Here, There, and Everywhere
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Here, There, and Everywhere
by harioandlouigi

Summary

Louis was in a rut. He was still living in the same small Texas town he’d hated all his life, he was about to graduate with a degree he’d never been interested in, and he was hooking up with a guy he didn’t even like just because it was probably his only chance to be with another man.

And then someone else’s overindulgences triggered a series of events that lead to where Louis is now, touring the world as a roadie for Harry Styles.

Notes

Thank you for the wonderful prompts. They were all so great that I had a hard time choosing just one.

Thank you so, so much to my beta. I’m running out of ways to thank you for all the work you’ve put into every single one of my fics.

I didn’t want to misrepresent Jay or disrespect her memory by making her an “active” character, but I also didn’t want to make any references to her passing, so I tried to find a bit of a gray area. I hope none of what I wrote comes across as disrespectful or insensitive. Sadly, Robin passed away after I had finished writing this fic. I chose to keep the small part involving him because it was based on what Harry had said in interviews. I hope I’ve made
the right choice and that, once again, it does not come across as disrespectful or insensitive. The last thing I’d ever want would be to accidentally exploit either family’s pain or disrespect Jay and Robin’s memory.

I was a bit harsh on Levelland (and Texas in general), but this fic was written from Louis’ POV, a gay man living in the Bible Belt who has always hated his small town, so, naturally, it’s easier for him to fixate on the flaws. The term “redneck”, which can be considered a slur, is present in this fic, but Louis uses it self-deprecatingly only, and never as an insult.

A silly little note to finish: I changed Louis’ birthday to fit the storyline. I know we all feel very strongly about him being a Christmas baby, but it had to be done. Sorry!

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

Prologue

Louis was just your average Joe.

He was a struggling community college student with a part-time job waiting tables at a local diner. He watched all the Dallas Cowboys’ games on T.V. with his buddies and went to church every Sunday. He drank beer even though he hated it and drove just over the speed limit.

A perfectly normal life, just like so many others.

And that was exactly the problem… Louis hated how monotonous and cliché his life had become, following the exact same path as pretty much every other small town Texan.

Every lecture was boring as the last – save for Mr. Young’s classes, they were remarkably dull – and the only exciting thing that ever happened at the diner was when Clumsy Keith dropped a plate and/or a glass, which was actually so frequent, it was practically part of the routine.

Everything was equally as flat as far as the eye could see and the fields were still the exact same shade of green-y brown as they were when Louis came into this world.

Even the conversations seemed to repeat themselves over and over again without anyone noticing it besides Louis.

Hell, every other day he would see tumbleweed rolling right outside his window, and it is the most popular cartoon representation of boredom for a reason.

He was in a rut, and there was no way out of it. Sure, he wouldn’t be in college forever, but then he’d be stuck behind a desk all day with his life and energy being drained out of him, which is even worse.

His life could really only go downhill from here, and it’s a pretty fucking dire reality to wake up to everyday.

(And that’s without even going into the whole gay-in-the-Bible-Belt thing.)

Anyone who knew Louis, knew he was adventurous and impulsive, the kind of guy who’d book a ticket to Thailand on a whim.

Unfortunately, his budget did not agree with his personality, and the most reckless thing he could afford was buying an unnecessarily expensive bottle of lube at the Walmart two towns over at 5 a.m. because, goddamn it, his ass deserved the best.

Louis would wake up feeling trapped everyday - by his lack of money, by his sense of obligation, by the lack of opportunities, by life itself. He desperately wanted to do something, something different and unexpected, something that wouldn’t fit into the cookie-cutter life he could see no way out of.

Wherever he looked, he could see his future.

He knew, without a shadow of a doubt, he’d grow into the sweaty middle-aged man with circles under his eyes and a fifty-dollar suit ordering extra bacon despite his high cholesterol. Looking into the eyes of a woman two tables behind was like looking in the mirror, the exact same dimness and
lifelessness, only they’re framed by two sets of crow’s feet, which weren’t marking Louis’ skin yet. Even his Pop would send him into existential crisis mode all the time, remembering his war days almost tenderly, as it was the only period of his life spent out of this land of nothingness.

Louis’ biggest fear was dying without having ever truly lived, and he knew that’s exactly where he was heading. A whole life with nothing to show for it besides bitterness and regret.

He was in a place in his life where he knew – but certainly did not freely accept - that he’d be stuck living the exact same story as pretty much every other person in this town when a man walked into the diner and convinced him to run away and join the circus.

Or at least that’s what everybody else would make it seem.

With his long hair and psychedelic t-shirt, he couldn’t have looked more like an outsider in the land of pickup trucks and plaid shirts.

All eyes were on him as he sat down in a booth alone, but he either didn’t notice or didn’t care, which was for the best, because the judgment and prejudice in the air were almost palpable.

Louis told his friend and co-worker, Stan, that he’d take the outsider’s order, ignoring the suggestive oooh he got in response. He had only recently come out to Stan, and his friend was doing this weird thing to show that he was okay with it where he was over-the-top supportive and perpetually pushing Louis to find a boyfriend.

He appreciated the fact that Stan wasn’t throwing holy water at his face, but it was a bit exhausting to spend time with someone who thought he ate, slept, and breathed dick.

Louis wasn’t even attracted to the stranger, honest to god; he just looked like the kind of guy who would have crazy stories to tell and an exciting life that Louis could live vicariously through.

If there’s anything Louis had learned being a waiter at a diner in Texas it’s Southern charm and hospitality, and he channeled all that positive and vibrant energy in his quirky costumer’s direction.

It had barely taken a cup of coffee before Louis was sitting down across from the long-haired man – Steve, he had learned, much to his disappointment, expecting him to be called Storm or at least something not quite so common.

Steve told him all about his life as a member of a road crew – or a roadie, as cool people like him call it - as Louis sat literally at the edge of his seat.

Steve’s official title was “production manager”, which literally meant nothing to Louis, and he was currently on tour with a band called Passive Aggressive. They were supposed to be on their way to Santa Fe from San Antonio, but the vocalist was so hungover that he’d demanded they stop in the first town they saw so that he could recover and stop puking his guts out.

It wasn’t a good day for Steve, even before having to stop in Levelland.

One of the roadies had suddenly quit because he “missed the bae too much” – Jesus Christ - and he had figured the only thing that could cheer him up while he had to make a hundred phone calls to find someone willing to drop everything and join them in Santa Fe tonight and for the rest of the tour was a nice greasy burger and a chocolate shake.

If asked, Louis wouldn’t be able to remember why exactly he had said what he said or even how it had come up ages after they’d discussed the missing crew member, but he told Steve that, if given the chance, he would take the job on the spot.
And in the biggest what the fuck moment of Louis’ life – in a good way; no, in the best way - Steve actually did offer him a job as a roadie on the Passive Aggressive’s tour crew.

It was insane and incredibly selfish of Louis to even consider taking the job and suddenly leave everything and everyone behind, but this was the exciting, crazy opportunity he’d been waiting for his whole life.

Freedom and adventure were finally knocking on his fucking door, and he welcomed them with arms wide open.

It had taken less than two hours for Louis to go from a waiter and community college student who’d never even left the state of Texas to a roadie making his way to Santa Fe, New Mexico in a sleeper bus.

Louis learned the ropes of the job incredibly fast, giving it his all and working harder than he had ever done before. He had finally found a way out of his boring, predictable future, and by god, he was going to hold onto it for dear life.

It wasn’t the actual job that he loved - though he genuinely did enjoy the physical labor of setting up the stage and taking it down afterwards before getting back on the road– it was the freedom and the excitement. It was knowing that one day he could be drinking a beer in Seattle and the next he could be eating poutine in fucking Canada.

He was finally doing something worth telling, and he had never been happier, even if he did feel like a redneck that was way out of his depth sometimes.

But life on the road wasn’t all sugar, spice, and everything nice.

The members of Passive Aggressive weren’t that passive, but they sure as fuck were aggressive. They were such sour, horrible human beings that Louis often wondered if one of the prerequisites when forming the band was being actual fucking Satan incarnated.

There was a clear hierarchy, and Louis was at the very bottom, something that the band, their groupies, and their friends and family loved reminding him off. He’s pretty sure none of them even knew his name, but they sure as hell knew who he was. To them, he was just the smiley, funny roadie with the embarrassing accent who still hadn’t learned his place, but Louis put up with their shit because he was getting paid to travel, and that’s the dream.

The dream was shattered one day, though.

Everyone had been complaining about the scorching hot Arizona June weather while Louis laughed when Steve came out of the band’s bus, looking more serious than the Texan had ever seen him.

“Brock was arrested for stabbing some dude in a bar fight. The tour has been cancelled.”

Fuck.

Louis had never been more disappointed in his entire life, not even that time when he had finally talked his Mom into buying him three scoops of ice cream only for the whole thing to fall onto the floor before he’d gotten the first taste.

He’d found something worth getting out of bed in the morning, and now it had all gone to shit. That hotheaded absolute caveman had single-handedly crushed Louis’ hopes and dreams.

Maybe he should have felt grateful for these two and a half months of living instead of just existing,
but he almost wished they had never happened. You can’t just have a taste of freedom and
adventure, and then go back to your mind-numbing, life-draining routine, as it turns out.

This was a crazy, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and, most definitely, the peak of his existence on
earth, and all that was left to do was find his way back to the Middle of Nowhere, Texas, with his tail
tucked between his legs.

While the rest of the roadies went back into the bus to gather their shit and lick their wounds, Louis
stayed outside breathing in the smell of the unknown. He’d be back in boring old Levelland the next
day, and god only knew if he’d ever properly leave again.

Roadie life wasn’t done with him yet, though.

“How are you feeling, kiddo?” Steve asked when he came back to find Louis still outside. He didn’t
look nor sound nearly as upset as Louis, probably because he would find himself a new adventure
soon enough, unlike the Texan.

“Well, I’m going back to Levelland to have the joy of living sucked out of me, so what do you
think?”

“I mean, you can go back home if you want to, but a buddy of mine got me another job and I
managed to get you a place in the crew as well. Not sure if you’re interested, though. You sound oh-
so-excited to go back to Levelland...” Steve said sarcastically, a mischievous glint in his eyes as he
smiled knowingly.

“No fucking way! Steve! I love you, man! Thank you, thank you, thank you!” Louis yelled, hugging
Steve so tightly, the other man could barely breathe.

“Yeah, I know... I’m the best. And it’s a major upgrade from this gig. We’re going to be travelling
all over the world, little Southern Belle!”

“Wow! Holy shit, Steve! Who are we going to be working for, then?”

“Harry fucking Styles. Bet you’ve heard of him even in Levelland.”

Louis sure as hell knew who Harry Styles was.

As a matter of fact, he’d known about Harry Styles since the singer was still a teenager. One of his
high school friends, Lindsay, had been obsessed with him, so Louis knew all these random facts
about Harry Styles, like how he’d moved to America with his family when he was in his early teens
and that he absolutely loved fro-yo of all things.

Louis was never particularly interested in him, to be honest, and he definitely was never a Harry
Styles fan.

He remembered his songs being quite catchy when Lindsay played them, but Louis hadn’t heard any
of his stuff in years. It’s not that the singer had become less popular – on the contrary, he’d become
even more famous since then, with his audience and musical style maturing with him – it’s just that
Louis always listened to his carefully selected playlists, and Christian Pop was the only type of
acceptable music at the diner.

He wasn’t totally indifferent to Harry Styles, though.

Every time Louis came across a picture of Styles, he imagined the singer fucking him against a wall,
of course, like any self-respecting human being.
It wasn’t, like, a crush or anything like that - his heart and dick’s preference seemed to be straight cowboy-boot-wearing men who most definitely would not be flattered if they found out about Louis’ feelings. He just had a pair of working eyes and a fully functioning, if not too needy, dick, and Harry Styles was hot.

The fact that he’d be working for a really attractive artist wasn’t intimidating to Louis at all, as he was sure that he would find Harry Styles a lot less appealing after having to put up with his diva strops. He had also thought Brock was good-looking when he’d first met him, and he sure as hell didn’t anymore after he puked on stage during soundcheck on Louis’ first day and then yelled at the crew for not cleaning it up fast enough.

Also, Harry Styles’ crew was definitely going to be bigger than the Passive Aggressive’s, so it would be ten times easier for Louis to blend in with the other guys and be completely invisible to the singer.

No more being targeted for “having too much fun” or “playing around too much when work needs to be done” for Louis Tomlinson.

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Present day

*Oakland, California*

You’ve got this, Louis repeats over and over again in his head. It’s his first day working on *Harry Styles: The Pink Tour*, and he’s a little (see: a lot) overwhelmed.

This tour is definitely a much bigger production than what Louis is used to, and he’s sure that everyone else has a hell of a lot more experience than him.

Plus, the actual tour hasn’t started yet - they’re in the rehearsal phase - so he presumes it would be entirely too easy to fire him and find a replacement just like that, especially considering that he isn’t actually a specialist in anything, just an average handyman, really.

Whatever!

Louis has never been a negative person and he isn’t about to start now.

Even if it all goes wrong, he can say that he spent a full day in San Francisco, the one place he’s always thought of as the gayest city in America.

God bless whomever decided that the tour rehearsals were to be held in Oakland, because Louis is only a small ride away from San Francisco and he intends to spend as much time there as possible.

No offense to Oakland, but he’s been seeing pictures of the Castro and the San Francisco Pride Parades ever since he dared to start googling what that bubbly, warm feeling in his belly around boys was. He’d never been to a place where PDA between people of the same sex was so accepted and the rainbow flags were flown so proudly, and it’s hard to believe that Louis’ birthplace and this tolerance heaven called San Francisco could be part of the same country.

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There was absolutely nothing to worry about, as it turns out, and he’d even dare say that he’s genuinely having fun working.

Everything is very well organized and the rest of the roadies are incredibly nice, so Louis doesn’t
stick out like a sore thumb despite the fact that pretty much everyone else has toured with Harry Styles before.

The only downside of this job is that, despite being a way bigger deal, it is technically a demotion for Steve, as he transitioned from being the production manager on their previous tour to just a regular lighting technician, so their jobs don’t intersect nearly as much anymore.

It kind of sucks because Steve is the only person from the crew Louis already knew, but a good Southern boy always makes friends wherever he goes, his current favorites being another stage roadie, Liam, and a pyrotechnician called Niall.

Liam is a hard-working, yet incredibly friendly guy who seems to think that all of Louis’ jokes are hilarious, and Niall could only be described as a firework, which is quite appropriate - energetic, gets everyone’s attention, and totally unpredictable.

Everything is going so well that Louis keeps waiting for the other shoe to drop, and he’s afraid that that might just be Harry Styles.

The first two days of rehearsals were crew-only, the roadies figuring out what should be where and when, and placed by whom, so that everything will run smoothly when Styles starts rehearsing.

Today is the third day, which means that Styles is supposed to be here soon – that is, if he doesn’t pull a diva move and ditch it - and Louis is afraid that he’ll be such a repulsive, despicable, arrogant jerk that it’ll ruin it all.

Unlike what he was expecting, Harry Styles actually arrives on time. He is, however, drinking one of those green, gross-looking smoothies that Louis had only seen in those reality shows his sisters love, fitting right into the snobbish, holier-than-thou celebrity culture the roadie fully expected him to be a part of.

The singer starts making his way towards the stage and… he’s actually not as Louis expected him to be.

Sure, he may look the part with his perfectly tossed curls, black skinny jeans, and nearly completely unbuttoned shirt, but he’s not really acting like the arrogant, egocentric rock star he’s supposed to be.

For starters, Harry either hugs or shakes hands with all the members of the crew that he walks past, always accompanied by a genuine dimpled smile.

When asked to test the microphone and his position on the stage, he starts singing Olivia Newton-Jones’ *Physical*. No, not just singing, he *performs* it like he’s found his way to a karaoke bar after one (or five) too many shots of tequila.

It has got to be the most obscene and hilarious performance Louis has ever seen.

Styles grinds on the microphone and on Paul, the tour manager, licks his lips and shakes his booty like he’s got no shame, and even starts crawling towards his bodyguard at some point – all while laughing like a deranged cockatoo. Definitely not the bland, personality lacking, too-cool-for-everything celebrity Louis had been expecting.

And the strangest part is that the crew is openly laughing with and *at* him, almost like they aren’t afraid of treating Styles like a buddy instead of someone who’s really, really above them in the hierarchy.

There’s a weird dynamic going on here, something akin of equality between the artist and the
roadies, and Louis couldn’t be more confused.

As Louis is scooping some mashed potatoes onto his plate, he can’t help but smile as he thinks about how different his life was just a couple of months ago.

Sure, both this gig and the previous one were practically handed to him on a platter, but he hasn’t let Steve down so far. For someone who knew nothing about being a roadie, he thinks it’s quite an accomplishment to be able to keep up with the other guys.

Louis carries his plate to a small table in the back of the room, the sound of Niall cackling like a beacon showing where Liam and him are sitting. He spots Steve along the way, chatting animatedly with the guys to his right and left, and he flashes a smile in his direction.

He’s in the middle of exaggerating a high school story for comedic effect as Liam and Niall laugh their asses off when he sees him walk in.

Harry Styles.

The main act just walked into the crew’s lounge and started loading up a plate, and Louis seems to be the only one who’s surprised.

“What’s he doing?” Louis whispers to Niall and Liam, knowing that they’ve both worked with Harry before and probably have a much better understanding of the “beast”.

“Who?” Liam asks, making Louis roll his eyes so hard, they nearly fall out of their sockets.

“Harry fucking Styles, that’s who!”

“Um, getting food?” Niall answers, looking puzzled by Louis’ reaction.

“He eats with the crew?”

Niall snorts unattractively, “Of course! What, did you think he was going to eat in his dressing room all alone?”

Okay, fair enough, that’d probably be kind of lonely, but he still wouldn’t expect Styles to eat with his minions. Maybe with his backup band, sure, but never with the brawn.

“What if I sit with you so that you can annoy Liam with your loud chewing!” Niall yells so brashly, he probably wasn’t just heard across the room, but across the planet as well. Much to Louis’ discomfort, the singer does start making his way towards their table.

“I do not chew loudly; Liam is just too sensitive. Maybe it’s some sort of compensatory mechanism for his supposedly missing kidney.” Harry says as he sits down, causing Liam to groan and Niall to laugh loudly. Guess it must be an inside joke. Liam and Niall, two lowly roadies, have inside jokes with the star of the show. What kind of alternate universe is this?

“Oh, hello! I haven’t met you yet. I’m Harry.” He says as he holds out his hand, as if there was any way Louis didn’t know who he was. Even if by some miracle he had never heard of Harry Styles before this tour, the guy was literally singing on stage less than half an hour ago.

Louis appreciates the gesture though, and the way he introduced himself was really polite and humble.

Harry Styles might actually be a pretty decent guy, after all.
Louis also likes to think he’s a polite, humble, decent guy himself, but it’s not quite showing right now.

The thing is that Harry’s British accent is still intact despite the fact that he’s been living in America for years, and so damn hot, Louis actually struggles to remember his own name, let alone make polite conversation. It makes for a bit of a stilted interaction, but Niall breaks any awkwardness soon enough. (Bless him… Everyone who have a pocket-sized Niall that they can just pull out in case of emergency.)

He quickly puts all the bullshit and prejudice behind him, accepting that Harry is actually a friendly guy who doesn’t treat the roadies like shit.

(He also, thankfully, manages to get past the he’s-so-fucking-hot-I-can’t-think-properly phase that he suspects everyone goes through when meeting Harry for the first time.)

It’s so strange how well the four of them get along once Louis drops the guarded ice queen act, so much so that the break room is nearly empty now, but they’re still chatting away. Louis is even allowing a lot more of his dramatic, over-the-top personality to be on display, almost as much as when he’s with his family.

“Jolly Ranchers are fucking great and I am deeply disturbed by the fact that you three idiots think otherwise! You people should honest to god be tested in a lab, because that ain’t normal!” Louis argues loudly. To be honest, he doesn’t even like that stupid candy that much, but he refuses to cave and admit that it’s not that weird to hate Jolly Ranchers.

Liam huffs, “The only acceptable fruit candy is Skittles, period!”

“No, that’s a ridiculous idea! Skittles are way too fruity and sweet. I prefer Jolly Ranchers, and it’s not like they’re made with any real fruit. They’re just soft candy. I mean, come on! They’re not even real fruit! Jolly Ranchers are a joke!” Louis retorts.

“Ugh, don’t even mention that candy from hell around me! One of my sisters loves Skittles and she eats them all the goddamn time. The problem is that she hates the green ones, so she takes them out of the packet first and then just leaves them all over the place. I’ve lost track of the amount of times I’ve woken up with a perfectly shaped engraving of a Skittle on my face.”

“Sisters, plural? How many have you got?” Harry asks, his gaze so intently fixed on Louis’ face, he’d find it creepy if the singer wasn’t so fucking attractive that even serial killer is a good look on him.

“Five. I have five sisters and a baby brother. It’s absolute chaos, but I love having a big family. Plus, it kind of balances out the dullness of my hometown, so…”

“Wow, six siblings! That’s really cool. So, where are you from, Louis?”

Louis really does understand now why Harry has a reputation for being able to charm his way through anything.

He has this way of looking at people when they’re talking, like he’s genuinely interested in what they’re saying - the recipient of all his focus and attention.

It makes Louis want to tell him everything about himself and happily give away all his secrets, and he’s sure it will become a problem eventually.

“Does the Southern drawl not give it away? The Lone Star State, of course - the great state of Texas. A boring, small place called Levelland, to be more precise.”

“I could tell it was a Southern accent, but to be honest, I can’t really tell a Texan accent from, like, Georgia, or something. Is there even that big of a difference between the accents in the South or am I
just ridiculously uncultured? Well, if we manage to have such different accents just in England alone, there must be a difference…”

“Which type of accent is yours, then? The posh type or the redneck type of British accent?”

“Well, uh, I wouldn’t- I wouldn’t call it posh-“

Louis snorts, “Definitely posh, then, I see.”

Harry blushes lightly, making him look almost cherubic, and Louis revels in the fact that he did that. He made that happen.

“It’s just that, um, in certain regions, the accents are a little rougher, and in London, where I lived until I was fourteen, the accent is softer and more, uh, more melodic. It’s not necessarily more posh than, let’s say, a Birmingham accent, just you, know, less brash in a way.”

“Whatever you say, posh boy.”

Harry shakes his head slowly, his cheeks dimpling as he fails to suppress a smile, and Louis isn’t proud of the fact that, like someone much cuter than him once said, it makes him melt like a popsicle on the Fourth of July.

Louis has barely known Harry for half a day, and he’s already entirely too fond of him.

Fuck.

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Harry greets Louis the next day when he walks past him, but he also greets literally everyone else around him in the same exact manner, and that’s okay. Just because they have mutual friends and had one conversation over lunch, it doesn’t mean that they’re buddies or that Harry is going to treat him any more warmly than he does everybody else, especially considering that he’s known most of the guys for years.

Sure, Harry is very polite, but he isn’t going to remember every single little conversation he has with each individual roadie.

The singer probably doesn’t even remember Louis’ name anymore, and that’s just fine. Louis honestly doesn’t mind being just another roadie in a sea of crewmembers.

As a matter of fact, that was exactly his plan, and just because Harry isn’t a piece of shit like the guys in Passive Aggressive, it doesn’t mean he has to have a personal relationship with him.

*

Seattle, Washington

It’s the first show of the tour, and Louis is really fucking pumped.

On his last tour, he tolerated the actual work in exchange for the freedom of travelling around, but on this one, he’s genuinely having fun working. He loves the other roadies, he’s made some great friends, and the team works like a well-oiled machine, which makes everything less stressful.

He’s even gotten himself a new nickname – “little one” – which he pretends to hate, but is actually endeared by because it makes him feel like he’s a part of the “family”.
One day, still during the tour rehearsals, one of the lighting guys was having a hard time weaseling his bulky-ass body into a tight space to fix something or another, so Louis offered to try it.

Ever since then, whenever something needs to be done that involves tight spaces, like adjusting a light without sending it flying or crawling underneath the stage, they ask “the little one” for help. They do know his actual name, but apparently being the smallest of the guys, not only in height, but also in body type, trumps over what his birth certificate says.

As stupid as it may sound, his newfound “talent” has made Louis’ position on the crew feel a lot more secure because he doesn’t feel like literally any person walking down the street would be able to replace him. It may be a dumb “specialization”, but at least he knows he’s being useful in a way that none of the other guys can be.

Louis has just finished everything that needed to be done before the beginning of the show - involving tight spaces or otherwise - and is on his way to the roadies’ breakroom for some well-deserved snacks when he bumps into Harry.

Literally.

“Oops! Sorry, Louis. I wasn’t paying attention to where I was going. I’m so sorry.”

“No, I’m sorry. It’s my fault, really. I was daydreaming about the bowl of Doritos in the breakroom and I just didn’t see you there. Sorry!”

“Maybe we should just write it off as both of our faults and call it a day, so that we can stop apologizing.” Harry says, chuckling just a tad bit too loudly, “Have you spoken to your sisters and little brother lately? Are they alright?”

Okay, Louis had been half hoping Harry would remember his name, and maybe meeting someone with a bunch of siblings nowadays is uncommon enough to be remembered – especially when you weren’t raised in an area where there were plenty of families who believe birth control is against God’s will – but Harry fucking remembered the girl to boy ratio, and that’s really damn nice.

“Yeah, they’re great. Are you okay, though?” Louis asks, noticing how pale and jittery Harry looks.

“It’s so stupid, really, but I still get nervous before every show, especially the first one of a tour. I just want everything to go well and for all those people out there to have a good time, you know…”

Harry explains, smiling sheepishly.

“You’ve got this, Harry, trust me. And if something does go wrong, then you have months and months of tour to improve it. It’s going to be great though, I know it. It’s cute that you get nervous though, it shows that you actually care about your music and your fans, and aren’t just in it for the money and the fame, and all that.”

“Harry, you ready for your earpiece?” One of the roadies, Jack, asks from down the hallway, thankfully interrupting Louis before he could say anything too embarrassing trying to calm Harry down.

“Alright, showtime.” Louis says, starting to walk towards the breakroom to try to still get some food in him before he’s needed again.

Harry stops him with a hand around his wrist though, “Thank you, Louis. Really.”

“Break a leg, posh boy!”
“Don’t even joke about that! I’m clumsy enough for that to be a real possibility.”

Louis giggles all the way to the breakroom, remembering all the times Harry had tripped over cords and nearly fallen off the stage during rehearsals.

You always imagine celebrities to be these perfect, flawless beings, but Harry is dorky and clumsy, and a real mess sometimes.

He always looks so damn good though, even when he’s tripping over thin air…

Harry absolutely kills it.

Louis had seen him up on stage and heard him sing before, of course, but it’s in front of a crowd that he really shines. He feeds off the energy of the audience, and gives them love right back.

It’s almost magical, and Louis is honest to god mesmerized during the whole show.

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Los Angeles, California

“What are you up to today?” Liam asks Louis while he’s doing his hair.

They have the day off today, and the Texan has already wasted half of it by sleeping until one p.m.

Louis shrugs, “Don’t have any plans besides not lifting or carrying anything.”

“You should hang out with us, then. We’re going to lounge by the pool all day and just chill.”

“You got a kiddie pool hidden in here somewhere, or something?” Louis mocks, pretending to search for it.

Liam snorts unattractively, “Harry has a house here in L.A., so we’re going to drive up there. You should come with us. It’s just Harry, Niall, and I.”

“I don’t think Harry would be very happy if he knew that you’re inviting people to his probably very secret L.A. home.”

Liam rolls his eyes, but before he has a chance to say anything, they hear the bus door opening and closing.

“Liam? You ready, mate?” None other than Harry himself asks loudly before spotting them, “Oh, hi, Louis! Did Liam tell you about our plans? You should join us.”

Liam doesn’t actually say “told you so”, but the expression on his face as he looks at Louis totally does.

“I didn’t bring any swim trunks on the road with me.” Louis says, frowning as he realizes that that was incredibly moronic of him. He definitely needs to buy a pair of swim trunks, because they’re going to exotic places like Brazil, and he sure as hell is not going to miss out on the chance of going for a swim there.

“Bro, we’ll be lucky if Harry wears any clothes at all. You can swim in your underwear, it’s fine.”

“Okay, sure.” Louis says, and he honestly doesn’t know if he agreed because it sounds like fun or because of Liam’s comment. He hears about Harry’s nudist tendencies nearly every goddamn day,
but he has yet to be blessed with such a heavenly sight, unfortunately.

It’s probably for the best, because Harry certainly wouldn’t be okay with some gay guy gawking at his naked body.

(You can take the boy out of Texas, but you can’t take the fucked up internalized homophobia out of the boy, apparently.)

“Well, let’s go then, boys! I need to tan the abs, yo.” Liam says, and Louis honestly wonders how someone as sweet as him can talk and dress (see: camo and golden chain) like such a douche sometimes.

“Do you even tan underneath all that body hair?” Harry asks mockingly, making Louis laugh like a banshee.

“Hey! At least I have the upper body of a real man, not a prepubescent boy like you, Styles!”

Louis snorts, “A real man! More like the upper body of a grizzly bear, but alright.”

The disgruntled slap in the arm he gets in response stings for ages, but the loud cackle and high-five he gets from Harry makes it worth it.

“Louis! Are you joining us?” Niall asks when they meet him by the car, “Didn’t feel like doing the Walk of Fame and Beverly Hills first timer trail?”

“You’ve never been to L.A.?” Liam practically yells in a surprised tone, making Louis feel a little embarrassed. Liam and Niall are obviously not as wealthy as Harry, but their job has already taken them around the world. Louis is almost a travel virgin in comparison to literally everyone he works with.

“Nah, man. I had never even been outside of Texas until less than a year ago.”

“And look at you now, travelling all over the US and soon literally every single continent. You should be proud of that, Louis.” Harry says, smiling kindly, “Would you like me to drive past a few, like, tourist attractions on the way to my house since you’ve never been to L.A. before?”

“It’s really nice of you to offer, but no, thank you. I’ve never been interested in visiting L.A. to be honest.”

“Hmm, interesting… May I ask why?” Harry asks, the red traffic light allowing the singer to actually look at Louis as he’s talking to him. Liam and Niall are quietly scrolling through their phones in the backseat, so it feels like it’s just the two of them in the car.

“I guess everything and pretty much everyone here has always seemed a bit too superficial and phony to me. Plus, I think that mentality of worshipping the rich and famous is such bullshit, you know.” Louis says, instantly cringing as he realizes that, not only does Harry fit into that category, but he also clearly likes L.A. enough to buy a house here. “No offence?”

Harry snorts, “None taken. I didn’t like Los Angeles either when I came here for the first time, actually. I felt like everyone I met back then was really self-centered and shallow, but then I started spending more time here and realized that I had just gone to all wrong places. There’s no humble way of saying this, but I can’t go clubbing in a “celebrity hotspot” and then expect a peaceful night without everyone and their mother trying to get into my pants, you know what I mean. But the thing is that there are plenty of artists and actors, and all that, who enjoy the arse-kissing, so I can’t really blame the people who, like you said, worship the rich and famous for doing what they think “we”

"..."
want. And I guess the fact that people in L.A. can be very obsessed with their bodies and their appearance may seem a bit superficial, but there’s much more beyond just botox and trying to be super skinny. A lot of emphasis is put into taking good care of your body here, but I think that that’s quite nice, actually. Things like yoga and eating your veggies are great for you, just as long as it doesn’t become an obsession and you don’t completely deny yourself a treat every once in awhile. I know people tend to scoff at the kale and Pilates culture of L.A., but there’s a lot more to it than just that. People here are usually very accepting and open-minded, and not only do they generally not discriminate based on gender or race or sexual orientation, but they even fight avidly for what I personally consider basic human rights. I feel like in Los Angeles there’s a lot of love for everyone, not just for people who look like you or who have the same sexual orientation as you. Sorry, I just babbled for ages, didn’t I? Next time I do that, just tell me to shut up because I can talk for half a century if no one stops me.”

“I don’t think you babbled at all, to be honest. Everything you said was very interesting and relevant, trust me. It’s not babbling just because you express your opinion for a longer period of time or use more words to do it. Also, if someone tells you to shut up because you’re talking a lot, then, I’m sorry, but they’re not actually interested in what you’re saying.”

“Yep, we’re definitely keeping this one.” Niall says, tapping Louis on the shoulder and making him laugh awkwardly as he realizes how overly passionate he’d gotten.

The truth is, Louis had gotten genuinely mad when Harry apologized for talking too much because he’s seen the Briton being ignored or interrupted way too many times before.

He can tell that Harry weighs his words before he says anything, which only adds to his already pretty drawn out way of speaking, but people who don’t have the patience to hear him out are total assholes.

Nobody should ever feel like they need to condense their side of the conversation to an “appropriate” duration, especially not someone who has such interesting and thought out opinions and beliefs as Harry.

Harry prattles on and on for the rest of the drive, while Louis listens avidly, taking credit for giving him that extra confidence. It’s not a one-sided conversation at all though, as Louis, Niall, and Liam all contribute to it, but he can tell that Harry isn’t restraining himself in any way.

Louis’ skin is dangerously hot even though it’s nearly September, and he can feel the energy being drained from him by the second.

The solution to his problem is right in front of him, the enticing cold water of the pool looking like an oasis at this point, but Louis is feeling a bit too insecure about his body.

He’s never really been that self-conscious before, certainly not to the point that it actually stops him from doing something he wants to do, so he doesn’t know why his brain is doing this to him now.

Liam and Harry are athletic as fuck, and although Niall is a lot more scrawny and pale than the other guys, he’s confident in a way that Louis isn’t.

It also doesn’t help that they’re all wearing proper swimwear, whereas Louis would have to strip down to his tight underwear.

Sure, he gets undressed all the time in front of the guys in the bus, but that’s just a quick change of clothes in a kind of dark environment.
So here Louis is, lying down by the pool in his t-shirt and jean shorts in eighty-degree heat like a fucking weirdo.

(It is possible that Harry’s presence is a bit more relevant to his current predicament than the other guys. Louis can’t help but want to impress him, and he doesn’t think that his body has what it takes to do that. He tries to tell himself that the reason why he feels the need to impress the singer is because he’s “famous”, but, honestly, Zac fucking Efron could be here in Harry’s place and Louis would still be cannonballing into the pool in a pair of tighty whities.)

Louis finally sees an opening after the boys get out of the pool and lie back down on their sunbeds, all three relaxing and soaking up the sun with their eyes closed. (He’s pretty sure Liam is already dozing off even though he’s barely been lying there for more than a few minutes.)

He takes off his shorts and t-shirt quickly, but quietly, choosing to use the steps into the pool instead of just jumping in to not draw attention.

Fuck, that feels so good…

Louis is instantly a hundred times more comfortable and just happier in general, the lifestyle of the rich and famous not seeming so scoff-worthy now that he’s swimming around in an infinity pool with the greatest view in front of him.

He loses track of how long he’s been in the pool for, just swimming and floating on his back with the California sunlight warming his wet skin, but there are two different instances when he gets this feeling like he’s being watched. He blames it on self-conscious paranoia when he finds all three of the boys still with their eyes closed both times.

At some point, Louis spots a pair of sunglasses underneath a sunbed on the other side of the pool, probably forgotten by either a guest or Harry himself, so he figures there’s no harm in borrowing them, tired of squinting every time he opens his eyes.

He goes back to just floating around without a worry in the world, smiling as he thinks about how much his life has changed since that fateful day when Steve walked into his diner.

Louis is so relaxed that he almost falls asleep like that, still floating on his back, but that feeling that he’s being watched returns and wakes him right up.

He glances at the boys out of the corner of his eye just to be sure, expecting to find them all still relaxing just like the two other times before.

And then he sees them.

Harry’s eyes.

Wide open.

Looking right at him.

What?

He’s so caught off-guard that he involuntarily turns his head to look at Harry properly, and watches as the singer’s eyes instantly go from open to closed.

Maybe it was a coincidence, Harry just randomly opening his eyes exactly when the Texan looked at him and then closing them again because it’s really sunny out.
Or maybe he was trying to figure out if the sunglasses Louis has on are his.

There might also have also been a bee or some other bug flying over Louis’ head and he didn’t notice it.

Well, Louis has never been told he was an odd belly-button or, like, weird nipples, or anything like that, but maybe he does and that’s what Harry was looking at.

Or maybe he just imagined the whole thing. It’s really hot today, so it seems pretty likely that his brain has been cooking for long enough for him to start hallucinating.

Yeah, that must be it.

*

Nashville, Tennessee

Louis must be a real redneck, because he thinks Nashville is the best place he’s visited so far. (L.A. and New York suck donkey dick in comparison to this place. Seriously.)

The city is lovely, the people are incredibly nice and welcoming, and it saddens him to say that the accent is a hell of a lot more charming than his Texan one. Plus, there’s a real love for music here, which Louis has come to appreciate more and more.

Sure, Louis enjoyed singing along to his playlists in the car back home, but now he’s beginning to learn to really appreciate music, from the geniality of certain riffs to the meaning of the lyrics, and Harry’s the one to blame for that.

When the singer found out Louis couldn’t name a single Rolling Stones song, he made him a playlist with his absolute favorite tracks and the classics that he felt like everyone should listen to at least once.

Trying to copy the playlist onto his beaten, cheap phone had been a bit of a struggle, but Louis is really happy they managed to do it, because there isn’t a single day that goes by that he doesn’t listen to that darn playlist.

They’ve only been here in Nashville for a little over six hours, but it’s enough for Louis to know that he definitely wants to come back to this place one day, especially after trying the food at the barbecue joint where he has lunch with Liam, Niall, and Steve.

He buys a pulled pork sandwich before he leaves to take back to the venue for Harry, knowing that when he’s done with his interview he’ll be starving and won’t have enough time for a proper meal before the radio thing he has afterwards. Technically, Louis knows that all the Briton has to do is say “I’m hungry” and, like, thirty people will sprint down the street to get him some food, but that doesn’t mean he can’t be considerate and a good friend.

Harry will definitely appreciate the gesture.

He sneaks into Harry’s dressing room to drop off the sandwich, having been told by Paul that the recorded part of the interview has already finished and the journalist is just chitchatting with him.

The singer is sitting on the black couch in the back of the room, talking to a man who Louis guesses is the interviewer.

He holds up the sandwich when Harry notices his presence so that he’ll know it’s for him, and he’s
just putting it down on the table next to the dozens of candles that are always decorating his dressing rooms when he hears the journalist asking Harry if he’s “going to try to meet a Southern Belle during or after the show”.

“Oh, Southern Belles do amuse me greatly.” Harry says, looking straight at Louis and even having the nerve to wink at him, before addressing the journalist again, “We’re not even going to be here a full day, unfortunately, so no, I’m not. I’m sure there are a lot of lovely people here in Nashville, though.”

Louis is not proud to say that he blushes after Harry’s comment, hopefully not very visibly, and he gives him the finger before leaving the room.

This isn’t the first time Louis has seen Harry weasel his way out of answering a question about women, and that combined with the fact that he always uses gender-neutral pronouns is making him more curious than it should.

As a matter of fact, he doesn’t remember Harry ever explicitly saying anything that would leave no room for doubt as to whether or not he’s straight, even in private.

In a weaker moment that Louis is very, very ashamed of, he’d even googled it, but it seems that the Internet is just as clueless as he is.

There are a lot of gay rumors surrounding Harry, and he’s apparently never denied it in any way.

He’s never confirmed that he isn’t straight either, though.

The fact that he’s never been photographed kissing or doing anything “romantic” with anyone only adds to the speculation, since there’s no “evidence” to support either side of the argument.

The thing is, Louis isn’t sure if he’s hoping Harry is straight or hoping he’s not.

He’s come to accept that he has a small, harmless crush on him – who wouldn’t have a thing for someone who’s truly beautiful on the inside and on the outside – so Harry being gay, or at least not completely straight would definitely please that small part of Louis.

But, if he were straight, Louis would know for a fact that there isn’t even the smallest chance of him actually dating Harry, so his stupid dumb heart wouldn’t keep hoping that the Briton might be interested in him.

*

Las Vegas, Nevada

Louis is on his way back to the stage after a much needed bathroom break – note to self: next time Steve suggests they get Taco Bell at two a.m., he’s going to say fuck no - when he sees a girl in black jeans and a jean jacket going into Harry’s dressing room.

“Excuse me! Hey, miss?” Louis says, running to catch up with the girl before she can do something crazy, “Do you have permission to be in here, let alone sneaking into Harry’s dressing room?”

The girl doesn’t seem nearly as fazed as she should be considering that she just got caught red-handed, calmly rummaging through her purse instead. Louis will never get over how little self-awareness these stalker type fans seem to have.

“I’m sure I put the bloody I.D. tag in here somewhere, but I’m Gemma… Gemma Styles?”
Oh, shit. Louis definitely recognizes Gemma now that he’s really looking at her. Not only does she look a lot like Harry, but Louis has also seen her in the photos that the singer keeps in his bus. Jesus Christ.

“Of course. Shit, I’m sorry. I totally recognize you from Harry’s photos now; you don’t need to show me anything. He did mention you’d be flying in today, so I should have made the association - my bad. I guess I’ve just heard too many weird stories about fans doing crazy shit to try to meet Harry and got paranoid thinking you were going to hide inside a trash can like that other girl, or something.”

“How many times have you heard that bin story? Or, trash can story, I guess… Like, be honest. I feel like Harry tells it literally on a daily basis.”

“Well, considering that I almost tackled you to the ground just now because I thought you were a crazed fan, I feel like I need to redeem myself, so I’ll be completely honest. I’ve heard it many, many times, but it’s still lagging behind the I used to be a baker story.”

Gemma looks so similar to Harry when she laughs, it’s almost unsettling, “You’re a wise man, Louis. Wow, that was really creepy, wasn’t it? I figured there was no way there was another new roadie with a Southern accent, so you had to be Louis.”

Jesus, does Harry really go into so much detail about the crew that his sister knows their names and, well, accents too, apparently? He knows the singer sees the crew as a second family, but this seems a bit extreme.

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“Does Harry really talk about the crew that much?”

Before Gemma can answer, the subject of their conversation walks right up to them, almost as if he could feel they were talking about him, “Hi, Louis. What’s going on, Gemma?”

“Louis here was trying to figure out how I recognized him and knew his name just based on your description of him. Yes, Louis, Harry does talk about the crew a lot. As a matter of fact, sometimes it feels like he talks about nothing else besides, you know, the crew.”

Now, Louis is an older sibling too, so he knows exactly what Gemma is doing.

He recognizes both Gemma’s fake innocent tone and Harry’s murderous look. It’s a scenario that he’s been in a million times before, and he’s got the scars to prove it. (His sisters don’t have nails, they have fucking claws, honest to god.)

Gemma is clearly trying to pass off an embarrassing jab at Harry as a harmless comment, just as Louis does to his sisters all the time. He just doesn’t understand what the dig is or why that statement would embarrass Harry this much.

It’s not his place to figure it out, though, so he leaves it be. If either Gemma or Harry wanted him to know, they would have told him point blank.

It’s interesting, though. In all the time he’s known Harry – granted it hasn’t been that long – he’d never actually seen him proper embarrassed about anything before, so whatever secret Gemma was hinting at, it’s probably something big.

“What are you doing tonight, Louis?” Gemma asks, finally easing off her brother.

“Well, I heard Henry Stiles, or Styles, or whatever his name is, is in town, so I might be at his show tonight. Anything’s possible, really.”
Louis is rewarded with that ridiculous hyena laugh that he sometimes manages to pull out of Harry, “What a coincidence! I’m going to that show, so I guess we might run into each other there. If I do see you at Henry Stiles’ show, then I guess I’ll have no choice but to invite you to go out with us afterwards.”

“Partying in Vegas? You think my church-going, moonshine-fueled body can handle that?”

“If you can handle moonshine, then you can survive Vegas.” Gemma says, scrunching her nose.

“We’ll take care of you, don’t worry. You’ll come back to the bus alive and well, pinky promise.”

“You’re mouth may be saying pinky promise, but your pinkies are not!” Louis jokes, making Harry roll his eyes and groan. The singer does stick his pinky up, though.

Louis tries not to think about how big Harry’s pinky is in comparison to his - or his hands in general - he really does. He fails miserably, though.

“Have you ever been to a club like this before?” Harry asks Louis once they’ve walked past the mayhem and found a quieter area by the bar.

Louis snorts loudly, regretting it immediately, “This is the first club I’ve been to. Ever. The nearest club back home was many, many miles away, and I started working as a roadie pretty soon after turning twenty-one anyways.”

“Really? Wow! Well, you sure are doing life right, Louis Tomlinson, if your first time at a club is a place like this. That calls for tequila shots!” Harry says, walking up to the bartender and opening a tab for the eight of them – Harry, Louis, Gemma, Liam, Niall, Harry’s guitarist and drummer, Mitch and Sarah, and his bodyguard, Alberto.

Louis accepts the shot he’s given, knowing better than to demand to pay for his own drinks in a place like this, and waits for the rest of the folks to have their shots lined up so that they can take them together.

“To Vegas, baby!” Niall yells, drawing the attention of literally everyone in the same area as them, which Louis is sure Harry does not appreciate.

Louis had been hoping that the fancy tequila they’d been served wouldn’t be as bad as what he’s had before, but it’s equally as nasty regardless of the price tag, burning all the way down and leaving a horrible taste in his mouth.

“Well, since Niall stole the toast from me, we’re going to have to get more shots.” Harry says, ordering another round even though Louis is still sucking on his lime wedge with a sour look on his face.

“To Louis’ first time clubbing!” Harry toasts, making Louis groan and hide his face behind his hands.

“Wait, you’ve never been clubbing before?” Niall asks, looking like somebody just told him Louis had never fucking blinked, or something. “Okay, we’re doing this right! We’re going to get you hammered and find you a fine-looking lady to bone. Or a guy, of course; whichever you prefer.”

Before Louis can start panicking and stammering out a not-so-well-thought-out answer, Harry intervenes, “Can we just fucking drink these shots now?”

And they sure as hell do drink the damn shots. (And then they drink two or three more afterwards.)
At some point, finally accepting that Louis genuinely doesn’t want to hook up with anyone, Niall disappears after finding a fine-looking lady for himself instead.

Liam taps out early because homeboy can’t handle his liquor very well, taking an exhausted Gemma with him.

Mitch and Sarah announced that they were going to dance the night away right after the third shot, and Louis hasn’t seen them since, presumably because they’re doing just that.

And then there’s only Louis and Harry left, and as lame as it may sound, they talk. A lot. They also dance for a while at some point, a mess of uncoordinated limbs, but they mostly talk.

The club is so big that it has a quieter area, with these big couches and a beautiful view, but Harry and Louis still have to talk rather closely in order to be heard. The proximity should intimidate Louis and keep him from having such honest, serious conversations, but the shots of tequila combined with the rum and coke in his hand don’t allow that to happen.

“You’re so, so interesting, Louis.” Harry says after Louis tells him the story of how Steve walked into the diner he worked at to get a burger and Louis impulsively took off with him.

“I don’t think you were listening; I literally had the most boring life ever before that.” Louis argues, knowing that there are rocks on the ground with better stories to tell.

“No, I’m saying that you’re interesting, not your life. I mean, your life is interesting too, way more than you think, actually, but what I meant was that I know plenty of people who’ve lived crazy lives and have lots of amazing stories to tell, but they’re not half as interesting as you are. It’s your wonderful brain that makes you interesting, not your life experience. I mean, having the courage to leave the only life you had ever known just like that is… inspiring.”

Louis has received compliments before, of course, but none of them were even on the same galaxy as this one.

Pretty much everyone else’s reaction upon hearing “his story” is to call him crazy – not in an offensive way in the majority of cases, of course – but here Harry is, calling him courageous, inspiring.

Every so often, Louis starts feeling guilty for practically running away, leaving his whole life behind, but Harry has put such a positive spin on it. Maybe he didn’t run away from his problems after all; maybe he was running towards something. Something meaningful. Something that was bigger than what his small town had to offer.

*

Houston, Texas

Louis is sweating like a sinner in church as he carries way more shit than he can handle when Harry walks up to him, “Paul told me that he gave you tickets for your sisters to come to the show tomorrow in Dallas.”

Louis instinctively sets everything down, his eyes twice their normal size as he starts to panic, “Oh, I thought we were allowed to do that. I’ll give them back, don’t worry. I’m sorry. It won’t happen again.”

“Louis,” Harry stops him, gently grabbing his fear-driven, flailing arm, “everyone working in this tour can request tickets. I didn’t mean to make it sound like you did something wrong; I just wanted
to say that I’m happy they’re coming to the show and that you’re going to get to see them. Also, I’d really like to meet them, if that’s okay?”

Louis snorts unattractively, “You do know you’re, like, the star of the show, right? Everyone should be bending over backwards to meet you, not the other way around.”

Harry tsks, “It would be an honor to meet you sisters. I’ll ask Paul to give them backstage passes. Are Ernie and Doris not coming?”

Louis pouts, “Don’t remind me. No, I don’t get to see the babies. It is a concert after all, plus it wouldn’t be fair for Lottie and Fizzy to be stuck babysitting instead of fully enjoying themselves.”

“That’s not a good enough reason for you not to see your baby siblings. I’m sure we can find someone who can keep them entertained backstage during the show. As a matter of fact, I fully expect to have a ridiculous amount of volunteers when they see how cute and adorable Ernest and Doris are.”

“Are you sure? I mean, I’m already abusing the system by getting four free tickets; I can’t just ask someone to watch the twins.”

“Louis, everyone gets free tickets, so you’re absolutely not abusing the system; it’s just the way we do things around here. Secondly, you won’t be asking anyone to watch the babies - I will find someone, don’t worry about it.”

“Thank you, H. Really, I just- thank you.”

“You don’t need to thank me, honestly. I’m just happy knowing that you get to see your siblings, all of them, and I’m really excited to meet them.”

Life is really testing Louis’ patience, putting such a wonderful, beautiful guy right in front of him, but so, so out of reach.

* 

Dallas, Texas

Louis puts some extra thought into his outfit knowing that his sisters and baby brother are coming today.

It’s not like he feels that he needs to impress them, but he really wants them to “recognize” him, and not think that he’s become some wild creature roaming around from place to place.

Most of all, he wants them to not worry about him and to know that, although his life is kind of insane, he’s not. (Or not yet, at least.)

The drive from Levelland to Dallas is pretty long, and the fact that two of the passengers are two years old sure isn’t going to make them get here any faster, so Louis isn’t expecting his siblings to arrive any time soon, unfortunately.

He entertains himself in the meantime by hanging out with Harry, who somehow manages to talk Louis into playing fucking Scrabble, of all games, with him.

Not only is the game boring as fuck, especially when he’s restlessly waiting for his siblings, but Harry is ridiculously good at it, so much so that Louis starts to wonder if he’s a middle-aged lady reincarnated in the body of a rock star.
Harry looks so damn delighted when he wins by a gazillion points though, that he can’t even find even a hint of annoyance inside himself.

Lottie drives into the parking lot next to the arena just after three, and Louis can’t help but tear up when he sees almost all of his favorite people inside the run-down pickup truck.

As much as he loves his current life, he used spend literally everyday with his family before this whole roadie thing happened, so it’s definitely really, really hard for him to go from that to barely ever seeing them.

Harry’s tour is going to last almost a whole year, and even though there are going to be a few breaks here and there, he doesn’t know if he’ll ever be able to afford the plane ticket home.

Taking his siblings around the venue and the buses, and introducing them to everyone is great, but also kind of weird, like two completely separate parts of his life are suddenly colliding.

Lottie gets a lot of compliments, and although Louis knows the guys are mostly messing with him, he still can’t help but go into big brother mode and chase them off with murdering looks. Even freaking Liam puts on a charming act, making Louis grumble and huff despite knowing for a fact that he’s so stuck on some girl back home, he doesn’t have eyes for anyone else.

Louis ends up not having enough time to take the girls and his favorite boy to meet Harry before he’s needed, but he shoots the singer a text promising that, if he’s up for it, he’ll introduce them after the show.

Harry’s texts “yayyy” back almost instantaneously, and he can’t help but melt at the singer’s enthusiasm.

To be fair, Louis talks about his family all the time, so Harry probably feels like he already knows them, but still, it’s incredibly endearing. (Lord only knows how much it makes him want to kiss the lights out of Harry.)

Louis has never been worse at doing his job than today.

He’s happy because his siblings are here, excited because it’s their very first concert, especially knowing how fucking amazing it’s going to be, and nervous about his sisters and brother meeting Harry.

He just really, really wants them to all like each other.

Harry has quickly become one of Louis’ favorite people, so he wants him to get along with his babies. (Yes, all of them are still babies, regardless of whether or not they can drive now, and shit.)

Plus, Louis’ unpredictability is definitely a family trait, so he’s kind of scared that one of his sisters will suddenly decide to share an embarrassing story about him with Harry.

Harry’s performance is as amazing as always, and Louis’ sisters sure seem to agree, if how they keep almost yelling about their favorite parts is anything to go by.

He almost feels bad for ruining them. There’s no way they’ll ever see another artist live who’s better than Harry, guaranteed.

The girls wear their backstage passes proudly around their necks even though no one would stop them when they’re with Louis.
(He’s proud to say that he’s on a first name basis with everyone, from the merchandise manager to Harry’s personal bodyguard. He even likes to think he’s pretty well liked within the crew, and the fact that he’s been relieved from having to work at all after the show – without Harry’s interference – only adds more strength to that possibility.)

Harry and Louis’ sisters and brother get on like a house on fire.

The singer has a deep discussion with Fizzy about social justice, laughs at all the older twins’ jokes, and even offers Lottie a job if she does end up wanting to pursue a career in beauty.

It’s the sight of Harry sitting down on the ground to play with Doris and Ernest and making them laugh their beautiful, baby heads off that almost gives Louis respiratory issues, though.

There’s absolutely nothing Louis loves more in the world than watching someone give every single amazing, smart, beautiful member of his family the appreciation they deserve.

“You two are sleeping together, I know it.” Lottie says as soon as they’re out of the venue, making Louis trip over his own feet. Their sisters are walking much further ahead, thank god, Fizzy and Daisy carrying Ernest and Doris, respectively, while Phoebe skips and twirls by their side.

“What? Are you insane? I’m not sleeping with Harry!” Louis denies quickly, the incredibly high-pitched tone showing how dumbfounded he is.

“Harry isn’t even the last guy you introduced us to, you know. We ran into at least three other dudes after leaving his dressing room, and yet you knew exactly who I was talking about. That’s quite suspicious, wouldn’t you say, Louis?”

“Okay, I see your point, but you couldn’t be more wrong. He’s really damn attractive, so I think that the fact that I have a silly little puppy dog crush on him is justifiable. It doesn’t actually mean anything, though, and there’s absolutely nothing going on between us.” Louis confesses, feeling instantly relieved, to be honest, as this is the first time he’s told anyone about his stupid cliché crush on the cool rock star.

Lottie looks at him very intently, and Louis knows his sister well enough to know that she’s trying to read him and see if he’s telling the truth, “I believe you when you say that you aren’t sleeping together. But that bit about your crush on Harry is absolute bullshit. I know it’s not true because God wired you wrong when he made you, and you’re not superficial like the rest of us. You don’t have crushes on attractive people; it’s the guys who help the little old ladies cross the street and who are good with kids that always catch your eye. You like him for who he is, not what he looks like, and if he doesn’t appreciate that - especially considering what he does for a living – then he’s really dumb.”

“Well, it doesn’t matter anyway because nothing is ever going to happen. Harry’s, well, Harry Styles, and I’m just a silly roadie who jumped for joy at the promise of an adventure. He can do a lot better than someone like me. Plus, he might actually be straight, for all I know.”

Lottie tsks, “Okay, first of all, I’ve never heard anything so disrespectful in my entire life. I’m offended on your behalf. You’re incredibly funny and sweet and loyal, and you inherited those family good-looking genes – I should know, I got them too. Secondly, you’re being really unfair to Harry. He doesn’t seem like the type to think you’re beneath him, at all. I may not know him well, but you do, and if you like him, then that means he must be pretty great. I trust your judgment, and I know you’d never have feelings for an arrogant jerk. Nevertheless - and I know you think nothing’s going to happen between you two - I still want you to promise me that you won’t let him treat you like shit or break your heart.”
“Lottie…” Louis sighs, knowing that his sister is making a big deal out of nothing.

“Promise me, Louis William Tomlinson, or I will make your life a living hell!” Lottie threatens, and Louis knows better than to not take her seriously. She once spent an entire day following him around, banging pots as payback for him accidentally stepping on her hairbrush and breaking it. She even followed him to his friend’s house, for fuck’s sake.

“Okay, I promise. And you better be following your own advice, Charlotte. Not that you’re old enough to be dating, but still…”

“Don’t worry, big bro. I’d rather hit myself in the face with a shovel than date someone who doesn’t fully realize that I’m a catch.”

Yeah, Louis’ family is the fucking best…

*

*Toronto, Canada*

Louis is so excited he could shit everywhere.

He’s not going to, obviously, but he could.

The next leg of the tour is the European leg, so Louis is flying to fucking Brussels tomorrow.

Holy mother of god! Louis Tomlinson is going to Europe as a part of his super cool job. In your face, middle school Geography teacher who said he’d never amount to anything! Hope you sit on a fucking cactus, you piece of shit!

He knows he should be trying to get as much sleep as possible because of how exhausting traveling and jetlag supposedly are, and all that, but he’s just too happy and he wants someone else to know just how exciting this is for him.

He gets out of his bunk with an obvious destination in mind: Harry’s bus. Luckily, they’re parked overnight waiting for their flight, so he can just easily walk there.

He tries to tell himself that he picked Harry to share his enthusiasm with because a) he’s the reason why Louis is even going to Europe and b) he knows for a fact Liam is asleep because he could hear him snoring like a fucking ogre, but the truth is that he doesn’t just want to share his happiness with anyone - he wants it to be Harry.

Louis knocks softly on the bus door, knowing that they keep it locked for obvious security reasons and not wanting to wake either Harry or Alberto up if they’re asleep.

It’s Alberto who lets him into the bus, “Oh, hey, Louis.”

“Hey, man. Is Harry still awake?”

“I’m not sure, actually, but you can go check if you want to. Worst case scenario, he’ll be sleeping over the covers and you’ll get a full frontal.”

Yeah, what bad luck that would be… Louis definitely wouldn’t like that at all, and he certainly wouldn’t bring that memory back every time he jerked off.

“I’ll take my chances.” Louis jokes, walking towards the back of the bus.
Harry’s bus, unlike the others, only has two bunk beds, but it has a proper bedroom in the back, with a real bed and a door, and everything, which is a major luxury on tour. It’s not exactly the glamorous life of the rich and famous, though, but it’s better than everybody else’s living conditions. (Not that Louis is complaining, honestly.)

Once upon a time, Louis had wondered why Harry didn’t travel by plane and stay at hotels like other huge artists like him do, but now that he truly does know him, he knows that the Briton would find it way too lonely.

Harry has made it clear many a time that he really does see the crew as family, and he genuinely believes he’s doing this music thing with them.

As soon as Louis knocks softly on the bedroom door, he knows something’s wrong.

Harry’s quiet “yes?” could easily be mistaken for someone with severe allergies, that’s how congested he sounds.

“Louis?” Harry says when Louis opens the door, obviously not expecting him. He’s sitting on his bed, his eyes pitifully red and swollen.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Louis asks in a sweet, soft tone, not wanting to spook Harry or upset him further.

Harry laughs self-deprecatingly, “It’s nothing, really. I’m just being too sensitive, as per usual.”

“Oh, so here’s what we’re going to do. If you want me to go, then I will. Otherwise, I’m going to lay down next you, and if you ever feel like talking, go for it. If not, then at least you’re not alone. I’ll be right next to you.”

Harry doesn’t say anything, but does he lie down on his back, so Louis takes it as his cue to lie next to him.

It’s really, really quiet for quite a long time, the only sounds heard in the room being their inhales and exhales, which match up at some point.

“Oh, somebody tweeted me.”

“Okay.” Louis answers simply, wanting Harry to know that he’s listening, but he’s going to let him explain at his own speed.

“He thanked me for providing a safe space for people like him. Gay people. He said that he’s always felt accepted in my “fandom” because I defend the male fans when interviewers ask if it’s weird for me to know that they’re into me. He also wanted me to know that it always makes him feel happier and prouder of who he is when I show my support for the LGBTQ+ community. I apparently played a huge role in his self-acceptance and his coming out process, and I really, really don’t fucking deserve any of the nice things he said.”

Oh god, where is this going? Somewhere that is definitely way too close to home for Louis, that’s for sure.

“I-” Harry takes a shaky breath, “I could be doing so much more… I don’t just accept them, I am them. If I were honest and upfront about being gay, I could make a much bigger difference in these people’s lives. But I’m a bloody coward. I like my career as is, and I like being able to tour in certain countries and not be afraid, and I’m always so scared that I’ll lose everything I worked for if I come out, which I’ve been told will happen a million times before. I try to tell myself everyday that it’s not
lying if I never deny it, just something that I’m keeping private. But that’s not true at all. We still live in a society where heterosexuality is assumed by default, and, although there are rumors about my sexual orientation, I’ll always be presumed straight until proof of the contrary. This guy made it sound like I was just about the best person alive for going out of my way to show that I accept and support the LGBTQ+ community, but when I’m waving those rainbow flags around on stage, I’m doing it mostly because they represent me. It’s so fucked up. Everything is so fucked up. I’m absolutely not ashamed of being gay and I don’t necessarily want to keep my sexual orientation a secret, but I don’t want to publicly come out and deal with the consequences either. Those two things can’t really peacefully coexist, you know; it’s either one or the other, and right now I’m letting fear win. How can I go out there everyday and be a good role model when I’ve got such a fucked up relationship with my own “label”?

“You’re making it sound like it’s so easy to be out and like being in the closet automatically means that you’re weak, which is not true at all, especially when you feel like you’ve got a lot to lose. I don’t know what being in the spotlight is like, obviously, but I can imagine that it’s not easy to feel like the whole world is watching you, so it’s okay for you to be scared and to not be ready to share such a huge thing with everyone and their mother. So, yeah, like I said, I don’t actually understand everything you go through on a daily basis, but I do know what it’s like to be in the closet. I’m gay too, which you wouldn’t fucking know because I’ve never told you. Or maybe you guessed it or something, whatever. And, like, when I was growing up, I always dreamt about living in a place where being gay wasn’t a huge scandal or, for a lot of folks, a fucking abomination. I used to tell myself that if I ever left my hometown, I’d be out and proud, and shouting from the rooftops that I’m gay and I’m not ashamed of it. And then I did get out of that place, but I’m still keeping it a fucking secret. You probably don’t even remember this, but when we were in Vegas, Niall said he’d find me a girl or a guy, or whichever I preferred, and I was just handed a chance to casually mention my sexual orientation on a silver platter. And I wanted to take it, I really did. I wanted to answer that I like guys, but I choked, big time. I just couldn’t fucking say it, not even to you guys with whom I honestly do feel ridiculously comfortable with. I’m not in Levelland anymore, and I’m surrounded by some great, accepting people, so I literally have no excuse to still be in the closet. I’ve got nothing to lose and I’m still not out, so if you’re a coward, then I’m a much bigger coward.”

Harry turns his head to look Louis straight in the eye, and it’s the first time that they’ve made eye contact beyond just stolen glances since the beginning of this incredibly intense conversation, “I don’t think you’re a coward at all, Louis.”

“I don’t think you’re a coward either, Harry.”

God, Louis feels like he’s just ran a goddamn marathon.

It’s a great feeling to be honest about who he is, but it also demands so much of him and just sucks away all his energy.

The emotional exhaustion hits him straight away - so much so that he struggles to keep his eyes open.

He doesn’t even remember anything past those intense minutes of eye contact, when teary eyes stared into red eyes, and no more words were needed.

When Alberto wakes them up the next morning to go to the airport, their hearts are too light for either of them to be embarrassed about being caught sleeping in the same bed.

Louis had been lucky enough to always feel accepted and loved when he came out to other people, but with Harry he feels understood in a way that he never thought would be possible.
Harry isn’t someone who “loves him just the same as before” or who “has been in the closet too, and, trust me, it gets better”.

Harry understands that fucked up internal mess that is not wanting to hide who he is, and yet being scared of everyone actually finding out.

He gets that there’s a big difference between accepting that you’re gay, and actually being in a position or a mental readiness to be comfortable with the world knowing it.

There was a loneliness inside Louis’ soul that he wasn’t even aware of, and his conversation with Harry absolutely obliterated it, because now he knows that there’s at least one person in the world who feels the same way as he does.

Harry understands his internal struggles like no one else had ever before, and that is comforting beyond words.

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Amsterdam, Netherlands

The sky is a beautiful shade of blue, the water runs so peacefully that it almost sounds like it’s singing, the people on the street are spreading love and harmony with the sweetness of their tone, and Louis is definitely high.

When in Rome and all that, you know…

The fact that Louis is with Harry wouldn’t surprise any member of the crew at this point.

Ever since that conversation in Harry’s bed they’ve been inseparable. He feels like he can be one hundred percent true to himself when he’s with the singer, so that’s the reason why he’s been spending so much time with him.

That, and the fact that he’s got a huge boner for him, of course.

Louis had gone to one of the famous Amsterdam coffeeshops with Steve earlier today after taking a nice little scenic walk around the city, and he’d bought two joints and a pot brownie to share with Harry.

It really is a pity that just going outside can be a hassle for Harry, because Louis literally daydreams about walking around these beautiful historical places with him.

It’s not the occasional picture that’s annoying for the Briton – he honestly seems to enjoy meeting his fans, actually - but the fact that when update accounts tweet his location, people show up in dozens, and, sometimes, even hundreds.

It really bothers Louis when he sees Harry being treated like he’s not even human, just a freak on display, with everyone shoving their phones in his face and chasing him like lunatics. Harry is a fucking human being and he deserves to be treated with respect just like everyone else.

Not everyone is that rude and intrusive, of course, but he still likes to keep his chances of getting mobbed at the bare minimum.

Luckily, Harry has nice friends like Louis who are willing to bring the local delicacies to him. (Stroopwafel and weed, in this particular case.)
They’re technically watching Netflix and just chilling – uh, not like that – but Harry keeps scribbling on his notebook while Louis sings “Ice Ice Baby” under his breath.

At some point, Harry puts the notebook down and they strike the weirdest, deepest, most random conversations.

Lord only knows how or why, but they end up talking about weird stories that have been written about Harry, and Louis nearly pisses himself laughing when he finds out that he was once on the cover of a magazine for supposedly having an affair with Obama, of all people.

“You should be so lucky… Obama’s cool as fuck.” Louis says, giggling like he had been doing pretty much since they lit that first joint.

“Oh, I’m proud of that rumor, trust me. He’s definitely my favorite out of everyone I’ve been linked to.”

“I can’t believe there are people out there who genuinely think that just because a magazine says a celebrity is dating someone, then it must be true. Have they ever actually gotten it right with you?”

Harry snorts “Can’t get it right when there’s nothing to get right.”

“Wha’?” Louis mumbles, his brain too wonderfully hazy to even attempt to decipher what Harry just said.

“I’ve- uh…I’ve never really been in a proper relationship before.” Harry says as he places his arm over his eyes, his voice doing that high-pitched, cracking thing that it always does when he’s uncomfortable or embarrassed.

“I’m the last person who would ever give you shit for that, trust me. Levelland isn’t exactly brimming with dating opportunities for people like me. What about you? Personal preference or has life just gotten in the way?”

“I guess I just hadn’t met someone I could see myself falling in love with before…”

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Dusseldorf, Germany

“We’re going to have to let you go, sadly. You’re fired, Louis.” Paul says as soon as Louis walks into Harry’s dressing room after finishing work.

“What?” Louis manages to get out, feeling his heart sink.

Harry slaps Paul in the arm, “You’re such a wanker! He believed you, you knob. Paul’s just joking, Louis, though you have indeed committed the ultimate roadie sin – you’ve stolen the spotlight from moi, the star. How dare you?”

Harry hands a very confused Louis his phone as he giggles away, showing him a tweet. There’s a photo of him walking towards the bus, and the caption reads: “I’ve officially stopped being a Harry Styles’ fan so that I can stan this hot AF roadie full time. What have we done to deserve such a beautiful angel? What is your earthly name, oh heavenly one?”

Louis snorts, messing with his fringe embarrassedly. The caption is entirely too much and a total exaggeration, but it’s also kind of really flattering.
“All my fans are, like, talking and tweeting, and shit, about you. They’ve even nicknamed you Hot Roadie. I’m afraid we’re going to have to start putting a paper bag over your head every time you walk outside, otherwise I might have no fans left before the tour is over.”

“I mean, I don’t know if that would be enough. I’ve been told that my ass is my best attribute, and that wouldn’t be covered.” Louis plays along, turning around and shaking his booty like the idiot that he is.

“Oh, I would even go as far as to say that it’s your best asset.” Harry says, looking way too pleased with his stupid pun.

“That’s it! I can’t do this anymore! I quit!” Louis says mock indignantly, pretending to storm out.

“No, come back! Our children need you! Think about our little Liam and Niall, sweetie pie.”

“I’ve never loved those little demons! They tore my vagina all the way down to my asshole coming out of me, how could I ever love them after that?”

“Oh, I’m the one who’s quitting this time. I can’t put up with you nutjobs anymore! What is wrong with you?” Paul grumbles, finally making Harry and Louis break character and laugh.

“You’re going to be so bored during the break without us to entertain you, though, don’t even try to tell me otherwise.”

“Oh! I’m glad you mentioned the break, Louis, because I forgot to tell you that I’ve talked to Jack about you sticking around, so that’s been taken care of.” Paul says, making the transition from playful to sensible tour manager in the blink of an eye.

“What?” Harry asks, understandably confused about the exchange.

“I can’t fly home for the break, so I asked Paul if it was alright for me to just stay in the bus. That way I won’t have to find accommodation or transportation to the next location after the break – Prague, right?” Louis explains, hoping that Harry will read between the lines and have the decency to not ask him why he can’t fly home.

“If you want to fly home for the break, Louis, I’ll-“ Harry starts, but Louis interrupts him straight away.

“No. No, thank you. Whatever it is you were going to say, I appreciate it, thank you, but the answer is no. Christmas is, like, a month away anyway, so I’ll be perfectly fine waiting until then. It’s not a big deal, honestly.”

Louis knows Harry means well, but he’s barely got anything besides his honor and his pride, so he always makes sure to do well by them. He doesn’t want charity, or a handout, or preferential treatment. If he can’t afford it, then he doesn’t buy it, simple as that. Plus, his contract includes transportation back home for Christmas, so he’s one hundred percent sure he’ll be seeing his family soon.

“Come with me to London, then. I’m taking a private jet from Berlin, so you won’t need a ticket or anything like that, and I have a spare room you can sleep in, so that’s sorted as well. I absolutely love London – it would still be my favorite city even if I hadn’t spent my childhood there – so it’d be fun to show it off to someone who’s never been.”

Hmmm, staying in that stinky bus alone or spending two-weeks with Harry at his house in London? What a tough decision…
“Are you sure I won’t be a bother?”

“Of course not. I wouldn’t have invited you otherwise, would I?”

“Then, sure, yeah. Sounds good.”

Louis absolutely knows he’s made the right decision when Harry smiles so widely, his dimples are 
fucking abysses.

Yeah, his plans for the break have definitely improved.

*

_Berlin, Germany_

“Howdy, cowboy!” Harry says in chipper voice when Louis finally makes it into the Range Rover 
that’s taking them to airport. (Louis’ hair wasn’t cooperating this morning, so his minor lateness is 
justified, okay?)

After having put up with Louis mocking his posh accent for ages, Harry had finally started paying 
him back in the same coin. The thing is that his Texan accent is so bad, he’s only fueling Louis’ 
teasing further by supplying him with more material to be mocked.

“How have you even heard me talk at all? I feel like you should see your doctor about your complete 
inability to copy my accent even though you hear it every goddamn day.”

“My impression of you isn’t that bad.” Harry pouts, “Alberto, remove Louis from this car. He can 
walk to the airport instead.”

“Stop fighting, kids. Dad’s got a headache.” Alberto jokingly says, making Harry and Louis snicker.

“Oh, daddy…” Harry says in a sultry voice, almost turning Louis on until he ruins it by accidentally 
bumping his head against the headrest of Alberto’s seat when he tries to jokingly lick his face.

“I have a feeling that’s exactly what all your attempts at seduction look like.” Louis jokes, laughing 
so hard, he starts wheezing.

“Hey! I’ll have you know that multiple articles have called me ‘sex on legs’ this year alone.”

“That’s… That’s kind of degrading, isn’t it? Almost like they’re saying your whole being can be 
reduced to just sex…” Louis replies seriously, furrowing his brow.

Harry looks at him and tilts his head to the side, his surprise morphing into something akin to 
fondness, “I guess it kinda is, isn’t it?”

*

_London, United Kingdom_

Louis is exhausted; in a great mood, but exhausted.

He’d started off the day in a great way, with Harry making a divine full English breakfast or a fry-up, 
as the singer calls it.

They’d taken their plates out to the patio, even though it was really fucking cold, cuddling up under 
blankets as they ate and sang along to the Spice Girls album Louis had found proudly on display in
the living room.

It was a packed day after that. Harry had taken him to see the London Eye, Big Ben, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Buckingham Palace, and Westminster Abbey, giving Louis the full tourist experience.

Louis had the most British food possible for lunch, fish and chips with mushy peas, though he’d refused to pour vinegar over it – ew, what the bloody hell is wrong with you, England?

Despite his attempt at dressing down to avoid being recognized – a gray, baggy sweater from, like, a donut place or something, and a beanie - Harry still had to stop for a few photos here and there, though, admittedly, tourist attractions are not the best place to fly under the radar.

And now they’re finally back home – uh, Harry’s house, he means - looking worse-for-wear, but pretty fucking smiley.

Neither of them can be bothered to get up and make dinner, too busy keeping their legs tangled together on top of the same ottoman even though there’s another exactly like it right by Harry, so they order Indian food, which the singer claims is actually a deep-rooted British tradition.

They end up talking about their “gayness” over dinner somehow, from the crushes they had as kids to the last person they had come out to.

Somewhere along the way, they realize their stories have more in common than they could have ever predicted, especially how they both realized and admitted to themselves that they were gay.

It also becomes clear that neither of them had downplayed it when they talked about their previous relationships, Harry having had two small flings and Louis only one - which, and he doesn’t tell Harry this, didn’t even entail actual sex, just a few handjobs and blowjobs here and there.

Louis isn’t really that ashamed of technically still being a virgin, given that he didn’t exactly grow up in the most propitious environment.

Hell, it’s not even like Louis is the exception back home; the majority of people his age are either still virgins or are already married, since the consensus is usually to wait until marriage to have sex.

He doesn’t want Harry to think he’s a prude who’s too innocent to even have a dirty thought, though, mostly because he’s dumb enough to actually entertain the idea that one day Harry might see him as more than a friend.

*

London, United Kingdom

When Louis opens a single eye to check the time on his phone, he’s not even that surprised when he sees that it’s nearly one in the afternoon considering how sluggish his body feels. They’d stayed up really late last night watching movies and talking, so it’s no wonder that he managed to sleep half the day away.

It takes a few tries, but he manages to roll out of bed and into the shower eventually, still taking the time to have a nice lazy wank. (He learned this word yesterday, and it’s his new favorite. How the Brits can make even masturbating sound classy is a mystery to him.)

Harry had spent ages in the kitchen yesterday making a delicious roast beef with, like, five hundred different side dishes, but today he has clearly taken a well-deserved break from being the designated chef, as Louis can spot paper bags on the kitchen table.
Louis exclaims as soon as he gets close enough to recognize the logo. “I feel like I should be offended by the fact that you liked Nando’s better than anything I’ve cooked for you so far.” He hears Harry say from behind him, turning to see the singer walk into the kitchen wearing only a pair of basketball shorts that are hanging way too low on his hips in Louis’ opinion. (Not that he’s complaining, of course.)

“That’s not true at all, and you know it. I guess I just- This is going to sound so lame, but I’ve kind of fallen in love with London? So, I guess I just get overly excited about everything that I feel kind of represents it – not that freaking chicken represents London, obviously.”

Harry’s lips quirk upwards into a small smile, “You really like London, don’t you?”

“I really do... It’s kind of silly, especially considering that I’ve only been here for, like, a week, but I could actually see myself living here. There’s just something about London that makes me feel- I can’t really describe it. I guess it kind of feels like home.” Louis rolls his eyes at his own sappiness, “Ignore me, I slept in too late, and now I’m being overly emotional and just an overall mess.”

“No, that’s really lovely, Louis. I’m glad you feel that way. It makes me really happy to know that you feel at home here. That’s- wow. Maybe one day, we’ll both be living here at the same time. You know, when we’re not busy touring, and shit. I’d really like that.” Harry says, a glint in his eyes like he’s picturing it in his head. Unfortunately, Louis knows that it looks nothing like the picture in his own mind, with them waking up next to each other, maybe hearing the pitter-patter of their dog’s paws down the hallway – or, Jesus, of their kids’ feet as they run to their bedroom.

(If Louis spends the rest of the day humming Wouldn’t It be Nice, nobody needs to know why but him.)

*  

London, United Kingdom

It’s really, really quiet.

Louis has gotten used to their routine, and this is definitely abnormal.

Every morning, Louis walks down to the kitchen, says good morning to a cheerful Harry who’s always singing along to some classic rock song or another, drinks some freshly-squeezed orange juice that his god-sent friend has prepared for them, and then runs back upstairs to take a shower before they sit down to have breakfast.

It’s not even that early today, and Louis can’t hear anything as he’s walking towards the kitchen – no sizzling pan, no impromptu performances, no nothing. He’s not surprised at all when he finds it completely empty, and he almost just assumes that Harry has simply overslept.

But then he sees him as he’s walking back upstairs.

Harry is sitting on the windowsill in the living room, his eyes so intently fixed on the screen of his phone that he doesn’t even notice Louis.

“Harry? You okay?” Louis asks, startling Harry and nearly causing him to drop his phone.

Harry looks at him with the most pitiful doe-eyes, “I’m so sorry, Lou. I knew this was likely to happen, and I should have warned you, but it was so quiet for so long that I started getting too comfortable and thinking they wouldn’t talk about it at all-“
“What? What’s going on, H?” Louis asks, trying to figure out what is actually happening and why Harry is apologizing to him.

Harry hands him his phone, and Louis has a flashback to when he found out that someone had tweeted about him.

The lightness in the air and the amusement are definitely missing this time.

One look at the headline on the screen is enough for Louis to understand exactly why Harry is apologizing. According to some trashy tabloid called “The Sun”, Louis is Harry’s “new boy toy” – their words, definitely not Louis’.

The article talks about how they’ve been spotted together several times “looking intimate” all over London, featuring a couple of amateur pictures and a professional one taken on different days without them noticing it.

There’s a paragraph talking about Harry’s sexual orientation and how “the world is still wondering if he enjoys the V or the D” – which is both disgusting and belittling – but the majority of the article focuses on how “loved up” they looked.

They call him Harry’s mystery man a gazillion times, which is great because it means that they don’t know the first thing about him besides the fact that he went to fucking Waitrose with Harry.

Even that picture that was taken of Louis during tour has made it into the article, with a nice little dig at how he might be using Harry if he is, indeed, a roadie. (As if everyone who’s not a millionaire can only be interested in Harry if they’re fucking their way up to the top.)

Louis reads the entire article before saying anything, wanting to know exactly what they’re dealing with before trying to tackle it.

“Well, I can’t say I was expecting this personally, because it honestly hadn’t even crossed my mind, but it’s not a big deal, and you certainly don’t need to apologize for it. They don’t even know my name, and I’m sure much more interesting gossip is going to come along soon enough. It’s fine, really. I didn’t drop out of college on a whim and leave a mostly homophobic state to suddenly start worrying about what people think about me, the choices that I make, or who I may or may not be sleeping with. I’m not going to stop being your friend or anything like that just because these people are convinced we’re dating. I mean, unless, you’re uncomfortable with this rumor and that’s what you want?”

“No, I just- I feel really guilty about you kind of being under the spotlight now just because you dared to be seen with me. I mean, I guess they’re entitled to gossip about me, but it makes me really, really unhappy when they drag the people that I care about into it. So, yeah… To be honest, I was a lot more upset because I thought maybe you wouldn’t want to hang out with me anymore, which sounds so cringe-worthy, but it’s true. Anyway, I’ve talked to Jeff and he’s going to get a statement out, so, hopefully, that will put an end to the speculation.”

“Okay, first of all, I get that sometimes people think that by choosing to be in the spotlight you’re automatically signing away your right to privacy, but I think that’s bullshit, and they’re not entitled to anything besides what you want to share. It’s not your fault that you can’t be seen with another human being without people jumping to conclusions, and it’s certainly none of their fucking business. I’m honestly more bothered about the fact that people are taking pictures of us without our permission than the fact that they think we’re together. Also, like I said, I sure as hell am not about to stop spending time with you just because some stupid tabloid thinks we’re boning. The day that I start limiting what I do and who I choose to do it with because of other people’s opinions is the day
that I know I’ve become someone I’m not.”

Louis means every single word he tells Harry, but what he doesn’t tell him is that he understands why people would think they’re dating, beyond just the Harry-Styles-was-seen-with-another-human-being-so-they-must-be-dating stupidity.

Looking at the pictures, Louis can’t help but notice how incredibly comfortable with one another they look, in a very intimate way.

They’re smiling or laughing in nearly all of the pictures, and casually touching each other’s arms and thighs in quite a few of them. Also, at least one of them is looking at the other in every picture, and Louis is certainly relieved it’s not just a bunch of photos of him creepily staring at Harry while the singer is distracted.

Honestly, Louis would have been fooled too if he wasn’t, you know, a major character in this narrative.

He’s seen quite a few real couples and a lot of celebrity couples that didn’t have half the romantic energy as Harry and Louis seem to have in those pictures.

It took a total invasion of privacy to make Louis see how tactile and intimate their friendship really is, and he isn’t sure what that says about his perception skills.

*

**Levelland, Texas**

Tomorrow is the last day of his Christmas/New Year’s break, and Louis can’t wait to go back to work, which makes him feel understandably guilty.

Spending time with his family never gets old, it truly doesn’t, but Level-fucking-land sure did, about six hours into his break.

God, he misses being on the road and hearing the guys’ funny, crazy stories, and just fucking doing something exciting every day.

Levelland has never felt smaller and more boring than it does right now. It’s so mind numbing to be in a place that seems to be stuck in time. Louis could swear that not a single thing or person has changed in any way since the day Steve walked into his diner - with the exception of his siblings, of course, who seem to grow by the minute.

He misses the excitement of being in a new place everyday, the fun of working with an amazing, crazy crew, the relaxation of just chilling with Harry for hours.

He misses his life, his **true life**, the one he built for himself outside this place.

He wishes there was a way to live his dream that wouldn’t entail going so long without seeing his family, but as long as the choice is between Levelland and the road, he’ll always pick the road.

Levelland is too small for him, and Louis is too different for Levelland.

Louis has been living vicariously through Steve’s crazy snaps, Liam’s cheerful and **horribly** misspelled texts, and Niall’s drunk dialing, but it’s the Skype conversations with Harry that always make his day.
As soon as Harry had hinted at a video chat, Louis had run to his computer, but not before fixing his hair and making sure he didn’t have any boogers hanging out, of course.

That was only four days into the break, and they’ve skyped quite a few times since then.

(Fine... Louis knows the exact number… They’ve skyped nine times, okay?)

He misses Harry.


His Harry.

The one who doesn’t express an opinion without having really pondered over it, from politics to the best way to clean rings.

The one who cries when he hears sad stories and when he hears happy stories.

The one who donates to charity every month and doesn’t tell anyone about it.

The one who can talk about his job at a bakery as a teenager for hours, but never brags about his achievements as a musician.

The one who treats his crew like family, and his family like gods.

His Harry, with whom Louis always feels happy.

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Manchester, United Kingdom

Getting out of bed this morning was a real struggle. Louis delayed doing it over and over again, drifting in and out of sleep too many times to count.

He managed to get his ass up and in the shower after eleven a.m., knowing that he can’t miss lunch otherwise he might not have time to eat afterwards.

“Good morning, sleepyhead.” Harry jokes when Louis shows up, dropping a ridiculous amount of rice onto his plate as he smirks at Louis.

“Stop judging me, posh boy.” Louis tries to joke back. He has a huge headache though, so it comes out a bit strained.

“Are you okay, Louis? Are you sick?” Harry asks, putting his plate down and placing a hand on Louis’ forehead to check his temperature faster than the roadie can answer him.

“I’m not sick, don’t worry. Just tired.”

Harry still furrows his brow in concern, “Were you up late? Or are we overworking you?”

“I was in bed by midnight, believe it or not. I just haven’t gotten a good night’s sleep in too fucking long.” Louis says as he follows Harry to their usual table.

“Are you having trouble sleeping? I have these lavender drops that my Mum got me, and they always help me fall asleep when my sleep schedule is all messed up.”
“How well will your lavender drops fare against drilling noises?” Louis jokes, and if he weren’t so
tired, he’d laugh at Harry’s expression of confusion as he probably tries to figure out why there
would be construction noises inside the bus at night, “It’s the guys. They all snore really fucking
loudly, all night long, and I guess going home for Christmas spoiled me because now I just can’t
seem to get used to it again. I toss and turn all night long. I’ve even tried putting my headphones on,
but I can still hear them over the calmer songs, and energetic music only excites my brain more. I
might actually go insane one of these nights. That, or I’ll smother all of them with a pillow.”

“Start sleeping in my bus instead, then. Alberto only sleeps there when we stay overnight at a place
that he feels isn’t very safe, and I have my own bedroom, so you’ll have the bunk area all to yourself.
No more lost sleep because of other people snoring - problem solved!”

“Am I- Am I even allowed to do that? Move into the artist’s bus just like that?”

“Louis, I’m going to let you in on a little secret, are you ready? I’m the artist, so I can pretty much do
whatever I want. It’s kind of, uh, my show.” Harry jokes, “Plus, it’s not even an altruistic offer at all.
I get bored and lonely when I’m alone in that bus all the time, you know, so it’d be nice to have
someone around to keep me company.”

“I don’t think you’re going to be as excited about it when I start leaving my stinky socks all over
your living space, but okay, I’ll trade buses.”

“You already leave your stinky socks all over my living space.” Harry deadpans, making Louis
laugh because he knows it’s true, “You’ve even progressed to leaving underwear behind now,
apparently. I found a pair of boxer briefs that isn’t mine or Alberto’s in the bathroom yesterday, you
absolute health hazard.”

“Well, I appreciated you letting me shower there so much when I was in a rush that I just had to
leave my underwear behind as a thank you, you know, so that you and Alberto could sniff it to your
hearts’ content.”

Harry wrinkles his nose, and Louis knows him well enough to know that it’s only partially in
revulsion, but mostly in amusement, “You’re disgusting. I’m eating, you wanker. Ew. I’m already
regretting letting you move into my bus.”

“Hey, now! No take-backsies, posh boy!”

“Oh, bollocks... Guess I’m going to have to share my bus with you, then, cowboy.”

*

Milan, Italy

Milan is so, so beautiful, Louis has a hard time believing it’s a real city and not some creation of his
fertile imagination.

As soon as the bus is parked at the venue, Louis is out the door and into the city alone, too excited
about Milan to let anyone slow him down.

(Okay, fine, part of him doesn’t want to share the city with anyone other than Harry, and since the
singer was busy with interviews all day, he’s chosen to explore Milan alone.)

He’s on a tight schedule, which is not surprising considering that he’s here to work after all, but that
only means he needs to make the most out of the little time he has before having to go back.
He walks around the tourist hotspots and the small streets, takes pictures of the luxury stores to send to Lottie and buys the older twins matching key chains, stuffs his face with genuine, thin-crusted Italian pizza, and savors every lick of his gelato.

Being in a city with so much to offer, it’s not surprising that Louis gets caught up in the mesmerizing beauty of Milan and ends up being late to work.

He’s pretty sure neither Paul nor Harry would fire him, but he doesn’t want to be that person who relies on his friendships and only does half the work compared to everyone else, so he literally sprints down to the stage as soon as he flashes his credentials to the local security guy.

He can see Harry on the stage talking to Paul and another man, but he’s almost too scared to find out if he’s about to start sound check or if he’s already finished.

“Nice of you to show up, Louis.” Paul says playfully, clearly not buying Louis’ attempt to blend in with the background and pretend like he’s been here all along.

“Sorry, boss. Nothing in my neck of the woods is nearly as beautiful as literally everything here, so I got distracted and lost track of time.”

“It is quite beautiful, isn’t it?” The stranger on the stage asks, and Louis finally takes a good look at him. He’s dressed really well, and the fact that he was talking to the “star” and the tour manager suggests that he’s probably some sort of a big shot organizer or manager, or something.

“It’s amazing, really. I’m truly awestruck.”

“What is that expression? It takes one to know one? Beauty knows beauty…” The Italian man says with a confident smirk, making a smooth gesture that leaves no doubt as to what beauty he’s referring to – Louis’.

Louis is totally caught off guard, and he can feel the warmth spreading across his cheeks, much to his embarrassment. It’s not the first time someone has shown interest in Louis, and not even the first time in the last month, but this isn’t just anyone – it’s a handsome, charming man.

“Oh, uh, th-thank you.” Louis mumbles, reproaching himself internally for having no chill whatsoever.

“You’re welcome. I believe someone as beautiful as you should be told that at least one time every day. My name is Vincenzo Scutese.” The stranger introduces himself, holding his hand out confidently.

“Louis Tomlinson.” Louis says, shaking Vincenzo’s hand.

“Are you planning on finishing the professional conversation we were having about my performance here or are you going to keep drooling over my crewmembers?” Harry says suddenly, making Louis’ eyebrows climb up so high, they deserve a place in the Guinness World Records.

Louis knows Harry hates it when people he’s forced to deal with in a work setting start hitting on him and behaving completely unprofessionally, but he didn’t expect the singer to be just as touchy when it’s one of the roadies who’s at the receiving end of the attention.

To be fair, Louis hasn’t seen him all day, so it’s possible that he was already in a bad mood and Vincenzo’s unprofessionalism triggered him, or maybe he noticed Louis’ awkwardness and interpreted it as genuine discomfort.
Whatever the reason, Louis does what any smart human being should do and walks away to do his job.

They’ve just finished setting up when Vincenzo walks up to Louis, “Hello again, Louis Tomlinson. I was interrupted before I got the chance to invite you for drinks at Lacerba after the show. It’s a great place, you’ll love it.”

As much as Louis wants to do something crazy and have a one-night romance with a charming Italian man in Milan, he just can’t.

Vincenzo is tall, handsome, fashionable, and has an incredibly sexy accent, but Louis already has someone in his life that’s all four of those things - Harry.

It’s a bit of a pity, really, as Louis is sure it would have been a great story to brag about in his seventies, when he can’t even get it up anymore.

“I’m really, really flattered, I honestly am. The thing is - and this is going to sound really lame, but it’s true - I’m just looking for something else right now. I’m sorry.” Louis says, trying really hard to not offend Vincenzo or make him feel rejected.

The Italian has been straightforward, but never crass when showing his interest, and Louis is genuinely flattered.

“Okay, I understand. I hope you find what you’re looking for…” Vincenzo says with a friendly smile, and Louis watches him walk away for a few seconds before finally turning around.

Louis thinks about what could have been as he makes his way to Harry’s dressing room to wish him good luck, like he always does, but he knows he’s made the right decision.

Had he accepted Vincenzo’s invitation, he’d be leading him on, and Louis doesn’t know how far he’d actually be able to go.

He’s sure he would have never agreed to have actual, proper sex with him for one – he’s waited so long to do it, he might as well make it at least a bit special – and he doesn’t think he would have been able to get into the Italian enough to actually do anything because of his stupid feelings for Harry.

It is what it is…

“I saw you talking to that sleazy Italian guy. What did he want?” Harry says as soon as Louis walks into his dressing room, messing with his hair in front of the mirror even though he must have gotten it done less than ten minutes ago.

Sleazy Italian guy, though, Jesus. Harry sure as hell doesn’t like Vincenzo, does he?

“Yeah, uh, he wanted to invite me to go out for drinks with him after the show.” Louis says, feeling that stupid urge to make it clear that, once again, it was Vincenzo who approached him, not the other way around. As if Harry fucking cares…

“Oh... So, you’re going to hook up with him or something?” Harry asks in a noticeably judgmental tone, like he finds it gross that Louis would even consider having a one-night-stand.

“No, I’m not, actually. I said no. But I appreciate your concern for my decency, Pastor Styles, and I’ll be sure to read a Bible verse next time Satan tempts me with sexual deviance and perversity.”

“Sorry, I guess I did come across as a judgmental arsehole. I just got a bad vibe from him, you know,
but it’s none of my business.” Harry apologizes, dropping all that nasty attitude so quickly, Louis nearly gets whiplash.

God only knows what the hell goes through Harry’s mind sometimes, but Louis sure would like to have at least half a clue.

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Somewhere between Rome, Italy and Dublin, Ireland

It starts with a Games of Thrones marathon while on route to Paris after the show in Rome.

Harry always loads up his Netflix account to the medium-sized T.V. in his bedroom, so it’s only logical that they both lie down in his bed to watch it, like they had done a few times before Louis had even moved into this bus.

Halfway into the third episode, Louis falls asleep without even realizing he’d closed his eyes.

It’s the second time he’s slept the whole night in Harry’s bed.

After that, Harry keeps suggesting they watch movies or have a Netflix marathon before going to bed, and Louis nearly always falls asleep in the singer’s bed or is too sleepy to get up and leave.

After the tenth or eleventh time it happens, he stops apologizing, and Harry has yet to look bothered in the slightest by Louis’ invasion of his personal space.

At some point, Louis realizes that it’s been over a week since the last time he’s slept in his own bed, but they don’t talk about it at all, nor do they talk about the fact that the border between their respective sides of the bed is becoming more and more blurred and they’ve woken up all over each other more often than not.

The funny thing is, Louis moved into Harry’s bus to get away from the snoring, but Harry snores too – not as loudly, but he does.

For some reason, Louis finds his snoring soothing, almost as if hearing the evidence that Harry’s near him calms him down.

Their weird living arrangements keep evolving, and eventually Netflix stops being essential in order for them to sleep in the same bed.

(Louis asks Harry to borrow his charger – he’s literally just bought this iPhone and he’s already lost the goddamn cable, showing that he doesn’t actually deserve nice things – and then Harry plugs it into the socket in his bedroom. It isn’t exactly the most obvious sign Louis has ever received, but a) they’d both agreed they were too tired to watch anything tonight, and b) Harry didn’t have to plug it in himself. The Briton then gets into bed without turning off the lights, on the opposite side of the bed to where Louis’ phone is charging, so he stops second-guessing himself and goes with it.)

Louis sleeps in Harry’s room every night after that, figuring that it’d be way weirder if he just suddenly decided to sleep in his bunk one night.

So, this is a thing now. Louis sleeps in Harry’s bed every night and they often cuddle “in their sleep”, and they’ve never discussed it.

It’s not weird or non-platonic if you don’t talk about it, right?
Sydney, Australia

Louis’ twenty-second birthday is already his favorite and he’s only been awake for less than an hour. Harry had tackled him onto the bed exactly at midnight last night, only getting up when Louis complained that he couldn’t breathe.

This morning, he brought him breakfast in bed, a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon, and another with a huge stack of pancakes, which is quite the accomplishment considering that they’re in a goddamn bus without access to a kitchen. (Seriously, how did he manage to either pick it up or have it delivered, and serve it to Louis still as hot as if he’d actually made it right there and then?)

Harry has a radio something or another scheduled for today, so he leaves while Louis is still getting ready, giving him a hug and a kiss on the cheek, and wishing him a happy birthday again before running out the door.

Fortunately, though, the show is only tomorrow, so not only does Louis have a free day to do whatever the hell he wants in fucking Sydney, Australia, but Harry will be work-free after this interview too, so they’ll get to hang out.

Louis doesn’t need him to have fun though, and he’s more than happy to spend his birthday with his boys, Liam, Niall, and Steve.

He wanted to do something fun besides just sightseeing, so Steve suggested surfing, promising to teach him how to do it.

And Louis sure as hell is glad Steve came up with that idea, because he’s having the time of his life. He must look like a total loser, falling into the water every few minutes, but he honestly couldn’t care less.

To be fair, Liam had actually surfed before and he isn’t doing that much better.

Niall being the chicken that he is had refused to join them in the water after seeing the size of the waves, choosing to sit down in the sand instead and laugh at their flops.

If Louis had to describe what freedom feels like, he’d say that it’s this right here - the breeze on his face carrying the smell of the ocean, the warmth of the sun on his skin, and the taste of the salty water on his lips.

It’s fucking out of this world, and Louis is so, so happy right now, he could cry.

He’s having so much fun that he doesn’t even realize Harry has joined Niall until the three “surfers” - and, yes, he’s using this term very liberally – are too hungry to stay in the water.

“We’re starving, yo. Let’s get something to eat ASAP.” Liam says with that weird bro accent Louis loves to make fun of.

“Oh, thank god! Louis is finally going to take off his wetsuit, so maybe some people will be able to have a coherent conversation now. Seriously, Louis, your ass looks fucking obscene in that. I’d be drooling too if I were gay.” Niall says, but Harry doesn’t look embarrassed at all by the accusation, so Louis thinks it’s probably bullshit. (Well, not the fact that his ass looks great – that’s definitely true.)
“Envy is so unbecoming, Niall.” Louis jokes, “I’m sorry none of your girlfriends have ever had a booty like this, but there’s no need to be so bitter about it.”

“Ugh…Can we just go return this and eat, please?” Liam whines, huffing like an impatient child.

They do change out of their wetsuits and return the equipment though, much to Liam’s happiness.

They have lunch at a gourmet burger place Harry thought Louis would love, and he was totally right. The food is delicious, and he even gets a huge strawberry milkshake despite the fact that they’d just agreed to get ice cream afterwards. (It’s his birthday goddamn it, what the hell else should he be doing besides overindulging?)

The rest of the afternoon/early evening is spent at the beach, which is so, so lovely.

Louis had never even seen the ocean before he became a roadie, so it’s absolutely mind-blowing that his toes are digging into the sand of one of the most famous beaches in the world.

They get sushi for dinner, which, funnily enough, was something that Louis really didn’t think he’d like until he tried it for the first time, and then they grab a few drinks at a cute little bar.

Steve had tried to talk him into going clubbing, but, as depressing as it may sound, Louis was too scared someone would catch Harry’s eye at the club, which would definitely ruin his birthday.

Louis obviously wishes he could be with his family today of course, and he started missing them even more after every single one of them wished him a happy birthday over the phone, but Harry, Steve, Liam, and Niall have honestly become like family to him, so he doesn’t feel as sad as he probably should.

They’re all a little tipsy when they finally return “home”, cuddly and energetic like a litter of puppies.

On their way to Harry’s bus (and, well, Louis’, kind of), a number of other roadies wish Louis a happy birthday, which makes his eyes sting just a tad.

“Time for presents!” Harry says just a little too loudly, opening the curtains of the bunk that Alberto uses when he has to stay overnight.

Louis has to admit keeping them there was a genius move; he would have probably accidentally found them amongst Harry’s stuff otherwise. (He literally only sees these parts of the bus when he’s making his way into or out of the bedroom.)

“You guys… You didn’t have to get me anything.” Louis says, getting multiple eye rolls in response. He would definitely buy gifts for all of the boys’ birthdays too, so he guesses it works both ways.

“First, the present from the crew.” Harry says, handing Louis an obnoxiously colorful gift bag with a huge “Happy Birthday!” written on it.

It’s a t-shirt, but not just any t-shirt.

He sees them every time he walks past the merchandise stand, those classic white t-shirts with the venues and dates written on the back, but, unlike those, Louis’ has signatures all over it.

“Every single member of the crew signed it, including us.” Harry explains as Louis looks at it in amazement. It’s just one of those things that you don’t even realize you want until someone gives it you, and all of a sudden, it’s a dream come true.
He’s going to have a piece of every single one of these lovely, lovely people he’s working with for the rest of his life, and he couldn’t be surer that he’s going to look at it nostalgically and brag about it when he’s, like, in his eighties.

“I love it. God! I don’t know if I want to wear everyday for the rest of my life or keep it in a glass case and scream at anyone who even looks at it for too long!”

“There’s something else in there...” Harry says, prompting Louis to reach inside the bag and find a white envelope with dicks drawn all over it. Someone knows their recipient well, clearly.

Louis opens the envelope and... well, he’s not sure what he’s looking at to be honest.

“It’s an airline gift voucher.” Steve explains, “You can use it to go see your family during one of the breaks or to travel somewhere else if you want to.”

“I’m just going to say thank you and leave it at that, otherwise I’ll literally start crying. Just know that I appreciate it very, very much.”

“Okay, time to give Louis our present before we all start crying.” Liam says, prompting Harry to pass him a wrapped box.

“Before you open it, I just want to say that despite the fact that I’m the one who wrapped it and is handing it to you, this was Niall’s idea. Also, this is just from the four of us.” Harry says, and Louis is kind of scared to find out what the hell is hiding under the wrapping paper that warrants a disclaimer.

Louis rips the wrapping paper like the child that he truly is inside, and then instinctively brings a hand up to his upper chest like he’s literally clutching his pearls.

“You got me a dildo?” Louis says shocked, whispering the d-word. He doesn’t remember having ever even seen a sex toy in real life before, let alone owned one.

“A vibrating dildo!” Niall says enthusiastically, while Louis just blinks at him in disbelief.

“What Niall is trying to say is that now that you aren’t as, uh, limited by an oppressive environment, we thought we’d give you a present that is appropriate for a gay man who’s finally able to fully explore, and enjoy, his sexuality. The only other logical gift would be a male stripper, really.” Steve explains like it’s the most reasonable present ever, as if normal, sound-minded people just casually buy their friends things to stick up their butts. (Do they? Is that normal where they’re from? Louis honestly can’t tell sometimes if his friends act the way they do or say the things they say because they’re “wild roamers” or if they were just raised in a very different environment.)

Louis had casually inserted the whole I-like-boys thing into a light-hearted conversation with Niall, Liam, and Harry about two weeks ago, and the only reaction he’d even gotten was a proud smile from Harry.

It’s incredibly nice to be able to casually mention that he’s gay to his friends without them asking why he’s chosen to stray from God’s light, or some bullshit like that.

Steve had know about his sexual orientation since before they’d even become roadies for Harry, but now that his friends have decided to buy him a fucking dildo – excuse him, a vibrating dildo - he almost regrets not keeping it a secret.

“I mean, we can try to return it or something, if you really don’t want it.” Liam says, considerate as ever.
Louis subconsciously pulls the box closer to himself, “No. I have good manners, so I can’t just not accept a present, you know. That wouldn’t be very polite of me, now would it?”

“And let me guess, you’re going to use it too, just because it’s rude to let a present gather dust?” Niall jokes, mocking what they’ve all figured out by now – Louis may pretend to be outraged, but he’s totally planning on using that dildo.

“Well, we southerners do have very good manners, so…” Louis jokes back, and as soon as he sees Niall’s mouth opening to say something else, he adds, “No, I will absolutely not think about you, Niall Horan, don’t even say it.”

“Okay, time to give you my present.” Harry suddenly says, not even looking at Louis. If you’re going to be this disturbed to find out that your friend is planning on using a sex toy, then don’t fucking buy it for him. Jesus Christ.

Harry hands him an envelope, and for a few seconds Louis panics thinking that the singer is giving him money, or something.

Since they’ve become closer, Louis has learned that there’s a very delicate line between what he’ll allow Harry to pay for and what he finds outrageously offensive.

The presents he’s been given so far have been pretty reasonable, especially considering that other people contributed to them as well, so he’s got to trust Harry’s discernment.

Plus, Harry is literally on the edge of his seat, so he seems pretty damn confident that whatever is in the envelope is something Louis will like.

He loves it when the Briton gets excited about stuff. It’s absolutely adorable, and it makes Louis want to kiss the fuck out of him.

There are moments when Louis thinks Harry is a literal sex god and that he’s going to die of sexual frustration, but then he acts like this, all cute and adorable, and it makes him want more than just a nice blowie - it makes him want to marry Harry, and that’s a fucking scary as fuck thought.

Louis honestly couldn’t be more confused, “This is a piece of paper with a time and an address written on it.”

“It is. And it just so happens to be the time of your appointment and the address of the tattoo parlor where you’re going to get your first tattoo at tomorrow.” Harry says with a cocky smile, making Louis gasp loudly.

Louis’ instinctive reaction is to get up and jump into Harry’s arms, wrapping his legs around him as the singer’s hands support his weight naturally, almost as if they’ve done this a million times. (They haven’t, for the record.)

God, Harry knows him so well.

A tattoo is literally the best present anyone could have given him right now, and he wouldn’t trade it not even for the biggest, fanciest palace.

He’s been dreaming about getting inked since he was a teenager, and actually, seriously considering it since he became a roadie, but a tattoo seemed like a huge luxury, and Louis needs the money for other things.

Sure, he’d be able to comfortably afford a small tattoo at this point, but he really wanted his first to be
a chest piece – “it is what it is” – because it really reflects his current attitude towards his life and other people’s opinions.

And now it’s going to be an even more memorable experience because it was a birthday present from Harry.

As Louis buries his head into the crook of Harry’s neck and breathes in that sweet smell that has become so familiar, he doesn’t even remember there are other people in the room or worry about how they could be interpreting such an intense demonstration of gratefulness and appreciation.

All he can focus on is fighting back tears and keeping himself from actually kissing Harry.

“How come you didn’t climb me like a tree when you got the dildo? It’s a good dildo!” Niall jokingly complains, completely ruining the moment. Louis’ mood does improve when both Harry and him give Niall the finger at the same time.

Louis is so fucking lucky to have these boys in his life…

*

Sydney, Australia

Louis is so excited, he could die right now and he’d go with the biggest smile on his face.

He’s also a little nervous – hello, this it’s his first tattoo ever and he’s chosen a design that is both big-ish and in a pretty sensitive spot – but he’s mostly excited.

“Are you ready for your very first tattoo?” Harry asks while Louis is taking his t-shirt off with slightly trembling hands.

“Hell no.” Louis mutters, grabbing Harry’s hand for comfort as soon as he’s lying down. As guilty as he might have felt when he found out that the poor guy had to open the shop just for Louis as per Harry’s request, he now sure does appreciate being able to receive support from his friend without worrying about it ending up as a headline.

Plus, Harry had assured him that the shop would actually benefit a lot from it because of the publicity they’re going to get just by posting a picture of the singer there.

“Do you still want to go through with this, then?”

“Hell yes.” Louis answers, his voice raspy and shaky. He’s not sure if he’s afraid of the actual pain or if it’s just the monumentality of this moment that’s making him nervous.

Damian, the tattoo artist, comes back with a razor to shave the part of Louis’ chest that’s getting inked, and the Texan can’t resist teasing Harry, “Did they even bother pretending to shave off your non-existing chest hair just to not hurt your feelings when you got the birds?”

Truthfully, Harry does have chest hair and it’s pretty damn noticeable actually, but Niall and Liam have apparently been mocking him for supposedly looking like a 13-year-old for years, and Louis just subconsciously adopted the same jokes.

“Make sure to purposely misspell a word, Damian, please and thank you.” Harry says with a completely serious face, making Louis huff in displeasure.

“Alright, Louis, you ready to get started on your correctly spelled tattoo?” Damian asks with a smirk
on his lips, holding the tattoo machine terrifyingly close to Louis’ skin already.

“Yes, and also, marry me.” Louis deadpans, finally at a stage in his life where he’s comfortable enough to make jokes like that.

“Hey! I’m the one paying for this tattoo and holding your hand. Where’s my proposal?”

The needle is already carving the words into Louis’ skin, but Harry is definitely (and fortunately) distracting him. It’s either not as bad as Louis thought it would be or the company is just too good for the pain to get to him.

“Sorry, Baby Cakes. Buy me a wedding dress with a sweetheart neckline, and I’m all yours.”

“You’re selling yourself short there, sweetcheeks. I was expecting something more along the lines of a huge engagement ring and fifty sets of monogrammed towels.”

They keep up the teasing and silly conversations for as long as it takes for Damian to finish the tattoo, and then some more, the tattoo artist’s gaze moving between Louis and Harry with a knowing smile as he disinfects the Texan’s chest.

“It looks amazing, Lou.” Harry says as Louis finally stands up to see his tattoo in the mirror.

It’s a bit of a strange feeling to look at himself in the mirror and not recognize his own chest, but Louis absolutely loves it.

As lame and fake deep as it may sound, he has never looked more like the person that he’s always wanted to be.

“Shit, I’m hooked! Now I’m dying to get another one.” Louis says as Damian covers up his chest piece, adrenaline still being pumped through his body and making him feel unstoppable.

Damian smiles, “Good, that’s what I like to hear. Any idea what it’s going to be?”

“A triangle on my ankle.” Louis answers straight away, having been planning these tattoos for ages. The triangle isn’t a glaringly obvious gay symbol, but anyone who’s in the know would understand what it stands for.

“You should get it now.” Harry suggests as he hands Louis his t-shirt.

It shouldn’t be surprising in the slightest that Louis leaves the tattoo parlor with two brand new tattoos.

The unexpected part, or at least it was for him, is that Harry leaves with a brand new tattoo as well, and a pretty silly one at that.

Louis had jokingly said his next tattoo would be a penguin on his ass and Harry’s weird, yet fascinating brain had immediately provided him with a flashback to his childhood.

There was apparently a kids’ show in the UK with a penguin as the main character when he was growing up, so he’d just impulsively decided to tattoo Pingu practically on his armpit as an ode to “good old days”.

(Louis likes to believe Harry will think about him every once in awhile when he sees it - for a few years, at least. Louis knows he’ll always associate both his tattoos with Harry.)

Louis is absolutely buzzing when he gets back to the bus, so much so that half an hour later, when
they turn off the lights and get into bed, he’s still got energy by the gallons and talks his head off.

His rambling is so intense that his lips literally dry up and he has to get his chapstick from the nightstand, thanking the gods above that it’s not dark enough in the room for him to actually need to get up to turn on the lights.

As ridiculous as it may sound, that’s one of his favorite things about their (see: Harry’s) room, the way that it’s not too dark, meaning that he can still see Harry’s facial expressions, but also not bright enough for him to be too intimidated to have those deep conversations late at night.

“Smells good. Like honey, or something.” Harry says, and the fact that he can smell Louis’ fucking chapstick should really be a warning sign that they’re lying way too close to each other.

“Here, have some.” Louis says jokingly, and in a moment of total insanity that he’ll never, ever be able to explain, he actually fucking pecks Harry on the lips.

It’s not until he’s moving away from Harry that he realizes what he just did.

He fucking kissed him, completely unprompted!

Sure, he meant it as a joke, and Harry will probably dismiss it as such, but Louis knows that there’s literally no one else he’d be comfortable enough to pull this shit, jokingly or otherwise.

It was just a smack of lips, but, dear god, if Louis doesn’t handle this right, it could literally be the end of their friendship.

He’s just about to make a joke to break the weird tension in the air when Harry moves his head closer to Louis’.

“I don’t think I got any, actually.” Harry whispers, his gaze sliding down to Louis’ lips.

“Oh...” Louis sighs, lost for words and not wanting to kill the mood.

Louis’ wishes must have translated well enough though, because Harry kisses him.

It’s definitely more careful and intimate than that first playful peck, but it’s still an innocent, small kiss, and Louis desperately wants more.

“You’ve stolen it all now.” Louis whispers, and their faces are so close that their lips almost brush several times during that sentence.

And then their lips definitely touch, with Louis kissing Harry slowly, a gentle caressing of lips naturally turning into brushing tongues.

Louis wishes he could say that he’d overestimated what it would feel like to kiss Harry, but it’s even more mind-blowing than he’d ever be able to imagine.

The butterflies have come alive, his toes are curling even though their lips are the only part of their bodies touching, and he feels dizzy with emotion.

They kiss and kiss and kiss, until Louis’ lips feel raw and swollen, and then they kiss some more.

At some point, their fingers have intertwined, but Louis honestly couldn’t say when or how.

Even breathing has become dispensable compared to kissing Harry, and Louis is sure that if he were to suffocate to death right now, he’d die happily.
They kiss for so long that the bus eventually stops moving for the halfway break between Sydney and Melbourne, and they’re still kissing as they start approaching their destination.

They fall asleep eventually, but Louis honestly couldn’t say which one of them gave in to sleep first, just that they were kissing, and then it was all darkness.
Chapter 2

_Melbourne, Australia_

Harry and Louis wake up and get up.

Louis takes a shower while Harry checks his emails and then Harry takes a shower while Louis gets dressed.

They walk into the venue for breakfast together, hang out with the boys, do their respective jobs, and eat their meals together.

Not a single part of their day is different from the dozens of days before this one. They talk, look, and behave completely normal, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

Except something did happen, and Louis can’t stop thinking about it.

It looks like the kissing thing is getting the exact same treatment as the sleeping situation – they just don’t mention it.

It’s only when they’re getting ready for bed that their vibe is a little unusual.

Sure, they’re doing the same things as always, brushing their teeth, washing their faces, changing into their sleepwear – a t-shirt and sweatpants for Louis, while Harry just strips down to his underwear – but there’s a weird energy between them, almost like… excitement.

Louis hopes – hell, he daresay he knows – that something is going to happen when the lights are off.

They’re quiet as they climb into bed, not even pretending to stick to their respective sides.

Without a single word exchanged, they lie facing each other right in the middle of the bed, and the tension is so high, it’s almost palpable.

Harry and Louis just lie there for a few minutes, watching each other without saying or doing anything, their breaths mingling due to their proximity.

It’s so strange because Louis wants more, he wants to kiss Harry, but he’ll never get tired of looking at him either. He could just be right here for hours and hours, and it would still feel like time of his life even if they never actually kissed.

But then Harry bites his lower lip coyly, and Louis can’t hold off for a single second longer.

He kisses him firmly, without a trace of hesitation, and the singer kisses back straight away, clearly expecting this outcome just as much as Louis.

Kissing Harry feels like coming home strangely enough, even though they’d never kissed before last night, almost as if he’d known the taste of Harry’s mouth his whole life.

It’s simultaneously like a breath of fresh air and breathtaking somehow, as if he’s experiencing every emotion and feeling all at once.

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It becomes routine after that, kissing every single night once the lights are off.
They never talk about it or even hint at it, but they don’t do anything more than kissing either.

It’s simultaneously the most exciting and frustrating period of Louis’ life, being fed his dream in small doses every night without it ever evolving or devolving into something more or something less.

It’s also been a period marked by uncertainty.

There’s not doubt in Louis’ mind that Harry enjoys their nightly tradition – he wouldn’t come back for more, over and over again, if he didn’t – but he doesn’t know if Harry enjoys kissing just for the sake of it, if he likes kissing Louis, or if – and this is definitely Louis projecting – he has feelings for him.

There’s one thing he knows for sure, though - he’s the only person who’s lucky enough to be kissing Harry at the moment.

Living and working with the singer gives him privileged access to his life, so unless Harry’s making out with Alberto when the bodyguard drives him to interviews and the likes - ew, Jesus, what a terrible mental image - Louis is sure there’s no one else.

He likes to believe that means something…

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Wellington, New Zealand

As much as Louis loves his job, he gets bored sometimes.

If you don’t actually go out of your way to do something different, your days start to look the same even though you’re travelling all around the world.

They’re technically putting on the exact same show over and over again, and even the venues stop looking different after a while.

Louis tries to step out of their little bubble as often as possible, but sometimes he just has to find adventures and excitement inside it.

He's exploring all the nooks and crannies of the venue right now, as he often does, looking for something weird and/or fun.

Much to his delight, he does find it, so he goes straight to Harry.

“Please use your celebrity/diva status and ask them to bring the small trampoline I just saw into here so that I can jump on it.” Louis begs as soon as he walks into Harry’s dressing room, startling the Briton so much that he nearly drops his phone. Oops.

“Should I even ask where this trampoline is or how you found it?” Harry asks, shaking his head in mock disapproval.

“Mystery is the spice of life, posh boy… That’s how the saying goes, right?”

Harry snorts as he unlocks his phone, and Louis will forever wonder how and why his family and friends put up with his mischievous nature.

“I need a favor, Paul. There’s a small trampoline at this venue for some reason, and I was hoping you could ask them if I could borrow it, please.”
Louis is so excited about this damn trampoline, he literally feels like screaming his head off – in a good way, of course.

When he was growing up, they could never afford those huge trampolines everyone had in their backyards, but his lovely Mama bought him a small trampoline just like the one here, apologizing for not being able to afford one like the other kids had.

At the time, Louis had been over the moon with his new toy and barely even understood why she was apologizing, but now he appreciates it even more, getting emotional every time he thinks about how his Mom always put his happiness above everything else when he was growing up, even if she had to make a lot of sacrifices to be able to provide these kinds of luxuries.

“I should have known you were the one behind this.” Paul says as he brings in the small trampoline, rolling his eyes fondly at Louis.

“Don’t know what you’re talking about, Paul. I just got here.” Louis jokes, making Harry snort cutely. (Ugh, Louis literally thinks everything Harry does is done “cutely”. He hates himself.)

“Alright, try not to break any bones, kiddos.” Paul says, leaving to do much more grown-up things than Louis, probably.

Louis doesn’t waste any time before getting on the trampoline, not even sparing a single thought to whether this toy that is likely meant for children can handle his weight.

As he’s bouncing up and down – not very high at all, truthfully – he relives that moment of ridiculous happiness when he’d first gotten to try his new trampoline as a little boy, and he ends up sharing that memory with Harry.

The singer stands up suddenly and takes two long strides towards the trampoline.

“Do you want to try it?” Louis asks, thinking that that’s why Harry has stopped right in front of him.

“No.” Harry says, and yet he still steps onto the trampoline, forcing Louis to stop jumping as to not accidentally make the Briton lose his balance and fall backwards.

Harry kisses him suddenly, and Louis is so stunned that he doesn’t kiss back for long enough for the singer to start moving away.

Louis finally recovers when the cold air hits his lips, every inch of him screaming to get that amazing feeling back.

(He must really be a slave to the flesh, because he doesn’t even breathe until he’s kissing Harry again.)

The feeling of Harry’s lips moving against his always has this crazy effect on Louis’ mind that is unlike anything he’s ever experienced before. It’s like his brain has been completely drained of everything except HarryHarryHarry, so it isn’t until someone knocks on the door, forcing the singer to get off the trampoline, that Louis is finally able to process what just happened.

Harry kissed him in broad daylight.

He didn’t kiss him in the dark like he always does, nor did he do it in his bedroom; he kissed Louis during the day in his dressing room.

Not only that, but it wasn’t some sort of accident or impulsive kiss.
Harry had purposely stood up and gotten on the goddamn trampoline just to kiss Louis.

Wow…

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**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

“So, what’s going on between you and Harry?”

It’s a lovely, not-too-warm day today, so Louis dragged Steve along on his quest to explore Kuala Lumpur. If he’d known he was going to get the third degree at a goddamn ice cream place, he would have probably picked someone else to come with him.

“Shhh! Are you insane? What if someone hears you?” Louis whispers, looking around nervously.

“There’s literally only three other people in here and they don’t even know who we are, so stop being paranoid. Plus, there’s a million Harry’s in the world, and we could be talking about any one of them.” Steve says, relaxed as ever, “I worry about you, you know. Harry seems like a great guy, he really does, but you were already one of my best friends long before I met him, and I was the one who lured you into this crazy life, so you’re my main concern. I just need to know that whatever you’re doing, you’re being careful and putting yourself first. You’re like a brother to me, Louis, so I need to make sure you’re not going to get hurt.”

Louis has an instant flashback to his conversation with Lottie in Dallas, feeling incredibly touched by the fact that Steve worries this much about some misfit he picked up along the way and so, so blessed to have such amazing, loyal people in his life.

He honestly doesn’t know what he’s done to deserve all this love and kindness.

“It’s complicated, Steve, which sounds really cliché, but it’s true. So, like, while we were still in Europe, I started sleeping in Harry’s bed. I kept falling asleep while we were watching movies and shit, and then it just became a thing, and I haven’t slept in my own bed since then. And we’ve never talked about it. Um, the day after my birthday, we kissed for the first time while we were in bed. And then that became a thing too. We started kissing for, like, hours every single night, but only at night with the lights off at first. We would wake up the next day and act like nothing happened even though we’d kissed for so long the night before that my dick could serve as a coat hook. Uh, sorry for the visual. And then the kissing stopped being something we only did when the lights were off and is now something we pretty much do whenever we’re alone regardless of where we are.”

“But no sex, or like, wiener action in any way?”

“Okay, wiener action? Really? Ew, what the fuck, Steve? Anyway, the answer is no. There are middle schoolers out there who’ve engaged in steamier activities than us, which is kind of awful because I’ve never been more sexually frustrated in my whole life, but mostly good because, for me at least, it’s a kind of a big deal. I don’t think I could have sex with Harry without at least knowing that he sees me as more than a warm hole. Like, I know he appreciates me as a friend, but until I know for a fact that this thing we’re doing isn’t just about convenience or a nice way for him to waste time until something real comes along, I can’t take that big of a step. But, god, Steve, it’s so hard to keep myself from jumping his bones, and I can’t fucking get away from him because we work together, we sleep together and we spend every second in between together. Not that I would want to spend less time with him, but you know what I mean.”

Steve’s ice cream has melted into a gross-looking puddle because he’s giving him his full attention,
and Louis has so much respect and love and admiration for him, it’s insane.

“But, how do you actually feel about him? Are you mostly just attracted to Harry or do you want to
be in a proper relationship with him?”

Louis takes a deep breath, “I don’t really know how to describe my feelings for Harry. Saying that
I’ve never felt this way about anyone doesn’t even begin to cover it, because I’ve never even been
close to being in love with someone else before. So, I don’t know if I’m, like, really, really fond of
him, or if I’m falling in love with him, or, Jesus, if I’m already kind of in love with him because I’ve
never been in this position before. Sure, I want him to fuck me into the next century, but I also kind
of want to marry him one day? Oh god, I’m in so much trouble... Like, I want everything with
Harry, the good and the bad, and even though I forget it sometimes, I do understand that he isn’t just
Harry, he’s Harry Styles™, and that that makes everything more complicated, but... I just- I adore
him, Steve. He’s, like, my favorite person in the world outside of my family.”

“Talk to him, then. Be honest about how you feel and where you see your relationship going, Louis.
I honestly, genuinely think you could make each other really, really happy.”

Louis groans, “It’s not that simple, Steve. Even if I somehow forgot or didn’t care about how much
being rejected would hurt me, I’d still have to see him every fucking day, which I’m sure would be
uncomfortable for the both of us, maybe to the point of making me either quit or lose my job. I don’t
want to lose him and I don’t want to lose this job either, and I’d be risking both if I just flat out told
him how I feel about him. Plus, what if the reason why we’ve never talked about it is because Harry
wants to keep it casual and label-less and I’m just too inexperienced to see that?”

Steve smiles kindly, “I think you should always do what you think is best, Louis. I just hope this
whole no communication and no label thing doesn’t end up with you getting hurt.”

“Me too, Steve. Me too…”

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Koh Kood, Thailand

The Asian leg of the tour is weirdly scheduled, with the first part of it being just the past two shows,
followed by this weeklong break, and then a whole bunch of concerts.

Louis definitely isn’t complaining though, given that Harry had decided to rent a fucking beach
bungalow here in Thailand for himself, Louis, Niall, and Liam.

And, god, luxurious that doesn’t begin to describe this place. It’s fucking insane!

Their bungalow – or “villa” as the connoisseurs (see: pretentious millionaires like Harry) call it – is
the definition of paradise.

If they showed pictures of this place in Sunday school and told the kids that this is what heaven looks
like, no one would ever sin again.

They have a huge deck with a gigantic pool just for the four of them right by the beach – which is
private, of course.

Harry and Louis’ bedroom – yes, they’re sharing; no, not a single word was exchanged between the
four of them to make that decision – is all decked out in glass doors, so they’re going to be waking
up with this beautiful view of the clear, blue ocean every morning.
Liam and Niall both have their other own bedrooms, which, truthfully, are not as fucking unreal as Harry and Louis’, but, hey, the guy paying the bill should get the best room.

They even have their own electric buggy to drive around the island, and if this isn’t living in style, Louis doesn’t know what is.

None of them are actually that vain, honestly, not even Harry who could afford to be, but, by god, they sure as hell are impressed.

Louis takes a million pictures and sends them to his family, receiving a number of “fuck you’s” and similar sentiments from all of them. He knows those comments are coming from a good place, though – the place of pure envy.

While Harry and Liam stay inside to unpack – definitely the more sensible ones out of the four of them – Louis and Niall cannonball into the pool without a single care in the world until they tire themselves out.

Louis decides to stay in the pool after that, just floating around and relaxing, while Niall finds some shade to protect his pasty, delicate skin.

That’s exactly how Harry finds them, Louis absorbing the sunlight like a fucking plant and Niall hiding from it.

“You ruined my Zen.” Louis complains when Harry jumps into the pool, forcing the roadie to stand when the ripple of the water makes him lose his balance.

“Sorry.” Harry says, and Louis can tell by his tone that he doesn’t mean it all, the little shit, “Hi.”

“Hi. Your hair looks ridiculous.”

Harry pouts in response, and Louis has a hard time breathing for a few seconds.

How can someone with such a raw sexual charm be so adorable as well? It’s just not fair.

“Fine. Your hair does not look ridiculous. Middle part with a fringe down to the eyeballs is the latest fashion. Miss America can just resign!” Louis mocks, singing the West Side Story lyric in the most shrill voice possible.

“Well, that bitch ain’t got the curls that get the girls.” Harry jokes, quoting a tabloid headline that had made them laugh for ages. Sometimes you just have to laugh about the shit that they write about Harry, otherwise you’d never stop crying.

“Oh, I’m sure the girls love it. The boys though, they aren’t as convinced.” Louis says, smirking at Harry.

“How about now?” Harry asks, stepping closer to Louis, close enough that he can smell the singer’s minty breath, “Are the boys more convinced now?”

Louis pretends to think about it, “Nah, don’t think so. Sorry.”

“Guess I better try harder.” Harry says, smiling cockily at Louis.

Louis knows he’s in trouble straight away, but he’s completely unprepared for how close Harry actually gets, his nose almost touching Louis’ own.

“Niall?” Louis whispers, not even bothering to move his gaze away from Harry. (He doesn’t think
he could anyway, even if he wanted to.)

Harry shrugs indifferently, leaning down until his face is a hair’s breadth away from Louis’, waiting for the roadie to consent.

Fuck it. It’s not like their current position is any less compromising than if they were actually kissing. Louis presses his lips softly against Harry’s, and the Briton makes this little sighing noise that is just about the cutest thing Louis has ever heard.

He was wrong.

Their accommodation isn’t heaven nor is Thailand paradise.

This right here is absolute bliss.

The gentleness of their lips moving together, so perfectly in sync, is heaven.

Feeling Harry’s touch and smell and taste all at once is paradise.

It makes Louis feel like he’s both dying and being brought back to life, which doesn’t even make any fucking sense, but Harry messes with his brain too much for his thoughts to be coherent.

(Neither Niall or Liam, who seems to have gotten here at some point while Harry’s lips were distracting Louis, apparently feel the need to say a single word after seeing them kiss. Louis is inclined to believe they already knew about their thing, and since he wasn’t the one who told them, he definitely knows who did. God, he’d do anything to know what Harry told them – not the facts, because he obviously knows those, but what Harry thinks they’re doing and how he feels about it and where he thinks this thing is heading, if anywhere at all.)

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Koh Kood, Thailand

It’s their third day in Thailand and Louis is already feeling stupidly sad about the fact that their holiday is ending soon.

Technically, it’s actually the halfway point, but it still feels like it’s going by too fast.

It’s definitely illogical that instead of fully enjoying the time that he has left here, he’s being all melancholic and shit, but Louis has never claimed to be a sane man.

He’s going to miss the sunny weather and the clear blue ocean.

He’s going to miss spending hours greedily soaking up the sunlight and playing around in the pool with his boys.

He’s going to miss waking up to the sound of the waves crashing on the shore and the almost excessive luxury of their villa.

He’s going to miss the nearly undisturbed nature around them and the beautiful sunsets.

Most of all, though, he’s going to miss this version of Harry and Louis that they are here.

The privacy that they have at the resort and the fact that Liam and Niall know about their thing have allowed them to be a lot more, uh, enthusiastic.
They kiss.

A lot.

Everywhere.

They steal small pecks and they make out.

Fast kisses and languid, slow kisses.

There are times when only their lips touch, and others when their whole bodies are glued together. (The more undressed they are, the more they lean towards the latter. What a coincidence…)

That line between friendship and something completely different is becoming more and more blurred as the days go by, and there are times when Louis genuinely starts wondering if they both just decided they’re a couple now and neither bothered to tell the other.

Take right now for example: Louis and Harry are sharing a fucking hammock, for god’s sake. A hammock. And there’s a free hammock literally right next to this one, and yet here they are.

Harry is lying on his back with his legs spread and Louis has fit himself in between them, his head right by the singer’s heart. One of Harry’s hands is drawing circles on Louis’ now quite tanned back, while the other has “accidentally” ended up directly underneath Louis’ hand.

The soft sound of Harry’s heart beating is quickly lulling Louis to sleep, but his eyes snap wide open when he hears two sets of footsteps approaching them, Liam’s and a hotel employee’s, apparently.

Louis instinctively almost flings himself off the hammock, but then Harry’s hand presses down harder on his back in reassurance, and he’s reminded that privacy and confidentially are the bread and butter of places like this.

There’s no way anyone working here would blab without getting sued for everything they’re worth.

“Good afternoon, Sir. I’m sorry to disturb you, but I just wanted to let you know that there is a table for two available for tonight, after all. You’ll be able to dine at seven-thirty p.m., right on time to watch the sunset, as you wished.”

“Oh, that’s great! Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.” Harry says, and the feeling of his chest vibrating with his words underneath Louis stupidly gives him goosebumps. Jesus, he’s got it bad.

“Is there anything else I can help any of you with?” The hotel employee - Chao Fah according to his nametag – asks, looking at all three of them, which is a really nice gesture.

The amount of times Louis has seen people totally ignoring Harry’s friends/coworkers/family – himself included, of course - while bending over backwards to kiss the singer’s ass is off the charts. Just because they aren’t “rich and famous”, it doesn’t make them lesser beings.

And the funny thing is, Harry hates it when that happens, so the only thing they actually accomplish is the honor of being on the singer’s shit list.

They all give Chao Fah different variations of “no, thank you”, so the cheery hotel employee goes on his merry way.

“Did you hear that? We’re having dinner at the coconut restaurant.” Harry says, a small smile dancing on his lips.
The restaurant Harry’s referring to isn’t actually called “The Coconut Restaurant”, which is a missed opportunity in Louis’ opinion, but that’s what they started calling it after seeing the shape of the “tables”. The whole concept is that you sit in this big bamboo pod and they hoist you up so that your booth is literally dangling from a tree.

Louis had wanted to try it from the second he saw it, but Harry and Niall are kind of scared of heights, and Liam is scared of anything that could drive him to an early grave.

The waiters deliver your food by zip fucking lining to your table, for god’s sake! Who wouldn’t want to eat there?

“Really?” Louis asks enthusiastically, “Aren’t you going to be scared up there, though?”

“Umm, probably… A little bit, yeah, I guess, but you wanted to try it, so… Yeah… You’ll hold my hand if I get too scared, anyway, right?”

Okay, did Louis hit his head at the bottom of the pool or something?

Harry made a reservation at the coconut restaurant specifically because Louis wanted to try it, even though he’s scared of heights, and now he’s casually joking about holding his hand.

Oh, and he wanted them to be able to watch the sunset while eating?

And the reservation is only for two people, apparently, so clearly it’s just going to be Harry and Louis.

Having dinner.

Alone.

In a fucking bamboo pod in Thailand.

While the sun is setting.

Okay, what?

“Are dumb and dumber too scared to join us or something?”

“Or something.” Harry says cryptically, offering no further explanation, the little fucker.

Lord, I know I’m not exactly a saint, and sneaking out before the end of the service that one time to get a blowjob from Chris definitely wasn’t my best moment, but please let me be right about this and not embarrass myself into another dimension...

“Sounds almost romantic, doesn’t it? The sunset and the location, and all that.” Louis mumbles, half hoping Harry won’t hear it.

“It sure does…”

What kind of ambiguous as fuck answer is that? Is it that hard to say either “that’s what I was aiming for” or “it’s not romantic because I only see you as friend”?

Is it a good or is it a bad thing that it sounds romantic, you cryptic asshole?

Louis isn’t sure if he’s just that bad at interpreting possibly romantic signals or if Harry is actually that confusing, but one thing is for sure - he might actually go insane really soon.
Despite Louis’ confusion and overall exasperation with how uncertain his love life currently is, he has an amazing time at dinner.

It’s not just kind of romantic; it’s full on romantic.

It’s just the two of them in this little cocoon thing, with the ocean and the sunset providing a perfect backdrop.

They eat and talk and laugh and have enough cocktails for Louis to stop thinking about what this dinner means or how Harry feels about him, so it’s pretty fucking great.

“See, it wasn’t that bad to be up there, was it?” Louis asks once they’re back on solid ground, their bare feet sinking in the sand as they walk towards their villa.

“It was quite scary at first, to be honest, but then you distracted me and so did the drinks, and at some point I kind of forgot we were, like, above the ground, which isn’t really that great because now I feel like I could have easily gotten up and accidentally fallen from all the way up there.”

Louis snorts, “If you had gotten up, I would have forced right back down, trust me.”

“Awww, that’s so sweet. My knight in shining armor, my savior, my-“

“I mean, if you’d fallen to your death, then the rest of the tour would have been cancelled, and that would be a real bummer. At least wait until we’re done touring to meet your maker, H. Don’t be inconvenient.” Louis jokes, interrupting Harry’s string of nonsensical compliments.

“Oh, bullshit. Your life would suck without me, and you know it. Who would make you sure you have breakfast every single day if you didn’t have me?”

“Probably Steve. Yeah, definitely Steve.”

“Okay, but whose sweaters would you steal, then?”

“Liam’s, of course. Great sweaters, that one.”

“Well, I’m the only one of the boys who’s capable of really understanding and sharing your, uh, interest in Chris Hemsworth. Try to argue against that, cowboy.”

Louis snorts, “I think you’re really underestimating Niall. He’s the gayest straight guy I have ever met. I’ve literally seen him go into a trance of sorts just because some hot guy was talking to him.”

“Fine, how about this, huh?” Harry asks, kissing Louis soundly.

“Alberto does it better, really.”

“Umm, bet Alberto doesn’t do this as well as me.” Harry says, before picking Louis up like he weighs nothing and fucking throwing him into the pool. It all happens so fast, Louis doesn’t have time to fight back or even yell before his whole body is submerged.

“You fucker.” Louis screams as soon as he finds his way back up to the surface, glaring at a laughing Harry.

(Truthfully, he’s a little bit proud of the singer for pulling this off. Like, Harry can be quite mischievous, but it’s certainly not often that he manages to trick Louis. Maybe Louis is rubbing off on him. No, not in that way, sadly.)
Harry may try, but he’ll never dethrone the king, though.

As soon as Louis gets out of the water, Harry takes a couple steps back, clearly expecting the Texan to either force him into the pool or get him wet.

Louis is not that predictable though.

Instead of running towards Harry and giving him a taste of his own medicine, he dashes for the door of the villa.

“Say goodbye to all your favorite clothes!” Louis yells, and he can hear the thumping of Harry’s feet behind him as soon as the words are out of his mouth.

Harry may have those lovely long legs, but Louis has a Ph.D. in running away to create havoc, so he manages to stay out of his reach.

(Barely, but he does.)

He finally catches up just in time to stop Louis from locking him out of their room, but the roadie still manages to grab a shirt that is probably worth a month’s rent in, like, New York City, or some posh place like that, out of the closet before the singer gets to him.

Louis is just about to start running towards the bathroom to drop the shirt in the toilet – what? He could have had his phone in his pocket when Harry threw him in the pool, so it’s only fair - when the Briton picks him up again.

What the fuck? How dare Harry manhandle him like this and remind him of how strong he is? It distracts Louis from his righteous mission to mess with Harry’s shit!

He manages to land two or three kicks, one of them dangerously close to Harry’s balls, before the Briton drops him on the bed, falling right on top of him and crushing Louis to death.

“Ahhhh, get off me, you giant!”

“Aw, is Louis too teeny tiny to play with the big boys? Me thinks he is. Me thinks he’s so tiny, I could lie on top of him and nobody would even know teeny tiny Louis is under there.” Harry says in the weirdest baby voice Louis has ever heard. He’s heard him talk to actual babies before, and this is absolutely not what he sounds like.

“You’re so fucking weird.” Louis says, his voice audibly strained due to the effort he’s putting into trying to escape from underneath Harry.

Louis twists and flails his arms and shimmies and squirms, but it doesn’t work at all.

Well, actually, something does happen as a result of it, much to his embarrassment – he starts getting hard.

Oh dear god…

Turns out that having the body of the person you’re most attracted to in the whole world pressed against you is boner inducing, who would have guessed?

It’s definitely not a full mast type of problem yet thanks to the discomfort of his soaking wet, cold clothes, but given the fact that there isn’t a single inch separating their bodies, Louis doubts he’ll be able to get away with it for much longer.
In a desperate effort to distract Harry and escape, Louis licks the singer’s nose, but he doesn’t even flinch, which just goes to show how fucking gross and intimate they have become.

Harry’s response to the “attack” doesn’t take long, the Briton licking a broad stripe from Louis’ collarbone up to his earlobe.

Shit. Shit shit shit. Fuck Louis’ stupid responsive as fuck body.

Gone is any possibility of Harry not noticing his hardening cock because it just fucking twitched right against the singer’s lower abdomen.

And even if by some miracle that had gone unnoticed, it would still be obvious that Louis had very much enjoyed Harry’s tongue against the sensitive skin of his neck because he moaned so fucking loudly, it probably scared away the birds outside their window.

As strange as it may sound for two people who have been kissing everyday for ages, neither of them had actually properly moaned before. A little bit of panting? Sure. Breathy little sounds of enjoyment? Duh. A cutesy sigh here and there? Of course. But actual fuck-me-until-I-can’t-remember-my-own-name moans? Never. And it’s not even like the situation called for it – they were just playing around, not even kissing, and yet Louis’ dick had to make it all about itself.

Before Louis has time to start hitting himself in the face until he’s in a coma, Harry’s tongue finds its way back to his neck, kissing and sucking and biting this time instead of just messing around. The roadie doesn’t feel nearly as embarrassed when a soft moan escapes from his throat again, as he’s sure that Harry is purposely trying to draw them out of him now.

There’s something very teenager-like and almost innocent about how they go about their non-platonic interactions, often beginning with some playful wrestling just like now or teasing comments, a “boys will be boys” kind of energy - in the best sense of the expression, of course, not the gross misogynistic leniency that it’s so often distorted into.

It’s like they don’t have enough confidence or experience, or they simply don’t know how to initiate intimacy, so they have to resort to more immature strategies, pretending something was accidental when it was really their goal all along.

So, it’s not surprising to Louis at all that this much more sexually charged tension started off as such a silly, theoretically buddy-pal way.

(If their “relationship” were a type of porn, it would be those videos where the “straight” guys start talking about, like, boobs and beer while showering in a locker-room and somehow end up sucking each other’s dicks. Only they’re not even bothering to pretend to be straight.)

A particularly hard suck just beneath Louis’ ear has him spreading his legs instinctively, and Harry nestles himself right in between them, using a ring-clad hand to pull the roadie’s left thigh upwards and making him bend his knee.

Once Harry is apparently satisfied with the red abstract painting he’s created on Louis’ neck, he finally kisses him, knocking the air out of the roadie’s lungs. God, they fit so well together…

It never ceases to amaze Louis how naturally all this comes to them.

Back when he was figuring out what it meant to be gay, he read somewhere that there was no need to worry about kissing boys and sex, and all that, because once it happened, it would feel very natural and instinctive.
When it hadn’t felt like that with Chris at all, Louis had been incredibly disappointed. The few handjobs and blowjobs they exchanged had always felt awkward and stilted, with almost zero passion and sensuality.

There was no “wow factor” with Chris.

Sure, it had felt a hell of a lot more natural than the awkward kisses he’d exchanged with girls, and his dick hadn’t basically shrunk back into his abdomen like it always used to do before, but there was no intimacy, no instinctiveness to what they were doing.

Louis now realizes that their fling had been a “marriage” of convenience, really. (Metaphorically speaking, of course. He hadn’t actually married the guy, thank god.)

They weren’t truly into each other - or even liked each other that much, to be honest – they were just lucky enough to have found someone who liked the same “parts” so to speak and held on to it.

It felt like every single move with Chris was a deliberate, well thought out step towards an end goal, but with Harry, Louis loses the ability to even think properly, let alone make rational decisions.

Right now, his mind has allowed his body to completely take over, so every single action and reaction is instinctive. It’s perfect without being rehearsed, and now that Louis has had a taste of perfection, he knows he’ll never be able to go back to something like what he had with Chris.

Louis feels like his whole body is on fire when they get the angle just right, the pressure of Harry’s cock rubbing right against his whole length making his toes curl even though there are a million layers of clothing in between them.

Harry doesn’t seem to be fairing much better though, a soft “fuck” mumbled into Louis’ mouth, his voice deeper and raspier than the roadie had ever heard it before.

“May I?” Harry asks politely, pushing two fingers underneath the waistband of Louis’ jeans, his thumb circling the button as he patiently waits for permission.

“Yeah.” Louis mostly whines, something he’d most definitely be embarrassed about if he weren’t fucking ascending to the high heavens right now.

Harry kisses him again as he starts trying to pull Louis’ jeans down – trying being the operative word here.

“Jesus fucking Christ.” Harry groans, understandably frustrated when the wet fabric keeps making it impossible to take off Louis’ jeans.

The roadie is just about to throw the fact that it’s Harry’s own goddamn fault that his clothes are wet in his face when the singer changes strategies and reaches inside Louis’ boxer briefs to pull his cock out. It’s safe to say that Louis would struggle to even form a full sentence now, let alone be snarky.

“Gorgeous.” Harry mumbles, almost as if to himself, making Louis blush. He’s certainly never had someone look directly at his dick and compliment it before. Jesus. Harry’s definitely going to be the death of him.

Louis’ eyes involuntarily fall shut as soon as Harry’s hand is wrapped around his cock, almost as if his body literally cannot handle the power of sight when he’s feeling something this intense.

He forces himself to open his eyes again though, desperate to engrave the image of Harry hovering above him into his brain, all rosy cheeks and blown pupils, and so, so beautiful.
Harry plays around for a little bit, testing different speeds and moves to see which ones really make Louis tick, and the Texan should have known that he’d be just as attentive in bed as he is everywhere else.

By the eighth or ninth stroke, he’s got it down to a fine art, slow and steady on the way down and a fast and twisting upstroke – without neglecting the head, of course – and Louis swears he can hear a choir of angels singing outside the window.

Even Louis isn’t this good at reading his own body and jerking himself off, for fuck’s sake.

He simultaneously feels like he’s been on cloud nine for five hundred years and like it hasn’t been nearly long enough when that lovely warm sensation in his lower abdomen starts building up, and it’s truly admirable that Harry is still somehow maintaining that perfect rhythm when the roadie’s fingers are digging into his arm like he’s literally holding on for dear life.

(Let’s be realistic though – it’s definitely not been long enough because Louis is a pathetic mess of a human under Harry’s ministrations.)

And then it’s gone.

The lovely, big, soft, warm hand around his cock is gone.

What?

Louis, who had stupidly, involuntarily closed his eyes again, snaps them right open, willing to throw all sense of dignity out the window and just beg Harry to have mercy on him and finish him off.

Except he doesn’t say anything because Harry is fucking unzipping his own jeans and getting his cock out.

It really is a thing of beauty, long and thick, and the prettiest shade of pink, and oh so hard, it’s fucking dripping.

An embarrassing, whiny sound escapes from Louis’ mouth, the frustration of not being touched when he was so close to coming mixed with the maddening vision in front of him being more than he can handle, bless his heart.

Harry looks straight into his eyes then, and instead of having a smug expression on his face like you’d expect, he seems almost in awe, as if he’s surprised Louis would react like that. (Homeboy needs to look in the mirror every once in awhile, because there’s literally no one on god’s green earth who wouldn’t be drooling if they were lucky enough to see what Louis is seeing right now.)

Harry places a hand on each side of Louis’ head, kissing him passionately as he slowly allows some of his body weight to be put on the roadie.

Louis doesn’t want some of Harry though, he wants all of him, so he hooks a leg around him and pulls him closer.

Louis still hasn’t figured out why Harry stopped touching him when he did, and although his first guess would have probably been to tease him, now that he’s seen how hard the singer is and heard the almost desperate sounds falling from his lips, he’s starting to believe that Harry was so turned on that he literally couldn’t keep it in his pants anymore.

The insecure side of Louis is trying to convince him that Harry’s just had a long dry spell, but he desperately wants to hold on to the idea that it’s Louis that has this effect on him.
It takes some weird looking, unattractive shuffling and partial undressing before they manage to align their cocks without accidentally giving the other a zipper injury or something, but once they do, it’s fucking magical.

And the thing is, everything about this probably looks rushed and not classy in the slightest, both still wearing their shirts and basically only bothering to get their bottoms down enough to be able to get their dicks out, but it feels sweet and intimate.

Louis can’t tell if it’s the way Harry’s looking at him, or the fact that they never seem to be able to spend too long without kissing, even if they’re mostly panting and moaning into each other’s mouths, or the gentleness of their hands constantly roaming just to feel.

They’re a beautiful contradiction; desperate but gentle, eager but patient, and Louis loves it.

He’s so, so close, the feeling even more intense now after having been (accidentally?) edged, so much so that when Harry suddenly wraps his hand around both their cocks, his leg kicks out on its own volition and hits the singer’s hip. He’d apologize, if he weren’t too busy coming, of course…

Louis swears he can feel pleasure seeping into his fucking bones, and he really should be more worried about how strongly his body – and his mind, to be honest – responded to something as simple as a handjob.

He opens his eyes and is blessed with just the most glorious sight: Harry still above him, his ring-clad hand almost a blur as it moves up and down his angry-red cock with zero finesse.

If it were literally anyone else, Louis’ dick would have stayed in dead-to-the-world-I’ve-done-my-job-let-me-rest mode, but it’s Harry, so it manages to twitch weakly, a broken whine falling from his lips as his sensitive cock touches Harry’s knuckles for a split second.

“Fuck, Lou.” Harry moans, looking at Louis with such an overwhelming intensity, a shiver runs down the roadie’s spine.

Louis keeps his eyes locked with Harry’s as he moves one of his hands down, desperately wanting to see the effect that his touch will have on the Briton.

His thumb brushes the head of Harry’s cock softly, feeling the wetness gathered at the slit, and then slides down to that wonderful spot just below the head that is inexplicably sensitive.

Harry’s brow furrows as his eyes close, his mouth looking so inviting as it hangs wide open that Louis can’t help but run his finger over the singer’s lower lip.

This is what dreams are made of, one hand on Harry’s cock and another on his lips while his belly is being painted white.

Harry’s arms finally give out then, and he lets himself fall on top of Louis, making for an even more intimate picture, their torsos glued together (almost literally) and limbs intertwined.

Harry plants a few gentle, innocent kisses on Louis’ neck, and the Texan intertwines their fingers tenderly without even thinking, his head still too hazy to worry about how romantic it is to hold hands after sharing orgasms.

Louis’ mind doesn’t stay blissfully free of thoughts and concerns much longer though, keeping him wide-awake until long after Harry has started snoring softly.

How many lines are they going to cross without discussing what the hell is going on between them?
How many more nights is Louis going to spend next to Harry desperately wanting to tell him that he’s falling in love with him?

For how much longer is he going to wake up every morning and wonder if today is the day Harry’s going to meet someone else, someone he actually wants to call his boyfriend?

Not many more, Louis is sure of it.

There’s this frustration building inside him, this voice screaming that he can’t live like this anymore, falling in love with a man who probably doesn’t even see him as more than a friend. His heart won’t be able to handle having Harry only for limited periods of time for much longer.

*

Tokyo, Japan

Leaving paradise wasn’t easy, but Tokyo is so insane - in a good way, of course – that Louis is almost okay with it.

Fate - or, well, whoever scheduled the tour – had blessed them with a free day in one of the most exciting cities in the world, and Steve and Louis really took advantage of it.

Harry was stuck doing interviews and talk shows all day, so Louis being the nice guy that he is made sure to send him a million snaps of their adventures to make him jealous.

And that means that he should really have predicted this…

He should have known Harry would want revenge. The most excruciating, frustrating form of revenge known to mankind.

(Okay, so maybe Louis is exaggerating a little bit. Or a lot.)

“If you keep fucking doing this to me, I’m going to finish myself off and I won’t even let you watch, I swear.” Louis grumbles threaterningly, grinding his teeth so that he doesn’t actually cry, which, dear god, is he close to doing.

Harry has been leisurely sucking him off for what feels like a half a century now, always managing to pull off right when Louis was about to come every single fucking time.

“I had to take a break to breathe.” Harry says, blinking innocently at Louis. This fucking asshole…

“Yeah? What about the time right before that, you asshat?”

Harry shrugs, “My gag reflex was acting up.”

“You don’t have a gag reflex! Fucking Dumbo could shove his whole trunk down your throat and you’d fucking take it like a champ.”

Harry laughs loudly, before wrapping his hand around the base of Louis’ cock and guiding it into his mouth and down his throat.

Just.

Like.

That.
(Oh, how Louis wishes he could do this as easily as Harry… It takes a fucking empty stomach and a fervent prayer for him to be able to even take half of Harry’s cock into his mouth.)

“Oh my god…” Louis wails, and the answering moan he gets from Harry is just what he needed to finally push him over the edge, the vibrations around his cock turning him into a moaning, whiny mess.

Despite the fact that Harry had teased him for so long, his hair started graying, Louis is still kind enough to jerk him off, and he even cuddles him and plays with his hair when he inevitably hits that stage of post-orgasm clinginess.

The last couple of days have been a total dick fest, with so many handjobs and blowjobs, you’d think Harry and Louis were previously unaware they had wieners and that it feels good to touch them.

But no matter how shamelessly they crave each other’s touch and how easily they lose themselves in the heat of the moment, Harry has yet to go anywhere near his ass.

Well, that’s not strictly true; he’s gotten the occasional playful slap or cheeky grab from Harry.

(Cheeky grab? Cheeky? Who the fuck is Louis, the Queen of England? What the hell is happening to him? Is he going to start eating beans on toast and complaining about the weather soon, too? Is British-ness sexually transmitted, or something?)

The thing is, Louis definitely isn’t ready for Harry to do anything to, around, or in his ass yet for a number of reasons, the first being so heteronormative that the roadie is disgusted with himself.

Louis knows that in that division straight people loooove to make and discuss, he’s definitely a bottom, and if the dildo he got on his birthday is anything to go by, Harry, Liam, Niall, and Steve think so too. And, truthfully, he’s very much into the idea of being fingered and/or fucked, and he always comes ten times harder when he has one or more fingers stimulating his prostate.

He would definitely like to try topping too, but he does lean significantly more towards bottoming.

The problem isn’t whether or not Louis knows what he wants - it’s the bullshit he’s been hearing all his life.

“Takes it up the ass” is literally one of the biggest and most popular insults where he’s from, and a man who bends over for another man is considered the lowest of the “scum”.

If you hear people describing the bottom as the “girl” in the relationship or, even worse, a sex-crazed cockslut willing to shove anything up there for long enough, it will become an ingrained “fact”, even if that mentality goes against everything you believe in.

Even though Louis has matured a lot and become more educated since he left Texas, a (thankfully) very small part of him is still holding on to that idea that bottoming means giving up control, allowing someone else to dominate you, and that it makes you the “weaker” one or the lesser man - if a man at all.

In his darkest moments, he genuinely believes that from the moment he lets Harry go anywhere near that area, they go from two guys sucking each other’s dicks to the guy who likes things up his ass and the guy who gives it to him.

It’s gross beyond belief that he would even let these thoughts cross his mind, and he certainly would never, ever say or think these horrible things about anyone else, but he’s working on it, and he knows deep in his heart that there will come a day really, really soon when he won’t be ashamed of
saying that prostates are fucking awesome and anyone who hasn’t tried it is missing out.

It’s not even like Louis thinks the only way they could ever do anal would be with him bottoming, and he’s pretty sure that if he asked Harry, he’d totally be up for it, at least until the Texan got more used to the idea. As a matter of fact, he’s literally heard the words “versatility is the key to happiness” come out of Harry’s mouth, and judging by the smirk on his lips at the time, Louis is damn sure he was aware of the double entendre.

He doesn’t want to, though, and that’s the most honest of truths. Louis wants their first few times doing butt stuff – wow, how eloquent of him – to be his butt, both for selfish and altruistic reasons.

Louis has been imagining what it would feel like to have another guy’s fingers - or, dear god, cock - inside him literally for years, and recently that picture has evolved to include Harry.

If the fantasy he creates every time he’s jerking off is around Harry and Harry’s fingers and Harry’s cock and Harry’s tongue inside him, why would he do it any other way?

Further down the line, he’d like to reverse the roles at least once, but for now he wants his fantasy to come to life.

The other, less self-absorbed reason why he isn’t into the idea of Harry bottoming at first is because he doesn’t want to mess it up, and as of right now, he’s pretty damn clueless when it comes to sex.

He can’t even read his own body sometimes, adding a second finger too early or underestimating the amount of lube he needs, so it would probably be a lot harder for him to figure out what someone else needs and when they need it.

He wants Harry to enjoy it, and, above all, he doesn’t want to hurt him, so he thinks it’s definitely a better idea to get acquainted with what “real” sex is like instead of relying on what he’s learned from porn and just going for it.

The main reason why Louis is avoiding crossing that line, though, is this damn rabbit hole he’s fallen into, doing all this stuff with Harry and never fucking talking about it.

It always comes down to this…

He’s already done more than he said he would, but there’s a huge difference between blowjobs and actual sex. Louis had sucked someone else off before Harry, but anything beyond that is completely new to him.

What if he does have sex with this guy that he’s falling in love with, and then he ends up breaking his heart so badly that Louis regrets it?

Sure, Harry could obviously still break his heart if they were in a relationship, but it would be completely different – better to have loved and lost, and all that.

*

_Singapore, Republic of Singapore_

There’s someone knocking on the bus door and Harry’s in the shower and Alberto is somewhere that’s not here. Ugh.

Louis was so comfortable sprawled out on the couch, watching and re-watching the videos of the baby twins that Lottie had sent him and now he’s being forced to get up.
(He may or may not have been crying just a little bit. He misses his family, no shame in that.)

Harry’s bus, unlike the others, is always, always locked, and as much as Louis wants to complain whenever someone’s knocking forces him to drag his ass to the door, he understands why they need that policy.

Just a few months ago, a fan managed to sneak into what she thought was Harry’s bus and ended up walking in on a naked Preston instead. That particular time, it had been someone who wanted to sleep with Harry, but next time the motive could be a lot worse, so it’s absolutely necessary to make sure that nobody can get to the singer and potentially hurt him.

Louis adjusts himself as he opens the door, ungluing a runaway ball that had pasted itself to his thigh, ready to berate whichever roadie who has had the audacity of making him use his legs.

Only it’s not another roadie.

It’s a woman.

A woman who looks freakishly like Harry’s mom.

Only, Harry’s mom isn’t supposed to arrive until Tuesday.

As in three days from now.

“Oh, hello! Good morning! Is Harry awake yet?” Anne asks, looking way too unfazed for someone who’s just caught a stranger inside her son’s bus – a stranger who’s in his fucking underwear.

“Yes. He’s in the shower.” Louis answers automatically, blushing to the roots of his hair. Is he ever going to meet someone Harry’s related to and not embarrass himself straight away, dear god?

“Oh, silly me! I’m Anne, Harry’s Mum. I ended up having some unexpected free time right before I was supposed to join him on tour, so I just thought I’d surprise him and come a little earlier. May I come in?”

“O-of course, ma’am. Would like something to drink?”

Louis should really be ashamed of himself.

He was so stunned that he forgot his manners and made the poor woman stand outside. What a dick.

This isn’t how he was brought up at all.

“No, thank you, love.”

He knows he should definitely introduce himself too and that he’s being rude once again - this time intentionally - but he just doesn’t know what to say. Or, rather, he doesn’t know what Harry would want him to say.

Just offering his name with no explanation as to why he’s here seems distasteful, but saying that he’s a roadie or a friend of Harry’s would definitely be insulting Anne’s intelligence.

Plus, he doesn’t know what Harry is going to tell her, and whether it would contradict whatever explanation he could come up with, so he doesn’t want to come across as a liar.

God, he can’t believe Anne fucking Twist – Harry’s mother – has just walked into this shit show that they like to call “normal”.
“Okay, I’m going to uh- yeah.” Louis mumbles, pointing vaguely towards the back of the bus.

He throws on the first pair of sweatpants that he finds and a sweater that was lying on the floor, praying that there won’t be a jizz stain on it or something.

He’d been hoping to get out of this damn bus before Harry finished his shower, but of fucking course the bathroom door opens right as Louis is leaving the bedroom.

“Surprise, love!” Anne exclaims with a huge smile on her face, either completely unaware of the awkwardness of the situation or choosing to ignore it. Louis isn’t sure if her lack of reaction makes it all better or worse.

He can pinpoint the exact moment Harry realizes the mess he’s in, his eyes moving between Louis and Anne freakishly fast without saying anything.

Time for Louis to get the fuck out of here.

“It was nice to meet you, ma’am.” Louis mostly mumbles, barely making eye contact with Anne and none with Harry, the bus door accidentally slamming behind him.

Oh boy…

The following four days are a mess, to say the least.

Louis spends every waking hour trying to avoid Harry and his family – and by every waking hour, he means every waking hour because being where Harry is is literally his fucking job.

There’s only three of them, but it feels like they’re everywhere. (Harry’s stepfather, Robin, came with his wife, though god only knows where he was when that whole mess was going down. Louis sure is thankful that he was somewhere other than there.)

He’d never disrespect his upbringing by literally ignoring Anne though, so he always makes sure to greet her with a smile and the occasional “how are you today, ma’am?” Since he isn’t as, uh, well acquainted with Robin, a simple nod is more than enough.

As for Harry, well, Louis hasn’t even acknowledged his existence in any way since “the incident”.

And the funny thing is that, although Louis is actively avoiding Harry, he misses him like crazy.

Louis hasn’t shared a bed, a kiss, or even a goddamn conversation with Harry since Anne showed up on “their doorstep”, and, god, does he miss him.

He misses the kissing and the feeling of Harry’s plush lips wrapped around his cock, but he also misses sharing the excitement and the frustrations of his day with him.

It’s really hard to go from being Harry’s best friend - and whatever the hell they’re doing - to acting like he barely even knows him.

It may seem a little extreme, especially considering that Anne has already caught him with his pants down – figuratively and kind of literally – but Louis just doesn’t know how much he’d need to tone it down.

They both knew Anne and Robin were going to join them on tour for a little bit – even though Harry was expecting them later – so it was incredibly stupid of them to not talk about what their “relationship” would look like around his parents.
For all Louis knows, Harry could have been planning on pretending like they aren’t even friends in front of them.

If that was the original plan, then it was definitely ruined from the very start, but Louis still has no idea what sort of explanation Harry has offered, so how the fuck is he supposed to know what he’s allowed or not allowed to do or say?

So, yeah, Louis truly thinks that his avoidance of public interactions with Harry these past couple of days is both understandable and completely rational.

It certainly doesn’t explain why he’s not seeking him out in private though, but Anne’s reaction - or lack thereof – sure does.

She hadn’t looked shocked, or even surprised at all when she saw him, a half naked stranger in her son’s bus, and that’s been bugging Louis ever since that morning.

He has an inkling as to why that is, and it’s hurtful enough for him to not want to interact with Harry at all, in public or one-on-one.

It all comes to a head when Louis sneaks into Harry’s bus to grab Phoebe’s teddy bear.

He’d bought it for his sister back when she was seven or eight years old and was having nightmares nearly every night, telling her that the bear, Baloo, would protect her because her brave big brother had told him to.

When Louis left to chase The Dream™, Phoebe gave him Baloo to keep him safe, even though they’re both too old now to actually believe that.

(The gesture had still brought tears to his eyes at the time, though, of course.)

Now, with everything that’s going on in his life, Louis is desperately craving that comfort and familiarity, so he decides to sneak into the bus when he sees Preston, Harry, Anne, and Robin getting into a rental, probably leaving to have lunch elsewhere.

It would be great if anything ever went Louis’ way… Like, ever.

The key isn’t in his wallet, which is where he normally keeps it, nor is it in his possession at all, apparently.

He must have left it on the table or something because he’s a lazy piece of shit who can’t even be bothered to put a fucking key away sometimes, and in his haste to get away from Harry and his mom it obviously hadn’t even crossed his mind.

He misses the good old days when he only needed to know the code to get into the bus, before some girl saw Alberto typing it and told everyone what it was, forcing them to trade Harry’s bus for one with an actual lock to keep that from happening again.

Louis texts Alberto, hoping and praying that the bodyguard is around here somewhere because the past couple of days have taken a serious toll on him and his emotional stability, so he might actually cry a lot if he doesn’t get that damn teddy bear back.

It’s very, very likely that Paul has a key as well, but it would be incredibly humiliating to have to explain to his boss that he needs to get into the bus where he used to sleep with Harry until his mom found out about it to pick up his goddamn teddy bear.
Alberto thankfully texts back saying he’s on his way, so Louis just leans against the bus door and prays that the bodyguard will hurry the fuck up.

He breathes a sigh of relief when he sees Alberto walking towards him, knowing that, unless Harry has messed with his stuff, it will barely take him two minutes to grab the teddy bear and leave.

For the first time since he started working on this tour, Louis feels like an intruder walking into Bus 1, and he hates it so much that he physically cannot get his feet to move past the doorframe of “their” bedroom.

He’s so overwhelmed by the sudden storm of negative emotions inside him that he doesn’t even notice he’s not alone anymore until he hears steps right behind him.

He instinctively turns around, finding a stone-faced Harry, his arms crossed in front of his puffed out chest.

Harry looks like the poster boy for defensiveness, and Louis knows straight away that this isn’t going to end well.

“Louis.” Harry says impassively, raising an eyebrow questioningly.

“I just came to get my sister’s teddy bear.” Louis says in a harsh tone, his chin tipped up defiantly. Harry may be physically bigger than him, especially now that he’s clearly trying to tower over Louis, but what the Texan lacks in physique, he makes up for in bravado. Plus, it certainly helps that Louis is convinced he was the one who was wronged in this whole mess, so it makes it a fight worth fighting.

Harry suddenly storms into the room, his shoulder accidentally bumping into Louis pretty fucking hard, but the singer doesn’t even wince. (Louis sure as fuck does wince, though.)

He grabs the teddy bear and slams it into the roadie’s chest aggressively, and even though it’s a goddamn stuffed animal, the force Harry uses is enough to make Louis lose his balance and clumsily stumble back two steps.

Harry had once shamefully and guilty confessed that when he gets genuinely mad, he scares himself with how physically aggressive he becomes. He’s never and would never hit anyone, and Louis has no doubt in his mind that this right here is the absolute peak of his aggressiveness, but, dear god.

Louis isn’t actually scared of Harry, and he wholeheartedly believes he would never hurt him, but, jesus, Incredible Hulk much?

“Jesus! What the fuck is your problem, you asshole?” Louis yells, and everything about him, from his stance to his tone to the way his arms swing around yells as well.

“My problem? My fucking problem? What’s your problem, you twat? You’re the one who keeps pretending like I don’t even fucking exist! I honestly can’t believe you’re acting like this after everything that’s happened between us. You’re a dickhead and a fucking coward. Cutting me out of your life isn’t just an asshole move, it’s fucking dumb as fuck because we work together. You literally ran away when my family showed up, and you’ve been avoiding me like the plague ever since that morning. And now I catch you sneaking into the bus like a fucking coward to get your shit. I’m sorry I’m such a fucking inconvenience to you, you tosser.”

“What the fuck was I supposed to do, huh? Subject your poor mother to the awkwardness of having
to chitchat with her son’s current fuck buddy? Is that what all the others did, or did they just pretend like they weren’t sucking your dick backstage? Don’t worry, sweetie, I’m sure the next guy will know the protocol better than me. Or maybe you should start handing out manuals on how to be Harry Styles’ tour slut 101, you know.”

“Have you actually gone mad? What are you talking about?”

“Just how stupid do you think I am? Your mom didn’t even bat an eye when she caught me half-naked inside your bus. She must be really used to it, huh? I guess it must happen all the time if she’s developed such a deep-rooted indifference to it. So, tell me, Harry, how many guys have you fuck around with while on tour and then thrown away like trash afterwards?”

Harry shakes his head tiredly, “I honestly cannot believe you right now. My Mum wasn’t surprised to see you because she fucking knew you were living here. I told her about you, you blind fucking idiot.”

Louis mouth hangs open as his cheeks grow increasingly warmer, and he’s so stunned that the only response he manages to produce is a weak, mostly whispered “oh”.

“Oh, indeed. Why would you immediately jump to those god-awful conclusions and not even consider for one second that I might have told my mother about you? I’ve told you a million times that my Mum and I are really close, so what did you expect? Of course I told her about you, Louis. Everything you said is the exact opposite of what I feel - this isn’t a fucking game to me or a distraction while I’m on tour. Not only are you the first person who has ever even slept in this bed with me, but you’re also the first guy that I’ve ever had genuine feelings for. Ever. Don’t try to act like I’m using you, Louis, because I’m the one who’s fucking bending over backwards trying to get you to see how great we could be together.” Harry says, his anger shifting into exhaustion and pure sadness from the first word to the last one.

Louis can’t breathe.

Like, he genuinely can’t fucking breathe.

He can’t believe they’ve been this stupid, tip toeing around this thing for so long that it became normalcy, trying to guard their hearts while simultaneously wrecking them.

“God, H… I don’t- I don’t even know where to start… I’m sorry I’ve been acting like such an asshole. If I had asked instead of just assuming all that shit, we could have talked it out then and none of this would have happened. I’m sorry my insecurities and my shitty communication skills resulted in me ignoring you for days and us getting into a shouting match. Okay, so that was a pretty shitty apology and didn’t cover half the stuff that I wanted to say, but I’m really antsy to get to the next part, which is telling you that I already see it. I’ve seen it all along, Harry… The main reason why this whole mess happened – well, besides me being dumb as a rock – is because everything was so uncertain between us that my insecurities just took over, and, well, I really like you, which sounds so middle school, but I think we’ve already established that I’m bad at expressing my feelings, so…”

Harry looks truly bewildered, tilting his head to the side as if he literally needs to look at the situation from a different angle, “Yeah?”

“Fuck yeah.” Louis answers, and the fact that they’re now communicating using half sentences doesn’t go unnoticed by him. They’re finally addressing their relationship though, so it’s a clear improvement, but they definitely still need to brush up their communication skills.

Harry hugs him then, his arms squeezing hard around the roadie’s torso, and Louis greedily breathes
in that lovely Harry smell that he’s missed so, so much.

The situation probably demanded a passionate, cinematographic kiss instead of a tight hug, but they truly are best friends, and sharing their happiness with one another is what they do.

They’re relieved and ecstatic and they’ve missed each other, so making sure every inch of their bodies is touching for quite a while is a winning strategy.

Harry does kiss him eventually though, eagerly and passionately (and quite dirtily too), and Louis feels dizzy with want and love.

Harry has this incredible ability to make him feel like the whole world is shrinking around them, and it may sound insane, but he loves the way it suffocates him.

“Does this mean you’re going to stop avoiding my Mum like the plague? She’s been dying to meet you properly, always talking about how polite and funny you seem when you’re not literally running away from us.”

Louis rolls his eyes, “Aaaaand my boner’s gone. Way to cockblock yourself, Styles.”

Harry snorts, “I’m sure either my Mum or Robin are going to show up knocking on that door any second now. I came back to get my phone, so they must be wondering what the hell is taking so long. I’d prefer it if the half-naked encounters with my Mum didn’t become a habit, if that’s alright with you.”

“You and me both, trust me.” Louis says, wincing as he’s reminded of how awkward that first meeting was, even with Anne actively trying to not make it a big deal.

“Hey, Lou? Um, do you- I-. Wow, jesus…I’m shit at this. I guess what I’m trying to ask is if we’re, like, you know, together? Like, the next time Gemma calls you my boyfriend like she’s been doing pretty much since I first mentioned you, will it be true?” Harry mostly mumbles, and Louis is pretty sure there isn’t a single ring on his fingers that he didn’t mess with while getting that out.

It’s absolutely adorable, and his heart soars with the knowledge that Harry cares deeply enough about him to not only ask him to be his boyfriend, but also be this nervous while doing it.

“Yeah, you’re right… You are shit at this. “ Louis teases, loving the way Harry rolls his eyes but still blushes cherubically. “Lose the annoyed frog face, Curly. Of course we’re together now. Harry and Louis, sitting in a tree, k-i-s-”

Harry interrupts him before he can finish, literally sweeping him off his feet as he drags him into a passionate kiss.

It’s a hard job being Harry Styles’ boyfriend, but someone’s gotta do it…

*  

_Mumbai, India_

Harry keeps tapping his fingers on the table, and Louis can’t stop looking at them.

The singer has just come back from dropping Anne and Robin at the airport, and Louis has got to say he’s probably going to miss them a little bit, which is not that weird considering that he also misses Gemma.
(To be fair, he exchanges snaps with Gemma all the time, so it’s not like he hasn’t had any contact with her since Vegas and is just creepily attached to her, or something.)

Harry’s whole family is just too loveable, really, which is fitting, because lord knows how easily Louis is falling in love with him.

Anne is incredibly sweet and fiercely protective, reminding him of his own Mom, and Robin is hilarious, having that same sarcastic, teasing sense of humor as Louis.

Harry had once told him that Anne and Gemma keep him grounded and constantly remind him of where he came from, but Robin is the one who keeps him humble.

At the time, Louis hadn’t understood the difference, but he sure does now.

Robin has this way of gently teasing Harry and keeping his astonishing success from going to his head, and Louis thinks that are plenty of other “famous” people out there who need a Robin in their lives.

He can really see how these three lovely people – Anne, Robin, and Gemma – have shaped Harry and helped him grow into the sweet, generous, kind-hearted man that he is today.

They ought to be really proud of themselves and of Harry.

So, yeah, Louis really enjoyed getting to know Anne and Robin, and watching Harry interact with his family, and all that, but it will be nice to finally have some more alone time with him.

The official beginning of their relationship was kind of poorly timed because they haven’t had a chance to really live that “honeymoon” phase, with all the sappiness and sexiness that it entails.

With Anne and Robin gone, Louis doesn’t have to worry about what is “too much” and he’s planning on fully enjoying their newly established and labeled relationship.

Also, now that their feelings are out in the open, Louis isn’t a slave to that paranoia of making sure nothing he does or says is too romantic or revealing anymore, and he couldn’t be surer that the happiest days of his life lie ahead.

Which brings us back to right now, with Harry tapping his fingers on the table while reading some boring work emails, and Louis obsessively watching him like a creep.

(Whatever happened to the rock and roll lifestyle? Louis feels like Harry is constantly signing paperwork and, like, talking to his accountant, and shit.)

The thing is that Harry has these long, slim fingers, and Louis wants them everywhere – running down his back, wrapped around his cock, in his mouth, inside him – fuck, he really wants them inside him.

He honestly doesn’t know when he became so fucking dirty… Sure, he’s had sexual urges and fantasies since before his voice dropped, but there’s something about Harry that brings out a whole new side of him, and, honestly, Louis has run out of fucks to give.

He knows what he wants, and there isn’t a single trace of prejudice left in him.

“What?” Harry asks, finally noticing Louis’ unwavering stare.

“I want them inside me.” Louis blurts out, and, okay, he definitely could have phrased it a little
better, or, you know, not totally embarrassed himself by sounding like the most desperate guy under the sun.

Harry is so startled by Louis’ statement that he accidentally drops his phone, the sound unnervingly loud in the otherwise completely silent bus.

If he were in a different state of mind, he’d make a joke about how Harry really needs to work both on his sex appeal and his butter fingers, but he’s too desperate to be funny.

It’s not the kind of desperation you feel when you go too long without getting a chance for sexual release, like when he first went on tour and couldn’t even find the time to jerk off.

It’s different, like his whole being is craving Harry and Harry’s touch, even his goddamn soul.

Harry stands up and walks to the Louis’ side of the table almost predatorily, his phone long forgotten, looking at him like he’s going to fucking wreck him.

The unfiltered desire on Harry’s face, the dominance in his stance as he towers over a sitting Louis, and the determination in his eyes work like magic on the roadie, and he feels the arousal travelling through his body without even being touched, culminating in an embarrassing shiver that runs down his spine.

Louis stands up then, not nearly as steady on his feet as Harry, his chin tilted upwards as he waits for the singer to kiss him.

“If you want it, come get it.” Harry teased, smirking cockily as he straightens his back and tilts his chin up as well, making it as hard as possible for Louis to kiss him.

Louis might be both hard and desperate, but he refuses to play into Harry’s teasing game.

He hits him in the nuts instead, not hard enough to actually hurt the Briton, but just enough to surprise him and turn the tables.

“I’d rather bring you down to my size.” Louis says jokingly, kissing Harry soundly on the lips.

The singer is smart enough to forgive and forget, kissing him back straight away.

Harry’s hands move down to Louis’ ass then, sliding underneath the waistband of his sweatpants to grab his bare cheeks and gently pull them apart.

One of Harry’s fingers draws a teasing path down his crack to his hole, circling it softly and slowly, but never pressing in.

“Come on.” Harry says, lifting Louis like he weighs literally nothing.

The roadie wraps his legs around Harry’s torso instinctively, carding his hands through those lovely soft curls as he bites his boyfriend’s plush lips provocatively. Harry’s answering groan makes Louis’ cock twitch in the confinement of his sweatpants.

Harry’s grip on his ass doesn’t waver in the slightest as the singer carries him to their bedroom, not even when Louis starts licking and biting and sucking on the soft, delicate skin of his neck.

He knows he should be careful and avoid marking the his boyfriend’s skin to not create speculation, especially considering that a lot of the bruises made in the heat of the moment before have already been thoroughly talked about on social media, but right now he doesn’t give a fuck.
He wants Harry to look in the mirror and be reminded of how much Louis wants him, how much he aches for him, how much he wants his fingers filling him up until he can’t breathe.

It doesn’t take long before they’re both naked, and Louis is reminded of how much he loves rediscovering what Harry’s bare skin feels, smells, and tastes like.

“Why aren’t we spending every minute of every day doing this?” Harry asks, reflecting Louis’ exact thoughts. Everything about him right now, from his flushed skin, to his raspy, low-pitched tone, to his hardening cock is concrete evidence of how much he wants Louis, and it’s just the biggest turn on for the roadie.

“Beats me.” Louis mumbles, even though he knows it was a rhetorical question, watching Harry grab the lube. It’s certainly not the first time they’ve needed it, not with all the lazy early morning handjobs they’ve exchanged, but it is the first time that it’s going inside Louis instead of on him, and that thought is enough to make his cock twitch and his hands shake slightly.

Whether or not Harry notices his sudden nervousness, Louis can’t be sure, but he does slow down a bit, lying on top of the smaller man and kissing him slowly, turning their previously almost frantic pace into a gentler, more intimate one.

Despite the fact that Harry is bigger than him, not only in height, but also in overall build, Louis has never felt trapped or suffocated under his body, not even when his boyfriend puts all his weight on him.

He feels protected in a very primal way, and the amount of pure love and need that he feels for Harry when they’re in this position scares him sometimes.

Harry starts kissing his way down Louis’ body - his neck, his collarbones, god, both his nipples, and then his lips linger over the roadie’s ribs for a little bit, just pressed there without doing anything, and the realization that he stopped to feel his heartbeat makes the Texan’s heart melt.

His kisses grow sloppier and sloppier, going from sweet to absolutely indecent as he moves down Louis’ body, all tongue and teeth by the time he makes it to the inside of the roadie’s thigh.

The sound of the bottle of lube being popped open stupidly makes Louis’ dick twitch, a Pavlov reflex of sorts, but, funnily enough, so does Harry’s.

(Louis may be pathetic, but so is Harry, apparently – a match made in heaven, truly.)

Louis holds his breath instinctively when he feels a finger circling his rim, and he honestly doesn’t know why he’s so fucking tense. He’s lost count of how many times he’s had his own fingers inside him, and, thanks to his ridiculous friends, a dildo as well, but he’s still nervous.

The moment Harry’s lips wrap around his cock though, there’s no trace of nervousness or even coherent thought left at all.

Harry presses his finger into him a million times slower than Louis would, and, about a century later, he finally starts working it in and out of him.

It’s physically frustrating but so, so reassuring to see just how gentle and patient he is, especially considering that he doesn’t even know just how new all this is to Louis.

“‘Nother.”

Harry releases his cock with a loud pop, a shiver running down Louis’ spine when the cold air hits
his spit-wet length, “Not yet.”

Fuck Harry for being so fucking considerate, and, also, thank you Lord for creating such a caring, lovely human being.

“Please…” Wow, Louis is not above begging in the bedroom, apparently. Guess his pride ends where pleasure starts, huh.

“Patience, my little cowboy.” Harry says with a smirk, though he does add a second finger soon after.

Considering how slowly Harry had been doing everything, Louis certainly wasn’t expecting him to start looking for his spot right after adding that second finger.

Louis’ leg kicking out involuntarily when the pads of Harry’s fingers graze that lovely bundle of nerves nearly dead on his first try is, therefore, perfectly understandable.

God help him; when he’s finally comfortable with letting Harry fuck him, he might actually die.

Harry must be determined to drive him insane, because he keeps pressing and stroking and tapping his spot with maddening precision over and over again, sometimes softly and other times harder, at a fast pace and then so slowly, Louis’ body instinctively starts chasing his fingers.

“Fuck, look at you.” Harry whispers, almost as if just to himself. Louis can only imagine how debauched he must look, his whole body pink and sweaty, his skin covered in old bites and new, his cock dripping onto his abdomen, and, of course, his hole greedily swallowing his boyfriend’s fingers.

If Louis had been loud, loud, loud just a few minutes before, moaning, cursing, and mewling until his throat ached, he’s been rendered speechless now – no, not just speechless, soundless.

His impending orgasm keeps building up and up and up, beyond what Louis even thought possible, and he honestly believes for a few seconds that he’s going to spontaneously combust.

He hears nothing but the blood rushing in his ears, feels nothing but Harry’s hands, sees nothing but the stars behind his eyelids as he squeezes his eyes shut.

And then Harry takes him into his mouth again, making Louis come so, so hard, not even breathing as the waves of pleasure wreck his body and make him tremble.

Once he has recovered enough to remember that his body is made up of more parts than just his cock and ass, he finally manages to open his eyes again, and is thoroughly disappointed to see that Harry has already come and Louis missed it.

It’s so fucking frustrating to never be able to keep his eyes open once after a certain point… Like, he could live with being one of those people who cry after having an orgasm or who scream so loudly, their neighbors call the cops, but no, Louis just had to be the kind of guy who can’t keep his fucking eyes open. Cool…

“Good?” Harry asks, kissing Louis’ cheek sloppily before getting up to grab a small towel to clean them up a bit.

“Um, yeah… A little above good, I’d say… Something more along the lines of a hundred times better than I imagined it. And lord knows I’ve been imagining it for, like, ten years.”
Harry snorts, “Should I be worried about the fact that you’ve apparently been imagining what it would be like to have my fingers inside you for ten years even though I haven’t known you for that long? Oh my god, were you born in the UK after all? Did you go to my school? I knew that accent was too over the top to be real!”

Harry lies back down, resting his head on Louis’ chest and throwing a leg over his thighs, which is quite fortunate because that means that he is now within reach to be slapped on the arm for that joke about his accent.

“The world doesn’t revolve around you, posh boy. God, celebrities are so full of themselves… I meant someone else’s fingers in general, not yours in specific. Anyone would do, really, just as long as it’s not my fingers for a change.” Louis jokes, rolling his eyes at Harry. He doesn’t even realize the weight of his words or take into consideration that this is brand new information for Harry. Orgasms are dangerous and they should be illegal.

(Actually, no! Never mind! Louis doesn’t mean it!)

“What?” Harry asks, lifting his head to look right into Louis’ eyes. “What do you mean? Have you never let anyone else finger you?”

Louis cheeks heat up faster than sweet tea in July, which doesn’t exactly scream I’m-not-a-prude-I-swear. To be fair, it’s partially because Harry flat out said “finger you”, and he’s still not used to being around people who are so unabashed and honest when talking about sex, especially when it’s not even dirty talk.

(He’s honest to god heard the terms “marital duties” – which has got to be the most disturbing and unromantic way to refer to sex, not to mention oppressive and misogynistic - and “you-know-what” more times in his life than the word “sex”.)

“It’s not a big deal. I mean, I did tell you that Levelland wasn’t the best place to, like, explore my sexuality, or whatever. It’s not like I’ve been saving myself for someone special, or anything like that, you know, it just kind of happened – or didn’t happen, I guess. So, yeah, not a big deal. Or, I mean, I don’t think that it’s a big deal. Do you? Uh, is it, like, a bad thing for you?”

“No… Of course not, Lou.” Harry says tenderly, “What about everything that we’ve done before? You know, the-"

Louis interrupts Harry before he can make him blush again, “Yes, I had already done everything else before. I definitely wasn’t giving the pope a run for his money in the chastity department before I met you, don’t worry.”

“Okay. Okay.” Harry says, and if Louis were to look up the word “emotionless” in the dictionary, there would be a picture of his boyfriend right now next to the definition.

“Your mouth may be saying okay, but your face and tone are not.” Louis forces himself to say, wanting Harry to tell him the truth - even if it’s not what he wants to hear – instead of “the right thing to say”.

“I’m just surprised, I swear. You’re so naturally good at, like, romance and sex, and all that, I guess I kind of forget you haven’t been in a proper relationship before either. I definitely would have never guessed that you’re less “experienced”, or whatever, than me. I’m glad you told me - even though it was clearly an accidental confession – not because it changes anything, but because it’s an extra reminder to always make sure you’re comfortable with whatever we’re doing. Always be honest about what you’re feeling and tell me to slow down if you need me too, okay?”
“Okay. And that goes both ways, H. Just because you’re not a baby gay like me, it doesn’t mean that you can’t feel uncomfortable or rushed, or whatever. So, yeah, I’ll tell you, but you’ll tell me too, right?”

“Of course, love.” Harry agrees, resting his head on Louis’ chest again – well, resting is not the right word, it’s more like he’s hiding his face, and the roadie knows him well enough to be able to predict an imminent mumbled confession.

“It’s kind of hot, actually.” Harry says, right on cue, and Louis would be so, so tempted to assume the singer’s lying to reassure him if not for how familiar he is with this unsure, coy side of his boyfriend.

The best-case scenario in Louis’ mind had been Harry not being disappointed or turned off by his lack of experience, but this reaction was fucking unimaginable.

He really needs to start giving his boyfriend a lot more credit and make an effort to be more open and honest, because, so far, there hasn’t been a single insecurity of Louis’ that he hasn’t easily crushed.

Harry makes it almost easy for him to be comfortable with feeling vulnerable, which is a really big deal for someone who has spent his whole life trying to grow thicker skin and a perfect poker face.

The fact that Louis is happily giving his whole fucking heart to Harry should be absolutely terrifying, but he feels so, so safe and loved all the time that he just can’t help but think that what they have is it.

* 

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**

Louis hasn’t seen Harry all day, just like yesterday and the day before, and, well, he’s a little cranky about it.

He knows he’s being absolutely ridiculous, but he’s used to spending his free time and his working hours with his boyfriend, so only seeing him at night has been stupidly hard for Louis.

(They say the first step is admitting you have a problem, and he’s aware that struggling with spending ten-ish hours apart is not very healthy. He’s working on it, okay? His life has never and will never revolve around a man, no matter how much he may love him.)

Harry’s “lads”, as the singer likes to call the songwriters and producers he always works with, flew to Brazil earlier this week so that they could get started on the next album, so he’s been creating music with them, or writing an album, or whatever pretentious term the pros call it.

When the tour was being planned, Harry had actually asked for a few days off in Brazil because he loves it, especially Rio de Janeiro, and now, as it turns out, he’s been working nearly day and night, and if that isn’t some serious commitment and love for music, Louis doesn’t know what is.

The Briton wasn’t even supposed to start working on the album until the end of the tour, but inspiration had apparently struck him and he just couldn’t wait until then.

Louis keeps trying to tell himself over and over again that it’s incredibly conceited to assume that he’s the source of that inspiration – Harry’s muse, if you will - but it’s a pretty fair assumption considering that Harry himself has hinted at it, a mischievous glint in his eyes and a fond smile on his face as he talked about how he’s “been feeling really inspired lately” and how he has “been blessed with loads of great things to write about recently”.
And he must be feeling really fucking inspired, because he’s been holed up with his boys at the studio from the minute they arrived, only coming back to the bus late at night and then leaving early in the morning.

Louis might miss Harry, but he’d never resent him for spending a lot of time doing what he loves: music.

Writing these songs that are like chunks of his soul and then performing them is a huge part of who Harry is, and Louis loves all of him, not just the silly, cuddly boy he’s lucky enough to wake up next to everyday.

Liam once made a joke about how every night is basically a repeat of the hundreds of nights before for Harry, and the result was not pretty, the singer getting offended on the fans behalf and arguing that the people and the energy are always different and every show is special to him.

Harry loves his job, and Louis loves Harry, so he’d never in a million years stand in the way of his boyfriend’s career.

On the contrary, there’s nothing he wants more than for him to be happy and to accomplish every single thing his fascinating brain can think of, even if it means that they won’t be able to spend as much time together.

Plus, it’s not like Harry is the only person on this tour that Louis enjoys spending time with, and despite him being kind of a shitty friend who tends to neglect Steve, Niall, and Liam, they still welcome him with open arms every time he leaves that HarryandLouis bubble. (Again, working on that codependence thing…)

Harry had left in a hurry this morning, but not before kissing Louis’ sleep-warm cheek and telling him that he had a surprise for him later.

The Texan had been so sleep-dazed that he hadn’t even asked what the surprise was – which is really out of character for him – and he had almost started to believe he’d dreamt the whole thing until Alberto asked him if he was ready to go to the studio.

Louis feels a little uncomfortable as he walks into the label’s headquarters, almost too exposed, in a way.

Being with Harry at the venue is perfectly excusable. Even a little sightseeing or grabbing a cup of coffee can be easily explained.

But here is no place for a roadie.

There’s literally no way to explain why someone who helps set up the stage would be needed during the writing phase of the process.

The fact that Louis, and only Louis, has been brought here by Harry’s bodyguard so that they can (potentially) go somewhere else together after eight fucking p.m. is a little too incriminating, and that’s making him nervous.

Maybe he’s overthinking it, but the fact that the receptionist makes eye contact with him for a split second and then looks down at her lap like her crotch is the most interesting thing in the world, really bringing home the message that she “never saw him”, doesn’t exactly lessen his paranoia.

Louis and Alberto don’t exchange a single word as they walk down the hallway, everything about this whole situation making the Texan feel like he needs to be as invisible as possible, even if Harry
has never asked him to.

Alberto suddenly stops in front of a sturdy-looking door, and his knock is answered by someone Harry definitely introduced Louis to, but he can’t remember his name for the life of him.

He now realizes this is a proper recording studio, the complicated-looking music panel thing placed on this side of the glass with Harry sitting on the other side playing his guitar and singing into the microphone.

Harry has his eyes closed, as he always does when he’s putting his heart into the song, so he doesn’t notice Louis coming in.

He stands in the corner quietly, afraid of getting in anyone’s way, trying not to get distracted by how mind-blowingly amazing Harry sounds and focus on the lyrics.

It’s a love song, there’s no doubt about it, and Louis is trying so, so hard to silence that voice inside him screaming “it’s about you”.

Unless Harry explicitly tells him so, he’s dead set on assuming it’s not about him, because the opposite is heartbreak waiting to happen.

The song is beautiful either way, and that’s what truly matters.

He must be more hidden than he thought, because it takes a while for Harry to spot him after opening his eyes. The look of surprise on his face almost makes Louis start panicking thinking that maybe he was supposed to wait outside, but then his boyfriend’s lips quirk upwards into one of those lovely dimpled smiles, and the Texan instantly relaxes.

“Sorry, I hadn’t realized it was this late already.” Harry says as he gets out of the glass cubicle thing, and he nearly stumbles backwards in surprise when the singer greets him with a small peck in front of, well, people Louis doesn’t really know. None of the guys seem taken aback or surprised though, so he guesses they were either told about them or they’ve simply clued in on their own.

“It’s fine, don’t worry about it. I, uh- That song you were singing sounded really, really great, by the way; like, the guitar and the lyrics and your voice, and all that. It’s really good, H.”

Harry smiles bashfully, his cheeks coloring slightly, “It still needs a lot of, like, tweaks and stuff. We’re mostly just recording so that we won’t forget the work we’ve done so far. So, yeah, it’s definitely not finished yet. But, uh, thank you. I’m glad you liked it.”

“Get out of here, Harry. We’ll pack up, don’t worry about it.” A guy who Louis is pretty sure is the producer says, slapping Harry’s ass playfully. Uh, excuse you? Saying all the right words and yet doing all the wrong things there, pal.

“Alright, lads, thanks. I’ll see you tomorrow, then.” Harry says, placing a gentle hand on the dip of Louis’s spine.

“See you, guys.” Louis says, and the fact that he’s still being polite despite the fact that all he’s thinking about right now is kissing Harry until their lips are swollen really proves that he had a great upbringing.

“Bye, Louis, whose eyes are such a mesmerizing shade of blue, Harry would gladly drown in them.” The guy who slapped Harry’s ass says - and, okay, he’s back on Louis’ nice list.

Huh, how about that?
“Fuck off.” Harry mumbles embarrassedly, giving him the finger as he uses the hand on Louis’ back to quite literally pressure him into walking out of the studio.

Louis raises his eyebrows and smiles cockily at Harry as they walk towards the car, though, truthfully, smugness isn’t even in the top five emotions he’s feeling right now.

Holy fucking shit!

Harry really is thinking about him and talking about him and writing about him, and Louis is so, so happy and in love right now he could just start fucking bawling his eyes out.

“You can fuck off as well.” Harry says, bumping his hip against Louis’.

“Nah, you’d miss me too much.”

No matter how much Louis nags Harry, his boyfriend still doesn’t tell him where they’re going, claiming that “the magic will be lost” if he tries to explain it.

Not even Alberto puts him out of his misery, smiling fondly in response to his attempts at bribing him.

Well, Harry was kind of right in the sense that it would be hard to try to explain where they were heading, but there’s absolutely nothing magical about this place. (Maybe black magic, actually…)

“Are you going to kill me or something?” Louis asks half-jokingly, and the fact that Alberto starts reversing and driving away, leaving him alone with Harry, only adds to that theory.

They’re literally in a dark alley, walking towards a barely illuminated door, and if it weren’t for Harry being such a fucking cupcake, he’d honestly assume the surprise was a stab wound.

“I know this looks pretty sketchy, but someone would probably recognize me if we went through the front door. Plus, who doesn’t love a nice backdoor?” Harry says with a smirk on his lips, taking a card out of his pocket and placing it in front of the sensor. There’s an elevator two steps away from the door, and Louis is half-convinced he’s about to be recruited as a spy, especially considering that Harry has to use the card again just to get the elevator doors to open.

It’s dark and quiet and sketchy as fuck, and then, all of the sudden, it’s… wow. Just… wow…

Louis had barely even noticed that the elevator was made of glass, too busy looking at Harry in confusion (and, also, because he’s pretty, of course), so he’s understandably startled when ugly cement suddenly turns into golden sand and beautiful clear water as far as the eye can see.

“Wha’?” Louis mumbles, not trusting his own eyes. Surely this has to be some sort of a hallucination, because it’s fucking impossible for a place to be this beautiful without being photoshopped.

Has he casually walked into one of those man-made scenarios like in the Hunger Games?

“Pretty, isn’t it?” Harry asks, hugging Louis from behind, “I thought it would be nice to ditch the bus for a night and stay here instead, especially considering that we haven’t been able to spend that much time together. If I only get to see you in the evening, might as well make a proper occasion out of it. Our penthouse even has a little pool on the balcony and an ocean view, and everything, which is pretty cool.”

The elevator doors slide open before Louis has a chance to say anything, which is for the best, as it would probably have been just a bunch of incoherent noises.
“It’s amazing.” Louis says quietly to nobody but himself as he stares at the view in front of him, wondering how the fuck he’s managed to end up here, from a small town boy with big dreams and no means to make them come true to being in Brazil with his sweet, lovely, gorgeous boyfriend. Shit…

Louis eventually starts exploring the penthouse, and when he reaches the bedroom and takes in the beautiful, plush bed, he just knows.

Harry walks into the room precisely when Louis was about to go find him, the heels of his black boots clicking on the floor.

Louis wraps an arm behind his boyfriend’s head and uses the other hand to guide his face down so that he can kiss him, going in for a raunchy kiss right off the bat, all teeth and tongue.

Harry’s hands moves down to grab his ass, and Louis instantly knows that now is the time to make his wishes known if he doesn’t want his boyfriend to think that it’s an impulsive decision later on.

“Fuck me?” Louis turns it into a question at the last second, knowing that sex isn’t something that you should ever demand.

“What?” Harry mumbles, moving his face just far away enough to be able to look at Louis.

Louis rolls his eyes, immediately using sarcasm as a crutch because lord knows having the courage to ask Harry to fuck him is hard, and having to ask twice is even harder, “Would you like a more posh proposition? Would you kindly place your manhood within my being, Sir Harry Edward Styles?”

Harry scrunches up his nose in that classic I-want-to-laugh-but-I-can’t-let-you-trivialize-this way Louis has seen quite a few times before, “Are you sure?”

“Oh, time for me to call Alberto. He’ll probably be better in the sack than you, anyway.” Louis jokes, squealing loudly when Harry literally picks him up and puts him back where he was before he started walking towards the door theatrically. (Why is the fact that Harry can manhandle him this easily such a turn on for Louis? Ugh, he hates himself.)

“No. You’re my boyfriend. Mine.” Harry grumbles as he pulls Louis closer to him, sounding a tad bit jealous even though they both know the Texan is only joking.

Louis doesn’t have a chance to mock his possessiveness before the singer is stealing his ability to think properly by means of a rough kiss, playing even dirtier by teasing one of his unfairly sensitive nipples with one of his thumbs.

Fucker.

Louis’ got some special weapons as well, palming Harry’s bulge almost too hard as he tangles his fingers in his boyfriend’s curls and pulls.

At the least they’re both moaning now.

He starts walking backwards towards the bed (hopefully!), pulling Harry with him without separating their lips at all.

They’re so wrapped up in each other that neither of them is watching where they’re going, so it’s no surprise that they end up bumping into a dresser.
They don’t let their clumsiness deter them though, laughing quietly into each other’s mouths as their hands keep roaming like it’s the first time they’re touching.

(To be fair, between their unrelenting desperation, constant arousal, and perpetual clumsiness they’ve gotten so used to bumping into stuff and tripping and head butting and shit that it’s almost become a natural part of their sex life.)

“Fuck, I love your body.” Louis whispers as his hands slide upwards underneath Harry’s white t-shirt. *I love you* is what he wants to add, but he bites his boyfriend’s lower lip instead to keep quiet. It’s too soon, too much, too everything.

Harry separates their bodies just enough to take Louis’ t-shirt off and then his own, tracing the tattoo on his chest with the same amount of reverence as when they’d fooled around for the first time. (Or maybe even more.)

“The windows. Do we need to close the curtains or something?” Louis mumbles as he starts pulling Harry’s jeans down, and he can’t for the life of him understand why he finds the fact that his boyfriend sometimes “forgets” to put on underwear so damn attractive.

“No. It’s, uh- it’s- *Jesus*, do you see what you do to me? Can’t even think properly. Fucking hell. It’s one-way glass.” Harry says, having to stop his ministrations on Louis’ neck to focus on what he’s saying.

By the time they finally make it to the bed, Louis’ black boxer briefs are the only piece of clothing left, but even those don’t last long, Harry pulling them off and throwing them carelessly.

“*God*, I love looking at you. You’re so fucking beautiful, Louis.” Harry says, literally stopping everything he was doing just to take in Louis’ naked body, his gaze honest to god moving from the top of the his head all the way down to his toes.

“Shit, lube! Shit.” Harry exclaims suddenly, jumping up from the bed and running back to the living room where Louis remembers seeing one of his fancy leather bags.

He comes back holding the bottle of lube in his hand almost like a trophy, so visibly proud of himself and smiling so victoriously, Louis can’t help but laugh.

“Shut up.”

“Make me.” Louis says salaciously, running a teasing hand down his front to grab his hard cock.

“You do know I could stand here all day watching you touch yourself, right? Are you sure you want to play this game?” Harry asks, smiling cockily at Louis. Damn it!

“Ugh, I hate you.” Louis groans, throwing a pillow at Harry, “C’mon.”

Harry laughs at his frustration, the little fucker, but he still joins Louis on the bed, his lips finding the sensitive skin of the roadie’s neck straight away.

Those lovely, plush lips never leave Louis’ skin after that, from his chest, to his belly, to the head of his cock, to his balls, and, finally, a sloppy kiss right over his hole that makes his leg twitch.

“Giddy up, cowboy.” Harry jokes, lying down next to Louis.

They’d recently discovered that they’re both really into Louis being fingered while he’s on top - even though it’s not very practical - clearly a projection of a shared fantasy of having Louis ride Harry for
real. (The fact that he often bounces up and down on his boyfriend’s fingers makes it pretty damn obvious.)

He sits down on Harry’s lower abdomen as he always does, his legs on either side of his boyfriend as he leans downwards to kiss him.

He gets so distracted (in the best way possible) by Harry’s tongue licking into his mouth and how deliciously trapped his cock is between their bodies that he gasps loudly when a lube-wet finger suddenly starts circling his rim.

(He hadn’t even noticed Harry opening the bottle, let alone getting his fingers wet.)

“Please.” Louis begs, needing that lovely, long finger inside him, like, yesterday.

Harry is either in a merciful mood or he’s just too eager to tease him, his finger putting just enough pressure on his hole for it gently allow it in, and Louis rewards him by sucking his lower lip into his mouth and then biting it, giving his boyfriend that element of pain that he knows drives him insane.

Harry is more clinical than usual as he works his fingers in and out of Louis, sitting up with his back resting against the headboard instead of lying down to make it easier to open him up.

He makes up for it by being extremely gentle in the way he kisses him and runs his hands over his body.

A loud, broken moan escapes from Louis’ mouth when the pads of Harry’s fingers suddenly press his spot teasingly, but he’s not embarrassed about it in the slightest. His boyfriend has told him, time and time again, that he absolutely loves those unintentional sounds and indecipherable words because they mean that he’s making Louis feel so good, he literally stops being coherent.

Somewhere between Harry adding a third finger and Louis starting to ride them shamelessly, he notices that his boyfriend keeps looking out the window, and, well, he’s a little offended, to be honest.

He tries to ignore it first, not wanting to start a fight, but god fucking damn it, is it really that hard to pay attention to your boyfriend while you’re getting him ready for your dick – for the first time ever, mind you?

He’s hoping the look of pure annoyance on his face will be enough to get his message across without having to say anything, but his gaze keeps moving so erratically between the window and Louis’ naked boy that noticing anything seems to be beyond his current abilities.

The thing is, Harry doesn’t look bored at all – he looks almost… overwhelmed.

Is he…? Could it be?

Louis just takes the fucking plunge before he can start doubting himself, “Maybe it’s not one-way glass after all. Maybe everybody out there can see how hot we look together. How much I want you inside me.”

Bingo.

Harry literally stops breathing, his whole body twitching as his blown pupils finally look directly into Louis’.

“Fuck. Louis.”
Harry must be aching to touch himself, the one hand that isn’t inside Louis erratically squeezing and releasing his thigh.

He doesn’t though, either because he’s feeling a little self-conscious now that Louis has learnt about his little exhibition, well, *kink*, if you will, or because he’s scared he won’t last long enough to actually fuck his boyfriend.

Louis gently pulls Harry’s fingers out of himself, moving backwards to rub his ass all over his boyfriend’s hard cock, “You like that, don’t you? Everyone seeing us like this. Seeing *me* like this.”

“*Mine.*” Harry grunts, and Louis’ entire body is on fucking *fire*. He’s never felt more powerful in his whole life than he does right now, watching the effect of his words on his boyfriend’s body and face and *mind*.

Who wants a sweet, vanilla first time when you can have *this*?

“Ummm. That’s right. Nobody else can have me like this. Only you, Harry. First one and everything.”

Did he take it too far by bringing up the whole never-had-someone-inside-me-before thing? Is that going to be a turn off for Harry?

“Last one, too.” Harry growls, and *oh my fucking god*, if they don’t hurry the fuck up, they’re both going to come before they can actually make it that far.

Louis kisses Harry like his life depends on it.

Like, *of course* he does.

Harry has just fucking said he wants to be his last one - his *forever*, basically.

Sometimes Louis gets genuinely scared that one day he’s going to wake up in his bed in Levelland and find out that this whole new life he’s built for himself was just a fever dream or something, and a huge chunk of that too-good-to-be-true fear is Harry. *God*, he’s so fucking in love with him…

Although that wasn’t Louis’ intention, the kiss calms them both down a bit, the slow drag of tongues and lips distracting them from their angry-red cocks.

At some point, Harry gets so into it that brings a hand up to caress Louis’ face, clearly forgetting that that very hand was the one he used to open his boyfriend up, and the roadie can’t help but burst out laughing when he feels the slimy lube on the side of his face.

“Shit. Sorry.” Harry says, laughing embarrassedly as he uses the sheet to clean the lube on Louis’ cheek.

“You’re a *mess*, Styles. What am I going to do with you?” Louis says, rolling his eyes fondly, “Oh, wait. I know exactly what I’m going to do with you.”

Louis picks up the discarded bottle of lube, taking his time coating Harry’s cock, more for his boyfriend’s enjoyment than for his own welfare, to be honest.

“Come here.” Harry says, leaning forward until their faces are so close, they have to cross their eyes to look at each other, “Go slow. There’s no rush. And if you need to stop or take a break, or something, we will, okay?”
“You do remember pitching in on a fucking dildo for my birthday, right? I think I’ll be alright.” Louis jokes, kissing Harry’s nose fondly to show that he does appreciate his patience and concern.

Harry steals a quick kiss before tilting backwards until his upper back is resting against the headboard again, placing a supportive hand right where Louis’ thigh meets his ass.

Louis inhales deeply as he moves down onto Harry’s cock, guiding it with one hand as the other spreads out over his boyfriend’s front for balance.

“Oh, fuck.” He whispers as the head of Harry’s dick pops slowly but surely into him, the feeling not particularly pleasant yet, but not really painful either thanks to his boyfriend’s thorough prepping.

“You feel so good, Lou.” Harry says quietly, and the fondness and awe on his face make Louis’ heart grow three sizes.

He lowers himself slowly, not wanting his greed for Harry’s cock to cause him to bite off more than he can chew.

By the time he’s finally fully seated on his boyfriend’s lower body, he’s feeling a little frustrated and embarrassed about how ridiculously long it took him, but Harry is still patiently caressing Louis’ thighs and stroking his cock.

He just sits there unmoving for a little bit, getting used to the feeling of Harry’s cock filling him up and trying to fully relax.

Once he feels ready, he leans forward and holds onto the headboard, locking eyes with his boyfriend as he slowly allows half his length to slide out of him.

He can’t believe there was ever a time when he thought eye contact while doing anything remotely sexual was awkward, because now he absolutely loves holding Harry’s gaze, all blown pupils and glassy eyes and desire.

A little breathy “oh” escapes from Louis’ lips as he sits back down, the feeling of Harry’s warm, pulsing cock inside him a million times better than any dildo in the world. (Vibrating or not. Sorry, Niall.)

He rocks forward and backwards four or five times more before it stops being enough, every inch of Louis’ body begging him to bounce on his boyfriend’s lovely cock.

Harry’s gaze follows him as he releases the headboard and sits up properly, and if Louis had to pick a favorite “Harry”, this would be it, jaw slacked and pupils blown, his cheeks so pink, he looks deceivingly innocent.

Harry’s hand around his cock stills in an open fist, letting Louis fuck upwards into it with every bounce. The roadie still hasn’t been able to get the angle right to hit his own spot yet, but between the fullness and the friction on his cock, it’s still the best time of his fucking life.

The taller man bends his knees then, pushing Louis’ torso forward until his cock hits his boyfriend’s spot dead on, making the roadie’s eyes roll back into his head as he moans loudly.

Fuck, fuck, fuck. Louis’ whole body is trembling, so much so that he can hardly get his legs to cooperate anymore.

He hasn’t run out of energy yet, which is what he imagined would happen eventually, but he’s so overwhelmed by maddening pleasure that his body just can’t feel and work at the same time.
Harry holds him up with both hands under his ass then, snapping his hips upwards into Louis instead.

“Harry…” Louis wails, and either it was really, really loud, or the pleasure is fucking with his head because it literally echoed in his ears.

He really, really wants to lean backwards so that his upper body can rest on Harry’s bent legs, but he’s one hundred percent sure that if he lets go of the headboard, he’s just going to end up falling on top of his boyfriend like a puppet with its strings cut.

“Hold on to me.” Harry says, and, in a much more graceful move than Louis has ever witnessed from him, he flips them over, steadying himself with both hands on either side of the Texan’s head.

Louis is so, so close, ribcage expanding heavily as he pants and writhes. Harry brings his boyfriend’s knees closer to his chest then, changing the angle until he finds exactly what he’s looking for.

“O-oh.” Louis cries out when Harry’s cock hits his spot, his back bending at an awkward angle as he holds on to the pillow underneath him for dear life. It never ceases to amaze him how well Harry can read his body and know exactly what he needs and how to give it him, better than Louis himself at times.

“C’mon, Louis. Come on my cock.” Harry groans, and, suddenly, there’s a warm hand around his length again.

Louis couldn’t have disobeyed even if he wanted to, his orgasm having been building up for so long, and yet being so sudden, he actually gasps in surprise.

His mind is totally blank for what feels like a century, nothing but such an intense pleasure, it’s borderline painful. You could tell him he actually levitated off the bed and he would believe it.

He tries to regain at least a little bit of control over his own damn body, but he can’t even catch his breath, not with Harry thrusting into him erratically as he chases his own orgasm.

Louis moans weakly when Harry climaxes, feeling weirdly triumphant in an I-made-this-happen kind of way. He’s so, so glad they got tested and can forgo using a condom, because he’s really into literally feeling his boyfriend come inside him as it turns out.

Harry falls right on top of him then, and even though he’s heavy and Louis was already having a hard time breathing before that, he absolutely basks in it.

It’s warm, and literally close, and intimate, and everything he needs right now after having such an intense experience. (He may or may not be feeling a little emotional…)

“Jesus fucking Christ.” Harry mumbles into the crook of Louis’ neck, his lips grazing the sensitive skin there and giving him goosebumps, “Jesus fucking Christ.”

Harry’s cock inside him is becoming a bit too much, and when the singer moves his leg and accidentally jostles it, it does become too much, a pained whine falling from Louis’ lips.

“Shit. Sorry. Sorry.” Harry says, sitting up to pull out, and, god, oversensitivity is no joke.

“Come back.” Louis mumbles, slurring the words so much, he’s surprised his boyfriend even understands him.

Harry lies back down on top of Louis, this time making an effort to put less of his weight on him.
“Are you okay? How do you feel, baby?” Harry asks in between dropping kisses on Louis’ cheek and neck and nose and forehead and other cheek.

“I’m turnt, bruh.” Louis jokes, imitating literally every single straight athletic guy he went to college with. (And Liam!)

Harry snorts so loudly, it sounds like it physically hurt, “Me too, matey mate. I was balls deep in the hottest fucking guy in the world, like, two minutes ago, and came, like, so hard, mate. It was pretty fucking grand.”

“Siiick, dude. What a lucky bastard.”

“I really am lucky.” Harry says, smiling fondly at Louis, and either it’s a lighting issue or if his eyes are literally twinkling. (The evidence showing that Harry isn’t a real human being just keeps piling up, and Louis is currently leaning towards the Disney prince theory.)

“Your sappiness has ruined the joke. I hope you’re happy.” Louis complains lightheartedly, rubbing the tip of his nose tenderly against Harry’s.

“I’m really, really happy, actually… You make me really happy, Louis Tomlinson.”

“You make really, really, really happy, too, H.”

*

Atlanta, Georgia

It was a great day.

And then it wasn’t anymore.

The sun had already been shining when they woke up, making Harry’s eyes look even more gorgeous when he finally opened them after trying to convince Louis to let him sleep just a little bit more.

He’d been so, so tempted to cave, the pout on his boyfriend’s lips making it nearly impossible to resist, but it’s Niall’s birthday today, and he’s such a sweetheart, it would have broken his heart if they had ruined his big plans.

Their first order of business had been the most boring one in Louis’ opinion, though he had kept his annoyance a secret from Niall.

(Harry hadn’t been as lucky, having to put up with his grumbling for ages.)

Niall had wanted to play golf, so they’d made it happen. Harry had even put on his best golfing clothes for the occasion, the fucking loser.

Liam and Louis had been outrageously bad at it, while Harry and Niall walked around all high and mighty like they’re the Michael Jordan and LeBron James of golf. (Louis would compare them to famous golfers, but he doesn’t fucking know any, so…)

They’d had a late lunch afterwards, Niall picking KFC because he’s classy like that, and Louis and Harry had teamed up to mock the birthday boy’s sunburnt nose and forehead.

(Seriously, he was in the sun for three hours, tops, the delicate little flower.)
They’d gone to an Irish pub afterwards because Niall absolutely loves everything about them. Louis is sure he must have been Irish in another life or, like, a parallel universe, or some shit.

A few (too many) Guinnesses later, and Louis had been literally lying on the pool table trying to get the motherfucking ugly-ass spawn of the fucking devil ball into the stupid fucking pocket while Niall yelled “cheater!” at the top of his lungs.

The look on Alberto’s face when he’d come to pick them up was priceless, like he couldn’t decide whether to laugh at them or give them a hard time for getting so drunk in the middle of the afternoon.

Paul had definitely settled on the latter, which was understandable considering that none of them had been sober enough to actually set up the stage or, in Harry’s case, do the soundcheck.

(Niall’s a pyrotechnician, for fuck’s sake. Definitely not their finest hour.)

They had all been handed several cups of coffee, and Niall hadn’t been allowed near flammable stuff, but they also had to suppress smiles throughout the whole thing.

Despite the initial, uh, difficulties, everything had worked out in the end, and the show was a success.

Harry had even jokingly bid Niall off, and the birthday boy had looked absolutely ecstatic standing in front of thousands of people, especially when they started singing him “Happy Birthday”.

By the time the show had ended and Louis was gearing up to disassemble the stage, he was sure that this whole day would be one of those you reminisce over for years and tell your grandkids about.

And then he “asked to see Louis in Harry’s dressing room”.

Brad or Chad, or one of those names that only douchebags seem to have.

Louis literally has to ask who that is, because he doesn’t know a Chad or Brad, or whatever. He’s one of Harry’s publicists or management people or recording company people, or something like that, apparently.

He vaguely recalls hearing about some “suit” that was supposed to fly to Atlanta to that care of some paperwork or contract, or some shit, but he honestly can’t think of a single reason why he’d have such a sudden need to talk to Louis that he had to send poor Frank to get him.

He’s not really surprised when he sees Harry sitting there – it is his dressing room and he is the common link between Louis and this guy – but he is surprised when the singer doesn’t even look at him, staring at his fingers as he plays with his rings instead.

Paul, who is also here for some reason, does look up when Louis comes in, but everything about his posture and facial expression screams tension.

“What’s up?” Louis asks, crossing his arms defensively, even though he doesn’t even know what the hell is going on yet.

“What’s up is that you’ve created a big problem, Louis Tomlinson.” The “suit” says aggressively, basically shoving his pristine little brand-new-looking iPhone in Louis’ face. Fucker.

Louis isn’t about to give this asshole what he wants, so tries really, really hard not to let the embarrassment he’s feeling show on his face.

Someone recorded them while they were at that goddamn Irish pub, and Louis is acting like a
drunken mess in the video, dancing – he’s using that word very liberally because he looks more like a sloth falling off a tree – and just being overall obnoxious and loud.

It’s embarrassing, sure, and Lottie is definitely going to make him rewatch it over and over again until the day he dies, but he’s not doing anything wrong and he doesn’t feel guilty in the slightest.

He knows Fucker McFuckface over here isn’t concerned about how mocked his dance moves are going to be, though.

If he had to take a wild guess as to why this video is a “big problem”, he’d say that it’s the hug he and Harry share that is apparently oh-so-problematic.

He doesn’t kiss him or hold his hand, or fucking ride him on top of the pool table, so he doesn’t know why he’s being treated like he just forced Harry out of the closet.

The video itself is honestly not incriminating at all: they’re clearly a group of friends out for drinks, and considering how drunk they were and the fact that Harry and Louis are in a actual fucking relationship, it could have been a hell of a lot worse.

Whoever wrote the article, however, doesn’t seem to think it’s a platonic interaction, like, at all, describing their hug as “packed with sexual tension”. They’ve even added a few tweets from fans talking about how they’re definitely sleeping together.

“It’s not my fault nobody can even look at Harry without people yelling that they’re fucking. It’s a goddamn hug, for Christ’s sake. They just read too much into everything.” Louis says defensively, immediately feeling a little guilty for criticizing Harry’s fans for seeing something that is one hundred percent true and there.

“Oh, please… Between those pictures in London and this video, the tweets and the stories are practically writing themselves. Every time you pull shit like this, you’re feeding the rumors and giving the dozens of people maintaining Harry’s career a major headache.” Chad or Brad, or whatever, says, the big, ugly vein on his forehead looking about ready to pop.

You know what’s really pissing Louis off? How is any of this more his fault than Harry’s? They were both fucking there, and neither knew someone was recording them, so how come Louis alone is to blame for this?

Poor little Harry, always looking gay on social media because Louis is perpetually all over him against his will…

“In case you haven’t figured it out yet, I have no power over when and where people decide to invade Harry’s privacy and then post their videos all over the internet. I’m not pulling any shit; I’m just living my life and doing my fucking job. What else am I supposed to do? Pretend like I don’t know him from Adam whenever we’re not alone because someone might be taking a picture of us?”

“Well, you could at least try to make it less obvious. I mean, have you seen yourself in that video? No one in their right mind would ever believe you’re straight. You need to stop acting so flamboyant and, well, gay when you’re in public with Harry. There are plenty of gays out there who act like normal people, and if you have any respect for Harry’s career or concern for your position on this tour, you need to start acting more like a man.”

Louis can’t fucking believe this piece of shit, “Paul, do you have a problem with me being flamboyant and gay? Am I worse at my job than the other guys because I apparently don’t know how to act like a man?”
“Absolutely fucking not.” Paul spits out, looking beyond disgusted by how Louis is being treated. It’s a hell of a lot more loyalty and empathy than what he’s getting from his own fucking boyfriend.

“Even if I forget about the fact that you’re trying to tell me what I can and cannot act like outside my workplace, in my personal free time, you still have no power over me. I’m a crewmember, so I answer to Paul and to Harry, not to you. If you have a complaint about how I carry myself, you can pass it along to one of them, and if they share your concerns, then they can tell me themselves. Until then, I’m going to act as flamboyant and gay as I fucking please because my masculinity is not nearly as fragile as yours. And now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to shashay away and get back to work.”

Louis storms out of that godforsaken dressing room, holding his head up high because he is proud of who he is and he won’t let anyone try to convince him that there’s something wrong with him.

He’s angry – he’s really, really angry – but he can’t help but also feel quite proud of how well he handled the situation. Not only did he manage to expose that asshole for what he truly is – a hateful, homophobic bigot who was trying to hide under a mask of concern for Harry’s career – but he thinks he did a pretty good job at standing up to him.

Lord knows how much he wanted to punch that asshole in the face and make him look like a raccoon for weeks, but, as someone much smarter and cooler than him once said, “when they go low, we go high”.

He’s proven that he has a fucking backbone and won’t be intimidated by these “suits”, so, hopefully, they’ll think twice before trying to bully and humiliate him again.

All Louis thinks about while he’s taking down the stage – which, for the record, is what he was supposed to be doing in the first place instead of being forced to defend his personality – is that damn “conversation”, of course.

He thinks about the shitty, shitty things that asshole said, and how fucking glad he is that he stopped trying to “act like normal people” a long time ago.

He thinks about how disturbing it is that Hollywood and the music business are still being run by racist, homophobic, misogynistic men.

He thinks about all those times someone back home defended hate speech because it’s supposedly covered by the First Amendment, but had a fucking meltdown when John in, like, Seattle tweeted about how happy he is with his boyfriend and how they’ve been together for ten years because it’s “gay propaganda” and should be banned.

He thinks about how distressing it is that society in general still believes that there’s such a thing as acting like a man, and how it’s “okay” for a grown man to be aroused by a sixteen-year-old girl because she’s wearing a short skirt, but heaven forbid that a guy wears makeup or kisses his boyfriend in public.

The only thing Louis doesn’t think about is Harry.

He doesn’t think about how his fucking boyfriend clearly knew what Louis was about to walk into and still let him be ambushed like that.

He doesn’t think about how he didn’t even look up when Louis was being verbally attacked and humiliated, like he wasn’t the fucking reason behind that whole mess.

It’s his career, his business associate, his life people are interested in.
He doesn’t think about the fact that Paul, with whom Louis has more of a professional relationship than a friendship, showed him more loyalty than Harry. His boyfriend. The man he wakes up next to every fucking morning.

He doesn’t think about those things because he knows he’d do something he’d regret in the heat of the moment, like storming into his dressing room and breaking up with him, or crying his eyes out in front of everyone.

He needs time.

He needs to sit down somewhere quiet and organize his thoughts. He needs to think about this – all this – from everything that happened today to everything that has happened since the day he met Harry.

But, fucking hell, it is not easy to keep Harry off his mind here, literally standing where he was standing, like, an hour ago, back when they were both blissfully unaware of the storm that was brewing.

It’s not easy, but he does it.

And then, eventually, there’s no physical labor left to distract him from his own thoughts. Everything that needed to be done has been done, and Louis is just fucking standing here staring at an empty venue.

“You okay, Louis?” Steve suddenly asks from behind him, interrupting Louis’ chaotic thoughts. He’s so emotionally drained that he doesn’t even have the energy to be startled.

“No. I need to get out of here.” Louis blurts out, desperately wanting Steve to help him leave because he can’t even focus for long enough to find a fucking exit. (There are multiple exits and they’re huge. That’s how messed up his head is right now.)

“Let’s go, then. Come on.” Steve guides him out of the venue and into the streets of Atlanta with an arm around his shoulders, and Louis can see the I’m here for you, you’re not alone message written all over the gesture.

They walk aimlessly in complete silence for ages, and yet Steve never gets tired or grows impatient.

Louis grew up in a small town, meaning that he’s known the people he went to school with his whole life, and although he does have a few good friends back home, he doesn’t have a bond that is nearly as strong with them as he does with Steve, Niall, Liam, and, well, Harry, nor does he feel like they know him – his true self – as well as these boys.

Steve is a particularly good listener, and he somehow always seems to know when Louis is looking for advice and when he just needs to talk and talk and talk until he figures out what to do on his own.

Once Louis has smoked every single cigarette he had on him and is able to blame his nausea on something other than disappointment, he finally tells Steve what happened.

And Steve’s response further solidifies his conviction that he’s the protective, wise beyond his years older brother Louis never had, but always needed.

For such a calm, peace-loving dude, he sure can use some surprisingly nasty words when someone dares mess with Louis, and that’s exactly what he needed – a confirmation from a very levelheaded person that yes, the stuff that asshole said to him was unacceptable and he’s not overreacting or being too sensitive.
He doesn’t share his opinion or offer Louis any advice regarding Harry, but he listens attentively and offers him a shoulder to cry on (literally), which is great because he’s confused enough without someone else’s input.

Harry calls while Louis is with Steve.

And then he calls again and again and again, until Louis finally turns his phone off.

The fact that there’s a part of him that is incredibly happy that Harry cares enough to call makes him realize just how low he’s set the bar after what happened.

He went from expecting a hell of a lot from Harry, definitely more than you should ever expect from anyone, to feeling so betrayed and disappointed that his expectations fell to dangerously low levels.

He had stupidly thought that all that mattered was the fact that they wanted to be together and that they had made it to solid ground when they labeled their relationship.

He now realizes that there’s more that can make or break a relationship than having feelings for one another, and forgetting that there’s a world outside their bubble, with all these obligations and tests and prejudices, was a huge mistake.

Harry isn’t just Harry, he’s Harry Styles™, and as hard as he may try to keep his friends and family and private life separate from his career as a performer, it’s just not possible for him to live two completely independent lives on and off stage.

By the time Louis and Steve finally start making their way back to the venue, the sun is already coming up. It’s a good thing that one of the buses had to be repaired so they couldn’t travel overnight like they were supposed to, otherwise they would be in big trouble.

Louis closes the bus door as quietly as possible, knowing full well that he needs to talk to Harry while his thoughts are still coherent, but dreading it enough to not want to wake up the singer.

The bedroom door is half open, and he’s so, so weak that he can’t resist tiptoeing towards it. To be fair, he’s not going to get a chance to creepily stare at Harry while he’s sleeping like he does on a daily basis for quite a while, so…

Tomorrow – or, rather, today, given that the sun is already shining - is the last show before a three-week break, and, for the first time since Christmas, Louis is flying home.

He keeps going back and forth between thinking that the timing of this break is great and thinking that it’s terrible.

He trips over a shoe right as he was about to reach the bedroom – one of his own, of fucking course, because, as it turns out, being messy will eventually come back to bite you in the ass – and slams right into the door. The crash is loud enough to wake the dead, let alone a sleeping Harry.

Except, Harry isn’t in bed asleep… Harry isn’t in the bedroom at all…

He isn’t proud to admit that the first thought that crosses his mind is that Harry slept with someone else, both figuratively and literally.

It’s a shitty, shitty conclusion.

Harry may have messed up yesterday, and Louis may be feeling more unsure about their relationship than ever, but he has no reason to believe he’d cheat.
The sound of the bus door being opened stops his mind from creating any more groundless, nasty theories, and he forces himself to take a deep breath, and stay calm and collected.

Harry stops in his tracks when he sees him, his running clothes making it obvious that he was not, in fact, in someone else’s bed just now.

“Louis… Shit, I can’t believe I wasn’t fucking here when you came back. I knew it was stupid to go for a run, but I just couldn’t sit here anymore. And now I’m wasting your time talking about my fucking morning runs. Jesus… Anyway, I’m- I’m glad you’re here, because I really, really need to apologize. I am so, so sorry. I’m sorry that people think it’s okay to take pictures of you and film you, and then post it all over the internet just because you’re with me. I’m sorry that they talk about you, and write articles about you, about us, and try to find out everything about you, and don’t respect the fact that you didn’t choose this life like I did. I’m sorry that I come with so much baggage. I’m sorry that despite the fact that all this happened because of me, somebody from my team blamed you for it. I’m sorry that I even let Chad talk to you in the first place. I’m sorry I let him ambush you in your workplace to talk about your personal life. I’m sorry he even thinks he has the right to comment on your personal life just because I happen to be lucky enough to be a part of it.

I’m beyond revolted by the bitter, homophobic, sickening shit he said to you, and I hope you didn’t believe any of it for even a fraction of a second. And I’m absolutely disgusted with myself. There’s a part of me that wants to believe that the reason why I didn’t even try to defend you is because I’ve learned over the years that the best way to deal with people like Chad is to let them spew all that bullshit and never take any of it seriously, but it doesn’t really matter why I did it. Whether it was out of cowardice or self-preservation or experience doesn’t fucking matter. What matters is that I fucked up. I fucked up so badly. And I know that, at the end of the day, apologies are just words, and that my actions were fucking despicable, but there’s really nothing else I can do right now besides telling you that I know I fucked, and I regret it so, so much. I’m so, so, so, so sorry, Louis.”

Louis can tell that Harry really means it, and he wishes he could tell him that it’s okay, that they can just forget about the whole thing, but a lot of what happened last night was bound to happen sooner or later, Chad just acted as the catalyst.

Every inch of his heart is telling him to fix the broken look on Harry’s face and dry his tears, but he has to listen to his head this time.

Louis takes a deep breath, “Before I say anything else, I want to tell you that I forgive you - I honestly, truly do. I won’t lie and say that I wasn’t disappointed and am not feeling a little hurt still, but I forgive you, Harry. But what I realized at some point last night was that that confrontation was a small issue resulting from a much bigger problem. Yeah, it was nasty and humiliating, but there’s really nothing else I can do right now besides telling you that I know I fucked, and I regret it so, so much. I’m so, so, so, so sorry, Louis.”

“We never talked about what our relationship would be like outside this bubble. I know what I can do inside this bus, and what I can do in front of our friends, and what I can do in front of the rest of the roadies, but we never, ever talked about what I can and cannot do in a public setting. Maybe if I hadn’t been drinking, I would have thought twice before hugging you in that bar, but I would have never imagined a hug would be this big of a deal. We’re obviously going to be out in public at some point again, and if I have to worry about every little thing and wonder if it’s allowed, I’ll go insane. It’s fine if we can’t hug – it’s not great, but it’s fine – but I need to know that in advance. I know we can’t control what other people do and how they interpret what they see, but we can and should define what we’re comfortable with them seeing and how we’re going to deal with situations like this in the future.”

“What we have in here is amazing, but there is a world out there and we can’t keep on pretending like it’s not going to try to come between us. And the more I think about it, the more I realize that it’s
not really about us as a couple, but about us individually - what *I’m* comfortable with everyone knowing and thinking about me and what you’re comfortable with everyone knowing and thinking about you. Right now, I honestly have no idea what I’m comfortable with, and I don’t think you do either.”

“I need time and space to organize my thoughts, which is why I think it would be a good idea for us to not talk at all during this three-week break, so that we can really focus on what we want individually. It’s not a “break” or anything like that at all, I promise; I just- I’m having a hard time separating what I truly want for myself from what I think would be easier for us or for you, and I don’t want to accidentally push you in a certain direction either.”

“And I don’t mean just right now, you know, because, like, for example, what if one of us wants to stay in the closet forever and the other doesn’t? Sure, we can and will probably change our minds about certain things as time goes by, but I think everyone kind of knows if they’d like to get married one day, or start a family, or, well, not. I want us to still be together five years from now, and I think, or I hope, you do too, but what do you think our relationship will be like then? On the surface, it may seem like we want exactly the same thing - to be together in five years - but do you see how different our two visions may be? How do you picture it in your head? Are we actively lying about being together? Are we allowing people to draw their own conclusions without ever confirming or denying that we’re dating? Are we holding hands or kissing in public?”

“I want to be very clear about this - there is no right or wrong answer. I want to hear your honest opinion and what you truly do feel, not what you think I want to hear, or anything like that. And if it turns out that we have different visions, then I’m one hundred per cent willing to work it out and compromise, and all that. I’m not walking into this conversation with the mindset that if you don’t want the same things that I want, it’s all over. I want us to stay together, Harry, which is why I think it’s so important that we work out these issues before they come back to bite us in the ass. Did any of my shitty monologue even make sense to you at all or…”

“Absolutely, yes. It definitely made sense, and I agree with everything you said. I think it’s really, really important we have this conversation when we’re ready for it and know what we want. I’m going to miss you, though… I mean, I understand why it’s necessary, but it’s going to be really hard not talking to you at all.”

Louis hugs Harry tightly then, “Me too, H… So much…”

*  

*Levelland, Texas*

It’s only been a week, and Louis is already missing Harry so, so much.

Although this week has served its purpose, and Louis now has a very clear idea of what he wants, three weeks of no communication was definitely too much.

It was his idea to not talk for the whole break though, so it’d be incredibly unfair for him to interrupt Harry’s thinking time just because he didn’t end up needing three weeks after all.

The fact that he knows that doesn’t keep him from locking and unlocking his phone so many times that even the baby twins start looking at him like he’s lost his mind.

He’s so jittery and tense that when his phone starts buzzing in his hand, he nearly drops it, and then he nearly drops it again when he sees that it’s Harry.
Did he accidentally text or call him? Is Harry calling back after getting a weird voicemail of just *Frozen* playing in the background?

“Harry… Hey…” Louis whispers, leaving the living room after receiving precisely six curious looks.

“Hi. Uh, Hey, Lou… I- I really didn’t think this through… I thought about everything we talked about and figured out exactly what I want, and, um, I just had this sudden need to tell you about it straight away, and uh- You’re probably not ready to talk yet, of course, and I wasn’t even supposed to call you, let alone come here-“

“Here, where?”

“Lubbock. I should have called *before* I boarded that plane, at the very least. I was going to drive to Levelland to talk to you, but if you’re not ready yet, I’ll just fly my dumb, impulsive arse back-“

“No. No. Please don’t do that. I can come and pick you up.”

“No, I’ll come to you. I feel guilty enough as is… I’ve already rented a car, anyway.”

“Okay. Okay, great. Um, guess I’ll be seeing you really soon, then.”

“See you in a bit, Louis.”

It isn’t until they’ve ended the call that the possibility that Harry might be coming here to break up with him even occurs to Louis.

What if he’s in such a rush because he wants Louis to have some recuperation time before going back to work? Harry’s definitely the type of guy who would fly halfway across the country in order to avoid breaking up with someone over the phone.

And then his phone starts buzzing again.

“Are you coming here to break up with me?” Louis blurts out as soon as he picks up the phone, his voice breaking more times during that sentence than in his entire puberty.

“What? No. No. Absolutely not. Jesus... Is that what it sounded like or…?”

Louis breathes out a sigh of relief, “No, sorry, I just got paranoid for a second there. Sorry.”

“I actually-“ Harry chuckles, “I actually realized I don’t know your address, so it might be a little hard to, you know, drive to your house.”

Louis can’t help but burst out laughing. He went from being excited to see Harry, to being terrified, to realizing that they’re both idiots.

He’s still laughing his ass off when he sends his address to Harry via text, so he might actually be going a little insane.

Louis stands right in front of the window until Lottie says that he looks like their dog.

He then sits on an armchair instead, one that just so happens to have a nice, unobstructed view out the window – what a happy “coincidence”.

He stands up as soon as he spots a car that isn’t a pickup truck or a mommy van, and his suspicions are confirmed when he sees those lovely dark brown curls.
Louis is walking out of the house before Harry has time to even open the car door, and he’s never been more grateful for the ridiculous distances between houses in this part of Levelland - like in almost all parts of Levelland, to be honest.

He can only imagine the crazy small town gossip that would be making the rounds in, like, ten minutes if they were to be spotted.

Louis jump into his boyfriend’s arms as soon as he steps out of the car, and the fact that Harry catches him so easily even though he’s the clumsiest person alive renews his faith in their relationship.

He probably shouldn’t be doing this before they talk, but, fuck it, it feels so **good**. He inhales slowly, breathing in that lovely Harry smell that he’s missed so, so much, spicy yet floral at the same time.

This is where he belongs – right here in Harry’s arms. This is home.

They stay like that for a long time, like they’re fucking recharging or something, and even when they get in the car so that they can go somewhere to talk without being interrupted/spied on, they keep touching as much as possible.

The biggest perk of living in a place like Levelland is that there are plenty of places where you can just stop your car and do whatever the fuck you want because you’re a hundred percent sure you’re not going to see anyone else.

An inconvenience of living in Levelland and being gay is that a lot of those are places where he hooked up with Chris, and it would definitely be weird to have such an important conversation with Harry in a place that he associates with those first awkward sexual encounters.

He ends up picking a small dirt road right in the middle of a huge cotton field, not even realizing how cliché southern that is until Harry points it out.

“Right, uh, I was hoping you’d let me just say everything I need to say without interrupting me, or, not interrupting me, you know, that was kind of an unnecessarily strong word. Jesus, this is going great already… Why do I always put my foot in my mouth when we’re talking about something important? Just, you know, I need to say it all in one go otherwise I’ll probably not have the bullocks to tell you everything I want to tell you. Please.” Harry says, and he looks so nervous, his hands shaking and skin ghostly white, that Louis instinctively places a soothing hand on his thigh, his thumb tenderly drawing half-circles.

“Of course, Harry. Go for it. Oh, and please don’t beat yourself up like that just because you pick the wrong word or are having a hard time expressing your thoughts. We all mess up, and there’s literally nowhere else I’d rather be, so take your time. And if I misunderstand or have a brain fart and can’t figure out what you’re trying to say, you’ll help me out, I’m sure.” Louis says, knowing that the more frustrated Harry gets, the more he stumbles over his words, and it’s just a vicious cycle.

Everything Harry says is worth paying attention to, so he always tries to make sure his boyfriend knows he’ll wait as long as it takes for him to be able to express his feeling and thoughts.

“You’re a really, really good person, Louis. I hope you know that. And now this is going to sound like a spur of the moment kind of thing, and it really isn’t. I’ve known it for a long time and it was literally the first thing I was planning on telling you. I love you. I’m so, so in love with you. And, like, I’m not telling you now because it’s meant to add something or take away from what I’m going to say next, or anything like that. It’s- I just needed to tell you that I love you because I kept thinking about how much I wish I had told you earlier, long before that mess of a night, so, yeah…”
“Well, now that that’s out of the way – wow, how can someone who’s written several albums be so bad with words? Anyway, about the whole closet thing… I had never really thought about when or what sort of circumstances would be ideal for me to come out. I knew I wasn’t comfortable with being “out and proud” yet, and I knew I didn’t want to still be in the closet when I was, like, geriatric, but there was never, like, a deadline for me, you know. There was never a specific age or event that I was sure would make me go like, “this is it – I’m going to come out because of this”. I think the only sort of “deadline” that I imposed on myself was that I didn’t want to become a father before coming out, so I guess I kind of accepted that I could only stay in the closet for so long before my desire to start a family became stronger than my fears.”

“I’ve been in this comfortable gray area for such a long time, and although I do feel guilty because I’m not doing enough for my community and I’d like to not feel like I’m lying to everyone, I’m scared. I don’t want to be hated, especially for something that I just can’t help, and I’ve had this recurring dream for years where I can’t sell a single ticket because nobody wants to see “the gay guy”. I know it’s irrational, I do. The vast majority of my fans either strongly suspect or are dead sure that I’m gay and they’re still around, and they’re still supportive, and even if a whole bunch of them dropped me like a hot potato because of my sexual orientation, that’s for the best really, because I wouldn’t want gross people like that as my fans.”

“And the thing is, despite the fact that my sexual orientation adds a whole new layer of complications to my life, I don’t wish I were straight. I love being gay – I honestly do – I just want homophobia to not be a thing anymore. But it’s still alive and well, unfortunately, and I’m not just scared of how people will see me after finding that out I’m gay, I’m also scared of how the backlash will change me. Right now, it’s literally impossible for a public figure to be out without being forced to build some immunity, to grow thicker skin, because the world can be a really, really cruel place. What if I grow too bitter or too resentful or too angry?”

“The reason why I managed to go so long without ever having some sort of a coming out plan or strategy or deadline is because I just avoided putting myself in a position where I would be forced to think about these things. I’m pretty sure I’ve made some passing comments here and there about this before, but I don’t know if you’ve figured out why I had never been in a relationship before you. Every time I started realizing I could potentially have feelings for someone, I made sure it never happened. I didn’t want to ruin the delicate balance I had in my life, and I just never thought they were worth the trouble anyway, so I avoided everyone that I was even barely interested in like the plague.”

“And then you walked into my life, and it was different from the very start. I was immediately attracted to you when we all had lunch together for the first time. I thought you were gorgeous and so fucking funny, and my first thought when I got up from that chair was I need to stay as far away from him as possible. But I just couldn’t. For the first time in my life, I just couldn’t help myself. I desperately wanted to find out more about you. To find out everything about you. I craved your company and I literally went out of my way all the time to talk to you. I knew I was just digging myself a deeper and deeper hole every single time I saw you, but, frankly, I didn’t give a fuck. We became friends, and then we became something more, and then we became boyfriends, and I was a million times happier and more excited than scared.”

“At first I thought I could just treat our relationship the same way as my sexual orientation - the people who mattered knew and it was nobody else’s business. And it kind of worked for an outrageously long time because, like you said, we barely ever left that bubble. All I had to do was basically not mention you in interviews and not kiss you in places where the fans were able to see us. But thinking that we could just hide inside our little bubble forever was dumb.”

“You know, I watched that video over and over again trying to see what the hell was so
incriminating about it. Objectively, it’s just two guys out for drinks with the lads who hug for, like, five seconds, and it would be easy to just say that it’s because we had already been photographed together in London or that people are always looking for something to gossip about. Except, most of them saw something beyond just the obvious Harry-Styles-hugged-someone-so-they’re-obviously-sleeping-together. They were talking about the way we look at each other, and the way we touch, and how happy I look every time you’re paying attention to me, and how we’re so rough with the other boys but so gentle with each other. Hell, there was even someone talking about something called mirroring, which is basically this really creepy thing that happens several times throughout the video where we do the exact same thing at the same time. They saw a couple, and I’m pretty damn sure that even if we hadn’t hugged or if I had hugged one of the other boys instead, they would still have seen it – us. And that’s something that I couldn’t hide, even if I wanted to. I obviously can’t change the fact that I look at you like I’m in love with you, because I am in love with you.”

“The only solution would be to never be seen with you again, and I can’t do that. I don’t want to do that. Unless that’s what you want, of course, and I will respect that. I’m not comfortable with, like, making out in the middle of the street yet, but if I feel like talking to you or hugging you in public, or going for a walk alone with you, I bloody will. And we will look so fucking gay while doing it, Louis – it will be glorious! Fuck Chad and his stupid prejudices. He’s just an asshole who probably cries every time he wanks and, like, calls himself a meninist.”

“I think that’s pretty much everything I wanted to say about our relationship in the immediate future, so this is where I start embarrassing myself. You asked me to think about what I’d like our relationship to look like in five years, and I think I can sum it up in one word: normalcy. I want us to be like every other couple.”

“When I picture it in my head, I see us living together - like, in a proper house, not just a bus during tour. Maybe in London. You said you’d like to live there back before we even got together, and at the time I remember thinking about how much I wanted you to be living there with me. I’d wake up before you, like I usually do, and maybe I’d go for a run, if the weather allowed it. I’d buy us some tea and breakfast on the way back home and bring it up to the bedroom. You’d probably be awake by now because you get cold when I’m not cuddling you, but you’d still be hiding under the covers because you’re lazy as fuck. I’d kiss you despite your god-awful morning breath because I love you, and then we’d just lie in bed for ages, talking or watching a movie, or whatever we felt like doing. Later, we’d go out for ice cream because you’re the type of idiot who can eat it even when it’s snowing. I’d hold you hand proudly the whole way there, and then I’d kiss you until our ice creams started melting afterwards. You’d huff and complain, and I’d say just one more after every kiss. If we ran into fans, they’d tell us how cute we look together or how lovely you are, and I’d agree wholeheartedly. And then we’d go back home in the evening, and we’d make love over and over again until we just couldn’t get it up anymore, because I’ve never wanted anyone more than I want you. All the time.”

“I wish I could tell you that I’d be comfortable doing all these things tomorrow already, but I can’t. I think it’s something we have to work up to and plan carefully so that we don’t end up regretting anything, but I do want all that, and not five years from now – sooner. Uh, I think that’s everything, so, yeah…”

“Harry… I- wow… I-”

Louis can’t remember ever being completely unable to find a single right word to say before, but he has too much raw emotion and love bubbling up inside him to be able to express it.

He climbs onto Harry’s lap, bumping several of his limbs and his head in between changing seats and accidentally honking twice, but it’s so, so worth it in the end when he gets to bury his head in the
There’s a wet stain on Harry’s shirt when Louis finally lifts his head to look him in the eyes, but he isn’t even the slightest bit embarrassed about having such a strong reaction after all that.

“Jesus… I love you so, so much, Harry, and, just like you, I want to make it clear that I’ve known that for a long time and that it has nothing to do with what you just said. I mean, it’s obviously connected with you telling me that you love me, but none of the rest. And now I’ve made it sound like I told you that I’m in love with you because I’m supposed to say it back, or something. Lord, help us both… What I’m trying to say is that I’ve wanted to tell you that I love you for a long time and that I was worried it would be too soon, and all that, but now that you’ve said, I don’t have to stress about that anymore and I can say it over and over and over again. I love you. I love you. I love you.”

“Okay, about everything else you said… I was one hundred percent ready to fight for us to and to compromise, because if there’s anything I’m sure of is that I don’t ever want to lose you. And, as it turns out, I don’t even need to compromise at all because we want the same things. I’m becoming more and more comfortable with pretty much everyone besides the people here in Levelland knowing that I’m gay, but I’m certainly not ready to be known around the world as “Harry Styles’ boyfriend” yet. So, yeah, I’d really appreciate it if we could ease into it. That future you described, though, I want it. I want it all so, so badly.”

* 

Epilogue

* 

London, United Kingdom

Harry is in the doghouse, figuratively speaking.

Hell, if they had an actual doghouse, Louis would probably put him in there too.

(Using force alone, of course, because he hasn’t said a single word to Harry in last three hours.)

The reason behind Louis’ fury: fucking samoas.

They brought back two boxes of samoas from the US last time they were there visiting their families, and Harry ate his literally the following day.

Louis, on the other hand, is one of those weird people who save the food that they love for “special occasions so that they taste even better.”

And Harry respects that, he really does, except he’d had a light dinner yesterday, but then stayed up until four a.m. writing a song about Louis, and, well, he’d gotten really, really hungry, okay?

Sure, he could have made something, but it would have been a crime to interrupt such a productive writing session to cook, so he made the decision to eat an easy, packaged snack instead. The problem was that they had nothing like that at their home.

Well, nothing except for those Girl Scout cookies.

In Harry’s defense, it was late, and he was starving, and they’re so good, and he figured that if he only stole one, Louis wouldn’t even notice it.

Except those bloody cookies are more addictive than crack, and he ended up eating all of them.
Dear god, guilt had never tasted so good….

Somewhere between the third and fourth cookie, Harry obviously realized that there was no way Louis wouldn’t notice it, so he texted his Mum begging her to send him a new box.

He was planning on waiting until the package arrived to tell his boyfriend about his late night indiscretions, and, that way, he probably wouldn’t be in as much trouble because he’d be able to say, “look, now you have a full box instead of just a few”.

It was a pretty solid plan, only he was dumb enough to put the empty box in the bin, and Louis had seen it this morning when he was throwing away his tea bag.

Screaming and disappointment had ensued, followed by the current stage – the dreaded silent treatment.

Normally, Harry would just apologize and wait it out, knowing that sooner or later Louis would start missing him too much to stick to his guns, but today is not a normal day.

He tries and tries and tries to get his boyfriend to forgive him for his sins, using his extensive knowledge of everything Louis to come up with new and improved ways to redeem himself.

Almost six hours later, it finally works, and Harry even manages to get Louis to not bail on their dinner reservations.

Thirty minutes later, and Harry is sitting on the couch waiting for Louis to finish getting ready. He looks good, he smells good, and he’d even be willing to bet that Louis would say that he tastes good, too.

Five more minutes go by, and Louis is still upstairs.

“Louis? You almost ready?” Harry yells from the bottom of the stairs, knowing from experience that the sound will carry to the bedroom. (Louis has a knack for putting their kitchen utensils in the wrong places.)

No answer. As a matter of fact, the house is completely silent.

Normally, he’d be able to hear Louis walking around while he’s getting ready, so this is strange.

“Lou?” Harry yells as he’s approaching the bedroom, but, once again, he receives no answer.

He almost starts worrying that something bad has happened to Louis, but then he sees him, alive and well, sitting on the bed in his underwear clearly playing some game on his phone. What?

“Uh, did you forget we were going out or something?” Harry asks calmly, even though he literally saw Louis with half his outfit on just a few minutes ago.

Louis looks at him confidently, a condescending smile on his lips, “Oh, I’m sorry. I hadn’t realized this was the kind of expectation that was supposed to be met. You expected me to go out for dinner with you, apparently, and I expected you to not eat my samoas, but I guess disappointment is always the end result when people don’t do what they specifically said they would.”

Jesus Christ, Harry can’t fucking believe this…

Today was supposed to be a great day. As a matter of fact, it was supposed to be one of the happiest days of their lives.
They were supposed to go out for dinner at Louis’ favorite restaurant and have a lovely, romantic meal.

They were supposed to be acting all adorable and sappy, and hold hands as they left the restaurant.

They were supposed to go to Primrose Hill afterwards.

Then, Harry was supposed to kiss Louis and tell him that they were standing in the same spot where, exactly four years ago today, he had realized he was falling in love with him.

He was supposed to get down on one knee after that and say everything he’d been planning on saying for weeks.

Louis was supposed to be wearing the ring Harry bought months ago just a few hours from now.

Today was supposed to be the day they got engaged. Instead they’re fighting over fucking cookies.

Harry has never felt more frustrated or exasperated in his entire life, and he has to force himself to take a deep breath and remember that Louis doesn’t know the consequences of his pettiness so that he doesn’t start slamming doors and screaming the house down.

He falls face forward on the bed instead, groaning for longer than anyone has ever groaned in the history of mankind.

“Uh, Harry?”

“What?” Harry answers - not snippily, just wearily.

As much as he wants to cry and be miserable right now because the proposal he’d been planning for months has gone to shit, there’s no obvious reason why he’d be sad. Angry? Sure. Frustrated? Absolutely. But not sad.

He tries his best to not be visibly upset when he looks up at Louis, scared of being asked why he’s reacting the way he is.

Louis isn’t looking at him, though. His eyes are fixed on the side of Harry’s torso instead, his mouth hanging open. When Harry follows his gaze and sees exactly what he’s looking at, he fully understands his boyfriend’s reaction.

That little black box is sitting right there.

Fuck.

It must have pop out or flown out or fallen out of the stupidly big pockets on Harry’s blazer – get your shit together, Gucci – when he’d thrown himself onto the bed.

As soon as he sits up to do something - put it back in his pocket or throw it on the floor, or just anything - Louis grabs it so quickly that his arm is mostly a blur.

Louis opens the box and then closes it immediately after, almost like that childish belief that if he does it fast enough, Harry won’t even know he looked inside.

He suddenly holds out the box for Harry to take, bug-eyed and mouth wide open.

Harry’s so confused that he doesn’t even accept it for ages.
Why is Louis giving him the box back? Is it a what were you thinking? Of course I don’t want to get married now/to you, or a we’ll pretend this never happened so that you can propose to me at a better setting?

Maybe it’s neither! Maybe it’s a buy me a prettier ring because I hate this one.

Why the fuck isn’t Louis saying anything?

Regardless of why, there’s no mistaking the fact that he’s trying to give him the box back, so Harry accepts it hesitantly, his hands shaking so much, it looks like they could just fall right off.

Unlike Louis who was all fast, impulsive movements, Harry moves his arm back and downwards very, very slowly to put the god-forsaken box back where it came from, almost like he’s subconsciously scared that any sudden movement could cause Louis to pounce on him.

“No!” Louis yells, pulling Harry’s hand back out from his pocket, not even giving him a chance to actually let go of the box.

“Wha’?” Harry mumbles. Why the hell would he return the box and then not allow him to put it back in his pocket?

The Texan looks down at the box in Harry’s hands and back up to his face a few times before sighing loudly and rolling his eyes.

“Ask me.” Louis whispers, nodding his head towards the ring assertively.

“Oh. I- uh… It’s was, um, it was really more of a, uh, a specific location based speech, really. So, uh, it wouldn’t like work now. The plan was-“

“Harry,” Louis interrupts him, smiling fondly, “I’m sure the plan was great and I’d love to hear all about it at some point and find out exactly what you were going to say, and I’ll probably cry just as much as if it had worked out. Right now though, I need you to please, please, please ask me to marry you, because I’ve been dreaming about this day for longer than I’d ever care to admit and I can’t wait a single second longer. I don’t need a Grammy-winning, Nobel Prize awarded speech right now, okay? I just want to say yes to marrying my absolute favorite human in the world. Hell, if you don’t do it, then I’ll do it, and be warned that, unlike you, I don’t have a ring, so I’d have to make one out of fucking toilet paper or some shit, which would be tragic.”

Harry can feel the emotion building up in his throat as he gets down on one knee next to the bed, and he knows for a fact that he won’t make it through this without crying, “Louis William Tomlinson-“

“Sorry. I can’t see you properly. Why the fuck did we buy such a tall fucking bed?” Louis says apologetically as he stands up, forcing Harry to shuffle until he’s kneeling in front of his boyfriend again.

Harry giggles in response, feeling his eyes begin to water, “This is a mess. Everything about this proposal is a fucking mess, and yet I’ve never felt happier than I do right now. Everybody always tells their significant other that they’re their best friend when they propose, but you’re so much more than that. You’re, like, my fucking sun and I love you so, so much, Louis. Will you please, please, please make me the luckiest bastard in the world and marry me?”

“Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Hell fucking yes!”

(It should come as no surprise that Harry buys Louis so many fucking cookies, the boxes could probably completely cover their bedroom floor. What can he say? Anything for his fiancée…)
I want to make it very clear that Harry being the rock star and Louis the roadie has no relation to their singing abilities in real life or my opinion about their individual solo careers, or anything like that.

There are two main reasons why I decided to pick Harry as the singer – one I can’t really explain at the moment because it could betray the anonymity of the exchange, and the second is that, when I read the prompt, I immediately remembered those stories about Harry making sure to shake hands and learn the names of everyone he works with.

Furthermore, “Harry and Louis” struggles with their sexual orientation in this fic are purely fictional and by no means am I claiming to know the first thing about their real lives.

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