quarantined

by brightclam

Summary

Jason hadn't expected to be trapped in a warehouse with only Billy and Kim, two people from school he'd never talked to before, for company. But they can't hide from the zombies forever, and the world's only going to get weirder once they wander out of their safe house.

[A power rangers zombie apocalypse au that manages to be terribly sad without killing any characters (permanently) and vaguely follows the movie's plot]

Notes

this chapter is very full world building and also my musing on how mentally fucked up teenagers in a zombie apocalypse actually would be. Hopefully it's interesting nonetheless.

tw for this chapter: A panic attack. No violence, but lots of discussion of off screen deaths. Nothing is graphically described.

And just in case some jimberly shippers read this, Kimberly and Jason are forming a strong platonic friendship and you bet your ass Jason is gay for Billy
Jason paces around the dusty room, holding his bat as tightly as he can with his sweat slicked palms. The boards over the windows keep the warehouse in perpetual darkness, and the low visibility makes him tense. Having open windows would be unbearably dangerous, but that doesn’t make him any less nervous. He takes a couple swings to try and work off the nervous energy.

After all, Billy and Kim are depending on him. He turns to the sleeping pair, looking over their now familiar faces. He hadn’t known them before the end of the world, but a week spent trapped in a warehouse lets you get real friendly real quick. And with zombies ready to eat them alive a few feet away, Jason wasn’t picky about who he clung to as he cried. They’d all been a wreck the first few days, but what else do you do in the zombie apocalypse?

Logically, Jason knows the fact that they’re alive right now is a lucky fluke. If Mr. Johnson hadn’t taken on the zombie in the science lab, they wouldn’t have made it out the window, much less out of the school and into their current hideout.

Logically, Jason knows Mr. Johnson is dead.

Logically, Jason knows everyone in the school is dead.

Logically, Jason knows everyone in town is dead.

Jason tries not to think.

He doesn’t want to break down again, at least not until his watch his over. Then maybe he’ll let himself curl into Billy and sob until he’s out of tears.

Normally, Jason wouldn’t let himself cry, let alone sob. But the old rules don’t really apply anymore, and Kim says that if he doesn’t cry, he’ll repress himself into an even bigger breakdown. He can’t let that happen, just in case it happens in the middle of a fight. If he’s incapacitated, he’ll probably die. And then Kim and Billy will probably die, and he’s not going to let that happen.
He’s always been an okay leader, but the apocalypse has shown him how well that role really fits him. Being the leader is the only thing that’s holding him together right now. And he’s truly come to care for Billy and Kim, no matter how recently he met them.

Billy shifts and sighs, jolting Jason out of his thoughts violently enough to make him drop the bat. Even with the clang of the bat hitting the floor, Billy and Kim don’t wake. Exhaustion makes even the lightest of sleepers sleep deeply. Jason picks up the bat again, careful not to let the embedded nails scrape across the floor and make more noise. He scans the warehouse, checking that all of the boards are in place and that no light is being blocked.

Kim had poked holes in the boards before they put them up, small enough that zombies wouldn’t notice them, but still large enough to let the sunlight shine through. That way if a zombie passes in front of the window, the sudden absence of light will alert them to it’s presence. Jason feels his lips curl up as he thinks about Kim; she’s so smart and skilled. And to think he’d never have met her if this hadn’t happened.

Really, it could be a lot worse. At least he’s got people with him, people he can trust. And at least he knows his family is safe. Before his phone battery had died he’d called Dad. Jason had expected the worst, but turns out everyone was fine.

The outbreak had started by the school, in the center of town. It had spread slowly, slowly enough that people had noticed and the government had quarantined most of the area. All of their families lived in the suburbs, where the zombies hadn’t quite reached before the quarantine went up. Jason is so glad that the quarantine had worked, even if it had left them to die.

Even if they made it to the edge of town, which they can’t, they wouldn’t be allowed into the safe zone. They could carry the disease to the outside and infect everyone else. They could infect their families, or condemn them to a bloody death at the hands of the infected.

Jason is okay with it, really. He’s okay with being trapped here as long as no one else has to die. He doesn’t want his family to die. He doesn’t want his family to die. He doesn’t want…

He doesn’t want to die.

The ache in his chest explodes again, sending sharp pains down his sternum and across his ribs. He’s gasping for breath, but there doesn’t seem to enough air no matter how much he breathes in. He knows it’s a panic attack, he’s been having them the last couple days, but he still can’t calm down! He whines through the gasping, desperate for it to stop.
Billy and Kim jerk awake at the pained noise and are at his side a moment later. Kim runs a soothing hand over his back while Billy flutters next to them, wringing his hands. That just makes Jason feel worse; he’s supposed to be the strong one, they shouldn’t have to worry about him.

“Kim, why won’t it stop?”

“Jason, you have to calm down. I can’t fix it, you have to calm down on your own.”

Billy chimes in:

“Remember what we practiced? Breathing? In, out, In, out...”

The chant is slightly unsteady, but Jason latches onto it anyways. His brain is still running in panicked circles, but he focuses on Billy’s smooth voices and it all starts to fade away. Listening to Billy brings him back to the days when they were still getting to know each other, when they spent hours talking while they sorted their food supplies. He thinks of the first time Billy reached out to pat him on the shoulder, how much of a victory even that small touch was. He thinks of Kim’s steady presence on watch in the corner, sunlight falling in strips across her pink sweatshirt.

His body calms as his thoughts do, and his breathing evens out. His chest still aches from struggling to breathe, but that’s better than the panic attack. Kim’s hand settles on his left shoulder blade, a soothing warmth. Billy’s hand wringing lessens, and he flashes his signature bright smile at Jason. Jason does his best to smile back but he knows it’s a weak effort.

“I’m fine, guys. You can go back to sleep now. Sorry I woke you up.”

Kim gives him that stern look that comes out when he tries to act strong. They’ve been reworking how they say things, to try and have a more positive or truthful outlook on life. Funny that they’ve decided to do this lifestyle change in the middle of the apocalypse. He quickly thinks about what he just said and rephrases.

“Alright, I’m not fine. But I’m manageable for the moment. And you need to get your sleep, tomorrow’s the big day!”
Kim sighs and steps away from them, kicking at an empty can lying on the floor. It skitters until it hits the three full cans that make up the last of their supplies. They’ll eat that soup for breakfast and then there won’t be anything left. They’ll have the option to either starve to death in their safe house or find a way out. Billy had come up with the plan on Wednesday, and they’d been getting ready since then.

They’d had to creep out every night, when the zombies were slower and less dangerous. Jason would bury the explosives while Billy wired them up and Kim would make sure they weren’t drawing unwanted attention. It’d been incredibly stressful, but finally they’d surrounded the warehouse in bombs. Now all they have to put the plan into action and hope they survive.

Kim reaches the wall and collapses against it, letting herself relax. Billy grins at Jason again, patting his arm half in comfort and half as a goodbye before he joins her. They lean into each other and close their eyes, sleep quickly retaking them. Jason smiles down on them and pulls their one ratty blanket up over them. He settles back into his watch, keeping his fear at bay by filling his mind with memories of his friends.

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action

Chapter Notes

There been such a great response to this I'm so glad y'all like it!

tw: there's some more action this chapter, so some zombies get killed. There's some blood and description of wounds but nothing too bad.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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Jason shakes Kim awake, handing off the bat and the watch. It’s their only real weapon; Kim and Billy are armed with pieces of pipe they’d managed to tear out of a rusty fence. Kim frowns at him and wrinkles her nose, trying to rub the sleep out of her eyes. She yawns as she stands, using him to leverage herself up. Before she saunters over to the guard post she gives him a friendly shove, clearly indicating that he should get some sleep.

Jason complies, curling as close to Billy as he can without touching him. Billy is only okay with touching sometimes, and they’ve agreed no contact without permission. Jason isn’t cruel enough to wake him up to ask, no matter how much he craves the comfort. He falls asleep slowly, watching Kimberly pace and wave the bat in careful, controlled circles.

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When he wakes, the warehouse is as bright as it ever gets. The grinding of a can opener, the noise that must have woken him, continues as Billy pries open the third can of soup. Jason is about to rise when he realizes there’s a weight on his chest. Kim is still snoring, head comfortable pillowed between his pecs. He settles back down so he doesn’t wake her and lazily watches Billy get breakfast ready.

It’s peaceful and content and he wants to treasure it for as long as possible. This might be their last morning alive. So he pets Kim’s hair lightly and smiles at Billy as he signs to himself.

Billy is full of useful knowledge, and ASL is one of them. He’d originally learned it so that he could communicate when he went nonverbal, but it’s equally useful when you have communicate silently while hiding from zombies. Billy had patiently taught them the alphabet and some basic signs. He has a habit of signing to himself when he’s focusing, and Jason finds it adorable. And enviable; Jason wishes he could sign that quickly.
When Billy has arranged the cans to his liking, he looks up to Jason and asks:

“Breakfast time?”

Jason sighs and pouts, looking down at Kimberly’s peaceful face.

“Do I have to wake her?”

Billy looks down and notices her, his smile matching Jason’s. But he quickly sober and replies:

“I don’t want to, but we have to stay on time.”

Jason nods and gently cradles Kim’s head before shaking her shoulder. Her eyes snap open and for a moment they’re filled with fear. Jason makes a gentle shushing noise and Billy calls over:

“It’s just us!”

At the sound of their voices she relaxes, the adrenaline fueled energy draining from her. She laughs breathlessly, trying to hide how afraid she was but not quite managing it. Jason has woken up from enough nightmares recently to know how afraid she’s feeling right now. He grips her shoulder tighter, hoping the pressure will help ground her. She sighs and slumps into him, taking in the breakfast Billy has set out.

“Cold Minestrone. My favorite.”

Jason snorts; she’s apparently regained her sarcasm. He eases himself into a sitting position and she doesn’t resist the move. Once they’re in reach of the cans he grabs one, quipping:

“If the soup isn’t to your liking, my lady, I can have the chefs bring out the other four courses.”

She groans and whacks him, almost making him spill the soup.
“Don’t get my hopes up.”

Billy takes his can and settles back his haunches, watching them tease each other with a smile on his face. He doesn’t understand most of their jokes, but he likes watching their expressions. Seeing happiness is so rare nowadays.

They choke down the slimy soup, carefully scooping out the last drops with their fingers to avoid wasting any. A couple days with only one meal and they’d learned to appreciate what they have, even if it is terrible canned food. Once the cans are empty, they look at each other with dread. Jason tilts his head back and pretends to be drinking the broth even though there’s none left. He doesn’t want to think about what’s coming next.

Eventually, the cans can’t distract them anymore and they have to get up. They don’t meet each others eyes as they gather what they need and pile what they don’t in the trash corner. Kim takes halting steps over to the bat and runs her fingers over the protruding nails, looking down at it with apprehension. Smears of old blood stain the wood and she’s careful get any on herself; they still don’t know what spreads the disease.

Finally, she picks it up and slings it over her shoulders. She holds it with confidence, but bearing its weight makes her look like she’s carrying the world on her shoulders instead. She leans down, checking that her shoelaces are tied as tightly as possible. When she looks up she meets their eyes, inescapably intense.

“So, I’m the bait.”

Jason and Billy look at her with sad eyes, worried that she might have just read her own death sentence, but quickly get to work. Billy checks all the connections on his detonators while Jason packs their few supplies into a bag and grabs the makeshift pipe weapons. Billy stops clicking around on the detonators and silence fills the warehouse, letting them know it’s time to go.

Kim squares her shoulders and stretches out her legs one more time. Jason practices gripping the pipe, which is a very different weapon than the bat he usually uses. With those last preparations they turn to Billy and nod their readiness. Billy nods back but begins to nervously blabber:

“We all know what we’re doing right?”
“Yes, Billy. Let’s just get it over with.”

He blows a breath out, puffing up his cheeks. Then he clicks the first detonator.

They flinch when the explosives go off, louder than they expected, and so strong it shakes the warehouse. Kim runs for the door, which they’d unblocked moments before, and kicks it open. The full sunlight is blinding, making Billy and Jason cover their eyes, but she doesn’t stop. She tears out into the open and takes a quick look around.

The ground encircling the warehouse is covered in blood and chunks of flesh from unfortunate zombies in range of the first wave of bombs. She doesn’t bother with the remains, instead focusing on the active zombies shambling towards her. She gulps, fear coming back full force, but doesn’t hesitate. She slams the bat into the door she’d opened, the nails screeching across the metal in a purposely loud noise.

“Come and get me, you nasty fuckers!”

Billy and Jason crouch in the shelter of the warehouse, watching her with apprehension. Billy’s finger hovers over the second detonator.

The zombies are very aware of Kim now, and she keeps making the racket as she begins to back away from them. Once she’s gathered a large crowd, she starts running away from them, still hollering her head off. She’s quickly approaching the pile of boxes where the second bomb is hidden.

She clambers up the pile, which they had painstakingly constructed to be able to hold her weight. The zombies stumble into the boxes and mill around the base of the pile. Given enough time they would figure out how to climb up, but Kim won’t be there that long. She’s already reached the top and is grabbing hold of the rope.

She turns to them and yells, prompting more hungry groans from the zombies.

“Jason!”

Jason braces himself; if this goes wrong, it could ruin everything and get him killed. But he takes the steps out of the warehouse anyways, trusting that Kim can pull it off. The bat is their best weapon
and they can’t afford to lose it. Kim winds back and sends it tumbling towards him. For a moment he
thinks he’s going to get the nail side and rip his hands to shreds, but fortunately it loops around again
and he can grab the smooth handle instead.

He catches it without making enough noise to draw the zombies away from the trap and retreats back
into the warehouse. Now that the bat is safe, Kim begins climbing up the rope to safety. Billy and
Jason watch with bated breath; the plan is working so far, but that’s no guarantee. The zombies begin
to clamber up the boxes, shaking the pile, but Kim has already reached the top of the building and is
pulling herself up to safety.

Once her feet are on solid ground she cuts off the rope, just in case, and gives Billy the signal. Billy
presses the second detonator and cheers as the pile explodes, taking all the zombies they’ve collected
with it. Jason cheers along with Billy and goes in for a high five, dropping the bat. Billy pulls him in
for a hug and Jason accepts it gratefully.

“I can’t believe that worked!”

Billy laughs and buries his face in Jason’s shoulder, joy and relief mingling and turning into
euphoria. But their celebration is suddenly cut off suddenly when someone shouts:

“Hey!”

They whip around to see a person running towards them. Jason picks up the bat and pushes Billy
behind him, ready to fight, even if they don’t seem to be a zombie. They’re so busy with the
newcomer that they don’t notice the zombie coming around the corner behind them, blunt fingers
reaching for Billy.

The person charges towards them and Jason tenses, but only gets a flash of fabric before the person
passes them by. They turn, watching in horror as the stranger charges the zombie behind them.

The stranger darts in close, too close, close enough to get bitten, and lashes out with what appears to
be a length of chain. It knocks the zombie back but the stranger doesn’t seem to have another
weapon and they can’t kill it with just that—

The stranger whips a knife out and lunges, jabbing it into the zombie’s eye socket as hard as
possible. Blood spatters all over the stranger and Jason winces. But the zombie collapses to the
ground, deader than it already was. The stranger turns back to them, chain jangling in their hand and
a cocky smile on their blood spattered face.

Jason steps forwards, almost tempted to shove them but restraining himself.

“Are you crazy?!?”

The stranger laughs, bugs their eyes out.

“Yeah, I am!”

Jason grits his teeth, infuriated by the carefree attitude.

“You’re covered in blood, what if you get infected?”

The stranger huffs and struts past them.

“Well, my crazy ass just saved your uptight one, so how about you chill out?”

Jason can admit that the stranger saved them, but he’s not going to back off. He knows how dangerous this situation is. He’s seen enough zombie movies to recognize the pattern: someone gets infected, hides it from the group, and then transforms into a zombie and eats everyone. Jason strides towards the stranger, who’s wiping his knife on the grass, ready to fight.

Billy catches up and pushes in front of him, efficiently stopping his march.

“Come on, Jason! They’re a human! Maybe the last one we’ll find. We thought we were alone and you want to chase them off?”

Jason sighs. He can’t stop himself from thinking all the ways this could go wrong, and it’s smothering any excitement he might have had. But when he looks at the cautious hope on Billy’s face, he remembers how achingly lonely they all are. He can’t let his paranoia get in the way of something might be one of the best things that’s ever happened to them. Time to be a little less the leader and a little more Jason.
“Okay, Billy.”

Billy grins and spins around, clapping excitedly as he runs over to join the stranger. Jason tries to push down the feelings of foreboding as he listens to their conversation.

Billy puts out a hand to shake, reconsidering when he sees the blood on the stranger’s hands. He recovers quickly and chirps:

“I’m Billy, he-him, what’s your name?”

The stranger startles, looks up at Billy with a scared, surprised look completely at odd with his fearless rush into to battle.

“He-him?”

Billy’s face falls and he begins to wring his hands nervously. Jason tenses, ready to jump in if the situation turns bad. Figures one of the only people left alive would be transphobic. Billy begins to explain:

“He-him as in my pronouns, the ones I use, I’ve been told it’s polite to say those when you meet someone so you don’t misgender anyone, I don’t want to accidentally do that. But I’m not really good at reading social situations so maybe I shouldn’t have said that?”

The stranger relaxes slightly, giving Billy a wobbly smile, but his eyes still dart around as if he feels trapped.

“I know why you say pronouns, I just wasn’t sure if...”

He trails off, head falling for a moment before he rises, a smile that isn’t quite real plastered on his face.

“I use he-him too, and my name is Zack. Nice to meet you, Billy.”
Kim reappears in the alley next to them, having made her way down the fire escape to ground level. She shouts a hello, drawing Zack’s attention. He bounds over to introduce himself to her, leaving Billy alone. Jason rejoins him, and they watch Zack’s bombastic movements together.

Billy smiles and looks to Jason, speaking in a tone tinged with awe:

“Zack is really cool, isn’t he?”

It feels like ice water thrown over his head, and he fights down the competing jealousy and fear. Zack is still a loose cannon, who may just happen to turn into a zombie as well. Billy getting too attached is only going to end badly. But reminding him that Zack is dangerous will only turn Billy against him. So Jason resolves himself to just keeping a close eye on Zack.

Billy must have noticed his hesitance, because he reaches out and clasps their hands together. Jason feels a bit of tension melt away at the soft touch, and he takes a closer look at Zack. With a little focus he can push down the fear and see Zack for what he is: a reckless, but still frightened, teenager just like them.

“Yeah, he’s pretty cool.”

Billy bounces, standing on tiptoe and then falling back to flatfoot in a quietly excited dance.

“I hope he’ll stay with us!”

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Chapter End Notes

I'm trying to write Billy's autism properly using a mixture of the traits the movie gives him and some ones I've added. But if there's any problems or anyone has suggestions on how to do better, let me know!
what I have written out so far is pretty long and I'm only halfway through the plot, so buckle up, this might get lengthy.

tw for this chapter: some more violence and blood, nothing gory.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

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Kim and Zack rejoin them, cheerfully chatting. It’s bizarrely normal despite the blood and dirt covering the pair. They almost look like they could be strolling down the hallways of school, heading to another boring class. Jason pushes down the thoughts of their past lives, knowing they’ll never be so carefree and safe again.

Kim smiles at him and shouts:

“The plan worked!”

Billy cheers along with her. Zack and Jason remain quiet, but watch them celebrate happily.

A strange voice cuts through the familiar ones like a knife and they all snap to attention.

“What the hell are you doing, making so much noise? Do you want to offer yourself to the zombies on a platter?”

After a moment of frantic searching, they find the source of the voice. A person stands on a roof across for them, yellow jacket bright against the blue sky. Zack, seemingly unfazed by the arrival of yet another human, fires back:

“Don’t lecture us about safety, crazy girl! I’ve seen you out and about before. You think your parkour’s gonna save you?”
Jason doesn’t hear the stranger’s reply because Billy is tugging on his jacket, trying to get his attention. Billy’s voice wavers as he gasps out:

“Guys?”

Jason follows Billy’s pointing finger to the slowly growing crack in the building, spreading underneath the stranger’s feet. Jason feels a surge of panic and he screams in chorus with Billy:

“Guys!”

The top of the building crumbles and shriek pierces the air, sending them all running towards the collapsing debris. As the dust settles, a flash of yellow peeks out and Jason can breathe again. They gather around the groaning person, not quite touching but still there to help if needed. The stranger rubs at her face and asks:

“What the fuck happened?”

Billy looks up the gap in the building, studying the cracks that branch out across the concrete surface.

“Our explosives must have compromised the structural integrity, making that part of the building unstable. Your weight was enough to destabilize it, so you fell.”

The stranger accepts that, shaking debris out of her hair and starting to lever herself up. Zack looks concerned and offers a hand up, which the stranger doesn’t take.

“You sure you’re not hurt, crazy girl?”

That’s met with a glare and a snarl.

“I’m okay--”

She cuts off with a squeal as she makes it to her feet and her ankle promptly collapses. Kim manages to catch her before she hits the ground, but her face is still twisted with pain. Billy hovers, eyeing the
offending ankle, which looks swollen.

“That doesn’t look okay.”

Jason frowns, cursing their bad luck. He doesn’t intend to leave an uninfected person behind, especially if she can’t defend herself. But they only know basic first aid, and that isn’t going to be enough.

Zack claps his hands and cuts in:

“Why don't we take crazy girl--”

“Trini!”

“Why don’t we take Trini to the hospital?”

Kim let Trini lean on her and glares, unamused by Zack’s joke.

“No, really! It’s right over there.”

He gestures a few buildings over and, lo and behold, there’s a white building peeking out from between two office buildings. Jason stares at it in confusion; he doesn’t remember being this far south. Then again, their frantic rush to the warehouse hadn’t left time to get their bearings.

“Do you think we can make it?”

Billy cranes his neck, measuring the distance as best he can with the naked eye. He focuses for a moment, doing quick calculations in his head. When he comes up with an answer he looks at Jason and shrugs.

“Probably? It’s not that far, but I don’t know the terrain. It could be crawling with zombies for all I know.”
Zack once again interrupts:

“I do! I’ve been planning how to get over there.”

Jason is glad someone knows what they’re doing, but he doesn’t trust the fountain of information Zack has suddenly become.

“Why do you need to get to the hospital?”

Before Zack can reply, Trini screams:

“That doesn’t matter, we need to go!”

Before they can react, she’s whipping a small, scythe shaped blade out of her backpack and sending it whizzing across the street. It buries itself in the skull of a zombie, bringing it down, but more are right behind it. They pour out of the alleyway, dead eyes staring and bloody hands reaching for their prey.

Kim yelps, alarmed by the scythe blade flying past so close to her, but quickly collects herself. She pushes Trini towards Jason and runs for the bat, lying abandoned in the dust.

“Jason, take her!”

Jason feels naked without a weapon but he also has the most arm strength of the group and someone has to carry Trini. Trini doesn’t complain as he lifts her up bridal style and gets ready to run. Billy has pulled out his piece of pipe and is arming Zack with the extra piece. Trini has retrieved the bat and is running back to the safety of the group, the zombies close behind.

Once he’s taken in the situation, Jason takes off running. He’s going to be the slowest with Trini’s extra weight so he needs the head start, even if it hurts to leave his friends behind. Zack yells after him:
“Turn right at the next street!”

Jason stumbles at the turn, Trini’s extra weight throwing him off balance, but makes it. This is a small side street, funneling down even smaller as it continues on. It looks like a good place to get trapped, but it’s relatively zombie free, which makes it safer than the way they came. Behind them, Jason can hear the lively, staccato footsteps that denote a living person. Their friends must be catching up to them.

A little quieter, Jason can hear the shuffling and groaning of zombies. Terror blazes through him, making his eyes tear up and his body shake. He hasn’t actually been near the zombies since they found the warehouse, and he’d somehow forgotten how truly terrifying they are. At least he’s not the only scared one; he can see Trini gasping for breath in his arms.

Soon enough, Billy is running at their side, long legs letting him catch up faster. Kim joins them, her track team practice giving her extra stamina, and Zack brings up the rear, cursing. They’ve reached a cross street and he yells:

“Left! Go left!”

They obey, turning the corner before coming to a sudden stop. The zombies in front of them perk up at the sound of new arrivals and began to shamble towards them. Jason’s throat closes up and he struggles to swallow, terror massing darker and darker in his head. His hands instinctively clench, searching for a weapon, making Trini squawk as his fingers dig into her.

Zack pushes his way through their frozen forms and charges the first zombie with a whoop. He swings the pipe with so much force Jason thinks he must have been wanting to do that for a while. The first zombie’s head caves in and that breaks the spell. Kim and Billy rush forwards too, yelling in unison. Jason takes a step back to avoid being splattered with blood while they take out the remaining two zombies. Trini sticks out her tongue and wrinkles her nose, a strangely childish motion on her serious face.

“Ew.”

Zack, Billy and Kim are very still, looking down at the bodies. They’ve never had time to see the damage they’ve done before. Their victims may be zombies but when they’re lying limp and bleeding on the asphalt, they look just like people. Zack is the first to move, stepping back and looking up to the sky. A smile grows on his face and he erupts into slightly hysterical laughter. One by one they all join him, until their howling echoes around the empty street.
Zack recovers first, wiping tears away from his eyes and pointing his bloody pipe at an alleyway a few blocks down.

“We have to make it to that alleyway and climb the fire escape to the roof. The zombies get thicker from here on out, we won't be able to make it through on the ground.”

Jason groans, grateful for a clear plan of action, but not looking forward to climbing stairs while carrying Trini. He heads down the street anyways, knocking shoulders with Trini and Billy to encourage them to follow. They shake themselves out of their dazes, Kim throwing one last look over her shoulder at the bodies they’re leaving behind.

Zack seems unaffected; he whistles cheerfully and spins his pipe around, leading them up the fire escape. Jason struggles up the steps, apologizing to Trini when he jolts her. When he reaches the top he’s gasping for breath and has to set her down for a moment. He may be strong, but he definitely hasn’t been eating enough to expend this much energy. His body is running on empty by now, but he has no idea when they’ll be able to find more food.

He finally looks out over the dead city, taking in the empty streets and flickering lights. It takes his breath away, seeing the town he grew up in so deserted. He looks over at Billy and Kim, judging their reactions. Billy’s eyes are darting across the length of the entire town, mapping out routes Jason wouldn’t be able to remember. Kim is staring out at the fenceline that marks the edge of the quarantine zone. They can just barely see it from here. The bitter hatred in her face chills his blood and he looks away, thinking about their next move.

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Chapter End Notes

sorry that this cuts off kinda weird, I don't like posting giant chunks at once.
gay panic

Chapter Notes

there's a little bit of a time jump at the start of this chapter, I didn't feel like writing the rest of their journey to the hospital. hopefully it's not to confusing.

tw for this chapter: nothing really, the slightest bit of internalized homophobia I guess?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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Kim climbs the stairs, extra gauze and a pair of small scissors in her hands. The boys are downstairs, scoping out the bottom floor. The building is well boarded up; the hospital staff must have tried to defend the building before they were overrun. They’ve put Trini on the second floor, just in case the zombies do get in, but the building feels safe enough.

She pushes the door open with her foot and enters, setting her stuff down on a small table near the doorway. Trini pushes herself up to a sitting position and gives her a half smile. Kim wasn’t expecting that, given how stoic Trini has been since they arrive. It makes her trip over her words and all she manages is a quiet “Hey.”

Trini smirks, tilts her head like an inquisitive bird as she looks Kim over.

“Hey.”

Kim grabs the tray of gauze in order to give herself time to figure out what she’s going to say.

“I brought some gauze to wrap your ankle. It’ll take a while to heal even if we manage to keep it still, but at least it isn’t broken.”

Trini huffs out a bitter laugh, sprawling out on the floor to give Kim access to her ankle.

“I guess.”
Kim focuses on cutting the gauze into strips and carefully wrapping the ankle. She’d had a lot of practice wrapping injuries when she ran track, but she still wants to make sure she gets it done right. This ankle healing is essential to Trini’s survival. They fall into a peaceful silence as she works.

She’s almost done when Trini breaks the silence, making her jump.

“Thanks for this.”

Kimberly sets the scissors down and looks up at her, confused by the importance Trini places in that sentence.

“For wrapping your ankle? You’re welcome.”

Trini smiles wider.

“For that, and for everything else. For helping get me here, and for letting me stay. I know your Jason’s a little overprotective.”

Kimberly laughs, rushing to correct her.

“He’s not my Jason. And he means well.”

Trini hums, watching Kim closely as she tapes down the last piece of gauze. Her task finished, she gathers her things and stands. But she doesn’t leave; she wants to learn more about this strange, magnetic girl.

“Do you mind if I hang out here for a while? Jason can get a little exhausting to be around.”

Trini smiles, pats the ground next to herself.

“I don’t mind. Stay as long as you want.”
Kim eyes the comfortable looking spot. Billy and Zack had done a good job collecting enough fabric to pad the hard floor. But she doesn't feel like it's a good idea being that close to Trini so soon. Kim is past ignoring her attraction to girls, but that doesn't mean she’s comfortable with it yet. Instead she takes a seat a few feet away and pulls out her comb, trying to brush out the tangles in her long, unwashed hair.

She hasn’t really had time to worry about her hair, so she’s just been shoving it into a ponytail and ignoring it. Which wasn’t really a good idea; she’s not sure she’s going to be able to get the tangles out. She continues to try long past when she could have given up, just so she can watch Trini laze around. She can feel Trini’s eyes on her and knows she’s watching her back. Beyond the undercurrent of attraction between them, Trini is also one of the most calming people to be around that Kim’s ever met, and they’ve only known each other for a few hours.

Either Trini is something special, or the apocalypse is making Kim desperate. She hopes it’s the former and not the latter. But either way she looks forwards to seeing what their relationship becomes.

She’s started ripping out the worst tangles, too frustrated to actually focus on brushing them out anymore. Trini throws off her makeshift blanket and wanders over to Kim, picking up the scissors on her way over.

“Those aren’t coming out, you know. I can cut them out, if you want? You might even want to go for short hair, it’s easier to take care of. Especially now that we don’t have luxurys like conditioner.”

Kim feels a bit of fear when she looks at the scissors gleaming in Trini’s hands---she’s had long hair for as long as she can remember---but mostly she feels excited.

“Go ahead, cut it off.”

Trini smiles and steers Kim into a better haircutting position with hands on her shoulders. Kim leans into the touch, a wave of loneliness hitting her. She’s in constant contact with Jason and Billy so she’s not quite touch starved, but this feels different. She pushes down the little voice in her head that tells her maybe that’s because Trini is a girl and just relaxes.

Trini lets go of her shoulders and begins carefully snipping away her hair, the soft noises of the scissors cutting through her hair comforting. Kim lets her eyes fall shut as the hair falls down around her, and feels like some of the weight on her shoulders is falling away as well.
The sound of cutting stops and Kim opens her eyes to find Trini crouched in front of her, forehead creased with concentration. Trini sets the scissors down and begins running her fingers through the now short hair, parting it to the side and checking it’s all the same length. But she’s wonderfully gentle too, and obviously just enjoying petting Kim’s hair. Kim studies the pink curve of her smiling lips and lets herself enjoy the hands on her scalp.

Trini smiles down at her and it’s a real, toothy smile. Then she steps back, taking one last look at the result, and hums:

“Ta-da!”

Kim jumps to her feet and rushes to the nearest reflective surface, a dirty metal table, to look at herself. Her hair is about shoulder length now, and it curls slightly. It frames her face much better and looking at herself, Kim feels like something has clicked into place. She turns to look at Trini, who’s waiting expectantly, and whispers:

“It looks so good...thank you so much.”

Trini smiles, running a hand through her own wild mane of hair.

“All right."

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Jason stalks through the empty waiting rooms, watching Zack. He’s whistling cheerfully and poking at a pile of smashed office chairs. Jason watches him walk past the windows, white pillars of light flooding over him, and knows something isn’t right. He’s too nonchalant, too happy about them making it to the hospital. Jason wants to know why.

Billy is a comforting presence at Jason’s side, pipe slung over his shoulder. Jason makes a decision and turns to him, whispering:

“Billy, I’m going to talk to Zack. I’m not going to start a fight, alright.”
Billy looks concerned, but gives him the go ahead. Jason steps away from him and walks towards Zack. He has to consciously watch the way he walks; he’d instinctively fallen into the intimidating swagger he’d used at football games. He reminds himself that Zack isn’t enemy and this isn’t a fight. But it’s hard to believe when so much at stake, especially when the entire world seems to have devolved into nothing but one long battle.

Zack hears him coming and turns to meet him, giving him a half smile. Jason squares his shoulders and pulls himself up straight, noting that he’s a little bit taller than the other man. Zack’s smile changes into a nervous smirk, but he doesn’t back away. He looks Jason in the eyes and waits for him to speak.

“Zack, I know you’re hiding something.”

There’s a tiny flash of fear in Zack’s face before he turns away.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

Zack kicks a chair, filling the room with painfully loud echoes as it screeches across the tiling. Jason doesn’t let it faze him; he knows a distraction when he sees one.

“You knew how to get here. You knew every street name, every place where the zombies would be waiting. You must have planned this out. But why? Why did you want to get to the hospital so badly?”

Jason can see him getting tenser and tenser, as if Jason is backing him into a corner. Jason doesn’t like putting him on the defensive, doesn’t want him to be afraid of them, but they need to know what he’s hiding. But even when Zack is afraid he doesn’t lose his caustic bravado. He throws his arms out and snaps:

“I couldn’t just be a good samaritan helping Trini get the care she needs?”

Jason sighs, closing his eyes and trying not to snap back. Arguing with Zack feels like quicksand: as soon as you think you’re getting close to the truth you get sucked back into his distractions again. But Jason feels like Zack is a good person, somewhere underneath the outward layers of sarcasm and misdirection. When Jason opens his eyes and speaks again it’s with an aching truthfulness he hopes Zack might open up to.
“Zack, don’t lie to us. I’m so glad you found us and I want you to stay, but if you’re a danger to the group we won’t hesitate to leave you behind.”

That stops Zack in his tracks. Always full of energy, he suddenly goes perfectly still. He looks at Jason and Jason knows his words finally hit. Zack finally knows how serious he is being, and it terrifies him. Jason hates seeing how lost and afraid he looks, and when he remembers that Zack had spent most of the apocalypse alone he feels even worse. He can’t imagine how horrible it would be to face the zombies alone.

Zack stutters, his voice suddenly weak and childlike. The sound of it makes Jason’s stomach twist and he wishes he could solve this just by killing zombies, rather than by tearing Zack apart. Out of the corner of his eye Jason can see Billy wringing his hands and knows he must be even more deeply affected by Zack’s pain.

“Leave me behind? Fine. I can survive on my own.”

It isn’t convincing at all, and apparently he doesn’t even believe himself, as his eyes are wet. Jason’s heart drops and he’s terrified that Zack is going to try it, is going to be too stubborn and leave them for the empty, zombie filled streets. It terrifies him, thinking of Zack dying alone and afraid, just because he wouldn’t talk to them. It takes his breath away and he can’t force any more words out.

Fortunately, Billy steps forwards and speaks, voice shaking slightly.

“Zack, we don’t want you to leave. Please, just tell us the truth.”

Zack looks at Billy and the mask finally falls, all his vulnerability and fear shining through. Tears begin to drip down his cheeks and he lets out a tiny, rasping sob.

“It’s my mom. She’s sick.”

All of Jason’s suspicion falls away and he feels like he’s been punched in the stomach. His mind spins with terrible possibilities of what could have happened to Zack’s mom. He takes a step closer to Zack, watching him rub at his face with his sleeve, and asks as gently as he can:

“Zack, she wasn’t in this hospital, was she?”
When they’d arrived, they’d checked the entire building. There isn’t anyone left alive.

Zack hiccups as he gasps for air, but manages to answer:

“No.”

Jason feels himself relax and sees the same relief he’s feeling plastered across Billy’s face. They share a look and head towards Zack together, trying to figure out how to comfort him. Jason tentatively offers a hand and Zack takes it, clinging to him as if he’s the only sturdy thing in the world. Billy takes his other hand and together they close in around him, sandwiching him in a protective shell of bodies. Zack leans into him and keeps talking through his sobs:

“She’s not even in the quarantine zone. But we live far out by the mine, and I’m the only person she has. I take care of her. With me trapped in here, no one knows she’s there or that she needs help. I know her meds are going to run out soon.”

Jason wilts under the helplessness in his tone, his fear for his own family growing and mingling with Zack’s fear. He can see Billy has that look in his eyes that means he’s thinking about his own mom.

“Isn’t there anything we can do to help?”

Zack sniffs, gives them a weak smile.

“That’s why I had to get here. All the phone lines are dead, but the hospital has a radio that they use to communicate with their choppers. It should have enough range that it can reach someone outside the zone.”

Jason laughs disbelievingly.

“That was all you were hiding, Zack? You could have told us, of course we’d help you get to it. You had me thinking you were an evil mastermind or something.”
Zack laughs a wobbly but heartfelt laugh, his tears beginning to slow.

“You guys seem nice, but I don’t trust someone I just met hours ago. No offense.”

Jason sighs; that’s a reasonable reaction, but it had certainly complicated things. But now that they know where they stand, they can start making a plan.

“So, where is this radio?”

Zack grins at him:

“On the very top of the building, of course. More stairs is just what you wanted, right Jason?”

Jason groans and throws a dramatic arm over his face.

“At least let me eat some of this shitty hospital food before we go, you slavedriver!”

Zack sniffs haughtily, considers that.

“I suppose I could allow it.”

Then he grabs one of the chocolate pudding cups strewn across the room and lobbs it at Jason. Jason catches it, just barely, making Zack giggle. Jason tries to glare at him, but quickly gives in and starts laughing too. Billy joins them and soon enough they collapse into a pile on the floor, laughing their heads off.

Jason watches Zack laugh, his head thrown back and eyes blissfully closed, and can’t stop the wave of affection he feels. Zack may have been annoying at first, but his unapologetic joy in the face of the apocalypse is infectious. Billy’s watching Zack too, and he meets Jason’s eyes, giving him a smile that smacks of “I told you so”. Jason doesn’t like being wrong, but he’s glad that Zack isn’t the threat he thought he was.

They stay where they are, sitting draped over each other, as they devour pudding cups and bags of
chips. Not the healthiest meal, but beggars can’t be choosers. Jason quietly watches Billy and Zack as they chat, trying to figure out what the warm feeling in his chest is. It flutters in his stomach and makes him feel like he’s full of energy, despite the exhaustion clouding his mind. He feels like he could climb a thousand stairs or fight off an army of zombies. He feels like he can do anything, as long as Zack and Billy are at his side.

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Chapter End Notes

writing romance is so hard I'm sorry if it's terrible
Zack sticks his head into the room where Trini is resting and just as quickly retreats back into the hallway. He presses a finger to his lips and they tense, wondering what’s going on inside that might make him hesitate to enter. Had they missed a zombie in their sweep of the building? Was Trini okay? Had they left her a weapon? Zack notices their fear and tries to calm them, shaking his head. Billy frowns at him, struggling to figure out what’s going on, and looks to Jason. Jason shrugs; he has no idea. Zack huffs in irritation and gestures for them to peek inside.

Trini and Kim are sitting on the makeshift bed, playing with an abandoned deck of cards. Trini reveals her full house, smirking victoriously. Kim throws her losing hand down and groans in disappointment, but smiles a besotted smile at Trini nonetheless. They’re getting along famously, Jason hasn’t seen Kim smile this much since he met her. Jason gives Zack an approving nod; he’s glad they got to see the girls laughing together before they had to interrupt them.

But they have work to do, so he pushes into the room with an apologetic smile. Kim and Trini both whip around to look at him, ready to run or fight if need be. They relax slightly when they see him, and Jason carefully smooths over the rest of the tension as he enters.

“Nice haircut, Kim!”

She smiles at him, twirling the curls around her fingers.

“Thanks, Jason. It was long overdue, long hair is such a hassle. And Trini cut it for me, she did a great job!”

Jason smiles at their newest recruit, who smirks at him, a not quite friendly edge to it. She’s a sharp one, he’s noticed her sizing him up since they met. He drops his eyes, looking as non-confrontational as he can. He respects her toughness, which is probably a defensive front that’s helped her survive,
but she doesn’t need it around them.

“Thanks for doing that, Trini. I’m afraid none of us are very good with scissors.”

Zack throws an arm over Jason’s shoulder, using him as support as he leans in towards Trini.

“Maybe you should be the official hairdresser of the group, huh?”

She pushes herself up, standing and brushing herself off before snarking back.

“Even if I was, nothing I could do with your hair could salvage your face, Zack.”

Zack gasps overdramatically and clutches his chest, swooning against Jason as if she’d crushed him. Jason rolls his eyes at his theatrics but catches him. Zack settles into the half embrace and shows no sign of moving, smirking up at him and winking. Jason sternly reminds himself that he’s probably joking, and that he doesn’t have time for crushes anyways.

Billy, always the voice of reason, tugs Zack to his feet and asks:

“Don’t we have work to do?”

There’s a flash of pain in Zack’s face but he quickly covers it up with a teasing pout.

“But we’re having so much fun, Billy.”

Billy smiles at him, unfazed, and promises:

“There’s always time for hugs later, Zack.”

Zack obviously didn’t expect that as a reply; he’s left speechless for a moment. It’s as if he didn’t expect them to actually have or express any affection for him. Jason makes a note of the atrociously
low self confidence and decides to hug him plenty in the future. And not just because he wants to hug Zack, obviously Zack needs the positive attention.

It’s a rather sparse excuse, he can admit that. But he can worry about his slowly growing crush later, after they’ve found the radio.

Trini and Kim are giving them curious looks, unaware that there was any more work to be done. Billy shoots Zack one last silencing look and then begins to explain.

“We have to go up to the roof and get the radio working---”

Kim and Trini both interrupt at the same time, their excited outbursts blending into babbling:

“A radio? Can we call someone?”

“Are we going to get help? Will they even come if we call?”

They stop and stare at each other, undeterred by talking over each other, grinning excitedly at the thought of being rescued. Billy looks crushed at the thought of breaking the bad news, so Jason steps forwards and does it for him.

“We all know they aren’t going to come rescue us. They can’t let us out, it’s too dangerous.”

He brings the real world crashing back down on them, smashing the hope that had momentarily filled the room. Kim looks down, trying to gather herself, close to tears. It hurts like a knife in the chest to have made her look that sad, but the earlier it happened it easier the let down. Trini reacts with anger, jutting her chin out at him and growling:

“They why go to the radio at all?”

Jason looks to Zack, expecting him to jump in, but he looks like a deer caught in headlights. Jason abruptly remembers that Zack still thinks they’re going to be angry at him for asking them to help. He reconsiders and turns back to Trini, who’s still glaring.
“There’s someone in danger outside the zone, we need to call and get them help. We didn’t want to leave you guys unprotected, so we came to get you and bring you along. Safety in numbers, right?”

The girls don’t look enthused, and Trini obviously wants some more details, but don’t protest any further. They all recognize the necessity of unity when the world is so dangerous. And for now, Jason is the leader. Although he does wonder if Trini will challenge that eventually. But that’s a problem for later, for now he just needs to get everyone moving.

“Alright, grab your broomsticks and let’s start climbing.”

The heftiest things they could find to arm Trini and Zack with were some broken broomsticks. Not the best weapons, but longer range than Zack’s chain or Trini’s scythes. They could manage with their old weapons, but eventually they’d get to close and a zombie would take a bite out of them and Jason isn’t going to let that happen. He leads the way, bat held at the ready, Kim and Billy easily falling into position at his sides.

Zack and Trini huff, unhappy with being relegated to the back of the pack, but don’t fight it. They’re still too new to the group to fully integrate into the easy way the trio work together. A little more experience, and they’ll be just as in tune, but not quite yet.

They creep into the hallway, checking for threats even though they know it’s clear. The building had seemed secure, but the zombies could have found a way in since they checked the perimeter. The building is too big to set up guards, so they’re just going to have to keep their eyes open. It makes Jason nervous, he’s too used to having the safety of the warehouse at his back, but he leads the way to the staircase without hesitation.

At every turn of the staircase they’re ready for zombies to appear, but they never do. They make it up to the roof comparatively easily, the only problem being the exhaustion of climbing so many stairs. Jason wishes he’d thought to bring some more food with them, but then they’d have to carry the extra weight. They should be able to go back down and eat again once they fix the radio.

They finally push open the roof door, breathing in the fresh air with relief. Zack pushes ahead and runs to the booth where the radio is housed, checking it for damage. Billy inspects the smashed helicopter parked in the painted circle, looking upset by the loss of what could have been a great asset. Trini, Kim and Jason just hang around, waiting for Zack to report on the state of the radio.

Jason leans against the railing, watching Zack for any sign and hoping desperately the radio still
works. The thought of Zack’s mom needing help and them not being able to do anything leaves him shaking with nerves, and he knows it’ll be even worse if Zack has a breakdown over it.

They need that radio.

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the radio

Chapter Notes

I've never written something this relationship heavy before so I'm sorry if it doesn't flow naturally. I'm trying to progress with the plot and the relationships at the same time.

no tw for this chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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The crackling of static, normally a quiet sound, is loud enough to turn all of their heads. They quickly converge on the booth, where Zack is flicking buttons and holding a headset to his ear. He looks up at them, shocked and joyful, and mouths:

“It’s working.”

He flips a few more buttons and then been combing through channels, only finding more static. Zack is struggling to properly work the radio. He flips through channel after channel, greeted by more static. Jason can see despair quickly seeping into him. Billy leans over his shoulder, twisting a knob and helping him fine tune the frequencies. A few more seconds of static, and they hit an active frequency.

“I could kiss you, Billy!”

Billy shrugs.

“I’d be alright with that.”

Zack looks shocked for a moment; obviously he had meant it as a joke. But then he smirks, eyes lighting up, and stands up. He winds a hand around the back of Billy’s neck, ready to pull him in.

Billy stutters slightly, blushing, but smiles down at him.
“Oh, we’re doing this then?"

Zack smirks up at him, brushing their noses together.

“Yeah, I think so.”

Billy closes the distance and they close their eyes, kissing softly. Kim and Trini look at each other, confused for a moment, but quickly smile proudly at the pair. When you can die at any moment, relationships seem a lot less difficult. It’s not surprising that their group would form relationships quicker than usual.

Jason forces a false smile onto his face as Billy and Zack pull apart. They’re flushed slightly and staring at each other with stars in their eyes. He hadn’t realized he’d been falling for Billy, but it comes crashing down on him now that it’s too late. He bats the jealousy down; Billy deserves to be happy, and Zack is quite a catch.

A mean little part of himself reminds him that there’s no guarantee that they’ll get together. He buries it as deep as he can and steps forwards to join the group. Their conversation is cut off by a surge of static, and then a voice emanating from the radio set. Zack rushes away from Billy, back to the radio set.

The bored voice seems to be in the middle of a routine report about the condition of the quarantine fence. It must be one of the soldiers on patrol reporting to the main camp.

Billy clears the signal up as much as possible and then Zack jumps in, grabbing the mouthpiece.

“Hello? Can you hear us?”

The report stops abruptly. There’s a long stretch of stunned silence before another voice responds:

“Who is this? This is a restricted channel!”

Billy swats at Zack’s shoulder.
“You better get their attention, fast, or they might just cut us off.”

Zack fumbles for a moment, before steeling himself and starting to speak again.

“I’m sorry, but this is an emergency! We’re in the quarantine zone--”

“What?!"

“We’re broadcasting from the hospital’s radio, please, you have to listen to us!”

“Sir, we’ve got survivors. Do you want to talk to them?”

There’s shuffling on the other side, and then a new voice speaks.

“This is captain Rogers, i’m in charge of the quarantine camp. How how you survived this long? We thought everyone was dead.”

“We were hiding, sir. But that’s not important, you have to help us!”

There’s a weighty silence before he speaks again, voice regretful.

“We can’t get you out, we still don’t know how the virus spreads. I’m sorry, we’re doing everything we can.”

The little bit of hope the group was clinging to vanishes, and Jason can feel his shoulders slump. He wasn’t even aware of it, but he was still desperately hoping they would be rescued. A small, childish part of himself wants to throw a tantrum; why can’t the government, with all it’s technology and scientists, figure out how to save them? It’s tempting to just cry and scream, but he has to keep it together for the group.

Zack looks the least upset, too focused on his mom to worry about being rescued.
“We know, sir. That’s not what we need help with. My mom, she’s outside of the quarantine zone, up towards the mine. She’s sick, and I’m not there to help her. Someone has to go get her and bring her to a hospital. I know you aren’t really the people to ask for this, but I don’t really have any other options.”

He laughs nervously, filling the long pause.

“Your mom? How old are you? How many people are with you?”

Zack looks frustrated by the detour, but knows they have to cooperate.

“Um, I’m eighteen? And I think everyone else is?”

He looks around and they all nod.

“There’s five of us, we were all seniors at the highschool.”

Behind the captain, in a low voice they probably aren’t meant to hear, someone mutters:

“God, they’re just kids.”

The captain takes over again.

“We’ll go get your mother, son. She’ll get the best care we can provide. But in the meantime, can you tell us what’s going on in there? Any information that might help us?”

Zack wracks his brain, ready to respond, when something clanks behind them. Everyone but Zack spins around, scanning the roof for threats. They don’t see anything right away, but another clank echoes around them.

Kim yells, voice tight with strain.
“Guys, we’re not alone up here.”

Zack looks at them with frightened eyes, grabs his broomstick.

“Captain, sir, I can’t give you the information now. There’s something on the roof. We’ll call back later if we can.”

He joins them, staring out over the roof. There aren’t any more noises, but they know what they heard before wasn’t normal. They look at each other and square their shoulders, ready to start searching. If there is a zombie up here, it needs to be taken care of now, before it can get the jump on them.

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Chapter End Notes

I always assumed they were 18 in the movie, at least I fucking hope so
Chapter Notes

I'm a little nervous about this chapter. Romance is very hard for me to write but I hope it's okay.

tw for this chapter:
this chapter is mostly shippy so there's more internalized homophobia. Nothing much else.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

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They'd searched the roof until it got dark and found nothing. They'd had to stop when night fell; it had become impossible to see. They'd reluctantly returned to their safe room on the second floor, setting up extra barriers between them and the roof.

Jason collapses onto the pile of blankets they're using as a bed. He's glad he's alone so he can mope a little. He can just barely hear Zack and Billy talking outside in the hallway, but is too tired to pay attention. He's a mess, full of aching, tense muscles. It's a combination of knowing he'd missed his shot with Billy and Zack, as well as the stress of knowing a zombie is hiding somewhere on the roof. He buries his face in the fabric and groans, unaware that the other boys have joined him. Zack snickers at the overdramatic noise and Jason flips over to smile at him. Zack lowers himself down to lie at his side while Billy stands a couple steps away, wringing his hands. Jason frowns; that usually means he's nervous.

Zack curls into Jason’s side and slowly, deliberately, raises a hand to run his fingers through his hair. Jason goes very still, aching to lean into the contact. But his eyes dart to Billy, who’s watching them with a grin on his face. He feels like this is a trap, like he’s having a carrot dangled in front of him but as soon as he takes a bite he’ll get punished.

“What’s going on, guys?”

Zack smirks at him, but keeps his weight shifted back, careful not to block Jason in.

“We were just wondering if you were interested in us.”

Billy walks over, kneeling to join them, and looks Jason in the eyes, earnest.
“Because we’re definitely interested in you.”

Jason wants to cry with how unfair this is. He wants them, he wants them both, but aren’t they together? And how would he ever pick between them?

“I don’t understand how that would work. If all you guys are looking for is a quick fuck, I’m not down with that.”

Zack huffs, smiles at him.

“Well, not denying the fact that you’re sexy, but that’s not what we were asking.”

Billy buries his fingers in Jason’s hair too and Jason leans back into the touch, almost crying with how much he wants this. How much he just wants them close, wants the casual affection, wants to wake up cuddling them every morning.

It’s all so confusing and it leaves him feeling helplessly lost. He knows he can’t have both of them, but he desperately wants them both. Being in love with one boy is bad enough, let alone two.

Billy leans in close, voice almost a whisper.

“What we were asking is if you wanted to date us both.”

Jason turns to him in shock.

“Date both of you? How would that work?”

Zack laughs.

“Guess you haven’t heard of polyamory.”
Billy explains:

“It just means we all love each other and we’re all together at the same time. It might be complicated, hard to balance at first. It might not even work out. But I want to try.”

Jason still feels confused and ashamed, like his family is peering in the window and disapproving. But he’s being offered a way to have them both, and it’s the end of the world anyways, so who cares?

“I’m willing to try.”

“Me too.”

They all stare at each other, unsure what to do now that they’ve reached a decision. Zack moves first, nuzzling into his neck. Jason tentatively wraps an arm around him, smiling when he hums approvingly. Zack seems content to go to sleep with his head pillowed on Jason’s shoulder. But Jason prods him in the side to get his attention; Billy is still kneeling and he doesn’t want him to feel left out.

“Let’s have Billy get in on the cuddle party, huh?”

Zack unfolds himself and makes grabby hands at Billy. Jason laughs; now that Zack’s been given permission, he’s clingy as hell. Billy takes one of Zack’s hands and lets himself be pulled down. Jason is sandwiched between them, Billy’s arm over his stomach and Zack’s over his chest. Jason turns his head to press his and Billy’s forehead together. Billy smiles at him, dark eyes dancing, and Jason feels so full of love that he thinks he might explode.

Zack pulls himself closer, taking advantage of Jason’s distraction to press kisses along his neck. Jason smiles at the soft touch and reaches behind himself blindly until he’s wrapped an arm around Zack. Then he leans in and kisses Billy for the first time. Billy’s lips are chapped and he’s still sweaty from fighting zombies, but it’s the best thing Jason’s ever felt. It sets him alight in a way that kissing girls never did, and he tries not to think about what that means.

Zack whines behind him, fingers tracing Jason’s collarbone, obviously feeling left out. Jason pulls away from Billy with one last kiss to the tip of his nose and turns to Zack. He kisses him too, and it feels different but just as heavenly. Billy props himself up on an elbow to watch them. Jason pulls
away from Zack, feeling a bit overwhelmed by having two amazingly beautiful boys willing to kiss him.

Zack and Billy notice and give him space, unwinding their arms from his chest and leaning over him to kiss each other instead. They giggle as they come in at the wrong angle and bump noses. Jason watches them kiss and lets his eyes slip closed, feeling perfectly safe for the first time since the apocalypse started. Soon enough Zack and Billy return, tucking themselves into his sides.

Trini and Kim, who went to eat their meal in the hospital snack bar, return to find the boys sleeping peacefully, wrapped up in each other. Trini pulls Kim back into the hallway so they can talk without waking them. There’s a long silence and Trini looks at Kim, who shuffles nervously. Trini bites the bullet and gets the conversation started:

“So the guys are together. Who would have guessed? I was worried Zack might be interested in me.”

She sticks her tongue out and makes a disgusted face. Kim laughs and teases:

“And you thought Jason and I were a thing.”

Trini laughs, but suddenly gets serious. Her eyes are intense and Kim feels herself heat up under her stare. She can’t stop her eyes from flitting down to the other girl’s lips.

“I hoped you weren’t.”

Kim isn’t an idiot, she can feel the tension in the air. She knows what’s probably going to happen, what she wants to happen. But she also knows that she doesn’t feel ready. There’s that clawing wrongness in her chest, that leaves her head spinning.

She wants Trini, but she can’t rush into it. She needs time to process.

“We should get some sleep.”

Trini doesn’t call out the obvious distraction and nods.
“Yeah, who knows what could happen tomorrow.”

Kim is relieved that she isn’t pushing, and settles down on the blanket bed almost close enough to touch. She drifts off quickly. Trini’s warmth behind her and the reassuring bulk of the boys in front of her. They’re all entangled and she smiles; she’s actually feeling a little hopeful, after today.

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Chapter End Notes

Don't worry, Kimberly will happen next chapter.
woof it’s been a while since i’ve updated this lol. i intend to finish it, i promise!

TW for this chapter: slight violence, nothing graphic

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They make it back up to the top of the hospital, panting from the long trek up the stairs. Zeck and Billy head over to the radio booth, while Jason Kim and Trini keep watch. They’re walking in circles, still tense because as far as they know there’s an zombie up here. Something had to have been making the noise they heard earlier. Trinin is walking past the ruined helicopter, kicking at it’s warped metal sides with her foot.

Something reaches out of the helicopter, hidden by the darkness. It grabs Trini’s foot and she screams as it drags her towards the crushed metal shell. Zack is closet and he screams too, running after her and raising his weapon.

He goes flying, hitting the concrete and sliding. Jason can see blood blooming, but he’s more worried about Trini at the moment. Kim shrieks as she disappears into the darkness and runs after her. Jason tries to catch her, stop her from rushing in until they can regroup. He doesn’t move fast enough and she heads for the gaping helicopter doorway.

Before she can reach it, something comes barreling out of the darkness. It has bright yellow eyes, and one of it’s inhumanly long arms are wrapped around Trini’s legs, dragging her behind it. It’s legs are tiny in comparison to it’s arms and it’s potbellied, making it look hunched over. It’s head is domed and looks tough, like it’s ready to ram and do some damage.

Whatever it is, it’s not a human or a zombie, and they stare at it in shock. When it speaks, they all startle

“You’re not putties.”

Jason gapes at it, at a loss for words. The creature can speak english somehow? Billy is some what more resilient and replies:

“What a puttie?”

The creature lets Trini go. They all flinch at the movement, but quickly pull her away from it. Zack rejoines them, wiping at the bloody scrapes on his arms. Something dark glimmers in the blood, but Jason doesn’t take a closer look, too focused on the creature. It huffs, a strangely human noise, and crosses it’s arms.

“Putties. The infected of your species.”

Trini brushes herself off, glaring at it and snarling:
“You mean the zombies?”

It shrugs and responds, sounding almost annoyed:

“Zombies, putties, same thing.”

Kim takes a step forwards, looking around wildly.

“Are you guys ignoring that we’re talking to some sort of monster?”

Billy looks nervous, worry worsened by her anger.

“I wasn’t ignoring it, just not quite sure what to do about it.”

Zack jumps in, voice tight. His grip on his broomstick is tight enough to turn his knuckles white.

“We kill it. There’s five of us and only one of it.”

The creature is unconcerned by the threat, throwing it’s arms out in an exuberant movement.

“I’m not an monster, i’m an alien. But that isn’t important, what matters is that you’re here! Five uninfected, healthy humans! And young too, most likely in their prime years! How fortunate, you’re just what I need.”

The creature lashes out, moving too fast to stop. Jason is hit in the chest and collapses, seeing his friends fall around him. He struggles to breathe, the impact knocked all of the air out of him. He brings his hand up to his chest, checking for damage, and it comes away covered in blood. He looks down, trying to guess how bad it is, and sees something embedded in the bloodied flesh.

“What the hell?”

Before he can inspect it, the skin grows back, healing before his eyes. But the embedded object remains, glimmering slightly in the dim lighting. It’s some sort of red jewel, half sunken into his chest. He tries not to panic as he stares at the foreign object buried in his body. He sits up, checking on his friends.

They’re all bleeding too, but from different body parts. Kim and Trini are gripping their arms, while Zack and Billy grab their legs. Jason seems to be the only one hit in the chest. Zack jumps up, unhindered by his injured leg, and storms towards the creature. Jason doesn’t hear what he yells, because as soon as Zack moves his footsteps are thundering in his ears, so loud he feels like his skull is going to burst.

He curls into himself, covering his ears and trying got get the painfully loud sound to stop. That draws his friend’s attention, which only makes it worse: their concerned voices are so loud he feels like he’s going to shatter into a million pieces.

“The noise, it hurts---”

Through the thundering of his friend’s voices, he hears the alien speak at a normal tone.

“It’s your powers, they’ve activated very quickly. Focus on the stone, let it clear your mind and bring your powers under control.”

It sounds like bullshit, but Jason will try anything to get the pain to stop. He looks down at the gently pulsing stone in his chest and imagines that light curling around him. He imagines focusing it on his head, stopping the pain. After a few seconds of focus, his hearing returns to normal.
He uncurls from his protective ball to find his friends gathered around, worry on their faces. He looks up at them and does his best to smile, but that only makes them look more concerned. Billy brushes a hand over Jason’s arm and he takes it, interlacing their fingers to help steady himself.

Zack breaks the silence, snarling:

“What the hell just happened? And why are you glowing?”

Jason looks down, surprised to find that the stone in his chest is pulsing with red light. Part of his mind is babbling with terror that something alien is embedded in his body, but he manages to push it down and stay calm.

“I could hear everything and it hurt. It was too much, like even little things were too loud. And I don’t know, you’ll have to ask it. I heard it talk to me, in my head.”

Zack snorts sarcastically, not believing.

“What, like it’s telepathic now?”

Before Jason can respond, the alien’s voice echoes through his head again, and he can tell from his friend’s expressions that they’re hearing it too.

“Yes, I am telepathic. I am given this power so that I may assist the power rangers in saving their world.”

Zack’s jaw has dropped open and Trini and Kim look equally shocked. Billy is the first to recover and ask:

“Power rangers?”

The alien nods it’s large head.

“Power rangers. Defenders of their planet who are given powers by the stones. That’s what I’ve turned you into.”

Jason stares down at the stone, thinking about what he had been able to hear earlier.

“You mean we’re superheroes now?”

The alien laughs lowly but replies:

“Of a sort, yes.”

Zeck has finally regained his voice and he sounds angry:

“Why? Why would you do this to us?”

The alien seems unaffected by his anger.

“Because you must save your world from the putties and Rita Repulsa, the source of their power.”

Trini steps forwards, waving her hands:

“wait, wait wait. You know the source of the zombies.”

The alien nods cheerily.
“Of course. She’s a person, Rita Repulsa.”

Trini continues, looking confused:

“Okay, so you want us to defeat her. Which means what?”

The alien gestures excitedly with its long arms.

“It means the putties will be gone!”

Trini sputters, hope growing in her eyes.

“So if we defeat this Rita, the zombies will go away?”

“Yes.”

Affirms the alien. Trini turns to her friends and asks.

“Guys, do you know what this means?”

Jason nods, feeling determined.

“Yes, It means we have to defeat this Rita Replusa.”

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Chapter End Notes

sorry, i said there would be kim/trini this chapter but I didn't get around to it. Next chapter I promise!
finally, the promised trini/kim! kim is working through some internalized homophobia, which i hope i portrayed well but if that's triggering to you, please be careful!

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Kim collapses into her makeshift bed as soon as they enter their room. She throws an arm over her eyes and mutters:

“Okay, that was a lot.”

Trini nods and takes a seat nearby, responding:

“What part? When we met the alien or when we turned into superheroes?”

Kim snorts out a laugh and they fall silent for a long moment. Trini fidgets nervously before finally asking:

“Should we maybe...talk about it?”

Kim groans, but replies:

“Probably.”

Again, a long silence. Kim stares up at the ceiling, fighting internally with herself. Finally she sighs and rolls over, speaking:

“Fine, I’ll go first. I’m terrified because we’re in a zombie apocalypse, and now I have even more to be scared about because we’re going to have to fight some big bad guy we know nothing about. And I don’t know the first thing about fighting, and now suddenly I’m fighting for my life!”

Trini nods, a tiny smile on her face as she watches Kim.

“Totally feel you, dude.”

Kim laughs at the nonchalant response and kicks at Trini, urging her on:

“Come on, it’s your turn.”

Trini sighs and scrunches her eyebrows together as she thinks before replying:

“Okay, how about this? I’m so afraid to feel hopeful because we’re probably never going to get out of here alive. But now this alien is claiming we can end the apocalypse and possibly save ourselves. So how should I feel now? Should I let myself hope and possibly be disappointed, or stay bitter and sure we’re going to die?”

She gives Kim a challenging look and Kim huffs out a breath:
“Woof. that’s a lot. But don’t you feel better now that you’ve said it?”

Trini smiles, and it’s like watching sunlight break through storm clouds. Kim feels her breath catch and her heart speed up as she watches her friend, that choking feeling of love coming back again. Trini speaks:

“I do. And since it’s worked so well, maybe we should talk about our feelings.”

Kim frowns.

“Didn’t we just do that?‘

Trini continues, looking serious:

“For each other.”

Kim feels her heart speed up even faster, panic massing in her chest.

“Oh.”

Then Trini is sliding across the floor towards her, almost close enough to touch. She sits for a moment and just looks at KIm. Kim feels paralyzed by fear but some other part of her wants desperately to reach out and touch her friend. Trini speaks, her voice low and comforting:

“Kim, you know it’s okay. You can let yourself have this.”

Her hand comes up, reaching for Kim’s cheek, pausing to give her time to pull away. Kim knows she should, but discovers she doesn’t want to. Instead she closes her eyes and lets herself lean in until Trini’s hand cups her cheek.

“Is it really okay?”

Trini sighs before leaning in closer, until their noses are brushing, so close that Kim can feel her breath brushing across her lips. Trini speaks:

“It is. I promise.”

Kim breaths out shakily.

“Okay. Then I want to kiss you.”

Trini smiles, eyes crinkling in the corners with the force of the expression.

“Thought you’d never ask.”

Then Trini leans in and kisses her, so sweetly that it makes her ache. She lets Trini take the lead and Trini carefully deepens the kiss before pulling away. Kim breathes in deeply and lets herself fall back on the bed.

“Oh.”

Trini smiles at her, scooting closer until she bury a hand in her hair, looking for permission first. Kim nods and relishes the feeling of fingernails on her scalp. Trini asks:

“Good?”
Kim grins up at her.

“Very good.”

Then she rolls over to sit up again, wrapping her arms around Trini and humming:

“I want more!”

Trini smirks.

“I can do that.”

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