Summary

Being an Army brat means that every new town is a chance to start over. When the Criss family moves to Derry, Vicky Criss dies so Vic can start living.

Pre-IT (2017)
AU: Trans!Vic Centric
Henry/Vic Slow burn
Angst  Fluff  More Angst  Smut  Even More Angst
Playing fast and loose with the canon
Hair

Chapter Summary

It’s amazing how, at eleven, the length of your hair and the color of your clothes seem to change so much about who you are.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter One: Hair

January, 1986

Jefferson, New York

Honey blonde ringlets twist around thin, adolescent fingers. Pulled taut, the curls stretch out to full extension, before they are cut short and recoil back, flipping up at the ends with the new light buoyancy. Locks of hair fall into the sink, across the counter, and onto the bathroom floor. Those pink little fingers, with bitten down nail nubs and little scissor nicks that spot with blood, go back and pull out another curl. It gets amputated with shiny kitchen shears, and the strands fall to the floor.

Mom saved locks of hair from all their first haircuts as toddlers, taping each bundle into a pink baby-book and writing beside it how lucky I am to have another beautiful blonde baby girl.

Ten inches sheared off from all sides, Vic finally looks at himself in the mirror again. His bangs still hang heavy over his eyes, the way he likes, but the rest is short and messy and looks bright yellow under the flickering bathroom light. He puts both hands in it, letting the strands slip through his fingers and feels his scalp tingle from the air.

In his reflection, he sees the short hair and the dark green army t-shirt he wears, and he feels an immeasurable weight lift off his shoulders. It’s amazing how, at eleven, the length of your hair and the color of your clothes seem to change so much about who you are. He gives himself the first uninhibited grin he’s ever smiled, for once not caring about the way his snaggle tooth juts out strange. He finally doesn’t look like his sisters, or his mother. Finally he looks like himself.

Sophie pounds on the bathroom door when the lock doesn’t give.

“Vicky open up! I need to get my stuff!” Screechy, indignant, and sixteen, Sophia Criss hopes the next house they have will have more than one bathroom to share between four kids.

When she calls him Vicky his stomach flip-flops and reality settles like a heavy pit in his gut. His bare feet kick up the dead hair on the floor, pushing it all into a pile. Maybe he should throw it all away before anyone sees what he’s done what am I thinking everyone’s gonna know as soon as they see me stupid stupid stupid!

Sophie probably wants to pack all her hair stuff up. The bathroom counter is littered with stray foam curlers and bobby pins, and an electric crimper that left a nasty burn on Vic’s cheek the last time Sophie pinned him down to forcefully do his hair. Well, now she can’t do that anymore, there’s
barely enough left to grab onto. Cluttered in as well are Lucy’s tubes of lip-glosses and packs of eyeshadows, the latter of which Daddy said she couldn’t wear anymore because it makes you look like a fucking hussy. And besides those, there are Daphne’s collection of nail polishes, each with glitter crusted along the rim and giving off a strong sour odor that gives Vic a headache the longer he is exposed to the fumes. With the strands of severed blonde hair spread out, Vic has made his mark on the bathroom counter as well. The mark of a boy who has had enough of all the saccharine pink clothes and slimy makeup and miles of hair that have weighed him down.

By tomorrow it will all be gone, hair swept into the trash and beauty paraphernalia all packed up in the car and on the way to Derry, Maine. Daddy is on leave for the whole rest of the year, and wants to move off base and back to his home town. It doesn’t matter that all four kids have to transfer to a new school in the middle of January. It doesn’t matter that Mom looks like she wants to scream, because she’s lived on big army bases for 17 years and doesn’t know how to adjust to living in a backwoods hick-town. It doesn’t matter what anyone wants, because if Daddy says they’re moving then they are moving.

So is the life of an army family.

Vic’s already taken care of packing, because he refuses to chicken-out again and really plans to let this time be the time for change. He’s already cut all his dresses and the hand-me-down blouses and skirts that he got from his sisters to unmendable pieces. There’s no going back now. He only saves a pair of jeans with dark grass stains at the knees, white tennis shoes with the pink laces replaced with black ones, and a blue camp T-shirt he saved from last summer. All the girls at camp were supposed to get purple t-shirts but he had begged and begged and begged until the councilors finally let him have one of the boy shirts. He counts that as his first win. The rest of his clothes are from his dad’s old stuff, army-shirts and camo coats and cargo-pants cut short so they fit. Vic doesn’t care that they’re torn and stained and oversized, because they’re green and blue and black, with no prissy floral patterns, and they don’t make him feel like he’s being exposed to the world as a freak.

“Mo-AHM!” Sophie yells to their mother, sounding like to a feral cat on the inflection. She pounds on the door again, angered by Vic’s silent refusal to open up.

Everyone’s used to silence from Vic. He keeps his head down and stays in the background, clenching his fists and watching from beneath his bangs, doing as he’s told just to stay under the radar. The only times he’s ever pressed to speak is when someone calls him ,Victoria to many times, or when his sisters tease him gratuitously, or when Mom tries to make him wear a dress to church on Easter, and he feels like he’ll explode if he doesn’t snap back and say NO a thousand times. Last picture day Daphne wouldn’t stop saying how Vic had to wear a skirt for the class picture and he got so fed up he smacked her and said I’m never gonna wear a stupid skirt again, and she ran off to Mom crying. When Lucy called him ugly and said that no boys are gonna like you if you don’t start wearing make-up he grabbed her pony tail and yanked until her scalp turned red, and then called her a slut when she screeched in pain.

Vic sets the tips of his fingers on the latch, ready to unlock it and then bolt past Sophie and run to his room. If he can go fast enough he can hide out in there and won’t have to deal with the aftermath of his haircut until the morning. Daphne would see it, as they shared a room, but she wouldn’t tell on him because it would make Daddy mad, and when he yells it makes her afraid. Maybe if he went straight to bed and covered his head in a pillow no one would know until tomorrow when they left.

It’s never that easy though. Not for Vic. Because as soon as he turns the lock and yanks the door open, he runs straight into his mother and father, both at the door to see what Sophie is yelling about. In surprise Vic jumps back and slips onto the bathroom floor.
Hair hanging just above his ears, oversized clothes swallowing him up, and gaze locked with his parents looking down on him, Vic wonders why he couldn’t have pretended to be Victoria a little while longer.

Chapter End Notes

So I've been thinking about wring this for a couple weeks, and I finally started it. I hope it's not horrible.

Shout out to Soul4Sale, cause they encouraged me to post and they're one of the only authors for this ship. Their work is really great so everybody should check it out.

Yes this will have some pretty explicit underage content, it has been tagged as such. I don't really intend this to be like smut people beat off to. I drew a lot from my experiences as a young teen, and how people at that age come into their sexuality (which is a super big theme in the novel), and what love and sex and gender mean as you get older.

If everyone hates this I'll delete it and just read it alone. But if one person likes it I will feel validated for the rest of my life :) :) )
XOXO
YDFH
Chapter Summary

He knows that doesn’t make much sense, but he’s never had to articulate to someone else. He’s spent long nights awake, thinking about how changing his hair and his clothes and his name would actually set something right. How it would fix a mistake that had been made somewhere down the line. How change would make him normal. But he’s never had the courage to say it out loud, to himself or anyone else.

OC parents by the way, uncreative but they will serve a purpose.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Two: Pills Part 1

January, 1986

Mom is going a mile a minute, not letting anyone get a word in edgewise, yelling how could you do this? What have you done to your hair? What are you wearing? Victoria? Victoria!

“Sto-ohp,” Vic whined out, throat hiccuping as he tries to hold back the burn in his eyes. He’s backed up as far as he can, still on the floor and sitting against the bathtub. He draws his knees up, wrapping his arms around them tries to sink into the floor.

Mom wouldn’t have heard him even if she was listening. Vic’s voice always seemed to get drowned in the atmosphere of their family.

Sophie is watching, aghast and stuck between wanting to escape before she gets caught in the crossfire and wanting to know what her youngest sister is doing because it looks literally insane. Lucy and Daphne appear down the hall, cautiously approaching to see what’s going on but not wanting to put themselves in danger. Sophie waves them over to see the spectacle and they rush in, because there’s strength in numbers and who can blame them for being curious when there’s already an audience.

Vic sees his sisters and feels all-over exposed. He had thought maybe, just maybe if he could’ve talked to them, he might have gotten them to understand. At least Daphne, who’s only a year older and shared a room with him their whole lives, must have known that something was different about him, and maybe she could have been on his side. But now they’re all looking at him like he’s from outer space.

Daddy is silent, eyes shifting across the room like he is intent on not looking at Vic at all. In the last year, Vic could count how many words he’s had with his father on two hands, couldn’t even remember the last time they had touched besides brushing past each other in the hall. Mr. Criss prefers his family when there is thousands of miles them and himself, hence his long and continuing army career. With an overbearing wife and four daughters within five years of each other, he spent much of the last decade disengaging from his home life, only reappearing for a few months at a time for leave and then shipping out again. He only ever steps into a conflict when he’s going to lay down
the law, with a deep baritone drill-sergeant voice that every member of his family shrank away from. No boys. No running the streets like a skank. And definitely none of whatever this is.

Making up his mind, Daddy charges forth and is in front of Vic before the boy can blink. With a wide hand he reaches down and grabs Vic by his upper arm, gripping him tight as he hauls the boy up onto his knees.

“What the fuck is this?” He says, no heat or curiosity in his tone. Just cold, callous, answer me now.

Vic bites his tongue to keep the sobs back, and then Daddy shakes him so hard that he tastes blood in his mouth. He can’t breathe, too scared to move or speak. Daddy has only ever hit him once, leaving a burning welt on the back of his thigh for acting up in church at six years old. Though Vic does remember him hauling Sophie over his knee and beating her ass for sneaking out one night a few years ago. And once, after a loud night of arguing, Vic saw Mom putting makeup on over a freshly blackened eye. But usually, Daddy doesn’t have to resort to hurting anyone to strike the fear into them.

“I-” Vic is heaving, fighting for air as his father looms over him, “I wanna change this year.”

He knows that doesn’t make much sense, but he’s never had to articulate to someone else. He’s spent long nights awake, thinking about how changing his hair and his clothes and his name would actually set something right. How it would fix a mistake that had been made somewhere down the line. How change would make him normal. But he’s never had the courage to say it out loud, to himself or anyone else.

“What?” Daddy says, punctuating with another jarring shake.

Vic feels his brain pulsate painfully from the shaking, and little black dots flash in front of his vision. He hopes that it is the darkness coming to suck him up forever and save him.

“I wanna- I wanna change when we go to Derry. I wanna look like this, and change my name too.” Vic finally, finally, gets up the nerve to look up at his father in the eye, because this means more to him than anything else ever has. Those big, pleading dark eyes say all the things he can’t at the moment.

His father doesn’t know how to respond to the display, stunned as he still holds Vic’s arm in a firm grip. Mom though, seems to have just found her voice again.

“What do you mean!?” she screeches, “You’re going to pretend to be a boy?”

And then it all erupts until Vic can’t keep it in any more.

“I am a BOY!”

There is a deafening silence that comes over the house in the wake of his outburst. The air that a moment ago seemed thin now floods the room, filling up all the empty space between the occupants. Vic pulls in a revitalizing breath like he has just stepped into a new world. Even on the floor, arm wrenched up and head aching, he wants to laugh, to smile, because it feels so good to finally say it out loud. The laugh comes out more as a deflated gasp, and with it a flush of hot tears run down his cheeks in pure joyful relief.

Until his father backhands him so hard it sends him pitching over to the side. The grip that still holds his upper arm anchors him in place, so as he is hit, his shoulder comes disjointed from its socket. He shrieks in pain, laying on his side as his arm drops limp to the floor. Sobs rack his body in tremors as he hides his face on the tile.
“No more of this bullshit,” Daddy says in a finalizing tone, stomping out of the bathroom and leaving a rift between his wife and his daughters in his wake.

Mrs. Criss stands just in the threshold of the bathroom, watching her baby, her youngest child, sob in pain on the floor. Everything instinct in her says to run over, wrap that baby up in her arms, and tell poor little Victoria that everything would be alright. But her hand is stayed for some reason, like the echo of Vic’s announcement has put up a shield between mother and child. *How could she think a thing like that? It’s isn’t normal, it isn’t natural, there is something wrong with her. Oh God what has happened to my daughter*- She reaches a shaking hand up to run through her own hair and pulls a few strands as they fall out.

“Oh- Oh my God. I have to, excuse me,” she says, not really speaking to any of her children as she rushes out of the room.

The sisters stay huddled together at the edge of the door way, watching anxiously as both their parents walk out. Daddy goes up the stairs, heavy footsteps ending in a hard door slam, and Mom scurries into the kitchen, collapsing against the table and breathing heavy into her hands. All three girls watch Vic cry into bathroom tile, rolling into himself and cradling his aching shoulder. They all hesitate to act, or even speak, until Lucy gets fed up and shoves Daphne forward into the bathroom, then walks away, resigned to ignore this crisis for the rest of the night. Daphne nervously shuffles forward, pulling at the hem of her sweater as she crouches down beside Vic. Reaching out awkwardly, she rubs his back.

“Hey, come on, let’s just go to bed…” She prods gently, hoping that by the morning this episode can all be forgotten.

Vic stays on the floor, cheek pressed to the cold tile as his sobs die down.

Daphne tries again, “…Vicky come on-”

“D-don’t call me that,” He cuts her off, voice rough and huffy from tears and muffled against the floor.

Daphne pulls her arm back quickly, having not expected a response from her sibling.

“Vicky you heard Dad, you got to knock it off and get over it,” Sophie cuts in, trying to take some authority over the situation. She’s the oldest, she knows that Vicky needs to go back to normal before Daddy flies off the handle again.

Sitting up slowly, Vic settles a cold glare up at his oldest sister.

“I won’t. I won’t stop, I wanna be like this,” He says through gritted teeth.

“Oh my God,” Sophie rolls her eyes at his stubbornness. “You already made yourself look like a dyke and now you’re-”

“Shut up! Shut the *fuck* up!” He shouts at her, painful waves running down his body like a riptides. He shoves Daphne away with his good arm and yells at them both, “Leave me alone!”

Daphne picks herself up off the floor and she leaves the room with her head down, feeling sick over the whole spectacle she had witnessed. Watching her go, Sophie lingers in the door a moment longer, looking down at Vic with disdain. His head is bent towards the floor, but Sophie can sense his eyes still on her, glaring up through his bangs. She gets one final twinge in her gut, knowing that whatever this is will not end well, and then she walks away, done playing mind games with a petulant eleven year old. *If Vicky wants to be alone, then she can be alone.*
Minutes pass. The house settles. Tears dry on his cheeks. And Vic still can’t seem to breathe right. Throat rubbed raw and voice hoarse from yelling, he can’t remember the last time he’s spoke as much as he just did. Or the last time he yelled. Or shocked anyone to silence. Or the last time he demanded to be heard.

All his nerve is seeping out of him, and in its place he is filling up with cold regret. Holding his breath until his lungs burn, he gasps and dissolves into quiet sobs. Nothing could have gone worse. His arm hurts in throbbing pulses, and his cheek burns from when Daddy hit him. The way his family looked at him, like he was wrong, or crazy, or disgusting, makes bile crawl up the back of his throat. He brings his uninjured hand up to his hair, feeling the short strands slip through his fingers. They didn’t understand. They would never understand. Daddy wouldn’t let him change his name, Mom would get him more girl clothes and make him grow his hair out, his sisters would still call him Vicky, and he wouldn’t get any choice in it.

On unsteady legs Vic pulls himself up, and walks over to the mirror. A purple bruise is blossoming on his cheekbone, and his eyes are blood-shot and his cheeks are puffy. He already feels his throat closing up, a clog forming to stop him from speaking. Tomorrow he won’t be able to fight back, trapped in silent misery as he is forced back into the person he doesn’t want to be.

Reaching out, Vic grabs the edge of the mirror and pulls open the medicine cabinet. Up on the highest shelf, above bottles of vitamins and cough syrup, sits a big bottle of pain killers. One capsule is enough to make his mother numb to a migraine. When Lucy twisted her ankle last month, two pills put her to sleep within the hour.

A while back, Vic heard that a guitar player in a rock band died because he took to many pills. On purpose.

Standing up on his toes to reach all the way to the bottle, Vic grabs it as silently as he can, afraid someone will hear the rattling of the pills and come stop him. Twisting off the top, he pours a dozen capsules into his sweaty palm. He tries to swallow the whole handful at once, choking on the dry pills until he steals a drink from the sink to wash them down. They finally inch down his esophagus and make him want to gag, but he forces it back to swallow. Panting and coughing, he pours out another dozen and swallows that back too. And then another.

Three fistfuls of pills down, his head starts to spin from lack of oxygen, and he sinks down onto the floor. Eyes fluttering shut, he lies back against the floor and waits.

Maybe now they’ll understand.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who even glanced at this, and even more thanks to people leaving kudos. it makes me feel all warm and fuzzy inside <3 <3
I also love comments, especially deep lore canon discussions and dank meme references

I have a few of these prewritten, so I'll upload the rest of them after editing, and then try to get on a consistent updating schedule.
Chapter Summary

“Mom… Mom.”

“...hm? What is it? What time is it?”

“Vicky’s dead.”

“What?”

“Vicky died. She’s in the bathroom.”

“What?!!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Three: Derry

January, 1986

Derry, Maine

The station wagon jolts over another pothole on the aging Maine highway. Sprinkling raindrops dot the glass, and Vic wishes he could roll down the windows and let the cold air into the stuffy car. He wants to put his arm out and feel the cold droplets on his skin, wants let his fingers go numb as his hand rides the waves of whooshing winter air.

Daddy had taken the handles off the back windows a few years ago, specifically to keep Vic from rolling them down on long car rides.

In the seat beside him, Daphne keeps her head turned towards the opposite window. Everyone’s ignoring him, no one looks or speaks to him for hours, but Daphne is putting extra effort into avoiding even the atmosphere around him. He knows she’s still upset.

Daphne had been the one to find him. She stayed up that night, waiting on her wayward sister to come to their room and go to bed. Ten minutes passed and she wondered when Vicky would come to her senses and quit acting psycho. Twenty minutes passed and she was angry that Vicky had to be so selfish and turn the whole family upside down right before they were moving. Thirty minutes passed and she got worried that Vicky might still be in the bathroom, crying in pain on the floor. Daphne had never thought anyone could cry so much, had never imagined her quiet sister could scream so loud, and had never seen her father hit someone so hard.

So she trekked into the hall, glancing into the kitchen to see her mother, at the table and hunched over with her face in her hands and unmoving. Passing as silently as she could, Daphne turned into the bathroom and froze in place. Limp on his back, Vic lay unconscious as drool and froth and vomit bubbled out of his moth. His eyes were rolled back into his forehead. The pill bottle sat on the edge of the counter, and a few stray capsules were dotting the floor from when he couldn’t choke them all
Daphne didn’t scream, instead she felt a daze cloud her mind. She held very still, watching her sibling lie catatonic on the floor, and then backed out of the room slowly. She walked back to the kitchen, approached he mother and shook her gently on the shoulder.

“Mom... Mom.”

“...hm? What is it? What time is it?”

“Vicky’s dead.”

“What?”

“Vicky died. She’s in the bathroom.”

“What?!”

Her mother had sprung to action, rushed towards the bathroom and screamed loud enough to wake the whole house. Everyone got out of bed in a panic. Sophie called 911. An ambulance appeared. And Daphne still stood in the kitchen and wondered if she had actually fallen asleep and never got out of bed in the first place.

After three cycles of CPR, Vic finally heaved and gagged up a mouthful of half-dissolved pills, still not conscious but finally breathing again. At the hospital he gets his stomach pumped until the medication is all out of his system. He spent all of the next day passed out on a respirator with an IV drip in his arm. When he finally woke up, all he wanted was pancakes and a hug from his mother. Instead he spends the next day in bed while everyone pretended he didn’t exist.

They were supposed to leave New York on Sunday, but after Saturday night’s incident-that-no-one-will-talk-about, and the resulting day and a half in the hospital, they actually don’t get the car packed up and start the move until Tuesday. Now Vic watches the sun set as they cross the state border into Maine. It’s late evening by the time they pull off the interstate and pass the Derry sign. The rain is beating down with fury now, hail clicking on the windshield and wind howling through the trees.

Daddy bought them a house towards the center of town, one in a long row of white colonials where children play in the street and wives gossip about their neighbors. In the dark though, Vic can only see the trees. Dark looming evergreens reach for the sky, surrounding the town like a giant cage. He gets out of the car and gazes at them, tipping his head up as cold rain splatters on his forehead. The sky is pitch black and murky like deep water.

Welcome to Derry

Chapter End Notes

This was a shorty short chapter cause God did the plot need to get rolling.

Also I hope the way I use pronouns and names isn't confusing.... *shrug*

I promise I'm gonna get to Henry soon, cause my Nic Hamilton obsession is reaching maximum fangirl.
Chapter Summary

Oh, school...
Maybe there is a way to pull this off.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Four: Name

January, 1986

Vic wakes up at sunrise then next morning. The light has a strange quality to it, instead of a warm orange glow there is just a change in luminescence behind the grey clouds, casting a pale blue tint on everything. Residual raindrops from last night’s storm accumulate on the windows and run down the gutter in small streams.

He sits up in a sheetless bed, which was hastily made last night with a pillow and blanket so he could have the bare minimum to sleep with. Daphne is still fast asleep in her bed across from his, bundled up in a pink comforter like a caterpillar in a cocoon. Hugging his knees to his chest, Vic listens to the atmosphere. Daphne breathing low huffy breaths as she sleeps. Crows in the tree outside his window. The heater buzzing in the corner.

And then there’s Daddy, who always wakes up at dawn. The house creeks as he walks down the hall, uncaring of his own heavy steps on the whining floor. Mom and Daddy’s room is at one end of the hall, then there is the upstairs bathroom and the stairs. At the other end of the hall is his and Daphne’s room, and across is Sophie and Lucy’s room. There is a pause, like Daddy has stopped just at the top of the stairs, but instead of walking down them he continues. Daddy walks down this end of the hall, and with each step Vic’s anxiety builds an nth of a degree. On the drive, Daddy wouldn’t even look at Vic in the rearview mirror, but now it sounds like he has stopped right in front of the bedroom door.

Vic’s gut twists with fear, like he can feel the looming presence of his father on the other side of the door. The bruise on his cheek has turned a glossy mauve, with the edges yellowing as it heals, and his shoulder has been relocated but is still sore when he lifts his arm higher than his chest. Not once at the hospital were either injuries questioned, nor was the shortness of his hair. Daddy is still there, and for a second it really seems like he’s going to open the door. Vic lays down as fast as he can, pulling the blanket up and pillow over his head. Heart thumping, he closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep, just in case Daddy comes in. Minutes pass and the door never squeaks open.

In his ruse, Vic slowly drifts back to sleep, and then wakes up an hour or so later and confused about what happened the moment before. The door is now open, and Daphne is gone. The house sounds alive down stairs. Vic gently pads out of the room and down the stairs, listening for the voices coming from the kitchen. All his sisters are in there, yapping loudly at each other, and every few minutes he can hear Mom hmm in response to something they have said. After a while of listening he thinks it’s safe to conclude Daddy isn’t there, and he is relieved when he walks in and doesn’t see his
father.

Whether his sisters don’t notice him or choose to ignore him is unclear, but Mom jumps when she turns around and sees him lingering in the kitchen archway. They both are very adept at avoiding eye contact with someone right in front of them, so they walk around each other like invisible obstacles. Mom is unpacking boxes of kitchen utensils and Tupperware and putting them into cabinets, and Vic is trying to discreetly find some breakfast. Realizing that they are severely limited on food because no one has gotten groceries yet, he settles on a box off Froot Loops and sits at the farthest corner of the kitchen table as he eats them in dry handfuls.

Lucy glares at him for casting an awkward silence over the room, but after a while conversation picks up again like he isn’t even there. Vic never really asks questions, he just has learned to rely on listening to gather information. Mom says that Daddy has a job lined up with someone he knew before he joined the army. Sophie wants to go explore town. Lucy is mad that there’s no mall within thirty miles. Daphne asks if they really have to start school tomorrow or if they can wait until Monday.

**Oh, school.**

The absolute crux of Vic’s transition is whether or not he can pass at school without being outed. His insides burn at the thought of being introduced as a girl at school and having to convince everyone otherwise. Or having to settle back into being Vicky just to survive. Or trying to be Vic and everyone finding out that he isn’t like other boys. He’s not naive, he knows that the one thing not to be in Jr. High is different.

Mom lets there be no argument. Today she is going to the school to register them to start tomorrow, Vic and Daphne in Jr. High, and Sophie and Lucy in High school. Usually the schools they go to are near whichever base they’re at, full of other army kids, and most often all four kids go to the same school. No army brats ever worry about making lasting friends because they’ve all moved a dozen times before, and you’re known more for who you’re related to than who you are. This time they finally are separated out, and maybe now Vic might be able to meet some friends of his own. Friends that don’t know him as ‘you’re one of the Criss sisters, right?’ Friends that won’t expect him to pick up and leave by next year.

**Maybe there is a way to pull this off:**

“Can I go with?” He asks, after swallowing another mouthful of cereal.

His sisters falter in whatever they are talking about, surprised to hear him speak up. Mom gives no indication that she has heard him, but he is sure he actually said something instead of just thought about saying something so much he convinced himself he had (it’s happened before). Finally, Mom seems to draw in a terse breath and turn towards him.

“Hmm?” she hums back, as she grabs another casserole dish from a cardboard box. This kind of non-committal noise is the sign that she really really doesn’t want to have this conversation but can’t escape it.

This is his last chance to drop it and let his question be forgotten. Vic from a year ago would have put his head down and ended the conversation. Vic from two years ago wouldn’t have said anything to begin with.

“Can I go to the school,” He says. “With you,” He clarifies. “When you register us,” He keeps going, afraid if he leaves any room for misunderstanding that it will get brushed under the rug.
Now his sister’s look about ready to bash his head in, because they know whatever he wants must have something to do with that which they won’t speak of, and he is making it really difficult to forget about it. The collective thought of all three girls is ‘God, can’t she just be normal.’

His nerve is fading fast, so he’s hoping Mom will just say yes already because she hates to argue just as much as he does.

Setting down the casserole dish, she puts her palms on the counter and leans into them. Finally she looks at him, really looks in his eyes, and lets out an exasperated sigh.

“…Why?” She asks, but really she is saying ‘please don’t make me talk about this.’

Vic shrugs in response, because he doesn’t want to show his hand just yet, and also because he’s sure that if he tries to speak again no sound will come out.

There is no definitive answer from his mother, she just sort of turns around and goes back to what she is doing. So Vic decides that, yes he is going, and justifies it with the fact that she didn’t say he couldn’t.

Leaving the cereal box on the counter he goes to the living room. This house isn’t much different than any other they have lived in. Living room, kitchen, bathroom down the hall and to the left, three bedrooms upstairs, fenced backyard, etc. The only difference is that there is an extra room on the ground floor. It seems too big to be a storeroom but too small to really be a bed room, and it has one window that faces west toward the back yard so it gets unbearably hot when the sun sets. It’s probably going to get used to keep extra things they don’t want to unpack, but to Vic it seems like it would be a good place to hide from his family if he needs to.

In a pile of abandoned luggage by the door, Vic finds the duffel bag he shoved all his borrowed clothes into. Trekking upstairs and into his new bedroom, he changes quickly from yesterday’s clothing he slept in to his jeans, a big grey sweatshirt, and his tennis shoes. There is no denying that this outfit reads ‘boy,’ but he hopes that the message isn’t too assertive that it would send Mom into a hissy fit. If he pushes too hard he knows he’ll get shoved back into place by the rest of his family, but if he doesn’t push enough they won’t take him seriously. This is how he liked to dress before anyway, it shouldn’t make that much of a difference. But back then he looked like a girl trying to hide from the world, and now he looks like a boy just trying to exist.

He comes back down the stairs, quietly dodging attention from his sisters, who are always ready to criticize him at a moment’s notice. Mom has migrated from the kitchen to the living room, riffling through stranded belongings to find the car keys. She is distracted enough, more with her thoughts than with her task, that Vic can just shadow her until she is ready to leave.

Staying a step and a half behind her, silent and observant, Vic can hear her muttering softly. It sounds like she is making mental lists, lists of groceries she needs to buy, lists of things that need to be done around the house, lists of things that she has to do outside of the house, lists of all the things that could go wrong when she leaves the house. Mom’s been that way for a while, stressed about things she has to do, and nervous about things she can’t control. It always tends to get worse when Daddy is on leave, like she is riding the razor’s edge between anxiety and manic paranoia.

Vic wonders how long it would take someone else to find their keys, put on a coat, and walk out the door, but he is sure that it’s less than the twenty minutes his mother takes doing so. Locking the door on the way out seems to be what really overwhelms her, as she tries to find the new key on the ring and her hands shake because this is another new house again and another new town and she doesn’t know if she can handle change again. She is so overcome trying to lock the door that Vic walks right in front of her, shutting the door behind him and returning to his spot behind his mother, and she
never even sees him.

When they get in the car Vic thinks she must know he’s there, she had to unlock the passenger door, so she really is just ignoring him like she can just will him away. He knows it’s typical of her, to act like problems will go away if you don’t see them, but knowing so doesn’t quell the ache in his chest about being treated like a problem. Looking out the window, he watches the town as they drive through. Other cars crawl by at a lazy pace, grey sleet melts off the sidewalk and into the gutter, and kids are walking to school in winter coats and rain boots.

They pull up alongside a dark brick building swarming with kids, all between the ages of eleven and fourteen. Down the street is the high school, in an equally chaotic state. Neither Vic nor his mother make a move to get out of the car. The school bell rings like a sharp banshee cry, and all the students usher in. The last few finally meander their way in and the sidewalk is eerily quiet when Vic finally turns to his mother.

“You have to tell the school I’m a boy,” One on one, Vic is able to muster up some strength in his voice.

Mom still holds the wheel, despite the car being off, and she sighs in exasperation after beat of silence.

“Victoria, sweetheart, please-” She starts.

“No!” His voice cracks in anger, because she still doesn’t get it. “I’m a boy and you have to tell them. Or else I’ll-”

She snaps her head around, looking at him instead of through him.

“What?! Or else what? I am done putting up with this.”

Vic recoils back, knots tying him up inside and voice wavering.

“Or- or I’ll take more pills. I’ll take so many that I die for real this time.”

“I threw those out.” She counters.

Though he doesn’t believe her, because he doubts his mother can make it through the day without self-medicating, it does mean they are hid in a place that will take him at least a few days to discover. His threat falls flat, so he must consider resorting to his only other leverage.

“You know what’ll happen if you keep this up? If someone finds out? If any boys know you’re doing this don’t you think they’ll hurt you?.” Mom is winding herself up, voice escalating to a shout and driving Vic away from her.

“I don’t care what anyone does to me.” He interrupts, because he’s sure there’s nothing worse than being what he used to be.

Mom continues to lecture at him.

“Now I don’t want to hear any more about this, are you listening young lady? First thing this weekend we are going to the store to replace your clothes, and then maybe, if you’re lucky-”

“If you don’t let me be a boy, then I’ll tell Daddy you have birth control.” He says into his lap, because he’s even ashamed to let out his mother’s secret.
His mother stops short, choking on her own breath.

“…You don’t know what you’re talking about,” she denies after a beat of tense silence.

Vic feels a twinge of guilt, because the hurt in her eyes is real and so familiar, but he’s come this far.

“Yeah I do. I found it a while ago and Sophie told me what it was.” He lays all his cards on the table, still not knowing exactly why Sophie told him not to ever tell Daddy about Mom’s secret pills, but knowing that they could be the leverage he needs to win this argument.

Mom puts her head in her hands, leaning forward against the steering wheel. Anger bubbles up inside her, because she hates that Victoria is giving her the ultimatum that she would kill herself over this bizarre obsession. Angry that she has to justify her decisions to her own child. Angry that she didn’t want to move again. Angry that she didn’t even want to have four kids in the first place and there’s no way she could handle any more without pulling her hair out but if her husband knew that he would think she was sleeping around and beat the shit out of her and she’ll have to pretend everything is okay like she always does and-

“Mom,” Vic says tentatively, because he can see her starting to fall apart, hands shaking, mumbling to herself, and grinding her teeth.

Snapping her eyes up at him, she looks at Vic like he’s an intruder in her life. There’s a seething hatred in her eyes that he’s never seen before.

“Mom, please?” He tries meekly, wishing he could throw the car door open and run as far as he could away.

At the same time, a small voice in her head wishes he died on the bathroom floor that night. But after years of “how to be a good wife of mother according to societal pressures” being drilled into her, she is able to will that death wish away and set herself back to normal.

Vic is waiting on baited breath, sitting against the car door to put himself as far from his mother as possible.

“Fine.” She says, voice tight as she gathers her purse to go into the school.

Almost sure he heard her wrong, Vic gapes at her.

“…What?”

“What should I say your name is?” She says with a cold and disengaged tone.

“Really?” He is still afraid that she isn’t actually saying yes.

“Victoria,” She scolds and he flinches like he’s been hit. “I don’t want you to get hurt,” but her tone speaks the opposite. “Now what name should I tell them?”

He feels ice run through his veins, because he never thought getting what he wants would be so bittersweet.

“…Vic. Just Vic.”

So they go into the school’s office and Mom registers him and Daphne into sixth and seventh grade respectively. Vic stands behind his mother, hands in his pockets and mouth shut, but he does discreetly glance around her shoulder as she fills out the paper work. Just to be sure she really
listened to him.

_Last Name: Criss_

_First Name: Vic_

Chapter End Notes

Omg the intro s finally done. Now I can actually start the plot. This is also where my prewriting ends, so i'm gonna try and update at least every 3-4 days.

School and Henry in next chapter, and then the time jumps will speed up the pace a little bit

XOXO
School

Chapter Summary

Vic caught the sight of steely blue irises in that brief moment of eye contact between them. There was a certain empty hate in those eyes, like ashes left behind from a raging fire.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Five: School

Thursday morning Vic wakes up an hour too early, and spends most of that extra time curled up in his bed with his stomach in tight anxiety knots. Finally able to crawl out of bed, he changes his clothes quickly with the lights still out. The camo shirt he puts on is faded and will never stop smelling like smoke no matter how many times it’s washed, and he wears the same jeans as yesterday because he didn’t bother to dig another pair out of his bag. Checking the hallway for anyone else, he rushes to the bathroom and gets ready for school in silence.

He waits in the living room for everyone else to wake up, tucked into the corner of the new couch that probably put them into debt.

What’s the point of suburban living if you don’t buy shiny new furniture you can’t afford?.

Daddy also bought a pick-up truck yesterday, for work. Vic still isn’t clear on what the job is, but if it gets Daddy to leave before six a.m. and back home after eight p.m., then Vic’s happy.

The bruise on his face is still garish on his pale skin. The burn of rejection still feels fresh in his chest, but he pushes that down and tries to be happy about his first day of school. Happy about his first day as himself.

The car ride is simultaneously too quiet, the girls only chatter every once in a while, but also too loud, because it’s like he can hear all their thoughts bombarding him like heavy stones as they just openly gape and glare at him.

I know all the things that can go wrong, you don’t need to look at me like I don’t.

He doesn’t say that.

When they pull up to the school, his hands are shaking with nerves, so instead of putting his backpack on Vic clutches it against his chest as he gets out of the car. Daphne steps out beside him, and then before the door can even fully close their mother is driving off at a breakneck speed.

Vic looks to his sister, and they make the barest of eye contact before she turns away from him and stalks toward the brick building. Every time they’ve started a new school, he and Daphne had stuck together for at least the first couple days, because it’s easier to be the new kid when you’re not alone. This buddy policy never lasted that long, as Daphne would make friends and Vic would try to keep himself to the fringes and stay out of sight. Now he watches her walk purposefully away from him,
and the massage is clear.

*If you’re gonna be a boy, then you’re on your own.*

*When did they all learn how to speak without words?*

Still standing on the sidewalk, he digs into his bag and pulls out the class schedule he received after registration.

**Homeroom: Math 115**

It takes him too long to find his class, not because he gets lost but because he goes to extra lengths to avoid brushing up against anyone in the hall. Vic slides along the walls to avoid the crowding students, and when he finally gets to Homeroom everyone is already in their seats and the bell lets out a cry that sends makes him jolt in his skin.

Vic has felt invisible for so long that when he’s in front of a class of full of kids, all looking at him as he stands at the front awkwardly rolling on the balls of his feet, he feels an uncomfortable zing run up his spine.

*They’re gonna know. They can see me and they’re gonna know what’s wrong with me. They probably already know. Everybody knows. I can’t do this. They know. They know. They know.*

The mantra runs wild through Vic’s head like a tornado and blocks out all other thoughts. He wants to turn and run out the door, but his legs feel numb and all he can do is clutch his backpack tighter like a security blanket.

The desks sit in rows of two, cramped in and close together as students talk amongst themselves before class begins. The room seems overfull with its thirty-three kids, like there wouldn’t be room for another, and the close proximity breeds easy distractions and loud conversations. No one is really looking at Vic, but the thought that they could be is enough to scare him near to running away. The teacher seems too young to handle this many students, and is already fed up with the day before it has begun. It takes her a moment of organizing the papers on her desk and erasing the board before she notices the little blond boy standing frozen in front of the class.

“Do you need something?” she says with a biting tone as she approaches him.

Now more attention is called to Vic, and people start to take notice and he hopes they don’t see him shaking. His vocal cords are so immovable that they feel like rusted wires. Quickly he grabs the sheet the register gave him and passes it to her.

She looks over the paper with disinterest, and then turns to face the class.

“All right, everyone quiet down.” She shouts over the class. “This is-” She has to look down at the paper again, “Vic Criss. He’s a new student, so everyone try to be welcoming and all that.”

Vic doesn’t even notice her dismissive tone because his brain is running into overdrive from hearing someone say his name. Hearing someone call him a *he* for the first time.

All the other students respond to the introduction with unimpressed silence. And he is relieved that she doesn’t make him introduce himself to the class. But then the issue becomes where he is going to sit.

The teacher looks around the room, knowing there is one place available in the back corner pair of desks. She wonders if she can shuffle anyone around, because this kid doesn’t look like he could
handle to be thrown to the wolf in the back of the class. Coming to the conclusion that this is about the only option, she hopes that Vic is tougher than he looks.

“Go sit there in the back” she says without looking at him.

Vic looks at the empty desk, right beside one where a student sits with his head on the desk and arms folded around to block out any extra noise or light.

“Henry. Don’t make this an issue.” She commands in a stern voice to the boy in the back. “And you will sit up in my classroom.”

Just as Vic is about to sit down at the desk, though he can’t remember willingly walking towards it so his body must be on autopilot, Henry lifts his head from the desk and levels a stubborn glare at the teacher. Vic cautiously sits down beside him, and Henry snaps his gaze over to Vic. On instinct Vic breaks eye contact with Henry as fast as he can, finally sitting down and setting his backpack at his feet.

Class begins from there. Vic grabs his notebook and tries to keep up with the lesson, but he’s always been behind in math and he is distracted by the roaring flow of blood in his ears. Occasionally he steals glances over a Henry, who makes no attempt to pretend to pay attention as he leans on a bent arm and scribbles in his notebook.

Vic caught the sight of steely blue irises in that brief moment of eye contact between them. There was a certain empty hate in those eyes, like ashes left behind from a raging fire. Besides that cold resentment, Henry just looks tired. His head bobs every so often and his eyelids slip shut for a moment, before he shakes himself awake again. It’s a chronic fatigue that makes him look like he lives in a warzone and sleeps between battles. Shaggy, dirty blond hair falls in his face and he makes no move to push it back. Light freckles dot across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. He seems scrawny for his age, and the flannel shirt he wears sags on his shoulders and the sleeves hang too low.

Vic is fascinated, because he realizes he’s hasn’t been this close to another boy since he cut his hair. No longer is he looking at boys from a distance, seeing them as some unattainable status he could never get to. Now he’s up close and it’s like his whole perspective has changed.

Trying to sneak one more glance at him, Vic discreetly looks over to find Henry looking back at him. Henry’s eyes scan him over, like he is assessing his opponent before jumping into the fight. His gaze doesn’t connect with Vic’s though, instead it settles on the aging bruise on his cheek. Vic watches through his bangs, stuck in a loop of studying Henry while Henry studies him, until finally their eyes meet and they both quickly look away in embarrassment.

Henry huffs and turns away, head propped up on his hands and looking out the window. Just as he turns though, the collar of his shirt slumps a bit and something catches Vic’s eye. There is a big mark on Henry’s collar bone, so dark in the middle it’s almost black, and just beneath the skin is speckles of red where the blood vessels have burst. Just before he can really look at it, Henry fully faces away from him, and Vic can’t get the sight of that nasty bruise out of his head.

Class ends. The day goes on. Vic gets a locker assigned to him. Daphne doesn’t even look over when they pass in the hall. He’s too anxious to eat lunch so he waits outside his next class. Out of six classes, Vic has three with Henry, but he only is made to sit with him in math. He goes the whole day without speaking to anyone.

Mom picks them up at the end of the school day, asking how their days were in a tone that is more obligated then interested. For how concerned she seemed yesterday about him going to school, she
seems exceptionally uncaring now.

*If you ignore the problem, then it’ll just magically go away.*

*Or it will just fade into the background. It’ll still be there, but now you care a whole lot less about it.*

When they get home Vic quietly rushes upstairs and into the bathroom. His shirt is caked with nervous sweat and his skin feels sticky and clammy. Shucking his clothes and getting in the shower, he fluctuates the water temperature between freezing and boiling to bring some feeling back to his skin. He scrubs himself too rough, leaving red rug-burnt patches on his arms and legs.

Finally he shuts the water off when he feels raw all over, like his whole body is an exposed nerve, and he steps out to towel himself off. He avoids his reflection in the mirror until he can wrap the towel around his waist, because sometimes when he sees the flesh between his legs he gets sucked up into a whirlpool of cold self-doubt.

Hair still wet and skin prickling into goosebumps, Vic looks in the mirror and runs his fingers over the bruise on his cheekbone. The glossy swelling has all but disappeared, and in a few days the color will be gone as well. Next he finds the fading marks Daddy’s grip left on his arm. He knows they’re there, because he can still feel that strong callused hand on his tender skin, but to anyone else the red rings are invisible.

*Or maybe to everyone else, he’s invisible.*

Then, he touches his clavicle, right where he saw the bruise hidden under Henry’s collar. Wrapping his fingers over his shoulder and pressing his thumb into the soft spot right below the collar bone, He holds his breath and pushed inwards.

He imagined a hand, much wider and stronger than his own, pushing down on that spot. Pushing down until the skin turns black. Pushing down until the blood vessels burst like fireworks. Pushing down until the bone cracked under the pressure.

He’s squeezing as hard as he can, until a few tears eek out from his tightly winced eyes and he has to stop. The skin left behind turns hot where the blood rushes back in, but other than a faint pink oval there is no evidence of damage.

Vic thinks about the way Henry studied his face earlier that day, honing in on the bruise on his cheek, and then he questioned his own fascination with the mark below Henry’s neck.

After he has spent so long thinking about if someone could look at him and just know his secret, it seems he went the whole day without even being glanced at twice by anyone else.

What really unnerves him is that someone could look at him, and in an instant know where his bruise came from. And then he could look back at Henry’s and know where it came from.

*Like the hand that hurts them is one and the same.*

Chapter End Notes

*Swipe left for long walks on the beach and more pubescent gender identity crises.*

*This also had minimal editing cause i’m tired, plz 4give mee*
XOXO
YDFH
Chapter Summary

Just as Vic passes Henry’s desk, where he is in his usual half-asleep position, Henry lifts his head to the sound of the bell and they look right at each other. Henry has two dark, sunken black eyes, and the whites of his eyes are bloodshot beyond what is normal for sleep deprivation. For a moment Vic just stands in front of Henry, who just stares up at him, taking in the gash in his lip and swollen bruises. And then they look at each other, really look in each other’s eyes, and they see a mutual don’t-talk-about-it because no-one’s-gonna-do-anything-about-it look in each other’s gazes.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Six: Henry Part 1

February, 1986

Weeks go by and Vic falls into a rhythm. Wake up, go to school, say nothing, and be ignored. Then go home, say nothing, be ignored again, and go to bed.

Mom has a headache every day when school gets out, so she goes to lie down for most of the evening until she has to make dinner. Daddy’s rarely home before nine p.m., weekdays and weekends, so they all don’t bother to sit down to dinner at night. Instead, Mom leaves dinner warming in the oven and tells the kids to help themselves.

Vic’s appetite has always been up and down, usually depending on how recently they have moved, if Daddy is home, if Mom is ignoring him for days on end, and a number of other factors that make food taste like ash. So now that he’s not forced to sit at a dining table and expected to clean his plate, his eating habits suffer more than ever. In the mornings he gets himself a bowl of cereal and eats too fast just to get it down. He tries to eat the lunches his mother packs him, but more often than not he just takes a couple bites of the sandwich and then throws it away. If he’s hungry enough for dinner he’ll wait for the girls to be done eating and then get himself half a portion of whatever casserole Mom made. He eats in the extra room downstairs, which is empty besides a few extra boxes, because being alone makes him feel a little safer and helps him finish a meal.

School stays the same. He tries to do well in his work, but motivation is hard to find and when he doesn’t understand something he can’t bring himself to ask a question. He doesn’t make friends, and might have become a victim for older bullies if he wasn’t so unnoticeable.

There are a few things that keep getting him out of bed every morning though. Like getting to wear the clothes he likes. And teachers calling him by his name during attendance. And being away from his mom and sisters for a few hours. And a morbid curiosity to see what new injury Henry will have in homeroom.

Henry is always already in his seat before Vic even gets to class, head collapsed on the desktop to catch up on a decade’s worth of sleep. Sitting down beside him, Vic assess him for any immediately obvious damage. He has a running mental catalogue of injuries. A sprained wrist, hand-shaped
bruises on the arms, neck, and shoulders, swollen bruises on his cheeks, a small gash on his temple that looks barely scabbed over, a subtle limp that makes his left ankle look ready to give out. The list goes on.

No teachers ever say anything about the injuries, but other student’s gossip about them. Vic hears the rumors. That once and eighth grader was picking on him so Henry broke his nose. That he starts fights with people and takes their lunch money. That he walks home past the grade school so he can shove the younger kids around for fun. That Henry always has a switch blade in his pocket. But whether or not those rumors are true, or if people just use them to justify doing nothing about Henry’s injuries, it’s undeniable to anyone with eyes that those are adult sized bruises on a child’s skin.

Vic doesn’t say anything to Henry either, or to anyone else, and now that his own visible bruising is gone, Henry doesn’t even acknowledge his presence.

Life goes on in this routine.

But one day Daddy takes the evening off work and Vic doesn’t find out until it’s too late.

“Did you fucking go to school like that?”

Vic’s the last one through the front door as they come home, and ends up getting shoved back against that door as soon as it closes. He hasn’t let his hair grow more than an inch in the last month, and he has been wearing an army green coat over his sweatshirt to stay warm. Basically he looks the exact same as he did the last time his father saw him, but Daddy seems to think he would have gone back to long hair and skirts within a month.

What do you care?

Vic doesn’t say that, to his father or mother or sisters, but the thought is ever present in his mind. Because he knows what they think of what he’s doing, but at the same time they are all content to pretend he doesn’t exist. When he walks down the hall or sits at the table, he feels like a ghost. Like he really did die when he swallowed those pills and now he’s haunting his family, and they all are just trying to live around him. So what does it matter if he wears boy shirts and cuts his hair? Why does it matter what a dead kid does at all?

He nods quickly, because his father’s hand provides a constant force pushing him against the door. The front door opens inwards, so there is no escape from Daddy’s hold, but Vic does reach out and grab the knob for stability. He keeps his head tilted to the floor, but does bravely cast his eyes up and peek through his bangs.

“I thought I told you to knock this shit off.” That voice will never, ever, not strike cold blooded fear into Vic.

Shame burns his face, and in desperation he looks over to the side of the room where his mother stands. His sisters have already gone upstairs all in a hoard because they don’t want to witness a repeat of last month’s confrontation. But Mom is just standing there in the living room, halfway between taking off her coat and setting down her purse, and she’s just watching. Just eyes fixed forward, holding her breath, and doing nothing.

And Vic knows she will continue to do nothing but that doesn’t stop him for pleading a silent help with his eyes. For a second they make eye contact and it’s like she can really see him, so Vic thinks she might just intervene this time.
But then Daddy shoves his head back and it smacks loudly against the door.

“Fucking answer me.”

Big, black, fuzzy spots cloud Vic’s vision as the pain ricochets around his skull. Mind swimming and tongue heavy, unconscious primal instincts kick in just to survive.

*He can’t run away, so he has to fight back*

“NO!” Vic screams.

He’s not responding to the question. He is saying no to the pain. To the rejection. To the neglect. To the idea that he could just change back because there is no going back because this is who he is.

The pain and the anger make him feel vindicated in some twisted way. Like what he’s doing is real and it matters. Like the hits are a reminder that he’s doing this because he wants to be himself so bad that he’s willing to take any abuse over giving in. And no, the pain doesn’t feel good, but maybe it’s better than feeling empty.

A hard, swift fist to his mouth drives his head back against the door again, and this time the black spots overtake and he feels the sensation of falling, but doesn’t feel hitting the floor.

Vic comes to with the hot, metallic taste of blood in his mouth. His bottom lip is split by a wide gash, his inner upper lip got cut on impact with his front teeth, and his snaggletooth feels like it got shoved back a fraction of an inch and it sends pulses of deep nerve pain across his jaw. Eyes opening slowly, he finds himself sprawled out on the floor a few feet from the door. His hips hurt too, the one he fell on from the impact of hitting the wooden floor, and the opposite from when his father kicked his limp body out of the doorway and then left the house in a fury.

The pain in his jaw makes him hyperaware of the vein in his temple pulsing blood down to his neck. He thinks he can hear that blood rushing with terrifying clarity, until the sound stops and he realizes that was water running through the kitchen faucet. And then Mom is coming back into the living room with a wet washcloth and an icepack.

Vic tries to sit up and immediately drops unconscious again from the headrush. When he fades back in, Mom is crouched over him, pressing the icepack to the back of his skull and dabbing his bloody lip with the washcloth. And she’s saying something but he can’t really focus enough to hear her.

“-Honey, it’s time to stop this. You’re bleeding baby, hasn’t this gone on long enough? You can’t keep this up anymore-” She’s cooing softly.

The sound is so nice, and the feel of loving hands on his skin satisfies a deep neglected need in his heart. It feels so good to have his mother back that he almost gives in. Almost.

“N-no-o,” He whimpers, finding it hard to breath with someone hovering this close to him, but he is strong in his conviction.

*If he ever went back, then he’d be better off dead.*

She sighs in frustration, and the hand on his face stiffens and begins to pull away.

“What am I supposed to do? Let this happen to you? For what?” She whisper scolds, like mothers speak to their bratty toddlers in the supermarket aisles so to not cause a scene.

*Because of course he’s the one bleeding but this is really about her.*
“What should I say to people? To your grandparents? ‘No Victoria thinks she’s a boy now and if I
don’t play along.’”

“Tell them she’s dead!” He says through bloody gritted teeth, the same powerful anger rising up into
his chest. “Tell everyone she got hit by a bus. Or-or she drowned in a pool. Or *blew her fucking
brains out*!”

Fresh blood starts dripping down his chin from the open cuts in his mouth. Something hot and wet is
also running down his cheeks, and it confuses him because he didn’t know his face was bleeding and
he hasn’t the presence of mind to realize that those are tears.

Mom is frozen by his outburst, looking afraid of the feral, bloody animal her youngest child has
become.

“Victoria’s gone. She’s dead.” And a strangled sob creeps up his throat but he’s not going to let it
stop him. “She’s never coming back.”

It takes a lot of effort to finally stand up from the floor, and Mom offers no help. She just watches
him struggle and then stumble away.

He takes slow steps up the stairs until he gets himself to the bathroom. Locking the door, taking off
his clothes, and getting into the shower with stiff, methodical movements, Vic turns it on and cries
against the tile until the hot water runs out. And then he cries for a little longer until the icy spray
makes his bones hurt. Then he tries to dry off but can’t seem to get his body aligned with his mind,
so he just puts his school clothes back on while he’s still wet and takes the towel with him. Instead of
going to his room he goes back downstairs, which seems thankfully devoid of any family members,
and he goes to hide in the spare room.

Vic falls asleep in there, curled up on the carpeted floor with the damp towel under his head, and as
he drifts off he hopes he doesn’t wake up.

The next morning Vic wakes to the sound of Daddy leaving for work, and then he sleepily sits up
and starts getting ready for school. In the bathroom mirror he sees how bruised and swollen his lips
and jaw are and feel’s his stomach roll like he’s going to vomit. The split in his lip is patched by a
bloody scab and is too tender to clean effectively.

If he asks Mom to let him stay home, she probably would agree. But Vic’s done asking her for
anything.

The eggshells they walk on are so fresh and sharp that when he’s even in the same vicinity as his
mom or sisters, they all are silent. And in a vindictive way, the silence makes him happy, because it’s
how he knows they are forced to pay attention to him.

He walks through the school halls with his head down and the bruises go unnoticed. Until he gets to
Homeroom.

Just as Vic passes Henry’s desk, where he is in his usual half-asleep position, Henry lifts his head to
the sound of the bell and they look right at each other. Henry has two dark, sunken black eyes, and
the whites of his eyes are bloodshot beyond what is normal for sleep deprivation. For a moment Vic
just stands in front of Henry, who just stares up at him, taking in the gash in his lip and swollen
bruises. And then they look at each other, really look in each other’s eyes, and they see a mutual
don’t-talk-about-it because no-one’s-gonna-do-anything-about-it look in each other’s gazes.

And then the spell is broken when class starts and Vic has to quickly sit down. Ms. Donavan seems
particularly over it today (or maybe **hungover** it, if the rumors about her being an absolute lush are true), so she just hands out a work sheet and tells them all to work silently while she grades papers.

Vic starts at a lazy pace, still tired despite the extra hours of sleep he had yesterday, and his neck hurts from laying on the floor all night. With a slow and shaky hand Vic puts his name at the top of the paper, and doing so brings some semblance of peace to his soul. This is what he’s fighting for, little things like putting his own name on schoolwork and not having to pretend to be anyone else. He writes it again, steadier this time, right below the first. After he does the first math problem (**ugh, decimals**) his hand jumps up to the top of the page and writes his name again. He does another problem, probably incorrectly, and goes up to write his name again. He works his way through the sheet in this fashion, and by the fifth problem the top of the page is full of **Vic Criss**.

At once he feels a deep level of satisfaction, but also hears a nagging voice in the back of his head saying **why did you do that it looks stupid and the teacher’s gonna think you’re going crazy**—But then Vic sees something out of the corner of his eye.

Henry usually doesn’t even bother with busy work like this, or any work at all for that matter, and will typically put his head back down or lay on one arm while he scribbles in the margins. But today he’s sat up, hunched over the paper and tapping his pencil against the first problem while roughly biting at his bottom lip. There are a few guns and bleeding hearts doodled into the margins, but for once Henry looks like he’s trying and doesn’t know how to start.

Then his eyes flick over to Vic with the speed and precision of a predator catching sight of prey, and his gaze drifts down to Vic’s paper. Vic sees Henry’s brow furrow at the sight of the rolling scrawl of names at the top of his paper, and Vic feels a sharp stab of panic in his side.

Because Henry’s gonna see how many times he wrote that name and **know**. Because no normal kid has to write their name **seven times**. Because no normal kid has to think about how important a name is or **what it's like to have one that doesn’t fit you. Because**-

But Henry overall seems unconcerned with the odd heading and just seems interested in cheating off him. That relief soothes the tornado in Vic’s head, so much so that he moves his arm out of the way and pushes his paper a little more out for Henry to see. Henry looks up and their gazes meet, and Vic can’t see the harm, because his answers are probably wrong anyway and it’s just a stupid worksheet. It almost feels like an act of solidarity.

Until Gretta Keene goes and ruins it.

“Teacher! Henry Bowers is cheating!” she stands up from her desk and squawks out in that annoying voice of hers.

Gretta sits at one of the desks in the pair right in front of them, and Vic only knows her name because she never shuts up, and tattles on everyone, and **doesn’t he get enough mean, loudmouth girls at home?**

Henry growls through his teeth at her a raspy “Shut up,” with a tone so callous it sends a chill up Vic’s spine.

Ms. Donovan rolls her eyes, but she does begrudgingly walk to the back of the class. Henry folds his arms defensively over his sheet to cover the stolen answers. Everybody in class is looking at them now, and Vic just wants to disappear on the spot.
“Henry,” the teachers says, like she couldn’t be bothered to actually finish a sentence. 

“I didn’t do anything.” And for the reputation Henry has, Vic didn’t expect his voice to be so quiet and raspy. It’s less like the roar of a tiger and more like the hiss of a snake before it strikes. 

“Yeah you did.” Gretta counters back, still standing like she thinks she’s somebody that can talk down to others. 

“Mind your own fucking busine-” Henry starts in with fury, but the teacher cuts him off. 

“Bowers. Language.” She scolds, “And no cheating in my class.” 

“He wasn’t.” 

Suddenly everybody looks confused, and so is Vic because who said that? and everyone is looking at him and Oh no, was that me? 

No one in this school has heard him speak sense day one, so they all stay quiet in surprise for a moment. In that tense second of silence Vic feels like his insides are vibrating with fear. 

“He wasn’t cheating.” Vic affirms again, giving a half shrug to look casual because this is how normal people talk, right? Like it’s easy and not the absolute worst thing in the world. 

“Yeah he was, I saw.” Gretta says in a biting tone. 

“Why were you looking back here?” Vic responds. Just because he’s quiet doesn’t mean he doesn’t know how to bite back. He has three sisters. 

Gretta takes a breath and her nostrils flare like she’s a bull about to charge, but the teacher settles it before it can escalate further. 

“Alright, we’re done here. Everybody, eyes on your own paper. No more talking. Gretta, sit down.” And then she turns and walks back to her desk rubbing her temples. 

Everyone slowly turns back to their work, except for Vic, who is trying to quell a silent panic attack, Henry, who is giving him the most unreadable look, and Gretta, who is still standing and boiling with rage. 

“Gretta. Sit. Down.” The teacher commands again from her desk. 

Finally, Gretta turns away with a huff and goes to sit back in her chair. 

And maybe there’s some residual anger left from last night that makes Vic act. Maybe it’s because he wants some kind of twisted justice, and the haze of his anxiety is clouding his judgement. Because it’s not fair that he has to come to school with a busted lip and Henry has not one, but two black eyes. And something in him burns to make someone else hurt like he does. Hurt like they do. 

So he extends his leg out and hooks his foot on Gretta’s chair and yanks it out from under her just as she goes to sit. With a shriek she falls through the air and hits her nose on the edge of the desk before landing hard on her tailbone. Her nose begins to spout a river of blood from the impact, and when she feels its drip down her face and onto her shirt she screams like she’s in the worst pain of her life. 

Vic flinches back, hands coming up to cover his mouth to muffle a gasp. Because he didn’t intend to actually hurt her, he just wanted to get her back for being a bitch. But Henry snorts a laugh, flashing an unashamed and malicious grin at Vic, and maybe there is something funny about it. Gretta’s
fucking *crying* over a measly bloody nose, and the friend beside her is freaking out like she’s dying, and everybody else is looking on in horror. Henry’s laugh is contagious and Vic can’t help snickering in dark humor at the drama and production of it all.

And then the two boys look back at each other, mirth in their eyes despite the bruises that litter their faces. Perhaps this is another act of solidarity. They can look at each other while a bratty girl acts like a bleeding nose is the worst thing in the world, and they both think the same thing.

*I’ve had worse, and so have you.*

The bell rings before any blame gets thrown, so both boys grab their stuff and rush out before either get in trouble. Vic is just about to turn down the hall to go to his next class, still slightly high off the experience in homeroom, but Henry’s hand clasps on to his wrist and yanks him backwards. Henry pulls him a few yards down the hall to an alcove by a water fountain, grip strong and unrelenting. The hold doesn’t let up even when Henry turns to face him, and both boys seem uncomfortable with the close proximity and the physical contact, but neither make a move to pull away.

They stand in silence for a tense beet, and Vic wonders if those rumors really are true and Henry’s going to beat him up.

“What’d you do that for?” Henry asks, eyes hard but voice quiet in the crowded hall.

Henry is the only one who could have seen him pull Gretta’s chair out, and is probably the only one who would understand why he did it.

For a second Vic is sure, *very sure*, he can’t speak right now, but then he forces down the lump in his throat and tries to say something.

“I-…don’t know?” He says like a question, but it’s the honest truth.

He hasn’t felt quite like himself since last night, so nothing he does really makes any sense right now.

Henry seems mostly unimpressed, or even disappointed, by the answer and doesn’t say anything to respond. But the hand on his wrist does soften its hold slowly, and it lingers there for another second before Henry lets go and turns away. Vic watches him walk down the hall with his head down, until he disappears into the crowd and Vic has to go the other direction to get to second period.

Second period is uneventful, but his the skin on his wrist is still warm and the rest of his body is buzzing.

Vic has third period, English, with Henry, but in this class Henry is in the back while Vic took one of the desks on the side near the door. He tries to focus on reading the chapter that he should have read last night, but he feels a searing glare on his back. Though every time Vic braves a look behind him, Henry always seems in the process of turning his head away.

When third period gets out it’s lunch time, and Vic usually spends that half hour sitting in an empty hallway and trying to force down some food. But today, before he can even get out of his seat, Henry is grabbing his wrist again and pulling him up and out of the classroom.

All but dragging Vic down the hall by the arm, Henry leads them outside, where some the younger students hang out and the older students go to have lunch and/or smoke behind the school. But instead of going that way, Henry takes him down the side of the building to where there is a gap in the chain-link fence that lines the perimeter of the school.

Henry slips through the gap with ease, and Vic has had no choice to follow because the grip on his
arm isn’t loosening. The whole trip from class to here has left Vic breathless, not due to speed or strain but because Henry is holding him so tight and his heart won’t stop beating and now they’re alone and Henry’s gonna beat the shit out of him for no reason ‘cause maybe he is the psycho that everyone says he is and-

Then Henry pulls him down and the both sit on the dead grass under them. The ground is cold and wet from rain last night, but Vic’s pretty sure that his legs won’t work if he tries to stand up, so he’s stuck down here. Henry crosses his legs under himself and fixes one of his glares on Vic.

And then… nothing. No hits. No kicks. No threats. No words at all.

*Say something.*

Henry’s the one who drug him out here, he should be the one to say something.

And eventually he does, but not before he huffs in frustration and shoves Vic’s arm back at him as he let go of it.

“What happened to your face?” Henry asks in an indignant tone.

The question catches Vic off guard, because despite the dull throb of his bottom lip, he’s been doing the best he can to forget about his bruises. And he thought he and Henry had a silent agreement to not talk about the marks they saw on each other.

“Um, nothing?” Vic tries, because he’s never been called to answer for the bruises he has to wear.

Because no one sees them.

*Because no one cares.*

Henry doesn’t let it drop.

“Did you get in a fight?”

Vic shakes his head. They both know he wouldn’t last a minute in a fight, with anyone. Hell, Gretta could probably fight him if she wanted to, because she’s taller and broader than him by a good amount.

“Did’ya fall?”

That would’ve been the easiest excuse, but Vic doesn't take the out.

“No.”

The interrogation continues.

“Somebody beat you up?” Henry asks, but it’s really not a question.

Vic drops his gaze to his lap, shoulders sinking in defensively.

If Henry knows what happened, why is he asking?

“No.” Vic tries to deny.

“Was it someone at school?” Henry presses, and distractedly he starts biting on his thumbnail.
Vic shakes his head, shame beginning to rise up through his chest and color his face red.

“Was it your brother?” Henry says as he tears at a hangnail until it prickles with blood.

“I don’t have any brothers.”

Vic says fixed with his head down and red splotches on his face, because he had the chance to make up an excuse and brush this all off, but he didn’t take it.

And then the questions stop. Henry drops his bleeding thumb out of his mouth and into his lap, and then leans against the fence behind them.

Years from this moment, Vic will realize that yes, Henry knew exactly where those bruises came from and had probably known since day one. But this was a test. A test to see if Vic would use one of the dozens of excuses Henry had been using for years to explain away his own injuries. *Excuses he used until everyone stopped asking.* Or, if all alone, they could both finally tell the truth.

The result of this test isn’t as clear cut as truth or lie, but the outcome does cement something between them.

After long minutes of silence, Vic finally looks up at Henry again, a little more calm now that the questions are done. He hones in on Henry’s eyes, downcast and tried, and everything else around falls away. His vision oscillates from focusing on the dark bruise rings and purple lids, to the steely blue irises behind them.

“What about you?” Vic asks before he can stop himself.

Henry looks up, and for a moment he seems more vulnerable and confused than angry and defensive.

“What happened to you?” He persists.

*God, why is he still talking?*

But Henry just sags more against the fence.

“What nothing.”

Chapter End Notes

O Lordy, that was so fucking long. I probably could have broken it up into a couple different chapters, but i wanted to get to Vic and Henry talking asap. also editing in html makes my brain hurt.

I hope everybody like this ch, its one of my faves. the alternative title was Nothing, because i swear i wrote it a thousand times

Also i did add some new tags at the top, specifically anorexia. I hope if ED’s bother you you noticed beforehand and I'm sorry if you didn't. I'm probably only going to reference it every once and a while as a symptom of anxiety/depression, but I won't go into specific detail of it.
Btw, my existence is sustained entirely on comments and pita chips, so keep an author alive and tell me what you think. and thankQ to everyone who has commented, I love you. Passionately.
Literally just saying hi would make me so happy and really excited to start the next chapter.

Hopefully ch 7 will be out by friday night/saturday day.

XOXO
YDFH
Henry Part 2

Chapter Summary

Henry can’t gather the air necessary to sob, so he just keeps sputtering and choking until his face turns red.

So Vic leans down and cages his arms around Henry’s head, blocking out the sound and light around him, intending on helping him breath threw the panic. But instead Henry reaches up, latches digging fingers into Vic’s sides, drags him down and screams into his chest.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Seven: Henry Part 2

March, 1986

Digging through the cupboard under the bathroom sink, Vic finally comes across the pink bag he hasn’t seen years. He unzips it and finds the contents to be exactly what he remembers always being it there. A roll of medical tape, a fatter roll of elastic gauze, tiny blister-sized invisible Band-Aids, disinfectant spray, and a host of other practical tools for on-the-spot medical treatment.

Vic dumps all the supplies into his backpack, because God knows he’s not bringing a fucking pink fanny-pack to school tomorrow.

Yesterday Henry walked around school with that limp in his left ankle more pronounced than ever. He still drug Vic around by the wrist, like always, but he was moving slowly and wincing every few steps, and when he tried to sit down his foot rolled under the pressure and he fell to the grass.

So today at lunch, as they sit in their hidden alcove beside the school building, Vic shows Henry how to tape and wrap his sprained ankle. Henry is ambivalent, or some cross between irate and panicked, about taking his shoe and sock off and rolling up his pant leg. Yes, the bruise is absolutely heinous, all green and purple and splotchy, but Vic doesn’t say anything about it to make Henry any more uncomfortable.

“How’d you learn this?” Henry asks as Vic makes sure the gauze aren’t too tight but will still support the weakened bones.

“Umm…” Vic stalls.

Don’t say it. Don’t tell Henry about dance class.

“…Like, sports and stuff.” He lies with a shrug.

Henry gives him a skeptical look, but otherwise drops the subject as he puts his shoe back on over the bandages.

Vic hasn’t been in a dance class since fourth grade. It was one of those extracurricular activities that
Mom thought would be *so much fun for her girls*, but it turned out to be too much of a commitment and way too stressful and the bills had started to pile up. Plus, Vic’s hatred for ballet escalated to the point where he would purposefully land wrong on his feet, hoping he would break a bone and get to sit out. Hence the need for Mom to fill a fanny pack with medical tape and bandages, and of course it had to be pink.

Every day has gotten progressively better since he and Henry had started hanging out. The human contact seems to be putting some life back in them. Vic doesn’t feel as much like a ghost anymore. Henry looks a little less dead behind the eyes. The physical side hasn’t improved, both still came to school battle-worn and bloody, but being around each other gives them the chance to heal.

After their first conversation, Vic thought maybe things would just go back to the previous silent indifference they had had for one another. But the very next day after third period Henry walked right back up to Vic’s desk, grabbed him by the wrist, and led him outside again.

*“Come on,” Henry says.*

*Vic doesn’t even have to think twice.*

The firm hold Henry takes on him is a little straining, and one time the hall was crowed so Henry pulled on his arm a little too hard, but every day it is a relief to feel that hand on his wrist. If Henry didn’t grab on and pull him around like that, Vic would be too afraid to follow him. Because, what if Henry got sick of him? What if he was too weird and Henry didn’t want him around? What if Henry started ignoring him? Like *everyone* ignores him. So Vic takes that painful grip as a sign that Henry does want to hang out with him and for once he feels wanted.

They keep tabs on each other’s new bruises and cuts, but they never talk about where they come from, because to say it aloud would mean having to face something both boys want to forget. Even only for a short time, they just want to pretend it isn’t happening.

*“Where’d you move from?” Henry asks.*

*Vic huffs out a breath and considers the mental list.*

*“Connecticut, New York, Maryland, umm… Michigan for a little bit. Everywhere basically.”*

*Everywhere and nowhere.*

*“Why?” Henry seems genuinely curious, and there is a need for escape that makes him want to know about places outside of Derry. To know there’s a world beyond the town he’s trapped in.*

*“My dad’s in the army. We moved like every year.”*

*Henry regards him somberly, which seems strange to Vic because what he said didn’t seem particularly sad or anything. Moving is just what army families do.*

*But Henry is starting to realize that moving to a new place isn’t always an escape. Sometimes you can go everywhere in the world and still be trapped.*

*“My dad was in the marines,” Henry finally says, absently chewing on his thumb nail again.*

*And Vic starts to understand.*

So they don’t talk about their bruises or their fathers, because the two subjects are essentially indivisible. But they find other things to talk about. Comic books, video games, movies, people at
school they don’t like, some new trouble Henry got in, and the list goes on. And sometimes they
don’t have to talk at all, they just like being around each other.

In the mornings Henry has started lifting his head from the desk when Vic would come to class, not
as a proper greeting but just as a way of acknowledging his presence. If Gretta was being particularly
annoying in Homeroom, and Gretta hates the both of them now, the boys give each other sneering
side glances and roll their eyes. Vic would let Henry copy his answers, and they would get matching
C-’s. If Ms. Donovan has caught on, she doesn’t do anything about it, because she’s just glad that
there is some semblance of peace in the back of the classroom.

After a week had gone by, Vic walked into third period and went to sit down in his usual spot by the
door. And then suddenly Henry was beside him.

“Vic.”

A thrilling shiver goes up his spine, but not the bad kind like when Vic hears Daddy’s voice down the
hall. Something about hearing anybody say his name, especially Henry, sends a warm tingle
through him like an electric current.

“Yeah?” He says, barely audible.

Henry just cocks his head to one side to gesture to the back of the class where he usually sits, and
Vic follows him over.

And now they sit together in every class they share.

It took Vic a few days to realize that Henry doesn’t bring any lunch to school.

Vic pulls the paper bag out of his backpack, knowing that the tight knot in his gut is keeping his
appetite at bay.

“Do you want some?” He gets up the nerve to say.

Because sometimes Henry is defensive about certain things and Vic doesn’t want to make him upset.

“No.” Henry says with a glare. So this is one of those things that set him off.

“I’m not gonna eat all of it, really.” Vic presses just a bit, cautious but well-meaning.

A few moments of silence pass, but finally Henry does take half the sandwich offered to him, and Vic
decides to eat the other half to try and make Henry more comfortable.

As stubborn as he was before, Henry tears into the sandwich like he’s absolutely starving. And being
around Henry eating makes it a little easier for Vic to swallow down a few bites.

Days later, they sit down and Henry pulls a lunch bag out of nowhere.

“Where’d you get that?” Vic asks, because he doesn’t believe for a second that Henry brought it
from home.

“Don’t worry about it” Henry says as he rips it open, revealing a PB&J sandwich, a pack of Oreos,
a bag of chips, and a half-dozen pixie sticks. “Fat-ass doesn’t need it anyway.”

And Vic does feel a twinge of guilt, but as Henry digs in Vic is reminded that he doesn’t get enough
to eat as it is. One stolen lunch can’t hurt.
Despite his ravenous hunger, Henry makes Vic split all the junk food with him. And even though he didn’t think he was hungry, Vic feels marginally better after eating and doesn’t even get a stomach ache from all the sugar.

So Vic makes sure Henry has food to eat, and Henry makes sure Vic eats the food he has. And they don’t say it in so many words but that’s how they take care of each other.

Some people start to notice the two of them leashed to each other, but mostly it’s kids in their grade that know to stay away from Henry Bowers, so Vic doesn’t hear anything about it. The only person who really took issue with the situation was Vic’s sister.

A week ago Daphne pulled him aside while they were waiting for Mom to pick them.

"Who’s that boy you were with all day?" She asks with whispered malice.

He is frozen for a minute, because Daphne hasn’t spoken to him, at school or home, for weeks.

"Um- He’s just somebody I know from class."

Vic doesn’t want to jinx things by calling Henry his friend yet, because he hasn’t really had one before and definitely never one that was another boy, so he doesn’t want to ruin it now.

Daphne gives him an accusing look, and Vic feels his resentment rise.

“You get to hang out with people,” He reminds her.

Daphne already has a bunch of other girls to sit with at lunch. Lucy has her friends come over after school sometimes. Sophie is on the phone with boys when she thinks no one is around. So why can’t Vic have one person to talk to?

“I heard that he steals stuff and beats up little kids for fun.” She accuses.

“Those are rumors.” Vic tries to shrug it off, even though he has heard those same rumors float around the halls.

“If Daddy finds out then-” She half-warns half-threatens.

“You’re not gonna tell him.” Vic cuts her off with a biting tone.

For a second she looks mad enough that she would, because Vic doesn’t ever stand up to her and she wants to assert her older-sibling authority. His resolve cracks a little at the thought.

“Daph, please don’t tell?” He tries to appease her. “We’re not doing anything wrong, Henry’s just someone from class."

And finally she seems to relent, because she sees the marks on her (Sister’s? Brother’s? She doesn’t know what to think anymore) skin from his last run in with Daddy a few nights ago. Maybe it’s better if she doesn’t say anything about this after all. And if anyone finds out, she can just feign innocence to knowing about it.

“Fine.”

“Thanks,” Vic says, but Daphne has already turned away from him and is walking towards Mom’s car as it pulls up.

And so Daphne kept quiet about him and Henry, but she occasionally shoots him a concerned look
from across the hall when she sees them together.

With the gauze on, Henry has an easier time getting through the rest of the day. It still seems like it hurts, but now he can walk a little faster and the ankle doesn’t roll when he has to put weight on it. In sixth period Vic reminds him to unwrap it to before bed and prop his leg up for the night. Then they part ways, Henry walks around behind the school and through the woods to get home, and Vic goes to wait for his mother.

The night passes without incident.

The next morning is Friday, and as Mom drives them to school she lets them know she has some errands to run this afternoon, so the kids have to walk home. Mom gives Sophie the spare key, and while the girls complain about the inconvenience (it’s not even that far of a walk, jeez) Vic sort of looks forward to not having to ride home with his sisters.

But when Vic walks into Homeroom, Henry’s not at his desk. Henry isn’t here at all. For a moment Vic just stands looking at their desks, feeling lost and overexposed as he sits down alone. His mind swings between two extremes for explanation. One terrifying possibility: Henry finally got sick of Vic following him like a shadow and maybe somehow figured out that Vic’s not normal and is so disgusted that won’t even show up to school. Or equally possible and but more terrifying: Henry was hurt so awfully bad that he couldn’t even come to school, because the worst beatings Vic gets every few weeks are what Henry gets everyday, so what happens if his skull cracks or his neck brakes or his lung is punctured and no one’s around to help him?

Vic drops his head to the desk, breathing heavy pants into his palms and trying to fight back the budding anxiety attack. Henry had a sprained ankle yesterday, so if his dad came after him, he wouldn’t be able to get away.

Then Henry appears in the doorway, hanging on the door jam and leaning into his right side. For a second he just stands there, and Vic wonders if he is really there, or if this is some anxiety driven hallucination. But Henry starts stumbling forward, looking like every step hurts him all over, and arms wrapped around his middle protectively and sliding across the wall to get to his desk. It takes him a long time to finally sit down, and the other kids around try not to gawk at him too conspicuously. One girl looks at his cringing, quaking form for a second to long and Henry growls at her.

Vic wants to jump up, help Henry sit down and check him over. Because whatever is wrong isn’t immediately visible, but is looks absolutely excruciating. But Vic is frozen because Henry looks feral, spine rigid, shoulders hunched, and the anger in his hooded eyes is burning like an inferno. Vic feels a mix of pain and sorrow and empathy, but also fear. Henry looks like a puppy that survived a dog fight, but came out wounded and ready to snap his jaws and bite.

Finally, after eons of painful staggering, Henry collapses into his seat and curls so far into himself that he almost disappears. The teacher doesn’t even look twice.

“Henry?” Vic whispers, lying his head on his desk to get closer to Henry’s level.

The boy doesn’t respond, but when Vic gets real close he can hear the wheezing shallow breaths Henry sucks in and heaves out. Vic reaches out as gently and slowly as he can and brushes the tips of his fingers over Henry’s shoulder blade, and Henry flinches and trembles violently at the contact, but he has no physical power to make the touch stop. Pulling his hand away quickly, Vic feels his stomach drop and his eyes prickle.

Both boys spend the class with their heads down. Vic tries to whisper to Henry every few minutes,
but never gets a response. Henry just sinks further into himself.

By third period Henry still won’t talk, he doesn’t even move when the bell for lunch rings. So Vic takes the initiative to, as cautiously as he can, grab onto the sleeve of Henry’s sweatshirt and guide Henry up and out of the classroom. He sticks to a slow pace and they take frequent pauses so Henry can choke down some air, but they eventually make it to their spot. They sit down onto the cold grass as softly as possible, but Henry still winces.

The angry inferno in Henry’s eyes is dead now, just smoldering embers are left. Vic plants himself in front him, because as scared and anxious as he is, he resolves to help Henry through the pain.

“Henry, what happened? Where does it hurt?” Vic is still whispering even though they are far away from anybody else.

Henry makes a low, whining sound in the back of his throat before finally finding his voice.

“It’s nothing” He slurs softly, eyes drifting shut.

“No it’s not,” Vic says with a little too much force.

*It’s not nothing. It’s never nothing. And it’s not fair, and it’s not right, that they always have to pretend it's nothing.*

Henry flinches back but offers nothing else. He’s still holding his stomach, hunched over with arms crossed tight over his midsection.

Reaching over, Vic gently but firmly tugs Henry’s arms away and tries to pull up his shirt.

“Stop,” Henry rasps, tightening his arms.

But Vic keeps at it, more assertive this time.

“Stop it,” Henry bares his teeth and says a little louder.

Vic is undeterred, pushing him back aggressively to see what Henry’s trying to protect.

“Stop!” Henry screams this time, and in an instant swings up his arm and clocks Vic in the jaw with the side of his fist.

The impact hurts and it takes Vic back for a second, but instead of freezing and crumbling like when Daddy hits him, he feels a fire light in his veins. Vic pushes Henry onto his back, even as Henry throws more blows and tries to shove him away, so Vic pins his fists to the ground. Henry is undeniable bigger and stronger than Vic, but the pain he’s in makes him malleable to the hold.

Then the fight just drops out of Henry like he’s died on the spot. For a second Vic thinks the boy has passed out, but his eyes are open and moving. It just seems like Henry has left his body and his mind is off floating somewhere else.

The sight is unnerving but Vic pushes through and finally gets a look under Henry’s shirt.

Across the whole right side of his chest and ribs is a field of black and blue, and instead of swollen, the area looks sunken in on itself. Vic studies the injury, thinking through his mental catalogue of all the marks he’s seen on Henry. Punches leave dark round Dalmatian spots, impacts (like against the wall or to the ground) leave oblong marks on skin raised by bone that fade out. No this looks like Henry was already on the ground, curled into his side, as *kick after kick after kick* was laid into his
ribs. Until they cracked. Until something broke. Until the bent bones pressed into his lung and made it difficult to breathe.

Until Henry had to give in to the pain and float off from his body, like he’s doing now.

“Henry can you hear me?” Vic tries to bring him back.

He’s still limp and unmoving, but after a second his eyes focus again and he looks up at Vic. And then tears just start to overflow from his eyes.

“I’m not gonna hurt you,” Vic says softly, fingers running across the rib cage until he feels the one that dents inwards.

The tears are really coming now, in big fat streams that map out the curves of Henry’s face.

“I’m not gonna hurt you,” Vic says again, pulling his hands off Henry’s ribs.

Henry can’t gather the air necessary to sob, so he just keeps sputtering and choking until his face turns red.

So Vic leans down and cages his arms around Henry’s head, blocking out the sound and light around him, intending on helping him breath threw the panic. But instead Henry reaches up, latches digging fingers into Vic’s sides, drags him down and screams into his chest.

Tears soak into his shirt as Henry cries against him. For once Henry is feeling so overwhelmed but also just safe enough to let it out. The screaming continues, muffled enough by their closeness to not draw any attention, but the anger and the shame and the pain is still in every strain of his vocal cords. Vic just stays still, letting Henry hold on as tight as he needs despite the jabbing fingers in his sides.

The bell rings for fourth period and Vic just ignores it.

Finally the convulsions and screams die down, and Henry only stutters out a few sobs like a dying engine. Henry drops his arms and Vic slowly peels himself back from over the crying boy.

“Hen-” Vic starts, not having a real direction for his thoughts.

“I’m fine,” Henry says, or tries to say through hiccupping breaths, and he slowly sits up and winces in pain.

He’s wiping his eyes, shoulders hunched in and trying to put distance between him and Vic.

“Shut up,” Henry snaps, despite the fact Vic hasn’t said anything.

After a moment of averting eyes from each other and sitting in silence, Vic at last finds his voice again.

“Do you…” Vic pauses when Henry levels a dark glare at him, “…wanna stay at my house tonight?”

And Henry sits speechless for a moment, unbelieving and skeptical, but he nods slowly anyway.

Hours later, the walk home from school is slow and painful but Henry doesn’t complain about the ache. By the time they get to Vic’s house the girls have been home for a while, Daphne and Sophie upstairs, and Lucy already left to go hang out with friends. They don’t seem to care that Vic didn’t get home as promptly as they did, but at least they left the door unlocked for him.
Vic makes sure the ground floor is all empty as they come in, and then he leads Henry over to the couch and makes him sit. Henry is breathing through the pain, but the tears have stopped and he seems less tense than he was the whole day.

With Henry settled, Vic goes to the kitchen and fills a plastic bag with ice and comes back to the living room. Making him lie against the arm of the couch, Vic sets the ice as gently as he can against Henry’s side.

The two sit in silence for a while, letting the ice numb Henry’s side, and then Vic turns on the T.V. and flips through channels until he finds some action movie playing. Despite the explosions and gun shots coming through the T.V., a calm spell is cast across the room.

Henry is struck by how quiet it is, how safe he feels despite the pain and uncertainty. He reaches over and grabs Vic’s wrist, weaker than he does when pulling him around school, and just holds in the space between them. Vic doesn’t make a move towards or away, because he’s realizing that this is the only kind of contact Henry is comfortable with. And maybe Vic likes it too.

The movie ends and another starts up, so they just let it run and watch passively. Vic thanks God for when his sister’s don’t come downstairs all afternoon. They both start to sag from exhaustion, the day being both emotionally and physically straining, and they are almost dozing when Vic’s mother comes through the door.

“Oh!” She says in surprise, waking the boys fully.

Henry immediately drops his hold on Vic’s arm and tries to sit up, looking ready to bolt like a frightened animal.

For a moment Mom just stares at them, unbelieving that she somehow now has two boys in her home when a short time ago she had none.

“Hey Mom…” Vic tries to act normal, because they can’t just stare at each other like they can make the other disappear, “This, um… this is Henry. We have class together.”

And then they snap back to normal, or well, Henry drops his head to look at the floor, Vic sinks into himself, and Mom looks overwhelmed but willing to pretend like that everything is fine.

“A-alright. So were you doing homework together…?” She tries to justify to herself.

“Yeah,” Vic answers too quickly, because Henry’s never done homework in his life and they skipped two classes today so they could sit together outside.

“Mhmm,” Mom says, clearly not believing her own excuse, but not willing or able to start an argument about the real situation. She starts to walk towards the kitchen. “Henry, would you like to stay for dinner?”

Henry looks really uncomfortable with being spoke to, and he looks over to Vic in panic.

“Okay?” He says quietly.

So Mom goes into the kitchen without acknowledging Henry’s response, and after a second Vic follows her in.

“What are you doing!??!” she hisses at him in a hushed voice when they’re alone.

Vic is already prepared to counter.
“They have friends over all the time,” he whispers back, gesturing upstairs in reference to his sisters.

“This is différent Victo-”

“Shhh!” Vic hushes her before she can say it.

Mom looks angry and tired and high-strung all at once, but her resolve is starting to crumble. Maybe the best thing to do is just tell the truth, because he’s tired of making up excuses.

“Mom, Henry…got hurt really bad,” He hopes she catches the meaning in his eyes. “He can’t go home right now.”

A film of shame overtakes her eyes, because she understands the intent and why Vic wants to help the other boy. Because no one is helping him.

“Your father can’t know.” She finally says in concession.

“I know.”

“Okay.”

“Thank you.”

“Mhm.”

And then the conversation is over. Vic goes back to the living room and sits beside Henry, who looks unsure and awkward all alone. As Mom makes dinner, Vic brushes the back of his hand against Henry’s as a silent reassurance, because with someone else around Henry won’t grab his wrist.

They get called in for dinner, as if Vic has ever been called to dinner in the last three months, and he and Henry stand and set aside the half melted ice pack. Henry silently refuses to let Vic help him to the kitchen, and his side must be numb by now because his steps are stiff but look less pained than before. Though when they sit at the table he does stutter out the smallest of strained gasps.

Mom dishes up their plates like she’s June fucking Cleaver, like she always does when company is over and she has to revert to a perfectly nice housewife. Sophie and Daphne come down and look at the boys at the table in surprise, but Mom gives them a warning look to stay quiet about it. Vic is content to ignore their probing glances so Henry follows suit. So all the kids sit in silence and eat. Henry seems to be holding himself back, because he’s picking at his food slowly but Vic knows he hasn’t had anything to eat all day. Or maybe eating with a cracked rib is more uncomfortable than hunger. Vic is eating at just the same slow pace, despite also not eating lunch today, until Henry gives him just the barest of looks and gestures to the food. So he starts eating a little faster just because Henry is concerned enough about him. And after a concerned look back, Henry obeys and eats a bit more off his plate.

But then Mom breaks their silent conversation.

“So Henry, have I met your mother yet? Is she in the PTA?” Mom says from the counter, where she’s not eating, just standing there and hovering.

Henry freezes and his shoulders stiffen.

“No.” He says quietly, unclear to which half of the question he is answering.
Vic shoots a glare at his mother. *Like you even go to PTA meetings, don’t even pretend.* But then he is slightly more distressed by Henry’s hand quivering as he stabs another bite.

“Oh. Well, what does your father do?” She keeps probing, like someone would poke at a bear in a cage.

Henry just sets the fork down before he can get it to his mouth, head dropping towards his lap.

Vic wants to throw his plate at his mother as hard as he can.

“My dad’s a cop.” Henry says with a shrug, and that brief description doesn’t say a thing about what his father does.

“He mm.” Mom makes one of those conversation ending noises again.

If only the conversation hadn’t started at all.

Neither boy is interested in eating anymore.

“Mom, can we be excused?” Vic asks, hiding his disdain behind the facade of table manners.

She doesn’t really seem to care, responding with a wave of her hand as she tidies up the kitchen.

They leave their plates on the table but can’t get out of the room before Mom prods one more time.

“Do you need a ride home Henry?” She says, like she’s forgotten what Vic had told her earlier.

“No ma’am,” Henry says, standing behind Vic and trying to disappear into the wall. “I can walk.”

Coming back into the living room, Vic can feel Henry’s discomfort emanating off him, and he can hear his mom and sisters whispering to each other. Probably talking about them. Henry’s leaning into his side again as he grabs his backpack and goes towards the door. Vic reaches out and grabs his sleeve to stop him.

“Don’t I have to go?” Henry asks quietly, voice quivering just slightly like he’s on the edge of another breakdown.

Vic shakes his head, and motions for Henry to be silent. Grabbing both their backpacks, he leads Henry to the spare room down the hall. Setting their stuff down, Vic goes back into the living room and grabs some extra cushions and the throw blankets off the couch.

As he lays the cushions down Henry looks on confused. And Vic doesn’t really know what he’s doing either, because he’s never had a sleepover, and Henry doesn’t seem like he’s ever been to one, but this one is less about fun and more about safety.

The lie down in the quiet room, Henry’s just relieved that he can take the weight off his side and Vic is glad they are alone again. Henry pulls over his backpack and reveals that instead of textbooks Henry just brings a stack of comic books to school, so they spend a few hours switching issues back and forth and just enjoy being near each other in the small room.

The sun sets and the room is still warm from the last rays of sunlight. The dark, the quiet, the heat, the feeling of food in their stomachs, the safety they feel isolated off from the world, the comfort they get from each other, all finally outweigh the heavier traumas that they live with and both boys fall asleep.

They wake with a jolt about an hour later, *because the front door opens loudly and heavy footsteps*
are coming towards the room and-

It's okay, it's just Daddy getting home.

Henry seems petrified still, but Vic slowly crawls over to the door and peeks under the gap between the door and the carpet. He watches his father’s shadow move across the floor, coming closer to the spare room before going up the stairs.

Vic gives Henry a relieved nod and they both relax and let out the breaths they’d been holding. Settling back down into their nest of blankets and cushions, it takes a little longer to get back into that peaceful headspace they had before, but finally they do fall back into that heavy dreamless sleep, lulled by the slowing beats of their hearts and the steady rhythm of each other’s breathing.

Woken at dawn by the front door opening and closing again as Daddy goes to work, Vic blinks slowly and it takes him a second to realize that Henry is awake too, and looking back at him. They just watch each other, all the internal walls down and insides vulnerable.

Henry reaches over in their trance, only an arm’s length away from Vic, and with only the slightest tremble and hesitation, he grabs Vic’s hand and laces their finger’s together. This isn’t a tight grip on a wrist, or a tugging hold on sweatshirt sleeve, this is real flesh to flesh hand holding. Henry squeezes just enough that Vic knows that this means thank you, but the affection is kind of overwhelming for both of them so they swiftly let go and pretend it didn’t happen.

Awake now, they sit up and Henry rolls from one hip to the other to test the pain in his ribs.

“How’s it feel?” Vic asks, wanting to feel the soft spot to check it over.

“Better,” Henry confirms honestly after a moment, so Vic resists his urge to touch.

They make their way into the dim living room, picking up the cushions and blankets and resetting them on the couch. Vic makes them bowls of cereal and they eat on the living room floor while watching Saturday morning cartoons. They don’t talk and the T.V. volume is on low, so not to wake anyone else in the house.

After a while they start to hear stirring upstairs. Henry checks the clock on the wall and confirms that his dad’s at work by now so he can go home. Vic wants to tell him to stay, but knows that he’s pushing his luck with Mom already.

So Henry grabs his bag and Vic walks with him to the front porch. The early spring morning is cold but the sun is shining bright in the blue sky. Henry steps out onto the porch and they give each other just the briefest of glances as he leaves, walking through the yard and down the side walk without looking back.

Vic watches him go from the door way, noticing that his steps still seem stilted but looks like he’s only in a moderate amount of pain compared to yesterday. Then he closes the door and wonders how he’s going to pretend everything is back to normal by Monday.

Chapter End Notes

Me: I won't write an extra long chapter again.
Me to me: Add more stuff, make it even more gay.
So I know I said this was a slow burn but aren't they already the cutest little boyfriends ever!!?

Also if you haven't seen the tumblr video of logan thompson dancing to rihanna you are not living. look it up.

Required fanny pack reference: check (this fandom is so weird. i love it)

I hope I didn't keep ya'll waiting to long on this one, and I hope you like it. <3 <3 Pleaseessses leave me comments i live off them. it makes me so happy to hear from you guys. tell me what you think, tell me bout your day, tell me bout your it headcanons, call my mom a whore, literally anything. i love you all.

XOXO
YDFH
Friends

Chapter Summary

And then the painful knot loosens a little, because Henry looks at Vic not with judgment, but like he understands that some things in life just aren’t the way you want them and need them. So having a pink bike isn’t incriminating of who Vic is, but rather is just a circumstance that has been dealt to him, and it can be fixed when he has friends with spray paint who are willing to help.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Eight: Friends

May, 1986

What happens is that they don’t go back to normal, they find a new normal. Henry comes over at least once a week and spends the night on his dad’s days off. Vic can easily hide the evidence of the sleepovers, because Mom is very out-of-sight-out-of-mind oriented, Daddy is always at work, and the girls are spending more time with friends and less time at home. So no one really cares or notices that Henry and Vic have claimed the spare room as theirs. Even when alone, Vic sleeps down there most nights, unless it would be too conspicuous not to go upstairs to bed when told to. Vic also leaves the back window unlocked, and a few times in the middle of the night, Henry has snuck in and lied down beside him on the carpet.

The summer heat has started to roll in, despite the fact school is still in session for another six weeks, and the empty house is sweltering and humid, so Vic and Henry grab popsicles from the freezer and go lay out on the back porch. Henry has a gash from the corner of his mouth to the side of his chin, but it’s a few days old and has scabbed over. The popsicle stains his lips and the scar a bright ocean blue, and it seems like the sugary syrup would be irritating to the cut, but that doesn’t stop Henry from slurping at the frozen treat.

When Vic had first seen the cut, dazed as he woke to the sound of Henry climbing into their room through the window, he wondered what that big dark smudge was on his mouth and why it was dripping on the carpet—oh fuck. Vic took him into the downstairs bathroom to clean the cut, and Henry acted like it didn’t hurt until Vic sprayed disinfectant on it and he squealed like a little girl. The gash was deep enough that Henry probably needed a few stitches, but that wasn’t an option, so Vic hoped a couple of Band-Aids would hold for the night. Then they went back to their room and meandered through whispered conversations until they fall asleep.

The late afternoon sun bakes their skin pink and freckled, and sweat starts to glisten on their foreheads. Mosquitos buzz around their bare arms and Vic and Henry slap them away lazily.

“We should ride bikes to school tomorrow,” Henry says out of nowhere, breaking the calm summer silence.

Sometimes Henry will just decide what they should do. He never really asks Vic, he just speaks his mind and Vic goes along with Henry’s ideas. And really Vic doesn’t mind because usually it’s
something like We’re going to the arcade, or We should go to the woods, or We should ditch next class, and other things that mean they get to spend extra time together. There’s a psychological aspect to following Henry too, whether Vic is aware of it or not. Every day at home he feels so isolated as he forges a path all on his own, trying to be himself despite every obstacle his family puts in front of him. So being taken by the arm and led around pulls some of that weight and strain off Vic’s shoulders and lets him put his trust in another person.

But this bike thing is gonna be a problem.

“Um, I can’t,” Vic starts, wincing when he bites into the popsicle and it stings his teeth. “I don’t have-” But then the brain freeze takes over and he cringes.

Henry gives him a confused look, which most people would read as irritated because his expressions always err on the side of angry, but Vic knows by now that’s just the way Henry is.

“Y’don’t have a bike?” Henry says with little more judgement than necessary, but really who the hell doesn’t have a bike?

Before he can answer, Vic has to press his thumb up against the roof of his mouth to dull the pulsing throb in his head. Cherry red juice is running down his hand as his half-eaten popsicle starts to melt.

“No, I have one. It’s just that-” How can he say this without revealing too much? “It used to be my sister’s… so it’s like pink.” Vic says like the word makes him sick.

It is true that his bike did used to be Lucy’s, just another hand-me-down he got as the youngest, but even before moving and before cutting his hair, Vic didn’t want to ride on a pink bike so he rarely ever used it.

Henry makes a noise of understanding and takes another slurp off his popsicle, with his brow furrowed like he’s thinking.

It makes Vic anxious to admit that some of his possessions don’t match him right, like his secret will be obvious if Henry knows he has a pink bike or purple bed sheets or technically shares a bedroom with his sister. But whenever those things come up Henry seems confused but does not put too much thought into them. Really, Henry rationalizes that Vic’s parents just neglect him so much that they don’t care to get him boy stuff and think it’s okay to pass down girl things to him. And, actually, that explanation is correct, it’s just far more complicated under the surface. So a pink bike is a problem but not one that’s unfixable.

“We can paint it,” Henry shrugs, polishing off the last bite of the blue popsicle.

“With what?” Vic asks, and the headache has hindered his appetite so he tosses the rest of his popsicle into the yard, where it can melt into a sticky sweet puddle for a colony of ants to drink up.

If Vic had any paint he would’ve already recolored everything he owned, but doing so would probably mean the beating of his life once he got caught.

“I know somewhere we can get it.” Henry sits up like it’s decided.

And Vic wonders if “somewhere” is like Henry’s house, or like he means to steal it from the hardware store. Either way, Vic is on board just because Henry wants to do it.

And the thought that Henry cares enough about this that he would steal, gives Vic weird, warm, twisty feeling in his gut.
So Vic sits up too and thinks they’re about to get going, but Henry gets this playful look in his eye and shoves him back down. Vic is a bit jarred but doesn’t wait to strike back, pushing back against Henry and trying to shove him off the porch steps. Gravity is on Vic’s side, but then Henry locks their legs together and drags them both down onto the yard.

Play fighting is one of the things that Henry taught him, not really with words but with experience. It started with just a few pushes and shoves when they walked the school halls, and it escalated until they were full-on wrestling on the ground at lunch, legs tangled, arms jabbing into stomachs, trying to pin one another to the ground. Vic just figures that this is what boys do. Instead of play dress up or dolls, boys roll in the dirt and fight like animals and make each other say ‘uncle’, and it’s fun.

And maybe there’s something else to it that pulls both boys into these puppy fights. Like for once their bodies are their own, and not the broken property of someone else. This way they can choose to fight back, getting out all the pent up aggression of just having to take hits from their fathers’ fists. This way they can say stop when something hurts too much, and know the other will back off. This way they can feel pain and laugh about it, because it makes them feel alive inside instead of dead. And there is something about it that’s intimate in a way that feels masculine, because Vic and Henry would rather put one another in a headlock than a hug, but the contact is the same.

So postponing their trip to find whatever paint Henry wants, they fight on the lawn until they have built up a layer of dirt all over and accidently roll into the puddle of melted popsicle juice. Getting up, they’re sweaty and dirty and laughing for no reason, and Vic figures that this is part of being a boy too. This is the primal, filthy side of being a boy, where you want every touch to be rough and tough, and it makes him so happy.

Because to Vic this is proof that he’s been right all along about being a boy. That no matter what anybody says or the way his body looks, this feels like the way he was always meant to be.

On the way out Henry grabs his backpack and they walk a few blocks up the road. Instead of heading to the main strip, they go deeper into the residential blocks and towards the edge of the woods. Vic doesn’t ask where they are going, but knows that Henry’s house is down the backroads and further into the trees, and the hardware store is up Mainstreet and past the school. So wherever they’re going is somewhere new.

They walk in silence beside each other. Henry’s got his hands in his pockets, but Vic wouldn’t mind if Henry grabbed onto his arm like he does at school. Not like Vic wants Henry’s hand on his wrist or anything, he just wouldn’t mind if it was.

As they turn a corner they are passing a big hill when some kid on a bike speeds down and almost collides with them. They both jump back at the last second, and Henry may have reached out and yanked Vic back by the shoulder an extra couple feet, whether it was on purpose or not. The speeding kid looks like he’s heading straight into a lamppost, but his front tire hits the curb and he gets thrown forward and rolls across the pavement.

“What the fuck, Patrick?” Henry shouts, sounding half-pissed and half-exasperated, but he hasn’t let go of Vic’s shoulder.

The kid on the ground sits up and barks out a laugh.

“Hey Bowers, what the fuck’s up with you?” He shouts back.

Vic recognizes Patrick Hockstetter from school. He’s never had a class with him but generally knows him as the kid who left a dead mouse in Betty Daniel’s desk on Valentine’s Day and broke the fire alarm because he set it off to many times. Vic’s also heard something about a pencil case he
has, but never really understood the significance of such a thing. Patrick looks like he’s in the middle of a growth spurt, still padded with baby fat but also gangly and disproportionately tall. He looks tired, but a different kind of tired than Henry does, like he’s been up all night on a sugar rush so his eyes are pink and his hands are twitching, and his hair is overgrown and greasy. He’s got this big lopsided grin with sharp white teeth and chapped lips, and he laughs like diving headfirst into sidewalk asphalt was the best feeling in the world. Like he doesn’t believe he can get hurt.

Henry still has Vic’s shoulder, so when Henry marches over to Patrick Vic is along for the ride.

“Whattya’ want Henry?” Patrick says, voice roughed up by laughing and puberty. He cocks his head and looks at Vic. “And who’s this littl-“

“Do you still have that spray paint from last year?” Henry cuts him off, but Vic kind of wants to know what Patrick was about to call him.

The boy huffs and flutters his lips exaggeratedly, like he’s pretending to think before answering.

“No. I put the can in my parents’ barbeque and then lit it up ‘til it exploded. You should have seen it Henry, it was so fucking cool. The explosion was so loud the neighbors called the fire department again.”

Then Patrick stands up in one fluid motion, cocking his hip out and slumping to the side, head tilted and eyes predatory.

“Now who’s this flamer?” Patrick gestures to Vic.

The name doesn’t really faze Vic, because he’s already a little freaked out by Patrick and he’s been called worse things than a fag. But Henry sputters angrily and grinds his teeth, dropping his hand from Vic’s shoulder.

Now Vic is just the slightest bit upset that Patrick made Henry do that.

*Why are they talking to this guy?*

“This is Vic, the new kid.” Henry says with a scowl as he shoves his hands in his pockets.

Patrick wanders over slowly, eyes on Vic as he sizes the little blond up.

“Now who’s this flamer?” Patrick sneers amusedly.

Vic will admit he’s intimidated, because Patrick is like six inches taller and towers over him, but Vic squares his shoulders and crosses his arm over his chest. Over the last few months, he’s been modeling his masculinity from observing Henry, because Henry is strong and tough and doesn’t let any bigger kids talk down to him. And Henry is the only boy Vic has ever been this close with, and he’s never had a masculine role model besides his absent father. So Vic glares up silently as Patrick sneers amusedly.

Henry puts himself between the two, shoving Patrick back and favoring Vic’s side of the walkway.

“Quit being a dick. You know if Belch still has any paint?” Henry says and Vic feels mildly relieved.

Patrick juts out his bottom lip and shrugs, “I don’t know, probably.”

Henry turns and herds Vic forward down the sidewalk and they walk away from Patrick, apparently going towards Belch’s house. Patrick follows unperturbed, just leaving his bike on the side of the
“What you guys want paint for?” Patrick asks.

“You’re not coming.” Henry disregards his question, throwing a glare over his shoulder.

“Yeah I am.”

“No.” Vic and Henry say at the same time, sharing the same annoyed look in their eyes.

But Patrick just laughs like two no’s mean yes and follows anyway.

A block over and down a few houses, Henry leads them up a driveway and bangs his fist on the garage door. The metal wheels squeal as the door gets rolled up by the boy on the other side.

“Oh, hey guys,” He says, but then looks at Vic and seems confused. “What’s up?”

Vic’s has seen Belch Huggins around school, they might even have fifth period together but he’s not sure. The kid is just as tall as Patrick and twice as wide, broad shouldered and thick in the middle, but he’s still has a round baby face with ruddy cheeks. At school people are afraid of him just because of his size rather than anything he’s ever done, so the other kids avoid him. He has oil stains on his fingers and marking up his clothes, and on the garage floor behind him seems to be the ripped up insides of a junky transmission.

Patrick and Henry just walk into the garage like they own it, and Vic still stays only half a step behind Henry, despite being uncomfortable entering someone else’s space.

“What’d you do with that old spray paint?” Henry asks, already taking the liberty of looking around the garage for it.

Belch is eyeing Vic a lot less creepily than Patrick was earlier, but still looks confused by the smaller boy following Henry around like a lost puppy.

“Oh, it’s over there on the shelf,” Belch says as Henry helps himself to the two aerosol cans above a work bench. “What for?” He asks, looking from Henry to Vic to Patrick.

Stealthily, Patrick saddles up beside Vic and slings a long arm over the blond’s shoulders while Henry is distracted.

“This is Henry’s new boyfriend, ain’t he cute?” Patrick says with a sneer.

Vic freezes up at first, because this Patrick kid is weird and pressed up against him, and no one (except Henry) ever really touches him unless they’re hurting him, and he’s in a small space with people he doesn’t know, so he can’t help but to bristle and try to sink away. But then Patrick calls him cute, and that sets Vic on the defensive, because boys aren’t supposed to be cute. (He doesn’t consider that being called Henry’s boyfriend doesn’t make him upset, but ‘cute’ is what pisses him off.)

Vic shoves Patrick off as hard as he can, hoping he can knock the bigger boy to the ground. Unfortunately, Patrick only stumbles back a few feet, chuckling at Vic’s sad attempt to hurt him. But then Henry comes over and punches Patrick in the side and makes him wheeze and double over.

“I told you to knock it off asshole.” Henry growls at him, but Patrick just scoffs and licks his lips like he’s been proven right.
Henry then turns to Belch. “This is Vic. We’ve got Bitchface’s class together,” He says.

Belch just seems relieved that Henry and Patrick didn’t end up brawling in his garage, so he gives Vic a nod.

“Hey.” He says.

Giving a weak wave and nod back, Vic tries to keep his expression neutral even as his insides are still torn up from anxiety.

“What do you want paint for?” Belch looks at both of them, but really he’s asking Henry. “You’re not gonna go tagging again, are you? Last time-”

“No, we’re just fixing something.” Henry interrupts.

Vic kind of wants to know what happened last time Henry went tagging, but decides not to ask right now. Patrick is entertaining himself with a lighter, listening to the other boys but not really caring about what they’re saying.

“Is black okay?”

It takes Vic a minute of Henry and Belch looking at him that he realized that the question is addressed to him.

“Huh?”

“For your bike,” Henry says and waves the can of black spray paint at him.

“Oh, yeah.” Vic responds a little quieter than he intended, but for a second Vic had forgotten that this whole odyssey was because they needed to get paint for his bike.

“Cool,” and Henry puts the can in his backpack, slings it over his shoulder, grabs Vic by the wrist, and pulls him towards the open garage door.

As they walk out, without so much as a wave goodbye, Vic hears Patrick whisper to Belch “we’ve been replaced,” and then he laughs when Belch tells him to shut up. If Henry hears then he doesn’t do more than roll his eyes.

But the two other boys decide to just follow Henry and Vic down the driveway. And suddenly they are all walking to Vic’s house and he wonders how he’s going to explain having three boys over when his mom gets home.

On the walk, Vic warms up to the other boys and is able to speak a little more than usual, which might be due to the fact that Henry’s still holding his arm and that always makes him feel more comfortable. Patrick’s still weird and off in his own little world, but Belch is nice and he and Vic get to talking. Vic fills him in, with the least detail possible, on why they need to paint his bike. The guys tell him in alternating perspectives and series of events that they all used to hang out in grade school, but got in so much trouble together that the Jr. High doesn’t let them have any classes together. Also apparently Henry got caught tagging the principal’s car and he accidently broke the windshield when the alarm went off. Henry and Patrick start arguing about something insignificant, Patrick teases Henry by asking why he and Vic have to hold hands everywhere they go, Henry wants to start a fight, but after a minute of pushing and shoving they settle things by throwing rocks at passing cars and forgetting it.

But Henry still doesn’t drop his grasp on Vic.
Then Patrick puts a big dent in some asshole’s truck, and the guy pulls a U-turn and attempts to run the four boys down. Henry yanks Vic forward by the arm and they’re sprinting through back yards and over fences and then they’re laughing at the asshole they left in their dust. And while Vic is new at all this: having friends, having boy friends, being a boy and having boy friends, he can’t remember something else every feeling so right. It all seemed foreign to him at first, but the longer he lives it the more naturally it comes.

They get to Vic’s house and he’s relieved that his Mom and sister’s aren’t home yet. Henry gives him the subtest of looks, just to confirm that having the others over is okay and won’t get Vic a beating later. The concern makes Vic smile and he nods to Henry to confirm that this they all can be here as long as no one finds out.

They have to walk through the living room and to the back door to get to the garage around back, so Vic has to make sure Patrick doesn’t set the drapes on fire and hope they aren’t tracking too much dirt across the carpet.

Letting them in the garage and closing the door behind him, Vic finds his and Daphne’s bikes, both pink and previously owned by Lucy and Sophie, and drags his out to the center space. His face is burning in shame, because it was a lot different to tell them about having a girl bike, which was already pretty difficult, but actually showing them the glossy hot-pink frame makes his insides knot up so tight that his eyes burn and he wants to be alone. Maybe not alone, alone with Henry would be better.

“I like it,” Patrick declares, smirk fixed on his face and a smug look in his eyes. “Shut up Pat,” Henry says, not engaging in Patrick’s baiting.

And then the painful knot loosens a little, because Henry looks at Vic not with judgment, but like he understands that some things in life just aren’t the way you want them and need them. So having a pink bike isn’t incriminating of who Vic is, but rather is just a circumstance that has been dealt to him, and it can be fixed when he has friends with spray paint who are willing to help.

So Belch finds a socket wrench among Daddy’s tools and shows Vic how to pop the tires off the frame, while Henry and Patrick get in a minor paint fight that stains their hands and arms black as tar. Then the boys take turns spraying down the bike frame until all the pink underneath is invisible, which then leads to another paint fight that gets splotches of black on all their arms and shirts. Henry even gets a big thumb smudge on his cheek but Vic decides not to tell him until later.

Thankfully the spray cans hiss and die out before Patrick tries to set anything on fire, but the air in the closed garage is lightened by the smell of spray paint and all four boys are a little high off the fumes. They sit on the floor and talk and laugh about stupid things. Vic wants to get more popsicles and go outside, because the garage is hot and stuffy and they’re all sweating through their clothes, but he’s too dizzy to stand. Instead he ends up leaning his cheek against Henry’s shoulder, how’d that happen?, and the two look at each other for a prolonged second before they start sputtering laughter again for no reason.

“Thanks,” Vic says through periodic giggles, motioning over to the shiny black bike frame. In a few hours it will be dry and he’ll put the tires back on, like Belch taught him, and then he and Henry can ride to school together tomorrow.

Henry just shrugs but can’t get that drunk grin off his face, “It’s whatever. Don’t mention it.”

Without thinking, Vic reaches up and tries to rub away the paint splotch on Henry’s cheek, right where his dimple puckers into the freckled flesh. But then Vic realizes his hand is filthy and all he
does is smear more paint on Henry’s face, and he busts out laughing at the sight. Henry doesn’t stop
him or laugh along, instead his eyes glaze over and he leans into the touch. In his dazed state Vic can
only wonder, *if they only had black paint, how did Henry get so much red on his cheeks too?*

“You fairies need to get a room!” Patrick jeers at them, now fully out of control of his volume and
intensity. He’s laying upside down against the wall, legs propped up as he shakes up one of the
empty spray cans, still trying to huff all the fumes he can get out of it.

Belch is nearby, and he’s a little out of it, but he’s calm and doesn’t seem to care that Vic and Henry
are pressed up against each other.

“Fuckin’, eat shit Patrick,” Henry slurs, but he doesn’t really care about what the other boy is doing.

The sun starts to set and the boys settle in the quiet space. The only noise is Patrick flicking the
wheel on his lighter and occasionally burning his thumb. Vic thinks he hears his sister’s get home
from wherever, but none of them have any reason to come to the garage. He and Henry are slumped
even more into each other and Henry looks like he’s slowly drifting off, and Vic’s tired enough to
think that falling asleep in the garage sounds like a good idea.

But then he gets jolted awake by the sound of a car pulling up and parking in the drive way,
panicked to think his dad might be home. Henry jumps to because of Vic’s reaction, but after
checking that it’s still dusk outside and they are both relieved. So it’s only Mom getting home, but
that probably means he should get the guys out of here before he gives her an aneurism.

Quickly he and Belch put the tires back on the frame, while it’s Henry’s job to corral an indignant
Patrick out of the garage as quietly as he can. Bike reassembled, Vic steers it outside and hides it in
the shadows alongside the garage wall, so Daddy doesn’t see it when he gets home. Patrick decides
that the best way to go home is to take a running start at the fence around Vic’s back yard and jump
over it, which he clears impressively, despite the loud thump they hear him make on the other side.

“Bye assholes!” Patrick shouts way too loudly for a residential neighborhood, but luckily it doesn’t
garner them any attention as Patrick runs off towards his house.

Belch is a lot more cautious, checking around before leaving through the side gate and heading
towards the sidewalk. The extra caution is a habit he’s picked up from hanging out with Henry for a
couple years, knowing that whenever he’d go over to Henry’s house he’d have to stay far out of
sight from Henry’s dad, or else. And from the way Henry and Vic act, the flinching, the shared
looks, the protective way they curl into each other, Belch suspects the situation to be the similar at
Vic’s house.

“Bye guys. Um, see you tomorrow maybe?” he says with a little hope, because he wouldn’t tell
anybody but it kind of sucks not being able to see his friends all year because the school thinks they
have to be kept separated.

Belch is looking at Vic too when he asks, not just Henry, like he wants to include him in hanging out
tomorrow. And Vic looks forward to it.

“Yeah, definitely.” Vic says quietly, trying not to sound too eager and desperate for friends.

Henry just shrugs but the crooked smile on his face says that he would like that too.

Belch grins and turns down the walkway, heading off towards his house as inconspicuously as he
can.

And then Vic and Henry are alone, hidden in the shadows beside the garage, only about twenty feet
away from the back porch they were laid out on a few hours ago. It’s strange how since moving, Vic’s life had become a rollercoaster. Terrifying, heart-stopping, and exhilarating, with high inclines and sharp drops, and even crashes when things get really bad. But he’s sure that today was one of peaks, the thrilling kind where you’re so high up but you’re not afraid of the fall because you feel so alive and invincible.

Henry double checks the front, to make sure no one will see him leave. He still has that big black smudge of paint and a hint of that crooked smile on his face.

They linger a little bit, standing closer than they would have been if they weren’t in the shadows.

“I’ll be by in the morning.” Henry says after a moment, looking down at the ground a little bashfully.

Huh? Oh right, riding bikes.

Vic doesn’t know what he was thinking a moment before, something about Henry he can’t place in his mind, but then he remembers the proposal to ride their bikes to school tomorrow and gets a little excited at the thought.

“’Kay, I, um… I’ll be here.” He says lamely, because he couldn’t think of anything else to say and why do his neck and cheeks feel so warm suddenly?

Another moment of silence passes before they both realize they’re just looking at each other in the fading twilight. Stumbling back a few steps, Henry gives a halfhearted wave and turns to leave slowly.

“See ya’ Vic,” He says quietly.

“Bye Henry,” Vic says back, just as quiet.

Like they’re sharing a secret without words.

And Vic watches Henry walk away, cutting across the street and through yards on his way home.

The next morning Vic wakes up extra early, getting out of bed as soon as he hears Daddy leave the house and start his truck. He gets dressed and eats what he can stomach, and he may or may not stand in front of the mirror to talk himself down from being so excited over just riding his bike to school.

The bike isn’t really what he’s excited about.

He’s just ready to go out the door when Mom comes down the stairs.

“What are you doing up?” she asks, the surprise of seeing him overriding her natural inclination to ignore him.

In a rush Vic decides not to lie, and he also kind of wants to tell someone because he’s still so excited.

“Me and Henry are gonna ride our bikes to school today,” He says quickly, and just as soon as he does he darts to the backyard to get his bike from the hiding spot.

Mom is standing on the back porch, looking aghast as he pulls out the black bicycle.
“Where’d you get that?” She asks incredulously.

“It’s just my bike Mom,” Vic snips back, offering no other information.

And normally he wouldn’t be so much of a smart-ass when he talks to her, but he’s feeling gutsy today and takes his bike through the side gate before he can face the consequences.

Henry’s there by the street side, straddling his red bicycle and waiting for Vic. They see each other at the same moment and share burdenless grins as they both take off down the street, flying across the pavement on spinning tires. And of course they take the long way, and they cut through alleys, and they have a race because when you’re a boy everything is a competition, and they almost crash like four times, but it’s okay because they are together and for the moment they are free.

Chapter End Notes

Things that are canon in this household:
Patrick and Belch already know what going on between those little angels
and
12 yr old Patrick naruto runs everywhere he goes

For real tho, i hope this was the cute fluffy chapter i wanted it to be, but while writing i was BOMBARDED by thoughts like:
Evil Me: 'They should kiss' 'make it gayer' 'when they gonna fuck'
Good Me: its a slow burn, i gotta build it up. Also they're 11 they can't fuck yet.
Evil Me: You read the book you know what happened in that sewer

Plz tell me what y'all think of this clusterfuck of feelings, i love to hear from you guys.
New chapter probably Sunday night
Btw I'm on the west coast/ pacific time, so im probably a lot later than some people on updates, like my 1am is yr 4am ish, so don't stay up all night waiting on me.

XOXO
YDFH
Chapter Summary

Hot breaths puff into each other’s mouths as they pant from the fight. Sweat runs down Henry’s brow and onto Vic’s. They are looking at each other and going cross-eyed from the close proximity. The air is silent except for the chirping of crickets by the quarry. And their lips are still connected because Henry still doesn’t move.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Nine: Don’t Tell Part 1

July, 1986

Summer proceeds with binding sunlight and humid weather, days lengthening and stretching out the time Vic and Henry spend together.

Henry’s birthday came in May, but Vic didn’t know about it until the day of, when Belch and Patrick mentioned it at school.

“Henry,” Vic says softly.

Shoving his backpack in his locker, Henry just hums back and seems a little more guarded than usual. Vic stands dutifully by his side, leaned up against the wall and waiting for the other boy.

Vic treads carefully before proceeding, seeing the way Henry’s jaw is locked and there is a deep furrow in his brow.

“Why didn’t you tell me?

“Tell you what?” Henry says with cold malice, slamming the locker door shut too hard.

The bang makes Vic flinch back a little, and immediately Henry regrets it. He doesn’t say sorry out loud, but Vic can see it in the way his eyes drop and he leans in a little closer, softening his voice.

“Don’t worry about it, okay?” Henry whispers with repressed disappointment in his tone.

But of course Vic does worry about it, because it’s Henry’s twelfth birthday and he deserves something better than waiting for the beating he’s going to get tonight for being born at all. So Vic, Belch, and Patrick agree to take Henry to the arcade all afternoon (Patrick first suggested they put firecrackers in people’s mailboxes, but finally agreed to save that for another day). And then they go get ice cream and Henry spends the night at Vic’s house.

So maybe they didn’t have cake, and no one actually says “happy birthday”, but as the boys lay out on the floor in their nest of pillows and blankets Henry seems happier than when the day began.

“G’night,” Vic whispers into the dark.
“Thank you,” Henry whispers back, so quietly that Vic almost doesn’t hear it.

June brought Vic’s birthday, just a week before school got out for summer break.

The night before, Vic lies awake on the floor, without Henry because he couldn’t sneak out. And he tries to prepare himself to not be too crushed by disappointment the next day. He’s been forgotten in the past, he’s the youngest and the quietest of course, but this year feels different in an aching kind of way. No matter how much he’d been left out before, Mom at least tried, but now the family dynamic is so shifted, he’s not been forgotten, he has been excommunicated.

So in the morning he doesn’t even give Mom the chance to ignore him. He meets up with the guys and they waste the day away at the arcade and roaming the streets, until Belch and Patrick have to go home in the evening (Well, Belch has to go home, Patrick just kind of wanders off when he spies a stray cat in an alleyway). Instead of heading home themselves, Henry sneaks them into a horror movie at the theater. And afterwards boys will say it wasn’t scary, but there were certain scenes that made them jump and mutually reach for the other’s hand.

They both climb into their room at Vic’s house through the back window, and Henry stays the night for no reason other than they both want him too. Waking the next morning, a Sunday, Vic and Henry go into the kitchen and sit at the table as they eat bowls of sugary cereal. They don’t say much, but the quiet is soft and comfortable. Until Mom comes down the stairs.

She’s gotten so adept to the Victoria-died-and-will-never-come-back charade, that she can now effectively ignore Vic and however many friends he brings home without even batting an eye. But when she walks down the stairs, on her the way to the kitchen, she sees the two boys eating at the table and freezes, just staring at them for a full minute.

Henry notices first and almost chokes on his next bite of cereal, because Henry is always a bit unnerved by being looked at or spoken to by adults. So he drops his gaze to the table top and, as subtly as he can, alerts Vic that she is there.

Vic looks up, and for a second wonders if he had stumbled back in time, because Mom suddenly is looking at him like she used to. Like a mother who wants to love her children as much as they deserved, but just never really knows how to do so.

“Mom?”

She pauses in her trance, and then blinks rapidly like she’s thinking.

“Was… was yesterday the eleventh?” She asks softly, like she wants him to say no.

There’s a rising, pulsing clog in his throat, choking up his voice and burning his eyes, but he pushes through and speaks anyway.

“Yeah, it was.” Vic feels less hatred and more sadness.

And for the first time in quite a while, Mom seems to wake up, to see outside herself and the preconceived images she had of her life, her family, and her youngest child.

“Oh- Oh, I can’t believe, I didn’t mean to- honey I’m sorr-”

She’s talking too fast, and it sounds like she really is sorry and Vic can’t handle it.

“We’re going somewhere” Vic cuts her off, grabbing Henry’s sleeve and leaving through the back
door as fast as they can.

They left their bowls on the table and the screen door swinging behind him. As Vic charges through the backyard his steps start to falter and the tears start to fall. He loses his sense of time and space for a moment, and when he comes back to himself, Henry has led him into the shade behind the garage.

His chest hiccups with squeaking sobs, and his knees are so unsteady that when Henry pulls him into his chest he just collapses forward. Tears soak into Henry’s shirt as Vic presses his face into his shoulder and Henry wraps his arms around Vic’s back.

The boys don’t speak, don’t move except Vic shuddering sobs, they just stay in the shadows as Henry holds him through the tears. Because when they’re alone this is okay, it’s not weak, it’s not girly, it’s just something that they need from one another.

And they don’t talk about it again, but Vic considers that birthday to be one of the worst and best he’s ever had.

So now midsummer has peaked and the twelve year-olds have gotten bored of spending day in and day out at the arcade and the comic book store, so Henry decides that they’re going down to the barrens outside of town.

Belch can’t come because his Mom made plans he can’t be let out of. Patrick has Sunday school, which his parents think will help his behavior, but is really just fueling his desire to set the church on fire. So Vic and Henry go alone to fields of dead grass, walking along streams of muddy waters and tall reeds.

They revert to their usual form of showing affection, pushing shoving, tripping, they tease each other, Henry grabs a lock of Vic’s bangs and pulls on it, Vic digs his nails into Henry’s wrist and sticks his tongue out at him, until they end up sprawled out on the dry grass wrestling. Pollen and dust string their eyes, but they’re laughing because the hits and jabs tickle more than hurt, trying to pin each other to the ground to win the playful battle.

Henry rolls them over to straddle one of Vic’s legs and hold one wrist to the ground. Vic is digging his other knee Henry’s stomach and using his free hand to fist in Henry’s hair and pull him back. Leaning into his superior size and weight, Henry presses Vic harder into the dirt and finally pries the grasping hand from his hair. Fighting Vic’s resistance, Henry finally gets the other arm to the ground and bares down to hold it there.

And usually this is where the game ends, Henry often wins but Vic’s getting better, but this time as Henry pushes Vic’s arm down, the force drives his face down against the other boy’s. They’re foreheads hit painfully, their noses bump, their teeth clack because they’re grinning so hard, and their lips press together in the collision. It’s not a kiss, it’s just the soft, meaty flesh of their mouths meeting by accident, and Vic wouldn’t think anything of it, except Henry just stays there.

Hot breaths puff into each other’s mouths as they pant from the fight. Sweat runs down Henry’s brow and onto Vic’s. They are looking at each other and going cross-eyed from the close proximity. The air is silent except for the chirping of crickets by the quarry. And their lips are still connected because Henry still doesn’t move.

They blink, so close they can feel the flutter of each other’s lashes. Henry’s grip loosens on Vic’s wrists but doesn’t let go. Vic doesn’t try to escape. After another shuttering breath, Vic feels Henry’s tongue sweep across their bottom lips, wet and warm as it dampens the plump skin, and then Henry
is actually pressing his lips down and *this is really a kiss.*

It’s a child’s kiss. They hold their breath, their lips don’t move, they don’t close their eyes, and it makes the driest little squelching noise as they press together. Vic can’t say it feels particularly good, but also not bad either, it’s just wet and sticky and a little too warm and way too close. But there is something about the closeness that makes his insides shiver, like his blood is rushing faster and his bones are vibrating and his stomach is fluttering, but he doesn’t know if this feels good or bad either.

As soon as it really starts, it seems to end. Henry pulls back a little too quickly, so the damp skin clings together before breaking apart, and their lips stay pouted and slightly puckered for a moment.

Vic can see the storm clouds gathering in Henry’s mind, just like he can feel the turbulent ocean in his own stomach, because both boys know that this changes something. Up until now, the comforting, the wound treating, the crying, the hugging, was all within the bounds of what they could offer one another, but kissing seems to cross a line they weren’t aware of. Henry’s eyes are changing rapidly, going from surprised to confused to longing? to afraid to tragic, heartbreaking, melancholy.

As Henry looks down at him with that somber gaze, Vic wonders if he too has that haunted look in his eyes, if that is what they both see in each other’s dark irises. Is this the meaning of this look what binds them together? Is it because they both know what it feels like to have adults fists connect with their small bodies? Is it because they both know how to put their heads down to hide bruises in plain sight? Or is it because they both have something hidden just beneath the surface, something that they both are terrified to let anyone see?

Vic knows the words Henry repeats through choking tears, on those day when the pain and the fear overcome him, and he has to open up a crack before the whole dam explodes. “Weak.” “Coward.” “Bitch.” “Queer.” “Faggot.” The list goes on, but Vic has never thought about them as any more than words used as ammo by Henry’s father. But maybe those words mean more to Henry than the punches and kicks to his body.

“Don’t tell,” Henry says, with heat but no force, and his voice cracks like a painful sob is trying to rise up through his throat. “Don’t tell or else,” He tries to reaffirm his grip on Vic’s wrists to pin them back to the ground, but his hands are weak and shaking.

Vic lets himself be held down though, because if he moves he’s sure Henry will either punch him in the face or take off like a skittish deer. Swallowing down the lump in his throat, and licking off the sticky residue of Henry’s saliva on his lips, Vic gets up is nerve to speak.

“I- I won’t tell,” he croaks out, voice crackling with fear.

“Promise!” Henry yelled at him, fire burning in his teary eyes.

Vic flinches, because as similar they seem to be, Henry is still loud when Vic is quiet, strong where he is weak, and powerful in all the ways he is not. So sometimes he can’t help but to be afraid of his volatile best friend.

“I promise Henry. I won’t ever tell anybody,” He wants to shout back, but all he can muster is a loud whine that breaks at the end.

Henry stays leaning over him, still holding him down in a light grasp. A few tears overflow and Vic watches one roll down from the corner of his eye, over the bridge of his nose and leave a damp trail over his freckles. Henry is huffing angrily, but then his eyes drift down at Vic’s mouth, with his own lips parted gently, and Vic wonders if he’s going to kiss him again.
Oh no.

But instead Henry jumps off of him like he’s been burned on the places where their skin has touched. Turning away, Henry sits with his knees to his chest and wipes the stray tears with his sweatshirt sleeve. Vic sits up slowly, gathering all his limbs towards himself like they aren’t really connected to him. Waiting behind Henry, he wonders if he should say something and then can’t think of anything. Fortunately or unfortunately, Vic finds he can’t speak at all anyway, because his throat has closed up again. So he just sits and waits for Henry to recover.

Henry gets worse instead of better as the silent minutes pass, and soon Vic can hear the tell-tale sounds of repressed sobs, quiet as though they may be. Vic listens and thinks they could have a competition, to see who can cry the quietest into their pillow at night. Who can bury the most into the holes in their hearts and lock all the pain away? Who can make it through the night without being heard? First one to get caught by their father loses.

Unable to stand it anymore, Vic reaches out with the caution someone would approach an injured dog with. Instead of touching Henry’s back, or side, or arm, or anywhere else he’s seen bruises litter his skin, Vic curls his fingers around the sleeve of Henry’s sweatshirt, which has been dampened by tears, and gently pries Henry’s fist away from his face.

Henry looks back at him, breath hiccuping every few seconds and face red with shame. Holding the sleeve as tightly as he can, with just the barest hint of his fingers brushing against Henry’s wrist, Vic looks up at him and tries to impart all the things he can’t say into the look they share.

I’ll never tell.

The message seems to get across, because soon after Henry is pulling himself together, standing up, and leading Vic through the barrens once again. They don’t talk about it now, maybe they never will, but as they trek forward, Vic’s fist is still curled around his sleeve to tether them together.

Vic hopes the other half of his message has also gotten to Henry.

Nothing has changed.

Chapter End Notes

It has begun.
For real tho, i hope this one was okay I have a lot of homework that I am trying to do while i write. It's a little shorter but I hope it was cute&fluffy ://)

Me: Isn't it cute their first kiss was on accident
Me to Me: Bitch you know that wasn't an accident

Let it also be know that this chapter is the first one with a death count=1, because that cat Patrick found is not okay.

Ummmm Im running out of ways to tell you guys how much I love your comments and appreciate you all, but plz know that y'all are the great big universe turtle of my life and I only want to make you happy. ch 10 coming like wednesday-ish

Post-posting update....I have a tumblr sort of? I've never posted fanfics on tumblr and I
only ever use my account to reblog gay stuff™, but I know other accounts cross post on ao3 and tumblr. Basically if this is a thing people want me to do I will, but if not don't worry about it. Originally I didn't want to post on tumbl at all cause when I started this fanfic, the IT fandom was going through some /conflicts/ and it seemed like i should avoid the massacre. But now it seems more chill and idk..... shrug. whatever youze guys want

XOXOX
Kiss

Chapter Summary

Henry could never put into words all the thoughts he had in that moment. He could never begin to describe the ethereal face under the harsh television glare. He could never even fathom why this sight of his friend makes everything in his chest compress and expand all at once. But he does know that all he wants to do is kiss Vic again, and he lacks the impulse control to stop himself.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Ten: Kiss

August, 1986

Vic keeps his promise and never does tell anyone about the kiss in the barrens, but the other half of his promise breaks almost immediately. Because age twelve is the time when everything starts to change.

At first Henry avoids Vic, not altogether shunning him, but just actively putting more distance between them when they’re together. They lean a little less into each other now. Henry grabs onto him less often, though Vic still follows loyally behind as if Henry is tugging him along. Henry still comes through the back window at night, but he doesn’t wake Vic for the bandages he needs. Instead he just lies down, bleeding from wherever, and rests strategically further away from Vic’s sleeping body than usual. And Vic starts trying not to cry as often around him, because Henry seems less willing to wrap around him and hug him through the tears. Overall the new dynamic is cold and harsh and neither boy enjoys it, but it persists for a few weeks.

Until the tension brakes one night.

The two sit cross-legged on the living room floor, the room dark except for the glow of the television. Terminator plays on a network channel and both boys are engrossed in the film, but are not so hypnotized that they don’t keep an alert ear out for the sound of Mr. Criss’ car pulling up in the driveway.

Daddy seems to be coming home later and later every night, but Vic tries not to think about it. Instead he hopes that he and Henry have time to finish the movie before he does get back.

They sit an appropriate distance from each other, not touching but within arm’s reach, but the gap seems immeasurable because usually they would be lying on their stomachs, shoulder to shoulder and hands twined together if they weren’t in danger of getting caught. Henry is fidgeting, eyes jumping across the screen, tapping his fingers against his thigh, refolding his legs every few minutes, but Vic is trying not to pay attention to his restlessness.

Suddenly Vic feels something distinctly warm and clammy on the top of his hand, and flinches it back before he can stop himself. Henry pulls his hand away, holding it in midair with the slightest tremble, looking nervous and rejected in the low light of the television. And Vic doesn’t have to
think twice about grabbing Henry’s hand in his own as fast as he can. This is the first time they’ve really touched since the barrens, and he doesn’t want to ruin it by making Henry think that he doesn’t want to hold hands.

So they watch the next half hour of the movie with their conjoined hands resting between them. Henry is still clammy and fidgety, flexing his fingers, running his thumb across the inside of Vic’s wrist, gently scraping his nail across the web between Vic’s thumb and forefinger, until Vic can’t pay attention to the movie anymore and looks over at Henry.

And Henry is looking right back at him, cheek propped on the other hand as half-lit eyes assess him like pieces of a puzzle.

The television lights up as something explodes on screen, and it illuminates Vic’s face in a way that Henry knows he’ll never forget. The reds and yellow fire on the screen highlight the gold tones of Vic’s hair, and the blond bangs fall into his eyes just enough to obscure to way the dark irises shine in the television’s glare. There’s a pinkness in along his nose and cheeks, either from flushing or from the sunburn he’d gotten earlier in the day. In the light, his lips catch a certain shiny luster, slightly dampened by spit and tinted pink from anxious biting. And then what sets all those luminescent colors off is the shadows that darken one side of his face, contrasting the warm hues with cool blue wherever they touch his pale skin. There’s a duality to the image, dark and light, hot and cold, hidden and exposed. And there has always been a strange duality to Vic that draws Henry in, something about the angles of his cheeks and the plushness of his lips and the haunted look in his dark eyes.

Henry could never put into words all the thoughts he had in that moment. He could never begin to describe the ethereal face under the harsh television glare. He could never even fathom why this sight of his friend makes everything in his chest compress and expand all at once. But he does know that all he wants to do is kiss Vic again, and he lacks the impulse control to stop himself.

Vic stays perfectly still as Henry leans into his space and presses their lips together. Their noses push uncomfortably together again, and the amount of actual lip-to-lip contact is low because of the angle. But the warmth is persistent as Henry kisses with a little more umph than before, because he wants to really feel it this time. The odd closeness is also there again, it is still unnerving but weirdly pleasant, and even though his outsides don’t move, Vic feels like everything inside him is abuzz.

Pulling back quickly, Henry sits back in his spot and looks away like he doesn’t know what to do with himself. He doesn’t cry this time, for which Vic is grateful, but Vic can see that his shoulders are starting to rise and hunch forward, trying to become as small as possible. Eight months of being around Henry has taught him that this body language is a mix of fear and shame and sadness all wrapped up together in Henry’s mind. Vic doesn’t know any words to cure the toxic mix of emotions, but when Henry tries to separate their hands Vic latches on tighter, intent on not letting Henry avoid this again.

“I’m sorry,” Henry mumbles after a moment, eyes still downcast and face red with shame. His palm is even sweater than before.

Vic has to work really hard to swallow down the lump in his throat and open his mouth, still feeling the tingle of phantom pressure on his lips. But finally he can squeak out some words as quietly as possible.

“It’s okay,” His voice cracking a little at the end.

Henry slowly looks back up at Vic, somber and skeptical like he thinks that it really isn’t okay.
Before Henry can slink away, Vic scoots closer, sitting on his hip and folding his legs underneath himself. So now they are touching shoulder to shoulder, with their hands still clasped, like they should have been all along because this is what feels right for them.

Still looking a little pouty, but all together less upset than a moment ago, Henry leans into the touch. But then he catches the sight of Vic’s lips again, this time they are dark and glistening in blue shadows as the television light dims for a moment.

“Can I do it again?” Henry asks quickly, without the forethought to stop himself.

“Sure,” Vic responds just as fast, not giving Henry any time to regret asking and because he doesn’t know what else to say.

And then Henry reaches up his free hand to Vic’s cheek, feeling the skin turn hot under his fingers as he turns his face inward and kisses him again. This time they actually angle their faces right, fitting their lips together a little more seamlessly. Their eyes shut on instinct, and the low light is fading until they are just kissing in the dark as the movie credits roll. Henry readjusts the kiss, lips squelching as he pulls back a millimeter and then leans back in, pushing more of his lips against Vic’s. He does it again, this time aiming a little farther down and catching Vic’s bottom lip between his own, and then pulls back a little again to switch their angles to see if kissing on the other side feels any different. He then he keeps at this pattern of leaving a string of soft, dry kisses on Vic’s mouth without ever fully breaking their lips apart.

Vic’s head is spinning, probably because he’s forgetting to breathe between kisses. His lips are slowly chasing Henry’s every time he pulls back, trying to find that rhythm of kiss and rest and repeat, but getting too lost in it to really be an active participant.

When Henry pulls away fully, though his hand is still on the other’s cheek, Vic can’t help but lean in a little more, waiting for the next kiss to come and opening his eyes when it never does. Foreheads resting against each other, tips of their noses touching, breathing in each other’s air, they just sit and look at each other in the dark. Vic fills his lungs after the long bout of kissing, but it does little to stop the dizziness in his mind.

“Is this okay?” Henry asks for permission, punctuating his question with another lingering peck on Vic’s bottom lip and pulling back again.

Vic can’t make more than a soft keening noise at the back of this throat, but nods hesitantly back. He reaches over with his free hand and put it on Henry’s cheek to steer their mouths back together, and then they lean in and it’s not just Henry kissing Vic anymore, it’s them kissing each other.

This time they set a rhythm that they both can follow, pressing together and then pulling apart for tiny puffs of air, never letting contact break as they change angles and press in harder. They get stuck for a moment half-stepping each other’s lips, Vic kissing against the bow in Henry’s upper lip, and Henry is pressing a long sucking kiss against Vic’s lower lip. But then the hand on Vic’s cheek tilts him more to one side and the Henry seems intent on getting as much of his mouth against the other boy’s as he can.

Neither boys would say that kissing feels good exactly, it’s still too warm and sticky and a little awkward, but they would never say that it feels bad. Pleasure isn’t a word in their vocabulary yet, not in the same context it would have in the future, but that description also doesn’t fit the feeling they get from kissing. It’s more like the feelings they get when they comfort each other through tears, vulnerable and anxious, but then it’s relieving and satisfying a deep want for contact that exists far below their skin.
The extra movement makes their lips wetter, spreading each other’s saliva every time they drag their mouths together. It makes the kisses smack and squelch a little louder. The wet noises seem impossibly jarring in the quiet bubble they’re in, so the boys lean in a little more and just rub their lips together silently for as long as they can.

But then they hear the loud, rumbling sound of a truck pulling up the drive way and they jump away from each other. Vic turns off the T.V. with a shaking hand and then the two boys rush to the spare bedroom, shutting the door and keeping the light off and lying down in the cushion mound on the floor. They hear Vic’s father come through the front door, holding their breath and afraid that he would just somehow know that they were there and what they had been doing a moment ago. But the man’s footsteps only linger for a minute before he goes up the stairs and the sound slowly fades away.

Vic and Henry exhale in relief, and then can’t help the mischievous grins they give each other, because it feels like they’ve just gotten away with something amazing. Their hands find each other in the dark, clasp back together and pulling them closer. Their last kiss is one more lingering peck, lips now dry and chapped from overuse. They lie back and their heart rates slow as they drift off to sleep. Ironically, this little peck is the kiss Vic thinks of as his first kiss, because it isn’t accidental or curious, and it doesn’t feel nerve-racking or strange, it’s the first kiss that just feels natural.

Chapter End Notes

So this is like the fluffiest little throw away chapter ever, and I love it anyway. It was actually supposed to be just part of a short intro for the next chapter, but then I couldn't stop.

There is the most detailed kissing scene i've ever written. and it had terminator in it. What even is this chapter? XDXD

So I did the thing where I decided to add a few new chapters in to my outline, so if yr curious this right now is set up to be a 30-ish chapter fic. the good news thing is im not trying to pack as many things into one chapter and which means i will be able to update faster. But also the chapters are gonna be around this length unless its like super plot heavy. More like fluff/angst ficlets that follow a plot thread.

I hope you guys like this, even if it didn't really go anywhere in the plot. I just think little fics like this are cute and a good exercise in descriptive writing.

I love your feedback and your comments!!!! light of my life I swear to God. <3 <3
XOXOX
Chapter Eleven: Quarry

August, 1986

The last few weeks of summer slug by even hotter and more humid than before. The spare room holds the heat in all night, so by morning Vic is sprawled out on the floor, blankets kicked off and sweating through his pajamas. Henry couldn’t stay over last night, and loneliness and the oppressive heat made it so Vic didn’t fall asleep until well past midnight.

So when Henry climbs through the back window, no earlier than he usually would, Vic is distantly aware but still not awake. The noise makes him roll over and borrow deeper into the pillows. Time is a little shifty in his half-asleep state, because one second Henry is getting over the windowsill and then the next Henry crouching right beside him, trying to pull him out of the mound of pillows and is he saying something, or is that just Vic’s imagination?

“Hey, com’on Vic. Wake up,” Henry urges, with more fondness than demand.

Vic groans and squeezes his eyes shut even more, still clinging to the last threads of sleep, though he does roll over closer to Henry. It should be too hot to want to press against another person, but Henry is warm in a certain way that draws Vic in and makes him not care if they’re sweaty and panting.

“Viiicce,” Henry whines, but he doesn’t resist the urge to slide in closer to the sleeping boy.

When Henry slots himself beside him, Vic finally cracks his eyes open, vision still a little hazy but alert enough to pull Henry down and try to kiss him. The kiss misses, landing wetly on Henry’s cheek as Vic’s eyes drift back shut, but then Henry pulls his face the right direction and gets their lips together. Vic is still skating along the edge of sleep, kissing back with more muscle memory than real intent, but it’s soft and relaxed and starting to lull him back asleep.

Kissing has become their new favorite thing to do. It’s not the same as riding bikes, or hanging with the guys, or playing video games, or any of the other things they can do in public. It’s more special because it’s just theirs, no one else knows about it and they can only do it when they’re alone, so whenever they get a minute of solitude both boys are thinking about putting their mouths together. When they wrestle Henry insists that Vic is cheating by using kissing to distract him, but he never resists it in the midst of the fight. When Vic’s hurt, (Just two days ago, Daddy shoved him against the kitchen table. No words. No yelling. His father just took one look at him, grabbed him painfully by the hair, and threw him to the side. Mom might have seen, Vic can’t remember, but if she did then
she didn’t do anything about it. He now has this big purple swath in the indent of his waist, right where the table’s edge dug into the soft spot) Henry can’t do much more than just try to kiss the pain away while holding his hands, until Vic isn’t thinking about the soreness anymore. When Henry sneaks in late at night, Vic can’t see his tears in the dark, but he can feel them running down his cheeks as they kiss, and he can taste the blood on Henry’s lips.

So kissing isn’t the most fun thing they do, but its cathartic and comforting and something for only them. Something no one can take away.

For a second Vic falls back unconscious, only to revive a bit when Henry breaks the kiss and pulls back.

“Wake up. We’re going swimming,” Henry says, like that sounds better than kissing and sleeping all day.

Vic whines and holds on tighter, this time burying his face in Henry’s shoulder and wanting to stay there.

“hmm…Later,” Vic mumbles, voice rough from sleep. He twists his face inward and in a daze kisses at the cords of Henry’s neck. Maybe they should start doing that now too, because it makes a shiver run down Henry’s back.

Then there’s a loud bang that they hear through the back window, and it makes Vic wake up a little more.

“What was that?” Vic asks into Henry’s neck.

“The guys are outside,” Henry tells him a little reluctantly.

Vic sits up too quickly, surprised and afraid he and Henry are going to get caught kissing by Belch and Patrick.

“What? Why?”

“I told you, we’re going swimming,” Henry doesn’t seem too concerned about getting caught, so Vic relaxes. “Now get your lazy-ass up and let’s go,” Henry says with a vindictive little smirk.

“Shut up,” Vic pushes him away, though he kind of wants to pull him closer at the same time. Instead he brings his arms up to stretch, back arching and the hem of his pajama shirt scrunching up just a bit.

Henry fixates on the curve of his spine as Vic leans back into the stretch, and then he reaches out and runs his hand over the dip in his back. Vic freezes for a second when he feels the touch, and then a tremor runs up his spine as warmth blooms under his skin

Add neck kissing and back rubbing to the list of things they should start doing.

There’s another loud bang, and the distinct sound of Patrick saying “FUCK!” and the neighbor’s dog barking angrily.

A moment later, Belch leans into the back window and Henry yanks his hand away from Vic.

“Hey, guys? Patrick is getting bored. We should get going before…” Belch seems more upset with how Patrick is harassing the dog than he is with seeing Henry and Vic sitting on the floor together.
Henry rolls his eyes and stands, and Vic follows him up.

“Yeah, we’re coming,” Henry says and then turns to Vic. “Go get dressed, we’ll be out front.”

Vic rubs the sleepiness out of his eyes, wondering if he’s really hearing Patrick barking back at the dog to assert dominance. Henry climbs out the window and Vic slips out from the spare room. He goes up the stairs as silently as he can, hearing at least his mother in the kitchen and one of his sisters in the living room. Escaping into his and Daphne’s room, which has just become Daphne’s room where Vic keeps extra clothes, he changes from his sweaty pajamas into some denim cut-offs and a loose white t-shirt. Then he rushes downstairs and out the door.

The boys are waiting for them with their bikes on the sidewalk. Patrick looks like half-a-second ago he was rolling around in dirt, but what more can you expect from him, Belch gives him a wave which Vic returns, but Henry’s seems distracted as he looks at Vic and scans him up and down.

Vic doesn’t think anything of it, until he goes to grab his bike from where he left it lying beside the house yesterday, and as he bends down to pick it up, his shorts start riding a little high in the back and Patrick fucking wolf whistles at him.

“Lookin’ good Vic!” he shouts with a mocking enthusiasm and giving an appreciative clap.

Just as Vic spins around, face red and tugging at the hem of his shorts, Henry kicks Patrick in the shin so hard that it topples him and his bike. The action is angrier than Henry’s usual annoyance at Patrick’s comments. But instead of retaliating, Patrick just looks up and laughs right at Henry’s face, which seems a little redder than just sunburnt.

Now acutely aware of how much of his bare legs are exposed, Vic pulls his bike over to the sidewalk and straddles it, flipping Patrick off on the way and pretending to not be self-conscious.

Belch leans towards him and looks sympathetic.

“Sorry,” He whispers.
Vic shrugs like he doesn’t care, but really does appreciate it.

Henry is avoiding looking at him at all costs right now.

The boys pedal off and ride down to the quarry, long enough of a trip that by the time they get there they’ve moved passed the comment and are acting normal again. On the way, Henry and Patrick swerve to rough up a pair of younger boys walking by. The older boys don’t do more than run their tires up on their ankles and then push them to the ground as they speed away. But one of those little kids shouts some pretty obscene insults back at them, like he’s looking to get the shit kicked out of him. The other little kid is talking about how their scrapes are going to get infected and then they’ll get gangrene.

When they get to the top of the ledge over the quarry, they just dump their bikes in the grass and approach the rim. The heat has peaked and sweat is soaked down their shirts, so the boys just pull them off. Vic follows suit, happy to have the damp clingy fabric off his skin. He leaves his shorts on though, because they’re breezy enough not to bother him. Henry has to actively stop Patrick from stripping down all the way.

“Quit being a buzzkill, com’on,” Patrick says as he’s taking off his pants.

“Knock it off and jump” Henry fires back, and Patrick obeys, leaving his underwear on and giving the boys a wink as he takes a running jump off the ledge and splashing in the water below.
Belch seems a little ambivalent about taking his shirt off, still wearing a layer of prepubescent fat, but he’s tall and wide enough that he doesn’t really look fat, just thick for his age. Or maybe he’s just nervous about the jump, approaching the edge with caution and looking down at the water. He then looks back at Vic and Henry.

Henry gives a little nod, just a gesture that tells Belch to jump, but it’s more of a mental push than encouragement. Even this young, the power dynamic is established among the boys, but they don’t notice it yet and just go along with what Henry says. So Belch obeys and jumps of the edge, slashing loudly on impact.

Vic peaks over the edge a little bit, stomach twisting up anxiously when the drop looks a lot further than he imagined. Henry grabs his hand and pulls him back a couple feet, so they aren’t visible from below.

Keeping a hold on one hand, Henry reaches over and brushes the bruise on Vic’s side with his other hand. The spot is still sore but Henry is being gentle, just rubbing his thumb across the purpled skin like he can smudge the mark away. Vic just gives a half shrug, because he’s trying not to care as much about how the bruises look. With school coming soon he’ll have to get used to people seeing them again. He doesn’t comment on the big stripe of scar tissue across Henry’s back either, healed and lightened with age but still looking painful on his bare skin.

“Scared?” Henry teases with a half smirk, eyes pointing towards the cliff’s edge.

“Nope.”

Even though he is a little bit afraid, Vic feels empowered by the bruise for a moment. It a sign that worse has be done to him than a jump, and he still can survive. Maybe that’s why Henry doesn’t seem afraid.

Henry looks like he’s going to kiss him for a moment, something Vic isn’t at all adverse to, but then Henry’s gaze drifts downwards slowly, from his eyes to his lips, down his neck and stopping abruptly at Vic’s chest. The slightest furrow creases in Henry’s brow in confusion, so Vic drops his eyes down to look as well.

He’s always been thin, body lithe and slender with only a little bit of baby fat clinging to his cheeks and sides, but that doesn’t change the fact that his body is built a certain way. Almost unnoticeable but undeniably there, the flesh under his nipples, which had always been flat, has swelled gradually over the last few months. The extra ounces of soft flesh are minimal, but they are enough to make a painful shock run through Vic’s body. How could he not have seen them before? Because the small mounds of pillowy fat seem absolutely enormous from his perspective, and they feel like heavy weights pressing down on his lungs, and suddenly he can’t breathe right and his vision is going hazy.

“Hey, hey, Vic calm down,” Henry says when he starts breathing faster.

Vic wants to cover his chest, but his arms are frozen in place, and his shirt is over in the grass but he can’t move towards it. A cold sweat is breaking out over his forehead and he feels his empty stomach heave uncomfortably.

Henry assumes that Vic is scared to jump, and if he had to be honest so was he, that’s why he always made the other guys go first. He pushes aside his confusion about Vic’s chest, it still seems a little odd that fat would sprout up just right there, but it’s pretty insignificant. Hell, Belch has bigger tits than Vic does. A year ago Patrick was a foot shorter and looked like a potato. Bodies are weird.

So Henry tries his failsafe method of calming Vic down and wraps his arms around the smaller boy
and hugs him close. Henry has to try and miss a few times to finally plant a kiss on his mouth, but slowly Vic’s breathing calms down and he starts to kiss back.

They break apart before they can really get into it, because the guys are probably waiting for them in the water.

“You wanna go together?” Henry asks tentatively, hand reaffirming its grasp on Vic’s.

Vic feels a little better, head clearing like the sun coming through the clouds, His chest is pressed up against Henry’s, who doesn’t seem to notice the mounds again.

Maybe it’s not a big deal after all.

Yeah, let’s go” Vic says, breathless either from the mini-panic attack or the kiss.

So before they can think twice the boys take the plunge, fingers clenched tight around each other as they fall through the air, and then the water is rushing up swallowing them whole. They resurface and cough up the water that they inhaled. The water is a little murky and cold, but it feels so good on Vic’s overheated skin that he doesn’t really care.

When Patrick makes fun of them for jumping together, Henry swims over and pulls him underwater, and then the two are trying to drown each other. Belch and Vic hang back, treading and waiting until they have to step in to separate the other boys.

The four spend the day at the quarry, swimming, splashing, Henry and Patrick cyclically getting into fights and Belch and Vic breaking them up. At one point they all have to force Patrick not to break the shell of a turtle open (Belch releases it in deeper water so it can swim away and live a long and happy life) and Patrick pouts for no shorter than forty-five minutes, until finally something else catches his attention.

The heat of the day finally starts to burn off, so the four boys finally climb out of the water and spread out on the patchy grass. Their hands and fingers and toes are all wrinkled up from the water, and their cheeks and ears tinted pink from sun exposure.

As they lie on the ground talking and laughing, Vic feels that familiar sleepiness from earlier creeping in. The air is comfortably warm now instead of sweltering, and all he really wants to do is curl up against Henry and take a nap. He doesn’t, can’t with the other guys around, so Vic settles for looking wistfully over at Henry and letting his mind wander, eyes slowly drifting shut.

“What?” Henry finally notices Vic gazing at him.

Vic’s mind is slipping, so he just blinks slowly and shrugs in response.

“Nothin’” His eyes flutter tiredly.

Henry smirks at him and then rolls closer.

“If you fall asleep we’re gonna throw you in the water,” he threatens with no real malice in his eyes.

Vic just sticks his tongue out at him, as if to say I dare you.

And then Henry is on him, grabbing him by the arm and wrapping a hand underneath his thigh, pulling like he’s intent on hefting the boy up and really tossing him in the quarry. He doesn’t get very far off the ground, Vic is squirming and kicking and trying to pull Henry down to the ground. And then they’re rolling around wrapped up and fighting but laughing as they do it, wet bodies making
mud with the dirt under them. It’s fun, but it’s different than the normal way they wrestle, because something about all their exposed skin clinging together makes the touches feel more real.

“Kick his ass Vic!” Patrick shouts from a distance, watching the boys play fight as an engrossed spectator, lying on his stomach and licking his lips like a predator.

Belch watches but is unconcerned, because the way Vic and Henry fight hasn’t a tenth of the aggression that Patrick and Henry have, and they seem to be having fun wrapped up in each other for some reason. So Belch just leaves them be.

With a hard shove Vic almost gets Henry pinned to the ground, but then Henry flips them at the last second, and the action drives his knee up and it whams into Vic’s crotch.

Vic lurches forward and shrieks in pain, instinctively closing his legs and curling onto his side, because no matter the anatomy, a hard hit to the groin hurts like a bitch. It’s all just tender flesh and nerves down there, with no thick muscles to absorb the pain, so Vic feels the impact vibrate against the cradle of his pelvis.

Henry draws his leg away as fast as he can, springing back and looking shocked and regretful and guilty, but also confused.

“Hey, not cool Henry.” Belch chastises, because it’s basically an unspoken rule to not to hit another guy in his balls, and he comes over to check on Vic.

“Shut up! I didn’t mean it!” Henry fires back. He crawls back over to Vic, who is still curled up and clenching his teeth in pain. Patrick might be laughing in the background but Henry’s not paying attention to anyone else but Vic.

There is something that seems strange to Henry though. He’s been getting in fights for years. Real dragged-out, punching and bleeding fights, with boys older and younger than him. So he has, accidentally and on purpose, landed a punch or a kick or a knee into someone’s dick before, and this time it didn’t feel the same. It almost felt like nothing, just like a thick layer of skin covering bone.

Vic finally catches his breath and pants through the last ripples of pain, eyes a little welled up with tears, but he is able to uncurl and sit up.

Henry sees the unshed tears and looks towards the ground ashamed. He really didn’t mean it, sometimes things just get out of hand before he can control himself.

“Sorry,” He mumbles.

His bottom lip puffs out a bit like a pout, and Vic wants to kiss him despite still being a sore between the legs, but instead just reaches out and grabs Henry’s hand.

“It’s okay.”

The rest of the afternoon passes uneventfully. Henry tries to play less rough and Vic still holds his hand to insist he’s alright. Eventually Belch needs to head home and Patrick is getting restless again, so they wonder back up the ridge to their bikes and clothes. Vic slips his shirt on and feels the fabric brush against his nipples, suddenly reminded of his new discovery. It makes his stomach hurt all over again just to think about, but being covered at least makes him feel a little better. Though, when he goes to straddle his bike he winces because damn that’s still sore.

Henry notices the strained expression and can’t help but think about the incident again, feeling bad, but then his mind cycles back to his earlier confusion. Something still doesn’t seem right.
The bike ride home is lazy and quiet. Patrick takes off almost immediately with a parting “Fuck you guys!” as he peddles off God knows where. Belch’s house is closest and he waves goodbye as he turns down his street.

When Vic and Henry pull up to the house they ride around back so Vic can put his bike away. Vic expects Henry to stay the night, and is looking forward to it, but is surprised and disappointed when Henry makes to leave.

“Don’t you wanna…?” Vic starts.

*Stay? Sleep over? Kiss all night?*

“I’ve got to get the house clean. Before, ya’know…” Henry trails off.

*I wish I could stay forever*

Instead of saying goodbye they both lean in for a quick kiss, but as they break apart they decide that one’s not enough. So Henry holds Vic’s face and Vic wraps his arms around Henry’s shoulders and they kiss behind the garage until the sun goes down and Henry really does have to leave.

Vic walks in to the kitchen and grabs some dinner off the stove, not having eaten all day because he woke up late. Eating alone in the spare room, his mind drifts as his fingers wander around, until they come to his chest, feeling the soft squish of breast tissue under his shirt. Appetite suddenly gone, he sets the plate aside and walks stiffly to the bathroom down the hall.

Under the harsh florescent light Vic peels off his shirt and forces himself to look at his chest. They are less easily seen from the outside perspective, but when he looks downwards they are there, little budding mosquito-bite tits. His hand comes up and he grabs one, just enough fat there to squeeze between two fingers, and he pulls and twists cruelly until the skin turns red and his eyes burn. Then he lets go and does the same to the other one in reasonless self-punishment, and then the tears really start to fall.

He should put his shirt back on. He should walk away and try to eat some more food. He should think about something else. But instead he stares into the mirror until the clenching in his stomach is too much and he throws up what little food he’s eaten into the sink. Slumping to his knees with the sting of bile in his mouth, Vic lies face down on the tile floor to muffle his sobbing.

He wants to throw a tantrum like a toddler, wants to kick and scream because *it’s just not fair that he has to be like this.* He also wants to be dead. Most of all though, he wants Henry to be there.

Henry is sitting against the closed door of his bedroom, legs tucked to his chest and arms wrapped around himself. He’s nursing a bloody nose from the hit he received when his father got home, for no reason other than he was within reach and Butch hadn’t had a drink yet to temper his anger.

Stomach clenching painfully with hunger, Henry’s listening for when his dad falls asleep so he can steal some food from the kitchen. If he were to try right now, he’d likely get a bottle thrown at him and end up punctured with broken glass. The edges of his vision are fraying to blackness, either from hunger or exhaustion or stress, but he shakes himself awake every few minutes.

Just a little bit longer, he should be able to hear his dad snoring in front of the television. Any minute now.
To pass the time, he lets his mind wander to things that make him happy, and really all he’s thinking about is Vic. Patrick and Belch are in there too, because he does like hanging out with all his friends, but even in adolescence he knows Vic is a different type of friend.

Henry doesn’t want to think about it, especially not while his father is near, but there’s really nothing he wants to do more right now than kiss Vic. He knows thinking things like that make him a faggot, and that word feels worse than all the punches and kicks he’s ever gotten combined. But he tried really hard not to think that way for so long, resisting urges he didn’t fully understand. But then that time at the barrens happened before he knew it, and during the movie he couldn’t bring himself to stop, and then every day since he’s craved kisses more than he’s feared that word.

It wouldn’t be the same with a girl. It wouldn’t be the same with anyone else. Vic just seems to understand him in ways other people don’t, and Henry can’t stay away. He just wants to kiss him all the time now, everywhere; at Vic’s house, in the woods, in the barrens, at the arcade, on the kissing bridge, by the quarry…

Consciousness is really starting to slip now, but not before his thoughts drift back to today at the quarry. It was fun, but still something doesn’t sit right with Henry about their little play fight. He must be imagining what he felt, but it’s hard to miss kneeling someone in their dick.

Sometimes when they’re wrestling, his own dick gets half-hard just from the excitement. And yeah, he knows that happens sometimes to other guys, (he’s pretty sure Patrick’s popping a boner like, all the time and the guy just doesn’t care) but he still doesn’t want Vic to know about it. So usually he puts up a fight for a little longer and then lets Vic win, and then he has to just sit and wait for it to go away, and now the kissing sure isn’t making it any easier.

Today at the quarry there was something hanging on Vic like a dark cloud. Vic always looks a little nervous and melancholy, but Henry knows that’s just a side effect of always waiting for a hit to come, and even when it doesn’t you still never feel safe. But there was when he took his shirt off, and then the way he started to freak out for no reason. Vic just seemed weirdly self-conscious? And then when they were wrestling...

No, no way. He can’t be…

Chapter End Notes

Oh wow. Okay.
So this started out all cute and innocent, and ended with dicks and body dysmorphia.
Jesus.
And I gotta say, its only gonna get worse

Seriously tho, angst is coming, fluff and angst, but things are gonna start getting heavy.

My favorite line: A year ago Patrick was a foot shorter and looked like a potato.
Also some background baby Reddie
And a turtle

So I have a test monday and essay due tuesday, so I wanted to get this chap out before the weekend. so a new chapter probably not until wednesday

Like a few people have commented twice now, and a few have 3 times, and it literally
makes me feel like the prettiest girl at the ball. Srsly love you guys and yr feedback *kiss kiss kiss*
But I also wanna hear form new people too! Really if you say literally anything I will be so happy :)))))))

XOXOX
Chapter Summary

Every inch of skin that is revealed feels like it’s getting pierced with a thousand needles, the air hitting the flesh and making bristle with goosebumps. Everything inside him heaves, leaving the taste of acid heavy on his tongue and a fresh wave of tears pouring down his face. He feels cold and hollow on the inside, but still hot and ashamed everywhere on his skin. And then it’s like he jumps out of his own body for a moment, like half of himself gets free while the half on the ground surrenders and stops fighting. But the part of himself that has escaped doesn’t run away like Vic desperately wants to, it just hovers in the air above them, looking down and seeing what Henry sees.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Twelve: Don’t Tell Part 2

August, 1986

The next morning creeps by quietly. Vic has been awake for an hour, but can’t find the motivation to get out of his pillow nest on the floor. His eyes hurt, still red and crusty from crying all night. He wants to roll over onto his stomach and go back to sleep, but can’t because of the aching welts on his chest. Last night he got carried away in a torrent of self-hatred and insecurity, and ended up twisting and pinching his tits until the little lumps turned bruised and tender. A shower would probably soothe the chafing a bit, but something in Vic steadfastly refuses to treat the pain in his breasts.

As if enough abuse and neglect could make the problem go away. Where could he have learned that from?

So Vic is still lying on the floor when Henry comes through the window, and finally he slowly sits up.

“Hey,” he says rubbing his eyes and resisting the urge to cross his arms over his chest, anxious even with his pajama shirt already covering him.

Normally, Henry would at least come sit beside him, or maybe grab his arm and pull him up, or drop down into the pillows and start kissing him. But today Henry hangs back hesitantly, back against the windowsill and scanning Vic up and down with his eyes. He starts biting at his thumb nail, which Vic knows is the unconscious sign that Henry is thinking about something serious. There’s also a dark bruise over the bridge of his nose that wasn’t there yesterday.

“You okay?” Vic’s voice is cracking and squeaky, roughed up by a night of crying.

Henry hesitates for a moment longer, before finally looking Vic in the eye.

“We should go swimming again.”

It’s hot out today, but not nearly as sweltering as it was yesterday. After discovering the new growths
on his chest, Vic kind of never wants to be naked again. He doesn’t even think he can look in a mirror. And the way Henry proposes the activity is strange, like he’s still mulling something over in his head.

But Vic doesn’t have a reason not to go, at least not one that he can tell to Henry. And if Henry says they should do it then Vic doesn’t really know how to say no.

“Okay,” Vic starts, finally starting to get off the floor, “Lemme get dressed.”

Henry just gives a single nod of approval, thumb still fixed between his teeth as he nibbles at the calloused skin absently.

The two boys stand opposite each other, only a few feet apart in the small room, but the distance feels like a wide trench between them. Vic would give anything to know what Henry is thinking, to bridge that gap and bring them together. What he really wants is to reach out and have Henry wrap him up in a hug, because he’s gotten used to crying into Henry’s chest instead of on bathroom floors. He also wants a kiss. No reason why, he just does.

But instead they widen the gap as Henry climbs back out through the window and Vic goes upstairs to change. He finds his shorts from yesterday, dry but still smelling like murky water, and he decides that they’re already dirty so why search for something else. He does pick a different t-shirt though, one that’s black and baggier so maybe it will hide the little bit of cleavage.

Vic grabs his bike from the backyard and meets Henry out front, surprised to see that Belch and Patrick aren’t there with him.

“Are the guys coming?”

“They’re busy,” Henry says, a little cryptically, and then they start riding up towards the quarry.

Vic and Henry do things together alone all the time, sometimes they just need space for themselves. *So why does today feel any different?*

They roll up to the edge of the quarry much like they did the day before, dumping their bikes in the grass and approaching the edge. But as Henry takes off his shirt, Vic freezes with fear. He fingers the hem of his t-shirt, knowing that underneath is not only his tits, but also the red and purple bruises he gave them. As if they weren’t already noticeable enough before.

Henry is watching him hesitate, eyes not judgmental but questioning.

“Can I not, -I don’t,” Vic starts and stops, feeling his voice fading when he can’t find a way to say that he can’t take his shirt off.

Instead he just drops his arms from his shirt and hunches his shoulders defensively. Henry waits a second, observing Vic’s body language like he’s trying to put pieces together but can’t seem to get them to fit. But he does recognize that Vic is uncomfortable and shaky, breathing a little heavier than he should be. So Henry puts aside his confusion and does what he’s wanted to do all morning.

Without a word, Henry walks up to Vic and kisses him soundly, grabbing one hand in his own and laying the other on Vic’s cheek to plants their lips firmly together. Vic doesn’t expect the kiss to come, but when it does he immediately feels the tension drain out of him. Like this kiss is the reset button on their day, setting it right to where it should have started.

When they pull apart there is still a weird lingering mood over them, but they can’t resist the secret half-smiles they give each other and kiss one more time for good measure.
“Com’on,” Henry whispers against his lips, and then starts leading them towards the ledge.

Vic is just happy that he can keep his shirt on without being asked why.

After just a minute of stutter-stepping at the edge, the boys finally lock their hands tight together and jump with their eyes closed.

The water seems even colder than yesterday, and the way it soaks into Vic’s shirt makes it cling to his chest more than he would like, but he tries to ignore it and enjoy himself. He and Henry don’t play around as much as when the other guys were there, instead they just sort of float around and swim back and forth. It’s not very exciting, but it’s relaxing in a way that the two can only get when they’re together. Like maybe being alone is just something they both need, whether they know it or not.

Eventually the boys get waterlogged and their ears start to hurt, so they get out and lie on the grass to dry. The clinginess of his wet shirt now really starts to chafe against his raw nipples, so Vic has to keep pulling at it and adjusting it as subtly as he can.

Henry is kicking his feet and rolling from one side to the other, not uncomfortable but unable to relax. Finally he rolls over to Vic, lying right beside him and propping his head upon one arm. They look at each other contemplatively in silence, still trying to gage each other’s moods. Vic is still guarded, trying to cover himself internally and externally. Henry is still weirdly focused on him, like he’s trying to understand something Vic doesn’t know about.

But the dissonance between their thoughts doesn’t stop the magnet pull between their lips, because in any hurricane of doubt and pain, this thing that have together is their stability. Vic doesn’t know if Henry leans down or he lifts up, but the kiss is already underway before they know it. Eyes closed, stomachs fluttering, lips tingling, the boys just drift away from themselves, letting everything around them go and just being for a moment.

They’ve never kissed out in public since the day at the barons, and this isn’t public per say, no one’s around to see, but there is something still unprotected about kissing outside. But there’s also something thrilling about it, like for once they aren’t hiding something that means so much to them.

They break apart a fraction, lips still close together and sharing the air between them. Henry changes the angle and that makes the tip of his nose drag across Vic’s, and for some reason that makes Vic laugh, just a little bit, for the first time that day. So in between short kisses Henry starts rubbing their noses together like they are puppies snuffing at each other, until they are both laughing because it’s stupid and weird but it tickles and they like it.

Vic remembers something he thought of yesterday and breaks away, ducking his face down and nuzzling into Henry’s neck and kissing right under his jaw. Henry stiffens for a second, before he rolls forward and melts onto Vic. He’s a little heavy, but Vic laughs anyway and sucks soft kisses down his jugular vein. Vic can feel Henry’s pulse under his lips, thumping like a humming engine.

Henry props himself up on his elbows and knees, hovering over Vic and making him tilt his head to the side to latch on to his neck as well. Focusing up along his jaw, Henry copies the way Vic is pressing little lingering kisses up his own neck and returns the favor. Until Henry gets bored of tact and subtlety and just licks a wet stripe up from his neck up to behind his ear.

“Ew, Henry gross,” Vic disconnects from Henry’s neck to scrub away the cold saliva with the back of his hand, his nose scrunching up at the sticky dew left behind.

“Oh shut up,” Henry laughs at him deviously, before grabbing Vic’s arm and pinning it to the
Vic struggle against the hold for a moment, not really trying to get out of it, but then Henry finds his other arm and pins that down too, and *doesn’t this feel familiar?*

The struggling stops, the laughs die out, and the two hold the position for a moment before bringing their mouths back together. This kiss is so much better than the one at the barons, maybe because now they know what they’re doing, or maybe because this one feels like it’s building to something new. The push and pull of their lips rocks them back and forth like the ocean. It progressively falls more and more out of rhythm, until the feel their tongues touch by accident for the first time, and they pull back in surprise. The feeling was wet and slippery and still pretty gross for both boys, but it also made an odd *zing* shoot up their spines.

They almost come back together, wanting to chase that feeling no matter how strange it is, but first Henry has to readjust his position just the slightest bit. The hands keeping Vic’s wrists to the ground are limp as Henry rests his weight on his elbows, and then realigns their legs in a way that accidently slots his thigh right at the apex of Vic’s legs. It’s not like the knee to the crotch Vic took yesterday, it’s just the way their limbs fall together and it doesn’t hurt, but the contact is definitely *there.*

Henry freezes when he feels it, the way his hip is pressing up right against the mound between Vic’s thighs, and knows it doesn’t feel as solid as he expects it to. He looks down and then everything he had been thinking about all morning comes rushing back. *No way.*

At first, Vic doesn’t know why Henry has tensed up over him, but he then follows his gaze downwards to where they are pressed together. All the air rushes out of Vic’s lungs like he’s in a vacuum, unable to move as ice flows through his veins. *Oh no.*

Impulse overpowers Henry’s reason, as it usually did, so he can’t stop himself when one of his hands jumps down from Vic wrist and presses into his crotch through his shorts, feeling the soft give there. Vic tries to snap his legs shut, but can’t with Henry’s thigh still wedged between them. Suddenly even though they are outside, Vic feels like space closing in around him, breath hiccupping and eyes welling up.

But Henry still doesn’t believe what he feels, still isn’t sure of what he thinks is there, and he wants to know. He isn’t thinking about boundaries or consequences, because both concepts have always been skewed for him. *When is it okay to put your hands on another person?* Experience tells him that if you’re bigger or stronger or more powerful, you can just do whatever you want to anybody weaker and no one will stop you. Consequences only exist if you’re the weak one and nobody’s around to help you. So with that subconscious rational, Henry grabs at the waist of Vic’s shorts and yanks them down his slim hips. *He’s not trying to do anything wrong, he just wants to see.*

Vic comes alive when Henry pulls his shorts down, the still closed button dragging painfully over his skin, until the waist band is left around his upper thighs. His legs are kicking and his hips and torso are bucking wildly, trying to get Henry off of him as fast as he can, but the bigger boy is immovable. The free hand Henry’s not holding down anymore flies down to pull his shorts back up, but it gets pushed away at every attempt. And Vic doesn’t know he’s talking until he feels his voice crack painfully.

“No- no Henry stop- Please lemme go, don’t- Henry please don’t- No, no no no-” He can’t stop the stuttering flow of words, voice rising high with panic and lack of air.

But Henry’s not listening to him, zoning in on just what he wants and disconnecting from the part of himself that can hear the words. *He’s not hurting Vic, so why is he crying?*
Even when the tears start to fall, rushing cold down Vic’s burning cheeks, Henry doesn’t stop. Instead he grabs the elastic band of his briefs, which Vic had finally convinced his mother to buy last time they were at a clothing store, and pulls it down as well.

Every inch of skin that is revealed feels like it’s getting pierced with a thousand needles, the air hitting the flesh and making bristle with goosebumps. Everything inside him heaves, leaving the taste of acid heavy on his tongue and a fresh wave of tears pouring down his face. He feels cold and hollow on the inside, but still hot and ashamed everywhere on his skin. And then it’s like he jumps out of his own body for a moment, like half of himself gets free while the half on the ground surrenders and stops fighting. But the part of himself that has escaped doesn’t run away like Vic desperately wants to, it just hovers in the air above them, looking down and seeing what Henry sees.

Exposed under harsh sunlight, it’s just undeniable, no matter how much Vic has ever tried to ignore it. Both boys can see how the flesh folds in on itself, tucked snuggly into the pelvic gap, with fine blond baby-hairs just beginning to grow over the mound and outer lips.

Vic can’t speak, but he’s trying. He wants to tell Henry to stop again, wants to beg him not to look, but all he can get out through his shallow breaths is a quiet “Don’t tell, please don’t.”

Henry doesn’t know what to think, wondering what he expected to find in the first place but knowing it wasn’t that. Yes, he knows girls are different down there, but he’s never seen a pussy before and definitely never thought he would on his best boy friend. But the truth only further confuses him, because when Henry looks up he sees Vic, the boy he swears he trusts more than anyone, but then he looks down and sees a pussy and doesn’t know what to think. Henry can’t distinguish between the two, can’t figure out what’s the lie and what is real.

From his out of body view, Vic feels the dark realization come over him that this is all been for nothing. That he can change everything about himself but this one part won’t budge and it will always be the same. That everything he’s always felt on the inside is wrong. That he’s stupid for even trying to be a boy. That everything his family has said is right. That he is just a girl pretending, even though the thought breaks his heart. And then his soul flies back into his body and all the fear and shame and come in a rush, and he throws his head back and screams.

Henry jumps back at the sound, reality crashing over him like a tidal wave. There’s still a piece of empathy, not yet beaten out of him, left in Henry that knows that he’s crossed the line. Knows he’s broken something fragile when he looks down at Vic and sees the hurt and the betrayal in his eyes. He opens his mouth to speak but no words come out, stomach dropping as he realizes he’s taken all the trust they had between them and destroyed it.

Vic only has to feel a fraction of release before he is surging up with all his strength, pushing Henry away as hard as he can. He yanks up his shorts and underwear all at once, and then twists around to stumble to his feet. Running before his mind can catch up with his feet, Vic takes off like a frightened rabbit, but is staggering and dizzy from lack of air and the tears clouding his vision. He doesn’t know if Henry is coming after him, but does feel like something is right behind him, grabbing the nape of his neck with sharp claws and squeezing tight. Getting to his bike, Vic pulls it upright and slings his leg over, only concerned with getting away as fast as he can. And only then does he give a frantic glance back, but nothing is behind him, and Henry is still in the field where Vic left him. Just sitting there, unmoving and watching Vic as he peddles away.

Riding a bike downhill while crying and having a panic attack isn’t safe in the least, but Vic somehow is able to get home by speeding through the back roads. He just leaves his bike laying in the backyard runs to the backdoor, hands shaking and breath shallow and tears still raining as he comes into the kitchen and runs right into his mother.
They both stumble back a step and look at each other in surprise. She sees his tears and the way he’s panting and convulsing, and feels her heart clench protectively.

“Honey, what’s-” Mom reach out to touch his wet cheek, voice earnest like she actually cares.

Vic really wants a hug, wants someone to hold him because Henry’s not here to do it, and probably never will again. But being near his mom makes Vic remember all the times she’s told him to stop being a boy. And he knows when she looks at him she doesn’t love him anymore, she just loves the little girl he reminds her of.

So he pushes past her and runs down the hall to the spare room.

“Wait-wait, what happened?-” Mom follows after him, until Vic slams the door in her face and throws himself against it so she can’t get it open.

She tries the knob a few times and keeps talking at him, but he barricades himself against the door as hard as he can.

“Go away!” his broken voice shouts back at her.

Vic can hear her still in the hall, hesitating before finally turning, and then quiet settles over the house as she walks away from him. Sagging against the doorjamb, the tears don’t stop but slow a bit.

He feels disconnected from where he is. Knowing he’s in his room, alone with the door shut and all his clothes on, doesn’t stop him from feeling like he’s still out in the grass beside the quarry, naked and exposed to Henry’s prying eyes.

His chest aches, from feeling ashamed and violated, and from also hatred. Hatred for himself and his body. He wishes he could kill himself again, but this time not get revived and wake up in the hospital. He wishes he never would have been born in the first place, if this is what it means to be alive. Hating every part of yourself at every moment of every day.

But he can’t find it in himself to hate Henry, even after what he did. There’s just no room left in him. No more hatred left in his heart because he’s aiming it all at himself. Henry even probably hates him now too. He’s probably disgusted by just the thought of Vic now that he knows the truth.

Exhaustion takes over before motivation, so he doesn’t get up and slit his throat like he wants to. Just so quick it could all be over, but he can’t make is body move from its spot. He falls into a fitful sleep there, mind lingering on the last time he felt Henry kiss him, right before everything fell apart.

Henry sits in that field still, long after Vic has run away from him. The only sound he can hear is the rushing blood in his ears, thudding along with his racing pulse.

He wonders why he can’t breathe, why his eyes are starting to sting, why his hands are opening and grasping around nothing, why he has to ruin everything he has.

Because that’s what he’s done, shattered everything he and Vic had built in the last few months. All the friendship, all the trust, all the caring, is broken now. He wasn’t trying to break them, to hurt Vic, he really wasn’t. He just wanted to know. He just wasn’t thinking right.

Cold tears start rolling down his cheeks, nothing like the rivers that ran from Vic’s eyes when he looked at him like Henry was a monster.

*He didn’t mean it. Not like this.*
Vic’s the only person Henry’s ever felt this attached to. The only person who makes Henry feel like he’s not alone. The only person that knows that Henry likes to kiss boys, and instead of telling on him, Vic kisses him back. The only person that makes Henry feel safe.

Henry’s still confused, but boy or girl or whatever Vic is, Henry can’t let go of him now. He wouldn’t let go for anything in the world.

But then he had to ruin it. Vic begged him to stop and Henry didn’t listen. Vic cried and Henry did it anyway. Vic ran away and Henry couldn’t even say sorry.

His face drops into his hands, crying silently the way he does at night when he might get caught by his father. Something in his chest feels hollow, like a shell has been broken open and everything good in it has bled out.

It’s fitting, that Henry breaks things and Henry is also broken.

He can never fix himself. Deep down, he believes nothing can fix him and he’ll be broken forever. But maybe he can at least try to fix things with Vic before it’s too late.

Chapter End Notes

I don’t know what to say about this.
Like, I never expected anyone to like this story more than like a passing interest, but I’ve comments from people telling me that they can relate to this fic, or they are emotionally invested in it.
So I'm proud from a writing stand point, but I never want to make people upset.
And then I wrote a quasi-rape scene about getting outted.

I don't know. I hope you guys read the tags before diving into this fic, cause this isn't the darkest I plan to go.

Ummm, so tell me what you think if you feel like it, even if it's not positive. I want to know how this chapter came across. I super value your feedback <3 :))

things.... are going to get better next chapter.
Hopefully up by saturday night.

I'm still kind of ashamed
XOXO
“Can we go somewhere? Will you come with me?” Henry asks in a quiet hurry, knowing if they leave now they could get away before they’re caught.

Vic is ambivalent, having to dig into himself to find any thread of trust he still has to give.

Henry tries again, desperate now and flinching when they hear a step at the top of the staircase.

“Please, I promise I won’t—do it again.”

Chapter Thirteen: Bridge Part 1

August, 1986

The sun is painting the sky pink and orange as it sets, and finally Henry gets up and starts walking home. He’s wiping the stray tears away, but they keep running like a leaky faucet. There’s this deep ache in his stomach, not like hunger (Henry hasn’t eaten all day, but he’s very sure that just the sight of food would make him sick), it’s more like a deep, empty kind of pain. Like dread, but without the anticipation.

Time isn’t making any sense right now. When did Vic run away? When did it get so dark? Why did it take so long to get home?

But at last Henry’s trekking out of the trees and into the gravelly dirt of the driveway. Time really must not be on his side, because just as he’s about to go up the porch to the door, Daddy’s police car is pulling up to the house. When the bright headlights pass over him, Henry is frozen in terror like prey in the jaws of a predator. It’s not too late to run away, Daddy has already seen him probably, but he could still escape back into the woods. If only his legs would work.

But he can’t move from the edge of the porch, chest constricting and head dropping automatically as his father gets out and stomps up the drive. Henry holds as perfectly still as he can, eyes to the ground and hoping his father can’t smell the fear on him.

Finally the harsh steps stop, right in front of Henry, and he can sense Daddy’s burning glare scanning him up and down, looking for something to punish him over.

“Where you been, boy?” Daddy says darkly, always somehow knowing when Henry’s spent the whole day out.

It never makes sense, that Daddy never seems to want him around, but then hits him so hard for leaving. But Henry couldn’t ever voice that out loud, unless he wants to see the metal side of a belt...
“Nowhe-,” Henry mumbles back, but apparently not fast enough because he gets cutoff be a hard backhand to the jaw.

The force swings him back, head whipping to the side so fast his neck cracks, but Henry manages to stay on his feet. One of his back molars aches from the impact, leaving the faintest taste of blood in his mouth, but that one was already a little loose anyway. Henry just hopes that it’s a baby tooth this time.

Daddy wraps a wide calloused hand around his jaw, thumb and forefinger digging painfully into the soft spots of Henry’s cheeks, and wrenches his face forward and up. Henry allows his head to be pulled, but clenches his eyes closed in fear. A few extra tears eke out and roll down his burning cheeks.

“The fuck are you crying about?” Daddy digs his fingers in deeper, making dark red indentations into Henry’s face.

Over the years, Henry has learned how to read his father’s voice to know whether it’s going to be a bad night or a bad night. Because sometimes Daddy just needs to push him around a little bit, make him cry, bruise him up, and just to blow off some steam. But sometimes it’s like Daddy is in a different place, yelling words Henry doesn’t understand with a deranged look in his eye, and really really is trying to hurt him, break his bones, make him bleed, hear him scream. And there’s a whole host of grey area between the two extremes that Henry has to learn to navigate, because sometimes it will start one way and end another. It’s never good though. There are never good nights anymore.

So he’s being mean now, but Henry can tell that Daddy is just taking out stress on him, just trying to get a reaction. That doesn’t make it much better though.

Henry has to flick his eyes open, blinking rapidly to force the tears away. More just keep falling.

He catches the sight of his father’s gun in the holster at his side, and by reflex his hands, which have been gripped tight around the hem of his shirt, jump up to his face. Childishly, he tries to cover his eyes to pretend like the gun isn’t there.

One time, one of the really bad nights, Daddy pulled out his gun and shot at Henry. He was drunk, so the bullet ended up in the ceiling instead of his skin, but for that split second, Henry knew his father was trying to kill him. Ever since the sight of the gun is enough to petrify the boy. The sound of it firing is enough to make Henry piss himself. Now Daddy likes to terrorize him with it, shooting at his feet just to watch him shake with fear.

Thankfully the man doesn’t pull the gun out this time, but he does grab onto Henry’s wrist and twists it backwards roughly. The other hand still holds Henry’s face in a tight grip, so he can’t hide the way he has to grit his teeth to keep from crying out.

This is always the worst part, not the quick kind of pain like a hit or a kick, it’s the kind of ache that builds and builds until Henry can’t stay quiet anymore and starts to cry. Whether it’s twisting his arm around, bending his fingers back, squeezing around his neck, or any other slow tortures Daddy thinks of. Henry thinks that it’s some sort of test his father gives him to toughen him up. Like if he was enough of a man he wouldn’t scream when his wrist pops or his fingers break or he can’t breathe. He fails every time.

Henry feels the bones scrape against each other at the joints and that finally breaks his silent cringing.
“D-daddy, Daddy stop! No, please!”

“No- no Henry stop- Please lemme go.”

Finally the joint snaps and the bones dislocate, but he can’t hear his scream of pain over the echo of Vic’s scream in his head.

His father cuffs him one more time on the cheek, with the dark reminder to “quit being a little bitch, or I’ll give you a reason to cry like one,” before he throws Henry to the ground and walks up to the door. He goes inside, to get drunk in front of the television, not carrying either way what Henry does now.

On the way down, Henry clips the side of his temple on the porch step and everything goes fuzzy in his brain. The memories of what he did to Vic are still playing on repeat, the way he cried, the sound of his scream, the way he looked at Henry, all spinning through his head.

After a moment Henry is steady enough to get to his feet again, cradling his limp wrist to his chest. The memories don’t stop storming in his mind. Instead they come in perfect clarity, like Henry can see tear, hear every panicked breath, feel every tremor of fear that ran through Vic’s body when Henry pulled his shorts down and saw his...

Henry is lost, in mind and space, not knowing how to navigate the world he lives in or his own self. His one safe haven, tucked up against Vic late at night, kissing him silently in the dark, is slipping away from him. Like the light’s fading and Henry is stranded in a dark ocean, drowning as the waves beat him down. All because he hurt Vic like that.

The what and why and how still don’t make sense to him, but Henry wants to see Vic more than he cares about that.

More than anything, Henry just wants to fix this before it’s too late.

It’s amazing how, after such a short time, Henry’s feet know the way to Vic’s house like it’s second nature. The street lights are the only pathway he follows, until they lead him to the bock and Henry starts cutting through backyards and over fences to get to the little window at the back of the house.

When he presses on the plane of glass, Henry is half-dreading that it will be locked, but it gives as easily as it did any other night and swings open. He surveys the room before entering, suddenly self-conscious about coming in. The room dark, empty except the growing puddle of couch cushions and extra blankets Vic keeps a amassing for them. And usually Vic would be wrapped up in that pile, looking about as safe and warm as Henry could imagine anyone being. But tonight he’s a few feet off, slouched against the door like he’s collapsed there, head lolling to the side limp. To Henry, he looks dead.

It’s your fault.

Slowly Henry climbs over the window sill, clumsy but quiet, tying not to put any pressure on his sprained wrist or wake Vic up yet. He gets his feet under him again, but then he crouches down and crawls forward across the carpet, feeling a little safer being close to the ground.

Vic doesn’t so much as stir at the sound while he crawls over to him. Henry knows Vic can fall asleep just about anywhere at any time, and he’s been there too, when the stress gets too much and your body forces your mind to shut down and rest, but this looks different than regular exhaustion. In the low light Henry can see the red blotches on his cheeks and under his eyes, the places that flare up
whenever Vic cries for hours on end. Every breath he takes lets out a soft wheezing, like his lungs have been strained to their limit. His lips are swelled up and chapped from his anxious reflex to bite them until they bleed. Still, they look plush and soft and Henry wants to kiss them until Vic wakes up.

Henry pushes that thought away, because it’s one thing to think kissing is fun and it doesn’t matter who you do it with, but it’s another thing all together to just want to kiss one person over and over and over. Besides, Henry is shying away from coming any nearer to Vic, hands shaking and feeling that deep guilty ache in his chest.

Finally Henry musters up some strength to whisper, but even his quietest tone is jarring in the silent room.

“Vic…Vic wake up.”

The boy stirs a little, head rolling from one shoulder to the other and bangs falling in his eyes.

“Please wake up…Vic com’on,” Henry tries again, nerves rising the closer he brings Vic to consciousness.

Slowly, like all of time just stands still for a moment, Vic blinks his eyes open, lashes fluttering and pupils dilating to see in the dark room. His whole body aches from the inside, like a virus is poisoning his blood and slowly eating its way outwards. The taste of stomach acid coats his mouth and burns the back of his throat. There are no more tears left in him to cry, and his eyelids feel sticky and dehydrated when he blinks, but finally his vision comes into focus. And then he’s sure he must be dreaming, or having a nightmare, because Henry is there, sitting right in front of him.

Vic scrambles back instinctively, drawing his legs up and trying to get as far away from Henry as possible, which isn’t very far with his back against the door.

Henry shrinks back to, not as violently, but he didn’t expect Vic to be so afraid of him. Then he sees the way Vic pins his thighs together and crosses his knees, effectively locking his legs, and Henry feels sharp claws of shame scraping down his spine.

Your fault your fault your fault…

Shaking like a leaf, Vic wraps his arms defensively around himself and tries to become as small as possible Why is Henry here? Doesn’t he hate me now? What’s he gonna do? PleaseNoNotAgain-. His voice catches around a scream, not knowing which would be worse, between getting caught with Henry by Daddy or Henry maybe holding him down again and tryingtolookdownthere

Henry can see the building panic attack in how Vic is already hyperventilating, and tries to talk him down before he wakes the house up.

“Shhh, hey calm down,” Henry tries to hush him, but even his own voice sounds stressed in the tense air.

Even in the haze of fear, Vic can see the way Henry is trying to be gentle. He’s being careful not to touch him, speaking softly, and his eyes are wet and remorseful. The way he’s holding his left wrist to his chest looks like it’s been freshly sprained and he’s trying to ignore the way it hurts. It reminds Vic that Henry isn’t as big and strong as he seemed a few hours ago. That Henry gets hurt too, and when he does he can’t fight back either.

Vic feels himself calm down just a little bit, because he knows Henry, the worst and best of him. But that doesn’t stop the hurt and the shame of it all. All he wants is to be alone. But also not alone
because he wants someone to hold on to, but the only person he has to turn to is Henry, but he can’t because now Henry knows.

“Wh-what…?” Vic’s voice wobbles and he can’t get any more words out around dry sobs, because there’s no tears left in him to cry.

Henry opens his mouth but doesn’t know what to say, every step so far has been in the moment, so he hasn’t thought of what to do now. He’s never been good at thinking ahead.

Just then, they hear a creaking in the ceiling above them, a quiet one, like maybe the house is settling, or it could be the sound of someone getting up. Both boys, trained like dogs to fear the sounds of someone approaching, immediately assume the worse option. They hold their breaths to snuff out any other noise, but then they hear the same creaking again, louder this time. Their rapid-beating hearts drop to their stomachs.

“Can we go somewhere? Will you come with me?” Henry asks in a quiet hurry, knowing if they leave now they could get away before they’re caught.

Vic is ambivalent, having to dig into himself to find any thread of trust he still has to give.

Henry tries again, desperate now and flinching when they hear a step at the top of the staircase.

“Please, I promise I won’t—do it again.”

And Vic doesn’t know if it’s smart or not, but under the stress and Henry’s pleading he finally relents. Believing that, no matter what has happened, Henry knows he’s done wrong and isn’t going to again. So he reaches out and grabs Henry’s good hand, letting himself be pulled towards the window as they scramble out of the house as fast as they can.

When Vic’s mother gets to the bottom of the stairs, they are gone and all the small noises that woke her are gone with them. She thinks about checking on Vic in the back room, knowing he sleeps there most nights now, but eventually she decides not to and goes back upstairs. She’s kind of afraid of what she would find.

Henry takes them around the corner and down the block, but as soon as they’re out of view of the house, Vic takes his hand back and folds his arms across his stomach. Henry feels a little rejected by the act, but doesn’t want to push his luck so he lets Vic put some distance between them. Eventually they make it out of the neighborhoods and start going down the backroads. They walk aimlessly besides the empty streets, everything looking different in the dark and making them feel lost without each other to hold on to. They’re both still in the clothes they went swimming in earlier, so when a cool breeze picks up they both shiver but still don’t lean in any closer together.

They only see one car the entire time, but the headlights are jarring enough in the night that the boys run to avoid it, turning down a side street and coming down to the kissing bridge. Any teenagers who would’ve been down there are gone by this long past midnight, so the whole road is empty and quiet and serene in a way that appeals to the boys. They sit over the side of the bridge, legs dangling over the shallow ledge and arms resting on the wooden beams. All the chaos in their minds starts to clear away in the stillness as they breathe the fresh air.

Henry still doesn’t know what to say though, even in the calm. So he’s stuck with his cheek against the banister, probably getting an indent of someone’s name in his cheek, just looking at Vic and trying to speak.
Vic stares forward at the ground below them, eyes drooping despite the fact he’s not tired, and fingers tracing the caved letters along the banister. He knows that Henry is looking at him, just as confused and somber as he’s been all night. Maybe Henry doesn’t hate him, why would they be here if he did? But then why are they here? If Henry knows now, why is he still trying to do stuff like hold Vic’s hand and take him places? Well, maybe Henry doesn’t know everything, he’s just seen the worst part of it. And he still came back after.

“I – um,” Vic starts, surprising himself because usually he never begins a conversation. Maybe if Henry knows the whole truth, things would be a little easier. They’ve already come this far. “…Can I tell you?” a lump rises in his throat, “about it?”

He finally braves a glance over to Henry, who looks like he’s waiting on baited breath before nodding eagerly. Because as awful as Henry has felt about this whole ordeal, he still has that voice in the back of his head asking what the fuck is going on?

“Ummm,” Vic scrubs his eyes roughly, not knowing where to begin because no one had ever agreed to listen before. He doesn’t know if he wants Henry to say something or not, because it’s up to Vic to fill the silence and that overwhelms him. But he’s also never gotten to tell anyone before, the one time he spoke out to his family ended pretty terribly, and since no one ever wanted to hear about it again.

The first thing that comes to mind is the one that’s always persisted, always in his mind no matter how much he doubted and tried to tell himself otherwise.

“I’m not a girl,” He begins, and no matter what is going on, it always feels good to say. It’s therapeutic in a way, like screaming in a pillow or punching a wall, because it’s him being able to reject something and throw it back. “I’m not a girl,” He repeats, and then looks over at Henry to make sure he’s following.

Henry doesn’t say anything, but can’t help letting his eyes jump from Vic’s face to the spot between his legs, but then snaps his eyes away when he realizes what he’s thinking about. Vic sees the look and shifts uncomfortably, trying to pull his thighs even more closed.

“On the inside I mean,” He backtracks, knowing that Henry can’t see how different his mind is from his body, but wanting make him understand. “Like ever since I was a little kid, I’ve just known,” Vic never could put a date on when he realized, but remembering that there was always something that didn’t feel right. “But everyone always treated me like one.”

He pauses, smoothing out his shorts where they have started to crease and ride up, and then noticing how sweaty his palms are.

Henry is still silently listening, more focused and interested than Vic has ever seen him in school. After a moment, he nods like he wants Vic to keep going.

The next breath is a little easier to take before he starts talking again. “So when we moved this year, I just- I couldn’t,” He can’t think of the right word for it, “pretend anymore.”

His family acts like he’s a girl just pretending to be a boy right now, not knowing that it had always been the other way around.

“I cut my hair, I changed my clothes, I wanted to change my name,” He continues, steadfastly holding back the welling up tears in his eyes. He’s not going to cry this time, he’ll face this head on without falling to pieces. “But then my dad saw, and- well…”
Henry sits up a little more, unintentionally moving just a fraction closer to Vic in a way that’s more protective than threatening. He knows these parts of the story.

Vic takes a deep breath, trying to alleviate some of the building pressure in his sinuses before the tears win this fight.

“That’s why my dad hates me,” When he says it, hates sounds a lot more like hits, but he doesn’t know which word means more to him, the emotional or the physical. “My mom too, and my sisters,” They have a different brand of hate, more neglectful and passive aggressive, but Vic can still feel it.

Something about that catches Henry’s attention, because after all these years he’s stopped trying to pinpoint the reason why his own father hates him. At this point, he just believes that he deserves it, that something is wrong with him, and Daddy is trying to beat it out of him. Or maybe sometimes Daddy just has a hard day at work and is angry enough to take it out on him. Or maybe there is no reason, this is just the way things are. Henry wonders if it’s better knowing there is reason, but Vic is shaking and holding back tears when he talks about it, so no, it probably isn’t.

“So umm,” Vic really considers if he wants to tell this part, but he’s already started and can’t stop. “I took a bunch of pills that night… ‘cause I wanted to kill myself,” It’s strange that saying it feels heavier than actually trying to do it.

His eyes close tightly, not wanting to see Henry’s reaction to that part.

“I didn’t die,” He says, feeling dumb because well of course I didn’t, I’m still here, but also feeling like something did die that day. “I went to the hospital, and then we moved and I didn’t stop being like this, no matter what anyone did. And then I met you…”

Vic trails off, turning and finally holding eye contact with Henry for more than five seconds. The way Henry looks back at him is unreadable, not confused or discussed, but just processing all the information thrown at him.

The silence makes Vic anxious while Henry still doesn’t respond, until finally he breaks under the pressure.

“Henry, you know I’m a boy, right?” Vic asks, pleading for an answer more than trying to convince him of it. “You know me,” And I know you. I know you when you’re angry and upset and hurt and what you’re afraid of, and I know what makes you happy and that you like to kiss me and everything else, so don’t you know me too? Don’t you know who I am?.

Henry finally gets the idea that he needs to say something to, or Vic is going to talk himself into another panic attack.

“I mean, yeah.” He starts, still unsure of what he thinks of it all, but knowing a few things for sure. “Yeah, you don’t act like a girl, or talk like one, or look like-” he falters there, still trying to wrap his head around what he saw earlier verses what he sees when he looks at Vic any other time.

Vic drops his head in shame and Henry immediately feels bad for bringing it up.

“No, I mean,” Henry starts, but then stops suddenly.

Finally the words arrange themselves, epiphany striking him when he realizes what he’s been so confused over. But just as soon as he has them, he doesn’t want to admit them out loud. Vic is looking at him expectantly, hands still trembling, eyes glassy, bottom lip quivering, like he’s waiting to be rejected. And Henry knows he has to say it, because it’s his fault Vic is afraid of him, and he owes him something to make it better.
“I know you’re a boy, because…” Henry doesn’t miss the minuscule way Vic’s eyes light up when he says it, and that gives him a bit of encouragement to continue. “Because if you weren’t… I wouldn’t want to kiss you.”

Even mumbled so softly only one person can hear it, a cold sting of fear shoots through Henry when he admits it. He could never even think about it without hearing the words his father throws at him, knowing that they’re true making them hurt even worse. But now he’s told someone for the first time. Someone who is a boy, at least on the inside, who Henry looks at and sees as a boy and as his best friend, who also likes him like that and lets Henry kiss him. So maybe it’s a little complicated, but when he doesn’t think about all the technicalities, it makes sense. Henry likes boys, he really likes Vic, and so Vic must be a boy.

“Really?” Vic pulls him out of his circular logic, shoulders drooping like he’s a bit more relieved.

“Yeah, I don’t,” Henry pauses to avoid the crackling of his voice, and wonders why his cheeks are so hot and his vision is starting to blur. “I don’t think about girls the way I think about you…” And he’s not even sure what he thinks about Vic, it’s just a big cluster of safe and warm and kisses and fuzzy feelings he doesn’t fully understand yet, but he’s sure he doesn’t think that about anyone else. “…You know?”

Vic doesn’t know what he thinks at all, his mind just spinning with Henry knows I’m a boy, but what Henry’s saying now makes his stomach flutter and his face heat up.

“Yeah, it’s the same- for me,” He stutters out, blushing and hands fidgeting, nervous in a different way than he was earlier in this conversation. “I mean, I don’t think about anyone the way I think about you.”

Henry can’t respond, because he can feel his heart beating in his throat and warmth spreading all over his body. So they sit in the quiet, until they can’t help it and start laughing small huffy giggles as they look at each other. Who knows why, on a one of the worst days of their lives, they feel so happy in that instant. The laughter dies quickly, but Henry is glad that Vic seems less miserable than he was before.

“I’m sorry,” Henry says, with more sureness than he’s had all day. “About today.”

Vic breathes in a heavy sigh, trying to put everything they’ve talked about into context with what happened at the quarry. It still comes out making him feel a little sick and hurt, but not as bad as it did before. Maybe it will get better later, it already has so far.

“You’re not- you’re not gonna tell anyone? Right?” Vic asks him, quiet like doubt is creeping back in.

Before answering, Henry thinks about the time he asked Vic not to tell something. It’s not the same type of secret. Or maybe it is. He’s tired of thinking about things instead of doing them.

So without a word Henry leans over and kisses Vic like they used to, quick, soft, testing, just to show that this is just another thing between them. Not for anyone else.

It makes Vic smile softly, seeming to understand the message, so Henry kisses him again just to make him happy. And then Vic is pulling him closer and they’re kissing like nothing has changed. Even if everything has, this still feels the same and that’s what’s important.

Vic fists his hands in Henry’s shirt and Henry wraps his arms around Vic as they kiss, and finally the tears they both held back fall, in relief instead of heartache. They cry but keep kissing, until Vic has
to pull away and bury his face in Henry’s shoulder to really let go of all the stress and hate and pain piling on him, and Henry just holds him through it all.

It’s not fixed yet, and it will never be perfect, but that’s okay. They have time. What matters is that two people full of broken pieces can build something together.

Chapter End Notes

omg im so tired. swear i could write all day but 10 minutes of editing makes my eyes hurt.

K I hope thins is an adequate apology to all the people I apparently made cry last chapter, your sad makes m sad T.T

I'm like 2 weeks from being done with this semester, so this is gonna be a slow fanfic week for me, but new chapter will probably go up by wednesday or thursday

Hope everyone has a good Thanksgiving if you celebrate!
Tell me what you think of this chapter, it always makes me really happy!!! <3 <3 XOXOXOO
Chapter Summary

“Yea-” Henry starts, just wanting the other boy off of him at this point, but then he sees the way Vic is waiting on an answer. Like Vic needs something from Henry that goes beyond this fight, beyond the physical. And then it clicks for him.

Oh.

“Yeah,” Henry nods back earnestly, because he gets it now. “Yeah, you are.”

Chapter Notes

Hey guys, quick update:
Cause of some final essays due between now and Dec 6th, like 3 of them, I'm gonna be updating a little less frequently in the next week or so.
Ch 15 is started, it's just coming along slower than normal.
Soon winter break is starting and I'll have a whole month off, so I'll get back on schedule!
Thanks for waiting on me <3 <3 <3
XOXO

also I started posting these chapters on Tumblr, mostly so I can give faster updates on process and delays... cause idk how many people are seeing these notes. If you want to follow me at https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Fourteen: Kiss Part 2

September, 1986

It’s not so easy at first.

School starts a week after that night on the bridge, and seventh grade is about as rough as sixth was. The only added benefit is that they’re not the youngest batch of kids in the school anymore. Vic and Henry have only two classes together, so they compensate by hanging out before first period behind the school. Sometimes Belch and Patrick are there too, and by the end of the day they all meet up and run the streets like preteen boys are prone to do.

The only problem is that Henry keeps forgetting that Vic’s a boy. Not that he would say anything, in fact he avoids the g-word like it’s forbidden, it’s more the subconscious ways. Henry will be extra careful when their together, play fighting is basically not a sport anymore, teasing is more shy and gentle, when they are kissing Henry’s less eager to put his hands on Vic, rub his sides, touch his
neck, and so on.

And Vic likes the soft stuff sometimes. Like right after the school year started, Daddy slammed his head into the door jamb when he saw that Vic had convinced Mom to let him buy more boys clothes (and that itself was a week long struggle of screaming and crying and slamming doors in each other’s faces). Vic ended up with a minor concussion and a tiny gash that bled a disproportionally large river of blood. A roll of paper towels and half an hour later, the blood stopped but Vic felt dizzy and nauseas all day long. Until Henry came through the back window that night, saw Vic’s teary face and the dried blood stains on his neck, and wrapped him up tight in a hug as they lay on the floor. Vic remembered distantly that he shouldn’t fall asleep with a head injury, but Henry kept him bobbing just above unconsciousness by rubbing along the dip of his spine and pressing light persistent kisses along his bottom lip. By morning they were both exhausted and groggy, but Vic felt less unsteady as they went to school.

But then there’s stuff like Henry won’t tug on him so hard around, like Vic is in danger of breaking more easily now. When Patrick calls him fairy or princess, which Vic now knows is pretty tame for Patrick’s brand of teasing, Henry will go off on him. And it tends to escalate to the point that Patrick and Henry will get into a fight if they’re not separated quickly. One time, a ninth grader, who might’ve been the eighth grader from last year who got a broken nose from Henry, cornered Vic in the hallway. The older boy shoved him up against the lockers, laughing at his weak attempt to escape and twisting his arm behind his back, asking “you’re Bowers’ faggy little girlfriend aren’t you? What’s it take to make you suck his dick?” But Henry must have been just coming around the corner because in an instant the ninth grader was on the ground and Henry was laying into him. Vic ended up having to drag Henry, who was almost feral with rage, off of the older boy, who probably just got another break in his nose. They ran off as fast as they could, because if Henry got suspended then his dad was really going to let him have it.

So as much as Vic likes Henry having his back and being protective, he feels like Henry is babying him. And Vic misses the rough stuff. He likes the fighting and the jeering and getting to defend himself, because he’d already spent so long getting treated like a weak little girl that he refuses to go back.

Vic resolves to do something about it before the doubt starts to eat him up. He can already feel the anxiety creeping in to his skin, reminding him that even Henry won’t see him as a boy, no matter what he says. So he decides Henry needs a reminder before it’s too late.

They are out in the barrens, just messing around on a weekend afternoon. It’s just getting a bit too cold to be outside all evening, but the last couple rays of sun are staving off the chill for now. Belch and Patrick are coming to meet up soon, so for now Vic and Henry are alone.

As soon as they get far enough from the road so that no cars are visible, Vic starts their usual game of shoving and pushing. Henry plays back but not with the same dominant enthusiasm he used to, so Vic tackles him into the ground.

“Hey- what the fuck-” Henry barks back, but still doesn’t do more than try to throw Vic off.

Vic doesn’t answer with words, instead he shoves Henry’s face to the dirt and tries to pin his shoulders to the ground. Henry, for all his trepidation, is still stronger and can defend himself well, and twists over to fight back.

The rain from the night before still dampens the earth, so the boys in their wrestling get smeared with mud and dead grass. No matter how hard Vic fights, Henry still is giving half an effort. It makes Vic mad enough that, against his better judgment, he lands a firm punch to Henry’s chin that knocks his head sideways.
The split-second after he does it, Vic regrets the hit, because even to them that’s too rough for playing. In the next split-second though, Vic can’t think of anything, because Henry clocks him hard in the cheek and leaves his head spinning.

Then it’s not a game anymore. They go full on, twisting, tugging, hitting, kicking, and trying to hurt each other. With a sharp elbow to the stomach, Vic gets Henry on his back again and bares all his weight on Henry’s arms to pin them to the ground. When he finally gets Henry, who looks about ready to bite him, to concede to the pin, they pause for breath. They pant heavily, chests rising and falling against each other, as Vic keeps holding Henry down in the familiar position, only this time he has the upper hand.

“The fuck’s your problem?” Henry is still seething, teeth bared and spitting his words.

Vic is much the same, angry and vicious, but he’s also buzzing with excitement, endorphins running high and pumping through his blood.

“I’m a boy,” he responds with a malicious little smirk.

A crease in Henry’s brow deepens, eyes bouncing up and down Vic’s body before coming back to his face.

“And-?”

“Say it.” Vic presses down more, twisting the skin under his hands like an Indian burn.

Henry seems even more confused and pissed off, starting to tense up and trying to buck Vic off of him.

“Fuck, fine- you’re a boy,” he relents, still not knowing the point of all this. Of course he knows Vic’s a boy, well sort of- just not like- he’s not the same- or-

Vic pulls back a bit, coming down from his high and hoping his intent didn’t get lost in it.

“Yeah?” Vic says, because no matter how assured he was a moment ago, that empty spot inside of him still longs for validation from his best friend.

“Yea-” Henry starts, just wanting the other boy off of him at this point, but then he sees the way Vic is waiting on an answer. Like Vic needs something from Henry that goes beyond this fight, beyond the physical. And then it clicks for him.

Oh.

“Yeah,” Henry nods back earnestly, because he gets it now. “Yeah, you are.”

Vic feels all the doubt slither away in that moment, replaced with real joy and he can’t help but grin down at Henry. Because if only one person accepts him, then that person’s acceptance means absolutely everything. And maybe if he were thinking clearer and not so consumed by euphoria, he would have known not to relax his hold on Henry, or would have recognized the spark in Henry’s eyes and the flush rising to his cheeks.

In the blink of an eye, Henry flips them over and is pressing Vic into the mud, who is surprised but not afraid when Henry gives him a grin that is more mischievous than cruel. He thinks Henry is going to kiss him, which he’s ready for. What he’s not ready for is when Henry leans down and forces his whole tongue into Vic’s mouth.
Vic immediately gags as the squirming appendage presses against the roof of his mouth, trying to push Henry’s face away and having to swallow all the accumulated spit in his mouth.

“Gross, Henry what the Hell!”

Henry pulls back, face falling because he isn’t getting the reaction he wants and flustered in embarrassment. He’s seen people kiss like that, like people in movies or the teenagers who make out on the kissing bridge, and they seem to like it. Isn’t he doing it right?

“Shut up, that’s how you’re supposed to do it,” Henry gets defensive and goes to kiss Vic again, tongue trying to pry his closed lips open.

Vic twists his head to the side, ending up with a big wet trail of saliva on his cheek.

“No it’s not,” Vic says back, still feeling the warm, wet feeling of Henry’s tongue in his mouth.

“How would you know?” Henry’s pouts, indignant and ready to pull away.

Vic feels guilty when he sees the embarrassment on Henry’s face. They’ve both never done this before, of course they don’t know how it works.

“Hold on,” Vic reaches up and pulls Henry back down, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and using his other hand to steer their mouths back together. “Just like-” But then they meet in the middle and the words die on his lips.

It starts out like their normal kisses, but then they pick up the pace and at every push and pull their mouths open a little wider, until their tongues start brushing up against each other. They give each other short little kitten licks that dip shallowly into each other’s mouths, spreading across their lips. It still feels kind of gross, all slimy and wet and foreign to have something moving and alive in their mouths, but it’s making heat crawl up their necks in a way that makes them not want to stop. Henry gets his tongue in Vic’s mouth again, but this time is a lot gentler when he runs it across the inside of his cheek and over the roof of his mouth. Vic does the same, slowly mapping out the inside of Henry’s mouth, but there’s not really any room to move around for either of them, so they end up just rubbing their tongues together.

They’ve forgotten to breathe through this whole exploration, so they have to pull apart for air after another minute. A thin string of saliva pulls between their mouths but breaks when Vic licks his lips. They both scrub the extra moisture off their mouths with the back of their wrists. Henry looks down and sees the way Vic’s lips have turned red and raw, because they’ve always been easy to bruise up from kissing, and something about that makes Henry want more. Up close, Vic can see that Henry’s pupils have blown out wide and dark, and all that bush he had on his face has settled across his cheeks, so red it’s erasing his freckles. And then their eyes drift shut and they lean in and start tonguing each other again, a little faster this time.

They’re still not very good at it, but they just need practice.

When they hear Patrick and Belch coming through the bushes, the boys scramble apart as fast as they can. And then they have to think of an excuse for why they are on the ground, caked with mud and bright red in the face, while the guys give them the most judgmental yeah, sure looks ever.

Chapter End Notes
Consider this a mini chapter!, cause btw its not great. So this isn't the chapter I planned to write, but with Thanksgiving tomorrow i wanted to get something out before the end of the night.

I promise next one will be full of plot and angst and all that jazz. Hopefully by Sunday-ish <3

Y'all tell me how you're doing. How this piece of fluffy nuthin was. anything you want! I'm just happy to hear from you guys.

I'm also looking for good writing music, so if you know a song that this fic reminds you of, comment and I listen to it. Someone already suggest Pine Tree Lines, by Told Slant. which is great. really sad but great, give it a listen :)))

XOOXX
Blood Part 1

Chapter Summary

They know they have a few hours to get out of the house before Henry’s father comes back. They know they’ll need to find some safe place to stay for a while, because they can’t go back to Vic’s house. But for right now, they are trapped.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Fifteen: Blood Part 1

October, 1986

It’s not even that late. Just past sunset on a Friday night, the whole gang is hanging out on a side street corner. They’re just talking shit, drinking sodas and eating Halloween candy that Patrick has been hoarding since the beginning of the month. They’re planning on sneaking into the theater down the block soon to catch the seasonal reshowing of The Evil Dead, but for now they are just hanging out, like normal boys do.

Which makes it even worse, the fact that they aren’t doing anything wrong. No one else would have looked twice at them. Henry’s arm may have been over Vic’s shoulders, not even in an explicitly affectionate or possessive way, that’s just how they ended up standing with their backs against a brick building. Belch is leaning on the edge of a bus bench. They’re all watching Patrick as he is tries to jump over a bike rack, all three hoping he either lands on his face or smashes his dick into the metal bars. He clears it pretty perfectly, due to those long fucking spider legs, and the other boys roll their eyes in mild disappointment.

Just then Henry and Vic exchange a glance that says they would rather be tongue kissing right now. But they wouldn’t here, even on a relatively empty sidewalk, they are still with the guys and there are cars driving by. So he and Henry are barely touching, no more than anyone else might do with their friend.

*They aren’t doing anything wrong.*

Vic sees the truck in the corner of his vision, and in the low streetlights it barely registers in his mind. It seems like every other person in this town drives a pickup truck. But then he has to do a double take, and his stomach drops because he knows that truck.

For just a split second he makes eye contact with his father just as he pulls up to the stoplight. Vic should turn away, duck into Henry’s shoulder, hide in the nearby ally, or just run as fast as he can in the other direction, but he freezes and can’t do any of those things. There is the spark of recognition in Daddy’s face, and then he’s looking at the other boys around Vic, and the way Henry’s arm is over him. Even from the far distance, Vic can see the anger in his eyes.

Vic knows he’s been caught, even though for any other boy in the world, this would be normal. And that’s why it’s not fair.
Henry feels Vic tense up beside him, sees the dread in his face and follows his gaze to the familiar truck stalled across the street. It’s the first time Henry has ever seen Vic’s father, strange considering that Henry sleeps under his roof three nights a week. But he’s always just known this man by the sound of the heavy steps that signal his arrival and departure, or by the small details Vic has let slip through tears, or by the shapes of the bruises left on Vic’s skin that Henry desperately wants to erase. So in his imagination, the only reference point Henry has to picture this man, is his own father. But he also imagines worse than his own father, because what kind of asshole could put their hands on Vic, who’s so small and soft and breakable. So when Henry does see the man, all he sees is someone who seems so normal, virtually unnoticeable and unremarkable. This guy could be anyone’s father, driving from any job, going home to any house.

Maybe, Henry thinks, this is how his own father looks to other people, who don’t see the rage or the violence or the broken bones. Maybe this is why no one has ever done anything, because it all looks normal from the outside.

Unconsciously, Henry clutches Vic’s shoulder protectively and tries to pull him out of the way, wanting to put himself between Vic and his father. But Vic is rigid and unmoving, shaking with fear. Henry should drag him away fast, talk him down from the panic, but then they hear the screech of tires turning sharply and pulling up in front of them.

Both Henry and Vic flinch at the sound, and Belch and Patrick finally take notice of what looks like just some guy in a truck stopping at the curb. But this guy is throwing the car door open and Vic jolts with fear, so it’s not hard to figure out who it is.

Daddy doesn’t say a word as he storms out of the truck and up to Vic and Henry. Vic is stock still with absolute terror as icy fills his veins, unable to even flinch away when Daddy seizes his arm and yanks him forward. Shame burns his face and clogs up his throat, because this is something that only happens at home. At least in public, Vic has the chance to pretend to be normal. To pretend like this part of his life isn’t real.

Henry is stuck between pulling his own arm away from where it rests on Vic’s shoulder, or wanting to grab on tight to Vic and pull him back, to protect him from whatever awful thing is coming. But, no matter how strong or cocky he feels with his friends around, Henry is still only a twelve year-old boy, virtually powerless to do anything to stop a grown man. And when that man levels a hard stare at him, looking him up and down for a second too long, Henry feels just as weak as he does with his own father.

In the last few months, Belch and Patrick have garnered enough about Vic’s home life to know that this whole situation isn’t good. But they don’t have the history or experience to navigate it any better that Vic and Henry. For once Patrick doesn’t have a smartass comment to make, and Belch wants to help somehow, but doesn’t know how.

Daddy keeps pulling him towards the truck, and finally Vic starts to struggle. It’s a weak fight of Vic just trying to squirm away, not wanting to get in. Not wanting to go anywhere with his father.

He wasn’t doing anything wrong.

‘Please-please. Daddy no-’’ His voice is caught in a breathy, breaking whisper, like he wants to scream but is trying to contain it, not even knowing what he’s pleading for but just wanting to get away.

Henry feels something clench inside him, because he’s heard those words in his own voice, but now he’s from the outside and still can’t do anything.
Vic gets tossed into the open doorway of the truck, knocking his forehead on the edge when he trips over the curb. Everything changes color and goes blurry for a second, but Vic has enough wherewithal left to know any chance of escape is lost. He scrambles over the driver’s seat and to the passenger side, just trying to stay as far away from his father as he can.

Daddy follows him into the truck, slamming the door behind him and already driving away from the curb, never having turned off the engine. Just before they leave, the man looks out the window and casts his angry gaze on Henry one more time, threat clear in his eyes.

Henry, Patrick, and Belch just stand in the tense atmosphere as they watch the truck speed away and disappear from sight. The whole ordeal took a total of ninety seconds, so quick they wonder how it could have happened. Henry, hands shaking and mouth hanging open, feels sick with a mix of fear and guilt and shame and heartbreak, because he knows what kind of Hell Vic is in for, but he did nothing to protect him.

“…Henry?” Blech says cautiously, mistaking Henry’s shaking fear and red face for boiling rage.

And his overwhelming emotions are turning towards anger, teeth grinding and fists clenching. Because when he feels weak and helpless, his natural instincts turn towards violence to take it out on someone else. But this kind of thing isn’t fixable by beating up those loser bitches from grade school, or harassing that black kid that lives down the road. Those are usually his go to answers when he needs to feel powerful again, after his dad lays into him and breaks him down.

But this feels bigger than that. Someone took away the one person that makes Henry feel safe and balanced and like he’s not breaking apart from the inside out. Someone pulled Vic away, and is going to hurt him, and Henry’s was too weak and scared to stop him.

That Henry’s life. He’s angry at every person and everything that’s ever hurt him, but he’s also to powerless to do anything about it. All he can do is aim that anger in another direction, put the blame onto someone else just to ease the hurt. And maybe, in another place and time, he could see that process for what it is, but not in the here and now.

In the here and now, all the fight just drains out of him, because no anger will save Vic. Henry just has to wait until Vic’s dad is done with him. And then what?

It’s your fault

“Hey Henry,” Patrick tries this time, already sick of the tension and wanting to lighten the mood, despite Belch quietly shushing him. “Aren’t you gonna go save your princess?”

The tease is just to bait Henry, to set them back to the equilibrium of Henry starting fights, Patrick laughing it off, Belch breaking them up, Vic calming Henry down. Except, Vic’s gone, so they’re a little off kilter.

Princess

“Don’t call him that.” Henry says through gritted teeth. His voice is angry, but not volatile, instead he’s firm in the conviction and not taking no for an answer.

“What?” Patrick was waiting for something a little more fiery, but this sounds more like an order.

Henry turns towards Patrick, eyes blazing and voice authoritative.

“Don’t. Call. Him. That. Or any of that girl shit, ever again,” He isn’t even yelling, he’s speaking calmer than ever before. “Got it?”
Patrick doesn’t like it when things don’t go like he thinks they should, like the universe should be bending to his will, and when it doesn’t it means something’s wrong. Henry being so defensive over this little thing? Over Vic? Why?

He saves the reasoning for another day and logs this incident into his memory, knowing there must be greater purpose for it. But when Henry’s all keyed up it’s just best to agree with him, make him feel like he’s in control.

“Pfftt, whatever. Fine.” Patrick scoffs, with only a little more sass than necessary.

Belch is confused by the whole exchange. Henry only gets really defensive when someone calls him a fag or something. Vic doesn’t really even bristle at Patrick’s nicknames anymore. So why did Henry react like this? Maybe, Henry and Vic have more secrets than just one.

The anger inside him isn’t entirely satisfied by it, but the demand does make Henry feel a bit better. He can’t stop the beatings, but this is one small way he can protect Vic. Maybe that means something.

*Because there’s nothing else he can do.*

The truck is speeding down the road, making a sharp turn that throws Vic against the passenger door because he hasn’t put a seatbelt on. His whole chest feels compressed by fear and panic, only letting shallow breaths in and out of his lungs. Crowding in to the corner of the seat, as far away from the driver’s side as possible, Vic curls into himself defensively and tries to make himself as small as he can.

The first few blocks pass and Daddy is still silent, but the anger in him is rising by the second, until it finally boils over. Far hand still on the steering wheel, he reaches out with the other and grabs Vic’s arm tight in a bruising grip and forces the boy to unfold.

“What the fuck do you think you were doing?” He says, furious and still driving at a break-neck speed.

Daddy is holding his arm in a way that is pulling Vic’s wrist upwards and straining his elbow joint to bend backwards, making the bones in his forearm protest painfully.

“No-nothing. They’re just my friends,” Vic whines in pain, knowing that not answering is worse when Daddy asks him a question.

But that’s not the right answer.

Finally the grip on his arm releases, but the relief is short lived when Daddy slaps him hard across the cheek. The force snaps Vic’s neck to the other side, making him smack his other cheek against the window. The duel impacts leave his teeth and jaw aching and him feeling like there’s a game of pinball going on in his skull. It takes him a moment to gather back his senses.

“Can’t believe you’re fucking giving it up to Bowers’ kid,” Daddy says under his breath, seething with rage and disgust.

“You know Henry?” Vic says before he can stop himself, head still spinning a little bit.

That sets Daddy off even worse, and the car swerves dangerously as he lashes out at Vic again. But this time, Daddy wraps his wide, strong hand around Vic’s neck and presses in roughly.
Vic feels everything in him run cold, stomach lurching when his throat is squeezed painfully.

“You stay away from that kid.” Daddy levels a dark, hateful glare on Vic. “All he’s tryin’ to do is fuck you.”

“No he’s not!” Vic yells back, terrified and panicked and unable to breathe very well, but he’s also angry at what his father said. Angry enough that he’s digging his nails into the hand strangling him, just so he can fire back that Henry wouldn’t do that! Because Henry wouldn’t hurt him again and Henry listens to him and Henry treats Vic better than Daddy ever has.

But he can’t say all that because the grip on his neck tightens until no air can get through, and no matter how hard Vic claws and slaps at it, it doesn’t let up. The edges of his vision are turning fuzzy and dark while tears and drool accumulate, until they spill over and leave wet trails running down his face. Vic feels his stomach acid turning like ocean waves, and he isn’t sure whether he’s going to pass out or vomit up bile first.

But in the next moment the truck drifts too far into the other lane, and an oncoming car blares its horn loudly. In haste, Daddy finally releases Vic’s neck to swerve back into the right lane just before they collide with the other car.

Vic breathes in so fast that he gags on the influx of air, feeling a bit of bile rise up and mix with his spit, making his mouth burn. On his neck are big, red ring marks and a very clear imprint of where Daddy’s thumb was pressing into his jugular vein. The marks are hot and pulsing with pain like fresh burns. Bowing over to catch his breath and stop the fogginess in his head, Vic can’t stop the rough sobs that rack through him, shaking his whole frame as the tears start to pour.

Why does he always have to cry?

But Daddy sees the crying as pathetic enough to leave Vic alone for the rest of the car ride, until they are pulling up to the house.

Vic feels them come to a stop and immediately reaches for the latch to the passenger door, wanting to get out of the truck as fast as he can. Before he can though, Daddy grabs a fistful of his hair and uses it to drag him across the seats. He pulls Vic with him out the other door and up the walk way, not caring about the pained whimpers coming from the boy.

The front door gets thrown open and Daddy just keeps tugging him by his hair into the living room. And of course Mom and the girls are there, because if anything could make this worse it would be having an audience. All the sister’s stall their conversations, silent and frozen when they see their father, angry beyond belief, drag Vic in and drop him to the ground. Mom is just at the edge of the room, clutching the edge of the kitchen doorway in tight, shaking fists.

Vic feels all the heat in his face, knowing its bright red, partly because of the big slap mark on his cheek and partly because of all the shame. His throat burns to, feeling bruised and gravely on the inside so every sob strains his vocal cords.

“What happened?” Mom asks, and Vic’s surprised to hear her. She normally doesn’t say anything at all.

Daddy has let him go, but still stands over Vic within striking distance when he turns to his wife.

“She’s not leaving this house again. You hear me?” Daddy demands.

He says it like Vic isn’t there. And to him, Vic isn’t there. Vic isn’t even a person.
“We weren’t doing anything,” he pleads his case one more time, voice all roughed up from tears and getting choked.

Daddy just leans down and smacks him on the back of the head, hard enough to land Vic face down on the carpet and make little spots flicker in his vision. Without another word, Daddy storms off towards the kitchen, charging past his wife, who cowers away from him.

As soon as Daddy leaves the room Vic ties to sit up, still dizzy and crying but hating that the rest of his family is just staring at him. Mom makes a move like she wants to come over and do something, but as always, she doesn’t. Daphne looks a little ashamed and upset, but is avoiding making any eye contact with him. His other sisters are trying to pretend this isn’t going on.

Vic picks himself up and stalks out of the living room with his head down, wanting to be alone as fast as possible. He ducks into his little room and shuts the door silently, before throwing himself into the nest on the floor. Face in the pillow, he tries to stay as quiet as he can, but the tears escalate until he’s muffling frustrated screams.

But if he had held it all back for just a moment, if he had just been silent for another second, maybe he would have heard his father in the kitchen, speaking angrily to someone over the phone.

After Vic gets snatched away, plans to see the movie fall through for the boys. They loiter around a bit longer, meandering down side streets and not talking very much. But Henry is sulking and Patrick is still pissed and Belch is uncomfortable, so soon they part ways.

Henry walks home slowly, knowing that if he went to Vic’s house, he’d run the risk of seeing Vic’s dad and making things so much worse. So he resigns himself to going over in the morning to make sure he’s okay and kiss all the hurt away. But there’s this gnawing ache of dread in his stomach, knowing that Vic’s not going to be okay.

He gets to his house sooner than he wants too, wishing he could’ve spent all night out with his friends. But it’s late enough that his dad is home and Henry expects him to be already drunk and asleep in the living room. So he inches the front door open as quietly as he can, ready to slip through the smallest gap and run to his room.

But the house is eerily still and silent, and Daddy is nowhere to be seen. Henry walks in cautiously, knowing for sure he saw the car outside and that his father must be here.

He should have run to his room right then, or better yet, have run back out the door before it was too late. But Henry just stays in the living room, confused and listening for any signs of life. And then he hears something from the other room.

The click of the telephone being hung up.

And then Daddy is suddenly in the doorway between the living room and the kitchen. He looks a bit red eyed and wasted, but definitely not drunk enough to temper the rage Henry can see in him.

The next morning rises and fades with early fall sunlight. The air is brisk and damp because Vic left his window open all night, so he wakes up shivering cold and sore all over. Despite his hopes, Henry didn’t come over last night, and he feels defeated and weak and alone because of it.
Vic stumbles out of his room, still wearing all his clothes from yesterday. His throat still feels awful, and he’s sure there are big bruises left there and on his face, but he doesn’t want to see them. He wanders into the kitchen, hungry but knowing he probably can’t eat anything anyway. But he stops short and the doorway when he sees Daddy sitting at the kitchen table, waiting for him.

Daddy’s never home, especially in the morning, and he barely ever even looks at Vic, so to see him here waiting makes Vic absolutely petrified. The man makes no move though, no violent gesture at all, so Vic stays in his caught-in-the-headlights position, confused as to what’s going on.

“You’re not going to be running the streets anymore,” Daddy finally says, voice firm and threat evident.

All the fight gone out of Vic, he just wants all this to be over, and so he nods submissively with his eyes to the ground. He counts the tiles on the floor to distract himself.

*At least he can still see the guys at school.*

But then Daddy says something worse.

“And I made sure that Bowers kid isn’t going to come near you.”

Vic is startled to speech, unable to stop himself.

“What? What’d you do?” His voice is all torn and painfully scratchy to use, but his mind is spinning with *what happened to Henry-what happened to Henry-what happened-*

“I called up Butch, told him to keep his fucking kid away from mine,” Daddy’s almost smug about it. “He said he’d take care of it.”

And then Vic feels like he’s been dowsed in cold water, ever nerve inside him brought back to life with panic. Because if he thinks he got it bad, Vic can’t imagine what happened to Henry last night, and that fear and protectiveness boil up into anger that overrides his self-preservation.

“FUCK YOU!” He screams at his father, furious beyond any point he’s ever been.

*How could you!?*

*Isn’t it enough to hurt me!??*

*Why did you go after him too!?*

But immediately he realizes what he’s just said and sees Daddy react to the outburst, first shock, and then rage, and then *he’s getting up from the table and coming closer- oh shit-*

Vic bolts out of the room as fast as he can, spurred on less by fear of his father and more for getting to Henry as fast as he can. He just barely ducks past daddy’s swinging fist and scrambles out the front door. Cutting through the neighbor’s yard and over their fence, and then through ten more yards and running towards the woods, Vic doesn’t look behind him until he’s sure Daddy can’t be following him. He stops for breath at the kissing bridge, doubled over in pain because he’s injured neck isn’t letting in all the air he needs.

But he knows the way to Henry’s house from here, and no amount of pain is going to stop him now.

In his haste through the woods Vic trips over a dozen roots and is clipped by branches at every turn, but finally he is coming up the back the Bowers property. House in sight, Vic only stops at the edge
of the tree line, still hidden by shadows and foliage, just as he sees the front door open.

Butch Bowers walks out the door, dressed in his uniform and stalking towards police cruiser like it’s any other day. He looks grizzled and mean and intimidating, even from the distant vantage point, so Vic holds his breath in fear, hoping he doesn’t get noticed. He’s never seen Henry’s dad before, Henry never let them into a situation where his father might be around. Now seeing the man makes it all the more real.

Vic waits until Henry’s dad gets in his car, seeming to take forever to put it in gear and drive down the gravel driveway, but finally Vic hears the tires turn towards the road and thinks it’s safe. He runs up the porch and tries at the door, sure it’s going to be locked and surprised when it isn’t. The top of the latch seems to be broken, worn down by years of slamming against the doorframe. The door creeks open on rusty hinges, and that’s how everything else seems in the house too, old, decaying, only changed by decades of age and use, and creepily silent except the floor boards squeaking.

“Henry?” Vic whisper shouts in the dark space, afraid to approach any further than the doorjamb, but he persists when he doesn’t get an answer.

“Henry, are you here?” He asks a little louder, tiptoeing through the living room like he’s bound to be caught any moment.

Surveying the house, Vic can’t seem understand of the floor plan. It’s one of those big, old houses with way to many nooks and hidden rooms to make sense, and everything is dark and dingy.

Vic sleeps on the floor in a room under the stairs, and looking around, he thinks no wonder Henry is always spending the night at my house.

“Henry!” He tries again, even louder because the lack of noise is making him freak out.

What if…?

But then he hears the faintest little noise from a room past the kitchen.

Vic rushes towards the sound, noticing how the walls are bare of pictures, but are decorated with a few fist-sized holes. The kitchen leads into this weird space that seems too dark and claustrophobic to be a dining room, despite the big wooden table that sits unused in the center. But even in the dimness, Vic can see little drops of blood splattered across the floor.

“Henry?” He says, as softly as he can.

And then there’s a bit of movement in the far corner and another pained, fearful whimper.

Vic resists the urge to throw himself over the table towards it, and instead runs around and finding Henry curled up on his stomach against the wall. His arms are over his head protectively, hands bunched up into tight little fists, and body trembling. But what makes Vic’s stomach turn and heart ache is when he gets a look at Henry’s back. His shirt has been rucked up to his shoulders, and three big, over lapping, bloody lashes mark his skin. Most of the blood has dried in to a sticky residue, but under it Vic can see more welts crisscrossing all across his back, all raised and inflamed. There are even these dark belt buckle shaped bruises where the metal had met bone. The stripes go all the way down to the waist of his jeans, and from the way his thighs are clenched and shaking, the marks probably go all the way down there too.

Simultaneously, Vic drops to his knees just as his own tears start to fall, because he is unable to stand the sight of Henry in this much pain. He crawls over and touches Henry’s arm as delicately as he can, trying not to cry more when Henry flinches back.
“Henry, it’s me,” Vic says so soft he can barely hear it.

It takes quite a bit of prodding and petting his hair, but finally Henry peaks out from behind his arms. The mess of a bloody nose is smeared across his mouth and his face is all bruised up. His pupils are blown wide and dark with fear, and his eyes are severely bloodshot, but when he looks up at Vic there’s a spark of recognition and relief in them.

Henry can’t really move without making the torn skin on his back stretch painfully, but that doesn’t stop him from reach out an arm to Vic and grabbing at the air between them. Vic crawls closer, letting Henry bury his face in his lap, spreading dried blood and fresh tears into his pants. He smells like blood and piss and sweat, but Vic lets him latch on as tight as he needs to, running his fingers though Henry’s hair as they both choke on more sobs. Vic slumps against the wall, leaning down hug Henry but knowing he can’t without hurting him. Instead he’s pressing wet, teary kisses to Henry’s forehead while mumbling out an endless stream of apologies.

“I’m sorry Henry. I’m so sorry. It’s all my fault, I’m sorry…”

Because even though Henry’s dad is the one who hurt him, Vic’s father is the one who caused it, and that only happened because he caught Vic out with Henry last night, and if Vic hadn’t turned into a boy, Daddy wouldn’t hate him and this all would never have happened

Henry’s shaking his head against Vic’s thigh, wheezing out little protests because he will never believe this kind of thing is Vic’s fault, even though he blames himself for everything that happens to Vic.

He turns his face up just enough to look in Vic’s eyes, face more nestled in his stomach now. Henry sees the hand mark on Vic’s cheek, and the big dark rings around his neck, but is too hopeless at the moment to feel the rage those marks light within him.

And it feels like they spend eternity just looking at each other, both in the worst internal and external pain of their lives. They can’t say anything anymore, but their thoughts are identical.

We’re trapped. We can’t stop it. We can’t fight it. We can’t even protect ourselves, much less each other.

They know they have a few hours to get out of the house before Henry’s father comes back. They know they’ll need to find some safe place to stay for a while, because they can’t go back to Vic’s house. But for right now, they are trapped.

Chapter End Notes

OMG I’m BAck
I feel like a phoenix, risen from the ashes
Im so sorry about this break you guys, I really missed you and this story, so I wanted to give you ths big ass monster chapter at 4 am.

Despite school's best efforts, I'm not dead yet, and finals are officially done Dec 15th!!!!!!

Don't you love the part in fluff fics, where they meet each other's parents? well this chapter is kinda like that only horrible. Like legit this is almost too dark, even for my
evil ass. They didn't even kiss. What am I doing.

Also minimal editing, cause it's 4am.

Please Please Please!!! comment you guys I missed you <3 <3 also If you haven't commented before I really do care what you think :))))))

If you didn't see the earlier note, follow me (if you wanna(no pressure)) on tumblr at https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/ for more frequent updates on when new chapters are coming out. I also reblog pretty great moodboards so... ;D

Love you all, so good to be back
XOXOXOXO
Bully

Chapter Summary

Vic is panting, not from exertion, but from some weird excitement that is burning up his insides. Whether it’s due to the way Henry’s eyes are roaming over him with hunger, or due to the vindication Vic feels getting to put a bruise on somebody else, or maybe a mix of both, Vic doesn’t know. But he likes it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Sixteen: Bully

December, 1986


Winter brings the looming cloud of we’re trapped and there’s nothing we can do about it, and it darkens their moods towards hopelessness. But they have each other, and are filled with a bunch of new teenage hormones that fuel their anger, so they find a way to survive. Now instead of pretending the pain isn’t real, they just pretend they don’t care.

Vic plunges into full rebellion, when normally he would have lied low and played submissive for a few months. He cuts his hair every time it grows more than in inch too long. He goes out with the guys more, staying out until midnight or later, and then spends extra hour making out with Henry in dark alleyways. When he gets in trouble, he just wears the bruises he gets, pushing his bangs back so everyone can see the blackeyes and split lips. Because who cares? He sure doesn’t. And then he does it all over again.

A few weeks ago, Vic snagged a pack of cigarettes out of his mother’s purse and brought them when he met up with the guys. Patrick, despite thoroughly enjoying lighting things on fire, found smoking to be boring after the first few puffs. Belch was ambivalent but takes a drag of one, but backed out after the first pull because it tasted rancid. Henry and Vic both started coughing their lungs up after inhaling too much too quickly, and then they kept at it until their faces were red and they couldn’t breathe without hacking. But later that night, they went alone down to the barons and practiced by passing cigarettes and smoky kisses back and forth, until the rest of the pack was gone and the two boys were hooked. So now they swipe cigarettes from the pharmacy and light up behind the school, or on the kissing bridge, or in Vic’s room, or literally any place where they won’t get caught.

Henry turns his anger even more outwards and becomes more volatile and aggressive than ever before. He insulates himself to their small circle of friends and everyone else becomes an enemy. No upperclassmen come anywhere near them now, because even any teasing remarks are met with a disproportionate amount of rage and violence. Henry’s bullying becomes crueler too. Where he used to only pick on younger kids when it was convenient, now he’s actively seeking them out to beat up.

Vic witnesses the beatings with the knowledge that yeah, this probably isn’t right, but then he remembers the scars on Henry’s back, or the bruises on his own neck, and thinks nothing’s right
about that either.

No one cares what happens to them. Why should they care what happens to anyone else?

And it doesn’t take long for Vic to start participating.

One November afternoon, right when the sleet and hail is starting to turn to snow, Henry takes them on a detour up the road towards the kissing bridge. He and Vic have just parted ways with Belch, who had to be home before sunset, and Patrick said he had some “stuff” to take care of. This time of year, the kissing bridge is typically empty because of the icy backroads, so Henry and Vic spend their alone time up there making out and smoking until they get frostbite. But that day they run across some of those loser elementary kids that Henry likes to mess with.

It ends up with Henry shoving one of them, Kaspbrak, this little runt of a kid that’s always bitching about bacterial infections and communicable diseases, to the ground with barely any effort at all. The other one is Trashmouth Tozier, who talks a big game for a nerd with giant glasses, which Henry’s already broken once, and big buck baby-teeth that are begging to be knocked out. Henry grabs that one by the arm and twisting it so far behind his back that the shoulder pops, and then keeps digging his fist into the boy’s side, but even that doesn’t stop the kid from running his mouth.

Vic is getting bored waiting for Henry to get out all his aggression, so he pulls out a cigarette and lights up, because the street is empty and he’s craving hard. Kaspbrak, the little asshole, sees him and starts spouting off about emphysema and second-hand smoke and coughing exaggeratedly. So, rolling of his eyes, Vic blows out a long stream of smoke in the kid’s face and flicks the still lit half at him, just to watch him scramble.

“Henry, come on,” Vic says, tried of not having Henry’s tongue in his mouth and now annoyed that he just wasted half a cigarette over a loser.

But then Trashmouth says something like “your fucking girlfriend’s calling Bowers”, Vic’s not really listening, but does distinctly hear the word girl, and he lashes out without thinking. He’s never hit anybody before, besides Henry in play fights or Patrick when he’s being a jerk, but Vic hauls his fist back and clocks this little kid in the cheek as hard as he can. Henry stalls for a moment, still holding the boy tight but looking at Vic with intense focus.

“How do it again,” Henry encourages him, eyes dark and gaze burning.

And Vic doesn’t know why, but everything else falls away. Trashmouth is still talking but Vic can’t hear him, Kaspbrak is shrieking for help but that’s silent too, there’s no cold air blowing on his face or snow falling, there’s nothing else in the world. There’s just Henry, telling him what to do and looking at him like that. So Vic slams is fist again into the kid’s face, this time cracking one lens of his glasses and probably giving him a blackeye, and it feels good.

Kaspbrak gets up and tries to push Vic away from his friend, so Vic grabs him by the shirt collar and throws him back down roughly. Henry drops Trashmouth too, leaving both lying on the ground, and he is looking at Vic like he’s the most amazing person in the world.

Vic is panting, not from exertion, but from some weird excitement that is burning up his insides. Whether it’s due to the way Henry’s eyes are roaming over him with hunger, or due to the vindication Vic feels getting to put a bruise on somebody else, or maybe a mix of both, Vic doesn’t know. But he likes it.

A car turns down the street and Vic and Henry take off in the other direction, and by the time they get to the kissing bridge they’re laughing. A second later they’re clawing at each other and kissing roughly through the laughter, feeling high and seeking some physical satisfaction.
After twisting their tongues together for a good long while, Henry dips down and gets his mouth on Vic’s neck. He gets a good chunk of pale skin in his mouth and start sucking on it, and even though it’s below freezing outside, Vic is sweating and his face is red and burning. Then Henry bites down, not enough to bleed but enough that Vic pulls him back by his hair. Using his fistful of hair, Vic pulls Henry up to face him and then bites him back, digging his sharp little teeth into Henry’s bottom lip until it starts to swell up. And then they’re kissing again and biting each other like hungry wolves, with their bodies pushed so close together that Vic feels something firm pressing against his hip.

Vic doesn’t think about it until later. Not until he’s looking in the mirror at the big red mark Henry left on his neck, and wondering why it makes him feel so hot and itchy and sensitive in certain places.

Usually, Vic doesn’t get nearly as cruel as Henry does when he’s in a mood, but he does develop a taste for violence. There’s this certain rush he gets from being stronger than someone and being able to hurt them. And now with the strength and the smoking and the tongue kisses, Vic starts feeling like a man, even though he’s still a baby-faced little twelve year-old boy.

Belch doesn’t want to participate beyond the usual pushing around. He already looks like a big mean ton of muscle, and people don’t come at him like they do to Vic and Henry, so he doesn’t have the same rage to fuel a desire for violence. But after a bit of prodding from Henry, Belch starts to follow along, justifying it with ‘these are my friends, I should trust them’ and ‘these are just some losers, who cares if we rough ‘em up?’ But he also joins in to keep tabs on them, because Vic and Henry seem to be on a downward spiral and sometimes they don’t know when to stop. And Belch gets caught up in it all too, there is something magnetic about Henry when he gives an order, and Vic’s got this charm about him that can get anybody on his side, but Belch at least tries to hold them back before they go too far.

Contrariwise, Patrick is ready as soon as he sees the shift in the group, jumping out of his skin with excitement over getting to cause havoc. He finds new, creative ways to hurt people, and then when he shows the guys he expects them to be so impressed by his genius.

One day he wanted to show the boys how, if you get the top of a lighter really hot, it will leave a burn in the shape of a smiley face. Vic and Henry have their doubts, and would much rather punch the fuck out of someone than waste time putting tiny little burns on them, but they agree to try it and gang up on some sixth grader behind the school. They only plan on putting one burn on the kid, so Belch and Henry hold him still and Vic yanks the kid’s arm out while Patrick gets his lighter hot. The poor kid’s so terrified that he’s not even fighting back anymore, so Vic has time to pull out a smoke and light it off the flame Patrick has going.

But when Patrick finally does put the hot metal to skin, the kid flinches and shrieks, so the burn doesn’t come out right. Patrick tries again, this time pressing hard into the skin so the burn makes a dark imprint in his arm. The sixth grader started screaming and crying, but none of the older boys were listening.

Instead Henry says “That doesn’t look like anything.” And it doesn’t, it’s just a dark red smudge that skin is starting to peel from.

Patrick wants to do it again to prove it, Belch is trying to hint that they should stop now, and Vic is feeling bored and idle just holding this kid in place. So he does something that he knows is wrong, but seems like a good idea in the moment.

Before he really even thinks about it, Vic takes his cigarette and presses the burning end into the soft part of the kid’s inner arm. It leaves an ashy black circle surrounded by a ring of red inflamed skin. The boy is sobbing now, with big fat tears rolling down his face, looking a lot like Vic did when he
used to cry every day. But all Vic sees is Henry, looking back at him with that bright spark in his eyes and making Vic feel like he’s the one being burnt.

And it feels really good.

Patrick hates feeling one-upped and not having the attention on himself, so he flicks on the lighter and presses the live flame to their hostage’s wrist. He holds it there until smoke rises and they smell the acrid scent of burnt flesh, and the kid is screaming bloody murder the whole time. Belch finally draws the line, pulling the little twerp away and letting the kid run for his life.

Vic is shaking as he watches the boy escape, coming down from the endorphin high and realizing what he did, stubbed out cigarette still between his fingers. Belch is waiting to get told off by Henry for letting him go, and Patrick wants praise for his actions, but Henry is only focused on Vic. He’s still looking at Vic with that dark burning stare, making an intense warmth spread over his skin, and so Vic pushes the regret and guilt to the back of his mind.

The two boys give each other small, mischievous smirks, no longer even paying attention to their other friends because they’re drawn into an orbit around each other. Vic looks again at the cigarette in his hand. It’s still mostly smokable and there’s a good portion of white left, so it would be a waste to throw it way. After considering it for a moment, Vic passes it to Henry, who takes it and snatches Patrick’s lighter out of his hand. There’s probably a layer of charred skin on the tip, but that doesn’t stop Henry from lighting up and taking a drag.

Breathing out a long string of smoke, Henry passes it back to Vic. The tip is glowing orange and starting to crumble ash onto the ground, so Vic takes it in his mouth before the flame can die. It feels strangely intimate, not like “hold me all night and fall asleep on my chest” intimate, but the “This just put a hole in someone’s skin while they screamed and now we’re putting our lips on it” intimate. It’s kind of like a kiss, but not the innocent kisses they used to have.

Vic has already forgotten why he felt bad a moment ago.

So the boys continue down their dark path and more incidents ensue. They get a reputation for being violent little trouble-makers and kids all over the neighborhood fear them, but no adult takes them seriously enough to notice their escalating behavior.

Vic feels like he’s riding a turbulent wave of ups and downs, fluctuating between the rush of hurting people and the guilt of his actions in hindsight. But what always numbs him to the regret is Henry, who keeps him addicted to that new pleasure they get out of one another. They still have those night where they lie in Vic room and curl up around each other, but now kisses press harder and touches are more purposeful, like there’s a new fire between them.

And it’s all starting to cloud Vic’s judgement.

So he convinces himself that they really aren’t doing any harm, who cares anyway? and decides not to concern himself with the remorse. He can stop anytime he wants, he just doesn’t want to.

And why should he? This is the best he’s felt in years. He and Henry haven’t cried in weeks. They need this. And if they do go too far, Vic will stop, and he’ll make Henry stop too. He’s sure of it.

By early December, a heavy layer of snow settles across the town and school is cancelled until the roads are drivable again.

The night before, Henry snuck into Vic’s room as he usually did, only this time he was freezing cold
and soaked through with melted snow. In the low light, Vic can see how discolored his fingers are, almost purple with clotted blood and frostbite. The tips of his nose and ears are bright red too, and maybe the whites of his eyes are pink and irritated, but if they are then Henry isn’t letting the tears fall.

He doesn’t tell Vic what happened this time, but from the way he can’t lean weight on his right side, and how he holds the back of his thigh when the muscle starts to strain, Vic guesses that there’s a big bruise there. And there is, but whether it’s from being kicked or belted, Henry won’t say. But it must have hurt enough that he would run out into the 15° night and trek through a foot of snow, and the thought makes the ice around Vic’s heart melt.

Even if he doesn’t care what happens to himself, he still cares what happens to Henry.

So Vic goes to the bathroom and brings back a towel for Henry to dry off his icy skin, because of course he didn’t grab a coat when he ran out of the house. Then they bundle up in blankets and Henry clutches Vic to sap some of his body heat. Vic shivers but doesn’t complain, not even when Henry slides his frigid hands up into Vic’s shirt and presses his fingers against the warm skin of his stomach. Instead Vic brings Henry’s chapped lips back from frostbite with soft kisses and little kitten licks, until Henry can kiss him back without his teeth chattering. They fall asleep like that, not quite warm or comfortable, but unwilling to separate from each other.

At least some things don’t change.

In the morning, part of Vic wants to just stay in their nest all day. He likes lying there, half sleeping and feeling Henry’s hands, which have migrated under Vic shirt through the night, gently rubbing up and down his spine and leaving soft little tremors in their wake. They’re figuring out that bare skin on skin feels better than with clothes between them, and their touches are becoming a little more daring each time.

But the other part of Vic wants something more physical, wants its daily fix of power he feels when he and Henry beat somebody up. And Henry is keyed up for it too, still feeling the sting of the indent on his leg and wanting to pass that pain on to someone else.

So the boys eventually do get up, only taking an extra few minutes to make out and share a cigarette. Besides the small window, the spare room has poor circulation, so their smoking has started to soak into the walls and leave gray stains on the ceiling, but the boys don’t care that the air smells like ash. Before they go, Vic layers on two coats to fend off the cold and digs out a sweatshirt for Henry, and then the two climb out the window and into the frozen morning air.

They plan to go find Belch and Patrick first before they start looking for a victim, but opportunity presents itself before they know it.

They find a few other of those loser kids Henry used to know from elementary school. The two younger boys are in a snow filled yard, building ice forts and waiting for their other friends to arrive. One of the kids is Billy Denbrough, known to Vic as the boy with the heavy stutter who thinks he’s tougher than he is. The other is this curly haired boy Vic doesn’t know the name of, because Henry always refers to as the “the Jew”. And the two are just sitting ducks for torment.

They start with just the usual stuff, pushing, slapping, kicking, nothing too bad, but then Denbrough tries to stand up to Henry. Before he can stutter out more than a few words, Henry nails him in the face with two hard punches, one right after the other. The Jew boy runs up and tries to get his friend away from Henry, but Vic grabs the kid and pulls him back. Grabbing him by the arms, Vic wrenches them behind his back until his elbows are pinned painfully together. When the boy tries to squirm away, Vic punches into his side until the kid falls to his knees.
Henry drops Denbrough, who is half unconscious from the hard hits, in a heap on the ground and comes over to where Vic has the other boy held down. This Jew kid sure is a petulant little fucker, glaring up at Vic and Henry and refusing to talk. So after a little bit of baiting, Henry just kicks him in the stomach while Vic holds him there. Vic lets go when the boy crumbles over in pain, leaving him face down in the snow.

The thrill is starting to wear off, leaving Vic with just that pleasant tingly feeling in his gut, and he wants to stop at the kissing bridge for a while before they get Belch and Patrick. Henry gives him this look that says they definitely are going to do just that, and Vic kind of wants to kiss him right here. Denbrough’s passed out and the Jew is curled up on the ground, so no one’s going to see. But Henry grabs Vic’s wrist and starts pulling him down the sidewalk, away from the younger boys they beat up. Maybe they can duck between some houses down the block and make out in the shadows.

But then there’s this noise, the Jew kid must groan in pain or something, but it makes Henry stops and look back. Vic can feel the hand around his wrist, still clenching and palm sweating despite the cold, and Vic knows Henry is still itching for something. Dropping his hold on Vic, Henry walks back to the Jew and crouches down beside him.

“Got somethin’ to say?” Henry says to the kid, voice dark and eyes stormy like the grey sky above them.

Vic comes over too, standing beside Henry and willing to let him get out a little more aggression. But last night, Henry gave him a big red hickey in the spot where his collar bone meets his shoulder, and Vic wants to return the favor, so he’s impatient to get going.

The Jew boy barely has the wherewithal to respond, still clutching his stomach and eyes glassy with tears, so all he can do is look up at Henry and flinch in fear. It’s so pathetic that Vic doesn’t really see the point in beating on him any further, but Henry seems to disagree.

He grabs a fistful of the boy’s hair, pulling it painfully before shoving the kids head into the snow. Then Henry starts pushing his face back and forth, digging it into the harder ice below the top layer of frost. The boy is whining loudly, he probably can’t breathe well and is getting ice burns on his skin. He tries to crawl away, so Henry presses his knee to the boys back to hold him down and grinds his face further into the ground.

Vic gets a glimpse at Henry’s eyes when he shifts his weight. There’s no spark there, no light at all, instead there’s this far-off look clouding them, and behind that mist is a dark hatred. And he is still just relentlessly scrubbing this kid into the snow.

“Henry…?” Vic tries carefully, wondering why Henry is keeping this up for so long.

But Henry doesn’t respond, his teeth are clenched and he’s breathing heavy through his nose. He doubles down on the force of his shoving, until the tiny ice shards pierce the skin of the boy’s face and a smeared trail of blood is left in the snow. The sight only makes Henry go faster, and he can only distantly hear the sound of the boy crying and begging him to stop. He can also just barely hear Vic saying something *Henry comm’ on, stop* but his body is ignoring it. His brain is only distantly attached to what’s going on, like he’s is on autopilot. All he sees is the blood on the snow and that spurs him on further, wanting to see more of the red stain soak into the whiteness.

Vic sees the smears of blood as the snow melts and creates pale pink slush, and then it gets dotted with dirt as the frozen ground beneath gets turned up. His heart starts to beat a little faster, but not in the *good* way.

“Henry! That’s enough!” The blood is getting thicker on the ground, and the kid has quit kicking and
squirming, now he’s just wailing into the snow. Vic is standing by, shifting from side to side because Henry still isn’t listening and he doesn’t know what to do. Finally Vic can’t help it because there’s a lot of blood, so he grabs Henry’s arm and pulls him back.

Henry startles when he’s grabbed, balance thrown off and tumbling back onto his butt. His arm comes up on instinct like he’s going to punch the person yanking on him, but as he turns back Vic flinches away. Some semblance of recognition shows in Henry’s eyes, now present enough to see the way Vic jumps back like he’s afraid. Slowly, Henry comes back to himself, the sound of blood rushing in his ears and the tunnel-vision fading away, and for some reason his breathing is heavy and his skin feels overheated despite the cold.

As soon as he is released, the Jew kid brings his head up and takes a gulp of air, face bright red from cold and blood. His nose is gushing out globs of blood, and his forehead, chin, and cheeks are scraped up too. He scramble away from Henry as fast as he can and towards Denbourgh, who’s just starting to blink awake with confused, widely dilated eyes.

Vic sees that Henry is returning from whatever had come over him, looking a little dazed and hands shaking, so he reaches out to him.

“Let’s just go, okay? Henry?” He tries gently, not knowing if Henry is still jumpy.

It takes him a minute to process, but then Henry lets Vic help him up. The wide puddle of bloody slush on the ground makes his stomach turn in a weird way, because the sight is just familiar enough to bother him. The air seems too thin for Henry to get a real breath to fill his lungs, and the sun is reflecting too bright off the snow, making his head ache. He lets Vic pull him away, walking them down the sidewalk and cutting through someone’s backyard, leaving the two younger boys without looking back.

By the time they get to the kissing bridge, that tingly feeling Vic had stirring under his skin has faded. Henry still seems a little off, huffing angrily and hands trembling slightly. They lean against the wooden rails in silence, letting the frost melt into their coats and pants while they split a cigarette. The sweatshirt Vic gave to Henry is soaked from his time spent on the ground, so he’s shaking from the cold.

The smoke curls up into the air, and slowly the two start to calm down. They still don’t say anything, but Henry passes the cigarette back to Vic, and then leans over and nudges their noses together, asking and not demanding. Vic breathes out the last puff of smoke between them, and then meets Henry for a kiss as he drops the cigarette butt to the ground.

There’s no heat or excitement behind it, but it does warm up their lips and cheeks. Tongues slip back and forth gently, more out of habit than desire, and then they suck on each other’s lips until they’re red and puffy.

Henry pulls away before he usually would, but he doesn’t move that far. He drops his head onto Vic’s shoulder and presses his face to his neck, breathing hot air against the skin. Vic wraps his arms around Henry’s back, absently petting his hair and nuzzling his nose against Henry’s cheek.

They just stand there, neither really sure why they feel so strange. Vic decides that tomorrow, they should just stay in their nest and not get up for the day.

Chapter End Notes
And the loss of innocence has begun. In more ways then one.
I'm supes tired right now so I'll make this quick.
Sorry took so long, one chapter a week right now is all I can handle. Hopefully that will change soon
Follow me on tumblr @ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/ and i will definitely follow you back

Thank you so much for all the love and comments, I love hearing from people and knowing what you think!!!! <3 <3 <3 Tell me where you think the story's going after this !! :)))
XOXOXOXOXOXO
YDFH
Chapter Seventeen: Picture Part 1

December, 1986

Winter Break always comes sooner than Henry is ready for. He tries to prepare himself, find things to do to get out of the house and stay out of sight, but inevitably he has to stay home too often and runs into his father more frequently. And this time of year is rougher than any other, for reasons they don’t talk about.

But the holidays are inherently sentimental, revolving around love and family and memories. All the things Henry doesn’t want to think about.

Henry usually doesn’t keep anything he cares about, because he knows that it will always be destroyed one way or another. Either by his own hands or his father’s. But now he has a notebook shoved as deep as possible under his mattress, so buried that it’s almost unreachable, and he fishes it out some nights when he’s sure he won’t get caught. Inside is just a bunch of notes he and Vic have passed to each other in class, or slipped in each other’s lockers between periods.

They say things like meet me out back after fourth period or do you have any smokes left? or can I come over tonight? and then respond back and forth on the same scrap of paper, until they run out of room. The notes aren’t even that interesting to read, but Henry likes looking at them. The way they write is so different too, it’s like Henry can hear their voices on the paper. Vic has this small scrolling print, written in smudgy colored pens he swipes off peoples desks. Occasionally he’ll scribble over a word he can’t erase, blotting it enough that Henry can’t decipher what it was. Then Henry writes back too fast in this messy print, letters sharp and overlapping. He still has trouble with certain letters being backwards or out of order, so he’ll get frustrated and cross the word out.

Sometimes he’ll be writing so fast that he doesn’t think about it until after it’s on the page. Like, once after a few days of Henry not coming over at night, Vic wrote you ok? and slipped the note into Henry’s locker. When he finds it next class, Henry scribbles down I miss you, and then immediately regrets it. He crumbles the little square of lined-paper up and shoves it in his backpack, and then gets a new sheet to write a response on, telling Vic to ditch sixth period with him. But later that night he finds the ball of paper in his bag and, gentler than anyone would ever think he could, presses out the creases until it’s flat again. Henry puts it in his secret notebook, and thinks about the conversation
they didn’t have, about what Vic might have said back.

If Daddy ever found this notebook, that might be the one note to give away what these are, because the rest are pretty mundane and anonymous. Even when they want to go to the kissing bridge, the boys just write the bridge, so they don’t run the risk of getting caught. But just having a secret anything would be enough to get a beating for Henry. It wouldn’t even be about the notebook or what’s in it, it would just be the excuse for Daddy to say he deserves a punishment.

Though, what he’d get for that notebook is nothing compared to what would happen if his father found the other secret Henry has hidden under his mattress.

One night, a couple days before Christmas, Henry is feeling exceptionally down. That loose molar has finally fallen out after one more solid punch to the jaw. It was a baby tooth, but it’s out too early and the new tooth hasn’t started growing yet, leaving the nerve exposed. His tongue keeps drifting over to soothe the ache, but then it will touch the raw part and pain will shoot across his skull. And his shoulder hurts from being popped yesterday. And his hip is still sore for getting kicked a few days ago. And everything else kind of hurts too, the old bruises, the scars, the marks that have faded. Every inch of his body hurts because there’s this gnawing pain inside him that’s eating its way outwards.

Something is twisting his insides up, a mixture of new and old pain, fear, and insecurity, and Henry knows what it is. He just doesn’t want to think about it. Every year around time it’s the same thing, so it shouldn’t feel this bad anymore, but it always gets worse.

He’s looking through his notebook and listening hard for the sound of his father asleep in the living room. If Henry hears any movement, he’s ready to shove the book back into its hiding spot. He was just looking at the notes to distract himself, but the little written conversations are reminding Henry that he isn’t alone anymore. Maybe he doesn’t have to be alone.

you ok?

I miss you

After another moment of contemplation, or maybe it’s an hour, Henry slips his hand into the mattress crease with searching fingers. He reaches in all the way, until his shoulder meets the side of the bed, and starts feeling around. There’s a sharp panic that shoots through him at the last moment, because he can’t find it, but then his fingers close around one corner and drag the little square out from the bedding. He’s careful, trying just to hold the edges so he doesn’t smear fingerprints on the glossy side. Then he quickly flips it over so the blank side is up. He’s not ready to see it yet.

Flipping open his notebook, Henry puts the slip into the very center, where hopefully it will be most safe from the elements. Then he gets his shoes and coat, and then tugs the sweatshirt Vic gave him on over top. He should probably give it back, but it’s so too big for Vic that it would swallow him up (and really, Henry doesn’t want to give it back). And finally Henry takes the book and slips it under the sweatshirt, hugging it tight so he can keep it dry on the way to Vic’s house. Then he climbs out his window into the frigid night.

It’s past midnight, but Vic can’t fall asleep. He has four blankets layered on and a sweater over his pajamas, yet he’s still too cold because he’s gotten used to sleeping with another person’s body heat beside him. He’s already smoked two cigarettes in the last hour, so his agitated little headache isn’t due to nicotine deficiency. Kicking restlessly, he rearranges himself again on the floor, hoping to find a more comfortable position, and frustrated when he can’t. At this point, Vic knows he won’t be able
to fall asleep any time soon, not while he’s alone at least.

So when the window, which he still leaves unlocked despite the icy draft it lets in, gets pushed open all the way and Henry stumbles in, Vic feels every nerve in his body light up. He scrabbles out of his layers of blankets and rushes over, a little more enthusiastic than usual. Henry didn’t come over yesterday because of the heavy snowfall, so Vic had to be at home all day with his sisters, and most of his time was spent sulking.

Just as soon as Henry gets his feet on the floor, Vic wraps him up in a tight hug, and Henry latches on because Vic is so warm compared to the outside air.

Henry’s very cold and wet with melted snow, so Vic hugs him even closer and tries to pass on some body heat. But then he notices the odd way Henry has one arm wrapped around his own stomach. He doesn’t look hurt, but Vic still feels a protective burn in his chest.

Pulling back just the smallest inch, Vic looks down and asks “Are you okay?”

*I miss you*

Henry falters for a minute, before he looks down as well and sees what Vic is talking about.

“Yeah, no this- I’m fine” He stutters around the subject. “You?”

Vic nods. His father didn’t come home tonight, having called and told Mom something about icy roads and staying at work until tomorrow. She repeated back the message to her children, though she didn’t seem very convinced. But Vic didn’t care, to him that just meant one day without getting hit.

But Henry’s still holding his stomach like that, so Vic is skeptical and silent, waiting for Henry to tell him at his own pace.

“Um, I just have- I want to-” Henry is getting exasperated and fidgety, because when he’s upset he can’t put words together well.

And Vic knows him so well that he just waits patiently, nodding along when Henry stumbles and kissing him softly when he gets huffy.

*He deserves to know a little bit more.*

“Can I show you something?” Henry finally asks, voice soft and vulnerable while Vic sucks on his bottom lip.

Vic pulls off with a little squelch, eyes wide and earnestly curious, even with the dark rings under them.

“Yeah.”

So the sit down in their pillow nest, after shutting the window to preserve what little heat they have left, and Henry pulls out the notebook he was clutching to his front. He also drags off the sweatshirt, because it’s still damp with snow, and he bundles it up in his lap, like somehow it will protect him. Vic settles down right beside him, looking so soft and sweet with messy bed-hair and sweater paws. He looks so different from the person who, a few days ago, knocked some kid’s lights out with a hard punch to the temple. It amazes Henry that somehow Vic can be both.

The notebook sits on the floor in front of them, and Vic is confused as Henry hesitates to open it, but finally he starts flipping through pages towards the center. Along the way, Vic sees that the inner
pages are full of scribbles and doodles Henry does when he’s bored in class, but then a few scraps of loose paper slip out. Vic recognizes some of them almost immediately, knowing their handwriting and the time and place they passed these notes to each other. And then it hits him that *Henry kept all of them.*

Vic had just assumed that their notes had gotten thrown away or torn up, because usually they were about things the boys didn’t want to get caught doing. Never would he have thought that Henry saved them.

Henry tries not to be too embarrassed when Vic sees the papers, but feels the creeping blush crawl up his cheeks anyway. At least he knows the *I miss you* one is in the back of the notebook. Vic gathers up the few that have fallen out and starts looking through them, and Henry sees this soft rosy blush color his pale skin. They’re both sitting in the dark with their faces lit up like Christmas tree lights, all flustered over a few torn pieces of paper that say the most mundane things.

But then Henry finds the center of the notebook and feels all that tingly warmth drain out of him. Vic notices when he stops turning pages, and sees a photograph, lying face down so that the blank white side is turned up. Along the bottom edge is *January 1975* in small, handwritten letters.

Henry agonizes over it for a second longer, wanting to shut the book and run back home and shove it back in his hiding place forever. But Vic is looking at him without any judgment or malice, and finally Henry feels some semblance of trust break through his walls. With delicate, shaking finger tips, Henry takes the picture and flips it over. And there she is, looking exactly like she does in Henry’s memories.

He has the urge to clutch the photo to his chest, never let anyone see it because it’s all he has. But Henry trusts Vic. For the first time in years, Henry trusts someone. So he passes the picture to the boy beside him.

Vic takes the photo gently, suddenly nervous because Henry seems so shaky and afraid, and when he finally gets a look at the image he understands why. It’s a close shot of this lady holding a half-asleep baby on her hip. The color and clarity have faded a bit with time, but she looks young, almost too young, and pretty, with sandy blonde curls and blue eyes. The baby is bundled up in footy-pajamas, with his thumb firmly fixed in his mouth and his other fist is grasped tightly to the woman’s shirt sleeve. His head, with a thin layer of unruly blond hair already spiking up, rests on her shoulder, while he looks up at her with half-lidded eyes. And she’s looking down at him with this soft half-smile that puts a dimple in her cheek. It’s like the camera isn’t even there, they are so serine and unposed that the photo is almost as perfect as those magazine pictures that aren’t actually real. But this is real. This was someone, somewhere, in January of 1975, holding her baby like he is her entire world.

“Is that-?”

“That’s my mom-”

They speak at the same time, both sets of eyes focused on the picture. But Henry’s voice breaks at the last second, and when Vic looks up at him he sees the tears building in his eyes.

Vic doesn’t know what to say, because never ever has Henry spoken a word about his mother. Vic wouldn’t even ask, knowing that if Henry doesn’t want to talk about something, it’s probably for a good reason. But now he’s holding this picture, which seems like so much more than just a picture, and Henry is choking back tears.

Vic has no idea what to say, his quite nature catching his throat painfully, so he nods slowly, waiting
for Henry to continue.

It takes a moment, but then Henry takes a deep breath.

“That’s, um- that was before things got really bad with my dad,” Henry pauses, eyes going distant as he searches through his mind. “I think, I don’t remember really.”

Of course he doesn’t remember, in that picture he wasn’t even a year old. And even for years to come, he would be too young to recognize the escalating abuse that slowly destroyed their family.

Vic reaches over and takes Henry’s trembling hand, still holding the picture in his other, and nods again. Willing to listen if Henry wants to keep going, willing to drop it if he wants to stop.

Henry’s other hand comes up to tug in his own hair, fist clenching and unclenching with stress, until it travels down so he can bite at his thumb nail to ease his mind. An action that looks very familiar when Vic looks back down to the baby in the photograph.

“But then it got really bad sometimes” Henry starts again, remembering back to seeing his Momma’s blood drip onto the kitchen floor while she tried to nurse a head injury over the sink, or the time her side was hurt and he had to be extra gentle when he hugged her, or the multiple black eyes, or the dozens of scars, or all the times he heard her scream. And then Henry feels that empty pit of guilt open up inside him, and he hears the voices that spill out with it.

_It’s your fault._

_You didn’t do anything._

_That’s why she didn’t want you anymore._

“And- and then-” He can’t get the words out now without the tears spilling over, heart racing as he relives that night for the millionth time in four years. “A few years ago, she just left.”

It wasn’t that simple, but to an eight year-old Henry watching the door slam behind her, it was like she just disappeared. Disappeared and took all the love and safety and warmth out with her. It was a dark, snowy December night like this one, and how many nights after did Henry stay awake, praying _please please please, bring my Momma back?_ How many days did he go to school, pretending like everything was okay, hoping that today she would be there when he got home? How many hits did he have to take from his father, while wondering why she didn’t take him with her? How long did he wait until he gave up?

As quickly and gently as he can, Vic puts aside the picture and moves the notebook away from them, just as Henry crumbles forward into sobs. Vic catches him and guides them down onto the floor, so Henry can cry into his chest while Vic holds him through it. This pain seems so much rawer than any other, like it’s pulling back all the layers of hate and rejection and insecurity and letting Vic see the moment Henry was broken.

“She just left,” Henry cries into Vic’s shoulder, and in the sadness there’s anger as well. It’s the kind of misplaced anger of _how could you?_ that Henry then feels guilty for having. “She left and never came back for me.”

And she’s never going to come back for him.

_Your fault_

_Your fault_
Your fault

Any more words die into sobs, some screamed into Vic’s sweater, some whimpered. But eventually Henry cries himself out. Part of him never aged past being that baby in the picture, still needing someone to hold him until all the hurt is washed away. After the last few sniffles and choked cries subside, Vic pulls back, which of course makes Henry clutch tighter, but Vic only moves a couple of inches to look at Henry. His eyes scan over the red cheeks and tear stains, and then he leans back in and kisses him.

The kiss is soft and short, like their old kisses, and then Vic presses their noses together and repeats the same kiss again, over and over until Henry finally kisses him back. They pull apart gently and Vic lays his cheek against Henry’s, despite the sticky tears there.

“You okay?” Vic asks, so close that Henry can feel his breath blow across his ear.

The tears have worn away any shell for Henry to hide behind, but Vic’s arms around him make the vulnerability almost bearable. Henry never knew you could feel this overwhelmed and still so safe at the same time.

“I miss her,” He finally admits.

“I know you do,” Vic whispers back, hands rubbing across the scars on Henry’s back.

And it’s like a big weight floats off of Henry’s chest and he can breathe for the first time in forever. He fills his lungs in a gasp, with no more tears left to cry as relief floods in.

The walls won’t stay down forever, and that crushing weight will settle back into its spot eventually. Too much damage has been done to be cured in a single night, but on this night, for a brief few hours, Henry feels free. He tugs Vic’s mouth back to his, trying to put all his euphoria and gratitude and trust and some other feeling he can’t figure out into that kiss for Vic to feel.

And Vic understands.

Chapter End Notes

Well I hope that was plenty sad and fluffy
just the thing to get into the Holiday spirit!
<3 <3
Follow me on tumblr at https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/
New chapter soon, im 1/3 through finals
(please comment I love you)
XOXOXOXOXOXOXO
Chapter Eighteen: Picture Part 2

*December, 1986*

The kiss has a lot of passion and enthusiasm, but it doesn’t really go anywhere beyond where they’ve already been. Their tongues are slick and wet and feel good sliding around each other, and at some point Henry rolls onto of Vic just so he can get a little more of his tongue in the other boy’s mouth, but eventually the two break apart for air.

Vic notices that Henry’s still shaky, but now it’s more like he’s buzzing with excitement than anxiety. His face is still a little red, maybe it’s from the kissing, but the tears have dried and he’s got this big bright smile and the light back in his eyes. Something Vic hasn’t seen in a long while.

Henry drops his head to rest on Vic’s shoulder, cheek pressed against his collarbone and face in his neck, while Vic brings a hand up to idly cards his fingers through Henry’s hair. In quiet bedroom, Henry can hear the gentle thrum of Vic’s pulse against his cheek. The steady rhythm grounds him, tethers his excitement and focuses it, because he’s so not used to being happy that it’s making him float out of his mind a bit. And now he’s able to ask Vic the favor he’d been agonizing over all night.

“Hey?” He says softly, not wanting to break the calm atmosphere.

It takes Vic a minute, the warmth and quiet and comfort had just started to take hold and he was drifting off, but then he flicks his eyes back open and gives a quiet *hmm*? in response.

“Um- can you…” Henry is still nervous, not nearly as much as before, but the words feel heavy on his tongue.

After an extended pause, Vic shifts a little so he can look Henry in the eyes and brush his fingers over his cheek.

“Yeah?” Vic poses it like a question for Henry to continue, but really it’s his answer. He can do anything for Henry. He will do anything for Henry, just to see him this happy again.

Henry reads just a fraction of that dedication and affection in Vic’s voice, and suddenly he’s overcome by this strong pulse in his chest. It’s strong enough to make him sit up, because he’s sure if he keeps looking into Vic’s eyes, he going to combust. Henry gathers up a fresh breath of air as he moves, mentally preparing to keep going.
Vic follows Henry up, sitting cross-legged and rubbing his eyes. He’s never going to get to sleep at this rate, but with Henry around, maybe that’s not a bad thing.

Before the crying fit, Vic set the picture down in Henry’s notebook and pushed both a safe distance away, and now Henry reaches over and picks up the glossy photograph again. He holds it up close to his eyes, so even in the dim light he can see every little detail of the image. Over the years he’s looked at this picture so many times he’s memorized it, but he takes one more moment to imprint every square inch into his mind. So that whenever he closes his eyes, he will see his mother in that darkness, and know that at one point in time, she was there and she held him and she loved him.

Watching Henry scan the photo over and over with his eyes, Vic almost feels like he’s intruding on something too personal. But Henry wanted Vic to see this picture, and then let Vic see him cry while he admitted all those things he’s probably never told anyone. So maybe it’s okay to see this too.

Henry gives the picture one last look, and then without any hesitation holds it out for Vic to take.

“If my dad every found this, he would—” There’s too many things Daddy would do to Henry if he found this picture, “kill me.” And that’s the easiest way to say it, because that could mean anything between a broken bone or belting him again or even pulling out his gun and actually-

But what Henry’s really afraid of is seeing this picture be destroyed, like he knows all the other ones were in a drunken rage. Entire years of his life catalogued in thick picture albums burned or thrown away or ripped apart, just because they had her face in them. This was the only one Henry could save at the time and he’s kept it hidden for years, always afraid that one day Daddy would find it and erase the last memory of his mother he had left.

Vic looks at the picture presented to him, not understanding why, but taking it in his hands anyway, than looking up at Henry in confusion.

“So, um-” Henry stumbles, wishing Vic could just know what he means without him having to say it. “Can you keep it safe? For me?”

Not very long ago, Henry wouldn’t have let anyone even see this picture, let alone take it from him. But Vic makes him feel like all his secrets are safe, so who better to keep this one too?

Vic’s mind stalls for a minute, never expecting to be asked something so important and personal. And at first he doesn’t believe he can do it, because he’s small and weak, and if anything, Henry’s the one who keeps his secrets safe.

“Henry- I, I can’t-”

“Please?” Henry cuts him off, scooting forward a bit closer to Vic.

And all Vic’s doubt and hesitation flies away.

*He’ll do anything for Henry.*

“Yeah” Vic says finally, nodding and trying to blink a few tears out of his eyes before they fall. “Yeah I can.”

He has a spot where he can keep this, where no one will be looking for a picture of a woman that disappeared four years ago. It’s a little latch box in an unpacked suitcase in his room upstairs, and all that’s in it are a few things from before the move, and a-

*Oh, yeah.*
Vic considers the thought very carefully, almost too afraid to even imagine it. But then he looks
down at the picture Henry is trusting him with.

“Can- Can I show you something too?”

There’s this turn in Vic’s voice Henry notices, like suddenly he’s fearful and shy, eyes cast down and
hands shaking as he starts chewing on his bottom lip. But Henry nods anyway, wondering what Vic
could be talking about. The only thing Vic talks about like this is-

Oh.

Henry feels his face heat up with a rush of blood. At least they’re in the dark, so maybe Vic can’t see
it.

After Henry’s confirmation, Vic puts the picture down gently, and then stands up out of the pillow
nest. His legs are a little cramped and buzzing from lying down for so long, or maybe he’s too afraid
to do this and his limbs are protesting. It’s probably a little of both.

Henry watches the boy get up, and for a moment Vic just stands there in hesitation, rolling on the
balls of his feet and wiping sweaty palms on his pajama pants. With Vic standing and Henry still
sitting on the floor, Henry’s gaze settles right on Vic’s hips, which have filled out a couple inches in
the last few months. Vic usually wears baggy pants and big sweatshirts that hang low on his waist,
so Henry hadn’t really noticed the extra curve until it’s right in front of him. There’s this inch wide
stripe of skin too, on one side Vic’s sweater has ridden up due to static, and the band of his pants rides
a little low on that hip, leaving just the smallest gap of pale flesh exposed. Henry flicks his eyes up to
look at Vic’s face, seeming on the edge between ambivalent and petrified, and then looks again at the
milky white skin of his hip.

It’s not like Henry sees him any differently, it’s still Vic he’s looking at, it just seems like there’s
suddenly a lot more of Vic to look at. And Henry’s not thinking about boy bodies versus girl bodies
or anything like that. He’s thinking about how warm and soft Vic’s skin must be under all those
clothes, and maybe if he could just touch-

“Wait here,” Vic says, finally pushing through his nerves to carry out what he wants to do.

Henry blinks a few times, coming out of a trance that has left his face burning and his heartbeat
thudding in his ears, just in time to watch Vic turn away and start walking towards the door.

“Huh?” Henry asks, still half out of it.

“I’ll gotta get something,” Vic whispers back, edging open the door just enough to tip-toe through it,
and then he shuts the door softly behind him.

Henry is left in the dark spare room for a moment, wondering how that happened, when it seemed
like just a second ago Vic was right in front of him, looking so…so something. Scrubbing at his hot
cheek with the side of his fist, Henry tries to will the redness away, and is sort of relieved that he still
has that sweatshirt bundled up over his lap.

Vic walks as gently and quietly as he can across the living room, holding his breath every few steps
because he’s terrified of getting caught. He’s also terrified of what he’s about to do, but he’s trying
not to think about it all at once, instead just taking it a little bit at a time.

The stairs are harder to navigate, because it seems like every step squeaks obnoxiously loud, but
finally he gets to the top and makes a bee-line for his and Daphne’s bedroom. He sneaks into the
bedroom without a sound, but when he closes the door, the latch clicks loud enough to make Daphne
shift in her sleep.

He opens their closet door and starts fumbling around in the dark, looking for the suitcase he knows got stored away somewhere. If the noise wakes Daphne up, she doesn’t say anything.

But finally he finds the suitcase and pulls it out, popping it open and spilling the contents out on the bedroom floor. In it are just a few left over things from his last school year, some stuffed animals that were always too pink and cute for him, a diary that he left mostly empty, and then there’s that latch box. It’s a little beat up and the wood is chipping, but the metal latch still holds tight and hasn’t opened all this time.

Holding the box close to his chest, as he’s not ready to look inside yet, Vic shoves the pile of old junk back into the closet and then slips out of the room. Getting back downstairs is less careful than coming up, he just runs as fast as he can down the hall, trying to keep his steps light and skipping every other stair on the way down. In no time at all, he’s back at the door to the spare room, heart beating wildly as he gets inside and shuts the door behind him.

But then he’s standing in front of Henry, whose still on the floor and looking at him expectantly, and Vic thinks he should have taken a minute to prepare himself before this.

“Hey…” Vic says in the awkward quiet, realizing that his thumping pulse isn’t going to be slowing down anytime soon.

“What’s that?” Henry asks, eyeing the wooden box in Vic’s hands.

In his rushing about, Vic’s sweater has dropped back over that sliver of bare skin, so Henry tries to stop thinking about it.

“Umm,” Sinking down to the floor, Vic ponders what to say as he thumbs over the metal latch. “This is some old stuff,” he starts, folding his legs and sliding over to Henry’s side. “From before we moved here.”

Vic is shifting back and forth, biting at his lip and showing all those nervous habits Henry has learned to recognize. So Henry takes the initiative to throw his arm over Vic’s shoulders, pulling the boy closer so they’re right up against each other. At first Vic is jostled by the move, but then his skin prickles lightly where he’s pressed against Henry and he feels mildly reassured.

“Yeah?” Henry follows up, but really his mind is wandering to the way Vic’s teeth dig his bottom lip, turning the skin red and puffy. Impulsively, Henry doesn’t wait for an answer and swoops in to kiss Vic, pulling that lip out of the bite’s hold and sucking on it.

A few slow tongue kisses later, Vic finally pushes Henry’s face away from his and he feels a little more confident that before. Henry still crowed into his space, not unpleasantly, but Vic has to keep avoiding kisses before Henry starts them, and he unsnaps the latch with a click and flips the lid open.

Inside are just a few mementos from the last few years. Different postcards from places he’s lived, magazine clippings of rock bands Vic has liked, torn out diary entries that say things he didn’t want his sister’s to read, and a few polaroid pictures from when they had a camera a while ago. And in those pictures is the one that Vic always avoided looking at but kept anyway.

It’s in the back, so he flips to it and pulls it out of the box. Smaller than the one Henry showed him, it’s this little square framed by a white border, and with age the developer has stained and discolored along the edge. But the image is still there, no matter how much Vic wishes he could see something else.
With only a little reluctance he hands the picture to Henry, who takes it with curiosity. He studies the image and Vic feels a tight knot of anxiety build in his stomach.

In the picture is a girl sitting on the back bumper of a car, her legs aren’t long enough to reach the ground, so her feet are in mid-swing above the pavement. A travel bag sits in her lap like she’s waiting to leave, and she’s not looking at the camera, like she doesn’t know it’s taking her picture. A curtain of tangled blonde hair drapes down her shoulders and heavy fringe hangs in her eyes. The color’s a little blown out and faded, so the girl has this haunting glow on her that matches the empty look in her eyes. But Henry sees it in the plumped up lips and dark eyes, the slump of the shoulders and the way her hand is tugging at the hem of her t-shirt. There’s no mystery, but it is jarring to see it, because it’s the face he recognizes but not the person he knows.

“This is you?” Henry says, but it’s not really a question.

Vic’s eyes wander around, afraid to look at Henry and know what he thinks of that girl he used to be.

“Mhm… that was- um- me, a few years ago.” Vic says, catching the sight of the picture in the corner of his eye.

Around two years ago actually, right before the drive from Connecticut to upstate New York, his mother had snapped this picture of Victoria waiting by the car. Mom thought it was cute, but in the shuffle of moving she misplaced the polaroid and Vic found it in a box a few days later. And the only reason Vic saved it was because he remembered what he was thinking at that moment, while seemingly alone with his thoughts. He remembered feeling a breeze brush through his hair, and he was wondering what it would be like if he cut it all off.

Finally Vic flicks his eyes ups to glance at Henry, because the anticipation is killing him and the image of that little blonde girl is burning a hole in the back of his eyelids. Head cocked to one-side, Henry is still looking at the photo, but instead of judgment or confusion, he looks pretty indifferent to it. With long hair and a bit more babyfat on his face, Vic looks almost exactly like his sisters, whom Henry has never bothered to learn the names of. But if Henry didn’t know Vic now, and just saw a girl like this at school or on the sidewalk, would he even notice her?

And then Henry brings his gaze off the photo to meet Vic’s, and he sees those matching dark eyes looking back at him.

“Okay,” Henry says with a shrug, not uncaring, but nonchalant. In a motion that Henry doesn’t even think about, he reaches up and brushes back the bangs hanging in Vic’s face and scans him over with his eyes. “I like you better like this.”

Henry says it so simply, like he’s just stating a fact. This is who Henry wants to hang out with and kiss and tell his secrets too. And this person is a boy and that boy is Vic, not some ghost girl in an old picture. But Vic hears those words and feels his chest swell with something warm and serine that untangles all the fear inside him. He sags in relief, feeling as weightless and breathy as Henry seemed a little while ago.

“Yeah,” Vic mumbles, skin tingling with a fresh rush of elation that’s so strong it’s overwhelming. “I do to.”

And then the arm around his shoulder pulls him in again and they go back to kissing, mushing their lips and tongues together wet and sloppily. But after a minute, Vic has to pull away because he’s grinning too hard to kiss anymore. They sit in silence for a few minutes, but it’s a comfortable silence where they don’t need to say anything more. Henry is flipping the picture between his fingers.
absently, but otherwise he’s calm and drops his cheek to rest on Vic’s shoulder, and Vic thinks that if
they just lied back onto the carpet, they could just fall asleep like this.

But before they do, Vic remembers the picture of Henry’s mom sitting on the floor beside them and
reaches out to grab it.

“Sure?” He asks, holding the photo out to Henry just in case he’s having second thoughts.

Henry flutters his eyes open, looking at the picture mournfully. Without taking it from Vic’s hand, he
runs his fingertips over the image slowly, like he could memorize it better with touch rather than
sight, and it leaves a few streaky prints on the glossy surface. Finally he nods a little reluctantly, but
there is relief there too, like he’s letting go of a burden that’s been weighing him down. He never got
to say goodbye when she left, so maybe this is his chance to let her go.

Vic slips the picture into the wooden box behind the other papers in it, and then closes the lid and
secures the latch.

“Wait,” Henry stops him, holding out the old polaroid he’s been holding. “What about…?”

But instead of taking the photo back, Vic clutches the latch box to his chest shakes his head. For
once, he’s not ambivalent about his decision.

“No, you take it.”

A crease forms between Henry’s brows, and then he shaking his head and trying to give the picture
back again.

“Vic, I can’t keep it… if my dad, or anybody ever-” Henry implores, but really if anyone found it,
even his father, they probably wouldn’t realize it was Vic. But even then, Henry can’t shake the
belief that he wouldn’t be able to keep it safe. Because nothing is safe with Henry.

“No-” Vic interrupts, knowing what’s causing Henry’s reluctance. Even though, to Vic, with Henry
feels like the safest place in the world sometimes. “I don’t want you to keep it,” He doesn’t want
Henry to look at this picture and think of him, “I just want it gone.”

For all Vic cares, Henry could tear up the picture into a bunch of little pieces, right here and now. It’s
like he’s saying goodbye too, not like Henry did, more like he’s the one shutting the door and
leaving Victoria behind.

Henry waits for a moment, fingers curling around the picture and looking down at it again with a
thoughtful expression. Mind settling on an idea, he considers it again, it’s pretty rash and impulsive,
but he decides that Vic needs it. So he gives Vic this look, half desire and half mischief, the light in
his eyes betraying his excitement.

Oh Lord.

“Comm’ on,” He says, one hand holding the polaroid, the other grabbing Vic’s wrist and standing up.

“What?” Vic says, setting the box on the floor and letting Henry pull him up.

“We’re going somewhere,” Henry answers cryptically, tugging a reluctant Vic towards the window.

Vic digs his heels in, wondering what the Hell Henry is taking about.

“Henry, whad’ya mean- I’m tired, can we stay here?” Vic whines, pouting because all he wants is to
snuggle up with Henry and sleep.

But then Henry looks back at him, with that smirk on his face and gleam in his eyes, and says “Comm’on, it’ll be fun,” before planting a firm, wet kiss on Vic’s lips.

And how is Vic supposed to say no to that? So they put on their shoes and extra coats and Henry shoves the photo in his back pocket and climb out the window into the cold night.

Vic has no concept of what time it is, the sky pitch dark with heavy clouds and no cars on the streets, but it’s only snowing lightly and the adrenalin pulsing though his veins is keeping him warm and awake. It feels like they’ve been running all across town for hours, but somehow they haven’t fatigued, and every few blocks they stop and warm each other up with long kisses and heavy petting over their clothes. But that picture is still sitting in Henry’s back pocket, and Vic still has no idea what they’re doing.

So far they’ve gone by Patrick’s house, who was mildly grumpy to be awakened in the middle of the night.

“*What the fuck do you guys want?*”

“*Shut up. Grab your lighter and meet us in the barr-*”

“I’ll be there.***”

“*Henry what are you talking about*”

“*Don’t worry about it.*”

Then they went to Belch’s house.

“*Mmmh, huh? Vic, wha’s goin’ on?*”

“I don’t know, but Henry says you’ve got to come with.”

“*Where?*”

“The barrens. Patrick might already be there, lighting things on fire.”

“Oh fuck.”

And while Vic woke Belch up through his bedroom window, Henry popped the lock on the garage door and took a half-full canister of gasoline with them as they left. Belch didn’t seem happy, but he doesn’t say anything about it. He’s looks more worried about what they are about to do in the barrens.

They get to the wide empty wasteland along the edge of town, bordered by dark trees that keep them out of sight. A thick layer of snow blankets the dead grass and freezes the streams, and no animals or bugs have survived the cold, so the stagnant air is eerily quiet.

Except for the sound or Patrick, jumping out of his skin with anticipation.

Vic is still running on adrenalin and the fresh taste of Henry’s tongue in his mouth from right before they got to Belch’s house, but Henry has offered no clarity to what they are doing. Despite the confusion, all the boys seem on board with whatever Henry tells them to do. So he points out a
mostly flat area where the snow is thinnest and they start piling up any broken branches and dead wood that’s nearby until they have a big fire pit. Even though they can see their breath and snow is soaking through their clothes, the constant movement keeps their blood pumping.

Finally it looks like they have enough wood heaped up, and Patrick’s waiting on baited breath with his lighter.

“Let me do it now! Comm’on, Henry, that’s enough already!” He’s adamant, eyes hungry to see all that wood ignite with flames.

“Hold on,” Henry says back as he takes a drag off the smoke Vic’s been nursing on to keep his lips alive.

Patrick pouts, arms crossed and looking like he’s going to start something if he has to wait any longer, but instead of instigating a fight, he turns to Vic.

“Vic, tell Henry that I should do it now,” Patrick demands, sounding as bratty and indignant as a little kid, asking one parent to let them have something the other parent has denied them.

Vic just rolls his eyes at the thought, though Henry would probably listen to him, but he trusts Henry to be in charge. Then Henry passes the cigarette back to him and grabs the gas can.

The other boys watch as he splashes gasoline all over the pile of dead wood, until he uses about a third of what’s in there and Belch tries to slow him down.

“I think that’s enough Henry,” He says cautiously.

Henry doesn’t bark back anything, but he does look Belch dead in the eye and pour out the rest of the can right in the middle of the fire pit, until gasoline starts to run and pooling the crater of snow they’ve made.

“Alright,” Henry says with finality, throwing the empty plastic container behind him without care for where it lands. “Go for it Pat.”

Which is met with a very un-Patrick like squeal of excitement.

After a little bit of debate, they devise that the best way to light it, without Patrick getting his skin burnt off, is to set fire to a scrap of bark and throw into the center. Even though he complains that the plan is lame, and he thinks burnt off eyebrows would look cool, Patrick agrees and tosses the burning piece into where he thinks it will cause the most damage.

For a second, there’s nothing, just long enough for the boys to wonder if the flame went out, but then the gas catches and a bright orange combustion is set off with a roar. The heat permeates outwards like a fiery pulse, making all the boys jump back before they can be licked by the flames. The wood had been dead and rotting under damp snow, but the gasoline keeps the fire from dying, and it leaks out a stream of jet black smoke into the sky. It’s burning so fast that the wood crumbles under the heat, and every time it crackles loudly a new flame catches on the exposed kindling and rises up, making the bonfire even bigger.

At first it’s exhilarating, so loud and hot and alive that the boys can feel their hearts racing and blood pulsing in their ears. Their retinas burn from the bright glow, but they can’t look away, and their lungs ache as they breathe in the polluted air, but they don’t move away. It’s exciting and terrifying all at once, but it’s also strangely calming. Every breath they take, the fire inhales as well, swelling and constricting and growing in pulses. It’s consuming everything around it, sucking it up and destroying all it can, and the boys can understand that, needing a fuel for the aimless passion and aggression in
them. The fire cleanses that part of them, gives them an outlet for all those explosive feelings and urges they have bubbling up inside of them. And it seals them together, in the way that we made this, and even though it’s destructive and dangerous, it’s ours and no one else will understand.

And as they stand there, mystified by their creation, Henry drifts over to Vic in silence. It takes a moment for Vic to realize he’s there, but when he does, he looks at Henry they share these bright, blinding grins that rival the light of the fire. Henry reaches down to grab Vic’s hand, and Vic happily clasps on, until he feels Henry slip the photograph into his palm.

Vic takes it, noticing that the polaroid is a little wet with melted snow, but the image is still intact. And there she is.

There I am.

That’s the last though Vic has about the picture ever again, like the final door closing on the life he used to live. And so he feels no remorse, no guilt, when he gets as close to the fire as he can without being engulfed in it, and tosses the photo into the flames.

Yes, they could have burnt up the picture with a spare lighter or lit cigarettes, but like this, it’s all so much bigger. That bonfire is everything between Vic and Henry, in the past year, in the present moment, and in their future. Good or bad, for better or for worse, those flames are burning bright and big and licking up toward the sky, ready to consume everything around them. And that picture of the girl he used to be seems so small compared to the glowing inferno. It’s so insignificant that, as soon as it is caught by flames, it crumbles into ash, folding inwards and colors bleeding together before they’re burned away. And then she’s gone, Victoria is gone forever, and the fire remains, hot and alive and still growing.

Smoke is stinging his eyes and making them water, or maybe it’s not the smoke?, and sweat is soaking into his pajamas and running down his forehead, but he can’t be pressed to care.

Henry is there beside him again and loops an arm around Vic’s shoulders. They are so close to the fire that they can taste the ash in their throats, and they savor it like it’s the flavor of the best cigarette they’ve ever had. In front of the flames, they are almost completely silhouetted by the light, and all they can see of each other is the reflection of fire in their eyes.

They do give one glance back at their friends, Patrick is looking around for more wood to burn, Belch is telling him no and making sure the fire doesn’t spread too far, but they both see the way Henry and Vic are standing together. And it just seems that they don’t care, almost like they don’t expect any different.

So maybe it’s the night air, or the mild hypothermia, or their adrenalin addled bodies, or their smoke drunk minds, but knowing that their friends can see who they are and won’t reject them for it is enough to make Henry pull Vic in for a kiss.

It’s a long, hard kiss that’s less about tongue or feeling good, and more about just getting as close as they physically can to one another. Vic leans in and tangles his hands in Henry’s hair, Henry wraps his other arm around Vic’s back to press them tighter together, and neither of them let go.

And Vic feels a mix of elation and power and invincibility all wrapped up in that kiss with Henry. Now he can move forward, grow as the person he is, without running from what he isn’t. Now he can live his life, without being afraid of some dead girl he used to be coming back to take it away.

Now he knows that, if this is living, then Vitoria was never really alive at all.
O lord in heaven this was not supposed to be that long!!!!
I'm real hungover from a christmas part rn, so my editing might be shotty :/

ANYWAY THO ISNT THIS CUTE? Henry got that chapter about his mom, Vic gets this one about his past, then they got symbolically married in front of a bonfire, its all just my favorite!

(Also some new "urges" Henry's got, wink wink nudge nudge)

So, not in chapter numbers or length, but character arch wise, this is the halfway point in the story. Also next chapter im gonna time jump a little bit.

OH yeah follow me on tumblr @ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/
PLease tell me what you guys think, Im finally outta school for break and suddenly lonely and spending my days writing fanfics and on tumblr. I'd love to hear from youse guys <3 <3 !!!
Thankyou for reading and Happy holidays!!
XOXOXOXO
Touch Part 1

Chapter Summary

With the sound of blood rushing in his ears, Vic doesn’t know what noise he makes. It’s probably a cross between a strangled moan from pleasure and an indistinct cry for more, because he’s so close to something and it’s almost-

“Vic?”

Chapter Notes

Remember when I said this fic was gonna be explicit?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter Nineteen: Touch Part 1

March, 1987

For some reason, Vic can’t see anything clearly. Everything is just a fuzzy mess of color and light, when he opens his eyes there is darkness, but when they flutter closed he sees it again. And somehow he knows Henry is there, like he can feel where Henry’s hands have been, or hear the echoes of his voice, even though he can’t see him anywhere.

Then there’s this rush of hot and cold, the lights and colors shift and the sounds are familiar. They’re back to that night at the bonfire. Why and how don’t really make sense, but he and Henry are kissing again. It’s like Vic is there, feeling the kiss in real time, but he’s also floating around them, seeing them from above and below and beside like he’s everywhere at once.

But suddenly the heat rises up, everything in his vision turns bright and red and Vic is sure that they are tumbling into the fire and all he can do is clutch onto Henry tight. But the fire doesn’t burn, it heats him up all over and makes his skin prickly and oversensitive. And then it’s like the fire is inside of him too, stirring his insides into a frenzy and making him spasm all over.

All the clear images are gone, now he’s back to lights and abstract colors, but he still knows Henry is there. It’s like Henry is all over him, every inch of skin pressed up against him and tongues rolling around each other’s mouth in an endless kiss. And then the fire under his skin swells and burns so hot and-

Vic wakes from the dream when his whole body convulses and his hips jump up on their own. He hasn’t reached full consciousness yet, instead he’s drifting in that in between place, where logic and reasoning haven’t kicked in yet, but feelings and sensations are heightened. In his tossing and turning a spare pillow got pinned between his legs, pressed up against that spot where all the heat is spreading from, and every time he moves, it rubs right there and-

Oh fuck…
The early morning light filters in through the window, casting a milky glow over the room that’s too bright for Vic to keep his eyes open. His mouth feels dry and his lips are chapped and sore from biting. Despite the early spring mist and cold air, sweat is soaking through the sleeves and neck of his sweatshirt. His hips keep jumping, spasmodically grinding against the pillow in a rough and mindless rhythm, until suddenly that’s not enough. No matter how hard he squeezes his thighs together, the friction is fading and his legs are cramping up from strain.

In the last few weeks, Vic’s woken up with sore muscles and this weird, sensitive ache in his groin. The last time it happened, he squirmed awake feeling all wet and sticky right there. When he peeled off his pajama pants, he found his underwear soaked with something that didn’t smell like piss, but made his stomach turn anyway. The fabric was so damp that it clung to the cleft of his pussy, which was all puffed up and flushed pink.

Sometimes, when he and Henry make out for long periods of time, Vic will walk away feeling tingly and damp right in that spot. Thankfully when that happens, it’s never been so much wetness that it’s noticeable. It does leave him uncomfortable and itchy down there, and he just hopes that Henry won’t feel it when they press against each other.

The whole thing makes Vic feel sick. The weird fluid seeping out of him. The sore muscles. The burning, itchy, unsatisfied feeling he gets. The fact that his body just does things without his knowledge or permission. The fact that it’s coming from the one place that he wants to pretend doesn’t exist.

If things were different, with his mom, or his sisters, or himself, he might be able to ask one of them about what’s happening to him. Maybe they could tell him how to make it stop, or maybe he’s sick down there, or maybe it’s happening because he’s a boy with a pussy and his body hates him and he’s just broken.

One more rough grind against the pillow does almost nothing to keep the burning at bay, and while Vic just wants to scream and tell his pussy to knock it the fuck off, he also wants just a little bit of relief already. So in his half-awake, half-clouded state, his hand jumps from where it’s tangled in blankets and he presses the heel of his palm against the mound and rubs it hard. It’s just too close to painful to be good, but the pressure is better than none at all. He rolls his wrist around, trying to find a good way to rub himself to make the aching stop, and he can already feel a damp spot soaking into his pajama pants.

The feeling makes a rush of shame and disgust fill his stomach, but the need for more outweighs it. His thigh muscles are quivering with strain, clenching and flexing sporadically and hips rolling against his hand. There’s this little electric buzz that makes his body jump when he rubs this one certain spot. And while it doesn’t particularly itch, not like normal skin does, the flesh there seems super sensitive and tingly, so Vic worms his hand under his pants and underwear to scratch at it.

His fingers meet the fine curls that just keep growing across his crotch, and they’re sopping wet with whatever this gross fluid is. Underneath the hair he finds his slit, which is radiating heat and throbbing with blood, and at the top is a little nub that seems extra engorged and hot. Vic hasn’t done a lot of self-exploration in the past, more content to avoid that part of his anatomy altogether, but he knows he’s never felt anything down there ever be this swollen.

He digs his bitten-down nails into the bundle of flesh, trying to quell the tingling, and suddenly it feels like a thousand needles are piercing into his skin. The sting serves to wake him up more, sending a shockwave of pain rippling up his body. He pulls his fingers back quickly with a gasp, hand still trapped in his underwear and slit still leaking out liquid. After the pain recedes, the discomfort remains and that burning need for something comes back in full force.
At this point, Vic is exhausted. He feels wet all over with sweat and other body fluids, his hips hurt from bucking, he can’t breathe right, he’s starting to get a headache from exerting so much effort while half-asleep, but that ache in his pussy just won’t go away. So he just starts petting the skin gently, careful with his nails so he doesn’t claw himself again. He finds that nub again and rubs it back and forth with two fingers, steadily increasing the pressure until oh…

Just the right combination of pressing and movement sends what feels like tiny fireworks all over his skin and makes colors dance behind his eyelids. His mouth drops open as he rubs a bit harder, rolling the nub around between his fingers and he has to gasp for air like he’s drowning. Digging his heels into the floor, his hips rise up and roll like ocean waves, working with his fingers to increase the friction and pressure.

Vic can’t help but let out little kitten mewls as he goes, too preoccupied with pleasure to care about the weird things his body is doing. Instead of curing the ache, he can feel it building with every touch, until he’s burning hotter all over, and suddenly it’s like liquid fire is under his skin right there and it’s so close-

With the sound of blood rushing in his ears, Vic doesn’t know what noise he makes. It’s probably a cross between a strangled moan from pleasure and an indistinct cry for more, because he’s so close to something and it’s almost-

“Oh…”

His eyes shoot open and his hand gets caught in his underwear when he tries to yank it back and sit up at the same time. Moving so fast gives Vic a dizzy headrush and his eyesight doubles for a moment as it adjusts to the light, but then he can see Henry sitting just a few feet away. Vic flinches back, shocked and scared and embarrassed all at the same time. A shifty memory from last night comes to him, when he woke for just a second as Henry climbed in through the window. And then he immediately fell back asleep, content to feel Henry curl up beside him without a word. But somehow between then and now, Vic’s body just decided to forget that Henry was here and start doing this thing it does.

They sit caught in a spell of embarrassment and awkward silence, Vic’s hand still in his underwear, and Henry just staring at him. Henry looks like he’s still foggy with sleep and confused, but Vic also notices how his pupils are blown wide and dark, like they are when the boys are kissing. He’s got a big red welt on his jaw bone that’s on its way to turning purple and blue, but it’s overshadowed by the rosy flush of blood spreading across his cheeks and nose. His hands are clenching the fabric of his pants, and his spine is rigid like he’s trying to hold still despite his urge to fidget. And Henry stays like that, but his eyes are roaming up and down and all across Vic, taking frequent glances of his blushing face and of where his hand disappears into his pajama pants. His breathing is uneven too, shallow and panting softly until he can finally make some words come out.

“What’re you doing?” Because even though Henry can feel his body reacting, he really has no idea why Vic is touching himself like that.

In the last few months, he’s tried really hard not to think about what’s between Vic’s legs, but overtime, after long bouts of kissing and rubbing against each other, it’s gotten much more difficult to ignore. And Henry can’t even figure out what he wants, all his knowledge of sex from things he overhears older boys talking about. So he’s misinformed at best, and still too young to really understand the where and how and why of it all. All he knows is that he wants to see it again, the memory of that day at the quarry haunting his blurry late night dreams. He’d never dare to do what he did that day again, because as soon as he thinks of it, he sees Vic’s tear-streaked face and the fear in his eyes, and Henry gets wrapped up in guilt all over again.
But sometimes he wonders, or dreams, that somehow that day could have gone differently. If maybe he had seen Vic’s pussy without forcing his pants down, or if Vic had told him or something, maybe if they kept kissing and just could have felt each other…

So when he woke up this morning to the sound of Vic, crying out in what sounded like pain, he froze when he saw Vic squirming around on the floor with his eyes closed and a hand down his pants. Some part of Henry knew he shouldn’t be watching, but he couldn’t help but sit, entranced for a moment as he watched the boy roll his hips and quiver all over. The way Vic’s face was scrunched up and red almost did look like he was in pain, but the sounds he was making and the pout of his lips told a different story. Henry felt a sharp want strike through him, eyes drifting from Vic’s swollen lips to the arch of his back as he writhed on the floor, and finally stopping at his spread legs and bucking hips. And then all decent thoughts flew out of Henry’s head as he imagined crawling over Vic and settling between his open legs, licking into his mouth and kissing him awake, while his hand snuck down beside Vic’s and touched his-

But then, impulsive as ever, Henry had to say something and broke the spell before he thought any better of it. And now they’re stuck just staring at each other, Vic sputtering out half words and finally pulling his hand out of his pants.

“I jus- I mean, I wasn’t- it’s um-” Vic feels speech fail on his heavy tongue as he tries to wipe the slimy fluid on his fingers onto his pants. Finally he gives up on trying to say anything, face burning out of humiliation and stomach turning cold with insecurity. Hs head drops toward the floor, bangs hanging like a curtain to shield his eyes as they well up with tears.

*Why do I have to be like this?*

*Why did Henry have to see?*

Henry sees the slow progression to tears and hears those little huffy breaths Vic does when he’s close to panicking, and he know he has less than a minute before Vic completely falls apart. So Henry crawls to the other boy, careful not to crowd to close because Vic is shrinking into himself, and gets Vic to look at him with gentle hands brushing his bangs back.

“Hey, Vic comm’on,” Henry wipes the stray tears away, only to feel Vic flinch. “I– I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to-”

Maybe Henry should just leave, he shouldn’t have been watching Vic in the first place. But he also doesn’t want to leave Vic here alone to cry, and he really really didn’t intend to watch… it just was happening and he couldn’t stop.

“It’s n-not your fault,” Vic finally mumbles out, and he hears the thoughts in his head saying it’s because I’m a freak and somethings wrong with me and I hate it I hate it I hate it…

The tears are still running, but his bones unlock and he leans in to bury his face in Henry’s shoulder, trying to breathe through the hurt before it can get worse. He doesn’t want Henry to go, but he can’t stand to look him in the eye right now. The words start tumbling out, half because he feels safer speaking into Henry’s sleeve, and half because he’s been holding it in so long and he wants to tell someone.

“I don’t know what’s happening- but something’s wrong and it’s gross and it won’t stop, and it *burns so bad.* Henry, I can’t-” Even now, when everything else in his body feels terrible and disgusted, that hot throb in his pussy is still there, fading in intensity but still persisting and growing when he feels Henry’s hand run over the ridge of his back.
“What’d you mean it burns?” Henry interrupts, because that sounds painful and he didn’t know a pussy could burn, especially burn so much it could make Vic cry.

Vic stalls for a second, unsure of how to explain it, and he’s quiet long enough that Henry makes him pull back and look him in the eye. When Vic finally stops shying away from looking at Henry, all he sees is how concerned and protective his friend looks.

“It’s like, um, like all tingly and warm… down there,” he chews on his bottom lip between mumbles, not wanting to say the words but needing to get them out. Yes, Henry’s seen his pussy, but that doesn’t mean Vic wants to talk about it with him. Or with anyone. All he can imagine is Henry thinking about that part of him, thinking it makes him a girl and treating him differently and being just as grossed out by it as Vic is.

But Henry’s just rubbing his knuckles across Vic’s cheek and waiting for him to continue, with a look in his eyes like he’s figuring something out.

“Yeah?”

It’s a testament to how close they are, how comfortable Vic feels with Henry so close to him, that they can do this right now. Because even in the moments when Vic can’t even feel comfortable in his own skin, Henry can be hovering a few inches away and Vic will feel safer than he has with anyone ever.

“And then- when I like, t-touch it, it feels like-” Vic’s hands ball up, in front of him, clenching and spasming like they’re trying to impart his meaning through movement. “Like, all tight inside and burning…”

“Does it-” Henry shifts, suddenly aware of a certain feeling he gets, and Vic’s vague description is starting to sound familiar. “Does it feel good?”

Vic doesn’t know how to respond at first, doesn’t even know why Henry wants to know something like that. He can’t really separate how much he hates his body from how it feels to touch it, and with the soreness and wetness tacked on, he can’t say any of it is good. But then there was when he rubbed that spot and was so close to something that felt-

“Sort of? I guess, sometimes if I touch it the right way…”

Henry nods as Vic trails off, but then Vic drops his head down again and Henry shifts his legs again, and at the same moment their eyes land on Henry’s lap.

Minutes ago, while he watched Vic touch himself, Henry felt blood rushing down to his groin and his dick getting hard. And despite Vic crying into his shoulder and how uncomfortable it feels, it won’t go down and keeps rubbing up against the zipper of Henry’s jeans through his underwear.

So now Vic can see the bulge pointing up and undeterred by the situation. Henry hastily presses the heel of his palm into his crotch, trying to shove his dick down and keep it there, but it just jumps back up. He’s only twelve years old, almost thirteen, but Henry still is learning how to control his body and its over-enthusiastic hormones.

“Sorry,” Henry mumbles, an embarrassed blush over-lapping the aroused redness on his cheeks.

When they make out, Henry tries to keep from rubbing off against Vic’s hip or thigh, even though he’s sure it would feel so good. If Vic has ever felt it, he’s never said anything. So Henry has kept quiet about it, and then he’ll wake up the next morning thrusting against his mattress or with cum stains soaking through his underwear.
It didn’t take long to figure out that he can touch himself, thrust up into his fist with the aid of spit or pre-cum, and it feels ten times more amazing than humping his bed. He never takes the risk of doing it when his father is home, too afraid of what kind of awful thing would happen if he got caught. But when he gets a moment alone, he’ll shut his eyes and think about Vic’s tongue in his mouth and hands in his hair, and this hot lightning strike pulse through his body right before—

*Oh, maybe that’s the burning Vic’s talking about.*

“Is that...?” Vic asks, staring unabashedly and fascinated by the bulge in Henry’s pants.

“…Yeah,” Henry shifts his legs again, trying to close his thighs.

“Why is it like that?” Vic’s never seen boy parts before, besides what he can discern through clothes and the crude pictures people draw on the desks at school. And while he knows what dicks are in theory, he never knew they could stand up like this.

“Pfft,” Henry huffs and casts his eyes to the floor, because honestly, it seems like his dick will just get hard for no reason at all sometimes. But he knows it happens most around Vic, anytime they are together, and especially when they kiss. “Just, like, it happens sometimes.”

Vic keeps looking it, making Henry just as self-conscious as Vic was earlier, and then he flicks his eyes up to Henry like he expects more of an explanation of that.

If Henry knew watching Vic touch himself would lead to an intimate discussion of how his dick works, he would have jumped out the window without a second thought. But his affection for Vic outweighs his self-preservation, so he indulges his curiosity.

“Um- like, it gets hard like that, when I’m with you mostly,” Henry is scowling at the carpet and pouting slightly, like he does when he has to do something he doesn’t want to. “Like when we kiss and stuff.”

Vic mulls over the information, reminded of the way he can get wet when they kiss.

“Yeah?”

Henry makes the mistake of looking away from the floor and back to Vic, and meets the sight of those big dark eyes looking at him, soft skin flushed pink across his cheeks, and plush lips caught between his teeth. And now Henry’s thinking about kissing again, and he’s sure his dick is never going to go soft.

“Then it starts to hurt,” like the ache in his balls he begins to feel. “But, if I touch it, it feels really good. Kinda’ like—”

Vic waits through a whole minute of silence as Henry grinds his teeth, before persistent curiosity gets the best of him.

“Like what?”

Henry bites on his thumb nail to calm the ocean of confused feeling tossing around his stomach.

“Like, that burning feeling that you said, just really good and burning.”

Eyes drifting down to Henry’s crotch again, Vic thinks about the way he touched himself, just when it had started to feel good and he felt like he was on fire.
“Can…” Vic starts, not thinking about what he’s about to say, but still fascinated by the idea that somehow, even with different body parts, he and Henry are having the same feelings down there. Maybe, what’s going on is normal for boys, even boys with pussies. “Can you show me?”

“Wha- No!” Henry says defensively, hands jumping down to cover his crotch through his pants, even though the idea of Vic looking at his dick makes it throb with want.

“But- but you saw me,” Vic reminds him with a pout, thinking it unfair that Henry’s gotten to see Vic in this way twice, once at the quarry and again this morning.

“Yeah, but I didn’t mean to,” Henry fires back, despite rolling his hips as that throb in his groin starts to ache.

“Comm’ on Henry, I just wanna’ see.” Vic tries again, huffing in disappointment.

Henry considers it again, so hard now he know he needs to do something about it.

“Fine, but you have to show me yours too,” Henry sets his jaw, willing to be just as stubborn as Vic if he has to.

Vic freezes for a moment, eyes distressed like an animal caught in in the sight of its predator, looking scared enough to make Henry almost take back the proposition. But Vic swallows down his fear and meets Henry with a harsh glare.

“You already saw it,” Vic sounds part resentful and part insecure, thinking about the day at the quarry when Henry didn’t listen to him say no.

“Yeah…but,” Henry stalls, feeling ashamed as he considers the same thing. “I’m not gonna’ do anything this time. Just gonna’ look, okay?”

This kind of juvenile bickering should be a clue to the boys that they are too young for something like this. Too young to share their bodies when they barely know themselves, or understand what it may change in their relationship. But like most decisions they make now, they follow their impulses and wants, even when they’re hormone driven.

After a long minute of sulking, Vic finally rationalizes that Henry’s seen it once, what could it hurt if he does again?

“Okay.”

Henry goes to respond but words fail him because his mind is spinning with did Vic just say yes?

Suddenly it feels like the air in the room becomes thick and stagnant, despite the cold draft wafting in. All the noise filters away and the light around them is less garish, and it’s just Vic and Henry staring at each other and feeling blood rush through them.

Slowly, Henry lifts his hips and unzips his jeans while Vic shifts to his knees to wiggle down the band of his pajama pants. Underwear exposed, Vic notices that at the top of Henry’s bulge, there’s a spot of moisture soaked into the fabric, and he feels less nervous about the larger wet area in his own underwear that Henry is pretty obviously looking at.

After another minute of fidgeting and nerves, the boys start pushing down their underwear at the same time, watching each other more intently than they think about themselves. Naturally, Henry’s anatomy is visible first, dick springing up as soon as it’s free from his underwear. Vic jumps a little when he sees it move on its own, and he wonders what it would be like to have a whole extra
appendage just hanging off his body that just does whatever it wants. And Vic is so focused on it that he doesn’t hesitate to pull his own underwear down all the way to his thighs.

Under his unrelenting gaze, Vic notices that Henry’s dick is flushed reddish purple, like a fresh bruise, and swollen like one too, with a thatch of wiry hair at the base. Only a little bit longer than Henry’s fingers and thick enough to fit in a tight fist, it’s wider at the top and weeping a few drops of milky fluid. It bobs when Henry shifts back to sitting, and he grabs onto it because the even just the movement aches when he’s this sensitive. The touch of his own hand is also enough to make him throb painfully, especially with Vic looking at him so intensely.

But Henry barely cares about the way Vic is staring, because his eyes are set on those folds of skin between Vic’s legs. There’s more hair there than last time Henry saw it, but other than that, Vic’s pussy looks just the same as Henry remembers from that day. Then he notices that those blonde curls are damp and underneath them, his pussy is all rosy and pink, like Vic’s cheeks get when he’s flustered. At this angle, his slit isn’t really visible, but then Vic settles back down on his knees and spreads them slightly, just enough that Henry can see a hint of redness between the outer folds.

For a few seconds, they just sit and look at each other, studying each other’s body in silence. But if anyone ever thought that two curious and aroused teenage boys could look at each other like this and do nothing, then they would be wrong.

Already the boys feel themselves being pulled inward, like their orbiting each other until the gravity intensifies and finally makes them collide in open mouth kiss. Their eyes stay half-lidded and as their pupils expand as their tongues twist around each other.

Vic has one hand fisted in the band of his pants tightly, like all his anxiety and fear is concentrated there, and the rest of his body is free to do whatever it wants. His other hand comes up and tangles in Henry’s hair, using the hold to steer their kiss and deepen it. Henry indulges the kiss and swipes his tongue all across Vic’s mouth, before pulling away as strings of saliva connect their lips. Ducking down, Henry presses wet kisses along the side of Vic’s neck, until he finds the spot right below his jaw that Vic likes best. Sucking on the tender skin, Henry bites down just enough to leave a mark and make a shiver run down Vic’s spine.

And with that shiver, Vic feels heat swell between his legs and a new rush of fluid seep out of his slit. He reaches his free hand down, trying to cover himself before Henry sees how wet he is down there, but before he can, he looks back down at Henry’s crotch.

Whether it’s purposeful or unconscious, Henry’s hand is pumping his dick in a fist. He’s going at a slow rhythm, up and down with a rough drag that isn’t slick enough to be ideal, while he keeps sucking a hicky on Vic’s neck. And Vic is free to watch, marveled by how the appendage bobs and the skin stretches, and then how more of that milky liquid eek out of the tip and drips down Henry’s fingers.

Then Henry gives a particularly hard bite to Vic’s skin and immediacy soothes it with his tongue. The mix of pain and pleasure makes Vic whine, shutting his eyes and becoming very aware of how his hand is hovering just right in front of his pussy. He can feel that throb again, just as achy and hot as it felt when he woke. But now it’s getting worse, because Henry is sucking kisses onto his neck, and every time Vic opens his eyes, all he can see is Henry rubbing his dick.

So, with hesitant and shaking fingers, Vic brings his hand closer to his groin, until he can trace the line of his slit and feeling all the wetness there. He feels hypersensitive now, either from being kept on edge for so long or from Henry being so close, so even just the lightest touch makes his hips jump against his fingers. And then Vic finds that swollen nub from before tucked up in the top of his slit, and starts rubbing at it again. The slipperiness of his fingers makes it hard to get any fiction going, so
he increases the pressure and works his fingers in tight circles around the nub, until he feels sparks of pleasure tingling under his skin.

Henry detaches from Vic’s neck when he hears these breathy little whimpers coming from the other boy. The hand on his dick stalls for a moment when he sees Vic’s face, all flushed red with his eyes closed and bruised bottom lip caught in his teeth, and then Henry’s gaze follows down Vic’s body to where his hand is working between his legs. Unlike before, when Henry only got to see Vic touch himself under his clothes, now he can see the way his fingers dip shallowly into his slit and touch one spot incessantly, while his hips roll against his hand.

“Henry-y…” Vic whines when he catches Henry looking, feeling too good to be embarrassed anymore.

He pouts out his lips and leans in to bump his nose against Henry’s, not at all subtle in his want for a kiss. Henry doesn’t think twice about mushing their lips together in a sloppy kiss and starts stroking his dick faster than before. But after a moment he realizes that the pull is too dry and rough to feel good anymore, and now he can’t see Vic finger himself while they’re kissing. And Henry really, really, wants to watch.

“Hold- hold on a minute,” Henry mumbles against Vic’s open lips, and then lets go of his dick just long enough to spit the excess saliva into his palm.

For some reason, the thought that it’s his spit and Vic’s all mixed together, along with the drops of pre-cum on his hand, makes Henry’s head spin and dick throb like he’s right on the edge of cumming. The ache in his balls is spreading all the way up to his lower abdomen as his dick bobs heavy with blood. So he starts touching himself again, quick and aggressive now to get off as fast as possible.

Vic watches Henry’s hips jackrabbitsing to match the pace of his hand. At every thrust, Vic can see the head emerge from Henry’s tight grip, looking so red and swollen it must be painful, but the bridge of Henry’s nose is all scrunched up and he’s huffing out soft moans of pleasure. So Vic increases the speed his fingers are working at, imitating Henry to chase that pleasure. And the results are almost instant, burning him so hot that he can’t think straight as his fingers slide deeper into his slit.

The boys can’t keep kissing anymore, can barely keep their eyes open, so they are just panting into each other’s mouth and watching the other masturbate. It doesn’t last much longer, can’t when both boys are so sensitive and have been aroused for so long.

On one enthusiastic rub, Vic’s fingers slip lower and sink deep into his folds and touches a place that squeezes tight around the appendages. The feeling of something actually inside him makes that knot in his stomach pull so tight it finally breaks, and he gasps out a silent cry as his inner muscles finally relax with a warm rush of that slick fluid running down his hand.

Henry watches, seeing the way Vic’s thighs clench and spasm and his face tense up from the intensity, and the last clear thought Henry has is that he recognizes that look and the sound Vic makes. And then the touch on his dick is just perfect and he feels an electric shock run all the way from his chest down to his dick, making a shot of cum pulse out of his dick. Not much comes out, but from this position and angle, it ends up striping Vic’s bare thigh.

Relief floods them like a rush of fresh air, warmth fading as their blood redistributes and starts pumping normally again. Vic drops his head onto Henry’s shoulder, chest heaving like as he breath evens out. On loose and tired limbs, Henry lies them down on their sides and nuzzles his red face into Vic’s neck.
It takes a few minutes of silence and considering *Oh God, what did we just do?* before they finally can look at each other again. The blush on their faces is still there, especially since they haven’t pulled up their pants yet, but they don’t make a move to change that.

Eventually they have stared at each other so long that the boys just have to break the tension and laugh when they realize that, as weird as this was, *it was fun*. Fun like when they first started kissing, or making out, and now their experimentation has escalated to this.

“What, uh- what was that?” Vic asks, finding his tongue numb and slurring his words.

Henry huffs out another laugh, searching for words and coming up empty, so he shrugs and runs his fingers across Vic’s cheek.

“That just… happens sometimes. I don’t know why.” Henry doesn’t really know why or how it happened to Vic either, but he also keeps getting distracted by the look on Vic’s face until he can’t help himself.

They kiss lazily for a few minutes, until Vic feels something cold and tacky drying on his leg. With wet fingers he touches the sticky white ejaculate on his thigh and scrunches up his face at the feeling.

“Sorry,” Henry says quickly, partly regretting that he didn’t cum in his hand or on the floor instead, but also kind of liking the look of it on Vic’s pale skin.

“What is it?” Vic looks at the substance, watching it stretch between his fingers and flake off as it dries.

“Cum,” There’s probably a better name for it, but that’s the only one Henry knows from the stuff he’s heard around school. Vic looks up at him confused so Henry tries to elaborate. “Like, it’s what comes out when… ya’ know.”

It takes Vic a minute, but then he nods in understanding and looks again at the stripe of cum on his leg. So this is what happens when boys touch themselves, this stuff shoots out. But then he thinks about that tight, clenched up feeling he got right when it felt best, and the rush of liquid that followed. Henry has given him more information than anyone else ever has, even if it seems a little dodgy and ill-informed, so maybe he knows about this to.

“Do you know what happened, with… um-?” Vic gestures vaguely to his pussy, which is still damp even as the nerves there relax.

Henry looks down and gets a little hypnotized by being able to stare at Vic’s pussy so openly. Thinking back, he does remember someone saying something about girls getting *wet*?, or making them *scream*?, but Henry had never really had an interest in hearing about girls.

“I don’t know… but it looked like you came too,” He says it like it’s a question, not really understanding how a pussy can cum, but the way Vic reacted to it all seemed the same. “Did it, like, feel good?” All he really knows about cumming is that it feels amazing and happens when you touch yourself.

Vic thinks about the whole morning, the dream, the burning, the ache, all relieved by that shock of pleasure that hit him so hard, even though it took a lot of work to get there.

“Yeah…really good.”

“Then yeah…” Henry’s not an expert, even of his own body, but this at least sounds right. “I mean I think so.”
They lie there for a few more minutes. Vic’s curiosity has been satisfied enough to be comforting. There’s a name for what’s happening, and he knows what to do now when he wakes up like this again, and best of all, it’s normal. Even if their bodies are different, he and Henry do the same things and feel the same way.

Henry is getting restless though, trying to resist saying the pressing-question on his mind, but he takes one more glance at Vic’s pussy and his urges win out.

“Do you wanna’…do it again?” He says cautiously, afraid if he pushes too hard, it’ll be a repeat of what happened at the quarry.

Vic doesn’t seem upset or afraid though, which is relieving, instead he looks like he’s really considering it.

“Together?” Vic follows the question with his own. He knows he can probably make himself cum alone, but letting Henry watch gave an extra thrill to the feeling once Vic got past his insecurities. Plus, Vic kind of liked watching Henry touch himself.

Henry nods too enthusiastically to be subtle, unable to voice chorus of yes yes yes yes in his head. Fuck, if he keeps thinking about doing it together, he probably going to get hard again soon.

“But like, later,” Vic says quickly, sore all over now that the endorphins are receding.

Taking a breath of air and practicing a little self-control, Henry tries to will the thoughts away before he can get aroused again, biting at his thumb nail as a method of self-distraction.

“Yeah… okay.”

Midmorning is finally approaching, the sun finally burning off the mist and making the room glow. The hour they spend experimenting has left the boys tired and calm. Vic feels the craving for a cigarette kick in, but right now he’s so comfy beside Henry that he resists getting up. Henry seems content to fall back asleep, shifting so Vic’s head is resting on his arm and he can lie on his side. But neither of the boys has pulled up their pants or underwear.

So it doesn’t take long for Vic’s gaze to travel down across Henry’s body to his dick. It looks soft and deflated compared to how it was a while ago, but it’s still a bit redder than Henry’s skin and hasn’t shrunk back that much in the cold.

It’s hard for Vic to understand how he feels while looking at it, because the concepts of gender and sex and desire are all tangled up in his mind. So he doesn’t know whether the want he feels in his chest is like I want to have that and be a normal boy or is it like I want to touch that.

He should go to sleep, his muscles hurt, Henry looks tired, and it’s still too early to be awake on a Saturday, but once the idea is in his head, Vic can’t avoid it. Maybe, if Henry let Vic watch, it would be okay if he just…

“Can,” Vic starts, voice so soft Henry almost doesn’t hear him. “Can I touch you?”

His hands are itching with the prospect of touching Henry there, but he doesn’t have the inhibition to just reach out and do it.

Henry’s eyes pop open, body going tense as he imagines feeling Vic’s hands on his dick, and all reason goes out the window.

“…Sure,” His voice cracks slightly, either from sleepiness or from anticipation, and every inch of his
skin feels alive and awake suddenly.

Vic doesn’t hesitate now that he has permission, noticing how Henry’s skin prickles with goosebumps as he bring his hand down. Gentle as he can be, Vic brushes the backs of his fingers across the shaft of Henry’s dick, and then he flinches back when the thing perks up a bit.

Shutting his eyes and taking a breath, Henry wills himself to stay calm and not get hard for one little touch. And then he nods to Vic, when he feels ready.

This time, Vic runs his fingertips all over it, starting at the base and feeling down the shaft to touch the head. It’s about half up and a bit chubby with blood, but the skin is still loose and only a bit warmer than normal body temperature. Touching along the underside, Vic finds a thick vein running down the dick. He doesn’t want to squeeze or press to hard, even though Henry was gripping himself pretty tight earlier, but Vic wonders if his touch was any stronger, could he feel Henry’s heartbeat here.

Henry grinds his teeth hard when Vic touches the head and the underside, but stays quiet. His eyes jump across the room, trying not to notice the focused and inquisitive look on Vic’s face, until finally he ends up looking at Vic’s bare pussy again. Maybe it’s because his brain is muddled by Vic’s hand on his dick, but Henry says the first thing that comes to mind.

“Can I touch yours?” He says too quickly, and regrets it when Vic with fear in his eyes. “I promise I won’t do anything, I just wanna…” Henry tries to recover, getting lost in his words when he can’t figure out what exactly he wants right now.

Vic is still afraid of that part of himself, on the best days he can pretend his pussy isn’t there, on the worst days he looks in the mirror and hate hate hates it and wants to die. But Henry doesn’t look at his pussy like it’s wrong or disgusting, he just seems earnestly curious, even with that blush on his face.

“…Okay.” Anxious as ever, Vic agrees despite his fear, knowing that he wouldn’t ever say yes to anyone but Henry.

And then the boys fall into silence again, now more nervous than aroused as their hands carefully approach each other. Vic’s fingers return to their exploration of Henry’s dick, now dipping a little lower to his balls, where soft, virgin hair has just started to grow. Henry starts higher, up at the indent where Vic’s waist curves into the mound between his legs. Wandering down, he meets the blonde curls and feels the sensitive skin under them. Finally he gets to the slit, still damp and warm from earlier. The moist flesh is velvet soft under Henry touch, and the boy is suddenly aware of keeping his nails away and not being too rough.

To Vic, it’s almost too gentle, like he can barely feel it besides a tickle when Henry drags his fingers down. But then he certainly feels when Henry rubs his thumb down the slit and spreads the outer lips slightly.

“Oh, fuc-” Vic stutters, feeling overstimulated to be opened like that.

“Sorry,” Henry swiftly pulls back his hand, afraid he could have hurt Vic by doing that.

It takes a minute and a breath, but Vic shakes his head.

“No- it, um- it’s okay.” It doesn’t feel bad really, it’s just a lot of feeling all at once.

Henry approaches again warily, trying to ignore the way Vic is feeling along his foreskin, and goes back to touch his pussy again. With the relief of his orgasm, the blood has rushed away and Vic’s clit
has receded back into the folds of his pussy. So when Henry spreads him again, less open this time but just enough that he can see the inner lips peeking out, it all just looks like warm red flesh and folds.

The boys will stop soon, either due to exhaustion or oversensitivity, but for now they keep up their mutual exploring and learn just as much about themselves as they learn about each other. And when they’re done, Henry will lean forward and kiss Vic, and Vic will snuggle into Henry’s chest while they fall back to sleep. The bond between them won’t be broken, it may even be stronger, but it will defiantly change.

Chapter End Notes

wow. 7500 words. Of 12 yr olds beating off.
Whats wrong with me. why did i do this.

Have I earned that explicit rating yet?
(are you there God? Im sorry about this)

Soooo,,, sorry this took kinda long to come out. I hope it not too....fucked up.
In the book the kids were 11 tho, so im at least not as bad as Stephan king.....
im gonna go hang my head in shame. This chapter does have a purpose, I promise.

If you feel so inclined to rip me to shreds in the comments, please do. I think I deserve it.
(or if you just wanna comment and tell me what you thought, id really appreciate it <3 <3)
((also follow me on tumblr at https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/
lately I've been hunting pinterest for pictures of baby animals that remind me of Vic and Henry the bowers gang.... so you can look forward to seeing lots of those posts ;D ))

Happy holidays!!
XOXO
Chapter Summary

“Just a lil’ bit… comm’on,” Henry mumbles into his neck, where perfect indents of his teeth mark the tender skin. He drags his lips up Vic’s neck to his ear, while his prying fingers finally slip into his underwear. “I can make you cum,” He offers in a whisper.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Twenty: Touch Part 2

April, 1987

“Ahh! Henry-y sto-op,” Vic breaks their kiss and whines against Henry’s lips.

“Why?” Henry mumbles against his jaw, laying wet kisses and light hickeys.

Vic tries to squirm away again, twisting in the hold but feeling the wooden beam at his back keeping him in place. With a huff he tries pulling at Henry’s wrists and turning his face away.

“Your hands are cold.”

Henry laughs, going to suck on Vic’s neck and then he starts rubbing his frigid hands against Vic’s bare hips. He wiggles his fingers further down into Vic’s pants, until he gets to the soft skin of his inner thighs and squeezes.

Skin prickling, Vic eeks from the icy touch of Henry’s hands so close to his pussy. He should have known by the way Henry was eyeing him all day, gaze intense whenever Vic’s baggy pants hung low on his waist, that as soon as they got alone Henry was going to be on him. They hadn’t even made it back to Vic’s house before Henry cornered him at the kissing bridge.

After ditching their last class, the gang settled in to spend the afternoon and evening in Belch’s garage while his mom was at work. Usual they would listen to music loud enough to make the neighbors complain, and maybe Henry and Vic would sneak off to make out in the backyard if they got the chance. But today, Henry pulled a six pack of beer cans out of his backpack with a look that left no room for argument.

Vic doesn’t know where or when Henry got these, or why he would want alcohol with how heavy a drinker his dad is, but Vic is willing to try it if Henry is. The taste is bitter and malty and Vic’s gut reaction is to gag, but after the first can it gets less bad. He’s gotten used to eating half meals and smoking away hunger, so the alcohol affects him more than the other boys and makes his stomach feel uncomfortably full. Patrick chugs one can and then decides he doesn’t like it, probably because when he stands there’s a slight wobble in his head that makes him feel distinctly out of control, and that goes against every sense he’s ever had. Belch tries some too, but at his weight and size it would take something stronger than cheap beer to inebriate him. Henry takes to drinking with intent, like he’s chasing something but doesn’t know what it is, until suddenly all the beer is gone and he seems unsatisfied with the mild woozy feeling it gave him.
Overall, the beer just makes the boys tired and dull, not very exciting for their first time trying alcohol. After a little while of not talking while the screech of electric guitars rang in their ears, Vic crawls over to Henry and settles down beside him on the concrete floor.

“What’cha thinking about?”

“…Nothing.”

Vic knows that’s not the truth, can see the gears turning behind Henry’s eyes, but he doesn’t press the subject and just lays his head on Henry’s shoulder. This somehow progresses to Vic being half-on Henry’s lap, face nuzzled into his neck and body limp with drowsiness, while Henry played with his hair and tugged at loose band of his pants. At the rate they’re going, soon they’ll be making out and grinding their hips together, but then Patrick slides up beside them and tries to weasel his way into their space. Vic and Henry both push him away and this results in a tussle on the floor that ends when Belch tells them they have to go while hiding the empty beer cans before his mom sees them.

Patrick is pissy about being rejected and walks off in a huff, but Vic and Henry decide to make a detour before heading home.

It’s dark now, well past when anyone would normally be out on the road. A late spring fog rolled in in the evening that has dulled the streetlights and cast a dark haze over the town. So the boys feel safe and invisible as they make out on the quiet side street. The fresh air has sobered them up a bit, leaving just a dizzy, tipsy feeling in their heads that makes their kisses slow and messy. They’ve been at it for a while now, tongues sliding, squelching, and twisting as they kiss. The night’s chill is prickling their skin, but they barely notice with how hot they are pressed together.

Henry was running his fingers along the waist of Vic’s pants, tugging them down a little and rubbing the indents of his hips, until finally he slid his hands into them. And despite how Henry’s touch makes Vic flush all over and his heart beat faster, he can’t get over how fucking freezing his hands are.

“Fu-uck off…” He’s laughing more than he’s irritated, and Henry just buries his face further into the side of Vic’s neck as he shakes his head.

Vic tries to squirm away again, but Henry sinks his teeth into his’s neck to shock him still. The scrape and sting on his skin drags a half-choked moan out of Vic, and he’s now very aware of how Henry’s fingers are creeping closer to his center.

Since the first time they watched each other, the boys have experimented together a few more times. They’ve been calling it “practicing”, though what they are practicing for they don’t really know, and they can only do it on occasions when they have the time and know they won’t get caught. The boys touch themselves alone most times, after days of kissing or nights of fitful sleep, but for some reason they find that it feels better to do it together.

Vic has become much more acquainted with his anatomy, learning what parts of his pussy feel best and how he needs to touch them. Most mornings, he wakes with damp underwear and eager fingers on his clit, and then has to sneak his dirty laundry into the washer before his mother notices. And slowly but steadily, it’s getting easier to think about that part of himself. When he’s touching himself, he’s thinking more about cumming than the way his parts look, and afterwards he’s too tired to feel that empty ache in is chest.

When they’re practicing, before or after, or sometimes during, the boys will touch each other with exploring fingers, more learning the shape and feel than trying to pleasure each other. Vic still has and absolute fascination with Henry’s dick, hard or soft, watching how it moves and swells under his attention and feeling the stretch of the skin. Compared to his pussy, Vic thinks a dick would just be
more fun to have, and he would probably never stop touching it if he had one, even though Henry seems pretty curious about touching his pussy sometimes.

But now they’re not safe in Vic’s room, they are out on an empty road in the middle of the night, and Henry’s fingers are so close to his pussy right now that he must feel how wet his underwear is.

“H-henry, hold on- don’t-” Vic’s mind feels just as foggy as the night air and he’s having a hard time articulating.

“Just a lil’ bit… comm’on,” Henry mumbles into his neck, where perfect indents of his teeth mark the tender skin. He drags his lips up Vic’s neck to his ear, while his prying fingers finally slip into his underwear. “I can make you cum,” He offers in a whisper.

And the idea of Henry doing it for him, touching his pussy and making that fire burn inside him, clouds out Vic’s better judgment that getting felt up on the kissing bridge is a bad idea.

“…Okay,” Vic concedes with a nod, already tingling with anticipation while Henry pets his mound with gentle fingers. “Do it fast though,” He says as he guides Henry’s mouth back into a kiss.

While Vic sucks on his tongue, Henry slips his eager fingers down to the slit. He can’t see what he’s doing, and is still pretty unfamiliar with all the curves and folds of Vic’s pussy, so he focuses his touch at the top of the slit, where Vic seems to like fingering best. As he rubs, it gets wetter and slicker down there, until Henry can slip one finger into the fold and finds that little nub there that’s starting to swell with arousal.

Vic eyes squeeze shut and tries to bite his lip, but instead ends up digging his teeth into Henry’s bottom lip with a whiney moan. His hips jump up against Henry’s hand, because the touch is good, but just not enough.

“More, more… harder, comm’on already,” Vic latches his clenching fists onto Henry’s shirt and grinds his hips up more insistently.

Henry growls a bit at being told what to do, nipping the corner of Vic’s mouth and telling him to “Quit bitching,” but he increases the pressure on his clit and rubs faster.

The boys shift just slightly, standing closer and slotting their legs together. This drives Henry’s flexing hand more against Vic’s pussy, and also makes Vic aware of Henry’s hard dick press against his thigh. Even through layers of clothing, Henry starts canting his hips against Vic to relieve the ache in his groin.

All Vic can hear is the sound of blood pumping and Henry panting against his open lips, overwhelmed as the fingers on his clit rub in tight circles around the bundle of nerves, and then one slips further down and probes shallowly between his folds. But the hard press against his hip is getting rougher and more persistent, and Vic lacks the wherewithal to keep himself from reaching down and wrapping a hand around Henry’s dick through his pants.

“Oh- Fuck-” Henry stutters out, hips bucking into the touch and fingers stilling in their movements. His balls feels tight and his stomach aches like he wants to cum right then, but the hold isn’t tight enough to get him there.

Breathing each other’s air, the boys work together to pry open the button and zipper of Henry’s jeans, Vic only pausing to press through his own pants and get Henry’s fingers moving again. When finally Henry’s cock springs out of his open pants, reddened and bobbing with blood, Vic grabs around the base and feels the hot pulse of it against his palm. The skin is stretched thin and taut
around the swelled appendage, and the tip is glossy with drips of pre-cum. For a few seconds, Vic just holds the dick in a light grip, thumbing along the shaft and tracing the ridge under the head.

But then Henry grabs his wrist, tugging it forward and back in a choppy, rough pattern.

“Like- like that,” Henry keeps guiding him, hips trying to roll with the motion and his nose scrunches up with discomfort.

The drag of Vic’s clammy hand on Henry’s dick is much too dry to be pleasant for either boy, but Vic doesn’t have to be told what to do. Pulling his hand back, even though Henry is still gripping his wrist and urging him back down, Vic stalls for just long enough to spit into his palm and then get it back on Henry’s dick.

Henry gives a low groan of appreciation as Vic starts pumping his dick in a slick, tight fist. It feels so much better to have someone else touching him there. Vic keeps squeezing in different places, rubbing along the underside and then playing with the extra sensitive skin at the tip, and Henry feels that familiar burn in his veins as he humps against the touch.

He goes back to teasing Vic’s pussy, slipping a finger down the slit to the place that suctions him in with quivering muscles, and then tracing back up to roll the nub at the top between his fingertips. He’s only pressing shallowly into Vic’s entrance, just testing the gentle give of the dewy flesh and feeling it squeeze around his touch in tight pulses. Vic is humming out these whiny little moans, eyes glassy and pumping fist losing any sense of pace or rhythm. The knot in his stomach is wound tight, making all his muscles bunch up and burn with the need for release. Head swimming with Henry Henry Henry please more right there more please… Vic doesn’t know whether he’s saying it or thinking it, but those fingers are just so closed to something.

The boys align their lips again, sloppy and spreading saliva across their chins, and cheeks flaming red with blush. Their tongues map each other’s molars and gums for the millionth time, pulling away only to gasp for breath and then rub their noses together until they fall into another kiss.

Conveniently, they’re propelling towards climax at about the same rate, sensitive from the extensive teasing and self-control stunted by their age and the residual alcohol in their bloodstreams. Just when Vic’s grip is perfectly tight right around the head and pressing his thumb into the spot right under his weeping slit, Henry slides his finger a bit deeper into that snug gap, until he can just barely feel the inner ridge of his pussy, and it’s like a circuit runs through the boys where they touch each other.

Vic feels a rush of fluid drip out of him, running down Henry’s hand as he slips his finger out, and Henry is cumming in pulses, most of it landing in Vic’s hand or steaking up his wrist. The mutual orgasm is still running like shocks up their bodies, making light flash behind their eyelids and their bodies tremble. Henry’s face is all scrunched up and red as he leans into Vic’s shoulder, and Vic keeps trying to blink himself back to normal just as another wave of euphoria crashes over him and more slick leaks down his thighs.

But as they’re riding the high, an itchy feeling zings up their backs, like suddenly something is near and eyes are watching them.

There’s some noise, a stumble of worn out sneakers on old asphalt, and a quiet gasp that alerts the boys to someone behind them. They let go of each other quick as they can, Henry yanking his hand out of Vic’s pants but keeping a possessive hold on his wrist, ready to run if they have to. But from the angle they’re standing at and the thick fog around them, only Vic is able to make out the shape of a person, smaller, younger, than them, with billowy clothes and shining, panicked eyes meeting his. And then they turn just as fast as they have been discovered, and with the movement, a pair of messy red braids swing out behind as the kid disappears back into the haze.
He isn’t sure, but Vic thinks he recognizes her as Beverly Marsh, some ten-year-old nobody from the elementary school, and the only reason he knows her name is because he heard her mom died a few months ago. And while he wonders why she would be out so late at night, wandering an empty road, he would never think imagine that she had run out of her apartment, needing to escape. Because after her Momma died, Daddy started acting strange. He’s gets angrier now, yelling and throwing things just to scare her, and then getting in fights with the downstairs neighbors when they complain. He’s also been grabbing her in different ways, and not listening when she asks him to stop or pinching her legs until she cries. So sometimes she needs to run out and breath all the air that she can’t get when trapped in those walls, and she can pretend that all the touching isn’t real, pretend that Momma is still here and going to protect her, pretend that Daddy isn’t probably out looking for her right now.

But Vic couldn’t see all that in their brief moment of eye contact, even though he would understand it if he had the chance to know, and maybe Henry would too. Instead he just sees a little girl who stumbled onto something she shouldn’t see and ran when she got caught.

“Who the fuck was that?” Henry says, whipping around to the sound of feet running away. He sounds angry, like he’s ready to go after whoever saw them and beat them to a bloody pulp, but Vic knows there’s fear there too, can almost hear Henry’s heart pounding as he’s terrified about getting caught like this.

“Nobody,” Vic stays more levelheaded, though his hands shake with leftover anxiety. “Just some little kid,” He reassures Henry in a whisper.

No one will believe her, Vic tells himself. She won’t tell anyone who matters.

Just as Henry’s started to calm down, a pair of headlights turn towards side street and take aim at them. The light is milky in the mist, but garish enough to burn their eyes and reignite the panic in them. Whoever’s in that car is much more a danger to Vic and Henry than Beverly could be, because it seems like adults only listen to each other, and word of the boys feeling each other up on the kissing bridge could make it back to their fathers.

So the two impulsively throw themselves over the rails of the bridge, onto the steep hill below to hide from sight. They stumble down a few feet before catching themselves on tree roots and locking hands to stay together. From down here, they can just barely see over the ridge above them, and watch as Al Marsh’s truck passes over the bridge and into the tunnel while he scans the streets for his daughter.

The truck passes slowly, but finally it’s out of sight and the boys breathe a sigh of relief. Their hands are still sticky with each other’s cum, and they wipe the cold spunk onto their pants lazily.

Vic is thinking to himself that that they should save touching each other for indoors from now on, but Henry is staring distractedly down into the barrens below them. He wonders if Vic can hear it too. It’s like a rustling, small movements of a creature not wanting to be heard, and then it’s like the ground itself is opening slowly, inhaling and trying to suck Henry down with the air. His ears are ringing, aching, but the sound is also hypnotizing, and his heart hasn’t slowed yet.

Henry.

Henry.

Henry?

“Henry?”
It takes a moment, but finally Henry can hear as Vic calls out to him again.

“Huh?” He shakes his head, still dizzy but out of the odd trance. He must have been imagining the noise, because Vic is looking at him confused and unaware.

“Let’s just go, okay?” Vic tugs at his hand, and they crawl up the slope and back onto the bridge.

Henry concedes with a nod and the two take a slow walk towards Vic’s house, so tired that they’ll just collapse onto the flood in a heap. But on the way there, Henry still can’t shake that itchy feeling that something is near, watching them.

Chapter End Notes

why did this take so long ommmmmmgggggg

so i did go see friends for a couple days and, christmas with the family, so sorry that this took a whole long time.
I gotta run to work soon so I'll be quick

please please please comment if you haven't before, im really interested to see who has stuck with this story for so long, especially since it took a turn down creeper lane, and tell me what you think. And if youve commented before i would super mega love to hear from you again <3 <3 :)))))

follow me on tumblr for bad henvic memes and wierd fic ideas
@ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

XOXO
Blood Part 2

Chapter Summary

“I think…there’s something wrong with me,” Vic finally mumbles, and his chest feels like it’s being compressed until he can’t get more than a half-breath of air.

Besides the usual?” Daphne snaps at him, but then regrets saying it when she sees the hurt cross his face.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Twenty-One: Blood Part 2

June, 1987

Just out of school for summer break, and fresh off the heels of turning thirteen, the small bit of confidence and self-esteem Vic has built up gets stripped away.

Standing outside the bedroom door, he wavers back and forth about going inside. His hands tremble slightly and his teeth gnaw at his inner cheeks until he tastes blood. A ripple of pain clenches in his stomach, but for once it’s not due to anxiety or poor eating habits.

What finally drives Vic forward is the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs towards him, and in a panic he rushes in and shuts the door. Sitting on her bed, Daphne jumps at the noise and ends up spilling a streak of nail polish onto the magazine in her lap. She stares at him like she’s looking at a ghost, too surprised to even notice the pink gloss drip down the pages and onto her bedspread.

Vic doesn’t know what to say either, he barely sees his sister any more than a passing glance on his way in or out of the house, and even rarer does he come up to “their” room.

“What do you want?” Daphne finally asks, more accusatory than welcoming.

Fisting his hand in the hem of his shirt, Vic rolls back and forth on his heels and tries to find the words.

“I need help,” His voice is a bit scratchy from an earlier crying fit, and his irritated eyes stay pointed to the floor, “with something.”

Daphne shifts uncomfortably, finally screwing the top back on her nail polish and closing the stained tabloid. The year and a half in Derry hasn’t treated her poorly. Fourteen now, she’s pretty and slim, but plain overall and looking more like her mother every day. She has a moderately sized group of girl friends at school who invite her to slumber parties, and a boy or two she’s held hands with at lunch, without garnering too much gossip. She might be a little quiet sometimes, blending into the background as she stands behind her friends, and she has an unconscious reflex to freeze up scared when a man raises his voice, even if it’s not aimed at her. Only occasionally is she been asked about her brother who comes to school with bruises and makes trouble with his friends, but she just shrugs off the questions and pretends not to care.
That’s now become Daphne’s permanent demeanor, not caring. She sees now why her older sisters do it, because that’s the easiest way to live in a house where Vic is turning the world upside down and Daddy’s beating the shit out of him and Mom is falling apart. So it’s best to be indifferent.

“With what?” She might be a little curious though.

Vic keeps standing there, his mouth opens and closes a few times, trying to start but never knowing how. His lips are all puffed up from when Henry kissed them raw this evening, so Vic can’t bite them without it hurting. He and Henry spent the good side of hour in the backyard, after a long day of roaming around with the guys and picking on losers. Tucked up behind the garage, where no one could see them unless they were really looking, the boys sucked each other’s tongues and ground their hips together. But by sunset Henry had to go home and probably couldn’t come back to spend the night, which had disappointed Vic at first, but now he was grateful Henry wasn’t around tonight.

“I think…there’s something wrong with me,” Vic finally mumbles, and his chest feels like it’s being compressed until he can’t get more than a half-breath of air.

“Besides the usual?” Daphne snaps at him, but then regrets saying it when she sees the hurt cross his face.

“Fuck off,” He shoots back, feeling stupid for even trying to talk to her about this. But he sure as Hell can’t ask his mom or other sisters, so Daphne is his only option. “I mean like, I hurt myself or something.”

But that doesn’t really make sense, because the last time he fingered himself was the night before, and he felt perfectly fine afterwards. This morning he hadn’t had time to before he had to meet up with the gang, and Henry and Vic never got to do any practicing today because they never had the privacy. So what could be wrong? Why is this happening now?

“I’m b-bleeding,” He finally stammers out, voice quiet and strained.

Daphne looks at him warily, checking her sibling over for damage and finding none but a faded black-eye and a tear streaked face, but there’s no blood to be seen. Daddy isn’t even home right now, and won’t be for a few more hours anyway, so Vic couldn’t have gotten a beating from him.

“Where?” And maybe if Daphne took another minute to think, it would have dawned on her, but nowadays she’s so distant from Vic and he’s acting so strangely that she doesn’t know what to make of it all.

And Vic can’t bring himself to say it, can’t get any words out around the lump in his throat, so he just has to gesture down vaguely to the spot between his legs.

After Henry had left earlier, Vic just thought the dampness he felt in his underwear was the normal response he had when they made out. Later he went to his room to touch himself, planning to take his time and really enjoy it to stave off that lonely feeling he gets when Henry’s not around. But as he pulls off his jeans and underwear, he sees a patch of semi-dried blood staining the fabric. Heart-stopping in his chest, Vic looks at his pussy and finds his pubic hair soaked and sticky with red. After gaping for a moment at the sight, he feels a hot rush in his lower abdomen, not like the kind he gets while cumming, and a fat drop of blood swells along his slit streaks down his thigh.

He lets out some choked scream, not loud enough though to get any attention, and stumbles back onto the floor, eyes still locked, wide and terrified, on his bleeding pussy. Insides twisting painfully, in hindsight, he remembers having a stomach ache all day but had disregarded it as nothing. Bile crawls up his throat and Vic ends up face down and dry-heaving on the carpet, leaving little droplets
of blood below his groin.

Of course first comes the usual self-destructive voice that says your body’s wrong and gross and this is what you get for being a boy with a pussy, but also now mixed with your broken and going to die because your bleeding from the inside and it won’t stop, and then maybe this is what happens when you touch your pussy too much, or let someone else touch you there and make you cum.

Thoughts swimming around his head like hungry sharks in dark water, Vic starts to panic and digs probing fingers into his folds, trying to feel if he cut himself there or something, and crying more when he just ends with bloody fingers and his pussy sore from the abuse. His stomach cramps up again, hot and tight and painful like the worst hunger pain he’s ever had, and more blood just rushes out in a little stream across his leg.

The cramp doesn’t go away, it pulses in rough waves that make him hyperventilate and double over with clenched fists. In the pain, all he can imagine is a monster with razor claws, reaching inside him and scratching down his inner walls, going deeper and breaking him open, ripping his organs apart, tearing him up inside, until blood is pouring out of his pussy. And then the cramp passes, fading into a dull throb, but the image and the fear remain. After thinking of something like that, he never wants his pussy touched ever again, by himself or Henry or anyone else.

When he’s able to stand, he pulls his pants and underwear back up and runs to the bathroom down the hall. With water and toilet paper he tries to clean himself and stop the blood, but to no avail, and by now he’s tired and the tears have dried up, and he finally admits that he needs help.

Daphne gapes at him for a moment after he admits where he’s bleeding from, silent for just long enough to convince Vic that he really is dying. And if he is, then Daphne will tell Mom, and Mom will take him to the hospital and then a bunch of doctors will see and then everyone will know about his body and-

“You got your period?” She asks abruptly.

Vic’s mind stalls, all other thoughts flying away.

Period.

He’s heard that word before, but he’s never considered it, never cared to know what it means in a context like this. But what he does know is that it’s a girl thing.

“What?” his voice breaks as speech returns to him, “What’s that?”

Daphne looks at him like he’s insane, eyes shifting around the room like she’s waiting to hear this some kind of joke. But Vic just keeps standing there with that fearful and confused look, reminding her of the little sister she used to have, who would ask her questions and cry in her pillow late at night. The memory softens Daphne a bit, makes her more compassionate even though she doesn’t really know Vic like she used to.

“Didn’t Mom, like, tell you about that stuff?” Just over a year ago, Daphne got quite an uncomfortable talk from her mother about certain body functions and care.

“Mom doesn’t talk to me anymore,” Vic says as plainly as he can, like the fact doesn’t put an empty ache in his chest, especially knowing his mother was supposed to tell him about this kind of stuff and she just didn’t bother.
“Oh- okay, well,” Daphne stalls, feeling an immeasurable amount of guilt and pity, the same way she feels when she has to watch Daddy knock Vic around and can’t do anything about it. Because she does know that the way that their parents treat him isn’t right or okay, but she doesn’t know how to help and just has to pretend like it’s normal. “It’s like a thing that happens to your body. You bleed down there for a couple days.”

Now Vic gets to be the one staring aghast at his sibling, looking at her like she has two heads. A couple days!?

“What- Why!?”

Daphne sputters at his exclamation, shrugging and saying, “I- I don’t know. It just happens! Like it’s something about having babies.” Daphne was not the best at retaining and repeating information.

Babies?

“Does it, like, happen to you?” Vic wants to know, if this has to happen, is it normal?

His sister huffs and folds her arms, not really wanting to make herself the example here, but not having another option, “Yeah. It happens to everybody.”

Vic’s panic is lessoned, voice going soft and contemplative, “Everybody?”

“Well, every girl,” She clarifies, and watches his face fall.

Of course.

Every girl.

Girl.

His head drops to the floor as another cramp ripples through him. Whining softly in pain, he hugs himself around his stomach and feels fresh tears spring up in his eyes.

Girl.

Daphne unfolds her legs as she watches him break down into quiet sobs, walking over and cautiously putting a hand on his shoulder. The last time they were this physically close, it was that night on the bathroom floor, back in the New York house, and what happened after that, after she left Vic alone…

“I’m sorry” she mumbles, knowing that, no matter who or what her sibling is, Vic can’t stand to be called a girl.

Choking down his next breath, Vic tries to gather himself, slightly uncomfortable with the touch be appreciating that she’s at least trying.

“Wh-when does it st-op?”

“Like, three of four days, every month,” She’s gotten used to the semi-steady rhythm of a cycle, enough to forget how jarring it was to find out about it.

“Mo-Mont-?” Vic tries to repeat but can’t as his voice cuts out with a squeak and he crumbles back into tears.
Every month, he has be reminded that he has a *girl body that hurts and bleeds and makes him sick.*

Daphne pulls him in before he can really start crying again, hugging him even though he doesn’t embrace her back. But Vic will admit that the comfort is nice, not as good as he gets from Henry, but at least he’s not alone. And maybe it is kind of nice, for them both to be close again, just for a little bit.

“What do I do?” He asks pathetically into her shoulder as the cramp finally lets him breathe again.

She pulls back and tugs him toward the door, “Come on.”

They walk out into the hallway, pausing to make sure no one is nearby and confirming that Daddy isn’t home yet. Daphne leads him to the upstairs bathroom, and quickly shuts the door behind them. It’s more spacious than the one downstairs, with a full bathtub and shower, and looks more lived in as well.

Vic doesn’t want to be here, the cold tile stings his bare feet and seeing his blotchy face in the mirror makes him want to cry more, but he sits on the edge of the tub and waits curiously while his sister digs into the cupboard under the sink.

Daphne pulls out a narrow blue box holds it out to him, “Here.”

Vic takes it with a hesitant hand, finding it half full and branded with swoopy, elegant font. The side is open, and in it he finds stacks of plastic wrapped squares. He looks up at her skeptically, wincing when he feels another rush of blood leech out of him and onto his underwear.

“What’s…this for?”

Daphne shifts her shoulders and lets her eyes wander around the room, wishing the box had directions that could explain it. “They’re pads, to soak up the blood.”

Vic feels weirdly self-conscious doing it, but he takes one of the packages out of the container. Folding it over in his hands, he peels off the plastic and finds a folded cotton sheet, one side padded and the other sticky with adhesive. He looks up at his sister again, still pretty confused about what this weird thing has to do with his period.

*His period.*

*Oh fuck.*

Another wave of insecure nausea comes over him, not helping the sporadic cramps going to town on his stomach.

“You take one, and stick it to the inside of your underwear,” Daphne’s voice pulls him back, and he examines the pad again. “and then it, like, absorbs all the blood.”

The idea kind of makes him gag, but it sounds better than letting the blood soak into his pants, “What if it… gets full?” Vic asks, doubting something this thin could suck up all the blood in him.

“You’re supposed to change it every few hours, if you don’t you can get an infection,” She informs with a shrug. “Mom buys new ones every month.”

Vic hums in understanding, considering the pad again and then wincing as another pain twists him up inside.
“Why does it hurt so bad?” He chokes out and puts his head into his lap. Vic’s gotten used to pain, from a variety of different sources, but this kind is so deep inside he’s sure that it’s ripping him apart.

“Oh, those are period cramps,” Daphne has them occasionally, not as bad as some girls she knows, and obviously much lighter than the ones Vic is having.

He whines in pain again, huffing out little quaking breaths to ease the pain.

“How- h- do- ah-" stop, please make it stop.

Daphne comes over and sits beside him on the tub’s edge, awkwardly rubbing his back as he heaves.

“Mom used to give Sophie and Lucy painkillers for when they had cramps,” she says as Vic starts to relax when the pain lets up. “But now she won’t buy them anymore, ‘cause you- uh-” Daphne probably shouldn’t have brought it up, because the reminder casts a dark shadow over both siblings.

Vic just nods after a moment, sitting up and wiping a few stray tears on his wrist.

“Thanks, I guess,” He finally says, eyes trailing to the floor as he holds the pad. “For showing me this stuff.”

Out of the corner of his vision, he sees her nod, and look at the floor with him. A heavy silence weighs on them, too many things left unsaid to start sharing now, too much distance between them to cross. Though Vic does have one more favor to ask of her.

“Can you not tell Mom about this? Or anybody else?” A serine somberness takes over and words flow steady in monotone.

“Yeah.” Daphne assures, never planning to do so anyway.

She should leave now, let Vic be to take care of himself and never talk about this again, but one question has been weighing on her mind. It occurs to her whenever she sees him in the school halls or on the sidewalk, the rare times he really seems happy, when he’s with those boys he calls his friends.

“Vic-” she starts, and then pauses when they both realize that, after all this time avoiding each other, this is the first time she’s ever called him by his name. “Um, did you- does anyone know?” she gestures to him, “About-?”

Quickly, Vic shakes his head but refuses to meet her eyes, “No, nobody.”

And Daphne knows she should let the subject be, but can’t help but ask, “What about Henry?”

Vic considers for just a moment, a short moment, telling her the truth. Maybe even telling her about the touching and cumming, because sometimes he wishes he knew more about his body, even if he doesn’t like it. But this is his and Henry’s secret.

“Nobody knows.” He lies again.

With a sigh, Daphne gets up from her seat and leaves him behind, heading towards the bathroom door with a half-wave and not looking back. She closes the door behind her, letting him have some privacy to figure out the new way his body works, and she only waits outside the door for a few seconds in case he calls her back. He doesn’t, so she goes to her room and doesn’t expect to talk to Vic again for quite a long time.
Still in the bathroom, Vic stews in silence for a few minutes before setting the unwrapped pad aside with the box and standing. He decides to shower before testing out these pads, feeling sticky and sweaty all over and wanting to scrub away all his shame with hot water. Shucking off his clothes, one thought makes him clench up with anxiety.

*What about Henry?*

The next day Vic is lying on the floor of his room, even though he’s not sleeping and it’s well past noon. The summer heat makes the room unbearably stuffy, and what makes it even worse is the hot water bottle Vic has on his stomach. Every few minutes a new cramp will make him seize up in pain, panting and whining until it abates, leaving him sweaty and sore. The warm pressure is helping, calming the turbulent swishing in his stomach, but not enough to allow him any rest.

And if his mind was in the right place, instead of wrapped up in pain and self-doubt and cigarette cravings, he would have remembered that he promised to meet up with Henry around this time. So Vic shouldn’t have been surprised when Henry comes in through the window, like it’s any normal summer day, wanting to go somewhere with Vic. But he watches Vic sit up, disorientated and overheated while he clutches the rubber bottle to his middle, and any plans he had go by the wayside.

“What’s wrong with you?” and Vic knows that’s Henry’s way of showing concern, but the abrupt question still makes his head pound painfully.

Vic crosses his legs and hunches over self-consciously. He had found a pair of old basketball shorts that were dark and baggy and ideal for the hot day. They also wouldn’t show any blood if his pads leaked, but now they feel a little too loose and exposing with Henry around.

“I’m sick,” Vic answers with a sleep roughened voice and a dull expression.

There’s no reason Henry has to know about all this anyway. Vic can just pretend to be sick, and if he’s going to be in this much pain for three more days, that won’t be a hard role to play, and when his period is over things will go back to normal. And then he has to do it all over again next month, and every month after that. For the rest of his life.

*Fuck.*

He expects Henry to leave, maybe sit and talk for a little bit, but then leave and go hang out with Belch and Patrick until Vic can join them again. But instead, Henry just comes over and gets down beside him on the floor, leaning into Vic’s space and running curious fingers over his forehead.

“You okay?” He says softer than before, finding Vic’s skin to be mildly warm but not feverish, despite the miserable expression on his face.

Vic just shrugs, eyes empty and mouth pouting, but then another cramp hits him and he curls to the side in pain. It’s a relatively short one, only a small burst of pain and a few ripples afterwards, but Henry can see him groan and clench his fists.

“Vic, what the Hell?” Henry crawls over him, checking for any external damage but finding none. “I-ah, my stomach just hurts,” Vic answers back, breathing through the ache with panting gasps.

He uncurls from his side but doesn’t make a move to sit up again, and Henry stays in hovering over him, wondering what kind of sick you can be that makes someone double over in pain. After a quiet
moment, Henry settles on the floor, laying his cheek on Vic’s collar bone and throwing an arm over his chest. He does that thing that Vic’s been noticing is one of Henry’s habits, where he will press his face into Vic’s neck, and usually it’s a silent request for some affection that he won’t ask for out loud. It’s kind of like how Vic will nudge their noses together when he wants a kiss. So Vic puts his free arm around Henry’s back, the other still holding water bottle against his middle, and starts idly playing with Henry’s hair, which is starting to get longer in the back.

“Are you okay?” Vic asks after a few minutes, because Henry is still and quiet against him, eyes drooping and fingers tracing over the bones of Vic’s shoulder.

Henry just shrugs, but Vic can see the storm brewing in his head under his plain expression. Maybe Henry will tell him later, maybe he won’t, but right now they are content to be silent as the day ages on.

And for a good long while, it’s nice just to be together, soaking up each other’s presence and letting go of anything else outside their space. The heat helps them doze soundly, only interrupted when Vic has to curl up and grind his teeth through a sporadic ache. Steady like clockwork, a cramp will twist Vic up inside, making him arch and squirm in an effort to escape the pain, and Henry lets him grasp on to his shoulder, arm, or hand, as he rides the harsh pulses.

After one particularly rough one that leaves the boy whimpering and quaking with riptides, Henry pulls away more distressed than before. He doesn’t know what to do, but he’s starting to think this is more serious than Vic just being sick. Henry moves aside the hot water bottle, which has gone lukewarm over time. Vic is really out of it now, tired, achy, and glassy eyed, so he just reaches up to Henry with grasping fingers and whines low in his throat. But Henry slips his hands underneath the light fabric of Vic’s shirt, rucking it up over his stomach and examining the skin revealed.

Besides the yellowing remains of a bruise on his hip, all Henry finds is a smooth expanse of pale skin that tapers in at his waist and shows the faint outline of his ribs underneath. But there’s no big marks, no signs of damage to explain the all the pain Vic is in. Henry traces his fingers over the curve of his abdomen, feeling the muscles quiver under the touch. Whenever they practice together, Vic doesn’t take his shirt off, even when he gets overheated and sweaty from it all, and Henry knows it’s because he doesn’t want to show his chest. So Henry doesn’t often get to see this much of his skin, never really gets to touch him above the waist either, so his blood can’t help but pump a little faster in physical excitement.

But then Vic tenses again, face scrunching up in a wince and shifting his hips as another cramp puts his organs in a vice, and Henry can feel all the little spasms of his muscles through it. When it’s over Vic deflates again, eyes closed and breathing in relief.

“I think… you should go to the hospital,” Henry says cautiously. And coming from him, who’s needed stitches and had broken bones and has coughed up blood before and just had to bear with it all, that means something.

Vic shakes his head drowsily, running a hand through his damp hair and blinking his eyes until they focus.

“It’s nothin’” He slurs quietly reaching up for Henry again because he misses the warmth.

“No it’s not,” Henry counters back. He’s never seen Vic, or anyone, act like this when they’re sick, and he’s worried about what could happen if Vic goes on any longer like this. “It’s not normal. Maybe, uh- you should tell your mom or some-”

“No,” Vic cuts him off, tone pleading and desperate. “It’s just a thing. It’s gonna go away in a couple
Henry is still skeptical, but Vic reaches up for him again and he comes down willingly. He shifts his weight to his knees and elbows, so he can lie over Vic without putting any weight on him, and starts kissing at his pouting lips. The kisses aren’t the best they’ve had, a bit too uncoordinated and dry, but at least it’s a distraction. Fingers still on Vic’s stomach, Henry puts more pressure there, pressing into the indents of his hips and rubbing up the sore muscles. Vic doesn’t tell him to stop, in fact he makes just the smallest whimper of approval and leans up into the touch, so Henry keeps going and starts trailing his mouth across Vic’s cheek and down his neck. Maybe Henry can’t fix it, but he can at least make Vic feel better, and of course he knows one way to do just that.

At first, Vic barely notices what’s going on. He’s dissociated a little from his body, trying to put his mind in a different place to deal with the pain, so when Henry’s hands keep dipping lower on his stomach, tracing along the edge of his shorts, and sucking on his neck, Vic just hmms softly at the feeling. But then those hands are slowly guiding his legs open, rubbing his inner thighs and tugging at the hem of his shorts, and suddenly Vic is very aware again of how sticky with blood he is and how rough that pad feels against his pussy.

“No- no don’t,” He says, batting Henry’s hands away from where their creeping towards his center.

And Henry backs off almost immediately, sliding his hands away and disconnecting from Vic’s neck. He knew Vic probably wouldn’t be into messing around right now, but he had just wanted to make him feel good for a little while. Sitting up again and untangling their limbs, Henry is just going to reset them back to how they were lying earlier, and is waiting for his dick down from when it started to perk up, but then he notices something. Along the inside of Vic’s thigh, a bit of blood has seeped out onto his skin and dried into a translucent red stain, big enough to catch Henry’s attention.

“What the fuck?!” Henry says way too loud, but instead of jumping back, he shoves Vic’s legs even further apart to confirm that there is only one place that blood could have come from.

The noise and the movement make Vic spring up, trying to close his legs and covering his crotch with both hands.

“Shhhh! And stop looking!” He shushes him, embarrassment and frustration coloring his cheeks.

“You’re bleeding!” Henry announces like Vic doesn’t know already, but there’s also this horrified panic in his eyes. “How did- did somebody hurt you-” there?

Because Henry knows by now, even if Vic doesn’t like to talk about it, that most of the times Vic’s dad beats him up, it’s because of Vic not being a girl anymore. But Henry never imagined that he it would go this far, hurting Vic in that place until he bled. And maybe that’s why Vic won’t go to the hospital, or why he’s hurting so bad, or maybe it’s even worse and-

“What? No, nobody did anything,” Vic insists as he shifts his legs back and pins them together. “It’s just a thing… that happens.”

Henry stares at him, trying to wrap his head around the idea that Vic can bleed from there and it’s not because he’s been hurt.

“Whatd’ya mean?”

Vic feels his heart pick up speed, hammering in his chest, as he considers what to say. Why did he ever think he could hide something like this from Henry? They can’t go a day without being on each other, of course he would have found out eventually. But that doesn’t make it any easier for Vic to
“It’s like a thing,” His throat burns on the next part, but he pushes the words out, “that happens to girls.” Henry keeps staring blankly, and Vic just wishes he would get the point already. “Like, it,” He gestures down between his legs, “just bleeds, for a couple days.”

“Why?” Henry spits out after a second of thought, still pretty shocked and horrified by the idea.

“I don’t know!” Vic fires back, frustrated by having to talk about it, especially when he feels the beginnings of another cramp coming on. “It just does.”

Henry backs off, seeing the makings of frustrated tears in Vic’s eyes, and gives him a moment to calm and breathe before he asks another question.

“It’s that why it hurts so much?” And as he speaks, Henry runs a comforting hand up the side of Vic’s leg.

“Yeah,” Vic grits out, feeling the last little ripples of pain fade away.

“That’s fucked up,” Henry says honestly, because that’s how the whole situation sounds to him, and for some reason it makes Vic huff out a laugh.

“I know, right?” It feels good to have someone sympathize with him about how fucking awful this all is.

The tension between them finally breaks, letting them breathe again without panic or fear, the both sag in relief. A few minutes of silence pass before they settle back down on the floor. Henry tries to keep some distance from Vic, until the other boy opens up his arms, inviting contact again. They get back into the way they were before, with Henry’s face tucked into his neck and bodies half-pressed together. And when Vic starts squirming around again, Henry goes back to rubbing his stomach until he relaxes.

“A couple days?” Henry asks.

“A couple days every month.” Vic answers miserably.

“Fuck.”

“Yeah.”

But then Henry presses his lips to Vic’s neck with a wet smack, and despite everything else, Vic feels his mood brighten just a little bit.
the body horror part wasn't to gross, it kind of made me feel icky to write it (though thats what my cramps feel like,,,,,sooooo)

Also follow me on tumblr @ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/ for writing updates and weird pictures (i wanna be in the cool kids club of the bowers gang fandom so bad, can we please be mutuals?) also feel free to anon message there or whatever you feel like doing :)))))))) <3 <3

Always thankyou for reading and ill be back soon with a new chapter!
XOXO
Pills Part 2

Chapter Summary

“I really got you something.”

Vic waits a whole minute in silence, trying to convince Henry he’s asleep, and then fails when curiosity takes over and he flicks his eyes open. Pupils adjusting to the light, Vic sees that Henry still has that little smirk on his face and that dimple in his cheek, and Vic feels that familiar warmth of fondness spread though his chest.

“…What?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Twenty-Two: Pills Part 2

August, 1987

Summer passes faster than the boys are ready for, but they still find time to spend together. And not all days are easy, thirteen year old boys are moody and aggressive, with bodies that are ever changing and driven by impulsive desires. But after all this time, Vic and Henry know each other from the planes and curves of their bodies to the dips and crests of their emotions, so as they change, they adapt.

Even though their thoughts have shifted, they can still give a look and know what the other is thinking, can still have conversations without speaking. And being this close makes what they do together always feel like it means something more.

Vic wakes up to a weight lying over his body and pinning his limbs down. Not long ago, this feeling would have set off a panic within him, because he would feel trapped and smothered by the pressure. But now, something about it is comforting, like it's pulling him back to consciousness without dragging him down. And of course, what also wakes him is the feeling of wet kisses attacking his neck.

“Vic… Viiccc-” Henry whines, suckling messily at his neck and sounding like a baby pig as he does.

“Huh?” The other boy responds, eyes still closed and body limp from sleep.

Sunlight is burning through his eyelids, making him squirm his face into the pillow in search of darkness.

“Wake up already,” Henry insists, putting a sharp bite on Vic’s collar bone.

“Whyyyyy…” Vic tries to shrug Henry’s mouth off of him, wanting less teeth and more kisses.

Flicking his eyes open, his sight is blurry and unfocused, but Vic can still see Henry lying against him, with that mischievous grin on his face that Vic knows either means fun or trouble.
“I got something for ya’” Henry shifts so they are face to face, so close that their lips are barely touching.

“What?” Vic mumbles back, vision full of that stormy blue color of Henry’s eyes.

Instead of using words, Henry bucks his hips and humps his half-hard dick against Vic’s thigh, grinding playfully and licking along the seam of his lips.

“Oh fuck off!” Vic shoves Henry away with a laugh, stubbornly squeezing his eyes closed and trying to force himself back to sleep.

If Henry woke him up this early during summer break just to get his dick touched, Vic’s ready to roll over and tell him to do it himself.

Henry just laughs back and keeps trying to kiss Vic anyway, but he does pull his hips back and lay off the grinding.

“No, comm’on I’m jokin’,” Henry insists and taps Vic’s cheek impatiently. “I really got you something.”

Vic waits a whole minute in silence, trying to convince Henry he’s asleep, and then fails when curiosity takes over and he flicks his eyes open. Pupils adjusting to the light, Vic sees that Henry still has that little smirk on his face and that dimple in his cheek, and Vic feels that familiar warmth of fondness spread though his chest.

“…What?”

Henry’s face brightens up in that way only Vic gets to see, with that pink glow in his cheeks that makes his freckles stand out, and the light in his eyes outshining the darkness behind them. Sitting up quickly, Henry reaches into the big pocket of his sweatshirt. Whatever’s in there clacks and rattles around, until Henry pulls out a something metal in one hand, and some smaller object fisted in the other.

Sitting up to get a better look, and also because he misses the warmth of Henry on top of him, Vic sees the matching sides of a slide lock in Henry’s hands.

About a week ago, the boys had been spending the evening in Vic’s room. They had borrowed Belch’s Walkman for the night and were trading it back and forth, switching out the variety of cassettes they had gotten from the record store. And to the tune of Metallica, Aerosmith, and Def Leopard they made out and touched each other with lazy hands.

But as time went on they got a little too rowdy, and there must have been some sound they made or loud thump on the carpeted floor, because then there was the creak of the door opening and the boys jumped away from each other. Thankfully, all their touches had been over their clothes so far, and from where they were sitting on the floor, everything that needed to be hidden was. But that didn’t help the absolute mortification they felt when Vic’s mother appeared in the doorway.

It was probably obvious that they were doing something, what with their burning faces and guilty eyes, but Vic knew he could get away with it because she would pretend it wasn’t happening.

“Oh- I didn’t realize you-” Mom says, clutching the doorjamb with white knuckles. She sees all the pieces laid out in front of her, but she’s trying desperately not to put them together.

“We weren’t doing anything,” Vic interrupts, sounding even more guilty than he looks, with his voice raspy and his lips swelled up. “Just listening to music,” and he shoots a glare at Henry to
make him nod along.

Mom gets this look in her eyes, like she wants to scold him but also like she’s worried, but after a long staring contest between them, she drops the look and goes back to being oblivious.

“Of course,” she says flippantly, like catching them like this is just typical. “Just don’t stay up too late,” Mom reminds them, not so subtly meaning stop before your father gets home, and then walks away. Leaving the door swinging open behind her.

Nothing came of the event besides Vic feeling like his mother was hovering over him more than ever before, watching over him when she thought he wasn’t aware of it. Before, he and Henry, and even the other guys sometimes, could pass through the house or hang out on the back porch without getting any attention from his mom, but now it always seemed like she was anxious and protective whenever Vic was with other boys.

It’s always at a distance though. She would never took her concerns directly to him. Would never admit that she was worried about what her youngest child was getting himself into, or scared that he would get hurt because of who he is, or guilty that she drove him away in the first place.

But Vic only resented the extra attention, so used to having so much space from her for so long. Why should she want to be his mother now, when he needed her most two years ago? The hovering also makes him paranoid about Henry and him practicing in the room while she’s home. At first they tried just touching each other down in the barrens or by the quarry, but there they run the risk of getting caught by anyone (and it only took a few mosquito bites to the inner thighs for both boys to become more itchy than turned on). And then Vic had mentioned, off-handedly and not at all serious, that he wished he could put a lock on the door, just because it would put his mind at ease. But now Henry has one, probably stolen from the hardware store, and Vic feels a pulse of excitement spread through his chest.

“Seriously?” Vic tries to keep a straight face, but inevitably can’t and gets that same mischievous smile that Henry has.

“Yeah.”

Imagine what two boys could do with a lock on their door.

Vic double checks that no one is around, remembering that a series of circumstances has left the house empty for at least a few hours. He and Henry dig through the tools in the garage, coming up with a power drill and a couple long screws that would hold the lock tight.

It’s not rocket science, but the boys do get in a mild argument over how best to put the lock on, which results in a few extra inch-deep holes being put in the wall. But eventually they get the pieces to line up just right and drill them in, making sure they won’t pop off or wiggle out of place. Then the boys test its hold, yanking back and forth on the knob to make sure the lock will keep it shut. And, just for good measure, Henry pushes Vic up against the door and shoves his tongue into his mouth, until the boys are furiously kissing and grinding against each other, and the door stays steady behind them.

Vic pulls away for a moment, letting Henry give him a couple hickeys while he looks down at the pile of cushions on the floor. It’s rare to have absolute privacy in this house for so long, and while they could spend it messing around and making out, maybe it’s time to make some changes around here.

“Hey,” Vic nudges Henry’s face off his neck so they can look at each other. “Help me with
“Something else?”

“Sure, what?” Henry shrugs.

Unlatching the door, Vic leads them upstairs, pulling Henry along by his usual grip on his wrist. Henry follows, eyes curiously wandering across the terrain of the second floor. For so long has he been sleeping over at Vic’s house, as well as doing lots of other things too, and yet he’s never been up here.

Vic takes him to the farthest door down the hall, and it opens to a room clearly inhabited by a teenage girl, what with all the boy band posters and makeup and clothes strewn about. But there’s two beds in here, against opposite walls, and one looks much less lived in than the other.

“Do think we could move it?” Vic asks as they walk over to his old bed.

Henry flops down on the mattress, despite the purple comforter on it, and feels the springs bounce back against him, and then Vic sits down beside him.

“Probably. We could just push it down the stairs,” He says, but his mind is drifting to what he in Vic could do in a bed together, and for some reason it seems much more serious than just touching each other on the floor.

Vic laughs at the idea, “I don’t think it would go through the door that way.”

After brainstorming ideas for a little while, they agree to separate the mattress from the bedframe and work from there. So Vic shoos Henry off the bed and strips it of the sheets and blankets, leaving them in a pile on the floor because he never liked them in the first place. The mattress tips off the frame easily, and the boys lay it up against the wall.

The brass bedframe is lighter than it looks, and they turn it on its side to maneuver it through the doorway. There’s a bit of juvenile bickering that goes on,

“No to my left.”

“That’s the same way!”

“No it’s not!”

“…wait so my right?”

“Henry, fucking shut up.”

“You fucking shut up!”

And on a sharp turn, they do put a small dent in the drywall that Vic hopes no one will notice. Carrying it down the stairs is kind of a safety hazard, but they do it with only minimal injuries, scratches and squished fingers, and only yell at each other a few more times before they have the frame in the spare room.

It’s a tight fit, almost big enough to stretch from one wall to the other and it takes up half the floor space, but they get it in and sag in relief. But then they remember that they are only half done.

“Do we have to?” Henry whines.

He strips off his sweatshirt to evade the heat, and leaves it crumpled in the corner.
And Vic just levels a glare at him and lays an open palm out towards the metal frame, as if to say \textit{what do you think?}

“…Fine,” Henry concedes, but on the way back upstairs he pinches the back of Vic’s thigh in retaliation.

The mattress is heavier and more ungainly than the frame was, but it’s easier to slide along the floor and to the top of the stairs. They flop it down there, and even though it seems stupid and childish in hindsight, they sit on the back edge and push off from the wall. The bed rolls down the stairs with hard thumps, going fast enough to throw Vic and Henry back and possibly crack their skulls open as they finally land on the hardwood floor below. But they come out unscathed and breathless from the short ride down, and their laughing in the end and kiss for a while at the bottom of the stairs to make up for all the bickering earlier.

They lazily drag the mattress into the room, flopping it down on the waiting bedframe and then throwing themselves face down on it.

Already, Vic realizes how much he missed lying on a bed instead of the floor. Henry seems to agree, rolling onto his side and letting his fingers run over the bare skin of Vic’s upper arm and dip under the sleeve of his t-shirt, until Vic finally shifts over to him and they wrap up in each other.

Later, Vic will at least grab some of the pillows and blankets off the floor to make the bed, but for now the boys lie on the naked mattress and slowly work each other up. It’s not long before they're both hot and ready for more, and even though the house is empty, they lock the door just because they can.

With sweaty and persistent hands, Henry grabs on to Vic’s hips and twists them over, lying on his back and making the other boy straddle him. They haven’t stripped off their underwear, but Vic does pull Henry’s hard dick out from beneath the elastic band and starts playing with the head, until Henry’s grinding his teeth and bucking upwards into the touch.

He pulls Vic forward on the next thrust, so he can rub his dick right up against Vic’s pussy, only separated by a thin layer of fabric.

“Fuck- fuck fu-” Henry huffs out, because the friction isn’t the best but \textit{God damn} is Vic so warm there that Henry feels like there’s fire burning between them.

Vic rolls his hips up experimentally, so wet that the slide is easy, and Henry moans again. The pressure of Henry’s shaft against his slit isn’t quite enough, but then on the next thrust, the tip bobs against his clit and that really gets his hips moving.

They get in a rough and choppy rhythm, with Henry guiding Vic’s hips back and forth and probably leaving finger sized bruises on his hip bones, and Vic leaning forward with his hands on Henry’s chest to steady himself. They’re both wet now with a mix of slick and pre-cum, which soaks into Vic’s underwear and makes the material stick to the cleft of his pussy.

Henry’s rutting up faster now, face red and eyes closed like he’s almost to climax, so Vic reaches down between them to make him thrust right up against where he needs it most. And while he guides Henry’s dick along his slit, Vic starts thumbing his clit along to the pace, trying to relieve the building ache in his stomach.

The mattress squeaks in unison to their faux fucking, barely louder than the groans and whines the boys make as they chase their orgasms. Henry cums first, arching up on his shoulders and leaving little crescent shaped indents with his nails on Vic’s skin. Translucent cum spits up over Vic’s
underwear, drenching the fabric further and making his fingers sticky as they work faster over the swell of his clit. A few more rough grinds downward is all it takes to make that knot in his core unwind and a rush of bliss to follow, pulsing warmth through his groin as he cum.

Finally Vic can draw a breath again, and as he does, he falls forward onto Henry’s chest. Henry squeals uncomfortably when his dick gets caught between them and pinched in their legs, but they readjust and roll over until they get in their usual cuddling position. Vic eventually shucks his soaking wet underwear and Henry kicks off his own, so all the skin below their waists is touching.

Their heart rates slow and skin cools of, and the boys are soothed by the hum of each other’s breathing. Vic has figured out that after cumming, Henry is extra affectionate and drowsy, content to hold the other boy close like a big pillow and suck weak kisses into his flesh. And Vic is fine with that, more dizzy and floating after he gets off, so he likes having someone to hold him down and anchor him while his mind drifts.

“Yeah, this is better,” Henry mumbles into Vic’s neck as they settle in the bed.

“Mhmm,” Vic hums back, thinking that he might actually get some real restful sleep now, especially if Henry’s going to be his human blanket.

Their cruising towards a short nap, evening approaching soon and the room going dark and warm from the setting sun. If they wake up in time, they might practice again, or at least play around a little. But now with the door locked, they don’t have to worry when someone gets home.

“Wait- mhh- hold on,” Henry sits up a little, blurry eyed and voice hoarse as he pulls them both from the brink of sleep.

“What?” Vic rubs his eyes and stays stubbornly lying on the bed, trying to pull Henry back down with clenching hands.

“I uh- I got you somethin’ else,” Henry says, standing off the bed to grab his sweatshirt from the floor and unconcerned about being naked from the waist down.

Vic sits up, brows knitting together when he hears something rattle as Henry pulls it out of the pocket. Henry comes back to the bed with it clutched in his fist, and an expression on his face that makes Vic even more confused. He seems some cross between scared and pensive, eyes shifting down to his lap as he sits unsettled and stiff.

“What’s that?” Vic asks cautiously, trying not to push and Henry too hard into showing him.

Henry huffs and blinks a few times, before pressing the object into Vic’s open hand.

It’s white pill bottle, full of capsules clacking around the inside and the lid still sealed. Vic turns it over in his palm, and holds it closer to his face to read the label.

*Ibuprofen* is written across the front in big, bold letters, and under it in smaller print is *100 Tablets.* 200 mg Each.

Vic looks up at Henry confused. He’s seen pills like these at the pharmacy, where Henry definitely stole them from, but why would he? Henry is looking back at Vic, studding his face with focus and fingers tapping thoughtlessly against the bed.

“It’s for when you get your thing,” Henry says after a beat of silence, but Vic just gives him another questioning look. “You know, your blood thing?”
It all dawns on Vic from there. The last two months have been Hell since his period started, everyday being just as painful as the last, until Vic is sure his stomach will just explode before the blood stops. Vic barely wants to get up to eat while having it, so he never goes out with the guys and spends a good few hours every day with a headache and either angry at everything or crying his eyes out. Henry’s been trying to help, but always is a little useless for things to do. He’ll come over at night and rub Vic’s stomach, get him glasses of water when no one’s around, and kiss him when he’s upset. But mostly they just have to wait it out, and that leaves both of them frustrated and touch starved.

So Henry had been thinking about this for a while actually, it wasn’t some impulsive decision for once, but finally he got sick of his best friend being so miserable and swiped these pills from the pharmacy. But something Vic had told him once hung over his shoulder, making him ambivalent to give them to him.

“Really?” Vic says, half-surprised and half-elated. Maybe now he can actually go out and be normal again, if the pain could finally go away. He’s gotten better at using pads and how to put them on, so he’s confident that if he can hide all the symptoms, no one will know. “Thanks,” and he leans in towards Henry to kiss him, but is stopped by firm hands holding his shoulders.

Their eyes lock together, Henry’s gaze so intense and unwavering that it intimidates Vic a bit.

“No- no Henry I won’t” Vic stutters out, dropping the pill bottle like it had burned him and putting his hands on Henry’s cheeks to draw him in closer.

“I promise.” Vic mumbles into his sleeve, just barely loud enough for Henry to hear. “I- It’s not the same anymore. I don’t want to-” die.

Henry nods against his shoulder and pulls them even closer together, so that every inch of space where they could be touching they are. And he doesn’t say anything else, but Vic feels it in the clutch of his fingers and the beat of his heart. They lay down on their sides like that, and eventually drift into a dark, dreamless sleep, with only words left unsaid floating between them.

I can’t lose you.

You’re the reason I’m alive.
I didn't expect to finish this so fast. It's rare a writing days are this productive.

This was a fluff chapter that nothing really important happened in,,,,, but I kinda love it for the ending T.T <3 <3

I hope you guys like it too, it wasn't as plot heavy as some other chapters, but sometimes I just like characters doing mundane things and being cute *shrugs*

I hope the time skips aren't too fast. I tried to space them out but I want to age the boys up faster,,,, ((so the sex parts are less weird))

Please please please tell me what you think, especially if you haven't commented before or have just started reading recently :)))) Love to hear from all of you. .....Maybe tell me what you think is coming soon? Good or bad? And/or call me out on my foreshadowing bullshit :PP

Also, if you can name the song that the last line of this chapter was referencing, I'll email you an oreo. ((for some reason it's my go to henvic/writing song))

Follow me on tumblr @ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/ , I have dumb things to say but god damn someone needs to say them!

Love love forever and always

XOXO
“Henry doesn’t even like girls anyway,” Vic says, not to Patrick, but to pacify himself.

“That’s what I thought.”

Chapter Twenty-Three: Note

November, 1987

“So I was wondering if- um, maybe you could give this to Henry? For me?”

Vic pauses between switching out notebooks from his locker, eyes affixed on the girl before him and at a loss for words. He can’t say he hates Sally Mueller, he’s barely given her more than a passing thought whenever they’ve shared a class together. She seems nice enough and popular with the other girls, even Greta doesn’t seem to hate her, and she comes from a good family further up town and probably gets a bigger allowance than any other kid in school. But overall, Vic doesn’t care to know her, but she seems to think he’ll help her with… whatever this is.

People around school seem to think Vic is the, well not the nicest, but the least awful of the Bowers gang. And Vic knows that’s not true, if Belch was left to his own devices, he wouldn’t do more than mess with people for laughs on occasion, and he probably would give a note to his best friend if some girl asked him to. What it really comes down to is that people just think Vic is the least intimidating of the four. Henry is a grade-A psycho according to most people, Belch is bigger than any other kid, and Patrick is weird and makes people uncomfortable. But besides an icy glare and a mean right hook, Vic is just the youngest and the smallest of the group, with soft features that seem distinctly feminine.

Ironically, Vic knowing that this is what people think of him only makes him crueler in the moment, like he has to prove his masculinity by hurting people even more than the rest of the boys.

“What is it?” Vic asks, voice low and quite. People also have gotten used to him not talking to anyone besides his friends and occasionally someone they’re roughing up. Years of anxious silence has garnered him the reputation of that kid who doesn’t say much and will knock your lights out. And even when he doesn’t feel that painful needling at his neck when he’s afraid to speak, he just doesn’t bother anymore, because anybody worth talking to already knows how to listen to him.

So Sally startles back at the sound of his voice, one hand hesitantly holding out a folded up piece of notebook paper, and the other clutching a textbook to her chest. Kids are rushing through the halls and shouting, so she has to strain to hear him.

“Just- um- a note,” She answers, starting to regret asking Vic in the first place because he’s giving
her a glare that could freeze Hell over. “You know, never mind. I’ll just—”

But Vic snatches the paper out of her hand without a word and goes back to grabbing books out of his locker.

“…So, you’ll give it to him?” Sally shuffles from one foot to the other, waiting persistently for an answer despite Vic’s dismissive attitude.

“Sure,” He says, with no intention to do so.

“O-okay,” She’s ambivalent, but still doesn’t pick up on the dark aura he is giving off. “Just don’t—don’t read it… please?”

Vic rolls his eyes but *hmms* back in the affirmative, and the fist holding her note clenches even tighter.

The bell rings and and Sally has to turn away and speed to class, throwing a last minute *thank you* over her shoulder. Vic doesn’t even move from his locker, watching the hall clear out and waiting until she goes around the corner before he unfolds the paper and reads it with burning eyes.

It’s not the most saccharine thing in the world, just some stupid letter asking if Henry wanted to go see a movie with her and how she wanted to hang out on the weekend, but Vic feels his stomach sour and turn uncomfortably. He crumples up the paper into a little ball, and then slams his locker much harder than necessary, so loud that it echoes in the empty hall.

“What’s it say?” Patrick says, suddenly appearing behind Vic and leaning against the wall.

Vic startles, jumping a foot in the air and dropping all the books in his arms, and just barely keeps himself from screeching by biting his tongue until it bleeds.

“Were you fucking there the whole time?” he snaps at the other boy, swallowing a mouthful of metallic spit and crouching down to pick up his stuff.

“I’m always here,” Patrick leers down at him with a sharp, condescending smile. “I’m everywhere.”

Vic poignantly ignores him, chalking this up to Patrick just trying to get under his skin and mess with him. They’re already past the acceptable time to be late for class, but neither boy is in any rush to get there. Since last year, Vic is now included in the school’s efforts to keep the Bowers gang boys apart, so he doesn’t even get to see his friends in classes anymore. In retaliation, they all are much more likely to ditch periods, or even whole school days, and smoke in the parking lot during lunch.

“So what is it? Some love letter for Henry?” Patrick asks again, eyeing the note still crumbled up in Vic’s hand.

“Forget it,” Vic is just going to throw the paper away and never mention this to Henry or anyone else, and maybe push Sally in the hall if she tries to pull something like this again.

He can’t explain why he suddenly feels so much white-hot hate bubbling up inside of him, because he’s never even cared about Sally fucking Mueller or who she was or what she thought of his best friend. But now he thinks about her perfect teeth and perky tits and blonde hair and how *if he hadn’t been this way or didn’t cut his hair, maybe that’s what he would’ve looked like*. So when he thinks of her, it’s not so much about her, or even about Henry really, it’s more about himself and the person he isn’t.

“Henry doesn’t even like girls anyway,” Vic says, not to Patrick, but to pacify himself.
Henry would be furious if he knew Vic said that out loud in school, even if no one was around. While he was able to tell Vic that one night when emotions were running high and their friendship was on the verge of falling apart, Henry is still intensely guarded over that secret and keeping it from everyone besides their friends. Of course Vic understands that, he’s had secrets for years now, but sometimes he does wish that he and Henry could hold hands or sit closer together, without worrying about what people will think. But maybe then, stupid girls wouldn’t do shit like this.

“That’s what I thought,” Patrick says abruptly, and Vic’s mind is stalls to process those words.

“What do you mean?” Vic looks up, books in his arms but still crouched on the floor.

From so low, Patrick looks impossibly tall and imposing, casting a long dark shadow across the floor. Vic stands back up, but Patrick is still looming over him with a dark mirth in his eyes.

He doesn’t know. He can’t know.

“Nothing,” Patrick shrugs, looking smug enough to make Vic want to punch him in the face. “See ya’ later,” he turns to leave with a wink, walking down the hall in the opposite direction of his next class.

Vic stays in place for a moment longer, watching Patrick go who-knows-where, and then he is alone in the hall. A pack of smokes is sitting deep in his back pocket and calling out to him, even though the sharp dread in his stomach isn’t due too nicotine cravings. If he ditches this class, which he might as well at this point, he’ll have to spend it alone behind the school with only his thoughts and a cigarette.

A few hours later, Vic has skipped two class periods and all his self-destructive thoughts have festered and consumed his mind. He spends lunch with the guys in their usual spot outside the school, and he tries to not be too miserable. He and Henry did find ten spare minutes to make out alone before they meet up with Belch and Patrick. But the latter is still giving Vic that dark leer the makes his insides twist.

So by the end of the school day, Vic is upset and irritated with no direction to aim his aggression in. He’s thinking too hard about what Patrick said, about what he didn’t say, and that works up his frustration more.

But, more convenient than trying to break Patrick’s nose, Vic runs into Sally Mueller again right after the bell rings. There are still kids in the hall, either loitering around or rushing to leave. Usually Vic would meet Henry soon and would go mess with the loser kids, who are now in sixth grade and much easier to torment within the same school.

Sally doesn’t say anything to him, but she does give him a look that asks silently if he has given Henry the note, and that ignites something inside him. Last class, Vic had fished out the paper from his pocket and tore it into a thousand little pieces, but the words on it still ring in his mind.

That deep aching anger clouds Vic’s reason and conscious, and suddenly he’s walking towards her on a rash impulse.

“Hey,” He startles her, interrupting some conversation she was having with a friend.

“Oh, um- hi, did you…” Sally separates from the group of girls she’s with, though they do watch curiously as she talks to Vic.

Vic tilts his head back in a gesture for her to follow, and then leads her down the hall.
“Yeah,” He says as they get to a quieter area. “Henry wants to talk to you.”

Her face lights up, excited and innocent with no suspicion that she’s being lied to.

“Follow me,” Vic takes her wrist in a grip that’s a little too tight to be friendly, and pulls her even further away from her friends.

Sally follows, wondering where they are going but too shy to actually ask, and her arm is starting to hurt from Vic is pulling her, but she doesn’t say anything.

Henry is most definitely not at the end of this hallway, he’s probably out front getting pissy that Vic is making him wait, especially since this is when they go to Vic’s house to kiss and touch each other. But Vic keeps dragging Sally along, gaining the attention of the few people they pass on the way.

“What, um- what’s going on?” Sally asks, mildly distressed and trying to slow down their pace.

“Don’t worry about it,” But just as he says that, Vic makes a sharp turn and ducks into the boys’ bathroom and pulls Sally in with him.

“Hey! Why are-! Let me go!” she starts hollering and trying to escape his grip, but Vic’s hold is unrelenting and he’s not listening. “Stop it!”

If there’s anyone in the bathroom or around hearing the commotion, Vic isn’t paying attention to them. His head is swimming with the words on that note, which he read at least a dozen times before ripping it up, and then there’s the things Patrick said, the way he looked at him all day. The thoughts spin around his head, whirl pooling and pulling him down into darkness, where he can justify yanking a shrieking girl into a stall.

She’s really screaming now, like he’s about to murder her or something, and there’s other noises too, people shouting, talking, watching nearby. Vic just rolls his eyes and switches his grip from her arm to her hair and pulls her forward. He’s only a bit taller than her, but playing around with bigger boys has made him strong enough to corral her into the dank stall and with a hold on her hair.

“Shut up,” Vic says, but he’s talking less to her and more to the rush of noise around them, and to the small voice in the back of his mind that tells him stop, don’t do this.

Sally lashes out against him, smacking and scratching pathetically, but her sharp little nails hurt enough to make him slap her hands away. With a kick to the back of her knees, she falls onto the tiled floor and he drags her over to the edge of the toilet. It’s mostly clean, not that Vic really cares one way or another, and with one more fierce tug on her hair, he shoves her face into the bowl.

Water splashes up onto his arms, icy cold on his fevered skin, but he holds her face down as she fights against him. She’s screaming, sputtering like she’s spitting out water and crying out for help, so he pushes her back down and presses his elbow into her shoulders to keep her there. It’s a bit of a stretch, but he can hold her down with one arm and reach over with the other to flush the toilet.

He’s done this before with his friends, targeting sixth graders and other losers they like to beat up on, but this feels different. Maybe it’s because Vic’s alone this time, when usually he would just be helping or holding someone down from the side, or maybe it’s because she has quit fighting back and is just crying out for him to stop. But Vic can only imagine her long hair getting all swirled into the water, tangled up and then yanked from her scalp.

Last time Vic did this, he was laughing, all the guys were laughing, but now it’s different, it’s not fun. His blood is pumping so fast that he can feel the pulse in his fingertips, still holding Sally down in the toilet water. It’s not the same alone, it doesn’t satisfy that anger in him, it just feeds in more and
leaves him unsatisfied. Doing stuff like this, hurting people, isn’t the same when he does it by himself.

*It’s not the same without Henry.*

Vic finally releases her, hands shaking and breath shallow, and takes a step back. She jumps back as soon as she’s free, falling on her butt and gasping for air while big fat tears running down her red face. He looks at her, crying and humiliated on the floor, and he can’t really remember why he’s so angry at her. The note seems horribly insignificant now, something he could’ve just thrown away and never thought about again.

A few other boys have gathered around, drawn in by the sound of Sally screaming, and outside it sounds like even more people are here, either laughing or shouting for a teacher to help.

Vic feels crowed in by all the people, all the voices, so he shoves through them and out of the bathroom, leaving Sally Mueller sopping wet and crying on the tiled floor. He slips through the group and escapes without being caught, trying to keep his head down along the way, either from shame or residual rage.

But if he did look up, even for a brief second, he might have seen Patrick leaning casually against the wall a few feet off, watching with a smirk.

Getting away from the chaos he caused, Vic turns down the hall and stumbles right into Henry coming the other direction. They bang into each other, and Henry reaches out to grab Vic before they both fall to the ground.

“Vic- what the fuck’s goin’ on” He’s eyeing the people down the hall, wondering what everyone is looking at.

Unconsciously, Vic latches his hands, wet and shaky though they may be, onto Henry’s shirt for stability. Already, he feels the world tilt back to normal, feels his body recenter and mind clear when he looks up at Henry. All that’s left over is the racing pulse of his heartbeat and the unfulfilled cravings in his gut, and suddenly all thoughts of Sally or anyone else fly out of his head.

“N-nothing,” Vic guides Henry the other direction, towards the exit. “We should go.”

“What’s your deal?” Henry asks, noticing how jumpy Vic seems.

Maybe later, he’ll tell Henry what he did, definitely not tell him about the note though, no one ever has to know about that. And by tomorrow everybody will be talking about it. But for now, Vic just wants to run off with Henry and never come back.

“My mom’s got stuff to do today,” Vic says as he remembers it. “And my sisters are busy too, so…” He entices Henry with a grin and starts tugging him towards the door again.

And Henry gives him back that’s says he couldn’t care less about the spectacle down the hall, and they dash out the school entrance and down the street.

*Suck my dick* has been in their vocabulary for so long, used to instigate a fight, thrown at the losers, told to Patrick when he’s being too handsy, but Vic never thinks about it literally until his face right above Henry’s hard cock.

Normally, they stick to shoving hands down each other’s pants to get off quick, or grinding against each other while they make out, but today they have an extra hour alone and want to take their time.
So they get to Vic’s room and lock the door in a rush, and then Henry basically tackles him onto the bed with a kiss.

Henry is getting him worked up already, roughly rubbing his pussy through his jeans and squeezing the backs of his thighs, while sucking big red hickies on his neck. Combined with his thudding pulse and left over nerves from before, Vic feels his peak coming up just from the scrape of Henry’s teeth running across his collar bone, but he’s craving something more than that. So he pulls Henry off and makes him lie back on the bed.

With hands grabbing at Vic’s sides, Henry tries to pull the other down on top of him, and he makes the softest whimper in the back of his throat at when Vic refuses. That sound does make Vic lean down and press a fleeting kiss to Henry’s lips, just to keep him happy. But after the kiss, Henry wants more, so Vic has to sit up and slot himself between Henry’s open legs.

Swiftly unbuckling his belt and yanking his jeans down past his thighs, he pulls Henry’s cock out from his boxers. Vic licks his palm and sets a slow pace to get him fully hard with teasing touches. Henry arches up into the feeling, head tossing from side to side and fingers clutching at the blanket under him. The shaft is blood hot and sticky with spit in his hand, and Henry seems perfectly happy just to let Vic make him cum like this.

But something in Vic wants to push farther than they have before. Wants to erase the guilt that’s turning his stomach cold.

So he moves farther down the bed, crouching lower as he keeps playing with Henry’s dick, until he’s literally, actually, within spitting distance of it. Henry doesn’t seem to notice or care that Vic is moving around, instead he’s just bucking his hips up in time with Vic’s hand, until it starts to slow down.

His eyes flutter open, not expecting to look down and see Vic posed over his dick with parted lips. They both freeze up for a moment, Vic like he’s been caught red-handed, and Henry holding his breath to keep from cumming right away.

“…Just, close your eyes,” Vic proposes softly, face bright red with embarrassment and arousal, “Okay?”

“Yeah,” Henry says back nodding, but keeps his gaze on Vic for a moment longer, just to cement the image in his mind.

As soon as Henry stops looking at him, because Vic just can’t do this with Henry watching, Vic slides his hand off his dick and leans down again. His heart is thudding so hard it’s making his eardrums vibrate, and he anxiously licks his lips over again before opening his mouth and swallowing up Henry’s dick.

All at once, the heat and the wetness of Vic’s mouth makes Henry thrust up on instinct, and it makes his dick jab against the roof of his mouth painfully. Vic feels his stomach turn and he gags immediately, pulling off as fast as he can with his eyes burning.

“Don’t do that!” Vic whisper-shouts at him, grabbing Henry’s dick to keep it from bobbing against his chin.

“S-sorry,” Henry says after a moment, face beet red and teeth grinding together.

Vic glares at him for another second, but finally concedes that Henry really doesn’t have that much control of himself when he’s this hard, so he probably didn’t mean it. Pumping his dick once more,
Vic tries again, but takes a lot less into his mouth this time. At first, he just barely wraps his lips around the very tip, where it’s flushed red and the slit is leaking steadily. It’s basically just a kiss, with soft lips and no tongue or teeth, but Henry moans like it’s the best feeling in the world. When he involuntary humps up again, Vic braces him down with an arm on his hip and a fist holding tight around the base, and then sucks another kiss against the head.

Vic figures out pretty quickly that pre-cum tastes gross, like musky sweat would taste, and the texture is slimy and sticky on his lips. But just the feeling of having Henry’s dick in his mouth, flesh burning hot and throbbing, isn’t that bad really, so he takes the rest of the tip in too.

The ridge under the head butts up against his bottom teeth, and Henry hisses and flinches away. Before he can pull his dick out, Vic soothes the sore spot with his tongue gently, and then starts sucking softly on the head. Vic flicks his eyes up briefly, just to see how Henry’s doing, and meets blown out eyes staring intently down at him.

Henry swears he must be dreaming, because this could only have come from some late-night fantasy, but it feels so real and so good. And the way Vic looks too, peaking up through his bangs and soft pink lips around his dick, is enough to make Henry feel warm and fuzzy all over. Especially in his crotch, but that should be obvious.

Vic still is ambivalent about Henry watching, but that pleasured look on his face distracts from the embarrassment. He pops off the dick with one more suck that leaves Henry whining.

“Good?” the saliva and pre-cum in Vic’s mouth slur his words, so he inevitably has to swallow it all down.

“Y-eah,” Henry nods eagerly and wiggles his hips impatiently.

Vic dips back down, sucking just on the head and pumping his fist around the rest, until Henry is groaning and clenching tightly to the bedspread.

It doesn’t take much more than that. Vic swirls his tongue around the head and feels all of Henry’s muscles seize sporadically. Henry’s face is all tense and red, and then with a deep moan he cums quickly. Vic feels the first pulse of hot ejaculate on his tongue and backs off as fast as possible, and ends up with a streak across his cheek too. The taste is even worse than before, stronger and salty like thick saline, and Vic doesn’t hesitate to turn his head and spit it up on the carpet.

Henry is all dazed and limp on the bed, huffing softly and smiling, despite the sour look on Vic’s face. Before either can say anything, Henry grabs Vic and tugs him back down on top, so they’re chest to chest and looking each other in the eye. Vic scrubs the extra cum off his face with the back of his wrist, leaving a sticky trail behind on his lips. But that doesn’t stop Henry from pulling him in for a kiss.

It’s all wet and sloppy, with slick spit and tongues, until Vic pulls off and makes a face.

“That’s gross.”

But Henry just answers by swiping his tongue over Vic’s cheek.

“You’re sick,” Vic accuses, but a grin is creeping onto his lips.

Henry is still dozy from his orgasm, relaxed and warm and clinging tightly to Vic. They lie together for a few minutes, snuggled close and listening to each other’s hearts.

Vic shifts a little bit, getting one leg over Henry’s so he can rut slowly against his thigh. He’s still hot
and wet down there, even though it’s starting to fade. But then that heat is reignited when Henry reaches a hand down and slides it into Vic’s pants and underwear. Fingers wander over his clit and up and down his slit, until Vic is riding his hand and panting into his neck.

“Hey,” Henry pauses his fingers and nudges their noses to get Vic to look up.

“Huh?” Vic mumbles, pumping his hips faster to get Henry moving again.

“There’s uh-” Henry starts, eyes dark in the low light. “There’s this thing I heard about,” Vic is barely listening, distracting Henry by sucking on his neck absentely. “Where, you like- put your tongue…here,” and he moves his fingers again for emphasis.

A sharp thrill run down his spine and all the muscles in his lower abdomen clench up unconsciously, and Vic doesn’t know whether those feelings are due to fear or excitement. Fingers down there already feel amazing, but Vic doesn’t know if he really wants Henry’s face there, looking and touching and licking him.

But then Henry guides Vic back down for a kiss, slow and soft with his tongue gently rubbing around Vic’s mouth, like he’s trying to show Vic how good it could feel somewhere else. And yeah, Vic is imagining a kiss like this on his pussy, and the idea makes him even wetter.

“Okay…” He mumbles between their lips, hesitant but tempted to try.

Henry rolls them over slowly, getting Vic to lie back with his hips just on the edge of the bed so Henry can tug his jeans and underwear down. He leaves them around Vic’s knees, but Vic is already a little uncomfortable, so having his legs pinned together makes him feel trapped and he has to kick them off all the way. His shirt is riding up too, just up to the dip of his stomach, so he puts a protective arm over to keep it from rising any further.

Henry gets off the bed and sinks down to the carpet on his knees, and his eyes keeping jumping from Vic’s face and to his crotch. He’s leans his head on Vic’s thigh and runs his fingers up the slit again. From this angle and so close, it looks different, redder in the middle and permeating this pulsing warmth. The skin looks extra soft and tender too, kind of like an open wound, and it’s all damp with that slick stuff Vic gets wet with.

If Vic thought Henry watching while he sucked him off was bad, it’s nowhere near as embarrassing as Henry looking so close at his pussy, so Vic has cover his eyes before he combusts into flames.

“Just do it already,” He whines, sick of the anticipation as Henry rubs his inner thighs.

And then Henry’s leaning in, so close that Vic can feel warm breath spreading tingles across flesh, and then even closer and he’s right there-

But Henry, turns at the last second and sinks his teeth into the junction between Vic’s thigh and groin, not hard enough to really hurt, but enough to make the boy shriek in surprise. Vic snaps his eyes open and looks down to see Henry smirking up at him and trying not to laugh.

“Stop making it weird!” Vic snaps at him, almost wanting to sit up and not do this at all if Henry’s just going to mess with him.

“You’re the one being weird!” Henry insists, and lays a soothing hand on Vic’s stomach. “Just calm down, okay?”

Vic recognizes that Henry’s being patient, speaking soft and moving slow, because he knows how protective Vic is of this part of himself, and Vic feels his heart soften and some of his guards come
down. He lays back down slowly, eyes closing again and forces his limbs to relax and fall open. One more deep breath and finally all the tension leaves, just as Henry licks along his slit in one quick, wet swipe.

A shiver shoots out through Vic’s body in every direction, making his shoulders arch up and eyes pop back open. His teeth sink into his lip until it bleeds, but the pain is overshadowed by that feeling of- Oh fuck, he’s doing it again…

“Good?” Henry pulls away with a slick noise, lips wet and eyes dark with want.

Vic is trying make words, or any noise at all, but all he can do is pant heavily and babble softly. Eventually he just nods, fingers knitting tight into the bedding and still not able to look down at Henry for more than a fleeting second.

Taking the go-ahead, Henry ducks back down to do it again. There’s a lot more hair down here than he imagined, and it’s kind of getting in the way of actually touching skin. So Henry moves his hands down, spreading the folds just enough to reveal that soft spot in the middle and he rubs his tongue up and down against it.

Vic is quivering all over, huffing out these soft little whimpers and legs twitching and flexing every time Henry’s tongue drags over his clit. He can’t put into words, why it’s so good. But it’s just so different than fingers. It’s softer, hotter too, and it keeps moving in squirmly laps up from his slit to the top of his clit, and then back down again. And then it slips into that one spot, where Vic can sometimes get a finger inside if he’s loose and wet enough, and Vic lets out a high pitched cry. The satisfaction and spread is there, but gentler and without the ache of getting stretched open, and that tongue feels burning hot inside of him.

Henry pulls his mouth away for a moment, just to catch a breath of air and wipe cold spit off his lips, and he notices how Vic’s legs are arching up and trying to draw him back down. His pussy’s all red and swelled up now, and every time he touches it Henry can feel the inner muscles pulse and clench. It doesn’t even really taste like anything, maybe a little salty like sweat or tears, but it’s more heady and warm than anything else.

After another minute of no contact, Vic pumps his hips up and twists around with a whine, finally daring to open his eyes again. Henry sees his bitten lips and teary, needy eyes and dives back down before Vic even has to whine again.

He starts fingering along the edge of his slit and sucking wet kisses against his clit, until Vic is keening with pleasure and wet all over. And then a few more strokes of Henry’s tongue is all it takes to have him feel his insides squeeze tight around the stimulation and release all at once.

Henry ends up with mess of slick fluid on his chin and his head buzzing from breathing in that scent for so long, but it’s worth it to see that exhausted, blissed-out look on Vic’s face. Wiping his face with the edge of his shirt, Henry climbs back up on the bed, half-hard again but not achingly so, and waits for Vic to catch his breath.

Finally Vic can open his eyes, and then immediately has to close them again when they meet Henry’s. He doesn’t know why it’s stranger to let Henry do that to him than it was sucking a dick, but Vic doesn’t think he’ll ever stop blushing at this rate.

Henry just leans in and kisses Vic anyway, pressing their lips together until Vic can’t resist opening up and letting their tongues twist together.

But then Vic’s face scrunches up and he pushes Henry off when he catches that aftertaste on his
“You’re sick,” He says for the second time that day, but with just as much fondness and affection as before.

“Whatever,” Henry just shrugs, unashamed and already looking forward to the next time they can put their mouths on each other.

They move around to lie longwise on the bed, still too warm for a blanket but cuddling up against each other anyway. Henry rolls around a bit, unsettled and restless, until he finally gets in a spot where he can hear Vic’s heartbeat and the steady rhythm tempts him towards sleep. Vic tangles his fingers into Henry’s hair and lets his mind drift off slowly.

But then, right before they both fall asleep, Henry shifts and hums softly, until he’s got Vic’s attention.

“So what was goin’ on after school?” He asks off-handedly, just casually curious.

“…Nothin’” Vic mumbles back, trying to fall back asleep, despite the cold guilt that rears back up inside his chest.

Chapter End Notes

..... i don;t like this chapter.
Full honesty time. I really just never got it to the point where i was satisfied with it. But i wanted to move on ad keep the story moving..... so im sorry I guess that it's a little lackluster
My editing might also be pretty bad cause i got sick of this chapter fast.

If you guys like it, or hate it, or have any kind of feedback at all, please please please drop a comment for me I LOVE them and it keeps me motivated to write. <3 :))))))

I do like my shy baby Vic tho, it's my #mood 2k18 ;P

Obligatory tumbler plug-->> https://imakeficrequestsandthedisappear.tumblr.com/
please follow me and we can be awkward internet friends

always thankyou for reading, i love writing for you guys even when it doesn't work out the way i want to :)))
XOXO

Post posting update:

Heyyyyy! To anyone whos waiting on the new chapter, I just moved back into school and started a new semester, so updates will be a little less frequent

Buttttttt, chapter 24 will be coming soon, like thursday-ish, and hopefully I'll be on a good writing schedule soon
Bound Part 1

Chapter Summary

Gesturing to his chest again, Vic mumbles, “If I could just…get rid of them. Like,” He passes an open palm over the air above his chest and down to his stomach, as if he’s wiping a slate clean, “just flat, you know?”

Like you, is what he means. Like normal boys.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Twenty-Four: Bound Part 1

February, 1988

Sometimes there’s a reason and sometimes there’s not, but lately Vic has been having a hard time getting out of bed. It’s not that he can’t wake up, in fact he’s also having trouble falling asleep, it’s that he physically can’t get up at all.

It always starts with this intense ache in his chest, either the day or night before, and then it feels like he’s slipping down, down, down into a dark hole that sucks away all his energy and motivation. So by morning he’ll wake from a useless, restless sleep, and can’t do more than stare up at the ceiling.

Most of the time, these misery spells coalign with his period, but the length and severity is way beyond the typical mood swings of a hormonal teenager. Vic does what he can, takes only the recommended dosage of painkillers, uses pads as discreetly as possible, takes extra showers to feel clean, and yet he’ll still awake the next day feeling empty and broken.

Yesterday, Vic felt one of these moods coming on, recognizing the tell-tale draining exhaustion, like everything in him was leaking out and being replaced with cold water. And then series of events occurred all at once to make it ten times worse.

He doesn’t know what happened first, if he was upset and that was why his father noticed him, or if Daddy noticed him and that was why he was upset. But in whichever order, Vic ends up pinned against the edge of the kitchen counter by a fist around his throat. Blood is pouring down from a gash on his forehead, painting one side of his face red and mixing with the tears that run down his cheeks. He’s kicking at his father and prying at the hand that holds his neck so tight, but it’s all futile. The world is closing in, black shadows taking over his vision as Vic fights for that last little breath of air. And for a second, Vic believes that this time he won’t wake up after.

What are we still doing this for? Vic thinks in his last few seconds of consciousness. Daddy barely comes home anymore, and when he does, he pretends Vic isn’t there until it’s convenient to slam his head into the doorjamb and choke him to death in the kitchen. But it seems like it’s been so long since this started. Two whole years have passed, and still Vic cuts his hair and wears the clothes he likes and insists he’s a boy at every opportunity, no matter how hard or how often Daddy hits him. So what’s it going to change now? Why is it still happening?
“Okay, okay! That’s enough!”

Right before everything goes black, Vic hears that voice call out, so faintly that he must be imagining it. But the pressure on his neck recedes just enough to let him draw in air and blink his eyes open. And suddenly his mother is there, not right beside him, or between him and Daddy, but at the edge of the kitchen. Her face is anxious and afraid, but also more engaged than he’s seen her in months, like she’s woken from a long hibernation.

“What?” Daddy says, and just the sound of that voice still makes Vic flinch, but the man turns his attention towards his wife, and that loosens his grip enough that Vic slip out.

“Just… that’s enough okay? Please?” Mom says back, voice soft and pleading. She’s clasping at the air in front of her nervously, eyes darting around the room so she doesn’t have to look her husband in the eye.

Vic sinks to the floor heaving, trying to catch his breath and feeling it scrape through his bruised throat. He’s looking up at his mother like she’s someone he’s never met. Not once before, not even for any other reason, has she ever intervened. She looks just as surprised and distressed as Vic is, obviously she’s always had an intense fear of confrontation, but she stays in place.

She looks down at her son, right before they both know Daddy is about to go off on her, and she makes this frantic movement with her eyes from him to the hallway. Vic immediately catches her meaning.

Go.

So he darts out of the kitchen without a second to spare, disappearing right before the argument really starts between his parents, his father, aggressive and violent as ever, and his mother, passive but not backing down this time. Vic runs to his room, locking the door and crumbling onto his bed in a heap. And when the noise across the house gets really bad, all he can do is pull a pillow over his head and will himself to sleep.

He wakes up the next morning sore from the outside in. The scar on his forehead, never cleaned or treated since last night, has left a big blood stain across his pillows and bedspread, and his neck feels like it’s lined with broken glass. But the rest of his body feels like it’s under deep water pressure. Like his body is just one big pulsing bruise.

After the beginnings of a few minor cramps, Vic finally chokes down a pair of painkillers and changes his pad. He feels gross and sticky all over, but even getting up for a few seconds hurts so bad, so he couldn’t possibly get all the way upstairs to take a shower.

It’s already noon, he couldn’t even wake up in time for school, and it seems that the house is empty. But, for all he knows, Mom could be upstairs right now in bed. Vic wonders if she also has days like this, where every inch of your body feels like it’s rotting into dust until there’s nothing left. He wonders if she’s having one right now. He wonders if she has bruises from yesterday too.

Lying back down, Vic tries to pull all the pillows around himself for comfort and protection. He kind of misses the nest he used to sleep in on the floor, even though it wasn’t very comfortable, but the bed just seems too empty and high up sometimes. He twists over, maybe not to fall asleep, but just rest his eyes and let the medicine take some of the aches away, but his whole body seizes up in pain.

A broken gasp that morphs into a whimper, the only real sound he’s capable of making right now, and he has to arch backward to pull his chest off the mattress. Lately when he’s on his period, his tits will swell up a little and be insanely sensitive and tender to any kind of touch.
First of all, Vic hates that they suddenly can just get bigger, like they weren’t already awful to begin with. But that inconvenience can’t even compare to the amount of pain they’re causing him. Just rolling onto his front on a soft mattress is enough to send shockwaves through his chest that he swears he can feel in his bones.

His nipples are the absolute worst, puffed up and chaffing from overstimulation and irritated like a fresh scrape. The rest of the breast tissue is pillowy and easy to bruise with just a little prodding, like all the blood vessels under his skin are ready to burst at any moment. All his nerves there seem alive and alert for any touch, and all they can relay back to his brain is an indefinite ache.

After a moment to catch his breath, Vic flops down on his back, trying again to rest and falling into a fitful half-sleep for a few relieving hours.

It’s not very long after that Henry climbs through the window, having skipped his last few classes to come over. Vic rouses slightly when he hears him, but otherwise stays buried in bed with his eyes closed. And Henry sees all the signs telling him that Vic won’t be moving anytime soon, and probably won’t be able to talk much either.

The first time this happened, when Vic went almost completely catatonic for two days, Henry freaked out, thinking that he was hurt. But at every try to see what was wrong, Vic would squirm away and roll over. Eventually, Henry got frustrated, wanting to help but not knowing how, and then angry enough to leave because Vic seemed to be just doing this for no reason. Then he returned even more worried than before because Vic still hadn’t moved. This cycle continued until Vic could finally pull himself out of bed and try to put together the pieces of what was going on.

He couldn’t really give Henry a good reason for why it happened, or why it keeps happening. All he can say is how much it hurts just to even be awake, and no matter what he does, it won’t stop until it has run its course. Overtime Henry softened to the idea, though it’s hard to ignore the sting of rejection he feels when Vic turns away from him. So on days like this, he’ll come over and try to be comforting through the night, hoping Vic will be over it by morning.

Henry guessed that this maybe one of those days when Vic didn’t show up at school today, but he wasn’t prepared to see those big bruise rings around his neck as well. Sitting on the edge of the bed, and being as gentle as he knows how, Henry touches the marks like he can will them away. The purple shade still stains all that soft pale skin, and Henry tries to push down the rage burning in his chest.

Vic’s father doesn’t beat on him as much as he used to, but when he does, it’s severe and lasts for weeks. And like his own father prefers pinning Henry to the floor and slapping a belt buckle over his skin until it bleeds, Vic’s dad uses choking as a go-to punishment. This isn’t the first, second, or third time there’s been an indent of a fist on Vic’s neck, and it won’t be the last time either.

From some rumor Henry’s heard, apparently Vic’s father has been shacking up with some lady in the next town over on the weekends, and that’s why he hasn’t been around much anymore. And while Henry isn’t sure if that’s something Vic would want to know or not, he is mildly relieved that it means Vic gets hurt less often.

Vic doesn’t do more than shy away from the curious touch to his bruised neck, and Henry pulls his hand back quickly. Usually he can at least distract Vic with making out and touches, or even making him cum, but right now, even just trying to kiss him makes Vic twist away and shake his head.

Making just the softest noise of refusal, Vic presses his face into the pillows to escape any more contact, and so Henry pulls away with a disappointed huff. He knows he shouldn’t be this irritated, especially since Vic insists that he can’t control acting like this, but Henry just can’t help missing his
best friend. What he doesn’t know is that, despite Vic’s quiet and motionless form, his mind is blazing with self-doubt and anger and what the fuck is wrong with you? And knowing that Henry is upset with him just makes it all worse.

But Vic won’t tell him that, no matter how bad it gets.

Thankfully Henry doesn’t leave, he finds a spot on the bed where he can press up against Vic at least a little bit, even though he much prefers to be right on top of him, and Vic doesn’t squirm away this time. They lie like that for a while, drifting between sleep and awake, both extraordinarily lonely despite being right next to each other.

Then Henry just shifts slightly, rolls more onto his side and lays his arm between them, and Vic flinches with a pained gasp when he just barely grazes his chest. Henry freezes stiff, balancing uncomfortably at the edge of the bed and wondering what he could have done.

“…You okay?” He asks, not really expecting an answer.

And it takes Vic a minute, his mouth feels exceptionally dry and it’s hard to pry his eyes open, but eventually his mind engages with his body again. With a limp hand he motions over his chest and he tries to speak for the first time all day.

“It just r-really hurts here,” His voice is all raspy and broken from abuse, but at least he can talk. That’s progress.

“Why?” Henry can hardly see the curves of Vic’s breasts through his sweatshirt, but of course he knows that they’re there. The only times he’s every really noticed is when he and Vic fall asleep all wrapped up in each other, and Henry will wake up with his head resting on Vic’s chest. And even then, Henry just likes all the warmth and the comfort there, and the sound of a slow beating heartbeat soothes his restless mind. To Henry, those tits are just another part of Vic’s body, and he’s pretty indifferent to them truthfully. But he knows Vic hates them, especially if they’re causing him pain.

“I don’t know…” Vic is too listless to shrug and his eyes are dull, but after a moment, he looks back up at Henry and grabs at the air between them.

Henry lies back down, careful to avoid jostling Vic in any way, but also taking all the contact he can get. It ends up with him on his side, cheek pressed to Vic’s shoulder and arm over his stomach, and that’s just the right mix of space and comfort to satisfy them both for now.

Maybe an hour or so later, the boys can’t tell besides by the light of the setting sun, Vic speaks again, picking up where his last words trailed off.

“…I wish they were gone.”

He’s had dreams before, some cross between fever dreams and nightmares, about a knife being held to his chest, not toward his heart, but flat against the skin. Sometimes he’s holding it, sometimes someone else is, and sometimes it’s just floating in midair. But no matter what, Vic can’t control it, the blade moves on its own, pressing in along his sternum and into the fatty flesh of his breast. Blood spills out in rivers down his stomach, but Vic can’t fight it, can’t even move, as the knife carves along the circumference of one breast, until it is severed off and plops onto the ground. And then the knife goes after the other side and does the same, until Vic is left with two gaping wounds in his torso, and his ribs and lungs and beating heart exposed within.

Vic will wake up in a cold sweat with the image of two bloody, jiggling, twitching hunks of flesh at his feet, and he’ll reach up to touch his tits, all at once relieved and disappointed that they’re still there.
Henry stirs after a moment, unsure if he really heard Vic say anything at all, but then his foggy mind finally catches up and can process what he heard.

“Huh?” He blinks a few times to focus and looks over at Vic.

Gesturing to his chest again, Vic mumbles, “If I could just…get rid of them. Like,” He passes an open palm over the air above his chest and down to his stomach, as if he’s wiping a slate clean, “just flat, you know?”

*Like you,* is what he means. *Like normal boys.*

Henry doesn’t really have an answer for that, and this is the kind of thing that frustrates him when Vic gets down. When he just wants so badly to help or fix it, but knows there’s nothing he can do. He flops back down on the bed, not noticing how the jostle of the mattress makes Vic cringe.

“Why don’t you just, like, tape ‘em down?” Henry says, throwing out the first idea that comes to mind.

“Tape?” Just imagining duct tape squishing down his tits makes Vic grind his teeth in pain, and he can’t even think of trying to pull it off afterwards.

“Or, fuckin’, not like…” It’s not a very nice conversation to have and both boys are a little on edge, but at least Henry and Vic are talking at all. “Like, this stuff,” Henry holds out his wrist to display the elastic bandages wrapped around his forearm.

A couple days ago, Henry came to Vic with a dislocated wrist again. The bones in his left arm pop out so frequently and painfully, either by his own doing or his father’s, that Vic is starting to worry that some permanent damage has been done. But like always, doctors and x-rays are out of the question for the young boys, so Henry snaps his wrist back in place and Vic wraps it in their endless supply of stolen bandages, and then reminds him to only punch with his right hand.

Bandages, as opposed to tape, are fabric, so they’re soft and stretchy and close to Vic’s skin tone. And, most of all, they compress. Vic has worn enough wraps on twisted limbs to know that elastic bound over injuries will shrink over time, holding everything tight in place.

What Vic doesn’t consider, what he has no foreknowledge to understand, is that bandages wrapped around broken bones that *need* to be held together is a lot different than using them to constrict normal naturally growing flesh. So he has no reason to believe that binding down his chest with elastic bandages would be different than any other use.

Henry’s suggestion floats around in his head for a while, bobbing in the waves of emotions he’s riding. Sometimes it seems like it could work, like it could be the solution to Vic’s dilemma, sometimes just breathing seems futile *so why should he do anything at all anymore?*

By the next morning, this misery passes like a storm getting swept away into the atmosphere, leaving Vic exhausted and damaged, but also calm and relieved. He’s grateful that this one was shorter than some before, and Henry is definitely grateful when Vic wakes him at dawn with slow kisses and searching fingers. The boys end up late for school, and Vic has to ignore the constant pain of his bruised throat, but overall he feels better than he has in weeks.

Except he keeps thinking about those bandages.

“Turn around,” Vic says, holding a bundle of beige elastic in one hand and tugging at his sweatshirt with the other.
“Why?” Henry sits crisscross on the bed, looking at Vic standing in the center of the small room.

It’s almost noon on the Saturday following Vic’s last episode, and after a few days to make sure he wouldn’t relapse into the same mood, Vic is finally ready to try binding his tits. His period has also just ended, so the swelling and tenderness there has gone down, and Vic has been obsessing over the idea that he could be completely flat.

But he’s not ready to get naked from the waist up with Henry watching.

“’Cause I gotta’… take it off,” Vic says softly, even though he knows Henry’s seen basically everything else up close and personal. This is just the one place that he doesn’t want to show, “Henry, please can you just not?”

“Fine,” Henry concedes, twisting around and facing the wall while listening to Vic shuffle around uncomfortably behind him. It’s not like he wanted to see really, he just doesn’t understand why it has to be such a damn secret that Vic’s got to keep from him.

First, Vic just tries to pull his sweatshirt up for just those few extra inches of coverage, but he figures out quickly that he can’t keep pushing it out of the way and wrap bandages at the same time. So the sweatshirt hits the floor in a heap, and Vic pricks all over as the air touches his bare skin. He barely looks down at his chest in the shower, and now he’s standing half-naked in a room with Henry right there. Even with him looking away, the thought of anyone seeing this part of him fills Vic with an untamable fear, so he turns to face the other wall just to be safe.

All he’s got to cover himself with is thin, almost sheer, bandages, and so Vic sets to work fast.

Pinning one end in his armpit, he pulls the roll over his chest and awkwardly around his back until it overlaps. It slips a few times and he has to start over more than once to get it to stay on his chest and not fall to his waist. He’s not even stretching yet, until finally he winds it a few times over. A couple layers crossing builds up the opacity and makes a wide strip to cover his breasts pretty effectively, so with a few more feet left on the roll, Vic starts pulling it tighter with each curve around his body.

The bandages expand to meet the task, and then slowly pull back into shape as they are laid in place, pushing his breasts down to his ribs. The soft skin flattens like pancakes pressed thin, but retaining just the smallest mound shape when he can’t pull the band any farther.

It doesn’t feel very good from the onset. Even though they’re not super sensitive like they were a few days ago, his tits still ache a little bit, especially around his nipples, the more he tightens the binding. He tries to relax to get those last few inches wrapped, but can’t completely fill his lungs with air without feeling sharp needle pricks of pain in his skin.

Also, there’s no way he can pin the end of the band to the back like this, so Vic makes sure the band covers enough to not expose him and then turns back to Henry.

“O-okay… you can look now,” He says, with only a little bit of hesitance. “I need help.”

Henry turns around quickly, bored by how long it was taking Vic just to get this far, but then his mind goes blank when he sees him. He didn’t really think it would be a big deal to see Vic slightly more naked than usual, but then he really gets a look. There’s a few patches of old bruises and healed over scars, but otherwise, all along Vic’s neck, shoulders, collarbone, and then down to his stomach, the subtle indent of his waist, and the small curve of his hips, is smooth, soft planes of lily-white skin. And with that to look at, Henry could care less about Vic’s half-flattened, bound up breasts, because all he wants to do is pull Vic close and touch him all over, inside and out.
“-Henry?” Vic turns and snaps Henry out of his thoughts. “Can you pull it in the back?”

With a nod, he takes the edge of the bandage and wraps it under Vic’s arm and across his back.

“Tighter” Vic says after testing the slack of the binding. It’s holding firm to his chest but he still can see a subtly bulging there, and he wants it all gone. Surely it can just be a little tighter without hurting too bad.

With no idea how much the bandages are already constricting Vic’s ribs, Henry pulls the end of the band hard. Hard enough that the layers beneath all tighten as well and free up a few more inches on the end. Vic heaves a silent gag as he’s forced to exhale all the air out of his lungs in a harsh rush, and he can feel the thumping of his heartbeat with distressing clarity. His hands come up on reflex to rip the bandages away, but halt when his palms touch where his beasts are pinned down. The bandages themselves do add a bit of bulk, and it would be impossible to completely flatten his chest like this, so this is about as flat as it will ever get. He runs his open hands up from his waist, over his chest, and to his collar, and then slides them down the same path, feeling only the smallest bit of curve that he wouldn’t even notice if he didn’t know it was there.

“Like that?” Henry asks, pretty sure that’s about as tight as it could be, and trying to ignore the way that Vic is feeling himself up.

“Y-yeah.” Vic affirms, pulling a safety pin from his pocket and passing it over his shoulder. It kind of hurts to raise his arm above his chest, but then Henry takes the pin and affixes the bandages in place.

Turning around slowly, Vic is taking small breaths and feeling slightly lightheaded, but his hands are still protectively over his bound tits. Immediately Henry notices how stiff his movements are, and how his face is flushed over red and tears are lining his eyes.

“Too much?” Henry asks, and already he’s reaching over to unpin the back.

“No, it’s just-” Three words in and Vic’s already out of breath, so he takes frequent pauses between words, “just need to get used to it.”

With mild trepidation, Vic finally drops his hands and lets Henry see the result. But just like before, Henry is much more interested in his bare skin than his breasts, flat or not. It is kind of amazing how flat they are though, just in terms of how not there they look with only bandages covering them.

Henry, ever impulsive and eager to touch, reaches up and Vic resists the urge to flinch away. Instead of going right for where the compressed flesh is most concentrated, Henry just runs his fingers over the border of the binding, thumbing over where the stretched fabric meets the flesh of Vic’s stomach.

“It’s just… weird.” Vic says even though Henry didn’t ask. He won’t say it hurts, absolutely refusing to admit it. He’s been hurt before, real crying-screaming-breaking all over hurt, so this isn’t something that should bother him. It’s no worse, he thinks, than having to see and feel his tits every day and worry that someone will notice them.

“I’ll get used to it,” He mumbles, trying to convince himself.

Chapter End Notes
Heyyy!!!!!
To everyone who was waiting for the binding chapter, it's even worse than you imagined..... and it will get worse-er, part 2 is next.

SUPER SUPER big thankyou to EverythingIsNightvale, I was having issues conceptualizing this chapter and they helped a lot and got me going on some ideas <3 <3 ,,, couldn't have done it with out their advice im so grateful :)))))
Make sure to check out their stories and their tumblr too :)

Anyway, I'm much happier with this chapter than I was the last one, I hope you guys liked it :))))

I also didn't plan to have body horror in this chapter too, but it leads to a funny story. (Don't read if your easily grossed out)
This might be TMI, but when I was 13/14 (about Vic's age, and pretty soon after I got my period) I had this dream where i stood up off the toilet and my vagina fell out. And it wasn't even like painful or scary, it just like landed on the floor with a splat and I was like "Oh damn it, how inconvenient" XD
So that was the inspiration for Vic's very traumatic dysphoria dream

follow me on tumblr if you wanna hear more awful life stories like that
https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

Thank you everyone who's been reading, I love comments they feed my writer's soul
Also, I now am in a creative writing class at school. I prolly can't turn in fanfiction, but I might post some original works to this account if I make anything of value,,,,, Lemme know if you guys think that would be cool :)))) <3
XOXOXO
Chapter Summary

“Shut up! This was your stupid idea in the first place!” Vic fires back.

Blame is an easy excuse for all the fire building up inside, giving him something to latch onto as the origin of the petty argument starts to fade from memory.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Chapter Twenty-Five: Bound Part 2

February, 1988

The first few hours go by, and Vic does get used to the binding. It’s awkward to turn his torso and he’s moving slower than usual, but for a short time he can push all the pain to the back of his mind and ignore it.

After double-checking, and triple-checking, that the bandages wouldn’t come loose, Vic pulled on a white t-shirt he wouldn’t usually where, just because it clings a little tighter than he is usually comfortable with. But now the fabric hangs naturally over his shoulders and flattened chest, and thankfully the bandages don’t show through either. He wouldn’t be able to wear anything more revealing than this, and it’s even a little too cold out to be dressed so lightly, but he really wants to be able to wear whatever he wants without worrying about what people will see.

He and Henry head out, traipsing through the neighborhood and meeting up with Belch and Patrick near the edge of the woods. So three hours go by and Vic isn’t feeling great, in fact there’s this continuous buzzing ache in his chest that keeps getting worse, but he will swear that it doesn’t hurt too bad. The bandages don’t come loose and it seems like nobody notices the change. Well, Patrick is eyeing him a little strangely, lips quirked skeptically and face bordering on disappointed. But otherwise, the boys look for trouble, mess with some losers, go to the arcade until they run out of pocket change, do what they usually do.

They walk a couple blocks away from the main road towards the kissing bridge just hang out, he and Henry aren’t going to just make out in front of the guys, no matter how convenient the opportunity. But by halfway there the sky is getting dark, and Vic, mind foggy, is confused because it’s still so early in the afternoon. He stumbles back, already lagging behind the group because it hurts to move too fast, and then it’s like the sidewalk is disappearing, going dark and stretching away into oblivion.

Vic’s been knocked out before, by hard punches to the face or having his head slammed into walls, but he’s never slipped so slowly into unconsciousness. Never watched with confusion and distant terror as blackness encroached on his vision, until only a speck of light remained, and then nothing. He doesn’t even feel the sensation of falling, just brief heavyness like his strings have been cut and all his limbs slump without support. And by the time he hits the ground, head thumping painfully on the pavement, his mind’s already gone.

A few seconds later everything fizzes back in like television static, he hears voices he knows but
they are saying words he can’t understand, and there’s an insistent tapping against his cheek that awakes his nerve endings. Suddenly, all feeling rushes back with distinct clarity. The cold concrete below him, the ache in the back of his head, the friction scrapes under his arms, the way his chest keeps rearing up, fighting against the binding just to get a bit of breath, and then the sharp pain that follows.

“Vic- Vic wake up-” the touch to his face is more insistent, hand cold and clammy on his overheated skin.

He twists over, wheezing and choking for air and then crumpling into himself as shockwaves rock through him.

Belch leans back, taking his hand away but still crouched over Vic protectively. Henry’s on the other side, hands shaking and eyes wide, afraid to touch Vic and not knowing what to do. Patrick is still on his feet, circling around them like a shark trapping its prey.

As Vic turns over, breathing panicked and shallow, the other boys see streaks of blood staining the underarms of his shirt, outlining the places where the bandages are rubbing his skin raw.

“How fuck!” Belch says and Henry flinches back, still silent. “What the Hell?”

Vic lies half-propped up by his arms, trying to take any pressure off his ribs as he gasps and sputters painfully for air. Finally his eyes blink open again and the world comes back into focus. He opens his mouth to speak but then shuts it quickly, grinding his teeth to keep the scream inside as another shock runs through his bones.

Henry knows what’s wrong, just by the blood and the heavy breathing, and finally his body catches up with his brain and he leaps into action. He shoves his hand up the back of Vic’s shirt, rucking the fabric up half-way over his back. Frantic fingers search across the bandages for the pin holding them together, but overtime the wrap has twisted and overlapped so the closure is lost in the layers of elastic.

The more Henry feels under his shirt, the more it creeps up Vic’s back, until the bottom edge of the band is revealed.

“How’s that?” Belch asks, wondering what Henry’s doing, and Patrick is poised over them with dark and curious eyes.

Instead of answering, Henry slips his fingers under the binding and gives it a sharp tug, thinking that he could just pull it off without unpinning it. But this just yanks Vic’s ribs inwards, making all the little cracks and hairline-fractures scream in agony under the pressure.

“Stop! Stop! Stop!” Vic cries out, tongue bleeding from a reflexive bite he sank into it.

Henry lets go fast and Vic flops down onto his front with a groan. It’s not even his tits that hurt anymore, it’s all overshadowed by that deep pain in the bones under them.

“Sorry, sorry,” Henry pulls Vic’s shirt back down over his back. He shouldn’t have done that, and he shouldn’t have let Belch and Patrick see the bandages, even for that quick second. Henry just didn’t know what else to do. “You need to go home. Comm’on, I’ll take you back.” At least there, they can unwrap the binding or cut it off or whatever they need to do without the guys watching.

Vic makes a soft noise a consent into the sidewalk, trying and failing to lift himself from the ground.

Belch sputters at the idea, “Home? He needs to go to the hospital, something’s wrong Henry.”
But Vic screeches back half a word and shakes his head violently.

“No, no hospitals,” Henry says firmly, wiping the sweat off his palms before he tries to help Vic get up.

_Vic’s gonna be okay_, Henry keeps telling himself. _He’s gonna be okay._

Every touch to his shoulders and torso hurts immensely, but finally Vic gets to his knees and relies on Henry to stand up properly.

“But-” Belch objects, genuinely concerned for Vic’s health and safety but not knowing the full scope of the situation.

“No,” Henry snaps back, and glares at Patrick until the boy backs off from leering over the. “You guys get lost.”

Vic is leaning heavy on Henry’s shoulder, eyes glazed over and dizzy from asphyxiation, but he nods and mumbles for them to go.

It probably takes some more convincing, but Henry’s not in the mood to argue and Vic is still seeing dark spots in his vision, so eventually the group parts ways. Patrick stalks off, dejected and irritated. Belch is still worried but not allowed to follow Vic and Henry, so he walks slowly toward home, taking frequent looks backward to see his friends walking the other way.

Henry steers Vic down the sidewalk, walking too fast but making him keep up. The pace doesn’t help his breathing, but the movement and the brisk air on his face wake Vic up a bit more, and all the pain rings even clearer as is mind comes back to him. “Wait-wait-wait,” he whimpers, pulling away from Henry and doubling forward.

He doesn’t pass out again, but he wheezes some more and holds is his arms around his rib cage.

“Take it off,” Henry says, trying to reach the bandages through Vic’s shirt again.

“No, stop-” Because every time Henry’s strong hands try and pull the binding away, Vic feels the shift in his bones and the pain quadruples. “Just stop grabbing me.”

Henry backs off for the moment, but Vic’s already hurting and frustrated. He knows he needs to take those fucking bandages off, but moving and touching hurts so bad, and cars are driving by and someone will see. And his shirt is too tight, so if the wrap comes off now Henry’s going to get an eyeful of his aching tits. All Vic wants is to run home alone to get free, but can’t like this and knows it. So he lets Henry walk him home, taking breaks often and hurting more by the minute.

Of course Henry knows what a cracked rib feels like, has had a few before and that was even the first time he went over to Vic’s house years ago. Every movement feels like the strongest burn of pain that travels up your skeleton, igniting you all over until your one big breathing ache. But Vic is turning from hurt to angry at record speed, snapping back at every touch Henry lays on him.

By the time they get to the house, Vic feels sweaty and exhausted, and the bloodstains under his arms have expanded, now visible from every angle. On the inside, the ache is fluctuating from icy sting to harsh explosions, so constant now that Vic can’t remember what a normal chest feels like. The breathing hasn’t improved either, but he’s adjusted to the small mouthfuls of air and frequent dizzy spells.

No one’s home, no one that will make themselves known at least, and Henry tries to lead him to their back bedroom, but Vic starts pushing him away. Something is bubbling under the surface, fueled by
pain and uncoordinated thoughts that spin around his head, and Vic just wants to be alone.

“Just go, okay?” Vic insists, petulant frown on his reddened face. “I’ll do it myself.”

“What? Don’t be stupid, comm’on,” Henry says, knowing Vic’s upset but also not willing to leave him like this. Though his choice of words could be better, because then Vic is smacking Henry away and turning towards the stairs.

“Just go already!” On top of everything, his head is pounding now too, making his words spill out faster than he’s thinking about them.

There’s scissors in the upstairs bathroom, Vic can cut the bindings off there. Then he can take a shower and wash off all the blood and sweat that have caked up under his arms. And then maybe he can try and learn how to breathe again.

“No,” Henry follows at his heels, losing control of his volume as he gets more pissed at how Vic is acting

“I said leave!”

Taking the stairs is proving to be a bad idea on Vic’s part, but he refuses to turn around and pulls himself forward by the banister.

“Fuck you! I’m trying to help you,”

And then they get to the top, escalating to a shouting match as Vic rushes into the bathroom.

“I don’t need more help Henry. Just go!”

He tries to slam the door behind him, but Henry pushes against it and Vic doesn’t have the raw strength resist, so the other boy just barges in behind him and shuts the door in his wake.

*Leave me alone leave me alone leave me alone!*

Vic’s head is spinning and vision is doubling, but he feels just as awake and alert as ever. Certainly enough to keep the fight going.

“What the fuck is your problem?” Henry yells at him, and his voice bounces off the tile and walls creating an ear splitting echo.

Vic can’t remember which drawer or cabinet the scissors are in, can’t even try and look because his hands are shaking with fury.

“Shut up! This was your stupid idea in the first place!” Vic fires back.

Blame is an easy excuse for all the fire building up inside, giving him something to latch onto as the origin of the petty argument starts to fade from memory.

Henry stalls for a minute, real regret and guilt breaking through the haze of his anger.

“I didn’t know this shit was gonna hap-!” He tries to explain, voice still hard and loud but less so than before, but he gets cut off.

Finally something erupts in Vic, like a pot boiling over or a fire cracker catching a spark, and he lashes out with his words, because trying to punch Henry in the face would probably be pretty painful and feeble right now.
“No! No, you don’t fucking know! You’ll never know for a God damned minute what it’s like, so stop telling me what to do about it!” His body craves violence, but the words feed his anger and offer some cathartic relief to everything he’s kept inside.

“Vic—” Henry steps back with trepidation.

Slowly, between the screamed words thrown at him like barbs, it dawns on Henry that maybe this isn’t about bandages.

“Don’t! Don’t even fucking start,” Vic, despite wheezing for every word, is on a roll and isn’t stopping anytime soon. “You don’t know what it takes to do this every day. How much it fucking sucks, when everything about you is wrong! I can’t even do this right!” He puts his hands on his bound chest for emphasis, and then cringes when lightning bolts strike across his ribs. “You’ll never fucking know, so stop saying shit to me about what I should do!”

His breathing is way out of control now, gulping for air like a fish left on land to die, and Henry recognizes it as some kind of cross between a panic attack and suffocation. He charges forth, batting away Vic’s arms and pinning the boy to the bathroom wall. Vic kicks back weakly and digs his nails into the arms holding him back, baring his teeth in a pained cringe.

Vic is so beyond angry right now, so much that self-preservation is out the window and he starts screaming again.

“Stop! Let me go lemme go, leave me alone!”

But even with such intense rage spurring him on, Vic is fading fast and Henry can hold him back with one arm. He grabs hold of Vic’s t-shirt and yanks it upwards so hard that his arms have to obey to the force as it gets stripped off.

“StopStopStop!” Vic wants the protection, something to cover up with, but can’t fight back anymore.

Henry keeps him pinned and reaches into his own back pocket to find the small switchblade he has stashed there. Usually he only uses it to scare the losers or intimidate older boys who think they can come after him, but now he holds it backwards with blade facing up toward his thumb. With his free hand holding Vic down, Henry presses the knife between his breasts, finding that one spot in the center where the elastic naturally gapes above his stomach.

“No! Please no!” Vic cries out.

Henry’s going to cut him, Vic just knows it. Like in his dreams, tear his skin and cut off his tits and open up his chest until he bleeds to death.

But instead, Henry hooks the blade in the fabric and yanks upward, one clean slice across several layers of bandage and they all fall to the floor. He barely gets a look, a small glance of milk-white skin lined with light blue veins and a flash of pink skin in the center, but then Vic tumbles forward, doubling over and breathing in one deep lungful of relieving air.

The first gasp is so strong that Vic gags on it, and his ribs stretch and compress painfully in response. But the next one is so good it brings hot tears to his burning eyes, and the next one feels amazing too, and the next as well. And then suddenly it’s all too much and Vic is collapsing again.

Henry catches him before he drops to the ground, and Vic is till hyperventilating as his lungs readjust to the freedom. Vic comes too with his cheek on Henry’s shoulder, body limp as Henry holds him close, and the tears really start to fall. Mixed with the way he’s breathing too fast, Vic feels like he’s caught in a hurricane. Or like his body is the hurricane.
He’s shaking now, Henry can feel it, and the panic is still evident in his rigid spine. Henry doesn’t know what to do, arms full of Vic right on the verge of falling apart and breaking into a thousand pieces, and the only thing he can think of is to pull them both backwards toward the bathtub.

_That’s a thing, isn’t it? Cold water when people panic, or when they pass out?_

Vic follows by gravity and Henry’s guidance alone, stumbling forward until they’re over the edge of the tub. Henry reaches one arm over and up, and Vic has just enough wherewithal to cross his arms over his exposed chest right before Henry twists the shower nob.

At first, the water is far too cold, and Vic lets out a high squeal of discomfort, so Henry turns it more towards hot, until it’s just a bit below body temperature. Now it feel like a warm summer rain, and after Vic gets over the shock of the feeling, the water actually does relax him.

He sags finally, stress being washed away and breathing slowing down to a normal speed. Overcome by an intense exhaustion, he rests against Henry’s chest. The other boy slowly maneuvers them, their legs thrown the edge as they sit sideways in the tub. Vic is half in his lap and lying on him, something that’s not very comfortable for either, but the water is pouring down on Vic’s back and side and neck, slowly cooling the heat under his skin.

They stay like that for a while, until Vic’s ribs are screaming out and he has to shift around. Between movements, Henry pulls off his own sopping wet shirt and throws the wet garment across the room. The seats of their pants are also soaked, but neither have the energy to take those off. Vic keeps his arms firmly locked over his chest even as his eyes droop and body starts to give out, but they settle again in a new position that hurts less.

Now Vic faces upwards, back against Henry’s bare-chest and letting the soothing water rain down on his bruised chest. There’s a wide red ring around his whole torso that will soon turn to a bruise, but the worst patches are under his breasts and on his sides, where the marks are already starting to blacken.

One pair of arms is clutching his chest, and another is wrapped around his stomach from behind, petting the soft skin there like they’re calming a frightened animal. Henry feels his own heart start to slow down too, residual anger and fear and worry seeping out of him as the minutes pass. With light fingertips, he searches across Vic’s bare skin, finding the spots under his arms where the binding chafed the skin until it was rubbed raw and bleeding. Water washes away the dried blood, and Henry brushes off the dead skin peeling around the wounds.

Nothing besides the water feels good right now, but Vic at least feels immensely better than before. His ribs will need rest and pain pills later, but for now he’s content with the dull hurt they permeate.

Tipping his head back, Vic rests again on Henry’s shoulder, and they sit silent for a good long while, listening to the scattered droplets sprinkle down on them and the tub. This is the first time they’ve ever touched each other like this, naked from the waist up, and if this was what it took to get here, then they’ll never do it again.

“Are you still mad at me?” Henry mumbles into the back of Vic’s neck, sounding so young and rejected that Vic doesn’t know how to respond.

He said all those things, screamed them so loud with the intent to hurt, at the one person who’s ever accepted Vic for who he is. And all those words felt real and raw in the moment, they were true deep down inside his soul, but he aimed them all at Henry. They weren’t even meant for him, well maybe some of them were, but it’s not that Vic was really angry at Henry. He was just angry and it all came out at once.
“I wasn’t mad at you. I’m sorry,” the shame takes over, not helped by the fact he’s covering his naked tits right now too. Shame on the inside and shame on the outside. “I’m just mad at everything.” His explanation doesn’t make sense in his own words, he can’t describe all the weight smothering him every day over something he can’t change. “Just everything. Ya’ know?”

And Henry nods, whether he really understands or not doesn’t matter, because he’s the only person who’s ever listened. So Vic leans back farther, twists his head to the side so he and Henry can look at each other, and their lips fall into the practiced rhythm they know so well.

The kisses aren’t going anywhere, their just for comfort right now. They go slowly, tongues rubbing lazily and noses nudging together, until the water runs icy again and they are forced to get out of the tub.

Chapter End Notes

Heyyyyy!!!!!
this was rollercoaster of a chapter to right, it mostly done all in one night and I am so freakin tired XDDD
I hope you guys like ts, Angry Vic is also a #mood 2k18

So I was feeling pretty down this last week, just kinda unmotivated and overwhelmed (u can see me projecting myself into Vic) but what absolutely always always makes me feel better is getting comments from you guys about what you think, even if its short or you havent commented before, every single time it makes my day and means so much to me :)))) <3 <3 so please please please and thank you!!!

Also you can message me on tumblr too, publicly or as anon, and I'll probably follow you back :D
https://imakeficrequestsandthedisappear.tumblr.com/ <---- Me

So I am actually writing an original short story right now too, something kinda short and it's just a draft for class. But I'll post it on this account in about a week,, its not IT or fanfic related, but if you like my writing style and wanna give me some feedback, I would literally love you forever <3 <3

Thank everybody for reading and reviewing, I'll be back soon with a new chapter ;D
XOXO
Birthday

Chapter Summary

Mrs. Criss flutters around the kitchen for a while before she has to lean over the counter and put her face in her hands. She takes a moment to shuffle away the things in her mind that she can’t handle right now, but it’s hard to do so. And then she wonders if her son still prefers yellow cake with thick vanilla frosting.

*Her son.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

**Chapter Twenty-Six: Birthday**

*June, 1988*

The next few months were a series of ups and downs for Vic, but eventually his mood started to even out. Some days it was hard to engage, some days he felt awful, some days he couldn’t get out of bed. But he learned to navigate these times and didn’t try to do anything as drastic as bind his tits again.

Now when he feels especially insecure about his chest, Henry would strip off whatever coat or sweatshirt he was wearing and toss it to Vic without any hesitation. And though the extra layer doesn’t solve the problem, Vic feels better to have it anyway.

Summer comes on fast and the boys, whether that know it or not, have grown quite a bit in two and a half years. Vic only thinks about it in terms of *I can’t believe just a few years ago I was still pretending to be a girl,* but he’s also grown as a person too. Just on the cusp of adolescence, with baby fat melting off and features becoming defined. He’s still quiet by nature, but he stands straighter than before, doesn’t seem to be hiding as much as he used to. He seems happier too, with his friends by his side at every obstacle. It’s the subtle changes that show a developing maturity, something a child wouldn’t notice, but a mother would.

Something else she notices is how it seems like Henry Bowers is in her house all the time. Vic’s mother walks into the kitchen and runs right into Henry as he comes in through the back door.

Henry had been waiting on the back porch for Vic to change into something to go swimming in, but eventually lost patience and went in to get him. Now he regretted not taking the extra minute it climb in through the window instead, but he had thought no one else was home.

“Oh, um,” Mrs. Criss was always seemed a bit scattered and frantic to Henry. “I didn’t- You must be here for…”

Adults still struck a fearful cord in Henry, but by fourteen he was already taller and bigger than this lady, and he wouldn’t’ admit that she scared him. It’s more like she unnerved him, just because he’s not used having a mother around and didn’t know how to act.
“Yeah,” Henry made to slip away, dodging the corner of the cabinet and making his way as fast as possible towards Vic’s room.

Mrs. Criss flounders between stopping him or not. She’d gone the whole morning without popping a pill, so she’s pretty on edge, but also focused and thinking about certain things she’s been avoiding for a while. And something is weighing on her mind.

“Wait, Henry,” She catches him right before he disappears and notices how he freezes still like a startled deer at her command.

With his head tilted down just enough to be about eyelevel with her, Henry feels a twist of unsettled anticipation in his gut. While Vic has had many more and much worse confrontations with his father, Henry knows that Vic and his mom have had their share of fights in the past. She doesn’t seem like a particularly cruel lady though, maybe just absent and neglecting.

“Well, I um-” Mrs. Criss stutters around her words a bit and drags out sentences, kind of like Vic does when he’s nervous. The resemblance softens Henry to her, and though he wants to escape the one-sided conversation soon, he’s willing to hear her out. “The eleventh is coming up here in a few days. I mean, I don’t know if you know, but…”

Henry knows that this Sunday is Vic’s birthday, only because in the last two years Vic’s lived here they’ve had an unspoken agreement to spend their birthdays together and avoid their families at all costs. This time around, Henry’s thinking of taking Vic down to the music store to get some new tapes, maybe get a band poster for his room because the walls are still bare. And then they could go to the kissing bridge and if no one’s around Henry can finger him or lick his pussy until Vic cums, just because it sounds fun.

“I was thinking, maybe you two and your friends could come over that night…?” Mrs. Criss finally gets to her point, and Henry has to think about the request over and over.

“Why?” Henry, and the gang as a whole, has never been invited over by one of their parents. Belch’s mom is nice but often working, Patrick’s parents would prefer that he never be home at all, and Vic’s mom is keen to ignore the boys at any opportunity.

She kind of regrets bringing it up now, but that heavy guilt is still lying on her from the last two years, so she decides to stick with it.

“Just for a little while, for cake.”

Henry shifts his eyes back and forth around her, waiting for the rug to be pulled out. She can’t be serious, something must be behind this.

Mrs. Criss sees the distrust and deflates a little, and the façade of being a nice, aloof housewife drops. Under that is a mom who really actually wants to try this time, because this birthday thing has been eating her up for the last few weeks.

“I just don’t want Vic to think I forgot again.” She admits earnestly.

She seems honest to Henry, though he’s still wary about if she has some underlying motive. If Vic heard this he’d probably refuse right away, because he’s become so disengaged from his family and been disappointed by his mom so often.

But then again, cake.

“Um- Okay…” There’s about a fifty-fifty shot they’ll actually do this, and even less of a chance it
won’t be a disaster, but Henry’s not going to say that to her face.

Huffing out a breath of relief, she steps back a few feet and they both feel less uncomfortable.

“Thank you, how about around seven? I’ll see you kids then.” The façade comes back up like a protective shield, but it seems less forced than before. She turns to the sink to start making dinner.

Henry shrugs and makes to leave again, until a thought pulls his mind to a screeching halt.

She wouldn’t…

“It’s just gonna be us, right?” Henry says with intent, eyes hard as she turns back to him. “Like, not…” He makes a telling nod of his head toward the front door and she understands.

“Oh, oh no,” She falters thinking about her husband, shame taking over where that guilt had just started to ease off. “Of course not.” He won’t be home that night anyway.

“And that cake has to say Vic on it.”

He says it with such sureness and conviction that she does a double take to understand.

“What?”

“Like, it can’t say some other name okay? Just Vic.” Henry says as much as he can without saying what he really means.

And then Mrs. Criss knows that he knows. If she thought about it for more than a minute, of course Henry would know. He and Vic obviously have something going on between them, even at their supremely too young ages. But she doesn’t want to think about that so she just doesn’t, and stays blissfully unaware. Even though it kills her.

But of course she can’t write Victoria in icing like she used to, even if she wants to with all her heart. That would not only instigate a huge fight with Vic, it would also probably ruin this day between him and his mother forever.

“Yes, yes of course.”

And Henry slips out of the kitchen a second later, ducking into Vic’s room and then they leave the house together.

Mrs. Criss flutters around the kitchen for a while before she has to lean over the counter and put her face in her hands. She takes a moment to shuffle away the things in her mind that she can’t handle right now, but it’s hard to do so. And then she wonders if her son still prefers yellow cake with thick vanilla frosting.

Her son.

“Hey, we got’ta to go back to your place” Henry says to Vic, turning to lead the gang down the road towards his street.

“Why?” Vic halts where he stands.

Any chance of this going easy was doomed from the start. Henry has already told Belch and Patrick about what Vic’s mom said, and of course Belch was supportive and adamant that they give it a chance, and Patrick was willing to play along. Mostly for cake.
“I uh- forgot something in your room,” Henry tries to ignore the way Patrick hoots at that.

“Just get it later,” Vic’s wearing that indignant pout he gets when he doesn’t want to do something.

Henry bristles at the attitude, but ties to keep his annoyance in check for once. But he’s fucking trying to do something fucking nice here, so maybe Vic could just fucking listen.

“It’ll just take a minute, comm’on,” He tries again.

Vic sags after a moment eyes casting down as he mumbles, “I just don’t wanna be there today.”

Henry doesn’t have an answer to that, not one that wouldn’t reveal what’s going on and make Vic upset. Luckily, Belch steps in.

“Is anyone gonna be there anyway?” he asks casually.

“Just my mom probably,” Vic shrugs, his sisters are out and father hasn’t been home in three days.

“Then you won’t even have to see anyone,” Belch seems to be much better at convincing someone than Henry is, at least when violence isn’t involved.

“It’ll just take a minute,” Henry piggy-backs onto the conversation.

“Yeah, I bet it only takes a minute,” Patrick says mockingly and gets punched in the kidney.

“Fine,” Vic relents, but he still doesn’t look happy about it.

So they walk over to Vic’s house and despite Vic’s insistence that they just wait on the porch while Henry gets his whatever-it-is, all the boys enter in through the back door.

But the light in the kitchen is on and they all loiter in the back hallway just long enough that it lets Vic know that something’s up.

“What?” He looks around to the other boys.

Patrick looks mildly disinterested, so it must not be too bad.

“Don’t get mad,” Henry starts, which of course sets off every warning in Vic’s brain.

“What’s going on?”

“Hey honey,” And suddenly his mom is standing there right at the edge of the kitchen, looking pretty terrified of the four teenage boys in her house.

Vic gives Henry the most What the fuck? look ever, but Henry pointedly looks towards the wall.

“Can you all come in the kitchen for a minute?” She asks warmly, but also with a small fear of rejection.

“Why?” Vic asks sharply. He doesn’t want to spend all evening playing mind games when he could be going to a movie or doing something fun.

Henry just rolls his eyes and physically pushes Vic into the room while the other boys follow.

Vic stumbles past his mother into the kitchen, and immediately his eyes fall to the cake on the kitchen table. It’s obviously homemade, in the way that it’ll taste better than it looks, with a generous coat of
ivory frosting. Fourteen lit candles around the circumference set off a gold glow to the table, and in the center written in blue frosting is Happy Birthday Vic.

Henry’s flanking his side, ready to pull him out of the room if this goes bad, and Belch and Patrick are waiting on the edge of the room. His mom is hovering by his other side, hands behind her back and looking at him anxiously.

“This is for me?” He asks her slowly, not really believing the words he reads.

“Duh,” Henry says too fast.

Vic turns back and whispers to him, “You fucking knew about this, didn’t you?”

“I just thought,” His mother starts, pretending not to hear what Vic just said, “maybe you would like it? If not, you don’t have to…” She backpedals, maybe this wasn’t a good idea after all.

“No- Mom I just…” I didn’t expect you to care. “Thank you, for this.”

She gives him this warm smile that only slightly hints at how overwhelmed and tired she is, and Vic kind of wishes they were alone. Maybe they could talk about some things.

“Go ahead then,” she tilts her head to the cake expectantly.

Vic eyes all the candles and then is painfully aware of all his friends watching him.

“Now?” Because at fourteen, he doesn’t feel like he should want to do childish things like blow out candles and make a wish, even though he actually does want to.


“Shut up,” all three other boys say at once, but at least it breaks the tension.

Biting the bullet, Vic leans down over the table to blow out all the tiny flames at once, and is struck by a distant but vivid memory. The last time he had had a birthday cake, age ten or eleven maybe, he distinctly remembers leaning in to blow out candles, while holding his hair back so the long strands didn’t drag through the icing. And he had wished for a whole host of things that year that did eventually come true, but not all in the ways he expected or without a cost.

There’s a burst of light in the corner of his vision, and he turns just after his Mom took a picture with the camera she had kept hidden behind her back.

“Mom,” Vic whines.

God, he wasn’t ready to be this sentimental today.

“Sorry sorry, it’s just the one I promise.” She says, but doesn’t seem that apologetic.

Would it be ridiculous to get a whole roll of film developed just for one picture of Vic being happy? No, she decides, it wouldn’t.

She grabs a few plates and forks and a large knife out, and then slips out of the room to leave the boys to their own devices. There’s a minor No Patrick, you can’t hold the knife fight that she overhears, and she tries not to worry about these weird boys Vic is friends with.

They end up staying later than anyone expected, sitting around eating cake and talking shit. Vic is partway through his second piece, which is more than he would usually eat but it tastes so much like
forgotten childhood memories. He slaps Patrick’s hand away when the guy goes for a third slice.

“Get your own God damn birthday cake Hockstetter,” *This one’s mine.*

“Fuck off, it’s good,” Patrick says, resenting the fact that his mom thinks carrot cake is an appropriate dessert for any occasion.

Evening has transitioned into night by the time they’re done, but they still have time to catch a movie downtown. As their making to leave, Vic’s Mom reappears in the door way and beckons him over.

Following her, they end up with just a few minute alone in the dim hallway.

“Hey,” He says awkwardly. They haven’t had a fight in months, but that means they also haven’t talked in months.

“Happy birthday honey,” She says softly. The dull gleam in her eyes tell him she’s taken some kind of pill to relax, but her words seem genuine.

“Thanks Mom,” and Vic lets her pull him into a side-hug that is uncomfortable but not unwanted.

His mother hadn’t noticed until now, but he’s gotten taller than her too. Just about an inch, but enough to change her perspective on her youngest child.

*Her baby. Her son.*

As the pull away, she reaches into her back pocket and pulls out a couple folded bills.

“I didn’t really know what you would want, so how about you go pick something out for yourself?” She passes him the money and clasps his hand as he takes it.

It’s enough to get himself a stereo or maybe some new t-shirts. Or anything really, as long as he gets to choose it.

“Thank you,” He wants another hug to, but he’s not going to ask for it.

Maybe another time.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys!!!!
I don't know why this too me so long i was just unmotivated af ....sorrrry :””) (I also have a head cold and feel like A+ shit)

But here's a nice fluffy chapter for all of you who are apart of the Vic-needs-a-hug squad. I resisted all evil urges to make this sad or mean, be proud of me!!! <3 <3

Also Vic is a gemini @me if you wanna fight
And Patrick hates carrot cake cause it's the worst

Follow me on tumblr @ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/
Some people also have sent me messages there instead of commenting here on ao3, and that is totally cool and I usually can respond faster, so any way that works for you guys
is great!!!!! <3 <3

Also I posted to this account an original short story I wrote during the break, its just a draft and it's pretty long but I would be super grateful if anybody took the time to read it and told me what they think :)))))

LOve you all, love you even more if you drop me a comment ;) , love you most if you live your life and be happy <3
XOXO
Chapter twenty-Seven: First Time

June, 1988

So if age thirteen wasn’t earthshattering enough, fourteen starts out with a bang.

After years of internal debate and mandates from the State Health Board to the Super Intendent of Education, and then campaigning and protests from religious groups and concerned parents, finally the AIDS crisis overwhelmed small town values and sex education was added to the Jr High curriculum.

Of course it was a fear-driven abstinence-pushing lesson that focused most on the *don’t have sex or these terrible things will happen to you* rhetoric. Still, topics like body changes and sexual desires had to be addressed, and eventually condoms and other disease preventing methods and contraceptives were worked in as necessary health information.

So the last two days of eighth grade are dedicated to extra-long classes where they put all the boys and all the girls into separate rooms and give them the school-board approved *talk*.

The first day is assigned to be about puberty and other physical changes people experience, which most every student has figured out the basics of already. But while Vic is perfectly content to sit at the back of the room with Henry and laugh as their math teacher fumbles through the lesson plan given to him, he starts to realize that he’s not getting any information that pertains to his own body.

It’s somewhere after the phrase *when testicles descend from the…* and Vic is left wondering *but wait, where do balls come from?*, which then soon is followed by *nocturnal emissions are a natural reaction to…* and Vic is left even more confused.

*I’ve had those, just not like that.*

He’s had plenty of dreams where he’ll wake up sweaty and satisfied from cumming, or woken up half-way there and finished with his hand. Even better, Henry’s woken him up with fingers in his pussy and mouth on his neck, or he’s woken Henry up by grinding their clothed groins together. But now there’s a word for it, it’s a *thing*, but only for boys with certain parts. Not a boy like him.

So he’s in the class he wants, but he’s not getting the information he needs. They’re just talking about different things altogether.

At this point Henry’s looking pretty red around the ears and fidgeting in that way he does when he
doesn't want to be wherever he is, but he also notices how Vic's quieted down too. It was funny at first, but now all this talk of dicks and how they work is getting hard to sit through, especially without Vic smirking at every time the teacher stutters on the word penis.

Truthfully, Henry thinks that his school-yard sexual information is just fine. You have a dick, it gets hard, you jack it, stuff comes out. Why make it more complicated than that?

Well, that's the way Henry saw it until he and Vic started practicing together oh-so-many months ago. Now there's a whole 'nother set of parts to play with, and a pussy seems a little harder to figure out than a dick. All Henry really knows well is that nub at the top that seems to feel really good when you play with it, but there's just so much more.

Sometimes Henry will be fingering Vic, not really even trying to get him to cum, just feeling along the ridges and folds and all the burning hot flesh, and then eventually comes back to that spot where he can slip inside and feel all those tight muscles flex. But then Vic will bat his hand away with a too much, com'on gim'me a rest already.

And then it does things like bleed every month, which Henry still wouldn't believe if he hadn't seen the blood for himself, and it cums different to.

So, ironically, both boys end up thinking more about what they could be learning in the other class.

Just before the bell rings and the forty-sum sweaty teenage boys are let loose into the world, they each are given paper booklets with a summary of information and other facts about male anatomy. And the booklet is given the same restriction as the parts it describes, keep it to yourself, or else. These would later be protested for their “scandalous and obscene” medical diagrams and would then be banned and set the school back another ten years in modern health, but that would happen next year. What a time to be fourteen.

But if the boys got them, wouldn't it stand to reason that the girls got one of these booklets too? So Vic and Henry hang out afterschool a little longer than normal, telling Patrick and Blech not to wait up for them. Vic slides the edge of Henry's knife along the edge of Gretta Keen’s locker until it pops open, while Henry makes sure the empty hallway stays empty. And there, tucked in between several spiral notebooks full of school rumors and under a pile of scrunchies, is a thin booklet with cursive Your Body & You across the cover.

Gretta won't need this, Vic tells himself. Though maybe if she came then she's be less of a bitch.

He and Henry end up sprawled out in a field of dry grass near the barrens. The early summer heat is beating down but a soft breeze keeps it from being unbearable, and they spend their afternoon educating themselves on the technical workings of a vagina.

“That's not what it looks like,” Henry insists, very sure all these diagrams are a bunch of lies.

“I think those parts are on the inside,” Vic was following along for a while and could map out certain parts of his anatomy according to the image, but now they're in the Reproductive Health section and everything looks way more complicated.

Henry drops his cheek onto Vic’s shoulder and feels the warmth of his skin seep through the thin fabric of his shirt. There’s a faded hickey peeking out from just below Vic’s collar, and Henry wants to put a bigger one over it that won’t disappear so fast, and maybe a few more up his neck as well.

Their eyes comb over the text and images, and comment as they go.

“Ohh, that’s what a clit is.”
"I guess."

The booklet does offer some clinical information about periods that Vic reads through quickly, but it’s mostly about the *how* and not the *why*. And apparently it doesn’t stop until you’re like, sixty or something. *Fucking great.*

But now it’s talking about babies and pregnancy and it makes Vic squirm at the idea. He’s already too young to think of things like that, but being pregnant also seems like the most *feminine* thing possible, and it triggers that deep-rotted anxiety in him. He just doesn’t want to look like that or feel like that or *be* that.

So besides a few brief mentions of “sexual intercourse” as something that causes pregnancy, there’s nothing about the things Vic wanted to know. Like, why do certain things feel really good down there? Or why does he get wet like that when he gets turned on? Or why does his pussy feel so sore after getting fingered? And there’s no word on that burning hot feeling, or the stuff that comes out when he cums.

"This is bullshit," Vic finally decides and tosses the booklet to the side.

Henry flips through the pages one last time, but ends up much more interested in the real thing.

"You can write a better pussy-book than this," he says as his hand wanders towards the spot between Vic’s thighs and he starts rubbing him through his jeans.

"Yeah," Vic huffs a laugh and lets Henry push him down to lie back on the grass. "You can draw the pictures."

Henry crawls over him and gets his mouth on Vic’s neck, sucking a few places before setting his teeth into really leave a mark. They unfasten each other’s pants quick and easy, and then get into their usual game.

Vic has Henry’s dick tight in his fist and is working a slow rhythm up and down the shaft. At every thrust the head bumps against the soft skin of Vic’s hip where his shirt has ridden up his waist, and the touch is burning hot and leaving little spots of pre-cum across his flesh. Henry’s ben thumbing his clit in these quick circles that keep winding Vic up and up and up, so close to cumming that his mind is going foggy.

"You’re lucky," Vic mumbles as he licks along the seam of Henry’s lips. "It’s easy to figure out," and squeezes just under the head of Henry’s dick to make his face scrunch up and his hips buck.

"Sure, but…" Henry gets him back by pressing just a little harder against that sensitive spot, and Vic squeals out a moan.

After a long while of practicing together, they know what feels best and where by now. They almost know each other’s body better than their own, and can make one another cum much faster than when either boy has to do it alone.

A few minutes later the boys hit their peaks and disentangle to catch their breaths. The dark flush on their cheeks is a mix of arousal and sunburn, and their eyes drift closed to escape the light.

"Let’s just do stuff that feels good," Henry says after a few minutes of blissed out silence. Vic flips his eyes open and sees that Henry’s looking over at the booklet on the ground. “Don’t worry ‘bout that stuff, ‘kay?”

“Yeah,” Vic agrees after a moment. The only times he has ever liked his body is when they do things
like this, make each other feel good.

He twists over and slides a hand across the curve of Henry’s shoulder. His fingers run across the
ridge and feels the muscle their flex and relax as Vic avoids touching the tender scars there. Vic’s
grown in the last few years, but Henry has too and Vic’s starting to notice how certain parts of him
look really good. Henry slips his hand down and gets a firm grasp on the meaty part of Vic’s thigh,
which is also place he’s left a smattering of dark hickeys.

Whatever it was that they started that day when they first touched each other, that was about feeling
good. Feeling good and normal young curiosity. But now it’s more than that, and Vic and Henry
know it. It’s more than just touching here or there feels good, it’s that this person, near me, touching
me, kissing me, makes me feel this way.

But the next day the topic shifts, and it leaves Henry and Vic red-faced as they learn the specific and
clinical description of sexual intercourse. Every few seconds, one of them will glance at the other
boy and then look away right after.

Vic is sure that there’s no way they could do that. Occasionally, Henry can slip two fingers into that
spot deeper in the folds of his pussy and the stretch always leaves Vic sore for a day after.

But, what would it feel like?

Of course both boys knew that something went somewhere, but now everything is made perfectly
clear and the thought of it consumes their minds.

Condoms are the following subject for class, as AIDS awareness is creating high public panic and
incorrect information about the disease has spread like wildfire. And in the weeks after this lesson
Mr. Keene will notice a high volume of condoms being stolen off his pharmacy’s shelves as a wave
of curious and informed teenagers try out their new knowledge.

Another hour passes and the bell rings, and finally school is out for summer. Henry and Vic wander
out of the building like usual, looking forward to a whole three months of dong whatever they want.
But any plans they had of hanging out with the guys or causing trouble go by the wayside when their
eyes meet and both think at the same moment;

Maybe we could try it.

Vic shifts from one hip to the other on the bed, squirming out of his pants and underwear and kicking
them into a pile on the floor. On top he has one of Henry’s sweatshirts that’s baggy enough to make
Vic feel comfortable about his chest. But there’s this buzzing anticipation in his gut that makes it hard
to sit still on the mattress. His thighs squeeze together and relax in pulses as tension keeps pulling at
his muscles. They’ve done other stuff tons of times, with hands and mouths and grinding against
each other, but something about doing this feels different, more real and important.

Henry settles down beside him on the mattress after shucking off his clothes, and he must be feeling
it too because his hand slides over Vic’s thigh much more cautiously than usual. They’ve been naked
in front of each other so often that they’ve moved far beyond being shy about it and usually jump
right into touching each other. But now Henry just skims his fingertips over the soft skin of his inner
thigh, getting closer to his pussy but never touching it, and feeling all those little twitches under the
skin.

“You want’ta?” Henry asks, feeling a strange mix of eager and anxious about this. He really wants to
do it. They were each other’s first everything, so why should sex be any different? But it seems
different, not good or bad, just unfamiliar and adult.

“Yeah,” Vic responds quickly and honestly, but there’s still some trepidation in his mind. Henry’s
the only person Vic has ever trusted or cared about so much, and when they touch each other it feels
right. So this is something they should do, have real sex. This is something they should want to do,
isn’t it?

After another minute of stunted touches and heavy silence, they drift together into a slow and familiar
kiss that grounds them again. They’ve done this before. After a little while they shift to lie back on
the bed and twist around into a position they like, with Vic on his back and Henry half on top of him.
From this spot they suck on each other’s tongues and their hips naturally slot together.

The kiss breaks into a few fleeting touches and mouthing at their necks, but then they have to take a
break to grab one of the condoms they stole and actually try this out. As Henry tears at the wrapper
with only a mild tremor in his hands, Vic can feel his dick pressing hot and insistent against the cut of
his hip. They’ve both grown quite a bit since they started touching each other, but they’ve grown in
different ways. And Vic starting to worry that that thing isn’t going to fit inside of him.

Henry slides on the condom with only a small amount of trouble and then looks down at Vic again.
His skin is so fair that the flush on his cheeks is a vibrant pink, and there’s the same color down
between his open legs too, his pussy a little wet and warm from kissing and anticipation. Henry’s
knows that he’s probably a bit red-faced himself, if the heat burning under his skin is any indicator,
but that blush just looks so good on Vic that there’s no comparison.

With one more kiss Henry sinks down onto Vic, aligning that spot where they’re supposed to fit
together and feeling all their skin touch. This is in movies, people lying like this and kissing, and then
the screen fades to black and everyone just believes the people have had sex. Those movies only
have a man and a woman in them, Vic thinks vehemently, nobody like him or two guys like them.
But at least it gives some context to what they’re doing. This is the way it’s supposed to work.

Henry bucks his hips up just to rub his dick up the curve of Vic’s pussy, and the head bumps up
against his clit. It doesn’t feel bad, in fact Vic arches up to catch more of that feeling, and they grind
back and forth until a slick layer of wetness and pre-cum has built up. Their eyes go a bit hazy and
dilated from pleasure, and this is starting to feel more natural.

And then Henry slips a hand down to slide his thumb along the cleft of Vic’s pussy and push it
inside. The stimulation is shallow but Vic still feels his hips jump in response as the muscles inside
him get wedged open. Henry takes himself in his other hand and guides the head of his dick up to
that tight space.

Vic can hear the steady hum of the blood rushing through his ears and reaches up to hold onto
Henry’s shoulders. Adjusting his hips and spreading his legs a bit wider, he’s looking for a sense of
stability to calm his racing heart, and then feels the first touch to his entrance.

At first there’s nothing, just the smallest pressure as Henry presses his tip right against where it’s
supposed to go, but not in yet. The condom makes both of them feel a little strange, just because the
texture isn’t what they were expecting, but the contact is burning hot and making the boys want
more. So Henry presses in more and Vic lifts his hips up into the motion.

The stretch is the first thing Vic feels, the pull of his skin around the intrusion, and then as it goes
deeper the muscles are spread open. It burns but not in the way that it should, and Vic shuts his eyes
tight in a cringe. He twists his hips but it’s still uncomfortable, and all that’s in so far is the head.
Henry’s eyes shut too, but for a much different reason. All his nerves light up as the heat and pressure wrap around his dick. It’s almost too tight, like it’s trying to squeeze him until he can’t move, but it also feels so good that he wants to keep going.

Another minor thrust inward and Vic bites hard on his inner cheek to stop from crying out. That stretch feels like a gaping wide spread now, and his insides burn like they’re being wretched apart. It’s beyond strange and uncomfortable now and just hurts, and he peaks down and flinches at the sight of how much more is supposed to go in. His legs are clenching like they want to close as he grinds his teeth, but he tries to will the ache away. This is what they’re supposed to do, right? Nothing ever said it would hurt this bad, so why does it hurt so fucking bad?

“Hold on a-” Vic mumbles, trying in vain to squirm back.

Just as he speaks though, Henry’s still caught in a haze of pleasure and thrusts forward again and lodges himself deeper inside. Deep enough to feel something snap around his tip.

That small snap feels like an electric shock that runs a ripple of pain up Vic’s spine. It’s like something is breaking inside and now sharp pinpoints spread through his groin as the muscles refuse to stretch any wider.

“Stop! Stopstop! Ow-fuck!” His knees come up instinctually and try to push Henry away, who finally opens his eyes again and sees the pained wince and unspilled tears on Vic’s face.

He yanks his hips back and jumps off Vic, but pulling out is almost as bad as the penetration. Vic feels that rush as it comes out, and then his muscles flex around nothing and the aching persists. He pins his thighs together and rolls his hips to shake off the pain, but instead he feels a warm trickle of blood seep out of his pussy.

“What the fuck?” Henry sees the blood and the pain written across Vic’s features. He doesn’t know what he did wrong, but something he did must have hurt him. “Are you-” Henry reaches out and touches his thigh softly, trying to soothe and comfort the other boy. Vic immediately pushes his hand away with more force than necessary.

“Don’t,” Vic breathes through his teeth as the sharp pain finally fades and he’s left with a dull ache all across his groin. He doesn’t know where the blood came from, but no more is coming out and his period is at least a week away.

Most of all, both boys are just confused. Why would sex hurt? Wasn’t it normal?

“I told you to wait,” Vic accuses as he pulls the up blanket to cover his lower body. He doesn’t want Henry to see the blood, it reminds him too much of his period, but also it acts as a layer of protection as doubt and fear creep into his mind.

Why does everything have to hurt, even this?

“I didn’t hear- I just wasn’t-” Henry feels the guilt twist up his stomach in a harsh pull. It had just felt so good, and he didn’t know, wasn’t thinking Vic could get hurt. “I’m sorry.”

They sit in silence for a moment and Vic calms down a bit as the pain continues to fade. He knows Henry didn’t mean it, but the surprise and intensity of the pain overshadowed his reason.

“I didn’t know it was gon’na be like that,” There’s a tinge of disappointment in Vic’s voice. This was something they wanted to do, something they should have been able to do, but now it seems like much more than they were prepared for.
“Yeah,” Henry slinks over, careful not to touch Vic but also wanting to be close. He knows Vic gets like this sometimes, defensive and frustrated and quiet, especially about his body or when they’re trying something new.

A few minutes later and Vic is sure the blood has stopped and he’s a little more comfortable with having Henry near. They lie back on the bed, Vic still with the blanket over his lap, but eventually he curls up against Henry’s side.

Any bit of arousal is gone for them both, so they just lie there cuddled up together and stare at the ceiling. Just like they weren’t ready for the subject at school today, they weren’t ready for the real lesson they just got. If everything they’d done so far was practicing, than this was the real thing, and it still seemed like too much for them. Too much too fast without knowing what to expect.

“We don’t have to do it again,” Henry says after a while. “We can just do the normal stuff.”

The admission releases them from this fixation they’ve had all day on sex. If fingers and tongues are more fun, and if it hurts, then maybe they don’t have to do it all. Or maybe just not right now.

“Yes,” Vic agrees with a soft sigh of relief.

“Are you okay?” Henry steers their faces together, close enough that their noses brush and Vic can’t keep avoiding looking him in the eye.

“I’m not mad,” He responds, voice tired and wishing he and Henry could just forget about it.

“Are you okay?” Henry repeats himself, and this time lets his hand drift down and rest on Vic’s stomach, only a little above the place where he had just been hurting so bad.

Vic knows he’ll be sore down there for a day at least, maybe a little extra sensitive to touch and fingers for a while too. Mostly now he just feels that gap that’s been created in him and still feels more open than ever before.

“I guess,” He says after a moment, and then rolls from his side so he can just lie right on Henry’s chest and burrow his face in his neck. Henry’s arms wrap tight around him and pet gently over the dip of his spine. “I will be,” Vic amends after a moment, and settles in to fall asleep with Henry like this.

Chapter End Notes

I could not for the life of me get any editing done so I'm sorry about any mistakes or weird sentences. :(((

But.... There it is. Nothing ever goes easy for these two does it. :P
I had a lot of fun writing this one, I wanted them to eventually have sex, but not without a cold dose of rety.
((also condoms are important, everybody use them))

This did end up being a weird chapter tho, not that I don't like it, just dont know what I think of it. So Im super curious what you guys think of it and where you think its going next, soo please please please leave a comment.

((Also I had a really bad day today that kinda turned me off from writing rn, so hearing
form you guys would really lift me up and motivate me for next chapter <3 <3)))

See ya'll soon
xoxox
Chapter Summary

*This is what they need.* Both boys know intrinsically that no matter what or where or when, they need each other. *This is where they belong.*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

**Chapter Twenty-Eight: Second Time**

*June, 1988*

It takes about two weeks, one to heal all the way and another to get over the fear, for Vic to want to try again. He still doesn’t feel exactly the same, but it doesn’t hurt down there anymore.

*Virginity.*

He had fished out that booklet about body changes, the same one that he thought was useless, and read it over in greater detail this time. Something breaks, it said, when you lose your virginity.

Vic doesn’t feel like he’s lost anything, nothing he knew he had in the first place, but he does feel different. Different like he’s just been let in on some long-kept secret, and was disappointed when it wasn’t all he expected it to be.

Henry has been extra gentle since then. They’ve held off touching each other the last few weeks and only do it when they’re in bed and have time to go slow. So instead of the usual rough and quick ways of getting each other off, it’s all soft kisses and searching fingers and holding each other tight. It’s what they need for a while, but not forever.

In a familiar position, Vic paces outside the bedroom door for a few moments and considers all is options. It’s not the same at last time, when he was on the verge of falling apart, but it’s still hard to ask. At least this time he has leverage.

Hesitantly, Vic taps his knuckles against the door quietly enough that it takes his sister a moment to respond.

“What?” She calls from the other side, already sounding annoyed.

Vic takes this as permission to walk in and quickly shut the door behind him.

“What do you want?” Sophie, now nineteen and thinking about running off to Portland before the end of the year, has completely disengaged from her family by this age. She doesn’t have much reason to stay, but also little prospects on her own. The last thing she cares about is her strange little *brother*, and hasn’t willingly talked to him in years.

Back against the door, head tilted just a bit to the side so his bangs hang down in his face, Vic decides to make this as quick as possible. He and Sophie have never connected, even years ago before their family got turned upside down, so he really has no desire to talk to her besides to get the
answers he wants. So he just lays all his cards on the table.

“Did you really let Tommy Harris fuck you last year at graduation?”

A beat of silence passes where she just stares at him, jaw slack and eyes wide, and then she surging up towards him with fury.

“Where did you hear that?” She crowds him up against the door, trying to be intimidating like she used to be as the oldest, but things have changed. They’re about the same height now, and Vic has gotten stronger than she ever thought he could be. He’s still slim, but is far less delicate than before. So much so that if she didn’t know who he used to be, she wouldn’t ever think that he could have been the little sister she used to have.

Vic doesn’t back down, too old and experienced to be afraid of his older sister and more.

“Just around,” Actually, Daphne told him that one night when they were sitting out on the back porch. They’ve been talking, not in depth or at length, but slowly they are rebuilding that relationship. He and Sophie might be a lost cause though. “Is it true?”

“What- fuck off!” She rolls her tongue into her cheek, not so subtly avoiding the question. She doesn’t know how someone found out about that, especially since she hadn’t told a soul and made Tommy swear the same. “That’s a bunch-”

“How’d you get it to fit?” Vic interrupts her before she goes into full denial.

“What?” She stops short of yelling, caught off guard by such a blunt question.

“Like, when he put it in,” The only hint of any nerves he has is the way he pulls at the edge of his shirt and the light flush that’s rising up his neck. The thought of his sister getting fucked is also enough to turn his stomach if he thinks about it in great detail. “How’d it fit,” And Vic makes a wide gesture over his groin, “there?”

Sophie blinks once, twice, and then again in astonishment as any words she has die in her mouth. They stare at each other for a moment, long enough that Vic thinks she might not even respond at all, so he jumps the gun.

“If you don’t tell me, I’ll make sure everybody knows about it.”

Sophie isn’t in high school anymore, so school yard gossip doesn’t really phase her like it used to. But this is enough to ruin her reputation and a few friendships if certain people found out.

“Un-fucking-believable,” She knows that she’s stuck, but is still shocked that they are having this conversation. “What the Hell is wrong with you?”

Vic just shrugs, knowing that there’s a thousand answers to that and all of them are hurtful, and Sophie would say any of them to make this questioning stop. He resigns not to care what she thinks, but it’s hard to really follow through with that.

“Why do you want to know?” She finally asks, exasperated.

“Just ‘cause,” He says, but she sees that flash of fear and embarrassment in his eyes before they cast down to the ground.

And then that needling suspicion she’s had for years, hearing things about Vic around town, how
often Henry Bowers is hanging around their house, Vic coming home late at night and sleeping in the room downstairs, all rushes to the forefront of her mind. Similar to her mother, and her other sisters as well, of course she knew something was going on. She just didn’t want to think about it.

“Are you and-” She starts, but can’t get much further than that.

“Just tell me already,” Vic insists, knowing where she’s going and wanting to avoid it. “Or else,” But now his ultimatum falls a bit flat.

Their standoff now has a larger impact than when it was just about some answer and a secret, and the teenagers are at a loss for how to proceed. Even if she doesn’t care, or doesn’t want to care, it’s still strange to think about her youngest sibling, boy or girl, having sex at fourteen. Having sex and not knowing how to do it right, and then asking her for advice. He’s also threatening to expose a regretful but not wholly unpleasant encounter she had, so it’s hard to be too sympathetic.

Sophie turns away, pushing her hair back and feeling her age in a way she hasn’t before. She used to just be the older sister, but now she’s just getting to an age where she’s learning that the things you want at one time can affect you later on. And she remembers being fourteen, wanting to talk to boys and stay out late, and feeling older than you are.

But she also remembers fumbling around in cars with boys as she got older, once or twice getting more than she was ready to experience and hurting afterward. And while losing her virginity after graduation wasn’t the best situation or one she would repeat, at least it went slow and she knew what was coming. Maybe that’s the least she can do, tell her brother the right way to do it so he doesn’t get hurt.

“You have to, like,” Her gut is still uncomfortable with all of it, but her intuition tells her that Vic isn’t going to listen if she tells him not to. “You stretch it out down there.”

“Like…?” And Vic motions with his fingers, curling them up and out in the air.

Sophie feels her stomach clench up at the idea that he knows what that is. She didn’t start masturbating until very recently and still wouldn’t admit it aloud to anyone, but Vic seems to know exactly what he’s talking about.

“Yeah. Like that,” She pauses and considers safety more than her own comfort, “but a lot, like enough that it doesn’t hurt going in.”

Vic nods along, absorbing her advice and thinking back to when he and Henry tried a few weeks ago. They were so eager to do it that they didn’t spend any time doing the things they usually would, with their hands or otherwise. And sometimes after getting fingered for a while, Vic knows he feels a little loser and can stretch himself wider.

Is it that easy? Just do what they always do, and then they can have sex after?

“That’s it?” He asks, sure that there was a real secret to it.

“Yeah, and go slow,” his sister tells him, looking more concerned than she ever has about him. “Don’t try to force it too much.”

“’Kay,” Vic turns to leave, relieved that this interaction can finally be over. “Thanks,” He throws over his shoulder and turns the door knob.

“Wait,” She stops him before he can escape. Finally that concern outweighs her refusal to care. “I know you think- you’re just too young, you shouldn’t-” She fumbles over her words until he gets the
gist of what she means.

“Don’t,” Vic says, without even a tremor in his command.

She doesn’t get a say over this part of his life and he’s not going to let her tell him what to do with it.

“I just don’t-” she deflates, “You might get hurt.”

But Vic feels a fire light up in his chest, feels all that repressed resentment he’s pushed back for years come to the surface.

“You didn’t care about me gettin’ hurt before,” It’s not even an accusation, it’s just like he’s sating a fact. “Every time, you never did anything. Ever since-” His voice falters a bit as he reaches up and grabs the short locks of his hair. *Ever since the beginning, you never helped me,* Vic means to say but can’t get it out. “So don’t start now.”

And then he walks out the door, letting it slam behind him without listening to anything else she has to say.

Vic thinks about the new information for a couple days, and gives it a few tries just to see if it would work. This results in him taking a late evening bath one night, when usually he prefers quick hot showers. By the time the water goes tepid he’s all lose limbed and exhausted, with three fingers inside himself and panting uncomfortably from his second orgasm. But the hot water and extra time he spent helped, so this is far less painful than he thought it would be. Maybe there’s something to this after all.

One late June evening, after a day of hanging out at the barrens and Belch’s garage, Vic and Henry split a cigarette on the kissing bridge before they part ways. There’s that moment between their last prolonged kiss and turning to walk away from each other, when they both don’t want to separate but also don’t know how to voice it.

Things have changed undeniably since that day a few weeks ago, but a bigger change has occurred over the last year. The boys don’t feel right without each other anymore. On his own Henry is more unhinged, it’s harder for him to focus and think through things clearly. And when Vic’s alone he feels strangely lost in his own mind, like he needs a guiding voice to lead him along.

Together this dynamic works for them, but apart they are too unbalanced to function well. Whether or not either option is healthy is another matter.

So they separate on the kissing bridge and only look back at each other a few times before heading home. Hours later, Vic is asleep uncomfortably alone in his bed and awakes immediately when he hears Henry climb in through the window. The latch on the window hasn’t been locked in years, maybe never since Henry and Vic became friends, and now Vic is always aware when the hinges squeak open.

The night sky is pitch black and cloudy, so no light is able to filter into the small room. Henry tumbles down from the window sill and to the bed on memory alone, and the darkness covers a tender bruise on his cheek and a shallow gash across the bridge of his nose. The cut still weeps a few drops of blood when pressure is put on it, but it’s starting to dry up and turn sticky as it scabs over. Mostly Henry just wants to forget the injuries are there, so he just throws himself onto the bed in exhaustion.

Vic opens up almost instinctually, arms and legs spreading out so Henry can fall right between them
and wrap him up tight. They lie chest to chest, lips mashed together in a sleepy kiss as Henry slips his arms under Vic’s waist so they are as close as they can possibly get.

This is what they need. Both boys know intrinsically that no matter what or where or when, they need each other. This is where they belong.

They stay like that for a while before finally falling asleep. Henry lays his head on Vic’s shoulder, and then through the night he scooches down to press his ear on Vic’s chest and is lulled to sleep by his steady heartbeat. The weight and warmth anchor Vic down without making him feel trapped, instead he’s safe because he knows it’s Henry there.

The sun rises through a thick layer of grey clouds, casting a misty orange light across the sky that wakes the boys up slowly. Not fully conscious, Vic flicks his eyes open to find Henry half-buried in his neck and staring back up at him. With soft and lazy fingers, Vic traces over the cut on Henry’s nose and the congealed blood flakes off from the irritated skin.

Henry doesn’t flinch away when Vic touches his bruise, which could’ve been a broken cheekbone if it was an inch higher. Instead he leans in toward the hand on his face, seeking out that warmth and the slight sting of the pressure. After exploring the sore spot for a while, Vic skims his fingers down, along Henry’s jaw and along to his lips.

It’s just that light touch that makes Henry’s mouth fall open enough to pull Vic’s fingertips in. If he was thinking about it, this would be some weird embarrassing thing that Henry would quit doing immediately, but he’s not thinking right now. His mind is moving slow with the early morning hour, so he just lets himself suck languidly on two of Vic’s slim fingers because it feels good.

It feels a little strange at first, but Vic is also still sleepy and limp so he gets used to the wet suction around his fingertips. Curiously, he presses them in a little more and feels Henry suck them in further, until can run his tongue across the pads and up the middle of them.

There’s nothing inherently sexual about it, but it feels undeniably intimate. Vic can feel the edges of Henry’s teeth just scraping along his skin and the plush warmth of his mouth. And then Vic starts thinking about where else Henry’s mouth feels good. Like sucking on his tongue or biting his neck or teasing his pussy, and then his hips start to move of their own accord.

Grinding up against the thigh sitting snug against his groin, Vic tries not to disrupt their comfortable position but ends up squirming too much to be subtle.

“What’re we doin’?” Henry asks after a moment, words jumbled and slow as he keeps Vic’s fingers in his mouth.

Vic just shrugs, face turning pink as he pumps his hips up faster. That flush just looks so appealing to Henry that he has to push the fingers out of his mouth and lean up to kiss him breathless.

The kiss is all tongues and wet lips smacking together, turning up that heat burning Vic feels burning low in his stomach. And his fingers just sit there limp and still slick with spit that’s slowly going cold. So he brings that hand down to where he needs it most, wiggling it between him and Henry and into the band of his pajamas.

He’s already wet there too, just starting to feel that tingle and heat in his core, so it’s easy to slip his fingers into the folds. With a little stimulation and some more kisses swapped between them, Vic feels himself relaxing and opening up, enough that he can fit one finger, and then the other, inside and stretch out his muscles.
Henry breaks their kiss with a slick pop, and props himself up on one arm to watch Vic finger himself. And he can’t just watch for very long, so he slides his hand down to meet Vic’s between his legs and starts playing with his clit.

Two fingers in and another hand touching him right where he likes best is almost enough to push Vic over the edge, especially when Henry starts biting and sucking on his neck too. There’s an insistent push against his leg as Henry starts humping against his thigh, reaching his free hand down long enough to pull his dick out of his pants.

It all feels really really good, but it’s not exactly enough anymore. Yes, they could easily get off like this and have before, but there’s something about the heat in the early morning air, the way their skin sticks together, and that gravitational pull between their bodies. It’s not like the last time, when they thought they should do it because they had to. Now it’s that they just want to be that much closer to each other, want to feel each other inside and out, so they can hold on and never let go.

“Hey,” Vic says between panting breaths, twisting his fingers in Henry’s to get him to stop touching his clit. “Henry, hold on.”

Hips stuttering forward one last time, it takes him a second, but Henry stills and heaves a breath right beside Vic’s ear. “Yeah?”

“Um, if you help me, like- stretch out,” he guides Henry’s fingers down lower to his entrance. “Like, really stretch, we can try fitting it in again.”

“Really?” Henry says a little too quickly to not sound eager. He very much didn’t want to repeat what happened last time, feeling Vic break inside around him, but he can’t say he hasn’t been thinking about being inside him. Just the little hint he got that day felt so tight and hot, of course he wants to try again. He just didn’t think Vic would ever let him.

“Oh-huh,” and just as Vic slips two fingers back into himself, Henry slides one in too.

“Like that?” moving his finger around inside, Henry slowly works Vic even more open that before. The stretch is definitely there and only slightly uncomfortable, but it doesn’t hurt.

“Yeah, keep-” Vic is having a hard time putting his words together. “Keep going, like that. Just like that.”

Because of his angle, Henry can reach deeper in him, even more so when he tugs down Vic’s pants and underwear and lets him kick them off. More room to see and work now, Henry guides his legs open more and gets Vic’s thighs to straddle his hips. He can feel the muscles around his finger quiver and squeeze in pulses, but the more he massages them the more room is created. Finally Henry can get another finger inside too, four now counting the two Vic’s holding himself open with, and as he does he watches Vic for any jolt of pain.

He doesn’t quite feel any hurt, but four fingers still feels like a lot to take down there, and Vic closes his eyes and arches his back into the feeling. It’s slow going, but it’s actually getting easier the more Henry stretches him out. And then another hand is finding his clit again and rubbing it in quick circles, which makes relaxing and opening up feel that much better.

“Oh- fuck. Okay,” Vic slowly draws his and Henry’s fingers out, knowing if they go much longer he’s going to cum and have no energy left for the rest. “I think that’s enough,” Without anything there, he can still feel that open space and a gnawing craving for something to fill it.

“Yeah?” Henry’s still hard as ever, dick bobbing against his stomach and pre-cum dripping from the
head, but he could also spend all day just doing this. There’s something amazing about fitting his fingers in Vic, seeing how many he can take, feeling his insides move, and watching his face get redder with each touch. But putting his dick in there sounds good too. Maybe better than good, now that he’s thinking about it.

Vic hums back in agreement, pulling his legs around Henry’s hips to draw him in and only pausing to help him push down his jeans to the foot of the bed.

The condoms they stole are tucked into the mattress, hidden away with a pack of cigarettes just in case Vic’s mom got to snooping through his room. It takes a little bit of digging, not aided by Henry kissing him slow while he fumbles around for them, but finally Vic finds one and passes it to Henry. It goes on faster than the time before, and feels less strange on his skin now that Henry knows what to expect.

Vic brings his hands up Henry’s shoulders and pulls him down for a kiss. They lie like that for a moment, nose to nose, lips barely pressed together, chest to chest even with their shirts still on, and groins lined up. Their skin is burning hot down there, so much that just touching like this feels intensely good. And they’re not thinking too much this time, about what they should do or should want to do. They’re not thinking because they don’t have to.

In tandem, they bring their hands back down to touch each other. Vic grabs Henry’s dick around the base, feeling the appendage jump under his hold, and slowly he steers the head down to his entrance. At the same time, Henry slips two fingers back inside him and spreads Vic open again, which is much easier to do with the prep they did. They both need to feel a little in control, but they also want to make it easier for each other. It’s not the power-struggle it could be, instead they’re so attuned to each other that they know this is how it will work best.

Vic feels the tip right there, almost inside but not quite, and there’s a mix of anticipation and fear in his stomach. It’s not overwhelming, but he’s still afraid it will hurt. Henry seems just as cautious and pushes his hips forward slowly, listening for any sound of discomfort so he doesn’t go too far too quickly.

The initial penetration goes faster and easier than before, the extra stretching and slick down there helping them along. As soon as the head gets all the way in, Vic digs one hand into the meat of Henry’s shoulder and clenches another in the blanket under them. Henry stalls, laying distracting bites and licks across Vic’s neck and moving his hips in a slow rhythm. It’s not even thrusting yet, just a natural roll of his pelvis that stretches out that space a bit more.

After a moment, Vic gets used to the wedged open feeling enough to lighten his grasp and urge Henry on by rolling his hips up to meet that rhythm. Henry slides in an inch more, pulls back when Vic clenches up, and then thrusts back in when he relaxes. In this back-and-forth movement they slowly come together, breathing into each other’s open mouths as it gets steadily more intense, until Henry’s halfway inside and Vic feels more full than ever before.

“OH- oh fuck, hold on-” Eyes clenched shut, Vic brings a hand to where they’re connected and feels along his stretched pussy lips and the burning hot shaft splitting them open. Henry goes to pull away but Vic keeps him in place like this, just to get used to the feeling. “It’s okay, just- just’a minute.”

Every instinct in Henry tells him to thrust in right now, but he gathers all the self-control he has to stay in place. There’s no blood this time, he notices in relief, and even breathing heavy and eyes shut tight, Vic doesn’t really look like he’s in pain.

“Can we… like,” Vic flicks his eyes open, heavily dilated and cloudy with desire, and twists his hips to one side while urging Henry to follow.
“Like this?” Henry moves onto his side and Vic rolls to his, briefly breaking the connection between them as they settle down in the new position.

Vic nods gratefully and slings one leg over Henry’s hip, so it’s easy to push his dick back inside again. It feels better on like this, with gravity no longer putting pressure on them so they can go as slow as they need.

Henry pushes in a little bit more, about the deepest he can get from this angle, but it’s enough. They don’t need everything at once, this already feels like a lot.

“Okay?” Henry asks quietly, hips twitching up in the urge to move.

“Yeah,” Vic answers after a moment, head heavy as he nods along and draws Henry in close for a kiss.

The first thrust doesn’t feel great for either of them really. Just the angle’s all twisted and Henry tries to pull out too far. But the next ones better, just in terms of fitting together. And by the next, Vic is touching along where they meet again, just slightly overwhelmed but not needing to stop yet.

The pressure and heat around his dick feels so good it’s hard for Henry to think, but he does notice that there’s not as much slick down there and the friction isn’t great. So he reaches down and seeks out Vic’s clit, finding it all swelled up and tender to the touch. Henry rubs it, fast, slow, hard, soft, and flicks the nub back and forth between his fingers, doing everything that he knows makes Vic wet.

Vic lights up under the touch, face bright and burning and breathing out the keening little noises of pleasure. The more Henry plays with him, the more wet he gets and thrusting becomes much smoother. Henry shifts his hips so he’s thrusting more up than forward, and that angle makes a spark of pleasure zing up Vic’s abdomen. That, plus the touch to his clit, is enough to get Vic thrusting too, meeting Henry’s movements as they steadily get faster and deeper.

Not every roll of their hips is perfect, but enough are to keep them going, working up, up, up towards their peaks. Mouths molded together and tongues licking haphazardly across their lips, they kiss for a while and take frequent breaks to look down and watch their bodies fit together. And just a little more of that is enough.

It doesn’t really last that long, but it’s fulfilling for two young boys that are doing this for the first time. It’s another thing they’ll need to practice at, but that doesn’t mean it wasn’t good.

A few more presses to his clit and thrusts against the right spot make Vic cum like he’s tumbling down a hill, slow and then building in intensity until he can finally catch his breath at the end. Along the way, he clenches up so tight and his insides pulse with muscle spasms, just the right thing to pull Henry over with him. His hips jump to their own accord now, thrusting faster as cum shoots out of him in waves of white-hot pleasure.

And then they both drop off and return to reality all at once. Breathing heavy, they separate enough for Henry to pull his dick out, but stay close as they lie parallel on the bed. The condom feels even stranger with a layer of cum inside, so Henry strips it off and gets a mess on his hand in the process. The deflated rubber gets thrown to the floor, neither care where it ends up for now, and Henry wipes his hand across the bedsheets.

Being empty feels strange too, especially now that Vic knows what it’s like to be stretched to his limit. He touches himself again, feels along his inner ridge that’s still quivering as his insides slowly close back up. It’s overstimulating to touch more and he has to stop, but nothing hurts like he feared
it would.

Henry runs a hand up Vic’s thigh, across his hip, and to his waist, as high as he’ll ever go on Vic’s torso because he knows better. His other hand tilts Vic’s chin towards him so they can look each other in the eye.

“Are you—” okay?, is what he means to say, but the real question is Did I hurt you?.

Instead of answering right away, Vic leans in for a kiss. It’s just a simple, lingering peck on the lips, but it feels like more than any of their earlier tongue kisses. He finds Henry’s hand and tangles their fingers together in a tight hold.

“’m good,” He mumbles between kisses. “It was good, so good.”

Henry turns bashful under the praise and ducks his head down into Vic’s neck. Their arms wind around each other in that natural position as exhaustion takes over, and they start to drift off in the warmth of the morning sun.

“You wan’na do it again?” Henry asks quietly, face still hidden but curiosity and mirth in his voice.

Vic lets his eyes fall shut, knowing Henry is half-kidding, but also really considering it.

“Later,” He says off-handedly while combing his fingers through Henry’s hair.

“Like later today or…?”

“Henry go to sleep.”

Chapter End Notes

Through no pre-planning or forethought, this chapter became the valentines day chapter :D <3 <3
Happy Valentines day every one!! my gift is some very un-sexy but fluffy sex for the boys, hope you like it :/}
I also hope you guys have a good day whether or not you celebrate (I work at a restaurant, so i plan on having an awful evening)

I think I liked the realistic sex experience of last chapter, but I like this one defiantly more. They just so cute i want them to be happy <3 <3

It would make me feel very very loved if you guys could drop me a comment (or get me a boyfriend, either or) <3 <3 <3

Also follow me on tumblr @ https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/ so we can chat and be friends!!

New chapter coming out by next week, take guesses to what’s gonna happen ;)
XOXO
Love

Chapter Summary

“I know Henry.”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Twenty-Nine: Love

August, 1988

With a strong grip clenched in Henry’s hair and another holding tight to the edge of his mattress, Vic arches up until his back is barely touching the bed below. He drops down a second later with a thump, hips still twitching as he shakes off a second orgasm that came right on the heels of the first, leaving tingles crawling up his skin.

Henry pulls back for a breath, panting as he licks cum and slick off his lips. From down here, Vic’s pussy looks all rosy and soft from stimulation, and Henry knows from just a moment ago how hot and tight it is on the inside. Curiously, he presses two fingers in and watches Vic shiver from it. He spreads his fingers wide and the muscles stretch with no resistance, revealing the inner folds and the burning red place between them. Vic has one leg swung over Henry’s shoulder, and his thigh is about the softest pillow Henry could ever have as he lays his cheek on it and watches his pussy pulse with each movement.

Another rush of slick runs out and across Henry’s fingers, not like Vic is cumming again but like his body’s building back up to it. With only a little malicious intent, Henry leans back down and swirls his tongue around Vic’s clit again, just to hear that high squeal and feel the way he tenses up. Both legs come up now and his thighs squeeze tight around Henry’s head, half-trying to get away and half-trying to pull him closer. And Henry, barely breathing with his mouth and nose smushed into Vic’s pubic bone, thinks Yeah, I could die like this, like it’s the best idea he’s ever had.

“AH- Fuck! Henry, Henry, just-” Vic cries out, no intent or direction to his thoughts besides how much he doesn’t think he can come again, but how badly he wants to.

At the call, Henry finally comes up for air and gets an eyeful of Vic’s red face, dark eyes, and bitten lips. He’ll never get tired of hearing his name from that mouth, whether it’s just said in casual conversation or when Vic is screaming it from pleasure.

Once more, Henry tests how loose he is before pulling out his fingers and sucking the slick off them like he’s dying for it.

“Hey,” He whispers, voice thick with want, and looks up to see Vic’s teary eyes looking back down at him. Raising his brows and crawling up the bed, Henry asks silently and Vic nods eagerly.

As far as Vic’s concerned, if Henry’s going to make him cum this many times, then he can do whatever he wants.
Their pants and underwear were kicked off a while ago, even though this had just started out as a normal fingering before going out for the afternoon. As usual, Vic has kept his shirt on, but it’s just a light t-shirt that’s already damp with sweat and sticking to his skin. Henry’s dick looks achingly hard and is bobbing against his stomach, but every time Vic has tried to return the favor, Henry has just batted his hand away.

But now Henry gets over him, nosing under his chin and sucking a few pink marks on his neck, and then grabs Vic by the hips and twists him to the side. Limp from pleasure and exhaustion, Vic follows along and ends up face down on the bed with a pillow propping up his torso. He sags into a comfortable position and folds his arms under his head, rolling his hips up and letting his legs splay out open.

After pulling on a condom Henry drapes himself over Vic’s back, fitting their hips together and leaning up to nuzzle his face into his shoulder.

“Like this?” Vic asks, tongue heavy and words slurred, as he feels Henry’s dick slip between his open thighs and rub against his pussy. They haven’t tried it like this before, and it feels a little strange, not being able to see Henry and not being able to control anything. But it doesn’t feel bad, especially with Henry on him like a warm blanket after tiring him out so much.

Busy mouthing along his ear and down his neck, Henry just hums in response and sinks his teeth into the spot where Vic’s neck meets his shoulder, and leaves a dark red mark there. He humps his hips forward a few times, not in yet but just bumping the head of his dick along Vic’s slit and getting it wet with slick and left-over cum.

Henry brings one hand up to Vic’s cheek to twist his head to the side, just enough to bring their mouths together in an off-center kiss. The angle is almost impossible, but their tongues squirm around each other’s mouths and spread the taste of cum between them. Vic finally loses the energy and just lets Henry suck on his tongue and lips until they are tingling and sloppy wet with spit. And then Henry reaches down and gets a hold on himself, slips the tip into the folds and then just slides in with one smooth roll of his hips.

Vic draws in one big breath of air and whines as his insides adjust. It feels deeper than ever before, like he’s absolutely full and split open, but it’s also really really good. Twisting his hips to one side and then the other, he feels that fullness spread from his hips to his lower belly as a new orgasm builds up slowly under the pressure.

Sitting up and giving a few short thrusts just to feel out the position, Henry starts a slow and steady rhythm that pushes Vic further into the mattress. He gets a strong hold on Vic’s hips, which curve out in the most appealing way Henry could ever imagine, and the milky white skin there will wear the indents of his fingers for days.

Vic lays his cheek to the bed and his eyes drift shut, rolling with the movement and just letting Henry fuck him like this. He didn’t think he could handle any more than just a quick fuck to get them both off, but this, slow and gentle enough to lull him to sleep and still make him cum, is better than he would’ve thought. The pillow under his stomach is migrating down to his hips, propping them up and making his back arch higher. This angle makes his pussy suck Henry in even deeper and at every thrust Vic feels just the right amount of pressure on his clit. He’s probably leaving a wet spot on the pillow from how much slick is dripping out of him, but he’s not thinking about how gross that will be later on.

Henry alternates between a slow, rough rhythm that drives as deep into Vic as he can go, and then he’ll lie back down over him and do these short, little movements against this spot that makes Vic keen in pleasure. The change in pace and position keep his orgasm at bay for now, but after such a
long time teasing Vic and not touching himself, Henry can feel that burning need to cum aching in his veins.

Slipping his hands under Vic’s shirt, Henry rucks it up over the dip in his back to his shoulders, and then feels all along the soft swath of skin revealed. Vic’s chest is firmly pressed into the bed and still completely covered, and he knows Henry isn’t going to touch him there, trusts him not to. But Henry does bring his hands around the curves of his ribs and the indents of his sides, teasing his fingers along the flesh as it prickles, and then wrapping around his stomach and sliding down to rub his clit.

Vic’s face is so burning red from arousal that the sweat running down from his forehead feels icy in comparison. He’s panting so hard that he can’t keep his mouth shut, so all the moans and mewls of pleasure just spill out, along with a sticky trail of drool running over his lips. Everything about it should be gross, but it feels so good that he can’t really care.

*They’ve gotten much better at this since they started.*

They’re getting close to their ends, and Vic is especially grateful because his pussy’s starting to get oversensitive to it all, so after this orgasm he’ll probably be sore for at least a day. Henry leans back down and presses his face between Vic’s shoulder blades, laying a mess of open-mouth kisses there and resting his burning cheeks on the skin. The only part of this Vic wishes were different is that he can’t watch Henry cum with him from this position. But then Henry starts thrusting at just the right angle to catch a sensitive spot on the inner ridge of Vic’s pussy, and his mind goes into a haze.

Any noises they were making, soft grunts and cries drowned out by the low hum of Vic’s stereo playing in the background, get amplified as they rush as fast as they can toward their climax. A few more hard thrusts to his spot sends Vic almost over the edge, and a stream of words and cries pour out of his mouth.

“Oh fuck- Henry, Henry! Right there- Ah! Fuck, I love you. Harder, comm’on- Henry-y-y, love you so much- love you- Please, more, comm’on I need-” And then it all devolves into nonsense half-words and moans into the bedding. His eyes are squinted tight, and the muscles in his abdomen pulse as he’s getting so close to cumming that his muscles are getting ready for the strain. So he’s not really aware of what he’s saying. It’s just everything that swimming around his head coming out at once, all of it true and raw as he’s stripped down to primal wants and needs.

But Henry falters in his thrusting, stutters his hips forward a few times before losing rhythm all together and halting abruptly. He’s still inside Vic, still achingly hard and close to cumming, but his spine goes rigid suddenly like he’s been shocked by a thousand volts.

“What?” He asks, voice broken and gasping from strain as he keeps his face planted in Vic’s back.

Vic whines out a frustrated cry as he’s cut off from the friction, and starts shoving his hips back to get Henry moving again. But it’s not the same, they don’t fit together right and the angle is off. Then Vic feels something wet and hot drip onto his back and turn cold as it runs down his skin. And then another droplet follows, and another.

“What?” He mumbles, confused and overwhelmed with the sudden shift between them. Vic tries to sit up and twist around, but Henry’s arms wrap tight around his stomach and hold him in place.

“Don’t,” Henry says when Vic tries to turn again, but right at the end his voice catches around a sob and Vic can feel him shudder with another wave of tears.

Panic floods in and replaces all that arousal that was rushing through Vic’s veins, and he tries even more frantically to turn over.
“Henry- what’s wrong? Is it- Are you okay?” Distantly, Vic’s putting together a string of thoughts of all the things that might be wrong. Most of all, he’s thinking that if sometimes sex can hurt for him, maybe it can hurt for Henry too, and maybe something went wrong and now-

“What’d you say?” Henry whispers, voice torn up now by hiccuping sobs. More tears fall onto Vic’s skin and pool in the ridges of his spine, no matter how hard Henry shamefully wills them to stop flowing.

“What?” Vic gives up his efforts because there’s really no escaping a hold like this, with Henry weighing him down and a dick still speared into his pussy.

“Before,” Henry mumbles after a moment, trying to hold in another sob and collapsing onto Vic when he can’t.

What? Vic knew he was just spouting off words, too turned on and ready to cum to keep them in. He traces back his foggy memory, which was overwhelmed with lust and need so he can’t really remember more than more, faster, and…

Oh.

“I love you?” Vic says like it’s a question, but it’s not. It’s never been.

Henry just cries harder, all out bawling at the words.

“Henry- Henry comm’on,” Vic reaches a hand back over his shoulder and can just barely brush his fingers through Henry’s hair, but it’s hard to be comforting while face-down on a bed. “Henry, please, can you take it out? It’s starting to hurt,” and it is, without any movement or friction and the urge to cum fading away, having his pussy split wide like this is uncomfortable.

After a moment Henry pulls out, mostly soft now and the condom sagging uselessly off. Vic takes that split second to flop over onto his back, and then tug Henry back down to lie on him again. Henry resists, trying in vain to hide his tears and wipe them away, but eventually gives up and buries his face in Vic’s shoulder.

Vic holds him there, strokes over his neck and back and combs through his hair as gently as he can. He hasn’t seen Henry cry like this in a long while, sometimes he’ll come over from a bad beating with the remains of tears on his face, but never just out of the blue like this.

He starts talking in this soft, hushed tone that someone would use to calm a frightened animal, right against Henry’s temple and pressing light pecks there. It’s kind of like before, with all the words rolling out of him like a one stream of thought, but now he knows what they really mean. “Henry, of course I love you. Of course I do. I love you so much. I always have.” Henry hugs him tight around his bare waist, and for once Vic doesn’t care if his shirt has risen up over his chest. Henry’s more important than that. “I’m always gon’na love you.”

Even before the sex, or the touching, or even the kissing, back when they first met and spoke to each other, Vic can’t think of a time when he didn’t love Henry at least a little bit. And everything that came after just made it expand, until there was no room left in him for anything else.

“Please, talk to me?” Vic mumbles after the sobs have died down. Henry’s breathing heavy against his neck, and a few stray tears are still rolling over the curve of his shoulder. “Please Henry?”

With an exhausted sigh, Henry sits up enough to wipe the extra moisture from his cheeks, but he keeps his eyes cast down, like he can’t bring himself to meet Vic’s gaze.
“’m sorry,” Henry mumbles, hands still on his face like he’s trying to hide as much of himself as he can.

Vic sits up to, and finds that everything below his navel is already starting to ache. But he pushes on and finds a way to hold his core that doesn’t hurt too badly, and slowly peels Henry’s hands down and tangles their fingers together. He nudes their noses until Henry has to tilt his chin up and look him in the eye. Their lips touch briefly, not like a kiss, just like they’re breathing each other in.

“It’s okay,” Vic says earnestly, because he knows this is just part of who Henry is. Underneath all the rough edges is this raw part that feels hurt like aftershocks from an earthquake, and never really recovers from it.

Henry looks like he’ll deny it, shake his head or turn away, but Vic holds him in place with just their eye-contact alone. For once, Vic feels like the most powerful force in the universe, like the whole world hinges on him keeping Henry from crumbling apart, and there’s no doubt in his mind that he can do it.

“I-” Henry starts, but can’t really get his mouth around the words properly. “I just never-” thought someone would.

And if a few more tears eek out after that, Vic doesn’t know, because he’s drawing Henry back in for a hug and reminding him that, “I do. I love you.”

They lie back on the bed like that, snuggled up close together like they can just soak into each other and never separate. Any left-over urges are long gone, especially after the sharp twist in their moods left them both cold and sore. It doesn’t really matter that they didn’t cum, because what happened seems much bigger than that.

“Vic?” Henry mumbles from his hiding spot in Vic’s shoulder. If he could live here forever, feeling Vic’s heartbeat and the warmth of his skin, he’d never want for anything ever again.

“Yeah?” Vic is fading into a light sleep, tired physically and emotionally, but is still hyperaware of Henry at every moment.

“I- I-” Words slipping into crackles of fear and self-doubt, Henry really tries, but can’t say more than that.

“I know Henry.” With a soft touch brushing over Henry’s cheek bone, Vic tempts him into a fitful sleep.

Chapter End Notes

I bet you thought this was just a smut chapter,,,,, turns out its the emotional crux of the story.
I guess I have the innate ability to at least make someone somewhere cry without intending to, but this chapter was actually meant to make you guys cry (((watch no one cry because irony)))

But there it is, they love each other! We all knew it, but apparently Henry didn’t and had a breakdown (me irl)
Please leave me a comment you guys, I now this wasn't a super plot heavy chapter, and more emotional that anyone expected, but I promise plot is coming!!! In fact,, we're almost to when the movie starts in canon....and don't think things arnt gonna get turnt up.

Give a guess at what you think is coming, or any thing you wanna see from the book or 2017 movie in the next few chapters.

tumblr ----> https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

Love you all!!! <3 <3 <3
XOXOX
Caught Part 1

Chapter Summary

“Wha’da ‘bout my ol’man?” Henry murmurs, brow furrowed with the shadow of concern.

“He’s not here, it’s okay,” Vic starts petting Henry’s hair again as he lulls him back into relaxing.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Thirty: Caught Part 1

September, 1988

Sunlight streaming in through the window, Vic awakens to the quiet hum of an early Sunday morning. He finds no arms wrapped around his waist nor a head fast asleep on his shoulder, and drowsily concludes that Henry must not have been able to come over last night. He had spent the last three nights here, and they filled that time with slow, lazy sex and sleeping in late. So Vic shouldn’t feel this lonely waking up by himself, but as he rolls over on the mattress and feels too much empty space, he can’t help it.

The first few weeks of ninth grade have drug by, and the impending knowledge that this is their last year in Jr. High hangs over the boys. It’s strange to consider how much time has passed between them, and how many things have changed. But by the weekend Vic and Henry are back to what they always do, hanging out with their friends, picking on the losers, and sneaking off to make-out at every opportunity.

It’s still too early to reasonably be up, but no matter how much Vic tosses and turns he can’t get back to sleep. So he eventually does roll out of bed and wander around the silent house. He takes a shower and spends a little extra time touching himself, until he cums to the thought of Henry and him in there together. The image of their skin, hot and wet and slip-sliding against each other, gets him off just fine, but when he comes down he’s reminded that if they were to do that, then his chest would be out the whole time. And while that idea still puts a cold ache of dread in Vic’s stomach, it’s not as bad as it could be, or as bad as it has been before.

Maybe they could do that someday. Someday a long time from now, but maybe.

Vic walks slowly back downstairs, meandering to the kitchen with his hair still wet and clean pink skin. His mind is still full with thoughts of Henry, where he is, what he’s doing, the last time they had sex, what they could do today, the next time they could have sex, until his mind is buzzing with Henry Henry Henry.

Feeling the usual phantom pains of hunger, Vic looks through the kitchen out of habit more than desire but doesn’t expect to eat anything of real substance. What he does find is a box of blueberry muffins in the fridge, surprisingly store-bought and decadent looking. He picks at the top of one and licks the sugar topping off his fingers, and finds it pleasingly sweet and it entices his appetite.
While he might be able to eat one of these, or maybe two, on his own, it’s become much easier to eat with another person. Checking the time, half passed seven already and by now Vic knows the shift schedule of Derry police force, so maybe he doesn’t have to eat alone. The idea is a bit impulsive, but every variable seems to fall into place and encourage him to do it.

Taking the box with him, with not a care for who or what it’s in the fridge for, Vic grabs a sweatshirt and sets out down the road, across the kissing bridge, and towards Henry’s house.

As he get nearer the trees thicken and the sound of cars on the road fade away, until all there is only the crunch of dirt and gravel under his shoes. He approaches the empty driveway and breathes a sigh of relief, still buzzing slightly with fear and anticipation. Vic and the rest of the gang have been to Henry’s house before, always when his dad was gone and they would usually just hang out in the backyard for a few hours. But most of the time, Henry just wanted to get away for a while, and Vic hasn’t actually been inside the house since the incident over a year ago.

The door gives just as easily as it did before, the lock clicking ineffectually as it unlatches immediately, and then Vic takes slow, quiet steps through the house. The hardwood floor lurches and squeals from the movement, but the air in the living room is stagnant. The kitchen is also eerily empty, and only a small bit of sunlight filters in through the small window. Vic sets the box of muffins on the bare counter and ventures further into the twists and turns of the old house.

Henry’s room is toward the back, down a dark hallway that seems to get tighter the farther Vic walks into it. The only door is shut, but Vic knows it’s not locked. Henry got Vic a lock for his room, but if he tried to put one on his own door he would get the beating of a lifetime.

Vic stops just outside the doorframe as doubt starts to creep in. There’s no guarantee that Henry’s even home right now, but this is typically too early for Henry to be awake on the weekend. Maybe Henry won’t want him to be here. But Henry comes over to Vic’s house all the time, any hour of the day, and Vic likes having Henry around to distract him from all the bad things that happen around him. Vic wants to be able to do that for Henry too, even if coming over here isn’t as easy.

So he quietly opens the door and steps into the dark room on his tip-toes. And he sees the bed tucked into the far corner and a bundle of blankets on top, with the soft sound of Henry breathing. Vic feels a spark of fondness bloom in his chest that pushes out all the indecision as he comes closer to the bed.

Twisted awkwardly on his side, like he couldn't find a comfortable position to sleep in and just lied where he was, Henry is clutching his pillow tight to his chest. His cheek is damp with a bit of drool, but otherwise he looks warm and soft and content. In sleep he seems younger, like when he and Vic first met.

Gently as possible, Vic brushes his thin fingers through Henry’s tangled hair.

“Henry… Henry wake up,” he calls softly, his thumb brushing over the shell of his ear.

It takes a moment but soon Henry’s nose scrunches up and he shifts around a bit like he’s waking up. But then he freezes, tenses up like he’s terrified even in half-sleep, and in a clumsy movement he squirms as far towards the wall as he can to escape.

“No-no-no, Henry it’s me,” Vic pulls his hand back, realizing what Henry’s afraid of.

“Huh-?” Henry groans groggily, lifting his head up at the voice he knows so well.

He blinks his blurry eyes open slightly, and catches enough of a glimpse of blond hair for the fear to
leave him. Vic reaches a hand out to his cheek and Henry almost falls back asleep from that touch alone. This must be a dream, one of those half-dreams Henry has where Vic will suddenly appear in his bed and then he’ll wake up humping the mattress. This one feels real, but Henry doesn’t have the energy to start fucking Vic like he wants to, so instead he just pulls the other boy down with him.

Vic goes along willingly, settling into the bed and letting Henry hold him close and not unlike he was holding his pillow a few minutes ago. Henry drifts back to sleep, but he’s slowly bobbing along the surface of consciousness.

“Wha’d’a ‘bout my ol’man?” Henry murmurs, brow furrowed with the shadow of concern.

“He’s not here, it’s okay,” Vic starts petting Henry’s hair again as he lulls him back into relaxing.

Henry just hums back and settles down, realizing slowly that maybe this isn’t some slow-starting sex dream. A small voice in his head, one that doesn’t sound as dark as other’s he hears sometimes, reminds him that Vic being here even with his dad gone could be bad for them both. But eventually that voice gets drowned out by drowsiness and the comfort of Vic’s warm body against his own.

“Say it” Henry commands quietly, finally rising out of sleep.

This is how he’ll know this is real, because even in his dreams he can’t hear those words. Only Vic can say it.

“I love you Henry” Vic says it like the words can soak into the walls and remain in the house forever, so that every creaking floorboard would remind Henry that, despite what’s always been true, he’s not alone anymore.

With his eyes still closed, Henry twists his head to the side and lays a sloppy kiss on Vic’s mouth. Vic steers their mouths together with a guiding hand, and that does help quite a bit, but the kiss isn’t really going anywhere. Definitely not where Henry’s fantasies usually go at least.

“I brought food,” Vic says after a moment of silence, mumbling it against Henry’s lips like it’s not the second best thing he’s ever said.

“Oh my god,” that’s all it takes to get Henry awake and out of bed, tired though he may be. “You’re amazing.”

Vic just laughs and rolls off the bed too, leading Henry down the hallway and back towards the kitchen. Mid-yawn Vic takes a muffin and shoves it into Henry’s open mouth, who then spits up a bunch of crumbs and flips Vic off in the meantime. When he can breathe again Henry starts eating the pastry like he’s starving, and Vic starts to pick at his own.

They migrate slowly towards the living room, taking the box of muffins with them as Henry eats at twice the pace Vic does. When they sit down on the couch Henry tenses awkwardly, like he’s uncomfortable being in his own home like this. But eventually they recline and relax when Henry gets used to not having his father here and the fear starts to abate.

“They’re alone. Everything’s fine.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Henry asks, sort of joking but also not as he watches Vic eat the top off his second muffin and leave the rest in the wrapper.

“I don’t like the stump part,” Vic shrugs, licking the left over sugar off his fingers.

“What?” It has to be the mist ridiculous thing Henry’s ever heard.
“It’s boring, I want the topping,” Vic reasons. Henry fixes him with a pointed look and Vic gets defensive, “Don’t tell me how’ta eat.”

Henry huffs out a breath and mutters something like un-fucking-believable, but he takes the left over muffin-bottoms and eats them up. Then the next muffin he picks up he tears the top off and shoves it into Vic’s waiting mouth.

This somehow escalates to them feeding each other in the most ineffectual and messy way possible, spreading crumbs everywhere and staining their lips blue from the filling. At some point Henry bites onto Vic’s fingers and refuses to let go, swiping his tongue across them until they’re soaked and sticky.

“Fuck off,” Vic mumbles while trying to pry them away, but the only real solution is to lean in and let his tongue replace his fingers.

Henry opens his jaw and lets their lips fall together, the kiss extra sweet with the leftover crumbs stuck to their teeth. But then their tongues touch and a bolt of fear shocks up Henry’s spine as he remembers where they are and what they’re doing. He pulls away abruptly, twisting his head to the side and dropping his eyes to the floor just on reflex alone.

“What?” Vic naturally leans in, more in concern than for a kiss, but Henry is stiff and not reciprocating.

“Just, like, not here,” He says with the smallest tremor in his shoulders and a far-away look of fear in his eyes.

“Oh,” Vic sits back, reminded of why Henry wants to escape this place so often. “Okay.”

The mood is colder after that, and now the boys are out of food to fill the quiet. After a few moments, Vic lays out his hand between them, palm up and open, but not demanding Henry take it. It takes quite a bit of hesitation, but finally Henry laces their fingers together and his palm is just as sweaty as the first time they held hands. When nothing immediately bad happens, like the floor doesn’t open up and swallow him or the house doesn’t burst into flames and burn him alive, Henry can finally take a breath of relief. He clasps their fingers tighter together and it feels like so much all at once that it still sort of scares him, but also makes him feel alive.

Vic squeezes his hand back, and feels a strangely proud of Henry for just doing this. They sit still like this for a little while longer, just so Henry can get used to it. And then they go towards Henry’s room so he can get dressed, talking about what they should do with their day and still holding hands the whole way.

While Henry changes into jeans and a shirt, Vic sits on his bed and notices how it smells musky, like sweat and teenage boy, but he doesn’t really think it’s bad. Henry comes over to sit beside him and finds it’s a little easier to be affectionate when they’re in his own room.

“Did you do this to all your shirts?” Vic fingers along the edge of Henry’s flannel, where the sleeves have been torn off and the fabric is fraying.

“…No.” Henry thinks he must have some shirt somewhere that didn’t get this treatment, just to prove Vic wrong.

Vic rolls his eyes like he doesn’t believe it, but then he drags his fingers down Henry’s arm and feels the firm curve of his bicep. Maybe he likes the no-sleeves more that he expected.

They’re in no hurry to leave but they do come back out to the living room, Henry lacing their fingers
together again like they were younger again. It’s something to adjust to, and it’s still a terrifying if he thinks about it for too long, but slowly it gets easier. For some reason it feels like the most dangerous, rebellious, and liberating thing he’s ever done, to hold hands with another boy in this house.

When Henry says something he didn’t know was funny Vic laughs and light glints in his eyes in a way that makes everything else fall away around them. Henry leans in on impulse, getting his mouth onto an exposed swath of Vic’s neck and pressing a wet, sucking kiss there. His hands naturally fall to Vic’s hips and he strokes his thumbs above the waistband of his pants, just so he could touch the barest hint of skin.

Vic brings his arms around Henry’s shoulders, pulling him close but not holding tight enough that he can’t escape. He knows this is difficult for Henry, and he can feel the ridges of scars along his back that remind Vic why.

Henry leaves a pink hickey on Vic’s pulse that will turn darker as the day goes on, and then just keeps his face pressed to his shoulder. But maybe if he had pulled away for a second and looked around, Henry might’ve have noticed the dark leather wallet sitting alone on the table beside the front door. And if he did, he would’ve known that they have to get out right now, or better yet, ten minutes ago. But he doesn’t notice until it’s too late.

There’s a distinct crackle of gravel from outside as tires pull up, a sound eerie enough to shock both boys where they stand as their blood runs cold. A car door opens but doesn’t shut, and the engine is left running as heavy steps come up the porch too quickly for Vic or Henry to catch their breaths. And then the door is thrown open, bouncing against the wall and further decaying the spot where the doorknob frequently cracks the drywall.

“What in the fuck is this here?”

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys!!
Sorry this too so long and its not very long as a chapter :(( but I hope it was some nice fluff for the first part. (unless you read the title and then this whole thing was probably one big anxiety build up))

Truthfully, I really wanted to make them eat muffins. Don’t know why. Infact in my outline it says "V&H eat muffins and bad things happen" thats the whole summary.

Next chapter the bad things will happen i promise.
Please leave a comment and maybe try to convince me not to go super dark next chapter..... idk if it will work but you should try ;D

Coming soon-ish!!!
<3 <3

tumblrrrrr -------> https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/
I recently had a hc that in and au of this au, vic gets Henry a pet rabbit and Henry loves his bunny more than life itself,,,, so follow me for more posts about that I guess.

Thank you guys always for reading and I hope to hear what you think !!! <3
XOXO
Caught Part 2

Chapter Summary

“You wan’na be cocksucker so bad?”

Chapter Notes

((Ayy bb, read the tags))

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter Thirty-One: Caught Part 2

September, 1988

“What in the fuck is this here?” Butch stands like a looming shadow in the doorway, one wide hand gripped onto the doorframe, and the other with a thumb hooked in his belt.

The boys jump like they’ve been burned and stumble a few feet backwards against the couch. Vic fists a hand in Henry’s shirt like a lifeline and can feel the vibration of his shoulders shaking. The air around them all gets sucked away, like their lungs have collapsed and the boys can’t breathe anything in. The already dark room seems to cave in, with the only shred of light coming from the blocked doorway.

Vic gets a look at Henry’s dad like he never has before, somehow at a distance but so close up at the same time. He’s got that deep set in his jaw, the way Henry’s is when he’s really angry and grinding his teeth, but permanent on his face. His eyes are darker than Henry’s ever are, even on the days when he gets his worst, but also cold and sharp like the gleam of steel.

“N-nothin’,” Henry says after a tense moment, and his voice is just barely audible in the silent house.

The man takes a step forward, boot heel heavy on the floorboards and they creek under the strain, and then he takes another. He’s in no rush, just closing in on the boys like a predator.

Henry grabs Vic by an arm and pulls him backward, and twists them so he’s between Vic and his father. The shaking hasn’t stopped, in fact it’s gotten worse, and on reflex Henry’s keeps dropping his head down towards the floor, but he doesn’t back down from his protective stance.

Part of him, the part that is more angry than afraid, wants to grab onto Vic tight and never let him go, keep them safe from this dark part of his life and never let anything get between them. As if to say, I don’t care what I am or what you say about it, but this is what I want. You’ve taken everything else away from me, but you can’t have this. I won’t let you.

But of course it’s not that easy to be brave in real life.

Vic has quite a different reaction, much more flight than fight, of Henry let’s get the fuck out of here
right now- Why are you still standing there? Come on! He’s tugging Henry’s arm back with all force but no momentum, so they’re not going anywhere.

And there’s nowhere to go, the backdoor is down more than a few turns in the house and wouldn’t be an easy path for the boys to follow quickly, none of the windows open or are big enough to escape through, and Henry’s door doesn’t lock. So the only way out is the open door in front of them, passed a man with cruel rage in his face that’s coming closer.

Henry’s eyes can’t come up off the floor, trained by years of backhanded slaps that eye-contact is dangerous, but it’s not just him here. He hears the heavy footsteps come even closer and Vic grips on tighter to his bicep.

His father gets up close, dark glare baring down in that way that makes Henry feel like he’s the smallest, most pathetic thing in the world. The silence stretches on longer, making his tongue twist up and his voice clog in his throat. His mind is stalling and sputtering like a faulty engine, because he knows he has to get Vic out of here right now, but the fear and adrenaline in his blood won’t let him focus.

A wide hand comes up and Henry braces himself for a hit, but instead it gets fisted in his hair and yanks until his scalp burns and his teeth clench. The grip steers his head up, so Henry has to finally look at his father.

“The fuck were you doing?” and when Henry doesn’t answer, his father cuffs him hard across the cheek. “Well?”

“It’s nothin’, we weren’t doin’ anything,” Henry says, voice high and tight like he’s already pleading for mercy.

The slap he gets for that isn’t even that hard, relatively, but it still makes his skin burn and a shock of pain shoot through his jaw. And then the next hit comes and then another, each growing in intensity until his ears are buzzing.

But then Butch sets his sights on Vic, this fairy-looking kid with a scared but angry look in his eye and an unrelenting hold on Henry’s arm. To him it’s pretty clear who the bitch is between the boys, but that doesn’t temper his anger any. Just the thought of his son bringing this little fag around his house to fuck, makes a seething burn of hate and rage and disgust rise up inside him. These two will never try this shit again, not if he has anything to say about it.

Before Vic can flinch away, the man grabs onto his wrist and yanks it away from Henry and then twists roughly until Vic has to go with the movement. Arm now held painfully up in the air, Butch shoves Henry to one side and pushes Vic back against the wall. The kid seems so fragile, bones looking ready to snap under the slightest pressure, and Butch cruelly tests that theory. He grips that wrist until the bones pop apart at the joints, and Vic cries out in agony and tries to pull his arm free.

There’s bruises, older and half-healed, along the boy’s collar and neck, so Butch figures that he’s the kind of fag that likes to be roughed up. He probably likes it when bigger boys grab on and fuck him hard, and Henry’s fallen for whatever game this slut is playing.

“Don’t” Henry voice rings out in the quiet room, raspy and out of breath already, and the beginnings of a sob rising in his throat. It’s not a command, more like he’s begging. He’s on the floor and trying slowly to get up, so petrified with fear that he can’t get his body to cooperate. “It’s me, it’s my fault,” He leans heavy on the wall but finally gets his feet under him, shaking visibly all over and holding back tears. “Don’t hurt him, please.”
Years later, Vic will think that this moment, where they were, how they were, with all the fear in the air and what was said, is the closest Henry ever got to saying *I love you.*

But Butch just pulls his free hand back and nails Vic right in the stomach with a solid punch. Vic can’t double over as the pain ripples through him, so all he can do is huff out a silent scream and gasp for air. And a second later he gets a hard open-palm slap to the cheek that rattles his skull.

Henry reaches out and goes to push his father away before he can land another hit on Vic, but of course Butch just aims his fist at his son instead. The punch sends him tumbling back with his head spinning.

Vic tries to clear the fog in his mind and then starts squirming away. To one side is the open door and to his other is Henry on the floor, and without hesitation he struggles towards Henry.

There’s a trickle of blood from a gash in the corner of his mouth, and it smears across his cheek as Butch slaps him again. His head snaps to one side and his bangs stick to his sweaty forehead, but there’s something about the shape of his jaw and cheeks that makes Butch stop.

“What in the Hell kinda-?” Butch gets a hold of Vic’s jaw, painfully tight and bruises blossom across his pale skin, and he twists the boy’s head forward. His face is familiar, he knows this is that scrawny Criss kid that he’s heard about, one of the boys that hangs around Henry. But there’s also something in the shape of his face and body, even hidden under a layer of baggy clothing, that doesn’t seem right.

Their eyes meet for a moment, as Vic tries to turn away from the prying hand, and he sees the way he’s being looked at. It’s the way people look at him when they can’t quite place he features, something about them distinctly too feminine for a boy, but also concealed enough that they aren’t sure either way. Usually Vic can escape these looks by ducking under his bangs and maybe throwing a punch at someone to establish his masculinity, but he’s never been studied this hard. And it feels more dangerous than the usual looks, because he’s being held down and examined by a dark look that seems to sear right under his skin.

A rush of fear and embarrassment is ignited by rage, and Vic feels an impulsive need to fight back. He reaches up and digs his nails into the hand holding his face, trying to pry it away, and he fights to free the arm pinned to the wall until his shoulder aches from the strain. He’s terrified but not enough to be helpless, this isn’t his father, this is the person who hurts Henry every day, and Vic wants to hurt him back.

Vic’s attempts seem pretty pathetic as soon as Butch pulls his arm back and decks him hard in the face, and a heavy pulse of blood runs down from his nose to his chin. Everything feels like it’s spinning as he goes halfway limp with pain, so he doesn’t know the next hit is coming until it impacts with his cheek and throws him to the side.

Forearms braced to the floor, Vic just barely catches himself before landing face down, and he has to blink more than a few times to keep himself conscious. He gets his legs under him and tries to get up, but a heavy boot lands hard in the center of his back and pins him down.

His chest aches as it’s pressed into the floorboards, but then the pressure increases steadily as the man steps down on him, and he can feel his ribs strain. It’s so close to being too much, Vic is sure he’ll shatter any moment as the pain intensifies, and screams out as it gets worse.

“What!” He hears Henry yell, with some real anger and ferocity this time, and suddenly the ache lets up as Henry shoves his father away with all his strength.
Butch takes a couple steps backwards but stays on his feet, and that’s enough time for Vic to catch a breath and scramble up. He rushes over to Henry in the split second they have before Butch comes back at them, with a deep dark rage in his eyes for his son, but just as quickly Henry pushes Vic away.

With a cruel grip Butch grabs Henry by the scruff of his neck and hauls him back, slamming his cheek into the wall and holding him there, and then he reaches his other arm out to Vic. With just enough distance to evade, Vic sees the look Henry gives him, clear as day with no indecision.

*Go.*

It’s almost like Vic can hear the sharp command with the look in Henry’s eyes alone, and he turns and sprints towards the open door without a second thought.

The sunlight blinds him for a second as he stumbles out onto the porch, but that doesn’t stop him from running. Vic runs until the gravel under his feet turns to grass, and then to dirt, and only stops once he’s smacked in the face with a few low hanging branches. He catches himself on the trunk of a thick pine tree and scrapes his cheek and palms across the bark in the process as he stumbles to the ground.

He’s only across the far end of Henry’s yard, right where the woods begin and he can remain unseen in the treeline. But he can still see the house from here and watches helplessly. There’s nowhere he can go, no one he could ask for help, and nothing to do that could stop what’s going on in the house.

The air is eerily quiet, for how long Vic can’t tell, but his heart is racing at every second. He just has to wait for Henry’s dad to leave, or something, but for so long there’s nothing, and he can’t imagine what’s going on inside.

And then there’s an earsplitting *bang* followed by a scream Vic knows is Henry’s. Then there’s nothing.

“What the fuck do’ya think you’re doin?” Butch lays another hard punch into Henry’s face, each time pulling him back up by his hair when the boy falls to the side.

“It’s not-” Henry tries to say through each hit, but can’t find the words amongst all the pain. There’s a deep split in his top lip that weeps blood into his mouth, and both his eyes are starting to blacken around the sockets.

“Fuckin’ a little queer like that? In my house?” Now he lets Henry slide to the floor and hit the ground, and then lords over him with a hand still in his hair.

“No!” Henry insists “It’s not like that,” but to no avail.

“You might as well just get a girl, if you want you a pretty bitch like that,” and something in Henry twists up at the thought of his father looking at Vic that way. As if he *knows*, and what he could do to Vic if he did.

But Butch yanks Henry upright so he has to sit against the wall, limbs limp out in front of him in hurt and exhaustion. He can’t fight anymore, has to just take it and maybe his father will be done with him soon, but Henry doesn’t know what’s coming.

“You wan’na be cocksucker so bad?” He grabs Henry’s face, wide palm spanning from one side to the other of his wet cheeks, and pulls his face upwards. “Huh?”
“N-n-no, I’m not-” Henry tries to turn back down, to cover his neck protectively, only to get a rough punch to his jawbone.

“Fuckin’ faggot,” Butch gabs him by the hair and slams his head once, twice, and then again, against the wall, until Henry can see little blinking stars all around.

And then suddenly there’s a glint and something cold and metal with harsh edges presses against his mouth.

“Open,” His father commands with another rough pull on his hair.

Going cross-eyed, Henry recognizes the sleek black shape of the gun and can feel the tip of the barrel pinching his lips to his teeth. His blood runs ice cold and his heart stutters with fear. He’s torn between blind obedience, because he knows that there’s no fighting back, but also natural self-preservation and bone-deep fear.

Another swift slap to the cheek makes the metal clack hard against Henry’s teeth, and he can taste a trickle of blood on his gums from the impact. The ache vibrates up his jaw and he can’t help but to cry out one pained breath, right before the gun barrel is shoved into his mouth. The tip is pressed hard against the flat center of his tongue, leaving a circular indent in the soft muscle. It tastes bitter and heavily metallic, like a mix of blood and grime and oil, and Henry tries to turn away and push it out of his mouth.

But instead it’s going deeper, scraping across his tongue and into his throat. His jaw aches as it’s wedged open but the broad side of the gun and his teeth protest against the pressure driving them up into his skull. The tear in his top lip gets spread even further, until the flesh around the cut can’t hold on anymore and splits open like torn seams, and more blood smudges across his mouth.

“Bet ya’ like that. Fuckin’ little bitch wants it,” Henry can hear the words, but they don’t really sound like his father. There’s something too quiet, barely there and creeping in his spine, and Henry can’t tell if the voice is real or just in his head.

About half the gun barrel gets in his mouth when the harsh edge touches the back of his throat, and he can’t help but gag. Cold tears run in streams down his face as he tries to dislodge the gun from his mouth. Everything tastes like blood now, and his father slaps him again and forces it in deeper until he can’t breathe.

Then it becomes all too much and Henry kicks out instinctively, bringing his hands up to pry the gun out of his mouth. Just the smallest bit of relief is all he needs to choke the gun all the way out, and he coughs up a steam of pale bile and stomach acid along with it. His pants are wet with piss and vomit and flecks of blood, making him twist up with cold shame.

A hard kick to his side makes Henry curl inward, but Butch hauls him up by the hair again. The gun hangs heavy by his shoulder, and then his father swings it up and bashes the barrel against his cheek, and the hold on his hair keeps him from flinching away. There’s a deep indent left on his cheekbone, and blood seeps from the edges.

“Fuckin’ what you get, bringin’ some faggot fairy here,” Henry can barely hear the words, almost as if Butch is talking more to himself than his son, but the meaning strikes Henry like any hit would.

Faggot faggot faggot.

“You want it so bad, don’t ya?”

Just along the edge of Henry’s vision, which is fading with the pulsing pain in his skull, he sees his
father’s hand, wide and callused from years of beatings like this, grab his belt buckle. The metal *clinks* as it’s unclasps, and Henry knows what’s coming next so he goes absolutely limp. Lashings hurt worse when he tenses up, he knows that from trying to squirm or brace himself. Instead of turning him over with a kick to the side, his father gets him by the hair again and makes him lift his head higher and tilt it back. He’s gotten a few belt slaps across the chest before and they hurt just as much as on his back, and the same hits to his legs often don’t heal right and stay painful for a few weeks, but Henry’s never gotten a hit across the neck before. Without the buckle it might break his skin, slice his neck until he bleeds out, or with the buckle it will probably break a bone and he’ll suffocate.

But he doesn’t hear the slip of leather through belt loops, nor feel the *crack* of it on his skin, instead he hears the metallic roll of a zipper, and then there’s a hand on his chin and a thick finger prying his mouth open.

All at once his mind can’t, *refuses*, to know what’s coming and he can only think of escape. So he kicks out wildly with both legs, body flailing with renewed energy, and luckily, *thankfully*, kicks his father hard in the knee and sends him stumbling backward.

But Henry can’t breathe with relief or run out the open door like he wants to, because as Butch tumbles back his hand comes up, still holding his gun, and he reflexively clenches his fist through the fall and catches himself on the edge of the couch. The *bang* rings through the house, loud and jarring and freezing them both in place.

And then Henry feels absolute *fire* in his shoulder and he screams as his whole body lights up with pain. He puts both hands over the wound as if that will end the agony, but it doesn’t. Blood spurts out over his hands and soaks through his shirt, feeling all too hot on his cold skin. The bullet grazed right where his collar bone meets his shoulder, digging a deep groove in the tender flesh and exposing a layer of pink muscle and a hint of glossy bone, and then embedded into the wall behind him.

He leans into the pain, curling into his side and ending up face-down on the floor and breathing heavy. A trickle of blood starts pooling on the floor, slipping between the beams and staining the wood dark maroon forever. The ache in his head is disappearing, and he can hear his own heartbeat, slow but loud, pulsing through his body.

Senses slipping slowly, his eyes trail across the cracks in the wall and they shift into lines and shapes and images, until Henry is sure this Vic’s heart he’s listening to. They’re somewhere else, warm, soft, light everywhere, and so close Henry feels like they’re connected. Maybe they’re fucking, or kissing, or just holding each other, he can’t tell, but it’s so *so* good. It’s perfect. And then something dark creeps in, silent and hungry as it swallows them both up and tears Vic away from him. Then Henry is alone. Then there’s nothing.

Butch watches his son scream and shake and then go still, one hand braced on the couch and his gun still held in his other. He takes a heavy breath in the stagnant air and can smell the mix of smoke and blood, and it gets his head out of where it was a moment ago. There’s no empathy or remorse, never has been and never will be, but reality does set in finally.

He came back here in the middle of his shift for his wallet, not to put a bullet in his kid. But Henry deserved it, needed it, to snap him out of all this faggot bullshit. He comes home and finds his son all wrapped up in some little blond bitch, what was he supposed to do? Now however much time has passed and he needs to get back to patrol. Most of all he’s wanting a drink, and once he’s off the clock and had a few, he’ll know how best to deal with all this.

So he leaves, just like that, with not a glance back at his son on the way and a ridiculous expectation that Henry will have himself taken care of and the floor clean of blood by the time he gets back. The
door slams heavy behind him, and the house goes dark.

A moment later, Vic watches Henry’s father finally come out of the house. The man walks long and slow steps to the car, like he’s leaving for work just like normal, and climbs in. The engine has been running the whole time, so he just puts it in gear and backs out of the driveway, leaving a trail of exhaust smoke and turned up gravel in his wake.

As soon as Vic is sure he can’t hear the hum of the car in the distance, he bolts off toward the house even faster than he ran away from it. He throws the door open, entering into the darkness and forcing his eyes to adjust.

“Henry? Henry!” he calls out and gets no response, but he doesn’t have to look far to find him. Henry is curled up on the floor, twisted protectively towards the wall, completely limp and still. Vic runs over, dropping to his knees along the way and finding the small puddle of blood around Henry’s head. His heart drops and he’s sure, very sure, of the worst, but then sees the small shuttering breaths Henry takes every few seconds.

With shaking hands Vic touches Henry’s cheek first with just his fingertips, but when that doesn’t get a response he has to tries again.

“Ple-ease Henry, please be ok-ay,” Rough painful sobs rock throughout his body as Vic tries to awaken Henry, but he just lies there still. “Henry! Please get up, I’m sorry! I’m so sorry!” with no one around Vic can’t help but scream out his apologies, and then just scream and cry with heartbreak. It’s his fault, this was his idea, and he aches with too much guilt to handle.

Vic pleads with any force in the universe to let Henry be okay, but also knows he can’t help by himself. He fumbles around for something to do, but has no way to get Henry to a hospital or anywhere else safe.

After another minute of racking his brain and watching Henry breathe choppy little huffs of air, Vic finally has an idea. And it may not be the best, but it’s the only one he has in such a panic.

He feels so awful to do so, but he leaves Henry’s side, just for a minute, and runs across the room to the kitchen. The phone sits in the corner and he picks it up, frantically typing the number three times before he finally gets it right.

It rings, once, twice, again, and again, and each time Vic feels his stomach drop even more. And then finally theirs the click of the receiver.

“Huggins’ residence,” Belch says in that polite voice his mom taught him to use, which the guys make fun of him for each time they call. “Who’s-”

“Belch! I need your help!” Vic basically screams into the phone, voice going high-pitched and crackling like he’s never heard it before.

“Vic? What’s-” He tries to ask, but Vic won’t stop talking.

“Please, please come to Henry’s house! He’s hurt really bad, please right now, come now!” and then it all devolves into screeched nonsense into the phone.

“What hap-”

“Now!”
My. Poor. Baby. T-T
Why did I do this? why do I hurt the things I love?

Yeahhhh so this is about a 7 outta 10 on my dark scale, could have gone darker, but I think this got the point across.
I'm not going to make any claims about Henry's canonical abuse in the IT universe...... but you guys have seen my opinion.

Also, sorry that updates have been a week apart, I used to do them like every 3 days I know. I just don't have the time for more than this right now :(  
But also, we've got like 8 or 9 chapters to go!!!  
Yay!! But also sad. Verry verry sad. :(((((

Also on my tumblr,,,,, https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/ I wanna start taking headcanon requests that might turn into oneshot fics, for bowers gang/it related stuff <3 so hmu if you guys want to request anything!!!!

Also please leave a comment if you like this chapter, or if not, either way :DDDDDDDDDDD <3 <3
XOXO
Freedom

Chapter Summary

“Anywhere-” His voice breaks at the end, like he can’t hold in how much the word means. They can leave. Because they car and can go wherever they want. They can just drive right out of the city limits and stop suffocating in this town. “Henry,” Vic says, softer and more pleading.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Thirty-Two: Freedom

October, 1988

Torn skin will grow, slowly but steadily, over an open wound and cover it. But the scar won’t be any stronger than flesh, the pain may persist as a dull pulse, and the mark will be a vulnerable reminder of what has happened. Scar tissue twists up as it grows, and gravity drags it down to a pucker into the skin. Wounds do not heal to make us stronger, to be pretty, to teach us something, or to make us better people. Wounds only heal so we can survive.

Henry’s first trip to a hospital since birth was just a blur of hurt and darkness. He woke up briefly lying face down on a car seat, somehow cold and burning at the same time and getting nauseous from the movement of the car. And then he woke up again somewhere with too much light and noise. He had no feeling anywhere besides a heavy weight in his head dragging him back down into unconsciousness.

An hour or so later he was finally able keep his eyes open and sit up, and he found himself in a room with the lights turned low.

“What’s goin’ on?” Vic had said, far off and quiet like he wasn’t really there, and it took Henry more than a moment to answer.

“What’s goin’ on?” He mumbled, blinking until his vision adjusted. Vic and Belch were there, just a couple feet away, but it felt like a long distance.

“I told the doctor that you got in a fight,” Vic said like it was important. Henry could see the dark red and purple splotches on his face, and finally realized that they were bruises. Then a foggy memory rose to the surface of when they got caught and what happened after, and Henry willfully pushed it back down. He put it in some dark corner of his mind and built a barricade to keep it there, because he couldn’t live with it.

A fight, people will believe that. Just a fight, no need to spend time thinking about it.

But overtime that dark corner of memory has grown too large to ignore, and everything has started to overflow, no matter how he tries to push it back.

A nurse came in later, talking too fast and Henry could only catch a few snippets of “minimal
“So we will need to contact your parents for further treatment,” She had said. She must have been new, to her job and to the town, if she didn’t know who Henry’s father was.

Henry glanced back at his friends, both uncomfortable and looking at the ground, and then he just nodded to the nurse when it seemed like she wanted him to. When she left them alone again, all three boys left the emergency room as fast as they could.

Henry doesn’t go home for two weeks, and doesn’t spend a whole night there for three, so he’s been drifting in and out of his friends’ houses for a while. Mostly he spends nights at Vic’s, and then they’ll go over and spend the weekend at Belch’s place and crash in the basement.

Patrick drifts in and out, a cross between bored and alienated by the mood hanging over his friends. He’ll bait Henry into an argument and get the mildest response back, or none at all, and Vic will give Patrick death-glares the whole time. There just seems to be a gap between understanding and empathy, between objectivity and emotion, that keeps Patrick at a constant distance. So he hovers around the edges, unable to relate but persistent to stay.

And they all just exist like that for a while. Vic feels like they’re stuck in a haze, some dark blur that’s clouded over their lives, and it lingers heavy in the air for what feels like forever. Seeing Henry like this, quiet, dull behind the eyes, hardly sleeping due to nightmares, and more in his head than ever before, makes Vic feel like there’s a gaping hole in his chest.

Sometimes they kiss, for a long time or a short time, and Henry’s favorite place to sleep is still with his cheek pressed against Vic’s shoulder, but other than that Henry doesn’t really want to be touched right now. And Vic understands, or he thinks he does, but it gets harder as the days go by to just sit and watch Henry be this achingly miserable. Vic wants to put out his arms like a needy toddler and grab at the air until Henry wraps him up and never lets go. He wants to hug and kiss like they used to, when everything felt new and exciting and special.

But it’s not that easy, they don’t heal to be better, or to be happy, but to survive.

Then at last the rut breaks. Belch, now fifteen and technically the oldest of the group, and frequently mistaken for even older due to his size, finishes fixing up the busted up Trans-am he’s been working on for years It’s been the centerpiece to many late nights hanging out in his garage, but finally the engine purrs to life and it’s like the whole world opens up for the gang.

They take a couple joy rides first, going fast enough to bring some kind of spark back in Henry for a short time. But then they want more. So, after a thousand laps around town, down every side road, and almost crashing on the main street, the question is, where else?

Some early afternoon, all the days are bleeding together, the boys are sitting across the floor of Belch’s garage. The car sits poised in the driveway, blue gloss reflecting bright rays of sunlight, waiting to be driven.

Henry has been lighting up cigarettes for a while now, but all he’ll do is take a few drags of one and then be sick of it and pass it on to Vic, and then do it all over again a few minutes later. After smoking most of six cigarettes in succession, Vic’s throat is burning and his head is starting to throb, but he takes the next one Henry holds out to him anyway. He wants Henry to stop, but he doesn’t want to tell him to.
“Let’s just leave,” Vic finally says, like it’s more than just an answer to afternoon boredom.

There’s a beat of silence, and then another.

“Where?” Belch asks when Henry doesn’t respond and Patrick slumps disinterested in the corner and plays with his lighter.

“Anywhere—” His voice breaks at the end, like he can’t hold in how much the word means. They can leave. Because they can go wherever they want. They can just drive right out of the city limits and stop suffocating in this town. “Henry,” Vic says, softer and more pleading.

Henry stalls in his chain-smoking, blinking until some life comes into his eyes and turning to Vic.

“We can leave,” Vic says, just to Henry. And suddenly it’s like Henry isn’t looking through him anymore.

“Yeah,” it’s not a question, but Henry says it like he’s still trying to put the pieces together. “Yeah,” He repeats, with more authority this time, and stabs out the barely burnt cigarette on the concrete floor. His hands fidget for something to occupy them, but his eyes drop to the floor and he says to himself, “We can leave.”

Belch and Vic share a wary look as Henry talks to himself, but then he suddenly stands up.

“C’mon, let’s go,” Henry says, quick and commanding but still slightly off.

“Now?” Belch asks, but already he’s reaching toward the keys.

“Yeah now. You got somewhere to fuckin’ be?” And even though Henry’s being impatient and aggressive, Belch and Vic are mostly relieved that he’s even talking at all.

Belch goes to get the car started but Vic hangs by Henry’s side as they turn to Patrick.

“Hockstetter, get in the fuckin’ car.”

Patrick looks up, open palm hovering over the little flame to test a theory that he can’t be burned. “Where’re we going?”

With Henry stuck in his head and brooding all the time, Vic mooning over him, and Belch mom-ing them in the meantime, who can blame Patrick for tuning it all out.

“Who fuckin’ cares?” Now Henry’s voice is a little too sharp, like he’s riding a fine edge between frustrated and enraged.

Patrick rolls his eyes as he gets up, and pointedly walks between Vic and Henry on his way to the car, still flicking his lighter the whole way there.

For a moment, Henry and Vic just stand in the garage, with their friends just a few feet away and waiting for them. Henry has his arms are crossed defensively across his chest and that tense clench in his jaw, but his eyes are far off and still aimed toward the floor.

“Henry,” Vic says faintly, barely audible even in silence, and brushes his fingers across his shoulders.

In an instant and reflexive movement, Henry flinches back at the touch. Not too far, just enough to put some distance between them, and Vic can see the ripple of fear crawl over his skin. Vic pulls his hand back quickly, but leaves it hanging in mid-air as his heart sinks into his stomach. And they both
know, distantly, that they should talk about this, about whatever’s lying beneath the surface and making Henry act this way.

But they don’t. Instead Henry keeps his head down and grabs Vic by the wrist, leading him to the car without much force in his grip. It feels familiar and Vic longs for a time when things were easier to understand, and then gets in the car when Henry tells him too.

*Why talk about things when you can run away from them?*

“I swear to God, if you don’t get in the fuckin’ back Patrick…”

Of course Henry sits up front. He likes being the leader, likes calling the shots and so forth. But also, he needs to be in control to stay calm and feel *safe*. And Vic knows this, he understands that sometimes Henry needs things that aren’t from him. So he’s not going to let it bother him that Henry’s not going to sit in the backseat too. It’s not a big deal, even though this is the first bit of anything he’s gotten out of Henry in weeks, and they could be in the back talking or kissing or *something*, but they’re not. It’s fine. He’s fine.

Belch had said, in the midst of a stagnant argument of “Where are we going?” “Who cares? Just go.” that if they go past the interstate and hit the old highway then they have a straight shot to the coast. That way they can get away and avoid getting pulled by over a state trooper.

So Vic slumps and gets ready for the long haul of a four hour road-trip, committed to kicking Patrick every time he crosses over into his side. Which he just does over and over.

The engine starts up with a deep hum, and the rumble rolling up the frame from the engine is strangely comforting. The streets fly by as they pick up speed, making sharp turns along residential streets. Along the way they pass Vic’s house and he barely gives it a glance, and then they’re on the main strip and racing toward the edge of town.

A few twisting curves and the buildings fade away and trees line the road, until suddenly they are crossing the invisible boundary of Derry, Maine. From his view in the backseat, Vic watches the way the muscles in Henry’s neck and shoulders tense up. Vic catches the sight of the town sign in the corner of his vision as they pass, but it isn’t until they’re about a hundred feet away before he and Henry release the breaths they didn’t know they were holding in. And for every mile they drive, more relief floods in.

Someone turns on the radio and the boys bicker back and forth about which type of metal music they should listen to, until it all starts to sound the same. But the arguing is lighthearted and they all eventually settle on something, probably Henry’s choice, and the time passes slow but pleasantly.

Eventually Henry rolls down the window, even though the car is going sixty down a nearly empty highway, and Vic naturally leans up and puts his hand out the window. It’s a left-over habit from a childhood full of long car rides between cities, sitting in the back with his sister and reaching one hand out to the open air, wishing he was somewhere else.

Henry has his arm propped up on the window’s edge and lets it get swept back by the wind. They’re hands touch briefly, once and then break apart, and then again but they hold on this time, fingers hooking together like links in a chain. The angle is strange and hurts their wrists slightly, Vic is leaning so far forward that he can lay his cheek on the back of the passenger seat, and Patrick may or may not be looking at him like he’s pathetic. But other than that, it’s nice. Maybe it’s not enough, but that’s okay.
And then another car comes up the highway beside them and Henry breaks their hands apart immediately and Vic lets his flop uselessly in the breeze. The car passes a little while later, and after it’s a good distance ahead Henry finally reconnects their fingers. Vic knows this is going to happen every time a car comes near, every time there’s a chance someone will see, and he tries not to let it bother him.

The air seems to change slowly, from the heavy mist of backwoods Maine to the fresh icy gust that comes off the ocean, until suddenly it feels like they’re in a different world all together. The drive was full of periodic complaining. Patrick got bored, Vic got annoyed, Henry got angry, and Belch just tried to calm everybody down. And so on.

About three hours into the trip, they all realize that that they left with no plans, no idea where they’re going, barely any money, and nowhere to spend the night because it’s already evening and they are sick of driving. But they stop at a gas station and while Belch fills up the tank the other boys stuff their pockets full of junk food and almost get caught on the way out.

Food and water helps take the edge off for the final leg of the trip, and soon they drive through a small beach town. It’s late enough into fall that the town is quiet and almost deserted, and farther down from there the boys find a small inlet framed by rocky cliff sides. The sun has just begun to set behind them, so the sky shifts through dark blues and purples into a clear night sky dotted with stars. And this seems like a good place to stop.

They get out of the car, all tired and cramped, just to stretch their legs. Patrick takes off almost immediately down the shore and across some big rocks, off to do who-knows-what. Belch checks the car, popping the hood and making sure the carburetor is taking the long journey without issue. Henry and Vic drift across the beach, shoes sinking into the sand with every step. They stand and arm’s length apart but it feels like a greater chasm, and slowly they are drawn in towards the shoreline.

The beach is all damp grey sand and little pebbles, and the waves are foaming up from the wind. But there’s that crash of the ocean against the shore, steady and calm like a heartbeat, and the absolute relief of being somewhere else finally sets in.

Henry sits down suddenly, dropping hard to the sand like he didn’t really mean to. He’s crouched defensively with his knees up and head between them, and doesn’t react when Vic cautiously sits down beside him. The only noise is the rush of the waves and the huff of their breaths in the brisk night air.

“It’s so quiet,” Henry says after a minute, or several, like it’s a revelation. He looks up at Vic like he expects something.

“What d’ya mean?” The sound of waves is a nice break from ear-splitting music, but Henry says quiet like it’s something important.

Henry lifts his head up and Vic catches sight of his eyes in the minimal light. There’s some mix of scared and anxious and uncomfortable in them, but they’re also clear and focused, like he’s just awoken from some long-lasting daze.

“Like quiet, but in-” His words are choppy and hang unfinished in the air as he puts his face in his hands. He doesn’t know how to describe it, but it feels like something has lifted off of him, a heavy pull that has been dragging him down and sucking him inwards has released. The quiet unsettles him most, no buzzing in his ears, no subtle echo on words, no strange thoughts twisting through his brain, just silence. He vaguely remember a time when this kind of quiet was normal, but can’t quite figure
out when that changed. Now it’s like there’s a clarity to everything, but it’s not sharp or overbearing, it just feels real.

The change was slow as they drove away from town, the steady hum of some calling still under his skin, but now they’re so far away Henry can’t hear it at all. It makes him feel like he’s off balance because he’s so used to being weighed down.

“Henry, are you okay?” Vic asks, leaning in a little closer. He can see how Henry’s shaking, but it’s not from the cold.

And then the quiet unlocks some deep buried memories, so tucked away Henry doesn’t even recognize them as his own. Some are recent, some older, but for once Henry can’t push them into a dark corner and let them fester. Instead they rise up to the surface, and finally Henry just has to deal with them.

He hides more his hands, more overwhelmed than ashamed, and digs the heels of his palms into his eyes. Some primal cry or hurt and pain and anger rises up through his gut, shaking his bones and burning his throat, until he is screaming into the night as he lets it all wash over him.

Vic jumps back at the noise, and Belch looks over from the car. They share a panicked look of oh, shit and then Henry screams again, louder and like every second hurts him.

“Henry, calm down-” Vic hushes him gently and reaches out to gently tug his hands from his face.

At the touch Henry falls onto his back, sinking a few inches into the sand and screaming until he runs out of air and has to take a breath. Vic hovers over him and just waits it out, ears ringing and heart aching from what sounds like Henry going through the worst pain of his life.

It hurts, it hurts so bad, but not as bad as Henry thought it would. Then all the memories start to drift away, carried off by the ocean, and Henry can breathe like his lungs are new and his mind is clear.

The screaming stops with a choked gasp, and Henry drops his arm limp to his chest. The cold air is soothing on his hot skin, and then there’s a hand on his face that feels even better. It gently touches along the bridge of his nose, across his cheek, and cups his jaw while stroking slow circles into his skin. Even eyes closed and emotional exhausted, Henry would know that touch anywhere.

“Something’s wrong,” Vic says and Henry nods, head bobbing like he can’t control the movement.

So many things are wrong that he can’t figure out what they all are, but finally he’s starting to let some of them go.

“Can you tell me?” Vic leans in so close, whispers the question like he won’t let anyone else hear. Like he would protect Henry from anything the world, just to take this pain away from him.

And Henry really really wishes he could. But he’s not ready for that yet, and shakes his head until more tears roll down his face.

There’s a knot that Vic can feel rising up through his throat, and distantly he realizes he’s crying too. The tears stream down his face, but he feels disconnected from them. Like they’re not important right now.

Almost simultaneously, Henry reaches up and Vic leans down, and they latch on to each other like magnets drawn together. Vic shifts over to blanket Henry’s body, all while kissing his neck and cheeks to the rhythm of the ocean.
“I love you, nothing’s bad’s gon’na happen, I love you so much, Henry…” He rambles in a soft mumble, unable and unwilling to stop.

Belch comes over at some point and sits beside them on the beach, quiet and uncomfortable, but watching over them protectively. After the last few shuttering breaths from Vic and Henry, Belch rubs Henry’s shoulder until he’s calm, just so Henry will know he’s there.

Vic gives him a teary but grateful look, trying to wipe his eyes and sit up. He tries to coax Henry into sitting up, having some food or water, but Henry just tugs him back down to his chest and clutches Vic tight like a security blanket.

They stay still like that for a while as Henry recovers slowly from his breakdown, and Vic and Belch relax as the feeling of crisis leaves the air. And when Patrick wanders back to them sometime later, he sits down beside them and studies his friends like they are an unknown species.

They listen to the ocean, and Vic and Henry listen to each other’s heartbeats, and try not to remember that they have to go back to Derry eventually.

They decide to spend the night there, but in the car instead because it’s getting too cold outside. The prospect is uncomfortable and crowded, but they don’t really have another option.

Vic is dozing in the backseat for exactly a second before he feels Patrick slither a hand across his thigh.

“Oh fuck no,” Vic launches himself forward between the front seats and crawls across the console. He knows that Patrick is probably just messing around, probably, but he’s not going to spend all night back there finding out.

Patrick pouts as Vic moves to the front of the car, but then he appreciates the great view he has as Vic wiggles his hips to get through the gap in the seats. He stretches out along the backseat and settles in for the night, despite not having a cute little blond to keep him company.

Vic finally gets over the threshold and into the front, and just throws himself onto Henry’s lap. To his credit, Henry just opens his arms and lets Vic fall into them, when just a few hours ago he wouldn’t even hold hands with him for very long. Now Henry’s more pliant and exhausted than anything, but he also shoots a glare at Patrick that says *I’m tired right now but if you ever do that again Hockstetter I’ll…* Vic just snuggles into Henry’s chest smugly and props his legs up on the middle console, and Belch rolls his eyes and fondly wonders why his friends are like this.

A few hours later Vic wakes up slowly. The car is dark and the radio is humming some slow beat that he doesn’t recognize. He almost gets sucked back into sleep, but he feels fingers absently fidgeting against his hip, and he knows Henry is awake. Turning his head up and feeling a protesting cramp in his neck, they’re so close that their noses touch.

“Hey,” Henry says, so quiet it’s almost like a breath.

Vic blinks back at him, trying to stay awake but slowly losing his will.

“I’ll tell you someday,” Henry promises, and it takes Vic a moment to understand.

“Okay,” he doesn’t want to push Henry into talking if he’s not ready for it, but he also wants to take it all away and save Henry from whatever it is.

“Someday when…” Henry isn’t searching for words, just can’t seem to get them out all at once. He’s
so used to holding everything in, so this new release granted by the distance is still overwhelming, “…when we don’t have to go back.”

Vic nods slowly, trying to imagine being with Henry in the future, living somewhere far away and never having to turn back to Derry again, and an intense want blooms in his chest.

“I love you,” Vic says it so naturally now, at every chance he thinks Henry needs to hear it. He touches Henry’s shoulder, stroking over the deep and barely-healed scar from the bullet, like he wishes he could make it disappear.

Henry feels a tight ache in his chest, but that doesn’t stop him from speaking again, “Yeah,” and he brushes Vic’s messy bangs away out of his eyes. “I’ll tell you that too.”

The sentiment is bittersweet, but Vic will wait as long as Henry needs.

They drift into a slow kiss with lots of tongue but no teeth, and it leaves both boys buzzing pleasantly.

*It's gonna take a lot to take me away from you…* The radio sings to them softly. *There's nothing that a hundred men or more could ever do…*

“What the fuck are we listening to?” Henry mumbles into the kiss.

“Fucking garbage,” Vic mumbles back, and reaches over to turn the radio off.

*I bless the rains down in Africa-*Click.

A few days after they return, Georgie Denbrough goes missing. And if Vic knew what this would lead to, he would have run away with Henry right then and never looked back.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter is full of tone dissonance. I couldn't decide whether it should be sad or cute or funny or angsty and it came out to be none of the above. Sorry bout ittttttt :(((

And sorry about the late update. Truthfully I've had a pretty lame week and just have felt shitty, so my motivation and creativity were pretty low. I'll try and get back into the spirit soon.

I hope you guys found something in this chapter you like, it was kind of all over the place :{

Btw Africa by Toto isn't garbage Vic is just fourteen and 3dgy

Tumblr where i post about being a sad virgo crybaby >
https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

It always makes me really excited to see comments, and it would actually really help me to know honestly what you guys think.

If your still with me thank you so much and I promise to be back soon <3 <3 <3

love you all

XOXOX
Broken Part 1

Chapter Summary

“'Cause you’re not-!” Henry says before he can hold it back, and only stops himself when he realizes what he was about to say. “Just drop it already,” he tries to cover, turning away and trying to breathe, but Vic grabs him by the wrist and pulls him back into the tense and stagnant air.

“No, what were you gon’na say?” Vic could hear that small change in Henry’s voice, and part of him doesn’t want know what it meant, and the another part can’t let it go. “What the fuck were you gon’na say to me?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Thirty-Three: Broken Part 1

May, 1989

Of course they all remember that night on the beach and Henry’s breakdown. There was something about the terrified clarity in his eyes, like a veil had been pulled back and whatever was behind it was too painful to face, that haunts Vic’s memory. It’s not unlike Henry avoid talking about something that makes him feel vulnerable, but so much time goes by that Vic has to wonder if Henry remembers the episode at all.

And Henry’s memory gets shiftier as time goes on, like his thoughts are malleable to be twisted by some strange force, until he’s not sure what really happened that night. Gradually the tunnel vision narrows and the subtle thrum under his skin builds until it’s a painful itch. There’s a noise he can’t quite hear, always present in the back of his mind but he can’t place what it is. It all pushes him further onto the edge of some dark chasm that reaches out to pull him in.

So weeks go by and none of the boys talk about their brief escape. They go back to school, cause trouble, hang out until the late hours of the night, and then do it all over again. Some new fat kid moves to town and crosses Henry’s path too many times to not get the shit kicked out of him. So that’s fun, for a minute or two, but then it just fades into their everyday routine.

Two more kids go missing before Christmas, and another three in the months after. Hysteria is high and hope is low. The world of Derry just seems so much more vast and dangerous than the land outside its meager borders, and everyone here just has to learn to live in it.

Spring rolls in like even the earth is crying out for newness, revival, but the early summer sun sucks the life right out of it all. Vic wonders when time started going so fast.

One stupid weekend starts out with Henry restless and Vic along for the ride. By the afternoon they’re sitting in Belch’s garage getting drunk on stolen whiskey and chasing it with down with cheap beer. Henry is feeding some slow burning fire in his gut and getting testier by the minute, but Vic is feeling warm all over and his better judgement has been tempered by alcohol. Belch is drinking far less than them and Patrick seems to prefer huffing paint to getting drunk, but other than that, they’re all just wasting the day away.
Vic has his legs swung over the arm of the ratty old couch, and he absently swings his feet to the beat of a song playing too loud from the stereo. A few moments ago he was lying half-asleep across Henry’s lap, but then Henry got restless and is now pacing around with a lit cigarette. There’s this warm buzz in Vic’s head as he rolls his hips to get comfortable. He can’t decide whether he’s too horny to sleep or too drowsy to fuck, but either way he wants to go home soon with Henry.

“What’re you pouting about?” Patrick crawls out from whatever corner he’s been huffing in and leers over Vic. “Huh blondy?” He plants his hands right on Vic’s knees and his long fingers slowly creep upward.

Vic puts a foot into Patrick’s chest and gives him a halfhearted shove back. “Fuck off,” Vic knows that Patrick is just messing around, maybe, but he can’t really be pressed to care.

He feels a warning itch of anxiety in his spine and pats down his pockets by instinct, until he remembers that Henry has his smokes and Patrick probably has the lighter. So Vic flops back in a huff and the foreboding feeling remains at the in the back of his dizzy mind.

Henry stomps out a cigarette on the cement floor and leans against the wall, barely responding when Belch tries to check on him. When it seems like he’s coming back over, Vic pretends to stretch just to arch his back up and spread his legs a little more, as if he’s trying to get Henry to fuck him right now. It’s been almost six hours since Henry fingered him in his bedroom earlier. What’s a guy got to do to get some action around here?

He’s drunk and turned on and almost fifteen, who can blame him for not knowing how to be subtle? But Henry just thumps his head back against the wall and mumbles something inaudible to himself.

Unhurt and ignoring the rejection, Patrick slinks back over and leans over the edge of the couch in a way that was probably supposed to be smooth but turns out mildly disturbing. Vic just rolls his eyes and resists the urge to reach out for Henry to come back to him.

“You’re like a fuckin’ cat in heat,” Patrick says as he roams his eyes over the pretty boy laid out in front of him. And when Vic glares up at him with dark, burning anger in his eyes, Patrick just reaches over and pinches his cheek like he’s the cutest thing in the world.

“You’re an asshole,” Vic says with malice but no real force, and smacks Patrick’s hand away from his cheek.

The pinch leaves a pink welt on his snow white skin, and Patrick thinks it might be the prettiest thing about him.

“Yeah, sure,” Patrick has this smug smile on his face but this eerily look in his eyes that doesn’t match. His hand drifts down through the air and settles on Vic’s stomach, right along his hips where his t-shirt meets the sloping band of his pants. “But I’ll tell you what you are,” and he sneaks his fingers under Vic’s shirt just enough to dig them painfully into his lower abdomen.

The words seep into Vic’s skin and send an icy chill through his veins, until his limbs lock up in place and his heart stutters. He can feel the hand on his stomach, nails scraping along his skin as it crawls upwards achingly slow. His mind is starting and stalling at a frantic rate, confused and afraid and saying No no no he doesn’t know, and No no no stop it! But for some reason his teeth are clenched tight around his lip and Vic can’t get the anything out around them. Some instinct is telling him to stay perfectly still, like he can escape the jaws of a predator by not fighting back, but Patrick just leans in closer and keeps touching him.
Propping himself on an elbow, Patrick slings a leg up and slides his knee right between Vic’s open thighs until it’s uncomfortably close to his center. The position cages the boy in, not that he’s trying to escape though, Vic’s just lying there with that terrified look in his eyes. And then the hand slides up even further and travels along the edge of his ribs.

“The fuck are you doing!?” Henry gets a fist hooked in Patrick’s collar and hauls him backwards, sending him tumbling back onto the floor.

Vic flinches back as he’s finally able to breathe again, drawing his knees back and yanking his shirt down. With the movement a rush of blood flows to his mind, already muddled from alcohol and anxiety, and he can’t quite put together what just happened.

Just finding a break in the tornado of his thoughts, Henry had finally come to with the sight of Patrick crouched over Vic like he was stalking prey. And suddenly that creeping rage had an outlet.

As he falls to the floor, Patrick grabs onto Henry and drags him down with a half-playful punch to his side. Henry, clearly not at all playing, rears up and slams his fist into his jaw.

Before the fight can really get going, Belch jumps in and drags Henry up, and he then shoots Vic a desperate look when Henry won’t stop kicking and Patrick keeps goading him on.

“C’mon Henry, we were just messin’ around,” the sneer in his voice makes it clear that he’s inviting Henry to hit him again. “Just having fun,” and Patrick give Vic another appreciative look up and down.

Vic gets up and locks his arms around Henry’s bicep, tugging him back while also flipping Patrick off along the way. Getting up makes his head hurt and he’s tried and confused as a twisting dread builds up in his stomach.

“It was just a stupid joke,” Vic insists, whispering to Henry but really trying to convince himself. Patrick always says stupid things and gets handsy. It didn’t mean anything.

The air hangs tense and heavy for a moment as quiet settles and Henry stops trying to fight, finally letting Vic pull him back to the couch. Henry’s got that look on his face, like he’s swaying between pent up anger and just annoyed frustration, and Vic thinks that maybe the best way to calm him down is with a few slow kisses. And then they can go back to Vic’s place and forget about this stupid thing that totally doesn’t matter.

But of course, Patrick has to say something to make it all worse.

“Fine, but if you fags want some have some real fun, then-”

Fag.

“The fuck did you just call me?” Before Vic can even get him to take a breath, Henry’s up again and ready to keep the fight going. There’s also this certain edge to his voice that sounds just the slightest bit unhinged.

“Will both of you shut the fuck up?” A headache is starting to sear between Vic’s temples and he just wants this to go home already. “You’re a faggot too asshole,” he throws at Patrick just to end the conversation.

Henry snaps his head around to Vic with a strange look, like he wants to say something else, but after some urging from Belch they all just drop the subject.
The evening is spoiled after that, tense and silent as they don’t really want to be around each other anymore. Vic settles down into the couch and tries not to think about getting felt up a few moments ago, and tries even harder not to think about what Patrick had said. Or, what he didn’t say.

*Just a joke. Just messing around.*

A little while later Henry wants to leave, and Vic is relieved to follow him.

About halfway into awkwardly silent walk to Vic’s house, Henry still has that mood hanging over him, like he’s holding something in that’s trying to break through the surface. The boys make a detour at the kissing bridge, just out of habit, as the sun finally dips under the horizon and casts blue shadows over the town. And finally the tension comes to a peak.

“What’d you say that for?” Henry asks, with a gruffness in his voice from the alcohol and anger left in his blood.

“What?” Vic feels his energy sagging and leans against the beam of the bridge. There’s an ache in his temple that makes it hard to focus and pick up on Henry’s tone.

“That shit about Hockstetter being a faggot,” He snarls his mouth around the word and grits his teeth in unprovoked aggravation.

Faggot faggot faggot.

Vic snorts a laugh, “’Cause he is?” but it seems like Henry isn’t finding it as funny. “He’s just as much as a fag as we are,” Vic says offhandedly.

But there’s this subtle flinch and stiff arch in Henry’s shoulders at the implication, and he quickly covers it with anger.

“Why’d you fucking say that?” and the defensive note in the words make it clear that Henry isn’t talking about Patrick as much as he’s talking about himself.

Vic can see this pretty easily, and part of him knows that this is a sore subject for Henry, but some of that empathy is stunted by a drunken headache.

“That’s what you’re mad about?” Vic reaches out to Henry, to grab his hand or something, but Henry evades him with a dark look set in his eyes. “Henry this is stupid, it’s just a word,” Vic can think of a hundred worse things to be called, and has been over the years, but Henry seems fixated on this one. “Who cares?”

But it’s not really about the word for Henry, and if he had any sense of self or right now, he might be able to realize it’s more about who had said it, and what it meant when it latched onto his skin with sharp hooks and never let go. But that kind of retrospection needs a clearer head and more vulnerability than Henry is able to have.

You wan’na be cocksucker so bad?

Henry flinches away from the words only he can hear, “No- it’s-” the words are all twisting up in his head and making it hard to remember what they’re really talking about. “I’m not fucking fag, so just quit saying it.” He finally insists, and even though the demand is aimed at Vic, it’s really a plea with the voices in his head.

Fucking faggot.
But Vic doesn’t hear the storm of noise ricocheting through Henry’s mind, he only sees his best friend getting angrier about something that didn’t seem important until now.

“…So what do you think all this is?” Self-preservation and insecurity tell him not to ask, but Vic’s tongue is loosened and there’s a churning ache in his chest. “You and me?”

Of course he knows they can’t do fag things in public, like hold hands or kiss or hang on to each other for too long, no matter how much Vic really wants to sometimes. But now it’s just them on a quiet road after dark with no one around. So why does Henry have to act like this?

“That’s not- it’s not like that,” His hands clench up sporadically, shaking slightly and needing something to occupy them as the words tumble out. “You’re not-”

“A faggot?” Vic interrupts, turning defensive the more the subject sits between them. “Of course I am. Henry I love you,” And his voice softens enough to break through the haze of Henry’s mind, just for a moment, “that makes me a fag.”

And then the haze comes back over with a sharp current that feeds into some unnamable rage inside Henry.

“No, shut up. Stop saying it!” There’s a clammy sweat building up in his palms and a burning ache in the back of his throat. He can’t really control the volume of his voice or the words that come out with his anger. “It’s different.”

Faggot. Fuckin’ little bitch wants it.

No I’m not. I don’t. No.

“Why?” Vic can see something brewing in Henry’s eyes, but he has no way to understand what it is. “Henry what’s your problem?”

“Forget it,” Henry puts his fists to his eyes and presses them in as he tries to settle the raging voices in his head. “It’s stupid, whatever.”

He just wants it all to go away, aching for that distant quiet he had not too long ago, but there’s no escape for him now.

And maybe if Vic knew that, he wouldn’t have kept prodding at this argument.

“No, c’mon, what’s the fucking big deal?” Vic feels his own anger tiring, he should just forget about this, but he hangs on just because of this hurt in his chest that won’t go away. “Why’s it so different?”

“’Cause you’re not-!” Henry says before he can hold it back, and only stops himself when he realizes what he was about to say. “Just drop it already,” he tries to cover, turning away and trying to breathe, but Vic grabs him by the wrist and pulls him back into the tense and stagnant air.

“No, what were you gon’na say?” Vic could hear that small change in Henry’s voice, and part of him doesn’t want know what it meant, and the another part can’t let it go. “What the fuck were you gon’na say to me?”

“It’s just not the same!” Henry pushes him back, until his back hits the wooden rail of the bridge. “Like when we fuck around and stuff, it’s not the same as being a fag, ‘cause you’re a…” And by the time his mind comes back to him it’s too late to take the words back.
For a second neither say anything. Vic can feel the edge of the wood dig in under his shoulder blades and leans into the hurt like it could over shadow the absolute agony in his chest. A rush of doubt floods into the ache, along with long-buried insecurities he’d thought had been put to rest. But Henry was that one person who helped him put all that away, a now he’s just opened the wound back up.

“Fuck you,” it comes out in a miserable rush of air, and when Henry doesn’t answer it builds into an angry burn. “So I don’t fucking count? You’re not a fag ‘cause of me?” Vic wants to pretend that his voice doesn’t crack, tries to cover it with spite and venom, but then it feels like he’s screaming because it hurts so bad and why would Henry say that?

“I told you to drop it!” Henry shouts back, more on instinct than with anger. There’s a deep pit of guilt in his stomach that he would rather avoid then deal with, and then more anger seeps out around the edges. “You’re being a bitch, just forg-”

Adrenalin and rage running high, fueled by pain and alcohol and words neither intended to use, the only way this fight can go is when Vic surges up punches Henry across the cheek. The impact is quick and sharp and vibrates up his jaw, but that doesn’t stop Henry from grabbing Vic by the arm and throwing him backwards a second later. Along the way, Vic can’t keep his feet under him and tumbles back just low enough to slam his head into the railing. There’s a dull thump on the wood as it holds its place, but a jagged edge does cut a gash across his scalp, and the ensuing blood rushes down his neck in a fat stream.

Vic reaches up with a shaky hand, knuckles stinging from how hard they ran into Henry’s cheek, and comes back with wet fingers when he touches the cut. He sinks to the ground and wishes it could swallow him up already, just as the warm trail of blood crawls over his shoulder.

Henry sees the blood and his lungs clench up around nothing. He still has these distant memories from before things in his head stopped lining up, from all the nights where Vic would have these deep cuts or dark bruises and he would reach out to Henry like they had the only safe place in the world with each other. But somehow it’s different, something has changed inside him, and he’s ruined whatever it was they had before.

“…Vic, I didn’t-” I didn’t mean, I never ever meant it.

Henry crouches down, tremors rolling up his spine as he sees all the blood flowing, and just wants to make it stop. He wants to make this all stop, the voices, the fighting, the way Vic is looking at him like he hates Henry, but he doesn’t know how.

As soon as the world stops spinning, Vic kicks out at Henry before he can touch him. If they’re going to fight, even if it’s this pathetic screaming crying fight with no winner, then Vic’s not going to back down now. Even if he’s already on the ground.

“No! No, fuck you- listen to me!” he yells at Henry, while trying to sit up and hold in the tears burning his eyes. “No matter what you think being a fag is, I’m a guy and you’re not gon’na pretend I’m not,” and though the yelling dies down into an impassioned but exhausted cry, the way the meaning hurts is just as intense for them both.

“You can’t just pick which parts of me you want sometimes and then others later,” Maybe that’s the part that hurts the most, that he really thought Henry saw him as the person he’s always been, not some mix of a girl outside and boy inside. “I’m a guy, and if you fuck me and love me then you’re a faggot Henry. Get over it.”

And Vic means that to be the end of it. How long have they known each other? How long have they known things about each other that no one else ever has? Long enough that Vic thought they were
past this, that what they had meant more than this.

But then Henry doesn’t say anything, not even in anger or frustration. He just stays there, a few feet away, eyes unclear and dilated in the darkened evening, until he drops his gaze to the ground. There’s a thousand things running through his head and he can’t get a grip on any of them, and he just feels lost amongst it all.

As the silence eats away at them and the anger fades, Vic feels one thing remain between them, keeping the two apart like a barrier they can’t cross.

“Do you even love me?” there’s no more fury to hide behind now, just raw honest pain when he finally has to ask.

A moment passes, and then another, and another, and still Henry doesn’t look back up at him. The world tilts and the air changes, like the space around them opens up and cold distance pushes them apart, as Henry stands up slowly.

There’s a strange disconnect between his mind and heart and body, all different pieces that are doing different things, and Henry can’t figure out which to follow. There’s some call at the back of his head pulling him away, even though he feels a deep urge to go towards Vic, to touch him and kiss him and say all the things he never has. More than anything, he wants to fix this before it’s broken forever.

He doesn’t realize he’s stood and turned away until he takes a step in the other direction.

“Hey! Don’t- don’t fucking walk away from me,” Vic rears up despite the betrayal, still reaching out to Henry no matter how much it hurts. “Henry?” he calls out.

There’s no answer as Henry disappears into the dark fog in the distance.

Gravity pulls Vic down as his body quits holding itself up, and his head bumps painfully back into the wooden beam. He holds his breath, knowing the worst is coming but wanting to keep it in, and then it all builds and crests into a heavy sob that can’t be suppressed. Vic puts his face in his hands, smearing old blood along the way, and lets the tears wash over him like a heavy rainfall. The sobs turn to cries and then to screams, limbs shaking as he pulls them in protectively, but still there’s no relief. And it goes on until everything in him is poured out into tears and he feels more empty than ever before.

By the time he can take a breath, choppy and rough though it is, his legs are cramped and the blood from the gash has slowed to a trickle. The only light is from distance streetlamps further down the road, and it feels like the darkness is closing in around him. Vic finally pries his eyes open and he’s still alone, no one here to pull him out of the despair. No one left to trust when he’s falling apart.

It’s pretty clear that Henry doesn’t want him, at least not way Vic wishes he did, but still Vic looks down the road and aches for Henry to come back.

If he goes after Henry now, Vic will just feel stupid. If he doesn’t, he’ll just be alone. He wonders which is worse, being stupid or lonely. And then he wonders what means more, a half-dunk fight where they said things they didn’t mean, or a late-night conversation that they don’t talk about.

When he gets home the last little bit of alcohol in his blood will drag him down into a restless sleep that stalls the heart-ache, so by the time he wakes it will hurt just as bad and his head will still be pounding.

“I’ll tell you that too.”
“Do you even love me?”

“Henry?”

Chapter End Notes

uggggg forced conflict is forced and awkward and inauthentic and I haaaaaaate it. I'm kind of angry cause I really wanted this chapter to be good and I feel like I dropped the ball. it's really to set up the next one, which i hope will be better. but still this feels kinda clunky *disappointed shrug*

Anyywhoo tho, it would help to get an outside perspective on this chapter cause im not loving it. So whatever you guys think, good or bad, I'd really like to hear :)))))) It also always just makes me feel better to hear from you guys at all <3 <3

irl i just binged bojack horseman and have a raging sadness boner. So thats probably not the best environment to write in. :""""( season 4 episode 11 tho, fuck me up man that shit got too real.

soon I will return tho! I think we're approaching the end soon, probably chapter 40-ish !!! Tell me what you'd like to see and what you think is coming,,,,, whatever it is its probably sad *nihilistic shrug*
Love you all see you soon <3 <3
XOXOXOX
And then there’s a flash of yellow light, sickly and dull in tone but jarring to Henry’s eyes just before he sinks into the blackness enclosing him. There in the open doorway, so far away but also too close and arching over him like open jaws, are three small specks of golden light. They swell slowly, light creatures taking a breath, and then their gleam grows brighter and sears an imprint into his retinas.

Henry.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Thirty-Four: Broken Part 2

May, 1989

There’s a drilling ache at the back of his skull that keeps Henry from really knowing what’s going on. He finds himself on a dark street that he doesn’t recognize, the air heavy with fog and prickly cold despite the season. A distant panic is hammering in his chest, like an alarm going off that he can’t quite hear, can’t quite understand.

A moment of clarity comes with the sensation of cold metal in his hands, feeling like thin little branches with sharp thorns jutting out into his palms. He grasps on without meaning to, knuckles going white from stain and the ache traveling slowly up his arms. Slowly the world fades in, shifting from dark and fuzzy to dim and defined, and Henry barely recognizes where he is. There’s a looming shadow over everything, weighing heavy on his shoulders as he finally looks up.

The structure builds itself before his eyes, from the deep slopes in the roof and the cracking slats of the walls, high arches to deep indents, windows that cover more than they reveal, overgrown weeds that climbed as high as they could reach before dying there, and an open door gaping like a wide portal into complete darkness.

There’s something familiar about it, the image of an old abandoned house on the edge of town flittering into Henry’s memory, like it was always present so there was no reason to notice it. But suddenly there’s this ominous foreign air around it, like the illusion of lifelessness is just beginning to fade away.

Fingers still gripped on the wrought-iron fence, Henry slowly tries to piece the night back together. It’s a rush of flickering light and noise, out of order and constantly changing the more he thinks about it. There’s a stand out memory of a fat streak of blood rolling down soft pale skin, and then a persisting pain in his cheek that feels like the indent of knuckles.

Vic. And the kissing bridge. And-
“You're a-”

And Henry feels a hollow ache in his chest, like it’s an open cave and echoes of guilt and regret bounce off the sides. He can’t quite catch them, can’t get a hold on one and face it, so they continue to bombard him over and over, until the rhythm is like a new heartbeat.

Just as he’s gaining some sense of time and place, a sharp pain pierces into his hands. It starts like a twinge or muscle spasm, but then it digs into his skin and scrapes across his bones. Henry flinches at the icy sting, but his hands stay locked onto the fence. He looks down see a set of long, spindly shadows crawl up his fingers and over his knuckles, and then they hook into his flesh and the pain intensifies.

There’s no blood, no open wound, even though Henry is sure that his skin is being wedged open with sharp daggers and the long slits are splitting between his fingers and up his wrist. The shadows hold tight, anchoring him to the fence. Henry pulls against them, with no aggression or fight, just on pure pain and need to escape it. The ache crawls up his arms, sliding under his skin and carving through all the muscles and tendons.

The shadows swim through his blood, stretching the veins uncomfortably wide until they’re sure to burst, and then they seep into his lungs and fill them up. Henry can’t struggle anymore, can’t even choke any air past his throat as he drowns slowly in a cold ache. His mind is fading fast as well, being swallowed up by the same darkness eating him alive, until it’s all slipping away into numbness.

That hollow space inside him is finally full, but it feels unimaginably worse.

And then there’s a flash of yellow light, sickly and dull in tone but jarring to Henry’s eyes just before he sinks into the blackness enclosing him. There in the open doorway, so far away but also too close and arching over him like open jaws, are three small specks of golden light. They swell slowly, light creatures taking a breath, and then their gleam grows brighter and sears an imprint into his retinas.

Henry.

Henry.

“Henry.”

A real voice breaks through the haze like lightning breaks through clouds, and the current runs through Henry’s body and shocks him back to reality. The shine of the lights is gone and he can see again, and the shadows hooked into his flesh finally unclasp. Henry jumps back in one reflexive movement, drawing his arms back into his chest protectively and breathing in too fast. He stumbles back, barely keeps from falling to the ground, and feels frantically across his hands and arms.

No marks remain from the feeling, just a numbing buzz all over his skin that he can’t shake off. There’s a constant spinning in his head, like he can’t get his eyes and ears and body to focus on the same thing all at once. He looks back at the open doorway, vision swimming through blurriness like thick mist, and sees no yellow lights shining back at him.

No marks. No Lights. Nothing. It was nothing.

But there’s a reflecting glare on the back of his eyelids of three bright spots, and it doesn’t fade no matter how often he blinks.

“What’s your fucking problem?”
The sidewalk slowly fades in under dim streetlights, and there’s Patrick standing a few feet away. He’s leaned up against a fence post on the edge of the property, the usual smirk on his face but a darker look in his eyes as they comb over Henry.

Skin prickling and shoulders shaking, it takes more than a moment and a lot of effort for Henry to put the words together, and then even longer to respond.

“What? What’s goin’ on?” He has an urge to beat his head against a wall, just to make the spinning stop.

One second Patrick is a good distance away and then the next he is right up close and pushing into Henry’s space.

“You don’t look to good Henry,” Patrick says like it’s enticing, liking the way Henry can’t keep eye-contact and looks frantically around them.

A hand comes up and grasps Henry’s jaw in a long fingers, twisting his face from one side to the other and Patrick looks him over. His skin is pail and clammy, with a cold sweat breaking out over his forehead, and he’s panting deep and panicked breaths that stutter and stall with hiccups. The glassy look in his eyes, blown wide pupils and irritated pink around the edges, seems to be more than just the effects of alcohol.

“Where’d this come from?” Patrick asks as he traces over a rounded bruise on Henry’s cheek that wasn’t there before. And when Henry doesn’t answer, still struggling to understand that someone is touching him, Patrick presses his thumb into the bruise.

“St-stop.” Henry bats the hand away weakly, twisting his chin out of the hold, but too off-balance to move further away. He’s swaying on his feet, trying to stay centered but losing balance every time. His thoughts are quite the same, not finding any solid ground to stay on and drifting from one place to another.

There’s more noise that Henry can’t decipher, a stretch of silence he can’t navigate, and then an insistent snapping right in front of his face.

“Hey, c’mon Henry,” Patrick has a curl to his voice that sounds like he’s laughing at him, and Henry bats away the hand out off his face again. “You’re really losing it, huh?”

“Wha-?” He shouldn’t be here, not on some random sidewalk in the middle of the night. His mind is restless but his body is tired, and he wishes he were tucked in some warm bed, with darkness that doesn’t feel so smothering and a heartbeat thumping under his ear. He should be with…

“Where’s Vic at?” Patrick is still leaning to close, eyes flashing with sinister glee.

“I- I don’t-” remember.

No, wait.

“It’s not the same.”

“So I don’t count?”

‘Cause you’re a-

“Do you even love me?”
And then it all fades to silence.

“What are you doing here Henry?” Patrick asks after a moment, voice going soft and careful like testing shallow waters before jumping in. And for some reason it sounds more unsettling that any other tone Henry’s heard.

Henry searches his mind for some defense, or some way to escape the uncomfortable itch under his skin, but can’t find anything. There’s a split down his thoughts, on one side memory and reason and on the other is this illusive stream of fear and confusion, and no matter how he tries he can’t bridge the gap.

“I don’t know,” he finally admits, defeated and energy drained, and he gives in to the whirlwind around him.

All Henry knows is that he’s done something awful to someone he cares about more than anything in the world, and he can’t figure out why he did it.

A cold pressure wraps around his wrist and tugs it forward, and at first Henry thinks it’s the return of those dark shadows crawling into his skin and flinches away. But instead it’s Patrick’s scaly hand that holds firm, and he leads Henry down the sidewalk.

The steps make the world jostle and bounce, not helping the steady pulse thumping in Henry’s skull, and an indistinguishable amount of time passes before Henry asks, “Where are we?”

Patrick ducks through a wide hole in a chain fence, lined over top by barbed-wire and below by overgrown weeds, and pulls Henry through the entrance as well.

“Don’t worry about it.” And with small tugs and nudges Patrick is cornering Henry up against the fence.

They’re a good distance from the road, and after a few blinks Henry sees the piles of garbage, torn up furniture, broken appliances, and rusted over car parts of a junkyard. After years of overfilling and neglect the space has gone quiet with decay, content to be ignored on the edge of town and sink slowly into the soft earth.

The air is to hot and tastes like rot as Henry keeps panting heavily, but no matter how he tries he can’t get his heart to relax and breathe normally.

Patrick looms over him, looking much taller as he leans closer to Henry. One hand still holds Henry’s wrist in a strong grasp, not that Henry’s trying to escape, and the other wanders up to his neck. A thumb presses into his neck with the cruel intent to feel his breathing stutter, but Henry has just enough wherewithal to push it away.

“Stop,” his voice comes out to weak, and Patrick keeps leaning in and pressing Henry’s back to the fence. A split chain juts out painfully into Henry’s back, and that sharp point grounds him. It reminds him that despite the strange rocking of the ground and blurriness of the air, this is real.

“Stop,” he repeats, stronger this time, as Patrick touches along his waist and presses into his stomach.

“I’m not doing anything,” but he digs his knee in the gap between Henry’s legs and pins him to the fence.

Usually just the smallest hint of being trapped would make Henry lash out, ready to kick and claw his way out of any hold, but this time he freezes. There’s just some broken connection between his panicked heart and dizzy head, keeping his limbs limp and pliable to the other boy.
“Don’t,” It’s hard to breathe around all the words tangled up in his throat.

“Don’t what?” Patrick teases and pops the button on Henry’s jeans easily. “Huh, Henry?”

There’s a deep curl in Patrick’s cheek as he smirks. Not too far from them is a car frame with all tires slashed and windows smashed, and the dirt around is littered with iridescent shards. A moldy refrigerator lays at an angle, propped up by a thick padding of garbage. The tree leaves are rustling as the late night breeze picks up. Clouds slowly migrate across the sky and filter the moonlight.

Henry’s mind grasps at any fleeting image or sound, anything to avoid thinking of the fingers searching under his waistband. It doesn’t work.

“Don’t,” He feebly pushes on Patrick’s chest, not even with the intent to hurt, just to get a little bit of space to think and breathe.

Patrick grabs onto Henry’s wrist and pins it above his head against the fence.

“Just relax,” he shoves Henry’s pants down as far as possible in this position, just enough to get into his underwear.

“Don’t,” Henry keeps saying it, though some far-away part of his mind knows that Patrick’s not listening. No one’s listening. He’s stuck, in mind and body, and can’t even try to evade the hand gasping around his dick.

The touch is cold and way too rough, especially when Patrick pulls at it and twists his wrist around the head. But after a minute or so of stimulation, Henry’s body can only react naturally, but the vice in his stomach feels more like he’s going to vomit than cum.

“C’mon Henry,” Patrick pulls the half-hard appendage out of Henry’s underwear and starts pumping it with real intent. Henry jackknifes a short thrust into Patrick’s grasp, and he grabs onto the chains in the fence to keep steady as his hips jerk on their own.

Patrick then pushes his groin into Henry’s hip, letting him feel the firm curve of his own dick, and says, “Aren’t you tired of boy-pussy?” and gives a couple of rough thrusts against Henry.

Henry clenches his eyes shut, shoulders coming up defensively and muscles tensing. Behind his eyelids are flickers of strange memories and phantom feelings, all tangled up in those shadows that crawled up his arms and into his bloodstream.

A hard squeeze around his dick makes him bite into his tongue, and a hiccupped sob escapes with a mewl of pain. His eyes are dry, itchy and burning every time he dares to open them, but he feels like he’s crying. A puddle of blood is forming in his mouth and it’s like he’s drowning, suffocating in all the tears that won’t fall and blood he holds in.

“Please,” he doesn’t know who he’s begging, Patrick or himself or something greater, just to make it all stop. But his dick bobs under forced arousal and his hips keep to the sloppy rhythm of Patrick’s grip.

With almost an audible sneer and a hum of pleasure, Patrick leans in close to whisper, “Say that again.”

Henry feels the familiar tightening in his balls and a jumpy ache in his thigh muscles, and he shakes his head desperately to stave off the need to cum.

“Stop,” he doesn’t even know if he’s really saying it, or anything at all, as a trail of bloody spit runs
over his lip. It could all be in his head. Or it’s all real. Or it’s some mix of both and neither. “Stop-
stop, Ple-ease.”

You’re really losing it.

All in your head.

Henry.

“Henry,” Patrick mumbles darkly into his ear and jabs his dick into Henry’s side a few more times.

With a stifled cry of confused pain and pleasure, Henry cums like it’s being yanked out of him, taking pieces of his skin and bone and organs with it, until he’s broken all over.

With a shaky gasp for air Henry comes down and dark splotches flash across his vision. Finally as his heart-rate is forced to slow and air can move into his lungs, he finds what little strength he has to drive the side of his fist into Patrick’s neck.

Patrick is knocked back a step, and Henry notices how hard his dick is straining the front of his unfastened pants, but in the time it takes to regain his balance, Henry pivots and dashes to the side.

He doesn’t make it very far before an intense head-rush knocks Henry to the ground, landing hard with his chin sliced on a fragment of broken glass. The wind gets knocked out of him as he thumps to the ground, and he almost gives in to exhaustion and passes out.

But then Patrick laughs at him, wild like he can’t contain how elated he is to see Henry like this, and takes a step towards him. That sound is all it takes to pull Henry out of near-unconsciousness and he struggles to his feet, barely remembering to pull his pants up as he runs toward the hole in the fence.

He stumbles and runs into more than one telephone pole along the way, but just on primal fear is Henry able to sprint as far away as possible before his body starts to burn from the strain.

The junkyard is gone, and the Neibolt house is even further in the other direction. But the streets still don’t make sense as Henry runs down them, each seem to twist and turn a thousand directions, yet somehow he ends up in the same place every time he looks around.

Despite what all the panicked looks over his shoulder tell him, it feels like there’s someone following him. Something, right on his heels and ready to strike.

Henry.

Henry.

A flash catches the corner of his sight, so bright it shines through the deranged tunnel vision, and Henry just barely throws himself out of the street as a car speeds past. The reflection of its headlights stays in his eyes, and when the sun starts to rise Henry can’t tell the difference.

Henry.

Chapter End Notes

Oml im tiiiiireeddddd
I need to not write at night but I have no other time *shrugg

But anyway,......, didn't I say I played fast and loose with canon?

"Will Henry be okay?" you may ask, I ask "Was Henry ever okay? like literally for any single moment?"

Ummm I couldn't have another coherent thought if I tried, so please tell me what you thought of this ....thing.
It really does mean a lot to me to hear from you guys tho<3 <3

tumblr thing where I post dumb headcanons ----->
https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

I have con this weekend, if yr from the seattle area, sakura con is this weekend and I'm vvv excited :DDDD
I'm also fucking tired of sewing my cosplay.
But chapter 35 will be coming out probably not till the 4/6 or 4/7
sorry for the short break ;"
Love you all and I hope you guys are ready for the end coming soon!!!
XOXOXX
Broken Part 3

Chapter Summary

“I’m still mad at you,” Vic says after a moment, with the imitation of spite on his tongue. Why is it this hard to be mad at you? “But can you tell me?” And despite himself, Vic strokes his fingers across Henry’s cheek in such an easy motion that he doesn’t even have to think about it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Thirty-Five: Broken Part 3

May, 1989

Vic wakes up with a dry layer of acid in his mouth. He smacks his tongue and grimaces at the taste, but the rancid flavor fades into dull bitterness as his eyes settle across the room.

Sometime last night, in a moment of deep hurt and lucid anger, Vic shut his window and put the latch down. Now the air in the tiny room is stuffy and stale without the familiar draft to wash it out. Grey light is starting to filter into the room, but Vic keeps staring at the gleam of the lock.

It could stay like that. He could keep it shut and locked like that forever. He could never let Henry in again, if he keeps the latch closed.

“You’re a-”

He falls asleep again, eyes tiring from the light and the strain, and he has strange half-dreams in which Henry never comes back at all.

A knock at the bedroom door wakes him for the second time that morning, or afternoon it seems like, and no matter how hard he presses his pillow over his head, the pounding continues.

Vic finally pulls his head from the bed sheets when the incessant knocking gets too loud to ignore.

“What?!” He yells out, still drowsy and with an agitated headache in his temples.

The knocking stalls and the door shutters with subtle vibrations, making the metal slide lock clink annoyingly. Window locked, door locked, like Vic is trying to shut himself away and keep everything else in the world out. And he’s trying to keep certain thoughts out too, like why he has a door lock at all, and why his window should be left open all night. The bitter reminders feel like acid on a fresh wound, and the sting hasn’t faded since last night, so now he’s just left with and exhausted and impotent anger to cover a festering hurt.

“Vic…” but somehow the soft voice of his sister breaks through the irritation and resonates with him.

He considers rolling back over and blowing her off, and the thought is very tempting as just sitting up gives him a queasy ache in his stomach, but after a moment he stands slowly. It’s not much of a
hangover but it sure does make walking across the small room take forever, and by the time he gets to the door, he just wants to bash his head against it. Vic doesn’t have the force to really do it, so his forehead just makes a dull thump against the door.

“What?” he says through the wood, pressing his cheek against it because the cold surface feels good on his clammy skin.

Daphne pauses for a second and Vic can imagine her fingers twisting up in her sleeves, or her toes digging into the carpet, as she gathers up words to say. It’s the little things like those that make Vic understand her a bit better. Sometimes it’s still hard for him to speak, hard to look people in the eye, but it’s gotten easier over the years. With hindsight knowledge he can now recognize that deep rooted anxiety in his sister, and in their mother too. He’s also noticed how Daphne’s not been eating well lately, and he understands that struggle too. Even if he tries not to care, he understands.

“Henry’s out on the back porch,” She finally says back.

The message impacts like a hard punch in the gut. It rattles up his lungs and stuns his heart for a brief second, and a heavy weight drops into his empty stomach. There’s that strange unpleasant taste in his mouth, something that reeks of hurt and regret, but also relief. He wants to hide away, maybe not forever but for just a little longer, and pretend that last night didn’t happen. Pretend the blurry but vivid memories aren’t real. For a while Vic wants to be as far away from Henry as possible, but just the thought of him so near makes his heart ache for a familiar touch, a smile, a voice, that could make it all better.

“Tell him to fuck off!” He shouts into the door, too loud just to cover the yearning with more anger. Being angry is easy, Henry taught him that. It’s better than being hurt.

But he can just tell from the silence Daphne gives him after that, as if silence could have its own tone and volume, that she’s not going to do that. “…Vic?”

Finally he peels his cheek off the wood, probably leaving a shallow indent of the grain on his skin, and opens the door. And there’s his sister, looking just about exactly like he pictured her, nervous, timid, but with that edge of quiet attitude they both share. They’ve about evened out in height too, maybe he’s got an inch on her, but the gap between almost-fifteen and almost-sixteen doesn’t seem as large as it used to.

But then she gets this scared look in her eyes when she looks him over. He’s sure she looks like Hell, tired, slightly sick, swaying on his feet, still red in the face from tears and alcohol, but she’s got her gaze fixed on the side of his neck. His hand comes up before he thinks about it, and finds a smeared trail of dried blood up his neck to his skull. The memory of getting pushed stands out clearer in his mind than hitting his head, and the memory of punching Henry right before is pretty vivid as well. The cut just below his hairline feels deceptively small for the amount of blood it wept, but at least it has scabbed over. For some reason it doesn’t make him angrier though, more like a feeling between shame and the need to cry.

With her eyes still on him and concern growing, Vic just slaps his hand over the blood and cut to cover it. That turns out to hurt way more than he anticipated, but he schools his face with an expression that tells her not to mention it.

“Tell him I’m sleeping,” Vic conceded, voice quiet and soft as he studies the dust on the floor.

Daphne just keeps standing there and says, “I did.”

Of course she did.
Vic rolls his eyes, either at Henry’s stubbornness or his own.

“Then tell him to fuck off,” and with a huff he goes to close the door, content to sleep a few more hours. Or days.

“Wait- he’s-” Daphne grabs the door before can shut, and if she wasn’t in a small group of people in his life that he liked, Vic would have slammed the door on her fingers. “He seems really upset,” she says earnestly, with a small bit of worry for a person she’s never even spoke to before today.

“Pffftt-” He sputters, like a faulty engine or a person that is pretending not to care. “Henry’s always fucking upset,” it seems like all he’s been is upset these last few months, and Vic tries not to feel rejected when he can’t make it better.

Before Daphne tries to convince him any further, Vic shuts the door with enough care to push her fingers out of the way. He turns to quickly back to his bed and his insides unsettle, so he stands as still as he can and waits for it to calm. It never does.

With a furlong look at his bed, where he can close his eyes and not think about Henry and what happened for a while, he finally turns back to the door.

“You’re a-”

Why do I fucking try so hard for you?

He opens the door again and is not surprised to see Daphne still there, and she’s not surprised when his pushes past her and walks quickly towards the backdoor.

“Did something happen?” she calls after him, like she wants to ask it soft and listen if he would only slow down to tell her.

“No,” and the backdoor clatters shut behind him.

The sunlight seems garishly bright as Vic steps outside, and he has to blink his tired eyes several times before his vision returns. Bare feet on the slatted wood of the porch, he stands with his back to the door, and doesn’t move as his eyes settle on Henry.

But the scene doesn’t look like he expected. Whether he thought Henry would be propped up against the banister with that typical scowl on his face and acting like the whole thing last night didn’t happen, or if he would pin Vic against a wall and kiss him breathless and erase the memory all together. And while neither methods would have worked, they certainly seemed more probable than just finding Henry sitting on the porch steps, with his back to Vic and his head in his lap, so still it’s almost as if he isn’t breathing.

Vic waits for a moment, and then several, and the more time passes the more he squirms in his stance. The nauseous whirl in his stomach hasn’t given him a reprieve, and it isn’t getting better the more he looks at Henry. But still Henry doesn’t move, not even the slightest sign to shown he knows Vic is there.

“Hey…” Vic tries to say as the quiet suffocates him, but his voice just comes out in a weak gust of air. And he gets no response. “Henry?”

But then Henry flinches inward, shoulders arching up and spine going rigid, and his position doesn’t relax even as Vic falls silent again.
Walking slow and quiet on the balls of his feet, Vic comes closer, taking a half-moon shaped path around Henry, keeping a good distance away but surveying him from a new angle. When he can see enough of Henry from the side, arms over his head, knees pinned together, uncomfortably tense all over, Vic notices the subtle shake to his frame, like he’s vibrating from the inside out. And then he notices that Henry’s wearing the same clothes as yesterday.

“Henry?” Vic asks with a little more concern this time, and gets a similar flinch in response. “Are you okay?” And Vic can pretend not to care about everyone else in the world, but he can’t do it with Henry.

It’s almost to faint to hear, but Henry makes this soft keen of agony at the back of his throat and Vic feels and intense pain worse than the cut in his scalp. He creeps closer slowly, careful as Henry trembles at every movement. Until finally Vic can sit down beside him on the steps.

“Henry can you hear me?”

Henry twists and rolls his shoulders, teeth grinding audibly as he struggles through a nod. His face is still hidden in his lap, but Vic catches the movement.

“Did you go home last night?” The gentle interrogation continues, and the more Henry tremors and whines, the more the fury dies in Vic’s heart.

Henry just shakes his head and sinks further into himself.

“Did something happen?” Besides the fight they had on the kissing bridge, Henry was acting strange all yesterday. And if he didn’t go home, then where has he been all night?

But Henry seems to crumble inward at the question, and finally draws in a deep heaving breath like a dry sob. His breath catches, hitches, and Vic can see the slump of his shoulders gallop as he heaves in short chokes for air.

“What? Henry, breathe,” Vic watches the panic rise, and despite the part of him that doesn’t want to be near Henry, Vic touches his arm and tries to gently draw out of his hiding place. “What happened?” He insists again, not knowing what could have made Henry like this.

Henry flinches reflexively at the touch, but instead of recoiling he frantically grabs Vic’s wrist like a buoy floating in a thrashing ocean, and pulls it closer to him.

“Hey…” Vic tries to take his hand back but Henry holds tight with sweaty fingers. He brings the hand to his cheek and Vic’s warm skin feels so alive against his cold cheek. And Henry just holds it there, keeping Vic hostage with a loose grip on his wrist, and clutching that hand to his face like babies clutch their blankets.

“Uh… Henry?” Vic tries again, awkwardly leaned forward and wondering if Henry is having some sort of episode. But eventually Henry’s breathing calms to a slow and uneven rhythm, and Vic can feel every puff and gasp against his palm. He tries once to pull his hand away, but Henry curls their fingers together in a desperate knot to keep it there. On his second attempt Vic tries harder, gaining some momentum from a fierce surge of hurt and frustration, but Henry makes this desperate whine and grabs Vic’s hand with both of his own.

Vic concedes with a huff, deflated but not pleased, no matter how awful it is to see Henry like this. And while he tries to maintain distance, tap into that crueler part of himself and think that this all to be pathetic, it’s more heartbreaking then he wants to admit. Those walls that he put up last night are wearing down, locked windows opening up slowly, despite the urge to keep them closed.
Why is Henry doing this now? Why did he do that last night?

“I’m still mad at you,” Vic says after a moment, with the imitation of spite on his tongue. Why is it this hard to be mad at you? “But can you tell me?” And despite himself, Vic strokes his fingers across Henry’s cheek in such an easy motion that he doesn’t even have to think about it.

Henry stays quiet, or some panting and tremoring version of quiet, for a while, until he mumbles something almost indistinguishable into Vic’s hand. “I don’t remember.”

“Why not?” Vic responds too quickly, too forcefully, and Henry cringes and burrows further into the safety of their conjoined hands.

Even with the feeling of damp eyelashes fluttering against his palm, Vic’s patience is running thin. Any other day, he could drop the subject and forget whatever anger was hanging around him. He could do it for both of them, they’re both happier when they pretend the bad parts don’t exist, and sometimes that means Vic has to put up with certain things. Sometimes he has to forgive things he doesn’t want to, and sometimes he has to keep Henry from falling apart.

But-

“It’s not the same.”

“You’re a-”

“Do you even love me?”

“Why’d you say that?” Before Vic can stop himself, the words are tumbling out in a tone that’s more betrayed than furious. “Do you remember? Huh?” And the question is meant to sting, but he’s not ready to see the way Henry curls away from the onslaught. “I fuckin’ hate you,” And saying that lie hurts on his tongue, but for an angry moment Vic really does believe it.

Henry peaks up just enough that Vic can see the deep pools of his dilated pupils, blown out by fear and primal panic. Throat catching on a choked breath, Henry shakes his head in a rough jerking motion, pleading with little whines and half-words as tears flood into his red eyes. He reaches out with a flexing fist to Vic in a physical cry, unsoothed by the small bit of affection he’s getting and needing more to make all the hurt disappear.

“Why’d you fucking say it?” Vic doubles down on anger because he’s afraid to backtrack, believing he really does want to hurt Henry as much as Henry hurt him. But he just feels worse by the minute. He bats the grasping hand away from him, even though he has the same intense urge for Henry right now.

“I don’t know,” Henry says like it’s a question. Like a cry in the dark seeking an answer. “I’m sorry,” And though Henry sounds so sincere and honest and raw, Vic wonders if Henry even knows what he’s saying sorry for.

“I hate you,” Vic says again, like it will change something. But already he can feel his eyes prickling and face scrunching with involuntary sobs.

Henry hums a low moan of assent and nods along, agreeing that he hates himself too. He rubs his cheek into Vic’s palm like he can fuse their skin together, and doesn’t hide away as the tears start to fall between them.

In one fluid move, two bodies drawn together into a magnetic orbit by forces they can’t control, Vic opens his arms and Henry falls in like he’s meant to be there. The embrace is twisted and
uncomfortable, but as soon as Henry gets his face tucked into Vic’s neck, and Vic wraps his arms around Henry’s tremoring shoulders, they feel more at home than anywhere else in the world.

Eventually Vic has to shift from one hip to the other, and Henry just sags heavy in his arms, so Vic tips backwards and lies across the porch while Henry coils around him in an unrelenting hold. Nimble and slow fingers thread through Henry’s hair in that calming way that comes so naturally to Vic, and they lie like that for a while. Not talking, tears falling, waiting for their skin to fuse together forever.

Distantly Vic thinks it would be easier if he could hate Henry. But he can’t, and he won’t.

“What happened Henry?” What did this to you? Vic’s never seen Henry fall apart quite like this. Sometimes it has been a quiet despair that leaves Henry empty after, and sometimes it’s been an angry, violent implosion. But this is more an unraveling, pulling back layer after layer and splitting Henry at the seams. And now he’s too open, too raw, and Vic can’t do more than hold him close and try to keep the little bits together.

Henry.

The silence between them stretches out in every direction, like a vast desert reaching all the way to the horizon. But where Vic just hears the steady thrum of Henry’s heartbeat against his own, Henry hears the shadows of a voice chasing at the fray of his mind.

“I use’ta think-” Henry starts without knowing where he’s going, but it’s a little easier to talk with his face hidden into Vic’s shoulder.

The events of last night don’t line up in his mind the right way, memory off enough that he knows something is wrong, but scattered enough that he can’t put the pieces in the right order. There was some kind of shift, like the whole world got turned on its axis, first they’re on the bridge, but then he turns around and he’s somewhere different, somewhere that smells like rotted skin and fire. And then there’s skin that smells like fire, skin that feels like fire, drawing amorphous shapes down Henry’s body.

”Don’t-“

Broad hands squeeze around him, pinching and pulling until the burning is inside him now. It’s a churning molten heat in his belly, twisting and turning as cold sweat ekes down his skin, and then cold tears as well. There are words he can hear but not understand, a voice that seems familiar, melding with others that seem less so.

Henry.

But then the touch turns frigid, and sharp needle points delve into his skin and take hold of his insides. He’s somewhere else suddenly, somewhere dark he doesn’t recognize. A shadowed monster with open jaws, or an open door, looms over. Headlights race at him, car horn blaring in the quiet night air, but there’s no car, only lights. Orange lights undulating in a sea of darkness. They flash suddenly and Henry’s back on the bridge, faced with a pair of fierce dark eyes looking up at him with fear and anger and hurt. A streak of blood runs down stretch of pale flesh, and Henry feels guild stained into his fingertips.

“Do you even love me?

Henry?” Vic prompts when the quiet goes on uncomfortably long, and from the far-off look in his
eyes, it doesn’t seem that Henry’s really here right now.

It takes a minute, but Henry finally shakes himself out of his head and catches on to some semblance of thought along the way. “I use’ta think you were the same as me,” he says in one big rush that makes one word run into the next.

Vic pulls back as much as he can in the position they’re in, a gut reaction to the implication that sounds so familiar.

“No-no-” But Henry clutches on tight immediately, lucid enough to understand that his meaning is lost with last night’s fight haunting them. “‘Cause of…” words fail him but his fingers gently brush over the curve of Vic’s neck, along bruises that have disappeared from sight but not from memory. “A-and ‘cause…” and this time Henry trails his fingers up and touches Vic’s lips with a reverence he’s never felt before.

And Vic understands. When they met. When they recognized that they feared the same things. When they realized that they wanted the same things.

The midday sun beats down on them and burns their retinas, but the light is such a relief to all the darkness from before.

“But you’re not,” Henry keeps down the slow track of words, chasing an end that he can’t see. His wrist goes limp and his fingers rest against Vic’s mouth, and because he takes some kind of strange comfort in it, Vic lets them stay there. “‘Cause you’re braver than me,” Henry mumbles like a secret into Vic’s neck. “I couldn’t do this, what you do,” And that’s what makes the tears fall, but not from Henry.

Vic feels a flood of tears with his next breath, and he clutches on to the hand on his mouth in some need for protection and solidarity. Sometimes, even after years, Vic still can’t believe he’s done this, and never before has someone cared about how fucking terrifying it can be.

Henry can feels teardrops creep down from Vic’s face and slide across his skin, can feel the way his chest hiccups under his ear, and Henry stops trying to hold his own sobs back. “I can’t even talk about it or say…” and it all dissolves from there into them both crying these sporadic sobs and trying to hold themselves together.

“You’re not broken,” Henry adds quietly, with intent clear in his tone. Like I am.

Henry, you’re not broken,” Vic jumps in without a second thought, ready to pull Henry out of whatever he has been sinking into.

Fuck last night. Fuck everything. They were drunk and Vic can forgive one stupid thing Henry said, even if it hurt worse than anything else it the world. This feels more important, more real.

“No, something’s wrong,” Henry heaves himself up on one arm, looking distressingly weak but insisting his point, “with me.” Vic catches a glimpse of Henry’s eyes and realizes that even if Henry is calmer, that half-crazed look in them hasn’t faded. “Like- I can’t think right- and I don’t remember things right, like stuff happens but it didn’t really, or-” Henry speaks in a long and panicked ramble, gasping little breaths between words and trying to describe something he doesn’t fully understand.

But then his voice morphs into little raspy cries and gasps, and Henry is plunged back into choking around air.

“Hey- breathe,” Vic sits up a bit and pets Henry’s cheeks, calming the attack before it can start. “C’mon Henry, breathe.”
“But- but I need you,” Henry stutters through a painful sounding sob, and even in the fearful and primal wells of his pupils, Vic can see the absolute sincerity. “When- it’s like-” Henry tries and starts to say a million things all at once, all resting heavy on his tongue and some variation of I love you. The closest he can get is, “When you say my name, it’s like- I can remember who I am.”

Vic gives some whine that sounds almost like his name, as a steam of fresh tears crawls down his face.

“No- don’t, I’m so-sorry,” Henry tries to brush the tears away with shaking fingers. The boys are so far in each other’s space that they share the air between them. “Please don’t hate me,” he begs in a voice too vulnerable for Vic to handle. “Please Vic, I can’t-”

But Vic’s already pulling Henry into another embrace, one he never plans to release.

“No, Henry, I don’t hate you. I don’t, I promise,” he says between a series of sloppy kisses across Henry’s cheeks and mouth.

They’re more like comfort kisses than enticing kisses and eventually Henry slides his arms around Vic’s waist and catches his lips. Their skin sticks together where the tear tacks have almost dried, but they just press closer, kiss more, rub their noses together, hold on tight, and never let go.

“I love you Henry, please-please breathe, calm down,” Vic says against his lips, and repeats it after every kiss until Henry nods along and takes a relieving breath. “I love you Henry, you’re not broken.”

And if you were, I’d still love you.

Chapter End Notes

ooooommmllllll
I’ve run out of things to say. the end is near.

Next chapter will be kinda a mini chapter, cause this one destroyed me, but its comin within the week! :) *crosses fingers*

Please please please I love comments I love people (im kinda lonely rn cause im a needy bitch) but I would love to hear what you guys think the ending will be!!! Or just tell me about your day <3 <3 or anything :)))))

Come to my tumblr to see a real sad virgo aesthetic >>>
https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

Love you all <3
XOXOX
They drift for a while, still lying on the sun warmed slats of the porch, but somewhere else in their minds.

At some point the back door slowly opens and Vic tilts his head back just enough to see his sister peeking out through the gap. They’re probably a sight to see, red faced and so wrapped up in each other that no one could ever pull them apart. And while it’s not a very sexual position, and neither is turned on, Vic knows how they must look. Henry on top of him with his face against his neck, Vic’s legs open and they’re hips pressed together a little too intimately to be subtle.

But Daphne doesn’t look shocked or scandalized, doesn’t even bat and eye, and just mouths “You okay?” to her brother.

“Go away,” he mouths back with an insincere glare, and she smirks like she knows he’s more grateful than angry.

The door closes with little hitch and a shutter, but Henry doesn’t move at the noise.

“Hey,” Vic mumbles, wondering if Henry has fallen asleep on him. If he really has been out all night, then he probably needs it, but this also isn’t the most comfortable place to sleep for a few hours. Gently Vic strokes his fingers tips over the curve of Henry’s neck, feeling the slow push and pull of his breathing and encouraging him to speak.

“Yeah?” Henry responds in a raspy rush of air, deflating even further.

“…What happened?” Vic tries one last time, hoping the calm might have put Henry’s mind back together

“I don’t know,” Henry answers instantly, adamantly, like it’s easier not to know than to remember.

But Vic lets the silence hold for a moment, rubbing the dip in Henry’s shoulders to work out the tension there, and nuzzling his nose into his hair. “Yeah?”

“I don’t know…” Henry speaks a little slower now, more honest with Vic and himself, “…which parts really happened.” Which hands touching him were real.

Vic can hear, can almost sense, the fear and confusion swirling around in Henry’s head, and knows that this isn’t something that can be fixed in a day. If this is all Henry can give right now, than Vic
just has to find a way to be okay with that.

And then Henry looks up at him with stormy blue eyes, and in them it’s like he’s been burnt alive, without even the dullest spark left behind.

 “…Fuck, Henry,” Vic draws him in for a bunch of sloppy kisses, trying to bring some kind of life back into him. Eventually Henry kisses back, timid at first, but then with natural muscle memory. “C’mon, let’s go to bed,” Vic says between their lips, punctuating the sentence by sucking on Henry’s tongue.

If Henry wants to sleep all day, they can do that. If Henry wants to fuck him slow or rough or again and again, then Vic’s willing to do that to. Anything really to put the last twenty-four hours behind them.

Henry makes a hum into the kiss like he wants to go, either for sleep or for sex, but then gives the slightest shake of his head.

“No- wait…” he says, closes his eyes and puts a lot of effort into focusing on the current moment. Pushing up on wobbling limbs, Henry sits and rubs his eyes, a miserable pout still on his lips but a little clarity in his thoughts. “I- I wan’na do something.”

It takes Vic a moment to know he is thinking halfway clearly, but when Henry stands, leaning heavily on the porch banister, Vic follows him up.

Henry’s hand seeks Vic’s out, flapping and grasping in the air between them.

“Henry,” Vic laces their fingers together and lets him squeeze as tight as he needs to “You need to sleep.” he tries to lead Henry toward the backdoor, towards a warm bed and a day of pretending that they can live different lives.

“Come with me?” Henry insists, stubborn but not angry, and tugs Vic in the other direction.

And Henry looks about ready to shatter again, so how is Vic supposed to say no?

Somehow they walk all the way down the sidewalk, up the road, and then towards the backwoods, holding hands. Occasionally a car will pass and the boys will turn enough to hide their arms, but neither ever pulls away.

About halfway there, Vic knows where they’re going and wants to turn back, drags his feet the whole way, but Henry keeps tugging him forward.

“C’mon I need to do somethin’.”

“Henry, I don’t wan’na be here.”

“Please? I promise.”

Vic doesn’t know what Henry’s promising, but the lilt of his voice sounds like an apology. And in the end, Vic will follow Henry anywhere.

So when they walk on to the kissing bridge, Vic is confused and slightly resentful to be drug back here. He’s even more confused when Henry leads him the side rail and just sits down on the edge, pulling Vic’s wrist like a lifeline until he sits as well.
“What are we doing?” he asks, exasperated and only here to pacify Henry.

For a second Henry just sits there, eyes cast down and thumbing a bare spot in the lower beam. He uses his thumbnail to chip off the edge of someone’s name, and then smooths out all the splinters in the wood. The quiet and methodical action stretches out long enough that Vic wonders if Henry’s drifting again, if this was just some lapse of judgment due to not sleeping and losing important memories.

Despite the fact that just a few feet away there’s a dried blood stain from last night, Vic tries to think about other times they’ve been here. He leans a cheek on the wooden rail and has a vivid flash to a night when they were just starting to understand each other, after Henry had done something much worse than last night, and things hadn’t gotten better immediately, but they did. They’ve kissed hundreds, maybe thousands of times here, day and night, whenever they got the chance. Also Vic is pretty sure this is where Henry fingered him for the first time, and more than a few times since. And that’s not counting all the things he’s done to Henry here…

Vic can feel his cheeks heat up and tries to avoid thinking about sex, or really anything else they’ve done here because it all ended like that. So maybe this, the bridge and these memories, are kind of like other things in their lives. Not perfect, but more good than bad.

“Hey,” Henry whispers, but Vic hears it clear as day.

“Hey,” he says back, and Henry gives him that bashful little smirk that only Vic gets to see.

And then Henry pulls his knife out of his back pocket and flics the blade up.

“Henry,” Vic flinches just the slightest bit, a concerned edge in his voice and thinking that Henry might be a little too volatile right now to have sharp objects.

To be fair, Henry’s always a little too volatile to have sharp objects.

But Henry puts his thumb to the back of the blade and presses it into the bare spot in the bridge’s rail. The wood is soft from time and decay, chipping at the edges of the cut as Henry carves downward, and he digs into the groove a few times to make sure the mark doesn’t ever fade.

And it’s not that Vic doesn’t know what he’s doing, but only by the second line does he realize that Henry is serious.

“Henry… you don’t need to…” This was always a secret, their secret. Mostly because it wouldn’t be smart or safe to let anyone in town know about them, and the way they feel about each other, but also because Henry could barely accept it for himself.

“Yeah,” Henry says, calmer than he has been all day, “I do.”

Vic watches each angle of the knife, the way it shines in the late afternoon sun, and the letters it leaves behind. There isn’t a lot of space, but Henry makes it work. When he finally puts the knife down and brushes away the last little flecks of dry wood, Vic lays his head on Henry’s shoulder.

**HB + VC**

Vic touches the letters to prove to himself they’re real, and then again just to make sure. Henry lays his hand over Vic’s, and they stay like that for far too long.

“Hey,” Vic turns his face towards Henry, sees the red flush across his cheeks and thinks it’s the cutest thing in the world, and nudges their noses together.
Henry nudges back, “Hey.”

“I love you too,” Vic says with a short kiss.

And then they kiss again. And again and again and again. Suddenly Henry hauls Vic into his lap, and his hands slide across his hips to squeeze his ass and thighs.

When Vic finally can get his tongue out of Henry’s mouth, he says “You wan’na go back and fuck me?” like Henry needs to be asked.

They’ve never run to Vic’s house faster.

They find some solace, in bed and in each other, and feel safer then than they ever will again.

Days go by, then weeks, with ups and downs like always. Henry never really understands what happened that night, never can find any peace within himself and allow himself to remember. There’s a lingering dread in him, and that triggers a paranoia and unhinged aggression that he can never completely bury. Vic learns how to deal with it, comfort Henry when he can and try to pretend it’s all okay. Pretend it will pass, even when it doesn’t.

Then school gets out and they corner that fat ass new kid on the very same kissing bridge. They’re all riding a high of adrenaline and teenage cruelty, so when Henry takes his knife and carves into that poor kid’s belly, Vic doesn’t try to stop him. Belch has enough conscience and wherewithal to say something, Henry gets kicked in the balls pretty hard, the kid runs into the barrens, and Henry loses his knife.

And for better or for worse, that’s the last time they or anyone sees Patrick Hockstetter. Alive.

Chapter End Notes

K I know this was really short but I wrote it in a day :][][][][][][][][][[[:im so tired])
But isn't that so cute!!!!
And sad.
And Patrick died.
Don't hate me plz, I loved his problematic ass too.

The blog >>>>>> https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

Please please please comment I missyou guys I wish i could update with more and more often :""""(((((
bu but I love you and i love opinions <3 <3 <3
5-ish chapters left!!!!!!
see yall spoon
XOXOOX
Falling

Chapter Summary

Stiff and indifferent, Vic says with venom and spite, “Why don’t you go find Marsh for that?”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Thirty-Seven: Falling

June, 1989

“Jesus Christ Henry,” Vic mumbles, reprimanding and exhausted, as he wipes streaks of blood from Henry’s temple. There’s a big split gash along his forehead, and though the blood has slowed in the last hours, it’s still trickling.

Some sharp fucking river rock must have caught him hard in the head, broke the skin and possibly cracked his skull. It seems to have lodged a few shards of stone and flecks of sand in there too.

They sit, cross-legged and tired on Vic’s bed while he does his best to treat Henry’s wounds. But besides cleaning and bandaging, there’s not much he can do.

Henry just groans back at him, wincing every time the cut is touched and grinding his teeth when Vic sprays on a thick layer of disinfectant. He feels heavy in the way that only head injuries could produce, with his body awake but mind slowly falling into unconsciousness. And then there’s that burning, intense hate and rage swirling in his stomach for those losers, that Marsh bitch, and that fucking ni-

“Hey,” Vic snaps his fingers twice right in front of Henry’s face, the sound sudden and jarring enough to make his drooping eyelids flutter. “Stay awake,” stupid Vic reminds him, with a not so subtle bite to his words.

“Pfft,” Henry huffs and dodges the next time Vic tries to clean his injury. They’ve both had more than a handful concussions, so Henry knows not to fall asleep just yet. Their minor medical knowledge ends there, but eventually the constant headaches stop and they take that as safe to sleep. If the headaches don’t stop, then who knows if they will wake up at all.

The day had started with Henry just needing to blow off steam, and somehow it quickly derailed into the gang getting pelted by rocks. Of course, Henry letting out some anger almost ended with him bashing that black kid’s skull open on the river bed, losing himself in the violence before Vic or Belch could even think to pull him back. And then a heavy stone flew through the air and knocked into Henry’s head.

The fight that ensued between the three of them and the younger teens was painful and ended pretty terribly for the gang. It didn’t matter that they were bigger and stronger, more people meant the losers could throw more rocks, and eventually hailstorm of stones drove the older boys away from the barrens.
Vic did get the chance to nail Trashmouth in the face with a rock, plus a couple other good shots at the others. His aim was probably the best out of them all, and he knows how to put some real force into his arm, so now there’s an ache in his shoulder. A few rocks did catch him, one in the stomach and a few in his knees, but Vic obviously made it out better than Henry did. What he’s really sore about is his last throw just barely missed Beverly Marsh’s face, and while it would have been so satisfying to break her nose and watch her bleed, Vic knows that she’s not the person he’s angry at.

“Next time I see those little fucks, I’ll-” Henry mumbles, leaning his cheek on Vic’s shoulder for balance.

“How about we just do other shit,” Vic cuts him off, and shifts away.

When Henry bobbles but doesn’t fall over, Vic takes this as him being fine enough. Somehow on the crowded surface of the small bed, Vic puts a good bit of distance between them, laying on his side and drawing his legs in. He finds one of the many Rolling Stone magazines lying on his floor and flips through weathered pages aimlessly.

Henry squints, irritated and confused with a distant throb in this temple, at Vic shunning him.

“What’s your problem?” If anything, Henry thinks he should be getting his dick sucked for all the bullshit he had to put up with today.

Taking a bunch of rocks to the head was bad enough, let alone from the loser bitches, and not getting to smash that kid’s face in on top of that. And then of course, there’s that persistent sting in his back, where the skin is split pulled to tight over his muscles, that Henry’s doing his best to ignore.

“Nothin’,” Vic just flips another page and rereads a year-old article.

While he knows Vic is giving him the cold-shoulder, as to why, he has no idea, Henry’s now stuck on the image of plush pink lips around his dick and the flutter of Vic’s throat gagging around his tip. And if that helps him avoid thinking about the lashes across his back, then all the better.

Moving makes him a little dizzy, but Henry slowly crawls over to Vic and drapes himself along his back, throwing a leg over Vic’s hip to rut against him. Maybe they could just fuck instead, because Henry really wants to feel soft skin rub against his own, their hips roll in a slow rhythm, and their tongues twisting together.

They haven’t touched each other in the last few days, or even kissed really. It’s been… weird lately. Cold. Confused. Ever since Patrick went missing.

Henry starts laying a bunch of wet kisses along Vic’s neck, chasing a physical, mental, and emotional escape from the world around them.


Henry heaves a sharp breath and pulls back, and Vic feels a little bad for it, but he covers it well.

“What the fuck’s wrong with you?” Henry says with a scowl, rubbing the sore spot in his side.

He doesn’t move though, just lies against Vic’s back and tries to snuggle more into him.

Stiff and indifferent, Vic says with venom and spite, “Why don’t you go find Marsh for that?”

“What?” Henry rears back, the icy bite to those words almost worse than a jab to the gut. “Is that
what you’re pissed about?”

Vic just keeps pretending to study glossy pictures and shrugged, like he wants Henry to know he’s upset without having to admit it himself. And the aloof gesture is not nearly as subtle as he thinks it is.

“Oh my fuckin’- Vic it’s a God damned rumor,” Henry sits up, and Vic just tries to turn farther away. “Apparently she’s forked everybody,” He tries to rationalize, but knows just by the look on Vic’s face that he isn’t convinced.

“No, you.” Vic’s tone is so cold and unimpressed that Henry swears it could freeze over Hell.

“Jesus Vic,” Henry’s huffs, already tired of an argument he doesn’t have a stake in. He doesn’t care who Beverly Marsh is, besides the bitch who gave him a concussion, or who she has or hasn’t fucked. That rumor had made its way to him secondhand a few months ago, and all he’s doing is playing along. “I heard somebody say you fucked her too,” the list of guys, and a few dykes, that people have said she’s given it up to is a mile long. “You don’t see me bitchin’ about it,” Henry says, like that’s what this is about.

But Vic finally turns to face him, with a glare that’s has just enough hurt behind it to make Henry pause.

“I don’t act like it’s true,” And that’s what it’s really about.

“I- fu-” Some kind of response, either to brush off the remark or deny the implication, gets clogged up in Henry’s throat. What he really wants to say is that it’s easy to act like it’s true. Isn’t it worth it for people to believe he’s forked the school cum-dumpster, just so that no one thinks he’s a fag?

When that self-doubt and fear creeps in, it gives way to that strange darkness inside him. It lurks around in the quiet recesses of his mind, waiting for a weakness to attack. A cold ache travels up his arms, then his legs, and into his chest, slowly turning him numb all over. This has been happening more often now, too often, and while Henry still can’t really comprehend or identify it, it’s starting to feel familiar.

Vic turns away again when Henry’s silence lasts too long. This time he actively puts himself on the other end of the bed, not even pretending to be reading this time. He just sits at the edge of the mattress and kicks his legs angrily at the carpet, wondering, not for the first time, why what people think means so much more than him. More than them.

This time Henry’s just close enough to the precipice of numbness that he can catch himself before falling into darkness. His mind searches for solid ground, stability, and it finally settles on the boy sitting a few feet away, like sanctuary in a storm. He’s able to shake off his insecurities for the moment by thinking of curvy hips, warm skin, and piercing dark eyes, and the darkness abates.

The slump in Vic’s shoulders, as cold as the distance is, tells Henry that under the venom and bite is a whole lot of hurt. He crawls across the bed slowly, trying not to jostle the mattress along the way, until he’s kneeling behind Vic.

And even if he doesn’t react, Vic knows he’s there. Henry reaches out and his hand hovers an inch away from Vic’s back, tracing over the dip in his spine, the slight curve of his side, and the planes of his shoulder blades. Like he wants to touch but is afraid to.

“I don’t want that slut,” he mumbles into the tense space between them.

“I know,” Vic says as the last flames of anger burn up and evaporate, leaving just a miserable taste in
his mouth.

But a response is enough to get Henry to lean in, lay his cheek on Vic’s shoulder and slide his hands around his stomach. “I want you,” he says, nuzzling his face into Vic’s neck and mouthing at his skin. It’s comes out more sorry than sexual, like Henry doesn’t just want to fuck him, he wants everything about him.

“I always want you,” Henry presses wet kisses along Vic’s jaw between words, like he’s trying to prove it.

Despite any pettiness or spite Vic has left that tells him to resist, he leans back into Henry’s chest, lays his arms over Henry’s to keep them there, and tilts his head to the side so Henry can kiss him more. When he does, Henry hums happily and starts sucking a bright red hickey into his neck, and Vic feels the natural urge to smile aching in his cheeks.

“I miss you,” Henry says, pulling Vic further back into the embrace and spreading his knees to pin Vic’s hips in between them.

“I’m right here,” Vic turns his face to Henry, bopping their noses together and trying to lure Henry into a kiss.

“Yes, but-” Henry says against his lips, while also trying to slide his tongue into Vic’s mouth. “I miss this- us. You know?”

I’m sorry.

Vic catches his bottom lip in his teeth and sucks on it, just barely pressing his teeth into Henry’s skin and then rubbing his tongue across the spot, and then he lets it go, “Yeah.”

I miss you too.

From there the kissing goes from slow and soothing to rough and burning hot, full of teeth and tongues and broken words in between.

Though Vic does make a point to pull away, make Henry look him in the eye seriously, and say, “If you ever grab your dick in front of some girl again-”

Henry laughs harder than he means, sending a pulsing ache up his temple, and he immediately regrets it when Vic moves to pull away.

“No, fuck-” Henry grabs him before he can escape to sulk again, holding Vic tight around his waist and kissing along his cheek. “I won’t,” he promises, and Vic sags into his arms again.

Vic can feel the firm bulge of Henry’s half-hard dick pressing into the dip of his back, and is very aware of the building heat between his own legs as they start kissing again. The angle is weird, it hurts Vic’s neck to have to turn this far back to reach Henry’s mouth, but then Henry yanks Vic back into his lap and grinds his dick into the soft curve of his ass.

“I’ll make you cum,” Henry says as he unbuttons Vic’s jeans and slides a hand down the front, baiting Vic to refuse with fingers pressing into his wet slit. Vic can feel his abdomen tense up as Henry rubs his clit and gives him another hickey, and the grinding of their hips is making him hump against the touch.

“You better,” Vic says like a dare, arching back to catch Henry’s dick between his thighs and squeezing as Henry ruts up between them.
Anything else Vic could say flies away with a cry and Henry suddenly shoves two fingers all the way into him. Air gets caught in his throat as the fingers thrust and twist inside him, stretching his muscles out and stroking the ridges of his inner walls.

His face must be dark red with arousal by now, because his cheeks feel burning hot and sweat is starting to roll down his forehead. Henry must be pretty red to, if that feeling of warm skin against Vic’s neck is anything to go by. They shouldn’t be trying to do this with all their clothes on in the middle of summer. And that thought makes Vic want to be naked, preferably with Henry’s dick inside him rather than just fingers.

Abruptly Henry pulls his fingers out and Vic reacts with a high pitch cry, lifting his hips up to follow the hand trailing up pussy. Henry holds him tight, and even facing away Vic just knows the smirk that is on his face as he circles and pinches his clit with damp fingers.

“H-hen-ry,” Vic whines, his insides clenching with need and ache as more slick seeps out of him.

Tipping back and turning, Henry lays Vic on his side across the bed and pauses only long enough for both to shove their pants and underwear down as well as grab a condom along the way. Henry’s dick pops out, hard and red with pre-cum dripping down the head. All the moving is making Henry’s head spin, and his hands shake as his slides the condom on, but he has enough natural instinct to grab Vic’s thigh and spread his legs.

Vic lies half on his stomach and half on his side, and lets Henry arrange him however will get a dick in him fastest. He’s flexible enough to accommodate the way as Henry lifts his thigh higher and spreads his legs wider. With his other hand on his back, Henry makes Vic arch his ass up until the folds of his pussy peek out from between his legs, and then he leans forward and sinks his dick in.

Henry lies along Vic’s back and presses in to the hilt, blood boiling at the high pitched keen Vic moans out. His pussy is so hot and tight that Henry thinks, not for the first time, that he never wants to leave. Vic is panting, lips bruised and soaked with spit, with his fists clenched tight in the blanket under him as his body adjusts to the quick penetration.

Something about the position is strange, not bad, just putting an extra pressure inside him, and when he looks down Vic can see a small bulge in his lower abdomen.

“Oh-h fuck…” He groans, reaching back grasping at the space behind him, “Henry…”

Henry grabs the hand offered to him, leaving Vic to hold his own leg up and making his thigh muscle burn. And Vic leads the hand eagerly to his stomach, letting Henry feel the way he’s pressing through his stomach. At the feeling Henry freezes, feeling along the bulge gently as Vic squirms.

“Hurts?” Henry asks, barely able to put even a word together with his lust and concussion hazed mind.

With an avid shake of his head, Vic bares down and thrusts backwards against the dick inside him, trying to get Henry moving already.

It doesn’t take more than that for them to fall into a smooth and slow roll of their hips, and with every push and pull they can feel the bulge in Vic’s waist rise and fall, each time making the knot inside him tighten. Henry leans down to kiss him, a sloppy mess of tongues slipping between them, and speeds up their fucking.

Then on the next thrust Henry presses his palm into Vic’s stomach, putting pressure on him inside and outside, and Vic has to bite his fist to keep from screaming.
Maybe one day Henry won’t have to make him cum to say I love you.

An hour or so later they’re both limp and tangled up in each other, the air heavy with the smell of sweat and sex. Vic feels sore all the way from his pussy to his stomach, like he’s been stuffed full and is now empty, with the burn of the stretch remaining. But the pain in Henry’s body is finally catching up with him, and he aches all over. His head is pulsing with a migraine all across his forehead, rock bruises from earlier feel fresh again, and the sting in his back returns with a vengeance. If he wasn’t so exhausted, he might be crying in agony.

Vic is stroking his hair while Henry is listening to his steady heartbeat, and he feels the way Henry flinches when he traces over the ridge of his shoulder.

“Can I see?” He knows where this day all started, why Henry was so wound up with a resentment and hurt that turned into aggression and hate. But that doesn’t mean the hurt isn’t still there, just buried under layers of repression, and pulled up into bleeding scars.

“No,” Henry doesn’t even hesitate, even though some part of him knows Vic only wants to take care of him. It’s just getting harder to be vulnerable, afraid the dark forces inside him will eat him alive if he gives in to weakness.

“Henry, I just wan’na help-” Vic says, but knowing the stubborn tone in Henry’s voice.

Things have been strange the last few days, since Patrick went missing. Henry is more closed off about certain things, less willing to talk to Vic when he’s upset. Vic can sense the guilt hanging on Henry’s chest, knows he blames himself for Patrick being down in the barrens at all. But Henry also feels this strange itch of anxiety in his back, the shadow of fear and violation following him. It has been for a while now, from that night he still can’t remember, with faceless hands and strange voices calling his name. And even with Patrick gone, the feeling remains.

“Don’t,” Henry insists, cutting off the thoughts before they can start racing around his head. “It’s nothing.”

Vic stops prying, and they go to sleep like falling down a long dark hole.

It’s never nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Omg I took so long to update I'm sorry :((((

But I hope you guys liked it!! <3 <3 my editing is really bad cause im tired af tho ':D

And no hate to Bev she is an A+ character, I just like the phrase cum dumpster

I am in like the last 2 weeks of school, so finals are coming and i dont have a ton of time to write, so next chapter should be up like in 7-10 days, and then another week, and then im free to wrte the last few chapters much faster!! <3 <3

The end is near!! Tell me ho you think its going to end I want to hear some theories :DDD

Or please comment on anything you like !!! I really really love them <3 <3
Please Note: The net 2 chapters are gonna be heavily content warning-y, so please always read the tags first !! (dark shit is a'comming)

my barely used blog ----> https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

Thankyou all!!!
XOXOXOX
"You okay, Henry?" Vic tries again after a few moments of Henry being eerily silent. He’d give anything for just the smallest reaction, but Henry stays still, looking more lost than ever before.

Chapter Thirty-Eight: Shadow

August, 1989

Vic should have known that Henry with a gun in his hand would end terribly, but in the moment it was fun. They were hanging out in Henry’s backyard, sipping on a few beers in the early afternoon heat. No matter how much Henry and Belch teased him, Vic barely drank enough to feel a little buzz from the alcohol, knowing that cheap beer can go to his head after only a can or two.

The three have been sticking closer to each other lately. Since the rock fight in the barrens, Henry’s got a nasty scar on his temple that is just starting to clear up, but his anger has remained. It’s a fuming, bubbling mass of rage and hate inside him, one that can quiet but never rest. Vic and Belch do their best to distract him. When they go for a drive, Belch keeps them off the main streets and away from masses of people, and Vic is constantly watching Henry for any sign of aggression, ready to talk him down or distract him by any means necessary.

Just the other day Henry almost got in a fight with some random high schooler in the street, and Vic just pulled him into an alleyway to suck him off right then. It turned out a little more gross than hot than either of them would have liked, but it did the job.

Because of the increase in disappearances, the Derry Police have been on high-alert constantly. The development is double-edged though, as Henry’s father is away from the house much more than usual, but when he is home, he’s a lot more agitated and ready to take it out on his son. But this has given the boys the opportunity to be together more often in their last month of summer break, and they usually spend that time drinking and talking shit in Henry’s backyard or staying out all night in Belch’s car.

A few days ago, Vic and Henry had been wanting to go and do something but hadn’t known what, needing a daily dose of sunlight and fresh air that is necessary for young boys to feel alive. Belch was off with his mom for the afternoon, and going down to the barrens or the quarry has been hard since Patrick went missing there.

So the two just lied out in the field behind Henry’s house, the grass lush and soft in a way they never had noticed before and the buzz of fireflies in the air. For hours they just stayed there, barely touching and talking in mumbles, staring up at the clear blue sky as sunburn slowly spread across their skin. And somehow, that was so much better than some quick blowjob in a dirty alley.

But today Henry got a hold of his father’s gun, left behind in a half-drunken haze on his way to
work. There was something empowering about holding it as Henry picked it up off the counter, feeling the glossy metal in his palm and the deceiving weight of the thing, even as he felt the shadow of pain in his shoulder. The old wound has long healed into a gnarled pink mark, but the day it happened still haunts the fringes of Henry’s memory.

Without Butch behind it, the gun looked far more benign than ever before. There was a lingering distant fear, routed deep in dark childhood memories, but it was overwhelmed by a teenager’s impulsive want to rebel. So when Belch and Vic showed up in the driveway, the urge to show it off was far too great.

They both looked at him warily at first, in that way that pisses him off because it feels like they’re trying to parent him. But Henry fires the first shot at the fence and sees the dirt bellow jump as the bullet strikes, and Belch and Vic flinch at the noise. When nothing immediately bad happens, just the air vibrating with the sharp sound of a gunshot, they laugh along to the violence of it all.

“One more,” Henry insisted each time, taking more bullets out of a half-empty ammo box after gun clicked empty.

“You’re shit at this,” they guys ragged on him, as once again he missed the bottle perched up on a fence post.

“Fuck off, I got it-” and after a few more practice shots, he did.

“Lem’me try Henry,” Vic pouted, tracing his fingers over the curve of his bicep and setting a fire under Henry’s skin.

“Sit your ass down,” Henry said back, checking out that ass as Vic turns, and trying not to think about why the image of Vic holding a gun was both appealing and scary at the same time.

They don’t spend very much time out there, it could have gotten boring if they hadn’t gotten some beers after a while, and for a moment they’re having fun like they used to, before the world started falling apart around them.

But there’s something about the weight of the gun in his hand, the heat of the barrel and the sharp gallop of the recoil, the false sense of control it gives him, that goes to Henry’s head. And then suddenly his mind is twisting before he can realize how far gone it is.

With a vague hook of his shoulder and a pointed look with cloudy eyes, Henry says “Next target,” to Belch, meaning a mangy stray cat sniffing around the yard.

“Uh-” Belch tries to backtrack, refuse without having to actually tell Henry no. Briefly he looks to Vic for help, knowing one way or another Vic can put Henry’s mind on something else, but the other boy is a bit too dazed and amused to take Henry seriously.

Henry puts a little more force into his look, body language communicating the command with sharp clarity. The hold he has on other people, his friends most of all, a mix of loyalty and magnetism and fear, can sometimes overwhelm their better sense.

So when Belch regretfully trudges over to the fence and picks up the thin gray cat, as delicately as big calloused hands can be, Vic feels the mood shift drastically.

If the little animal was a raccoon or any wild rodent, it would have had the instinct to run for its life, but the thin little cat is just tame enough to lean into the touch and be picked up, chest rumbling with a soft purr.
Vic bites the inside of his cheek as Henry holds his ground, watching as Belch reluctantly holds up the cat in Henry’s line of fire. They both are waiting for a laugh, something to show Henry’s just bluffing, or maybe the cat to rear up and escape.

“Hold it still,” Henry demands when the thing starts twitching, or maybe that’s Belch itching to pull away.

The sun warmed breeze offers no relief to the tense air.

On the edge of the lawn chair, Vic leans forward and digs the balls of his feet into the grass. He’s ready to jump up at any moment, to grab Henry’s wrist and pull him back, to put their lips together and slowly ease the gun out of his hand, to promise some fun sex thing just to make Henry forget about this. But his limbs lock up painfully, dread filling them as he tries to pretend that Henry doesn’t mean it, won’t do it, isn’t cruel enough, despite knowing better.

“Henry-” Vic barely says, too quiet and too late really, but his tongue curls around it like a plea for something. For warm summer days with shy touches and soft kisses. For an open sky, empty of all the hurt and fear, but full of something greater that was just for them. For something between love and mercy because he can’t keep watching Henry fall apart.

“What the hell’s goin’ on?” A deep, dark voice behind them growls, and Vic feels a shudder run up his spine and he lunging up from his seat before he even thinks about the man behind that voice.

Henry jolts as well, a reflexive jump that looks like he wants to run and drop to the ground at the same time. The gun almost hits the ground with how slack and weak Henry goes all over, head bowed and shoulders slumped fearfully as he turns quickly towards his father.

As soon as they get caught, Belch lets the cat go and it expertly jumps down each rung of the fence and disappears into the overgrown bushes of the yard. He sees the way Vic and Henry flinch from the man as he approaches, knowing the long history of bruises and cuts that have been across Henry’s skin, and senses that none of this will end well.

Vic dashes somewhere between Belch and Henry, needing to get far away but not wanting to leave Henry there alone. What he wants most is to pull Henry back with him, protect him from forces too powerful for them to escape, but the shadow of their last meeting still hangs over the boys. A meeting that ended with a sprained wrist, a new crack in his ribs, and something even worse for Henry.

No matter how strong the urge to escape, Henry stays routed by terror in his spot.

“The fuck are you doin’” Butch says, coming too close to Henry to feel safe. There’s a certain sway to his step, a blurriness to his gaze, that tells his son that he’s drunker than he looks. He must have stopped at the bar between the end of his shift and coming home, and Henry hopes that this will temper his anger a bit.

Vic ducks under his bangs, trying to hide certain features so that at least the man won’t look at him too closely. Fortunately, or maybe not, Butch’s eyes are fixed on Henry solely, with a cold anger in them.

“Jus’ cleanin’ your gun,” It’s a poor excuse, but usually not answering at all is even worse.

A second ticks by slowly as the man comes closer, right into Henry’s space to glare down at him, and even with his eyes to the ground, Henry can feel that look weighing on him.

“Yeah?” Butch says, dark and daring Henry to answer, but not showing anything behind the cold
scowl. This kind of unpredictability, never knowing what could set his father off one way or another, and knowing that he’ll get hit either way, has worn Henry down over the years of constant fear.

A wide palm reaches out and he tenses up for a slap or punch, but instead the gun is snatched from Henry’s grip so quickly that he flinches back.

The other boys flinch as well, knowing the danger of Henry’s father with a gun in his hand. Vic just tries to disappear, eyes occasionally peaking up as he tries to hide beneath his bangs, but he also see the way Henry is clenching up in fear at every second.

Butch makes a move like he’s going to walk away, probably not forgoing the punishment but just delaying it until later, after a few more drinks and his blood is really boiling. But even that little reprieve, long enough to let Henry escape for a while, makes the boys all deflate a little. Henry takes a breath that’s sounds almost like relief, but that’s enough to make Butch want to put him back in his place.

He turns sharp and aims the barrel down to the dirt, right between Henry’s feet. The gun wobbles like he can’t really keep it steady, but he fires three rounds in quick succession, and luckily the bullets land a few feet away from their target.

All three boys jump at the loud gunshots, but Henry flinches violently into himself, hands coming up to pathetically cover his face as his eyes close in a terrified wince. A rough tremor crawls up his spine to his shoulders, shaking him inside and out.

The silence hangs heavy as the echoes fade into quiet, and Henry just barely opens his eyes when no other shots come. He tries to hide it, but there is a distinguishable redness in his eyes and across his cheeks, proof of the tears he’s trying to hold back.

For good measure, Butch swings the gun up and smacks the butt into Henry’s jaw, the sharp edges cutting shallow grooves into his cheek and knocking his head to the side. The hit leaves his teeth rattling and forces some of those tears from his eyes, and he has to stagger more than a couple steps to stay upright.

Vic reaches out without thinking, an involuntary movement towards Henry from a strong instinct to help him. A second later he goes back into his self-conscious position, trying to repress that urge to pull Henry away. Butch’s eyes fall to him in an instant, a hint of recognition in them once he sees the boy behind his son. Thankfully there’s just the slightest blur to his vision that makes it so he can’t really place where he’s seen the little blond teen before. It has something to do with Henry getting his ass beat, at some time or some place, but he isn’t really sure right now.

But he’s currently satisfied with Henry’s shaking and whimpering, with the intent to reinforce the punishment later, and the man turns and stalks up the driveway and into the house, leaving three terrified boys in his wake.

As soon as the front door slams shut and they are alone, Vic rushes over to Henry without a second thought.

“Hey, Henry,” he mumbles, gently pulling Henry’s hands from his face and stroking over his cheeks. There’s a little bit of blood and a big bruise that will appear in a few hours, but Vic is most worried about the empty look in Henry’s eyes. “You’re okay. Henry, look at me,” Vic tries to pull him back, but the shaking under his hands persists.

“Henry, let’s get out’ta here,” Belch gestures towards the car, and he and Vic share a concerned glance when they get no response.
Instead Henry shrugs away from Vic, and then further away from them both as his spine goes rigid and his gaze reverts to the ground again. There’s a tingle crawling under his skin, emerging from the deep welt in his cheek spreading into his limbs. It leaves a hollow ache in every part of his body, making him feel too vulnerable to be around other people. Already he’s slipping into a familiar daze, mind full of quiet voices that twist his memories and feed on his fear.

He doesn’t make it very far, getting to Belch’s car and sitting down beside the bumper, head falling into his lap, trying to escape the world but finding no sanctuary. Does much time pass? He can’t tell, but it seems like the shadows under him grow into long streaks of darkness.

Vic and Belch call out to him, follow his stumbling with the intent to help, but they see how Henry closes himself off. It seems like he doesn’t even hear them at all.

"You okay, Henry?" Vic tries again after a few moments of Henry being eerily silent. He’d give anything for just the smallest reaction, but Henry stays still, looking more lost than ever before.

But the boys are willing to wait as long as they need too, knowing that whatever this mood is that has taken over Henry, nothing good will come out of leaving him alone.

And in some ways they are right and in others they’re wrong, because then Henry gets up.

"You okay, Henry?"

A far-away voice that hovers just beyond his grasp. But he reaches out, wants to hang on to it, follow it into the pool of light that is drifting so far away from him. And then then the darkness sets in, swallowing him up in a great tunnel of cold black numbness. It stretches out, miles and miles long as he sinks into the void, until the light of the sun and the voices his friends are just a speck in the distance.

And then there is a flash of red in the corner of his vision, fast but silent and sending rippling shivers up his spine. Henry turns to it, though finds that he doesn’t have much control of his body. Instead it feels like there are disembodied hands, subtle and intangible but also forceful as they guide him one way and another.

There are small prickles of pain, like needle points or bee stings, where the hands touch his skin. The pin pricks move along his cheek, dig in painfully bellow his jaw, scratch along his neck, and curl around his wrists and plunge into his veins.

Ice burns up his veins, seeping into his muscles and numbing him all over, inside and out. The world tilts in a lopsided rhythm, side-to-side and choppy, and it doesn’t occur to Henry that he has stood up and is stumbling forward. His feet can’t feel the earth below him, like he has floated off to a place with no solid ground.

But then suddenly there’s this strike of color amongst the thick blackness, a big red orb hovering in front of him, shining with a sinister aura that calls to him and fills him with subconscious dread at the same time.

The invisible force pulls him toward it, and Henry doesn’t have the ability to fight, or even understand what’s going on. Muscle memory takes over in a way that thinking can’t, letting him open the mailbox as he had done hundreds of times before, and inside he finds a box that feels feather light in his numb fingers.

Everything he sees is just a swirl of shape and colors, nothing that feels permanent, and no matter
how he tries to make sense of it, he can’t.

But then inside the box is something cold and heavy that sits naturally in his palm. His thumb slides instinctively up the side, and the blade pops out with a sharp *click*.

An image plays through his mind, clear and crisp in the blackness around him. It’s somehow both familiar and foreign, somewhere between a memory and a nightmare, but it feels so real.

Cold tile under his feet, dim lights overhead, and the tense quiet of trying not to be caught. The gleam of a short blade in his palm, feeling a like it weighs a thousand times more than it does.

Bruises on his cheeks and mouth from something he doesn’t want to remember. His arms laid out, tender along his wrists and lined with barely visible blue veins that pulse with blood.

*Do it! Do it!* the voices tell him. *Do it Henry!*

He wishes he would, but also wishes he didn’t have to. The voices cry out louder and he wants to bash his head into the wall. But instead he gives in to the urges and sinks the blade into his wrist.

The flesh gives easy, rippling with blood that slowly overflows the wound, streaming down his hand and to the floor. He cuts in deeper, making long slices up his arm and slowly loosing feeling in his fingertips. More blood flows as he tries to cut all the evil out of himself, all the poison that runs through his veins and into his head.

The voices fade but don’t disappear, just a dull into quiet echo in his head, and then everything fades and the darkness creeps in. It crawls into his wounds and takes root as he slips away into nothingness, breathing in a gasp of anguish and relief, before he hits the ground.

But no, he didn’t do it. No cuts, no blood, no emptiness. Only quiet, and cold, and darkness.

The front door opens with that aching creek it’s always had, but *why is he here? What’s going on?* Lights dance across his eyes but he can’t reach them. Invisible strings move his limbs and he can’t fight them. There’s a noise that he can’t recognize but strikes bone-shilling fear in him. All that is real is the knife in his hand, and Henry’s not sure how it got there.

*Do it Henry! Do it!*

*Do what?*

A flare of chaotic energy appears in front of him, like a fire of pain and hatred and fear, waiting for him at the precipice of the darkness. While he wishes he could turn away, like he always has before, he’s pushed forward with strength that isn’t his.

Anger, long buried but untamed, rears up in his chest and blankets over his muddled thoughts. But no matter how powerful the rage, it can’t erase all the hurt and rejection and loneliness of a little boy crying out for someone to save him.

Skin under his fingers, warm and alive and pricking with sudden fear. But it’s not his, or is it? His sight is fixed on some strange corner of the floor, a dark spot that stands out from a blurry memory. His head hitting the ground, blood running down his scalp, sore spots across his face, heavy steps walking away.

The knife dives into the skin with such viscous intent, but Henry finds no purpose in it, just a complete surrender to the darkness as it finally takes over completely. Blood rushes over his hands and splatters up as the veins are pierced. Cold hands try to pry his away, but he holds firm, digs the
knife in deeper, until the struggling stops.

And then Henry hears his father take one last breath before going limp, and he feels that intense swell of both anguish and relief.

Henry.

Henry.

Henry.

“Henry?”
Chapter Thirty-Nine: Last Time

August, 1989

The front door sways in the wake of Henry’s entrance, a squealing creek in the still air as Vic and Belch wait. They stare at the dark doorway, unable to see anything in it but waiting for something. Some kind of noise, words, scream, anything that seems inevitable when Henry and his father collide.

But just as strangely as Henry stood up and walked silently into the house, no noise follows. Why Henry would even go in there? From the boys’ perspective, this was the chance to escape, Henry had gotten off pretty easy for the time being. Yes, the butt of the gun had left a nasty bruise on Henry’s cheek, and for a good while afterwards he was still shaking from the shots fired at his feet. But compared to some of the punishments they had seen, this wasn’t as bad.

Vic wanted to sneak away into some quiet place under the sun, away from everyone, where he could wipe all the hurt away from Henry’s skin. Henry absolutely shutting out Vic in Belch was unusual but not unheard of, but there was something chilling about the quiet spell he went into.
One moment passes, and then another, and still there is no sign of conflict from the house, nor does Henry reappear in the doorway. In fact, there’s a certain emptiness in the atmosphere, like there is some kind of void where life should be.

More time passes as the two teenagers wait in Henry’s yard, watching the open door with growing anticipation. Vic gives a quick glance over at Belch, and finds the other boy looking back at him, silently asking *what should we do?*

Tugging at the hem of his shirt and chewing on his bottom lip, Vic wants to go in and get Henry. He’s being pulled by that magnetic force that has always drawn him to Henry, but the last time he was in that house, around that man, keeps Vic afraid to approach.

Belch doesn’t know all of what happened that day, but he saw the aftermath written across his friends’ skin, and in the bullet wound on Henry’s shoulder. He knows from years and years of having to stand by and watch his best friends fall apart, but he has never had any chance to save them, and doesn’t even know how to try.

They both are a bit lost without Henry’s guidance, but slowly Vic trails his eyes over to the mailbox that Henry had opened before going inside. He takes a careful step to the side, cringing when his shoes crunching the dry grass as he walks to the mailbox.

The door hangs down as Henry had left it, and the inside was rusted with age and empty. Vic is sure he saw Henry take something out of it, *why?*, something small enough to fit in his palm. Vic didn’t get a good look at the thing, but saw Henry’s fist clenched around it as he walked up the porch stairs. And just as he went through the doorway, it gleamed with the reflection of the sun.

*Wait.*

Vic feels a tight knot of dread and uncertainty wind up so fast in his gut that it knocks his breath out all at once.

*No no no,* he thinks to himself, *He wouldn’t, he won’t.*

The inside of the house stays quiet, but a dark mood seems to echo from its open door, reminding Vic of the way Henry goes silent and it seems like a haunting shadow is cast over his eyes.

Before he really thinks about things like *help* an *safety*, Vic can feel his feet on the gravel, running in quick strides toward the porch.

“Vic?” Belch sees his friend go toward the house frantically, and then immediately follows when Vic doesn’t stop.

The *thumps* of his feet on the wooden steps are jarringly loud, and then are echoed by the even louder steps of Belch behind him. Going a little closer to the front door, just testing the waters, Vic feels that knot inside himself winding up painfully tight and his lungs seize up.

All he can hear is the low dialogue of the television, playing some strange kids’ show on an inaudible volume. And then Vic comes closer and there is the distinct sound of heavy breathing, gasping, hiccapping, garbled breaths that signal panic.

The two boys creep more into the darkness, drawn in by the noise, and then just as they cross the threshold, the room goes silent and freeze in their steps.

Vic’s eyes adjust to the darkness slowly, a drastic shift from the striking sunlight outside, and the first thing he sees are Henry’s hands. They are clenched in tight fists, knuckles white and fingers stained
with blood, and then one yanks back with a rough tug, pulling the knife free from his father’s neck. More blood spurts out, wet pulses that splash onto Henry’s skin and clothes, and then Henry takes a step back and Butch Bowers slumps, limp and lifeless.

And then Henry turns, slow with an inhuman roll in his shoulders, like his body is being pulled by intangible puppet strings, and looks back at his two friends standing in the doorway. A stray ray of light catches the side of his face, illuminating the dull glaze of his eyes, pupils blown wide and unfocused. It’s as if he’s not really seeing at all, even as his eyes fall on Vic and Belch.

Both boys can feel their hearts beating a frantic rhythm in their throats, but it seems like their feet are stuck into the old wood floor below them. But even through absolute, petrified shock and fear, Vic can feel his voice rising up into a single word.

“Henry?” Vic asks, soft and quiet like a call for help, voice shaking lungs heavy as the smell of blood floods in. And he sees one flicker of something, recognition, remorse, love, fear, and then in the next instant it is gone.

A moment stands still as the front door creeks on its hinges, and then shuts with a deafening slam behind Belch. He and Vic flinch at the noise but Henry stays still, too still, spine rigid like a feral animal.

“Hey, Henry…” Vic says again, trying to sound soothing and calm despite the obvious wobble in his voice.

Henry doesn’t even meet his eyes this time, doesn’t even show that he heard Vic at all, but then he takes a stiff step closer.

Belch backs up, feels his elbow hit the door behind him, and the terrifying sensation of being trapped. This is more than Henry at his worst, cutting up kids’ stomachs and trying to bash someone’s head in, it’s a cold, callous darkness that he’s never seen before in Henry. With blood on his hands and a dead body behind him, slowly coming closer.

But Vic, despite every instinct of self-preservation, leans in as Henry comes near. He knows something’s wrong, has been on the precarious edge of his own breaking point before, and what he might do to himself or someone else if he ever went over it. Henry has clearly taken a turn and lost himself along the way, but Vic still thinks he can pull him back.

He’s trying to speak, just those little hummed half-words that can usually calm Henry down, but Vic gets no response besides another staggered step closer.

“Henry,” he whispers, seeing a few splattered dots of blood across his cheek. This isn’t something that can be fixed, nor can it be ignored long enough to fade away. Henry’s dad is dead, and eventually someone will find out and who knows what they’ll do to Henry, or-

But just in this moment, Vic tries to awake Henry from the haze, knowing that maybe the best he can do is calm Henry down and get as far away from here as fast as possible.

Vic reaches out as Henry comes within arms distance, slow and cautious even though Henry doesn’t even seem to notice, one hand hanging in the open air, to touch his cheek, draw him in, and slowly ease the knife out of Henry’s grasp.

“Vic…” Belch says warningly, but as he and Henry drift closer, there is an undeniable magnetism between them.

And then there is a flash in Henry’s eyes, so small and subtle that Vic wouldn’t have noticed if he
wasn’t looking right into them, but in the dark pools of his pupils shines three golden specks of light.

Henry’s lashes out, fast like a snake bites at prey, and grabs Vic by the wrist and yanks him forward. Vic feels his feet lose purchase on the floor as Henry’s blunt nails dig into his skin, and with a jarring turn, Henry throws him down to the floor hard.

“Henry!” Belch grabs at Henry just as the hand holding the knife rises up, grabbing his shoulder and pulls him away from Vic.

Despite the considerable size difference between them, Henry breaks out of Belch’s hold with an unknown strength and charges at the bigger boy, snarling like bull as he shoves Belch up against the door.

Twisting around, Vic gets on his feet just as Henry has the knife aimed at Belch and drives it down. He latches onto Henry’s shoulder, pulling his arm back so that the blade only cuts a shallow slice across Belch’s chest. The boy lets out something like a cry of pain, his shirt splitting along the gash and staining with blood.

Then Henry drives his elbow into Vic’s ribs, shaking him off as he wheezes. As soon as he gets a fraction of his mobility back, Henry lashes blindly behind himself at Vic, the blade whistling through the air as it barely misses flesh.

Vic still hangs on to Henry’s arm, trying to wrestle the knife away, even as it gets closer and closer to cutting him. But then Blech goes to separate them, trying to push Henry back and give Vic and himself room to escape. In the struggle they get twisted around, so when their bigger friend goes to shove Henry one way, Vic ends up getting bucked to the other direction.

On his fall to the ground, he clips his temple on the corner of the coffee table, hard enough that his vision goes murky and Vic can feel a warm streak of blood running down his by his ear. And from the floor he watches the blurry figures of his friends as Henry rears up against Belch and sinks the knife into his shoulder.

There’s a groan of anguish, followed by a sharp gasp as the blade is pulled up. And then the knife comes down again and again, in a jerky succession as Henry stabs several punctures into Belch’s chest. A thick artery is pierced along the way, spraying droplets of blood across Henry’s hand, arm, and face.

Belch can’t scream in pain, one especially deep wound pierced into his lung, and it is slowly filling up with blood. With a choked and gargled noise, he drops to the ground with a heavy thump, shaking with pain as his blood pools across the floorboards.

Henry leans over him, chest heaving and hands shaking, but eyes calm with that dull film that still clouds them. There’s a moment, just a brief hint of hesitation as he puts the knife to Belch’s neck, where Vic thinks that Henry might still be in there.

“Stop,” he cries out, though his voice breaks in the middle like a sob. The ache in his head still persists but his vision is clearing, despite the tears that fill his eyes. “Henry, Henry please-

The call stalls Henry just before he slits Belch’s throat, but when he turns toward Vic, it’s clear that Henry is still lost to whatever this is.

And those golden flecks of light are still shining in his eyes.

Perhaps because of the concussion, or perhaps because he is too terrified to move, suddenly Henry coming at him and Vic can’t even try to evade him. Grabbing Vic by the hair in a painful grip, Henry
forces him flat to the ground and crouches over him, dropping to his knees and pinning the other boy down.

Vic tries to fight back as soon as Henry leans in close, trying to kick and punch, and then raking his nails across Henry’s cheek when nothing else works. All that results in is that Henry lets go of his hair and grabs Vic’s wrists instead, holding both hands to the floor with one of his own. And before Vic can keep struggling, Henry presses the sharp tip of the blade to his cheek, threat intent as Vic goes still.

Despite his best attempts, Vic can’t stop the way his chest heaves with terrified sobs, or the way he’s crying out to Henry for some kind of mercy. “Please! Henry stop! Please don’t!”

But Henry stays quiet to his begging. Too quiet.

Vic is sure that Henry is going to kill him, stab him, slice his throat, but a moment passes and the pain never comes. Instead Henry leans down, knife still on Vic’s face, and presses his nose to his neck, where his pulse is racing just below his skin.

In his murky tornado of darkness, Henry senses the absolute pure fear running through Vic’s veins. He’s drawn to it, can feel a vast hunger that is not his own. It’s stronger than the bloodlust, more than he wants to feel something die by his hand, he wants to harvest every little bit of terror out of the boy below him.

And that voice in his head, taunting him, pulling him along, guiding his hands, knows all the ways to do that.

Vic feels a wet sensation drag up the side of his neck, realizing with a churn in his gut that Henry is licking the trail of blood from his head wound. And when Henry pulls away, Vic can see a twisted look of malice and joy written across his features, teeth bared in something between a smirk and a grimace.

“Henry?” Vic asks, knifepoint digging a shallow prick into his cheek with the words, as he remembers something Henry once told him.

*When you say my name, it’s like- I can remember who I am.*

“Henry,” Vic tries again, hoping that if he closes his eyes, when they open he will see the person he loves most in the world.

Instead he gets a quick slap across his face, the handle of the knife leaving a scrape across his cheekbone.

“Shut up,” Henry growls at him, in a voice that doesn’t quite sound like his.

The knife comes back to rest at his neck this time, and Vic shakes his head frantically back and forth in a silent plea for Henry to stop. His eyes squeeze shut for the pain to come, but again it doesn’t.

Henry can feel the body bellow him, *does he recognize Vic? can he?* vibrating with fear, but some lingering memories just on the cusp of his reach tell him that there is more to be found.

The knife drags down Vic’s neck, leaving a pink scrape in its path, over his collarbone and the loose neckline of his shirt. It finally comes to settle on his chest, to one side where the flesh perks out a bit, and Henry presses the blade into the soft mound through his shirt.

Vic rears up as he feels the knife stop on his breast, thrashing with a violent reaction that it seems
Henry didn’t expect.

“No no no!” he screeches, fighting harder now and managing to almost throw Henry off. But instead the knife catches on his shirt and Henry pulls it down with a quick strike, cutting the fabric up the middle. The front of his shirt falls open in his thrashing, revealing all Vic ever wanted to hide from prying eyes.

The fear is thrumming through him, so potent that Henry can taste it, and the voices in his head flare with hunger for more. But that fear also boosts the adrenaline that makes Vic fight harder, finally breaking one arm from Henry’s grasp and slapping the knife away from him.

It slides across the floor a few feet, almost out of grasp but not quite, but Henry is still vicious without it. When Vic tries to free his other arm, while also beating against Henry’s chest and kicking wildly, Henry grasps onto one of his breasts instead, digging his fingers in like claws and twisting cruelly.

With a howl of pain Vic stops his struggle, too aware of the way he is being touched right now, and Henry doesn’t relent, clawing at the pale skin and pinching his nipples until they turn red.

In a desperate attempt to defend himself Vic reaches toward the knife, just brushing his fingertips across it. He had never imagined that he would have to even think of hurting Henry. But before he can get a hold on it, Henry yanks him to one side and slams his head to the floor, and then continues the assault on his chest as Vic cries out in pain.

A dark, rumbling laughter rolls through Henry’s chest, but it comes out more like a snarl than anything else, and he swiftly grabs Vic by the jaw and twist his face to meet his eyes. And then in an inhuman voice, croaking and uneven and chilling to the very core, Henry says “You’re such a little bitch.”

For a moment, Vic can feel his heart stutter and his limbs lock up with shock. There was something behind those words that creeps into his skin, where Henry is touching him and across his body, something that finds the deepest pit of fear in him and coils around it tight.

“No-” he repeats, breathlessly this time. “No-no, Henry-”

Vic reaches down reflexively to push the hands away from his chest and gets a firm punch to the jaw for his attempt.

“C’mon little girl,” Henry says, and the words burn Vic from the inside out, “cry for me.”

As scream breaks through his heaving throat and more tears trek down his face, Vic tries weakly to escape again, all while deep-seeded insecurities eat him from the inside out. It hurts more to hear it from Henry, who for so long treated him like a boy. But this, the voice, the eyes, the violence, isn’t Henry. Vic just intrinsically knows that this thing isn’t his Henry.

But then a rough set of fingers dig between his legs and press into the inner seam of his pants, rubbing furiously at his groin.

“Stop! Stop, Henry no!” Is he screaming? Vic can’t tell, all he can focus on is the empty eyes leering down at him like he is a feast to be eaten.

When his legs kick up, Henry just pins his knees over Vic’s thighs, body crouch over and predatory as he starts tugging down his the band of his pants.

“You know you want it,” he bites at Vic’s neck with the desire to taste blood, and gets a scream in
Vic finds that his body is filling slowly with a cold weight that makes it harder and harder to fight Henry’s hold, no matter how his mind wants to escape. Air isn’t reaching all the way to his lungs. Another choked scream forces bile up his throat. And still he cries out for Henry to stop.

His pants come down too easy, loose around the waist and just a bit too tight around his hips, but Henry yanks them unhindered. The briefs underneath come down just as fast, and though he’s been naked dozens of times before in front of Henry, this time Vic feels so vulnerable that it’s like his skin has been ripped away too. Now he’s just one big exposed nerve, raw and open like a wound, and only able to feel pain, especially when Henry’s fingers shove their way into the folds of his pussy.

Back arching in a deep curve off the floor, Vic tries to squirm away from the invasion, but Henry just probes deeper, forces him open despite his body refusing. They don’t even have sex this roughly, ever, and there’s nothing slick or wet down there to make it easier.

“He-henry,” all he can say is that name, over and over, pleading like some would plead for a savior. “Henry Henry Henry,” but there isn’t anything left in Henry to save him.

A cold tongue licks away his tears, and Vic cringes at the feeling.

Suddenly the fingers are gone, but their painful stretch remains, and Vic slowly opens his tightly shut eyelids, just to see Henry shoving down his own pants just enough to pull his dick out.

“NO! NO, Henry don’t!” a mix of words and screams ring through the air as Vic gives one last valiant attempt to get away. He’s almost able to throw Henry to the side, but gets a fist slammed into his temple instead.

The ceiling above him is spinning as Vic goes limp, fighting to stay conscious as black spots flash over his vision. And Henry’s voice is right beside his ear, whispering in a voice that Vic will hear for the rest of his life, “You want this Vicky? ‘Course you do.”

Henry’s dick isn’t hard like it is for sex, it’s more half-way up from the adrenaline, so he has to fist it in one hand while shoving the limp thing into Vic’s pussy. And the burst of satisfaction from the voice in his mind far overshadows the scream of his best friend.

One thrust, slow and choppy like Henry isn’t even bothering to find rhythm, and Vic feels like his flesh is tearing down there, inside him. He wonders distantly if there is blood, like the first time. By the next thrust he is sure he’s bleeding because it hurts so bad, it hurts so fucking bad.

Henry grits his teeth and thrusts faster, harder, watching the tears roll down Vic’s red face and chasing a pleasure he can’t attain like this. Distantly, in some part of him that is trapped behind layers of darkness and evil, he remembers what this is supposed to feel like. An unnamable feeling of unconditional affection, warmth, and acceptance, like coming home into someone’s body and never wanting to leave. Being surrounded by someone, body and soul. That’s what this is supposed to be, what being with Vic is supposed to feel like.

But this is wrong, no matter how is body is pulled one way and another, forcing him into the other boy and taunting him through his agony. Distantly he knows it’s wrong, but has no power to stop.

“This is all you’re fucking good for, right?” Henry punctuates each word with another rough thrust. “Opening your legs? Huh, slut?”

But he gets no answer besides weak mewls to the torture.
He puts his hands on Vic’s shoulders, pressing them down for leverage and bucking his hips faster to find a release. This frees up Vic’s hands to try and push him away, though the fight is weak and pathetic. All Vic can really do anymore is shove at Henry’s arms, shoulders, face, anywhere to get him away, but gets no results.

Hands scratching at Henry’s neck and cheeks, Vic just tries to ride out the pain.

His insides are on fire, like broken glass is being drug through his organs, spreading from where he’s being violated and up into his chest. Vic wishes he could have been stabbed, wishes he could be dead already. But this is another way to kill somebody, a way he’s never thought of before, as the pain starts to take hold and he begins to slip into unconsciousness.

Numbness is a blessing as it travels through his limbs, but not before he feels a hot rush of something he doesn’t want to think about fill his pussy, and fresh tears escape his tired eyes.

Death is coming, he can feel it in his cold fingertips, whether it’s just shock or not he can’t tell. But then Vic has an urge, one he can’t fight as Henry’s flaccid thrusts slow inside him, and his hands on Henry’s face start pulling the other boy down.

He just wants a kiss, an unknown desire that just sprung up when he realized that he wanted to die, but he wants it so bad it makes him scream again. Vic just doesn’t want the last thing he feels to be this, burning, violation, humiliation, excruciating pain. He wants to think of the sun and his best friend and swimming and sleeping together and Henry’s mouth on his, kissing him like it’s the very last time.

“Henry,” he mumbles, making their eyes meet as he tries to tug Henry down. His grip is weak and slipping, and his own face is so wet with tears that his skin is going frigid and numb.

But for a brief flash, there is a hint of stormy blue irises coming into focus, pupils clearing, gold lights fading. And then the rage and malice melts off Henry’s features, leaving a terrified look of what have I done? behind.

“Vic?” he asks, barely audible and so vulnerable that Vic can hear the heartbreak in it. The recognition is there in Henry’s eyes and Vic feels so much joy and relief mix up with all the pain so fast he feels dizzy from it. For a brief second, Henry comes back to him.

And then just as quickly as it left, the darkness returns with a vengeance. Whatever it is, it doesn’t like the way Henry escaped it for that moment, all for the crying boy below him. It grabs a hold of Henry’s insides, holding his heart, ruining his mind, controlling his limbs.

Vic watches, confused and unmoving as Henry rears up, shoulders tight and hand grasping, just close enough to reach the knife on the floor.

“Henry?” Vic asks, with no panic or fear, just trying to speak to someone who’s no longer there.

With one clean swipe, Henry drags the blade across Vic’s neck, and everything goes dark.

Chapter End Notes

so. that was the rape chapter.

I- feel the need a reason to justify it. but I also don’t have one, besides, that this is
always where I intended the story to go. I suppose the best understanding I can give you guys is that, these are the kind of stories I like to read, not specifically rape stories, but stories where bad things happen for complicated reasons. they just .... feel human to me. So thats the kind of stories I try to write.

To everyone asking if I was going to kill vic off, I'm sorry that this is the answer you got instead.
Im also sorry to anyone who has stuck with this story for 39 chapters and wasn't ready to read this one.
as always no one is required to like this story, this chapter, or any number of things in it.
I tried my best to warn you guys with out spoiling the plot, so I hope everyone who chose to read this chapter is okay.

Comment with any ANY thing you want to say to me, good bad and in between.
I hope everyone practices self-care, knows their limits, and has a good day.

I've also added an extra chapter, so now we have 4 left. it will be the next one and it will be a little.... softer. for reasons

Some fiction is an escape from the world we live in, and some fiction holds up a mirror to it. And I believe we need both.
XOXOX
“If you could go anywhere, like anywhere, where would you go?” Vic is staring up at the singular cloud floating in the sky, not knowing he’s spoken his thoughts until Henry answers.

“…As far away as I can.”

Chapter Forty: Dreams

September, 1989

Laying out under the sun, heat seeping into their skin until they are warm inside and out, Vic finds Henry’s hand though the long grass and twines their fingers together. Henry’s eyes are closed, with his other arm over his face to escape the blinding sunlight, but Vic knows he’s awake by the way he squeezes Vic’s hand in his.

During the summer Henry always gets a swath of freckles along his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. Vic can already see them rising along his skin, and wants to run his fingers across them. They’re cute in a way that reminds him of when Henry was younger. When they both were younger.

In the summer air and with Henry’s hand in his, Vic just lets his mind wander.

“If you could go anywhere, like anywhere, where would you go?” Vic is staring up at the singular cloud floating in the sky, not knowing he’s spoken his thoughts until Henry answers.

“…As far away as I can.”

“Yeah?”

Henry hums softly, like he’s dreaming. “With you.”

Vic wants to kiss him but can’t find the energy to move, so he just squeezes Henry’s hand in response.

They’re probably going to be sunburnt within the hour, and bitten to near death by mosquitoes. But at this moment Vic wouldn’t move for anything in the world.

“When I was younger, I wanted to go to Florida,” he admits, thinking of those long car-rides across states. Town after town passed him by, some they lived in for a year or so, until the road ended in Derry, Maine.

Henry flicks his eyes open, alert and clear despite his sleepy posture.

“Why?”
“…to be by the ocean, and it’s hot all year;” it sounds like a place that normal people would want to live in. “And I thought no one would ever find me there.”

Henry twists over and Vic leans in for a kiss. They could just run away and never came back.

They would leave in the middle of the night, maybe a year from now. Maybe sooner, maybe later. They won’t leave because they’re angry or afraid, Henry will just show up one night and Vic will look at him and know.

Maybe they steal his dad’s car just as a last "fuck you". Vic will take a few things with him, pictures and small mementoes. Henry will have nothing but clothes and his knife. In a few weeks Vic will miss his mother but won’t say so out loud, and Henry will look at him and just know.

Maybe Belch will come with them. They’ll offer but he’ll probably say no, he doesn’t need to escape quite like they do. But once they settle somewhere, Vic and Henry will call and tell him where they are, so one day he can visit. He’ll be the only person that knows that they didn’t go missing and he’ll never tell anyone where they went. Maybe, if things were different, Patrick could have come with them.

But they will leave in the middle of the night, headlights on the open highway and radio humming low and hands intertwined over the console. And after a hundred miles or so, as the sun starts to rise, the boys will stop feeling like they are running away from Derry, and more like they are running towards somewhere new.

It will actually take them a while to get to Florida. Not days or weeks, more like months and years. They will stop in towns all over the coast, sleeping in cars, sleeping in cheap motels, stealing cars, stealing money, working whatever labor two sixteen year old boys can find, having sex in the backseat of stolen cars, having sex in cheap motel beds, running off in the middle of the night, starting over again.

But they’ll get there eventually. The first night they spend in Miami, the boys will sleep on the beach just because they can, and wake up to the sun rising over the ocean, and look at each other and know that this is where they belong.

They’ll get fake I.D.’s and Vic might cry the first time he reads Victor Criss on something so official, counterfeit though it may be.

By then they will be old enough to get real jobs. Maybe Henry can find something to do with his hands, something more constructive than destructive, something that makes him feel satisfyingly exhausted at the end of the day. Maybe Vic can find a place where he doesn’t have to say much, something he can do well on his own, something that builds his confidence.

They will come home to some crappy studio apartment on the south edge of the city. For the first few months Vic will have to watch everything Henry says, because they’re not in that small backwoods town anymore and “If you get us thrown out of here for some racist shit Henry, I swear to God…” But slowly old habits will start to die.

The first thing they will buy for their apartment, besides food and necessities, is a big soft bed. They will be used to sleeping on floors, car seats, sand, or literally anywhere, so the first night they sleep in their bed it feels like too much, too big, and they will wake up all curled into each other on the far edge. But then in the early morning heat they’ll start fucking and realize that having more space is kind of nice.
Sometimes they’ll fight because living with someone you love isn’t always easy. Sometimes one of them will yell too loud, move to fast, and the other will flinch just by instinct. Nothing will ever end a fight faster than that, because no matter how angry, they both know that they will never go that far. All of those fights will end in a few tears and a lot of kisses, and then falling asleep holding each other.

One night Henry will walk out the door, slamming it behind him in a rage, and in the moment Vic will really believe that he’s not coming back. For an hour Vic will stay angry, whatever the cause may be, and then for another hour he’ll cry his eyes out into Henry’s side of the bed. Another hour will go by and he’ll start to worry, about what could happen to Henry alone, about what Henry could do to himself. Finally grief and dread will eat him alive and Vic will rush out of the apartment, not knowing where Henry is but intent on finding him before it’s too late.

But Henry just will be sitting right outside their door, facing away with his head in his lap, trying for hours to pull himself together enough to go back inside. And Vic will realize then that Henry’s never going to leave him.

One morning, they will both conveniently have the day off and sleep in as long as they can. When Vic wakes up, he’ll find Henry’s face tucked into his neck, and their legs tangled up together with the blankets kicked to the foot of the bed. In the haze of the humid morning, Vic will start petting gently over the bridge of Henry’s nose, where a light dusting of juvenile freckles are starting to appear.

They’ll have been thinking of getting a pet. Their apartment won’t allow dogs, and they won’t have the room for one anyway. Vic knows that when Henry was younger he had helped raise a batch or two of piglets, but they definitely can’t have a pig here. Maybe a rabbit? Rabbits are like piglets, right? Vic wonders.

Eventually Henry’s nose will scrunch up under the touch and his eyes will flutter open.

“Hey,” he’ll mumble into Vic’s neck, burrowing deeper into his hiding spot.

“Morning.” Vic will answer as he starts running his fingers through Henry’s hair. “Last night was fun.”

Henry will snort a laugh and look up at Vic, “You were fuckin’ wasted.”

“No I wasn’t,” he may be lightly hungover, but Vic will have upped his alcohol tolerance over the years.

Henry might laugh at him a little, tease him some more, but more likely he will lean in to kiss him. Their mouths will taste of the sour remains of alcohol, but neither will complain.

They will have gone to a bar the night before, stayed out late playing pool with some guys they met, only a little older than them. Vic will end up being much better at pool while drunk than anybody else, but according to Henry’s slurred rambling, “Vic’s better than everybody at everything.”

Vic will have noticed almost immediately, the way those two guys at the bar were sitting together, casually touching each other and laughing at inside jokes, but it will have taken Henry a little extra time to realize. It wouldn’t have been a gay bar, but the boys will have found that people in Miami are a lot more open than they ever would have thought. And for a while Henry will have been visibly uncomfortable, shoulders arched and spine tense, but instead of rushing out or doing something rash, Henry will have drowned his fears with enough alcohol to loosen up again. Vic will take this as progress, and be mostly proud of and only mildly worried about him.
“…Do you think they knew?” Henry will mumble, and Vic will know exactly what he means.

“Henry, we have a one room apartment,” he’ll say, tone more amused than annoyed. “The neighbors know, the landlord knows, and I’m pretty sure those guys knew when you grabbed my ass.”

Saying something like that, so blatantly and honestly, might have started a fight a few years prior, when Henry was so full of hate and fear for himself. But time and space will heal over some of those wounds, inside and out, and Henry will be a different person by then. So instead of denying it, Henry will weasel his hands between Vic and the mattress and squeeze his pert ass with eager hands.

And Vic will squirm away with a laugh, and that will launch them into a mock wrestling match, like the kind they had when they were younger. But this one will end when they realize that, sometime between coming home drunk and crawling into bed, they pulled off most all of their clothes and fell asleep that way.

From some late night TV show, Vic will find out that there is a surgery to remove breast tissue. It’s mostly for women with breast cancer, but there are some doctors who do the procedure for a certain kind of patient. And then Vic will learn that there’s a word for someone like him, tons of words actually. Transgender, transsexual, transvestite, and a hundreds others that range from scientific to confusing to hateful. But it’s a thing. There’s other people like him. He’s not alone.

And that night Henry will have come home from work to find Vic sobbing on the floor, their crappy television playing infomercials in the background. After an initial panic and a lot of words choked out through cries, Vic will get most of the message across to Henry, and will just be too relieved, too happy, to stop crying.

So after that night Vic will squirrel away any spare money he can earn. A dollar here and there every week, an overtime paycheck at the end of the month, hidden into an old wooden latch box under their bed. Sometimes Henry will slip a few extra bills in there, and when Vic starts to notice his fund growing bigger, Henry gets ambushed with a kiss like he’s never had before. Vic will be saving for years and years for this surgery. He’ll know it will cost thousands of dollars, but every day he will think about his chest being completely flat, and will know that it’ll be worth the expense.

But for the time being he’ll wear a thin t-shirt to bed, but when he gets out of the shower or changes clothes, he doesn’t care so much if Henry sees. Besides his shirt, both will be completely naked and very aware of how their sweaty skin sticks together.

Vic will give Henry a little shove on the shoulder, and Henry will roll over while tugging Vic along. They will end up with Vic straddling Henry’s hips, findings solid balance on his knees and then easing down slowly on Henry’s dick.

“Wait,” Henry will stall, but the way his hips buck upwards tells that he doesn’t want to. “What about-”

They’ll have a bottomless supply of condoms in their bedside table, but it will seem horribly far away at the moment.

“Don’t- don’t worry about it,” Vic will say after a moment.

He won’t want to think about what he means by that. So much time will have passed, but they’ll still be so young. At that age, Vic still won’t know completely what he wants, for now, for the future, or forever. But at this very moment he’ll just want to feel Henry, inside and out, with nothing in between.
His pussy will be slick and still stretched from an over-enthusiastic fingering the night before, so as he works his way down onto Henry’s dick, all the way to the hilt, it feels so perfect that he almost doesn’t want to move.

They’ll go at it at whatever pace they want, slow and fast and rough and smooth, taking their time to draw out every bit of pleasure in each other. Henry will get a tight hold on Vic’s hips, digging his fingers into the soft flesh of his ass and inner thighs. And when Vic pauses for a moment to catch a breath, Henry will give him a light spank just to get him going again.

“Fuck you,” Vic will say with a gasp, asscheek stinging and face burning, much more from excitement than pain.

His insides will be on fire but he loves the heat, wants more of it, so he’ll starts riding Henry faster. Vic will bite his lip too hard it will puff up and turn red, and then Henry will drag him down and kiss all the hurt away. He’ll dig his heels into the bedding for leverage and start fucking into Vic faster, rhythm slipping as he chases release.

Vic will scratch his nails into Henry’s shoulders and hang on for dear life, letting Henry suck on his tongue while fucking him breathless. The fire in his core will be so hot that it’ll be burning him alive, so good he can barely think. But then it will hurt, like an old wound being torn open again. It’ll hurt so bad that he’ll scream, but no sound will come out. Henry won’t be there, no one will be there, just darkness all around as his insides are ripped apart.

And then Vic opens his eyes to the bland hospital ceiling, a blur of white and too many lights, with the steady beep...beep...beep of a heart-monitor beside him.

Chapter End Notes

so this is the happy ending I wasn't going to write.
And yeah .....it makes me kinda sad that I didn't end the story this way
They could just be so happy if I wasn't such an evil author :””””(

But this is also the soft chapter, the next few will give some closure to things, but will not be as nice as this one.
I also hate writing in future tense, so this bad grammar was a bitchhhhhhhhh

But I hope you guys liked it!!! this one actually made me happy to write it, instead of allover saddness
<3 <3
Also alternate universe Henry and Vic do get a bunny check out my tumblr for more cute shit like that ---> https://imakeficrequestsandthendisappear.tumblr.com/

New chapter coming in about a week! the end is near!!
XOXOXO
Aftermath

Chapter Summary

The first thing he said when he could speak was “Where’s Henry?, and no one answered him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Forty-One: Aftermath

September, 1989

Vic blinks his bleary eyes open, unable to really see but vaguely aware of the dull florescent lights. There’s a tube down his throat, the apparatus fastened over his mouth and feeding in oxygen to his lungs. Another tube, small and thin and attached to a hooked needle, pumps something cold into his veins. It travels up his arm and into his heart, pooling in a deep well that sits uncomfortably in his chest. On the other side, another tube pumps in something warm that leaves a tingling fire in its wake. He can feel those things so clearly, but everything else is numb, heavy and limp like this body is not his own.

He feels no pain, inside or out, but there is the memory of pain lodged deep in mind. In this heavily medicated state, Vic’s not quite able to access those thoughts. A fresh pump of morphine runs up his arm and he drops back into unconsciousness just before he can remember what happened. For a few quiet seconds, he is able to forget.

The next time he opens his eyes, he remembers everything.

He wakes, unable to know where he was or how much time had passed, to see the blurry image of his sister sitting just beside him. Daphne has her head propped on her arm, eyes hooded and tired, and when there gazes meet she jumps like she had just been shocked by lightning.

Everything hurts, a faint but persistent ache all through Vic’s body. The pain medication helps keep it at bay, but the intense pain still lurks under his skin, waiting to emerge again soon. He tries to say something but no sound comes out besides a whine.

“Hey…” Daphne says after a moment, astonished, like she can’t think of anything else to say. Her hand dips underneath one of the dozen layers of blankets over him and finds his hand, holding it in hers like she can’t believe that he feels so real. So alive. “Mom’s coming back in a minute.”

Vic wants to ask where they are, what’s going on, but there’s something in his mouth that he can’t speak around. And still everything hurts, like sore muscles that have been stretched so much that they ripped. One certain place hurts the most, all through his pelvis and groin. It hurts so bad he wants to scream.

There’s a nagging thought in his head, thrumming with the sound of his own pulse, that his sister isn’t the person he wants to see, this isn’t the person who can take all the hurt away, that makes him
feel safe. But just as he realizes that this longing ache in his heart is for Henry, he remembers being held down, forced open, ripped apart, and then seeing that last little bit of life drain from Henry’s eyes.

His chest constricts and the breathing tube in his throat feels like it’s choking him as he tries to pull harsh gasping breaths into his lungs. Vic can’t speak, but a restricted scream tears through his throat. It feels as if he’s too heavy to move, but his body bucks upwards on its own, flinching and flailing in some violent fit.

He just can’t breathe. He can’t breathe and Henry did this to him and tried to kill him and he just can’t breathe.

A moment later, his mother appears in the hospital doorway and presses the ‘Call Nurse’ button a dozen times before one finally appears. A fresh dose of medication dulls his panic attack and sends him into a lucid half-sleep for the rest of the night.

Since he getting out of the hospital this morning, Vic’s been in and out of different rooms in the police station, giving statements to sheriffs and state detectives and answering a thousand versions of the same questions.

“Where were you that day...”

“Do you recall seeing any of the victims...”

“Did the accused ever tell you anything about...”

“What?” Vic can feel the rough drag of air through his vocal cords, followed by a hacking cough that threatens to pop a few of his stitches. He’s been taking pill after pill all day to numb the pain, but they are slowly proving ineffective.

By some miracle, the knife only grazed his jugular veins and scraped a shallow gash across his trachea. He went into shock far before he could have bled out, left lying for hours on that floor before the police and medics arrived. Twenty-six stitches across his neck, closing up the wound into an uneven pink seam, and two blood transfusions later, he could finally breathe without a respirator.

The first thing he said when he could speak was “Where’s Henry?, and no one answered him. Then he asked about Belch and was told that he was alive but in critical condition.

The sun has already set and the room he’s in is dim, but even the littlest amount of light stings his eyes and aggravates his migraine. And all the questions aren’t helping either, asked by people he doesn’t know that don’t seem to really listen to what he has to say.

Now there are two stern faced men sitting across the table from him, apparently homicide detectives from Augusta, if Vic can remember correctly. He’s having trouble focusing right now, sagging with an unending exhaustion and jumping every time there is a sudden sound. His mother is there too, for some reason about minors being interviewed with a parent present, but she seems to be too far and too close all at once. She reaches over to touch his hand, comforting and bringing him back to the present moment, and he has to force himself not to flinch away.

“We have reason to believe that Henry Bowers is responsible for nine kidnappings and murders since October of last year,” One detective will say, while the other stares Vic down, cataloging every minute response the boy gives in a notepad.

“No,” Vic says automatically, voice cracking painfully. “No Henry didn’t do that,” he doesn’t really
know much right now, what day it is, where he is, *what the fuck is going on*, but Vic knows Henry didn’t kidnap any of those missing kids.

The detectives give a look to each other. They have this way of communicating to each other silently, but Vic recognizes the way their eyes scan him up and down, trying to figure him out.

“He was found in the vicinity of six bodies, the remains of three others are yet to be found.” The detective says, jaw clenched like this is the absolute truth, and Vic just can’t believe it.

“What?” he interrupts, head pounding as the haze of his last dose of painkillers starts to fade. Suddenly things are too clear, too intense, all the lights too bright and voices too loud, and *What happened to Henry?* swirling in his mind. “Found him where? Is he okay?”

The man pauses with clear annoyance at being interrupted, voice laced with an edge. “According to our investigation, he has a history of violence, and as far as we know has no alibi for any of the disappearances in the last year.” The case broke a few days ago, garnering so much law enforcement and media attention that the detectives have been working twenty hour shifts just to do damage control.

“No-no, he didn’t kill anyone. He wouldn’t,” but Vic keeps insisting, adamant that whatever they think Henry did *isn’t true. “And I was with him all the time, I know he didn’t do anything.”* It’s so natural to say, that he and Henry spent every second that they could together, and Vic doesn’t think of the implication of saying so.

The detectives pause for a moment, the one taking notes looks up from his writing, and the other asks, “He was with you at all times?”

“Yeah-” Well, Vic can’t say he was with Henry at every moment, and there were those times he went off on his own for a few hours. “Mostly, every day,” Vic concedes. And if Henry wasn’t with him at one time or another, then he was at his house. “He couldn’t of- I would’ve know.”

But the cops have other concerns.

“Even at night?” The man asks abruptly.

“…Yeah- every night too,” Vic is suddenly very aware that he’s saying this in front his mother, and can’t help but to be a little ashamed to admit it.

“Where?” the detective keeps pushing for more answers.

Vic takes a quick look over to his mother, and when their eyes meet he drops his back to the table top. She doesn’t look angry, but she definitely isn’t happy about it either. “In my room. He’d come over after curfew.” And they would do things to each other that Vic hopes he doesn’t have to tell to these people.

But instead the detective turns to look at Vic’s mother judgmentally.

“Did you know about this?” he asks, like she’s the one who’s done something wrong.

She takes a moment to answer, silently acknowledging the criticism “…Not every night.”

For some reason that especially makes Vic angry, to see this guy talking down to his mother over something that she had nothing to do with, all while not listening to what is really important. Besides, he and Henry weren’t really doing anything wrong when they slept together. Yes, they were sneaking around, but they weren’t hurting anybody and they both wanted to do it.
“You know you want it.”

“No! No, Henry don’t!”

No, he reminds himself. *That’s not Henry.* It wasn’t his voice or his eyes, no matter what anyone says, Vic knows that wasn’t Henry. But that doesn’t stop the memories, coming back to him in crisp detail. Every inch of skin that touched his own, every time he begged Henry to stop.

The room has gone quiet, the detectives are consulting the notes and Vic’s mother has averted her eyes to the floor. Vic wants to lay his head on the table top, to find some kind of rest that keeps evading him. His stitches are itching, and without thinking he starts picking at them. One edge is digging into a tender piece of skin, and Vic starts scratching it. The result is almost too painful to stand, but it distracts from his headache to pry at the little wire cords.

“Can I see him?” He asks suddenly, startling even himself. More than anything, Vic wants to make sure that Henry has come back to himself, to pull him off that ledge before he’s lost forever. A small part of Vic wonders if all of *his* Henry is already gone. Another part is in complete denial, believing that he and Henry could somehow just go back to normal after this. The rest of Vic is just too confused, *too hurt,* to make any sense out of either.

A moment passes with no words, both detectives and his mother looking wide-eyed at him, before speaking at the same time.

“What?”

“Vic, Honey-”

“Please, let me talk to him,” Vic interrupts, trying to sound calm despite the way his throat cracks between words. When all the adults look keep eying him uneasily, Vic insists, “Henry didn’t hurt anybody. Let me talk to him and he’ll tell you-”

Vic could see it in Henry’s eyes, right before everything went black, a hint of sanity and regret. He touches his stitches again, wishing he could have kept Henry from doing this.

“Now we know you’re… distressed, after what happened to you, but you’re confused,” The detective says, with callous professionalism and only a hint of irritation. “You, a young man, and Oscar Bowers were found slaughtered,” he emphasizes the brutality of the act, but Vic doesn’t flinch. “And Henry was found with your blood on him. And from the medical exam, we know he *raped* you-”

“NO!” Vic jumps like he’d been electrocuted, breathe catching painfully under his scar when he shouts. “Henry didn’t do that! It wasn’t him, I know it!” he slaps his hands on the table top in frustration, because no one seems to believe him. “Henry wouldn’t do that to me.

It’s getting harder to breathe.

“What are you talking about?” the cop demands, leaning in to the indignant fifteen year old.

“Something’s *wrong* with him,” Vic says, words intense in between heavy breaths. "I could tell- I could see it! *He* didn’t do this, it was something else,” Vic feels the pinpricks of tears in his eyes, the sharp prickles of pain blooming in his neck. “Let me just talk to him, please-”

“This is insane,” The man mumbles, sitting back like this has been a waste of his time.
“No! Henry didn’t do it,” Vic just yells louder, standing up from his seat and slightly woozy from the vertical shift. “He wouldn’t hurt me like that!”

“Young lady, sit down and control yourself.” The man shouts back at him, and Vic feels the whole world shift underneath him.

“Don’t call me that!” He screams, fists clenching and eyes winced shut. Something tears in his outburst. Everything hurts but his mind is racing.

Because of course if they had a medical exam, if they found him in Henry’s house, then the doctors and police all know about his body and think he’s a girl. And of course they all know what Henry did to him. But it wasn’t Henry, but it was. Vic can see it so clear in his memory, he keeps seeing it over and over, every time he closes his eyes.

“This is over,” His mother finally speaks with a real assertive tone as she gets up quickly. “No more, Vic come with me,” She says to the detectives while trying to guide her son toward the door. “Don’t say anything else,” She commands him, but his breathing gets more shallow as panic overtakes.

“No! What happened to Henry?” He yells at the detectives. “Where is he?”

In the next breath one of his stitches pops open, and then a couple more follow down the slash, and his mutilated skin seeps out a tail of blood. He’s breathing so hard that Vic can barely feel the pain, but soon his vision doubles and he drops to his knees on the tile floor.

There’s a rush around him to call an ambulance, and Vic can kind of feel his mother’s cold fingers on his cheek, just before he loses consciousness.

After a six hour return to the hospital to resew his stitches and monitor his heart rate, Vic finally comes home in the late evening that night. *Four days,* someone had told him. Three days in the hospital, one talking to detectives. Something about the house seems foreign to him, like he’s never seen it in this light at this angle.

*Should the world look different four days after you almost died?* He asks himself.

Four days might be the longest amount of time he’s gone without seeing Henry, and most of those days he was unconscious or heavily medicated.

Maybe the house seemed different because Vic knows Henry won’t be sneaking in to spend the night.

*Should the world look different four days after you were ra-

The echoes of noises ring through his head, dull but pulsing impacts that make Vic want to rip his hair out from how much it hurts. Walking up the driveway is agonizing, and while his mother gets his keys to open the door, he leans his cheek on the doorjamb, eyes closed and trying to recover from the bombardment of sensation.

The lock clicks and the door slowly opens, but Vic and his mother just stand there for a moment. The night is balmy with the last heatwave of the summer and the air is still. Cars go by, neighbors’ lights are on, but it feels like they are completely alone. And Vic finds that feeling both relieving and terrifying all at once.

His mother reaches out, almost touching his shoulder, but then thinking better of it. Her hand comes up to brush his bangs aside, but then she stops again. With a mild tremble in her wrist, her hand
hovers in the air right around the wound on his neck, like she’s afraid to touch him but really does want to. Vic watches her, unsure if he wants to let her touch him or not, but then their eyes meet in the dim light and they both look away quickly.

He slips passed her and into the house, skin crawling with the phantom feeling of fingers on his neck. Though he hasn’t eaten all day, his stomach twists like he’s going to vomit. Most of all he just wants to crawl into bed, *that cold bed with no one else in it*, to fall asleep and never wake up.

He turns from the living room into the back hallway, eyes cast down and feet dragging with every step, and comes within an inch of running into his father on the way there.

They both stumble back suddenly, neither watching where they were going, and for a split second both are shocked to see each other.

*Why are you here?* Vic wants to ask but doesn’t. With how often his father is away “working”, and how well practiced Vic is at avoiding him, they haven’t crossed paths in weeks, maybe months.

Neither say anything at all, but Vic does notice how he’s being stared at by his father. It’s some kind of disbelief, like someone would look at a ghost that has appeared in front of them, and then his gaze settles on the gnarled stitches lining the long slice across Vic’s neck.

It’s been a long time since the last time Vic got more than shoved into a wall or an off-handed strike to his face, but that never quelled the deep ingrained fear from years of abuse. No matter how far away it all seemed, Vic still had to carry the anxiety of the next time he would get the shit beaten out of him, whenever or where ever it was. But now, it’s so strange to him, he feels nothing. No fear or apprehension, no need to flinch away and look at the floor.

There’s nothing really to be afraid of anymore.

*What could be as bad as what’s already been done to him?*

Now Vic just levels a cold glare up at his father, more out of spite than anger, and shrugs past him on the way to his room. He shuts the door but doesn’t bother locking it. He can’t bring himself to shut his window, but thinks about it for a long time.

Collapsing on the bed, Vic holds on tight to his pillow and buries his face in it. The tears come faster than sleep does.

Hours later Vic wakes up with some sense that it’s passed noon and he’s slept at least most of a day. His neck hurts from hours of tossing and turning, and his pillow is speckled with a few droplets of blood. He brushes his fingertips lightly over his throat, feeling the tender wound to make sure none of his stitches popped. They all seem to be intact, just the edges strained in his sleep.

He’s just slept countless hours, but still he feels exhausted. Hunger is a distant feeling that he doesn’t respond to. A soft breeze rolls in from his open window, and he stares at the plane of glass for quite a long time. It fills him with a whole lot of hurt and betrayal and sorrow, but also longing and regret, like all those feelings got mashed up inside of him and tore him apart in the process.

When it hurts too much, he turns over and looks at the ceiling for an hour or so, never moving and barely breathing. Sleep doesn’t find him again, and can’t even find the strength to cry anymore.

A knock at his door doesn’t startle him, nothing seems to get a reaction out of Vic at all. Hours have passed and still he can’t bring himself to move, but when the door creeks open he looks over to see his mother as she slips into the room. She quietly closes the door behind her, holding a glass of water
They look at each other in silence for a moment, an awkward staring contest where Vic wants desperately to be alone, and his mom looks like she wants to say something but is struggling to.

“Hey,” she finally says, voice breathy and tight.

Vic doesn’t answer, and considers pulling the blanket over his head, just to escape the tense mood. Instead he stays still, even as she comes closer and sits on the edge of the bed. He can see the way she’s considering her words, biting her tongue and eyes searching across the floor, before she finally sets the glass down on the dresser beside his bed.

And then next to the water she sets a little yellow pill.

“What’s that?” Vic asks before thinking better of it. His voice is rough and cracking from a long night of crying, and his injury is only making it worse. He sits up slowly, drawing his knees to his chest and putting his head between them when the movement makes him dizzy.

“It’s—” she pauses, fingers fidgeting and looking down at her son uncomfortably, with an edge of sadness in her eyes. It’s clear to Vic that whatever this is, Mom doesn’t want to talk about it. “It’s a pill you take after— um,” her voice breaks in the middle, choking up like she’s pushing back tears. The noise makes Vic’s chest hurt, a clawing ache of knowing his mother is going to cry, and again he wants to hide under the blanket.

A moment passes with no words, both of them hanging on what she hasn’t said. He watches as she puts her face in her hands and takes a shaky breath, trying to pull herself together before she falls apart.

And then she finishes in one flurry of words, trying to say them before she loses the nerve, with only a few shimmering tears lining her eyes, “So you don’t get pregnant.”

“I’m not a girl,” Vic says immediately, a defensive gut reaction to the implication.

He’s not, he can’t be.

It doesn’t count.

No no nonono!

And suddenly he can’t breathe.

The next gasp he takes feels like he’s being ripped open, lungs aching for air but it can’t get through. “I’m not a-”

“I know,” His mother snaps, not out of anger, but just to stop his panic attack before it starts. For the first time today she purposefully looks him in the eyes, leans in and takes his face in her hands and makes him look at her. “I know you’re not,” she insists, sincerity soaked in her words “Honey I know.”

Calm washes over Vic then and the next breath feels better than ever before. Being touched doesn’t feel as terrifying as he thought it would, instead the fingers on his skin are so warm and soft that he wants to lean into them, fall asleep there and not be afraid to wake up.

“I know you’re not a girl,” She says, emphasizing for each word so that he’ll never forget she said it, and when a few stray tears roll down his cheeks, she brushes them away. “But I’m your mom and I
need to take care of you,” her voice goes quiet and Vic has to bite his lip to hold himself together. “And I know I haven’t been very good at it,” she smiles in that way that people do when they are too ashamed, too sorry, to even say so. And then she looks at him seriously, eyes intense and face so close to his, “But Vic, sweetheart, you need to take this, please,” He tries to look away but his mother doesn’t let him. “You can’t pretend that it didn’t happen.”

“Raped.”

“Pregnant.”

“I know you’re not a girl.”

And then Vic falls apart.

“Mommy,” the word comes out as a painful, squealing cry, voice going high and breaking at the end. He crumbles into sobs, tears running freely and face flushing with blood. He reaches out to her, hands grasping at the air like how toddlers ask to be held, and she puts her arms around him and pulls him right into her chest.

“Oh baby, I’m so sorry,” his mother says, clutching him close and letting him cry into her shirt. She rests her cheek on the top of his head, wanting to hold him and know that her youngest child is alive. “So, so sorry,” and if she cries too, she doesn’t try to hide it.

Vic screams into her chest, overwhelmed and overfull with hurt, and then he takes in desperate breath, and screams again. Over and over and he lets it all out with the tears, throat burning where Henry cut him, where his skin still tears apart like he wasn’t meant to survive.

“Why’d he do it?” He says between cries, words broken and strained as he can’t hold them back. “How could he do that to me?”

Even if he knows it wasn’t Henry, or somehow, wasn’t really Henry, or something was wrong with him, Vic still has to live with it. Has to think at every moment why?

She takes a long pause, huffing out a few breaths when the words don’t come easy. “…I don’t know” and as Vic cries harder, she shushes him and rubs the tense arch of his back.

Eventually Vic slumps from exhaustion, but doesn’t feel as rung out and empty as before. His mom doesn’t let him go, doesn’t stop soothing the hiccups that make his body jump. She’s still warm and the touches still feel good, and a real sense of safety finally settles over him.

“I miss him,” Vic admits, feeling ashamed but unable to deny it, while tucked under his mother’s arm. “I love him so much Mommy,” his voice is so small and sad it’s almost impossible to hear him, but she does.

“I know you do honey,” she says, pushing his bangs back and wiping the last tears away.

A little bit of fussing and rearranging, his mother is able to get him to lie down again, bundled up in blankets and petting his hair as his eyes droop. Even as his breathing evens out and he is lulled to sleep, she gives no indication of leaving him alone.

“Mom?” Vic mumbles after some time.

She hmmms back, tucking the comforter around him.

“Can you shut the window?” he asks.
“Sure baby,” and she does, without asking him why.

Right before he falls asleep, Vic sits up and swallows the pill with a big drink of cold water.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this took so long and my editing is bad, im just super tired rn. I might add more to notes later.

Hope you guy like this one! this scene with Vic and his mom was always one of my faves in my outline. Please leave me a comment I really really love yall and what you have to say <3 <3 These next chapters will be kinda long, so they are gonna take a little time, hopefully they will be up soon! XOXOX
“I never-” Vic starts, his words tumbling out before he thinks of a better way to say it. Eyes fixed on his feet, he knows that there are no words to make this easier, but he tries to speak them anyway. “I need to tell you something-”

A wide hand settles on his leg, not aggressively or overly soft, just a solid anchor that stalls Vic’s anxieties. He looks up to see Reg give him a look that he can’t quite read.

“I know,” is all he has to say.

Chapter Forty-Two: Loose Ends

January, 1992

“You know you don’t have stay here.”

Vic sits on the back porch, the sky dark and cold with a late night chill, and turns at the sound of his mother’s voice. She’s standing in the back doorway, the lights off behind her because he knows she also doesn’t want to get caught.

A lit cigarette glows between his fingertips but he doesn’t bother to hide it, instead scooting over on the step to let her sit beside him. She comes over delicately, every footstep a quiet little thump on the slats of the porch, and as she sits she pulls out a cigarette for herself. Vic lights the smoke for her, fishing out an old plastic lighter from his back pocket.

On one side of the lighter is the word Slut scratched into the surface, a crude engraving that has survived years of Vic rubbing his thumb across it. Patrick gave him the lighter not to long before he went missing, one of the many fire starters he stole from pharmacy or gas stations. The more time passes, the more Vic wonders if the label was meant to be an insult or a twisted term of endearment. Constant use has almost depleted the fuel in the lighter, but it still puts out enough spark and heat to catch a cigarette.

As his mother takes a drag she reaches over and brushes his bangs away from his eyes, and then carefully touches the bruise forming on his jaw. There’s a sorrowful glint to her eyes that he answers back with a smirk, like he’s somehow smug about it.

In the last few years the dynamic of their household has changed. Whether it was caused by what happened or just by the passage of time, no one can say. The older girls are long gone and only call home on Christmas and to borrow money. Every day Daphne looks out the window like she wants to escape as well. Vic knows that feeling too, but he wants to escape into something that he used to have. What they almost had. And their mom isn’t trying to hold it all together anymore.

You don’t have stay here.
“I know,” Vic says with some finality, stubbing out his cigarette on the porch.

Tomorrow Belch- or Reg, as he now goes by- is packing up his life and driving out of state. His uncle in Vermont has a lumber yard and has offered him a job. Senior year isn’t going well for either of them, so there’s not much reason to stay to finish school.

And then he offered Vic a ride out of Derry to anywhere else.

In the wake of the summer of ’89 both boys have drifted away from their peers. It took many months for Belch to recover fully from a collapsed lung and punctured artery, and months after that he started going by his real name. Perhaps to distance himself from Henry, perhaps to be a new person.

Months went by and the gash along Vic’s neck finally healed, stitches removed and resown more than once, but he still wonders if he ever really recovered. A nasty pink scar remains along his pale skin.

People, in school and around town, look at them from a distance, knowing who they are by the scars in their skin. Knowing what happened to them.

But no one really knows what Vic does, and every day it gnaws away at his insides. Every day he feels a bit more empty.

The urge to leave calls to him, like a thin stream of light from an open door, slowly closing forever but not shut quite yet.

Vic puts out his smoke on the wooden step below his feet, leaving a singed circle among a trail of other identical burn marks. In the faint light he can see his mother’s cigarette glowing hot orange amongst darkness, and behind that he can see the faint outline of a bruise around her eye.

“You don’t have to stay either,” He reminds her, but she looks at him like she’s always known that.

The screen of the backdoor shutters quietly, opened and closed so stealthily that most people wouldn’t even notice, but Vic can already sense his sister’s eyes on his back. He turns to look and isn’t surprised to see tears running down her face.

“You’re really leaving?” Daphne says, because of course she was listening.

Instead of answering Vic twists to face her, opening his arms up to her as she falls into them. They’ve grown more than a few inches in the last few years, with Vic ending up a smidge taller than Daphne. They look more like siblings now than they did for a very long time, in more than just eyes and hair, but in the way they share those looks at each other and can understand.

The fight that prompted tonight’s long needed discussion was caused by Daphne coming home late from a date with her not-so-secret boyfriend, some guy she went to high school with. And while Vic is definitely the more experienced of the two, learning things about sex and love at an age so young that most people would be shocked, from what he’s heard Daphne has done some stuff too.

Last year she came to him for some sex advice, which had started out as embarrassing but ended with this exchange, “You know what’s easier than faking an orgasm? Saying ‘Hey asshole, this is where my clit is.’” “But that’ll make him feel bad.” “He should feel bad! Sex isn’t that hard.”

But whatever the case, Daphne came home late and made the mistake of walking through the front door, which Vic could have told her was the easiest way to get caught, and it launched their father into berating her. From the corner of the kitchen he was brooding in, grinding his teeth as Daphne’s face crumbled into tears, Vic planned on waiting out the tirade, until he sees his father’s hand come
up to strike her.

Faster than he’d ever moved before, Vic was suddenly between his father and his sister, shoving the man back with a sharp movement that caught him off-guard. Fist clenched and eyes blazing, Vic actually put up a fight this time when his dad lashed out at him, all while Daphne watched in terror and awe. It ended in Vic getting knocked on his ass with a punch to the jaw so hard his teeth rattled, but he got in a few hits before then. And then the night simmered into a tense quiet as Vic escaped onto the back porch.

Daphne knows he has to go, she knew so even before the fight tonight, but it’s a hard pill to swallow. She holds tighter to his shoulders, wishing she could turn back time and protect him like he protected her, and he returns her embrace like he’s telling her it’s okay.

When she thinks she has control of her grief, Daphne pulls back just enough to look at him. There are things about him she doesn’t recognize, not on the superficial level, but in the subtle way that he doesn’t look away anymore, doesn’t try to hide behind his bangs or drop his gaze to the ground.

“It’s weird,” she says with all the fondness in the world. “You went from being my baby sister to my big brother,” and a laugh gets caught in her throat like a sob.

The comment catches him off guard and he quickly scrubs his eyes to keep from crying. “Don’t say shit like that,” Vic says with no malice or venom, the hint of a smile appearing on his face.

And for the last time in her life, their mother gets to see her youngest child, her only son, be genuinely happy.

The sun rises and Vic wakes as the light passes over him. Like every morning, he finds himself looking at the window across from his bed, iced over from last night’s chill and glistening in the dawn. The lock is latched but that doesn’t keep away the nightmares. It also doesn’t keep away the dreams.

Muscles stiff and aching, he stretches until his joints pop and slowly crawls out of bed. His bag is all packed up, done in a late night fit of anxiety and repressed rage. But now he feels like the fire in him is all burnt out, no spark left to ignite and only the ashes remain. He’s come to some sort of inner piece as he leaves out the front door, in the way that there’s no other choice to make.

Reg’s trans-am is waiting at the edge of the road, humming with life and spitting out grey exhaust behind. The early January morning has settled a frosty mist over everything, and when Vic slides into the passenger seat he has to press his fingers to the heating vents to feel them again.

The two give each other just a nod of greeting as Reg drives forward and down the block. In the rearview mirror, Vic can see the fading shadow of his family’s house and doesn’t feel much of anything at all when it disappears. He has his bag in his lap, holding it close to his chest and laying his cheek on it after a moment.

Reg looks over and offers a small half-smile of reassurance that Vic tries to return. They don’t talk very much, whether they are at school or in alone Reg’s garage. There’s not much to say anymore, but the boys do take comfort in each other and it helps them combat the oppressive loneliness. Most of all they just feel off-balance, like there are pieces are missing from what they used to be.

So as much as they want to believe that things will be okay, neither can say so aloud.

The speedometer climbs as they set out on the highway, miles flying by with a blur of evergreen
trees. They pass the town sign and Vic tries not to remember the last time he saw it. Tries not to think of who he was with. The sign fades away into the distance as they drive, and after a few moments Vic feels a sharp burn in his lungs and realizes that he has been holding his breath for who knows how long.

By the time they get to Portland the morning rush has set in and the city is alive with activity. Reg pulls up to an empty stretch of curb on a random street. There’s a meter beside the car and if they loiter long enough they’ll get a ticket, but for a moment neither moves one way or another.

“You sure?” Reg asks him.

His first offer to Vic was to just come with him to Vermont, stay with distant family there until Vic found his own way. But after days of thinking it over Vic had to refuse, feeling too much like a burden on his friend. Reg deserved to be able to have his own life, without anything tying him back to Derry. And whether it’s from his deep insecurities or an endless guilt over what happened to them, Vic won’t budge from his decision no matter how much the other boy insists otherwise. So instead Reg takes him to the city, somewhere Vic feels like he can disappear.

“Yeah,” Vic says with a deep exhale, but makes no motion to get out.

Something is tickling at the back of his throat, a persistent thought that he been mulling over for months. Now there is an impending need to say it, like he won’t ever get the chance again, but even after all these years it’s not that easy.

“I never-” Vic starts, his words tumbling out before he thinks of a better way to say it. Eyes fixed on his feet, he knows that there are no words to make this easier, but he tries to speak them anyway. “I need to tell you something-”

A wide hand settles on his leg, not aggressively or overly soft, just a solid anchor that stalls Vic’s anxieties. He looks up to see Reg give him a look that he can’t quite read.

“I know,” is all he has to say.

Vic feels the news hit him like a wave of cold water.

“H-how?” his tongue tangles up around the word.

And Reg can see the flash of fear and embracement and rejection fly through Vic’s eyes and quickly tries to backtrack.

“A lot of stuff, from back then,” he tries to explain, though he doesn’t specify what or when. It was just some small things, like the way Vic was always so defensive about anything feminine or how guarded he seemed. “And after the hospital, the cops talked to me, and well-” One way or another, Reg found out about the secret Vic has kept for so long.

He knows more than just that though. And while he would never tell Vic this, the police had told him what happened that night, after he was stabbed.

“But you didn’t-?” Vic feels his voice crack before he can finish.

All this time, how long? Reg had known about everything, and never once did he even look at Vic differently. Never questioned him or treated him like a girl. Never even brought it up until Vic was ready to tell him.

“Don’t worry about it,” Reg just pats his knee encouragingly and looks away awkward, both boys
knowing that it’s too late to really have this conversation. They’ve spent too much time trying to get away from the past that they can’t turn back now.

Before an unwanted spell of tears and sobs come, Vic shakes it off and leans over to hug his friend. The embrace is uncomfortable over the console, but neither boy wants to let go.

Until finally, through the layers of flannel and undershirt stretching across Reg’s broad shoulders, Vic can feel the mottled flesh of scar tissue on his chest and has to pull way. Before he remembers the sight of his blood raining down from his torso. Before he remembers who caused it.

Vic sits up and wipes his eyes with a barely shaking hand, so good at disassociating now that he’s almost perfect at it. Grabbing his bag, he pops the car door open and steps onto the busy sidewalk, giving Reg just the briefest “Bye,” before the door shuts.

He watches the trans-am merge into traffic, slow at first like Reg wants to turn back, and then faster the farther away it gets.

Suddenly Vic feels very alone on the city street. People bustle by, some run into him or avoid eye contact, but he doesn’t really see anyone at all. Seventeen years old and he already feels like a ghost in this world, and every minute he feels himself fading away a bit more.

There’s faint tickle in the palm of one of his hands. It’s just the smallest sensation that reminds him how lonely he is. How much he wants to feel skin pressed against his. How much he misses having a hand clasped around his own.

*How much he misses Henry.*

Chapter End Notes

So. I added some more chapters.
Surprise (no one should be shocked)

This actually was supposed to be part of the Epilogue, including the next 2 chapters, but it would have been a massive chapter and I haven’t updated in a long time. So now i've broken it up into a couple chapters.

Hope you guys enjoyed and I promise to get on a better writing schedule for next chapter!!
Much love to anyone who leaves a comment <3 <3
XOXOOX
Chapter Summary

What does call to him is the little bit of liquid pooled in a waiting syringe. Despite how blurry everything is, how garbled all noise sound to his ears, suddenly it all falls away and he is only able to focus on the needle. It’s just about half a hit, so it might soften all the cold shards cutting open his veins, or it will knock him on his ass and he’ll wake up the same way he did today.

Get out get out get out-

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter Forty-Three: Addicted

January, 1993

There’s a startling, aching chill that wakes Vic. It’s like a thousand pinpricks crawling up his spine and spreading an icy tingle all through his body, and this painful cold has nothing to do with the winter draft coming from a broken window.

He opens his eyes to a dark room he doesn’t really recognize, with a sting in his inner arm that he definitely does recognize. There’s also a soreness in his groin that is familiar in a way that makes his stomach turn.

With some vague memory of the other night, Or a week ago? Or maybe longer?, Vic recalls that he’s in his dealer’s apartment. Invited over some unknowable time ago for a couple hits, this is the first time he’s come out of his heroin induced haze and already the craving for more is setting in.

The room he finds himself in is dingy and dark –whatever time it is, Vic can’t tell— with a gross mattress and cracked windows. There are voices outside the door, sounding warped in his pounding head, but it makes him realize he is not alone.

Sitting up slowly, almost overcome by cold-sweats and shaking, Vic tries to get his feet under him. He feels absolutely disgusting, wearing the same clothes as he has been for days in a row, unshowered, and hair growing a few inches too long for his comfort. But inside jagged and sharp icicles are in his veins with an aching hunger that is never satisfied any more, no matter how often he shoots up.

With as much energy as he can muster, Vic tries to stand off the bed. The movement makes his head rush with blood and makes him so dizzy he almost falls straight forward. He barely misses stepping on couple stray needles lying hidden in the dank carpet.

But that feeling, of almost falling, of reaching out for stability, of his hand grasping at empty air, strikes some kind of physical memory. Like forgetting something vastly important for so long and
then suddenly it comes back full force and all his senses alight like the night sky. The smell of sweat and wild grasses, the feeling of warm sunlight and hot skin against his own, the faint taste of cigarette smoke mixed with something vaguely sweet while his tongue slides along another, the sound of clipped half-words mumbled between long kisses, and opening his eyes to see stormy blue irises looking back at him.

And he’s stuck by the want to never, ever let go of those exact feelings.

Henry.

Like breaching the surface of water and gasping for that first breath of air, Vic is jolted back to reality. For the first time in months his head clears and it’s like he can see the world without the fog of drugs.

Staggering toward the door, Vic follows his sudden instinct to flee. Get as far away from here as possible. Get the crawling burn out of his arms. Get back to being a person and not this empty thing he’s become.

The apartment isn’t big in the least, just a trashy segment of an unkempt building that looks every bit like a place someone would sell drugs out of, but just navigating through the hall is difficult for Vic. Leaning heavily against the wall, he tries to restore some of his fleeting energy and to catch his breath. He’s lost some weight in the last few months, somehow eating worse than he did when he was a kid, and he’s already exhausted.

What sounds really good right now is a big drink of cold water, to wash away the metallic sting in his throat. Or maybe something to eat, just enough to fill the void in his stomach. But much more overwhelming than thirst and hunger, is the urge to put a needle in his arm. He feels absolutely drained of everything, somehow too heavy to drag himself around but empty at the same time. Every pulse of blood from his heart is like a thunderclap under his skin, forcing open punctured and collapsed veins. A few thin veins have burst from the pressure, spotting his arms with patches of bruised spider webs.

The need for water and food seems so arbitrary when overwhelmed with this pain, and just one quick hit would take it all away.

Following the distant sound of voices Vic finds himself in the living room, watching a couple of guys he doesn’t recognize shoot up in the murky light. No, wait- one of them he does remember, the drug dealer who offered him a free hit not too long ago.

The first few months in Portland were rough, and then the next few months were much worse. Finding a job as a seventeen year old high school drop-out was near impossible, but he started picking up cheap labor and waiting tables to make a little money. He’d make friends and crash on couches, but anything long-term never worked out.

But what was the absolute worst was the nightmares. Almost every night he would wake up in a panic, reliving everything he has tried to forget. Again and again he would feel some unseen body pinning him down, some cold blade pressing into his skin, something hot and painful thrusting into him. Weeks went by and it never improved. He got thrown out of more than one place for screaming in the middle of the night.

Eventually he gave up on sleeping, staying up days at a time and then dropping from exhaustion. The physical and mental strain sent his anxiety sky-rocketing, making him so high-strung that he could barely hold down a job for more than a few days at a time. And suddenly he was overcome with a stress induced paranoia, every hour, every second it seemed. No matter what he did, Vic
always felt as if eyes were on him, watching him fall apart and waiting to strike at any minute.

He’s wished, more than once, he had called his mother then. Or called Reg, or one of his sisters, or literally anybody else. But instead he stole some sleeping pills from a corner store. He recognized the brand as the one his mother takes, and found something darkly ironic about that. They work for a while, numb him up and at least put his nights at ease.

The anxiety remains and the paranoia hits him at random times throughout the day, and then after some time the pills stop working so well for him. Painkillers come next, then Vicodin and OxyContin. He buys them from sketchy dealers that hang out around pharmacies, and trades up for stronger stuff when he can. Each one gets harder to quit.

By the end of the summer Vic still had enough clarity to realize that he was being sucked into a vortex and every pill he took was pulling him deeper. He knew he had to ask for help, his mom at least could understand the self-medicating, maybe even tell him how to ease off.

But Vic didn’t call her, he didn’t call anybody. Maybe because he was ashamed, maybe because it’s been so long sense he left. More likely, it’s because one night he was hurting for a big dose of Vicodin but his dealer was nowhere to be found. After an hour of stalking the backstreets and looking like a total burnt-out, some guy across the street called him over. Vic followed because he knew a drug dealer when he saw one, but this one offered him a hit of heroin for free, just because “you’re pretty and look like you need it”.

It was all prepped in a fresh syringe, and even if Vic knew better, his body was aching and he couldn’t breathe right and hadn’t slept for two nights, so he would have taken just about anything to take all the pain away. The needle broke through his skin effortlessly, and as his vein flooded with heroin it felt like everything under his skin was suddenly lit on fire, like acid was climbing up his arm.

And then it felt better than he could have even imagined. It’s not even euphoria, just absolute numbness all over. Vic could barely think about where he was or what he was doing, and everything from the past seemed to melt away into nothingness. For once his emptiness isn’t a hollow echo of himself, instead he feels as small as a speck of dust in the air, and there is something relieving about being nothing at all.

Vic fell into his addiction in the calmest daze, finding the slow, dragging quiet in his mind to be more restful than the best night’s sleep.

From then on, every dollar he could get his hands on was exchanged for more heroin. Hit after hit was shot into his arm and that amazing nothingness carried him away into the sky, until he fell back into his body hours later. The withdrawals set in, itchy and icy cold in a way that made Vic want to peel his skin off. Each drop would get worse, and he’d seek out more opiates to take away the pain, until suddenly he was broke and had nowhere to go.

And now he’s here, feeling shivers and sharp twisting aches roll through his body, in an apartment with no memory of the last few days and a disgusted lurch in his stomach. He hangs back in the dark corner of the living room, unseen because he has always been so good at being invisible.

He watches his drug dealer shoot up with the other guys, none of them bothering to look in his direction. The urge to put one of those needles in his vein is overwhelming, but Vic fights his own weakness, grounded by the need to escape this life he’s fallen into.

There is a dull ache in his groin, a pain that is so distinct that he knows that he’s been fucked more than once. Whether it was when he was high or after he had passed out, Vic can’t recall, nor which
one of these men it was, or if it was just one of them. It really could’ve been anyone, and that fills him with a bitter shame. But he doesn’t have time to indulge self-hatred today, that would just drive him towards taking another hit.

Vic feels a contempt, too cold to be fury but just as vicious, as he watches those scumbags shoot up more, knowing he’s been used like some junkie whore. In some dark humor, he wonders if they are the types that like boys with pussies or if they just think he’s a girl with short hair, or if that mattered at all to them. Did any of them care if he was more than a mostly-alive body that wouldn’t fight back?

He has a sudden thirst for violence, one he hasn’t felt since he was a young teenager, and he wants to take it out on these assholes who thought they just had the right to fuck him.

But he can’t. Vic knows that he can barely do anything right now. Getting out of bed was a hard-fought battle, and he still has to lean against the hallway wall to stay upright, breathing hard and shaking all over.

The front door isn’t that far away, just a few steps that might take him twice as long as a healthy person to cross, and these guys are so fucked out of their minds that Vic isn’t even worried about being noticed.

What does call to him is the little bit of liquid pooled in a waiting syringe. Despite how blurry everything is, how garbled all noise sound to his ears, suddenly it all falls away and he is only able to focus on the needle. It’s just about half a hit, so it might soften all the cold shards cutting open his veins, or it will knock him on his ass and he’ll wake up the same way he did today.

Get out get out get out-

With his last little bit of resistance, Vic throws himself toward the door. It hurts so bad to turn away, his body is screaming out for just a little relief and Vic can barely think around all the pain.

Just as he’s almost at the door, he runs into the leg of a cheap table littered with used needles, razor blades, and plastic bags. But amongst those things is key ring and a clipped bundle of a few hundred dollars, and even in his daze, Vic doesn’t hesitate to swipe both. If he can’t do anything else to them, to the fucker who lured him here and stuck that needle in his arm, he’ll at least steal his car and money.

The door has an impressive amounts of locks keeping it shut tight, and it takes Vic a while to undo the puzzle trapping him inside, but finally it gives way and the light of the midday sun streams in.

His eyes scrunch shut, light and sound suddenly too intense as he steps outside. The air tastes too fresh in his mouth, overwhelming because it’s not musky with fumes and smoke and sweat. Vic dry heaves once, twice, before spilling what little is in his stomach onto the porch.

Strangely enough, that makes him feel better for a moment, like a little bit of the infection is out of his body. The sour taste in his mouth isn’t pleasant, nor the tingling in his cheeks from where his abused blood vessels have popped, but suddenly he feels so much more awake. More alive.

A beat up car is parked haphazardly beside the curb and thankfully Vic recognizes it. His hands shake with the keys but the door pops open eventually, and with a distressing sputter the engine comes to life.

Vic isn’t the best at driving, Reg had done his best to teach him a few years ago, but as long as he gets away, Vic doesn’t care how much he swerves. Those junkies won’t call the cops, and if they do,
still nothing would be done. Cars disappear from this side of town all the time.

So, going slightly too fast for his senses to keep up with, Vic drives as far away as he can get, seeing the apartment door swinging open in the review mirror, hoping that someone will break in later and kill those guys. The only destination he has in mind is the methadone clinic up on the west side of the city, stopping briefly into a pharmacy to buy a pack of familiar yellow pills.

A few weeks go by. A few horrid weeks of withdrawals and shivering and puking between doses of methadone, but slowly he eases out of addiction.

At its worst, Vic thinks he’s really going to die, and has gone to the E.R. more than once before his body absolutely shut down. When the doctors get him breathing again, they start asking questions he doesn’t want to answer, like Where did this scar come from?
By the end of the ordeal, Vic is sure this is one of the hardest things he’s ever had to do, only overshadowed by not picking at his stitches when he was fifteen and trying to forget about Henry.

The lady at the clinic tells him every time he’s there that he should get an AIDS test, and Vic has promised more than once that he would, but still hasn’t. He’s not ready to know, tries to believe that he could be the one in a million junkie that gets out clean. She reminds him of his mother in a way that makes him want to avoid her at all costs, because he’s trying not to miss her. Maybe he’ll call home soon, but he probably won’t.

Just for the sake of time and money, Vic lives in his stolen car. Some nights are freezing and there’s not much he can do about it. Sometimes he sucks dick in alleyways for ten bucks, which he’s not proud of, but he needs some money for food and smokes. It’s not that bad because at least he’s choosing to do it this time.

Through this he’s met the tranny girls down on 11th avenue, selling everything they’ve got. They gave one appraising look to the cut of his jaw and said “How long have you been playing this game? Huh, pretty boy?”

”I’m not playing,” he wants to say, but maybe that’s not what they mean.

“A long time,” Vic says, gaze dropping to the cracks in the sidewalk as he lights a cigarette.

But he sticks by them for a while, stops by their corners to offer them a light, let them ruffle his hair like he’s a little kid, laughs when they say “Let’s trade sweetheart, my parts for yours.” With them he feels a bit less alone.

At his last trip to the methadone clinic, because he promises himself this is the last one, he parks up a few blocks and around the corner, on a busier street so no one will fuck with his car. It would be just his luck to get all his shitty tires stolen.

Vic walks with his eyes up for once, because this is still a rough place and he doesn’t want to walk into the wrong person again. He passes more than a few people on the sidewalk before turning down into the side street, but just as he goes to cross intersection, his eyes meet with someone else’s on the other corner. She stops and stares for a few seconds longer than he’s comfortable with, but for all her shabby clothes she doesn’t look like an addict nor a homeless teenager.

When he goes to cross the street, she passes in a quick jarring pace while no longer looking at him. And only a few seconds later does he finally recognize the red hair and freckles and wide blue eyes. He stops short in his stride, almost falling straight to the concrete. Standing there for a moment, he considers that he could be wrong, but knows with no doubt he’s not.
When he turns to look over his shoulder, sixteen year old Beverly Marsh has disappeared from sight.

After a long time just standing in the middle of the sidewalk, long enough that people are starting to look at him strangely, Vic fully turns around. The Portland street is dark and a good number of people are bustling around, but what Vic sees the bright and empty streets of a backwoods small town. He sees adults that he avoids eye-contact with. He sees a pack of loser kids that are only a little younger and a little more vulnerable than him. He sees Henry beside him because when were they ever apart, with Belch and Patrick not more than a step away either.

Vic walks back to his car, no longer caving any substance to keep away his withdrawals, because the bittersweet nostalgia was almost enough to make him happy again.

That night he falls asleep without any help from drugs for the first time in almost a year. It’s not the best rest in the world, especially in the reclined seat of a cold car, but it’s not bad like he expects it to be.

Instead of a the nightmares he feared would return, he has this long dream of a place he’s never been before.

He’s diving up this long winding road, with the crystal clear belief that around the next turn he will see Henry, but the pavement goes on forever no matter how fast he goes. He isn’t in a panic, almost content in his never ending quest, but there is a distant feeling of anxiety he keeps ignoring.

Nagging at the back of his thoughts was the question Which Henry will it be? but the road never ends. And then suddenly he was driving backwards, falling backwards, falling into nothingness, still looking for Henry around every corner.

And then he wakes to the splattering of hail on the roof of the car, feeling calm in a way that he has rarely ever known.

One thing, a feeling, an answer, sits on the edge of his mind, slipping through his memory like it is unwilling to be caught. But Vic doesn’t reach for it, just waits in his serine half-sleep for it to come to him. He’s spent too much time running from the past, too much time feeling empty.

The answer comes to him like a whisper, a sigh of relief in the mist of struggle.

Henry.

Juniper Hill.

Sitting up, in the grey light of the early morning mist, Vic adjusts the rearview mirror to see his reflection. The purple bags under his eyes seem so vibrant on his pale skin, and his lips are chapped and eyes are red and puffy from irritation. But Vic aims the mirror lower, to catch the slope of his neck and the pink gnarled scar across his throat.

When he presses on the gash, he can still feel the weak spot in his skin where it never quiet healed, and he wonders if that is his missing piece. If he really did lose part of himself when he lost Henry.

Twisting the mirror back into place, Vic turns the key in the ignition and starts driving.
it may seem like i have disappeared from this fic or something, it will be finished hopefully within this month. these last few chapters have just been really hard. i'm starting to feel the drag.

i'm also gonna start some new stories here soon though. i'm thinking about a stranger things oneshot for stonathan week coming up, and then a new original story that might be longer. i think that one will also be a story with a trans main character, so to anyone who likes WYSMN maybe check it out when i publish the first few chapters.

<3 <3 <3

be back soon with the epilogue

xoxoxo
Epilogue: Vic

Chapter Summary

With his eyes closed, Vic feels like he’s floating.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Epilogue: Vic

April, 1993

“We just don’t do that,” They tell him.

Vic has memorized the phone number of the administration department at Juniper Hill Asylum. At this point the secretary knows it’s him before she even picks up. He’s holed up in the corner of a small-town diner, using the outdated pay phone to call the hospital. When the owner glares at him for taking up space, Vic pays another dollar for a cup of coffee and puts another quarter into the phone. How much money he’s spent so far, he doesn’t want to know.

“Well why not?” He insists.

He’s been in this town for a while, Castle Rock or something of a name. It’s rural and quiet, tucked into a small mountain pass, with one big main street and a dozen dirt roads leading to it. The summer heat is humid and lasting, with long sunny days and restless children roaming the unkempt backwoods.

To Vic it seems like Derry, but thankfully it isn’t.

What really matters is that if he drives back on the interstate and up north, he will be at the gates of Juniper Hill within twenty minutes.

“We don’t have visiting hours. Especially not for… these kinds of patients,” the secretary says, like she had never been asked a question like this.

Vic calls the next day and then the next, and the next, badgering the woman until she finally relents and transfers his call to the director, a stern voiced man that just repeats the same thing Vic had heard.

“Juniper Hill is not open to visitors.”

“That is an extremely violent and unstable patient.”

“This kind of thing just doesn’t happen here.”

“Well how can I make it happen?” Vic says a bit too loudly, startling the waitress across the diner.

You don’t know what I will do to make this happen.
There was a long pause in the receiver, Vic could imagine the old man at his desk, insulted and annoyed at Vic’s arguing, until he finally spoke again.

“The only visitation we can allow is by family or legal counsel.”

Vic knows Henry doesn’t have any family in the state, especially none that would ever go to see him in an asylum. But the lawyer is a different story.

After many months of investigation, no new bodies turned up but six found was already damning enough, the trial that sent Henry to Juniper Hill took only days to finish. It was a total wash, there was never any doubt that the verdict would be guilty. The only thing that kept a fifteen year old boy from being sent to an adult prison forever was the defense’s plea of “not guilty by reason of insanity”.

Leading up to the trial, Vic met Henry’s state appointed lawyer once. He remembers the short man that droned on in a monotone voice that even then seemed very uninterested in the case. At the time, Vic was still pretty hysterical and traumatized, two feelings he’s had to bury over the years rather than deal with. So seeing the lawyer went quite like when Vic was interviewed by the police, him adamant that it wasn’t really Henry that did it and then getting dismissed as a helpless victim.

But he did ask the man if he could see Henry, imagining it like how in movies people would go visit someone in jail. The lawyer responded with “That boy will be lucky to see even the light of day ever again.”

The insanity defense was quite convincing, especially because Henry reportedly went completely catatonic shortly after being arrested. He wouldn’t speak or eat for days at a time, and then at night he would have violent panic attacks and night terrors. After scratching a seven inch gash up his arm he was put on suicide watch at the local prison, and then restrained in the hospital bed after trying to bash his head into the wall.

Vic heard all these things through the local news, and then even worse details as whispered rumors around Derry. He would lie in bed at night, wishing Henry could be there next to him, knowing that something beyond insanity was wrong with Henry, and not being able to do anything about it. And then he would fall asleep to his own nightmares of being raped and sliced open all over again.

Years have passed and still Vic can’t handle the gnawing guilt in his heart over how he couldn’t save Henry from being locked up forever. But maybe he can do something now, convinced that if he could just see Henry, talk to him for a moment after all this time, Vic could pull him back from the brink.

And maybe pull himself back too.

“…Well, can I have the number to Henry’s lawyer?” He asked, not deterred in the least.

He’s come this far, left home, done heroin, quit heroin, sucked off strangers, and slept in his car in this rinky-dink nowhere town, fuck if Vic’s stopping now.

“I don’t have the time for this,” The man on the phone says, like he thinks Vic cares.

“I can wait,” He’ll annoy every person in this place until he can see to Henry. “I’ll call back tomorrow.”

The next morning he rings up the secretary right at eight a.m. and she has already found the phone number, reading it off as Vic quickly jots it down on his arm.
After a few more calls to assistants and interns, Vic hears the familiar voice of Henry’s lawyer, still sounding as dull and bored as ever. He doesn’t even seem to remember the infamous case that rocked the entire east coast until Vic reminds him of it, and then is asked, “Why are you trying to speak to this boy?”

Vic falters for a moment, not knowing how to say *I love him and sometimes I hate him and I want to save him and he ruined my life and I’m never going to be whole without him and he needs me and I need him* in one sentence. Without breaking down into sobs.

“I- I know him,” is the easiest thing to say. “I used to, I mean,” that’s harder to say.

The lawyer *hmmms* in that a deep voice of his and says “What did you say your name was?”

“Vic Criss.”

There is a long pause on the other end of the phone, a rustling of papers can be heard through the receiver, and then the lawyer speaks again.

“Criss… Criss,” he mumbles like he’s trying to recall something. “Were you that one kid that Bower’s-”

“We just used to be friends,” Vic interrupts quickly, not wanting to wait for the lawyer to figure out who he is. “I just… want to make sure he’s doing okay.”

“Well then,” He responds after a moment. “I suppose I can look into the matter when I have time. My assistant will contact you with any further information-”

“I’ll call tomorrow,” Vic interrupts again.

“What?” The man seems almost taken back at Vic’s assertion.

“I just want to make sure you don’t forget,” Vic says, fingering the rim of his coffee cup when the staunch old man stutters at the accusation.

“This kind of thing doesn’t resolve itself quickly,” The man’s voice hardens a bit, but Vic won’t be dismissed so easily.

“I have time.”

*All the time in the world.*

“Well… technically he is an inmate of the state, and that takes precedence over being a patient in a private institution.” The lawyer starts droning in that disinterested tone Vic remembers, taking long pauses between statements. “So he is entitled to receive monitored visits, within state constraints and safety precautions,” And for the first time it sounds to Vic like it’s really going to happen.

He doesn’t know what this feeling in his stomach is, something between elation and dread.

“Are you eighteen?” he asks after a moment, the faint noise of him drumming his fingers across his desk.

“Yeah, almost nineteen.” Vic answers quickly, excitement burning in his throat.

“Do you have identification?”

“Yes,” He tries not to stutter, because of course his I.D. is fake.
There’s another rustling of papers as the man hums along to Vic’s answers, “The processing time can last up to six weeks.”

“O-okay,” Vic can feel his mood drop at the amount of time, but he tries not to be too disappointed. “I can wait,” he reminds himself.

“Then I suppose I can push through the paper work to Juniper Hill on Monday,” The lawyer says with some finality, but some edge to his voice tells Vic that this might get swept under the rug.

“How about tomorrow?” he refuses to be ignored, no matter who stands in the way.

There is a big huff of breath on the other end of the phone, “…You’re just going to keep calling, aren’t you?”

“Yes.”

All Vic has right now is a few dollars, a stolen car, and the last shred of hope he has to see Henry again.

“Kid, nothing good is going to come out of this,” the lawyer says in a warning and honest tone, like somehow he can see Vic’s hands shaking and eyes brimming with tears.

I know.

“… I just want to talk to him.”

He tries to hold in the oncoming panic attack, hanging up the phone with a terse “Goodbye” and escaping out of the diner. He’s so close to seeing Henry again that he’s suddenly afraid. Afraid to find out which Henry will be there waiting for him.

I have nothing else to live for.

“What are you doing up so early?” Daphne’s sleepy voice says through the phone, probably padding around her boyfriend’s apartment in her bare feet.

Vic isn’t up early, he just hasn’t slept all night. The last few hours he has spent in anxious anticipation, staring up at the clear night sky through his windshield and trying to calm his racing heart. So by the time the sun rose, he had drove over to the diner he’s become a regular at, calling up his sister because he needs a distraction.

“Just uh- going for a drive later,” He says, swirling the cold coffee in front of him. “How’re things going?”

Daphne gives this little nervous laugh at the question, a sound that betrays a bashful joy he’s so glad she’s found.

“Good… things are good,” she says, and Vic just has to wait in silence for a real answer. “I got’ta tell you something.”

Vic sits up a little more alert at that. His sister doesn’t sound upset or anything, but he knows how easy it is to pretend to be okay. And from what she’s said, her boyfriend seems like a good guy, but if he ever put a hand on her Vic would-

“I’m pregnant,” she blurts out.
“W-what?” Vic nearly chokes on his own breath.

“Yeah,” He can clearly see her in his mind, nodding her head eagerly, blonde curls bouncing, with a big smile on her face. “Just a couple weeks, I know I shouldn’t tell, but I went to the doctor and had a sonogram and I’m gon’na tell Jessie tonight.”

And she sounds so happy, so very very happy, that Vic can’t take it away from her.

“Wow… that’s amazing Daph,” his big sister’s going to be somebody’s mother. “Have you told mom yet?”

Daphne still lives in Derry, but after moving in with her boyfriend things have been difficult with her and their parents. Not to say Vic has called home in these last few years either.

“Not yet,” Daphne admits. “I’m gon’na try to go over to the house later this week. You know, when Dad’s not there.”

Vic responds with a quiet hum and traces the woodgrain of the counter top, trying not to think of the beautiful little baby his sister is going to have. Trying not to think of those strange dreams he has sometimes, where he and Henry were allowed to be together forever.

“You should call Mom,” Daphne reminds him, as she always does since he started contacting her again. “She’s worried about you.”

“Yeah, I should,” but he makes no promises.

“So, there’s another thing,” she says, and this time sounds much more serious than excited.

“What?”

“Me and Jess have been talkin’, and we need to get out’ta this town,” Daphne says.

“Pfft,” Vic rolls his eyes. “I could’ve told you that.”

Everybody needs out of that place.

“What I mean is,” she starts again. “When we find a place, you should come and stay for a while.”

With a long sigh Vic averts his eyes, even though his sister can’t even see him right now, and fights the urge to hide his face in his hands.

“Daph… you don’t need to take care of me,” he whines. “I’m doing fine-”

“No. You’re not fine,” She interrupts, being assertive enough that Vic can’t shrug her off this time. “I don’t want you to be alone.”

“It’s… not that easy Daphne.”

He’s been pulled apart too many times. Too many pieces missing. Always alone without Henry.

The siblings have a long stretch of silence between them, the echo of the phone ringing in their ears.

“I have to get going,” Vic says to break the quiet, palms sweating as his anxiety creeps back in. “I’ll, um- think about it.”

“Okay,” there is a calmness to her voice that reminds him of their mom. “Where’re you going
anyway?”

“Just… into the mountains, for the day.”

The gates of Juniper Hill loom over him in the early morning light, casting long shadows across the pavement.

Vic drove slowly up the narrow mountain roads that lead to the hospital, taking the sharp turns slowly and pulling over more than once to scream out his nerves into his hands. Half-way there he pulled a sharp U-turn and started speeding away, a persisting ache in his inner arm.

His skin is alive and crawling with cravings. Lately he’s been fighting off his addiction though long sleepless nights and painful shaking fits. All that’s kept him from relapsing is the thought that he could see Henry again, but he now can’t fight back the fear that’s trying to suffocate him. Vic wants to turn around, find the nearest needle, and shoot up a heavy dose of heroin to take it all away.

No.

He got clean for this. He can’t be fucked out of his mind when he sees Henry.

A Xanax would be nice though.

I can do this. I need to do this, He reminds himself.

Some people would call it closure, other might say he’s just ripping opening old wounds. Vic doesn’t really know what to think.

After just sitting in the car and staring at the entrance for an ungodly amount of time, he finally talks himself into going in. The building in a dark grey fortress with small windows and tightly sealed entrances, dashing any of Vic’s hopes that this would just be a normal hospital.

At the front gate is security officer who leads Vic in when he mumbles that he has an appointment. The hallways are shiny with white tile and florescent lights, and the further he walks in the more the walls seem to narrow and fade into a blur of beige.

At a large doorway he meets a lady that sounds suspiciously like the secretary he badgered for days at a time. She makes Vic sign a thick bundle of papers, which he has to skim over to keep up with her unforgiving pace, and he hands over his I.D. when she asks, silently relieved when she doesn’t realize it’s a fake.

Next he gets a very thorough pat down from the security officer, and thankfully he is wearing a thick sweatshirt that disguises the softness of his chest. But after getting clearance he is let in to the locked entrance, to another pathway of halls that lead to a small room with dim lighting.

A new security guard is standing by the door, unmoving except for the stern glare that follows Vic around the room. Across the room is another door, and between the two is a short wall topped with large plane of thick glass cutting the room in half. Each side is equally bare and claustrophobic, with a chair posed at the window that Vic is sat at with a heavy hand on his shoulder.

Briefly he worries that he’ll be restrained to the uncomfortable armrests, but after Vic sits the security guard backs off and stands beside the door again. Tentatively, Vic puts his hands on the narrow table top over his lap, trying to relax but it’s almost impossible to do so. There’s something about the ceiling being so low, and the lights being too dull, that makes Vic feel like he’s been swallowed by the massive building.
The door on the other side opens and Vic jumps, suddenly not ready, suddenly trapped, but there is a bit of relief when a tall, balding man comes into the room. He has a clipboard in his veiny hands and only looks up from it briefly to look Vic in the eye.

“How, I am Dr. Stephen Grey.”

With the thick glass between them, Vic can’t really shake his hand or anything, so he just gives an awkward half-wave. “Hi.”

Dr. Grey stands, unperturbed by Vic’s apprehensions nature, and proceeds on in a slow, unnerving tone.

“In a few minutes the patient will be escorted in,” Vic feels his stomach clench up in a vice. “If at any time he seems agitated, does not obey the orders, or poses a threat to himself or anyone else, this visitation will end immediately.” The doctor looks up again to level a cold look Vic, “and you will leave the premises. Immediately.” Only after Vic nods does the doctor continue. “It is in your best interest not to share any information with him that might anger or distress him.”

“Okay- is he, um-” Vic tries to speak, but is cut off by Dr. Grey.

“This meeting will be monitored by myself, and the necessary security personnel, and any observations will be used for research purposes. As the waver you signed stated.”

“Oh- okay.” Vic doesn’t really know what he signed in the first place, though he doesn’t really like the idea of being someone’s case study.

How he deluded himself into thinking he would be alone with Henry, even though the thought of it is both terrifying and wonderful, Vic doesn’t know. Of course he can’t just talk to Henry alone. Of course he can’t talk about certain things.

How much he misses Henry.

How much he loves Henry.

How could Henry do that to him?

“Barring that possibility, this visit will end in precisely one hour, and afterwards you will not be allowed any more contact with the patient without legal action.” Dr. Grey continues. “I don’t care if he doesn’t speak a word to you, after an hour this is over. Understand?”

“…Yeah,” Vic tries to bury the bitter disappointment away as be speaks. “Are you, like, Henry’s doctor or something?”

“I am the head psychiatric physician of this hospital.” He says briskly, clearly not appreciating being called a doctor or something.

“Is Henry… okay?” Vic presses a bit, seeing how much the man doesn’t like being questioned by a ragged teenager. But Vic just wants to prepare himself for what is to come, and he has this sinking feeling in his gut that he still won’t be ready.

“I am not at liberty to share the details of a patient’s mental health,” Dr. Grey responds quickly, but his tone echoes of absolutely not.

Then the man turns briskly and sits in a chair in the corner of the small room, getting more comfortable then Vic could ever hope to be, and looking ready to begin taking notes at any minute.
And no one, the security guard or the doctor, asks if Vic is ready, so he just has to sit there for a few tense moments, hands shaking slightly and staring at the door. The urge to turn and run is thrumming under his skin.

You can do this.

You need to get out of here.

You need to do this.

Oh God, get me out of here.

When the door opens, Vic tries very valiantly not to flinch. All is muscles cramp up, toes curling and nails digging into his palms, and briefly he shuts his eyes out of fear.

But the quick flash of white he sees is jarring enough to make Vic look again, and suddenly he is convinced that this person he’s looking at is definitely not Henry.

Led by an orderly, a young man is pulled into the room and posed at the seat across from Vic. All but shoved into the chair, he moves with the stiff, jarring movements of someone not in control of his own body. He has stark white hair, cut shorter than Henry would have ever wanted it, and Vic can just barely see the heavily dilated pupils of his cast down eyes. His limbs seem heavy and unattached, arms flopping down onto the table top and fingers twitching occasionally.

But there is something about that face. Vic can see it in the bridge of his nose and the few freckles persisting on his pale cheeks.

“…Henry?” he whispers slowly, repeating himself slightly louder when he gets no reaction.

Those empty eyes don’t move their gaze from that fixed point in space, but Vic can see the hint of cloudy blue iris lining them. Obviously Henry is heavily medicated, Vic can recognize that look from when he would take a handful of psychoactive pills to get high.

“Can…can he hear me?” Vic asks to the doctor, as still Henry doesn’t react to him.

“As far as we know,” The doctor responds, disinterest evident in his voice and not writing anything into his papers.

Clearly Henry not responding is normal, but Vic finds it more unnerving than his appearance.

There are bruises to, Vic notices them in his inner arms, along his jaw, one nasty purple one on the corner of his brow. Some are near healing, some obviously self-inflicted, but others seem more suspicious. Especially when Vic considers the rough way that orderly pushed Henry around.

That orderly is still there, near the far door with his meaty arms crossed over his chest, eyeing Vic in a way that makes him squirm in his seat.

“Please Henry,” Vic ducks down, trying to catch Henry’s gaze and putting the tips of his fingers against the glass.

And there’s the smallest bit of spark in Henry’s eyes as they travel up his hand, across his arm and to his face, and finally some semblance of recognition comes to him.

“Vic-?” He barely mumbles, voice unused for so long, as he reaches out to Vic’s open palm.

“Do not touch the glass,” Dr. Grey says sternly, and suddenly the orderly is by Henry’s side again,
forcing his hand down and flat on the table top.

Vic drops his hand immediately, sheepishly looking down and wishing he could touch Henry for real, “Sorry.”

Only when the oppressive presence of their overseers settles and the orderly steps away from Henry, do their eyes meet again.

“Henry, can you hear me?”

Blinking a dozen times, slow and confused like he’s in daze, Henry finally responds. “W-what? What’s going on?” All his words slur together, but underneath Vic can hear that familiar voice that drifts through his dreams.

“Are you okay?” And Henry is very clearly not okay, but underneath the drugs and bruises, there is something sinister hidden in him.

“Where…where am I?” He asks, like he’s just woken in a different place than he fell asleep. Squinting his eyes until the focus, Henry reaches out to the glass barrier again and smacks his hand against it, testing it like it isn’t really there. “What- Vic what’s this-?”

The orderly rushes forward in long, powerful strides, getting a tight grip on Henry’s wrist and shoulder and yanking him back. Henry, for all his dazed, slow movements, flinches violently at the contact. His shoulders lock up and teeth clench, eyes shut tight as he resists the hold forcing his hand down and beginning to hyperventilate.

“No, no please- Henry stop,” Vic says quickly, trying to calm Henry down quickly, especially when he sees the doctor in the corner move to stand.

The command is soft and pleading, but Henry still seems to hear it and slowly peaks his eyes open. His struggles die down and the orderly stops restraining him, but not without a painful squeeze on his shoulder that Vic notices.

“Henry just look at me,” He whispers, leaning in as close to the glass as he can get.

Henry’s head lolls forward, tired eyes landing on his, and a shudders out a breath of relief when he sees Vic again.

Dr. Grey slowly sits down again, giving Vic a skeptical look but not interrupting.

“You’re at a hospital.” Vic doesn’t think he is able to say asylum out loud.

Henry gets that little crease in his brow, one like when he’s confused or pouting, that Vic used to think was cute. Now it’s just kind of sad that Henry has no idea where he is or why he’s there.

“I hav- I hav’ta go back-” Henry’s words trail off and going quiet. And then suddenly his arms come up over his head protectively, forehead dropping to the tabletop with a hard thump. “Stop-stop-stop-” Henry talks to himself, scratching his nails across his scalp as a harsh shiver travels up his spine.

“Henry don’t-” Vic can see the remains of old injuries along his neck and skull, scabs and bruises that haven’t ever had the chance to heal.
“Make it stop—” Henry says abruptly, looking up at Vic with tears in his crazed eyes. “Please— please make it stop!” he shouts too loudly, making Vic jump back.

The man behind him goes to restrain him again, and Henry scrunches down as if he can escape the big hands coming for him.

“Stop-stop-stop- Help me! Somebody!” Henry keeps crying out, in some sort of pain from an unseen force. From something that’s inside his head.

“Don’t,” Dr. Grey finally speaks to the orderly, writing furiously in his notes. “This is the most we’ve gotten out of him in years.” And he gives Vic a look that tells him to continue.

“Henry, look at me,” Vic tries to pull Henry back, voice breaking and he feels a few cold tears slip down his cheeks. “C’mon please? Make what stop?”

Keeping his cheek on the cold tabletop, exhausted and panting out his stress, Henry’s eyes search across the glass like he’s chasing shadows.

“It’s coming for me. I- I can hear it. It’s coming back,” He goes to cover his ears, to hurt himself, again, and Vic just wants to touch his face, draw him in and kiss all those fears away. “Please don’t make me go back.”

“What’s coming?” Vic leans down to be on Henry’s level, so close that their noses might touch, if it weren’t for the thick plane of glass between. “Henry, what is it?”

For a little while Henry goes quiet. Vic wonders if this is what people meant by catatonic, because it’s as if he’s barely breathing, not moving more than absolutely necessary. The spell he’s under makes his eyes go empty again, and occasionally he’ll open his mouth to speak and no noise will come out.

Vic stays in place, fixated on Henry and making no effort to stop the faucet of tears rolling from his eyes. Of all his expectations, Henry being the way he used to be, Henry being angry and violent, Henry trying to hide all the hurt inside him, or even the Henry that held him down and forced him open, this person is somehow worse. This is Henry when his mind is absolutely broken, and Vic barely knows him anymore.

“. . .I saw Patrick,” Henry says abruptly, lifting his head and some kind of intent evident in his tone.


Briefly he looks up at the doctor, who is still recording their conversation in his notes, wondering if he knows who Patrick Hockstetter is. According to the trial, he’s was one of Henry’s victims in the disappearances, but his remains were never found. Vic knows that Henry absolutely was not around when Patrick went missing, (in all honesty, he and Henry probably went home and fucked if he remembers correctly) but no one ever listened to him about that.

“Down there. With it.” Henry answers with a far-off look in his eyes.

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“Down there. With it.” Henry answers with a far-off look in his eyes.

Vic sees him fading again in to quiet, thoughts drifting far away from the present moment, “Henry, Henry stay with me. Look at me.” With a sniffle, Vic finally wipes his eyes with his sleeves, finding his face much hotter and wetter than he expected. “Please, Henry.”

When Henry catches sight of the tears, sees the way Vic’s chest is jumping with the sobs he’s trying to hold back, something suddenly changes in his face. His pupils focus, tighten in a primal sign of panic and his skin prickles.
“Please, Henry stop!” Henry shouts, voice going breathy in a way that Vic recognizes, but not as Henry’s. “Stop! Stop!”

“What?—” Vic is propelled back in his memories, to the echo of his own voice calling out. Lying on the hard floor of Henry’s dark living room, strong hands holding him down mercilessly, screaming as his insides get ripped open.

“Henry- Henry don’t—” Henry’s voice is twisted in pain as he repeats back what Vic screamed up at him, near pitch perfect to Vic’s own memories of that day.

“Stop!” Vic yells at him, body convulsing like a thousand volts have shot through him. His chest constricts, lungs dragging every painful breath through his throat, skin crawling, vision tunneling into darkness, and mind ablaze with the need to escape. “Stop saying that!” He cries as Henry keeps screaming at him.

Get out – get out – get out-

In the very last instant, time seems to slow down between them. The orderly rushes forward, getting an arm hooked around Henry’s neck to yank him back and pull him from the room in a tight hold. Dr. Grey stands as well, ready to follow and already planning his book on the worst case of schizoaffective disorder he’s seen in his entire career.

But in one small second, Henry and Vic look at each other again. It’s not the same as it once was, both boys are irrefutably damaged by time, fighting the demons hiding in their own skin, and barely held together by old memories. Of when they had each other. When they had everything.

“I’m sorry,” Henry says, almost silently, but there’s that flicker in his eyes of sanity.

Vic hears it, can feel the absolute sincerity of it, but it doesn’t fix him like he thought it would. He thought, naively maybe, hopeful despite reality, that if he just saw Henry again then they could put all their shattered pieces back together. Instead, they just cut themselves on the shards.

“Henry,” He says one last time, a whispered shout into the abyss. A goodbye he’d never wanted to say.

“No! Don’t leave me here!” Henry shouts as he is drug away, fighting back with little strength but plenty of passion to escape the man holding him. “Vic help me! It’s coming- it’s coming!” He reaches out to the glass, hand grasping in the air and tears dripping down his clammy face, “Vic don’t leave me here.”

Vic just sits there, still and dumbstruck as the world collapses beneath him, watching Henry get pulled away forever.

The walls of the hospital twist and turn, but Vic hasn’t a thought to navigate them as the security guard at his back pushes him along. Nurses that pass look at him with confusion, the secretary who let him in gives a cold and seething glare.

The outside air is too cold for the season, too heavy for the mid-morning, or maybe Vic just isn’t breathing right.

The gate closes behind him with a clank, and Vic makes it all the way to his car before he breaks down. Hands shaking and keys jangling, he barely gets the door open, falls haphazardly into the seat, and drops his head to the steering wheel.

He doesn’t have the strength left to scream, so his mouth is just open in a silent cry as the tears fall
freely. His body is alive with need, the old puncture wounds on his inner arms begging to be
reopened and shot full of liquid pain relief. How much heroin would he have to take to forget that
dead, soulless look in Henry’s eyes?

*How much to forget everything forever?*

Vic starts the car.

*How much to end it all?*

Slowly he turns from the hospital, driving down the mountain roads.

*He doesn’t need to go that far.*

Right before the road curves into the steep ledges and turns, there is a gas station on the side of the
road. There is a beat-up payphone by the door. Vic stops for just a couple minutes.

Vic sways along with the curve of the road. The needle of the speedometer is climbing, arching up
towards the sky. No other cars are near.

He closes his eyes like he’s falling asleep, like all he wants is rest. Finger by finger, he pries his
hands off the wheel, letting them hover in the air, grasping for someone to hold on to. The road turns
one way, his tires turn the other.

The initial crash of the guard rail is just a hitch under his tires. And then his organs are rising up
inside him, weightless as he falls.

With his eyes closed, Vic feels like he’s floating.

Mrs. Criss finds a voice mail on the answering machine. Her son’s voice comes through choppy and
quiet, disengaged with his own words.

“Hey Mommy. I’m sorry I haven’t called you, or come home,” Vic says.

“And I—I’m sorry I’m not the person you wanted me to be,” the recording goes on.

“And I need you to tell Daphne tha-that I’m sorry I can’t come see her baby,” the tremble in his
voice cracks into a heartbroken sob.

“I just- I can’t do this anymore. I’m s-so sorry.”

There is a long pause.

“I love you.”

A day later she sees the news report on an accident north of Castle Rock. A car veered off the road
and tumbled down half a mile of mountain terrain, finally landing in a river bed.

The vehicle was completely totaled, but what remains of the license plate is found to be registered to
a car stolen many years ago. What makes the story news worthy is that, after hours of searching, still
no body has been found from the accident.

When her husband comes home to the quiet house and finds her frozen in front of the television, he
says. “What the hell are you crying about?”
But that river splits off into a thousand little streams and creeks across the state, until eventually that water runs into the streets of Derry and down into the sewer.

Chapter End Notes

I wrote most of this today the i key on my keyboard popped off and im so tired my eyes are gonna bleed.

The final chapter is coming sooner rather than later! I promise!

I promise to try and reply to comments this time, ive just been having a weird mental health kinda month ((how ironic))

love everyone that has stuck by me this long!<3 <3
XOXO
Epilogue: Henry

Chapter Summary

And Henry doesn’t know why, but when he thinks of an angel, he can only see a little blond boy that is good at keeping secrets.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Epilogue: Henry

May, 2016


But at night the darkness comes alive. Henry resists the urge to rest for as long as he can, sure that he will be swallowed whole by it again if he closes his eyes. The hours of the night pass so slowly, excruciatingly long and stressful as he fights the need for sleep. Days will pass and the numb and drowsy effect of his pills will mount, until he literally drops from exhaustion.

He wakes on the hard spring mattress of his room, and if he had any sense of time, Henry may wonder how long he’s been living in this room. No, not living, just existing.

His nightlight has burnt out again. The little glowing device has been his one comfort in the darkness, the soft light it casts on the grey wall is a beacon in his chaotic mind. The first time it went out, how many years ago?, Henry screamed for hours. At the time, the night staff let him left him alone to cry it out like a restless baby. The next time the light died, he beat his forehead against the door until a puddle of blood leaked underneath and spread into the hallway. Since then, the asylum staff has made sure to keep his nightlight working, for everyone’s sake.

Tonight he is plunged into the dark again, disoriented from an early nightmare that he can’t quite remember. The sight of pink flesh and fresh blood plays behind his eyelids. Memories and imagination are hard to separate. But strangely the panic isn’t setting in, and the voices in his mind are just a dull roar.

There’s a distinct pain in his neck, the back of his head, and his right shoulder from earlier today. He had gotten thrown to the ground, arm retched back and a big palm on the nape of his neck.

Whatever kind of kicking and screaming fit Henry had thrown, whether he was trying to hurt himself or someone else, was caused when Henry caught a glance of his reflection in the sheen of the tile floor. In that moment he was unable to recognize that person as himself, and instead he was so sure that he was looking into the eyes of his father. The rough treatment he got from the orderlies was the same as it’s always been.

Somehow the pain is distant from him. Fear has spared him tonight, stress and panic abated, and pain numbed. And he sits transfixed, hypnotized by the light of the full moon that is cast down from the
skylight.

The pure white moonlight draws him in, demands all the focus he can give, and the beams of light twist and change in front of his eyes.

*Henry…*

A voice calls to him, quiet and soft and not nearly as scary as he remembers it.

*Henry…*

The moonlight says, sounding familiar in a way that makes his heartbeat stutter in his chest.

He sees the twinkle of dark eyes, the glow of pale skin, and the subtle curves of a body he remembers. In the moonlight, an angel appears to him.

And Henry doesn’t know why, but when he thinks of an *angel*, he can only see a little blond boy that is good at keeping secrets.

“Henry,” It says to him, lips quirked up in a shy half-smile.

He falls to the floor, legs buzzing with numbness as he shuffles forward on his hands and knees, until he is right in front of the angel. His voice cracks in his throat, vocal cords frozen as his mouth hangs open in awe. Sweat pools in his open palms, feeling damp and clammy on his cold skin, so he wipes them on the scratchy hospital pants before he reaches out to touch the apparition.

The milky light bends and curves around his hand, letting his touch pass through it like air. But the angel laughs and leans closer, running it’s thin little fingers over Henry’s wrist and up his arm, setting his skin alight with shivers.

It’s not quite a touch Henry feels, more like an air of a feeling, washing him over with an eerie calmness. He is awake, but at rest. Afraid, but only of the unknown.

The angel leans in, draws its touch up to Henry’s cheeks and coaxes him closer.

“Henry.”

That voice makes a sob wrack his body.

“Vic?” Henry asks, the name heavy on his tongue.

“Come find me Henry…” it says, sliding into Henry’s arms like it’s meant to be there.

The being is cold and almost weightless on his lap, spreading chills up every inch of Henry’s skin. But still, Henry tries to hold the translucent angel closer, wants to see some warmth in those pale cheeks, wants to find some life in those familiar eyes.

“W-what?” he can’t really understand what’s going on. Why suddenly Vic can appear out of thin air and moonlight? What is it trying to tell him?

“They’re coming back…” It leans closer, words skimming across Henry skin in a way that feels like the devil whispering in his ear. “…You have to save me. You have to kill them.”

*Kill them all.*

“Wh- huh?” Where is he? What’s going on? How did Vic get here?
“Come back to me Henry,” It begs him, and all the Henry’s thoughts fade away.

Up so close, Henry can see into the deep wells of its pupils, where three flares of golden light shine back at him.

“Where?” Henry will follow it anywhere. *He will do anything to be with Vic again.*

“We all float down here,” it whispers.

The apparition begins to fade, slipping back into shapeless moonlight. Henry tries to hang on, cries for Vic to stay with a broken sob, but the light evades his fingers.

“You’ll float too.”

Chapter End Notes

O wow. it’s done.

I started this fic on October 1st (if I remember right) last year. I was really inspired by the works of Soul4Sale, especially their trans aus, and I tumblr messaged them asking if it would be okay if i wrote a trans Vic au (because i was insecure and didn't want to take their idea) and they are the nicest ever and said yes (definately everyone go read their stories). I had to wait like 17 days for my membership on ao3 to go through, so i wrote the first 4 chapters while i waited. I never thought I would finish this fic until people started commenting.

Literally the most rewarding part of this experience was getting feedback from everyone who commented.

You guys have driven me to do I've never been able to, write something big and finish it. I have seen my writing improve exponentially through this fic and thank you guys so much for the compliments and encouragement.

I remember, around chapter 10 or 11 (?) someone asked how many chapters this would be, and i siad something like 25 and that it would be done by december XDDD but I really never knew the story would grow like this.

This has always been the ending I’ve wanted to write. Even the rape, the death, and I wont spoil what happens to henry at the end of it, but its not a happy ending. And i hope you guys took this journey with me and even in the rough spots found something interesting or special or entertaining.

Unfortunately, i have no plans for a sequel for when IT 2 comes out. This is where WYSMN ends. I toy sometimes with the idea of a oneshot in the wysmn universe, but i don't think im gonna write it. these last months have kinda drained me on this story, im really relieved that i have finished it, and it feels finished to me.

So not to get too lovey dovey, but I am so happy to have you guys read my story and kinda sorta like it or passionately hate it at some points, or even cry ((but i really didnt mean to do that im sorry)). if you've never commented before and have the chance, I would love to hear from you. If youre a regular commenter i am so thankful to have you and want to know how you feel about the end.

Just as a comment prompt, tell me your favorite chapter and your least favorite (you wont offend me i dont like some of this fic) because I would love to know what people
liked best. And ask me any questions you guys want about this fic. :)))

Also, a shameless plug: I'm gonna try and start up an original work with similar themes to wysmn, something multi chapter that ill post on this account. So if youre interested stay tuned. And in the meantime, check out my original short stories ive already posted <3

As always, thankyou for reading
XOXOXO

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!