The Less I Know: A Hamilton Mixtape

by scarlett_the_seachild

Summary

When Jefferson mocks Hamilton's music taste, Lafayette thinks of a plan to educate him.

Laurens has never been one to waste an opportunity.

Notes

this started out as me creating a playlist of "songs that john laurens would like" on Spotify and whirlwinded very quickly. fair warning, it's very dialogue heavy. Apologies if that's not your thing.

Each chapter is a song on the playlist Laurens makes for Hamilton although other music will be referenced constantly throughout. check it out! or don't. no one likes armed missionaries.

See the end of the work for more notes.
One of the nice things about being friends with someone who wore their emotions so bleedingly on their sleeve as Alexander Hamilton was that there was rarely cause to ask whether or not they were upset. Case in point: when Alexander threw open the door so hard that had it been his own apartment the handle would definitely have made a dent, there was little need for Mulligan or Lafayette to guess that there might be something on his mind.

“I like that door,” said Lafayette mildly, just to make clear whose apartment it actually was.

“Bad day?” Mulligan clucked as Hamilton threw himself onto the couch, glaring at the silk cushions as though it had been they who had dared to comment.

“What gave you that impression?”

“You just give off that vibe.”

Hamilton snorted, plucking at a stray thread from one of the pillows and pulling harder when it didn’t snap off. Unable to keep himself from seeing his things manhandled any longer, Lafayette stood up abruptly and crossed to the other side of the room, snatching the cushion out of Hamilton’s hands.

“Hey,” frowned Hamilton, looking up indignantly as though he were the victim.

“I like this cushion too,” Lafayette informed him severely. “Adrienne embroidered it specially.”

“Oh,” Hamilton muttered, shoving his hands defensively into his lap. “Sorry.”

Taking pity on him, Lafayette set the cushion to one side and sat down. At once Hamilton raised his hand to his mouth and started tearing at his own fingernails. Lafayette wished he knew why, whenever he was angry or upset, Hamilton always seemed to be motivated by the urge to destroy something.

“There’s clafoutis in the fridge,” he told him kindly.

Hamilton shook his head. “It’s not a girl thing.”

“Whiskey as well.”

“Nah. Pretty sure I smashed the last midterm. Most of the paper was pretty much just asking for a beginner’s breakdown of Keynesian economics that any idiot freshman could have done. Like hello, I think we can all agree that demand-side policy is a thing, okay, why the fuck we’re still debating the fact that when people can’t work people can’t buy things is beyond me.”

“Cycle of poverty,” offered Mulligan. “Great Depression.”

“There you go. Mulligan gets it and you did, what? Ninth grade history? Four months into your junior year college course and one would like to think that if the government works within a capitalist system, then the government’s responsibility to help support it is pretty much a given.”

“Oh,” said Lafayette, nodding sagely with dawning comprehension. “This is about Jefferson.”

“What? No. It’s not,” snapped Hamilton, and then suddenly coloured. “Well yeah, it is. But not in the way that you’re thinking.”
Lafayette and Mulligan exchanged glances. Hamilton had stopped biting his nails and had moved on to shaking his leg up and down in a characteristic attempt to dispel excess frustration. Lafayette wracked his brains, trying to think of anything apolitical Jefferson might have said that would have served to rile Hamilton to such a degree but stopped when he realised the list was exhaustive.

“Is it a case of not the what but the how?” he prompted.

“The what of the what?” frowned Mulligan.

“When he speaks to me as if I’m the help,” Hamilton explained before turning back to Lafayette. “And no. In this case, it was most definitely the what.”

“Alright, so the what did he say?” asked Mulligan, leaning over to grab a slice of cold pizza from the coffee table.

The colour in Hamilton’s cheeks grew brighter even as he said with dignity: “He insulted me.”

At once, the others were on guard.

“…Racially?” Lafayette said when it became clear Mulligan wasn’t going to.

Hamilton shook his head, taking a long pause before replying. “He insulted my music taste.”

It took all the effort that both Mulligan and Lafayette possessed not to look at each other but to instead continue blinking, politely if questioningly at Hamilton.

“He insulted your music taste,” Lafayette repeated, and then said it again in French to see if anything had been lost in translation.

“Pas critiqué, il me railla,” Hamilton snapped. “It was nauseating. He and Madison were on the quad, doing their little stunt for the student council election. With boomboxes. Like, from the nineties. And they were wearing do-rags, for fuck’s sake. Anyway they were blasting some nonsense, tryna be all blackaddy-black-black and when I called them out on it they challenged me, asking if I even knew what it was. And…yeah. Well. I didn’t. So what?” he added, glaring suddenly at the others, eyes blazing as if they had asked the question. “Ok so, I don’t go around like a couple of white boys claiming to know my Tupac from my Biggie, that doesn’t erase my blackness or whatever the hell it is they’re trying to prove…anyway, I said all that, but then they were all like ‘Fine Hamilton, what music do you listen to apart from Beethoven’s Ninth’ because haha very funny, Hamilton’s an elitist and his name is Alex, did you know we read Burgess that one time because we’re not just hip ya’ll, we’re also so fucking cultured.”

He crossed his arms over his chest and fell back against the couch, scrunching himself up small and breathing heavily like a winded dragon. Mulligan and Lafayette deemed it safe enough to risk exchanging a glance, affirming a wordless agreement before Mulligan cleared his throat.

“Erm,” began Mulligan tentatively. “Now, don’t take this the wrong way Alex…but you have been listening to the same three artists since 2008.”

Hamilton’s eyes narrowed as he blustered in protest. “That is not true!”

“Come Alexander,” followed Lafayette, growing courage upon seeing that Mulligan still had his head. “When was the last time you played something that wasn’t Buena Vista Social Club?”

“I listened to Supernatural today!”
“Let me rephrase. When was the last time you played something in which the guitarist was not Carlos Santana?”

Hamilton opened his mouth to retaliate then closed it when he realised he had nothing to combat this.

“Okay, so I’ve been going through a bit of a latin phase,” he admitted at last. “You tell me why anyone would want to listen to another guitarist when Santana is in existence. But I like other stuff! Trust me, I have great music taste.”

“Show,” commanded Mulligan, holding his hand out for Hamilton’s phone.

Hamilton passed it over reluctantly and Mulligan began scrolling through his saved music. To be fair to him he wasn’t lying; apart from several various latin bands Hamilton had amassed quite an impressive collection of blues, jazz and soul. Mulligan had to give a deferring nod to Miles Davis, Bobby Womack and Curtis Mayfield as he handed back Hamilton’s phone.

“Fair play,” he conceded. “You’ve got some good old boys on that thing.”

“I know,” replied Hamilton smugly. “And I’d bet my next month’s rent Thomas Jefferson hasn’t even heard of Bill Withers.”

“Granted, but I can also understand when Jefferson calls your taste elitist,” Lafayette countered from where he had been looking over Mulligan’s shoulder. “No one’s saying that Miles Davis Isn’t Good but is there anyone on there that is actually still alive?”

“Bill Withers is alive!”

“You know what I mean. There’s no new music on there. Like, from this millennium.”

Hamilton stuffed his phone back into his pants’ pocket crossly. “I don’t have time to listen to new music,” he muttered. “Everything they play these days is just a rip off of the greats anyway, only now white people get to do it.”

The door opened and slammed with more force than was necessary. Lafayette cringed in pain. He needed to find less aggressive friends.

“Speak of the white devil,” said Mulligan as Laurens walked in.

Laurens raised an eyebrow. “You know you can’t really say that if I’m not actually white,” he said, putting down his bag.

“You’re my whitest friend.”

“Hamilton’s mixed too? Also, what about the Schuylers?”

“Somehow, the point still stands.”

Laurens shrugged. “Fair enough,” he said, grabbing a slice of pizza and marching in the direction of the fridge. “What are you guys doing?”

“John!” cried Lafayette suddenly, jumping up onto his knees in exuberance. “Come join us! We are critiquing Alex’s music taste!”

A short laugh came from the kitchen. Hamilton scowled, crossing his arms over his chest as Laurens emerged with a plate in one hand.
“Attempting to drag Alexander into the twenty-first century?” he scoffed, reaching for a fork. “Good luck. Did you guys know there’s clafoutis?”

“Yes,” said Lafayette sulkily. “It is my house.”

“I don’t need dragging anywhere,” Hamilton told them. “My music taste is fine.”

Laurens waved his fork. “Name me three artists on the charts right now,” he challenged him. “Not Drake or Beyoncé.”


Mulligan let out a wild hoot of laughter as Lafayette cringed again and Laurens looked down into his plate, grinning. “What?” Hamilton demanded, feeling the heat rise back again into his cheeks.

“Lamar, Hamilton,” Lafayette said gently as Mulligan gasped for breath. “His name is Kendrick Lamar.”

“You’re forgetting his little known Arab cousin,” Laurens told him. “And, in my opinion, the real and underrated genius.”

“Alright well, fuck you guys,” Hamilton snapped, turning his burning face again. “I bet Kendrick Lamar never did anything as good as Dock of the Bay.”

“Not the point Alexander,” Laurens shook his head.

“Okay that is it,” said Hamilton, suddenly flinging out an accusing finger. “I refuse to take musical advice from ‘Did-you-know-I-DJ’ Laurens.”

“Yeah that’s entirely fair,” said Mulligan as Lafayette nodded.

Laurens stared at them all, face comical with indignation. “Um, what the fuck?”

“Your taste is the worst,” Lafayette clarified.

Laurens jabbed his thumb at his own chest. “I have the best music taste out of all of you,” he stated emphatically. “I literally get paid for my music taste.”

“Oh here we go,” Mulligan rolled his eyes. “Hey, did you guys know Laurens DJs?”

“I’m sure the promoters at Berghain think it’s all technically very good,” Hamilton rolled his eyes impatiently.

“It’s the eighties synth I object to,” Mulligan cut in. “That and the techno.”

“Techno is amazing.”

“Techno is terrible, John. Everyone thinks so.”

“It’s just so,” Lafayette wracked his brains for the right word to accurately describe Laurens’ iPod. “European.”

“You’re literally from Europe.”

“Pretentious, then. And this is coming from a Frenchman.”
“The word your looking for,” said Mulligan, grinning deliciously. “Is white.”

The others all murmured in agreement.

“Oh okay,” said Laurens, putting down the desert and raising his palms in surrender. “You guys are philistines who know nothing about good music. That’s cool, hey, no one likes armed missionaries. Not about to set out to convert those who have already turned their backs on the church of dutty bass.”

Hamilton, Mulligan and Lafayette groaned.

Lafayette clapped his hands. “I have an idea!” he declared, just about bouncing off the edge of the couch in his excitement. “Each of us must introduce their choice of new music to Alexander. Then, we put them all together and make a playlist!”

“Nice,” Mulligan nodded. “And then we throw a party.”

Lafayette looked at him quizzically. Mulligan shrugged. “I just really wanna throw a party,” he said. “If you want an excuse, my birthday is in a little over a month.”

“Cool,” said Laurens, holding up one finger in condition. “But I’m gonna make a separate playlist to educate Hamilton with. You’ll see. My stuff is the absolute shit.”

“You mean absolutely shit,” Mulligan muttered.

Hamilton shrugged, not particularly thrilled about the prospect of such a bright spotlight being shone on his cultural ignorance. On the other hand, his friends were looking increasingly excited and he didn’t want to be seen as the spoil-sport. He tried to make his expression appropriately indifferent as he addressed Laurens. “Fine. But if you put any Jamiroquai on there I reserve my rights to revoke our friendship.”

Lafayette beamed. “Magnifique!” he declared, grabbing his phone. “I shall alert the chat.”

The others watched absently as Lafayette typed in a flurry, his tongue poking out slightly in concentration. When Hamilton felt his phone vibrate he slipped it out of his pocket, frowning out at the screen in confusion.

“Why have you changed the group name to ‘The Go Down Brothers’?” he asked, perplexed and a little scandalised.

Lafayette’s eyebrows wriggled in confusion. “Faire money-money, non?”

“Give me that,” said Mulligan, snatching Lafayette’s phone from his hands and changing ‘Go’ to ‘Get’.

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It was late by the time Hamilton got back to his own room in the college dorms, much later than he had intended. Unable to finish the reading he had wanted to get ahead on, he spent the entirety of the next morning finishing the book he had set down at three am before making a start on his next assignment. When the knock on the door came he nearly didn’t hear it over the soft notes of Duke Ellington and the sound of his own fingertips, hammering relentlessly as they flashed across the keyboard.

“Come in,” he called when the knock came the second time.
The door opened, revealing John Laurens. Hamilton finished the sentence he was writing before looking up.

“Hi,” he said, trying not to betray his surprise.

“Hey,” said Laurens. He was holding a brown paper bag and he reached into it, withdrawing a generously sized bagel. “I was in the area. Wasn’t sure you’d eaten today and I knew you’d be working hard after last night.”

Hamilton took the bagel and expected it. The bread was brown and heavily seeded, the filling thick with cream cheese and something that looked like avocado. He took a cautious bite and smiled.

“Thanks,” he said, taking another. “I forget sometimes.”

Laurens nodded. “I know,” he replied, taking a seat on the edge of Hamilton’s bed.

Hamilton spun round a little in his chair so that he was facing Laurens. He was looking around the room interestedly, taking in the many books and articles piled in haphazard heaps and littering every available surface. He picked up a textbook laying on the bed next to him and flicked through it.

“Re-evaluating the Keynesian Model,” he observed dryly. “Wow. You’d really think they would have sussed that when people don’t have jobs, people can’t afford to buy shit by now.”

Hamilton laughed, a little incredulously. “Yeah,” he said, grinning at the familiarity of the words. “I…yeah. That’s exactly…yeah.”

Laurens put down the book somewhere on the ever-growing pile. Hamilton felt a flicker of self-consciousness about the mess but he suppressed it quickly. It wasn’t exactly as though he had been expecting company. Hamilton liked Laurens, but he was more Lafayette and Mulligan’s friend than his own. In fact, he was willing to stake that this was the first time he had been in Hamilton’s room without the other two with him.

“It’s the duke,” said Laurens abruptly.

Hamilton frowned, about to ask Laurens what was wrong with Lafayette and to correct him that his real title was in fact marquis when he realised he was talking about the music.

“Oh yeah,” he nodded. “He’s one of the only people I can listen to when I’m working. Although I hate to say it,” he sighed, recalling last evening’s conversation. “He is starting to sound a little…overplayed.”

To his credit, and Hamilton’s surprise, Laurens did not smirk. Instead he reached into his pocket, pulling out a memory stick and passing it to Hamilton, looking a little embarrassed.

“That’s actually why I’m here,” he explained. “I mean, I was in the area, but I actually did get started on that playlist last night.”

Hamilton picked up the memory stick, turning it over in his hands. “But you got back later than me,” he frowned. “This must have taken you ages.”

Laurens shrugged like it was no big deal. “I have insomnia pretty bad,” he said. “Beats studying. That’s actually how I started remixing you know, when I can’t sleep I just take to messing around with shit on my laptop—”
“-Oh, do you make *remixes* John Laurens?” asked Hamilton, latching quickly onto the old joke.

Laurens took the line, grinning in self-awareness. “You’re damn right I do,” he said. “You should feel honoured, Hamilton. That’s a Laurens special right there, not just some average shit I queued on my Spotify. I played around with some of the songs, you know, to make em unique but they should all still be recognisable.”

Hamilton nodded, rubbing his thumb over the side of the memory stick. He felt that the polite thing to do was play it, however, when he made to plug it into his laptop Laurens stood up suddenly, as if jolted by electric shock.

“You know,” he said and Hamilton saw that his cheeks were rather pink. “Ya. I’d like…play it song by song, rather than all in one go. There are like directions for what each one’s good for. Obviously you don’t have to follow them, but like, yeah. The first one’s really good to study to. Anyway.” He cleared his throat and gestured at the door. “I gotta get going. I’ll see you later.”

“See you,” said Hamilton as Laurens headed for the door. “Hey, thanks.”

“No problem,” Laurens called, already halfway down the corridor.

Hamilton shook his head in bemusement at Laurens’ sudden awkwardness. He hesitated, wondering if this was actually some sort of practical joke that would release something embarrassing or potentially destructive on his computer the moment he plugged it in. He didn’t know Laurens well, but he did have a kind of weird sense of humour. It tended to be crueller towards himself though, rather than anyone else.

He plugged it in, waiting impatiently for the memory stick to load and feeling a twinge of excitement when the playlist popped up onto his screen. Scrolling down, he saw that Laurens had followed all the names of the songs with brackets, containing things like: *for when ur baked out of ur head and thinking about aliens or christopher nolan meets ridley scott on ketamine. what happens next will shock u.*

Smiling amusedly to himself, Hamilton double clicked on the first song: Windowlicker by Aphex Twin (*for when u wanna study but also contemplate the matrix*) and began to play.
Hamilton listened to the second song on Laurens’ playlist while walking to college the next day. Laurens had put in the brackets ‘for feeling angry about the state of America’ and for Hamilton, who was always feeling angry about the state of America for one reason or another, the short walk presented as good an opportunity as any.

After the first song, Hamilton had expected more ambient electronica. He was therefore surprised when his eardrums were met with a steady hip hop beat, and the rhyming polemic that accompanied it. By the second verse Hamilton found himself nodding along, his step jauntily in time with the rhythm as he attempted to listen to the sharply articulated points the rapper was actually making.

When Hamilton got to his apartment Mulligan looked up from where he was sat at his sewing machine, grinning when he heard Hamilton singing along.

“Laurens’ playlist, huh?” he guessed and when Hamilton nodded, “What’s it like?”

In response, Hamilton plucked out one of his earplugs and offered it to Mulligan. He listened for a few seconds before his grin widened and he nodded approvingly.

“A Tribe Called Quest,” he diagnosed correctly. “Damn, I’m impressed. Wouldn’t exactly have pegged this on Laurens’ radar. I thought he was just gonna spawn you off a load of ten minute rhapsodies, complete with random electronic beeping.”

“I mean I’m not gonna lie, that’s a fairly accurate description of the first one,” Hamilton conceded. “Mind you, I wasn’t sure about it at first, but it did grow on me the longer I listened.”

Mulligan looked unconvinced. “Maybe you just learned to tune it out.”

“Yeah maybe,” said Hamilton, moving around Mulligan’s table to get a better look. “What’re you working on?”

Mulligan lifted the material from the machine and held it up for display. Hamilton caught a mass
of ruffles, ribbons and brass buttons before he set it down again and began to stick it with pins. “Autumn assignment,” he answered, snapping off a piece of thread with his teeth. “I’m going with the ancien regime.”

“Nice,” Hamilton nodded in approval. “Then Elizabeth can’t complain when you tear it the fuck down.”

Mulligan gave him a look. Hamilton raised his hands in surrender. “Yeah, I know, I’m sorry,” he cringed apologetically. “Too easy, right? Anyway, when can I get to be one of your models?”

“You’re too short to be a model.”

“Rude. Anyway, my face is so beautiful it should hardly matter.”

“You’d make an excellent Covergirl,” Mulligan agreed. “Hand me that box of ribbons over there.”

Hamilton obliged and passed the box, noticing as he did so the sleeve of the vinyl record it had been resting on. He picked it up and examined it, reading ‘Fugees’ and ‘The Score’ in yellow writing. “What’s this?”

Mulligan looked up briefly from his sewing machine. “Oh, that’s for you,” he said. “I was looking through some of my stuff earlier to see what you might like when I remembered that if you don’t like Fugees, then not only can we not be friends, I will literally have to sever all attachments with you out of sheer embarrassment.”

Hamilton turned over the sleeve and scanned the list of songs. He was familiar with the band of course, mostly through their having been played on repeat by Mulligan, but he hadn’t properly listened in depth. He lifted the vinyl in acknowledgement. “Fair play,” he said. “Thanks.”

“Take a bit of Lauryn Hill while you’re at it,” Mulligan advised him, gesturing towards his record collection. “I’m right in thinking you have a player, yeah?”

“Yeah,” answered Hamilton awkwardly, without elaboration. It was one of the few really expensive things he owned. Mulligan had clocked it once when Hamilton had first moved to the city, but hadn’t pressed the matter further. He guessed he thought Hamilton would have sold it by now.

Mulligan returned to his project while Hamilton wandered over to the shelf to leaf through Mulligan’s many records. He had taken great care over them, the covers bright and glossy as if newly minted. It was mostly hip hop; Hamilton found A Tribe Called Quest and several other Fugee albums, however there was also an impressive store of reggae, funk and soul. He was just slipping The Best of Lauryn Hill and Roots’ Phrenology under his arm when Lafayette flew in.

“Have you seen the news?” he demanded as the door closed behind him, his accent coming out thick and heavy in his urgency.

“I just got back from class,” answered Hamilton, frowning perplexedly. “What’s happened?”

Lafayette picked up the remote and pointed it at the TV, flicking through the channels until he had the news. Hamilton slid to join him on the sofa, his brow furrowing further the more he looked at the screen.

“There has just been another alt-right march, here in New York,” Lafayette told Hamilton over the reporter. “Well, I say that. Actually, it was only twenty people or so, and college kids no less. This boy, a black boy, got in an altercation with one and when the police arrived, guess which they put
Neither Hamilton or Mulligan said anything as they watched the footage unfold on the screen. However, when the face of the boy appeared, bruised and battered against the stark white of the hospital sheets Mulligan jumped up.

“Shit!” he exclaimed furiously. “I know him! That’s goddamn Jamal Curtis. I used to go to drama workshops with that kid!”

“Are you serious?” asked Hamilton as Mulligan whipped out his phone and began to type furiously.

“It gets worse,” said Lafayette grimly as Hamilton and Mulligan glared at him, as if to ask how it could possibly get any worse. “There is a rumour that the boy he fought with is a student at Columbia.”

Hamilton swore so violently the phone jumped out of Mulligan’s hand.

“Great,” he said loudly. “This is just great. In fact, turn the television off. I already know how this goes. See, not only can they keep doing this to us, keep beating us, keep killing us, keep putting us in prison while the people who started the fire get to walk up and down the streets scot-free, spewing their evil racist bullshit – not only can a police officer put a black kid in cuffs while high fiving his assaulter with the other hand but the guy who did it also manages to be a student at one of the most prestigious fuckin’ schools in the goddamn country…doing really well, probably, all set to graduate and maybe even a member of the football team with a solid go at the championships this year, and guess what, guess what. His goddamn father’s a donor and member of the board!”

“It’s possible you’re letting your imagination run away with you,” Mulligan said through gritted teeth, still typing.

Hamilton rounded on Lafayette, eyes blazing. “Tell me I’m wrong, Lafayette.”

“They have not released his identity yet,” said Lafayette quietly. “But last I heard, the common guess was that it was Andy Drayton.”

Hamilton started laughing. It was not a nice sound.

The door opened again. Laurens walked in and stopped, eyes flickering unsurely from Hamilton to the television screen.

“I walked in on something bad,” he guessed as Hamilton’s laughter rose in both pitch and desperation. “Didn’t I?”

“Jamal Curtis,” answered Lafayette as Hamilton tried to calm himself down.

Laurens sighed, removing his beanie in order to run a hand through his long hair.

“Yeah,” he said eventually. “My um…my father just texted me.”

At once Hamilton was on his knees, spinning round to look challengingly at Laurens over the back of the couch.

“Really?” he demanded, eyebrows raised in mock surprise. “Let me guess. On no account must you speak to the press any word regarding Andrew Drayton. Right?”
“I don’t know what kind of opportunity he thinks I’d have to talk to the press,” Laurens mumbled. Hamilton snorted and turned back round to face the TV. Laurens took off his jacket and came to sit down tentatively next to Hamilton. His arms were folded across his chest and his eyes were narrowed at the screen, his jaw set so tight it looked like it hurt. Laurens felt his face warm as he forced himself to watch the news.

“We The People,” Hamilton muttered under his breath.

Laurens looked back at him, blinking in surprise.

“Fuck this,” exclaimed Mulligan suddenly. “I was just talking to my friend, Robert Townsend. Jamal’s parents haven’t got the money to pursue this in court. They’re thinking about dropping it because they’re scared of the consequences if they lose.”

Indignation, hot and swift as fire leapt in Hamilton’s chest. “Ok no,” he said bluntly, reaching into his satchel and pulling out notepad and paper. “That is not happening. Not if the SJC has anything to say about it.”

“What’s the SJC?” asked Laurens, watching as Hamilton began to scribble feverishly in his notepad.

“The Support Jamal Curtis Foundation obviously,” Hamilton replied impatiently, underlining the same at the top of the page. “The latest subset project of the Black Student Union. Long term aims…well. The ending of police brutality, as well as the fulfilment of practical social, political and economic equality for black, brown and other ethnic minority peoples across the United States of America but I feel like that might take longer than before we graduate. The impartial deliverance of justice towards student misdemeanour, maybe? And proportional chastisement for all students at Columbia University, regardless of how well their father knows the Dean. How about the creation of a separate philanthropical trust, dedicated to supporting the victims of racial and discriminatory abuse? I know, I know, the college needs to be seen as apolitical, gotta appease the donors, but it’s something to aspire to, right? Okay short term aims, that’s simpler. Raise money for Jamal Curtis’ family and the profile of affiliation privilege on campus. The second one’s good because if we do it right we might be able to embarrass the higher ups to the extent that they have to set up the trust in order to keep up their precious, squeaky-clean image. For now though, let’s concentrate on fundraising. Damn, I gotta go home and brainstorm…need to get this shit typed up and sent to Burr before he has a chance to form a spineless response. I’ll catch you guys later.”

He stuffed the notepad in his bag, grabbed his coat and left.

Laurens turned to Lafayette, looking glum. “I guess now would be a bad time to ask him what he thought of the song, huh?”

Lafayette stared at him. “John, a boy just got hospitalised.”

“I know, I know,” said Laurens quickly, looking shamefacedly down at his hands. “I wasn’t being serious.”

Lafayette watched as Laurens began to play with his fingers, a pink blush beginning to creep across the pale brown of his cheeks. A lot of people (stupid people, much of the time, but people none the less) didn’t know Laurens was black and were surprised when they found out. Lafayette knew Laurens felt guilty about this. But while Hamilton would holler and scream to make sure that people wouldn’t forget what he was, more often than not Laurens would settle for the easy life,
shrugging and smiling through a sarcastic reply until the effort of restraint proved too much.

“What else did your father say?” he asked.

Laurens shrugged. “The usual,” he answered. “Keep your head down. Stay away from journalists. Don’t do or say anything that could reflect badly. On him, obviously. God forbid my opinions could be interpreted as my own.”

“So that is a solid absolument pas when it comes to affiliation with the SJC?”

Laurens laughed bitterly in response, not meeting Lafayette’s gaze. Lafayette glanced at Mulligan who raised his shoulders unhelpfully. He turned back to Laurens.

“He did like it,” Lafayette relented at last, willpower crumbling. “He messaged me last night to tell me it was pretentious as fuck, but also strangely Baroquian.”

“He liked ‘We The People’ as well,” Mulligan offered. “He was singing it on his way in.”

Laurens ducked his head again, only this time to hide his smile.

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“Ready or not, here I come, you can’t hide.

Gonna fiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiind you, and take it slowly.”

Hamilton was in an excellent mood. He realised this was inappropriate, considering the circumstances, and had he not had a plan of action he would most likely currently be sitting in the library trying to keep his head above the water while the rest of him flailed in an ocean of despair. But if there was one thing that made Hamilton hopeful about the state of the union, it was a strategy. Specifically, his own.

He found Burr outside the languages department, talking animatedly with a group of seniors. Hamilton registered briefly that Jefferson and Madison were among them however, he blanked them out as he marched across the quad, directing his focus solely towards Aaron.

“Mr Burr, sir,” he greeted him, going as always with his most deferential form of provocation.

Burr glanced at him and Hamilton saw his features flash very briefly with guardedness. He politely detached himself from conversation with the senior, turning to address Hamilton with caution.

“Alexander,” he said coolly with another glance at Jefferson. “Can I help you?”

“Did you get a chance to read my proposal?” Hamilton asked.

“You mean the eleven paged document you emailed me at quarter past four in the morning,” Burr responded dryly.

“One of them ya,” Hamilton nodded, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet. “You’re gonna have to be more specific. This one had Jamal Curtis at the top?”

Hamilton ignored the suddenly tense expressions on the faces of several of the seniors, including Madison who rolled his eyes and Jefferson who snickered. Burr however kept his face impassive.

“I skimmed it,” he answered mildly. “There were some useful ideas in there. Although I think you know that some of your long-term aims were a little unrealistic.”
“What were they?” Jefferson cut in. “Single-handedly destroy the alt-right movement with the aid of poster stickers and bake sales?”

“Actually, we prefer to privately fund the individuals who share in our philosophy through secretive and legally dubious means,” Hamilton snapped. “Or, as the case may be, provide a large donation to a grateful and potentially sympathetic institution.”

“Also you guys,” said Jefferson, turning to address the seniors. “Did you know that the moon landing was faked and Franklin Roosevelt was a Freemason?”

“Franklin Roosevelt was a Freemason, you pedestrian fuck. And so is Washington, he probably met your dad and Andy Drayton’s through bonding over the Illuminati.”

“There’s no proof yet that it was Dray.”

“Uuhh. And who’s the big sleaze helping keep his name out of the papers, I wonder? Probably someone who’s shoulder he brushed at your dad’s country club?”

“You weren’t there, Hamilton,” Madison snarled. “No one knows what happened, including you. Facts get blown out of proportion by the media all the time. Some kids were exercising their constitutional right to assemble when they were attacked. Now just because the assailter happens to be a black kid suddenly it’s a race issue and he’s the victim.”

“It was an alt-right protest! It’s a race issue because the protesters were racists!”

“Hamilton, calm down,” Burr told him severely. “Madison, Jefferson, could you please refrain from provoking him for a minute while I have a word?”

Jefferson and Madison turned away, smirking. Fuming, Hamilton allowed Burr to lead him away and tried to tune out their not-so subtle whispering behind him.

“What is it you wanted to ask?” Burr said.

“Can this be the BSU’s next project?” Hamilton answered automatically. “The SJC. I’ll head it and run it obviously, you don’t need to worry about that, but it would be good if we had the union’s backing. Y’know, for legitimacy and everything.”

Burr’s mouth was a thin line. “I don’t know Alexander,” he replied eventually. “I don’t want to look like we’re endorsing anything too political.”

“You are literally the chair of the Black Student Union. It’s a strong contender for the most innately political society on campus.”

“It’s a society that represents the cultural interests of a particular demographic as they begin and end on campus. Not a pressure group.”

“Don’t you think as the elected head of this particular demographic it’s your job to take a stance on Jamal Curtis?”

“I don’t see why that’s my responsibility.”

Hamilton stared at him.

“Look, I’ll think it over,” Burr conceded when it became clear Hamilton was getting dangerously close to blowing a fuse. “But no promises. At the very least, the BSU can offer the SJC its
friendship and co-operation. How about that?”

Hamilton didn’t say anything. Burr sighed and looked over his shoulder, no doubt to check that Jefferson and Madison had gone before offering him a small smile.

“I saw what Lafayette put on the chat,” he said confidentially. “I’ll have a look through my CDs, dig out something you might enjoy.”

Hamilton rolled his eyes. “Great. I can’t wait to hear the latest remix of Hedge Your Bets by the Non Committals,” he snarled before beginning to walk away, throwing over his shoulder as he went: “And no one listens to CDs anymore Burr. It’s 2017. Get a fucking grip.”
“Okay guys. I’m looking for ideas here. Good, practical things I can use, okay, things that will piss off the administration but not to the point that they won’t take us seriously. Lafayette.”

“Oui,” said Lafayette, glancing up from his phone.

“Stop texting.”

“It’s Adrienne,” explained Lafayette, as if that somehow changed matters.

“I don’t care if it’s Gerard Depardieu. No texting during meetings.”

“Adrienne has ideas too. Don’t disregard her input just because she is unable to be here in person.”

Hamilton rolled his eyes, turning to Mulligan on his right. “Herc. You start.”

“Yard sale.”

“You can’t just say yard sale every time you’ve got a load of crap you wanna throw out.”

“Fine. Fashion show. Wait, no, because I’ll end up doing all the work and I’ve got enough on my plate for school anyway. I revert to yard sale.”

Hamilton resisted the temptation to roll his eyes again and scribbled it on the flipchart behind him. It was the unspoken question of everyone in the room which person had been short-sighted enough to get Hamilton a flipchart.

“Angelica,” he said, heroically choosing not to labour on the fact that she was painting her nails.

“Yard sale is a good idea,” she affirmed, carefully dabbing polish onto her pinkie. “We should hold it in Mulligan’s neighbourhood so that Jamal’s friends and family can take part.”

“Fine, but we already have that and we need something on campus. This is a brainstorming session, what’s your plan?”

Angelica finished her pinkie. “Yard sale is a good idea.”

“Ben,” Hamilton turned his back on her. “My man. Mr 007. Gimme something.”

Tallmadge looked at him hopefully. “Open mic night?”

Hamilton hated to be the one to crush a young man’s dreams of becoming the next pony-tailed plaid-wearer to make it big playing mediocre acoustic guitar. But someone had to do it.

“This is not a chance for you to have your big break, Ben Tallmadge,” he told him severely. “Please can we all try and remember who this is about.”
“Yes Alexander, can we please all try and remember who this is about?” Angelica muttered. Laurens swallowed a laugh.

“Adrienne says bake sale,” piped Lafayette.

“Oh ya, because things went so swimmingly the last time we had one of those.”

“The Austen Tea Party was a great success. The Arts Department got their funding.”

“There was tea in the river. Also, why did the football team turn up in culturally appropriative costume? That part was never explained to me. Never mind, it’s in the past. John Laurens, what have you got for me?”

“Um,” said Laurens, embarrassed but lacking in alternatives. “I was gonna ask my dad’s not awful friends to give me money?”

Hamilton hesitated. “I…” he wracked his brains, trying to think of something wrong with this before nodding vigorously. “Yes. That’s good. That’s very good. Keep it up.”

“I actually think the open mic night is not a bad idea,” voiced Eliza. “People can come and express their feelings over the situation. It’s inclusive, non-threatening, and attractive to hipsters. The white kids will love it.”

Hamilton and Tallmadge looked at her with matching expressions of gratitude.

“Eliza,” spoke Hamilton, very solemnly. “You are a gift to this meaningless void we call a world.”

Eliza blushed and laughed. Tallmadge looked indignant. “It was my idea,” he complained.

“Shut up, Ben. Eliza took your shitty idea and turned it into something good, as she does with everything she touches.” Hamilton wrote Caucasian-friendly open mic night on the flipchart. “Ok, we have a yard sale and open mic night to raise funds for the family. We need to organise a protest as soon as possible, I’m thinking this Thursday? Is everyone free?”

“Can’t do Thursday,” Angelica shook her head. “I have Femsoc.”

“Really? Can’t you miss it this once?”

Angelica glanced up from her nails to glare levelly at Hamilton. “Did you miss the movement?” she returned challengingly. “My things are important too, Hamilton. No. I cannot.”

“I said I’d hang out with Caleb and Abe,” said Tallmadge sulkily, not sounding particularly unhappy to be doing so.

Hamilton groaned in frustration. “Come on guys,” he frowned. “Can we please get our priorities straight? Can no one here do Thursday?”

“Sorry Alex, I have a church fundraiser,” said Eliza apologetically.

“Eliza, you yourself are an angel sent to bless us, the unworthy, from a benevolent God and have no need to apologise for anything, ever.”

“How about Friday?” suggested Laurens. “A lot of people don’t have class on Friday.”

Hamilton pulled a face. “Friday…is not good for me,” he admitted, his scribbled mess of a planner flashing briefly before his eyes. “I have an essay I was gonna write and I told Washington I’d come
in…whatever, I’ll move stuff around. This is more important. Friday it is. Here, when are you available to do the yard sale?”

“Um,” Hercules checked his phone quickly, skimming through his calendar. “Next weekend looks good. My yard won’t be big enough though, I’ll email the council and ask if we can use the park.”

“Perfect. Ben if you wanna talk to the SU and see what day we can get the bar. Laurens, we need flyers for this Friday. Feel free to get creative with your depiction of Drayton. Anyone who’s around tomorrow can start giving them out. And I’ll make a Facebook page, obviously.” He paused, trying to think if there was anything else he’d missed. “I think that’s it. Eliza, you got everything?”

“I think so,” said Eliza, spinning her laptop round to show Hamilton the minutes.

“Eliza Schuyler. Best of minute-takers, best of women. Okay, good work team. You can go.”

There was a scuffle and the sound of chairs scraping the floor as people stood up to leave. Laurens hung by the door, gesturing to Lafayette that he’d catch him later when he looked at him questioningly. He waited for Hamilton to pack away his flipchart and notepad before holding the door open for him.

“Thanks,” said Hamilton, shouldering his satchel. “That went well. Good turnout. I mean, I know it was literally just the group chat minus Burr and Dick Meade but it’s so hard to get everyone together in one space, y’know? Like, I know I was crabby with Ange but come on. The girl must be the only one with a schedule even busier than mine, it’s hard enough tryna find a time to meet up for coffee, let alone dismantling the system. It’s nice though, I like it when we get to do things as a group. Even if it is under shitty circumstances. God, I hope all this fundraising makes a difference. If Jamal Curtis doesn’t get justice I’ll feel like I’ve personally failed him, y’know? Like, there’s so much a person can do and if you don’t do it then it’s kind of like you’re stepping aside and saying it’s okay for this kind of shit to happen. Speaking of cowards, Burr still hasn’t got back to me by the way. Asshole. Honestly, I will never understand that guy.” Hamilton paused in his flow, noticing for the first time who he was actually talking to. “Do you think you’ll be able to squeeze money out of many of your dad’s golf buddies?”

Laurens shrugged. “A few,” he replied vaguely. “As long as I keep it anonymous. A lot of them aren’t quite as bad as their constituents make them look.”

Hamilton nodded. “Makes sense.”

There was a lull as they left the empty classroom and set off down the corridor. Laurens wanted desperately to ask Hamilton what he had thought of the songs but still wasn’t sure if it was an appropriate time. However, as the silence stretched with Hamilton looking increasingly expectant he found he couldn’t contain himself.

“Did you get a chance to listen to any of the playlist yet?” he plunged.

“Yeah I did,” Hamilton responded immediately. “It’s interesting. I like it a lot. You were right – Windowlicker was really good to work to, once you get past that weird opening. We The People was great, loved that. Very clever use of constitutional terminology. And I listened to the Fatima Yamaha one this morning, what was it called-”

“Love Invaders,” Laurens prompted.

“Love Invaders, right,” Hamilton agreed. “A cyborg and an astronaut find love in a hopeless place.
What do you even call that genre?"

“I tend to go with electrofunk.”

“Yeah, you know what? It kind of reminded me of the comics I used to read as a kid,” Hamilton informed him. “Afrofuturism. Were you ever into that stuff?”

Laurens laughed. “I think the closest we ever got to literary diversity as children was Huckleberry Finn.”

Hamilton cringed. Oh wow.

“No offence,” he began. “But did your dad…like…realise what colour his children were?”

“Son,” Laurens corrected him. “My brothers and sisters have a different mom. But the answer is no. I think he has a tendency to um…conveniently forget.”

Hamilton tried desperately to think of a way to detach himself from what was swiftly turning into a very awkward conversation.

“Well anyway,” he said jokingly. “I like your weird, edgy white music. I didn’t think I would, but hey. I enjoy learning.”

“It’s not all white music,” said Laurens defensively. “I put some hip hop on there.”

“Yeah, Mulligan was impressed. He gave me some stuff yesterday, Fugees and The Roots. Do you know em?”

“Uh yeah,” replied Laurens enthusiastically. “The Roots are incredible, I think I put some on the playlist. Which album did you listen to?”

“Phrenology?”

“Uuh. I prefer Undun personally but they’re both good. Fugees are awesome too. Oh man, I remember when I first started playing them around the house, my dad would always give me a look of such disdain haha…”

“Your dad is lame,” said Hamilton before he could stop himself. “Nah, they’re good. Great fuel for my societal rage. You’re cool with doing those leaflets, right?”

“Yeah, of course. I’ll do em tonight and send them to you.”

“Great. I’d ask anyone else, but you’re the best drawer I know.”

The corner of Laurens’ mouth twitched. “I’m not that good.”

“Dude. I don’t know shit about art, but I’d say you’re better than Eliza. To be fair, I haven’t seen much of her stuff since we went out, but—”

Laurens’ footsteps faltered slightly. “You went out with Eliza?”

“Yuhuh. In first year, for like, four months. How do you not know that?”

Laurens shook his head, stunned. “I guess I never pictured you guys together.”

“Haha yeah. Most selfish thing I ever did. She deserved way better than me. It’s okay though, she
dumped me for the Lord. Kind of hard to compete with that guy.”

Laurens didn’t say anything. They arrived at the main gate; Hamilton gestured in the direction of the library.

“I’ve got some work to do,” he said. “I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“Sure,” Laurens nodded. “I’d better start googling which of my dad’s dinner guests are least likely to have voted for Trump.”

“Have fun, Laurens.”

“Later, Hamilton.”

* 

“You never told me Hamilton dated Eliza,” Laurens accused Lafayette.

They were watching La Vie en Rose. Or rather Lafayette was. Laurens was mostly sulking. Lafayette sighed, leaning over to grab the remote and pause the movie.

“It never came up.”

“You mean it wasn’t something you thought I should know?”

“It is difficult to know what I think you should know sometimes Laurens. The last time I tried to enlighten you, you locked yourself in your bedroom and refused to speak to me.”

“Because you used my old comfort blanket to clean up after sex, Lafayette. That was definitely the kind of information I could have gone my whole life without.”

“I thought that honesty was the best policy.”

“Except in this situation where éluder is the order of the day.”

“Okay,” said Lafayette. “First of all, it is crass to make French Revolution jokes. Secondly, I did not evade anything. It never came up. It was the beginning of first year and they barely went out for more than a few months. I think most people have forgotten it ever happened at all.”

Laurens didn’t say anything but Lafayette could tell he wasn’t happy. Lafayette chewed his lip, thinking about how he could comfort Laurens without accidentally betraying his impatience.

“It was first year,” he said again. “Eliza had never had a boyfriend before and Alexander was hornish.”

“Horny.”

“As you say. They found out very quickly that it was not going to work. Honestly John, could you see the two of them together?”

Laurens squirmed uncomfortably. “I couldn’t,” he admitted. “But then today at the meeting, Eliza seemed to be the only one Alex had any time for. I don’t know man, it got me thinking if maybe he isn’t still in love with her?”

Lafayette looked at him quizzically. Laurens hunched his shoulders in defence. “It’s just a theory.”
“It’s a stupid theory.”

“I’m just saying, if you could maybe find out-”

“You have known him for almost a year Laurens,” Lafayette snapped, losing his patience. “Here, I have a theory. Maybe, instead of repressing everything you have ever felt and hiding secret signals in your little mixtapes, you should grow a spine and talk to him yourself.”

He picked up the remote and unpause the film. Laurens sat there in silence, his jaw clenched, and after a while Lafayette started to think that his journey towards maturity had begun. Then five minutes later, Laurens stood up and headed for his room, shutting the door loudly behind him.

*  

Hamilton was still in the library at eleven pm. Eliza had recommended him a folk singer called Emmy the Great and he listened to her while he alternated between the paper he was working on and Washington’s budget proposal. She was nice to listen to; her songs were pretty and she had a lovely voice. But for some reason, it had reacted to some usually dormant part of his brain that kept wanting to nod off.

“What is wrong with me,” Hamilton muttered to himself, rubbing fiercely at his eyes when he felt them starting to close.

Hamilton was just about to switch from Emmy to revisit Laurens’ playlist when a blossoming notification on his laptop screen let him know he had a message.

**JL**: wagwan. have a leaflet

Hamilton double clicked the attachment. He felt the grin crawl unbidden onto his face as he took in the design; brutal, striking and entirely unapologetic. A Laurens special.

**AH**: It’s amazing!!!!!!! <3 <3 <3

Seriously dude how is it you’re not doing art?? ur so talented.

(and this is from someone who knows)

**JL**: lol

“hey dad. u know that time when i said i wanted 2 do zoology and u were all like ‘no son of mine is going to waste his life w a pointless major’ etc? ya now i wanna b an artist.”

**AH**: ok fair

But honestly man these are really good

I bet you could make good money if you put a price on ur skills

**JL**: ever the capitalist rnt u hamilton ;)

**AH**: It makes the world go round!!

But seriously, speaking as someone who knows what it’s like to have none you should make the most of what you’ve got

Milk that shit for all that its worth!!!!
JL: u should put that on ur tombstone

AH: I think I’m gonna. that or “lived and died a baller”.

JL: loveit

AH: It’s funny because it’s a double entendre. yknow?

JL: yh i got it

AH: Cos of testicles.

JL: yh i got it thanx

AH: I was just checking that u got it

JL: i did get it thanx


JL: MAKE MONEY MONEY MAKE MONEY MONAY

AH: :’)

Your so gansta John laurens

JL: ikr. that’ll be my inner moose sex appeal

*enormous

shit

AH: inner moose

JL: i fucked up ok

AH: No pls. I want to hear more about your inner moose, and how it correlates so directly to ur sex appeal

JL: so u agree

AH: ?

JL: that i have enormous sex appeal

AH: I mean that was never in doubt

JL: knew i caught u iballing me hamilton

AH: omg “iballing” I take that back

Like Apple apped mentally undressing

JL: mentally undressing huh

AH: I mean, u wear a lot of cardigans
There’s a lot of food for thought

JL: ur always thinking

AH: alas, I admit it

JL: does ur brain ever stop

AH: Uh

The clean answer is no

JL: ?

AH: Sex helps

JL: oh cool

AH: It just slows everything down, yknow? like right after, I feel like a ship thats finally found a calm sea after a massive fuckin storm. Do you ever get that

JL: …

The sound of footsteps along the corridor outside, accompanied by the jangle of keys alerted Hamilton to the presence of the caretaker. “Shit,” he muttered to himself, starting to shove things into his bag.

AH: I g2g man I’m about to get locked in. Forgot the library isnt open all night on weekdays :)))))

JL: classique

AH: Thanks again for the leaflets. I will see you tomorrow!!!

JL: np. see u

Alexander closed his laptop and stuffed it in his satchel, racing out the room just as the caretaker approached.

“Sorry, sorry,” he apologised, making his way out the library and beginning the walk home, noticing as he did so that he suddenly felt much more awake.
"Is Laurens gay?" Hamilton asked, entering the apartment without further greeting.

Both Lafayette and Mulligan started at the abruptness of the question. They looked at each other.

"I am not sure I am at liberty to say," answered Lafayette after a long silence.

"You are, however, at fraternity."

Lafayette's lips thinned. "Don't pretend like that makes sense in English," he said reprovingly. "I have become very proficient in the last two years. It comes with paying attention to the things people say."

"I've heard the things he's said," Hamilton replied impatiently. "That J'Andre's hot and he wouldn't mind banging Brad Pitt. Like, wow. Someone ring the alarm, we got an urgent call for a case of common sense. And sure he makes jokes, but that's just Laurens isn't it? I assumed they were just mildly tasteless jabs of self-deprecation."

"Assume makes an ass out of u and me," said Mulligan primly.

"So what are you saying," asked Hamilton sharply. "He is?"

Mulligan and Lafayette exchanged another look.

"Please stop doing that," Hamilton protested. "I knew both of you before you met each other. You're making me feel left out."

"What would happen if you asked?" Lafayette ignored Hamilton, directing the question at Mulligan.

"Easy," Mulligan answered brusquely. "He'd turn bright red, start doing this with his hands," he flapped them violently up and down. "And eventually state that he doesn't feel the need to subscribe to normative labels."

"So bisexual then," said Hamilton, remembering what he himself had gone around telling people in high school.

Mulligan and Lafayette looked as though they were about to exchange another glance. Hamilton threw Adrienne's cushion at them. "Stop."

"Have you ever heard him talk about girls?" Mulligan raised an eyebrow. "Or express any interest in them whatsoever?"
Hamilton thought back to halfway through freshman year when he had first met Laurens. "What about that girl Martha Manning?" he said, recalling the name very distantly. "I remember when we were playing truth or dare, and he told us how he'd lost his virginity."

Mulligan and Lafayette burst out laughing. Hamilton watched them, feeling frustrated and more than a little left out the longer it went on.

"Are you finished?" he snapped when they showed no signs of stopping.

"I would take that story with a pinch of salt," Mulligan managed finally.

Hamilton frowned. "What," he said. "He was lying? Is Laurens a virgin?"

"I never said that," said Mulligan quickly, suddenly looking anxious, as though he had betrayed a confidence.

"You strongly implied it," Hamilton pointed out.

"Why do you ask anyway, Alex?" Lafayette cut in, swiftly changing the subject while Mulligan looked shocked at his own treachery. "You have never shown any interest in Laurens' sexuality before."

Hamilton shrugged, once again assuming the nonchalant indifference with which he had entered the room. "No reason," he said breezily, crossing over to the kitchen and peering into the fridge. "Except that we kinda flirted a little last night."

The silence received from the living room was more delicious than the tart au citron Hamilton found wrapped in cling film.

"You flirted?!" exclaimed Lafayette incredulously, leaping up onto the couch to goggle at Hamilton as he emerged from the kitchen.

"Uuhh," nodded Hamilton, tart in hand. "And don't look at me like that," he added defensively. "He initiated it."

"Laurens initiated it," Mulligan repeated doubtfully. "What did he do? Send you a raunchy remix accompanied by a meme?"

Hamilton shook his head. "We talked about his sex appeal," he answered thickly through a mouthful of desert. "And he asked me if I ever mentally undressed him."

"To which you replied?"

"Well sure," Hamilton shrugged and when Mulligan and Lafayette oggled at him: "What? The guy's hot. You know. In a homeless, trustafarian-hipster, cardigan-wearing sort of way. Which reminds me, what is with that? Is there some unofficial uniform among sad rich homosexuals that I haven't heard about?"

“How did this conversation even come about?"

“He sent me some flyers,” Hamilton shrugged. “Got to talking about asset capitalisation. Bada bing bada boom.”

“Oh my god,” Lafayette groaned, putting his head in his hands. “You two would make the nerdiest couple.”
“We’d be a fuckin’ power couple,” Hamilton countered. “With my brains and his money, plus both our exotic good looks. We’d be unstoppable.”

“Pretty sure it’s still racist to call yourself exotic,” said Mulligan, quirking his eyebrow.

Hamilton shook his head. “Nuhuh,” he replied, scraping the crumbs of his plate. “I’m reclaiming it. It’s about time one of us did. If I have to see a bunch of old white Baby Boomers ‘looking for an exotic young friend’ on my Tinder then I reserve the right to call them out on it while also maintaining a USP.”

Hamilton stuck his plate in the dishwasher and re-emerged from the kitchen, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

“Anyway,” he said, reaching into his bag and pulling out Laurens’ flyers. “The point is, I wasn’t sure if Laurens was speaking for the hell of it, or whether he really was driven by interest. Either way, it’s fine. You know me, love a bit of harmless flirtation as much as the next guy. Probably more. Haha. But c’est l’egal. I’m actually more pleased that we’ve gotten to that stage in our friendship where we can have a bit of sexy banter, regardless if he really did fancy snapping off a piece of this West Indian candy. Which reminds me, our business plan for becoming a billionaire-power-couple is an app called ‘iBalling’. Like the Apple ‘i’. Not sure what it does yet, but it’s bound to be a winner. Why am I even talking about this? Not important. Take these, spread em around campus. Angelica and I are doing the portico this afternoon. With any luck we’ll get a couple of hundred at the protest on Friday, I’ve already got fifty on the Facebook page saying they’re interested.”

He handed Mulligan and Lafayette the leaflets before standing up to go.

“Vive la Révolution,” he announced, shouldering his satchel. “Et Vive la mixed-race race.”

He left.

*

“Okay, but why does Laurens have a playlist solely full of depression music?”

Hamilton peered at the screen of the phone Angelica held out to him which was currently open on Laurens’ Spotify. They were standing on the steps of the portico, arms and bags bursting with Laurens’ leaflets. Hamilton’s megaphone was dangling off his waist, although he hadn’t yet had motive to use it.

“What are you talking about,” Hamilton frowned, squinting at the screen. “This is all happy stuff.”

Angelica raised an eyebrow. “Eye of the Tiger, the Rocky theme tune, Final Countdown, The Time Warp,” she read sounding more and more scandalised. “The Ghostbusters theme tune, dear God Alexander! I have never seen more evidence in my life of someone lowkey wanting to die.”

“Give me that,” snapped Hamilton, wrenching the phone from Angelica’s hands and scrolling through the list. He felt his stomach drop as he realised she was right.

“Okay,” he conceded, handing back the phone when he caught sight of YMCA. “Okay, but Laurens is a DJ. Maybe he keeps all of this for remixing purposes.”

“Is he DJing children’s birthday parties?” Angelica asked doubtfully. “Fucking Christ Hamilton, there’s Euro-pop on this thing!”
“Oh yeah he put some of that on my playlist,” Hamilton shrugged. “It’s not terrible. Well it is, but in a good way? It’s kinda hard to describe. Anyway, how about cooling it with all the blasphemy? What would Eliza say if she heard you taking the Lord’s name in vain?”

Angelica narrowed her eyes at him, extending a flyer as someone drew nearer. “Don’t,” she warned Hamilton dangerously before summoning a brilliant smile. “Hi there. Support Jamal Curtis, protest Friday at 1pm. Fight the power, tell your friends.”

“Seriously though,” continued Hamilton recklessly once the passer-by had descended the portico steps, leaflet in hand. “How are you taking your sister’s newfound glory? Must be hard to play protective older sibling when her boyfriend is our Lord and Saviour.”

Angelica looked at him sharply.

“It’s not my place to have a take on anything,” she responded tersely. “And the same goes for you, seeing as you receded all rights to talk to me about my sister when you broke up with her.”

Hamilton stared at her indignantly. “She broke up with me!”

“Only because she thought you were going to cheat on her.”

“Oh my God,” Hamilton huffed, turning away from her angrily. “That is so…so far from how it went down…you’re just so wrong…I can’t even begin to tell you how wrong you are.”

Angelica shrugged. “Then don’t,” she said. “I’m sure I’ll live. Hi there, support Jamal Curtis, protest Friday at 1pm. Fight the power, tell your friends.”

“Oh,” the boy stopped in front of them, looking unsure as Angelica tried to hand him a flyer. “Can I just ask…what is this protest actually for?”

“It’s drawing attention to the privileged treatment received by certain individuals at this university, based on wealth and connection,” Angelica explained. “As well as a general expression of outrage in response to an act of police brutality.”

“But I swear we don’t know that it was Andrew Drayton? Also, the boy attacked him first. The police were just doing their job.”

“The only reason Drayton’s name is being kept out of the papers is because someone is cleaning up after him,” Hamilton stepped in heatedly. “And the university are doing more than their part to hush things up. As for Jamal throwing the first punch, the so-called protesters were a bunch of neo-Nazis who had specifically gone into that area looking to start something. They got what was coming to them, and the police’s reaction was entirely disproportionate and misdirected.”

“Isn’t that victim blaming?”

Hamilton strongly mentally debated the pros and cons of throwing a punch himself.

“Jamal Curtis is a victim of excessive violence and racial animosity inherent in the system,” said Angelica hurriedly, noticing the colour Hamilton was swiftly turning. “Regardless of who threw the first stone, a rightfully angry adolescent shouldn’t have been put in hospital for it. However, these are all valid questions. If you come to the protest on Friday we’ll have further answers for you.”

Angelica prompted the leaflet into the boy’s hands, rather forcefully. After flickering a hesitant glance at Hamilton, he took it reluctantly and walked away.
“Asshole,” muttered Hamilton, watching as his back retreated.

“We’re gonna have to deal with more than a few of those on Friday,” Angelica said. “Good thing Eliza will be there to provide a voice of calm. Or to hold us back.”

“Mmm,” Hamilton murmured in agreement. “I’m surprised she’s taking such an active interest to be honest. I was a little worried she’d gone all ‘turn the other cheek’ on us. How did you get her to come to the meeting?”

Angelica looked at him wryly. “I told her the JC stood for Jesus Christ.”

Hamilton snorted.

“No,” Angelica admitted. “Eliza is very much an ‘eye for an eye’ kind of gal when the first eye is systematic racism and the second legitimate action. Hers is the Good Samaritan kind of Christianity. Also, hey.” Suddenly the humour was gone from her voice, she gazed at Hamilton levelly. “You should know by now that if anyone in the world has your back, it’s her. Eliza is down with the cause. But even if she wasn’t, odds are she’d be there anyway waving your flag.”

Hamilton looked away, feeling embarrassed and guilty. The back of his neck felt suddenly very warm. Apparently, Angelica was also not enjoying the new awkwardness for she swiftly changed the subject.

“Do you like SZA?” she asked him.

Hamilton looked at her quizzically. “I mean, obviously I prefer Alexander to Nicholas.”

Angelica rolled her eyes. “I’m talking about the singer,” she replied. “I bet Eliza made you listen to Emmy the Great didn’t she?” and when Hamilton nodded, “Dull as dishwater. Here.”

She pulled out her phone, scrolling through her own Spotify until she had found what she was looking for. “You’ll like her,” she said decisively. “She gets me. Listen to Normal Girl and The Weekend.”

“Alright,” Hamilton nodded, filing away the name down for later. “I will.”

Angelica smiled and peace was restored.

“Hi there. Support Jamal Curtis, protest Friday at 1pm. Fight the power, tell your friends.”

* 

** HM: have u guys heard

** AH: No Herc. Not everyone is lucky enough to have a Robert Townsend in their lives

** HM: bro its all over campus. drayton did it

** GdMlMdL: !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

** RKM: Surprise Sur-fuckin-Prise

** BT: Fuck

** AS: Literally who is shocked
AH: I can't believe it. Well no I can believe it. I can't believe how fucking easy it is for me to believe it.

HM: ikr. Looks like someone's golden river ran dry

AH: What's the uni said?

HM: literally everything u guessed. “This is a v good student with a bright future ahead of him, his actions are not an accurate portrayal of his behaviour on campus, altho we accept the situation is serious we are not considering kicking him out at this time blah blah blah football bribery republicans”

AH: jfc

Sorry Eliza

ES: Seconded.

JL: Imao this is bullshit

AS: At least all those apologists no longer have a leg to stand on. I’d like to see Jefferson and Madison try to wriggle their friend out of this

AB: Believe me Angelica, if they can find a way they will.

AH: MR BURR SIR!! SO KIND OF U TO JOIN US!!! PLS TELL ME WHAT IS UR LATEST LUKEWARM REACTION TO IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE???

AB: Horror and sincerest sympathy, obviously.

AH: OBVIOUSLY!! HORROR AND SYMPATHY!! EVERYONE, COME WATCH AARON BURR CHANGE THE TIDES OF RACIAL HATRED WITH HIS HORROR AND SYMPATHY!!!!

RKM: Cool it man

AS: Yeah Hamilton take a break

AB: It's alright guys. I'm quite used to it.

AH: Do Not Worry, all. Mr Burr is quite Well-Acquainted with Such Vulgar and Crass treatment as can be Expected from a one Mr A. Hamlilton.

GdMlMdL: Ham-lil-ton! <3

AS: Omg I love it

ES: Definitely suits you :)

*John Laurens has set Alexander Hamilton's nickname to 'hamilton'*

AH: Laurens you are a scoundrel and a traitor

JL: i never pledged allegiance 2 u
*Alexander Hamilton has set John Laurens’ nickname to ‘did-you-guys-know-i-dj’*

**JL:** original

**AH:** Ikr just like calling ur song “Rock You” to induce provocation

**JL:** loooool fair

did u r8

**AH:** Yeah I did I want it to be my own personal soundtrack for fucking shit up

**JL:** i can make u one of those 2 iul

**AH:** iul?

**JL:** if u like

**AH:** Oh I thought it stood for I undress Laurens

**JL:** ooso

only on special occasions

**BT:** what is going on

**AB:** Agreed.

**AH:** Not important. Ok as the good Mr Burr was so kind to point out this is OBVIOUSLY horrific. But!!! Practically speaking at least we have a hard angle we can work on Friday. This kid is a middle-class white RACIST who goes to one of the most prestigious schools in the whole gddamn country which is OBVIOUSLY being bank rolled by his father into letting him stay on, despite the fact that he is as aforenmtioned a RACIST who went into Jamal’s neighborhood with the sole intention of spreading his hatred & vitriol and hoping for a reaction and therefore should face the same gddamn repercussions that every other kid should have to face in his position

If the law wont arrest him then the least we can do is prevent him from achieving a future which will allow him to do the same thing to other ppl

Is everyone good for Friday

**HM:** YES

**GdMIMdL:** oui oui mon ami

**AS:** 100%

**ES:** Yes!! :) 

**JL:** *thumbs up*

**AH:** Excellent

Also Eliza i’m sorry

**ES:** What for?
It was 12.55pm on Friday. Hamilton was standing on the quad in the middle of campus. In one hand he held a hand-made sign that said ‘Justice 4 Jamal’. In the other, he had his megaphone.

“How much did you pay for that, exactly?” Lafayette asked him interestedly.

Hamilton glanced down at it. “Err,” he tried to remember. “Five bucks?”

“Worth it.”

“I mean, I don’t use it as much as I’d like to.”

“No, I daresay you do not.”

Hamilton huffed impatiently and glanced around the quad, checking his phone for the time. Around him almost all the others were standing holding similarly painted signs, the best of course being John Laurens’. Hamilton didn’t know this, but trying to effectively conceptualise systematic prejudice and represent it satirically in acrylic paint had taken him all night.

“Where’s Burr?” Hamilton snapped.

“He sent me a text,” Laurens replied, looking apologetic. “Says he’s not gonna be able to make it.”

Hamilton exhaled his frustration. He wasn’t surprised. Still, he hadn’t expected the betrayal to jab so much.

He looked up at Laurens’ sign and grinned. “Your sign is great.”

Laurens glanced up as if he had only just noticed it and hadn’t been waiting on edge for Hamilton to comment on it for the past twenty minutes.

“Thanks,” he answered modestly. “Insomnia has its uses.”

Hamilton hummed in agreement. He thought about it for a long time before adding casually: “I can think of nicer reasons to stay up late.”

“Can you,” said Laurens.

“Mmhm. I can suggest some, if you like. Might not be in mixtape format, though.”

“Whatever floats your boat on a calm sea after a storm, Hamilton.”

“Sorry. I should have said ‘iul’.”
“Wow. Must be my lucky day.”

Hamilton felt his grin widen, partly in amusement and partly in something else. Looking at Laurens he saw he was struggling to keep his face impassive, but the corners of his mouth were twitching slightly.

The alarm on Hamilton’s phone buzzed.

“One o’clock,” he muttered, stuffing it back in his pocket.

Laurens nodded. “Rock em, Hamilton.”

Chapter End Notes

nb: Emmy the Great is not dull but a beautiful talented angel sent to bless us and you should all listen to her right now
“Columbia University was built on the backs of slaves,” Hamilton was shouting into his megaphone. “The one percent elite who founded King’s College got to be that way through African trade. And some people at this school seem to have the same mentality, a mentality that has existed in the minds of the aforementioned elite for the past three hundred years.

“You there,” he pointed suddenly at a freshman girl who started. “Do you know how many black people have been killed by police this year alone?”

The girl looked tentatively at her friend who shrugged. “Fifty?” she guessed timidly.

“A hundred and eighty-nine,” Hamilton replied. “That’s just in 2017. And you,” he pointed at a boy in the crowd. “Guess what percentage of officers were NOT convicted of any crime.”

“Ninety percent.”

“Close! Ninety-nine! But close!”

“Where is he pulling all these statistics from?” Angelica murmured to Lafayette.

“He was up all night memorising them,” Lafayette replied. “He sent me a document to double check our facts matched up.”

“Also, every time the crowd starts chanting he’s on his phone,” Laurens observed. “See?”

They watched when as soon as Hamilton got the crowd shouting “Justice for Jamal”, his head bent down quickly, ducking out of sight. Lafayette shook his head in disbelief.

“Mon dieu,” he sighed admiringly. “He would make a very good revolutionary. Georges-Jacques Danton was an excellent orator, but he lacked somewhat for accuracy.”

“Hamilton wants to be a politician,” Angelica pointed out. “Not a revolutionary.”

“I think he wants to be both,” replied Laurens. “He just wants to build on the existing system instead of tearing it down.”
“That’s not very revolutionary.”

Laurens shrugged. “It’s more practical,” he said. “Probably stands a better chance of working.”

“And less chance of getting himself shot,” Lafayette confirmed. “I agree. Reformism is a much more realistic goal. He should have been a Founding Father.”

“Does he plan on becoming president?” asked Angelica.

“Can’t,” Mulligan chimed in, having of course been listening to their conversation. “He was born in Nevis. Not a natural born citizen.”

Angelica tutted in what could either have been sympathy or frustration. “I can’t decide whether it’s a shame or not,” she said. “On one hand, I think Hamilton would make a good president. On the other, I really can’t see it being a good idea to give him so much power.”

They were quiet as they watched Hamilton address the crowd, head once again visible above the sea before him. He had been up on the podium talking non-stop for an hour now and showed no signs of tiring. The Facebook page had gathered at least a hundred people but more had come at the sound of Hamilton’s voice alone; the words fiery with passion but so eloquent and articulate they seemed to flow from him like water. Laurens gazed up at him, like the other members of the crowd, awash.

Finally he concluded his speech, leaving on a note that suggested he could quite happily go on for longer. He hopped down from the podium to venerating applause, grinning despite himself as he wove through the crowd.

“How was I?” he asked as Lafayette handed him his sign back.


“Wasn’t he talking to save his life?”

“You couldn’t stop talking to save your life. Did you take a breath once?”

“Bon point,” Hamilton accepted. “Je ne crois pas. It’s fine, I’ve managed to create a system which means I don’t need to intake so much oxygen when I’m speaking. It means sometimes I pass out afterwards but that’s ok so long as I don’t interrupt my flow.”

“That doesn’t sound good for you.”

“You know what isn’t good for me, Lafayette? Legalised brutality.” Hamilton glanced around him to take note of how many people were there. There were quite a few people he recognised, either from class or around the campus. He was pleased they had managed to reach out to so many people, although he suspected a lot of them had just turned up to watch him rant rather than to listen to what he had to say.

“Burr didn’t turn up then,” he said bitterly, standing on his tip-toes in order to better scan the faces. “What a gutless flake, seriously. If I were a General I’d have him shot for desertion.”

“He said he was busy.”

“He’s not busy, he just doesn’t want to risk the chance someone might see him and think he’s being too black,” Hamilton snarled sarcastically. “Which is, y’know. Totally inappropriate for the head of the Black Student Union. You know what, I should quit counting out my change in public.
Someone might think I’m too good at maths and sack me from Treasurer.” He took out his phone and started snapping pictures. “I’m going to badly photoshop him in this and stick it on my Instagram.”

“Hey, Hamilton?” Someone tapped his shoulder. Hamilton spun round.

“John,” he gasped. “John André.” He dropped his phone.

John André bent down to pick it up, smiling as he handed it back to Hamilton. It was a beautiful smile, full of very even straight white teeth. Hamilton swallowed dryly.

“I was wondering if I could get an interview,” he said. “For The Spy.”

He ran a hand through his rather long dark hair, hair which had been cropped so that it flopped messily into his eyes, as though he were in a boy band. It was beautiful hair. John André was very beautiful.

“Uh,” Hamilton was having some trouble making words with his tongue. “Yeah…uh, I mean, if you don’t mind. I mean, duh, why would you mind, it’s your job. Not that you get paid for it. Wait, do you? Because if you do I’d totally apply. I know The Fed doesn’t pay because I tried to get on it last year and it didn’t fit into my schedule. I like writing but not enough to do it for free, y’know? Apart from fanfiction. Kidding! I don’t do that anymore, not since I was fourteen. I just said that, that’s embarrassing. Still, would beat clerking for Washington. I love the guy but sometimes I’m just like ‘Jesus, get off my dick!’ Directed at Washington, not Jesus. Oh my God. Haha. Anyway, yeah, I’m all good, questions, let’s go for it.”

André blinked at him. Not rudely, André never did anything rudely. After a nervous look at Lafayette who was standing with his head in his hands, he smiled again.

“Great,” he said, fishing out his phone and bringing up the recorder. “Thanks so much. The Spy doesn’t pay, but it’s worth it to cover stuff like this. I really admire what you’re doing. You were just so on it with your response. Makes me think I should be doing more to help.”

“Well sure nothing doing just wanted to yeah great,” said Hamilton, eventually petering into an incoherent mumble.

“Ok here goes,” said André and drew up his shoulders into an appropriately journalistic stance. “So Alex, what’s your reaction to the recent discovery that the student who fought with Jamal Curtis was in fact Andrew Drayton?”

“You’re saying ‘discovery’ like this comes as some sort of a shock to us,” Hamilton answered automatically, blessedly temporarily forgetting who he was speaking to. “We’ve known it was Drayton since the rumour got out that it was a student at Columbia. And if not Drayton, then someone like him. Let me clarify what I mean by that. I’m talking about some A-list white guy, probably a jock, with a wealthy father and a clean record – note the correlation there, by the way – who, if he isn’t on the board, no doubt has his fingers in several pies, and a couple of thumbs in the Treasury too. Someone whose name the university would benefit from keeping out of the news and letting him stay on.”

“You’re saying you think the school had a hand in keeping Drayton’s identity hushed up?”

“No doubt. I mean sure, it looks bad for the school if it turns out they’re harbouring literal neo-Nazis. But when it’s more damaging to their reputation to keep on said neo-Nazis instead of kicking them out, then they’ve gotta have something else to gain, right? Personally, I’m thinking its
“gotta be a pretty fucking big donation to patch up this mess.”

“You use the term ‘neo-Nazi’. Is there really evidence to suggest the protest was anything other than a legitimate demonstration, and that Drayton wasn’t the victim of a vicious assault?”

“Oh come on,” Hamilton exploded impatiently. “They were alt-right thugs who went into that neighbourhood with the specific intention of causing violence. It’s further evidence as to the state of our nation which side was blamed for starting it when the police showed up.”

“You think it’s valid to fight fire with fire?”

“I think it’s *valid* to seek justice,” said Hamilton. He paused before adding, “By any means necessary.”

André grinned, showing his beautiful teeth. “Malcolm X, like it,” he nodded approvingly. “The undeclared intellectuals flirting with Poli Sci will love that. One more question, what’s the next step for the SJC? That’s what you’re calling yourselves, right?”

“Right,” Hamilton agreed. “We’ve got a yard sale coming up in a week’s time to raise money for Jamal’s family and we’re also planning an open mic event, date to be confirmed. All are welcome, we’d be really grateful if people would show up and lend their support.”

“An open mic event, huh?” said André, stopping the recorder and lowering his phone. “Is that open to everybody or…”

“Hot people – I mean, white people can participate,” Hamilton nodded.

“Great!” André flashed the smile. “I wrote this poem I was thinking of sharing. Or there are a couple of songs I could play…I don’t know. I’ll guess I’ll see.”

“I didn’t know you wrote songs,” said Hamilton weakly.

Laurens and Ben Tallmadge scowled.

André looked modest. “Yeah,” he shrugged. “Kills the time, right?”

“I write songs,” said Tallmadge.

“Shut up, Ben,” muttered Hamilton.

“Anyway guys, I gotta bounce,” said André. “Mind if I snap a pic for the paper?”

“Yeah of course you can have anything you want,” Hamilton cleared his throat, gesturing for the others to draw nearer.

Laurens was glowering darkly with his back turned when André took the picture. By the time he turned back round André had gone.

Hamilton flung out his arm. “Can someone help me please,” he gasped. “I think I’m about to faint.”

“What is it?” demanded Lafayette, rushing to his side. “Did you do your anti-breathing technique?”

Hamilton shook his head. “J’André was just here,” he gabbled. “He just spoke to me. Did you see him? Did you see that he spoke to me?”
“Good God Hamilton,” frowned Dick Meade, looking pained.

“Let’s get him out of here,” Mulligan suggested. “Oxygen-deprived or not, he’s been standing up for a long time. And I bet you haven’t eaten yet today, have you?”

Hamilton shook his head, allowing himself to be led away from the throng.

They weaved through the mass of people, stopping when they reached a bench on the edge of the quad. Once they had Hamilton seated, he he spoke again.

“I can’t decide whether that was the best or the worst thing that ever happened to me.”

Lafayette and Mulligan exchanged looks, caught between not wanting to put Hamilton down and not wanting to lie.

Hamilton put his head in his hands. “‘Directed at Washington, not Jesus,’” he repeated tragically to himself. “Fuck. Sorry Eliza.”

“It’s ok,” said Eliza, rubbing his back sympathetically.

“He is unreasonably pretty,” Angelica acknowledged. Lafayette hummed in agreement.

“Am I the only one who doesn’t see it?” asked Laurens.

Everyone stared. Hamilton blinked and frowned, looking quite personally offended.

“You said you thought he was hot that one time,” Lafayette said accusingly.

“Well yeah,” Laurens’ cheeks flushed. “Like, obviously he’s good looking. But he’s not attractive. He looks like a Beatle.”

“Un scarabée??”

“Un McCartnée, Lafayette.”


There was a moment of silence while everyone contemplated the phenomenon that was John André. Finally, it was broken by Hamilton.

“I take it back,” he said abruptly. “This is, without a doubt, the worst thing that has ever happened to me.”

He put his head back into his hands and groaned.

* 

Embarrassing himself in front of John André was not the worst thing that had ever happened to Alexander Hamilton. When he was ten, he had woken up in the middle of the night to his mother screaming while his father packed a bag and marched out the house without a second glance. Two years later, his mother died and he and his brother were flung into the care system where they were then separated. Then, when he was seventeen, a hurricane tore through St Croix, leaving him with more psychological baggage than the single bag he took to America.

Laurens was not to know any of this. For Laurens, the question at the front of his mind was why, after a single conversation, Hamilton had become more flustered than he had ever seen him
throughout the entire course of their acquaintance.

“I really love this song.” Hamilton was saying.

They were in Hamilton’s room. Mulligan and Lafayette had gone in search of nourishment; meanwhile, partly because he was obsessed with it and partly to fill the silence, Hamilton had been playing the fifth song on Laurens’ playlist on repeat.

“You have proved to be,” Hamilton was singing while on his laptop. “A reeeeaal human beeiiing. And a reeeaaal heroooo.”

“Hey man, who sings that song again?” asked Laurens from Hamilton’s desk chair.

“Uh,” Hamilton checked the playlist. “Electric Youth.”

“Yeah, let’s keep it that way.”

Hamilton looked up at Laurens, eyes wide and face split in a delighted grin.

“John Laurens, you absolute savage,” he said gleefully. He shook his head in admiration. “Hot damn, son. Ok, fair enough. You win this round.”

“Just this round, huh?”

“Yeah bro, don’t get cocky,” he sniggered. Laurens rolled his eyes.

Hamilton let the song play unimpeded for approximately five seconds before speaking again. “I really love this song.”

“Yeah, you mentioned.”

“You know what? It reminds me of someone.”

Laurens looked up from his essay hopefully. “Who?”

“André.”

“Oh.”

“He’s just such a hero, y’know?” Hamilton propped himself up on one elbow in order to better gaze dreamily out the window. “A real hero. You know what, he’s the kind of guy who would get caught by the other side in a war or something, but no one would wanna do anything to him because he’s just so nice and pretty.”

Laurens grunted.

“I mean look,” Hamilton continued, raising his fingers and ticking them off. “One: he’s handsome. Two: he’s charming. Three: he writes songs, for Christ’s sake and poetry, like for real, could he get any dreamier—”

“I’m sure one day he’ll make some man very lucky,” said Laurens churlishly.

“Oh André’s not gay,” Hamilton said decisively, settling into the pillows. “He’s going out with that blonde chick. What’s her name? Peggy something.”

“He could be bi.”
“He could,” said Hamilton doubtfully. “I don’t think so, though. Like tends to recognise like, if you know what I mean.”

Laurens could feel Hamilton’s eyes on him. He felt the back of his neck prickle but avoided his gaze, fixing his attention to the laptop screen. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” said Hamilton softly.

He could see Hamilton’s reflection in the metal of the laptop. He was watching Laurens carefully, dark eyes hooded, lips very slightly parted. Laurens clenched his fist. He spun around in the chair so that he was facing Hamilton.

“So did anyone give you any new music lately?” he asked, trying hard to keep his voice level.

Hamilton gave Laurens a long hard look, as if disappointed with him, before replying casually. “Yeah Angelica told me to listen to this SZA girl,” he said. “She’s pretty good.”

“Right up to track nineteen-seventeen, am I right?”

“HA. Bolshevik humour. Always a winner.”

“Gotta love a good commudy.”

“Agh,” Hamilton pulled a face. “No. Too far, that was bad.”

“Damn. Guess I just came at it from the wrong Engle.”

“If you adjust it a little bit you’ll definitely hit the Marx.”

“Wait, I’m confused. Are we doing Bolshevik jokes or sex jokes?”

“‘Wait, I’m confused.’ – John Laurens, 2k17.”

The door opened and Mulligan and Lafayette clattered in, arms laden with plastic bags.


“Meat is murder.”

“The real reason, man. I’ve seen the way you ogle a steak.”

“Fine,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “Because, despite what the government and most special interest groups will tell you, the number one cause of destruction to the environment isn’t carbon emissions or fossil fuels or whatever. It’s livestock. Like, twenty percent of the Amazon rainforest has been cut down in the last forty years to make more room for farmland because of the profits from the beef industry. And like, if most of that money was going to the actual farmers and the local communities then fair enough but no – most of the workers are underpaid and exploited by billionaire tycoon bosses in charge of the meat corporations. So you middle-class liberals can wax lyrical all you like about recycling and clean living and shit. I mean sure, do that too, but that’s kinda like sticking a band aid on a fucking bullet wound. As inconvenient a truth as it is to admit, fact is agricultural farming is unsustainable. Environmentally and economically.”

“You asked,” Lafayette stared at Mulligan imploringly. “Why must you always ask?”
Mulligan shook his head. “I never learn.”

“Can we change the subject?” asked Laurens, looking guiltily at his burrito.

“I have been talking to Adrienne,” Lafayette announced.

Hamilton, Mulligan and Laurens groaned.

“She has been thinking of music for you, Alexander.” Lafayette continued, cheerfully ignoring them. “She asks if you have heard of Alex Nevsky? I think she thinks that because he is from Quebec and not France you will have done. I feel slightly betrayed that she did not pick anyone from the country but I guess it does not matter, all his songs are in French. She says she thinks you will like him because he is good looking. Personally I do not think he is your type, but maybe you will find his voice attractive-”

There was a loud buzz on the desk. Everyone jumped, realising that Laurens’ phone was ringing.

“It’s my dad,” said Laurens, frowning. He picked it up. “Hello?”

Hamilton saw the colour drain from his face.

“I didn’t know,” Laurens stood up. “I promise I didn’t know. Of course I didn’t allow it, I didn’t realise he’d taken it. Yes I listened to what you said, my back was turned. I didn’t know they were going to publish it so quickly.”

He left the room, practically tripping over his own feet in his haste. Hamilton, Mulligan and Lafayette ate their food and tried to pretend that they couldn’t hear half of the conversation on the other side of the door, growing steadily louder in volume.

Five minutes later Laurens re-entered, looking frazzled and upset.

“What's the matter?” Hamilton asked, although he had a sinking feeling that he already knew.

Laurens ran a hand through his hair, exhaling deeply. “My dad just saw The Spy,” he said.
There was a deep stretch of silence before Hamilton decided it had gone on long enough.

“So?” he prompted.

“So,” Laurens exhaled sharply through his nose, looking frantic. “So there’s a massive picture displaying my face on the front fucking page.”

“Unsurprising, since you were there.”

“Good point my man, but no one was supposed to know that, were they?” Laurens snapped. “Especially not my fucking father.”

He released a long noise of anguish through his teeth, running his hands over his face and through his hair. Lafayette watched him with a pain in his chest, similar to how he felt when Adrienne’s cat had gotten hold of a bird, or when he heard lobsters boiling.

“Is he…” he began tentatively. “Is he very upset?”

Laurens let out a hollow laugh. “You might say that,” he agreed. “You might very well say that, Lafayette.”

He collapsed into the desk chair miserably. Hamilton frowned at him, unsympathetic.

“Yeah, and what?” he shrugged, sinking back against the bed. “A boy was beaten so badly he was put in hospital. Now we’re supposed to get our panties in a twist over your dad’s opinion on the matter?”

“You don’t get it,” Laurens retorted sharply. “Already he has people calling him up, voters, donors, asking him if he shares his son’s views on what happened to Jamal Curtis, on whether Andrew Drayton should be allowed to stay or not. This could affect his entire campaign.”

“Oh I’m sorry,” Hamilton raised an eyebrow. “Jamal Curtis is made subject to police violence and I’m supposed to be concerned that some rich white Southerner might not get re-elected?”

“It’s my dad, Alex.”

“Sorry, but that means nothing to me.”

“The world doesn’t revolve around you,” Laurens replied, voice fiery. “If his campaign fails it’s my fault. He gave me one job; keep my head down, don’t do anything that could put him in a difficult position. Instead I do the absolute opposite. Just because I was stupid and selfish…I wasn’t looking
when André took that stupid photo but it doesn’t matter, I shouldn’t even have been there in the first place-"

“None of this is your fault Laurens,” said Mulligan smoothly when Hamilton looked like he was about to argue.

“I should have listened,” Laurens snapped irritably. “I should have just done what he said. Then I wouldn’t have gotten him into this mess.”

He stood up and began shovelling his things off Hamilton’s desk into his bag.

“I’m gonna go find André,” he said. “See if I can stop him printing before any more copies begin to circulate. If nothing else I can get him to take my face off the damn online edition.”

He zipped his bag shut and took off, just stopping short of slamming the door behind him.

Hamilton’s gaze darted from him to Mulligan and Lafayette who were both looking worn-out and sombre. “What the fuck just happened?”

“Henry Laurens just happened.”

“Ok, but did someone strike a match? Because I caught a strong whiff of gaslighting from over where I was sitting.”

“Cool it, Alexander,” said Mulligan severely.

“I’m being serious. What’s going on? Is it something I should know about?”

Mulligan and Lafayette looked hesitant. Hamilton felt a flicker of frustration. “Laurens is my friend too, you know,” he snapped. “We might not be close, but if he’s going through something then I wanna be able to be there for him.”

“It is nothing specific,” Lafayette assured him quickly. “Laurens’ father is just…very overbearing. He has a very stubborn view of what he thinks a son ought to be. It is a lot to expect from him.”

“That explains the closet,” Hamilton muttered. “But so what? Laurens is his own person. The civil war was won two hundred years ago. No one can make him do anything he doesn’t want to do.”

“He doesn’t want to disappoint him.”

“At the risk of being a disappointment to himself?”

“It’s not that simple, Hamilton.”

“What’s complex about it? So he has to spend the rest of his life toeing the line and apologising for being gay and black just because it doesn’t fit his father’s view of ‘what a son ought to be’? I’m sorry, but that’s bullshit.”

“You don’t know what it’s like for him Alex,” said Mulligan quietly. “You’ve never owed anything to anyone but yourself.”

Hamilton looked at Lafayette. He was carefully avoiding his gaze. Shame flared through him, hot and simmering. He grabbed a textbook and disappeared behind it so they couldn’t see his face burning.

“Yeah, because Hamilton doesn’t have a family to disappoint,” he muttered, feeling more guilty
“It’s just ridiculous. All the guy’s doing is showing some common human empathy, along with the hundred and fifty other people there I might add, as well as support for someone whose situation might well have been his own if things had worked out a little differently and he’d found himself in the South Bronx rather than South Carolina with an overbearing Congressman for a dad. But now he’s got it in his head that he’s done the wrong thing by protesting, like his moral responsibility lies with his father rather than a victim of racial violence who actually shares his skin. Like I’m sorry, I know the Enlightenment was championed by a bunch of sexist white men who mostly used their newfound ‘reasoning’ to advance their own material ends rather than the rights of the subjected colonies but still, pretty big movement to miss. Who got it into his head that his first allegiance should be to established forms of authority, rather than his own logic and moral compass? No offence meant, sir. Did you want these emailed or DX’d to Professor Greene?”

“Emailed please,” Washington replied mildly, pushing his glasses up his nose as he flipped through the report.

Hamilton fixed him with a doubtful look. “You know if I put them in the DX they’ll get to him by four o’clock today,” he prompted. “And he’ll have a hard copy, whereas if he has to print them out himself he’ll only bitch about cheekiness and probably miss out a page?”

“Both, then.”

Hamilton nodded in satisfaction and took the documents to the copier.

“Anyway,” he continued as the machine whirred into life. “I have serious doubts about the necessity of the nuclear family system. I’ve been thinking about this a lot lately. I think it’s outlived its historical purpose. I know, I know, I’m hardly a great model for the ideal family unit, no need to point that out. But if you think about it, what does the nuclear family do except foster the exact kind of environment essential for abuse? Take John, for example. Two parents, a mother and a father, the ideal model for hierarchal authority as passed down for generations. Children are expected to obey their parents unequivocally…for what? Because of tradition, and to keep the balance of power as mirrored by higher forms of societal organisation. Ok, but how is that different from the Divine Right of Kings? I think it’s a sham, not only redundant but also potentially dangerous. There are numerous examples of non-Western societies where raising a child is a communal responsibility, significantly lowering the chances of attachment issues and emotional abuse—”

“Hamilton,” Washington interrupted. “Did you circulate the minutes from last meeting like I asked you to?”

“Yes, I did,” Hamilton bristled visibly.

“Then why is Professor Knox telling me he hasn’t received them?”

“Because Professor Knox still hasn’t figured out that his Inbox and Junk Mail are two separate folders,” Hamilton replied, striding over to Washington’s computer and scrolling through his email.
“Here, look. I’ve CC’d him in it as well as his secretary.”

Washington peered closer to the screen. “Ah, I see,” he nodded. “See’d,” he added with a chuckle.

Hamilton narrowed his eyes at him. Apparently, his rant about the limitations of the nuclear family had done nothing to dissuade Washington from making his usual number of dad jokes.

“See, this is what I’m talking about,” Hamilton resumed once Washington had sent the email asking Knox to check his Junk. “First response to a blunder: blame the employee. Not your fault sir, can’t help being anything other than a product of the system you’re brought into. But Laurens…in his head he’s eternally the employee of his household. All his life he’s been treated like the bottom of the food chain, below his younger siblings in fact, seeing as his burden of responsibility is so much greater. Henry Laurens has got as firm a grip on his family as the Dean does on this university, first it’s him, then Laurens’ mother, then his first white child-”

“No Laurens’ mother,” said Washington idly, jolting Hamilton out of his reverie.

Hamilton broke off. “Sorry, sir?”

“John’s mother died when he was quite young,” Washington answered without looking up from the report. “Car accident. Tragic circumstances. The affair lasted quite some time - when she fell pregnant, Henry had to cease contact. Sent her into a depression from which she never quite recovered; rumour has it she was driving under influence at the time.”

He glanced up at Hamilton who had frozen, one hand on the copier. “I suppose you didn’t know that.”

Hamilton forced himself to shake his head. “No.”

“It’s not exactly a secret,” said Washington gently, folding his hands together. “It was all over the news when it happened. Biggest scandal of the year. I’m not surprised that John doesn’t like to talk about it.”

Hamilton didn’t say anything. Washington returned to the report, dragging across it with the nib of an expensive fountain pen.

“Don’t be too hard on him,” he said. “It takes a great deal of courage to stand up to someone you love, and not everyone has your audacity.”

Hamilton swallowed dryly. It stuck in his throat. For a long time there was no sound apart from the rustle of paper and distant hum as Hamilton fed it through the copier. Finally, Washington spoke again.

“Lafayette tells me you’re looking for new music.”

It took Hamilton a while to find his voice. “Well yeah,” he managed after a while. “Sort of. It’s his project, really.”

Washington smiled fondly. “Gilbert does have a tendency to let his ideas run away with him.”

Hamilton hummed non-committally. He had long been unsure how he felt about the strange, almost filial closeness between his best friend and his boss. There was a part of him that felt very uncomfortable, and not least because he was also a little jealous.

“He tells me you have a record player,” Washington continued.
Hamilton shrugged. “Yeah,” he said defensively. “Not a very good one. It’s trash, pretty much.”

Washington hummed semi-consciously. “I’ll have a rifle in my attic when I get home,” he said. “See if there’s anything that might pass as cool for you kids these days.”

Hamilton, quite heroically, did not respond to that.

*

AH: SOS

ES: What did you do D:

AH: Wtf

why does everyone always assume I did something wrong

once u know just ONCE I would like someone to assume ME as the victim

ES: Awww I’m sorry I take it back

What happened???

AH: i think i upset john

ES: :/

So when you said you were the victim

AH: I didnt

I said I would just like ppl to make that assumption

u know

Every now and then

ES: You make it kind of hard Alex

AH: :(((((

That wasnt a very Eliza-y thing to say

ES: Sorryyyy

Do you want to talk

AH: yes

Are u free for lunch

ES: Give me 10 mins

Eliza was already sat in the café, the light from the front window spilling prettily onto her face as she sipped daintily at a caramel macchiato, when Hamilton crashed in and slumped into the seat opposite her.
“Ugh,” he said with feeling, sliding his hands over his face and feeling the crushing weight of the universe collapse onto his thin shoulders.

“You need a haircut,” said Eliza.

“I did a bad, bad thing, Schuyler.”


“Which one? The one with the squint eye or the one with the side-burns? Doesn’t matter, they’re all pretty hot. Or they were in my memory. We didn’t have cable growing up so I mostly got the Disney channel goss second-hand from store magazines. They weren’t that big in the Virgin Islands anyway. Think most people saw through that whole chastity ring charade.”

“It really wasn’t a compliment.”

“Did you know about Laurens’ mother?”

Instead of responding right away, Eliza took another sip of her coffee. Hamilton’s eyes flickered over her face, calm and impassive as a china doll, her posture still and straight. At last she set the mug down.

“Yes,” she answered.

Hamilton felt his shoulders slump. “How?”

Eliza looked at him levelly, dark eyes fixed and unwavering. “The same way I knew about yours.”

Hamilton’s face warmed. He drank some of his coffee for an excuse to look down.

“Laurens’ dad found out that he was at the protest,” he explained afterwards. “He saw André’s picture of him in The Spy and called him up, mad as hell. Laurens completely freaked out, managed to convince himself that he had single-handedly ruined his father’s election campaign. And well I…” He found himself tearing at the napkin that had appeared in his hands. Somehow, it was harder to face Eliza than anyone who had actually been there. “I wasn’t exactly sympathetic.”

He sighed, rubbing tiredly at his eyes. He remembered Laurens’ panic-stricken face as he had re-emerged from his phone call, as if he had been caught with the blood of a murder fresh on his hands. Hamilton shook his head. “I wish I’d known about his mother,” he admitted.

“Alex,” said Eliza gently. “You didn’t need to know about his mother to be nice about it.”

She wasn’t wrong. The realisation didn’t make Hamilton feel any better about it. He tore up pieces of napkin with his fingers, trying to get each piece smaller than his fingernails until Eliza reached across the table and took his hand, stopping him. Hamilton nearly started at the touch. Her hand was warm and dry and very little. It sent memories ricocheting around his head like a pinball machine.

“Let’s get desert,” she said.

* 

Laurens was laying on his back reading about post-structuralism when Hamilton knocked on his door.
“Hi,” said Hamilton when he opened it. “I brought desert.” He fished around in his bag. “Also your headphones.”

Laurens took the headphones and the desert. It looked like a tart tartin. There were two. Hamilton flicked his hair out of his eyes. “Can I come in?”

“If you want,” mumbled Laurens, stepping aside to let him past.

Hamilton stuck his hands in his pockets and walked in. He was very small, Laurens only realised how small he was when he entered spaces where there were only one or two of them inside. Often, Hamilton would walk into a room and it would shrink, dwarfed by his charisma; his effortless grace and provocative charm. It always made him seem a lot taller.

Hamilton sat on the bed and picked up the book Laurens had discarded.

“Folie et Déraison!” he exclaimed excitedly. “Foucault.”

“You know it?” asked Laurens.


He set the book down and looked up at Laurens who was still standing, the box of desert and his headphones held awkwardly at his sides. “Will you sit next to me?”

Laurens did. Hamilton ran a hand through his black hair. It was growing long at the front, resistance against its natural curl forcing it into a sort of afro-mullet thing. He looked a little bit like Che Guevara.

“I came to apologise,” said Hamilton. “About earlier.”

Laurens shook his head to try and stop himself from blushing. “It’s fine.”

“It’s not,” Hamilton protest. “Wasn’t. I wasn’t kind. Sometimes I forget that there’s more going on than just how I see things. I get so absorbed in the big picture that I forget that other people have their problems. I push myself so I think that gives me the right and liberty to push others. That’s not an excuse.”

“You’re not selfish, Hamilton.”

“I know I’m not,” answered Hamilton. “But sometimes I get so bogged down in my own stuff that I just…don’t think about other people. Maybe it’s a survival thing. Again, not an excuse. I’ll work on it.”

Laurens nodded, not really sure what to say.

Hamilton exhaled deeply, tension easing a little from his body. “Is your dad still pissed?”

Laurens shrugged. “A little,” he replied. “I couldn’t find André, I sent him a message. It doesn’t matter, dad’s already busy telling his friends about kids these days, how they’ll jump on any cause like it’s the latest fashion trend. How social justice is the new thing and his son thinks he’s James Dean.”
Hamilton rolled his eyes but refrained from saying anything. For wont of something to fill the silence, Laurens opened the box of dessert. “Do you want this?”

“Thanks,” said Hamilton gratefully, taking the tart Laurens offered him. “Mind if I hang out here for a bit? There’s work I should be doing, but I could use a break.”

“Knock yourself out,” answered Laurens through a forkful of tatin. “This is really good, by the way.”

“I know, right?” Hamilton agreed, digging in happily. “I should get some more for Lafayette, keep his fridge stocked since we keep raiding it.”

“We can always message France. Send for reinforcements.”

“Guns. And ships. Beaucoup de chocolat suisse.”

Laurens laughed and reached for his laptop. “’M gonna put on some music.”

“Cool, I’ll get the lights,” said Hamilton. He looked up, catching Laurens’ staring with his mouth slightly open, and grinned. “Kidding.”

Laurens stuck his middle finger up at him, the other hand scrolling through his Spotify. He clicked play. Hamilton smiled as the familiar guitar notes and drum beat swelled, accompanied by a deep, reverberating voice that was almost 80s.

“I like this song,” he admitted, remembering it from the playlist.

“Of course you do,” Laurens raised an eyebrow, laying down across the bed with his arms behind his head. “I told you. My taste is impeccable.”

Hamilton rolled his eyes, moving his dessert casing to one side so he could lie down next to Laurens. The hem of his cardigan had ridden up slightly to reveal a long flat plane of abdomen, light brown and lightly freckled like beached wood. Hamilton could just make out the jagged cut of V-line above his waistband, dipping low beneath the elastic of his boxers.

He dragged his gaze up to Laurens’ face. His lips were moving in time to the lyrics, fast, well-practiced French. Hamilton felt something inside his chest tug.

“How is it you know French again?” he asked.

“I went to boarding school in Geneva,” Laurens replied.

“Of course you did.”

“It’s really quite second-rate, y’know.”

“Yeah?”

“Ya. All the really rich kids go to Vienna.”

Hamilton laughed and Laurens smiled. Hamilton resisted the urge to reach out and touch it.

“What about you?” asked Laurens, jolting Hamilton back down to earth.

“Huh?”
"How is it you know French?"

"Oh." Something squirmed uncomfortably in Hamilton's stomach, and he hesitated before replying. "My mom spoke it."

Laurens' mouth formed a little 'o'. Hamilton though he was going to change the subject, but then he said: "I'm sorry," and when Hamilton didn't reply: "Do you miss her?"

Hamilton nodded. "Every day," he replied forcefully. He blinked hard, eyes suddenly blurry, and looked up at the ceiling. "You?"

There was a long pause before Laurens replied.

"I don't really remember her that well," he said quietly. "But...ya. Every day."

Hamilton nodded again, the pain in his chest constricting.

They listened to the rest of the song in silence.

Chapter End Notes

Again massive thank you to those who commented on the last chapter! please keep them coming and let me know if u enjoyed this one :)
Someone Great – LCD Sound System

Chapter Summary

and it keeps coming till the day stops

After the song finished, Laurens brought some obscure, indie film up from the murky dregs of his laptop. He told Hamilton that it was very good, had been voted number one in some weird arthouse magazine that Hamilton had never heard of, and that it would totally change his perception on the depiction of Artificially Intelligent beings in cinema.

Hamilton wasn’t sure if it did any of that. Following the movie loosely, it seemed to be about a sentient robot who celebrated his newfound self-awareness by committing multiple acts of atrocity across downtown New York. Hamilton didn’t care to follow the plot much closer than that. In truth, he was much more distracted by the show that was seated right next to him.

Laurens had stretched out across the bed, filling the space like a particularly obnoxious starfish. His arms were still behind his head but his limbs were so long that his elbows seemed to take up most of the room. Hamilton would have minded, except this meant he was cramped up to the edge of the mattress with nowhere to go except nearer Laurens’ body. Which had turned out to be very accommodating. Twenty minutes into the film and Hamilton found himself folded into Laurens’ side, his knees tucked up so that they nuded Laurens’ hip. The top of his head brushed Laurens’ bicep so that if he moved up half an inch, he would be resting on it.

Whether Laurens had noticed their new closeness he gave no sign of it, breaking his intense concentration only to babble: “This bit, oh my god, watch this” or “See, this is just unrealistic. The singularity would never happen on such a widespread basis, it’s supposed to be a process of accelerating change, not instantaneous.” In response to each outburst Hamilton hummed in what he hoped passed as agreement while inside, he was a storm.

Someone on screen said something very witty. Laurens laughed. Hamilton tried for the life of him to figure out how he had not noticed before now how hot Laurens was. He had not come here for sex. But the hem of Laurens’ cardigan was rucked halfway up his stomach and Hamilton could see the muscles of his abdomen and count every dark brown freckle spread across his light brown skin and God it had been a while and God he was burning up.

Laurens laughed again. Hamilton felt the vibrations run up all along his side, sending a shudder through him. Heat was curling in his stomach to the point where he couldn’t concentrate. It was becoming a problem. Something had to be done.

He turned on his side so that he was looking directly at Laurens. He put a hand on his stomach. Laurens started, Hamilton felt the movement under his hand. He turned so that he was also on his side, blinking at Hamilton questioningly. Hamilton exhaled deeply, trying to calm the rising crest of his blood. He wrapped his hand in the wool of Laurens’ cardigan and pulled him forward to kiss him.

He had expected surprise, for Laurens to go stiff and maybe even resistance. Instead Laurens responded eagerly, rising up from the pillow so that he was at a better angle, and bringing his hand up to Hamilton’s jaw. It was so hot and so unexpected that Hamilton felt himself go a little crazy,
particularly when it became swiftly apparent that Laurens would be the one taking control. He leant back, allowing himself to be pressed further into the mattress and rising his hips very slightly. Laurens pushed back, tangling one hand into Hamilton’s hair as he stroked his face. Hamilton felt a little bit like he was sinking, every muscle in his body going loose so that it was all he could do to hold onto the front of Laurens’ sweater with increasing desperation. He opened his mouth beneath his, mewing when he felt Laurens’ tongue slip inside.

The blood in his veins surged like a tidal wave. He felt feverish, delusional. He knew he was burning up. The hand that was resting on Laurens’ stomach slid under his shirt to run up over his skin. Laurens’ breath hitched. Satisfied, Hamilton let his exploration wander until he had slipped beneath the waist band of Laurens’ jeans.

Lauren jolted backwards as if someone had applied him with an electric shock. Hamilton snatched his hand away. “Sorry,” he gasped. “Sorry…I…”

“Laurens!”

Hamilton’s head whipped towards the door. Laurens bolted upright, wiping a shaking hand across his mouth as he stared at in horror. Hamilton looked back at him, eyes wide.

“Dude?” the voice called again. “Are you in?”

“Ben?” Hamilton mouthed. “Ben Tallmadge?”

Laurens gestured for Hamilton to shut up. “Hold on,” he shouted back. His voice was hoarse and oddly strangled. Hamilton cringed.

There was a beat. “Are you jerking off?”

Hamilton looked perplexedly at Laurens who rolled his eyes.

“No.”

“Is there someone in there with you?” asked Tallmadge, sounding increasingly doubtful.

Laurens and Hamilton exchanged a look. Hamilton shrugged. Laurens huffed in frustration, running his hands over his face. “I’ll be out in a sec,” he said.

There was no reply. Laurens breathed out a sigh, turning to look apologetically at Hamilton who was staring at him incredulously.

“Ben Tallmadge?” he hissed. “You live with Ben Tallmadge?”

Laurens frowned. “Ya?”

“Since when?”

Laurens shrugged. “I don’t know,” he said. “Four months, maybe? I moved in with him after Lafayette’s aunt died and left him enough dough to afford his own place.”

Hamilton shook his head, stunned. He really needed to start paying attention to what was actually going on around him.

He ran a hand through his hair, cringing upon discovering how mussed it was. “I should go.”

Laurens looked embarrassed. The effect was contagious; Hamilton felt humiliation rise in his cheeks, spreading to cover the back of his neck. He mumbled some excuse and practically tripped out the door, into the living room where Ben Tallmadge was sat on the couch eating pickles dipped
Tallmadge looked up when Hamilton entered the room. His eyes flicked from him to Laurens, roving over their flushed cheeks and messy hair. He snorted disdainfully and went back to scooping pickles out the jar.

“We’re out of bread,” he informed Laurens.

“So mayonnaise is an acceptable substitute?”

Tallmadge shrugged. Laurens spared him a look of disgust before turning back to Hamilton.

“It’s the yard sale next weekend,” he said. “You want me to make more flyers, right?”

It took Hamilton a few seconds to comprehend exactly what Laurens was talking about.


“No problem,” said Laurens. “Thanks for bringing back my headphones. And…um…the dessert.”

Tallmadge scoffed loudly in disbelief. Hamilton ignored him, feeling the blush creep back into his cheeks. “It’s cool,” he said. “I’ll catch you later, Laurens.”

“Bye Alex,” Tallmadge called after him as Hamilton headed out the door.

* *

“Thunderbirds are go for this Saturday,” Mulligan announced, settling into the seat Lafayette had saved for him. “The council said we can have the park for free.”

In a confusing display of mixed-signals, Hamilton threw a pen at him.

“Hercules Mulligan,” he proclaimed, punching the sky in celebration. “He needs no introduction, give him a simple task and he will get that shit done again.”

“Why only if it’s a simple task?” Mulligan frowned, rubbing his shoulder.

“Dick, where are we for transport?” Hamilton asked, turning around to tick ‘venue’ off his flip-chart.

“My dad said I can have two vans,” Meade replied. “And Laurens has his car. That should be enough to carry stuff for people who can’t drive if we just do return journeys. People can put on the Facebook page if they need a lift.”

“What kind of car have you got, Laurens?” asked Hamilton innocently.

Laurens hesitated. “I don’t see why that’s important.”

“I just wanna know if it’s gonna have enough room.”

“It’s big enough, trust me.”

“Yeah, but I’m curious.”

“Actually good point, what kind of car is it, Laurens?” asked Meade.

“Yeah, tell us Laurens!”
“Fine!” Laurens snarled, crossing his arms over his chest. “It’s an Audi Estate. Happy?”

There were multiple sounds of exasperation and disbelief from around the room.

“Typical,” Angelica shook her head. “Of course the DJ drives an Audi Estate.”

“Lafayette drives a four-by-four Porsche!” Laurens protested, flinging a finger out in accusation.

Lafayette looked unperturbed. “Adrienne picked her out,” he said mildly. “Her name is Henriette, which will be the name of our first child.”

“Ok, so that’s two vans from Dickidder Meade,” Hamilton scrawled on his flipchart. “And one outrageous display of wealth and ostentation from John Laurens.”

“Whatever Hamilton,” Laurens leant back in his chair, arms behind his head. “I know you have a thing for muscle cars.”

Hamilton chanced a glance at Laurens. He had tucked his long dark hair behind his ears so that the curls peeked out from under his beanie. One eyebrow and the corner of his mouth was quirked. Hamilton felt something squirm in the pit of his stomach.

“I like fast things,” he shrugged. “You think your engine’ll do the job?”

“Top speed of 189 miles per hour.”

“You can keep it going for that long?”

“Pretty sure you’ll be satisfied.”

“If you’re sure it’s big enough.”

“Please,” Tallmadge interrupted, looking pained. “Do we have to sit here and listen to this?”

“Yeah, dirty car talk? Seriously?” Angelica grimaced. “What is this, an early 2000s Rihanna album?”


“I asked my pastor to announce it to the congregation on Sunday,” Eliza replied. “Pretty sure we can count on most of my Church to come.”

“Eliza, you’re the pastor of my heart. Heathen Schuyler, what about you?”

“Laurens and I did a few flyers at lunch,” Angelica replied. “And I tweeted about it, like, an hour ago.”

“Yeah? How’d that do?”

Angelica held up her phone. It already had five hundred retweets. Hamilton swore, checking his own.

“Shit,” he hissed. “I’ve only got a hundred and eighty-two. How the fuck do you do that?”

Angelica smiled witchily. “Magic.”
Hamilton stuffed his phone away discontentedly, trying not to betray the instinctive envy risen in response to competition. “Lafayette, where are we on tables?”

Lafayette looked up from his phone to beam at him sunnily. “I bought a hundred!” he announced proudly.

There was silence as everyone turned to stare at Lafayette.

“Lafayette,” Hamilton began slowly. “You bought a hundred tables?”

“Oui!”

“Why?”

“Cur non?” Lafayette retorted. “I wrote to the administration to ask if I could borrow some but the form they sent me in response was so complicated. In the end I thought it would be easier if I just bought them. What?” he asked defensively when seven pairs of eyes were still goggling at him.

“You never know when you are going to need a hundred tables. Perhaps Adrienne and I will use them for our wedding. She pitched in.”

Hamilton thought it would probably be easier if they all moved on.

“Okay, good work I guess,” he said. “Everyone, keep it up with the leafleting, word of mouth, etcetera. In the meantime, start getting stuff together for the sale. Also, I had an idea,” he paused, suddenly a little tentative. “I thought maybe it might be good if a couple of us went down and met with the family before the yard sale. Explain who we are, what we’re doing, in person. Otherwise it might just look like we’re a bunch of college kids looking to raise our own profiles or get some extra credit, or whatever. We’re there for Jamal’s family. We shouldn’t forget who this is about.”

He paused, waiting a little nervously as everyone mulled over the words.

“I think that’s a good idea, Alex,” said Eliza quietly.

Hamilton smiled at her gratefully.

“I’ll go with you,” Laurens volunteered.

Hamilton looked at him quizzically. “Are you sure?” he asked. “Your father—”

“If he sees something wrong with my offering condolences to the victims of a family tragedy, then I’m voting for a different Congressman,” Laurens snapped. “Fuck it. I’m going.”

Hamilton was, very briefly, lost for words.

“Okay,” he managed after an uncomfortably long time. “Cool. Thanks. Um…meeting over, I guess. You can go.”

Everyone stood up to leave, Laurens slinging an arm around Mulligan’s shoulders and driving him away very quickly. As they began to file out, Hamilton called after them. “Hey, Ben? Can I get your help with something?”

Tallmadge looked despairingly towards the door before shoving his hands in his pockets and meandering sulkily back to Hamilton. Hamilton waited until everyone else was a safe distance away before fixing on a cheery expression.

“So,” Hamilton addressed Tallmadge brightly. “The other day. That was weird, huh?”
“What, you mean when I came home to you banging my flatmate?” Tallmadge raised an eyebrow.

“Okay, first of all, we weren’t banging,” said Hamilton. “So let’s squash those eggs before they hatch.”

“Not an expression.”

“Secondly, how did I not know that you and Laurens were living together? I’ve been friends with both of you for ages.”

“This might not be my place to say,” Tallmadge rolled his eyes. “But there seems to be kind of a lot that you don’t know about Laurens.”

Hamilton remembered his conversation with Washington and thought that there wasn’t much he could say to that.

“Fair point,” he conceded. “But listen, hey. That’s kind of why I wanted to talk to you. Do you think you could give me the lowdown on Laurens’…romantical…attachments?”

Tallmadge squirmed uncomfortably. “I don’t know man,” he said. “Again. Not really my place.”

“I’m not asking you to betray classified intelligence,” Hamilton told him, trying not to sound impatient. “I just…look. Is Laurens seeing anyone?”

Tallmadge continued to look conflicted for a few seconds before relenting. “Not that I know of.”

“Has he seen anyone recently? Does he ever bring people back?”

“Look Alex,” Tallmadge leaned in and Hamilton, sensing the new tone of confidentiality, followed suit. “Laurens is real private about that kind of stuff. As far as I know he’s never brought anyone back to our place but maybe he’s just super discreet. Between you and me though, I doubt it. He talks kind of a big talk but honestly, I’m not so sure for whose benefit that is. Do you get what I’m saying?”

Hamilton nodded with a sinking feeling, remembering what Lafayette and Mulligan had said about Laurens’ father.

“Can I ask a favour,” said Hamilton and when Tallmadge proceeded to look wary, “Don’t tell anyone?”

Tallmadge looked boredly at him. “If discretion is what you’re after, I gotta tell you. You’re not doing a very good job.”

“Flirting in meetings is one thing,” said Hamilton. “You know what I’m like. I can’t help myself. Probably no one expects anything. But if word gets back to his father—”

“No one will hear it from me,” said Tallmadge impatiently. “Mostly because I don’t care enough to spread it, but y’know.”


Tallmadge laughed shortly. “I’ve been told,” he said. “Listen, hey. I just remembered, I’ve got something for you.”

He unzipped his rucksack and pulled out a CD album. The sleeve was white with a navy graphic
on the front, looking closer Hamilton saw that they were what looked like seaside houses, gulls flying over the top.


Tallmadge nodded. “I listened to pretty much nothing else for the whole of my gap year,” he said. “Boats and Trains will make you cry.”

Hamilton wasn’t sure exactly how much he trusted Tallmadge’s judgement when it came to anything that involved an acoustic instrument, but he wasn’t exactly in a position to be churlish.

“Wow they have a song called Long Distance Lullaby,” he read, trying to sum up some semblance of enthusiasm. “That sounds…meaningful. Thanks, Ben.”

*

AB: ALEXANDER.

AH: Sir! I see u have mastered the use of caps lock. And to think it only took u since 1973

To clarify: 1973 being the year of invention of the modern-style keyboard, not that u have been using a computer since 1973

if that were the case I would have expected u to be a little more techolnogically savvy by now

AB: Alexander, your Instagram post.

AH: oh ya!!

Do you like???

I know its a little rough around the edges but as if i can afford one of those fancy photoshop programs.

i actually think it looks better this way, with ur head just a little bit oversized it makes the rest of ur body look more in proportion

AB: Take it down.

AH: What?? Why?? You don’t like it? But i worked so hard yknow
to rly emphasise ur BETRAYAL

AB: I didn’t betray you. I never told you I was going.

AH: Oh wow

That’s great, very clever

You’ll make some morally degenerate oil tycoon seeking legal representation very happy one day, Aaron Burr

AB: This isn’t funny, Alexander. People are taking this seriously. They’re asking me why I wasn’t there at the protest.

AH: Well u know what Burr that’s actually a pretty good question
Why WEREN’T you at the protest?

AB: I have told you why. I can’t be seen to take a solid stance on contentious matters like these. As the chair of one of the largest societies at the University I have to be seen as impartial.

AH: BULLSHIT!!!

You’re just worried that when ur running for president in 20 years time someone will drag this into the light and claim ur Marcus Garvey because u went to a peaceful college demonstration that one time

AB: Well forgive me for considering the long-term implications of my actions.

AH: Most Humbly I do accept Your Apology sir, also do I Offer my sincerest Condolences to Your Genteel Mother, who has had to Cope with the Burden of Raising a Dirty Deserting Coward these Past One and twenty Years.

AB: You’re very funny. Take the picture down now, please.

AH: Fine.

Spoil sport

* 

“Hey man,” Charles Lee came striding across the stage towards Laurens. “Check this out.”

Laurens peered at the screen of Lee’s phone, opened up on Hamilton’s Instagram. It displayed a photo of the crowd at the SJC protest, only Hamilton had used something like Paint to copy Burr into it very badly. Laurens felt his face break into a grin.

“Hilarious, right?” Lee prompted. “I gotta say, that Alex Hamilton can be annoying as fuck but give the guy his credit, he’s fucking witty.”

Laurens shook his head in disbelieving glee. “I can’t believe he actually did it.”

“Oh yeah,” said Lee, taking his phone from Laurens’ hand and sliding it back into his pocket. “I keep forgetting. You’re friends with that whole crowd, aren’t you?”

Laurens nodded, plugging his laptop into the speakers. “Guilty as charged.”

Lee hummed as Laurens proceeded to set up the deck, clearing away the refuse of Lee’s DJ set. Although he enjoyed doing double gigs like this and liked Lee’s company, the guy was a slob with a habit of leaving his shit all over Laurens’ space. Laurens untangled a few wires from the deck and passed them back to Lee who accepted them with a grunt of thanks.

“What does your dad think about that?” he asked. “You falling in with the trouble-makers of campus?”

“I wouldn’t exactly call the Treasurer of BSU, chair of Fem Soc, and the darling of the administration, not to mention a literal marquis, trouble-makers.”

“Yeah but you know what I mean,” Lee shrugged. “Every time something kicks off they’re always at the core. Remember the time with that gay club and Hamilton did that whole speech with the poem and everything?”
Laurens’ palms prickled with tension. “Yeah.”

“So that’s what I’m saying,” said Lee. “They always take it upon themselves to get involved, you know? Just because they single-handedly make up the majority of the school’s gay and black population. Like, obviously I don’t have a problem with it. If you’re gay that’s your business, but you don’t have to shove it in everyone’s face all the time, you know?”

“Actually, none of them are gay,” Laurens said tersely. “Alexander is bi.”

“Oh come on. What about that other guy? The wealthy one.”

“Lafayette’s not gay. Just French.”

Lee laughed. “Right. Next time you’ll be telling me he has a long-term girlfriend in France.”

“He does. Her name is Adrienne. They just bought a hundred tables together so I think it’s pretty serious.”

“Whatever. Anyway, my point is, it’s the same with the black thing. Like, take this whole Jamal Curtis situation. In my opinion, it’s all being blown way out of proportion. If people just chilled the hell out and treated everyone with respect this stuff wouldn’t be an issue. Take you and me, for example. You’re black, but you don’t like, shove it in people’s face. Not like that Hamilton and Mulligan do.”

Laurens didn’t say anything. He knew Lee didn’t mean anything by it. Besides, there was absolutely no benefit in arguing with someone who so clearly had not a fucking clue.

Wanting to test out the speakers, Laurens brought up Hamilton’s playlist and selected the sixth song, cranking up the bass as loud as it would go. The stage beneath their feet began to reverberate; Lee nodded in time to the music.

“What is this again?” he asked.

“Uh, Someone Great,” Laurens replied. “LCD Sound System.”

“You’ve played this song the last three sets,” Lee observed. “You must really like it.”

Laurens smiled, widening when he felt his phone buzz and he looked down to find a text from Hamilton, displaying a screenshot of the same song accompanied by a thumbs up. “Yeah,” he answered, already typing out a response. “It reminds me of someone.”
And once more I woke up in the moonlight
And once more our paths crossed through the night
And a moment's hesitation
Your silent invocation
But you shielded me from your glow
Like a moth against your window
And I'm too shy to stop you in your tracks
Oh you leave me in the dark

His phone buzzed. Hamilton wiped the tears from his face and picked it up.

“Hello?”

“Hey,” came Laurens’ voice. “Figured you’d still be up. Just checking what time you wanted me to come by tomorrow?”

“Oh right,” Hamilton muttered, rubbing his eyes and blinking hard to clear his vision. “Um…the yard sale starts at 11 and I’d like to be there at least half an hour beforehand…but we don’t wanna bother them too early…do you wanna say quarter to ten? Get there for ten o’clock?”

“Sounds good,” Laurens agreed. “I’ll be there.” There was a pause. “Are you crying?”

Hamilton sniffed. “No.”

“You’re definitely crying.”

“Am not.”

“Trust me man, I know what the sound of unscrewing the old waterworks at 2 o’clock in the morning sounds like. That was prime time during high school.”

“That was more insight than I needed into your lonely adolescence.”

“Nuh-uh not me. I was one of the cool kids. Boarding school, dormitories. Nowhere to hide.”
Hamilton snorted. “You, John Laurens, were one of the cool kids,” he said sceptically, settling back down into his pillows. “Somehow I find that hard to believe.”

“I mean, cool for an elite Genevan boarding school,” Laurens admitted. “I once smoked weed round the back of the Lacrosse pitch.” He paused again. “Do you wanna tell me why you’re crying or change the subject?”

Hamilton shook his head, attempting to clear the distracting image of Laurens playing Lacrosse. “Nah, it’s okay,” he replied. “Ben just uh… Ben gave me this album to listen to and it’s…it’s pretty good.”

“No kidding?” Hamilton could practically hear Laurens’ face break into a grin. “What’s it called?”

“Beachcomber’s Windowsill by Stornoway,” Hamilton answered. “But it’s just this one song which is…” he took a long breath out. “Kind of savage.”

“It must be if it made you cry,” said Laurens with glee. “Link it to me.”

“What, so you can stay up all night destroying it with your laptop?”

“Ugh, no. I just got back from a double set with Charles Lee. Need a break from mixing for a few hours.”

Hamilton made a contemptuous sound. “Eugh, Charles Lee.”

“You don’t like him?”

“What’s to like? The guy’s an asshole. Washington beat his dad for President and since then he can’t keep his mouth shut about him. You know he once tried to spread a rumour that Washington and I are sleeping together? I say ‘tried’. Angelica got there before anyone could take it too seriously. Turns out your friend being low-key Twitter famous can really come in handy.”

“Lol, I didn’t know that. He’s alright, though.”

“He’s a bad loser. Also, I think he’s a racist.”

“He’s not a racist. He’s just uninformed.”

“Huh. If you say so. You give too many people the benefit of the doubt, Laurens.”

“I like to be nice.”

Hamilton grinned despite himself. “Keep it up and you’ll be as bad as Lafayette,” he said. Pretty sure he’d even be friends with Jefferson if we let him.”

“Ew, dude, please. I have standards.”

Hamilton laughed. He felt wired, electric. Like his whole body was being powered by a mad current. Not the usual desperate irritation he felt when he couldn’t sleep. “What are you doing if you’re not being Mozart?”

“Being Picasso, obviously,” Laurens replied.

“Really?” Hamilton felt a trill of interest run through him. “What’re you drawing?”

“Turtles.”
Hamilton laughed, strangely delighted. “Seriously?”

His phone buzzed. Hamilton lowered it from his ear to see a pencil sketch of two turtles, carefully outlined and shaded. His grin widened incredulously as he raised the phone again.

“They are truly majestic,” he told Laurens. “Can I name them?”

“Sure.”

Hamilton thought for approximately three seconds. “Toussaint and Napoleon.”

Laurens snorted. “That’s cruel.”

“They’re two of the greatest leaders in revolutionary history.”

“Two failed leaders, one being a literal dictator. Also they hated each other, Napoleon stitched Louverture up and left him to rot in a jail cell.”

“Yeah, so, let these turtles serve as their reincarnated spirits or whatever,” Hamilton yawned. “Attain the friendship and solidarity they never achieved in real life.”

He stifled another yawn, hearing Laurens’ chuckle over the receiver. “You’re tired.”

“Am not,” said Hamilton. It was mostly true. His body felt ready to crash into an open tomb but his mind was wide awake. There was something about Laurens’ voice on the other end of the phone that made him want to keep his eyes open.

“Big day tomorrow,” Laurens observed. “You should try and get some sleep.”

“Blacker than the kettle calling the pot, my friend,” Hamilton replied. “But yeah, guess you’re right.”

“9.45?”

“9.45,” Hamilton agreed. He hesitated. “Good night, John.”

“Sleep well, Alexander.”

They hung up.

*

Laurens didn’t get to sleep until around half four when he managed to snatch maybe three hours. As a result he woke up edgy and cranky, annoyed at his brain for being unable to play anything other than Hamilton’s voice, over and over again as if it were a track on loop. When he arrived at Hamilton’s residence he knew he looked guilty and embarrassed, the dark shadows under his eyes not quite enough to distract from the redness of his cheeks.

“Morning stud,” Hamilton greeted him chirpily, sliding into the passenger seat and clicking on his seat belt. “Sweet ride.”

Laurens turned away so that Hamilton wouldn’t see the effect that this greeting had on his face and reached for two paper mugs of coffee. “You take it black too, right?”

Hamilton nodded, accepting the coffee gratefully. “Yeah. You as well?”
“Than the kettle calling the pot.”

Hamilton grinned, sipping contentedly as Laurens backed out of the parking space. Once on the road, Hamilton turned on Google Maps and entered the address Mulligan had given them into Laurens’ phone.

“You can pick the music if you like,” Laurens told him.

Hamilton scrolled until he had found Laurens’ playlist and selected the latest song; Firefly by Mura Masa. The tinny sound of the xylophone rang from the speakers accompanied by soft clicking and a high-pitched voice, until the chorus when the beat swelled to fill the car, pulsing through the expensive speakers until they quaked. He caught Laurens’ smile out the corner of his eye.

“Rating out of ten?” he asked.

“Solid seven point five,” Hamilton replied. “It didn’t make me feel anything but it’s catchy. Nice beat. Easy listening.”

“So not like the song Tallmadge gave you,” said Laurens wryly. “Did you tell him it made you cry?”

“Oh my God,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “Biggest mistake of my life. I told him I liked it, then this morning I woke up to him spamming me with indie crap. Bon Iver, Jonah and the Snail-”

“I think you mean Noah and the Whale.”

“Whatever,” Hamilton snarled, crossing his arms. “It was terrible. Seriously, I’m considering burning my iPod out of embarrassment. It’s corrupted now.”

Laurens laughed again.

They lapsed into silence as the song played. Laurens was tapping along on the steering wheel, lips moving to: I’d rather have everything than nothing at all. A new awkwardness had settled in and they were both aware of it; the great space of the car seeming suddenly too small, the air thick and claustrophobic. Hamilton wound down a window and breathed out, seeking relief from the rush of city air. It still wasn’t enough to let out the elephant in the room.

The drive to Jamal’s neighbourhood was about fifteen minutes, managing to avoid rush hour. During that time the silence only thickened in its uncomfortableness; Hamilton gazed out the window so that he wouldn’t have to see Laurens, gritting his jaw and staring straight ahead. The glittering sky-scrapers and glamorous apartments of the city centre had shortened and filled out into blocks, several of which had been scrawled with fading graffiti. Kids playing on the sidewalk dropped their jump ropes and hoops to stare at Laurens’ car as it glided self-consciously through their streets. Laurens glanced at the vehicles to the side of him and swallowed.

“Maybe you should have got Mulligan to drive you,” he muttered.

Hamilton didn’t say anything, almost as embarrassed of the Audi as Laurens was.

He parked at the very end of Jamal’s road, Hamilton guessed so that his parents wouldn’t see the car as they opened the door. Hamilton unclicked his seatbelt, making to reach for the door handle when he noticed Laurens hadn’t moved.

“You okay?” he asked.
Laurens nodded. “Yeah,” he said distractedly, running a hand through his hair. “Listen, Alex, about the other day.”

Hamilton felt heat rise swiftly up his neck until his face was as hot as the underside of a saucepan. He shook his head. “We don’t need to talk about that now.”

“I wanted to apologise,” Laurens said quickly, words coming out in a rush. “For freaking out.”

Hamilton sighed, letting the belt slide out of his hands as he leant back against the car seat, resigning himself to having this conversation. “You don’t have to apologise, Laurens,” he said heavily. “I should be the one saying sorry. I misread, shouldn’t have jumped the gun like that. Mulligan’s right, assume makes an ass out of u and me.”

“No,” Laurens shook his head earnestly. “No you uh…you didn’t misread. I was very, um, into it. I don’t know, something about the thought of going further just…made my brain short-circuit. I don’t know whether it’s because you’re my friend or…” he mumbled, looking down at his hands. “Or because I’ve never done anything with a guy before.”

“But you do like guys,” Hamilton prompted. “Right?”

Laurens’ face went the exact colour of a beetroot. He began to flap his hands up and down. “I uh,” he was blinking very hard. “I don’t exactly uh…I don’t feel the need to subscribe to normative labels, ya know? We’re all just people…after all…isn’t sexuality just one big social construct?”

“No,” said Hamilton bluntly. “Look…dude. Labels exist for two reasons. Political, and self-identifying. You’ve read Frederick Douglass, right? Well, I subscribe myself bisexual because I think it’s more politically useful as an LGBT black person than if I went around saying ‘I don’t want to be put into a box and have my existence confined by labels’ etcetera. That’s not a dig, by the way. Other people might go by bisexual or pansexual or ace or whatever not because they’re making a political statement, but because it helps them personally to have something to identify as. Or others don’t want to call themselves anything at all. That’s fine too. Just make sure you know you and that you’re not just abandoning labels because you’re afraid to subscribe yourself as anything. You dig?”

“I’m not afraid,” Laurens began to argue.

“Okay, good,” said Hamilton, more coldly than he had intended. “Then I guess we have nothing to worry about.”

Laurens slumped in the car seat, simmering silently. Hamilton was about to get out the car again when Laurens said: “Why did you kiss me?”

“Oh my God,” Hamilton ran a hand over his face. “Because I wanted to, alright? You’ve been giving me signs for the past few weeks now and the moment was there. I think you’re hot. Simple as Keynesian economics.”

Laurens looked miserably at his hands. “Is that all?”

“Yeah I guess?” Hamilton was confused. “I don’t really tend to think about these things that much. It was kind of an impulse decision. Not that deep.” He opened the car door. “This is so…so not important anyway, Jesus. Come on.”

Jamal’s house was a quarter of the way down the street. Squat and box-like, with a small porch and
a flight of stairs leading up to it, it reminded Hamilton a little of the house he and his mother had lived in back in the Virgin Islands. Pushing that thought the back of his mind, Hamilton climbed the stairs and rang the bell.

There was a short scuffle and the sound of voices calling each other from inside. Hamilton waited, heart ticking nervously inside his chest until finally the door was opened by a harried-looking black woman. She faltered, taking in Hamilton’s foppish attire from his second-hand chinos to his 70’s haircut.

“Morning ma’am,” Hamilton greeted her as she blinked at him bemusedly. “My name’s Alexander Hamilton and this is my friend John Laurens,” he gestured behind him at Laurens who was stood with his hands in his pockets, looking sulky. “We’re students at Columbia University. We’re really sorry for disturbing you, but we just wanted to check whether you’d heard about the fundraiser we’re holding at the park this afternoon in support of your son?”

“Oh,” the woman’s expression cleared. “Yes. You’re friends with Hercules. I’ve seen the posters. Please, come in.”

Hamilton thanked her and stepped inside. As Laurens followed suit he felt the woman’s eyes rove over his expensive jeans before landing on his face. He lowered his gaze, the back of his neck prickling with embarrassment.

Jamal’s mother, who introduced herself as Annie, led them into the kitchen. A little girl was sat at the table, colouring ferociously with crayons. She looked up when Hamilton and Laurens entered, her mouth falling slightly open. Annie gestured for them to sit at the table before turning to make tea. As the kettle boiled, Hamilton began to tap an anxious rhythm on his thigh. It had been an easy enough thing to knock on the door but now, actually inside the family home, he was uncomfortably aware of how out of place they were. He tried not to pay too much attention to the fact that the little girl was staring at him.

The kettle whistled. Annie poured the tea into mugs and set them on the table. Hamilton and Laurens took them politely.

“Sarah Mulligan told me what you boys have been doing,” said Annie, taking the chair opposite Hamilton. “It’s really very kind of you.”

“We just want to help,” Hamilton burst. The meticulously prepared speech he had memorised beforehand flew out his head as soon as the words came tumbling. “What happened to Jamal was a crime and ought to be treated as such. The school and the press are tryna treat this like it’s a one-off incident but that’s b- that’s nonsense, this isn’t a one-off event. It’s the latest in a list of police abuses on the black community that stretches back to pre-Selma. Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Jamal Curtis. Not that your son is just another name on a list. Um. But that’s the point, they don’t see people, they see an angry, uncooperative black kid tryna beat on a white guy who’s automatically protected by the law based on the pure privilege of his race and money. Retaliation becomes an endorsement of violence and suddenly he was the one to start it all along, which is total justification for the police to come and beat him to a…”

He stopped, catching himself and who he was talking to. Annie was gripping her mug very hard. Hamilton looked down, ashamed.

“I’m sorry,” he muttered.

Annie flicked her finger dismissively. “You’re very passionate,” she said.
“I’ve been told,” mumbled Hamilton.

“My son is also very passionate,” said Annie. “Mouthy. Loud. He’s a good kid, but he doesn’t always know when to keep his mouth shut, or when to run away.” Her eyes were shining. She wiped them with the back of her hand. “It’s a useful thing for boys like him to learn.”

Hamilton and Laurens didn’t say anything. Hamilton because he was well aware that this was one lesson that he himself had never learned and Laurens because he hadn’t had anything to say since they’d walked in.

“This isn’t the first incident like this,” Annie continued. “Kids bait him, provoke him. Tryna get a reaction. He has a strong sense of justice and a temper. Dangerous combination.”

“I can relate to that,” Hamilton admitted.

“Yes, I get that feeling,” Annie smiled. “He’s not quite so well-spoken as you, though. Easier to use his fists. Lands him in a world of trouble.”

“Not trouble he caused,” Hamilton pointed out.

Annie shook her head. “Don’t matter so much if the end’s the same,” she replied. “I count myself lucky they only put him in hospital. Been waiting for someone to show up at my door with worse news since he was doing drama workshops with Hercules.”

“Mam,” the little girl tugged insistently on Annie’s sleeve. “Draw me.”

“Not right now honey, can’t you see mommy’s talking?”

“What does she want?” Laurens spoke up.

Annie rolled her eyes. “A mermaid,” she explained. “She’s been tryna get me to draw her one all morning except I can’t do it right. Got no talent for that sort of thing.”

“I’ll do it,” said Laurens, moving his chair closer to the little girl and picking up a crayon. “How d’you want her?”

Hamilton watched, dumbfounded as the little girl instructed Laurens. Laurens listened attentively, nodding and looking very serious as he hastened to obey. Annie watched amusedly for a while before turning back to Hamilton.

“It’s good of you boys to check in with us,” she said. “Where did you say you were from?”

“Columbia.”

“I mean originally.”

“Oh.” Hamilton suppressed the flicker of irritation that rose whenever anyone asked him that question. “I didn’t. I’m from the Virgin Islands but I was born in Nevis.”

Annie nodded enthusiastically. “I thought I could hear your accent,” she told him, unconscious of his displeasure. “It’s faint, but it’s there. My parents are from Barbados. When did you leave the Caribbean?”

“Three years ago,” answered Hamilton stiffly. “I got offered a full scholarship for college, so yeah. Still riding that high.”
“Your folks stay behind?”

“I’m an orphan,” said Hamilton. “A hurricane hit St Croix and I wrote this stupid opinion piece about it. That and a friend of mine helped convince people to donate enough money to buy a plane ticket to NYC.”

Annie looked impressed. “Lord, aren’t you something,” she said admiringly. “That must have taken some guts.” She paused, taking another sip of tea before asking, “You ever miss the Caribbean?”

Hamilton shrugged. “Sometimes,” he said, not entirely truthfully. “It’s warmer there. I don’t like the cold.”

Annie chuckled, nodding. “I bet,” she said. “Must take a lot of getting used to.”

She finished her tea and Hamilton copied her, feeling awkward. Laurens and the little girl were colouring together, she chatting in a flurry of excited whisper while Laurens nodded and hummed, asking interested questions whenever she paused for breath. He looked up and grinned, catching Hamilton’s eye. Annie noticed, craning her neck to look at Laurens’ drawing.

“What a beautiful mermaid,” she commented to her daughter. “I hope you said thank you properly?”

“Thank you,” said the little girl, abashed.

“What’s your name again, honey?” Annie asked, addressing Laurens.

“Laurens,” he replied, then, remembering most people outside of their friendship group worked on a first name basis, “John Laurens.”

Hamilton thought he saw a flicker of recognition cross Annie’s face but she said nothing.

Annie poured them a second cup of tea and Hamilton and she made small talk while Laurens and her daughter coloured. When Hamilton and Laurens stood up to go, the little girl got up too and hugged Laurens round the middle before skipping off happily, mermaid in hand. Annie hugged them as well; Hamilton found himself blinking suddenly very hard when she released him.

“Visit any time,” she told them. She paused, looking at Laurens. “I have something for you.”

Hamilton and Laurens exchanged perplexed looks as Annie retreated to open the fridge. She came back carrying a large Tupper Ware box of fishcakes which she placed in Laurens’ hands.

“You look like you need to eat,” she chastised him. “Student budget is no excuse.”

Laurens took the Tupper Ware box dumbly, his throat too thick to properly form a reply.

They left the house quickly, Hamilton practically leaping down the front steps in his haste to be out of there. When they got in the car he clicked on his seatbelt, closing the door loudly.

“Goddamn,” he said with feeling as Laurens got in beside him. “God-fricking-damn.”

He rubbed his eyes fiercely. When he looked back up he saw Laurens, staring stupidly at the Tupper Ware box in his hands. He looked as though he wasn’t sure what to do with it.

“Are you okay?” Hamilton asked him.
Laurens shook his head. It was a gesture of uncertainty, rather than a “no”. Hamilton exhaled heavily, aware that it came out shaky.

“Come on,” he muttered, placing the box on the back seat. “Let’s get out of here.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much for your comments on the last chapter, they absolutely make my day. next one will definitely be more light-hearted, promise.
“Ok all set,” Angelica straightened up, shifting the last table into place. “Is that everything?”

“It looks like a war camp,” observed Tallmadge. “Like in the Return of the King.”

The urban green space had been transformed with furniture, banners and displays of merchandise until it had all the bones of a lively market. Already people were bustling around, clearing out their car boots and setting up stalls.

“I mean it’s not exactly a hundred,” said Meade, shielding his eyes from the sun as he scanned the park. “But I guess it’s a good job Laf bought so many tables.”

“Hmm,” Angelica responded non-committedly. She disliked obvious displays of wealth. Admittedly this was because she knew she had it, and couldn’t understand why anyone else wouldn’t want to keep it quiet.

“So many people already,” Peggy observed, watching people flit back and forth across the grass, their arms laden with boxes. “You guys did a good job getting the word around.”

“It was mostly Hercules and Eliza,” Angelica admitted. “Most of the people here are from his neighbourhood and the last third are from Eliza’s church. Thanks for agreeing to help out, by the way.”

Peggy waved dismissively. “Beats doing homework,” she shrugged. “Plus it’s nice to see so many people care so much. You get a real sense of community, you know?”

They stood for a moment watching Mulligan and Eliza. They were stood by the entrance, beneath the large banner sporting “Jamal Curtis Community Fundraiser” that the others had spent last night painting. Mulligan was wringing hands and hugging every black face that appeared while Eliza smiled, exchanging a grateful “God bless” with every other. Peggy observed with pensive interest. Neither of them had Hamilton’s belligerent magnetism or Angelica’s dexterous charm, but both seemed to possess a quiet charisma of their own, a way of working people through their friendliness, warmth and sincerity. It wasn’t something she had noticed in her sister before.

“People joining together to fight evil out of common cause,” said Tallmadge whimsically. “Just like a New Hope.”

“Ok, you are aware John Laurens isn’t here to validate your nerdy nonsense with a high five?”

“Good point,” Meade frowned. “He and Alex should be here by now.”

There was a hesitant pause while everyone in the vicinity considered whether or not this was, in
fact, something they were going to talk about.

“Ok,” said Angelica, making the decision and breaking it abruptly. “I’m sorry but…anyone have any idea what the hell is going on there?”

“Not a clue,” Meade answered automatically. “Seriously, I was gone for like, three days then I get back on the chat and I’m like…what did I miss?”

“We’re all like that,” Angelica assured him. “I mean…Hamilton and Laurens?! Who the hell saw that coming?”

“I did,” Peggy pointed out. “Remember that time when you had them all round ours, and Hamilton walked into the room and Laurens put his elbow in the guacamole.”

“Oh yeah,” Angelica hummed thoughtfully. “I’d forgotten about that.”

“What are we talking about?” asked Lafayette, appearing suddenly at Tallmadge’s side.

Tallmadge started. “Dude!” he exclaimed, a hand darting to his heart.

Lafayette looked at him unsympathetically before turning to Angelica. “I heard the words ‘Hamilton’ and ‘Laurens’. Please do not gossip about my two best friends without including me. It is very inconsiderate.”

“Is it really a thing though?” Meade asked Angelica. “I mean, Hamilton flirts with anything that goes on two legs. This time last year we were having the same conversation about him and you. Before he started going out with your sister, obviously.”

“That’s true,” Angelica conceded. “Lafayette, is it a thing?”

Lafayette looked thoughtful for a few seconds before spreading his palms doubtfully. “I am not sure. John obviously likes Alexander. And John, despite his terrible style and taste in music, is very nice looking. Whether Alexander is interested in John being more than…how you say…his next conquest, I do not know. Personally, I am not sure how I would feel about it being a thing because although I think they would be very good together, they would both have to work around their enormous issues and neither of them are particularly sensitive or clever. I do not want my two best friends to end up breaking each other’s hearts. It would make life very difficult for me.”

“How considerate,” muttered Peggy.

“But do you really think it’s any more than just Alexander dicking about?” asked Meade doubtfully.

“I just said I wasn’t sure.”

‘Dicking about’ means messing around.”

“Oh,” said Lafayette, expression clearing. “Yes, I think so. But I don’t know. It’s not as if I have walked in on them in a compromising position.”

Tallmadge cleared his throat awkwardly.

“I just hope Alex knows what he’s doing,” said Angelica seriously. “Laurens is very embarrassing and a poor excuse for a meme lord, but that doesn’t mean I want to see his feelings hurt.”

“I think Alexander will be careful,” Lafayette replied gently. “He has learnt a lot since being with
Angelica pressed her lips together but didn’t say anything.

More and more people were setting up stalls until there was nowhere to look without seeing an outgrown children’s toy or a battered household appliance. Leaving Peggy and Angelica to man their own rather morbid display which largely consisted of decapitated Barbie dolls, Meade disappeared to unload his vans while Lafayette and Tallmadge wandered over to help Mulligan. He was engaged in animated conversation with an elderly black woman as they approached, stooping down to hug her before she tottered away on shaky feet.

“My old history teacher,” he explained to the other two. “Seventy-eight years old and still working, can you believe it? Sews like a demon too, you should check out some of the lampshades she’s got on sale.”

“Seen many familiar faces?” asked Tallmadge.

Mulligan nodded. “A fair few,” he answered. “A lot of people from home, obviously, and quite a few from school. Washington’s here with his wife somewhere and you know Professor Steuben? From the languages department? He turned up with like, shit tonnes of Prussian war memorabilia.”

“How did it go?” he asked upon catching sight of their faces.

Hamilton and Laurens shrugged.

“George is here,” Lafayette volunteered once the silence has stretched on for too long.

Hamilton seemed both to perk up and deflate at the same time. “Can you not call him ‘George’?” he snapped. “Especially as I know you know how creepy and annoying that is. Where is he?”

“Round the back,” Mulligan answered before Lafayette could retaliate. “I didn’t know he whittled. He came in with a lot of hand-crafted birdhouses.”

Hamilton rolled his eyes. “I bet that sells like hotcakes,” he said in a tone that managed to be both fond and frustrated. “I’d better go borderline-appropriately chat up his wife. See you guys in a bit.”

Hamilton went off in the direction Mulligan had pointed out for him. Laurens watched him go, short form bobbing as he zig-zagged his way past the other vendors, excusing himself as he went. He could feel eyes on him and, tearing his gaze away, saw they belonged to Eliza.

“Are you ok, John?” she asked him softly.
Laurens shrugged. “Yeah?” he said. He cursed himself for making it sound like a question.

Thankfully, Eliza didn’t press the matter but turned away to greet the other people coming in.

An hour later and the yard sale was in full flow, Meade having to make multiple trips as more people from the community came to flog their wares. It had taken on the strange, hybrid tone of hardy, dogged resistance and jamboree. With the banners, balloons and tables straining under enough food to feed the five thousand, it could almost have been a festival. Laurens surveyed the scene with mixed feelings, unsure quite what to make of it.

“ Weirdly celebratory, isn’t it?”

He turned to see Hamilton with his hands in his chinos, having just come back from the Washingtons. Laurens’ gaze drifted as a couple of little kids with painted faces ran past, flourishing large foam swords.

“Everyone seems so…happy?” Laurens thought about it. “Maybe that’s the wrong word.”

Hamilton nodded. “It’s a black thing,” he explained. “The worse the circumstances, the more forced the jollity. Back when my mother was dying, a bunch of extended family showed up in the emergency room with barbecue food. Like, complete with corn on the cob. They would have sat munching it right round her corpse if the attendants hadn’t kicked them out.”

Laurens stared at him, completely taken aback by the frank recollection. Hamilton moved on swiftly before he could recover from it.

“It’s all a façade of course,” he continued. “Kind of like a ‘stiff upper lip’, ‘life goes on’ sort of attitude. Like, no matter how bad things get someone’s still gotta remember to get the macaroni cheese out on time, y’know? Also there’s a sort of Oedipal tradition that if something affects the one, then it’s the problem of the whole community. Hence, stuff like this.”

“That’s kind of nice though,” Laurens pointed out. “Strength in numbers, and all.”

Hamilton hummed. “It is now,” he said ambiguously. “Can be a fucking nightmare when everyone’s all up in your business.”

Laurens recognised he was still talking about St Croix. Hamilton shoved his hands deeper into his pockets, surveying the park nostalgically.

“I’m hungry,” he said after a little while. “You ever had Caribbean food?”

Embarrassed, Laurens shook his head. “Maybe when I was little,” he replied. “I can’t remember.”

Hamilton let out a low whistle. “Laurens boy,” he shook his head in dismay. “Come on. It’s time I took over your education.”

Laurens laughed shortly, following Hamilton over to the buffet table. Hamilton passed him some plastic cutlery and a paper plate before starting to point dishes out to him.

“Jerk chicken, oxtail, ackee and saltfish,” he stated as Laurens loaded his plate. “Curry goat fucking yes. You have to try this. Take some of the plantain as well there’s hardly any left, the bitches.”

“What’s this?” asked Laurens, leaning over to inspect a yellow pudding which looked a little bit like mashed potato.
“No,” said Hamilton, putting a hand on his arm to stop him. “That’s cou-cou. Stay away from it. If you want a carb, go for the rice and peas or the macaroni. I always think it’s slightly redundant but if it’s not there people seem to lose their shit so I guess it’s got a reason. I think maybe it was an inside joke someone started a long time ago and now they’ve gotta wheel it out for every meal.”

Laurens obeyed, ladling a little bit of everything besides the cou-cou onto his plate while Hamilton did the same. Around them people were chatting to their neighbours as they collected their food, the conversation buoyed and optimistic. For some reason it made Laurens’ spirits soar, despite what Hamilton had said about forced jollity.

“So that was weird today, huh?” said Hamilton, spearing plantains onto his plate.

Laurens didn’t need to check whether he was talking about their visit to Jamal’s home.

“Yeah,” he replied heavily, then because he felt the need for elaboration, “She was so nice.”

Hamilton nodded fiercely. “Would have been so much easier if she was pissed as hell,” he said. “If she had just straight up given us a lecture on privilege or ranted about the NYPD for an hour.”

“Did she remind you of your mom too?” asked Laurens quietly.

Hamilton hesitated before shaking his head. “My mom wasn’t nice like that,” he replied, equally quietly. “I mean, she was kind but she wasn’t particularly warm. She was pretty hard on me when we were growing up. Obviously I understand why now, she just wanted me to get off that damn island, but I spent a lot of the early years of my life hating her.”

He spooned a generous amount of curry goat onto his plate before risking a look at Laurens. He seemed to be debating how much to share. “My mom was nice,” he said at last.

Hamilton nodded.

They moved away from the buffet table. There were a lot of people sitting down, some on picnic blankets, others on the grass. Hamilton looked at Laurens. “Do you want to find the others?”

Laurens wrinkled his nose. “Not really?”

Hamilton laughed. “Cool.”

They sat down on the grass, plates on their laps. It was turning into a warm afternoon. Hamilton stretched out his limbs and arched like a cat.

“This is more like it,” he said agreeably. “Sensible weather.” He nudged Laurens in the side. “Put a record on, Mr DJ.”

Laurens rolled his eyes, scrolling through his Spotify and pulling up the next song on the playlist, feeling too lazy to think of anything else. Soft trumpet came flowing into the warm air accompanied by a gentle melody, mild and strangely nostalgic. Hamilton drew in a breath sharply. Laurens glanced at him, concerned.

“You ok?”

Hamilton shook his head dismissively. He closed his eyes. They were both quiet as the words washed over them, so honest to the point that it was painful.

*I know that these days are feeling cold*
My love could take her home
As if we never knew
I was too young for you

Hamilton’s lips were moving wordlessly. He exhaled, long and shakily, opening one eye to look up at Laurens frowning down at him.

“Sorry,” he said heavily. “This song…uh…reminds me of someone I used to know.”

“Oh,” Laurens scrabbled for his phone. “It doesn’t matter, we can change it—”

“No, it’s fine,” Hamilton stopped him, putting his hand on his. Laurens froze at the touch. Hamilton listened to the rest of the song silently, gazing up at the boundless sky above him. He felt as though there were a string, one end knotted around his heart and the other connected to Laurens’ phone. It was pulled very taut.

“Back in the Virgin Isles, I dated this woman for a bit,” he spoke suddenly. “She was uh…she’s actually the reason how I got here. She was the one who managed to scrape together enough money to buy the plane ticket.”

Laurens didn’t say anything, heart beating hard in his chest as he waited for elaboration. Hamilton took another deep breath before continuing.

“She was older than me,” he said uncomfortably. “…And married.” He looked up to check Laurens’ reaction and, reassured by his impassive expression, went on. “I mean, it was stupid in hindsight. But I don’t know, I wasn’t making the best life decisions back then. I really thought she was gonna choose me, y’know? Stupid. Of course she stayed with the asshole husband, instead of risking her future and reputation on some orphaned seventeen year old who can’t keep his mouth shut.” He rubbed his eyes automatically. “In the end the guilt proved too much for her. She knew she had to get rid of me and I didn’t have any money of my own so…” he spread his palms wordlessly. *Et comme ça.*

Laurens’ mouth felt dry. “I’m sorry,” he managed.

Hamilton waved his hand dismissively. “It’s fine,” he shrugged. “Like, it hurt a lot at the time. Like, *a lot.* That’s kind of why I am the way I am, y’know. With people. I forget names. I keep it casual. It’s just a lot easier when anyone you end up feeling any deeper for abandons you.”

He turned his head to the side, chancing another look at Laurens. His eyes were dark and imploring and Laurens knew he had meant the confession as an apology, as well as an explanation. Laurens put his food to one side, moving his hand tentatively to cup Hamilton’s jaw. He waited for the surprise to flicker from his eyelashes before bending down to kiss him. He could feel Hamilton’s pulse leap and stutter, his breath catching as Laurens slid their lips sweetly together, the combination of warmth and gentleness pulling so tightly on the string around his heart that he thought it might snap.

After what seemed like a very long time, Laurens released him. Hamilton’s eyes fluttered open. His face was flushed and he was panting slightly. He was gripping Laurens’ wrist very hard. Laurens smiled at him, slipping a loose lock of curly hair behind his ear.

“I think you’re hot,” he grinned, parroting Hamilton’s words back at him. “Simple as Keynesian economics.” Hamilton ducked his head, blushing fiercely. “Hey,” said Laurens, quirking up Hamilton’s chin with his finger. “It doesn’t have to be deep, okay? You’re cool. I wanna get to know you better. As friends, if nothing else.”
Hamilton nodded vigorously. “I wanna get to know you better too,” he said truthfully.

“Cool,” said Laurens. He picked up his plate and scooped up some curry goat with his fork. “This is amazing,” he told Hamilton. “I can’t believe I’ve never had this before.”

“Super good, right?” Hamilton agreed, grateful for the change in subject. “It really shouldn’t be so hard to find a decent Caribbean in New York.”

“Wait a second,” Laurens paused, glancing at Hamilton’s plate. “Aren’t you a vegetarian?”

Hamilton looked guilty at the mountain of meat balancing precariously on his lap. “Oops.”

Laughter burst from Laurens like a fountain. “You little hypocrite!”

“Hey come on,” said Hamilton uncomfortably. “This doesn’t count. I hardly ever get to eat home food.”

“No way Hamilton, you don’t get to play that card with me,” Laurens smirked. “I can’t believe you sacrificed your principles that easily.”

Hamilton continued to look ashamedly at his plate for a few more seconds before shrugging and scooping up another forkful. “Whatever, there’s worse I’d do for a goat curry,” he stated, unabashed. “Just don’t tell the others.”

Laurens smiled, amused. “It’ll be our secret,” he promised.

Chapter End Notes

N.B. family showing up at the hospital with food is a true story, only it was with fish and chips

come find me on tumblr
Bad Kingdom - Moderat

Chapter Summary

worn out version of yourself, too tough to fall.
aka Lafayette intervenes

Chapter Notes

the song isn't mentioned in this chapter, but it works really well so maybe play it over the top or something idk
in other news, we're about halfway! enjoy

See the end of the chapter for more notes

John Laurens was in a very good mood when he came in the next morning, slamming his way into Lafayette’s apartment.

“You know you don’t live here anymore,” said Lafayette, looking up briefly from the money he and Peggy were counting on the kitchen table.

“Neither does Hercules,” Laurens pointed out. “And he’s in here as much as I am.”

“Hercules does not abuse my door or steal all my comfort food,” Lafayette retorted.

Laurens raised an eyebrow. “Expensive Parisian delicacies are comfort food to you?”

“It is comfort food because they are sent to me from my country, who was my mother until I landed here in this wilderness of North America!” Lafayette snapped, thumping his fist on the table. “With love from my girlfriend, Adrienne, who has very expensive tastes! That is it, you and Alexander are on a time-out.”

Instead of looking suitably reproved as he was wont to do after being too unpleasant, Laurens merely snorted with amusement and collapsed onto the sofa, his arms behind his head. Lafayette goggled at Peggy in shock. Peggy, who had only really met Laurens once or twice before and was only spending so much time with this friendship group because the wifi was broken at home, shrugged her shoulders.

“Why are you here?” Lafayette demanded Laurens. “Shouldn’t you be in your apartment doing horrible scratchy things to innocent and equally expensive records?”

Laurens looked affronted. “I was bored,” he answered defensively. He gestured at Peggy. “What’s she doing here?”

“She, ’has a name,” Lafayette snarled, chivalrously riled on behalf of his new friend’s honour. “It’s…” he broke off and turned to look guiltily at Peggy. “Ah. What is your name again, my
dear?”

Peggy rolled her eyes. “Margarita.”

“Oh! That’s very nice. I heard everyone at the fundraiser calling you something hideous like Shaggy or Leggy.”


“Ah,” nodded Lafayette, looking gravely sympathetic. “I see. Well, my name is Gilbert, so I suppose we all have our struggles.”

Laurens snorted again.

“We are counting the money from the yard sale,” Lafayette explained in answer to Laurens’ question. “Alexander and Hercules are working and Angelica is out of town, which means we are down all our proficient accountants. Fortunately, Angelica has leant me this helpful little dwarf to aid me.”

“Seriously?” Peggy raised her eyebrows. “‘Little dwarf’? Could you maybe have thought of something patronising that was less politically incorrect?”

“What?” Lafayette frowned, confused. “I meant like in Snow White. With the jewels. And also because you are grumpy, but clearly have a big heart.”

Peggy scoffed, resuming the stacking of coins unmollified.

“Feel like that might have been a ‘lost in translation’ moment there, champ,” said Laurens, yawning behind his hand. “What have we got so far?”

“We have done very well!” Lafayette announced, at once looking chirpy. “It was a very good idea of Alexander’s to charge people for entry and to set up a stall instead of insisting that any profits be donated to the cause. It would have been unfair and unreasonable to make charitable giving compulsory. Instead, by allowing people to make a profit for themselves we have had more participators, and as they are making money anyway that has made them more inclined to donation. So far, we have nearly five thousand! It is a great feat, considering there cannot have been more than three hundred present.”

Laurens nodded. “Ethical capitalism in action,” he observed.

“Yes, well,” Lafayette sniffed disdainfully, returning to his spreadsheet. “Except I don’t really believe in that, but credit where it is due I suppose.”

There was a brief silence while Lafayette and Peggy sorted through a stack of twenties. Meanwhile, Laurens hummed to himself, tapping an accompanying beat on the arm rest. When this grew too irritating to ignore, Lafayette rounded on him.

“Anyway,” he said. “What are you in such a good mood about?”

Laurens blinked at him in mock-confusion.

“Moi?”

“Oui.”

“Je proteste. Je ne crois pas je sais de quoi tu me parles.”

“Stick to English, John Laurens,” Lafayette ordered him. “Your accent makes you sound Cajun,
and it is very off-putting.”

Laurens leaned back on the couch. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You do,” Lafayette insisted, getting up from the table and crossing over to the couch to glare accusingly at Laurens. “So far you have been here five minutes and haven’t made a single pun or said something self-deprecating. Something good happened, and seeing as you so obviously came here with the single purpose to tell me about it you might as well save me the time of having to guess.”

Laurens kept up the façade of confusion for a valiant six seconds before his expression sagged and broke into an exceptionally smug grin. “Ok, something did happen,” he admitted.

“J’en étais sûr!” Lafayette punched the air and then, leaning close to Laurens, commanded. “Spill.”

“I kissed Alex,” Laurens confessed, cheeks flaming but unable to keep the grin off his face. “At the yard sale. In a public place.”

Lafayette stared at him, scanning his face for any sign that this might be some sort of practical joke. When he could find none, he settled on his first response as the correct reaction. “What the fuck.”

“I know,” Laurens agreed.

“You finally make a move on the person that you have been in love with since you first saw him drunkenly perform the Virgin Isles March and did not tell me straight after?!”

“Uh,” said Laurens, cringing apologetically. “Actually it was the second time. Also, cool it with the whole ‘in love’ thing, okay? In America that actually means something.”

Lafayette smacked him on the side of the head. “Don’t you dare try to insult France in order to distract me from your worse betrayal,” he chastised him. “The second time?! And here Peggy and I were discussing only yesterday whether your disgusting flirting amounted to anything more than a twenty-year dry spell.”

“Don’t drag me into this,” said Peggy, coolly securing the stack of notes with a rubber band.

Laurens frowned, heroically not dwelling on the phrase ‘twenty-year dry spell’. “You guys were talking about us?”

Lafayette waved dismissively. “It is not important,” he said. “You are the one with explaining to do.”

Laurens shrugged. “I don’t know,” he said, settling back down onto the triangle of his long arms. “It’s been kind of a long time coming, I guess? He came round to apologise the other day and we ended up making out…then we kind of fought about something…but then yesterday we made up and agreed we would take it slow.”

Lafayette frowned. “Okay,” he said as his brain struggled to get a grip of this new information. “What does that mean?”

Laurens shrugged again. “I dunno,” he replied. “I guess you know when you’re on the Sims…and then the teenagers are like ‘Going Steady’?”
He began to snigger privately to himself. Lafayette tried to exchange a horrified look with Peggy before realising that she wasn’t Mulligan.

“Wait, wait,” Lafayette put a hand on Laurens’ knee. “Are you telling me that you and Alex…are in a relationship?”

Laurens shook his head. “We’re not putting labels on it,” he explained. “We’re just seeing where things go. Getting to know each other better. Ya know?”

Lafayette did not know. He did not understand where these Americans got off on refusing to put labels on things. The other day, he had been round Meade’s apartment and drank from a bottle in the fridge which most certainly had not been apple juice.

“Alright,” he said, deciding to accept that there were just some things which were beyond his cultural sphere. “If you really are sure what you are getting into, then I am happy for you. I suppose. Most of all John, I am proud and overjoyed that you have finally managed to accept your sexuality.”

At once, Laurens’ face flared scarlet. “I told you,” he mumbled, crossing his arms over his chest. “We’re not using labels.”

“But you are in an exclusive relationship with a man,” Lafayette pointed out, pausing before adding, “And you are not interested in anyone else…of the opposite gender…”

“I never said that.”

“Laurens, you don’t like women.”

“I like plenty women!”

“Margarita!”

“I don’t know you people,” Peggy complained.

“Right,” said Lafayette briskly. “Laurens, congratulations. If you wouldn’t mind taking over from me, there is something I must see to.”

Laurens stared at him. “What.”

“It is mostly just counting and stacking,” said Lafayette, grabbing his coat from the stand. “If you are confused Margarita will show you what to do. Mes félicitations, once again.”

He left, snapping the door courteously behind him.

* * *

Hamilton was listening to Bruce Springsteen when Lafayette knocked on his door.

“Hello,” said Lafayette, holding up a bag of takeaway enchiladas. “I brought you lunch.” He paused, taking a second to identify the ungodly sound emanating from Hamilton’s record player. “What fresh hell is this?”

“Washington ‘did some digging’,” Hamilton replied, sketching quotation marks with his fingers. “Found a bunch of stuff he ‘thought I’d enjoy.’”

“Do you?” asked Lafayette, raising an eyebrow.
Hamilton shrugged. “Could have been worse,” he replied, settling back onto his mattress. “The guy’s so out of touch I was half expecting him to show up with a box of Gregorian monk chants. Then again, I do now have a vivid insight into my boss’ youth that I really, really could have done without, so I’m not sure which is worse.” He picked up the record sleeve and passed it to Lafayette. “Plus, he said one of the songs reminds him of me and I’m low-key terrified it’s We Shall Overcome.”

“Oh no,” said Lafayette, skimming over the songs on the sleeve. “It is much more likely to be Eyes on the Prize.”

Hamilton smirked, secretly pleased. “You think?”

“Oh or Mrs McGrath.”

Hamilton threw a pillow at him. Lafayette caught it, pressing it between his hands. It was so lumpy that if it had hit him it might have actually hurt.

“To what do I owe the pleasure?” asked Hamilton, picking back up his textbook.

Lafayette hesitated, deliberating in his head the best way to go about this. “John just told me the good news,” he settled on finally.

Hamilton looked up, suddenly alert. “Did he?” he asked, eyes wide. “Damn. I wanted to tell you, except I wasn’t sure he wanted people to know about it. Although I guess you don’t really count as people. Yeah, I probably should have thought about that.”

“I am shocked, quite frankly,” stated Lafayette, quite frankly. “Shocked.”

Hamilton wrinkled his nose. “What?” he said. “You doubted my wiles? Come on man, even a worm will turn when faced with this irresistible piece of ass. It was only a matter of time.”

“Yes, because you are so desirable,” Lafayette countered sarcastically. “Especially when you buy only black socks to disguise the fact that you have been wearing the same pair for three days.”

Hamilton looked guiltily at his feet.

“How did it happen?” asked Lafayette, settling at the foot of Hamilton’s bed and pressing a hand into the mattress. Like he suspected. Lumpy.

“Uh well,” Hamilton put the textbook down, running his hands distractedly through his hair. “After Eliza made me feel bad for being a jerk about the whole dad situation, I went round to his to apologise. We ended up sort of cuddling through this truly terrible film and it was really boring so I was like why the fuck not and just sort of went for it, y’know? And it was fine, like, it was really good until he got all weirded out and compulsive-heterosexual on me and then fuckin’ Tallmadge came home – you know they live together, by the way?” he broke off and when Lafayette nodded impatiently, “Crazy. Anywho, yesterday in the car we had this totally awkward conversation about it which ended up with him being all John Laurens over the place and me getting pissed off so yeah, that wasn’t good. But then at the yard sale we had some jerk chicken and kissed and made friends and he agreed that I could put it in his butt.”

Lafayette raised an eyebrow. Realising he had let his words run away with him, Hamilton amended quickly. “Paraphrased,” he corrected himself. “He didn’t actually say I could put it in his butt. But y’know, the sentiment was there. I mean, he doesn’t have to do that. Just hand stuff is fine too. He can put it in my butt, if he wants. I’m not picky.”
“Laurens kissed you?” Lafayette asked, in an attempt to keep the conversation decidedly away from either of his friends’ butts.

“Yeah,” Hamilton’s face suddenly lost its smugness, blossoming into a flushed, pink smile that was almost bashful. “Crazy, right? I gotta admit, I didn’t think he had it in him.”

“I am still very sceptical.”

“I would be too, if I hadn’t spent the last twenty-four hours replaying it,” Hamilton confessed shamelessly before adding, “Laurens is a really good kisser.”

“He should be. He has spent the last twenty years doing nothing else.”

Hamilton snickered. “And to think I’m gonna be the one to pop Jacky’s cherry,” he hummed whimsically. “I feel a little honoured, to be honest.”

He stretched his arms behind his head, raising a little off the mattress. Lafayette hoped very much that this was a spontaneous movement, and not a demonstration.

“You seem very fixated on the sex,” Lafayette observed wryly.

Hamilton glanced at him quizzically. “Why wouldn’t I be?” he asked. “You’re not judging me for objectifying him, are you? I mean, Laurens is a great guy and all, I like him a lot. Very smart, draws a killer turtle. But have you checked out the abs on that tall drink of water? Mother, may I. Alex, you may.”

“Aren’t you the least excited about getting to know him as a person?”


If Lafayette had still been holding the enchiladas, he would have dropped them. “Friends-with-benefits?”


“I know what it is,” Lafayette told him. “But are you sure that this is the agreement you and Laurens have made?”

“Well sure,” Hamilton shrugged. “Like, I explained to him that I’m uncomfortable with the whole relationship thing and he said it was cool, that it didn’t have to be deep and that we could just ‘get to know each other better as friends’ if nothing else. But y’know. The ‘nothing else’ was heavily insinuated.”

“So you are not exclusive?”

“Good God, no,” Hamilton pulled a face, springing up so that his knees were on the mattress. “Jesus Lafayette, have you met me? The last time I tried commitment, I sent someone running for the Church. And Laurens…Laurens can’t even commit to himself, let alone a monogamous relationship.” He paused, and, catching sight of Lafayette’s face, turned very pale. “Why? Does Laurens think we’re exclusive?”

Lafayette’s phone buzzed. Looking down, he saw that it was an incoming phone call from the devil himself.
“I have to go,” he told Hamilton apologetically, already getting to his feet. “Very sorry. Enjoy your enchiladas.”

“What the fuck,” said Hamilton as Lafayette hastily crossed the room. “Lafayette, wait-”

He was halfway out the door before Hamilton had even finished his sentence.

*

“When are you coming back?” Laurens demanded once Lafayette was a safe distance from Hamilton’s room. “This shit is way harder than you made it out to be. Also, Peggy is MEAN. She made fun of my maths skills twice.”

“She is not mean, she is thorny,” Lafayette corrected him. “Like a delicate rose bush.”

“Okay, first of all that is a super weird analogy, especially for someone who I’m pretty sure is still in high school.”

“It was not super weird, it was poetic,” Lafayette complained. “And she is a junior in high school, but her eyes speak of a maturity far older than her years. Question for you. Did you and Alexander specifically say that you were exclusive?”

There was a pause on the other line, during which Lafayette prayed to a God that, despite what he had told Adrienne, he had never truly believed in.

“I mean, not in so many words,” said Laurens at last. “But I feel like we made it clear where each other stands. Like, if he went off and had sex with John André tomorrow, then that would be a pretty shitty thing to do.”

Lafayette hummed noncommittally in response.

“Lafayette?”

“Oh no, I am breaking up,” Lafayette exclaimed, intentionally stepping on an empty beer can that had come across his path. “It must be because I am near the subway. Talk to you later John, bye bye.”

“Lafayette, what-”

He hung up.

*

AH: And it’s not like I’d intentionally go out to hurt him, yknow?

Like Im not about to get with some random guy or girl in the club when he’s right there or anything, like, who does that. But if john andré hits me up and says he’d quite like to have sex tomorrow then i reserve the right to hit that

lafayette

lafayette

gilbert du motier pls say something so that I know that you don’t think im an asshole

GdMIMdL: i think you need to talk to John.
Chapter End Notes

quite a short chapter this one, promise i will make it up with the next (spoiler alert: John Laurens DJs and we gain another glimpse of his inner moose)

The Springsteen song that reminds Gwash of Alex is in fact Mrs McGrath, a folk banger if ever i heard one.

Thanks again for your amazing reviews, they're what keep me writing. Please keep them coming, or else feel free to say hi here
Chapter Summary

Come on Superman, say your stupid line.

aka wow would u look at that its the name of the story

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

AH: Hey

JL: yo

thats weird i was just thinking about u

Hamilton braced himself, thumbs hovering over the phone keypad, uncomfortably conscious of the sound of his heart quickening in his ears. He took a deep breath, forcing himself to calm down before replying.

AH: Oh?

JL: yh. i was watchin this nature doc about pygmy marmosets nd somehow u popped into m brain

think i mite have found ur patronus


AH: !!!!!!!!!!

WTF

EVERYONE KNOWS MY PATRONUS IS A MOTHERFUCKING MONTAIGNE LION

JL: montaigne lion

AH: U fukcing know what I meant

JL: mayb but whatever ur intentions i now have an image of michel singing hakuna matata

didnt want it didnt need it

Hamilton laughed out loud, and then felt terrible about it.

AH: “que sais-je” what a wonderful phraseeee

i do have a talent for viscerallity

Is that a word? Feel like it should be

doesn’t matter it is now
Are u free today?

Hamilton chewed his lip, heart hammering as he watched the three dots of Laurens’ reply flash hurriedly across the screen.

JL: yh 10%
sorry meant 100% lol
do u wanna come over?

Hamilton pictured Laurens, eager, excited, frowning hard at his phone as he waited for Hamilton’s reply. He pushed the image to the back of his head, as well as the jab of shame that accompanied it as he began to type.

AH: Yeah if that’s ok
JL: ofc :)
i have some reading i was gonna do but give me like an hour?
AH: Yeah cool
JL: *thumbs up*
see u then

x

Hamilton threw his phone across the mattress, turned over and screamed into his pillow. It had been twelve hours since he had spoken with Lafayette, and for twelve hours Laurens had been replaying the conversation he and Laurens had had at the fundraiser over and over in his head. Surely, surely Hamilton had been clear when he’d explained what had gone down with Ann? And didn’t he say it was fine, that it didn’t “have to be deep.” In what world did “oh, and by the way, I know we’re both buckling under the weight of our crippling emotional issues but we’re a monogamous couple now” not count as deep?

It didn’t matter anyway. Regardless of where the fault lay, one thing was for certain: Hamilton had fucked up.

Hamilton sighed, rolling onto his back, and stared at the ceiling. He had an hour to kill. An hour, and then he would have to go over to John Laurens’ apartment and explain to someone already suffering from issues of extreme insecurity that although Hamilton liked him enough to sleep with, he wasn’t quite boyfriend material. Hamilton had never thought he would say this, but he would quite happily trade lives with Ben Tallmadge round about now.

He tried to do some work to distract himself, managing this for approximately ten minutes before his brain began to rise up in revolt and he shut his laptop disgustedly, snatching up his phone and scrolling through Lafayette’s insta feed until it was an acceptable time to go.

Meade had recommended him a rap artist called Dizraeli and his band The Small Gods, an urban motley crew that had successfully managed to combine beatboxing with folk music. Hamilton listened to them on the way to Laurens’ apartment, steeling himself mentally before he knocked on
the front door. Barely a beat passed before it was opened, displaying Laurens behind it, and Hamilton’s breath stuck in his throat.

Laurens was wearing a white basketball vest that was slightly too small for him, revealing the shadow of lean muscle beneath the thin material, as well as the not-quite-so subtle toning of his long arms. His sweatpants hung low around his waist, the bunching of material above it leaving ample room to display the grooves on either side, jutting in a harsh V above the line of his boxers. His long, curly hair was wet and tied up in a pony-tail.

“Hey,” Laurens smiled, his eyes lighting up upon seeing Hamilton.


Laurens raised an eyebrow. “Thanks?” he said puzzledly. “I just got outta the shower.”

Hamilton made an odd, high-pitched sound that was ultimately indecipherable.

“You wanna come in?” asked Laurens amusedly after several seconds had passed with Hamilton doing nothing but stare.

Hamilton mumbled something incoherent, stepping inside. Laurens closed the door behind him and, hesitating briefly, suddenly leaned in to give him a swift peck on the lips. Hamilton started, eyes blown wide as he stared at Laurens, heat rising swiftly to his cheeks.

“Sorry,” Hamilton stuttered after an awkward few beats.

Laurens looked at him oddly. “Why are you apologising?”

Hamilton’s face was burning. “Sorry,” he said again.

Laurens laughed. Hamilton wanted to die.

“Do you want anything?” asked Laurens, waving Hamilton into the kitchen. “I was thinking about making something but I might just stick on a ‘za.”

“A what?” asked Hamilton, who’s brain was having some trouble pushing past the muscles in Laurens’ upper back.

“A pizza,” Laurens confirmed, taking one out the fridge. “It’s store bought, you don’t mind, do you?”

“No of course not, um, anything is fine.” Actually, the bottle of window cleaner laying on the sill was looking pretty appealing.

Laurens tore the packaging off the pizza before putting it in the oven. Hamilton wanted to make a joke about being too lazy to pre-heat but it died somewhere in between his tongue and his throat. Laurens was humming cheerfully as he put the packaging in recycling, occasionally sending quick, sheepish looks in Hamilton’s direction which didn’t quite disguise his happiness upon his being there.

“So um, what do you wanna do?” Laurens asked upon his return. “We could watch a movie. Or I just brought up my PS4. I can teach you how to play.”

Hamilton took a deep breath. “Laurens-”

“-Or we could make out,” Laurens shrugged. “Whatever. Totally your call.”
A gust of embarrassed laughter escaped Hamilton as he admitted, “Making out does sound good.”

He had meant it as a joke, and was entirely unprepared for Laurens to step forward, hooking his fingers into the loops of Hamilton’s jeans in order to bring him closer. Hamilton melted automatically at the warmth and gentle pressure of Laurens’ mouth, the certainty of his hands as they moved to grip his waist. Laurens’ lips were firm, his grip almost domineering and Hamilton felt every sensical thought in his brain dissolve as his body went limp, surrendering to the heat and the hard packing of Laurens’ body. Laurens was sliding down, scraping over his jeans to dig his nails into his ass and he gasped, breaking the kiss off before his body gave into the urge to grind against him.

“Laurens,” he breathed, placing his hands on his chest to hold him back. “I can’t…I’m sorry. I can’t.”

Hamilton looked up to see confusion and pain flash across Laurens’ face. “What’s the matter?” he asked, hands flying immediately from around Hamilton’s hips.

Hamilton took a deep breath before his words left him in a rush. “I really like you,” he said with feeling. “I really do. But I’m sorry, I just can’t be in a relationship. At least, not an exclusive one. And I think that my idea of where we were going with this isn’t maybe what you had in mind. And you gotta believe that it’s nothing to do with you, it really isn’t. I mean look at me, I’m losing my shit over here just because you opened the door in your fuckin’ sweatpants. But like…things in my past got me all fucked up so far as romance is concerned, I didn’t realise how much until I got with Eliza, and I came out of that swearing to myself that I would never go into something selfishly again, knowing the other person is on a different page. I don’t wanna put you through that, y’know, you’re a good guy, you deserve better.”

He trailed out, unable to summon the will to keep going. Laurens shoulders had sagged. He looked as though someone had let all the air out of him.

“Oh,” he said quietly.

“Yeah,” said Hamilton uncomfortably.

“So when you said you wanted to get to know me better,” Laurens asked. “You were really just talking about sex?”

Hamilton’s skin prickled with guilt. “Not just sex,” he said defensively. “I genuinely wanna be better friends with you. But yeah, I mean, that’s where I thought you were going with that. And the sentiment still stands, y’know, I don’t wanna fuck you over. But if you just wanna fool around and that’s it then cool, I’m game if you are.”

“Yeah,” Laurens sighed, rubbing his eyes tiredly. “Um…well…I’m gonna be honest with you. I don’t think I can do that. I like you a lot and the idea of you being with someone else doesn’t really jive with my fantasy, if you get me. I think all that would happen if we started fooling around is that I would catch feelings, and we’d both end up getting hurt, so. I think it’s probably best for our friendship if we separated the two.”

Hamilton nodded and tried not to let the crushing waves of disappointment show on his face. “Yeah,” he admitted. “Yeah, that probably makes sense.” He picked his coat from the kitchen chair. “Ok…well…I guess I’d better head, I’ll see you tomorrow for the meeting, I guess-”

“Wait, where are you going?” Laurens frowned, jerking his head up from where it had hung in moping.
“Uh,” Hamilton glanced towards the door. “I thought we had reached the intermission break of this particular episode.”

“But you don’t have to leave,” Laurens persisted. “We’re friends, right? We can still hang out.”

“I guess,” said Hamilton doubtfully. “I never really…considered us that kind of friends.”

Laurens raised an eyebrow. “You mean I can stick my tongue down your throat but we can’t watch TV together?”

“I meant more along the lines that you’re Mulligan and Laff’s friend,” Hamilton muttered, face heated. “And we’re only really ever together alone because they just left the room, recent events excluded, and also I was crazy jealous of you when you first joined the group because I felt that you were taking my two best friends away from me, and I never really stopped resenting you for that.”

Laurens blinked, taken aback by the frankness of the confession. “Right,” he said at last. “Well. If we’re gonna get to know each other better…platonically speaking…I think now is a pretty good time to start, don’t you?”

“Yeah,” said Hamilton, warming to the theme. “Yeah, I guess so. Why not?”

“Cool.” Laurens turned away, beckoning Hamilton into the living room. “So I’ve got the remastered Assassin’s Creed Ezio collection, or pirates, or the Revolution. What’s your period?”

“By Revolution, is that American or French?” Hamilton asked, dropping his coat back onto the chair.

“Either.”

Hamilton grinned. “Liberté, ou la mort.”

* * *

It had taken Hamilton the space of approximately five minutes to realise that he truly sucked at video games.

“This is bullshit,” snarled Hamilton, flinging the controller away from him as the screen flashed red. “Also, this game is literally loaded with historical bias. Like yeah, okay, I can see where one might get off on making all the Terrorists Templars, but that loses all the political nuance of the situation. Not to mention completely missing out on the whole point of the French Revolution as being one of degeneracy. I’m not being an apologist, the Revolution was a fucking disaster and the foundations it was built on were unstable from the start. Like sure, it sounds real nice to have a restructuring of society based on ideals rather than practical economic theory but if you really think about it, ideals are so subjective that you’re just leaving a gaping whole wide open for future discourse, discourse in this case being literal decapitation. You can’t base your system for a working economic model on idealistic theoretical thought, there’s just too much room for dispute, you have to base it on how people are, not how you would like them to be. That’s why capitalism, despite its flaws, is really the only conceivable pragmatic system, complete with elements of socialism to humanise it; accessible health care, decent public schooling, a sizable safety net, etcetera. What was my point? Oh yeah. But to say they were all Templars from the start is just fucking juvenile. Like, the very least they could have done would be to have Robespierre and Danton and Marat and all that lot start out as Assassins and then gradually come round to the Templar way of thinking as their lust for power overrides their commitment to the Republic…and
in fact, that would have made for a way more interesting game because then you have the whole philosophical debate about what freedom actually is—"


Hamilton pressed the button too late. The soldier slashed at his character and the screen flashed with the word “Desynchronised”. Hamilton groaned, falling back against the couch.

“This game is bullshit,” he said again.

“Or maybe you just suck,” shrugged Laurens.


Laurens checked his watch. “I think the za should be about done anyway,” he said. “You hungry?”

“Yeah,” said Hamilton, getting to his feet and realising how hungry he actually was.

They crossed into the kitchen. Laurens took the pizza out of the oven, fetching plates and water glasses for Hamilton and himself. Meanwhile, Hamilton fiddled with the Bluetooth on his phone, fixing it up to Laurens’ speaker. A moment later he had it sorted, and the kitchen was throbbing with familiar bass.

Laurens glanced at Hamilton from the tap. “You can’t seriously tell me you didn’t know this song before I put it on the playlist?”

“I did know it,” Hamilton admitted. “But it wasn’t until your playlist that I realised how good it was.”

Laurens nodded. “It’s the best,” he said, returning the water glasses and setting them on the table.

Laurens cut the pizza and for a while they sat companionably, munching their slices with their heads bobbing in time to the music. They had just reached the chorus when Hamilton’s phone buzzed; glancing at the screen, he saw that it was Lafayette.

“Hey man,” he greeted him. “What’s up?”

“Where are you?” Lafayette’s voice was nasal and complaining. “We were supposed to be going scarf shopping today. You know the seasonal change does no good for my sensitive skin. My neck is perishing.”

“Oh shit,” Hamilton swore, slapping a palm to his forehead. “I’m sorry Laff, I completely forgot. I’m at Laurens’.”

There was silence on the other end, broken only by the sound of Laurens singing along quietly to Tame Impala.

“You are at Laurens’,” Lafayette repeated after what might have been several sunlit days.

“Yes.”

“John Laurens’.”

“No, Lauryn Hill’s,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “She took a brief break from her Miseducation to chat to me about social theory.”
“I don’t understand what joke you are making but I am sure you think yourself very funny,” Lafayette snapped. “When in fact you are nothing of the sort. Alexander, are you trying to make Laurens your fuckboy?”

“See, now I know that you know the correct use of that phrase,” Hamilton retorted. “Stop pretending to be bad at English for dramatic effect.”

“I thought we talked about this! John is not in the same place as you – if you continue this course of action with no regard for his feelings then you are not just a fuckboy, you are a terrible person and even though I love you both I will have to make a choice and I don’t want to have to choose Laurens, Alexander, but I am a chevalier first and foremost and I cannot go against my moral code—”

“Oh my God, shut up,” Hamilton cut him off angrily. “Just shut up. I will call you back in an hour.”

He hung up, swearing savagely as he stuffed his phone into his pocket. Laurens blinked at him, a pizza slice halfway to his mouth.

“Problem?” he asked innocently.

Hamilton huffed in annoyance, running a hand through his hair. “Tell me John,” he asked finally. “Why is it, that whenever there’s the slightest cause for contention, people always automatically assume that I have done, or am bound to do, something morally dubious in the immediate future?”

Laurens shrugged, taking a bite of his pizza. “I don’t know,” he said. “Maybe it’s the chinos.”

*

Monday came round before anyone was quite ready for it. During that time, the entire student body had been made aware of the SJC and their movements over the weekend, which had been published in the school and local newspapers complete with a statement from Jamal Curtis’ parents, thanking the team for their commitment and support of their son. The pro-Drayton faction was getting antsy; Hamilton had walked down a hallway that afternoon and caught sight of Jefferson and Madison with their heads close together, speaking in hushed, anxious voices. He was exceptionally pleased to note that neither of them looked too happy.

The balance had shifted, and everyone could feel it. Instead of pulling back however, Hamilton had decided that now was time to push with the changing tide.

“Amazing work on Saturday you guys,” Hamilton addressed the meeting, practically bouncing up and down with excitement. “Each and every one of you made me proud. Especially Mulligan and Eliza. And of that two, especially Eliza.”

“Thank you Alex,” Eliza smiled as Mulligan rolled his eyes. “We’re very proud of you too.”

Hamilton waved dismissively, secretly pleased. “But,” he continued. “Now is not the time to get complacent. The battle has turned in our favour; we’ve managed to raise a lot of money for Jamal’s folks and public opinion is finally waking up to what a slimy piece of shit Drayton really is. But who knows how long that will last? All it takes is a week of inaction for people to forget and for anger to simmer back into apathy. So, what’s the next step?”

“We have public opinion on our side,” Laurens spoke up. “I say we use it to attack Drayton.”

Hamilton snapped his fingers. “Yes,” he nodded vigorously. “I agree. It’s time we got specific,
focus our goal more directly into getting Drayton kicked out. What are we thinking?"

“Poster campaign?” Laurens suggested. “Black panther style. I’ve got a load of ideas on how we
could satirise 60s activism propaganda.”

Hamilton turned to scribble on his flip chart. “John Laurens, you beautiful vigilante genius,” he
said, writing down Blacktivist Posters. “And by beautiful, I am again referring to your brain, which
is both artistically complex and pragmatically enterprising, and not to your body, which although
equally inspiring, deserves more than to be objectified.”

“It’s a nice idea in theory,” Angelica argued, while Mulligan and Lafayette exchanged glances.
“But if we just put up a bunch of posters saying ‘Andrew Smells’ around the school it’ll be all too
easy for his supporters to say we’re bullying him. You see how it looks, a bunch of aggressive
minority kids targeting a misguided, tearful repentant. We could end up the ones getting kicked
out.”

“So we keep them conceptual,” Meade shrugged. “Keep the art obviously hinting at Drayton, but
vague enough that if they kick off we can just say they’re being sensitive. Turn their own tactics
against them. Plus, if we put them up in closed areas like the bathrooms, there’s less chance of
administration pulling them down.”

Hamilton added the word sneaky above Blacktivist Posters. “Good,” he said appreciatively. “Ok,
what else?”

“We need to use the media,” Mulligan pointed out.

“I mean, I can write,” Hamilton shrugged. “I’ve got an in with The Federalist. That’s not an issue.”

Mulligan shook his head. “It’s not enough,” he said. “We got a lot of good coverage with The Spy
but the local papers are the real weapon. If we can gain enough support from outside the
community of Columbia, then that means outward pressure on the admin to change their policy.”

Hamilton nodded slowly. “Alright,” he said. “I did some work experience for a Jewish paper a
couple of summers back. Pretty sure they were pleased to be rid of me, but I bet I could get them to
publish something in their freelance section.” He paused before adding, semi-casually, “They said
they liked my writing, anyway. It’ll have to be big to count as newsworthy, though. They’re not
gonna take just another opinion piece.”

“Another rally?” suggested Angelica. “Bigger than the last time, and taking place off campus.”

“Ooh, let’s start in Time Square!” Lafayette exclaimed excitedly. “I have always wanted to visit.”

“Lafayette, we went there last weekend,” Laurens frowned at him. “Remember? You made me sit
through that horrible musical with the puppets.”

“Oh, was that Times Square?” Lafayette asked, surprised. “I thought that was just a very loud
entertainment centre.”

“What exactly do you think Times Square is?”

“The Wikipedia page described it as ‘The Centre of the Universe’. I had rather high expectations.”

“Rally is good,” interrupted Hamilton as Laurens began to look increasingly exasperated. “Let’s set
the date enough time in advance to give us a chance to get the word around and a permit from the
council. Shall we say three weeks’ from now? Until then, we can just keep spamming the campus
papers. Ben, did you manage to book the SU?"

"Yeah I did," Ben nodded. "For next Monday."

"Nice, did you let André know?"

Ben crossed his arms over his chest impertinently. "No."

"Well can you? He’s kind of our star performer Ben, people are gonna be coming to see him. It’s kind of a big deal."

"Fine, Jesus, I’ll let him know," Ben rolled his eyes, muttering under his breath, "The poser."

"Alright, great," Hamilton moved out the way to better view his flipchart. "We’ve got the poster campaign, newspaper storm, open mic night and rally in Times’ Square. Let’s all stay active as possible on social media, try and get #ColumbiaIsDracist trending again. Nice work with that one Angelica, by the way. Anything else? Eliza, got everything? Ok, you can go."

"One more thing," said Laurens. "Er…not to shamelessly self-promote my own work or anything, but this is probably the last time I’ll be able to address you all in one space, and if I put it on the group chat I run the risk of you all ghosting me."

"We would never Laurens," Lafayette assured him.

"Who’s Laurens? I thought that guy’s name was Chet," said Mulligan. "Or Bailey."

"Haha," said Laurens boredly. "Ok, well, just so you know I’m doing a double set with Charles Lee at Republic tomorrow night. I say double set, it’s actually more like a duel I guess? We like, take turns going against each other. It’ll be a lot of fun."

"Wait, you’re playing at Republic?" both Angelica’s eyebrows shot up. "John…that’s actually…really cool."

"Eugh, don’t do that," frowned Mulligan.

"Thanks Angelica," said Laurens, ignoring Mulligan. "Actually the best set wins a contract with the club so yeah, even though it’s all friendly competition, it’s kind of a big deal. I’d really appreciate it if you guys came."

"Are you serious?!" exclaimed Hamilton, almost flinging away his sharpie in excitement. "Watching you wipe the floor with Charles Lee? Hell fucking yeah we’ll come, where can we get tickets?"

"You can get them on the door," Laurens replied, clearly very pleased with this reception. "But if I were you I’d book em online in advance. It’s gonna be pretty packed."

"Yes, because so many people will queue up at the mere mention of John Laurens," mocked Lafayette.

"Hey," Hamilton scolded Lafayette. "Enough, ok? Yes, we might have had our fun and games taking the piss out of Laurens in the past. But this is our friend. Our good friend, who we love, platonically speaking, and are very proud of. And we want to continue to love and support our friend, platonically, in all of his endeavours and I think," he continued, raising his voice as he gained momentum. "That Laurens will be a Very Good Disk Jockey. In fact, I have the utmost faith in it. Put it there, big boy."
He held out his hand for a low five. Laurens patted it cautiously.

“Excellent,” said Hamilton with a brilliant grin. “Well, would you look at this. It seems like things are looking up.”

Chapter End Notes

NB. The "Anne" referred to is Anne Mitchell, the older married woman who in this story Hamilton had an affair with and who helped get him to America irl. Not to be confused with Annie, Jamal Curtis' mum, and the similarity of the names is completely coincidental and bad planning on my part.

i've just made the playlist public on spotify. Bear in mind i’m still moving a few things around so some of the songs may change. enjoy and please let me know what you think!
“Who’s pumped for tonight?!” asked Hamilton, aiming to sprint into the room but slipping on an old Vogue and colliding into the side lamp.

“You, apparently,” replied Mulligan, offering a hand to help him up while Lafayette cackled.

“What’s wrong with you? You’ve been acting like a coked-up slapstick performer since Laurens invited us.”

“I’m just excited,” said Hamilton defensively, accepting Mulligan’s hand and wincing as he got to his feet. “Ow,” he added, touching his head gingerly.

“Excited or excité?” asked Lafayette.

Hamilton sent him a dirty look. “Excited,” he repeated emphatically. “I’ve never seen Laurens perform before.”

“Yes you have,” said Mulligan. “McHenry’s birthday party, remember?”

“Yeah but that wasn’t a real set,” Hamilton argued. “That was more doing a favour for a friend.”

“Which way round, I am not sure,” Lafayette snickered.

“But this is different,” Hamilton continued, ignoring Lafayette. “This is Republic, not some shitty basement rave or someone’s house. And now that Laurens and I are just friends I can go support him without it being weird or deep and God everything is just so much better.”

He collapsed, spread-eagled, onto the couch, gazing up at the water-marked ceiling as if it possessed all the brilliant constellations of the Southern Peninsular. “I don’t know why I don’t try not sleeping with people I find attractive more often,” he mused. “I feel so liberated.”

“What about Angelica?” Lafayette prompted. “You haven’t slept with her.”

“That’s different,” Hamilton asserted dismissively. “Sleeping with Angelica would be like having sex with myself.”
“Well I think that’s just about the most narcissistic thing you’ve ever said,” observed Mulligan airily.

“No, shut up,” Hamilton snapped. “It would be narcissistic if I actually did it. That’s my point. Stop twisting my words. Anyway, irrelevant. I dated her sister for four months and didn’t get my dick wet once so Angelica Schuyler is further off the cards than…I don’t know…Aaron Burr.”

At once this statement produced the retching sounds and loud complaints Hamilton had banked on. Snickering, he got to his feet, glancing at his watch. “What’s the time? 7.30. The others are coming at 9 which gives me an hour and a half. That’s forty-five minutes’ reading I can get done, then shower for fifteen, half an hour to get ready. What to wear? Damn, I haven’t been out-out in so long I’ve forgotten how to do it. Do people still wear jeans to clubs? Whatever, I bought a pair of Levis the other day that make my ass look so good you could eat off it. Bet you’re glad I said ‘off’, haha. Shoes…how picky is Republic? Because I have a real nice pair of Doc Martens but I don’t know…I don’t wanna get them scuffed up. Then again, my Vans have seen better days. You know what, fuck it, it’s a special occasion, I’m wearing the Docs. Ok shirt…I’ve got that powder blue Oxford one but I don’t wanna look like I’m going to the office. Oh, but I could wear my navy bomber jacket over it, that would look fly as fuck. Ok, right, got it. Sorted. Damn, I hope it isn’t too warm in the club because this guy is going to be one hot motherfucker.”

“And I thought Lafayette was a dandy,” said Mulligan, shaking his head amusedly. “All that’s going to take you half an hour?”

Hamilton pointed at his head. “Have you seen what’s coming out of my scalp?” he retorted. “My hair alone will take twenty. It would be so much easier if I just shaved it. I was thinking of getting an undercut the other day, what do you guys think?”

“I think you should go full buzzed,” replied Lafayette with an entirely straight face.

“You think?” asked Hamilton, twirling a stray curl around his finger, the irony completely lost. “I mean, I would probably rock it. But nah, I think I’m enjoying this whole ‘Furious Five’ thing I’ve got going on, even if it is a bitch to maintain. Herc, can I borrow some of your stuff?”

“Mi casa es su casa,” Mulligan replied, gesturing to the various oils and tubs of hair pomade scattered about the room.

“Thanks,” said Hamilton, taking one and saluting. “See you in ninety minutes.”

He departed cheerfully for Mulligan’s bedroom where he had left his books. Lafayette looked at Mulligan.

“Do you want to hear what I’m wearing?” he asked hopefully.

Mulligan shook his head, unpausing the television. “No.”

*  

An hour and a half later, the doorbell rang. Mulligan answered it to reveal the two elder Schuylers, Meade and Tallmadge, as well as a bottle of rosé and Jack Daniels between them.

“Hey hey,” greeted Angelica, leaning on her tip toes to kiss Mulligan’s cheek. “We brought supplies.”

“Nice one,” said Mulligan appreciatively, taking the bottle from Angelica. “I see you put those IDs I got you to good use.”
Angelica made a committal sound, taking off her pink leather jacket and glancing round Mulligan’s apartment. “Where are the others?”

“Lafayette’s straightening his hair,” Mulligan answered. “And Hamilton’s locked in an epic battle between a lavender shirt and the powder blue.”

Angelica looked at him quizzically. “And yet you’re the one majoring in fashion.”

Mulligan nodded tiredly. “The irony is not lost on me.”

Mulligan led them into the kitchen. The table was already glittering with various bottles of alcohol, soft drinks and plastic cups, *A Tribe Called Quest* blasting from the tinny speaker balancing precariously on the counter top. The others took seats around the table and set about mixing their drinks. Five minutes later, Hamilton entered.

“Wagwan,” he announced, bending down to hug Eliza. “You smell nice. Is that the perfume I got you?”

“It is,” Eliza smiled shyly. “You look very handsome. Good job on the hair.”

“Huh? This?” Hamilton flicked a stray curl out of his eyes, taking care not to rearrange the do. “Nothin’ to it, took me three seconds. Picking the shirt was the hard part but in the end decided lavender does not go with navy. What the fuck is that?” he broke off suddenly, pointing accusingly at the bottle sitting at Angelica’s elbow.

“What?” asked Angelica innocently.

“That,” Hamilton answered, snatching up the bottle and glaring at it murderously. “Why is there pink crap on my table?”

“My table,” Mulligan corrected him.

“We were supposed to be vodka twins!” complained Hamilton, appealing to Angelica in a voice of deepest hurt.

“Sorry man,” Angelica patted him apologetically. “Eliza decided she wanted to drink and she doesn’t like spirits.”

“What about the Holy Spirit?”

“Pretty sure that has almost nothing to do with Smirnoff.”

“I can’t afford Smirnoff, this is Glens,” and when both Angelica and Eliza pulled a face, “Don’t look at me like that! You promised, and you betrayed me. That makes you a Judas.”

“Oh, quit being so dramatic,” Angelica rolled her eyes. “I’ll do shots with you. Deal?”

Hamilton fixed her with a long, black look before relenting.


“Thank you, Alex,” said Angelica and Eliza.

“Alright enough chit chat,” Mulligan’s voice boomed through the conversation. “Let’s get this party started. Truth or dare, everyone in.”
“Oh no,” Hamilton shook his head, raising his palms defensively. “I am not falling into that trap. Every time we play this frickin’ game all of you guys always target me...forget it. I’m not playing. Me say one man down. Rum-pum-pum-pum etcetera. I’m out.”

* 

“It was one time!!” Hamilton whined while around him the room cackled with laughter. “And I didn’t know she was on her period otherwise I obviously wouldn’t have gone down on her…it took me very by surprise-”

“But surely,” Meade insisted while Mulligan wheezed. “Surely alarm bells must have gone off when you saw the shrunken head on her dresser.”

“Well yeah, that did strike me as a bit odd,” cringed Hamilton weakly as Tallmadge, gasping, staggered to the sink in search of water. “But come on...there’s a big gap between having creepy decorative tastes and...you know...”


“You can’t have an orgy with only two people!” Hamilton snapped, folding his arms defensively before adding. “Occult sexual practice, is what I was going to say.”

“So when she started chanting,” Meade continued. “And waving the candles...did you keep going...or?”

“Of course I kept going,” said Hamilton and when the others began to shriek again, “What? I got manners. Momma didn’t raise no quitter.”

Tallmadge spat out his water.

“Anyway, it’s not that weird,” Hamilton persisted. “I mean, alright, the satanic ritual part was pretty weird. But you can’t tell me none of you have had period sex. Lafayette.”

“Of course I have,” said Lafayette idly. “Adrienne and I only get to see each other over the holidays. We are hardly about to waste that chance even though the timing is not ideal.”

“And?”

Lafayette shrugged. “It is not so bad.”

Mulligan winced. “Well, you guys do like your meat bloody.”

Lafayette frowned at him. “Please do not compare the love of my life, and future mother of my children, to a rare steak.”

“Let’s change the topic,” announced Tallmadge, who was looking rather green.


Angelica took a noble sip of her rosé before replying. “Truth.”

“Ever done it in a public place?”

Angelica scowled at him. “Define public,” she said through gritted teeth as Hamilton smirked.

“Oh, I don’t know. An alleyway, perhaps?”
“You had sex in an alleyway?” exclaimed Meade, aghast.

Angelica leaned across the table to punch Hamilton in the arm. “Asshole,” she hissed as he giggled defiantly. “And no, I did not.”

“Not for lack of trying,” Hamilton supplied.

“He was very drunk,” Angelica explained to the others who were all ogling. “Didn’t work out. Wasn’t long before I figured this probably wasn’t the best life decision.”

“Angelica,” Eliza was looking at her disappointedly. “That’s a little trashy.”

“Hey!” Angelica exclaimed indignantly. “Judge not that ye be not judged, bitch. Do I have to whip out the Maria Reynolds story?”

“What’s the Maria Reynolds story?” asked Hamilton, suddenly very interested.

“Never mind,” said Eliza quickly.

“Hamilton,” Angelica swooped in before he could press her. “Truth or dare?”

“I just went!”

“I don’t care, I’m mad at you.”

“Fine. Truth again, I guess.”

“What’s the deal with you and Laurens?”

“Ha!” said Tallmadge, and when everyone turned to look at him, took a discreet sip of his JD and coke.

Instead of appearing perturbed, Hamilton simply leaned back in his chair. “Nothing.”

“Oh come on,” Angelica said sceptically. “A carving knife couldn’t cut the sexual tension between you two.”

“I’m glad you think so,” said Hamilton smugly. “We are both very sexy.”

“We’re talking about Black Sheldon and Lord Cardigan here?”

“Hey, ix-nay on the ‘Ack Sheldon-blay’,” Hamilton told Meade reprovingly. “Call me what you want, but I will in no way be affiliated with that terrible show. Sorry Ange, but there’s nothing to spill. Laurens and I are friends. No more, no less.”

Several sceptical glances were exchanged. When Hamilton continued to look perfectly candid, Angelica slumped back in her seat looking disappointed.

“Shame,” she said. “You guys would have been cute together.”

“Yes, I would have liked to have seen you two together too,” Eliza agreed.

The others stared at her. Eliza blinked. “What?” she asked then, upon realising, flushed brightly. “Oh,” she said, before starting to giggle.

“Guys, the ubers are here,” Mulligan announced suddenly.
“I call shotgun,” stated Hamilton.

“Oh,” said Lafayette, eyes widening as he stared at his phone. “Adrienne is calling me.”

“Be honest, is she calling you because you’ve been texting I miss you, please call me, for the past hour?”

“Talk and move, talk and move,” said Mulligan impatiently, shepherding them out of the house.

The two cars were parked side by side outside the building, gleaming ghostly in the orange lamplight. Mulligan stumbled into the front seat of one and Hamilton into the other, looking around immediately for an aux chord.

“Eugh, don’t let Hamilton choose the music,” complained Angelica drunkenly, pulling the car door shut as she climbed in after Eliza. “No one wants to listen to La Bamba.”

“Hey,” Hamilton snapped. “I’ll have you know my range has vastly improved.”

“Ooooh John Laurens is so good for you,” Eliza chimed before hiding her giggles with her hands.

“Allô, ma bichette?” Lafayette was speaking in a careful, quiet voice that fooled absolutely no one. “Non, non je ne buvais pas...bien, peut-être un petit peu...non je ne suis pas seule! Je suis avec Alexander...say hello, Alex!”

“Bonsoir, Adrienne!” Hamilton yelled into the receiver. “Ton chevalier is as drunk as a motherfucking skunk.”

“Ferme ta gueule!” snapped Lafayette, wrenching the phone back from Hamilton. “N’écoute pas, mon coeur...il est un idiot...”

“Adrienne, I thought I knew you,” Eliza was singing softly. “Once again, you used me, used me...”

“Can we please put on some music?” Angelica whined.

Hamilton scrolled through Laurens’ playlist. Within seconds, the seats were vibrating. Angelica let out a crow of delight.

“AWWW YES!!” she screeched, bunching her fists with glee.

“DUNNUH DUNNUH DUH DUH,” Eliza bellowed. “DUH DUNNUH DUH.”

“DUNNUH DUNNUH DUH DUH. DUH DUNNUH DUH.”

“SOMEONE SAID THEY LEFT TOGETHER, I RAN OUT THE DOOR TO GEEEEEET HERRRR”

“SHE WAS HOLDING HANDS WITH TREEEEEVEHRRR, NOT THE GREATEST FEELING EEEEEVERRRR.”

“DÉSOLÉ MON COEUR,” Lafayette’s voice had risen to be heard over the Schuylers’. “LES AMÉRICAINS SONT GROSSIERS ENCORE.”

“Oh my love,” Hamilton murmured very softly, watching the lights of New York bleed red and yellow down the bright glass of his window. “Can't you see yourself by my side? No surprise when you're on his shoulder like every night.”
“She said it’s not now or never, wait ten years we’ll be together.”

“I said ‘better late than never, just don’t make me wait forever’.”

“Mon dieu!” Lafayette swore, having concluded his conversation with Adrienne. “This song is about you and John!”

“Nooooon,” Eliza stared, wide-eyed at Lafayette. “Alexander, is that true? Is this song about you and John?”

“No, it’s not,” Hamilton snapped.

“It is!” Angelica shrieked and fell back against the seat, cackling.

“Whatsoever, think what the fuck you like,” Hamilton snarled, crossing his arms defensively over his chest.

“We’re here!” Eliza squealed excitedly just as the car drew up beside an enormous queue.

Mulligan and the others had already gotten out the uber and were waving them over to the much shorter VIP line. Hamilton, Lafayette and the Schuylers shuffled into formation, trying hard to look like Very Important People who were not at all unsteady on their feet.

“It’s a good thing John managed to snag an upgrade on our tickets,” Hamilton observed, casting an eye over the other queue which only seemed to be getting bigger. “I do not fancy being stuck in that.”

“Did you hear that?” Angelica whispered not-so-subtly in Eliza’s ear. “Alex mentioned a good thing about Laurens.”

“Also he called him John,” Eliza whispered back. “Only boyfriends use first names.”

Before Hamilton could tell them to shut up, the bouncer appeared asking for their tickets and IDs. Hamilton flashed the barcode on his phone and the fake ID Mulligan had sourced for him two years ago before following the others inside.

The club was dark, and seemed darker through Hamilton’s blurred vision interrupted only by flashes of red strobing, pulsating through the gloom like a heartbeat. Hamilton held tightly onto Eliza and Meade’s hand as they weaved through the crowd, Mulligan taking the lead. The space was packed, the walls already creaking with the mass of bodies and thundering of the music, shaking through the floor like a tempest through a tin roof. Hamilton felt his own heart thudding, the vibrations from the speakers quaking through the soles of his Doc Martens.

With great effort, and taking care not to lose one another, they approached the stage. Once they had found a space to stand Mulligan dropped the hand he was holding and reached for his phone, texting Beth hurriedly. Hamilton stretched up onto his tip-toes, peering over the line of heads in front of him; Charles Lee was just visible on the stage, bopping up and down in front of the sound system. He was red-faced and sweating, large head glowing like a beacon in the blink of the luminescent strobing.

Lee was playing something vaguely familiar, a remix of some House beat from the charts. Clearly people recognised it, Hamilton could see a few lips moving along to the repeated refrain. But apart from those at the front there weren’t that many people dancing. Perhaps it was because it was still early. Behind him Angelica and Eliza were already gaining attention; Hamilton swooped into the circle to join, keeping a watchful eye for anyone overstepping a boundary as he danced with them.
After a while, Mulligan tapped Hamilton on the shoulder.

“Do you wanna drink?” he asked. “I told Beth we’d meet her at the bar.”

Hamilton nodded, making a drinking gesture to the Schuylers who nodded and followed. At the bar Hamilton bought shots for himself and Angelica while Mulligan went to find his girlfriend. The song was still playing, despite the very clear fact that few people were into it. Hamilton downed his glass and grimaced, finding the repetitive, jarring beat suddenly extremely annoying.

“Found her,” announced Mulligan, returning with a very good-looking girl with a septum piercing and long hair in box-braids. “Guys, this is Beth.”

“Wow,” said Hamilton, more than a little stunned. “Now I see why he won’t let me be the model.”

“Hamilton!”

“What? I meant because she’s tall!” Hamilton protested, before leaning conspiratorially towards Beth. “And also, if I’m being honest, way out of his league.”

“I think I’m tall enough to judge the league for myself, thank you very much,” answered Beth coolly.


“Is Laurens on yet?” asked Mulligan, swiftly changing the subject.

“Nah, Lee’s still stinking up the stage,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “I’ll be the first to admit I know shit about DJing, so is it just my natural antipathy towards the guy, or does he genuinely suck?”

“No, he sucks,” Beth nodded agreeably.

“Beth’s studying to be a music producer,” said Mulligan, putting an arm around her proudly.

“Oh, no way? Know any numbers I’d be interested in?”

“Hamilton, I swear to God, if you don’t stop hitting on my girlfriend right now—”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” Hamilton winced apologetically at Beth. “I get really nervous when I meet new people and my first instinct is to flirt. I have this thing where I place excessive stock on my own personal boundaries while being completely negligent of other peoples’. It’s a real problem.”

“Sounds it,” said Beth sympathetically.

“I think it’s time for you to be drunk and embarrassing elsewhere,” said Eliza, taking Hamilton’s hand and leading him back into the crowd.

Lee had finally moved onto a different song, although it wasn’t much better than the last. Hamilton danced half-heartedly along to the sequence while internally recognising it as commercial and synthesised. He wondered whether, a few months ago, he would even have thought twice about the kind of music they played in a club. Perhaps Laurens’ influence had turned him into a snob.

“Oh thank fuck,” breathed Meade when Lee’s final remix finally slowed to a halt. “For a second there I thought I was falling asleep.”

“Hey, it’s Laurens!” Tallmadge cried, actually jumping to see the stage.
“Where?” asked Hamilton urgently, craning his neck in order to see over the crowd. Angelica nudged him and they moved forwards, zig-zagging through the chaos until they had a decent view of the stage. A guy in front of them moved out the way, allowing Hamilton finally to have a clear sight. Sure enough there was Laurens, waving in a way that was both self-assured and modest as he walked onto the stage. At once the crowd erupted; Hamilton cast about, perplexed as people to the left and right of him began to jump up in excitement, clapping their hands over their heads and hollering in appreciation.

“Mon dieu,” murmured Lafayette, who looked just as taken aback as Hamilton felt. “Who knew he was so popular?”

Laurens settled behind the system, long hands slipping locks of escaped hair behind his ears before hovering steadily over the board. He was wearing one of his ugliest jumpers; a striped, grey sweater that reached almost to his knees, the sleeves so long they flopped over his fingertips. Hamilton had barely enough time to muse exasperatedly that as if Laurens, of all people, could get away with wearing a cardigan in a motherfucking club before he started to play.

It began with a steady drum beat, gradually growing louder and louder until it was joined by quick, rhythmic clapping. Just as Hamilton began to wonder whether Laurens was playing Jungle it was interrupted by the sharp, nasal sound of synthesizers and finally, the deep murmurings of a Spanish voice, perfectly in time to the beat. Hamilton found himself nodding, tapping along until a low undertone crept in and suddenly he was moving, the bass building like a storm in the pit of his stomach.

A pause.

And then the bass dropped.

It was as if someone had sent a stone, plummeting into the depths of a bottomless pool. Hamilton didn’t have the words to describe the feeling. Looking around him everyone was dancing, not a single soul who wasn’t jiving, grinding along in time to the beat, constant and steady but not monotonous, building like a steady fire over hot coals. Laurens’ fingers flickered over the board and there came another level, a hum that was vaguely Eastern, like the memory of a song lost over desert sands before it was snatched up by the wind, the blend of Spanish words and electronic beat making it sound strange and otherworldly:

*Oye dime si tu sabes*
*Si me has visto mi mujer*
*Pelo corto*
*En la Orilla un clavodil*
*Oye tu me hablas*
*Me hablas de sexo*
*De amor*

Laurens was moving over the board, his entire body bending back and forwards with the motion of his arms and quick fingers. His hair was flying in and out of his face, pulled by the tide of the crowd before him as they pointed and waved their arms in the air.

Hamilton swallowed.

“What is this?!” Meade was yelling over the roar of the speakers and the crowd’s wild, unbridled joy.

“Fuck if I know,” Mulligan hollered back, fist pumping to the lethal, contagious beat. “Fuck.
Fuck.

Fuck was right.

Laurens was grinning. Hamilton could see his teeth, flashing white through the purple and green electronic lights. His hair was dripping sweat, it trickled in beads down his golden skin, his face shining with sheer, uninhibited delight. Not once had he ever looked so free, so comfortable and so perfectly, wondrously happy to be there.

The music flowed from him as if he commanded it with his very being. The crowd too; they obeyed his slightest will as though they were all one mind and Laurens alone had the power to tap into it. Hamilton was suddenly, desperately aware of a mad and powerful force gripping them, linking the pit of his chest to that of the person grinding against him, to the one next to him and on and on; a golden chain that began and ended with Laurens, flowing through the heart of every soul in that club in a way that was dangerously, maddeningly sexy.

The crowd was going insane, people attempting to climb onto the stage only to be hurled back by security. Laurens seemed not to notice. He was pumping his fist, a magnificent magician who could send sparks flying. Arrogant, kingly, lost in the joy of his own creation.

“Who is this guy?” a girl who was standing near them asked her friend.

“It’s my boy,” Mulligan turned to answer her. “John Laurens. That’s my homeboy.”

“John Laurens?” the girl frowned. “Isn’t his dad a Congressman?”

“Yep, that’s the one,” Mulligan nodded, practically beefy with pride.


“Go John!” Eliza yelled, jumping ecstatically before turning to Hamilton. “Isn’t he wonderful?”

A strange, strangled noise escaped from the back of Hamilton’s throat in response. The music had found a slit in his skin and made its way into his veins, so that his muscles were shaking with it. He felt very, very hot.

Angelica looked at him concernedly. “Alex?”

Hamilton didn’t hear her. The tide was rushing into his ears, tiny silver dots appearing at the fringes of his vision. The room was suffocating, he could feel himself burning up. Laurens glanced up from the board. His eyes glanced over the crowd before settling and locking onto Hamilton’s. His smile broadened, smug and knowing.

Hamilton was going to faint.

“ ‘Scuse me,” he mumbled, tearing away from Laurens’ gaze and stumbling through the crowd.

“Alex,” Angelica called after him again.

Hamilton ignored her, pushing past dancers and drunks with straight-minded purpose until he had successfully removed himself from the many tentacled, organic being that was the audience. His head was spinning; he tripped through the doors to the main floor, having to fling out an arm to support himself. Dazedly he could just make out the purple neon sign that indicated the toilets; he staggered in that direction and pushed open the door, hoping it was the right one as the letters had all blurred together.
The cool of the bathroom was like breathing after being too long underwater. Once in the stalls Hamilton collapsed, dropping his head into his hands. His entire skin felt like it was on fire, itching to peel away from the bones. Heat threatened to consume him, so stifling it was as if someone had wound a scarf too tightly around his throat, yet he was shivering. He took in huge lungfuls of air, willing himself not to panic.

“Alexander?”

Hamilton raised his head slightly out of his hands at the familiar voice as it repeated the call.

“I’m in here,” he answered shakily before unlocking the door.

Lafayette stumbled into the stall. After collecting himself, he took a step back, frowning bemusedly at Alexander.

“What are you doing?” asked Lafayette.

“I think I’m drowning,” answered Hamilton.

Lafayette’s frown deepened and he glanced around him, as if searching for signs of excess water. When he could find none, he returned to Hamilton with a very serious expression on his face.

“You are drunk,” he said bluntly. “Come outside. I will find you some water.”

“No, I can’t.” Hamilton shook his head, stomach lurching forward as his vision began to swim again. “I can’t go back in there…Lafayette…”

“What?” Lafayette sank to his knees, taking Hamilton’s hands in his and gazing up at him in concern. “What is it, mon chér?”

Hamilton groaned, his head falling against the back of the bathroom stall. “I think I’ve made a terrible mistake.”

“You’ve made many,” Lafayette agreed. “But you must be specific.”

“Laurens,” said Hamilton. “It’s Laurens.”

“What about him?”

Hamilton made a noise that Lafayette hoped very much, in any capacity, never to hear again.

“Ok,” said Lafayette. “Ok. I love you, and we are friends, but you must not do that.”

“I can’t help it,” Hamilton whimpered. “He’s just so-”

“-Stop,” Lafayette said quickly, starting to panic. “Please stop.”

“Help me,” Hamilton squeaked.

“Pull yourself together,” said Lafayette.

“I can’t stand up,” said Hamilton.

“Why not?”

Hamilton pointed towards the font of his jeans. Lafayette swore.
“Jesus fucking Christ,” he hissed, wiping a hand across his forehead. “Are you fourteen? What the fuck is wrong with you?”

“It’s only semi,” moaned Hamilton reproachfully.

“Sort yourself out,” Lafayette snapped. “Think of boat shoes, or irresponsible government spending, or something.”

Hamilton nodded and closed his eyes while Lafayette retreated in search of water. By the time he had returned with a plastic cup from the bar Hamilton had managed to clamber to his feet and was splashing himself with cold water from the sink. Lafayette handed him the cup and he drank it gratefully, re-filling it when he was done.

“Richard and Angelica are outside,” Lafayette told him. “You need some fresh air.”

Hamilton shook his head. “I need to crawl into a hole and die,” he said.

“The only holes available are those toilets,” Lafayette answered. “And while you are a piece of shit, I do not think they will flush you.”

Conceding this to be the case, Hamilton followed Lafayette back out the toilets and into the smoking area. Angelica and Meade were seated companionably on a wooden bench, blue smoke uncurling from the dying stubs of their cigarettes. Hamilton accepted the one Angelica offered him gratefully, ignoring Lafayette’s disapproving expression as he fumbled with the lighter.

“Didn’t know you smoked,” observed Meade.

“And while you are a piece of shit, I do not think they will flush you.”

Conceding this to be the case, Hamilton followed Lafayette back out the toilets and into the smoking area. Angelica and Meade were seated companionably on a wooden bench, blue smoke uncurling from the dying stubs of their cigarettes. Hamilton accepted the one Angelica offered him gratefully, ignoring Lafayette’s disapproving expression as he fumbled with the lighter.

“Didn’t know you smoked,” observed Meade.

“Only when I’m drunk or experiencing extreme anxiety,” Hamilton answered. “Lucky for me, it’s a double whammy.”

He breathed in deeply, closing his eyes in relief as the nicotine hit his system. Angelica nudged Lafayette, bending to whisper in his ear. “What’s the matter with him?”

“He was having a mild panic attack.”

“Fuck! Is he ok??”

“Yes, I think so,” said Lafayette, frowning concernedly as Hamilton took another long drag. “It is very hard to tell.”

“Shit, poor guy. Do you know what might have set it off?”

“Yes,” replied Lafayette, lowering his voice. “He has had a lot to drink. Also I think that maybe his feelings for John are…a little more…intense then he had bargained for. He doesn’t know how to handle it.”

“Hey guys,” came a familiar voice. “How’s it hanging?”

Angelica and Lafayette looked up to see Laurens, having emerged from the back VIP entrance and now making his way across the smoking area to join them. His oversized grey jumper seemed to have sagged even more in the heat, hanging like an empty sack around the top of his skinny jeans. His hair and face were shining with sweat. He was still grinning.

Hamilton dropped his cigarette.
This chapter is littered with true stories.

It was also my favourite chapter to write so far! I hope you enjoyed it, please let me know if you did and thank you for your wonderful words so far.
Chapter Summary

Por allá por allá y por allá ¿Has visto mi mujer?

Chapter Notes

tw for drug use

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Hi,” Hamilton squeaked.

Laurens reached down to pick up the fallen cigarette. As he handed it back to him their knuckles brushed. A shock of electricity jolted through Hamilton’s skin, sending waves down his spine.

“What d’ya think?” asked Laurens, fishing out papers and tobacco and starting to roll.

“Laurens man,” Meade shook his head, failing to articulate with words. “Dude. You were-”

“Fucking incredible,” Angelica swooped in for him. “Seriously, what the hell. I had no idea you were so good.”

“I still cannot quite believe it,” Lafayette told him. “You actually passed as cool.”

Laurens laughed, scratching the back of his neck self-consciously but looking very pleased. “I’m glad you liked it,” he said modestly. “It’s a really good song.”

“Song shmong,” said Angelica dismissively. “That was all you, dude. I have to admit, I am so impressed. And if I’m ever rude to you again-”

“I’ll accept it as a rebalancing of the universe,” Laurens finished, nodding.

Hamilton watched Laurens’ hands as they cupped the cigarette, curling around the bright orange flame as it leapt from his lighter. He breathed in, running a hand through his bedraggled hair before turning to Hamilton.

“What about you, Alex?” he asked. “Didja like it?”

Hamilton swallowed, his throat coming away dry. “Uh yeah,” he managed to rasp out. “Yeah, it was uh…it was really good.”

Laurens smiled. It lit up his whole face. Hamilton was saved the humiliation of having to sit down by the arrival of the others, running across the smoking area towards them.

“MY BOY!” Mulligan roared, arms outstretched wide and tears nearly brimming as he enveloped Laurens. “BRING IT IN MAN.”
“You were amazing John!” Eliza gushed, throwing her arms around Laurens after Mulligan had released him.

“Thanks guys,” Laurens winced, massaging his ribs. “And thanks so much for coming, it really means a lot.”

“What comes next?” asked Tallmadge.

“Charles finishes off the rest of his set,” Laurens explained. “And then I’m back on in about half an hour. I don’t know about any of you guys, but I need a drink.”

“I’ll come with you,” said Hamilton abruptly.

Lafayette looked at him warily. “I’m not sure that’s such a good idea.” he said uncertainly.

“I’m not gonna get one,” Hamilton assured him before slipping his arm through Laurens’. “Come on, let’s go.”

Hamilton led Laurens away from the smoking area back into the sweltering furnace of the club. The crowd was still hyped from Laurens’ set but now that Lee was back on the stage there was suddenly much more room to move around. He had reverted back to some other prosaic House remix and while there were still plenty of people dancing, he definitely seemed to be the most energetic person in the room. Hamilton watched bemusedly Lee while Laurens bought his drink, noting how animated he had suddenly become.

“You sure you don’t want anything?” Laurens asked, tilting his glass. “I can buy.”

“Nah, I’m really drunk,” Hamilton replied, waving his hand. “You go ahead.”

Laurens shrugged, taking a generous drink.

“Thanks again for coming,” he said, setting the glass back down on the bar. “I know I already said this, but it really does mean a lot to me that you did.”

“I wouldn’t have missed it for the world,” Hamilton told him heartily. “Honestly dude, you were so, so good. Like…fuck. I don’t even have words.”

The corner of Laurens’ mouth twitched sardonically. “Alexander Hamilton lost for words.”

Hamilton felt his face warm. “Yeah, well,” he mumbled. “It’s been known to happen.”

Laurens took another sip of his drink and Hamilton watched the movement, noticing for the first time what was actually in the glass.

“Did you order an old fashioned?” he blurted.

Laurens looked sheepish. “Uh…yeah.”

Hamilton stared at him in disbelief. “Are you actually a dad?” he demanded. “Like, did you just shaka straight out the womb from the 90s on a skateboard, already a fully-formed dad?”

“That’s a weirdly specific image.”

“Who orders whiskey in a club?!” Hamilton screeched, feeling a little frantic. “Come to think of it, who wears a fucking Goodwill seasonal donation to a club?? With skinny jeans??”
“Whiskey makes me frisky,” Laurens chirped primly. “Doin’ it for the thrill with Goodwill.”

Hamilton stared as Laurens smirked into the dregs of his glass. “My God,” he complained. “How the fuck am I so attracted to you?”

“Sorry Hamilton, didn’t quite catch that.”

“Drink your fucking dad drink Laurens,” Hamilton snarled. “Jesus Christ.”

Laurens snickered as he downed the rest of his glass. Hamilton watched the stage for want of something else to look at. Lee looked very much as though someone had wound him up and applied him with an electrical charge, fists pumping so belligerently Hamilton half feared he was about to punch the system off the stage. His eyes were wild and he was dripping with sweat.

“What’s the matter with him?” he asked.

“Huh?” Laurens followed his gaze to where Lee was engaged in a furious skirmish with his own soundboard. “Oh. Yeah, he does this sometimes. When it’s not going too well quite often he’ll take a hit of something to bring him up. He’s doing it more and more actually to tell you the truth, I’m a little worried about him.”

“Maybe you should be,” Hamilton frowned. He didn’t have a lot of experience with drugs, the people he hung around with tending to stay away from anything harder than weed. However, he knew Laurens and even Lafayette on occasion ran in those circles. Either way, even in his state it wasn’t difficult to see that Lee was a mess.

Laurens bought another drink which he downed, slamming it on the counter before turning back to Hamilton. “I gotta go backstage,” he said. “You can come with me if you like, but it’ll be pretty boring.”

“I should probably go back to the guys,” Hamilton replied, squinting as he tried to remember where he’d left them. “Lafayette…I think he wants to be my mom.”

Laurens laughed fondly. “Mine too,” he nodded.

“Ew no,” Hamilton cringed. “Then we’d be brothers. That’s gross.”

Laurens laughed again, ripping out whole sections of Hamilton’s stomach. “You’re cute,” he said. He stretched out a hand, slipping a fallen lock of hair behind Hamilton’s ear. Hamilton’s breath caught in his throat, eyes blown as Laurens’ fingertips grazed his skin.

“Sorry,” Laurens winced, dropping his hand from Hamilton’s face. “That wasn’t very platonic of me.”

Hamilton swallowed again before replying. “You’re good,” he forced out.

Laurens looked away from Hamilton, his gaze wandering over the length of the club. The room was swaying gently with self-conscious dancers, moving as though they knew they were being observed. A movement by the door caused Laurens to lift his head. “There’s Hercules,” he said, jerking his chin in the direction of Mulligan and the others trailing behind him. “I’ll catch you later, Alex.”

Hamilton nodded. Laurens zapped finger-guns at him before he headed off and was immediately swallowed by the crowd. Seconds later Mulligan was by his side, slapping a heavy hand on his
“You alright?” he asked, brow knitted in concern.

Hamilton nodded and, taking his word for it, Mulligan steered him back towards the dancefloor.

By this point, Lee’s set had shifted from a showcase of the music to his own physical performance. The audience watched, half amused half in mounting horror as he got more and more worked up, limbs flailing like a chimp gone berserk. The board was glistening with sweat to the extent that it was a wonder he could still see. Perhaps he couldn’t; as the set continued his control seemed to be slipping until it was almost indistinguishable from the beeps and whirs of a broken household appliance.

Just as Hamilton was beginning to wonder how much longer he had to suffer this Laurens was back on stage, forcing him to grit his teeth through a different kind of torture. He was aware, vaguely, as Laurens teased and flirted with the crowd, of another kind of feeling mixed in with the desire. It was similar to the envy he had felt when Mulligan and Lafayette had turned up at the bar one day with the someone we’d like you to meet. Only this time, the object of his resentment was not Laurens but something less tangible, more difficult to quantify. Perhaps it was the crowd, all those faceless names and bodies who were able to share in a smile that until now, only Hamilton had been able to possess. Or maybe Laurens was the object after all, only it wasn’t envy he was feeling, but jealousy.

Half an hour later both Laurens and Lee had finished their sets. Hamilton clapped along with the rest of the crowd as they waved themselves off the stage, the applause much louder for the former, although admittedly Mulligan made up a substantial amount of it. When they had both disappeared backstage, Angelica nudged Hamilton’s arm.

“Shall we wait for him outside?” she asked.

“Good idea,” said Hamilton gratefully, taking her hand and allowing her to lead the way back into the smoking area.

Outside was blessedly cool. Hamilton, still drunk, collapsed onto one of the benches with his head in his hands while Angelica, Meade and Tallmadge fished about for lighters. Eliza sat down next to him. Mulligan and Beth were very busy and Lafayette was making friends with a group of bucket-hat wearing white boys who looked too high to follow a word of what he was saying. Hamilton put his head on Eliza’s shoulder.

“Hey,” he whispered.

“Hey,” she replied softly. She ran her fingers through his hair.

The vanilla-rose of the perfume he had bought her, combined with the motion, was so familiar that tears sprang into his eyes. “Why are you friends with me?” he asked.

Eliza smiled. “Because you make me laugh.”

“I made you cry too,” said Hamilton, and when Eliza didn’t say anything, “I’m not a good person.”

“You’re not a bad person.”

“Don’t you think I’m going to Hell?”

Eliza was silent for a long time, and when she replied, her voice was very quiet. “I couldn’t believe
in a God that would send you to Hell, Alex.”

A tear trembled, and tripped off his eyelash. It fell onto Eliza’s knee before he could wipe it.

“Man, what the fuck,” a sneering voice tore through the conversation, causing Eliza to start beneath Hamilton’s cheekbone. “Who invited the Panthers?”

Charles Lee staggered out of the VIP entrance, a limp cigarette hanging aggressively from his bottom lip. His pupils were enormous, his eyes stretched so wide it would have been comical, were it not for the look of hostility on his broad, scarlet face. Hamilton felt Eliza tense. He stood up, stepping instinctively in front of her, noticing to his right Mulligan, Meade and Tallmadge do the same.

Lee took a drag of his cigarette. It did absolutely nothing to calm the jittery, impulsive movements of his body. “You guys take a break from saving the world?” he asked provokingly. “The Revolution doesn’t sleep.”

“It might have done if it had been forced to sit through your set,” quipped Hamilton. “Seriously man, did you hop in a corvette to Aqua’s attic or what?”

Lee’s laugh was like the bark of a badly-trained Rottweiler. “Funny,” he conceded. “You’re a funny guy, Hamilton. I was saying the same thing to Laurens the other day.”

“Thanks,” said Hamilton wryly.

“Very fucking amusing,” Lee continued, as if he hadn’t heard him. “You know, with so many natural advantages, it’s a real brain-teaser why you guys just can’t seem to catch a break. I mean sure, there’s you on the Student Council and Treasurer of one of the largest societies on campus and paper boy to only the fucking president of the goddamn university but hey, what is that, right? Peanuts, am I right? When compared to all those fat, rich, white bastards stealing all the good stuff. Like…uh…hey, remind me what it is you guys were mad about again?”

“You can’t say ‘coloured’,” said Angelica through gritted teeth.

“I wasn’t talking to you, bitch,” snarled Lee.

The effect of the words was instantaneous. Immediately Hamilton and Meade leapt forwards, only to be held back by the other four, springing to their feet at once. Hamilton scrabbled at the hold Lafayette and Eliza had around him, swearing savagely as Lee smirked, blowing smoke casually into the sky.

The back entrance opened. Heads whipped round to see Laurens closing the door behind him, grinning elatedly as he caught sight of his friends. The smile faded as he took in the situation, to be replaced with one of confused apprehension.
“What’s going on?” he asked, eyes flickering over Hamilton and Meade.

“Hey Laurens,” Lee flicked his stub onto the floor, putting it out with the sole of his shoe. “I was just telling your friends your good news.”

“What happened?” Laurens turned to Lafayette. “Did he say something to you?”

“He called Angelica a bitch,” Lafayette replied, tightening his hold on Hamilton who had begun to thrash.

“What the fuck,” Laurens spun round, looking surprised at Lee. “You can’t talk to her like that—”

“I’ll knock his fucking teeth out,” Hamilton spat, tearing loose from Lafayette and Eliza.

“Whoa,” Laurens stepped in just as Hamilton sprung forward, seizing him by the shoulders. “Alexander, calm down. I’m sure he didn’t mean it, he’s fucked, he’s not in his right mind—”

“So violent,” Lee taunted, snickering. “I knew that whole honours boy thing was an act. Look at you. Fucking animal.”

“Hey, shut up,” said Laurens, loosening his hold on Hamilton for just a second.

“It’s cute how ape-shit you’ll go for your girlfriend,” Lee persisted, not hearing Laurens. “Got tired of getting bent over Washington’s desk, huh Hamilton? Or maybe it doesn’t matter, maybe you’ll fuck anything regardless. God it makes me laugh when I think of how you got your job. People think you’re so talented, so smart, when really you’re nothing but another dumb slut—”

It happened very quickly. Laurens released Hamilton who tripped and fell backwards into Lafayette. He gathered himself just in time to see Laurens, pelting towards Lee with his fist pulled back; another second and he was slamming it into Lee’s jaw.

“JOHN, STOP!” Lafayette shouted, pushing Hamilton aside as he scrambled to reach him. Laurens didn’t hear him. Blood was roaring in his ears, blocking out every sound except for that of his knuckles, colliding with the wet flesh of Lee’s face. He felt a crunch and Lee’s nose exploded, running thick and dark as tar. Before he could do the same for his jaw however Lee had grabbed him by the shoulders, whirling him round so that the back of his head slammed against the floor. Lights popped up at the corners of his vision; he heard someone scream, then, pain as Lee’s fist smacked his bottom lip into his teeth and the sting of copper flooded his mouth.

Someone was trying to pull him back, he felt nails grasp at his back and shoulders. He flung them off, concentrating his every desire into rubbing Lee’s face into the ground. He jerked his knee up, catching him in the stomach. Lee doubled over, clutching his gut and Laurens grabbed him, pushing him back into one of the benches.

“Alright assholes, that’s enough!”

Laurens was aware of enormous arms wrapping around his torso, gripping him so tight it was almost suffocating. He tried to fight against it but before he even had a solid grasp of what was going on, he was dropped and fell, sprawling, onto the sidewalk.

He lay there for a few seconds, pulse hammering in his ears, before getting gingerly to his feet. The knees of his jeans were ripped, revealing the blood underneath, and his palms stung. He could still hear someone shouting but it was familiar, higher-pitched than Lee’s savage grunts, and within a second, Hamilton was standing beside him.
“Don’t worry about it,” Hamilton was yelling. “I’ll go back with him, it’s fine.”

“Do you have a phone?” Mulligan.

Hamilton held it up. Mulligan jerked his head, satisfied. “I’m calling you an uber,” he shouted back. “Text me when you get in.”

Hamilton nodded. Laurens straightened up, wincing as his body groaned in protest. “Uh…” he started. “What just happened?”


“Oh,” said Laurens. His tongue felt thick in his mouth. He thought he might have bitten it. “…Why are you here?”

“Well I’m hardly gonna let you go home alone, am I?” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “Jesus.”

His eyes roved over Laurens’ torn jeans, the jagged split down his lip still oozing blood. “Where d’you go, psycho-boy?”

“Haha,” said Laurens, his ribs feeling too tender to properly appreciate the reference.

Three minutes later, the uber drew up. Hamilton helped Laurens into the backseat before giving Laurens’ address to the driver. Tentatively, and taking care not to aggravate his grazed palms, Laurens wound down the window. The rush of cold air was welcome on his stinging skin, providing gentle relief as it snagged at his hair. He closed his eyes, letting his head fall back against the seat.

He became aware of a timid, soft nudging against his other hand. He squinted, opening his eyes very slightly and saw Hamilton, brushing it shyly. He spread his fingers, allowing Hamilton to lace through them with his own.

The journey passed by in a flash and within a second, the uber had drawn up outside Laurens’ building. Laurens and Hamilton stumbled out of the car, winning the obligatory battle with the front door and waving at the doorman who offered them an unamused look as he took in the bloodied face and torn clothing.

Once inside the apartment, Hamilton took Laurens’ hand again, directing him forcibly into the bathroom. Laurens followed meekly, his head spinning, either with drunkenness or the beginnings of a concussion he couldn’t tell. The bright lights seemed suddenly overwhelming; he flinched at the stark glare of the tiles and porcelain as Hamilton made him sit down on the toilet lid.

“Fuck,” muttered Hamilton, scrunching up toilet paper and running it under the cold tap. “I’m too drunk for this shit.”

Laurens grunted in agreement, turning into a hiss as Hamilton applied the wet toilet paper to the cuts on his knees. Hamilton looked up at him, unsympathetic.

“Quit being a baby,” he said.

“Not being a baby.”

Hamilton raised an eyebrow, dabbing meticulously at the blood before turning his attention to Laurens’ palms. Laurens watched him dumbly as he worked, his tongue poking out slightly in
concentration. He had felt very brave and noble as he had punched Lee. Like an avenging angel, or something out of Thomas Mallory. Now, with Hamilton playing doctor as if Laurens were a sullen schoolboy, he felt a little foolish.

“Do you have antiseptic?” Hamilton asked.

Laurens shrugged. “Probably not.”

“Vinegar, then,” and in response to Laurens’ questioning look, “It’s what my mom used to use when I got into fights.”

“Check the kitchen.”

Hamilton left for the kitchen cupboard, returning with a bottle of white vinegar which he upended onto a fresh ball of toilet roll. “Fair warning,” he said. “This is going to hurt like a motherfucker.”

Laurens grit his teeth against the sharp, searing pain as Hamilton applied the vinegar to his grazes. When he was done he threw the tissue in the bin, tearing off another load before moving towards Laurens’ face.

“Oh baby,” he breathed as Laurens winced at the touch of the damp tissue on his split lip. “What have you done to yourself?”

Laurens felt a shiver run up his spine in immediate response to the word, and in its use in an entirely different context from before.

“I couldn’t hear him say that about you,” he muttered, feeling the heat rise in his cheeks.

Hamilton made a humming noise, a slight crease appearing in between his eyebrows. “What,” he said. “That I’m a slut?” Laurens nodded. “Well, he’s right, y’know. I am.”

“Don’t,” Laurens frowned. “Don’t say that about yourself. You’re not—”

“I sleep around, John. In the literal definition, so far as a colloquialism has one, I am a slut.” Hamilton shrugged, entirely unfazed by the proclamation. “I mean, alright, I’m not fucking Washington and Angelica’s not my girlfriend and I sure as hell am not fucking dumb, but. If you’re gonna get mad at Lee’s bullshit, my promiscuity is probably the wrong topic to pick seeing as it’s the only thing he said that hovered close to any kind of truth.”

“I don’t have a problem with your promiscuity,” Laurens mumbled, defensive and embarrassed. “Do what you want. I have a problem with people talking shit about you, whatever the context. I thought I made that clear.”

“Ok, so this wasn’t a…I don’t know. Some sort of crime of jealous passion or something—”

“No,” stated Laurens, more forcefully than he had intended.

Hamilton nodded. “Good,” he said.

He finished cleaning Laurens’ lip, chucking the last ball into the bin before sitting back to admire his handiwork. Or, more specifically, John. “I don’t need you to fight my battles for me—” he started.

“I know—” Laurens rolled his eyes.

“But I think it’s really cool that you did.”
Laurens blinked at him, surprised. Hamilton was smile was almost shy, his cheeks blushing very faintly. “You’re not mad?”

Hamilton shrugged. “Lil bit,” he admitted. “But, I mean, I was planning on murdering the bastard for what he said to Angelica, so. Who am I to play the hypocrite. I guess the only reason I’d be mad is if I felt like you were…I don’t know…robbing me of my masculinity by usurping my right to defend myself, or something, which is dumb, and heteronormative nonsense and stupid as fuck, so. And also a completely irrelevant feeling anyway, considering how I found you risking yourself like that for me was so unbelievably hot.”

Laurens’ lip twitched. “Yeah?”

“Yes.” Hamilton’s eyes flickered to Laurens’ mouth.

The silence that followed was deep and tangible. Laurens could hear Hamilton breathing, his quick exhales matching the increased thump of his own pulse.

He wasn’t sure exactly who initiated it. All he knew was that a moment later, they were kissing; Hamilton started gentle, hesitant of causing further damage to Laurens’ split lip but then Laurens let out a groan of frustration, curling his fist in the front of Hamilton’s shirt to urge him deeper. Spurred by his forcefulness, Hamilton kissed him hungrily, as he had been wanting to do all night, flicking his tongue in the slit and tasting copper. Laurens gasped, turning quickly into a choked off moan as Hamilton sucked on his bruised mouth, strangely wanting Hamilton to hurt him a little for reasons he didn’t understand and even less wanted to get into.

Hamilton was crowding him, knocking over cleaning materials as he scrambled to gain purchase onto Laurens’ lap. Laurens’ hands went immediately around his little waist, revelling in the feeling of Hamilton’s hips beneath the flat of his palms. Hamilton pushed his tongue into Laurens’ mouth and Laurens opened up beneath him, leaning his head back to take more of him in.

“God,” Hamilton gasped, drawing back briefly for breath. “You make me crazy.”

He moved away from Laurens’ mouth, sucking lightly at his neck and jawline and Laurens whined, his hand going automatically to reach under Hamilton’s shirt.

“How far do you want to take this?” Hamilton whispered, nipping lightly at Laurens’ ear-lobe.

That was a very good question, and another one that Laurens did not have an answer to.

“God, I could fuck you,” Hamilton groaned, and Laurens’ cock twitched in a way that both shocked and embarrassed him, even as fear jolted through his body. “I won’t, don’t worry,” he said quickly, catching sight of Laurens’ expression. “Just tell me when you want to stop.”

“I don’t…” Laurens tried and failed. It was very difficult to think through the haze of alcohol, and through Hamilton’s hands working insistently at his jeans. “I don’t know what I want. I want you.”

“I want you too.” Hamilton kissed him again, so sweetly that Laurens felt himself rise in an attempt to chase his lips, not wanting to let go. “Come with me.”

Laurens took his hand, allowing Hamilton to lead them into Laurens’ bedroom. Once inside Hamilton pushed Laurens down onto the bed, one hand pressing down on his chest while with the other he undid his jeans.

Laurens’ hips were shaking. Hamilton moved the hand from his chest to press lightly at his waist. “Okay?” he asked.
Laurens jerked his head. Hamilton placed a kiss on the patch of skin just above Laurens’ waistband before beginning to roll his jeans off his hips. When he had them around his ankles, Hamilton slid his hands up the inside of Laurens’ thighs, pushing them further apart before bending down to run his tongue up the bulge in his boxers.

At once Laurens’ hips snapped forward and he issued a little squeak. Hamilton grinned, sliding down the elastic and attempting to slow his heartbeat as Laurens’ cock sprang into full view. It was bright red and flushed, curving prettily towards the muscles leaping in Laurens’ abdomen. Hamilton took a second to admire it before taking the head into his mouth. Laurens cried out, throwing an arm over his eyes as Hamilton moved a hand around the shaft, teasing the slit with his tongue as he had the cut in Laurens’ lip.

“Oh God,” he said again, pulling off briefly as he felt his own erection chafe against his jeans. “You have no idea how much I’ve wanted to do this.”

“Alexander,” Laurens moaned.

Hamilton’s grin widened, relishing the sound of his name broken in Laurens’ throat. “Yeah baby?”

“Alex, please-”

Hamilton took a shaky breath to stabilise himself and settled back onto Laurens’ cock, taking as much of him in as possible. Laurens sighed, hands tangling automatically in his hair. Hamilton moved up and down, heat pooling in his stomach at the feeling of Laurens’ hands clutching at the back of his head as if it were a life raft. He was aware of him becoming more insistent, his hips quaking more violently until suddenly, he gasped and threw back his head.

Hamilton continued to slide his tongue up and down Laurens’ shaft as he came, drawing off only when Laurens began to bat at his hair. Hamilton sat up, watching as Laurens shivered, breathing heavily through the aftershocks. He still had one arm thrown over his face.

Dizzily, Hamilton stood up and returned to the bathroom. He unzipped his jeans and took himself in hand, picturing Laurens’ face as he stroked himself. He came with a strangled cry, one hand flung against the bathroom wall, the world still spinning around him.

Chapter End Notes

:)
Laurens woke up with the feeling of someone next to him, and for a second he didn’t know where he was.

The panic was as swift as it was intense. As his heartbeat slowed to normal the familiar surroundings of his room came into focus; there was his Glass Animals poster right next to the full-blown colour print he’d done of Adam Ant, there was the glossy tower of history textbooks he’d ordered first class off Amazon and hadn’t opened since, there was his vinyl collection, tastefully battered and second-hand. There was Hamilton, curled up in bed beside him.

Laurens turned his head to look at him. Hamilton’s hair was messy, his desperate efforts to keep it under control having been gradually thwarted throughout the night. Now it lay across his pillow in dishevelled curls, the tangled ends looping over his bare shoulders. His eyelashes were very long and fluttering slightly, as if even in sleep his mind were going at a hundred miles per hour.

Laurens traced the curve of his jawline with his eyes, the graceful, rather prominent line of his nose. Hamilton’s lips were parted, like they were already halfway to forming a word, and he only had to wake up for it to fall out. His eyes dropped to Hamilton’s mouth and he let out a shaky breath.

Had last night really happened? It was hard to tell. Laurens had dreamt so often of Hamilton’s mouth on him, of pulling Hamilton’s hair while he worked between his legs that to trust in his memory seemed rather like pushing his luck. Laurens didn’t have great luck. That’s what Mulligan and Lafayette were always telling him. You’re still a virgin because you’re unlucky, Laurens. That’s why you haven’t found anyone – you’re just unlucky. Laurens had rather resigned himself to being unlucky for the rest of his life. He didn’t feel too bitter about it. Fortune didn’t favour people like him, but people who deserved it. People like Alexander.

Hamilton snored gently. Laurens let his head fall back against the pillow, and tried to order things in his brain so that they made sense.

Last night, I did a DJ set.

I got in a fight with Charles Lee.

Hamilton gave me a blow job.

Somehow, getting in a fight with Charles Lee and Hamilton giving him a blow job were connected. Maybe it was recklessness. On both occasions, Laurens had been pretty fucking stupid. Nausea flooded through him as he realised how many people had been in that club, how many of them must have seen. What if word somehow got back to his father? People must have seen he and
Hamilton leave together. Did that look suspicious? He didn’t see how it could have done, but then again, he hadn’t been quiet. And not just that…only last weekend Laurens had kissed Hamilton in a public place, in the presence of at least three hundred people. Suppose his dad found out, and pieced the rest together?

His stomach felt like liquid. Laurens climbed out of bed and staggered towards the bathroom. The white tiles around him gleamed coolly and he shivered with the cold, dropping to his knees and gripping the sides of the toilet as he bent over the bowl.

“Laurens?”

He heard Hamilton push off the covers and get out of bed, the soft patter of his bare feet on the floor. A moment later he had appeared in the doorway, another and his hand was on Laurens’ back.

“Hey,” he said softly as Laurens retched. “Alright? You ok?”

Laurens nodded shakily. He wiped his mouth. Hamilton waited to see if he was going to bring anything up before getting to his feet.

“I’m gonna get you some water,” he said.

Hamilton departed for the kitchen. Laurens flushed the toilet before slumping into the space between it and the sink, one arm flung over his face and waiting for the world to still. Hamilton re-entered, carrying a glass. Upon seeing Laurens, and his unconscious imitation of his posture last night, he faltered, swallowing hard before remembering himself.

“Thanks,” said Laurens gratefully, accepting the water and taking a needy gulp.

“No problem.” Hamilton ran a hand through his hair, cursing when it got knotted between his fingers.

Laurens drank down the rest of the water while Hamilton chewed his nails, perching precariously on the edge of the bathtub. He looked suddenly very guilty. Laurens refilled the glass and took another drink; Hamilton waited until he was done before speaking.

“Listen John,” he began. “Um…I just wanted to say…I royally fucked up there, man. Like…I’m so fucking pissed at myself, I can’t even think. I really hope you’re not as mad at me as I am, although you totally have a right to be. But um…I hope you’re not because even though I’m a massive asshole who can’t keep it in his pants I really do value our friendship and I don’t wanna fuck it up even more than I have already. But yeah. I’m sorry. I was drunk, I guess, and horny. I don’t know what I was thinking.”

He dropped his hands from his mouth, realising he had been speaking around his fingers this whole time. Laurens wasn’t looking at him, but was examining an oddly shaped stain on the bathmat.

“You said you can’t keep it in your pants,” he said at last.

Hamilton looked at him quizzically. “Yeah?”

“But it was out of my pants.”

Hamilton huffed, amusement caught with impatience. “Well…y’know. It’s really a figure of speech.”

“Ya but it was my dick Hamilton,” Laurens rolled his eyes. “Out of my pants. The point I’m
making is you don’t have to sound like you…coerced me, or something. If either of us *fucked up* then that’s on both of us. Don’t try to make me sound like some sort of victim.”

“Yeah but,” Hamilton was blushing. “I initiated it…”

“Did you?” he raised an eyebrow and Hamilton thought back to Laurens flirting with him on stage, Laurens slipping a lock of fallen hair behind his ear, Laurens smashing in Charles Lee’s face for calling him a slut. “We were both drunk, like you said. And if the only time you’re ever gonna be interested in me is when you’re drunk and/or horny then I thought what the hell, I’ll take what I can get.”

“Hey come on,” Hamilton winced. “We talked about this. I’m interested in you, you know that. I just don’t want-”


“Don’t be an asshole,” said Hamilton curtly. “You’re making me feel like shit.”

Laurens shrugged casually. “Sorry,” he said, though he didn’t sound it.

Hamilton exhaled sharply through his nose. He stood up. “Is there a reason you’re behaving like such a ray of fucking sunshine the morning after you get your dick sucked?”

Laurens shrugged again. “I mean, I probably lost my contract,” he replied. “And I keep semi-fantasising about getting disowned, so.”

“Wait, back up. Why would you lose your contract?”

Laurens frowned at him. “Are you serious?” and when Hamilton continued to look blank, “How about because I nearly broke someone’s nose as a minor under influence on the club premises?”

“But they can’t do that,” Hamilton’s face was stark, his eyes wide as though he were the one who had just been struck. “Lee was the one on illegal substances, he started it.”

“Er, not to get all technical on you, but I think the legal definition of ‘starting it’ is the one who hit first.”

“But that’s insane,” Hamilton snapped. “God, it’s like frickin’ Jamal Curtis all over again-”

“Hey, don’t do that, alright?” said Laurens, getting to his feet. “Don’t turn me into one of your causes. I might not be more than a friend, but I’m definitely more than *that*, Jesus.”

Hamilton stared at him. “I know you are,” he started, the rest of what he was going to say getting stuck in his throat.

Laurens sighed, folding his arms over his chest. He was uncomfortably aware that he was only wearing boxers. Clearly Hamilton realised this too because he flushed, backing out of the bathroom.

“I should go,” he said, returning to Laurens’ bedroom in search of his clothes.

“You don’t have to,” Laurens muttered.

“Yeah, I do,” said Hamilton. He had unearthed his shirt and jeans from a heap in the corner and hastily began to pull them on. “I’ll text you, or something.”
“Why would you text me anytime other than usual?”

Hamilton paused on the hem of his shirt, horror-struck as he realised the words had fallen out automatically. Laurens laughed, shaking his head in disbelief.

“Get out of here Hamilton,” he said amusedly, jerking his head towards the door.

Hamilton blew him a kiss, shouldering on his jacket as he skipped out the door. Once he had left Laurens’ bedroom, he paused, one fist still gripping the handle.

Tallmadge was in the kitchen. He was standing in front of the oven wearing an apron that said ‘I love my wife’ and stirring what looked like eggs. Upon catching sight of Hamilton, frozen by Laurens’ bedroom door, he snorted and returned to the stove.

“I see you two got home alright,” he observed wryly.

“Why are you wearing an apron to cook eggs?” asked Hamilton.

“Why are you asking me invasive questions in my own home?”

“It’s hardly invasive, I’m just curious.”

“For protection,” Tallmadge retorted, sparing Hamilton a contemptuous look. “I’d expect the same from you, if you ever got up to anything…invasive.”

Hamilton flipped him off, striding decisively for the exit.

“You owe me and not Mulligan for the uber,” Tallmadge shouted, just as the door slammed shut behind him.

*

Laurens was not at school that afternoon. Hamilton did not acknowledge this, however, for the rest of the day he was particularly touchy, barking orders at the SJC and snapping when anyone asked him the mildest question. While the rest of the group put this down to hangover and sleep deprivation, Lafayette, who liked to think he possessed some of the debonair instinct of Jules Maigret, thought he knew better. Like any good detective however he also knew the folly of asking his suspect straight out, and so like the others resolved to stay out of Hamilton’s way, pairing up with Eliza to put up the posters around campus.

“I just wish,” he confessed as Eliza leaned on her tip-toes to adjust the angle. “That when he is angry, he didn’t take it out on everyone else.”

“John, or Alex?” asked Eliza, squinting to see if the line was straight before tearing off more blue tac.

“Oh, Alexander of course,” replied Lafayette. “Laurens never takes anything out on anybody except himself. He bottles everything in, becomes very quiet before suddenly coming out with something that is at once very funny, and quite upsetting.”

“Hmm,” Eliza frowned, stepping back from the wall. “That doesn’t sound healthy.”

“No, it doesn’t,” Lafayette agreed. “Much more convenient for me, though,” and when Eliza looked at him quizzically added quickly, “I am making a joke, of course.”

“Of course,” said Eliza, raising an eyebrow.
Lafayette managed to look suitably guilty for a second before pressing on. “Anyway, Alexander has never kept anything bottled up in his life,” he continued. “In some ways, it is useful. You never have to guess with him. But with Alex, I think sometimes he is not so sure what or who he is angry at, only he is aware that he’s angry. And this knowledge without the correct…how do you say…channel, to focus it only makes him more frustrated. He is like a barrel full of water with no…ah…faucet.”

Eliza looked at him. Winced. “Faucet.”

Lafayette cringed. “I didn’t realise it until I said it.”

Eliza reached for another poster. Lafayette handed her one before remembering that he was also supposed to be putting them up himself.

“These are very good,” he observed, admiring the artwork on one. “I like this a lot.”

“Thank you,” said Eliza politely. “John’s are much better, though.”

“Oh, I don’t think so,” Lafayette protested heartily. “You just have different styles, that’s all.”

Eliza laughed. “That’s very nice of you to say,” she told him. “Alex is right. You’d make a wonderful diplomat.”

“I am not being diplomatic,” Lafayette insisted. “I am being honest. Laurens’ are much more…provocative, it is true. But yours have subtlety, and wit.”

Eliza shook her head modestly. “If there’s anything witty about them it’s Angelica,” she answered. “I only did the drawings. I’ve never been quite…there…with art. There’s always something missing, something I’m not quite brave enough to put down. I wish my drawings had Laurens’ courage.”

“Laurens is reckless,” Lafayette pointed out. “Sometimes selfishly so.”

“Maybe,” Eliza shrugged, running a hand over one of his posters. “But I still admire him. Alex always used to say that I hold myself back, and that’s what my art loses.” She sighed, shoulders falling slightly as her hand dropped from the wall. “I guess Laurens’ just have something that I don’t.”

Lafayette watched glumly, his heart aching for her even while he didn’t know what to do. Eliza wasn’t in love with Hamilton anymore. In fact, she had been the one to call things off. He didn’t think his sympathies that her ex was now interested in someone else were quite what was called for.

“Well,” he said, trying for a joke. “You could always go for religious art. If you ask me, I think the homunculus is in for a resurrection.”

Eliza’s fixed him with an icy stare. “Is there something funny about the divine form of our Lord and Saviour, Lafayette?” she asked coldly.

Lafayette fumbled, the back of his neck immediately creeping with heat in the full force of Eliza’s glare. “I’m sorry,” he stammered. “I didn’t mean…I just meant…ah…”

“Lafayette.”

“Yes?”
“I’m kidding.”

“Oh,” Relief burst through him like a flood over dry land. “Haha. You are very funny.”

Eliza smiled. They moved further along the corridor, leaving a sizeable gap between each poster. As they walked, a nagging question needled against Lafayette’s skull, driving him to distraction until he couldn’t help but let it out.

“You don’t have to answer,” he started. “But…well…Adrienne…I have tried, very hard, for her sake to believe. I don’t like having to share her with anybody else, even God. But every time I sit in that church and I take the communion or listen to the hymns there is this little voice at the back of my head that says…”

“This is bullshit?” prompted Eliza.

“Yes! Exactly!” Lafayette exclaimed, and instantly froze. “Well…not exactly…in those words, I mean-”

“It’s alright Lafayette,” Eliza laughed again. “You’ve met both my sisters. How do you think they responded when I told them I wanted to become a Christian?”

Lafayette nodded concedingly, remembering how Peggy had reacted when Tallmadge told her he wasn’t a fan of Kanye West. “Good point,” he said. “Your parents are of Jewish heritage, yes? How did they take it?”

“Just my dad,” she corrected him. “And they’re both atheists. They were…very surprised. And confused. We had a lot of awkward conversations where they tried to see where I was coming from, but in the end we exhausted ourselves. I think mostly though they’re just relieved to see how much happier I am. Even if they can’t understand it, that’s all that really matters to them.”

“You were unhappy before?” asked Lafayette tentatively. They were headed dangerously into Alexander territory. Neither he or Eliza had ever really talked about what happened between them. Lafayette had just assumed it was too painful. And unfortunately, this had also meant assuming the worst of Hamilton.

Eliza wrinkled her mouth. “I was very insecure,” she said frankly. “I’d always been interested in religion. I got into the habit, whenever I was feeling low, of reading the texts we had around the house. With the Old Testament…I found a lot of comfort in its anger. I understood its fury…it’s hunger for justice and revenge. I felt vindicated reading about the murder of Shechem, the firstborn sons for all the crimes of Egypt. But that kind of comfort…the comfort of rage…it doesn’t last. It sits and it smoulders and eventually it takes hold of you.” They had reached the lockers on the third floor. Eliza handed Lafayette another stack of posters and he turned to pin them up, nodding at Eliza to keep going. “So, then I started reading the New Testament. And that’s when I realised…all of that rage, all of that all-consuming need for justice…it’s necessary. It’s important. But it’s not the whole picture. You need the warriors; the Samsons and Dinah’s brothers, but you also need the healers. The peacemakers. Someone to turn the other cheek once in a while, if only to stop the whole world going blind.”

“And you think that someone’s coming again?” asked Lafayette doubtfully.

Eliza shook her head. “I think he already came,” she replied. “It’s our turn to be our own Second Coming.”

Lafayette nodded slowly, stepping back from the wall. “Ok,” he said. “I see that. But you believe in
God, yes?”

Eliza nodded. “I do.”

“Ok. And how do you explain all of this?” Lafayette waved, gesturing at the posters glaring at them from almost every angle. “How does God account for the suffering of His people? For an innocent boy to be nearly killed by that same hate and anger that could just as easily have been avoided had He bothered to step in?”

“To take that line of argument is to remove far too much responsibility from mankind,” replied Eliza calmly. “I’m not in the business of excusing people for their actions. So long as good exists, so does evil. I chose the Church because it helped me better to recognise which is which, and told me it was my responsibility to do something about it.”

Lafayette looked at Eliza. There was no anger there, there never was. Yet Lafayette thought he saw a glimpse of that quiet determination Hamilton spoke of when he gushed about Eliza, the glint of hard steel beneath the careful measure of her words. And suddenly he found it easy to imagine how the quiet, shy daughter of Philip Schuyler must have felt when she read about the Son of God, and discovered there could be strength in kindness too.

“I suppose people have to take responsibility for their actions,” he admitted after some time. “There wouldn’t be much in the way of free will if God stepped in every time America voted in an archvillain.”

“No there wouldn’t,” Eliza agreed. “Really though, I think when people speak of God, they’re over-complicating it. If you get too bogged down with the philosophy, then you lose sight of what God really is.”

“And what is that?” asked Lafayette.

“Love,” said Eliza simply.

They had reached the end of the corridor. Lafayette looked back, surveying their work with a proud sort of pleasure. Beside him, Eliza was also smiling. She reached up and touched his elbow.

“Shall we get lunch?” she asked.

“Cake,” said Lafayette decisively. “I want cake for lunch.”

“There’s a new coffee place that just opened,” Eliza told him excitedly. “It only plays Swedish covers of Elvis, there’s a different kind of succulent on every table and all the desserts taste a little bit like tea.”

Lafayette looped his arm through hers. “By all means, lead the way.”

* 

The music playing at the coffee shop turned out to be Danish covers rather than Swedish. After trying various cakes and desserts with Eliza (which all did taste rather inexplicably like tea) Lafayette decided to visit Laurens. He didn’t think he was really ill, still, maybe it was Lafayette’s excellent detective instinct but the lie had something of the plea about it.

His suspicions were confirmed when he knocked and, instead of someone answering the door, there was Laurens’ voice yelling COME IN. Not without apprehension, Lafayette pushed it open.
Laurens was in the living room sat in front of the television. He was watching *Requiem for a Dream*, only the sound was off. In its place, roaring from the speakers was what sounded horribly like the *Ghostbusters* theme tune.

He looked up when Lafayette entered, his face breaking into a ridiculously large grin. “Gilbert du Motier!!” he exclaimed.

“What the fuck,” said Lafayette.

Laurens withdrew a hand from his blanket (a blanket, Lafayette reflected guiltily, that he knew intimately well) to pat the space on the couch next to him. “Sit!”

“I’m not sure that I want to,” said Lafayette, but obeyed anyway.

Once Lafayette had taken his place tentatively on the couch, Laurens gestured at the screen. “Have you seen this?”

Lafayette squinted. Jared Leto was staggering around the screen, clutching a crater sized hole in his arm. “I cannot say that I have.”

Laurens pulled a face. “It’s super depressing,” he said. “I’m not sure if I like it.”

“Why are you watching it with the sound off?”


Lafayette frowned at him. “Are you drunk?”

“No,” said Laurens.

Lafayette leaned in close to sniff his neck. Laurens jerked out of the way but not before Lafayette caught a whiff of what was unmistakeably Sam Adams. “John Laurens, you are drunk!”

“I’m not,” Laurens snarled. “Do you see any alcohol here?”

Lafayette stood up and marched to the recycling. Jerking open one of the bins, six or seven bottles came crashing out, rolling thunderously onto the floor.

Laurens cringed. “Oops.”

“What the fuck is this?!” Lafayette screamed. “What the living fuck is this?!”

“Dude chill,” said Laurens.

“CHILL?!” Lafayette thundered into the room, one bottle of the accusing substance held aloft. “CHILL?! JOHN LAURENS, IT IS 2 O’CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON AND YOU SMELL LIKE BOSTON BREWERY. AND WHY, WHY FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THAT IS HOLY ARE YOU LISTENING TO GHOSTBUSTERS?!!”

“It’s fun,” Laurens replied. “I am having a fun time.”

Lafayette swore, throwing the bottle across the room. It hit the potted Areca palm tree by the bookcase.

“What happened last night?” he demanded as Laurens made a reproachful noise at the treatment of his plant. “Why are you depressed? Why do some people think Jared Leto should have gotten an
Oscar for this piece of shit film?"

“I’m not depressed,” Laurens frowned, his words slightly slurred. “I am enjoying some nice, fun, quality time with myself. I am getting to know me.”

“You told me you had already gotten to know you,” Lafayette challenged him. “And that it was one of the worst experiences of your life.”

“Worst experiences of my life...thus far,” Laurens corrected him, holding up a feeble finger. “Who could have predicted the...fuckin’...shit storm the universe had planned...hey, you know what? Someone ought to go back in time and talk to fourteen-year old Jacky. Be like, yo, buddy, you think this is bad just give it a coupla more years...ok...you’re gonna meet this...this boy...who’s, like, crazy beautiful and fuckin’ smarter than Einstein, or whatever, and you’re gonna get to the point where you’re convinced that maybe, ya know, maybe it’s not impossible that he likes you too and you’re gonna get your hopes up so high it only hurts that much fuckin’ more when it turns out hey, guess what my dude, my guy, he doesn’t give a shit.”

“I’m beginning to think you might be talking about Alexander,” said Lafayette.

“It’s so fuckin’ stupid man,” Laurens ignored Lafayette, his voice growing louder to shout over the next Ghostbusters! “It’s so fuckin’ stupid. Why did I do that, huh? Why did I let him go down on me when I told him, I told him I didn’t wanna do stuff like that if it was just gonna end up fucking me up-”

“He did what,” Lafayette started to ask, but by this point it seemed Laurens had forgotten that Lafayette was even there.

“Doesn’t give a shit,” he repeated savagely, lip curled in a bitter sneer. “Why else would he do that...when I told him...It’s the same fuckin’ thing with Eliza. Doesn’t matter, he doesn’t care, doesn’t give a shit, so long as he gets what he wants-”

“Hey now, that’s enough,” interrupted Lafayette, shaking himself together enough to take some sort of active part in this conversation. “Alexander can be thoughtless sometimes, yes, and self-centred. But you are his friend, John. He worries about you. He cares about you very much.”

“He does not,” Laurens muttered, head sinking back against the couch. “Why would he. Why should he. I wouldn’t, if I were him.”

Laurens closed his eyes, blowing out a bitter, frustrated breath. Lafayette watched him powerlessly, feeling for the second time that day like he had no idea what to say.

“Come on,” he said at last, grabbing Laurens by the arm. “Get up. You need to take a shower.”

“No,” Laurens yanked himself out of Lafayette’s grip, retreating further into the folds of his blanket. “Don’t want to miss the movie.”

Lafayette sighed, rubbing his eyes tiredly before reaching for his phone and entering Mulligan’s number.

*  

“Yes? Hello, is that the manager?” Burr’s fingernails tapped against the polished surface of the table while with the other hand he held the phone to his ear. “Yes, I’ll hold.”

One moment, he mouthed at Hamilton who was watching him, leg shaking up and down
“Yes, hi, is that Mr Daniels?” Burr asked after some time had gone by. “Hello there sir, my name is Aaron Burr, I’m the Chair of the Black Student Union at Columbia University. I heard that you were considering withdrawing the contract offer made to a Mr John Laurens, son of Henry Laurens the Congressman. Is that true?”

Hamilton could hear the manager talking quickly on the other side. Burr waited patiently, drumming his fingernails on the table top until he had finished talking. “Yes, I understand that sir. But unfortunately I’m not sure you have all the details quite as they went down. Mr Laurens was simply standing up for a…ah…female friend of his,” he mouthed an apology at Hamilton who waved dismissively. “As we’ve heard it, Charles Lee was acting very aggressively, to the extent then Laurens was concerned for his friends’ welfare. We’ve received reports from several witnesses at the event regarding the belligerence of Lee’s behaviour, and the fact that he appeared to be on cocaine.”

Burr paused again, rolling his eyes as the manager continued to jabber, high-pitched and anxious through the receiver. Hamilton smirked.

“With all due respect,” spoke again, voice steely. “I should think the abuse of a Class A illegal drug vastly outweighs a simple case of underaged drinking…evidence of Mr Laurens’ doing so, I’ll add, being entirely non-existent. If, of course, you are certain you have grounds to use that in your judgement, I’m sure his father would be perfectly happy to discuss the matter.”

“Damn frickin’ straight,” Hamilton hissed, giving Burr a thumb’s up. Burr waved him away impatiently, bending closer to hear what the manager was saying.

“I understand your reservations perfectly,” he said smoothly, keeping eye contact with Hamilton. “But, as head of one of the largest student bodies on campus, I feel I would be remiss in not informing you that the BSU has long regretted the lack of diversity in Republic’s performers. White people dancing to black music played by white people, are words that I’ve often heard in reference to your club’s setlists. We were very excited when we heard that one of our own might be getting a regular shot in the spotlight, and it would be very disappointing if that weren’t to happen, and we’d have to think about withdrawing our support from your establishment.”

Out of the corner of his mind, Burr saw Hamilton mime casting a net and reeling it in. He rolled his eyes again amusedly before diverting his attention back to the call. Hamilton held his breath, fingers crossed as Burr waited with a furrowed brow, silent while noise crackled over the other end of the line.

“Excellent,” he said suddenly and Hamilton’s spirits soared. “That’s very good to here. I’ll give him the good news at once. Thank you very much sir for your understanding. Yes sir, I’ll give the Congressman your regards. And a very good day to you too.”

Burr hung up the phone. Hamilton let out a cackle of delighted laughter.

“You’re a fucking magician,” he said, voice laced with awe. “Seriously, how the fuck do you do that?”

“It’s really not that difficult,” Burr replied. “Be courteous. Keep calm. Refrain from using the word ‘fascist’.”

“Sounds like an effort,” Hamilton pulled a face. “I’d rather pay a brownnoser to do it for me. How much do I owe you?”
“Call it a favour,” Burr waved dismissively. “That I’ll be sure to cash in on.”

“I’m sure you will,” said Hamilton, stuffing away the notes he’d been about to take out his pockets. “Seriously man, thanks a lot.”

“No problem.” Burr drummed his fingers on the table one last time. “It would be very disappointing if we had to think about withdrawing our support,” he parroted himself, voice laced with disbelief. “As if I possibly had the power to speak for the whole of the Black Caucus.”

Hamilton shook his head amusedly. “They think we’re all one hive mind,” he replied. “We, The Blacks of Columbia University by our conjoined powers do threaten to boycott your establishment.”

Burr laughed. “As if we’ve ever been united enough to have that much of an impact.”

“We could be though,” Hamilton pointed out. “What you just did…that was a win. That was real power. See what happens when we join forces, Burr?”

Burr hummed. “Your intimidation and my respectability,” he acknowledged. “Good cop, bad cop.”

“Exactly,” said Hamilton eagerly. “Huey Newton and Bobby Seale.”

Burr laughed again. Hamilton hesitated, scratching the back of his neck before he spoke again. “I like it when we work together,” he admitted.


Hamilton shook his head. “Nah, I’mma head up to the lib,” he replied, getting to his feet. “Got a four thousand word commentary on de la Casas’ Destruction of the Indies that ‘aint gonna write itself. I’ll catch you later, Bobby.”

“Good luck, Alexander,” answered Burr amusedly, hesitating only briefly before returning his salute.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies to the ghosts of both alexander hamilton and rachel faucette for what I think might be the most savage pun i’ve ever made
AB: Hey.

AH: Mr Burr sir!!!!!

AB: Do you have to do that every time?

AH: Only as long as it rhymes so conveniently

what’s up?

AB: I just got your numbers for the Disabled Access facilities. Is $3,500 really the lowest we can go?

AH: yuh-huh. Unless you wanna take the fall for some shitty piece of equipment that’ll collapse the moment a third wheel touches it. tbh I’d prefer to go w some of the higher end ones and cut the corners on construction – i called up a couple of local guys who said they’d do it for way less than the agency the school usually hires, I put their contact details in the report did u see

AB: Yes I saw. I don’t know, though. I’m not sure I’d like to deal with the repercussions if the school finds out we’ve hired a bunch of cowboys.

AH: they’re not COWBOYS, jesus, they’re freelance. And if we go with them that saves us a full $1,700 than if we bought a weak-ass ramp off CareCo only to have to get another one in 2 yrs time. look on pg 4, it goes into detail on the life expectancy of those things and Im telling u Burr 94% of ppl told me 2 years MAX for anything under $250 per foot 2 YEARS MAX burr

AB: You don’t have to quote your own statistics at me, I’ve got the report right here.

AH: Ok fine well im just sayin

2 yrs

Not v long, Burr

AB: Granted. But do you have any suggestions of where we’re supposed to find $3,500 in the budget?

AH: well Sir, you’ve got the report RIGHT THERE if you just turn to pg 7

AB: Page 7 just says “Sports” underlined three times.

AH: ya I left it up 2 extrapolation

AB: Alexander, you can’t just take funds from football every time you need money.
AH: Why not????

let us review.

What people need: decent disability access, gender-neutral bathrooms, better furnished religious spaces, up-to-date computer equipment, culinary variety

What people do not need: overfunded racist jock homosocial/phobic* black-ppl-hating boring jerk-off hobby *kosofsky-sedgwick, 1985

AB: Did you just reference a critic to make your diatribe less auto-partial

AH: did u just stick 2 words unnecessarily together when u could have just used the word ‘partial’

AB: Alexander you have funded the past three student council projects by making cuts from the football and athletics teams while leaving basketball conveniently untouched. I shouldn’t have to tell you that at some point it’s going to look suspiciously partisan, especially with two of its senior members in the BSU.

AH: Im not being racially partisan.

I just like basketball.

nd not to sound opportunsitic but if there’s ever been a good time to balance oot the completely inequitable spending on facililities by transferring some of the surplus wealth enjoyed by sports into other departments which more ppl actually benefit frm its now while Andy Drayton and all his jock discipels have never been less popular

Besides, football suuuuuuuuuucks

AB: This sounds suspiciously like subjective logic.

AH: ya mayb but the point still stands

AB: Mmm.

Are you aware that your typing style is becoming increasingly similar to John Laurens’?

AH: What

no it is isn’t, shut up

Fallacy by misdirection.

AB: Withdrawn. Find another way to cut costs. When you have an unbiased alternative, I’ll put forward the proposal @ next meeting.

AH: fineeee

I’ll get rid of Calligraphy club or sth no one goes to that

In other news, have u seen the posters

AB: Being an attendant of the university, obviously I have seen the posters. Jefferson rang me last night specifically to demand that you be suspended from the council for libel and harassment.
AH: Loooool

who says it was me

Could have been anyone, poor Dray is lookig pretty short of friends of late

Also libel wtf we named no names

*they. The anonymous “they” named no names

AB: Well yes, eventually he conceded that I didn’t have the grounds. And I can’t see the admin finding an excuse to take them down any time soon.

I have to admit, they were very clever.

AH: well thank u sir!!!!!

I’ll see if I have any spares, u can stick one in ur dorm.

AB: Haha. I’m good, thank you. But in the spirit of working together, how would the SJC like an open debate on the matter of Jamal Curtis, hosted by the BSU?

I should add that Thomas and James have already said yes.

AH: the SJC would like that v much

AH: *Sent a gif*

AB: It’s not a duel, Hamilton.

AH: *Sent a gif*

AB: Stop that.

AH: :))))))

Ever your Most Humble and obedient Servant

we’ll be there.

AB: Consider yourself in Receipt of my moste Ardent Thanks, Mssr. Newton

AH: :O

You played along!!!!

omg this is amazing i’m going to buy us matching jackets w the names on the back

AB: Please don’t spend budget money.

By the way, have you listened to Benjamin Clementine?

AH: Heard of him, haven’t listened.

from what I’ve been told he sounds quite zesty

really makes the crowd go bananas
AB: Hilarious. You should listen to his album ‘At Least For Now’. I think you’d really enjoy it. He reminds me quite a lot of Nina Simone.

AH: sick

I mean cool sounds good

Thanks for the rec

AB: No problem. Talk later.

AH: xxx

* 

“Yo,” said Hamilton, waltzing into the Gender Studies’ common room. “Guess what gig Burr got us booked for.” He paused, catching sight of Angelica’s t-shirt. “What white devil is that on your stomach?”

“It’s Justin Trudeau,” Angelica replied, glancing down as if double-checking.

“He’s still problematic you know,” Hamilton told her. “Just because the Internet loves him and he’s got killer teeth and perfect hair doesn’t mean he’s not still problematic.”

“Yeah, yeah, and all straight white men are devils and the media is a hell of toxic bias,” Angelica rolled her eyes. “Thanks, Wallace D. Fard. Please don’t preach to me on my home ground.”

“Right. Sorry.” He glanced around to see how many of them were there. Meade and Angelica were doing their homework at a coffee table while Lafayette and Laurens were laying on the couch, their legs entangled. Hamilton felt a pang of jealousy and wrenched his gaze away. “So yeah. Burr wants to hold a debate between us, Jefferson and Madison, and a BSU Uncle Tom. What are we thinking, are we in?”

“You say that like you haven’t already agreed to it,” Lafayette pointed out.

“Well…ok, yeah. Maybe I did kind of assume that we’d be up for it. But come on, this is a democracy. Angelica?” he asked her hopefully.

“I know you’re asking me just so when people ask, you can say there’ll be at least one woman on the panel,” Angelica answered, highlighting her notes calmly. “But yes. I will do the debate with you.”

“Not true. This is also a meritocracy. I asked you because you’re the second smartest, and the least likely to throw a punch at the opposition,” replied Hamilton before adding, “No offence, Laurens.”

Laurens blinked at him, raising his head from where it had been resting wearily on Lafayette’s shoulder. “What?”

“You know,” Hamilton’s insides were squirming with the instinct to abort. He tried to keep his voice appropriately jokey. “Cos you threw a punch. At Lee. That one time.”

“Two days ago, yeah,” Laurens nodded, eyebrow raised. “I remember.”

Abort. Abort. The back of Hamilton’s neck was burning. Fallacy by misdirection, go. “Ok. Cool.” He cleared his throat. “What are you guys doing?”
“Homework,” Meade replied, glancing at Angelica. “I decided to do my course essay on queer cinema with a specific focus on Derek Jarman. You know, the film-maker?"

“Of course I know Derek Jarman!” Angelica gushed excitedly. “He’s amazing. Have you seen Sebastiane?”

“Well actually, I had an idea,” continued Meade. “I got a projector for my birthday and I’ve gotta watch a bunch of films for my course. So I was thinking of starting like a film club? What do you guys think?”

“I think it’s a great idea,” said Hamilton enthusiastically. “What day? I’m free…wait. No. I’m working then. And it’s student council the day after that. Uh…can I get back to you?”

“I can’t do this week,” Angelica shook her head. “And I’m pretty sure Eliza’s all booked up too.”

“You know what, we need more female friends,” Hamilton frowned. “Not that you two aren’t great, but you’re kind of a package deal.”

“Hey,” Lafayette piped up indignantly. “What about Adrienne?”

“Adrienne lives in Paris, Lafayette.”

“That is not her fault! Don’t be so exclusionary! Anyway, I can put her on FaceTime. Adrienne is a big fan of cinema,” he informed Meade. “We have been to Cannes for the past five years.”

“Nice,” said Meade appreciatively. “Well, it’s just an idea. You know, give us something to do that doesn’t solely revolve around systematic injustice.”

“Are you telling me watching this film doesn’t count as a form of protest?” asked Hamilton. “I’m no longer interested. Any of you guys wanna get lunch?”

“We already bought pizza,” replied Angelica, gesturing to the empty boxes on the table.


“There’s a piece left,” said Laurens, offering the box to Hamilton.

“ Laurens, that is your piece,” Lafayette hissed. “I know because no one else would dare to commit such an abomination as adding pineapple as a topping.”

Laurens shrugged. “Hamilton can have it.”

Hamilton hesitated. “Dude, it’s yours.”

“Seriously it’s cool. I don’t want it, I’m full anyways.”

“I don’t wanna take your piece.”

“It’s not my piece if I’m giving it to you.”

“I don’t want you to be hungry-”

“Just take the damn pizza Hamilton,” said Angelica through gritted teeth. “Jesus. Some of us are trying to work over here.”
Hamilton took the slice awkwardly. “Thanks.” He took a tentative bite, finding it somewhat difficult to swallow. “I’m gonna go to the library. I’ll catch you guys later.”

He left the common room hastily. Angelica watched him go, one eyebrow raised perplexedly before returning her gaze back to Laurens.

“Well that was awkward,” she said.

“Am I missing something again?” asked Meade. “I really feel like I’m missing something again.”

“Nope,” said Laurens, reaching for his headphones and plugging himself in.

Lafayette frowned down at him. He had pulled his beanie very low over his eyes, still, Lafayette didn’t need to see his face to know that he was probably listening to The Time Warp or some hideous techno.

He sighed, wandering how he was possibly going to balance his time between Laurens and Hamilton if this terrible stalemate were to continue. It was no good, he had never been much of a multitasker. The way forward was so clear he didn’t even need to consult Adrienne beforehand. Something had to be done.

*

Hamilton was laying on his bed, listening to Benjamin Clementine and editing the second draft of his paper when Laurens called.

“Um, hello?” he picked up hesitantly, catching sight of the turtle emoji he’d put in place of a name.

“Hey,” Laurens’ voice over the phone was brusque. Definitely a business call. “Are you free tonight?”

“Uh…I can be,” replied Hamilton, uncertainty growing. “I have some reading I was gonna get ahead on, but it’s not urgent or anything. Why, what’s the problem?”

“It’s Lafayette,” said Laurens and Hamilton could practically hear him rolling his eyes. “He’s homesick.”

Hamilton sat up at once. “Oh God,” he said.

The last time Lafayette had been homesick, he had driven to the Metropolitan Opera House, bought out an entire box for himself which he had then locked himself in, and sat for eight hours eating eclairs in front of Carmen and Les Huguenots.

“He wanted to go to the ballet,” Laurens was saying. “Tickets are currently on sale for $2,000 apiece. I talked him down from it and he agreed, on the condition that both of us come over tonight.”

“Both of us?” Hamilton repeated, insides freezing.

“Yeah,” said Laurens. “He wants to watch French films and listen to Mireille Mathieu and make French food and talk to his French girlfriend.”

“He wants us to be in the room while he listens to music and FaceTimes Adrienne?”

“Yeah, pretty much.”
Hamilton’s gaze drifted over to the stack of reading he had mounting on his desk. Altogether, it looked much more appealing than the prospect of the evening Laurens described. “Why can’t Mulligan go?” he protested.

“Mulligan doesn’t speak French,” answered Laurens, sounding very bored. “He was pretty clear on that account. He was quite insistent that it be us.”

Hamilton paused for a long time, thinking whether there was any way of getting out of this while still being a good friend. On the other end of the line he could hear an impatient scuffling; Lafayette’s voice asking Is he coming followed by Laurens impatiently, I’m asking him, hold on. Hamilton sighed, shoulders sinking as the last of his restraint left him.

“What time do you want me?” he asked dully.

“Lafayette says 6.30,” replied Laurens, sounding if possible, even less thrilled than Hamilton felt. “To give the bouillabaisse time to sit.”

Hamilton was going to murder the French.

“Tell the marquis I’ll be there,” he said finally.

On the other end he heard hands clapping together, followed by an exuberant shout and some exaltations in French, amongst which he could make out tell him to bring his record player!

“Lafayette says bring your record player,” said Laurens.


“He says Mireille sounds better over vinyl,” explained Laurens. “More authentique.”


Laurens hung up. Hamilton swore again, flinging his phone onto the mattress. His eyes fell on his vinyl player, resentment bubbling in his stomach as he wondered how the hell he was going to get it on his bike.

*

When Hamilton arrived at Lafayette’s apartment, the door was opened by Laurens.

“Hey,” he said, quite unenthusiastically.

“Hey yourself,” answered Hamilton, shaking off his coat. “Don’t look so happy to see me.”

“I’m not unhappy to see you,” muttered Laurens, taking the record player obligingly from Hamilton’s arms.

“Wow, you had me fooled for a second there,” said Hamilton, closing the door behind him and moving past Laurens. “Where is he?”

“Kitchen,” replied Laurens, jerking his head.

As Hamilton followed Laurens’ gesture, his nose was greeted by the sharp, sizzling smell of something cooking. Moving into the kitchen he found Lafayette by the stove, dressed in an apron and pushing onions and garlic around a large pan.
He looked up when Hamilton entered, face breaking into an elated grin. “Bonsoir, mon ami!” he exclaimed, waving Hamilton over in order to place an affectionate kiss on his cheek.

The Marseillaise was blasting from the speaker on the counter. Hamilton glanced at Lafayette’s phone saw that it was a clip from YouTube.

“À toi aussi,” returned Hamilton, looking at him with concern. “How are you feeling?”

“Terrible!” replied Lafayette, quite chirpily although his face fell with an expression intense pain. “All day I have been quite weak with sickness, pining in misery for she who was my mother before I embarked upon La Belle Aventure of my life and landed here in this wilderness of North America. I have not been able to eat, nor sleep, every time my thoughts return to the sweet rolling hills of Haute-Loire they are accompanied by a pang of intense loss—”

“You seemed alright when I saw you earlier,” observed Hamilton.

Lafayette waved dismissively. “It is a latent illness,” he explained. “The symptoms arrive quite suddenly. Comme la peste. I am a chevalier, and my outward show must be one of strength while inside my heart twists in unspeakable torment.”

“Maybe you should stop eating street-side chipotle,” suggested Laurens.

From the tinny speaker, the chorus swelled to bounce around the walls of the kitchen. Lafayette ignored Laurens, closing his eyes and raising his spatula like a baton.

“Listen to that!” he chimed. “The best bit is coming up,” he paused, spatula in the air before starting to sing. “Aux armes, citoyens! Formez vos bataillons! Marchons! Marchons! Qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons!”

“I’m not so sure about that line about ‘impure blood’,” Hamilton said, looking at Laurens. “What ‘impure blood’ are they talking about?”

“The blood of the tyrants!” Lafayette replied, waving his spatula fiercely. “Admittedly, some of the words are quite problematic. It was composed in the 18th century, by some very angry military volunteers. Still, Liberté, Liberté chérie! Do you think I should get it tattooed?”

“Too long,” Laurens shook his head. “Just get ‘Liberté’ in block letters down your spine. Then I’ll get ‘égalité’ and Alex can have ‘fraternité’.”

Hamilton sniggered. “Where would you get yours?” he replied. “If you were gonna get a tattoo?”


“Tramp stamp,” said Hamilton without hesitation.

Laurens laughed. Lafayette’s timer pinged.

“Time to add the vegetables!” he announced with glee. “Laurens, can you cut the tomatoes. Alexander, will you put on Les Parapluies s’il te plait?”

As Laurens turned to the chopping board, Hamilton went over to Lafayette’s television, rifling through his collection until he had found The Umbrellas of Cherbourg. While he was struggling to work the remote Lafayette came up behind him, slumping melodramatically onto the couch.

“This is Adrienne’s favourite film,” he bemoaned morosely. “It will be very strange to watch it
without her."

“Can you pretend?” Hamilton suggested.

Lafayette looked doubtful. “Maybe,” he hesitated, looking at Hamilton oddly for a moment. “Could you put your hair up a little?”

“Absolutely not,” answered Hamilton.

A moment later, Laurens reappeared. Hamilton and Lafayette budged up along the sofa to make room for his lanky limbs. Hamilton found himself once again pressed up against Laurens’ left side; he tried not to pay too much attention the solid heat of his arm, radiating through the wool of his thin sweater.

“Oui, this is nice!” exclaimed Lafayette, laying his head on Hamilton’s shoulder. “The only thing is if we were in France right now and not New York…not that I am not very happy to be here, certainly I do not regret my decision to leave, otherwise I would never have met you Alexander, or you John, and I do believe, without exaggeration, that I would have missed out on what is swiftly becoming the greatest friendship of my life.”

“Well,” said Hamilton, exchanging an awkward look with Laurens. “That’s very nice of you to say, Lafayette.”

Lafayette waved dismissively. “Friends like you are what make the separation bearable,” he continued. “And Hercules, of course. But he is not quite like us, I think. The three of us…we are all misfits. Orphans, immigrants. When I first came here, I was very anxious that I would meet no one like me. Oh, friends were not an issue, I am a very sociable person after all. But even back home, there is no one there, apart from Adrienne, that I connect with on the same level as you two. I feel like I have known you much longer than two years.”

“We like you very much too, Gilbert,” said Laurens, who was making every effort not to roll his eyes.

“And it is very important to me that you two like each other also,” Lafayette went on. “I know that when we first introduced you, Hercules and I were unsure whether you would get along. But it fills me with happiness to see your friendship grow, to know that the two people I love most in this world are friends as well. It is a great comfort to me, in my loneliness and my heartache.”

Hamilton and Laurens said nothing but looked embarrassedly down at their hands. Lafayette, apparently having concluded his speech, lapsed into tranquil silence and was quiet for the next fifteen minutes of the film, until his phone went off again.

“Merde,” he said, jumping to his feet. “Shit.”

“What is it?” asked Laurens. “Did you forget to make the rouille?”

“I am expected at Washington’s this evening!” Lafayette cried. “He invited me last week! I completely forgot!”

“You fucking what,” started Hamilton as Lafayette ran around the apartment in search of shoes.

“Yes, last week,” Lafayette repeated, yanking his shoes on and reaching for his coat. “He asked me after I came to visit you at work Alexander, and it completely slipped my mind. What can I do? It would be rude of me not to go, particularly after all the effort Martha has put in. No, no, I have no choice, I must depart. Mon dieu! What an error to have double-booked!”
“Are you serious?” said Laurens, staring open-mouthed as Lafayette tied his scarf and grabbed a bottle of wine from the countertop. “You’re actually leaving right now?”

“Yes, yes, I must,” Lafayette nodded, flipping his scarf over his shoulder. “I am truly very sorry. I shall try not to be back late. Please eat the bouillabaisse, and watch the film without me. There is also a bottle of Sauvignon in the back, feel free to break into it. Au revoir! And désolé, once again!”

He rushed out the door. Hamilton and Laurens watched him go, too shocked to do anything. By the time Hamilton had found his voice Lafayette was long gone, leaving Hamilton and Laurens staring at each other, alone in his apartment.
It was a long time before Hamilton broke the silence.

“That sly bastard,” he hissed.

Laurens looked at him quizzically.

“He set us up,” Hamilton elaborated. “Do you not see? He used the temptation of pescatarian delicacy and bilingual bonding to lure us here under false pretences.”

“I really think he just forgot,” said Laurens doubtfully.

Hamilton shook his head. “No,” he said, striding over to the door. “No way. The US will grant voting rights to its West Indian citizens before Lafayette forgets a dinner invitation from George Washington.” He yanked it open, just in time to see Lafayette’s tail coat vanishing as he raced down the stairs. He swore, slamming it shut. “Son of a bitch.”

He whipped back round furiously, running a hand frustratedly through his hair. “I don’t know what I’m madder about,” he said. “The fact that we got trapped or the fact that we got trapped by the goddamn marquis.”

“There are people you’d prefer to be trapped by?”

“Well sure,” Hamilton replied, crossing his arms. “If it were Burr or Angelica. Or Eliza, even.”

“Eliza? Really?”

“You don’t know her like I do,” said Hamilton warningly. “She looks innocent as anything now but I’m telling you, she wasn’t always so full of grace.”

He turned away, still muttering oaths under his breath as he looked around for something to kick. Laurens fidgeted uncertainly, a little offended by Hamilton’s vehemence.

“So,” he cleared his throat at last. “Do you wanna leave or…?”
“What?” Hamilton frowned at him. “No. We’re not leaving. That’d be playing right into his hands.”

“But he wants us to stay.”

Hamilton waved dismissively. “He wants us to stay,” he explained. “He doesn’t think for a minute we actually will. And we are not going to give him the satisfaction of proving him right.”

Laurens nodded hesitantly. “Okay,” he said as his mind struggled to keep pace. “So…what do we do?”

“What do we do?” Hamilton gestured violently at the television. “We watch the Parapluies of fucking Cherbourg. We eat the bouillabaisse. We do the exact the opposite of what he expects.”

“Right, and then we win,” said Laurens dryly.

“Right!” exclaimed Hamilton, on whom sarcasm was lost. He marched into the kitchen and immediately beginning to rifle through the drawers. “So what’s the deal with this soup business?” he asked. “It can’t be that hard to cook, right?”

“That’s assuming you know how to cook,” replied Laurens, going up to Hamilton and taking an egg cuber out of his hands.

Hamilton scowled at him. “I’ve lived on my own for eight years,” he said reproachfully. “I know how to cook.”

“Heating up week old ramen on a stove doesn’t count,” replied Laurens. “And I strictly remember you saying once that it was much more economically viable to just not eat.”

“Right, well that’s the last time I give you financial advice,” snapped Hamilton. “Also fyi Laurens, getting your butler to make shit for you doesn’t count as cooking either.”

“We don’t have a butler,” Laurens rolled his eyes. “We keep a part-time cook but she only comes in weekends,” and when Hamilton looked exasperatedly at him: “It’s the only chance we get to eat as a family, ok? Anyway, she’s the one who taught me how, so I don’t know, maybe back off a little bit.”

“She taught you how?” Hamilton raised an eyebrow. “I guess she took a liking to you, huh?”

“Yeah,” said Laurens defensively. “So what?”

“Was she Hispanic?”

“I…yeah, maybe, I don’t-”

“Was she Afro-Puerto Rican?”

“Ok, you know what, fuck off,” Laurens snapped as Hamilton snickered satisfactorily. He picked up the recipe, brushing Hamilton out the way as he skimmed over it. “Lafayette did forget to make the rouille,” he observed. “I’ll do that. Meanwhile, you can prepare the fish. You do eat fish, right?”


“Sustainable farming, right,” Laurens finished for him. “Got you. Ok, well I don’t think there’s any
cod in this. You can start with shelling the prawns and do the rest after.”

“Affirmative General,” Hamilton said with a salute. He reached for the speaker. “Mind if I put some music on?”

“Anything but Mireille,” answered Laurens.

Hamilton hooked up his phone to the Bluetooth and brought up Laurens’ playlist. He hadn’t listened to any new songs in a while on account of his embarrassment, it feeling like somewhat of a betrayal to listen to it while in real life they weren’t talking. Now though, he thought maybe it was what was needed to break the ice.

They got approximately thirty seconds in before he was thoroughly regretting this decision.


Laurens snickered.

Hamilton snatched the phone, brow knitting as he glared as he read the caption off the screen.

“For when your crew’s blowing up like Chappies’ bubblegum,” he read with disgusted incredulity. “Seriously Laurens.”

Laurens smirked. “Motherfuckers get buzzed off the spice that I bring,” he sang. “Step into my world, nous j’y suis in paradys. Hey get that, it’s French!”

“This is not French,” Hamilton countered. “This is an abomination.”

Laurens threw back his head and cackled. Hamilton shook his head, an amused smile pricking the corners of his mouth even while the ungodly sound of electronic, nihilist-rave trip hop assaulting his eardrums blared I fink u freeky and I like you a lot.

“And to think you were doing so well,” he said, waving the phone in front of Laurens’ face. “What is this, Laurens? What the fuck is this? You can’t tell me you genuinely enjoy listening to this shit.”

“Ya dude, it’s sick,” Laurens replied, pumping his fist dramatically in time to the refrain.

“Yaaaaaa dude,” Hamilton mocked, rolling Laurens’ moneyed drawl in his mouth as if it were syrup. “You know what? You’re sick. Did you hear me Laurens? I said you’re sick. In the bad way.”

“Sorry man, I can’t hear you over the sound of this dirty bassline,” said Laurens. Hamilton threw a garlic clove at him.

“Hey, hey,” said Laurens, darting to grab Hamilton’s arm as he made to tip in the fish off the chopping board. “What are you doing?”

“Oh,” said Hamilton, setting the chopping board back down embarrassedly.

Laurens looked at him, the corner of his mouth quirked as he glanced over Hamilton’s flushed cheeks while he struggled with the Carabineros. “You want me to show you how to do it?”
“I know how to do it,” Hamilton nearly bit back before relenting. “Uh...sure. Thanks.”

Laurens moved over, taking the shrimp from Hamilton’s hands. Hamilton watched humbly, silent as Laurens showed him with gentle patience, speaking in tender tones like one would a child. And when Hamilton got it right Laurens praised him, sending waves of warmth cascading into the very pit of his stomach, in a way that put every nerve on edge as if it had made connection with a live wire. He swallowed, taking a moment to scold himself. *Now is not a good time to discover a new kink over raw fish, Alexander.*

“Ok, I think that’s all done,” said Laurens at last, placing the lid on the pot and setting a timer. “We got an hour while it cooks…you wanna watch the movie?”

Hamilton started to nod, his mind catching on the memory of something Lafayette had said. “Whadja say we break into that Sauvignon Gilbert was on about?”

Laurens’ eyes lit up. “The man does owe us.”

“That he certainly does,” Hamilton nodded, going off in search of a corkscrew.

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“So you see, I did not really trick them,” Lafayette explained, accepting the dish of greens Martha offered him and spearing asparagus onto his plate. “I mean yes, for all intents and purposes I suppose I was dishonest in my motivations for bringing them to my apartment…but you see, it is perfectly obvious that they were both aware of the real reason for my summoning them, subconsciously at least. For one thing, I had already had a conversation with Laurens previously whereby I informed him that I would find a way to bring them together again. True enough, he might not have been in a, ah, reasonable state to make much sense of what I was saying, but he heard me nevertheless. And Alexander is astute. There is no way he heard my summons and did not think for a moment there were some greater powers at play. Did that sound like I was comparing myself to God?” He broke off to laugh nervously. “I did not mean to. Apologies. Anyway, as I was saying. Alexander is distrustful by nature. He would not have come if there was not the smallest part of him that did not seek to make amends, even if he was not knowingly aware of it. It is like…how do you say? When you get the things you are too scared to want awake in dreams?”

“Wish fulfilment,” offered Washington, popping a piece of potato into his mouth.

“Wish fulfilment yes,” Lafayette nodded vigorously. “By bringing them to my apartment, under the guise of a sham, I have fulfilled their unconscious desires to reconcile. And what is more, I have removed for them the embarrassment of having to make up themselves. Because now they have the comfort of saying ‘Oh! Look at Lafayette, that wily French bastard! He has taken advantage of our most kindly sensibilities and betrayed the sacred tenets of friendship! Now we are stuck here, with little choice but to set aside our differences’ while all along, they are secretly very pleased.”

Washington laughed and Lafayette grinned sheepishly, having been unsure of how he would take the deception until now. “You’re very crafty, Lafayette,” he said.

Lafayette hesitated, torn between being pleased by the compliment and unsure of how it fit in with his chivalric code.

“You must not think I am doing this for my own vanity,” he told Washington reproachfully. “I would be lying if I said there was not a part of me that takes some pleasure in messing with my friends, but really I am very concerned about them. I just want them to be happy.”
“I believe you,” Washington reassured him and Lafayette relaxed, diverting his attention to cutting up his lamb. It looked a little overdone for his tastes, but that was to be expected. At least it was well-seasoned.

There was a long silence, during which Lafayette waited on tenterhooks for the real reason Washington had invited him this evening. While this was hardly the first time he had eaten at the Washingtons, and he hoped very much never to be considered a stranger in the house of whom he had frequently (and only half-jokingly) referred to as his American parents, the fact remained that the timing was auspicious. His suspicions were confirmed when Washington cleared his throat, leaning back in his chair slightly before speaking.

“I received your letter,” he began.

Lafayette set down his cutlery. “Ah,” he said.

“The macarons were a nice touch. Thank you for them.”

“It is not a problem,” replied Lafayette weakly. “Have you…given any more thought to the idea?”

Washington did not answer for a long time, appearing to be very concerned with the cutting up of his vegetables.

“The transaction went through, ok?” he said at last.

Lafayette felt his spirits sink. He tried not to let his disappointment show too much on his face as he replied. “Yes, thank you,” he answered stiffly. “We have managed to raise quite a lot of money for the family.”

Washington made a humming noise of agreement. “The thought of them having to drop the suit,” he shook his head. “It would be an unspeakable injustice.”

“Yes,” Lafayette affirmed fervently, flaring up upon the realisation that he had nothing to lose. “Almost as unjust as the man who assaulted their son going on to enjoy a privileged education, and subsequent lucrative career, which will stand him in perfect stead to uphold those same institutions that allowed him to nearly murder his victim.”

Martha closed her eyes. Washington sighed, and put down his knife and fork. He rubbed his face tiredly with his hands, suddenly looking much older than his years.

“You know his expulsion lies outside of my power, Lafayette,” he said quietly.

Lafayette thought he might cry. “But what about the trust?” he protested desperately. “A separate body with the power of review…sort of like a Supreme Court, if you will, for all discrimination related cases…you could make that happen! Besides, you’re the president. Surely…surely that counts for something-”

“I cannot dismiss a student just because you ask me to,” Washington told him severely. “I am flattered how much authority you seem to think I have, but I’m afraid I have to disappoint you. There are…what was your phrase? ‘Greater powers at play’ here. As for this ‘philanthropical trust’ you speak of with judicial power…do you know how much money and resources would have to go into that? How many members of the board would be willing to support such a scheme? The responsibility to the trustees…the interests of the university-”

“-You mean the interests of Drayton’s parents,” Lafayette muttered under his breath. “And Thomas Jefferson’s.”

“Look,” he spoke again when Lafayette was still pushing vegetables sullenly round his plate. “I will see what I can do, but I can’t promise anything. So don’t go telling Hamilton that the SJC or whatever it is has my wholehearted support—"

“I won’t,” Lafayette assured him quickly. “He doesn’t even know that I have asked you. Thank you very much. I am sorry if I sounded presumptuous, either just now or in my letter, but the truth is this whole affair is putting me under a great deal of stress. Things are even worse now that Hamilton and Laurens aren’t speaking to each other. I just can’t stand it when people argue. Alexander says it is the diplomat in me.”

“What did they fall out about?” asked Martha, very tactfully changing the subject.

Lafayette dropped his fork. “I…ah,” he paused, looking guiltily at Washington who was taking an idle sip from his wineglass. “I am not sure I should say.”

“It’s alright,” Martha assured him. “I’m just being nosy.”

Washington set his glass back on the table. “Probably a girl, I should imagine,” he suggested casually.

“Aha! Yes!” exclaimed Lafayette, grateful for the unwittingly thrown lifeline before remembering that he had just sworn himself to secrecy. “Maybe!”

Washington and Martha laughed, apparently finding their guest charming instead of a total idiot, and Lafayette drank some of his wine to stop himself from talking. It was difficult for him to work out how much Washington knew. He thought it quite likely that he was aware Hamilton was bisexual, on account that he had once decorated his office to look like it was vomiting rainbows during Pride month. With Laurens, however, he was less sure. Lafayette was wary of bringing it up for two reasons. 1) He had absolutely no intention of outing Laurens to anyone, not even Washington. 2) He wasn’t certain of how much communication Washington had with Laurens’ father.

“Is Alex still seeing Philip Schuyler’s daughter?” asked Washington after some time had passed.

“Oh no,” Lafayette shook his head vigorously. “They ended a long time ago. Last year, actually.”

“Oh really?” Washington raised an eyebrow. “I always see them together.”

“Yes, they are very good friends,” Lafayette affirmed.

“He talks about her a lot.”

“Yes. As I say.”

“Then again,” Washington added thoughtfully, as if he hadn’t heard Lafayette. “He talks about Laurens a lot too.”

Lafayette, unsure of how to reply to this, settled on a non-committal response. “Mmm.”

He looked down at his plate, fixing his food with great concentration. When he looked back up, he was surprised to see that Washington looking oddly mournful. Catching his gaze, he rearranged his expression into what was a rather unconvincing smile.
“Sorry for badgering you,” he apologised awkwardly. “You must think I’m a terrible old gossip.”

Lafayette shook his head. “Not at all.”

“The truth is, I worry about Alex. I know it’s silly. But he hardly tells me anything. I’m glad he’s got someone like you that he can talk to.”

Lafayette winced. He had tried so obviously to frame it as a joke, and it had fallen so horribly flat. Lafayette reached for his napkin, taking his time to wipe his mouth while he formulated a reply.

“In all honesty,” he said at last. “Alexander hardly tells me anything either,” and when Washington looked sceptical, “Oh, he’ll tell me when there’s something bothering him. He’ll let everyone know when there is something bothering him, even if he does not particularly care to let anyone know what that is. But there are other things…things about his past…that he keeps very private about. Most of what I know, I have gathered from insinuation. I think he is fine…most of the time…but, ah, well. You are not alone in worrying about him.”

Washington nodded, continuing to look despondent for a moment before remembering himself. “You’re very observant, aren’t you?”

Lafayette shrugged modestly. “I am thinking about becoming a detective,” he confessed, not so modestly. “The problem is, I know that if I ever make it I will have to deal with a lot of Poirot jokes from people who do not know that there are, in fact, other countries that speak French. Ah, well. It is only an idea.”

“You should think about being a psychologist,” said Martha warmly. “Or a diplomat. You clearly have a knack for it.”

“Hm, yes, maybe,” said Lafayette politely. “I really don’t think I am all that diplomatic though. I try to speak from the heart.”

Washington made an assenting sound and for a while there was a lull but for the gentle clink of cutlery on china. Lafayette thought about Hamilton and Laurens, and whether he would ever find better psychological case studies than his friends. Perhaps he should think about it. He would definitely make a very good therapist, although, he reflected somewhat guiltily, he would probably have to think of another method of solving conflicts besides trickery.

“What did Alexander think of the Springsteen album I lent him?” asked Washington suddenly, breaking the silence.

Lafayette hesitated. “He liked it much more than he expected,” he replied at last.

Washington nodded and Lafayette returned to his lamb, so delighted at having gotten out of the question without having to lie that he didn’t notice Washington and Martha exchanging an amused glance over the table.

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“Oh my Goood,” Hamilton complained, rolling his eyes at the television screen. “What is going on? Why is everything so dramatic?”

Laurens snickered, filching a mussel from Hamilton’s plate. “Dramatique,” he corrected him.

They were watching the Umbrellas of Cherbourg. Or rather, Hamilton was. Laurens had lost interest around forty minutes ago, when he had discovered there was not just one film but three.
Since then he had rather given up in favour of stealing from Hamilton’s plate and drinking all Lafayette’s wine.

“More violins,” Hamilton observed. “What is the need for so many violins. Oh my God, hey. Laurens. We fucked up. We should have turned this into a drinking game.”

“I dunno man,” said Laurens, casting a dubious eye over the two bottles they had managed to unearth besides the Sauvignon. “I feel pretty drunk right now.”

Hamilton hesitated, trying to make out the alcohol percentage on the bottle before shaking his head. “No, wait, we can still do this,” he insisted. “Ok. One shot every time someone gives another person a wistful glance. Two shots every time someone says _mais je t’aime._”

_“Mais je t’aime,”_ parroted Laurens before tapping Hamilton’s glass. “Drink.”

“It doesn’t count if it’s not in the movie,” Hamilton rolled his eyes, but drank anyway.

“This film is long,” Laurens grunted after Hamilton had downed his wine with a grimace. “We should do something else.”

Hamilton chewed his lip, glancing around the apartment for inspiration. His eyes fell on Lafayette’s coat rack, widening suddenly. “Ooh!” he exclaimed, goggling at Laurens with glee. “Let’s look through all Lafayette’s fancy clothes!”

Laurens snapped his fingers at him and together they staggered clumsily in the general, although not altogether straight, direction of Lafayette’s room. The space was almost as big as the main apartment and just as elegantly furnished. Laurens collapsed onto the bed, relishing the feeling of the satin while Hamilton stumbled over to the enormous wardrobe, pausing before it.

“Hey Laurens,” he said, pointing at the elaborate closet. _“Je t’adore, mon amoire.”_

Laurens screeched, falling backwards onto the bed with his hands over his face and snorting through his fingers. Hamilton grinned before opening the wardrobe and leafing through the clothes, releasing an ecstatic squeal as his hands closed upon something violently purple and made of fur.

“What the _fuck_ is that?” shrieked Laurens as Hamilton emerged, holding the coat to his body. “That…that can’t be real.”

“It is,” Hamilton confirmed, passing a reverent palm over the soft material. “I think it’s…I don’t know? I think it’s mink? What kind of terrible fucking person do you have to be to skin a mink and then proceed to _die it purple._”

“Put it on,” Laurens commanded.

Hamilton deliberated very briefly before making a decision. “Yeah ok,” he relented. “Wait a sec.” He turned to search through the rest of Lafayette’s clothes until he had found a silk v-neck shirt and a pair of leather pants. “This will do. Close your eyes.”

Laurens put his hands over his eyes obediently while Hamilton shimmied out of his jeans. Secretly, he was more than a little intrigued by what it would be like to own a fur coat. His ethical qualms held it as a distant impossibility, still, it was one of those shitty indulgences he hoped he’d be able to afford someday. Right next to one of those sensory-wash toilets and underfloor heating.

“Ok check this out,” he announced.
Laurens opened his eyes. Both the leather pants and silk shirt far too big for him, exposing a sizeable portion of his chest that Laurens really wasn’t going to complain about. The fur coat, however, was oddly becoming – for a sort of very expensive clown.

“Why does that suit you?” asked Laurens, aghast.

“Does it?” Hamilton glanced down at his sleeve, secretly pleased. “I guess it’s because I look like money.”

Laurens scoffed. Hamilton leapt onto the bed next to him, turning on his side and Laurens followed suit so that he was facing him. They smiled at each other, both of them feeling slightly sleepy and hazy with wine in a way that was warm and comforting.

“Hey,” said Hamilton.

“Hey,” said Laurens.

Hamilton smiled. It was so pretty that even in his pleasantly fuddled state, it hurt Laurens a little bit. “I’m glad we’re friends again.”

Laurens nodded. “Me too,” he paused, feeling slightly daring. “Maybe we should make it official.”

Hamilton quirked an eyebrow. “Yeah?” he said. “You think we should kiss and make up?”

Laurens shrugged. “I mean,” he replied. “It’s how the French do it. Wouldn’t wanna be culturally insensitive, on French day.”

Hamilton nodded slowly. “Ok,” he said apprehensively. “Let’s do it. Reconciliatory platonic kiss. But we have to stay strictly within the boundaries of friendship. You think you can handle it, tiger?”

“I think I can handle it,” replied Laurens, silently adding if you don’t call me tiger.

“Ok,” said Hamilton again. “Ok, here it comes.”

He stretched out a wary hand, reaching to grasp the back of Laurens’ neck. He was aware of Laurens’ breath hitching slightly, dark pupils blowing infinitesimally larger, but apart from that he didn’t move. Hamilton closed his eyes, moving forward to press his mouth to his. The soft cushion of Laurens’ bottom lip caught between his own, sparking the automatic reaction to deepen the kiss but he resisted, holding it for about three seconds before he released him.

“That was so fine,” commented Laurens.

“Yeah, that was nice,” nodded Hamilton, actually very surprised at how easy that had been.

“I should do the same to you now.”

“Why not,” Hamilton shrugged. “Go for it.”

Laurens moved his palm so that it cupped Hamilton’s jaw, tracing an exploratory thumb across his bottom lip before leaning in. Hamilton took in a sharp breath, body going slack at the warm slide of Laurens’ mouth, flooding his entire skin with heat. For a while there was nothing but the gentle insistence of Laurens, guiding their lips together. Then Laurens made a soft sound, moving his arm to land on Hamilton’s hip, pressing their bodies flush against each other. Hamilton gasped, desire flaring in his stomach beneath the dominating, firmness of Laurens grip. He was conscious of his
heart racing, both his skin and Laurens’ swiftly heating up, and when he felt the pressure of Laurens’ tongue he pulled away.

“Nope,” he said, grabbing a pillow and hitting Laurens with it. “Crossed the line, crossed the line.”

“Yeah, sorry,” Laurens wiped his mouth. “That was a bad idea.”

Hamilton grinned. “Good thing I stopped us when I did,” he said, glancing down at his pants. “I’d hate to pop a hard one in these bad boys.”

“You’d only have to remember whose they actually are,” Laurens pointed out and Hamilton gagged.

“Good point,” he conceded. “What should we do now?”

“I don’t know,” Laurens shrugged. “We could take a nap?”

Hamilton thought this over for a second before nodding. “That actually sounds pretty good.”

Laurens moved under the covers, holding up the fold of the duvet to allow Hamilton to wriggle in. The thought crossed his mind briefly that Lafayette would hardly thank him for going to sleep in his clothes, and he was probably going to get very hot very quickly. Then again, he was also pretty sure he was too drunk to care.

“Ok, so platonic kissing is a no,” he said, throwing caution to the wind. “But what are your views on platonic cuddling?”

Laurens chuckled, freeing his arm from where it was trapped to clasp Hamilton’s waist. Hamilton snuggled backwards, grinning delightedly to himself as he buried deeper into the circle of warmth.

“I can feel your nose poking my arm,” Laurens whispered.

“Sorry,” Hamilton cringed. “I know it’s enormous.”

“It’s not enormous,” said Laurens, debating whether he was going to be chivalrous before adding, “Your forehead is enormous.”

Hamilton kicked him. “I hate you,” he said.

“No you don’t.”

“No, I don’t,” Hamilton agreed. He twisted around in Laurens’ arms, planting his own around his neck and grinning up at him. “I Fink U Freeky Laurens,” he told him, pausing briefly before adding: “And I like you a lot.”

Laurens laughed. Hamilton turned back round and closed his eyes, surrendering to the gentle tug of warmth and safety that was already lulling him to sleep.
Wasteland - Le Matos

Chapter Summary

In a post-apocalyptic wasteland, an orphaned teen must battle a ruthless warlord to save the girl of his dreams.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Safe to say, Lafayette was less than thrilled upon coming home and finding his friends curled up in his bed, one of which was dressed in his not insignificantly priced clothing. After braving Hamilton’s defensive challenge as to why he owned a purple mink coat in the first place and agreeing churlishly that they could stay over, he banished them to the guest room and privately congratulated himself on a plan well executed.

He was a little worried that their reconciliation would be brief. A ceasefire in the face of a more powerful enemy, rather than a total armistice. His fears were assuaged the next day however when Hamilton came bouncing into the campus café, tossing down a stack of magazines onto the table where Lafayette and the Schuylers were sitting.

“Copies of The Federalist for you,” he said chirpily, slinging his bag down and drawing up a chair. “Figured you wouldn’t have had a chance to read it yet, don’t say I never did anything for you.”

“When did you find time to write this?” Angelica frowned, flicking through the glossy pages.

Hamilton shrugged. “Here and there,” he answered vaguely. “It’s not as fleshed-out as I’d like it to be and reads more like a polemic than a didactic news piece, but oh well. Does the job.”

He watched keenly as Lafayette turned slowly through the magazine, skimming interestedly. “The article’s on page 5,” he said.

“I want to read the other pieces,” answered Lafayette reproachfully.

“Did you use your name?” asked Eliza.

Hamilton shook his head. “I sent it in anonymously,” he replied. “Thought it would be a bit bait if the whole school knew it was written by a one Alexander Hamilton.”

“You signed it ‘Publius’,” Angelica sighed exasperatedly, tapping the print with a crimson-painted nail. “Everyone’s going to know it was you. No one else would be that pretentious.”

“Nah, I wouldn’t know,” said the boy sitting next to Lafayette, who Hamilton honestly hadn’t noticed up to this point. “There are plenty people on my course who could give you a run for your money.”

“There you go, see?” Hamilton nodded gratefully. “Thank you…um…sorry. Who are you?”

“Alexander, this is Tench Tilghman,” Lafayette introduced him without looking up from the magazine. “We take Comparative Literature together.”
“Oh hey,” Hamilton greeted him awkwardly, unused to impromptu additions to the group. “Alexander Hamilton. Or the artist formerly known as, seeing as I might as well start going by ‘Publius’ for now on.”

“Please don’t,” said Angelica firmly.

“This is really good,” Tilghman told Hamilton. “I’ve been waiting for someone to have the balls to call out that Drayton asshole ever since the whole thing came out. John André did an article in *The Spy* which was pretty decent but he didn’t name any names, did you see it?”

“Ohuh yeah, I think I might have skimmed it,” replied Hamilton carelessly.

“10 bucks says you’ve got the thing pinned up on your wall at home,” said Angelica.

“Actually, I sleep with it under my pillow,” Hamilton retorted. “So joke’s on you.”

Tilghman laughed. Hamilton accepted half the sandwich Eliza offered him before turning her copy of the magazine towards him in order to reread his own writing.

“This is actually better than I remember,” he observed. “Maybe I’ll send it in to the local papers as well. We’ve gotta have loads if this article barrage is gonna make any impact, so I’d appreciate it if you guys helped me out.”

“What’s the point? You completely rewrite everything I’ve ever sent you anyway,” said Angelica.

“That’s not true,” replied Hamilton, stung.

“Hamilton, I asked you to look over the piece I wrote on menstruation and you told me my personal voice didn’t sound authentic.”

“Did I?” Hamilton racked his brains guiltily. “Sorry. Man, what a dick move.”

“I can write some if you want,” Tilghman offered. “It probably won’t be as eloquent as this, but if you’re short on numbers I’ve got the time. English major, you know.”

“Don’t tell him that,” Lafayette hissed. “I spend half my life trying to convince him that it isn’t a waste of a degree.”

“Hey, don’t get me wrong, I like English,” said Hamilton defensively. “I just think there are other subjects more useful to immigrants because they’re more directly vocational.”

“I’m an immigrant.”

“You also have a title, Lafayette. Really not the category I was going for.”

“I feel you,” Tilghman assured him. “My parents are first gens from Jamaica and they do not get it. Wah yuh wa fi duh a wutless degree like dat for? Yuh wa fi be an English teacha? Took ‘em a lot of persuading that I wasn’t just wasting their money on pot and Milton.”


“Hey Hamilton!”

Hamilton, starting at the unexpected aggression, whipped round. Jefferson and Madison were making their way across the café, faces curled in expressions of deepest loathing.
“Well, if it isn’t the Lannisters,” smirked Hamilton, leaning back in his chair. “Thrown any first years out the window?”

“You’ve gotta quit it with this shit man,” Jefferson snarled, tossing a copy of The Federalist at him. “I’m serious. It was cute at first, but this...this is too far.”

“The poster thing was low,” added Madison, shaking his head as if disappointed. “Even for you.”

“I’m sorry, what?” asked Hamilton, looking around at his friends in mock-bewilderment. “I think you’ve got the wrong guy. I don’t know anything about that.”

“Don’t be cute,” Jefferson glared. “Your writing style carries a very recognisable flavour of arrogance.”

“I’m touched you’re so well acquainted with my writing style,” replied Hamilton, taking a nonchalant sip of Angelica’s coffee. “Also, that’s the second time you’ve called me cute, Thomas. It’s fine, don’t worry. I won’t make it weird.”

“This isn’t a joke,” Madison said lowly. “You don’t know who you’re messing with. Back off of Andrew, or things could get very difficult for you.”

Hamilton burst out laughing. “Oh my God,” he wheezed. “What is this, the Godfather? Are you gonna stick a dead horse in my bed? Oh man, I can see you rehearsing this, this is hilarious.”

“How would Henry Laurens like to know that his kid got thrown out of a club for defending a ‘batty boy’?” asked Jefferson challengingly, sketching quotation marks with his fingers. “That’s what you people call it, isn’t it? Curious incident, him getting all riled up to fight for your honour. Wouldn’t wanna put ideas in his head, would we?”

Hamilton stiffened. Beside him, he could feel Lafayette do the same while both Angelica and Eliza looked as though they were only barely keeping to their seats.

“I would think very hard about the next thing you say,” said Angelica quietly.

Jefferson glanced at her, a flicker of apprehension crossing his face before jerking his chin. “Whatever,” he snapped. “Stick to bake sales, Panthers. Keep your noses out of places they don’t belong.”

“I’m sorry, was that a segregation reference?” Tilghman demanded, nearly getting to his feet.

“Oh my Lord, sit down,” Jefferson laughed. “Not everything is about race, y’all. Kindly chill.”

“Kindly get fucked,” replied Hamilton pleasantly.

“We were just leaving,” answered Madison coolly. “Think hard about what we’ve said, Alexander.”

“Tata now,” replied Hamilton, waving blithely as they retreated out the café. As soon as the door closed behind them, he dropped his head into his hands. “Shit.”

“It was an empty threat,” said Lafayette, sounding very much as though he were trying to reassure himself. “So they tell his father Laurens got into a fight for defending a friend. And what? They have nothing.”

“Didn’t you hear the insinuation?” Hamilton hissed. “What if they tell him more than that? That
Laurens…”

His eyes flickered nervously to Tilghman. Getting the message, he stood up. “Anyone want another coffee?” he asked. “No? Just me.”

He left quickly. Once he was out of earshot, Hamilton turned back to Lafayette.

“What if they tell him about Laurens?” he despaired.

“Lafayette’s right, Alex,” Eliza said gently, putting a hand on his arm. “Even if they do tell Henry, and they probably won’t, he’s unlikely to believe them over his own son.”

“He might if he already has grounds for suspicion,” Angelica pointed out.

“But there’s no reason to think that he does,” countered Eliza. “Right, Lafayette?”

The others looked at him imploringly. Lafayette shifted, not altogether comfortable under the new spotlight. “I don’t think so,” he spoke hesitantly. “I have only met him once or twice. He did not give off the impression of somebody who would easily give in to gossip.”

“Well there we are,” stated Eliza soothingly, satisfied. “No reason to panic.”

“We should still be on our guard,” said Angelica warily, casting a dark look in the direction Jefferson and Madison had just vacated.

“I’m not weakening the attack on Drayton,” Hamilton started angrily.

“I’m not saying weaken the attack on Drayton, I’m saying we should be on our guard,” Angelica cut him off. “Even if they don’t go to Henry, we’ve no idea what kind of tricks they have up their sleeve. Stuff that might get you thrown off the student council, for example.”

“Oh please,” Hamilton leant back, his self-assurance returned. “Jefferson has been trying to get me thrown off the student council for months. Trust me, if that were possible he would have done it by now. Plus, Aaron and I are friends at the moment so at least we’ve got that base covered.”

“Didn’t Madison used to be cool?” asked Tilghman, returning with his coffee. “I was in a couple of societies with him last year. He seemed like a pretty chill guy.”

“Yeah, believe it or not, we used to be friends,” muttered Hamilton bitterly. “Until he started hanging out with that douchebag. Whatever. They deserve each other.” He glanced at his phone screen and swore. “I gotta go. Where are Mulligan and Laurens, by the way? I wanna give them copies.”

“At the gym,” Lafayette replied. “I can pass one onto Laurens, if you like.”

“Nah, it’s cool,” Hamilton shook his head. “I’ll just give him one when I see him later.”

“Later?” Angelica asked interestedly, raising an eyebrow.

“Ya, we’re gonna catch a movie,” Hamilton shrugged casually.

“You’re going on a date?!”

“No,” Hamilton frowned. “Calm down. Friends can do stuff together too, you know.”
“In that case, can we come?” asked Lafayette nonchalantly.

“No,” replied Hamilton. “None of you are invited. Except Eliza,” he conceded. “Eliza can come. And Tench Tilghman...?” he added, not wanting to seem rude in front of a stranger. “I guess?”

“We’re both fine,” Eliza assured him before Tilghman could respond.

Hamilton gave her a thumbs-up before departing for the library, leaving Lafayette and Angelica to exchange a bored look.

‘‘Ya,’’ repeated Lafayette.

* *

“So you and Alex are friends again, huh?” Mulligan asked.

Laurens nodded as Mulligan suppressed a grunt, heaving the bar up and levelling it back onto the machine.

“Ya,” he confirmed. Hesitated before adding, “We’re actually going to see a movie later.”

Mulligan straightened up with a short exhale. He nodded, grabbing his water bottle and moving off the bench. “Yeah, Laf told me,” he replied. “That’s cool.”

Laurens, settling down in place of Mulligan, felt an involuntary spark of irritation. “What, you guys talking about me again?” he said irritably. “Glad to hear I provide so much subject matter for conversation.”

“Man, don’t be like that,” Mulligan rolled his eyes. “I asked Laf if you guys wanted to come over this evening, and he said you had plans.”

The irritation, as quickly as it had come, was swallowed up just as quickly by guilt.

“Oh,” he muttered, laying his head back and reaching up to grasp the bar above his head. “Sorry.”

He flexed his fingers, measuring the distance of his grip before pushing up. Mulligan chewed his lip, looking thoughtfully into the distance until Laurens had finished his set.

“It’s just annoying, y’know?” he said finally, clanking the bar back into position and gesturing for Mulligan to take over. “Like…I know you mean nothing by it, but I can’t help but feel spotlighted sometimes.”

Mulligan nodded, lifting the bar and gritting his teeth at the increase in weight. “It’s the girls,” he joked. “They like to gossip.”

“It’s not just the girls. Mostly it’s Lafayette.”

“Did I stutter?”

Laurens rolled his eyes, but couldn’t fight the smirk. “Don’t be sexist just because we’re in a gym.”

“Right.”

Mulligan finished his set with some effort and they moved over to the cable bar. Laurens set the weight and curled his fingers round the bar, somewhat narcissistically enjoying the flex of his biceps as he pulled upwards.
“Hamilton likes to be talked about,” Mulligan explained after a while. “Sorry. Sometimes we forget that you’re not the same person.”

Laurens laughed hollowly, releasing a stifled breath. “Yeah, we’re really not.”

He released the bar and moved out the way to allow Mulligan to take over.

“Like…it’s fine,” he said, trying not to come off as overly sensitive. “I don’t mind. I just don’t appreciate it when you guys assume that you know me better than I do.”

Mulligan didn’t say anything. Laurens sighed, slipping back a sweaty curl that had fallen from its ponytail.

“You don’t have to justify yourself,” said Mulligan at last, stepping away from the machine and fixing Laurens with a serious look. “If you don’t like us doing something, then tell us and we’ll stop. That goes for anything, even if its us dragging you about your music or for being a DJ or whatever.”

“Seriously, it’s fine,” said Laurens quickly. “I know how to tell the difference between a joke and something hurtful.”

“Okay, well,” Mulligan shrugged. “You let us know if we step out of line.”

He took another drink from his water bottle and Laurens nodded uncomfortably. The conversation had not taken the direction he had set out and he was feeling a little weird about it. Despite him being one of his best friends, it was rare for he and Mulligan to talk about anything too emotional. That was what he had Lafayette for, and more recently Hamilton. Mulligan served more as a means of escape from that.

“You wanna do legs?” asked Mulligan, gesturing towards the leg press.

Laurens shook his head. “Nah. Thursday.”

“Mind if I?”

“You do you, dude.”

Mulligan approached the leg press and Laurens stretched his arms, noting with satisfaction that they were looking a lot more toned than a month ago. There was no helping his features, which would always border on the effeminate, but at least he was no longer the twig he had been in high school.

“How’s stuff at home?” asked Mulligan, huffing slightly as he lifted his legs.

Laurens nodded. “Good,” he said. “Jemmy came second place in the science fair. He’s getting so smart you know, already he knows more stuff than me. Wants to go space camp this summer.”

“That’s great,” said Mulligan.

“Ya,” Laurens agreed. “And Marti’s already thinking about schools, if you can believe that. We talked a little bit about Jamal Curtis the other day.”

“Yeah?” Mulligan raised an eyebrow, interested.

“Yeah,” said Laurens, a little uncomfortably. “She wants to help. Was asking me for tips on fundraising at her school.”
“How does your dad feel about that?”

“Fine,” replied Laurens defensively. “He’s on our side, ya know. He has nothing against raising money, in fact, he donated a lot when I asked him for it. It’s just the activism stuff. Making a scene, drawing attention to the family, all of that. He has a responsibility to his voters, even if a lot of them are assholes. He’s not…he’s not a bad person.”

“Never said he was,” replied Mulligan easily.

Laurens huffed frustratedly, watching Mulligan finish his set while his mind wandered. It had been difficult not to feel bitter as Martha described her plans for a campaign. Henry had always acted more indulgently towards her, on account of her age and probably also her gender. He wondered what his father would have said if he’d expressed a desire to sell lemonade for a police assault victim at fifteen.

“I just wish there was another way,” he said finally. “You know. To make people understand.”

“Well you know,” said Mulligan, getting up from the bench with a groan. “You could always just punch them in the face.”

Laurens laughed ruefully, scratching the back of his neck. “True,” he sighed. “I’m really not cut out to be a politician.”

Mulligan shrugged. “I’d vote for you.”

Laurens smiled, amused. “Thanks.”

“I’m serious. Rather have you as my Congressman than Hamilton. At least your speeches would be shorter.”

Laurens laughed again. “You done?”

“Yeah. Wanna head?”

“Sure.”

They picked up their water bottles and towels, slinging them around their necks as they walked in the direction of the changing room.

“Hey Herc,” said Laurens, suddenly nervous.

“Yeah, man.”

“I think…well, no. I don’t think. I’m gay.”

Mulligan nodded. Said “Alright.” He looked at him. “Do you feel any better?”

Something inside Laurens squirmed. “Not really,” he admitted. “Am I supposed to?”

Mulligan let out a weary breath. “You’re asking the wrong guy man,” he said. “If you ask me…I seriously doubt saying two words is supposed to make all the other stuff magically go away, you dig?”

“Yeah,” Laurens sighed. He rubbed his eyes tiredly. “I guess…I don’t know. I’ve never said it out loud before. I guess I expected to feel different.”
“Why should you?” asked Mulligan. “You’re not any different, are you?”

“I guess,” said Laurens uncertainly.

“And nothing’s changed,” Mulligan told him firmly. “Nor will anything, ever.”

Laurens looked down, cheeks flooding with heat. “You’re the first person I’ve told,” he confessed.

“I’m honoured,” said Mulligan. He paused before adding, “And I love you.”

Laurens smiled weakly. “I love you too, brother.”

Mulligan nodded. He pushed open the door to the changing room, heading in first so as to give Laurens a chance to wipe his eyes with the back of his hand.

Chapter End Notes

bit of a short chapter but I thought it was a nice place to end.

"batty boy" is a very offensive term. please never use it.

next chapter: the return of Major John Andre.
“So basically, what I’m saying is nihilism is all very well and good a philosophy to have, but essentially, it’s one of complete privilege,” Hamilton explained. “Like, yes. Okay. Anyone can see that life is meaningless. There’s no great plan, no grand design or whatever; we’re born, we eek out whatever pleasure in existence we can create for ourselves, we die, we become worm-food, right, that’s it. Not exactly as ground-breaking as those Dawkinsian morons seem to think y’know, what we like to think of as modern ‘atheism’ can be dated back to at least the 5th century, more than a thousand years before Nietzsche. And that’s only the western tradition, mind. But what I’m saying is, even if you accept that, it’s still a completely useless statement. More than that, it’s totally redundant, to the point that its own veracity is completely cancelled out. I mean, you take your newly-enlightened, Tyler Durden wannabe with his shiny, edgy new lease of life and imagine him going up to some starving woman living in poverty and being like “Yo, hey. I know you have to walk three hours every day to find water that won’t poison your children with diarrhoea and all, but guess what, life has no meaning”. Right? Fucking dumber thing to say. Let’s take a less drastic example. Look at language, John. Listen to the words that I’m speaking. They’re just sounds. They don’t have any intrinsic value, there’s no direct route between the signifier and the signified and yet, you still understand them. That’s because we ourselves assign meaning to these guttural noises and grunts that any old chimpanzee could make. Language, like gender, is in its very nature performative. It’s purely psychological, but that doesn’t make it any less real, you dig?”

“I dig,” answered Laurens. “So, what you’re saying is…it all comes back to Descartes?”

“Damn,” Hamilton swore. “I guess I am. Fuck that fallacious bastard and his dualism. Nah, for real though. I just wish there were less villains in Hollywood with nihilism as a motivation. Like, just making a dude whose entire world-view is ‘life is meaningless, so I might as well fuck shit up’. What kind of lazy-ass writing is that? Like, that could be your average white dude off the street. And if they pitched it that way, with some bitch-ass spoilt kid who spends too much time on the Internet as the main antagonist, and the moral message that the only reason he has this philosophy is because he can afford to…well that might be something.”

“Tom Hiddleston was good though,” Laurens pointed out.

They stopped outside the cinema, glass door swinging shut behind them. Hamilton shoved his hands in his pockets and bunched them into fists to fight against the cold. Winter, always a stealthy adversary, had crept up on him while his mind had been occupied on other things. Already he could feel the cold air pricking the gaps beneath his skin, creeping into his lungs and making him sick.

“Thanks for the ticket,” he said to Laurens gratefully. “And the popcorn.”

Laurens waved dismissively. “Don’t worry about it.”

“I can pay you back when I’ve got the dollar. I get paid on Friday and I think Herc’s managed to wrap me another shift with that catering company—”

“Seriously, it’s fine,” Laurens cut across him. “It’s not even my money.”

“That’s true,” Hamilton said thoughtfully. “I’d forgotten about that. Ok. I guess I don’t feel so bad taking from Papa Laurens.”

Laurens laughed. Hamilton slinked his arm through his and they began to walk down the street, Hamilton keeping very close. Laurens could feel him shaking through his pea coat.

“Are you cold?” he frowned concernedly.

Hamilton nodded jitterily. “A little,” he admitted.

Laurens unwound his thick grey scarf from his neck and draped it round Hamilton’s. Hamilton stared up at him, dark eyes wide. “Are you sure?” he asked.

“Your need is greater than mine,” Laurens replied teasingly. “Who was it you compared yourself to earlier? Iron man?”

“In brains, business acumen and charisma, obviously,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “I wasn’t implying that I had metal skin. Let’s give Tony Stark an origin story in the tropics, see how well-climatized he turns out.”

“Did you just refer to yourself as having an origin story?” Laurens smirked.

“Sure,” Hamilton shrugged. “Let’s face it, I’ve got all the fundamentals right there. Dead parents, check. Skewed moral code, check. Transformative moment, resulting from a deus ex machina in the form of a spontaneous natural event, check. I’m pretty much a superhero already.”

“Right, and you got your powers in the hurricane?”

“Yep. The powers of chronic anxiety and thanatophobia.”

Laurens barked out a laugh. Hamilton grinned up at him, enjoying the way his curls danced beneath his beanie as he threw back his head.

“What would yours be?” he prompted him. “If you could have any one.”

“Uh, I dunno,” said Laurens. “Time travel?” And when Hamilton looked sceptical, “Hey, don’t give me the ‘you can just go get a milkshake without the racism’ spiel ok, I just wanna know what the Spartans looked like.”

“I wasn’t gonna!” Hamilton protested defensively. “I was going to say that…well…you’d get so old.”
Laurens’ brow knitted. “Come again?”

“Think about it. Say you spend a week in Sparta. And then like, a couple of days in Mesopotamia or somewhere. All of that time adds up. So, when you arrive back in the modern day, you’re already older than you were when you left. And if you keep doing that, then eventually all those hours you’re spending interrailing through history’s gonna pile up until one day you’re popping back to 2017 at the grand old age of eighty-five.”

“Huh,” said Laurens, a little crushed. “I never thought about that. Damn. You just blew my ten-year old dreams straight out of the water.”

Hamilton looked sympathetic. “You can be a super DJ,” he consoled him. “When people get too close, they cut themselves on your edges.”

Laurens grinned. “I’ll take it.”

“I’d probably be like Stark or Batman where my superpower is just being wealthy and smart,” Hamilton continued. “Damn, that’s kinda lame. What else have I got?”

“Maths,” prompted Laurens.

“Maths,” Hamilton pulled a face. “Fuck. That’s the nerdiest ability ever.”

“Captain Hamilton. Fighting injustice with the powers of progressive economics and fiscal responsibility.”


Laurens laughed again. “What would Lafayette be?”

“Trickster god. A master of illusions and deceptions, capable of moulding the world to fit his own romantical notions of reality,” replied Hamilton. “Mulligan…”

“Telepathy,” answered Laurens immediately. “And mind control, for good measure.”

Hamilton snapped his fingers. “Good call,” he said. “Angelica can have freeze powers, since she’s such an Ice Queen. Eliza’s basically Jesus so we’ll just straight up give her that. And Ben can have ESP or super-hearing or something, seeing as absolutely nothing gets by him.”

“Oh ya, how’s the stuff for the open mic coming, by the way?”

“Pretty good. Venue’s booked, posters are out. Business is booming on the Facebook page, we should have enough seats. I gave FemSoc a special discount so…uh…yeah. Prepare for a lot of period metaphors and thinly-coded Judith references, I guess.”

Laurens snickered. “Is Angelica doing one?”

Hamilton shook his head. “Nah, not her thing. Her boyfriend’s coming, though. I think from us it’s just Tallmadge and Mulligan. And J’André, of course.”

“And me,” Laurens added.

Hamilton looked at him in surprise. “Yeah?” he raised his eyebrows. “You’re doing one?”

“I wrote something,” Laurens shrugged very casually, a pink tint creeping into his cheeks.
“Great,” said Hamilton enthusiastically. “Awesome.”

“What about you?” asked Laurens. “You’re not doing one?”

Hamilton shook his head. “The world really doesn’t need subjecting to my poetry.”

“What’s your style? Free verse or iambic rap?”

“Heroic couplets.”

Laurens laughed. Hamilton stared at him. “I’m not kidding.”

“What, like Alexander Pope?”

“Yeah like Alexander Pope.”

“Alex, that is the worst thing I’ve ever heard.”

“Yeah. Well. I told you it’s not for popular consumption, alright? I can recite you a bit, if you want.”

“I’m actually fine.”

“Before no mortal ever knew, a love like mine so tender, true-”

Before he could really get going, a deus ex machina occurred in the form of Laurens’ phone. He fished it out of his pocket, staring at the screen with a frown.

“Everything ok?” asked Hamilton after a long time had gone by.

“Yeah,” said Laurens slowly, the frown not leaving his face. “Sorry. I just got uh…I just got a message from someone I haven’t spoken to in a while.”

And wasn’t that all kinds of intriguing.

“Do you want me to open it for you?” asked Hamilton, trying to keep his interest out of his voice.

Laurens shook his head. “Nah, it’s fine,” he said. “I’ll look at it later.”

He stuffed the phone back into his pocket. Hamilton, curious but knowing better than to press the matter, resumed the recitation of his poem. Laurens scoffed and made sarcastic remarks in all the right places; still, Hamilton thought as they said their goodbyes, he looked somewhat disturbed for the rest of the way home.

*  

“A little to the left,” ordered Angelica as Mulligan shifted the chairs into position. “Little more. There, that’s it.”

“How come we always get stuck doing the manual labour?” grumbled Peggy, ungracefully dumping another stack by the bar.

“You’re the only one who volunteers for this,” Angelica reminded her. “The rest of us are roped in automatically, by nature of being in the friendship group.”

“Yeah and trust me, if Kitty wasn’t at her dad’s tonight I a hundred percent would not be around,”
Peggy retorted bitterly, massaging her wrist.

Eliza sighed wearily. “Nice to hear you’re a devotee to the cause, Peggy.”

“Margarita!” cried Lafayette exuberantly from the stage where he had been helping Meade and Tallmadge set up, and promptly tripping off. “What a delight!”

“Eugh,” Peggy rolled her eyes. “Why are all your friends either gay and sad, or happy and annoying? Why can’t you have a happy gay, or a quiet straight?”

“You know, that is actually a very good point,” remarked Angelica, pursing her lips at Lafayette. “And then you’ve got Hamilton, who somehow manages to be both.”

Peggy hummed in agreement, eyes roving the bar. “What time is JC getting here?” she asked.

“Uh,” Angelica checked her watch. “A little after nine.”

“I miss him. I haven’t seen him around in a while.”

“Mm.”

Peggy elbowed Eliza sharply in the side. “Don’t you miss JC, Lizzie?”

“What?” asked Eliza, startling out of her reverie. “Oh. Yes. Of course I miss Jonny. It will be very nice to see him.”

Peggy smirked as Eliza turned away hastily to help Mulligan with the posters.

“Ok, that’s all set up,” said Tallmadge, leaping down from the stage and face alight with excitement. “Man, this is gonna be so cool.”

“Maybe even the coolest thing we’ve ever done in the name of social justice,” Meade nodded agreeably.

“Hey come on,” said Angelica. “I’m starting to think the Austen Tea Party is getting an unfairly bad rep.”

“We nearly got arrested,” Meade pointed out. “And Hamilton nearly drowned.”

“Well there we go,” said Angelica sweetly. “Between that and a more inclusive curriculum, we almost killed two birds with one stone.”

Meade chuckled and they grinned at each other. Tallmadge coughed loudly.

“Okay,” he said awkwardly. “You do…that. I’m gonna go check the guys on the door.”

He left quickly, just as Hamilton and Laurens were about to walk in.

“Wagwan citizens,” Hamilton flounced into the room, Laurens close behind him. “How we doing?”

“Pretty much there,” Mulligan responded, gesturing towards the set up. “How was the movie?”

“Marvel-lous,” answered Laurens, taking off his jacket and draping it over the seat next to Mulligan. “That’s not to say it was particularly good.”
“No Bechdel points?” asked Angelica.

“Decidedly not. Hamilton can write you a poem about it, if you like. The gilded screens of Whedon’s Trinity mask a ’pressive Masculinity—”

“Oh, okay, that is the last time I share anything personal with you,” Hamilton shoved him, but he was grinning.

“Everyone sit down please,” Tallmadge huffed, stepping from the door to allow in a huddle of nervous-looking first years.

Hamilton took the seat next to Laurens, leg jittering as he cast about the venue anxiously for a sign of John André. Laurens, noticing his preoccupation, rolled his eyes and ordered two pints for himself and Mulligan.

“It is quite exciting, isn’t it?” Lafayette said in an undertone to Eliza as more and more people began to spill around the tables. “I don’t know why, but people seem to be much more electrified than when we have done protests in the past.”

“Electrified,” Eiza whispered back. “And yes, I know what you mean, although, I’m not sure that’s the right word to use in this context. ‘Energised’, maybe.”

“Ben certainly looks pretty ‘electrified’,” said Meade as Tallmadge climbed back onto the stage, snapping impatiently at Caleb Brewster, the acting techy.

“Hey baby,” came a voice near Angelica’s left ear.

Angelica very nearly spilt her gin and tonic. “Jonny,” she exclaimed, mopping the splash in a voice of forced pleasure rather than irritation. “You came.”

“Of course I did, what kind of boyfriend would I be if I didn’t help my woman smash the patriarchy,” replied Church, drawing up a chair from another table. “Yo, Meade, my man. Long time no see. How’re you doin, brother?”

“Can’t complain,” replied Meade, looking as though he most certainly could.

“Laf-baguette!” Church exclaimed, turning away from Meade to stretch over the table. “How’s my favourite French fry?”

“Good, I think,” replied Lafayette, returning the fist-bump bemusedly and wondering why Americans felt the need to compare him to certain types of food. “How is my favourite…cheese burger?”

Church tipped his head back and laughed loudly. “This guy,” he pointed. “Hilarious. Where’s Hamilton?”

“Probably gone to hover at the door for André,” replied Angelica with a glance at his vacated seat. “You want a drink, babe?”

“I’ll have a beer,” replied Church, putting a hand on Angelica’s shoulder as she made to get up. “No, no, I’ll get it myself. Couldn’t call myself a feminist if I had my lady running around at my beck and call. What is this, the 1950s?” he added with a laugh. “Anyone else want anything?”

“I’ll take a raspberry twist,” replied Lafayette, quailing under Meade’s fierce glare. “What?” he asked when Church had departed for the bar. “He’s paying!”
“You’re rich,” hissed Meade.

“Ok everyone, settle down,” called Tallmadge, tapping the mic with his finger. “Can everyone hear me? You guys at the back ok? Sweet. Kay, first off, on behalf of the SJC I wanna thank you all for coming. Since Jamal Curtis’ story first made the news, we’ve managed to raise over ten thousand dollars to help his family fight the case in Court, which is quite frankly a phenomenal feat. We’ve spoken to the family, they’re both touched and grateful for your support and we really couldn’t have done it without you so thanks again, and give yourselves a round of applause for being on the right side of justice.”

Tallmadge paused to allow the audience a brief, self-congratulatory clap before reassuming the microphone. “We’ve done a lot of good here, but let’s not forget there’s still a long way to go. Court fees are expensive and can cripple a family, even if they do manage to win. If you’ll look over there you’ll see my colleague Eliza Schuyler holding a donation box,” Eliza lifted the yellow bucket over her head. “She’ll be coming round later, please feel free to put in as much or as little as possible. More than fundraising though, this event is about raising awareness. It’s about shedding light on the racial and financial privilege enjoyed by certain individuals on campus, which allows them to commit crimes without repercussion. It’s about sharing stories and emotions – anger, grief, frustration – all those feelings we might have in the wake of such a tragedy, as well as in response to the current administration as a whole.

So without further ado, let’s give it up for our first performer here tonight! My man, Hercules Mulligan.”

“Weak,” commented Hamilton, reappearing with a beer and rolling his eyes. “Not one single pun or rhyme. It’s official; Ben is a decent orator, but he lacks showmanship.”

“Alexander!” Church cried, seizing his hand. “The man of great candour! How’s it going, my man?”

“Jon Church,” replied Hamilton weakly, massaging his fingers once Church had released him. “The man who…greets everyone with ‘my man’…even though he’s white…which is his constitutional prerogative, I guess.”

“We need to have a talk about Marxism versus the free market soon,” Church told him.

“Do we?” asked Hamilton weakly.

“Quiet,” hissed Peggy as Mulligan took the mic.

“Hey guys,” he greeted the audience. “Thanks Ben for that introduction…and for not trying to rhyme it with my name, which is certainly what Hamilton would have done,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “This is a poem I wrote called ‘Shucks, the Police’.”

The audience managed to hold some semblance of silence while Hercules recited a very witty commentary on the passivity of middle-class liberals. When he stepped down from the stage it was amidst resounding laughter, whoops and shouts of agreement mixed with the applause. He was followed by an anxious-looking first year who was pretty good despite her nerves, however as the mic was passed and more people took to the stage, it became swiftly apparent that the ability of the performers was somewhat of a mixed bag.

“Jesus,” Meade winced as one girl collapsed onto the stage, beating her chest as she called on the Goddess to end her suffering.
“You know what, maybe I should have written one,” commented Hamilton, watching the increasingly visceral demonstration with growing dislike. “At least I would have stuck to the theme instead of using the opportunity to indulge my own artistic narcissism.”

“Wait, I’m confused,” Laurens muttered. “Is she calling on the Mother’s milk to wash away her sins or to help her transcend binary morality?”

“Why is she wearing a g-string as an Alice band?” asked Eliza, digging her nails so deep into her cheeks they left little half-moons.

The following appreciation, however, was one of the loudest it had been so far. As soon as the girl hopped off the stage she was swallowed up by a gaggle of enthusiastic, and very theatrical-looking fans. Church was on his feet, clapping doubly loudly to be heard over the applause and whistling shrilly; meanwhile Angelica, sat behind him, took a discreet sip of her drink.

“You know what, she’s got the right idea,” muttered Hamilton, getting to his feet. “My round, who wants beer?”

He departed for the bar just as Tallmadge took the girl’s place, drawing up a seat and adjusting the strap of his acoustic guitar. Laurens took a sip of his pint, stomach fluttering as he watched with anticipation. He was beginning to have second thoughts. Rather than encouraging in their mediocrity, the more questionable performances had only caused him to cast further doubt on his own ability. The thought of seeing the same look of strained amusement and second-hand embarrassment on Hamilton’s face was almost more than he could bear.

“Uh, hey.”

Startled out of his reverie, Laurens looked up into the face of John André, gesturing at Hamilton’s newly vacated seat.

“Is it ok if I sit here?” he asked. “I can’t see anywhere else spare.”

“Uh…” Laurens eyes flickered to Hamilton, about to reply that it was taken when he saw that he was busy chatting up the girl tending bar. “Sure,” he answered reluctantly. “Go ahead.”

John André sat down. For wont of something to do Laurens took another drink, casting a curious glance at André out the corner of his eye. He looked uncertain, hesitant; perching on the edge of the chair as if not sure whether he wanted to fly away. Feeling the need to make conversation, Laurens flicked his finger at the stage. “Are you doing one?”

“Yeah,” André replied, combing a hand through his floppy dark hair. “Caleb’s got my guitar up there.”

“Oh, you wrote a song?”

 André nodded, perfectly hollowed cheeks glowing faintly pink. “Yeah. I mean I don’t…I don’t know. I feel a bit stupid going up there, to tell you the truth. Like I’m drawing the focus away from the victim.”

“Is it not strictly-speaking relevant?”

“It is,” André protested, defensively. “Sort of. It’s about generalised injustice, dreams of a better world, etcetera. It’s really fucking stupid actually, I’m embarrassed I wrote it.”

“It can’t be that bad.”
“You ever heard ‘Imagine’?”

“Ya, course.”

“It’s worse than that.”

Snorting, Laurens nearly choked on his beer. “It’s not that,” he assured André in response to his defeated expression. “It’s just…I kind of told Lafayette once that I thought you looked like Macca.”

André grinned, head ducking shame-facedly. “Really?”

“Yeah. Only he thought I was calling you an insect. ‘Cos uh…you probably won’t get this, but in French the word for beetle kind of sounds like-”


“You speak French?”

André nodded, switching into it casually.

“Ma mère est française. Et quand j’étais petit j’ai habité en France pendant un moment, et puis en Suisse.”

“Oh vraiment? Je suis allé en lycée en Suisse. Qu’est-ce que vous pensez?”

André’s enthusiastic response however was drowned out by the sound of Church, who seemed to be regarding the interval as an opportunity to update everyone on his personal views since they had last seen him. “It doesn’t take a genius to tell you the concept of religion is essentially fascist,” he bellowed across the table, completely ignoring the tense grip of Angelica on his arm. “Literally any idiot can pick up a Bible and see clear as day that God is the most bloodthirsty despot in history. I mean, come on. Just look at the amount of genocide and military conquest in the Old Testament! He practically makes Pol Pot look like Gandhi!”

“Maybe now isn’t the place to be having this conversation,” hissed Angelica through gritted teeth while Eliza stared silently at Church, hard-faced.

“Christianity is the biggest con since man learned to walk,” Church continued, ignoring Angelica. “Followed swiftly by capitalism. What else is it but a clever sham, thought up by the wealthy elite to distract the proletariat from claiming their natural right to resources? The disenfranchised have bought into a hoax that has them believing in some magical Santa Claus on a cloud, worrying so much about their immortal souls that they don’t notice they’re being robbed blind.”

“Hey man, why don’t you cool it a little?” asked Meade, with a wary glance at Eliza.

“Oh I’m sorry,” Church mocked, leaning back in his seat satisfactorily. “Didn’t realise we had a pig in our midst. My mistake.”

“Word of advice brother,” said Meade, a harsh light glinting in his eye. “This isn’t the 1950s. But I would strongly refrain from calling a black man a pig.”

“Richard,” muttered Angelica.

“Well on that note,” announced Lafayette, getting to his feet. “I have a sudden craving for chips. Excuse me.”

He hurried to the bar where Hamilton was still leaning. Having concluded his conversation with
the bartender, Lafayette thought for a moment that he was deeply enthralled by Tallmadge’s set when he realised he was staring not at the stage, but at Laurens and André, deeply engaged in animated conversation.

“What are you doing?” he asked when several seconds had passed without Hamilton’s gaze shifting.

“Trying to figure out if I’m in a nightmare, or a wet dream,” Hamilton replied, frowning intensely.

Lafayette gawped at him in horror. “You are unbelievable.”

“Don’t tell me you haven’t thought about it.”

“I’m straight.”

“Debatable.”

“I’m very much in love.”

“Can’t control what you dream, Gilbert.”

“Alright, it may have crossed my mind once,” Lafayette conceded. “That is completely irrelevant. You have an unsavoury knack for making seedy the most innocent situations. What you are suggesting is entirely unwarranted.”

Hamilton raised an eyebrow. “Is it?”

He inclined his head and Lafayette looked back at them. André was laughing and Laurens was grinning; a self-conscious, tentative grin but one none the less. André’s hand was on his shoulder. Lafayette turned back to Hamilton uncertainly.

“André is dating Margaret Shippen,” he said.

Hamilton shrugged. “So?”

“He’s straight.”

Hamilton looked at him, dead-ass, in the eye. “So are you.”

Lafayette flipped him off. “I am going to sit back down now,” he said.

Hamilton nodded. “You do that,” he said. “I’m going to stay here and. You know.”

He made a vague gesture in Laurens and André’s direction that Lafayette did not try too hard to decode.

Meanwhile, André was talking to Laurens. “I’ll tell you something,” he said, scrolling through Instagram for a picture to show him. “I was thinking of singing this love song I wrote. For a girl, you know.”

“Yeah?” said Laurens, who found that the words were coming much easier now he was halfway through his third pint. “What’s her name?”

“Margaret Shippen,” André replied, showing her picture to Laurens for his approval. When he grunted, he continued. “She’s just…ugh. She’s so beautiful, man. You’d just die to look at her. But yeah, I was thinking of doing this big thing, singing her a song, tell her how I feel and everything.
But she didn’t show up.”

“My girlfriend didn’t show up?” Laurens frowned.

André stared at him. “She’s not my girlfriend, dude.”

“Oh?”

“No. She’s dating Benedict Arnold, you know him?” Laurens pulled a face. “Yeah. That guy. But I don’t know man, she’s like my best friend. I like her so much but I’m afraid if I say something I’ll ruin it.”

Laurens sighed deeply. “I feel you, man,” he said.

André looked at him hopefully. “Yeah?”

Laurens nodded. “Yeah.”

“Sucks, doesn’t it.”

Laurens laughed hollowly. “You can say that again.”

They clinked glasses.

"Laurens,” called Tallmadge from the stage. “Dude. You’re up.”

“Oh shit,” Laurens swore, running a hand through his hair.

“Good luck,” André wished him as he got to his feet. “You’ll be great.”

Too nervous to reply properly, Laurens jerked his head in acknowledgement, his legs feeling suddenly unsteady as he approached the stage. Tallmadge stepped away from the mic and Laurens grasped it with one hand, the other going to his phone and scrolling until he’d found his poem.

“Uh…hi,” he said, clearing his throat when his voice came out croaked. “My name’s John Laurens.” A loud whoop came from his friends at the table. He smiled shakily, feeling suddenly emboldened. “This is a poem I wrote. It doesn’t really have a name…but uh, ya. Here goes.

“Baby, what’s your name?”
she asks, voice sweet as ‘Summertime’
  lilac on a warm day to
  the sound of Jimi Hendrix blues
  even while eyes, kind of like how you
  think God’s must be
  nail you to a cross, self-made,
  hammered from the countless patches of skin stitched together,
  pulled tight over a flimsy skeleton
  not quite enough to cover the bones.

Light skin, almost a white skin
  both marks and sets stark as a member of my kin
  folks laugh when I tell ‘em I never had chicken and rice,
  turns to dust in their mouths when I describe my mom as “nice”,
  Well she was –
  Boy from the South, better watch your mouth
rich kid, forbid from saying something real
something how I really feel –
Well forgive me if I find it therapeutic
to play that funky music
though I ‘aint no white boy.

Truth is it’s not cos I don’t remember,
it’s not cos it still hurts,
it’s cos my momma was so lovely
that I just don’t have the words.
White boy, bright boy, remember your rights boy,
tell yourself what you don’t like boy,
maybe then it’ll be alright boy, and your skin won’t feel so tight.
Summertime;
forget my solace in songs and rhyme,
it’s just taken me a minute
to work out my skin’s no crime.”

A long silence followed in the space the last word left. Laurens stepped back from the microphone and handed it to Ben. As if this had been the permission it was looking for, the room erupted with applause. Scanning the faces in the crowd, he saw that several people were crying. Cheeks burning, Laurens jumped down from the stage and walked back to his friends with his head-ducked. They were all on their feet, beating their palms together so hard the table was vibrating with it, every face blazing with pride. Tear tracks were running down Eliza and Lafayette’s cheeks. Mulligan was clapping as though he would never see his son graduate. There was one face Laurens was looking for though, and as Angelica pulled him in for a bone-crushing hug, he peered through the gaps between her arms to search for it.

Hamilton looked staggered. His mouth was hanging slightly open, his eyes blown so wide he looked like he was on drugs.

“What did you think?” Laurens asked shyly once all his friends had released him in turn.

Hamilton shook his head. “I…” he started, then gave up, feeling stupid. “Fuck. I don’t have the words, man. It was amazing.”

“More than amazing,” said Mulligan fiercely, thumping Laurens so hard he thought his back would give out. “Fuck, bro. Let’s see John André follow that.”

Blushing, Laurens sat back down and Hamilton refocused his attention on André, who had promptly assumed the stage. Contrary to what he’d had Laurens believe, he was actually very good. While his music didn’t seem to differ too much in style and substance from the conservative, Bon Iver-flavoured folk Tallmadge couldn’t seem to get enough of, his voice was nice and his lyrics weren’t terrible, still, Hamilton found that could scarcely follow them, due to the fact that his brain was so utterly fixed on Laurens.

André exited the stage with one final smattering of polite applause and Tallmadge returned once again for the close, directing would-be donators towards Eliza. Jon Church had left for the toilet and told Angelica to meet him outside; while she was shaking on her coat Meade spoke to her casually.

“So Jonny didn’t write anything, then?” he asked.

“No,” replied Angelica bluntly, looking down at the button she was doing.
Meade shifted his feet. “That’s funny,” he said. “He seems like he has so much to say.”

“As, it seems, do you,” said Angelica, glancing up suddenly.

For a second Meade quailed in the full force of her glare. He looked around, checking no one was listening in before asking, “Ange, why are you with him?”

Angelica’s eyes narrowed. She finished securing the last button, grabbed her bag and left without looking back.

“Well I have to say,” said Lafayette, slinking an arm happily around Hamilton’s shoulders. “It is true that I have doubted Ben Tallmadge in the past. But that was a massive success.”

“Mm,” replied Hamilton, watching Laurens’ back retreat as he followed Mulligan out the door.

That night, at 3am, Hamilton called Laurens.

“Hey,” came the voice, surprised but happy through the receiver. “What’s up?”

“Nothing,” Hamilton replied. “Can’t sleep.”

Laurens laughed humourlessly. “I feel you man,” he said for the second time that day.

Hamilton hummed in agreement. He imagined Laurens stretched out on his bed in his sweatpants, hand slipped idly beneath the thin elastic, tips of his fingers resting just below his abdomen. He took a deep breath, and swallowed.

“How’re Toussaint and Napoleon?” he asked, voice dry.

“Uh…pretty good,” there was a rustle and Hamilton saw Laurens turning his head, glancing at where the drawing was pinned to the wall. “It’s hard to tell because they keep a lot of things bottled up and all. But I think they’re happy.”

Hamilton laughed shortly. “You’re cute.”

“Thanks.”

Hamilton blew out briefly, eyes drawn suddenly to his vinyl player resting precariously on a stack of old textbooks. He took another breath, aware that it came out shaky. “Your poem today,” he started, voice dry. “That was…it was really something, Laurens.”

There came a pause on the other end, during which Hamilton heard the blood throb in his ears as though it were a gong calling to battle. “Thanks,” Laurens answered finally. He hesitated before adding, “I had fun today. With you, I mean.”

The corners of Hamilton’s mouth twitched treasonously. “I had fun with you too.”

“Is that why you’re calling me at 3am?”

Hamilton laughed breathily, knowing he had been caught. “Kinda,” he admitted. “Also, um. No, I shouldn’t say.”

“Oh, come on, that’s not fair. You have to now.”
Your voice helps me get to sleep. “I can hear the city outside,” he said instead.

If Laurens was aware Hamilton was changing the subject, he didn’t mention it. “Is it keeping you up?”

Hamilton shook his head. “No.” He paused, attempting to gather his thoughts into some semblance of meaning before they spilled out without control. “I find it comforting, actually.”

“Really?”

“Why? Don’t you?”

“I don’t know. I guess I find big cities sorta lonely at times.”

“That’s what’s comforting about it,” Hamilton insisted. “It’s like…it’s another island. The whole world outside is a mass of chaos and confusion…but here you’re safe in the security of your anonymity. Like, the city doesn’t give a shit about you, but that’s ok, y’know?”

“This city is your lighthouse,” Laurens quoted from his playlist, and Hamilton could hear the grin in his voice.

“Right,” he laughed again, agreeing. “This city is my lighthouse.”

There was another long silence. Hamilton could hear Laurens breathing, could sense the way he clutched the receiver tightly. Neither of them knew what else to say, but neither of them wanted to let go.

This is stupid, thought Hamilton. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I should go. I’m keeping you up.”

“It’s fine,” answered Laurens quietly. “You know it’s fine.”

Hamilton tried to swallow. His throat came away coarse and he drew in air instead. “Bye,” he said quickly, and put the phone down.

The screeches and blares of the city crashed around the walls of his dorm, like waves against the cliffside. Hamilton huddled atop his mattress, buried his face into the pillow.

He didn’t sleep.

Chapter End Notes

sorry this chapter again took so long to get out, i’m trying hard to work on time management but it is a struggle

Also, much like Hamilton, i am very much aware that poetry is not my strong suit. Just imagine Laurens' poem was much better and moving etc in real life. However, there were some kind of personal things in there and even though i literally wrote it tonight at 3am some reassurance would be really nice, and if u could maybe refrain from dragging it completely that would also be quite nice.

N.B. the line in the last stanza was originally "tell yourself that you don't like boys" but idk I thought it would be a little OOC to have Laurens suddenly declare that to a
room full of strangers. just throwing it out there so u know u can read it that way.
“Ok try this one,” Hamilton whipped out the next flashcard. “One of the faults you claim to have with the administration is that preferential treatment is given to students of significant wealth and connection to influential individuals. Can you provide concrete examples of this happening, or can we chalk these allegations down to speculative witch-hunting?”

“You only have to go back as far as 2015,” Angelica answered at once. “When Thomas Conway was found with cocaine in his dorm and suspended for six months, compared to the black student Stephen Brown who was jailed over an eighth of weed only three months previously.”

“You’re over-simplifying the case, little darlin’,” countered Hamilton, in uncanny emulation of Jefferson’s drawl. “Conway was let off on the grounds that substantial evidence implied the drugs had been planted.”

“The chief Commissioner who uncovered said evidence also happened to be an old acquaintance of Conway’s father,” replied Angelica without missing a beat. “Which only serves to prove my point about friends in high places.”

“Interesting you should say that,” said Hamilton, with a flourish of his next card. “Doesn’t your father happen to be a Mr Philip Schuyler?”

Angelica bristled. “What of it?”

“Well, one could argue the reason that you yourself have been allowed to get away with such militant vigilantism is due to that same privilege of connection.”

Angelica’s lip curled. “They won’t ask me that.”


Angelica’s eyes, already steely, narrowed. “I’m aware of my privilege,” she answered at last. “It’s my family name and the colour of my skin that gives weight to my words when my friends are stopped by security, or pulled over by policemen. It’s because of that privilege that I consider it my duty to speak out against injustice when I see it, instead of turning a blind eye like so many other entitled white liberals.”

“Good,” nodded Hamilton appreciatively. “Maybe tone it down on the whole ‘entitled white liberal’ thing. You started to sound a little defensive towards the end.”

“I was not being defensive-” snapped Angelica defensively, just as Lafayette and Laurens appeared with their dinner trays.

“You guys still practicing?” asked Laurens, slumping down next to Eliza. “You’ve been at it all morning.”

“We need to be streamlined,” Hamilton told him. “At the moment we’re like, two days after Angelica’s shaved her legs territory.”

“Whereas we need to be at Hamilton’s default jawline.”
“Was that supposed to be an insult? I’ll have you know I feel no shame at my natural absence of body-hair. I make up for more than enough of it in other places.”

“Really didn’t need to know that, dude.”

“I meant on my head. Seriously Godly Schuyler, are you gonna keep standing for this pervert crap?”

Eliza shrugged. “I was kinda thinking it.”


“We never went to boarding school,” Angelica rolled her eyes.

“I did,” Laurens shrugged, taking a bite of his casserole. “Can confirm.”

“Yeah. Well,” Mulligan raised an eyebrow. “What else is new? We all know John Laurens is a filthy-minded little bastard.”

Laurens shrugged again, neither confirming nor denying.

“I can’t wait to see Jefferson’s face when we thrash him across that stage,” said Hamilton, rolling the image around in his head deliciously. “Just you wait, he’ll be such a laughing stock come student council I’ll be able to pass any proposal I want.”

“Yes, because that’s what this is about,” said Angelica waspishly. “Your political ambitions.”

“If it was about that, I’d try and be nicer to him,” replied Hamilton. “Seeing as we’re all probably going to end up working together someday. Imagine that. Me, you, Burr, Jefferson, Madison – old college buddies running the country.”

“Ugh,” Lafayette pulled a face, although it was half directed at the casserole. “I am moving back to France.”

“I’ll join you,” Laurens agreed.

“I don’t know what you think you’re getting away with,” said Hamilton, turning his fork on Laurens. “Mr Representative from South Carolina.”

Laurens laughed shortly. “I don’t think so.”

“What else are you gonna use that law degree for?” asked Meade.

“Wild idea: maybe become a lawyer?”

Lafayette wrinkled his nose. “Really?”

“Yes,” frowned Laurens, offended. “Why not?”

To get out of answering, Lafayette resumed picking at his casserole. “No reason. I have just remembered why we don’t eat at the cafeteria more often. This brown…whatever it is…leaves rather a lot to be desired.”

“Imagine Laurens as a lawyer,” Mulligan joked before assuming a surfer-esque drone. “Uh…yo, hey my guy, Your Honour, dude, like, no offence…but the other side has got me totally buggin’
“When have I ever sounded like that?!” asked Laurens, aghast, as the table erupted with laughter.

“Yo, uh, hey dude, my guy, when have I ever sounded like that?” Hamilton mocked.

“That’s not even what I said!”

“Yo buddy, my guy, my pal, that’s not even what I said-”

“Hey, Laurens!”

Laurens made an ambiguous gesture. “Your hair is George Harrison,” he replied. “Your clothes are Robert Mapplethorpe.”

André hummed agreeably. “Fair enough,” he conceded. “Anyway, thanks. Remind me and I’ll get you that Grosz book I was telling you about. See if I can convert you to neo-expressionism.”

Laurens pulled a face. “I mean, you can try.”

André laughed good-naturedly before his eyes landed on Hamilton, who was staring at him with his mouth slightly open. “How are you, Hamilton?”

“Uh, yeah,” Hamilton stammered, shaking himself into some degree of consciousness. “Really good fine thanks I mean no complaining nothing doin’.”

“I’ve got something for you,” André continued, rifling in his bag. He pulled out a record and stretched across the table to pass it to Hamilton. “Laurens mentioned you were looking for some new music. Not to labour too much on the 60s thing, but The Kinks are pretty much my life.”

“Aha,” Hamilton choked. “Kinks are…you don’t say.”

Laurens, Lafayette and Angelica looked tiredly at him.

“You guys practicing for the debate?” André gestured at the flashcards.

“We are,” Angelica confirmed, when it became clear that Hamilton was doing nothing but blink stupidly. “Will you be covering?”
“Yeah,” André rolled his eyes. “My editor said I gotta try harder to make my writing ‘non-biased’ and ‘more objective’,” he sketched quotation marks with his fingers. “As if there could be a side to this story which isn’t justice = good, Drayton = bad.”

Laurens laughed. “You’ll find a way,” he said. “I have faith.”

“I don’t really wanna find a way,” André confessed. “Writing all this cowardly, neutral, on-the-fence bullshit…it kinda makes me feel like a traitor, you know?”

“You are too nice to be a traitor,” offered Lafayette.

“Nice people make the best spies,” muttered Tallmadge.

“Thanks guys,” André beamed, apparently not noticing Tallmadge throwing him a suspicious glance. He patted Laurens affectionately on the shoulder. “I’d better get going, class in a bit. I’ll catch you later, John.”

“Later man,” said Laurens, turning back to shovelling food in his mouth. When he looked back up, it was to the whole table staring at him. “What?”

“What do you mean ‘what’?” Hamilton demanded, voice returned now that André had retreated. “Since when are you and André on a first name basis?”

“Technically, we should all be on a first name basis. I really don’t understand why we keep referring to each other via patronymics, it’s very homosocial.”

“It’s because you know more men named John than you do women,” pointed out Eliza.

“Fallacy by evasion. Explain yourself.”

“What’s to explain?” Laurens shrugged. “We got to talking after the open mic night. Turns out we have a lot in common. Art, natural photography, formative years in Switzerland. Ya know.”

“You described him as a mix of George Harrison and Robert Mapplethorpe,” said Mulligan, aghast.

“Haha, ya,” Laurens grinned through a mouthful of mashed potato. “Guess I really out-gayed myself there, huh?”

The silence that followed was so expansive it somehow seemed to swallow the whole of the cafeteria.

“Guys chill,” Laurens raised an eyebrow when six seconds had passed with no one saying anything. “Remember when there was literally a movement to get ‘André-sexual recognised on the Personal Information forms?”

“You said he wasn’t attractive!” Lafayette yelled, flinging out an accusing finger.

Laurens shrugged. “Yeah, well,” he spread his palms defensively. “What can I say? I’m starting to see it.”

“What is going on,” asked Meade, who was feeling very lost.

“I think Laurens is going to try to pull John André,” replied Mulligan with a frown.

Laurens laughed. “André’s straight, y’all.” He stood up, picking up his food tray. “Sorry to rob you
of your vicarious lifestyles, but I’ve gotta make a call.’”

“Who the hell have you got to make a call too?” Hamilton demanded, scandalised. “We’re your only friends!”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you,” replied Laurens, smug. “Ciao, bambini.”

With a final wry salute he chucked his tray on the rack, dancing out of the cafeteria without so much as a second glance. Hamilton’s eyes followed him out before swivelling back to stare non-comprehendingly at the rest of the table.

“What the fuck?” he demanded.

No one had an answer.

*

Laurens continued to act strangely for the rest of the day. While Hamilton didn’t actually have any classes with him, he could tell by the frequency of his messaging that something was up. Ordinarily Laurens was a very fast texter, and Hamilton could open up his phone to find a reply within seconds of messaging him. Today however, Hamilton felt himself growing increasingly impatient as the gaps between answering grew longer and longer. He was also being strangely evasive in his communications, and Hamilton couldn’t help but think it had something to do with the mystery text he had received on the way back from the cinema.

By the time Hamilton arrived at Washington’s office he was in an irritable mood, not taking kindly to the fact that it had been three hours since his last message to Laurens and he still hadn’t seen it. Sensing his tetchiness, Washington resolved to keep out of his way, only appearing once or twice to drop some files on his desk.

“Long day, Alexander?” he asked kindly after a while had passed with Hamilton pretending not to notice he was there.

Hamilton grunted. Washington sighed, turning away to flip through his diary. “Did you get me those expenses reports?”

“On your desk.”

“Thank you. And would you call Knox and remind him that the meeting has been rescheduled to next week?”

“Yep.”

Washington ticked something off and rustled noisily through the pages, reaching across Hamilton’s desk for a highlighter. “I hear you and Miss Schuyler are doing a debate with Jefferson and Madison.”

“I bet you did.”

“Very civilised of you. I didn’t think ‘let’s sit down and talk it out’ was entirely your favoured method.”

“Burr’s idea,” Hamilton explained. “Not mine. Besides, my favoured methods are the ones which get results. Any good campaigner knows you can’t get far by employing the same old tactics over and over. You gotta switch it up.”
“Aha,” said Washington, picking up a copy of a school magazine that was laying around. “And that’s what you’re doing here?”

Hamilton glanced at the magazine in Washington’s hand. “That one wasn’t me,” he said. “It was written by my friend, Tench Tilghman. But yeah, same idea.”

Washington flipped through it, humming appreciatively. “It’s very good.”

“Mmm.”

“Rather less bellicose than yours.”

Hamilton shrugged. “If you wanna make an omelette, you gotta add egg-shells as well as cream.”

“I really don’t think that’s an expression.”

“No?”

“Also, decidedly not how you make an omelette.”

Hamilton shrugged. Washington finished highlighting whatever was on his page before snapping his diary shut decisively.

“There’s a trustee dinner at the end of this month,” he told Hamilton, pushing his glasses up his nose. “Will you be attending?”

Hamilton racked his brains, trying to remember if Washington had mentioned it previously. “Uh… I don’t know, will I?”

“Would be a good chance to network. I know you’re looking into doing an internship over the summer.”

“That’s true,” Hamilton confirmed. “Sure. Why not, thanks.”

“And your date,” Washington continued. “Will they be male or female?”

Hamilton glanced uncertainly at him. Washington’s face was impassive, uncorcerned. “I’m just trying to get a hold of numbers,” he explained.

“Right,” said Hamilton. He chewed his lip, wandering whether it would be weirder to invite Laurens or Eliza. “Uh…Male. Probably. How about I get back to you on that?”

Washington nodded. The phone rang. Hamilton picked it up. “President Washington’s office, how can I help you?”

“C’est moi! Le cowboy!”

Hamilton rolled his eyes and buzzed him in with ill-grace. “Your son is here,” he told Washington. Washington laughed embarrassedly and turned away to hide the pain in his eyes.

Within seconds the door opened and Lafayette flounced in. “Good afternoon,” he greeted them breezily before turning to Washington. “Are you ready for dinner?”

“Give me two minutes Lafayette,” Washington told him. “I just have to finish up this email.”
Lafayette nodded and Washington crossed over to his office. Lafayette collapsed into the wheelie chair across from Hamilton’s desk and promptly started spinning.

“Stop that,” snapped Hamilton.

“My, my,” commented Lafayette with a raised eyebrow. “Someone’s touching today.”

“It’s ‘touchy’ and you know it. Is Laurens replying to your messages?”

“Um,” Lafayette slid his phone out his pocket and glanced at the screen. “Not recently, no.”

Hamilton blew out a frustrated breath. “Right,” he muttered bitterly. “At least it’s not just me then.”

Lafayette fixed him with a penetrative, sceptical gaze. “Are you quite alright, Alexander?”

“What? Yes, I’m fine,” Hamilton replied, running a hand flusteredly through his hair. “I just…I don’t know. Didn’t you think that stuff today was weird? With André, I mean.”

Lafayette shrugged indifferently. “Not really,” he replied. “They seem to get on well.”

“Yes, exactly,” Hamilton insisted. “Isn’t that weird?”

“It is not surprising. They are from very similar backgrounds.”

“Yeah,” Hamilton muttered darkly. “I wonder what else they have in common.”

Lafayette’s piercing gaze became more pronounced. He frowned at Hamilton, a shadow of disapproval crossing over his brow. “This is a dream come true for you,” he said. “I would have thought you’d be happy.”

“It was hot in theory,” Hamilton replied. “But now that it could actually happen…I don’t know. I don’t like it.”

“André’s straight.”

“Why do people keep saying that like it means a goddamn thing?”

“Alexander listen,” said Lafayette, throwing a wary glance at the door before leaning in closely. “Laurens is at perfect liberty to do what or who he likes. You understand that, don’t you?”


Lafayette picked up the magazine Washington had dropped and hit Hamilton with it. “Not conceptually,” he barked. “John Laurens is a free being with an independent will.”

“Are you quoting from Jane Eyre again? I knew I shouldn’t have let you take Comparative Literature, its done absolutely nothing for your sensory perception. Although I would make a damn sexy Mr Rochester.”

“Alexander,” said Lafayette through gritted teeth. “John has got enough on his plate to deal with right now without you policing his romantical attachments. You have no right to him. If he wants to talk to André about creepy art that is his prerogative. If he wants to text other people besides you once in a while then that is also-”

“Whoa, hey,” Hamilton interrupted him. “Laurens is texting other people?”
Lafayette clammed up instantly, eyes wide. Hamilton pointed accusingly at him. “You know why he’s acting weird!”

“I do not,” replied Lafayette gruffly, burrying his face into his scarf in order to hide his flaming cheeks.


“I am not saying anything,” Lafayette hissed just as Washington appeared at the door.

“All ready?” he asked, pulling on his coat.

“Yes!” Lafayette exclaimed blithely, jumping to his feet at once. “I am very excited. I have only had Thai food once or twice since coming to America. I think I will get the green curry. Or is that too predictable? Perhaps I should be more adventurous. What is an udon?”

“You can have whatever you like,” Washington assured him indulgently before turning to Hamilton. “Coming, Alexander? You’re more than welcome.”

“Yeah, why not,” Hamilton shrugged, switching off his computer and reaching for his coat. “Not about to turn down a free meal. You’re paying for me too, right? Don’t worry, I won’t pick the most expensive thing on the menu. I know I’m not quite as adorable as Gilbert here but I do actually have some class. Also, not being churlish or anything but that pay-raise you gave me only just about covers my expenses, y’know. No biggie, just throwing it out there.”

“I’ll bear that in mind,” Washington nodded agreeably, holding the door open for the boys to skip out.

*

At 1am, Laurens called Hamilton.

“Yo,” he said, voice crackly through the receiver. “Fancy a drive?”

Hamilton sat up in bed, flinging off the covers in his surprise. “Uh…sure?” he guessed. “I mean, I’m not about to fall asleep anytime soon.”

“Cool,” said Laurens. “Be there in fifteen.”

He hung up.

Fifteen minutes later, Hamilton heard the sound of an Audi Estate honking outside his window. Heart hammering with intrigue, Hamilton grabbed his keys and coat before hurrying down the stairs.

Laurens was waiting in his car with the window down. He smiled at Hamilton when he saw him, opening the door to allow him to slide in.

“What’s this about?” asked Hamilton as Laurens backed out of the parking space.

“Needed to clear my head,” Laurens replied vaguely. “Felt like some company.”

Hamilton glanced at him suspiciously. “You’re not on drugs, are you?”

Laurens looked quizzical. “No? Why?”
“Because the last time I got in a car with someone in the middle of the night he was on drugs and nearly crashed us off the Golden Gate Bridge.”

Laurens frowned. “You know, for someone so smart, you make really bad decisions.”

Hamilton nodded. “Yeah.”

He leant back in his seat, enjoying the gentle vibrations of the engine as Laurens accelerated down the street. The traffic wasn’t nearly as bad as it could have been, still, it took them some time to get out of the main tangle of the city. Hamilton wound down his own window, enjoying the cold gust of the wind on his face and hair. Despite the constant tiredness that had him feeling like his body was on auto-pilot, everything around him seemed to be in technicolour. Flashing past street signs and 7-Elevens he felt like he was seeing the whole city through a kaleidoscope of neon glow; a colour that was palpable, thrumming, almost alive.

Laurens stopped the car at a traffic light. As they waited for it to change, Hamilton snuck a look at him. A sliver of his face was in darkness, the other half a martyr to the city’s paintbrush, beaming in the light of the colours thrown against the glass; red to orange to blue to green. Like a figure in a stained-glass window. He let out a shaky breath, feeling it tighten in his chest.

The traffic light switched to green. Laurens’ fist on the gear stick pushed forward. Gradually the skyscrapers were beginning to fall away, the night thicker now without the defence of the buildings to keep it at bay. Hamilton’s pulse quickened as they turned onto the freeway, feeling the engine beneath him rumble with satisfaction as it picked up speed.

Laurens turned on the speaker and Hamilton connected it to his phone, smiling secretively at the warm pounding of familiar bass. Laurens was smiling too; he flashed a look at Hamilton out of the corner of his eye.

“How do you like my car now, Hamilton?” he asked teasingly.

Hamilton shrugged, unwilling to give Laurens the satisfaction of the truth. “It’s no Pontiac Firebird.”

Laurens chuckled lowly. Somehow it got confused between the vibrations of the leather seat and the humming adrenalin in the pit of Hamilton’s stomach.

After what felt like a long time, they turned off the freeway onto a long, empty stretch of road. Hamilton peered into the dark onto what looked like it had once been some kind of airfield. Laurens parked the car by the side of the road and turned off the engine.

“How are we?” asked Hamilton, because it seemed sensible to ask.

“Abandoned airfield.”

Hamilton nodded, there being not much to say to this.

Laurens sighed, head falling back against the headrest to reveal the long stretch of his throat. He closed his eyes. “I’m confused, Alexander.”

Hamilton, whose eyes were trained on Laurens’ throat, took every effort to resist biting it. “Ok, well,” he tried for a joke. “Generally speaking, if I were to murder someone, an airfield would not be top of my list of where to hide the body.”

Laurens’ mouth looked like it was about to twitch before slumping. “I don’t know what to do.”
“You wanna talk about it?”

“It’s complicated.”

“Uncomplicate it.”

Laurens sighed again. It conveyed more than just tiredness, or exasperation; there was a note of melancholy in the pull of it that Hamilton felt just as surely as if there had been a magnet somewhere in his chest.

“The message I got,” he started. “It was from a friend of mine…well. He was my best friend. From school.”

Hamilton nodded, curiosity mounting tangibly. “Right.”

“We fell out,” Laurens continued, his words careful and halting. “Haven’t spoken since. Three years, I think.”

Hamilton whistled. “Wow.”

“Well,” Laurens nodded nervously, fiddling with his fingers. “But now he wants to get back in touch. Apologise, see if we can patch things over, etcetera.”

“That’s great,” said Hamilton enthusiastically.

Laurens winced. Even in the darkness, Hamilton noticed. “What’s the problem?” he asked. “Do you not want to?”

Laurens made an ambiguous gesture. “I don’t know,” he confessed. “Maybe. It’s been a long time. But uh…what he did…it really hurt me, ya know?”

Hamilton’s eyes narrowed. “What did he do?”

“Well,” Laurens took off his beanie to run a hand through his hair. “Ok, so. Here’s the thing. We were really close in high school. Like really close. And it got to the point where I developed kind of like…a crush on him, I guess? But I don’t know, it was weird. Like, it was hard to tell if I wanted to be with him or if I just really enjoyed being his friend. It kind of messed me up for a bit, to tell you the truth. I felt pretty disgusting, like I was perving on him or something and he had no idea…anyway, long story short, we were at a friend’s party and we both got super high. And then suddenly, I don’t know what happened, but we’re making out. And it’s going good, like it’s great and then all of a sudden he jumps up. Stares at me like I’m a fucking monster and sprints out the room, doesn’t talk to me again for three years. Only…ah…and then he did is spread a rumour that he fell asleep and I sexually assaulted him.”

“What the FUCK,” Hamilton exploded.

“Yeah,” Laurens nodded, mouth twisting bitterly. “It was alright, like, it never properly got back to the admin. But it got so bad and enough people were talking about it that my dad had to take me out of school, move me back to America. I told him it was all bullshit obviously, that we’d never been anything more than friends and he believed me.”

“Fucking hell,” Hamilton swore. “Motherfucking hell, John.”

“But he wants to apologise,” Laurens said quickly. “He says he’s really sorry and that he freaked out, didn’t know what he was thinking…he has a lot of his own shit as well you know, he’s not a
terrible person-

“No,” Hamilton cut him off, shaking his head. “Fuck that. Jesus fucking Christ. This is why you were depressed? This guy made you depressed?”

Laurens shrugged, playing with his fingers uncomfortably. “Among other reasons.”

Hamilton swore again, more savagely. “Fuck. FUCK. Listen, John. You are going to tell that guy he can shove his apology up his motherfucking ass. You’re never seeing him again. And if I ever see that little bastard, I’ll kill him myself.”

This time, the corners of Laurens’ mouth twitched properly. “I haven’t decided what to do yet,” he said. “But I’ll remember that.”

He switched the engine back on and put his foot on the clutch.

“Now,” he said. “You ever drag raced before?”


Laurens stared, aghast, at him. Hamilton spread his palms. “I told you, the guy has a crush on me,” he said.

“Alexander, I know you are a free being with independent will, but I am begging you. Please do not bang Thomas Jefferson.”

“Please don’t bang John André,” Hamilton countered.

Laurens stared at him in surprise before his face relaxed into amusement. “Jealous, much?”

“Yes,” said Hamilton simply.

Laurens smiled sympathetically. “Don’t worry,” he said. “Giving you that record was his idea, not mine. He likes you.”

Who says I was jealous of you, Hamilton thought but didn’t say as the car roared to life, surging into a boundless, ceaseless highway.

Chapter End Notes

N.B. i have absolutely no idea how New York geography works, the end of this chapter is born purely out of the interests of romanticism.
Laurens dropped Hamilton home, and then Hamilton dropped to sleep. It was a thin, shallow, uncomfortable sleep; broken up by snatchings of images that weren’t quite dreams from which he woke a few hours later, unrested and annoyed. He stuck in his earphones and played The Kinks, working on a research paper until dawn broke through his blinds and he was able to come into school, excitable and pumped with caffeine and more than ready to discuss his problems with the first available receptive.

Unfortunately, the first available receptive turned out to be Angelica.

“Might I remind you,” she reminded him through gritted teeth. “That we have a game-changing debate against our academic nemeses in less than ten minutes?”

“Yes, I’m aware,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “And I’m prepared. In fact, I stayed up for hours last night preparing when I couldn’t get to sleep. You know. Because of the emotional turmoil.”

“Fine,” Angelica snapped, folding her flashcards away. “Fine. You have five minutes. Shoot.”

“It’s just a joke,” Hamilton launched immediately. “Just when Laurens and I are finally in, y’know, this really nice place some guy he used to have the hots for turns up from his past. Someone he grew up with, shared all kinds of traumas and memories of awkward adolescence before disappearing from his life and re-emerging with new swathes of hope and optimism and a glow-up.”

“You don’t know he’s had a glow up.”

“Laurens has,” retorted Hamilton. “I stalked his old high school pics on Facebook. He used to look like an acned daddy-longlegs. It’s a safe assumption.”

“Fair. Continue.”

“And then there’s André,” Hamilton went on. “André! I can’t compete with that! He’s the complete package. And I...well. Y’know me, I do alright with what I’ve got. You talk to most people and they’ll agree I’m pretty, at the very least. Like, there are some features you gotta try a little harder to find endearing, y’know? Specifically my nose and my forehead, don’t worry I got you, won’t make you spell it out. But even if you don’t fit into the category of people who find me good-
“looking, then at the very, very least you gotta agree my face is interesting.”

“You’re fine,” muttered Angelica, who did not like to be reminded that she was, in fact, one of the people who fit into this category.

“Like, I’m very sexy,” Hamilton continued. “Like, I know that. But most of my sex appeal comes from my charisma, y’know. My charm. My personality. Unfortunately, once you get past the hotness of it, it’s only later you discover my personality is, in actual fact, total garbage.”

“How much later are we talking?”

“Whereas André,” Hamilton ignored her, ticking off his fingers. “Face of a model. Cool, artsy, smart as fuck, and to top it off, killer personality! Like, literally the nicest guy. I almost ship it, which is just as well because next to him I have absolutely zero chance. Nada. Zilch. Like, come on. Who’s gonna pitch the hottest dude on campus next to an anxiety-ridden mess who can’t even sort his own life out, regardless of making any kind of positive, lasting impact on another person’s.”

“Okay,” Angelica sighed, recognising this sudden gloom as one of the bursts of insecurity that, although infrequent, were always to be taken seriously. “First of all, there’s nothing wrong with your face.”

“My nose,” Hamilton started before he was cut off.

“Your nose is fine. Your forehead is fine. But if you ask me, if you’re comparing against André looks have nothing to do with it. You say you and Laurens are in a ‘really nice place’. What place is that, exactly? You mean you, having Laurens exactly where you want him; not sleeping together but with an underlying sexual tension kept firmly at bay with the knowledge you can act on it any time it suits you…and secure in the fact that even though you’re not actually together, he has no interest in anyone else, yes?”

Hamilton looked guiltily at his hands. “I mean,” he muttered. “It sounds bad when you put it like that.”

“Oh sorry,” Angelica rolled her eyes. “I meant to say, friends who turn into hissy bitches whenever one of you expresses the slightest interest in another person.”

“Now you’re just being flippant.”

“André isn’t the problem, Alexander,” Angelica ignored him. “Neither is this guy from his high school, or your nose, or your terrible personality. The only thing stopping you from being with Laurens is the fact that you specifically told him you did not want that.”

“You act like you think I don’t know this.”

“Then what, pray-tell, is the problem?”

“The problem is I think I’m falling for him,” Hamilton snapped. “And I don’t know what to do about it.”

Angelica’s eyes widened. Her mouth formed a little “o”. Embarrassed, Hamilton looked back down at his hands, scratching self-consciously at the back of his neck. His face felt very hot. Angelica chewed her lip, silent for a long time before she spoke again.

“Alex, you falling for him doesn’t mean he can’t be with anyone else,” she said.
“I know that,” Hamilton retorted sharply.

“So why not just grow the fuck up and ask him out?”

Hamilton laughed hollowly. “I can’t.”

“Why? What are you so afraid of?”

“I just can’t, alright?” Hamilton snapped. “If you want to know why, go ahead and ask your sister.”

At once Angelica’s eyes, previously imploring, turned flinty. “If you’re going to bring Eliza into this-”

“No, oh my God, okay, I didn’t mean it like that,” Hamilton rolled his eyes again and blew out a frustrated breath. “I just meant…fucking Christ. It hurts too much, okay? I fall in love, it doesn’t work out, they leave. Because I feel too hard, because I fuck it up, because I’m not enough, whatever, end result’s the same. And it hurts too fucking much to put myself through that again so no, no thank you. It took me a long time to perfect the art of self-preservation, I’m not about to let all that go to waste.”

“You don’t know it’ll end that way,” Angelica began softly.

Hamilton barked out a humourless laugh. “Of course it will end!” he cried, actually throwing up his hands. “Of course it will! Ultimately, the only two courses for relationships is you either get married, or you break up. Can you see me marrying Laurens? Can you see how his father would take that? Can you see either of us surviving long enough to even get to the point of attempting to fit ourselves into the model of a heteronormative ideal?”

“You’re blowing this way out of proportion,” Angelica told him tersely. “Jesus, marriage? Are you serious? You’re twenty. I know you have your weird legacy thing but you don’t have to have everything planned to a T. It’s enough to be young and to have fun and just see where things take you.”

“Right, which is exactly what you’re doing with Church,” nodded Hamilton, before he had thought about it.

Angelica stared at him, her mouth slightly open as though she couldn’t quite believe what he had said. “You know, you really are an asshole.”

Hamilton winced upon realising how angry she was. “I’m sorry,” he said quickly. “That was a dick thing to say.”

“Jonny and I have been together since high school,” Angelica told him through gritted teeth. “Do you honestly think I would still be with him for no other reason besides convenience?”

“Hey, I like Jonny,” Hamilton raised his palms in self-defence. “When he’s around, people are a lot nicer to me.”

“Because quite honestly I couldn’t give a shit what any of you think about it,” Angelica continued as if she hadn’t heard him. “You don’t know anything about it. And you can pass that onto Richard as well.”

“Uh, I really think that’s the kind of thing you’d be better off telling him yourself,” Hamilton mumbled.
“What do you mean?”

Hamilton stared at her. “Angelica.”

“What?”

“Come on.”

A small crease marked the skin between Angelica’s knife-blade eyebrows. “What?”

“Don’t you think there’s a reason why Church bothers him just that tiny bit more than the rest of us?”

A sudden blush crept into Angelica’s cheeks. She turned away. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“You like him too, Ange. It’s plain as white food at Thanksgiving how well you two get on.”

“Get your own house in order Hamilton,” Angelica retorted. “Before you start throwing stones at mine.”

“Alright,” Burr stuck his head out the double doors and beckoned them over. “We’re ready.”

Hamilton and Angelica stood up.

“Game time,” said Hamilton under his breath, then louder. “Sorry for being a jerk.”

“It’s fine. Sorry for being a bitch.”

A handshake was performed. It was a secret one, devised at their very first event when they realised that neither of them had much chance at joining the Free Masons.

Jefferson, Madison and a BSU rep Hamilton only vaguely knew were already seated at the front of the lecture theatre. The room itself was packed; sweeping his gaze across the first aisle Hamilton made out Washington and Professors Greene, Knox and Adams, as well as several other elderly faces he recognised from various meetings and networking events.

Hamilton and Angelica took their seats on the right of the space left for Burr. The moment they had sat down, Jefferson leaned over the table to grin ferally at Hamilton.

“How’s Laurens?” he asked with a leer. “My dad asked after him. Apparently, his father is very anxious to know how he’s getting on this year.”

“Spend a lot of time worrying over other people’s fathers do you?” asked Hamilton mildly.

“Only the best for you doll,” Jefferson drawled with a wink. “Say, why don’t you give this up and mosey on over to our side of the table? ‘Aint no Jungle Fever but things’ll sure get plenty heated.”

“Gosh racist and sexist,” Angelica rolled her eyes. “You really are the full package, Thomas.”

“I’m not a racist,” Jefferson argued furiously.
“Wow. Compelling argument. You hear that Ange, I think we might actually have a problem here.”

“Both of you save it,” Burr hissed, sliding into his seat before beginning to speak into the microphone.

“Hello, and thank you all very much for coming. The current atmosphere in the light of recent events has, as I’m sure you’re aware, been increasingly contentious, on and off campus. There are a lot of high emotions flying about, a lot of different sides to the story. While a plurality of different ideologies and beliefs can only ever be beneficial to a school, and society as a whole, it is important to have an orderly, controlled outlet for these feelings to be addressed in a respectful manner, lest the powder keg explode under the spark of toxic fear, hatred and prejudice from both sides.” (Hamilton rolled his eyes.) “Introducing our panellists: we have Ford Carter of the Black Student Union, Thomas Jefferson of student council and the Business Society, James Madison of student council, and from the Support Jamal Curtis Foundation: Alexander Hamilton of student council and Angelica Schuyler, Chair of the Feminist Society.”

There was a smattering of polite applause. Hamilton felt numerous pairs of board-member eyes flicker over him. Committing his face, remembering his name.

“First question,” Burr turned his body slightly towards Hamilton and Angelica. “Why did you found the SJC? Specifically, what was it that made you decide it was Jamal Curtis who deserved your support, rather than Andrew Drayton?”

“Uh, it was a no-brainer,” replied Hamilton sarcastically. “Andrew Drayton and a group of fellow students, whose identities are still unknown, went into the neighbourhood dressed in hockey-masks, balaclavas…all that Purge nonsense…to look intentionally threatening, although not as threatening as the signs bearing white supremacist and racist slogans they were also carrying. Whether they went there looking to provoke trouble or as some sort of practical joke I don’t know, but I do know that act in itself was a violent one, a threatening one. Now you take a teenage boy, full of all the anger and recklessness of youth and you send these people into his home with a message that they want you dead. Of course he’s going to hit back. I’m not going to defend whether his reaction was right or reasonable, because it’s not actually relevant. The police did not care whether his reaction was right or reasonable – the police saw a black boy hit a white boy and their reaction was to put the black boy in hospital. It was an unlawful and disproportionate miscarriage of justice that, had the victim in question been any other colour, would not have happened.”

“Besides, it wasn’t only a question of who deserved our support, but who actually needed it,” Angelica added. “Andrew Drayton is from a wealthy, well-connected family. Were the case to come to Court, the fees would not have been an issue for him. For Jamal’s family however, they were considering dropping the case altogether simply because they couldn’t afford it. It’s a sure sign that there’s a problem inherent in the system when a victim has to rely on charity from a college society just to get justice.”

“There is no evidence that this was in any way a racial matter,” said Jefferson boredly. “The police received a call from onlookers that there was trouble. They arrived at the scene to find two kids embroiled in a fist fight, one of which significantly had the upper hand. They used their powers of reasonable force to deal with the situation. Everything that happened afterwards has been blown up by the media preying on the insatiable public demand for titilatory consumption.”

“The SJC and the media have allowed themselves to become waylaid on this issue of race,” Madison elaborated. “Which has obscured some of the facts. Drayton and his friends were
exercising their right to assemble and express their opinion. You don’t have to agree with his opinion, you don’t have to agree that what he did was sensible or wise. But the fact is his right to do so is enshrined in our constitution. Misguided yes, dangerous maybe, but ultimately, Drayton did nothing illegal. Jamal Curtis however, understandable though his motives may have been, broke the law. He committed assault with a deliberate intention to maim if not worse. Despite the politics and philosophy surrounding this incident, the fact is all American citizens are subject to the law and it is the police’s job, as agreed by way of Social Contract from every member of society, to see it carried out.”

“The law is there to protect society,” nodded Carter, the BSU rep. “However, arguably, the police were heavy-handed in their approach, and this could have been due to racial influence. Or not. It is hard to know.”

“You mentioned the Social Contract,” said Burr as Hamilton frowned bemusedly at the BSU rep. “But, to quote Maximilien Robespierre: ‘Any law which violates the inalienable rights of man is essentially unjust and tyrannical; it is not a law at all.’ Arguably, the Social Contract only works so long as it protects all its citizens. If the police are over-exercising their powers, then surely the law falls on the side of Jamal?”

“That argument only works if there is substantiated evidence that the police have been over-exercising their powers,” replied Madison.

“They put a seventeen-year-old boy in hospital,” hissed Angelica.

“We don’t know the situation,” answered Jefferson. “We don’t know how much force was required. The police are obligated to use their discretion and act quickly. No disrespect, Jamal Curtis may be only seventeen but he’s a big lad, looks quite a bit older, carries a lot of weight—”

“Do you actually know that?” Hamilton interrupted cuttingly. “Or are you just making a general assumption?”

“I’m sorry,” Jefferson raised a questioning eyebrow at Burr. “Am I being accused of racial profiling, or not doing my research? Because honestly, I find both insinuations pretty offensive.”

There was some laughter from the audience. Hamilton slumped back in his seat, lip curled.

“So by your estimation the police’s conduct was appropriate?” Burr asked Jefferson.

“I wasn’t there,” Jefferson raised his palms defensively. “I can’t say for sure whether their use of force was warranted. But I can say that recently, people have been too quick to slap a racial label on a situation that doesn’t necessarily require one, and it would be unconstitutional for Drayton to be punished for wishful liberal thinking.”

“You argue that this situation has nothing to do with race,” countered Hamilton. “Then outright ignore the fact that Drayton and his friends were there as members of a neo-Nazi rally.”

“Which is their right, and thus cannot be penalised for.”

“Cannot be arrested. That doesn’t mean they should be allowed to stay on at this university.”

“Oh come on, Hamilton,” Jefferson rolled his eyes. “You’re just gonna kick out everyone that doesn’t agree with you? That would start a very dangerous precedent. We’ve already made a portentous start by quoting Robespierre, let’s not turn this into the Terror.”

“There’s a difference between having a plurality of opinion,” said Angelica. “And an endorsement
of racist views. Being a neo-Nazi is not a political identity. It is an incitement of murder and genocide. The constitution allows freedom to assemble under any ideology but Columbia University has a responsibility to its culturally-diverse students to ensure their safety, which cannot be provided for if someone like Drayton is given the OK to undermine their right to exist.”


“Two wrongs do not make a right,” said Carter sagely. “Freedom of speech is important, but so is community.”

“What exactly are you here for?” demanded Hamilton.

“We’ve hit upon the main topic of debate,” said Burr swiftly. “So we may as well stick with it. In your opinion Drayton should be expelled, yes?”

“Absolutely,” nodded Angelica. “Which brings up the other crux, that of wealth and privilege. While Thomas and James’ views are shared by many, the fact is the school wouldn’t dare risk the blot on its reputation if the cost of keeping Drayton on wasn’t outweighed by that of his expulsion. It’s one thing that Drayton is white and middle-class. But arguably, the influence of money and social pressure on the administration’s decision is even more sinister in what it means for accountability and transparency.”

“You’ve got an awful lot to say for someone who is also white and middle-class,” snarled Jefferson. “I thought the idea of identity politics was to stay in your lane.”

“Excuse me,” said Angelica, her voice frosty. “For your information, I have a number of practical problems with identity politics. But if you’re going to make that argument, my father is Jewish and while I don’t claim to share the experience of some of those at this university, I would also rest a lot easier without the likes of Andy Drayton around.”

“Your father is also Senator Philip Schuyler,” Madison pointed out. “Another member of the board and, forgive me, a singularly wealthy individual. Is it too far to reach that historically, one of the reasons you’ve been allowed to be so vehement in your crusade is that self-same pattern of wealth and privilege?”

Boom, there it is thought Hamilton, as Angelica’s eyes turned to flints.

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“Do you think we have enough?” asked Tallmadge doubtfully, appraising the mountain of beer stacked haphazardly in the bucket of icy water. “I can go out and get more.”

“Nah it’s fine,” Mulligan shook his head, clapping Tallmadge on the shoulder. “You and Laurens have done enough letting us party in your place. Least I can do to restrict the amount of underaged drinkers throwing up on your carpet.”

“Underaged drinkers such as le Marquis de Lafayette, you mean?” asked Laurens, snickering from where he sat texting on the couch.

Lafayette stuck his tongue out at him. “I told you,” he whined. “I ate a funny whelk.”

“Sure you did,” said Mulligan, stretching. “What time are Ange and Alexander getting here?”

“About an hour,” replied Eliza, checking her watch. “They’ve both got society stuff, but they’re
coming straight after.”

“Who do you think won the debate this morning?” asked Meade.

Mulligan shrugged. “Hard to tell,” he replied. “Obviously it’s my instinct to denounce everything Jefferson and Madison say as complete bullshit, but they spoke well and made good points. Angelica was very good and so was Hamilton…if tending to rely slightly more on emotional persuasion than detail at times. Then again, it’s a very emotional case. I don’t know. Both sides did well, even if they couldn’t totally refrain from getting bitchy.”

“But do you think they’ll have had any effect on the administration?” asked Eliza.

“It’ll have made them uncomfortable if nothing else,” replied Meade. “Once we get a full-scale rally underway and have public pressure on our side, then we can start to widen the cracks.”

Laurens snickered. Lafayette frowned at him. “What are you doing?”

“Sending this to Alex,” replied Laurens, showing Lafayette the screen.

It was a Russian cat meme, depicting an orange tabby curled possessively around a teddy-bear. Lafayette’s frown deepened.

“Don’t you think it looks like him?” asked Laurens.

“No,” said Lafayette decisively. “I do not.”

Laurens shrugged and pressed send anyway.

“What about music?” Tallmadge asked Mulligan.

“Laurens is DJing.”

“It’s not DJing if it’s just putting on a playlist off Spotify,” said Laurens, tearing himself away from his phone. “You wouldn’t even let me use my deck.”

“My birthday means no techno, and as passable as I will accept that you are, I still don’t trust you.”

“Okay, well, whatever,” Laurens rolled his eyes. “I put together the playlist like you wanted me to, and I made it collaborative so all your dumb choices are on there. Fuck whoever added Mumford and Sons.”

“Tallmadge.”

“Little Lion Man is a generational classic and I won’t be shamed for liking it.”

Mulligan kissed his teeth and turned away to examine the playlist. Lafayette went back to watching Laurens scroll through his phone, tittering every so often.

“Laurens, do you know that post with the stickman with a face that says ‘memes’ and then it takes off its mask and it says ‘crippling depression’?”

“Lol ya.”

“That’s you.”

Laurens smacked him, nearly dropping his phone as it vibrated with a response.
“Oh my God, this one is so Francis,” he muttered, forwarding something to do with breadsticks.

“So, you two are friends again?” asked Lafayette with a raised eyebrow as Laurens quickly started typing.

Laurens shrugged. “We’re just talking,” he replied. “Keeping it casual. It’s nice, I won’t lie.”

“Hmm,” responded Lafayette as the doorbell rang.

“Hey man,” Hercules greeted jovially as he opened the door, ushering in Robert Townsend and a number of his other friends from home. “Come on in, good to see you.”

“Oh shit,” said Laurens, eyes widening as a new message popped up on his screen. “I mentioned the party to André. Herc, is it cool if he comes?”

“Yeah dude, I already invited him,” Mulligan replied, closing the door as the last guest filed in.

“Sweet,” said Laurens, relaxing back into the couch.

Lafayette, still frowning as Laurens returned mindlessly to his phone, gave his ear a long, penetrating look.

“John,” he began. “In all seriousness, please tell me there is nothing…untoward…going on between you and André?”

Laurens smirked at him. “Untoward?”

“Trompeur. Sournois. You know what I mean.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” Laurens rolled his eyes, a little impatiently. “Look. I’ll admit it, I like André. I enjoy speaking to him. I also enjoy messing with Alexander. But come on, you really think I’d do that to him? When I know he likes him? Come on man, what kind of friend do you think I am?”

“He doesn’t like him-like him. He would just quite like to…how you say…smash.”

“Even so,” Laurens shrugged. “Major break in the bro-code.”

“Is that what you are now? Bros?”

“Looks like it, doesn’t it?” Laurens got to his feet, slipping his phone in his back pocket. “Right. Where the fuck is this aux chord?”

Laurens went off in search of Mulligan’s speaker. Lafayette, who had the feeling it was looking like that kind of evening, went to get a drink.

About half an hour later, André turned up looking solidly miserable.

“Hey,” he said unenthusiastically as Lafayette opened the door. “Laurens here?”

“Yo my man,” Laurens exclaimed from behind Lafayette’s shoulder, stopping when he caught sight of his face. “You okay?”

André grunted, pushing past Lafayette to enter the apartment. “You got anything to drink?”

“Sure,” Laurens replied, leading him towards the liquor table. “We’ve got beer…cider…whiskey,
vodka…”

André filled a plastic cup with about a third of vodka and threw it back. Laurens watched with a semi-shocked, semi-impressed grimace.

“Peggy,” André explained, pouring himself more vodka although thankfully adding some lemonade. “She came over today. We hung out, totally chill until she starts getting all these messages from her jerk boyfriend: where are you, who are you with, when are you getting home, etcetera. So then we get into this massive fight until finally she just up and leaves.”

He took another sip of his drink, shuddering slightly at the aftertaste. “It’s just so fucking unfair, you know?” he continued. “Not only am I in love with someone I can’t be with, but I gotta watch while she gets treated like absolute shit by this total fucking asshole.”

“That really sucks man,” said Laurens awkwardly, pouring himself an old-fashioned so as not to be outdone.

“Yeah,” André exhaled frustratedly. “Sucks. Anyway whatever, I’m being rude, not about to drag the atmosphere down with my problems. Thanks for inviting me. This place is sweet, this is yours?”

“Ya I share it with Ben,” replied Laurens, grabbing Tallmadge by the arm as he walked past with an armful of Doritos.

“Tallmadge, right?” asked André, giving him the onceover with eyes that were already slightly glazed. “You hosted the open mic event.”

“Yeah that’s right,” said Tallmadge warily.

“That was such a great time dude,” André told him eagerly. “Really well-organised. And I fuckin’ loved your set. Do you write your own stuff?”

“Yeah,” Tallmadge shrugged modestly. “Acoustic mostly.”

“Me too!” nodded André as Laurens looked on with exasperated amusement. “Dude, we should totally collaborate. The two of us together…we could be the next Simon and Garfunkel!”

“Who’s talking about Simon and Garfunkel?” Mulligan’s voice came booming over the speaker. “I already let Hamilton put on some Springsteen crap, okay, keep your six-string nonsense off my Bose.”

“Hamilton added Springsteen?” asked Lafayette, delighted.

Mulligan shrugged. “Someone did,” he replied. “And I am not about to take the wrap for that. In all honesty though, kudos to you, John Laurens. For the most part, he actually added music from post 1978.”

“Let’s have a look,” said James McHenry, picking up the phone and reading aloud. “‘A Hamilton Mixtape’. Herc its your birthday, you named it after him?”

“It’s this idea Lafayette had,” Laurens explained, the man in question being too absorbed in regaling Washington of the good news to take the credit. “Alex only knew, like, three Hispanic artists plus Bobby Womack so we’ve been steadily introducing him to new music. The playlist is an amalgamation of all our tastes.”
“That’s adorable,” McHenry commented, scrolling through and smiling upon seeing Public Enemy being followed by Emmy the Great.

“I heard you DJ’d Republic,” Tilghman addressed Laurens. “I was sorry I couldn’t make it, it sounded lit as fuck.”

“Did you hear I got into a fight with Charles Lee and lost my contract?” asked Laurens wryly.

“What!” exclaimed Lafayette, grabbing Laurens’ shoulder urgently. “You lost your contract!!”

“Almost,” Laurens corrected himself. “Almost lost my contract. Apparently someone from the BSU called them up and was all like ‘We’ll boycott you if you don’t include more black artists on deck’. Which was super cool of them, I need to find out who it was so I can thank them.”

“Dude that was Aaron,” Mulligan called over to him from where he was being forced a shot by Beth.

Laurens frowned. “Fuck off.”

“I’m serious, that was Aaron. He told me pretty much straight after.”

“Why would Aaron go out of his way to literally blackmail Republic over a DJ set?” asked Laurens, nonplussed.

“Because Alexander told him to, obviously,” Mulligan answered, now having finished the shot and passing several to Lafayette. “I thought you knew.”

Laurens stilled. “Alexander told him to?” he repeated, astounded.

“That was nice of him,” said Beth, mouth twisting unconvincingly.

“Hey,” Mulligan stopped her. “Leave off, ok? I know he’s kind of a lot at first…well, all the time, really…but trust me, he’s a good boy. He just kind of goes to shit whenever there’s a pretty girl involved. Or boy,” he added, noticing André. “For that matter.”

“What?” said André, blinking owlishly over his vodka and lemonade.

“He has his issues,” Mulligan continued. “Like the rest of us. But honestly, my life changed for the better that night I found him, wandering around Brooklyn in the dead of night, one suitcase to his name. And he’s grown up a lot since then, you know. I’m proud of my son. Don’t mention that to him by the way, that’s for present company’s ears only.”

“’Ear ’ear,” slurred Lafayette, unsure whether his accent was coming out thicker in his drunkenness or whether he was just repeating what Mulligan was saying.

“Hercules mentioned you’re thinking of going into music production?” Eliza asked Beth who still looked doubtful.

Beth nodded. “It’s a competitive industry,” she replied. “And very male-dominated. But I’m passionate about it.”

“That’s so amazing. I wish I was ambitious enough to have a goal like that.”

“What do you want to do? Music as well?”

“Oh no,” Eliza blushed. “I’m no way near talented enough. I think I’d like to work with non-profits
“or charities…human rights groups…something like that.”

“That’s really valid work. Have you done any internships or anything?”

“I’ve done quite a lot of volunteering,” said Eliza. “Soup kitchens and things. Mostly with my church but also with things like the SJC. I don’t know…I don’t think I’m smart enough to do much beyond the front line.”

“Don’t talk like that, I’m sure you’d be great.”

Eliza laughed uncomfortably, gesturing towards André and Tallmadge in order to distract the focus from herself. “These guys are thinking of starting a band,” she said. “You could be their manager.”

“Doesn’t really fit in with my vision I’m afraid,” replied Beth apologetically. “I’m mostly focusing on black artists, and more avant-garde stuff. Laurens though, I would love to work with you sometime.”

“Oh…really?” said Laurens, forcing himself from his thoughts and back to reality. “Yeah, totally. That would be great.”

“Can I give you my number?” asked Beth, pulling out her phone. “I’m getting together a group of young artists who are doing some similar stuff to you. Doing some workshops, get some PR going. If you’d like to drop by sometime that would be really awesome.”

“Great,” said Laurens, a little taken aback by what was happening but entering the digits anyway.

“What is this,” Mulligan said exasperatedly. “Now Laurens has got my girlfriend’s number? That is it, this is the last time I bring you to meet my friends.”

“Oh! Yes!” Lafayette snickered over his glass. “You must be very careful, Beth, that you do not fall victim to John Laurens, famed rake and lady-killer.”

Laurens pushed him. The doorbell rang; Lafayette went to get it.

“Bonsoir,” said Hamilton. “Anyone order a ham?”

Lafayette frowned at him.

“Yeah fair enough,” Hamilton shrugged acceptingly. “Worth a shot though.”

“Alex!” Nik Fish raised his glass in greeting, slopping half the contents over himself.

“Nicholas, my man,” said Hamilton, striding towards the couch where his friend was sitting. “How’s it going? Do you know Angelica?”

“I watched your debate today,” Nik informed her as they shook hands. “So satisfying to see you destroy Jefferson.”

“They put up a very decent fight,” Angelica conceded, not too happily.

“They were sexist,” Hamilton said angrily. “They knew they couldn’t side-line you for being a woman, so they tried to build an argument around your opinion being invalid because of your race and class instead. When they accused you of appropriation for ‘trying to adopt someone else’s struggle’?? What kind of bullshit. They wouldn’t have done that if you’d been a boy.”

“Raise a glass to neo-palatable patriarchy, I guess,” said Nik and he and Angelica clinked glasses.
“Oh well,” Angelica sighed after taking a long drink. “If it has any kind of influence at all on the admin it’ll have been worth it.”

“Do you know what the reach was for the press coverage?” Hamilton asked Nik who shook his head.

“Ask André,” he said, pointing. “He’ll know.”

Hamilton’s head whipped in the direction Nik pointed, stomach tightening at the sight of André, slumped halfway down the same couch as Laurens.

“Oh André’s here,” he said, voice hearty. “With Laurens. Great, that’s excellent. Really fantastic.”

“A lot of superlatives there, Alex,” Angelica pointed out.

“Vodka?” asked Nik, waving a bottle.

“Please,” said Hamilton gratefully.

Nik passed him the bottle. Hamilton grabbed the nearest available mixer before downing the glass, grimacing against the burn as it churned its way through his stomach. On the other side of the room Laurens looked up and caught his eye; he raised his glass in greeting, feeling the blood rush into his face when Laurens winked back. Oh this is ridiculous, he thought to himself as Laurens turned back to his animated conversation with André. You say the words I’m falling for him and suddenly you can’t even look at him without making a fool of yourself? Grow the fuck up.

“Hey Alex,” McHenry called, gesturing at the speaker. “Did you add this? I love Alt-J.”

“Yeah,” said Alex sulkily, wondering whether it was just the lighting or whether Laurens had always been this pretty. “Me too.”

Chapter End Notes

ok ok so originally i was gonna fit the whole party in this one chapter but then it was waaay too long so I decided to separate the two, but should have the next part up before Christmas.

thanks as always for your incredible comments, it's been a hard couple of weeks so the kind words and support I get from u guys is making me doubly grateful. Big love to all of you.

3 chapters left!
Dissolve Me II

Chapter Summary

She makes the sound, the sound the sea makes. I'm tired now.

Chapter Notes

Sincerest apologies for the lateness, hope the end makes up for it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“It is not quite the Palais Garnier,” Lafayette told McHenry. “But it is still very impressive. I am sorry, I did not mean to sound superior. The architecture is just not to my taste, that is all. And that is hardly the Metropolitan’s fault, I have just been raised with a deference for Beaux-Arts style since a very young age. The Opéra Bastille, for example, I regard as a visual monstrosity, so you see it is not just me being a condescending French.”

“I hear you,” McHenry nodded. “I took my girlfriend to see the Palais Garnier last time we visited Paris. Beautiful building, even though we could only afford to view the outside, haha.”

“Ah…yes,” said Lafayette, looking down at his glass guiltily. “It is very expensive.”

“Have you managed to see a lot of Opera since you got here?” McHenry asked.

Lafayette shook his head. “I have only been twice,” he replied. “Once when Adrienne came to visit…that is my girlfriend, she lives in Paris…and once when I was homesick. I’m afraid my friends are not so much of a *bon vivant* as I—”

“We’re saving you from yourself,” Hamilton spoke up before addressing McHenry. “One time he spent nearly four thousand dollars on a box which he holed himself up in and cried for eight hours.”

“I was depressed,” Lafayette complained as McHenry laughed. “I wanted to go home.”

“And apparently premium tickets at one of the most expensive attractions in the city were as close as you could get,” said Hamilton wryly. “We could have just gone to see *Divines.*”

“You wouldn’t understand,” muttered Lafayette darkly. “You never get homesick.”

“Oh, are you not from New York?” asked McHenry, surprised.

Hamilton shook his head, a little slower than he might have done when not under the influence of three vodka-cranberries. “Virgin Isles,” he replied. “Moved here for college three years ago.”

“Wow,” said McHenry enthusiastically. “Must have been quite a culture shock. Do you ever miss it?”
Hamilton shrugged. “I like cities,” he answered uncomfortably. “And I’m very much a New Yorker. Winter can get fucked, though.”

“I’ll say,” Tilghman chimed in, draping an arm around Lafayette’s shoulder. “Man, I can’t wait for the holidays. We always try to do Christmas in Jamaica.”

“I can’t imagine that being very Christmassy,” McHenry observed. “In the traditional sense, I mean.”

Tilghman raised an eyebrow. “In the Coca-Cola sense, you mean?” he said wryly. “Jesus was born in Palestine, ya’ll. Sand was a more common sight than fir trees in that part of the world.”

“Are you going home for Christmas?” Hamilton asked Lafayette.

Lafayette nodded. “You are welcome to come of course,” he said sincerely. “If you don’t have plans.”

“Oh, no it’s fine,” Hamilton shook his head quickly, cheeks reddening. “Mama and Papa Schuyler already said I can intrude on their perfect bubble again. I wasn’t sure seeing as Eliza and I aren’t even dating anymore, but hey. I won’t feel weird if they don’t.”

“Well, if you change your mind,” Lafayette continued with a shrug. “The offer stands. André is going back to France too and he and I are planning to meet up, if you would like to be Porthos.”

Hamilton’s gaze switched to André, currently watching the beer pong game Mulligan and Beth had started from where he leaned woozily against the mantle-piece. One look at his catalogue-designer clothing had him trying to imagine the three of them on holiday in Paris; two perfect princes gliding across the steps of the Sacré-Coeur while Hamilton scurried after them, trying not to dirty himself in the tracks they made in the dust.

“Porthos? Please,” he said eventually, covering his humiliation with lightness. “I’m so obviously Aramis. But thanks, you’re fine.”

Lafayette nodded and turned to ask Tilghman about his family in Jamaica. Hamilton went over to the liquor table and topped up his drink. Resentment was growing inside him, he could feel it tightening in his chest. The alcohol too, rather than making him upbeat was sinking him further into melancholy and as he sipped his drink, he cast about the room with bitter annoyance. It was a familiar apartment packed full of his friends, the people he loved best and only in this world. Even so, sipping sourly in his dark corner, he felt like he was alone amongst strangers.

“Hello,” came a dreamy little voice near his elbow. He looked down and saw Eliza smiling up at him, a bottle of Chardonnay in her hand.

“Hi sweetheart,” said Hamilton, putting an arm around her and very briefly burying his nose in her hair. “Are you drunk?”

Eliza nodded, her smile wobbly. “A little,” she conceded, pausing a moment before adding. “I came to tell you to stop brooding.”


Eliza clucked her tongue impatiently. “You couldn’t be Byronic if you tried,” she said. “You’re much too cute.”

Eliza looked very unimpressed.

“Making a terrible pun doesn’t mean you suit it any better,” she chastised him. “You need to find a new aesthetic. Moody goth-poet doesn’t work for you.”

“Yeah that’s fair,” Hamilton sighed, casting an eye over the room. “Admittedly my poetry is only barely better than Don Juan, an actual crackfic.” His gaze landed on Laurens, standing in a group with Robert Townsend and Mulligan’s other home friends. “Laurens could be Byronic. He’s got that sulky, misanthropic shit down.”

Eliza traced Hamilton’s gaze to where he was looking. Laurens was listening attentively to something Townsend was saying, brushing his long, curly hair out of his face in order to maintain better eye contact. Glancing up at Hamilton, she saw the corners of his mouth were sagging.

“He’d be a little less misanthropic if you went over and made out with him,” she suggested cheekily.


Eliza looked quizzically at him. Hamilton, who was now looking darkly in André’s direction, avoided her gaze by drinking more.

“Maybe I’ve got it wrong,” said Eliza, quite cuttingly. “You’re so self-destructive, perhaps you are a tragic hero.”


Eliza raised her eyebrow again. “If you’re trying to blame God, you’re preaching to the wrong choir.”

“Haha,” said Hamilton boredly. “Look, I’m not passing the buck, okay? Creon is not my downfall, or whatever. All I’m saying is some people just aren’t meant to be happy. Like, you either get the stars aligned all nice and straight, or you get your name in them. Can’t have it both ways.”

It was Eliza’s turn to look bored. “Very poetic,” she commented dryly. “If masochistic, elitist nonsense.”

“Wow, look at that. You just summed me up in one sentence.”

Eliza shoved him. In her tipsiness it was a little harder than intended and Hamilton stumbled, slopping some of his drink over himself.

“Hamilton! Stop wasting alcohol!” Mulligan barked at him from across the room, having soundly lost the beer-pong game. “Everyone, get over here. We’re playing odds-on.”

“Ooh, I love this game!” Lafayette exclaimed, hurrying over and promptly tripping up in his excitement.

“Nik, you first,” ordered Mulligan as Nik helped up Lafayette. He pointed to the fridge. “Odds on you eating a jalapeno.”
Nik pulled a face. “Aw man, no fair;” he complained. “You know I can’t handle hot food.”

“I once offered him a packet of Sensations,” said Hamilton. “And he couldn’t eat them because they were too spicy.”

“They don’t have spices in Denmark,” Nik retorted. “Only meatballs and socialism.”

“Fairly distribute the odds, dude.”

“Fine, twenty,” said Nik.

The others counted down from three as Nik and Mulligan glared challengingly at each other. As the final number fell Nik said “twelve” and Mulligan “seventeen”. A crow of disappointment resounded around the group.

“Bad luck bro,” grinned Nik. “I get to stay friends with my taste-buds a little longer. Hamilton, odds on you stripping.”

Immediately, Hamilton began to take off his sweater. “To the cloth or the skin?” he asked.

“The cloth, please,” grimaced Mulligan, forcing Hamilton’s arm back into his sleeve. “And at least wait for the odds, for Christ’s sake.”

“Five,” said Hamilton, before adding. “I like my body.”

“Fine,” Mulligan rolled his eyes. “3…2…1…”

Nik and Hamilton both said “four”. There was a clamour of laughter and Hamilton grinned roguishly, grabbing the hem of shirt and sweater before flinging them off in one fluid motion. Laurens’s grip on his glass tightened as Hamilton grabbed his waistband and wriggled out of his jeans, until he was standing in nothing but a pair of very tight boxer briefs.

“Calvin Klein, nice,” commented Angelica, not so subtly checking him out. “And yet you told Washington that you can’t afford to buy food?”

“I have priorities,” Hamilton responded, hooking his arm across his torso and stretching to properly display the muscles in his side.

“What’s that then,” asked Lafayette, poking the soft curve protruding above the elastic of his waist.

Hamilton batted him away. “Don’t body shame me,” he said. “It won’t work. So I’ve got a little extra to hold on to, I’m sexy as fuck and you all know it.”

“Granted,” nodded Nik, eyes running over Hamilton approvingly. “Fair play to you Alex, I always assumed you were boasting.”

Hamilton scoffed, placing his hands on his hips and leaning backwards slightly. “Come on Nik;” he grinned, looking down at himself briefly. “You should know by now, I only ever boast by telling the truth.”

Laurens’ breath died in his throat.

“Oh my God,” Angelica groaned as the others began to snicker. “Can we move on, please? Before this gets any more homoerotic.”
“Certainly,” replied Hamilton, stretching his arms behind his back so that his abdomen stretched. “Angelica. Odds on you letting someone text a contact off your phone.”

A flicker of anxiety flitted across Angelica’s face before it was back to its usual steel.


Hamilton nodded, flexing one final time before beginning the countdown. “3…2…1…”

“Eleven.”

“Fuck,” Angelica swore as the group cackled delightedly, slipping her phone out of her pocket with ill-grace. “How the hell do you do that?”

“I am the Numeromancer,” replied Hamilton smugly, declining her phone. “Math is power. Nah, give it to someone else, I can’t think of anything good.”

“I’ll take it,” said Meade.

Angelica turned to look at him. His face was impassive, betraying nothing. They held each other’s gaze levelly, neither of them speaking until after what felt like a long time, Angelica pursed her lips and passed him her phone.

“Don’t waste it,” she said simply before turning away.

“Hamilton, your turn,” Mulligan reminded him.

Hamilton waved dismissively. “Let someone else have it,” he said. “My brain’s completely gone. Most of it to my pants, haha.”

“I will go!” exclaimed Lafayette, pushing Hamilton out the way in his eagerness. “John! I challenge you!”

“Oh great,” said Laurens dully, offering André a tired look.

“Odds on you kissing John André!”

A hush fell over the group as several heads turned to look keenly at both Johns. Hamilton’s arms fell limply to his side, eyes wide as they flitted from one face to the other. Laurens laughed awkwardly, reaching up to scratch the back of his neck before turning to André.

“Do you mind?” he asked.

André shrugged. “Not at all.”

“Odds, odds, odds!” Lafayette chanted, thumping his fist on the table and utterly oblivious to Hamilton glaring at him.

“Uh…fifteen?” Laurens suggested, not wanting to offend André while also not wanting to come across too eager.

André, and several others, tutted at him. “Come on man, we can do better than that,” he said jovially, slapping Laurens reprovingly on the arm. “Ten.”

“Ten it is!” exclaimed Lafayette jubilantly. “Un…deux…trois…”
“Eight,” said Laurens and André to an uproar of cheering and enthusiastic applause. Laurens grinned sheepishly, his face bright red as he allowed himself to be pushed towards André. As the two approached each other Hamilton slipped further into the group as if seeking to lose himself, an unnecessary action as no one was paying him any attention.

When they were about six inches apart, Laurens nervously put his hands on André’s waist. He leaned in. Despite André’s bravado he could sense his own nerves; the automatic, heterosexual resistance when their lips met. But then he relaxed, melting very slightly in Laurens’ firm grip and allowing him to guide their lips together. Laurens felt the curve of his smile broaden amusedly as their friends cheered around them. He hesitated, probing his tongue daringly against André’s bottom lip and felt a swooping of delighted relief when he opened his mouth to accept it.

André’s mouth was warm and soft. His jaw was more angular than Hamilton’s with a rougher scratching of stubble that Laurens found enormously attractive. They kissed for a long time until Laurens’ embarrassment overtook him and he broke away, smiling blushingly as their friends whooped and wolf-whistled, stepping forwards to clap them repeatedly on the back.

“Bravo boys,” Mulligan congratulated them, pressing shots into their hands. “And well done to André for being a good sport.”

André shrugged, his cheeks also faintly pink. “It was no martyrdom,” he said. “You’re a good kisser.”

Laurens laughed, embarrassed but pleased.

There was another knock at the door. Mulligan opened it to reveal Aaron Burr, dressed in a very formal black coat with a particularly high, stiff collar.

Mulligan stepped aside to allow him in. “Do I have to invite you in first, or…?”

Burr smiled thinly and hoped that it passed for amusement. “Sorry I’m late,” he said, taking off his coat to reveal an even more formal shirt and trouser-suit beneath it. “I had a meeting.”

“No problem,” said Mulligan. “You just missed quite a performance.”

“Oh really?” Burr quirked an eyebrow, glancing interestedly around the ensemble for someone to enlighten him.

“John and John made out!” announced Lafayette before erupting into a fit of giggles.

“We were playing odds on,” said Laurens hastily, noticing the gleam in Burr’s eye that appeared whenever he heard anything particularly juicy. “It’s a stupid game. We weren’t fooling around or anything.”

Burr nodded. “Sure,” he said, filing it away anyway.

After that the game broke up somewhat, most people being too drunk to continue, and the guests went back to dancing or milling around. Burr accepted the beer Mulligan pressed on him, looking in his prim clothing very much like something out of an espionage as his raptor-like eyes surveyed the apartment. “Where’s Hamilton?” he asked.

Mulligan glanced around, as if just noticing he was missing. “That’s a good point, actually,” he said with a frown. “I’m not sure. Probably the toilet or for a cigarette.”

“Hey Aaron,” said Laurens suddenly. “Can I talk to you about something?”
“Sure,” replied Burr, surprised, following Laurens away from the main space of the living room where Tallmadge, André and Townsend were dancing very energetically to _I Wish I Was James Bond._

“What’s up?” asked Burr, eyeing Laurens coolly as he took a swig of his beer.

“Uh,” said Laurens, running a hand briefly through his hair before deciding it was probably best to head straight in. “Herc told me that it was you who called up _Republic_ and convinced them not to fire me, after the whole Charles Lee thing.”

Burr continued to blink expectantly at him, as if unsure whether he was being asked a question. “That’s right,” he said at last.

“Why did you do it?” asked Laurens nervously. “Alexander…Hamilton didn’t ask you to, did he?”

“Yes, he did,” replied Burr, matter-of-factly.

Laurens stomach dropped an inch. “Oh.”

Burr raised an eyebrow, looking at Laurens curiously. “I’m sorry,” he said, not sounding very apologetic. “I’m unsure whether that was or wasn’t what you wanted to hear.”

“It’s not what I expected,” replied Laurens.

Burr’s expression morphed into one of deepest scepticism.

“Why would he do that?” Laurens appealed desperately. “It’s not like him to…you know. Think about other people. Individuals I mean, not like…social or ethnic groups.”

Burr, whose expertise was not fully equipped to deal within the realms of emotional conversation, looked decidedly uncomfortable, glancing over his shoulder as if hoping to be literally anywhere else. “I don’t know,” he replied tersely. “Hamilton talks as though his world view is founded on pragmatism rather than sentiment, but you should know he very rarely walks the walk.”

“Sentiment?”

“Emotions,” said Burr tiredly, mistaking Laurens’ echo for confusion. “Feelings, you know. He lets them cloud his judgement. Er…no offence. I don’t pretend to have the slightest clue what’s going on in Alexander’s head, but he clearly thinks about you a lot.”

“Oh,” said Laurens again.

Feeling increasingly as though he’d rather sit through a student council budgetary meeting than continue this line of conversation, Burr took a sip of his beer, trying desperately to think of any other subject. “Did you enjoy the debate today?”

“Oh…ya,” nodded Laurens, shaking himself out of contemplation. “It was super great. I hope it helps.”

Burr shook his head. “It won’t.”

Laurens looked quizzically at him. Burr made an exhaustive gesture before elaborating. “The school asked me to put one on so as to have a non-combative space to confront the issues, in the hope that it will dispel some of the more…ah…confrontational urges orbiting campus at the moment. They thought if they allowed Jefferson and Hamilton to bark themselves hoarse like a
couple of Rottweilers it might prevent a larger-scale protest taking place, or more incidents like your poster campaign. Everyone knows that violence is the only thing that will scare the admin enough into changing its mind.”

“I thought you said it’s important to have order in times like these,” said Laurens wryly. “‘Lest the powder keg explode from hatred’ or something like that.”

“Yes, well,” Burr shrugged. “You’d be surprised to find, outside of the Gospel According to Hamilton, that what one says and what one thinks, doesn’t always have to align.”

Burr took another meditative sip of his beer, looking rather boredly around the room. Laurens was about to inquire about other times Burr had said something other to what he actually thought when at that moment, Angelica came bursting in, making a beeline for Meade.

“You asshole!” she snarled, jabbing a long-taloned finger painfully at his chest. “You absolute prick.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa,” said Mulligan, stepping in abruptly. “What’s going on?”

“Why the fuck would you send that?” Angelica ignored Mulligan, eyes flashing at Meade. “What the hell is your problem?”

“It’s just a game Ange,” said Meade, raising his palms defensively. “It’s a joke. Chill out.”

In response, Angelica grabbed the Dorito dip out of Tallmadge’s hands, hurling salsa over Meade’s t-shirt.

“Does this look like a joke to you?” Angelica demanded, shoving her phone screen in Meade’s face. “Because I am not fucking laughing.”

“To be fair,” said Mulligan equitably, looking apologetically at Angelica while Meade stared shocked at his front. “You knew the rules when you gave it to him. He’s allowed to text one person off your phone, the what and the who is entirely up to discretion.”

“He went too far!” Angelica yelled. “And he knows it! If it were Hamilton or Lafayette I wouldn’t be surprised, but I expected better from you.”

She stormed off, grabbing a perplexed Eliza in a vice-like grip and hauling her in the direction of the bathroom, leaving the boys staring bemusedly after her and Meade blinking in astonishment. After a few stunned seconds had passed, Tallmadge put a hand on Meade’s shoulder.

“What did you do?” he asked, voice hushed with shock.


“Obviously you messaged Jonny,” said Mulligan impatiently. “She knew you were going to message Jonny when she gave you her phone. She wouldn’t have let you do it if there wasn’t a part of her that wanted to see what you’d do.”

“Aha!” cried Lafayette. “Wish fulfilment!”

“Victim blaming,” frowned Laurens.

“Whichever,” said Meade, holding his top away from him in distaste. “I probably went a bit too far. I’ll apologise to her. But…uh…Laurens man, can I borrow a t-shirt?”
“Yeah, of course,” nodded Laurens. “I’ll go get you one.”

“Thanks,” said Meade, wrinkling his nose as Lafayette picked a bit of onion out his hair.

* 

Hamilton was examining a pencil sketch that Laurens had left on his desk when he opened the door to his bedroom.

“Oh,” said Laurens, stopping short upon catching sight of him, momentarily very confused.

“How?” said Hamilton immediately, jumping back from the desk as if it had burned him. “I…uh… needed some space and someone was in the bathroom…sorry.”

It was a lame excuse and he knew it. Laurens flicked his fingers dismissively. “It’s fine,” he said. At least he had put his clothes back on. “Are you ok? Do you need me to find a bucket or something?”

Hamilton laughed shortly. “I’m fine, thanks.”

He looked away shamefacedly, like a child who had been caught doing something he shouldn’t have. Laurens closed the door softly, curiosity burgeoning as he took in Hamilton’s avoided gaze, his rose-flushed cheeks. Hamilton gestured to the drawing. It was a collection of faces; Hamilton recognised Mulligan, Lafayette and Tallmadge’s as well as his own, all of them drawn with careful, painstaking detail.

“This is amazing,” he said, forcing the words out.

“Thanks,” said Laurens, walking over and shifting the page so that he could look at it properly. “It’s for an art project. I’m probably gonna do a black thing. Maybe something to do with masculinity…I don’t know.”

“Wow John,” Hamilton teased weakly. “You’re really getting into your black consciousness.”

Laurens laughed quietly. “Yeah,” he said, scratching the back of his neck ruefully. “Seemed about time.”

Both of them were looking at the face in the corner. Seconds of silence passed, until Hamilton thought that if he didn’t say something he was going to explode.

“Never pegged you as a flatterer,” he spoke softly, curving his index round the smooth grey lines of his own profile. “You’ve sized my features down a lot.”

“No I haven’t,” frowned Laurens, taking the comment more of a critique of his art than the insinuation it was meant to be.

“I don’t know what this is supposed to say about my masculinity. You’ve made me look pretty, John.”

Laurens glanced at him, and then away. “I only draw what I see,” he muttered.

There wasn’t much to say to that, but then Hamilton supposed he had walked into it. He opened his mouth to respond and closed it, feeling the words die in his throat. Instead he sat down on the edge of the bed, looking around Laurens’ bedroom as if he had never been in it before. Laurens, who was quite confused by what was going on, sat down warily next to him.
“You and André look like you’re having a good time,” said Hamilton, voice sounding oddly choked.

Laurens stared quizzically at him. “Alexander,” he said. “What’s wrong?”

In answer, Hamilton buried his face in his hands. He let out a horrible, high-pitched laugh. “I don’t know,” he confessed through his fingers. “I…ugh. Whatever, ignore me. It’s none of my business, anyway.”

“Alex, it was just a game,” Laurens urged, fear taking hold of him in the face of Hamilton’s reaction. “I really, really don’t think André’s interested in me. And even if he was, I’m still a hundred percent not interested in him.”

“Because of that other dude, right?” said Hamilton dully, picking at a stray thread from the duvet. “Francis, or whatever.”

“What? No…that’s…that’s complicated,” Laurens sighed, wishing he had just grabbed whatever shirt he could find from the dryer. “I haven’t even decided whether I want to be friends with him again, let alone anything else.”

“Good,” said Hamilton suddenly, looking up from his hands to glare at Laurens fiercely. “Because he was a jerk to you, John, and you can do so much better, like, trust me you do not need that in your life.”

“Yeah, sure, there’s that,” Laurens acknowledged. “Also, you know. The other thing.”

Hamilton’s eyebrows wriggled hopefully. “Other thing?”

Laurens looked tiredly at him. “You’re gonna make me spell it out?” and when Hamilton didn’t answer, “You know I’d be yours, Alexander. If you’d have me.”

Hamilton closed his eyes. A tear still squeezed between his eyelashes, he wiped it away furiously. “You deserve so much better.”

“I don’t want anything else,” Laurens mumbled.

Hamilton laughed again; a dry, desperate, choking sound. “There you go,” he said bitterly. “There you fucking go. Fuck you, John. Just when I think I’ve got myself together you say something like that and suddenly I’m falling all over again!”

“What,” said Laurens quickly, stunned, the word barely escaping his lips. “You’re falling for me?”

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you,” Hamilton snapped.

“You just said it.”

“Whatever Laurens,” Hamilton snarled. “This is actually a nightmare for me, so. No need to sound so goddamn happy about it.”

“I can be a little happy about it,” said Laurens, fighting to refrain from grinning. “At least it levels the playing field a little bit.”

Hamilton scoffed. Laurens raised his palm to his face. “Hey,” he said softly.

Complying with the gentle pressure of Laurens’ hand, Hamilton turned to look at him. His eyes were blown wide, the pupils nearly dwarfing the irises as he fixed Laurens with a gaze that was
almost painful in its desperation. Hamilton leaned forward. Their lips met; Laurens breathed in sharply, something tugging deep in his chest as he realised that this kiss was different, this was something starting. Hamilton reached up, tangled his fist in the cloth of Laurens’ shirt, pulled urgently. It felt like a confession.

A tear trembled on Hamilton’s bottom eyelash and tripped down his cheek. Laurens brushed it away with his thumb, grazing the right angle of Hamilton’s jaw before deepening the kiss and sliding in his tongue. Hamilton rose to meet it eagerly, mouth opening beneath Laurens’, a deep heat pooling and spreading throughout his insides until his skin was flushed with it and he found himself yearning for more of him, as much as he could get.

He slid his hand beneath Laurens’ shirt, dry palms rubbing over his nipples. Laurens tilted his head back, cursing softly as Hamilton rucked his hem further and further up until the t-shirt was laying on the bed beside them. Hamilton took a moment to admire Laurens’ torso; long, lean and star-speckled before he was bending forward and sucking on his neck, hands grazing the hard plane of his stomach and abdomen. Laurens’ hips tilted forward, a low moan escaping him as Hamilton pressed his lips to his clavicle, the barest hint of teeth brushing sharply against his collar bone.

Running his tongue along the deep hollow of his throat, he felt Laurens’ pulse stutter and halt. Laurens’ hand was on the small of his back, stroking the tip of his coccyx beneath his shirt, but despite the surety of his hands his nervousness was tangible. Even so Laurens grasped the back of Hamilton’s neck, pulling him closer until he was sucking on his tongue and rolling his hips forward so that Hamilton could feel how hard he was already.

“So you like that Alt-J song, huh?” he breathed, running his fingers through the tangle of Hamilton’s hair.

“Yeah,” Hamilton panted, skin feverish as he sought to chase Laurens’ mouth.

Laurens caught Hamilton’s lips between his own, kissing him deep and sweet. “I think of you every time I listen to it,” he said once they parted for breath. “Knee-deep in the North Sea…”

“Is that where you want me?” asked Hamilton, grinning wickedly as his hands ran up Laurens’ sides.

“I want you everywhere,” replied Laurens honestly. “Anywhere. All at once.”

Hamilton groaned, pressing himself firmly against Laurens’ body and grinding his hips down. They both swore. Done with the pleasantries, Hamilton’s fingers darted to the front of Laurens’ jeans, making swift work of the zipper until they were laying around his ankles before pulling off his own shirt. Not for the first time that evening, Laurens’ breath caught in his throat as he beheld Hamilton topless, desire coursing through him with such aching power that he felt ashamed of it.

“Look at you,” Hamilton breathed, hand going to palm Laurens through his boxers. “God, just look at you.”

“Alexander,” Laurens begged with sudden urgency as Hamilton’s palm made contact through the cloth. “Stop a second, I need to tell you something.”

“What?” Hamilton frowned, suddenly anxious. “What is it?”

Laurens chewed his lip. “When I said I hadn’t done anything with a guy before,” he began. “What I meant was…I haven’t done anything with anyone before. That story I told you about Martha…It wasn’t true. I’m a virgin.”
Hamilton tried very hard to fix his expression into one of utmost surprise.

“Oh!” he exclaimed, as though this was entirely new information. “What? Really? No way!”

Laurens looked at him uncertainly. “It’s okay if you’re turned off,” he said.

Hamilton frowned. “Why the fuck would I be turned off?”

Laurens shrugged, cheeks burning red. Taking pity on him, and filled suddenly with an instinctive swooping of endearment, Hamilton kissed him. Laurens melted instinctively, body going slack at the raw, beautiful impossibility that was Alexander Hamilton, currently running his tongue across his bottom lip and his right hand over his thighs.

“I don’t like you because of your sexual status, dude,” he told him, hand grazing the side of his face. “Virgin, slut, it doesn’t mean shit to me. I like you because you’re awesome, and hot as fuck, and you have great, great music taste.”

Laurens laughed self-consciously. It was just about the cutest thing Hamilton had ever heard in his whole damn life, so much so that he just had to kiss him again. As he did so, he slid a hand beneath Laurens’ waistband, relishing in the sound of his breath catching.

Slowly he began to stroke the whole of Laurens’ length, pushing his thighs apart with his other hand to allow him more room. Laurens’ head fell backwards, his mouth hanging open as Hamilton sped up his pace, thumb flitting teasingly over the slit in the head of his cock. Yearning curled in the pit of his abdomen as he watched the muscles in Laurens' stomach spasm, the gasping moans that escaped his lips going straight to his own dick and he bit his lip, trying not to imagine that it was himself moving between the seam of Laurens' thighs, rather than his hand.

A few strokes more and suddenly Laurens was coming, whole lower half lurching forward before he collapsed with a long, drawn-out groan onto Hamilton’s stomach. Hamilton smiled satisfactorily, hand going automatically to pat Laurens’ hair. Before he had a chance to wind a lock round his finger however Laurens was unbuckling his jeans, nudging his knees apart as his hand moved to wrap round Hamilton’s cock.

Hamilton gasped, eyelids fluttering closed at the first touch of Laurens’ hand. His grip was hard and dry and combined with the awestruck, spell-bound expression on his beautiful, freckled face Hamilton thought that he might split in two, bared raw and cut open in a way that both exhilarated and terrified him, like it never had done before.

Laurens kissed him, the hand that wasn’t moving between his legs going once again to cup his cheek and Hamilton felt all at once a bit like laughing and more than a little bit like crying. Instead he closed his eyes, heart leaping in his throat as his hips jutted forward, holding onto Laurens like he was a ship anchored to shore until the very last of his senses left him, gasping for breath as he plunged beneath the surface, and all of a sudden he was sinking, sinking, sinking.

Chapter End Notes

Nik's quip is a direct quote from my Danish housemate, Scandinavians don't hate me pls (especially as both meatballs and socialism are GOOD things.)

I hope you all had the most amazing holidays filled with love and joy and peace and
good will and I hope that God or whatever else you might worship or if u worship nothing at all watches over you and fills the rest of your coming days with laughter and light and i hope your families are safe and happy and I hope that 2018 treats you well and that you get everything you want for the coming year.

I will probably update before NY's day but if not, rest well, sleep well, and as always thank you.
I remember when we used to sing in the government yard in Brooklyn

I cheated and added another song. Classic me, there are two chapters left, not one. i'm doing my best.

tw for weed

For a while there was no sound, nothing but the rise and fall of their chests as they sought to reclaim control over their shock, pressing against the walls and creeping into the fabric of their discarded clothing. Hamilton stretched out across the bed, grinned at Laurens who, embarrassed, smiled back without quite meeting his gaze. Noticing, Hamilton put a hand on his back. The pressure warm and solid, reminding him that he was still here. Laurens leaned into it.

“Oh look at that,” Hamilton murmured.

Laurens frowned. “What?”

Hamilton’s grin broadened. “I can hear the sea.”

Laurens rolled his eyes, scoffed. Hamilton wriggled down the mattress until he was laying more completely next to him. He pawed clingingly at his arm until Laurens, chuckling, put it round him obligingly. They kissed.

When they broke apart Laurens turned his face, burying it in Hamilton’s curls. He breathed in deeply, thinking how nice it would be never to have to move from this spot. His grip round Hamilton’s waist tightened possessively and Hamilton giggled, pushing him away.

“We should get back,” he told him softly, brushing a hand through Laurens’ hair.

Laurens groaned, grabbing Hamilton’s hand. Spontaneously, he kissed it. Hamilton watched delightedly, feeling like he was being split open by sunshine even as Laurens blushed scarlet, face burning so fiercely that he had to avert his gaze. Hamilton stood up, grabbing a packet of facewipes from Laurens’ chest of drawers and wiping himself down quickly before chucking them at Laurens. He put on his clothes while Laurens cleaned himself up, tossing Laurens his shirt and pants.

“Come on tiger,” he said, taking Laurens’ hand and hauling him up. “On your feet.”

Laurens stood up reluctantly, placing his hands on Hamilton’s waist and kissing him once more before following him out the door.
Re-entering the living room they saw that several people had departed, leaving only a small group sat companionably in a circle. They looked up as Hamilton and Laurens walked in, faces breaking into smug, knowing grins.

“Alex,” Mulligan smirked. “I see Laurens found you.”

“Uh…yeah,” Hamilton nodded. “I needed to lie down for a little bit. Sleep off the vodka, you know.”

“Did you have a nice nap?” asked Eliza sweetly.

“I did, thank you Eliza,” Hamilton replied. “Laurens’ bed is very comfortable.”

“Manage to find me a t-shirt?” asked Meade, who was having a particularly hard time keeping a straight face.

Laurens stared confusedly, wheels in his head turning as he struggled to remember what he had actually gone in there for in the first place. His eyes widened with realisation as around him his friends’ smirks intensified.

“Shit,” he cursed, feeling colour creep back into his cheeks. “Sorry, I’ll uh…I’ll go get you one.”

Meade waved dismissively. “Don’t worry about it,” he said, gesturing between himself and Angelica. “We got most of it out.”

“Oh, you made up?”

Angelica fixed Meade with a severe gaze under which he quailed bashfully. “For now,” she responded stiffly. “So did you, it seems.”

“We weren’t even fighting,” Hamilton protested.

“Sure looks like you made something.”

“Oh! Love!” Lafayette interjected suddenly. “It looks like they made love!”

“Thank you, Lafayette,” said Laurens firmly, as the man in question looked enormously pleased with himself. “Can we change the subject?”

Mulligan laughed good-naturedly. “Sure,” he said, stretching his arms over his head before looking round the group. “Anyone wanna smoke? Laurens?”

Laurens nodded. “I’ll get my stuff,” he said before heading back to his room, looking none too upset about the chance to depart.

André, who had been laying on the couch and idly tracing patterns on the armrest, forced himself to his feet. “I actually gotta go,” he said apologetically, swaying a little. “I’ve gotta send off my piece on the debate in the morning, and it’s still not quite finished.”

“Someone go with him,” ordered Angelica immediately, as André staggered towards his coat. “Or at least get him an uber.”

“I’ll go,” said Burr, standing up and catching André just in time.

Mulligan pouted at him. “But you only just got here,” he complained. “At least stay for the weed!”
Burr shook his head. “I’ve got an early start too,” he said without elaboration. “Thanks though, it’s been fun.”

“Awesome,” André corrected him, stepping in. “It’s been awesome. You guys…you guys are awesome. I love you all so much, I’m so glad I met you. I mean…not met you, ’cos like, I already knew you. But I didn’t know you-know you. You know?”

“We’re very glad we met you too, André,” said Lafayette, patting his arm affectionately. “Remind me to make plans for Paris.”

André snapped his fingers. “Paris,” he nodded slowly. “Right. Hey Alex, man. You coming over this Christmas? Up to faire la bringue with me and Gilbert?”

Hamilton shook his head. “Can’t sorry,” he said, with a small smile directed at the Schuylers. “I’ve got plans.”

André’s face fell dramatically. He took a few steps towards Hamilton, reaching out to seize the material of his sleeve. An instinctive rush of heat jolted through him as André gripped his arm, dark eyes boring deeply, if slightly unfocused, into his face.

“Alexander,” he said solemnly, words slurring even as he fought to get them out. “Fight the power, man. Don’t let the bastards get you down.”

Hamilton pressed his lips together, trying not to laugh. “I will,” he promised.

“Congrats on everything,” André continued with a significant glance in the direction of Laurens’ room. “Look after my boy. That’s my best friend you’ve got there.”

“Didn’t you guys meet, like, four days ago?” asked Tallmadge, wrinkling his nose sceptically.

Hamilton returned André’s clumsy hug before directing him safely into Burr’s custody. They waved goodbye and left.

A short moment later, Laurens reappeared.

“Ya’ll owe me for this,” he told them, sitting cross-legged on the floor and breaking weed into his grinder.

“It’s my birthday,” Mulligan complained.

“Ya, and I already bought you the N.W.A album. Stop scrounging off me.”

Hamilton dropped his chin onto Laurens’ shoulder. Laurens, who was focusing on rolling, tried not to pay too much attention to his breath in his ear, a more difficult feat when Hamilton leant in close. “You’re so hot,” he whispered.

Laurens raised an eyebrow. “Make yourself useful,” he said, passing him the baccy. “Hold this.”

Hamilton obliged, watching Laurens’ clever hands as he worked, scattering tobacco onto the paper when Laurens asked and preening under the praise. Laurens’ tongue darted out to lick the paper and Hamilton stared shamelessly, his mouth already going dry.

“Someone put on some music,” suggested Meade.

Mulligan reached for his speaker, hooking up his phone. The familiar refrain of a guitar drifted over the room, causing several people to groan.
“Yes, let’s all kill ourselves at once,” Angelica grumbled, leaning further into Meade who, surprised, looked nonetheless pleased.

“Wait, I don’t know this version,” Eliza frowned as a soft drumbeat joined the famous melody.

“It’s the *Fugees* cover,” Mulligan explained as Laurens finished off the joint, holding his hand out for Hamilton’s lighter. “Normally I consider it a blasphemy to cover Bob Marley, but in this case, I’ll make an exception.”

Laurens lit the joint, aware of Hamilton’s eyes on him as he raised it to his lips, grey smoke curling around the corners of his mouth. He passed it to Hamilton who inhaled deeply, closing his eyes as he breathed out to the words of the song: “Good friends we had, good friends we’ve lost along the way…In this great future you can’t forget your past…so dry your tears I say…and to my peeps who passed away…”

*No woman, no cry.*

*No woman, no cry.*

*Hey little sister, don’t shed no tears,*

*No woman, no cry.*

“Absolutely terrible choice,” muttered Tallmadge, voice sounding a little choked as he accepted the joint from Hamilton.

Mulligan shrugged. “I make no apologies,” he said, although he was also looking a little emotional. “Don’t forget your roots, kids.”

“As if we ever could,” Hamilton breathed out, only a little bitterly. “They’ll never let us.” Laurens’ thumb brushed the back of his hand.

“We’ll fight back,” Meade promised him as Mulligan blew smoke into the air. “As long as they don’t, we’ll fight back.”

“Yeah, but for how long?” Hamilton challenged him. “All of this…everything we do. For Jamal, for all the others…it’s like we can’t have a single win without something new fucking us up. Like, ok, great we get Obama and gay marriage but then *bam.* Donald Trump. Charlottesville. Net fucking neutrality. Sometimes it seems like all we ever do is fight.”

“Someone has to,” said Laurens.

“I know someone has to,” Hamilton rolled his eyes. “It just gets a little tiring, is all. Waiting for things to get better, y’know. Waiting for that brighter day. Like, how do we know it’s ever going to come?”

Laurens shrugged. “I don’t know,” he said quietly. “Mine did.”

Hamilton stared, wide-eyed at him. Laurens wasn’t looking at him, but was fiddling with one of the bands around his wrist. Still, he couldn’t help but smile.

“It is about hope,” Lafayette slurred, probably thinking he sounded very deep as he offered the joint to Eliza, who declined it. “Even the darkest night must end.”

“Don’t,” warned Angelica, who did not like musicals.
“It’s about faith,” said Eliza.


My drink's my only remedy  
For pain of losing family, but while I'm gone Shorty  

Everything’s gonna be alright, everything’s gonna be alright,  
Fugees come to the dance tonight, everything's gonna be alright.

“Oh everything’s gonna be alright,” grinned Laurens, nuzzling Hamilton’s hair. “Everything’s gonna be alright…the gun man’s in the house tonight…but everything’s gonna be alright.”

“Oh my God,” said Angelica, and burst into tears.

“Ange!” Eliza exclaimed, rushing over to throw an arm around her sister as the others stared in shock. “What’s gotten into you?”

“I…I can’t,” Angelica sobbed, wiping fiercely at her eyes. “It’s too much…it’s too sad, I can’t.”

“This is the strangest thing I’ve ever seen,” Hamilton told Laurens, watching in paralysed horror as Angelica continued to cry into Meade’s shoulder.

“Hey,” Mulligan frowned.

“No woman, no cry. This is not what Bob would have wanted.”

“F**k off,” Angelica snapped, lifting her head from Meade’s t-shirt to glare at him. “You have no idea how much I fucking worry about all of you. If there was some kind of accident…every day, every day I think about what could happen if one of us were in the wrong place at the wrong time…and with the kind of stuff that we do-”

“Ange come on,” Meade rubbed her arm. “We’re college kids. We’re not even living in the real world yet. We’re going to be fine.”

“You don’t know that,” Angelica protested.

“Hey,” said Hamilton, fixing her with a serious gaze while leaning backwards against Laurens. “Wyclef Jean does. That should be good enough for all of us.”

Angelica’s smile was weak and shaky. Lafayette passed her the joint; she took a long drag, her fingers unsteady against the crumbling paper.

The song faded with the last of the joint. Laurens rolled another, Hamilton’s head still propped up on his shoulder. A weary contentedness had crept over him; he felt like he was drifting, overwhelmed with love for his friends and peace with the world and the sturdy heat of Laurens’ arm, radiating warmth and security beneath him. His mind was quiet in a way that it so rarely was and he indulged it, the conversations going on around him fading to a pleasant sort of buzz as he let himself float.

He had no idea how much time passed as he sat there, enjoying the hum of conversation around him while paying only half an ear, focusing more on the brush of Laurens’ hand as he stroked absently up and down his arm. His limbs and eyelids felt heavy. He thought he had only just closed them when distantly, as if through a thick haze of cloud he heard Mulligan’s voice.

“Yo, Laurens. Look to your boy.”
The grip on his arm tightened and Hamilton forced his eyes open, blinking blearily into Laurens’ face, gazing down at him with concern.

“You alright?” he asked gently. “Tired? Wanna go to bed?”

Hamilton smiled, nodded. Laurens pulled him to his feet, one arm keeping a stabilising grip around his waist to keep him from falling. “I’m just gonna put Hamilton to bed,” he told the group.

“Ugh, is this gonna be our life now?” Angelica wrinkled her nose. “You guys sneaking away from parties and pretending like you’re not going to have sex?”

“We’re not going to have sex,” said Laurens firmly.

“We could have sex,” said Hamilton hopefully.


“Yeah, I guess,” Hamilton grumbled, lifting a hand with some effort to salute the group. “Night, all.”

“Goodnight Alex!” came the chorus of reply, mingled with “Goodnight John!”s and “Love you!”s. Laurens and Hamilton waved their departure, retreating for Laurens’ room. Once inside Hamilton went to perch on the bed, gazing wistfully at Laurens as he switched off the light.

“Y’know,” he said as Laurens knelt to take his shoes off for him. “Joking aside, we could still have sex. Like, I’m not that tired and anyway, high sex is great. Oh wait sorry, I guess you wouldn’t know that. Take my word for it. And I won’t even have to do anything, I’ll just be sort of laying here, enjoying myself while you do your thing. Also, just saying, you still haven’t put it in yet. You’ll like that, trust me, it’s fun.”

Laurens laughed, shaking his head incredulously as he unbuttoned Hamilton’s jeans. “You’re unbelievable.”

“See, you’re already halfway there,” Hamilton grumbled frustratedly, wriggling his hips a little in what he probably thought was a seductive manner, smartening under the stern look Laurens gave him.

With some effort, Laurens managed to get the rest of his jeans off. Despite his bravado Hamilton crashed immediately, clawing lovingly at the mattress as his exhaustion hit him. He just had enough energy to open his eye a crack in order to look at Laurens, a wave of panic jolting through him as he seemed to be making for the door.

“Hey, where are you going?” Hamilton asked, anxiety making the words spill into each other.

“Relax, I’m just getting some water,” Laurens reassured him.

“Oh, ok.” Satisfied, Hamilton turned his face back into the pillow and sighed contentedly. “Don’t say I didn’t warn you about this, John. I’m not good at being left. You made your bed, now you gotta stay in it with me.”

“I will,” Hamilton heard the amusement in his smile as he returned, briefly running his hand along Hamilton’s spine. “As long as you want me to,” he added quietly.

Hamilton smiled, Laurens’ hands the last thing he was aware of before he fell asleep.
By the time they got up the next morning they rose to find the others had already done most of the cleaning. Admittedly there wasn’t too much mess, most of it being bottles and cans which Mulligan had swept into the recycling. Fortunately Lafayette, who’s stomach had been made martyr to yet another funny whelk during the course of the evening, had made it to the toilet on time. He was straightening the cushions on the couch when Hamilton and Laurens walked in, looking up to beam at them sunnily.

“Good morning!” he exclaimed, paying little heed to Hamilton’s wince. “Did you sleep well?”

“Like a corpse,” replied Hamilton, touching his head gingerly. “Is there aspirin?”

Lafayette reached into his pocket and produced two which Hamilton dry swallowed without hesitation. “You don’t look good,” he told him sympathetically.

Hamilton shrugged. “I don’t feel good,” he answered. “I swear my hangovers are getting worse. And what am I, not even twenty-one.”

“Practically ancient,” nodded Lafayette. “I blame the ridiculousness of the US drinking age. In Europe, we have much more time to learn our limits.”

“Oh yeah, that’ll be why Europe is so rife with teetotalism and responsible drinking,” Mulligan said sarcastically from the sink. “Did you know the UK is the binge capital of the world?”

“Please do not lump me in with Britain,” retorted Lafayette with disdain. “They do not even count as Europe anymore. By their own choice.”

“Creon is not their downfall,” Hamilton nodded agreeably. “You know, if I were a country, I sometimes think I’d be England.”

“Really?” Laurens looked at him sceptically. “Why?”

Hamilton ticked off his fingers. “Partial to democracy, but only the kind that’s been built on centuries of elitist tradition,” he listed. “Messiah complex. Obsession with history and a personal legacy that manifests itself in Empire. Hubris, obviously. Oh yeah, and upholding my personal creed as sovereign to the extent of forcing it on other people, while also remaining deliberately ignorant of my own flaws.”

Laurens looked impressed. “Fair enough.”

“You seem pretty savvy on your flaws to me,” Mulligan raised an eyebrow.

Hamilton stretched. “Yeah well,” he said with a yawn. “Know thyself, etcetera. Actually, it’s less a case of systematic amnesia, and more being secretly proud of them. Take imperialism, for example. On one hand, slavery and genocide aside for a sec, colonialism was the direct cause for the social and economic destruction of all so-called LDCs previously under British subjection, as well as their subsequent reliance in the modern-day through things like trade, tourism, charity etcetera which continues this cycle of deference, as well as the maintenance in the national psyche of the master/subject dynamic. It’s a violent, destructive, oppressive institution which dresses its conviction in its own superiority through the language of paternalism and intervention. On the other hand…I really, really want an Empire, y’know? Like, sue me. My name is Alexander. I like trappings, and whatnot.”

“Please,” groaned Angelica, lifting her head up from the triangle of her arms. “It is way too early
for discourse. And to be quoting Greek.”

“I wasn’t quoting Greek,” Hamilton argued. “I was quoting translations of Greek. If you want me to quote Greek, just ask.”

“I don’t want you to quote Greek. I just asked you not to quote Greek. I asked you to shut up, and let me nurse my hangover.”

“Any word from Jonny?” asked Eliza tentatively, putting a cup of coffee next to Angelica.

Angelica shook her head. “No,” she replied, cringing as she took a sip upon finding it bitter. “You know, I’m starting to think maybe it was a good thing that happened. At least this way if we break up it won’t actually have been my fault.”

“Ha,” muttered Meade under his breath. “Wish fulfilment.”

“You shut up.” Angelica retorted. “Just because I’ve forgiven you doesn’t make what you did ok. You had no right to tell him that I didn’t love him, using literal words from my mouth which you knew he’d recognise. That transgresses the realms of a joke.”

“You’re right, you’re right,” said Meade quickly, raising his palms in submission. “I’m sorry. I’ll make it up to you. A Pandora charm, right?”

“Two,” Angelica corrected him. “If he breaks up with me.”

“You sold your wrath for jewellery?” Hamilton frowned at him. “Not even I could think of a price high enough for that.”

Angelica made an indifferent gesture. “We live in a material world,” she said. “And I am a material girl.”

“Is that Greek?”

“Tallmadge,” said Mulligan over his shoulder. “Where we at with those eggs, man?”

“They’re coming,” Ben replied, turning around to reveal he was once again wearing his ‘I love my wife’ apron. “Who else wants? Hamilton? Laurens?”

“Ugh, no thanks,” Hamilton grimaced. “Just coffee for me.”

“I’ll take his,” said Laurens.

Laurens’ phone buzzed. He glanced down at it. “André just messaged me a link to the article,” he announced with surprise. “That was nice of him.”

“Yeah, André is nice,” Hamilton nodded approvingly. “We should invite him to more stuff, he’d be a nice addition to the group. Who does he hang out with at school, again?”

“I don’t know if he really has a group,” replied Mulligan. “He’s the sorta guy who’s friends with everyone.”


“Here meaning you,” Angelica corrected him. “Admit it. You just want him around more so that
“Hey, what can I say, it can’t hurt to have a little more eye-candy round here,” Hamilton raised his hands defensively. “At the moment, John and I are pretty much holding down the fort. What do you say, Laurens? Do we make him a permanent member?”

Laurens didn’t answer. Frowning, Hamilton put a hand concernedly on his shoulder. “John?”

In lieu of a reply, Laurens stuck out his phone. “You need to read this,” he stated bluntly.

Frowning, Hamilton took the phone from Laurens’ hands, apprehension building up inside him as he scrolled through the article. There didn’t seem to be anything wrong with it; admittedly André had clearly taken on his editor’s advice and turned down the tone so that it read more like a standard report than an argument. Hamilton was actually beginning to find himself more interested in the picture he had snapped of him and Angelica, and he glanced up to tell Laurens as much.

“He got my bad angle,” he told him.

“Get to the quotations,” said Laurens through gritted teeth.

Confusion mounting, Hamilton obeyed. The rest of the room was silent, watching as Hamilton’s eyes darted across the phone screen, gradually becoming wider before his savage swear was ripping through the quiet.

“Motherfucker!” he shouted, throwing the phone back at Laurens and reaching for his own. “That lying, scheming, asshole motherfucker-”

“What is it?” Lafayette demanded as Hamilton tapped furiously at his phone. “What has André done?”


He passed his phone to Lafayette. The others crowded around it immediately. Laurens heard shocked gasps and muffled curses even while his own gaze was fixed on the seething Hamilton, counting down from ten in his head as he waited for the dial tone.

“What thefuck Burr?” he exploded as soon as he picked up. “What the actual fuck?”

“Alexander, calm down-”

“Do not fucking tell me to calm down!” Hamilton cut across him. “How could you do this to us?”

“You’re being emotional-”

“Damn right, I’m emotional! It’s a valid response to being stabbed in the motherfucking back by a coward slime-ball who didn’t even have the nerve to betray me to my fucking face!”

“I did not stab you in the back.”

“Yeah? Well what is this,” Hamilton snarled, wrenching the phone from Lafayette’s hands and reading off the screen. “The SJC is a group of entitled, glory-seeking vigilantes. They have the arrogance to consider themselves the voice of a caucus; however, they do not speak for me, they do not speak for the BSU and they do not speak for the black community at this school. Their actions, rather than helping to heal the racial divide, have merely exacerbated it – almost singlehandedly worsening the situation through their fruitless and self-gratifying endeavours towards so called...”
‘justice’. They believe that by putting on the clothes of the Black Panthers and Malcolm X they are doing their part for society, when in reality they are merely children seeking relevancy. While in absolutely and in no way endorsing the actions of Andrew Drayton, the BSU stands by the constitution, and if it is in deference to the constitution that he be allowed to stay, then stay he must.”

“Hamilton,” Burr said curtly. “Listen to me. I had to say it alright, you don’t know the full situation—”

“Oh, so you had no choice?” Hamilton fired up instantly. “Was someone holding a gun to your head, Burr? Someone had you gagged and bound to a chair while you quivered in front of a tribunal…that’s right, it’s another self-gratifying Bobby Seale reference from a child seeking relevancy, you can shove it right up your fucking ass seeing as you seem to get off on screwing your own self.”

“Now you really are being a child,” retorted Burr harshly. “This is exactly what I’m talking about. You think you’re so far above everyone else, that you and you alone know how the world works, to the extent that you let yourself be blinded to reality. You can’t even be adult enough for a second to accept that someone knows how to play the game better than you.”

“Oh my God,” breathed Hamilton, realisation dawning on him suddenly. “Last night…you were late because you had a meeting. It was with a board member, wasn’t it?”

The silence on the other end was all the confirmation he needed. Hamilton released a humourless laugh, so cruel that it set every listeners’ hair on end.

“What did they offer you?” he asked. “An internship? A letter of recommendation for law school? Wait, don’t tell me. I know you’ve had your eye on JPMorgan Chase since summer, have they given you a position straight up or are they gonna wait till all this blows over first?”

There was another long silence, and Hamilton thought he had hung up. Finally, he replied.

“An internship first,” Burr answered quietly. “It’s a three-month probationary period, standard formality. But there’s the assurance of a formal position post-graduation.”

Hamilton found himself laughing again. “Fair credit to you Aaron,” he grinned. “So this was your plan all along, huh? Ride out the wave until you were in sight of land? Can’t fault you for your execution. Actually, I’m more mad at myself for thinking you could ever, ever be in this for something other than aspiration.”

“Alexander—”

“Goodbye Aaron,” Hamilton cut him off with a snarl. “I hope it was worth the fucking wait.”

He hung up and threw his phone across the table. It slid off the edge, Lafayette caught it before it hit the dishwasher.

"I can't believe this," he stated, painfully aware that his voice was coming out shaky. "I can't fucking believe this. Fuck. How could he do this? Now, of all fucking times?"

"I don't understand," said Eliza, looking at Laurens imploringly. "So he's released an oppositional statement. Is that really going to hurt us?"

"It's more than just an oppositional statement," Laurens explained. "He's basically aligning the entire black caucus against us. He's making it look like it's an extremist, radical minority who want
Drayton expelled, rather than the community."

"But that's ridiculous," Eliza frowned. "He can't speak for the whole of the black community at Columbia, no one will believe that."

"They did once," said Hamilton, and Laurens realised he was talking about Republic. "And to think it was me who gave him the idea. Jesus Christ. This could not have come at a worse time. At the moment the admin are on the fence, it's only pressure from a majority which will convince them into swaying in our favour."

He exhaled sharply through his nose, running a hand through his hair as he attempted to slow his heart down. “Okay," he said finally, brain whirring fiercely as he sought to stack events in motion. "Okay. alright, fine. Time for Plan B.”

“Which is?” asked Mulligan, the others too mute with shock and dismay to ask.

The line of Hamilton's mouth was as grim as his voice. “We go to war.”

Chapter End Notes

fun facts.

- The "Creon is not your downfall" nonsense i keep quoting is from Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, the full line being "Creon is not your downfall, you are your own". it's kinda like the summarising line for tragedy.
- "Know thyself" was inscribed on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. the full quote is "Know thyself and thou shalt know all the secrets of the Gods" or something to that effect. clearly it was a bit much to fit it all in.
- Bobby Seale was a Black Panther founder, and one of the original members of the "Chicago Eight". During his 1969 trial, he was gagged and chained in the courtroom for disrupting proceedings, you can read about it here.
- Burr founded the Bank of the Manhattan Company in 1799 which later became the Chase Manhattan Bank and finally JPMorgan Chase. so that's that there.

Thanks again for your wonderful comments! Happy New Year!
“Ok,” Hamilton started, rubbing his temples after setting down his fourth cup of coffee. “Our main problem is that Burr is making us into radicals, okay, militants. We need to do some damage control to make it look like he’s the Uncle Tom here and actually, we’re the ones with the moral majority on our side. That means we need fast, unequivocally supporting responses from people not in the SJC.”

“I shall message Tench,” said Lafayette immediately, already getting his phone out. “He has just had one tutorial, which means he has no contact hours for the rest of this week.”

“Is there anyone sympathetic in the BSU who would call him out?” Angelica asked Hamilton. “Or at least take offence at him speaking on their behalf?”

Hamilton nodded. “I can think of a few of people,” he replied. “I can round them up and ask for statements. The only problem is if Burr’s already sweet-talked them into keeping their mouths shut. And not to sound like a snob, but there’s not much point in asking anyone who isn’t a big name in the society, since no one’s gonna care about a couple of loud-mouthed first years.”

“They will if there’s more than a couple,” Angelica pointed out. “Depending on how loud they are.”

“True,” Hamilton conceded. “Which is why I can only see this working out one way.”

The others looked at him expectantly. Hamilton paused, taking a steadying breath before proceeding. “We bring the protest forward to this weekend.”

Mulligan drew air in sharply. Hamilton’s eyes flitted to him, knowing exactly what he was thinking. They held each others’ gaze and for a long time there was silence, until Tallmadge who was also looking uncertain, broke it.

“Alex,” he began tentatively. “The council gave us a permit for two weeks’ time.”

Hamilton nodded. “I know.”

“So you’re saying hold an unsanctioned demonstration in Times’ Square. It’ll get shut down before it’s even started.”

“Well obviously we can’t have it in Times’ Square.”

There was another long silence as everyone except Mulligan struggled to understand exactly what Hamilton was saying. Finally, Lafayette looked up.
“You want to stage it in a residential area,” he stated.

“Yes.”

“And you are hoping for a riot?”

“No,” Hamilton scoffed, without sounding entirely convincing.

“What the fuck, Alexander,” Angelica hissed. “You can’t just walk into a neighbourhood waving signs and placards and expect it to go like a goddamn family picnic.”

“You mean like Drayton did?”

“Exactly!” Hamilton insisted. “That’s exactly my point! Provocation, Angelica. It’s the only way to wake people up. Except, whereas Drayton went into a majority black neighbourhood advocating white supremacy, thereby provoking violence, we will be advocating justice.”

“You can’t just switch out one word for another and expect a different reaction.”

“Of course I can,” replied Hamilton dismissively. “Same as economics - it’s all about your target market. Think about it. We get enough people down to the park where we had the yard sale, okay, locals and college kids alike. We shepherd a peaceful march through the neighbourhood, by the time we get to Brooklyn enough people will have joined in to make the local news. Suddenly we’re not just a small vigilante group anymore. We’re an angry swathe of the multiracial, cross-class public demanding recompense.”

“But without a permit from council, there won’t be any marshals,” Eliza pointed out. “Who will be doing the shepherding?”

“Uh,” Hamilton racked his brains for an answer that would best appease her. “…Jesus?”

Eliza frowned at him.

“Okay it’s me,” Hamilton conceded. “I will be the Jesus.”

Eliza’s frown deepened.

“This is not sensible,” Meade muttered.

“Come on,” insisted Hamilton. “I’ll look after my flock. My voice is loud, besides, I’ll have my megaphone. I’ll even wear a fluorescent jacket.”

“No, you won’t,” said Mulligan sharply. “It’ll make you an easier target when the police show up. And they will show up.”

“Look, what are our other choices?” Hamilton snapped, all traces of flippancy disappearing at once. “Selling buttons at lunchtime? A strongly-worded letter to admin? Face it, Burr has rendered all our primary means of campaigning completely redundant. Only a storm will shake the earth now and it’s gotta be one from all angles. Also, let’s not forget what’s at stake here. If Drayton is allowed to stay on then that directly affects the outcome of the trial. It’ll imply that the police were within their rights to act the way they did, Jamal’s parents will lose and all our hard work will have been for nothing. This is more than just a case of some rich kid getting his just desserts. This is America, looking brutality in the eye and saying this will not stand. It’s not just a moment, it’s the
movement. Christ. What the hell did you think ‘we go to war’ meant anyway?”

“No one is saying this is a situation that can be solved with ribbons and candy,” said Angelica through gritted teeth. “But this is…dubious, Alexander. People could get hurt.”

“They won’t,” Hamilton assured her. “It’ll be fine. Look, we’ll advertise it as a college thing, okay? Say it has your dad’s backing, or whatever. And anyway, it’s not like we’re doing anything illegal, or anything the other side hasn’t done. If the police do show up we can use their own jargon against them.”

Hamilton waited, trying not to belay his nervousness as he glanced over the hesitant faces of his friends. At long last, Laurens spoke up.

“We were gonna do the protest anyway,” he said. “There’s no guarantee it wouldn’t be dangerous then. At least this way it’ll be more contained. We need public pressure, and we need it soon.”

Hamilton smiled gratefully at him. The others, however, still looked unsure.

“And if there is an incident?” asked Lafayette uncertainly.

Laurens shrugged. “Then we use it to our advantage,” he replied. “Weaponise it. Even Burr said: ‘Violence is the only thing that will scare the admin enough into changing its mind’.”

Hamilton’s gaze swivelled towards him automatically. “Burr said that?”

Laurens nodded. Hamilton chewed his lip, looking thoughtful.

Angelica threw up her hands in surrender. “Fine,” she exhaled, glaring at Hamilton in a way that let him know he’d won. “I’m in. What do you need from us?”

Hamilton made a vague gesture, all the fiery energy that had fuelled his anger suddenly zapped from him. “I’ll make a plan and send it later,” he told them, rubbing his eyes tiredly. “I’m not…I don’t know. I can’t think straight right now.”

Angelica nodded, jaw set. “In that case, we’d better get going.” She stood up, nudging Eliza to rise with her.

At the motion to leave the others began to follow suit, scraping back their chairs and leaning across the table to wring hands and clap shoulders before steadily trickling out. As Mulligan and Lafayette ruffled Laurens’ hair and thanked him and Tallmadge once again for the party Hamilton hesitated, his eyes flickering uncertainly to Laurens. Noticing, Laurens made an offhand gesture.

“Have you got work to do?” he asked. “Do you wanna hang out for a bit?”

Hamilton’s face broke into a grin. He ducked his head. “I’ve got some reading,” he admitted. “But I can do it online? If I can borrow your laptop?”

Laurens nodded. “Sure.”

He smiled at Hamilton, who grinned back. Tallmadge rolled his eyes.

“Great,” he said, voice heavy with sarcasm. “If anyone needs me, I’ll be in my room.”

“Good to know,” murmured Hamilton, eyes not leaving Laurens’ face as Tallmadge made for the door, shutting it loudly behind him.
“I wanted to tell you as soon as I got home,” André explained, grabbing a bagel and some chips and tossing them onto his tray. “The moment we were outside Burr gripped my arm all urgent, told me to take a quote. I told him there wasn’t any need, seeing as he was only the Chair at the debate but he was adamant, almost snatched my phone out my goddamn pocket. Anyway, I recorded everything he said but when I got to bed I passed out before I could even think to contact Alexander. Probably for the best, my editor would have had my head if I’d blown a story like that. Not that I would have preferred what happened,” he said quickly, glancing nervously at Lafayette. “I just mean I would have been kicked off the paper, is all.”

“I quite understand,” Lafayette assured him, debating whether he was going to have a pain au raisin or a hotdog. “It is your job to print the facts. Do not consider yourself a part of this, you did no more than that.”

“Mmm yeah,” André pulled a face as he glanced around the café. “I could have just deleted the recording, though.”

“But you didn’t,” Lafayette reminded him. “Because you valued your journalistic integrity over the possible consequences.”

André’s expression was sheepish. Lafayette put a hand on his shoulder, looking at him kindly. “It is not the choice I would have made,” he admitted. “But that is because I have a different set of principles to yourself as a result of a number of different factors, not least being upbringing, background, and social exposure. You are a journalist, John. I am a chevalier. The world needs both, and much more besides.”

“What good is a principle if all it does is make things terrible?” asked André miserably.

Lafayette settled for a hotdog and reached for it with the tongs, taking care that it did not roll off his plate. “Somebody has to report the truth,” he said. “In the times that we live…with our ‘two sides to every tale’ and our ‘relative veracity’ and our ‘nothing is black and white’ it is often easy to forget that there are things which happen and there are things which do not. It is important to have someone to state the facts whenever the philosophers and the politicians disappear too far up their own arses.”

André laughed, impressed. “Your English is very good.”

Lafayette smiled. “Thank you,” he said graciously. “Actually, it is not so fantastic. I just spend a lot of time with Alexander so I have picked up a lot of technical vocabulary. However, I have trouble remembering phrases which are more useful on a day-to-day basis. Idioms I struggle with, and slang, although Alexander thinks I put it on for dramatic effect. Which, ah, I must confess I do sometimes.”

André laughed again. “You like things to be a certain way, don’t you?” he observed. “Aesthetically, I mean.”

Lafayette looked defensive. “I like things to be interesting,” he answered reproachfully. “I will admit I am a romantic at heart, and an idealist. It upsets Alex.”

“Why?”

“Oh,” Lafayette managed to look both bored and distinctly uncomfortable at the same time. “Because I can afford to be, I suppose. As he says, it is easy to be an idealist when you have only
ever known nice things.”

They paid for their food and looked round for a seat. Despite the fact that they had intentionally picked somewhere a little out of the way of campus the café was still busy, many of the spaces taken up by students working desperately at their final essays, swiftly cooling coffees at their elbows. They managed to squeeze into a corner by the window, having to share the table with a couple of first years who moved up to make room.

André cupped his teacup with his hands and raised it to his lips. He was wearing a pair of woollen gloves with the tips cut off. With his leather jacket and swept dark hair it gave him a voguish, grungy sort of elegance, even despite his hangover. “So what are you guys gonna do?”

Lafayette exhaled heavily. “Alexander is working on a plan,” he replied. “We had intended a protest at Times Square in two weeks, but he wants to bring it forward to this weekend.”

André nodded. “That sounds cool,” he said. “You think it will help?”

Lafayette shrugged. “It cannot make things worse,” he replied, taking a bite of his hotdog and smiling to himself. Good decision.

André took a bite of his bagel. "Does Alex know the name of the board member Burr spoke to?"

Lafayette frowned. "I don't think so," he replied. "It was not a very long conversation."

"I do," said André, wiping his mouth. "Jacques Provost. You know Professor Bartow'? From Philosophy? He's her husband."

Lafayette raised an eyebrow. "Interesting," he said, although it wasn't, really. "She seems very liberal, and intelligent. I would not expect her to be married to such a man."

André shrugged. "They married young, I think," he said. "I don't know if it's helpful at all, but if Alex wants to do a little digging then maybe he can come up with some dirt."

He sighed, dropping his bagel to rub his eyes tiredly. “This whole thing,” he said, looking out the window mournfully. “Sometimes I wonder how we can ever come back from this. Like, whatever happens with Jamal, everything’s gonna be different from now on. The schisms that this has caused…not just in Columbia, but in the stuff that’s happening across the country. And beyond that, the world. Just…everywhere hatred and chaos and pure, mind-fucking stupidity. Corporations running prisons. Psychopaths in power with too much money and the nuclear fucking code. Arms deals and climate change and Harvey fucking Weinstein. God. It almost makes you not wanna hang around to see the end.”

Lafayette fixed André searchingly. He was still staring out the window, examining his reflection in the glass as though it were a self-portrait. Catching himself he looked away, smiling apologetically.

“Sorry,” he said. “I’m not in the best mindset at the moment.”

Lafayette shrugged, taking a sip of his Americano. “It is fine,” he replied. “I always become much more pessimistic when Adrienne is angry with me too.”

André’s face sagged so much Lafayette almost wanted to lean across the table and pin it up.

“Like…I’m not saying it would fix all the world’s problems if she broke up with Arnold,” he said, dropping his chin into his hands. “But, like, it would be a start.”
Lafayette wasn’t sure whether you could really compare an unrequited crush to national collapse and mutually assured destruction. However, he thought it might be tactless if he pointed this out.

“There is always assassination,” he suggested. “I have a friend who might know someone. The only problem is he would have to fly from France, and I expect he would want you to pay his expenses.”

André attempted a smile which was more a weak twitching of his mouth. Lafayette sighed, impatient, and set his mug down. *First Laurens, now this.* What was it with Johns and useless pining?

He leaned across the table, gripping André’s arm in reassurance. “Cheer up,” he ordered sternly. “It is not the end of the world. Yet.”

To his great relief that prompted a real smile, as well as a slight chuckle. Satisfied, Lafayette leant back and turned his attentions to finishing the rest of his hotdog.

*Such a good decision.*

*

**AH:** And you can raid the recycling at the back of the arts’ block for cardboard. Get as much of it as u can carry, there are always some cheeky losers who cant be bothered to make their own signs. also yknw. Protection.

**HM:** how many are we expecting

**AH:** About 300 so far. i mean 570 clicked “going” on the new fb page but I’ve made it a rule to /2 when it comes to social media. Gdamn Keyboard warriors.

**HM:** ok. i checked the regulation guidelines and technically we dont need a permit for a small rally in a park or a march down a public sidewalk, so we arent breaking any laws. my guess tho is ur hoping for things to get a little bigger than whoever saw the fb post

**AH:** Monsieur Lamarque is dead

**HM:** not to usurp Angelica or anything but you do know what ur doing right? this is not a joke etc

**AH:** Yes. I know what I’m doing.

I got off the phone with Ange’s dad just now. He’s agreed to act as everyone’s lawyer in case things go south

We pull back at the first sign of trouble

I take full responsibility for everything

**HM:** ok. well we should be fine as long as we dont divert from the route. i already told the others to meet at mine beforehand to duct-tape cardboard to our bodies etc

**AH:** cool. Laurens and I will meet u there

**HM:** *thumbs up*

i know i didnt get a chance to tell you earlier and we all got a lot on our minds rn but good job on that
is it offish?

AH: Lol. pls who r u talking to

HM: true point. yall better take care at this thing. i dont want u going down like the frickin Dreamers

AH: Ewwww!!!!

delicate

AH: Omg. he’s not a frickin corsage

HM: humour me ok? i may be ur mom but im his dad

AH: D:<

What is this weird incest theme ur running with

HM: idk. starting to regret it

AH: Good. I gotta go study some anatomy, i’ll talk to u later

HM: dude give ur mind a rest. u dont need to add schoolwork on top of everything rn

AH: hehe

who said anything about schoolwork

HM: D:

AH: >:D

HM: DELICATE

Hamilton looked up from his phone to glance at Laurens, sitting at his desk on the other side of the room. “You’re not delicate, are you John?”

Laurens turned an appalled expression on him. “What?” he demanded with disgust. “No. What the fuck, who’s saying that?”

“What?” hummed Hamilton, typing quickly. “Don’t worry, I’m setting him straight.”


Hamilton snickered. He pressed send, stretching his arms up over his head and dropping the phone on the mattress beside him. He had been laying in the same position since showering a couple of
hours ago, and his limbs were starting to get cranky. Lethargy built up inside him as he redirected his attention back to Laurens’ laptop resting on his knees. He did in fact have more reading to do, still, as his gaze shifted from the screen to the back of Laurens’ head bent studiously over his desk, he found that he couldn’t quite sum up the will.

“Are you working on your art project?” he asked and when Laurens hummed in response, “Did you ever think about going into comic books?”

Laurens smiled. “Not seriously,” he replied. “When I was a kid I used to practice drawing from Spiderman magazines.”

“No Afrofuturism, though.”

“Definitely not.”

Hamilton wrinkled his nose in disdain. “You know, it’s about time I took over your education.”

Laurens’ smile broadened. “Yeah?”

Hamilton nodded, heavy-lidded eyes trained on Laurens’ neck. “Yeah.”

Laurens put his pencil down. He spun so that he was facing Hamilton, gazing unsubtly at him from where he lay on the bed. He pushed the chair away, getting up and throwing himself down next to him. Hamilton issued a little squeak, so small that he bounced slightly with the impact of Laurens’ weight. It turned into a giggle as Laurens’ arms swiftly encircled him, pulling him until he was close enough to kiss. Hamilton reached up, wrapping Laurens’ curly hair in his fist before bringing their lips together.

By the time they broke apart they were both a little breathless. Laurens shifted his hands lower until they were resting lightly on Hamilton’s ass. Hamilton gazed up at Laurens, traced his bottom lip with his finger like he was trying to commit it to memory.

“Everything’s gonna be alright,” he muttered softly.

Laurens grinned. “Looks like I’ve taught you plenty.”

“Mmm,” Hamilton murmured in approval. “Only problem is, I’m not gonna be able to listen to a goddamn thing now without thinking of you.”

“That’d be inconvenient if we broke up,” Laurens conceded.

Hamilton raised an eyebrow. “Oh?” he said questioningly. “Are we together now, John Laurens?”

The effects of the words were instantaneous. Laurens’ eyes widened, the colour flooding from his skin before flushing scarlet. His hands disappeared from Hamilton’s waist, going to scratch self-consciously at the swiftly prickling back of neck. “Um…I mean, I just thought…” he stammered, cheeks growing redder and redder. “It’s up to you…obviously…”

“John,” said Hamilton, narrowly suppressing a laugh as he placed his hands on Laurens’ shoulders. “Relax. I’m just messing with you. I don’t want to be with anyone else.”

“Oh,” said Laurens, a wave of relief crashing into his head so quickly he felt a little giddy. “Okay.”

Hamilton grinned amusedly, feeling happier than he had felt in a long time. It seemed to swell somewhere deep in his chest, filling his lungs so swiftly it was a wonder he wasn’t already floating
a foot above the mattress.

“Well,” he exclaimed, sitting up suddenly and grabbing his phone. “If we are, as the kids say, an item, I gotta tell Washington.”

“Wait, what?” Laurens frowned, confused at Hamilton already searching for his number. “Why?”

“’Cos he invited me to this fancy trustee dinner a while ago and asked me who my date was gonna be. I told him I’d get back to him and now I feel like I’ve kept him waiting kinda past the point of rudeness, y’know?”

“Hold on, trustee dinner?” Laurens demanded, just as Hamilton shushed him.

“Hello? Hey sir!” Hamilton chirped sunnily. “Yep, everything’s fine. I was just calling to give you an answer about my date to the trustee dinner? You asked whether they would be male or female, do you remember?”

“Yes I remember;” came Washington’s voice, a little perplexed, over the phone.

“Male. It’s male,” Hamilton told him, grinning so hard he was sure Washington could hear it. “It’s John Laurens. He’s my date.”

“Alexander,” said Laurens desperately through gritted teeth. “My dad’s friends will be there. If anyone sees us together…”

He let the words trail out, it becoming clear by the look of horror on Hamilton’s face that he understood very clearly what he was saying.

“I’ll handle it,” Hamilton whispered self-assuredly before turning back to Washington. “Yeah…so uh, it would be really great if he could come. But would it be possible to have him there by your invitation, rather than looking like he was there as my date? Would that be ok?”

“Yes, of course,” Washington answered earnestly. “That’s absolutely fine. I’ll let his father know that he’s there by my request.”

“Great. Thank you sir,” said Hamilton, about to put the phone down when it was suddenly impossible to keep from exploding. “Just to clarify, he is there as my date though. He’s my boyfriend. John Laurens is my boyfriend. I have a boyfriend. Hah!”

“Congratulations, Alexander,” replied Washington, his voice warm with amusement and genuine pleasure. “I’m very pleased for you both.”

Hamilton hung up, dropping the phone before glancing at Laurens guiltily. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I should have thought.”

Laurens exhaled, closed his eyes briefly before shaking his head. “It’s okay.”

“You don’t mind me telling Washington, do you? Sorry, I should have asked again-”

“It’s fine. I don’t mind people knowing,” he hesitated. “It’s important to you that he knows.”

Hamilton made a gesture which might have fooled someone who didn’t know what nonchalant meant. “Sure. For the numbers,” he paused, muttering under his breath, “And because he cares about me, or whatever.”

He reached for Laurens’ laptop, propping it back on his lap and searching until he had brought up
the playlist, complete with the italicised instructions. He nudged Laurens with his foot.

“So tell me Laurens,” he said, fluttering his eyelashes coyly. “Which other songs remind you of me?”

Laurens smiled bashfully, glancing down at his palms. “Why don’t you guess?”

Intrigued by that answer, Hamilton cast his eyes down the list. For Alt-J’s ‘Dissolve Me’ Laurens had just written for feeling vibes and other things. Spotting the song below that however, he felt his curiosity piqued by the words when u see someone who makes u catch ur breath followed by ‘Can’t Take My Eyes Off Of You’. He turned the laptop around, tapping at the screen. “Is it a bit too optimistic to hope this one?”

Laurens laughed, only a little hollowly. “It wasn’t the first time we met, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“When, then?”

“Uh…Nik Fish’s birthday party, I think? You were performing the Virgin Isles March.”

Hamilton stared at him incredulously, confused and a little put out. “Really?” and when Laurens nodded, “Damn. I think I was still stuck disliking you on principle at that point.”

Laurens nodded, amusement pricking the corners of his mouth. “Ya. I got that vibe.”

Hamilton squinted at the laptop screen, interest mounting upon seeing it was by Lauryn Hill. “I haven’t listened to this version yet.”

“Put it on.”

Hamilton did.

The drumbeat kicked in, accompanied by a soft, tender voice, almost melancholy with longing.

You’re just too good to be true
Can’t take my eyes off of you
You’d be like heaven to touch
I want to hold you so much

At long last love has arrived
And I thank God I’m alive
You’re just too good to be true
Can’t take my eyes off of you

Hamilton looked up at Laurens, something tugging in his chest as the truth sunk in – there had been a time when Laurens had caught sight of Hamilton, the world had stopped, and this song had got stuck in his head.

Laurens kissed him, one hand going to his hip as he pushed him forcefully against the mattress. Hamilton’s breath caught in his throat, gripping Laurens’ shoulder tightly, complying until he was laying on his back. A trill of excitement ran through him as Laurens moved so that he was supporting himself by his elbows, his body crowding him until there was barely a hairs’ breadth of space between them.

Laurens slipped in his tongue and Hamilton moaned, sucking on it briefly as his mouth chased for
more of him. He lifted his hips from the mattress and Laurens ground down, shifting so that they were parallel. Hamilton slipped his hands up the hem of Laurens’ shirt, the pads of his fingers tapping the ridge of his ribs and Laurens gasped at the skin-on-skin contact, craving more. He ran his index along one; Laurens shivered, teeth grazing Hamilton’s bottom lip before moving to suck at the junction between neck and jaw.

“Yeah, come on, mark me up,” Hamilton panted, turning his head to give Laurens better access and biting his lip at the hint of hot breath on his skin. “Save me the time of having to tell everybody.”

“You just want to wear them to the office,” Laurens murmured, grinning against Hamilton’s throat at the thought of him prancing into work on Monday, one button done a little lower than usual, a string of violet bruises peeking out from his starched white collar.

“Yeah…well,” breathed Hamilton, unable to think of anything clever as Laurens began to suck once again at his neck. “What can I say? I’m a show off by nature. Want people to see what I won.”

Laurens shook his head, lifting his head briefly to gaze at Hamilton. “No,” he exhaled, eyes boring into Hamilton’s as a memory flashed of him standing on the stage of that bar, belting at the top of his voice and holding a bottle of tequila aloft as though it were a Molotov cocktail. “I definitely won.”

For a moment Hamilton couldn’t breathe, head spinning under the intensity of Laurens’ gaze. He put his hands on his chest to steady himself. “I’m not going to argue this with you.”

Laurens grinned, kissing him again while his hands went to tackle the fly of Hamilton’s pants. He unbuttoned them quickly, shoving his hand beneath the zipper. Hamilton whimpered, shoving his hips further against him as Laurens held his dick firmly through his boxers. All sensical thought vanished from his head as Laurens’ fingers slipped beneath the waistband of his boxers and tugged them down to release it.

For a moment Laurens just stared at it, all traces of bravado shaken as the full enormity of what was happening took over him. Before he had a chance to panic or overthink however Hamilton groaned again, writhing a little against the sheets and Laurens didn’t hesitate, diving down to fit his mouth around as much as he was able. Hamilton uttered a little cry, bunching his hands into fists to keep from pushing further into him. Laurens paused a moment, allowing himself to get used to the weight and feel of Hamilton in his mouth before moving his tongue experimentally up the shaft and Hamilton swore, hand going automatically to Laurens’ hair, brushing shakily through the curls as he sucked.

“You’re – so hot,” Hamilton sighed, voice breaking slightly as Laurens ran his tongue halfway along the underside, flitting briefly over the slit. “God, John. I could – write poems about just your – your mouth alone.”

Laurens smirked around his cock, drawing off to ask: “Are you trying to kill the mood?”

Hamilton huffed, eyes rolling closed as the wet heat of Laurens’ mouth began to spread upwards to fill his abdomen. Laurens placed a hand on Hamilton’s thigh, stabilising him as he continued to suck him off. His nerves and inexperience made him a little clumsy, yet his enthusiasm and eagerness to please were so hot and endearing it was turning Hamilton a little crazy. Hamilton could feel him, thick and hard against his leg and at once his brain dissolved, leaving no thought apart from a sudden, desperate certainty of what he wanted.

“You,” he gasped, putting his hands on his shoulders. “Can you – Fuck me, John, I want you, I
want to feel you, please-"

Laurens’ eyes widened. He pulled off, more from anxiety than preplanning, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

“That’s what you want?” he asked uncertainly, nerves wriggling in his stomach.

Hamilton nodded, tears in his eyes. Laurens breathed out sharply, glancing upwards towards the ceiling as he counted down from five.

“Oh, okay,” he said, trepidation making his voice shaky. “I have to…uh…I’m gonna have to ask Ben for stuff.”

Hamilton jerked his head towards his coat, hanging over the back of Laurens’ chair. “Check my wallet.”

Laurens did as Hamilton undressed, incredulity mixing with amusement as his fingers closed around a condom and a small tube. “Someone’s presumptuous.”

Hamilton tried to give him a withering look, aware that it probably came off as desperate. “Like I’m gonna go to a party and not be prepared.”

“Fair point,” said Laurens, getting the light before taking off his shirt and pants. He returned to the bed, running his hand up Hamilton’s bare thigh. His heart was hammering wildly in his chest, so hard he thought it might cave in, and his hands shook as he uncapped the bottle. “Can you, uh, turn around?”

Hamilton complied immediately, resting his head on the triangle of his arms. Laurens took another shaky breath, running his hand reverentially along his spine before resting it tentatively at the base, just above his ass. He could sense Hamilton’s anticipation, his lower half quivering like a string pulled taut as Laurens squeezed lube onto his fingers and, taking a moment to brace himself, slid one into Hamilton.

Hamilton sighed, releasing the tension in his muscles as he relaxed against the intrusion. He nodded, signalling for another and Laurens added a second to the knuckle. His mind was screaming at how strange this was, still there was no denying the heady, intoxicating feeling sparking his nerves like an electric current at the softness of Hamilton’s skin, the sound of his quickened breathing. He moved his fingers, unsure exactly what he was meant to be doing and feeling a little foolish, when suddenly they brushed against something and Hamilton gasped, turning his face into the pillow.

“Is that it?” Laurens whispered wonderingly against the back of his neck.

“Yep,” replied Hamilton through gritted teeth. “You got it.”

Spurred by this victory, Laurens wasted no time exploiting this newfound vulnerability, teasing Hamilton with his fingers until he was wining, gripping the sheets so hard the knuckles shone white through his skin and straining against the mattress as he sought to fuck himself further. Laurens’ dick, already painfully hard, twiched at the sound of him; the idea that it was he who was the source of those noises and had the power to make Hamilton unravel like this going straight to both ends of his body.

“God,” Hamilton whimpered, tears forming at the corners of his eyes as Laurens slid in a third finger. “Fuck. I’m ready, do it. Please John, I can’t wait-”
“Fuck,” Laurens breathed, transfixed by the sight of Hamilton rubbing against the mattress in search of friction, his cock leaking and rosy. “Okay, okay. Right. Fuck.”

He removed his fingers from Hamilton who keened at the loss, trying to keep them steady as he ripped over the condom. After dropping it twice he finally managed to get it on, placing his hand on the small of Hamilton’s back before lining himself up. He placed a shaky kiss at the top of his spine. “Ready?”

Hamilton nodded, too impatient to speak. Laurens took a deep breath, trying to steady his fluttering heart before slowly easing in.

Hamilton moaned, spreading his legs further as the feeling of Laurens filling him sent heat flushing to every part of his body. Laurens swore, biting his lip as his mind tried and failed to comprehend how good this felt – Hamilton, hot and tight and straining around him and God God fuck what the fuck

“Move,” Hamilton forced out, voice raw and ragged and Laurens did, sliding out of Hamilton about halfway before thrusting back into him. Hamilton groaned, turning his face into the pillow and grinding against the mattress. On Laurens’ next thrust he cried out, an unintelligible word choked with Laurens’ name and Laurens returned it with a moan, falling steadily into a rhythm.

“Alexander,” Laurens breathed, reaching a hand beneath him to stroke his cock.

“John,” Hamilton wined. “John, stay with me, please-”

“I will, I – God. Alex-”

The raw force with which Laurens thrust into him, contrasting with the tender stroking of his hand was enough to tip him over the edge. He could feel he was near to breaking point and when Laurens bent close to whisper “My pretty baby,” he came in one long groan, ass clenching tightly around Laurens’ cock.

Laurens came soon after, Hamilton’s name still on his lips and he wrapped his arms tightly around him, drawing him close against his body as his orgasm shuddered through him. Hamilton sighed happily, feeling as though his mind had up and floated out of his body and by the time Laurens had eased out of him he was already on another plane. Laurens shifted, fixing himself more securely around Hamilton to compensate and Hamilton settled back, burrowing into the circle as though it were the last safe place in the universe.

"Not bad for your first go," Hamilton murmured sleepily, eyes already drifting closed.

Laurens chuckled, placing a kiss against Hamilton's hair. "Whereas you're too good to be true."

"Oh my God," Hamilton groaned, slapping him lightly on the elbow. "You are such a cheese puff."

Laurens snickered, nuzzling the back of his neck. "You love it."

Hamilton hummed in agreement. "Yes," he said, too content to be bashful.

He reached up to wind his fingers between Laurens’, clasping his hand tightly. He was still holding it when they woke up.

Chapter End Notes
I LOVE YOU BAAAAAAAAABYYYYYY AND IF IT'S QUITE ALRIGHT I NEED YOU BAAAAAAAAABBBBBYYYY TO WARM THE LONELY NIGHT I LOVE YOU BAAAAAAAAABBBBYYYYY TRUST IN ME WHEN I SAYYYYYY that you guys are awesome, and I'm gonna miss you a lot. Prepare for the last chapter!
Chapter Summary

These brothers runnin around, hard-headed, they get a little jealous, you know what I'm saying? Just like that!

Chapter Notes

i am soooooo sorry about the wait. I've been ridiculously busy these past couple of weeks and literally had to make do with the tiniest amounts of space to get down this fucker.

Anyway: warnings for violence, childish naivety, all that fairly predictable shit you get with the average social justice fanfiction

See the end of the chapter for more notes

JL: so u wanna kno sth

HM: depends

it aint another fact about the force awakening is it

JL: nah

HM: ok well im still not sure

JL: trust bro ur gonna wanna hear it. frm me @ least

HM: that sounds ominous

JL: trust

HM: ok. shoot.

JL: hamilton and i did it

HM: fuck off

JL: nah

HM: your pulling my dick

JL: nah

HM: you smug motherfucker. i can sense you grinning through the screen.

JL: :)
HM: omg. this is simultaneously the best and worst news i ever gots in my life

JL: lol. sorry.

HM: nah im just playin. im happy for you man. how was it?

JL: ...

... ...

*thumbs up*

HM: are you serious. what tf is wrong with you.

JL: i was emotionally stunted @ un young âge

whoops sry french keyboard

nah it was good. v good. it was gr8.

HM: n’aaaw. mazel tof.

JL: thanx.

im done now. u dnt need any of the deets

HM: ...

just one.

and im only gonna ask it once, then we put it to bed forever

but…

i was kind of making a point to look away during odds on. is he quite as you know

as he makes out

JL: YES

omg sorry. got excited lol

but uh ya. its p big, probs the biggest ive seen proportionately speaking

HL: ...

JL: boarding school dude

HL: fair point

JL: but srsly

it shouldnt be real?? like...hes so small???
how does he not fall over more

HM: oh my god

JL: but scientifically i mean

HM: oh mY GOD

JL: loooool

im done

HM: fuck.

i cant believe he was telling the truth. lucky you i guess

JL: ik

HM: ok i gotta go wash my eyes before the blood stains the carpet.

JL: loooool

HM: congrats again man

JL: lmao. thanx <3

*

AH: GUESS WHO JUST GOT LAID

GdMlMdL: !!!!!!!!!!!!!

AH: !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

GdMlMdL: TELL ME EVERYTHING

wait no, let me tell Adrienne first

Ok done.

TELL ME EVERYTHING

AH: AHAHAHAHA

GdMlMdL: Alexanderrrr :((

you are setting off my FOMO

AH: ?

GdMlMdL: fear of missing out! I learnt it today :

AH: Good

You dont need to feel like a part of this

GdMlMdL: :(((((((((((
At least tell me John is good in bed

AH: Hey, give the kid some privacy. first time and all

GdMIMdL: oh no

you mien he wasn't?

AH: What? no. He was. John’s good at everything.

Im kind of mad about it actually

like what gives him the right, yknow? Fuckin nerd.

GdMIMdL: <3 <3 <3

AH: he was nervous af tho. It was so cute.

Like he didnt have any stuff

and his little face went all red and adorable

And then when he got the condom he kept dropping it

Honestly how is he this frickin adorable, like what gives him the right

i just want to smush him

GdMIMdL: mon dieu

AH: I know

GdMIMdL: what has gotten into you? dont answer that.

AH: >:D

GdMIMdL: this is so strange. Only a few weeks ago you were saying how you did not want à relationship and now you are all in a tither because he dropped a condom

AH: lol ikr. Such a joke

its so dumb i haven’t been able to concentrate for hours straight since it happened

Cant shake the thought of everything I wanna do to him

GdMIMdL: :O

AH: >:)

GdMIMdL: do you think he would be on board???

AH: idk

I rly rly wanna raw him

but i feel like he’s got a tone of issues to work out before thats even the remotest possibility. Which is fine tbh Im hardly gonna complain if last time was anything 2 go bi
by lol

Tbh he could probs just lay around in his sweatpants clipping his toenails and I’d still find a way to find it sexy

GdMlMdL: omg.

you are so so gone

AH: long gone bby. miss me w that speed limit.

Just gotta wait for it to all come crashing :)))))

GdMlMdL: :( 

that wont happen. i have faith in you two


anyway, matters at hand.

How is everything? Girls good?

GdMlMdL: we are fine. we are planning on heading to Hercule’s for 11. will you two be joining us or shall we meet you at the parc

AH: we’ll meet u at Hercs. Altho we might be a bit late because of reasons

GdMlMdL: is this going to be a regular thing? If so, some warning would be polite

AH: idk dude. Im just rolling w the punches atm. ALSO btw we’re boyfriends now. I told Washington so its supra-official

GdMlMdL: YOU WHAT

YOU TOLD GEORGE?????

AH : Don’t call him George. and yes.

GdMlMdL: …

AH: what? I thought you’d be happy

GdMlMdL: oh no i am

It’s just

I wanted to be the one to tell him

AH: oh my god. Im leaving now bye

GdMlMdL: its ok i can still tell him the rest. Like how you wish to top but are worried about scaring John away.

AH: leaving

GdMlMdL: <3 <3 <3
mes félicitations encore mon ami <3

AH : merci mon amour xx

Lafayette switched off his phone and slipped it in his pocket. “Alexander and John had sex,” he announced.

Eliza glanced up from the sign she was painting, eyebrows raised interestedly. “Oh!” she exclaimed warmly. “That’s nice.”

“I thought they did ages ago,” frowned Angelica.

Lafayette shook his head. “They had done deeds,” he explained. “But nothing Biblical. Not to be heteronormative about it.”

Angelica hummed her understanding before going back to assault her placard with crayon. “I see,” she said. “Well, I’m very happy for them.”

“We too,” Lafayette nodded earnestly. “Also, they are boyfriends now! Alexander told George so it is supra-official.”

He picked up the sign Eliza had drawn for him and resumed his colouring intensely as though nothing had disturbed them, tongue poking out slightly in concentration. Eliza and Angelica shared a look.

“Are you ok, Lafayette?” Eliza asked tentatively.

Lafayette’s head snapped up. “What?” he blinked, bewildered. “Yes! Of course! I am delighted. Only I do wish Alexander had let me tell Washington. It has been a great effort not to talk about it for two years.”

“I’m not totally sure it was yours to tell,” said Angelica, raising her eyebrow wryly.

“You don’t understand,” declared Lafayette, without elaboration. He was silent for a while, thinking deeply to himself as he focused on his sign. Finally, he spoke up again. “And I suppose I am a little worried now that they are together.”

“You just said you were happy for them.”

“I am!” Lafayette insisted ardently. “It is just that…we are entering troubling times. And they both have a lot to deal with. I do not want them to do anything which will make them like each other less in the long term.”

“You run that risk going into any relationship, Lafayette.”

“I know,” Lafayette nodded. “And I am probably being irrational. But I want them to be good for each other. And I want them to be good to each other. And I want them to be good to themselves. But I feel it is a little optimistic to ask from them all three.”

He sighed, putting the cap on his felt-tip and putting it to one side. He was gloomily aware that he would never have once thought like this two years ago, but would have greeted the news of his friends’ getting together with unadulterated jubilation. He had tried hard to fend off the most forceful rays of Hamilton’s cynicism. Clearly, however, it hadn’t worked.

Angelica, who predictably had grown impatient with the conversation, had diverted her attentions
back to her placard. Eliza however was looking at him with sympathy.

“They might find it hard at first,” she told Lafayette. “But if there’s one thing they both are, its tenacious. It’ll take time, but they’ll work each other out.”

Lafayette smiled gratefully. “I’m sure you are right,” he replied.

He glanced down at his sign. He wasn’t sure what he had done, still, somehow it didn’t look nearly as good as it had when Eliza had first given it to him. “I have managed to ruin it,” he declared.

Eliza turned it towards her, eyebrows knitting thoughtfully. “Yes,” she confirmed. “Don’t worry. I’ll draw you another one.”

She went away to fetch another piece of cardboard. Meanwhile Lafayette’s phone buzzed; he reached for it and saw it was a reply from Adrienne.

AdN: :O Tu es sérieux ?! C’est genial !!

Bravo pour John! Alex est très beau. Je voudrais :)

GdMlMdL: :( mon coeur!!

AdN: teehee. Je plaisante mon amour <3

GdMlMdL: Adrienne ?

AdN : Oui, Gilbert ?

GdMlMdL: jtm

Adn : Awwww

Jtm mon chevalier

<3

GdMlMdL: <3

*

By the time Hamilton and Laurens arrived at Mulligan’s, the others had mostly finished strapping sheets of cardboard to themselves and were hobbling round the apartment, gathering the signs together and having trouble manoeuvring their newly stiffened limbs. The moment Hamilton stepped through the door Mulligan pounced, brandishing the duct tape as if it were a foil.

“I’ve already got some on,” Hamilton protested, batting him away and lifting up the hem of his sweater so that Mulligan could see the makeshift flak jacket beneath it.

“Not enough,” Mulligan countered. “The police will be making a beeline for the leader. If you really plan on doing this thing, you’re doing it properly.”

Hamilton rolled his eyes but took off his sweater, allowing Mulligan to strap more cardboard to his arms and torso.

Angelica was going around with a thick black sharpie which she pointed threateningly at Laurens. “Arm,” she ordered.
Laurens stuck out his arm, grimacing at the cold as Angelica scrawled across the section that wasn’t covered by cardboard or duct tape. “What’s this?”

Angelica clicked the cap back on. “My dad’s phone number,” she answered. “Memorise it now just in case. Are you ready, Hamilton?”

“Yes,” replied Hamilton, jerking out of Mulligan’s reach as he made to attack his pants. “Okay everyone, listen up. This is important.”

The others gathered around, faces solemn as they blinked at Hamilton expectantly. Hamilton took a moment to look at them. A ragtag volunteer army, kitted out in real-estate signs and cereal boxes. Small yet determined. He felt his heart choke his throat and it took him a second before he could speak.

“First of all, if anything happens and the police bring you in, on no account do you speak to them until Angelica’s dad gets there,” he told them. “Not a single word without a lawyer present, you hear me? Even if they’re just asking if you want a glass of water. Secondly, if they ask you who organised it you say Alexander Hamilton. None of that Wild Child shit, as romantic as it is we need to have one unified story.”

“Did he just use ‘Wild Child’ as his reference instead of Spartacus?” Meade whispered to Angelica.

“If people get separated, call Eliza immediately. If you can’t reach her, head immediately back to Base A—that’s here. We need to be on guard against any deviation from the route. The way we’re gonna structure it is me, Mulligan and Tallmadge up front, then Laurens and Eliza, then Angelica, Meade and Lafayette taking the rear. Smallest people go in the middle. We need to be compact, with each person protecting the one next to them. Quick inventory check. Eliza, first aid kit?”

“Check,” answered Eliza, zipping it into her backpack.

“Ben, goggles?”

Tallmadge dangled the goggles in front of his face, quite obviously nabbed from the science department. “I only managed to get three,” he replied. “For the people up front.”

“That’s fine. Angelica, did you get the bandanas?”

Angelica held up a bunch of colourful handkerchiefs. Laurens glanced quizzically at Hamilton. “What’s that for?”

“In case of tear gas,” Hamilton explained. “You put some water on it and cover your mouth.”

“Oh,” said Laurens unenthusiastically. “Great.”

“Anyone got anything on them that could be construed as a weapon,” Hamilton continued. “Soft drinks cans, pointy key-rings, anything at all. Leave it here now.”

There was a brief scuffle as people turned out their pockets. Angelica rummaged in her makeup bag and withdrew a small pair of nail scissors before helping Meade take the bottle opener/corkscrew off his keys. Once everyone had set their things on the table, Hamilton nodded approvingly.

“Alright,” he said. “Let’s go.”

*
The park was already buzzing when they arrived, vibrant with people who had sought to get there early or who else had seen the signs and wanted to see what the fuss was about. Hamilton climbed out of Laurens’ car and sauntered into the middle of the crowd, megaphone bouncing from his hip. Familiar faces swam around him, students from Columbia mixed with a number of those who had been at the yard sale. At once Mulligan and Eliza began greeting the people they knew from church and the neighbourhood; meanwhile Angelica saw to the Feminist Society, several of whom were waving fairly incongruous-looking signs.

“What the hell is this?” she demanded, gesturing to one bearing a dramatic reproduction of a vulva.

“What’s solidarity,” the girl carrying it replied.

“What the fuck does a cartoon vagina have to do with police brutality?”

“All issues of oppression are feminist issues,” replied the girl scathingly. “United we conquer. Divided we shall fall.”

“This is usurpation. Not unity.”

“Well I didn’t want to say anything Angelica,” the girl huffed, casting a disparaging eye over the park. “But to be honest, I do feel like the main tone of your protest is drawing focus onto very male-centric conceptions of violence. We shouldn’t forget who the real institutions of patriarchy actually affect.”

Instead of replying, Angelica turned away in order to prevent the protest from degenerating into violence before it had even started.

Hamilton was bouncing on the balls of his feet. “Ok everyone!” he shouted into his megaphone. “We’re gonna set off in about five minutes! If anyone is waiting for friends, tell them to meet us at the first checkpoint!”

“Alex,” said Mulligan quietly, tapping him on the shoulder. “There’s someone I thought you’d like to say hi to.”

Hamilton spun around, nearly dropping his megaphone. Mulligan was standing with Jamal’s mother Annie and a few other family members, including the little girl Laurens had drawn a mermaid for. They were all looking a little conscious of the many eyes on them, particularly the older ones.

Annie stepped forward to hug Hamilton who seized up automatically.

“How’s he doing?” he managed to get out.

“Good!” Annie replied enthusiastically. “We told him about today. Damn near took three nurses to stop him from hopping on out that bed and coming to join.”

Hamilton shook hands with Jamal’s brothers and thanked them for coming. Meanwhile Laurens, after gritting his teeth against Annie’s affectionate embrace, looked on uncomfortably, keeping a wary distance. He was conscious of the puzzled glances in his direction, as though trying to figure out what the son of a Congressman whose chief agenda seemed to be in fucking them over was doing here.

After what felt like a lot longer than five minutes as the group struggled to shepherd everyone into some degree of logical formation, the crowd steadily began to siphon out the park, Hamilton flanked by Mulligan and Tallmadge taking the lead. Laurens took his place next to Eliza, a little
thankful about being in the middle so that he was able to slip into the masses, remaining relatively unseen. He felt on edge and self-conscious, ambivalence raging between his anxiety about standing out and his desire to be close to Hamilton.

Clearly his unease showed on his face because as they set off, Eliza touched him lightly on the arm. “Are you alright?” she asked. “What’s wrong?”

“Oh ya, sure. Fine.”

“Huh?” said Laurens, jerking out of his reverie and making an effort to unclench his jaw. “Good news about you and Hamilton,” Eliza smiled knowingly.

“Aha yeah,” Laurens forced out a laugh, the knot of discomfort in his stomach growing tighter rather than slack. “He told you, huh?”

“Lafayette,” Eliza clarified.

“Right,” Laurens nodded, unsure how he felt about Hamilton’s ex knowing this not uncomplicated development, and enjoying discussing it with her even less.

As they marched down the street the crowd began to chant and Laurens was saved having to make conversation. Already the sidewalk was flooding with protesters, several of whom were spilling out into the road. Looking over the heads around him he could see nothing but the flash of signs and banners, colours jewel-bright as the standards carried by cavalrymen. Close to the front Jamal’s family were waving blown-up photographs bearing a beaming, gap-toothed smile. Laurens found himself avoiding its gaze.

After a while, he felt a tug at his elbow. “Hey.”

Starting, he glanced down. A little boy was grinning up at him, his smile not dissimilar from the pictures in front of them. “Uh…hi?” said Laurens.

The boy pointed to the font where Hamilton and Mulligan were leading the chant. “Are you with those guys?”

Laurens nodded. “Yeah.”

“That’s cool,” said the kid. “They’re cool.”

Laurens nodded again. “Yeah,” he said, not really knowing what else to say.

The little boy however, did not appear satisfied with that. “Do you know my cousin?” he persisted.

“Who’s your cousin?”

“Jamal.”

Laurens shook his head. “No,” he replied. “I met his mom and sister though.”

“Yes, she told me,” said the kid and Laurens thought he meant Annie before he continued. “She wouldn’t quit on that mermaid you did. I saw it, it was good. You’re a good artist.”

Laurens smiled, touched despite himself. “Thanks.”

“Will you do me one?”
“What, a mermaid?”

“Ew, no,” the boy wrinkled his nose. “I want an alien. Or can you only do mermaids?”

Laurens laughed. “I can do you an alien.”

“Cool. Can it be a cowboy one?”

“Sure. Do you want it in space or the range?”

Laurens listened, spirits raising as the boy began to babble on about his vision in great detail. Around them the crowd was swelling, more and more people latching on as the protest began to pick up speed. Across the road locals were opening their doors and windows to catch a sight of what was going on, kids running out into the street to wave at them or cycle along on their bikes, shouting mixed jeers and encouragement. At the crest of the wave Hamilton felt it, the electricity of potential thrumming through his veins as surely as if he’d been charged with its power. He could feel it humming beneath his skin, a potent awareness of what could it might become and even as his mouth moved along to the chanted words his own brain was pounding with a different mantra: it’s starting it’s starting it’s starting-

“Shit,” Mulligan whispered softly.

The police were waiting at the end of the street, the black shells of their heavy armour glinting like the backs of beetles, riot shields held before them like wings. Hamilton’s pulse quickened.

“It’s ok,” he breathed. “We knew they’d be here.”

“So many of them though,” muttered Tallmadge, awestruck.

Hamilton didn’t reply. It had not escaped him that there were, in fact, far more than he had anticipated, standing between the blocks with their shields raised and guns at their sides, as if they had been expecting an uprising rather than a demonstration.

They seemed to tense as the crowd drew nearer, shuffling closer together. Similarly, Hamilton was aware of Mulligan and Tallmadge tighter against him.

One of the policemen at the front spoke into a megaphone. “No further,” he stated. “Break up now or turn around.”

His words were rushed, running slightly into each other and betraying his anxiety. Hamilton muttered to Tallmadge: “Get word to the others,” before addressing the cop.

“We’re within our rights to be here,” he shouted back. “You can’t tell us to go home.”

“There are too many of you,” the cop replied.

Hamilton glanced at Mulligan who shook his head infinitesimally. “We’re not breaking any laws,” Hamilton continued. “The constitution grants us freedom to assemble, or does that only apply to white racists?”

“No further,” the cop repeated.

In response, Hamilton moved until he was standing directly in front of the first line, heart thumping erratically as around him the crowd did the same. He lifted his megaphone, resuming the chant of “Justice for Jamal”. The police didn’t move but held the line, so tense that Hamilton could see the
veins sticking out above their vests. Someone further back pushed forward and the crowd surged; Hamilton found himself pressed against a riot shield. He flung an arm backwards, attempting to control his feet and the front line at once.

Laurens was so focused on Hamilton at the front it took him a moment to realise the little boy at his side had disappeared.

“Shit,” he swore, squinting to see whether he had re-joined his family and flailing around for a sight of him. “Eliza, did you see where that kid went?”

Eliza stood on her tiptoes, craning her neck to see over the top of the many heads in her way. “Over there,” she pointed.

Laurens peered through the throng, just in time to catch sight of the boy narrowly avoiding being trampled, weaving in the direction of the front line.

“Jesus Christ,” he hissed, shoving his sign at Eliza. “Here, hold this. Hey, kid! Stop!”

The boy either ignored or didn’t hear Laurens, instead racing forward until he was at the front. Laurens rushed after him, the blood pounding in his ears rising to deafening as the boy began to shout and swear at the policemen. He reached the front just in time to see the boy make a grab for one of the shields; the cop pushed him back, flinging him so hard his head slammed against the gravel.

“HEY!” Laurens yelled, pushing people out the way as he snapped. “He’s a kid, asshole!”

“GET BACK!” shouted the cop, staring at Laurens with wild, panicked eyes.

Laurens frowned, dumfounded. “I am back,” he shouted indignantly. “What the hell is your problem?”

He scrabbled to help the kid to his feet, casting a desperate eye for his family. The boy was screaming, hurling insults and swear words at the police as he fought Laurens’ grip. Thinking it was Laurens who had spoken, the cop bellowed back: “If you keep talking to me like that I’ll spray you.”

“You’ll fucking what,” Laurens snapped, releasing the boy as his relative stepped forward. “What did you say to me?”

“I’M WARNING YOU TO CALM DOWN.”

“I am fucking calm!”

The crowd drove forward and Laurens tripped, buffeted onto the cop’s riot shield. The cop pushed him, snapping his head back so fast it gave him whiplash. Swearing, and in a rush of impulsive anger, Laurens pushed him back.

It happened too quickly to regret it. The moment Laurens’ hand flashed he found himself grabbed by several policemen at once, all four of them leaping on him until he was slammed lengthways into the sidewalk.

Several people screamed. Above them, he heard Hamilton’s voice as if it had been ripped from him. “JOHN!” and then, “STOP. DON’T SHOOT.”

Laurens tried to raise his head to answer he was okay; he had barely lifted it an inch when he felt
someone seize the back of his neck and shove his face further against the concrete. He spat out gravel, tasting copper at the back of his throat as he tried to wrestle against the restraints gripping his arms.

“JOHN. LISTEN TO ME,” Hamilton’s voice again, peering through the haze of impact he could just make out his blurred outline. “Don’t struggle, ok? Stay calm, do as they say, don’t struggle!”

“Tell your people to get the fuck back,” the cop with the megaphone ordered, spit flying from his lips.

Hamilton hesitated.

The policemen on Laurens had handcuffed him, and were now yanking him to his feet. Hamilton watched as they jerked him by his hair, shoving him forcefully through the ranks. Blood was pounding against his ear-drums, so loud it deafened out every sound except for a thin, high white noise. He was hyper-aware to everything, from the sweat trickling beneath the cardboard under his shirt to the sound of the person breathing behind him.

“Alexander?” Mulligan called warningly.

Slowly, Hamilton turned to look at him and saw the question there, as clear as if he had spoken it. He scanned the faces around him and saw horror, shock, apprehension but most tangibly, anger. A hot, palpable, viscous thing; flowing through him and around him as if someone had knocked it from one of the buildings and now it splashed, thick and irrepressible to flood the streets. Above all however he saw the same question, mirrored on every face as they looked to him for a decision: What do we do?

“Alex!” another voice pleaded desperately from somewhere behind him. It was Eliza. She didn’t say anything else but as with Mulligan, Hamilton heard the unspoken entreaty.

I don’t know I don’t know I don’t know

In his mind’s eye, he saw it. Himself, lifting his megaphone and smashing it into the faces of the men who had arrested Laurens. The crowd swarming forward at the signal to attack, reaching into their rucksacks for potential missiles. Fire, glass smashing. People flinging open their windows to hurl bottles and furniture as tens of thousands flooded the street. Gunshots ringing, more young men and women grabbed and slammed into the gravel, blood pouring and palms raised against batons coming down and down.

Hamilton looked and saw families. Students, children. He looked back and saw an army of heavily armed police.

He made a decision.

He raised the megaphone. “Fall back,” he commanded. “Everyone, back.”

“What the fuck?” a young man snarled nearby, expression livid as he stared at Hamilton. “You’re just gonna give it to them?”

“Look at this,” Hamilton waved his arms at the enormous number before him. “Are you seeing this? Are you seeing the same shit as me?”

“I suggest you listen to your leader,” said the policeman.

“Nah man, fuck that,” the young man snapped, making to launch forward. At once two cops
grabbed him, hurling him backwards; his friends caught him before he could rush at them again. Panic rose swiftly in Hamilton’s chest as the implications of what could happen hit home; he spoke into the megaphone again, repeating the command to withdraw while Mulligan and Tallmadge aimed to herd the front line backwards, allowing the police to steadily gather ground.

Slowly the crowd began to disperse, the anti-climax that there would be no riot finally settling in. The many adolescents who had joined the protest for something to do went home disgruntledly, kicking the ground and muttering about time wasters. Many people shot angry and disappointed remarks at Hamilton and the police; Hamilton ignored them, focusing on shepherding the people out of gun range and back towards the park.

As they retreated from the block Annie came up to him, putting a hand on his shoulder. “You did the right thing,” she told him, her voice low and urgent.

Hamilton didn’t say anything. Already blue and red lights were flashing as a police car drew up along the sidewalk. One of the cops was speaking monotonously into a microphone.

He couldn’t see Laurens.

* 

Hours later, Hamilton was sat outside the Police Department with his head in his hands.

The clock on the wall was a blue, plastic monstrosity. Hamilton’s eyes had been trained on it, counting down every single second until the hour before it had become unbearable and he’d had to look away.

The others had tried to come with him but he’d waved them away, telling them to see the protestors home safe instead. He was only just starting to regret this decision. While he didn’t think he was exactly deserving of Lafayette’s buoyant chatter, or Angelica’s levelling sarcasm, or Eliza’s warm hand rubbing calming circles on his back, right now he would take just about anything to distract him from his thoughts, eligibility be damned.

The door at the opposite end of the waiting room opened and clicked shut. Hamilton jerked his head up, ready to scramble to his feet when he saw that it wasn’t Laurens.

Well. It wasn’t John.

“Oh,” said Hamilton. He sat back down.

Henry Laurens gave him a quick, level gaze from behind his thin wireframed glasses. He wiped his hands on his slacks, as if worried he had contracted something from the doorknob, before walking over and holding it out to Hamilton.

“Alexander, I presume,” he greeted him.

Hamilton shook it warily, trying to hide his curiosity as he stared into a face he knew very well. They did look remarkably similar. Henry’s eyes were grey, his mouth slightly thinner and jaw wider. But apart from their colouring, he could have been looking into an older version of Laurens himself.

“My son speaks of you often,” Henry continued. “Sings your praises, in fact.”

Hamilton was very aware that now would be a bad time to blush. “I’m not so sure how worthy I am of them,” he replied.
“Don’t be modest,” said Henry. “I’d have thought them affectionately exaggerated if I hadn’t already heard similarly from Washington and Schuyler. It seems you’re not short of influential admirers.”

Hamilton smiled weakly. “They’ve both been very kind to me.”

Henry nodded. “Indeed,” he said. “A valuable skill, making friendships with individuals of such high station. I’m sure it will serve you very well in later life. You work for Washington already, yes? And I hear you’ve also been offered work experience at Schuyler’s firm.”

“Yes,” Hamilton replied, feeling a little uncomfortable. “But uh…I think he was mostly being generous. I’m good friends with his daughters, you see.”

“Like you are with John.”

Hamilton stared at him, unsure quite what the insinuation was, or whether there was one at all. “Yes…” he began uncertainly. “But…I mean…I don’t just have friends with wealthy parents.”

Henry’s mouth twisted in what was probably amusement but Hamilton couldn’t be sure. “I wasn’t attacking you for it,” he assured him. “Like I say. It’s a very useful skill. You think I’d have gotten very far in politics if I hadn’t made similar acquaintances? I can offer you the numbers of a few more, if you like. From what I hear you’re intelligent and hardworking. I’m sure I can think of a few friends looking for an intern over the summer.”

Hamilton continued to stare at him, flummoxed by the way the conversation seemed to be going and feeling increasingly nervous by it. “Thank you,” he settled on at last. “That would…I would appreciate that a lot.”

Henry waved his hand, as if to say think nothing of it. “I would prefer it of course,” he continued. “If, noble as your schemes are, you’d refrain from using this particular acquaintance to influence them. I understand it must be of an enormous tactical advantage to have my son’s face at the front of your political agenda but if you could think of any other friendships you might put to similar use, I’d be most grateful.”

Hamilton felt something cold flood through him, as though he had just been buried under several feet of dead earth. “No, no, it’s not like that,” he protested quickly. “Laurens is my…one of my best friends. I would never use him for an agenda.”

“Again, it wasn’t an attack,” Henry said, voice smooth. “You’re a politician, Alexander. I recognise something of myself in you. Still, one might wonder what kind of friend would lead someone into a dangerous situation, where the odds are not insurmountable that he could have been killed.”

Hamilton said nothing. Henry held his gaze for a few moments, grey eyes boring deeply into his. Finally, he reached into his suit pocket and withdrew a neat, cream-coloured card.

“I’ll be in touch about those numbers,” he told him. “In the meantime, I think it’s best if you keep Jack out of your next scheme. I can’t control who he wants to spend time with, of course. Still, if you care about him as much as you profess, I’m sure our interests will align.”

Hamilton took the card. He slipped it into his back pocket, still making no reply. For some reason however Henry seemed to relax, as if this simple transaction was something comfortingly familiar to him.

“I’m sorry, I’m late for a meeting,” he said. “It was good to meet you.”
He left without a backwards glance, offering only a brisk nod to the man who held open the door. Hamilton watched him depart until he had climbed into the BMW parked outside and shot off down the road, disappearing in a screech of car tires.

A few minutes later, Laurens appeared.

“John,” Hamilton breathed, rising up and darting forward immediately.

Laurens squeezed his eyes shut, turning his face into Hamilton’s shoulder as his arms came up around him. He breathed out, long and shaky.

“What happened?” he asked, voice muffled.


Laurens let out a long sigh, jerking his head in the negative. “He talked them out of it,” he answered bitterly. “Like always.”

He sat down on one of the blue plastic chairs, gazing miserably at his hands. Hamilton put his arm around him, holding him close, and leaned his head against his shoulder. Laurens rubbed his face with his hands.

“I fucked up,” he muttered.

“No, you didn’t,” said Hamilton automatically. “What happened wasn’t your fault John, not in any way.”

“Yes, it was,” Laurens retaliated, exhaling sharply through his nose. “I attacked a police officer, Alexander. Through my own fucking recklessness and stupidity.”

“If anyone was stupid or reckless it was me,” Hamilton countered. “The whole thing was…fucking imbecilic. God. Just thinking about what could have happened…what almost happened to you—”

He broke off, unable to fight past the image of the police officer’s hand twitching for his gun.

“It’s not just that,” said Laurens. “I’ve ruined the whole campaign. I’ve ruined everything.”

Hamilton frowned at him. “What are you talking about?”

Laurens looked at him as though he had said something very stupid. “Alexander,” he said. “Your entire argument is built on wealth and race privilege. Now you’ve got Henry Laurens’ black son, getting off scot-free without even a stain on his police record. How the hell are you supposed to explain how that’s any different to what Drayton got away with?”

He raised an eyebrow expectantly at Hamilton, expression grim with dejection. “Face it,” he said, setting his jaw as he turned away. “It’s over. I fucked up.”

Hamilton however was chewing his lip, the gears in his head turning with the fledglings of brewing excitement.

“No,” he said quietly, only half to Laurens as the bones of a strategy began to take shape. “No. I can spin this.”
so TECHNICALLY this is the last chapter which means TECHNICALLY I didn't lie

But also, yeah. The epilogue will be up in another couple days.

i love youuuu i'm sorryyyyyy
Chapter Summary

All I ever wanted, all i ever needed is here in my arms. Words are very unnecessary - they can only do harm.

Chapter Notes

tw for light masochist!Laurens and the use of sex to avoid dealing with problems

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A week had passed since the protest, during which no one caught word or sight of Hamilton. Lafayette, when his messages remained persistently unanswered, allowed his anxieties to get the better of him and, convinced that Hamilton had either starved to death or was in the process of doing so, turned up at his accommodation with take-out. Upon ringing the buzzer however, he received nothing more than an order to “leave it outside” and so went away, furious but reassured that he was, at the very least, alive.

The first sign of Hamilton that anyone else saw was an article in the local news. The Jewish paper he had done work experience with over the summer wasn’t the only one to pick up the story. Very soon, the word that Congressman Henry Laurens’ black son had been arrested on no account other than the perceived threat of his race, and escaped punishment only once his lineage had come to light, had reached national level. The picture accompanying the story showed a younger Laurens, dressed in his Swiss private school uniform and smiling nervously at the camera.

Hamilton had got it off his Facebook.

Of course there were counter-arguments. People asking how there could possibly be a race problem if a black boy received the same privileged treatment as Andrew Drayton, when it came to being subject to the law. Suggestions that the real conflict was a one-sided one between black Americans and the police, with John Laurens’ “violent fit of temper” being compared to Jamal Curtis’ assault. But the timing of the article, and its anticipation of the response, had most of them refuted before they were even put to print; citing the main difference between the two cases as being, as ever, a matter of colour.

“The trope of the ‘tragic mulatto’ is one deeply embedded within our culture,” Angelica read from where she was sat on the common room floor, leaning against Meade’s legs. “Stemming from slavery days, it serves to represent an individual made the victim of a society divided by race. In this case, John Laurens’ story is a perfect fit to the narrative. His profile as a violent, aggressive black male put him in cuffs. Then, when the intervention of his Congressman father shone a light on the perfect whiteness of his heritage, his identity shifted. No longer a public enemy but the wealthy heir to a middle-class throne, his only crime was the allowance of that other side of his self to briefly rise to the surface. In this way, Laurens can be seen to embody several offences.
within our society, summarised by the conflict between racial prejudice and colour/wealth privilege.” She put down the paper, staring for a moment at Lafayette. “Was Laurens okay with Alex writing this?”

Mulligan nodded. “I assume so,” he replied. “He said he was when I asked. It’s all true anyway.”

Angelica wrinkled her nose. “I guess so,” she said, peering at the article. “I just can’t imagine Laurens particularly on board with being depicted as this…some sort of tragic figure.”

“Again,” said Mulligan. “Struggling to see the lie.”

Angelica rolled her eyes. “You know what I mean,” she said. “This really goes to town. On his wealth, on his ‘light-skin privilege’…on everything.”

“I know what you mean,” Mulligan agreed. “But this is the only way to get morons to understand that what happened to Laurens highlights the problems within the system, rather than rendering them liberal fantasies.”

“No, I get it,” Angelica said impatiently. “I mean I’m just surprised Laurens was so chill about his personal trauma being used like that.”

“John understands the value of a good story,” Lafayette reassured her. “He knows that this will help in the long run. In any case, I would not describe him as exactly ‘chill’.”

“Why?” Eliza frowned concernedly. “What’s wrong with him?”

“Well. Have any of you seen him lately?”

“I have,” said Tallmadge smugly.

Lafayette rolled his eyes. “Great,” he replied sarcastically. “And how much, would you say, have you seen him? For someone who literally cohabits the same space.”

Tallmadge appeared to physically deflate. “Not much,” he muttered.

“I just assumed he was with Hamilton?” Meade asked.

Tallmadge shook his head. “Nah, he’s been mostly in his room,” he replied. “I hear them on the phone sometimes. Either to him, or his father.”

A long silence followed this statement. None of them had really spoken about what happened after Laurens’ arrest. Laurens had clammed up about it instantly, telling Lafayette and Mulligan nothing other than it had been “sorted”. Hamilton, out of deference to Laurens’ privacy, had not seemed inclined to elaborate upon saying that he had met Henry Laurens at the police station. The others had assumed Hamilton would be at least a little more tuned in to how Laurens was dealing at this point; it seemed, however, they were mistaken.

“At least they’re talking?” Eliza suggested hopefully at last.

Tallmadge made a half-hearted gesture. “Not about the arrest, as far as I can make out. Mostly it’s kinda like: ‘Hey. Didja watch the Daily Show?’ ‘Oh, no. Guess I missed it today,’ ‘Oh well. You can always watch it tomorrow.’ ‘Guess that’s why they call it that.’ ‘Dontcha think Trevor Noah’s hot?’ ‘Not really. I miss Michael Che.’” He broke off, looking defensive as people blinked at him. “What? Laurens’ phone got busted at the march. Now he can only talk on loudspeaker.”
“Ugh,” Lafayette dropped his head into his hands. “This is terrible. The only person with whom he is having any kind of non-virtual communication, and he also happens to be the only one possibly more emotionally inhibited than he is.”

“What are his conversations with his father like?” asked Eliza.

Tallmadge shrugged. “Short,” he replied, assuming a low, deadpan tone. “‘What did you do today?’ ‘Oh, you know. Just working on my essay.’ ‘Make sure you finish it.’ ‘I will.’ ‘Are you seeing your friends soon?’ ‘Not today.’ ‘That’s for the best. Get some work done.’ And then he hangs up.” He winced. “I feel like the only reason he calls him is just to make it obvious that he’s sort of…giving him the silent treatment, or something.”

“Yes, he does that,” Lafayette nodded sagely. “When I went to visit Laurens over spring break, they got into an argument at dinner. Henry did not speak a word to him for the rest of the visit. He would make a point to come into the room and ask me about my day, or to pass me the newspaper.”

“That is fucked,” said Mulligan fiercely. “He’s a grown-ass man.”

Lafayette shrugged. “Some men can be very childish.”

Another silence. Lafayette picked up the newspaper and flickered through it. The publicity from Hamilton’s article had had the desired effect; Drayton had been suspended for a review period, and in the meantime, the board were under pressure to review whether or not he be permanently expelled. It was still too soon to call it, or determine what affect it would have on the trial. Still. Lafayette recognised a win when he saw one.

Suddenly, his phone rang. He glanced at the screen, releasing a peal of excitement when he saw that it was Washington.

“Ah!” he exclaimed delightedly. “Hello!”

“Hi Lafayette,” Washington’s voice came, harried and melancholy through the receiver. “How are things?”

Lafayette released a sharp breath. “Not good,” he admitted flatly. “Well…yes. They are on a public level. In that way, they are going very well. But speaking more personally, no. Not good.”


“Traumatised, I think. And his father isn’t speaking to him.”

“How’s Laurens?”

“Traumatised, I think. And his father isn’t speaking to him.”

“Hmm. And Alexander?”

Lafayette hesitated. “If I know him, frustrated that he cannot be of more help,” he answered finally.

Lafayette could practically see Washington looking dejected, his usually youthful face turned hangdog. “Well,” he said after some time. “I was going to ask you both, but I think perhaps it’s better if I gave him some space for the time being. Lafayette, are you free for dinner tomorrow evening?”

Taken aback, Lafayette took a quick moment to review his schedule. “I think so,” he replied, a little warily. “Any special occasion? Not that I am not always happy to attend, of course!”

“Well actually,” Washington began. “I ran what we talked about by the board, the independent
department that would judge future acts of misconduct etcetera, prejudice and things like that, and...well. To put it plainly, what happened to Laurens seems to have made people more open-minded to the idea.”

Lafayette jolted upright, as if someone had touched him with an electric rod. He held the phone very tightly to his ear. “You are serious?” he demanded, ecstatic. “That is excellent news! Of course I will be there, er...what exactly do you need me for?”

“Frankly, I think this is only going to work is if its partly student-financed. Which means of course it will also have to be student run, again at least in part. I thought we’d have a chat about how that might look and how you’d want it to be structured-”

“I can donate money,” Lafayette nodded vigorously. “How much?”

Washington laughed, a little uncomfortably. “That’s really not what I was asking-”

“It does not matter. You need money, and I have it. I am very committed to this idea. It would give me a lot of pleasure to leave behind something I can look on with pride after I graduate.”

“Well,” said Washington, sounding, Lafayette thought, a little choked. “That’s very honourable of you, Gilbert. We can talk about it at dinner.”

Lafayette nodded again, stopping when he remembered Washington couldn’t see him. “Yes. I look forward to it. Thank you very much again! I cannot tell you what it means.” He hung up, flinging his phone away in favour of a mini fist pump. “La victoire est à nous!” he cried. “Washington thinks the plan may pass!”

“You’re shitting me,” responded Mulligan as Angelica swore delightedly. “Someone needs to tell Alex.”

“I am on it,” replied Lafayette, picking up his phone and typing urgently.

*  

At the same time that Lafayette was speaking to Washington, Hamilton was calling Laurens.

“So in your opinion,” he said, scrolling through pictures of cruisers on his laptop. “Do you think I should get the first one or the second?”

“I don’t think you should get either.”

“I told you. That’s not an option.”

“You don’t even like yachts. You referred to them as ‘the cankerous scourge of the Caribbean’.”

“My personal feelings have nothing to do with it,” replied Hamilton primly, zooming in on the image and screenshotting it for his collection. “Also, that was before I saw they were on sale. Morals aside, I’m not about to turn down a bargain.”

“How much is the first one?”

“Only six-fifty!” Hamilton said excitedly. “Do you know how cheap that is? Honestly, anything under a million is an absolute steal.”

“Lol. Do you think your bursary will cover it?”
“Actually, I was thinking you could get it for me. Sort of like a Valentine’s thing, y’know.”

“I was gonna buy you a lamborghini.”

“I’d rather have the boat. ‘Cos then I get to name it.”

“Ya? What were you thinking?”

“La Bella Laurelia.”

There was a pause on the end of the line, during which Hamilton knew Laurens was fighting to keep from smiling.

“That’s pretty fucking cute Hamilton,” he said finally.

Hamilton’s grin broadened. “Yeah, well I can afford to be,” he replied, pasting the yacht into Paint and replacing the name. “Now that I’ve bagged myself a sugar daddy.”

Laurens’ laugh was half a choke. Hamilton paused, finger hovering over the mousepad. “What are your views on PDA, by the way?”

“Oh,” said Laurens, sounding uncertain. “Depends on context? I mean, I want people to know we’re dating. Just not, you know. All people.”

Hamilton nodded. “Got it,” he replied, switching to his private Insta. “Your dad’s not big on the gram, is he?”

Laurens laughed shortly. “Decidedly not.”

“Cool,” said Hamilton, hesitating before adding, “Not that he has much to worry about, seeing as you haven’t touched me since, like, the Renaissance.”

The moment it fell out his mouth he regretted it. Hamilton closed his eyes, cursing softly at his stupidity. On the other end of the line, Laurens’ silence was so loud it sent his heart racing.

“I am so sorry,” he stammered. “Seriously Laurens, forget I said it—”

“No,” Laurens cut him off softly, thankfully sounding more embarrassed than upset. “It’s fine, I… I’m sorry I haven’t been… available…”

“You don’t need to apologise,” said Hamilton forcefully. “It was a stupid thing to say. I just… um… miss you… is what I meant. And I don’t want you to feel like you can’t talk to me. Not that you need to talk, or anything. I just mean, like, I’m here for you.”

“I know,” said Laurens quietly.

There was an awkward pause, during which Hamilton repeatedly thought the word “fuck” in every language he could think of. After the protest he had holed himself away to work on the article and the subsequent fallout, however, he had made it very clear that Laurens was the exception to his No Visitors’ policy. Rather than taking advantage of this Laurens had averted it, changing the subject every time Hamilton dropped subtle hints about wanting to see him, and Hamilton had tried (and failed) not to feel hurt.

“I’ll come over now,” Laurens said suddenly.

Hamilton’s brows knit together. “What?” he said. “No, Laurens… you don’t have to come if you’re
not ready, it’s fine—"

“I’m coming,” Laurens responded shortly and Hamilton heard him rustling for his coat. “I’ll be there in fifteen.”

He hung up.

*

Fifteen minutes later, Hamilton had a text from Laurens telling him he was there. Bemused and a little flustered, he buzzed him in and waited for the knock on his door. When it came he opened it to find Laurens, despite the mild weather, wearing a heavy parker over an indeterminate number of woollen layers. His face was pale, a little thin. There were bruise-coloured shadows under his eyes.

Hamilton’s feelings rushed to the surface and got stuck somewhere between his chest and throat. “Hey,” he managed, stepping aside to let him in.

Laurens took off his parker, hanging it on the peg beside the door before coming to sit tentatively on the bed. Wanting to be hugged, Hamilton put his arms around himself.

“How have you uh…” he started, already knowing it sounded lame. “How have you been?”

Laurens looked at him. Probably because they had been on the phone nearly every day this week. “Not great,” he answered finally.

Hamilton let out a long breath. Cautiously, he came to sit next to Laurens on the bed, making sure to leave a lot of space between them. Laurens dropped his face into his hands.

“’M sorry,” he mumbled against his palms.

“I told you,” said Hamilton. “You don’t need to apologise.”

“You say that, but I know you’re upset.”

“I’m not upset,” Hamilton lied, turning his gaze towards the ceiling. “This may surprise you, but I can go a week without getting my dick wet, Laurens.” Being avoided completely however…

Laurens huffed frustratedly. Tentatively Hamilton reached out, laying his hand bear and vulnerable on the mattress. Immediately Laurens took it, gripped it tight. Relief flooded through him at the barest touch of heat.

“You’ve been talking to your dad?” Hamilton asked softly.

Laurens’ shoulders rolled ambiguously. “If you can call it that.”

“Did he,” Hamilton broke off, swallowed. “Did he say anything about me?”

Laurens shrugged. “Not really.” A pause. “He likes you.”

Hamilton’s face contorted. “Seriously?”

“That’s the wrong word, probably. But admires you, for sure. He said you seemed very shrewd and that he couldn’t understand how someone so brilliant could act so stupidly.”

“…Right.”
“It was a compliment,” Laurens reassured him.

Hamilton nodded distractedly. “I guess he’s seen the article?”

“Considering it made the national I don’t see how he can’t have done. But he hasn’t said anything about it. He only calls to remind me he’s not talking to me.”

Hamilton made an angry sound that escaped him before he could stop it. “That’s so fucked John,” he hissed. “His son goes through a traumatic experience which could have resulted in his death and his response is the silent treatment?!?”

Laurens shrugged. “Punishment, I guess,” he replied. “In the hope that next time, I’ll know better.”

Guilt simmered in Hamilton’s stomach, even though he had known what the article would mean when he’d sent it. “Are you angry with me for writing it?”

Laurens shook his head. “I said you could,” he replied. “It needed to be done.”

“Yeah but,” Hamilton wasn’t exactly sure why he was pressing for reasons Laurens should hate him, but he guessed this was the train he was on. “You can still wish I hadn’t.”

Laurens sighed heavily. “What would be the point?”

Hamilton didn’t have an answer to that.

Laurens’ gaze travelled to Hamilton’s vinyl player. A new record was laying on the shiny black surface: Enjoy the Silence by Depeche Mode. The last song on the playlist. In any other circumstances, he would have been overwhelmingly touched that he’d liked it enough to want a record version. Instead, the words that fell out of his mouth had nothing to do with the song. “Why are you so weird about your record player?”

Hamilton started. Stared at him. “What?”

“Whenever anyone asks about it, you get edgy or defensive. Why is that?”

“Oh,” Hamilton looked awkward, not aware this was something he’d done. “Ah…because it was my mother’s.”

Laurens looked at him, face softening. Hamilton cleared his throat. “It’s really dumb,” he continued. “I meant to sell it ages ago. Pretty much the only thing I have of any real value. But it’s also the only thing I’ve got left of her, so…”

His voice trail out. Laurens was no longer looking at him but at their hands, clasped together.

“I meant what I said,” Hamilton told him quietly. “If you ever need to talk about it, I’m here.”

Laurens shook his head. “I don’t want to talk.”

His grip on Hamilton’s hand slid up to grasp his wrist, he pulled him forward and kissed him. Hamilton gasped, heart leaping in shock which quickly turned to pleasure as Laurens took his bottom lip briefly between his teeth, sucking on it as he pushed him backwards into the mattress. He slid in his tongue and Hamilton moaned, arching up into Laurens who broke off, eyes boring down at him through a haze of lust.

“Yes?” Laurens demanded.
“Yes,” Hamilton breathed, reaching up to grab his hair. “Yes yes yes God yes.”

Laurens made a low growling sound, kissing Hamilton deeply. Hamilton’s head was spinning, everything happening so quickly after a week’s lack of physical contact making him dizzy. It occurred to him that perhaps this wasn’t sensible, that what they really should be doing was forcing their way through a discussion. But as Laurens licked into his mouth, hands gripping his thighs so tight he could feel the nails it became clear that right now, words weren’t what he needed.

Laurens’ fingers dug into the flesh of Hamilton’s thigh. Hamilton tightened his grip in his hair and Laurens pulled off suddenly, voice breaking into half a groan.

“Pull it,” he ordered.

Hamilton’s breath caught in his throat. He obeyed, tugging the curly locks experimentally. Laurens’ eyes rolled closed, his mouth falling open as he released a shaky, heightened breath.

“Like you mean it,” he muttered. “And put your hand on my neck.”

Hamilton gave him a quizzical look. “You know, we’re gonna have to talk about this at some point,” he said before complying.

Laurens jerked his head impatiently, expression shifting into one of blissed out pleasure as Hamilton pulled sharply at his hair, fingers resting gently above his pulse point. He very much wanted to ask for them to be around his throat rather than just on it, but didn’t want to freak Hamilton out so soon.

“You’re so lovely,” Hamilton whispered, voice hushed with awe at the view of Laurens, biting his lip at the sensation. “How am I this lucky, literally.”

In response Laurens kissed him again, drawing away from his lips to mouth at his neck. Hamilton turned to give him a better angle, hand going up Laurens’ shirt to run over his skin. Laurens was working impatiently at his jeans; as soon as the button popped open he shoved his hand down, rubbing Hamilton over his boxers. Hamilton let out a whine, nails scrabbling over Laurens’ back. The flashes of pain brought everything to a new, vivid intensity and Laurens found himself pushing back against Hamilton, searching for his own friction as he rubbed him.

There was a knock at the door. Hamilton and Laurens froze, heads whipping towards the source of the sound.

“Alexander? Are you in?”

Burr’s voice.

“Are you fucking serious,” Hamilton hissed.

“Um,” said Laurens. “What.”

Another knock, more impatient. Laurens jerked his hand out of Hamilton’s pants. Swearing, Hamilton rolled off the bed, fumbling to do up his fly as he made for the door.

Burr was folding his gloves into his pocket and looking very calm in the face of Hamilton’s thunderous yanking open the door.

“5 o’clock!” he snarled, words laced with fury. “I told you to come at 5 o’clock.”
“I texted asking if you were available earlier,” replied Burr, eyebrow raised. “It’s not my fault you didn’t reply. The janitor let me in.”

He glanced past Hamilton’s shoulder to where Laurens was attempting to angle his body into a very strange position. He looked back, and then down, at Hamilton. “Oh.”

“‘Oh’ is right,” snapped Hamilton savagely. “Come the fuck in then, I guess. Jesus. Everyone thinks you’re so frickin fancy. You don’t even have the manners to drop a call.”

“I told you, I texted,” said Burr smoothly, following Hamilton into the room. He nodded at Laurens, seated embarrassedly in the corner. “Hello, Laurens.”

“Hi,” squeaked Laurens.

“I was sorry to hear what happened. I hope there was no serious harm?”

Laurens shook his head. “My phone received the worst of it,” he replied. Also his jaw clicked whenever he tried to eat but that was whatever. “Sorry but uh…what the hell are you doing here?”

Burr looked tiredly at Hamilton. “You didn’t tell any of the others?”

Hamilton shrugged. “I wanted a little longer for everyone to think you’re still a total asshole.”

“Mature.”

“You know who is mature?” countered Hamilton. “Thirty-two year old Theodosia Bartow. Seriously dude, she’s old enough to be your mother.”

“Sure,” Burr rolled his eyes. “If my mother was twelve when she had me.”

“Your mother in oldy-times then,” Hamilton shrugged. “Or certain traditionalist communities.”


Hamilton looked at Burr. “Do you wanna tell him or shall I?”

Burr waved indifferently. “You go ahead,” he replied boredly. “You have such a flair for dramas.”

Hamilton nodded concedingly before turning to Laurens. “Burr made that statement as a condition to Jacques Prevost,” he explained. “He’s a member of the board, one of the pro-Draytonists. In return, Prevost offered him an internship at JP Morgan’s as his personal assistant. Burr has full access to his emails and he’s planning to release them as evidence that Drayton’s father offered him money to keep Drayton on.”

If the police hadn’t fucked up Laurens’ jaw, it would have hit the carpet by now.

Burr was looking at Hamilton with impressed surprise. “That was really concise,” he said.

“Thanks,” said Hamilton. “I’ve been practicing.”

“Wait, back up,” Laurens held out his palm, head spinning and fighting the urge to sit down. “You knew this the whole time?”

Hamilton shook his head. “Burr says he tried to tell me,” he said, rolling his eyes. "But after I yelled at him he decided to be a little bitch and let me figure it out for myself. I didn’t know until
André told Lafayette that it was Prevost Burr had met with. From there it wasn’t too hard to work out.” He glanced at Burr, face tauntingly smug. “Even with the promise of a fancy work placement, it didn’t fit right that he’d be doing the guy any favours. Especially when he’s been plotting ways to bring him down all year.”


“Oh go on Aaron,” Hamilton nudged him teasingly. “It’s really cute. Quite chivalric, honestly. Lafayette would be so jealous.”

Burr stared at Hamilton, a ghost of anger flitting across his face before being quickly suppressed. “This isn’t a laughing matter,” he told him, and there was the barest hint of passion in his carefully controlled voice. “It’s not Laurens’ place to know. It’s not even my place to say.”

“But it makes you look so good.”

“Don’t push it, Hamilton.”

“Ok,” Hamilton held his hands up in defence. “I’m dropping it. It’s dropped.”

Laurens stared from Hamilton to Burr, feeling increasingly as though he had stepped into some kind of alternate universe. “I can’t believe this,” he stated.

Hamilton clapped a hand on his shoulder. “You’d better believe it baby,” he said, smiling brilliantly up at him as if through a sky of grey clouds. “Just like you’d better believe this.”

His hand reached up to gently touch Laurens’ jaw, fingertips flitting over the scarlet grazes where concrete and gravel had split the skin. “We’re going to make them pay,” he promised him.

Chapter End Notes

Finished!!!

this has been a super fun ride. Thank you so much for taking it with me. It isn't the end though - i am planning on writing a sequel but it will have to wait in the wings while i sort my life out

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to everyone reading this and especially to those of you who have left such wonderful consistent comments, i can't tell you how touched they've made me and inspired me to keep writing through some at times quite tough stuff. I love you all dearly and hope very much to see you again soon! <3

End Notes

Would love to know what you think, of the story and the song if you gave it a listen. Please
drop me a comment below!

will try to update at least once every 2 days.

find the playlist on spotify and find me on tumblr.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!