mind the next few days.

“Until the wraith is found and dealt with in the very least,” Gladio said as he passed the couch heading for the kitchen island.

“And hopefully we’ll be able to figure out who and why they sent a wraith after you,” Noct added as he stood up from the chair to follow Gladio into the kitchen. His eyes were still glued on his phone the entire time.

“Are we eating in there or out here?” Prompto asked as he moved to kneel on the couch so he could see over the back.

“In here,” Gladio said. “I’ll be over to get Iggy in a moment.”

“I can walk,” Ignis pointed out even though he knew what the answer was going to be.

Surprisingly it wasn’t Gladio who voiced it. “Nope, don’t even think of it.” Prompto settled a hand on the center of his chest lightly, his voice having a commanding edge to it that Ignis had never heard before. “You need to rest Ignis and get better. Moving around too much will make it worse.”

While part of Ignis wanted to argue the fact there was another part of him whispering that he had a werewolf leaning over him and he really didn’t want to see Prompto mad. Even if the thought of Prompto mad was hard to contemplate. As if know what he was thinking Prompto suddenly took the hand off his chest. “Sorry,” he said wilting slightly where he was. “I didn’t mean to scare you.”

“I’m not scare of you Prompto,” Ignis said automatically and without thought.

He just got a small smile and Prompto tapped the side of his nose. “Really good sense of smell Iggy.
You can’t hide what you feel from me. I can pick up the change in your scent.”

Well, that had been rather unexpected. “Prompto-“

“It’s cool Iggy. No really,” he rushed to reassure him as Ignis gave him a disbelieving look. “I know it’s not easy having all this stuff piled on you, especially when you think of me as a werewolf and them as vamps.” He shrugged still smiling sadly, “Hard to think of me turning into five hundred pounds of fur and teeth isn’t it?”

Ignis blinked in astonishment, “Your body mass almost triples?”

“Yes!” he flexed both arms making the small bicep muscles stand out. “These guns get even more impressive.”

“Save the gun show for later,” Gladio said as he came around the side of the couch. “We should eat first.”

“Prompto,” Ignis held up the glass of half drank juice. “If you would be so kind?”

“Sure thing,” Prompto took the glass from him and then got off the couch, moving so he was out of the way.

Gladio didn’t waste any time, scooping both him and the blankets up so he could cart all of them into the kitchen. “Really Gladio,” he kept both arms wrapped around Gladio’s neck but nodded to the blankets still tangled around his legs, “Is this really necessary?”

“Probably not,” he said shrugging his shoulders as he easily carried Ignis into the kitchen. “But you honestly look adorable all bundled up like this.”

Ignis let out a little huff even as he smiled. That answer had been so purely Gladio that it was hard to think of him as anything else. He wouldn’t deny that some of what he had learned was frankly quite worrying but it was still Gladio underneath it all. Just like Prompto was still Prompto and Noctis was still Noctis.

Right down to him always trying to get Ignis to eat more.

“You do realize that there is no way I can conceivably eat all this?” Ignis asked Noct as Gladio settled him into one of the high backed stool at the oversized island which was covered in various pizzas and side dishes. Directly in front of where he sat was a large vegetarian pizza and a steak bomb parm bowl sitting off to the side. Prompto sat his glass next to him, full to the brim again.

Noct was setting down several two liters of soda he had just pulled out of the fridge. “I’m sure you’ll make your best attempt at it,” he gave him a small smirk before turning to get several large bags of chips from the pantry.

While he and Noct had been talking, Gladio had picked up a paper plate and served him a slice of what was apparently his pizza. Prompto reappeared at his elbow with a fork, sticking it in the parm bowl and shifting it closer to him. He let out a little snort of amusement, “I see I don’t have much choice in the matter.”

“Nope.”

“Course not.”

“What makes you think that?”
Ignis rolled his eyes as he began to tuck into his personal feast.

May 23rd at 1815

Ignis was stuffed.

Between the combined efforts of his friends and boyfriend, he had managed to eat the parm bowl, several cheesy bread sticks, a few handfuls of chips and about half his pizza. He had drank three glasses of juice and just when he had thought he had satisfied his friends that he had ate more than enough: Noct unearthed the ice cream from the freezer and the sundae making supplies from the pantry.

He honestly felt like he was never going to need to eat again.

And now Prompto was insisting on making them all hot cocoa.

During their meal not a single thing out of the ordinary was said. It was just the typical banter that Ignis had grown used to over the months that they had been hanging out regularly. Prompto and Gladio talked about some big school rivalry coming up. Noctis talked about the new mobile game he had downloaded and before long it was on everyone’s phone except for Ignis’. It was still lost somewhere on the school grounds –along with his glasses- which seemed to somber the cheery mood up as they all realized that they had brought up the elephant in the room even though they had been avoiding it.

“I’ll buy you a new phone Ignis,” Noctis held up a hand to stall any argument. “It’s the least I could do considering we let a wraith slip past us and get to you.”

“... Very well,” Ignis wasn’t even sure if his insurance plan covered being trampled by supernatural creatures. He eyed the mug of hot cocoa Prompto set in front of him with slight trepidation. “Though I really don’t think you should be responsible for it.”

“Humor me, suck it up and deal.”

“So, should we play a board game or watch a movie or something?” Prompto asked the room at large, probably in an attempt to stop any argument from brewing between Ignis and Noctis. His dislike for disagreements between them probably had more to do with Prompto seeing them as pack members more than a dislike for confrontations.

“I’d be down for a game,” Gladio said but made an exaggerated look at the dining room table. “But it seems the table’s still being used as temporary office space.”

There were several stacks of papers, what look like a map that had been pushed off to the side and post it notes where everywhere. “Dare I ask what it is?” he turned back to Noct with an eyebrow raised. “I do hope that that is not your term paper for European History?”

“Nah, just some reports I had brought up.” Noct shrugged as he continued, “They’re mostly on our guard rotations and scouting practices. I want to completely overhaul the system since it failed so spectacularly… There’s some outgoing stuff there that needs my approval or review.”

“Like Monica and Cor’s report on Iggy?” Prompto had wandered over to the table while they talked and had picked up the closest paper to him which just happened to be the aforementioned reports.

“They wrote reports on me?!” Ignis practically squeaked. Bad enough that they had poked around in his mind but writing a report on him hadn’t even crossed his mind. Who else had been or was privy to reading it?
“Don’t worry. It’s all classified Specs,” Noct said casually while shooting a disapproving look across the room towards Prompto who was still looking over the first page of the report, seemingly oblivious to what they were talking about. “Other than nosey were’s, the only people with access to it are myself, my dad, Clarius, the people who wrote them and Gladio.”

“Dude! You could’ve gotten expelled!” Prompto suddenly yelled looking at something on the second sheet on one of the documents. “What were you thinking?!?”

Noct huffed and started across the room. “Prompto enough,” he said as he snatched the sheets out of his hand. “You shouldn’t be looking at those!”

As the two friends started bickering, Gladio slid a hand across his shoulders and pulled Ignis towards him. “Do I want to know why my straight laced, always following the rules boyfriend was almost expelled?” He asked while tilting Ignis head up so he could look in his eyes. Gladio looked concerned as he added, “I haven’t read the reports yet.”

“It was nothing too drastic I promise,” Ignis reassured him as he looked away. He went to push up his glasses only to remember that they were still missing. He’d have to see about sending someone to get his spares that he kept back in his room. Some of his own clothing would be nice too. “And I made sure that there was no way for my indiscretion to be noticed.”

“That doesn’t sound reassuring, more the opposite.” Gladio shifted enough so that he was leaning against the island where he was still seated. “Did you need to hide a body or something?”

Ignis choked back a small laugh, “Heavens no. I simple borrowed a roommate’s hoodie and attend your statistics test.” He shrugged attempting to downplay what he had done, “I made sure to mirror your difficulties and kept my face hidden from the proctor. It was easier to do than I thought.” That wasn’t to say that he hadn’t been terrified that someone would see through his disguise and he’d be ousted from the school.

Gladio was silent for a long moment. “Huh, wondered how I passed that class.” He snorted in amusement, “Guess I should have become suspicious when you said you ‘talked’ to one of the most straight laced no nonsenses professors in the whole school and somehow got me a passing grade.” He bent down enough so he could whisper in his ear, “Remind me to thank you properly for that later… as long as you’re up for it that is.”

That Is … Ignis couldn’t help but wonder if that was in reference to his mental state or his physical state. In all honesty, Ignis knew that he wasn’t physically up to the task of any form of romantic endeavors. Especially after half gorging himself on such an assortment of foods. Mentally though, he knew it was high time he cleared up any misconceptions on that part.

Ignis twisted on his stool, one hand coming up to keep Gladio from backing away. The kiss was short and chaste, his lips barely moving softly against Gladio before he was pulling back. Their eyes met in that instance and Ignis found warm amber eyes pulling him back into another gentle kiss. Gladio’s fingers gentle tangled in his hair as Ignis pulled down on his head even more. While the kiss itself was tamed, the subtle message hidden in it was not.

“If you’re going to Mark him Gladio the guest room is open,” Noct pointed out bluntly in the midst of cleaning up the paperwork on the table. Prompto came careening in from the side, sitting in the computer chair usually in the almost never used study which he had been pushing along with his feet. “Just give me ten minutes to dig out the sound canceling headphones before you get to it.”

Ignis flushed up to his ears in embarrassed as he jerked away from Gladio.
Gladio for his part just smiled and pulled a rather reluctant Ignis closer to him. “You’re just jealous,”
The thumb on the hand holding him to Gladio’s chest rubbed at his collarbone soothingly. “‘Sides, I
want to see how well you really do at Conquer.”

The strategy board game was one of Ignis’ favorites but even he knew his limits and that game had a
rather long winded play style. “I don’t think I’m up for that-“

“Oh come on, Iggy,” Prompto said as he bounced over to the side board where Noct’s rather large
collection of board games was stashed. Noct didn’t say anything as he carted another armful of
paperwork to the study where he should be keeping it. “Someone other than you might actually win
this time around.”

Ignis smiled at that. He was the reigning champion at the board game he had gotten Noct for
Christmas, something that annoyed the other to no end even if he did try and hide his jealousy. “I
don’t doubt it. I’ll be amazed if I manage to stay awake past the fourth round.”

“Especially since Noct’s cheating. He told me to get the computer chair for you,” Prompto said
jerking a thumb at the chair he had brought in earlier.

“If that’s the case I doubt I’ll make it through the second round.” Ignis had sat in that chair once
before and he knew how sinfully soft it was. It was probably just a ploy to get him to go back to
sleep, not that it would take much right now.

“Then it’s settled. Start setting up Prom,” Gladio twisted his stool to the side so he was facing the
table across the room. “Go on,” he said as he picked up Ignis’ half drank mug. “Take your blanket
with you.”

Now that had been surprising. Ignis had honestly thought that Gladio was going to scoop him up
and ferry him the ten or so feet to the computer chair. Carefully, Ignis slid off the stool, pausing a
moment to gather up the blanket that he had been wrapped in, and walking over to his designated
seat. The self-reliance was nice but costly. He felt worn out as he slumped into the computer chair.

“That was nice,” he commented as Gladio set his cocoa down next to him. His boyfriend had
practically hovered at his side as he shuffled along but other than that reframed from helping.

“However I can’t help but wonder if Noctis is the only one using underhanded means in an attempt
to secure a victory.”

Gladio a pressed a kiss to his cheek but didn’t say anything, only smiled at him.

“So that’s how it’s going to be tonight?” he asked with an eyebrow raised, reaching for the yellow
game pieces, Prompto had already rotated the game board so that the island nation he preferred to
start with was closest to him. “Very well. May the best man win.”

He decided then and there to see if it was possible to win the game within three rounds.

May 23 rd at 2138

Ignis woke up as his back was being settled onto a mattress. He jerked, blinking blearily and
disoriented by his dark surroundings, knowing this was definitely not where he had fallen asleep. He
would have started panicking since he had no idea how he got to this position but a soft familiar
voice spoke up from out of the darkness.

“It’s okay Iggy. Just me,” Gladio's voice was warm, his arms just starting to slide out from under him
having settled him on the bed. “Thought you’d be more comfortable in here than out in the computer
chair.”
“What time is it?” He asked groggily as a hand worked its way out of the blanket he was still wrapped in to rub at his eyes. They felt dry and were definitely irritated from lack of sleep.

“Little after nine. You took over everyone's supply chains before falling asleep in the chair.” The mattress next to him dipped as Gladio sat beside him. “Do you want me to turn on the lamp?”

“Please,” he said as he relaxed back on the mattress. The last thing he could remember from their game was waiting for Prompto to figure out where he was going to do with one of his battle groups. He was horrible at these kinds of games but even he was taking an exorbitant amount of time figuring out his next move. Ignis assumed now he was doing it on purpose, trying to get him to fall asleep, and had succeeded.

The mattress dipped and swayed as Gladio leaned forward next to him and flipped the bedside lamp. The lamp light was a soft yellow and a low wattage bulb. It illuminated the guest room they were in but not blindingly so. Gladio's eyes held that warm softness that he had seen earlier. His boyfriend brought a hand up and gently cupped his cheek, smiling as Ignis not only didn't flinch away but in fact leaned into it. “How do you feel?”

“Groggy,” he muttered. The warm light was playing across Gladio's face in a way that made his mouth run dry. “Gladio?”

“Hmm?”

It was probably due to the lack of sleep but Ignis couldn't help himself as he asked in a playfully manner, “Are you going to 'Mark' me now?”

Gladio looked at him surprised. “Are you sure you want me to do that? Now?”

“Why not,” he countered. Had he misheard what Noct had said? He thought it was pretty straightforward.

Keeping the one hand to his cheek, Gladio brought the other one up to run a hand through his hair. “It's kinda early for me to Mark you Ignis, despite what Noct says. There's a bit of a ritual to it and you're exhausted.” Gladio gave him a small shrug, “I'm honestly not sure if you're even going to be able to get it up enough to participate.”

Ignis had to raise and eyebrow at that. “Sex is involved?”

“You need to orgasm for the ritual to be complete. Vampire's Mark immediate family members. Their children are marked until they're old enough to protect themselves and their lovers. Iris is still too young so has my Dad's Mark on the back of her hands that he gave her as a kiss when she was born. Removing it will be a big deal, that'll be coming up here in the fall probably.”

The hand on his cheek slid down to his neck, “For you, I'd be Marking you as my own, as my potential mate, you'd be mine. I'd being laying a physical claim on you,” Gladio seemed to puff up a bit at that thought. “And that Mark would promise pain and death to anyone foolish enough to mess with you…” Gladio's face fell slightly, “It's kinda a double edged sword though. It would make you a target for anyone or anything that has a grudge against me.”

Ignis swallowed as he thought about what Gladio was getting at. Marking seemed to be a more momentous moment in their relationship than he had thought. “Others are going to know I'm Marked by you?”

“Other vampires will see it like a faint red mark on your neck, a sigil that belongs to me, same as most deamons like wraiths. Were's can't see it but there will always be a faint trace of me on you.
because of it and they'll be able to pick up my scent from that with ease. Other humans won't be able to see it unless they are gifted with magic and even then they wouldn't be able to decipher it outside of a vampiric mark.” The thumb on his neck was stroking over it again.

“What do you Mark me with?” Ignis had a fairly good guess, as long as this was one of those instances where pop culture and Hollywood were right.

“My blood,” Gladio said it a lot more calmly than Ignis would have thought. “You’d also have to drink some it… and I would have to drink some of yours in return.”

“I thought I couldn't...” had it really been just that morning that the had been talking about the falsified truths of vampires?

“You can. In small amounts my blood won't hurt you but it will make you act drunk if I let you drink enough. To much will make you violently ill but I would stop you long before it came to that.”

Ignis couldn't help but scrunch up his nose a bit in disgust. “I can't imagine that it has a pleasant taste.”

Gladio smiled at him knowingly. “You'd be surprised.”

That got him a raised eyebrow. “What does it taste like then? Is it like the way you described how I taste.”

“No, everyone tastes different. My blood would taste different than your blood than my sister's blood. It really comes down to the opinion of the person who's drinking it.”

“I bet you taste like a heavy dose of iron,” Ignis couldn't help but say. Gladio snorted back a laugh before giving him a sidelong look in return.

“Do you want to test that theory?”

Ignis balked, surprised. “Are you suggesting I drink your blood?”

“No, I'm suggesting you have a taste.” Without hesitation, Gladio brought his hand up to his mouth. There was a flash of his fangs and then he was lowering that hand to Ignis’ face. On the tip of his finger was a small droplet of blood beginning to pool. “Go ahead.”

Ignis looked from the drop of blood, to Gladio and back again. “You want me to...”

“Go ahead and just lick it. That’ll be more than enough for you to get an idea of what I taste like.” Gladio held his finger a bit closer as he spoke. A silent encouragement even though Ignis would still have to lift his head a bit on his own to taste.

A thought about bloodborne pathogens and viruses crossed his mind. “You can't… transfer anything to me. Right?”

“Nope,” he said with a smile, nodding his head behind him to gesture towards the penthouses kitchen. “I could go out and drink from someone with aids, go to the mess and drink some bulls blood and then let you drink from me and not a damn thing would pass on to you.”

“Your liver and kidneys must be magic,” Ignis muttered. He lifted his head enough so that he could lick the offered digit before he could talk himself out of it again.

It tasted nothing like iron.
Gladio's blood was sweet, reminding him of a fresh peach and raw clover honey. It was somehow earthy as well. Almost like he could taste the fall air back home when he went for hikes in late autumn. Right when he thought it was all over, there was a trace amount of ginger that seemed to well up briefly from nowhere.

There was not a trace of iron anywhere to be found.

“Taste good?” Gladio asked with a smile on his face but there was a trace of something in his voice. Like he was looking for validation that Ignis did indeed like the taste of his blood. It was probably another vampire thing. It would make sense that they would enjoy the taste of their partner's blood.

“Honey and a fresh peach. The air in a forest on a sunny autumn day. Ginger…” Ignis trailed off, still slightly in awe as he stared up at the ceiling. His eyes snapped to Gladio as he shifted slightly in the bed next to him. “I liked it,” he reassured him, watching as the faint line of tension eased out of his shoulders. “I assume enjoying the taste of a potential Mate is important?”

Gladio chuckled and ran a hand through his hair as he let out a small sigh. “Yeah. There's an old superstition that if potential Mates reject the others blood that a trail of tears will be set on them both.”

Ignis smiled softly up at his boyfriend. “I do enjoy it. May I…” he felt a bit forward asking. “May I have another uh… sip?”

Gladio snorted in amusement. “That was a drop, nowhere near enough to be called a sip. That's about two ounces altogether.” He brought the same finger up to his mouth and nicked it again with his fang before holding it down for Ignis.

The second drop tasted just as good if not better than the first.

This time though, Ignis curled his tongue around one side of Gladio's finger and pulled it into his mouth. He swirled his tongue around it sucking gently. Gladio let out a low moan, clearly enjoying the attention as he pushed his finger deeper into Ignis mouth. Ignis let out a small sound of displeasure as the finger with drew back just as suddenly as it had moved deeper into his mouth. The faint trace of Gladio still lingering on his tongue.

Ignis was startled when he looked up to see that Gladio had dropped his glamour for the first time since he had first saw it. “Sorry Iggy.” Gladio's hand cupped his cheek as he loomed over him a bit. “But I think that's enough for one night of teasing.”

The change in his chosen seat was enough to block Ignis’ view of his crotch but he had a feeling Gladio was trying to hide something. “Did my sucking your finger excite you?” he said trying to sound seductive but knowing it sounded more tired than anything.

“Not quite,” Gladio sent him a playful leer. “But the thought of me fucking your pretty little mouth did.”

Ignis felt a thrill run through him.

“Can we?” He had to ask again, aroused even though he was tired.

Gladio shook his head, “It's not a good idea.”

“That wasn't a no,” he was quick to point out as those star shaped eyes met his.

For a long moment they held each other's gaze. Ignis was the one who broken it, finding he needed to blink. He quickly re-established eye contact. “What…” he started then stopped recomposing what
he was going to ask before speaking again. “What does Marking entail?”

Gladio raised and eyebrow, clearly surprised. “Basically I have sex with you after we’ve drank a bit of each others blood. During that I draw my mark on your neck in my blood and whisper an incantation in the language of old that binds it to your skin.”

“And that’s like what to other vampires?” Gladio’s brow pinched in confusion. “Is it like getting engaged?”

“No,” Gladio was giving him a confused look still as he frowned deeply. “I guess if you want to simplify and bastardized it to that point you could say that Marking would be like dating, Claiming is engagement and Taking is like marriage, though permanent with no chance of a divorce.”

“Excuse me?” Ignis blinked up at him taking his turn at being confused.

Gladio didn't respond right away. Instead he shifted himself around so he could lay on the bed and partially on Ignis. Ignis shifted his head so he could better stare into his boyfriend's eyes as Gladio rested his chin on Ignis' chest.

“Those three rituals act like a transfer of power. The vampire in the relationship is basically empowering their mate to a certain degree. It helps the mate live longer than average, resist diseases, heightened their senses and helps awaken any latent abilities that the mate may possess on a subconscious level.” Gladio reached up to Ignis’ head and rearranged the pillow so that it helped ease the stress on his neck. He muttered as soft thank you in return. “Take my Mom. She had empathic abilities that were passed on to both Iris and I.”

“So that ability of yours to calm people down isn't a typical vampiric trait?” Ignis said thinking of the soft glow that had been in Gladio’s eyes earlier.

“No, it's not really considered rare but it’s also not very common. What is rare is for a mate to pass on their latent abilities to their children, especially given how powerful Iris is. She's having a real hard time controlling it, don’t be surprised if your in a room with her and suddenly whatever feeling you have is torn away from you.”

“What can you do with your abilities?” Ignis asked remembering the feeling of his fear just melting away.

“I can drain away and I can impose an emotion on someone. If I have eye contact I can do it alot faster or if I target someone in a room it can be more of a subtle thing. They won't even realize it but it takes a long time. Couple hours easy.”

“Are you saying, I could go to the bar where you work and you could seduce me over a few beers without ever looking at me?” Ignis smirked slightly and said with a teasing lit to his voice. “I'm surprised you didn't use that trick back when you first tried approaching me last spring.”

Gladio smiled as a hand came up to cup Ignis’ cheek, his thumb gently tracing over the cheek bone. “Besides being horribly immoral, I’d have to constantly be pressing emotions on you to get you to keep dating me and that's draining. I wanted to have a relationship with you not just a one night stand.”

Ignis blew a kiss to Gladio feeling amorous again but lacking the strength to sit up and kiss Gladio like he wanted to. Gladio had no problem raising himself up from his arms and leaning in, kissing Ignis softly on the lips but pulling back a bit before Ignis could deepen it any further. “Patiences,” Gladio whispered in the air between them before drawing back. “I promise I’ll give you everything
you want once you recover a bit more.”

“You’re being a tease,” Ignis complained half heartedly as a yawn managed to work its way out of him.

“A tease that is concerned for your health,” Gladio said before pressing a kiss to the tip of Ignis nose. “Get some rest.” He moved to get off the bed.

“You’re leaving?” Ignis said not even bothering to mask the disappointment in his voice.

“I can stay if you want me to,” Gladio said even though he didn’t halt in standing up. “Let me just get more comfortable.” He stripped off his shirts, baring his upper body in one swift movement before dropping the them to the floor. His hands went to his belt even as he toed off his shoes but he suddenly paused midway through undoing the buckle. “Ummm… are you okay with me just sleeping in my briefs? I have another pair of sweats in my bag.”

Ignis made an impatient noise in the back of his throat as he slowly rolled up onto his side facing Gladio and yawned into the pillow. “I really don’t mind you sleeping in your underwear as long as you get back in bed and cuddle me.”

Gladio snorted in amusement as he swept his pants and socks off in one decisive motion. “Do you want me to leave the light on?” He asked as his slid into the bed next to Ignis, cuddling up close to him. Ignis made a happy sound as Gladio rearranged them so that Ignis was partially laying on top of him.

“I won’t need it shortly,” Ignis admitted as he smothered another yawn in Gladio’s chest. “Good night Gladio.”

A gentle hand coaxed his head up and lips played softly on his.

“Good night Iggy.”

And the light in the room vanished with a soft click.

May 24th at 0110

Gladio snarled, slamming him back against the ground with enough force to drive the air right from his lungs. Ignis choked in confusion and disbelief as Gladio pounced on him. Muscular thighs settling on his hips as his wrists were snatched up and forced over his head. Ignis blinked up into bright red eyes, fear shooting through him when he saw no recognition in them.

“G-gladio?” he whispered horrified as his boyfriend snarled down at him like he had over the phone at the wraith. “Gladio, what are you doing?”

Gladio didn’t answer him. Still growling, he grabbed the neckline of Ignis shirt and ripped it right down the middle, the sides fluttering away from his body at the sheer force of the tear. “Gladio! Stop!” He yanked uselessly at his wrists and kicked with his legs only to find Gladio as an unmovable weight pressing him down. “Let me go! Gladio!”

Gladio’s free hand covered his mouth and forced his head back. A muffled cry escaped Ignis as he bared his fangs and bent over him. He could feel Gladio’s breath on his neck and the press of fan-

“Enough!”

There was a sharp noise as if someone had slammed the tip of a cane down on a hardwood floor.
Somewhere glass shattered. A lot of glass shattered.

And suddenly Ignis found himself standing alone in darkness.

He blinked and looked around at the dark plane that he found himself in only to realize that he was standing in a forest. It was dark but the small glade he found himself in was brightly illuminated from the light of a full moon he swore hadn’t been there a moment before. A gentle breeze, warm and pleasant, ruffled his clothing. His intact clothing.

Gladio was nowhere to be seen.

Something prompted him to turn around.

Standing about fifteen feet away from him was a young lady. Her blonde hair was done up in and interact looking braid spiralled back into a bun that had partially come undone, leaving the ends of her hair and her bangs to flutter in the breeze. His eyes were just starting to trace over her flawless face as she opened her own. The were a clear pale blue. She smiled warmly at him, a gently twist of her wrist sent away a black and silver trident that seemed to vanish into nothing as soon as it left her hand. Despite the rather simple white shift she wore, she stood with the grace of a princess in her castle and Ignis found himself wanting to dip into a bow in greeting.

Her smile only grew as she turned to one side and knelt down. It was only then that Ignis realized there were two small dogs in the clearing with them. The white one was on her right side and watched him with eyes that were far too intelligent to be an animal. The black one on her left looked up expectantly as his master crouched down to his height, his tail wagging harder the closer she got.

“Here,” she said pulling a plain white box that looked like it held a piece of jewelry from the seemingly nowhere that her weapon had vanished to. The dog let out a playful bark before he carefully took the package in his mouth. She giggled and scratched behind one ear. “Thank you,” she said softly and started to stand again. The black dog turned and bounded away, seeming to dissipate into the trees before he even reached them.

Standing the young lady turned back to him and approached, shadowed step for step by the white dog that had remained behind. Ignis found he couldn’t move and only watched her approach silently on bare feet, the grass cushioning her steps as she came closer. She stopped within arms reach of him, gently gathering up both of his hands in her own. She brought his clasped hands up and pressed the knuckles to her forehead for a moment before gently moving them back to his sides.

Ignis found he couldn’t move and for some reason he was quite alright with that.

“Ignis Scientia,” her voice was as beautiful as her smile and eyes. There was a power to her words even though they were as warm and gently as the breeze that blew over them again. “It will be alright.” Her hands came up to cup his cheeks and he found himself pulled forward so that she could press her lips gently to the center of his forehead. “Your dreams will no longer torture you this night.”

She let his head back up and her hands moved down to his chest where she gave him a gentle shove. He fell backwards, body stiff as a board and moving much to slowly for it to be a natural fall. He watched her as he fell back. She brought both of her hands to her chest and clasped them together before dipping her head as if in prayer. Her eyes closing even though the smile remained.

When he was parallel with where the ground should have been, her image rippled away as if he had been seeing her reflection in a pool of water.
Back in the penthouse, where is body lay asleep in the arms of his boyfriend, nestled in a overly comfortable bed, Ignis sighed pleasantly and sunk into an even deeper sleep than before.

May 24 th at 0945

Ignis woke slowly and peacefully. He had been so deeply asleep that he hadn’t even dreamed. His limbs were still blissfully heavy and relaxed. He murmured pleasantly as the relaxation that he felt ebbed away slowly as he woke.

“Good morning, beautiful.”

“Morning,” he returned in an airy voice as he finally opened his eyes. Gladio smiled down at him, looking human again and freshly washed going by the still damp hair. “What time is it?”

“Nearly ten.” Ignis blinked up at him surprised and much more awake than he had been. “You slept like a log for nearly twelve hours. It’s done your body wonders.”

He half remembered a dream with a Lady dressed in white but didn’t feel as though it was really relevant to bring up. “I feel much better,” He agreed sitting up slowly on his own for the first time. Gladio’s hand came up and hover close incase it was needed but didn’t try to crowd Ignis other than that. “And a lot stronger than I did.”

“I’d say magic was involved but the only healer that could help you recover to this extent lives up near my Dad,” Gladio ran a hand over Ignis’ hair and pulled him closer to him. “You’ve improved a lot faster than you should have.”

Ignis perked up a bit. The arousal and promises Gladio caused and made the night before still prevalent in his mind. “Enough for us to spent some time languishing in bed together?” he asked giving Gladio a small smirk as he eyed him with an obvious interest.

Gladio barked out a laugh. “Yeah probably you little satryiasis,” Gladio said teasingly both kissing Ignis deeply, taking a moment to run his tongue across his lips and plunging it into Ignis’ mouth when he opened them. Ignis moaned into Gladio’s mouth. “However,” he said breaking the kiss to talk. “Cor showed up about two and a half hours ago. He wanted to talk with all of us present as soon as you woke up on your own.”

That sounded ominous. “Did something happen?”

“Don’t know,” Gladio said with a shrug. “He wouldn’t say. Just said he needed to talk to everyone, went into the other spare bedroom and took a shower. He’s been standing in the dining room playing on his phone ever since.”

Ignis began to shift his way to the side of the bed, kicking his legs gently to dislodge the blankets from around them. “Then we best not keep him waiting.”

“He can wait a bit longer if you want a shower,” Gladio stated this and Ignis was fairly certain he hadn't asked anyones’ opinion on the matter.

“No, this might be serious.” Though if it had waited this long another twenty minutes wouldn't hurt. “I can shower later… besides I haven't done much to warrant a cleaning. I've been sleeping the passed day.”

Gladio hummed knowingly even as he followed Ignis out the door of the room. “Maybe later I'll make you dirty enough that you have to take a shower.”
A thrill shot through him at the prospect and a bit of relief. They were back to how they used to banter. He couldn't help but let out a little sigh of relief. Despite everything they were starting to click as they use to again. It didn't matter that Gladio was a vampire, he was still Gladio.

Of course with him being a vampire and Ignis still wishing to be in a relationship with him brought in a whole slew of new worries and problems to be dealt with.

Ignis set his own worries aside as he walked into the main part of the penthouse. He had barely made a step towards the kitchen before Prompto was bouncing off the couch and heading over to him looking worried. “Iggy! You're up, how you feeling?” He asked even as he gave Ignis a once over, the skin on his forehead pinched in confusion.

“Much better. A full night's rest has done wonders,” he continued on his way over to the kitchen. He knew where the coffee was and no one was going to be able to prevent him from having a cup this morning.

“But how?” as he took the cover off the coffeemaker, Ignis caught Prompto looking over at Gladio who just shrugged in response. “I mean, yesterday you were a mess and now you’re barely even acting like anything had happened. You’re… fine.”

Ignis didn’t get a chance to say anything before Noctis was speaking up, a yawn breaking up the sentence a bit towards the end. “It was Luna.” A hand peeked up from over the back of the couch, its owner still buried in blankets and mostly asleep still. “Morning Iggy,” the hand flopped about in a half hearted wave. “You got a package.”

“Package?” Ignis asked with a raised eyebrow. Luna. There was something about that name that tingled a brief feeling of deja vu. He felt that he knew her even if he was drawing a blank on where. His thoughts were effectively derailed as the same black dog he had seen leaving his dream the night before came around the end of the couch and trotted right up to sit before him. The package the Lady had given him sitl in its mouth. Eyes that were eerily as intelligent as a human watched him as its tail started wagging happily.

Ignis was debating if he should panic that his dream wasn’t as much of a dream as he thought it was or if he should should be mad that somehow the Lady had been in his mind as well.

“Umbra isn’t going to bite you Specs,” Noctis’ head was now up over the back of the couch, his chin resting on the back of the cushions as if it was too much for him to lift it up. “He’s a good boy.”

“Um well yes but…” Ignis suddenly realized that Noctis was skipping class. “Shouldn’t you be in your world history class?”

“Lockdown,” he said with a lazy shrug.

“Which will be lifted as soon as I debrief you all on the current situation,” Cor stepped away from the window to stand next to the Island. “Receive your gift from the Oracle, Ignis. Prompto if you’re going to start a pot of coffee please make sure there is enough for me as well.”

“Sure thing,” While Ignis had been staring at the dog before him, Prompto had taken over coffee making duties. “Gladio, Noct, full pot?”

“Sure.”

A moan came from the vicinity of the couch where there wasn’t a sign of Noct peeking over the top anymore.
Hesitantly Ignis looked back down at the dog sitting patiently at his feet, its tail wagging a bit harder now that Ignis’ focus was back on him. He knelt and carefully reached forward to take the slim rectangular box from his mouth. This close he now realized that the box was bound with a white ribbon. A rolled piece of paper being held to the lid by the ribbon.

“He likes being scratched behind the ears,” Gladio pointed out from where he had moved to lean against the kitchen’s island nearby. Holding the box with one hand, Ignis reached up and patted the dog gently before scratching him lightly behind his ears.

The dog practically melted. Flopping down on the floor with a goofy look on his face as he rolled over onto his back. Displaying his stomach for scratching which Ignis dutifully supplied. Umbra let out a happy little noise and wriggled in glee.

He indulged the dog for a few more moments before turning to the package in his hand. He pulled the rolled paper free from the ribbon that bound it. He unrolled it and read over the lines that had been wrote inside.

‘I must beg your forgiveness on the events that have transpired against you in the past day, both in regards to the attack on you and the breach of your privacy the night before. However, I could not stand idly by as your nightmare unfolded the way it was. You have suffered too much already to have it also destroy your relationship with Gladiolus Amicitia. I understand if you are upset with my actions but I do not regret my intervention.

Though the attack on you was caused by a third party, it was still carried out by a creature created from the Blight on Our Star. It is my sworn duty to protect those from this Darkness and help the King of Kings arise to his Throne. Since this darkness has now chosen to close in on you, I present unto you this Talisman of Light. Wear it always to light your way through the dark and drive off the evil that may threaten you. Touch it as you wear it and call forth its power in your time of need. Every month allow it to sit in the light of the full moon as much as possible to recharge its light.

May the Light of Our Star protect you always,

Lady Lunafreya Nox Fleuret, Oracle of Our Blessed Star

P.S. I beseech you to speak to the Marshal Cor Leonis about your nightmares and allow him to bring you relief from them, though I understand if you would rather not. Just know that I won’t always be there to protect you from them.’

He read over the note again, Lunafreya’s voice from the night before echoing the words in his mind. He carefully folded the note and untied the ribbon, opening the box to reveal a small silver skull charm on a fine silver chain. He stood and set the packaging on the counter, withdrawing the fine chain from the box, the skull spinning slowly as it dangled free.

Prompto let out a low whistle in appreciation as he started setting out mugs for everyone. “Damn Iggy, That’s some gift she gave you.”

“It’s not everyday the Oracle blesses a necklace and then sends it off to a stranger.” Gladio seemed to agree with him as he stared at the necklace in his nads.

“She’s nice like that,” came a tired yawn for the couch.

“Light,” Ignis said, remembering the attack as Gladio yelled at him through the phone. “You told me to get to the streetlight.” He looked over at his boyfriend as Prompto started over to the couch, the
mug in his hand filled with cold water and ice cubes. “Why?”

“Demons hate light. It’s why you’ll never run into one on the street in the middle of the day. The brighter the light the more liable it is to drive them off.” The Shield gestured to the necklace still dangling from Ignis’ hand. “Now you’ll never have to worry.”

“I suspected Lunafreya would pay you a visit, though I didn’t believe it to be this soon otherwise I would have said something to you,” Cor didn’t even react to the shriek that came from Noctis as Prompto unended the contents of his mug onto him. “You dreamt of her the forest last night didn’t you?” Ignis nodded, confused as to how Cor knew that. “She has the ability to walk someone’s dreams though she tends to do so only if she has no other options. I was unaware of her being able to heal while she was walking someone’s mind.”

“Same,” Gladio said giving Ignis a critical look over. “But now that I remember what her magic feels like I can tell she definitely healed you last night. Somehow.”

“Who is she?” Ignis glanced at the title on the note he had and reread it out loud. “The Oracle of Our Blessed Star?”

“The Oracle is our direct link to the Gods and the Gods direct link to us. Lunafreya specializes in healing and defensive magic and she is gifted with Foresight and Dreamwalking. Though Regis tries to keep her safe, she has a tendency to wander off on her own which have given us no amount of headaches in the past.” All three of them ignoring the angry hissing and laughter coming from the living room even as Noctis started trying to beat Prompto with one of the couch’s throw pillows. Prompto was laughing too hard to do much in the way of defending himself from the onslaught though Noct was obviously swatting him with the pillow without much power in his strikes.

Cor continued, “About thirty years ago, Regis made a deal with the local werewolf pack. He bought several hundred acres abutting the Citadel’s land for them to claim as their own if they would protect Luna when she decided to wander through the forest.” He gave a small shrug of his shoulders, “Though they tend to be a little on the brash side the Glaives have turned out to be rather formidable allies... and their sacrifice has not gone unnoticed.”

“What happened?” Gladio said, perking up as the tone of Cor’s voice changed.

“And this is where you debrief begins.” Cor looked over at the scuffle happening in the living room, “Highness, if you are quite done assaulting the were with a pillow, we are ready to begin.”

Prompto and Noct disentangled themselves from the mess of pillows and blankets and came over to join them at the island. Prompto went back to making the coffee. Ignis tried to join him but was stopped as Gladio's arm circled around his waist and he found himself settled into a high back stool again. Gladio wrapped his arms around him and he felt his boyfriend's chin settle on his head as he stood behind him. Ignis only pulled away long enough to bring the packaging and note closer to him, noticing that Gladio hesitated a moment before letting him go. Ignis wondered if this was the possessiveness that Gladio had spoke about earlier. He settled the skull charm necklace back into the box for the moment, deciding to ask Gladio after they heard what Cor had to say.

“As everyone here knows: Ignis was attacked early yesterday morning but a wraith. Monica and I trace the wraith back to a self storage facility down near the industrial park. It was in one of the larger storage rooms that we found a binding circle that had been used several times to bind wraiths to do the summoner's bidding.”

“Any idea of who did this?” Gladio asked immediately. His arms tightening protectively around Ignis. “How many were bound and were they all sent after Ignis?”
“I was getting to that,” Cor frowned in Gladio's general direction before continuing. “A total of four wraiths were bound that night and yes, all of them were sent after Ignis.”

“But I only saw one,” Ignis said softly even as fear clawed at him. One wraith had been bad enough but four? He barely even noticed Prompto setting a mug of coffee down in front of him just the way he preferred it.

Cor nodded his head in agreement to his statement. “The other three were caught by our sentries or scouts who dealt with the creatures accordingly. With our men in the area preoccupied, it allowed the fourth wraith to slip through and get to Ignis.”

“I assume that you've dealt with it?” Noctis asked. Despite his earlier antics, he was currently quiet and reserved, watching Cor closely as if searching for a weakness. The lazer like intensity from his more laid back friend was a bit unnerving.

“The wraith itself managed to elude us for another hour before we cornered and destroyed it.” Cor tilted his head down adding a darker look to his expression, “The wraith had the same brand on the back of its left hand as the one Clarus reported his attackers having.”

Gladio didn't quite manage to stifle his growl. “So Ignis was attacked to get to me?”

“That was the original thought however clues suggest that is was for some other reason. The Glaives are reporting a similar attack on them at approximately the same time.”

“A diversion then?” Noctis asked quietly, his voice quiet with almost no affliction in it. Ignis wormed a hand free from his boyfriend's grasp so he could reach for his coffee. He tried to ignore how his hand was shaking.

Cor nodded his head in agreement. “Why would the wraith allow Ignis to realize it stalking him and allow him to get a phone call off to Gladio? Had this wraith been sent to kill Ignis because of his relationship with Gladio and to hurt the Amicitia Family he would have been dead before he had even realized he was in danger. The timing suggests that it was designed to keep me here instead of having me return to assist the Glaives. Nyx reported that they chased their unknown attacker up into Canada before they broke off the hunt. Whoever they were, they managed to outrun the some of the fastest scouts in the pack. They were moving faster than a human ever could without assistance from a machine or spell, they were bipedal and their scent unrecognizable. Taking into consideration that Lady Lunafreya was walking through the woods at the same time fairly close to where the altercation happened means that it might have been an attempt on her as well.”

“So what happened to the Glaives,” Prompto asked, fidgeting with his now empty mugs. “Are they…”

“Four Glaives are dead, one is in critical condition and currently being treated at the Citadel by Lady Lunafreya. Judging from their injuries and the high levels of silver in their systems, whoever attacked them knew how to attack and kill werewolves.” Cor gave Prompto a look, softer than anything Ignis had seen on his face before. “While her injuries are severe, The Oracle is confident that Crowe will make it.”

Prompto made a high pitched noise in the back of his throat. Noctis immediately shifting closer and wrapping an arm around him. Prompto practically collapsed into his side as soon as the comfort was offered.

Gladio half swallowed another growl. “Who's Crowe?” Ignis had to ask having never heard of her before even though his friends obviously knew her well.
“A she-wolf friend of ours,” Gladio sounded furious. “Hell of a fighter and always treats Prompto like her little brother when they’re together. Most of the Glaives are aggressive towards Prompto because his not part of the pack but Crowe, Liberatus and Nyx are friendly to him at least. Crowe was a stray too before she joined with the Glaives so she sympathetic to what’s he’s been going through.”

“Between the two attacks and the previous attempt on Clarus life, Regis wants everyone to be on high alert and a full review of all defensive and offensive measures available to us.” Cor said without giving a chance for anyone to say anything to the contrary. “He’s personally investigating the attacks to gauge what kind of threat the Clan is now facing.”

“I assume this means things are going to change around here.” Noct asked Cor. He continued before Cor even had a chance to respond. “Am I to return to the Citadel?”

If Noctis was ordered back to the Citadel then wouldn't Gladio have to go with him? Ignis brought a hand up to grip one of the arms wrapped about him. Would he be even allowed to visit him?

“No. Your Father wants you to remain here but he is sending another squad down to help reinforced your forces here and there will be some changes.” Cor gestured to Ignis, “Until more information on what is going on is forthcoming, Ignis will be provided with bodyguard unless he is here in the Nexus or with Gladio. Don't worry,” he raised a hand to prevent Ignis from objecting to the new rule. “Your guard is to be unobtrusive. You will only see them in light of an attack on yourself. They'll remain silent and invisible unless they are needed.”

“Should Ignis move into the Nexus? Or at least in with Gladio?” Noct asked and Ignis felt himself prickle slightly.

“Noctis, I am right here and more than capable of making my own decisions regarding this matter.” He quickly pressed on, not giving anyone a breath to stop him from barging ahead. “I know how much you would prefer me to live here but I do enjoy having my own space and freedom. I am quiet content where I currently am.

As for Gladio and I moving in together, our relationship is still fairly new. Too new to warrant living together no matter how much time I tend to spend there. My current living arrangements are fine.” He gestured to the necklace still sitting in the box before him. “I am to understand that his is a powerful charm in its own right, is it not? Between this and a bodyguard, I do believe that I am well protected.”

Noct looked like he was about to argue more but Cor cut in, “Ignis is entitled to live his own life Noctis. No matter how safe he would be, locking him in a gilded cage, no matter how opulent it maybe, is still locking him in a cage.” He shot Gladio a pointed look. “That goes for both of you.”

The arms around Ignis tightened fractionally before easing off and then letting go of him completely as if Gladio was just realizing how protectively he had been holding Ignis. “Sorry,” he said as he moved to step away.

Ignis didn’t bother saying anything, choosing to let his actions speak for him. He grabbed Gladio’s right wrist and pulled it back into his lap, curling it around his waist and holding it there. Getting the message, Gladio stepped in closer to him again. His left hand coming up to settle on Ignis’ shoulder giving it a light squeeze in the process but he didn’t wrap it around him like he had previously.

A smile twitched onto Cor’s face before sliding off just as fast. He gave a small nod in approval. “As of right now those are the only changes until we have a better understanding of what is going on. Noct, both Clarus and I will be reviewing any and all of the changes you make to your defenses
and administration as an added precaution. Ignis,“ he sat up a bit taller in his chair as his name was
called and Cor turned to him. “Your bodyguards are coming with the group from the Citadel. They
should be here this evening or later tonight. Please remain here or in Gladiolus’ company until
tomorrow morning. With this the lockdown is over and I will take my leave.” His right hand formed
a fist that rested over his heart as he gave a small yet respectful bow to Noctis.

As Cor turned to go Ignis felt a spot of wetness on his ankle. He glanced down at Umbra, who had
remained this entire time, sitting on the floor by Ignis’ stool and was just pulling back after pressing
his nose to Ignis’ skin to get his attention. The intelligent eyes gave him a knowing look before
glancing at Cor’s back as he walked away.

_Just know I won’t always be there to protect you from your dreams._

Lady Lunafreya’s voice seemed to whisper in his ears. What the creature at his feet actually was
Ignis wasn’t sure but it was obviously not a dog. No matter its appearance. “Cor? A moment before
you go?”

“Yes, Ignis?” Cor came to a stop, turning to face him even as Ignis slipped off the stool and out of
Gladio’s grasp.

Ignis knelt a moment and scratched Umbra behind the ears. The dog’s tongue rolled out of his
mouth and the classic dopey doggy grin spread across his face as his tail wagged. “Thank you for
your reminder and thank your Lady for her aid last night and gift.” Ignis had no doubt that his
message would get to Lunafreya. “I hope to not need her aid again for quite some time.”

Umbra let out a small bark as Ignis stood up and turned to the patiently waiting Marshal.

“Cor,” Ignis started feeling uncharacteristically nervous. “I have been told that you can modify and
even erase memories from the human mind?”

Cor lifted an eyebrow as he gave Ignis a blank look. “Are you requesting me to erase your
memories of what happened in the past twenty four hours?”

Ignis’ request went right out the window and his curiosity took hold again. “You can do that? How
would you rationalize the lost of time to me?”

Cor gave a small shrug of one shoulder as if down playing what he could do. “Erasing memories,
especially relatively new memories, is a lot easier than what you might think. Instilling memories
take more work because of the amount of time needed to fabricate there existence but I could leave
you with the impression that you were violently ill and being tended to by Gladio for the past day
and a half. I could even leave your body feeling weak and fatigued for the the next two days to
simulate you needing time to recover from your fabricated bout of illness.” He gave Ignis a sharp
look, “Would you like for me to do such a thing?”

While part of him would have preferred learning about what Gladio and his friends actually were
without such a violent attack involved, Ignis didn’t like the idea of just sweeping everything under
the metaphorical rug and pretending nothing had happened. There was also no telling how long it
would take from him to relearn everything he had or if he was attacked again then he wouldn’t know
what to do or who to trust. At least this time around Gladio had been trustworthy even if it had take
Ignis awhile to come to terms that he wasn’t dating an ordinary person.

“No, no thank you,” he said with a small sigh. “Though I wouldn’t lie that the thought is tempting, I
would prefer to keep my mind as unmodified as possible and other than the attack itself I am glad
events have happened the way they did.” He smiled reassuringly over his shoulder at a confused and
slightly worried looking Gladio, “If anything I feel they have made our relationship even closer than before.” The tension seemed to fall away from Gladio immediately and he gave Ignis a grin as he stepped closer to him and pressed a quick kiss to his cheek.

There was an approving look in Cor’s eyes when Ignis turned back to him. He felt that even if Cor would have done that if he requested it, he did not like the thought of tampering so much with Ignis’ mind. “I honestly was going to ask if you could erase my memory of the actual attack and the subsequent nightmares it has been plaguing me with?” He couldn’t help the small shiver that raced down his spine. “They are… becoming distressingly more terrifying as time goes on.” And he left it at that. “But please do not add or do anything else. I want to know that I was attack, who rescued me, what my friends really are and -most importantly- that I asked you to do this. Please,” he added on the end as respectfully as he could after making such demands.

Another twitch of a smile slid across his face. “I assume that you would prefer this to be done immediately?”

“Yes,” Ignis then remembered himself. “As long as you have time.”

Cor just stepped up to him, closer than Ignis was comfortable with but Cor caught his chin before Ignis could step back. “Relax your mind,” Cor said, lifting Ignis’ chin up a fraction and ignoring the small hiss Gladio let loose. “And take a deep breath.”

“Gladio, it’s okay. Remembered I asked for this.” Even as he spoke he reached for his boyfriend pulling him close as he tried to relax his mind and not think about he was asking for Cor to go poking around in his and destroying his memories. A small tremble ran through him. “Hold me?”

His voice was small and he hated that there was a touch of fear in it. Gladio didn’t hesitate to wrap his arms around Ignis’ shoulders and stomach, his hand splaying out to cover as much of his stomach as possible. Ignis flicked his eyes to the side and was briefly startled to see his eyes glowing like they had that night during the attack.

“Calm yourself Gladio,” was all Cor said, ignoring how Gladio seemed to bare his fangs at him. “He is yours, he merely asked me to do this. Ignis, when you are ready look into my eyes.”

Gladio’s eyes dimmed a bit and he pressed a quick kiss to Ignis’ temple. Ignis moved his hands to cover Gladio’s. He forced himself to take a deep breath, willing the tension out of his body before meeting the Marshal’s gaze.

His eyes took on the elongated star appearance that Gladio’s had when he dropped his glamour. And then everything just stopped.

Just like when Cor had interviewed him back at the apartment what seemed like ages ago, the room slipped out of focus while Cor remained in focus. He could barely feel Gladio’s hands on him and he was fairly sure he wasn’t breathing for a moment. His heart seemed to thud once harshly in his chest as if trying to escape the confines of his ribs.

You are fine. You can breath.

Yes, yes he could. It was a good chance that he was merely in a trace. Besides, Gladio wouldn’t let anything happen to him and he was fairly sure that Noct and Prompto would leap to his aid if he needed it. Cor wouldn’t hurt him.

No I won’t hurt you. Relax Ignis. Everything is fine. You are safe.
Of course he was going to be fine. He asked for this. He was safe. His friends were nearby.
Nothing was going to hurt him and nothing was wrong. Everything was fine.

A strange sensation, like someone was running a chill finger across his forehead and down behind
his ear made him try to pull back. A strangled whimper bubbled out of his throat even if he couldn’t
hear it. When had Cor’s eyes started glowing? They were a deep red that reminded him too much of
blood. He tried to pull away.

*Don’t fight me. Relax. You are safe. I’m almost done.*

He couldn’t have pulled away even if he tried. He honestly felt like he was drowning. Like nothing
else mattered as those red eyes seemed to draw him in and hold him under. Another weak noise
escaped him as the cold sensation seemed to curl around his skull and mind, touching everything. He
shivered.

Hands on him tightened and Gladio hissed angrily next to him, the noise sharp compared to the
muffled quality that everything else had taken.

*I’m done.* If anything though, Ignis felt like he was being pulled deeper. The chill left his mind even
as Cor’s eyes glowed even brighter. *I’m going to put you to sleep Ignis. It will allow you to recover.*
Cor’s hand tipped his entire head off to one side. *Gladio will be with you when you wake. Sleep…*

Ignis felt himself start to fall to the side only to have Gladio sweep him up into his arms. His head
settled against his shoulder as arms slid behind his knees and around his shoulders, lifting him up off
the ground and cradling him gently to his chest. Green eyes, still glowing a faint red, slid shut as
Ignis was forced to obeyed Cor’s last command.

... *Sleep…*

### May 24th at 2254

Ignis moaned into the pillow as his head throbbed with an unholy fire. He carefully blinked his eyes
opened, relieved when he noticed how dark it was. It wasn't often he had migraines but light -no
matter how dim- always seemed to make the throbbing worse.

“Hey,” mercifully Gladio was keeping his voice low as if he already knew how Ignis was feeling.
“Do I want to know how bad it is?”

Ignis just barely suppressed a whimper. “Horrendous,” he managed through clenched teeth.

He felt the mattress dip and shift as Gladio moved closer to him. “I wasn’t sure if you would be
bothered by my touching you. You usually just hide when your having a migraine in your bed.”

“Light mostly. Loud noises.” He shifted himself backwards towards Gladio, the weight of a
necklace around his neck not even giving him pause as he moved. Its gentle weight more of a
comfort than anything and he knew it was the Oracle’s gift without even having to touch it. He
was laying on his side, the blanket and sheet tucked around him with two pillows around his head
and shoulders making him stay in the position. “You can hold me.”

Gladio slid closer to him, tucking himself around Ignis' gently. He pressed his chest against his back
and slid and arm under his neck and around his side. Lips gently pressed against his neck and Ignis
carefully shifted his head enough to arch his neck and expose it to Gladio's lips.

“Mmmmm,” Gladio hummed. His lips pressed a little more forcefully to his neck and lingered for a
moment longer before he pulled back. “Do you think you can hold something down? You really
need to eat and drink something."

“What time is it?” It felt late.

“Almost eleven at night.”

Correction, it was late.

“I thought I was doing better,” he hissed partially annoyed with himself. “Yet I spent all day unconscious and in bed?”

The lips pressed gently to his cheek. “Messing around with someone's memories does leave a lingering headache for them. Cor said you kept trying to fight him which is probably why you have a migraine.”

“I was fighting him?” He didn't remember trying to fight back.

“You kept panicking, trying to push him away, most of it was subconsciously but towards the end you were actively trying to get him out. He was starting to worry you were going to hurt yourself.”

The red glow of his eyes, the feeling he had of drowning in them. “It is not an experience I wish to relive. Especially if a migraine is a result.”

“Don't worry,” Gladio's arms tightening around him. “No one will mess with your mind unless you ask them to. They’ll answer to me if they even try.”

Ignis let out a content little hum and patted the hand on his stomach. They lapsed into a comfortable silence. Despite the throbbing in his head, Ignis felt his eyes begin to slide shut.

“Hey,” Gladio traced his cheek lightly with the back of his knuckles, rousing him again. “Don't fall asleep yet. You need to drink some water at least. And some medicine might help with your headache.”

Ignis grumbled halfheartedly under his breath but moved to sit up. Gladio helped him sit up and then shuffled about nearby for a moment before turning back to him. “Here, some ibuprofen.”

The room was dark but Ignis trusted that Gladio was easily able to see in the dark. He had out his hand and felt several pills dropped into it. He swallowed them, extending his hand again and wasn't disappointed when a glass was pressed into it.

After several mouthfuls, Ignis lowers his glass. “So... How long am I going to feel like my head is being split open from the inside?”

“Hard to say. Cor said he wouldn’t be surprised if you were out for a day or two.” Gadio’s arm slid around his shoulder. “You’re probably going to miss school tomorrow.”

Ignis sighed but even he had to admit that attempting his kind of schedule with a migraine was next to impossibly. He turned his head and puckered his lips, letting out a happy little moan as Gladio met his silent request and kissed him gently. “Unfortunately that means you won’t see much of me this coming weekend. I’ll be trying to catch up with everything I missed.”

“You can come study at my place when you aren’t working. I’ll make sure not to distract you too much and make sure you stop to eat occasionally.” Another kiss, this time to his temple, feather light and barely felt. “And don’t worry about your budget. I’ll give it to you. Just as much as you normally would make so don’t worry about that.”
As much as he wanted to argue the point, Ignis bit his tongue and leaned into his boyfriend. “Thank you,” he said softly, taking another sip from his glass and then holding it up to be taken away. Gladio did just that before bundling him up and laying him back down, nestled comfortably in his arms. “You’re to go to me.”

“I just like spoiling you,” he agreed as he pulled the blankets back up over them.

Ignis relaxed into his boyfriend’s warmth and let his eyes close. Though there was a bit of lingering doubt on what the future held, this was what he wanted. He wanted to stay with Gladio and he no longer cared that he wasn’t human. Even the possessiveness he had shown earlier at Cor hadn’t been that bad. He could deal with it. If it meant he could stay with Gladio, he’d deal with whatever he had to.

“I have so much more to learn,” he whispered into Gladio’s collarbone.

“Hmm?”

“About vampires… werewolves.” After all, not all of his friends were vampires.

“Yeah but we’ve got time. No need to rush anything. It’s not like there is a test you have to take,” Gladio kissed him. “For now just get better. We’ll take it one step at a time from here, no matter how many there are. You can ask me anything.”

“I know,” Ignis nuzzled back down into Gladio’s arms and slowly slid off into a dreamless sleep, surrounded by the warmth and affection he’d come to treasure.

And was willing to fight to keep.

Chapter End Notes

And done... despite every attempt at my life to throw a monkey wrench into getting this out in a reasonable time like I had wanted.

I do apologize to the size of this chapter, as tempted as it was to split it again, there was just no good place to really do so and I felt kind of bad adding yet another chapter to this story after wanting to keep it to three chapters :/

That being said: there is still like another 7k of words that just didn't make the cut that I still want to add on to this universe in some capacity. I wanted this story to be about the first twenty four hours or so after the attack so some things just didn't work in that regards. If you couldn't tell there was just a little bit of foreshadowing in this last chapter.

Right now, I'm looking at two one shots and another multichapter fic at least with tentative plans for several more stories at another date. Who would have thought that 'I want to write a vampire Gladio fic' would turn into 70,000 words and a notebook and a half full of notes.

Thank you all for reading and I hope you enjoyed it!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!