A story of the boy next door, and how life's little curve-balls can bring about the most meaningful relationship of a lifetime.

Mostly from Craig's perspective.
Craig rode his bike down the street, paying little attention to the overly familiar houses as they whirred by. There were a lot of thoughts going through his head, the events of the past week had been some kind of insane. He wasn't even sure it was tame enough to classify as insane, it was something though. His dad's words were still in his head as he parked his bike outside the Tweak's coffee shop.

'If you try to fight it, you'll just make yourself unhappy your whole life.'

His dad didn't usually have a way with words, but that particular bit stuck in Craig's head. It stuck and bounced around in there, echoing off the walls and reverberating over and over itself until it was the only thing left in his mind. He didn't think he was gay, he still didn't think that, but he did think he was unhappy. He also knew the rest of the town was pretty unhappy now, and for whatever messed up reason, he had the power to fix that.

In a weird way, he almost felt like if he did this, this bizarre, absolutely stupid thing for the town, it might make him a little happier too. Not because of the townsfolk themselves, no, fuck the town. He just couldn't remember the last time he'd really felt much besides apathy, and Tweek definitely made him feel more than that. So maybe hanging around him and pretending to be gay for awhile might even make him feel a little happier.

He walked into the shop and approached the counter, nose wrinkling at the smell of sour coffee cut with something he didn't dare ask about, “Hey, Tweek here?” he asked simply.

Mr. Tweak looked down at him, an air of uncertainty to him, but he answered anyway, “He's walking down town, off to get our locally sourced-”

Craig didn't hear the rest, he was already out the door, not having the time or patience to hear Mr. Tweek ramble on about grass fed dirt or whatever. He went to get back on his bike, but before he could knock the kickstand back up, he spotted Tweek just across the street. The wild-haired blonde had his hands shoved in his pockets, looking dejected and generally stressed out as he made his way down the sidewalk.

Craig left his bike where it was and hurried across the street, feet only slowing when he realized he hadn't actually thought of what the hell he could possibly say to Tweek. What was there to even say? Craig was pretty sure he'd strung together five sentences at most in the last two days, and that was him being talkative. He stopped right in front of Tweek, who also stopped in his tracks, looking up at Craig in surprise.

Blue eyes met green, and for a moment there was unbearable silence. Craig was silently panicking, though his eyes were only slightly wider than usual, not betraying his internal freak-out. Tweek's face twisted into a question, brows furrowed and mouth pulled into a tight line. Craig looked back away, feeling awkward holding eye contact, and simply extended one hand.

He couldn't see Tweek's expression shift into elation, but he did hear his tiny, happy gasp, and he felt it when a shaky hand gripped his own. He tugged on his hand lightly, pulling Tweek up level with him before the two started walking again, heading down the sidewalk. Tweek made another small questioning sound when they passed up the crosswalk that led to the coffee shop.

“U-Um Craig, I need to get back to the coffee shop, d-dad'll get worried a-and if I don't deliver the product then the business will die a-and he'll have to close the shop and we'll have no money a-and
they'll have to sell me as a child slave,” Tweek rambled, words spilling out so fast that Craig only caught about half of them.

Now it was his turn to shoot Tweek a questioning look, “Dude. Relax.”

Tweek gave a twitch and a strained grunt in response, trying to tug his hand back away so he could go to the coffee shop. Craig rolled his eyes and kept a firm grip on him, “Fine, we'll drop off your stuff, then I'm bringing you somewhere. Your parents will have to manage without you for a few hours.”

Tweek gave an audible sigh of relief as Craig turned and walked with him to the coffee shop. The boys dropped off what definitely looked like a brown baggy of fine white unidentifiable powder, and then Craig informed Mr. Tweak that he was taking Tweek somewhere. “He's strung out. I'm taking him somewhere fun, that's fine right?” Craig said, more a statement than a question.

“H-he's just being weird, I d-don't have to go I'm not even that freaked out anymore I'm a lot calmer than I was this morning really a-and since deliveries are over I can just go sweep-”

“That sounds nice,” Mr. Tweak cut his son off, evidently used to tuning out his stressed-out ramblings, “Bring him back by dark, we need his help closing the shop and picking up some special ingredients for our morning brew, which we blend fresh every night.”

“Cool thanks bye,” Craig said shortly, dragging Tweek back out of the shop.

Tweek made another strangled sound as he was dragged along. Craig stopped in front of his bike, motioning to it, “I have a bike.”

Tweek blinked one eye at a time and gave a tiny jerk, “Uh, cool?”

Craig shook his head, realizing he should elaborate, “No I mean, do you have one too? 'Cause we'll get there faster if you do.”

“D-Dad says if I use a bike I could spill the deliveries, and he's probably right, so, uh, no, I don't have a bike.”

Craig gave a short nod and let go of Tweek's hand, grabbing his bike and looking for it to Tweek and then back again, “…think you could balance on the handlebars?”

“W-what?! Are you nuts?! W-we could crash into a ditch because it would limit your mobility o-or get cuts from rusty bike parts after a bad crash o-or ride off a cliff and get mauled by tigers!”

Craig raised one eyebrow, “Tigers?”

Tweek grunted, “I-I dunno! But something bad will definitely happen!”

Craig shook his head, swinging one leg over the seat and patting the bars, “Come on, it'll be fine. I carry my little sister on the handlebars all the time. You probably aren't much bigger than her.”

Tweek twitched and walked over, giving Craig a hard shove, making him topple over, bike falling partially onto him. “F-fuck you!” Tweek squawked. Craig shifted around and scrambled out from under the bike, brushing himself off and righting the bike. “Just for that, I'm making you get on.”

“H-how are you gonna do that, huh?” Tweek challenged, arms crossed, still shaking, though Craig
had a feeling that was more a caffeine thing than a fear thing right now.

“You either get on, or I chase you down the street full speed on my bike,” Craig replied.

Tweek seemed to think this over, decided Craig looked serious, and approached the bike, “I-if I die, I am so haunting your ass.”

“Fair enough,” Craig replied, getting on the bike and keeping it steady as Tweek clumsily climbed up onto the handlebars.

The bike was definitely not made to carry two nine year olds. It was barely made to carry a nine year old and a five year old. That, however, didn't deter Craig in the slightest, and he pedaled down the sloped streets at a breakneck speed, Tweek serving as a shrieking alarm to everyone they happened to pass. One terrifying ride later, they collapsed, bike and all, onto a patch of grass outside Whistlin' Willie's.

Craig rolled onto his back, arms and legs out as he tried to catch his breath, that bike ride had even been a little intense for him. He hadn't realized just how heavy Tweek was. Tweek, meanwhile, was now completely silent, eyes wider than a startled cat as he lay on his side in the grass.

“I-I hate you,” he finally whispered.

Craig felt his mouth do this weird thing, cracking into a curved line across his face, oh right, a smile. He smiled, and looked over at Tweek, “Yeah, I kinda hate me too. We sure got here fast though.”

Tweek slowly sat up, looking over to the building, “W-why exactly did you bring me here?”

Craig raised one arm over his head, waving around a green piece of paper in it, “My dad gave me a hundred dollars for being gay.”

Tweek glanced at the bill, then down at Craig, “a-and?”

Craig sat up, stuffing the money back into his pocket, “And, how am I supposed to prove I'm not a terrible cheater if I don't even take my 'boyfriend' on a nice date?”

Tweek crossed his arms and looked away, “S-sorry about that, I got really carried away. I just...got super in the zone.”

Craig stood up and offered Tweek a hand up, “Well let's see if you're that good at acting like you actually like me. C'mon, I actually brought you here because I wanted pizza and figured you could use a break from being your parents' personal child labor force.”

Tweek accepted Craig's hand, letting him pull him to his feet, “...well...alright then. Thanks. Boyfriend.”

Craig kept Tweek's hand in his as they headed into the building, this was...weird. It was going to take some getting used to.

Tweek moved a little closer, lightly shoving against Craig with his side, “But I'm walking home. You and your bike can go to hell.”

Craig's face split into another smile, there was something about Tweek he found so amusing, though he couldn't exactly place what it was.

Once the two were inside, Craig found them a cozy little booth that had the least amount of soda
stains on it, and settled in, ordering an entire pizza for them to share. Tweek gripped the edges of the table between them, looking around frantically as other kids about their age ran around the place, screaming and laughing and generally being annoying little fucks.

“Tweek, chill out, okay? Why are you so freaked out all the time?” Craig asked.

Tweek twitched a bit and focused in on Craig, “I-It's hard to explain, it sounds stupid. Don't worry about it.”

Craig shrugged, “Whatever, you can tell me when you feel like it. Do you like, need earplugs or something?”

Tweek shook his head quickly, “N-no, because then how could I hear if there was some kind of emergency? Huh? W-what if the building was on fire and the alarms went off and instead of leaving, I just sat here, totally unaware, because I had earplugs in like an idiot?!”

Craig reached across the table and patted his hand, “That's what I'm here for. I wouldn't let you die stupid. Do you have any idea how bad that'd look for me?”

Tweek met Craig's gaze, then he snorted, shoving Craig's hand away, “W-wow, real chivalrous of you. I-I'd hate to make you look bad by dying.”

Craig nodded in agreement, “Yes, that would be very rude of you.”

Tweek seemed to calm down a little after that, or at least he stopped gripping the table and managed to carry on part of a conversation. The pizza came and Craig got them sodas to go with it. After they were good and hopped up on sugar and cheese, they ran around to play some of the arcade games.

Craig was pretty solid at skeeball, while Tweek kept on hitting Craig with the balls by accident, as they would continually fly out of his hands too soon. After the fifth ball to the face, Craig suggested they try something else. They went around and played (and lost) at pretty much every game, until they got to one of those little maze games. It was a really simple looking thing, with a white stand and a black screen with neon text on it that read 'make it to the end of the maze without touching the walls to win!'

Craig snorted, “There's no way this is the only thing left, c'mon, we can go to the photo booth and flip off the camera.”

Tweek shook his head rapidly, “No no, I think I can do this one.”

Craig raised an eyebrow at that, “Uh Tweek, no offense, but you're about as steady-handed as a sleep deprived drunk meth addict.”

Tweek shot him a look, “First of all, that was super unnecessary. You could've just said I was unsteady. S-second of all, I can do this, I swear.”

Craig shrugged and pressed a couple tokens into Tweek's hand, “Alright, knock yourself out.”

Tweek stuck his tongue out at Craig and slipped the golden coins into the slot. A simple maze with thick red walls popped up on screen, and Tweek pressed one shaking finger to the start point. Craig leaned over his shoulder, kind of curious how quickly Tweek would lose, and found himself surprised as Tweek started moving his hand, actually keeping a steady line between the walls as he went. Craig glanced at his face, seeing a look of pure concentration, tongue peeking out slightly between his teeth, jittering entirely gone as he zoned in on this one task.
Craig's mouth was open in shock when Tweek managed to reach the end, the machine blasting out celebration music and shooting tickets out of the slot. Tweek turned around, facing Craig and giving him the smuggest look possible as ticket after ticket streamed out of the machine.

Tweek then picked up all his tickets, all five hundred of them, and walked back to their little booth triumphantly. Craig followed after him, dumbfounded. “I don't get it, how the hell are you so...but then like...that?”

Tweek started folding the tickets together, fingers twitching again as he worked, “I uhh, I c-can focus really hard on simple tasks, and I'm really good at them because I can block out everything else. So it's just for a couple minutes, but I can do little stuff like that. L-like coffee art, I know how to do that, and I'm good at it, because I can just...like...focus one hundred percent on it. You know?”

Craig nodded, but he didn't know, like, at all. He never really had trouble multitasking and doing things, but he wasn't sure he could ever focus entirely on anything, not with that intense level of concentration. He guessed it must be kind of shitty though, only being able to focus on specific things.

Tweek smiled at him, “W-well, since you were an ass, I'm gonna take my tickets and go pick out a prize for myself. A-and you'll just have to use your tickets instead of sharing mine!” Then he got up and ran off.

“Aww not fair! I only got like twenty!” Craig called after him.

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After eating a few more pizza slices and finishing their drinks, the two headed back out. Tweek had kept the prize he picked out in a bag, and was now fiddling with the thing as they walked out of the restaurant. The sun was starting to set now, Craig hoped Tweek would make it back to the shop in time.

He looked up towards the rapidly darkening sky and sighed, “You can take my bike back to your coffee shop,” he said.

Tweek jerked, startled by the sudden sound of Craig's voice, “H-huh?”

Craig nodded towards the bike, which was still lying in the grass, “You might not make it back in time if you walk, so take the bike for now, I can walk home.”

Tweek shifted back and forth on his feet, “I-I shouldn't, I...I guess you're right though, but...are you sure it's okay? What if—”

Craig waved him off, “No what ifs you lunatic. Just go. We can uh, hang out tomorrow too, if you want. This was...kinda fun.”

Tweek stood the bike up and smiled, “It...yeah...it was. You aren't like, so terrible.”

Craig chuckled a bit, “You aren't so terrible either.”

Tweek got onto the bike unsteadily, bag shifting in his hand as he gripped the handlebars, “O-oh right! Th-this is actually for you,” he said, reaching out and handing Craig the bag. Craig looked down at it, then back up at Tweek, “...why?”

“For...for being nice I guess. Plus I know you like space and stuff, and I just figured...it was better than anything else for five hundred tickets anyway, so just...yeah,” Tweek shrugged.
Craig reached into the bag and pulled out a package that had about twenty plastic glow-in-the-dark stars and a moon in it. He looked back up to ask Tweek how he knew he liked space, but Tweek was already gone. He could barely make out the silhouette of wild hair and wheels in the distance.

When Craig got home, his parents were already asleep. They didn't usually wait up for Craig, he was granted a pretty ridiculous amount of freedom for a nine year old. However, Craig's little sister, Tricia, was still awake and sitting on the couch, eating cereal and watching a horror movie.

“Sup fucker?” she greeted as Craig entered the house.

“Why are you still up, ass goblin?” Craig replied, walking over and ruffling her hair.

She grunted and waved him off, “Mh. I wanted to watch this scary movie, and they're only playing it right now.”

“You could always record it,” Craig pointed out, standing next to her for a minute to see what she was watching. It looked like 'Friday the 13th'. She really shouldn't have been watching that.

“It's not as scary during the day,” Tricia complained, kicking her legs, “Oh! Right! Did you go tell your friend you were gonna keep being gay?”

Craig grunted, “Yeah. It'll make the town happier and whatever, so might as well keep pretending.”

“I made bets with my friends that you're gonna kiss him before summer,” Tricia replied, shoving another mouthful of cereal into her face.

Craig rolled his eyes, “You're truly the best sister. Absolutely amazing.”

“I've u too ashhole,” Tricia garbled through her cereal.

Craig turned and headed up the stairs, “Whatever. And when that movie gives you nightmares you can come sleep in my room.”

“It won't gimme nightmares!” Tricia called. Craig ignored her and headed into his room.

He kicked the door closed and stood up on his bed, stretching up to see if he could reach the ceiling. He found he could if he jumped really hard. So, several failed attempts and one bruised ankle later, Craig had the little plastic stars in place, all stuck haphazardly to the ceiling above his bed, shining in all their green, plasticy glory. He tossed the now empty package aside and flopped back onto his bed, looking up at the little fake stars, feeling something weird in his chest. Something warm and...kind of happy.

He sighed and closed his eyes, contentedly dozing until he was awoken by twenty pounds of toddler ramming into him. He grunted and opened one eye, seeing Tricia clinging to his side, face pressed against him in fear. He scoffed and closed his eye again, wrapping his arm around her protectively, “I told you it'd give you nightmares,” he mumbled.

“Shut up,” she mumbled, muffled against her brother, then she quietly added, “I like the stars, are those new?”

Craig found himself smiling again, “Yeah, they're pretty cool, huh?”
Three months had passed since Craig and Tweek had started fake dating, and everyone had pretty much gone back to normal, mostly ignoring the two and going on about their own lives. Though Craig found that if he acted a little more affectionate towards Tweek around adults, they'd sometimes hand the boys money. It was a really handy trick, and the two had saved up a few hundred dollars from it already. Craig was humming a little to himself as he got ready for school that morning, pulling his hoodie on before heading out the door to scavenge for whatever cereal his sister hadn't already eaten.

Tricia shot down the hall just then, whirring past him and down the stairs, “MY CEREAL!” she screamed, as if she could just feel in her soul that her brother was out to steal the sugary goodness from her.

Craig grabbed the stair railing and slid down it in hopes of catching up with Tricia, prompting his mother to yell after him, “Craig! Sweetie stop acting like an asshole before you get hurt! Just use the stairs!”

Craig flipped his mom off and then immediately went flying off the stair rail, landing hard on the wooden floor. He gave a grunt when he heard his arm give a small crunch under him. He really hoped that wasn't as bad as it sounded. He sat up slowly, wincing as a stabbing pain shot through his arm.

His mother was next to him in a second, “Craig! I told you not to-oh Jesus, are you okay? Did you hurt yourself?”

Craig shifted a little, he might've been a really tough nine year old, but he was still a nine year old, and right now he kind of felt like crying from the pain. He didn't say anything, just leaned against his mom and trusted she'd fix it. She scooped him up, gently touching his arm and getting a small whine in response.

“Thomas, I think Craig broke his arm! I'm taking him to the hospital!” she called.

“Tell him to stop sliding down the damn stairs!” Craig's dad called back, “I'm gonna stop signing his casts!”

Craig's mom rolled her eyes and carried Craig out of the house, “He's such an asshole...he is right though, you've got to stop doing such reckless things Craig. This is the third time you've managed to hurt yourself this year.”

Craig whined again and pressed his face against his mom, “s'more fun sliding down shit,” he mumbled.

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That's how Craig ended up with his entire group of friends flocking him after school, asking in a frenzy where he was and what happened to his arm. Craig tried his best to shoo them away, but he was having trouble, what with one arm in a cast and all.
“Did a sixth grader attack you?” Clyde asked, “I heard if they touch you you get an STD, can those break your arm?”

“Clyde oh my fucking God,” Craig groaned, pressing his good hand to his face, “How can you be a decent student and so fucking stupid at the same time?”

“He probably just hurt it falling out of a tree or something,” Token said, “Craig, I told you man, if you keep climbing stuff you're gonna break a lot of bones. Didn't you already break your ankle just a few months ago falling out of a tree in my yard?”

“It was a sprain, and yes, but that doesn't make climbing shit any less fun,” Craig protested, “Besides, I didn't get this one climbing...exactly.”

“Y-you know the leading cause of wrist breaks in young men?” Jimmy asked, “Muh...Ma-Mast-”

“I'm gonna stop you right there,” Craig said flatly, “I'm nine. We're all nine. None of us do that. Except maybe Kenny.”

Jimmy gave a grin and didn't say anything. God he was so weird. Clyde bounced on the balls of his feet, always eager to say something, anything really, if it meant filling the silence, “Oh oh! Can we sign your cast?”

“Knock yourself out,” Craig grunted, lifting his arm up the best he could, showing the plain blue cast that only had one signature on it so far, his mom. Even Tricia said she wouldn't sign it because she was 'tired of encouraging his behavior by rewarding him with her amazing autograph'. She was a little shit.

Clyde pulled out an orange gel pen and happily signed his name, “man, you know, I hear that if you break your arm, it's harder to break it again. So, like, if you break it a few more times, you'll be invincible!”

“The amount of stupidity in that sentence isn't even worth my response,” Craig mumbled.

“Super bones!” Clyde added.

“Y-you know who has a super bone?” Jimmy cut in.

“I'm gonna fucking kick you out of my friend group,” Craig warned.

Token shook his head and signed the cast as well, “Sorry you have such bad taste in friends man. Guess I'm all that's left. Well, me and your boyfriend. Where is he anyway? Wasn't he with us when we left school?” Token directed his question at Clyde.

“Oh yeah! I thought so too. Maybe Jimmy's gay jokes scared him off,” Clyde shrugged.

Craig shrugged, “he has work right after school on Wednesdays, he probably had to go straight there.”

“Aw, you memorized his schedule, that's pretty cute,” Token said.

“Yeah, because we walk there together almost every time,” Craig protested, then realized that didn't actually do anything to help his argument.

“That's just cuter,” Token snorted. “Well, Clyde, Jimmy and I are gonna go play games at my house, want to tag along?”
Clyde shook his head, “Maybe later. I have a thing to do.”

“You're gonna go visit Tweek at work, aren't you?” Token asked in an accusing tone.

“None of your damn business. Maybe I'm going grave robbing,” Craig shot back.

The other boys all snickered and Craig flipped them off before walking away. So what if he wanted to see Tweek? He was pretty much his best friend at this point. They did so much together that it was almost weird not being around him for a day. He realized he shouldn't even care, since the point was kind of for others to think he was gay, but for some reason he did kind of care. He just didn't want his friends seeing him as like, THAT gay. He shook his head and pushed the thought from his mind. He just wanted to go visit his friend, there was nothing gay about that.

He kicked the door to the shop open, knocking the little hanging bell off its hook and sending it clanging along the floor. “Honey I'm home!” he announced loudly. Okay that was a little gay. In fairness though, they were supposed to act gay in public, so, it didn't really count. He was pretty sure it didn't count.

Mr. Tweak gave a tired sigh, “Tweek isn't here, Craig. Please stop knocking our bell down.”

“It's a stupid bell,” Craig said.

“Pick it up and set it on the counter,” Mr. Tweak demanded. Craig rolled his eyes and picked the thing up, tossing it up onto the counter, where it gave another harsh clang.

Mr. Tweak had a look on his face that said 'if you didn't make my son so happy I'd be wringing your neck'. Craig took that as his cue to leave. Before he did though, he had to know where Tweek actually was, since he wasn't here.

“Uh, where is Tweek?” he asked.

“Out,” Mr. Tweak said simply, picking up the bell and fetching a step ladder from behind the counter.

“Out...where?”

“Out,” Mr. Tweak repeated, then he pointed at the door, motioning that Craig better get out too.

Craig groaned and left the store, shoving his good hand in his pocket. Where the hell was he? He pretty much lived here. Craig decided to check the other two or three places Tweek generally hung around, but he wasn't at the park or the crack house-er-Kenny's garage. Craig sighed as he left the obvious meth lab, closing the garage door back behind him.

“Hey dude!” came a muffled voice from nearby. Craig looked over to see Kenny waving at him. Oh good, this asshole.

Craig didn't really mind Kenny that much, he more minded the company he kept, but he just wasn't really in the mood to talk to anyone outside his tiny circle of friends today. He gave a short grunt in response.

“What's wrong?” Kenny asked, approaching him, “somebody kick your ass?”

Craig gave him a questioning look and Kenny pointed to the cast.

“Oh, right, no, no it was just an accident. I was just looking for Tweek. Has he been by today?”
Craig asked.

Kenny shook his head, “Don’t think so. I try to stay out of my parents’ bullshit though. Gotta keep Karen out of harm’s way, so I just avoid the uh...special people in our garage the most I can.”

Craig nodded in understanding, “Sorry man. Good luck with...all that.”

Kenny sighed and shrugged, then pointed back down the street, “you should really get outta here, the addicts get restless around five and usually try to kill any living thing too close to them.”

Craig nodded and headed off, “Thanks for the warning!” He called, waving to Kenny with his good hand as he ran off. Kenny waved back before heading inside.

Craig slowed to a light jog once he hit downtown again, Jesus Christ, Kenny really had it rough. He was suddenly very thankful that his worst problems were a broken arm and a missing boyfriend. He sighed and came to a stop outside a little convenience store, sitting on the curb with a huff. It wasn’t that he needed to be around Tweek or anything, he was just annoyed that he couldn’t find him. He wanted to show him his broken arm and watch him freak out. Tweek worrying over nothing was always so funny.

Craig closed his eyes, listening to the distant sounds of people chatting at an outdoor restaurant, when he felt a foot tap against his back. “What are you, a hobo? Get up stupid.”

Craig opened his eyes and twisted around quickly, “Tweek? Where the fuck have you been?!”

Tweek made a small strangled noise, looking very confused, “I-I was inside that store, where you like, looking for me or something?”

Craig stood up, clearing his throat and shoving his hand back in his pocket, “No.” Smooth. Good save.

Tweek snorted and punched his shoulder, “You were! Dude that’s so gay. How long were you looking? Did you try places other than the coffee shop?”

Craig looked away in embarrassment, not wanting to admit just how fervently he’d been looking for Tweek. He realized now how ridiculous it seemed. Tweek gave another shaky laugh and swiped Craig’s hat.

“Hey! Give that back you little bitch!” Craig exclaimed.

“Oh I’d like to see you try and get it back with just one hand,” Tweek teased, shoving the hat over his messy spikes. His hair poked out from under the hat at all odd angles, pressing against his face and into his eyes a bit. Craig thought that he looked kind of cute. Objectively, not in a gay way.

He huffed and smoothed down his own hair, looking at Tweek in mild irritation, “I’ll kick you,” he warned.

“I know you wouldn’t,” Tweek grinned, “So, wh-what happened to your arm?”

“Got in a fight with like, two dogs and a sixth grader,” he said.

“Broke it sliding down the stair rail?” Tweek offered.

Craig hated sometimes how well Tweek knew him. They spent way too much time together for him to just guess that off hand. He fixed Tweek with a glare and the blonde snickered, grabbing Craig’s
casted arm and carefully looking it over.

“I t-told you a thousand times to stop sliding down that thing. It's so dangerous you know? Y-you could've been hurt a lot worse. Like if the rail broke and impaled you, or if you fell on your head and cracked your skull, or..s-something worse!”

Craig smiled a little, “What's worse than a cracked skull and being impaled?”

Tweek twitched and looked thoughtful, “Uh...t-tiger attack?”

Craig made a short sound that might've even qualified as a laugh, “What is it with you and tigers?”

“I don't like tigers,” Tweek replied. He rummaged through the bag of stuff he was holding, pulling out a packet of sugar and shaking his head, “H-hang on, I had something in here for you too.”

Craig looked at him curiously, “you do?”

Tweek nodded, “I h-had to get food anyway, and I heard about your arm at school, s-so I thought I'd make your cast less boring. U-unless you like the most exciting thing about it to be Clyde's gel pen signature.”

Craig rolled his eyes, “It's a cast, it doesn't need to be exciting. It just needs to make my arm better.”

Tweek gave another twitch and pulled out a pack of stickers, “a-ahah!” Craig went to question him, but Tweek smacked a hand to Craig's face, shushing him as he tore open the packet with his teeth and started placing sticker after sticker onto the cast.

“What if I don't like stickers huh? You're condemning me to a month with something I hate! I won't forgive you for this crime!” Craig protested.

Tweek shook his head rapidly and let go of Craig's arm, “O-oh god I should've asked first, I know you like planets and stuff but stickers are so hard to peel off casts what if I did it wrong o-or covered up a name or something oh Jesus-”

Craig lifted his arm up to examine the cast, which was now covered in glittery planet stickers. Tweek hadn't covered up any of the signatures, and the planets were kind of perfect against the blue background of the cast.

“W-well? You do like it right?” Tweek asked, suddenly getting anxious again, “O-oh god I should've asked first, I know you like planets and stuff but stickers are so hard to peel off casts what if I did it wrong o-or covered up a name or something oh Jesus-”

Craig pulled Tweek into an awkward half hug, “I'm not a nerd. You just don't appreciate space and all it's glory. I like the stickers.”


Craig smiled a little, “Yeah, I can tell.”

He pulled back and offered Tweek his good hand to hold, which the boy gladly took. They were just so used to this kind of thing now, they'd been doing it for months. They used to only hug when they were pretty sure someone was around to give them money, but Tweek seemed to find hugs kind of calming, so Craig started doing it more often when he was freaking out too badly. Craig never hugged anyone else outside his family, hell the one time Clyde tried to hug him Craig had given him a black eye. But Craig found that he actually felt pretty comfortable hugging Tweek. And the hand-holding had just become pretty standard. They spent so much time together at school and in public
that they just held hands whenever they were going the same direction. The girls at school (and Butters) absolutely ate it up. So they just found that as more and more time went on, the more they were just casually affectionate in little ways.

“So, do you need to get back to the coffee shop?” Craig asked as they walked.

Tweek nodded, “Y-yeah, um, I want to eat first though, want to come with me? We can s-sit at the park for a few minutes. That's where I usually eat.”

“I know, I checked there first,” Craig said.

“I thought you said you weren't looking for me?” Tweek teased.

Craig said nothing, just walked a little faster. Not that it did anything, since they were holding hands and all. Tweek snorted and followed after him. They got to the park and Craig took his usual spot, sitting on the grass by the bench while Tweek set his food out. He always ate after school instead of at school. Craig was pretty sure he was afraid that the cafeteria food had poison or something in it. Craig never understood why he didn't just pack a lunch to eat there though.

“Hey Tweek, how come you don't bring your lunch to school? Then you could still eat with me and the guys.”

Tweek gave a shaky laugh, “What, miss me that much at lunch time?”

“No! I just think it's weird that you never eat at school,” Craig huffed.

“I-I Don't really like being around that many people. It's just kinda loud, that's all,” Tweek said, pulling his deli sandwich out of the bag.

“School is always loud,” Craig pointed out, leaning back against one of Tweek's legs to look up at him.

Tweek shifted, “It's...different. Y-you know how much...like...louder they are at lunch. C-cause you're allowed to yell and run around and stuff a-and it's this like, closed in space and..it's just..like...a lot, you know?”

Craig frowned, no, he really didn't know. He never really paid attention to it. He guessed the kids were a little louder at lunch, but he just tuned them all out regardless, so he hadn't really noticed. “I just tune them out,” he said.

“Y-you don't get it man. It's fine,” Tweek said. He seemed a little disappointed though, like he had been hoping Craig would get it.

Craig shifted around to face Tweek, “Well, maybe you can explain it?”

Tweek shook his head, “N-no, I really can't. Just know I have my reasons for not going into the cafeteria, okay?”

Craig sighed, “Alright. I still feel like maybe if I understood I could help or something.”

“Y-you can't though. So drop it,” Tweek said, getting irritated.

“I'm just trying to be a good friend, jeez Tweek, no need to get pissy,” Craig huffed.

Tweek made a strangled sound and took a bite of his sandwich, not saying anything else. The two sat in fairly uncomfortable silence for awhile, Tweek eating and Craig picking at the grass. He
figured he should probably just leave it alone if Tweek was this touchy, but at the same time he really wanted to understand what was going on in his head.

---

The next day at school, Craig was sitting at the lunch table with his friends, pointing out the different planets on his cast, “And this one’s Saturn. Tweek got them for me, he’s way cooler than any of your stupid girlfriends.”

Token huffed, “Hey, Nichole is cool! We just aren’t as co-dependent as you and Tweek.”

“Bebe is hot,” Clyde added.

“A good point Clyde,” Craig said flatly, “and yet, she still sucks ass compared to Tweek.”

“You saying Tweek is hotter than Bebe?” Clyde questioned.

“Wh-no. I’m saying he’s more awesome than Bebe in every way. Because he has more than two brain cells and doesn't think tween magazines have good advice.”

Token laughed and Clyde huffed, “They have good advice sometimes!”

Jimmy walked up then, climbing up into his seat, “H-hey fellas. I was just talkin' to Wendy, she was sayin' you guys need to stop yelling so loud about y-your whores.”

“She did not say whores,” Token said.

“O-okay, she said 'partners', but mine is buh...better.”

Craig rolled his eyes, “She can shove it up her self-righteous ass.” He turned to face Wendy, who looked irritated, and flipped her off. She stuck her tongue out at him and turned back to her group of friends.

Craig sighed and looked around, mind wandering back to what Tweek had said the day before about the cafeteria being extra loud. He sat there a minute in silence, trying to hear what Tweek heard. The girls were all whispering about God knew what, he could hear the trekkie kids roleplaying in the distance, and oh, yep, there was the distinct sound of Kyle screaming at Cartman about Judaism. The more he listened, the more the sounds seemed to all jumble together into a mish-mash of noise. It was annoying, but that was about it. He grunted and shook his head, focusing back on his group of friends.

“You zone out there for a minute?” Token asked, “We were talking to you.”

“I'm sure you weren't saying anything important,” Craig offered.

“Thanks,” Token mumbled dryly.

“Hey guys, do you like, think the cafeteria is too loud?” Craig asked.

“Are you gonna start complaining about that too? Don't you have a long enough list of things that annoy you?” Token sighed.

“No no it's not that, it's just, that's why Tweek said he doesn't eat with us. Because it's like, too loud or something.”

“Muh...maybe he just doesn't like Kyle’s screeching,” Jimmy suggested, “I-it can be startling, and he
is easily stuh-stahh...sst-

“I don't think it's just that,” Craig cut Jimmy off, “He was talking about like, feeling confined or something, and noise levels and like...kids running around being extra annoying or something? I was trying to understand it, but like, I just don't. I mean yeah the other kids are annoying as fuck, but I don't see the issue.”

Clyde patted his hands on the table, “Oh oh! Maybe he just thinks WE'RE annoying! Ever think of that?”

“I'm sure he thinks YOU'RE annoying,” Craig grumbled back.

Token looked deep in thought, trying to figure it out for himself, “I dunno, sounds like some kind of personal thing...maybe it's like, a mental thing? He does have a lot of problems. Maybe you should bring it up to Mackey. He might know what you're talking about.”

Craig shrugged, “Guess I could, but I dunno if that'd work, Mackey's still pissed at me 'cause I keyed his car.”

“Dude. Why'd you key his car?” Token asked.

“He said I have behavioral issues.”

“And that's not proving him right!?” Token asked, exasperated.

Craig shrugged, “I guess I'll just drop it for now. Maybe Tweek'll be able to explain better eventually or something.”

---

After school, Craig met up with Tweek again, and before they could get out the door, they were stopped by Bebe, “Hold it right there guys. Here. You're coming to this,” she said, shoving a paper in Tweek's hand.

He squawked and looked it over, “U-uh...a p-party? I don't think-”

“It's my birthday, and I'm inviting my favorite people!” Bebe explained.

“So a bunch or girls, your boyfriend, and us?” Craig asked.

“And Token!” Bebe smiled, “He's cute.”

“And Token!” Bebe smiled, “He's cute.”

“He's dating Nichole,” Craig pointed out.

“There's no law against lookin'!” Bebe protested, “Anyway, you gotta come! It'll be super fun, we're gonna play games and eat junk food and prank call City Wok.”

“Hm, all things Tweek and I can do at my house, in the comfort of my room,” Craig said, “I think we'll pass.”

Tweek nodded rapidly in agreement, “I don't r-really like parties, sorry Bebe, it's nothing against you r-really!”

Bebe pouted, “Nuh-uh, you two spend ALL your time together, and you hardly spend time with anyone else! You're going, whether you like it or not!”
“Pretty sure you can't make us,” Craig said, flipping her off awkwardly with his casted arm and pushing past her, Tweek's hand firmly clasped in his.

Tweek gave an apologetic shrug as he was dragged along. He gave a small sigh as they made it out of the school, “J-Jeez, she wouldn't let up. Thanks for that Craig.”

Craig shrugged, “I hate people and you seem to hate a lot of noise, so this benefits both of us really. Want to hang out at my place? We can order pizza and watch red racer.”

Tweek smiled and nodded, “That s-sounds fun.”

---

Craig and Tweek were about halfway through the pizza and well into the fourth episode of red racer on Craig's DVR when the door swung open. Craig waved off the intruder, “Go awaay I'm watching cartoons with my boyfriend.”

He heard an irritated sigh and looked over to see his mom standing in his room's doorway, “Craig. Bebe's parents just called me. They said you and Tweek were very rude to Bebe, refusing an invitation to a birthday party? I know you don't much care for people Craig, but socializing is important every now and then.”

“I'm socializing right now, with someone I actually like being around,” Craig said, patting Tweek's head and causing him to jump.

“nGAH!” he yelped, surprised by the sudden touch.

Craig's mom smiled a little, “Yes I know, but this will be good for you. I already talked to Tweek's parents, and they agree with me that you should both go.”

Tweek looked over, eyes wide, “W-what?! Why?! I hate Bebe!”

Craig nodded in agreement, “Yeah, we both hate Bebe.”

Craig's mom clicked her tongue, “That's too bad. It's this Saturday, and you're both going. It's been decided.” She closed the door back before Craig could protest any further.

Tweek made a long half strangled noise, tugging on his hair, “No no nooo I hate my parentssss why do they do these things? Parties are the worst, s-so many things can go wrong a-and nobody has any regard for safety a-and present boxes have sharp corners!”

Craig sighed and rested his hand on Tweek's head, “It'll be alright, just stick by me the whole time, I mean, like we wouldn't do that anyway, but just, stick by me. I'll keep the girls from swarming us. I'll punch one if I have to.”

Tweek snickered a bit, “I-if you end up fist fighting a group of misguided fangirls, then this might end up almost being enjoyable.”

“Hey don't knock a girl's strength, Wendy broke my nose once. I hope those terrors don't gang up on me.”

“Well you could take Bebe real easy,” Tweek said, “A-and Millie.”

“Well yeah, true, but what if Red gets involved? Or Kelly?”

Tweek snorted, “I'd say Clyde and Token will be there to help, b-but I'm not sure how well Clyde
This led to the two talking for the next half an hour about how they thought a birthday brawl would play out. They ended up deciding that Craig and Token together could probably take Wendy and Red, Clyde would distract Bebe by kissing her, and Tweek would hit as many girls with a chair as he could.

Both boys were laughing by the end of their discussion. Tweek losing it on the floor as he described himself picking up a chair and spinning around like a tornado, knocking over girls left and right. Craig was snickering, “A-and if Clyde got knocked out, we could just swing him around as a weapon-pfff...he's fat enough to do some solid damage!”

Tweek snorted and shook his head, “Okay okay, m-maybe..MAYBE it won’t be terrible. As long as we have our battle plan.”

Craig nodded in agreement, “Now we are truly prepared for the worst.”

“A-and if we get cornered?” Tweek asked.

“Exploding cake.”

“Exploding cake?”

“Yeah, fireworks in the cake, it goes everywhere, totally ruins the party and distracts the girls,” Craig snickered.

Tweek laughed and leaned back against the edge of the bed, “You are, t-truly a master of planning.”

The boys went back to watching cartoons after that, both considerably calmer now. They were both still dreading going to that damn party, but figured that if they could stay close together and laugh their way through it, maybe it wouldn't be entirely terrible.

Chapter End Notes

I'm having way too much fun writing this sappy story.

More to come very soon I'm sure! Jesus these boys are just so fun to write!
Saturday came way too quickly, and Craig wasn't looking forward to Bebe's party at all. Sure he'd get to spend time with Tweek, but he would've been able to do that anyway. He walked around his room, struggling to get dressed with one arm, insisting to his mom that he was too old to need help getting dressed, even if he did have one useless arm. He managed to pull on a T-shirt that said 'I need Space' on it, with a picture of the moon under the text. It was punny and he hated it, but he also loved it. Tricia had given it to him last Christmas, and he wore it under his hoodie pretty much every day. He tried and failed several times to pull on his hoodie over the shirt, and eventually gave up, tossing it aside. Every other day this week, it had only been a little annoying trying to pull on the thick coat, but today, with everything already heading towards terrible, he decided it just wasn't worth the hassle.

He headed down the stairs, Hat still in place, though it looked a little weird without its matching sweater. He sighed and entered the kitchen, where Tricia was already eating fistfuls of cereal out of the box.

“You're gonna get diabetes,” Craig warned.

“You look stupid,” Tricia greeted in reply.

Craig frowned and pulled down a bowl, snatching the box from her to pour himself some cereal, “Thanks, you look fat.”

Tricia rolled her eyes, “No stupid. I mean, what's up with that? You're wearing sweat pants and your dumb hat and a t-shirt? None of those things look good together.”

“It funny, you know, it's like you think I actually care about how I look,” Craig retorted, passing the box of cereal back to her.

“Well you should! You're going somewhere with Tweek today right?”

“We always go places together.”

“Yeah, but you're like, going to a party as a couple! Like mom and dad do!” Tricia said, shoving her hand into the cereal box.

“No. We're being forced to go to a birthday party that we don't want to go to, with people we hate and don't care about.”

Tricia grinned, “So EXACTLY like the parties mom and dad go to.”

Craig rolled his eyes and Tricia threw a cocoa puff at him, “Would you just try to act like an actual human for one day? Mom'll be mad if you try to leave dressed like that anyway.”

“Well I'm mad at her for making me go at all,” Craig replied, eating the piece of cereal his sister had hit him with.

Tricia got up and ran out of the room without saying another word. Craig looked after her questioningly. She ran out of the room a lot, sure, but usually he said something pissy that prompted her to do it. He shrugged and went back to eating his bowl of cereal. She'd be back if she felt like it. And she was, she came back after just five minutes, holding a pair of Craig's jeans and a comb.
“Why do you—”

“You're gonna look nice dammit!” Tricia proclaimed, “And you can't fight me with only one arm!” She ran over and snatched the hat off his head, attacking him with the comb as he protested, trying to push her away with one hand. She was strong for a five year old, and eventually Craig gave up, going back to eating his cereal as she brushed his hair down.

“Why do you care so much about this?” Craig questioned as Tricia set the comb down, looking over her work.

“Because,” she replied stubbornly, “Now go change into these jeans.”

“Nah,” Craig replied, continuing to eat.

Tricia huffed, “Okay, fine. I care ‘cause this is like, the happiest you've ever been, and I know you're just pretending or whatever, but I think you care more than you know, and maybe if you put a little effort into it, Tweek would realize how cool you can be! You're just like, really hard to like. At first I mean, because you're so, you know, you.”

“You're making me feel fantastic,” Craig said flatly.

“No no, like, I just mean, look, you guys are pretty good friends, and it seems like you want to do more stuff when you're around him. So maybe if you tried putting in a little effort even when you don't want to, you might end up enjoying yourself and like...coming out of your shell a little more?”

Craig looked at her for a minute, thinking it over, then he finally sighed and took the jeans, “Fine. But if anyone at the party calls me hot or something, I'll punch you.”

Tricia snorted, “Just go change already asshole!”

Craig went back upstairs and took about ten minutes getting the damn pants on. It was incredibly difficult to do one-handed. While he struggled with the zipper, he thought over what Tricia had said. He did seem to feel happier lately, at least for a the most part, and Tweek was definitely responsible for that. Maybe his sister was actually right about this, and if he tried to enjoy himself, he actually might? That was a weird thought, and he doubted it, but...he figured he didn't have much to lose, and it'd make his sister happy anyway.

He managed to get the jeans buttoned and looked in the mirror on the back of his door. Tricia had done a good job combing his hair, and he realized how weirdly normal he looked in a t-shirt and jeans. He looked like any other kid, well, any other kid if that kid had had their emotions surgically removed. He tested out a small smile, felt that looked even weirder, and went back to his typical bland expression.

He opened his door to find Tricia already standing there, looking excited. He raised an eyebrow and she grinned, hugging him, “Yay! You look like you give a shit! Congratulations!”

Craig rolled his eyes and patted Tricia's head, “You're so weird.”

Craig's mom was walking out of her room just then, and smiled brightly when she saw Craig, “Ohh don't you look so handsome! And I thought you weren't looking forward to this party!”

“I'm not. Tricia convinced me to dress like this,” Craig replied.

“Look mom, I made him look like a real human person!” Tricia grinned.
“Good job sweetie, let's hope it's enough to fool them,” she whispered.

“Fool who?” Craig asked.

“The emotionless aliens of your home planet sweetheart, who else?”

Craig shook his head and his mom laughed, pulling both kids into a hug, “Ohh I'm just kidding sweetheart. You're going to have fun today, I'm sure of it!”

---

Craig stood on the sidewalk near Bebe's house, he'd been waiting for Tweek for nearly fifteen minutes, and he really didn't want to go in without him. Finally, tired of waiting, he pulled out his phone and texted him a quick 'where the hell are you?'. He shoved his phone back in his pocket and sighed, rocking on his heels as he waited.

His phone buzzed in his pocket five minutes later, a text that just read 'already inside, had to get here early. I made the cake'

Craig shook his head and headed up to the house, couldn't Tweek have told him about that earlier? Of course, he just kind of felt bad for him now, he was probably having to put up with so much shit by himself. And he'd gotten roped into making the cake? That really sucked. He knocked on the door exactly once before it was flung open and roughly three pairs of arms pulled him inside. Bebe, Red, and a Japanese looking girl he didn't recognize were chattering excitedly, commenting on how nice he looked and how they were SO happy he finally showed up.

“You know Craig I'm gonna be honest, I really didn't think you'd show up!” Bebe laughed.

“I wasn't going to leave Tweek to deal with you monsters by himself,” Craig replied, pulling himself free of the hungry grip of those hyenas known as girls. Sometimes he really felt like the only sensible girls around were Wendy and his little sister.

Bebe rolled her eyes and tried to grab his hand to lead him somewhere, but Craig slapped her hand away, “No. No one is allowed to touch me.”

Bebe pouted, “You hold hands all the time, don't be so weird Craig!”

“I hold hands with my little sister so she won't get kidnapped, and I hold hands with Tweek...kind of also so he won't get kidnapped. I don't care if you get kidnapped,” Craig replied. Sure he also held hands with Tweek for just the pure reason of looking gay, but that seemed like a really dumb reason to give. Though honestly after that whole 'spirit of human kindness' incident he really did worry about Tweek getting kidnapped sometimes.

Bebe groaned, “Whatever asshole. Just go out back then, that's were most of the guests are. Me, Red, and Kimi are gonna go get the games!”

Red gave Craig finger guns as she walked off, and the Japanese girl, Kimi, looked him over like she couldn't wait to draw a picture of this, then she hurried off as well. Craig was now very much regretting looking halfway decent. There was going to be an absurd amount of art being passed around on Monday, and he was NOT looking forward to that.

He shook his head and decided to push the thought from his head, for now he had to go make sure Tweek was doing okay. He headed out into the backyard and looked around, trying to locate his
twitchy friend. The yard looked pretty nice, there were two tables of snack stuff, a small table of presents, an empty area he presumed they were going to put games in, and about six people wandering around. He finally spotted Tweek near the edge of the yard, looking a bit more jittery than usual as Nichole and another Japanese girl attempted to talk to him. His eyes scanned the yard frantically before locking with Craig's, and look of relief washed over him.

“Craig!” he called, waving him over.

Craig headed over and pushed past the girls crowding him, nearly knocking Nichole over as he moved to stand by Tweek, “Back up bitches.”

Nichole stumbled and frowned, “Craig, that was really rude!”

The other girl just looked thrilled, grinning wider as Craig took Tweek's hand and protectively tugged him a bit closer. He noticed this and shot the girl a glare. She wasn't phased in the slightest, and just turned and hurried off, excitedly murmuring something.

“You're a smart girl Nichole, you should know better than to crowd Tweek like that. You're gonna give him a heart attack, like a cornered rabbit or something,” Craig huffed.

Nichole looked from Craig to Tweek, who was pressed pretty close to Craig, looking somewhat frightened. “Oh, god, you're right,” Nichole frowned, “I'm so sorry Tweek, I guess I just wasn't thinking. I'll give you some space. Maybe we can talk later, if you're up to it!” she waved and headed off, leaving the two boys alone.

Tweek gave an audible sigh and Craig patted his head, he decided Nichole was another girl that wasn't entirely terrible. Token had good taste. Tweek leaned against Craig a bit, always seeming a little calmer around him.

“You could've just told them to fuck off you know,” Craig said.

“I know,” Tweek mumbled, “I just, nngh...I actually like Nichole you know? I don't want to upset her.”

Craig shrugged, “I just don't really care who I upset.”

“O-oh come on, you care a little.”

“Not really. Watch this. Hey Clyde!” Craig called. Clyde looked over from where he was eating an entire handful of chips, Craig flipped him off, “Fuck you!” Clyde looked down sadly and Craig looked back to Tweek, “See?”

Tweek snorted, “N-not what I meant, but yes, you're a total dick to all your friends, good job.”

Tweek nudged Craig's side, “By the way, y-you actually look nice today, what gives?”

Craig scoffed, “Excuse you, I look amazing every day.”

“Craig your hoodie has a torn pocket and a really noticeable gravy stain on the front.”

“...I still look amazing. Fuck you. And my sister insisted I wear something decent today because she's weird and wanted me to look good,” Craig shrugged.

“Well...you do,” Tweek said kind of softly, “...look good I mean. It's really weird, seeing you without your hat.”
“You've seen me without my hat plenty, you steal it all the time,” Craig noted.

“Y-yeah but your hair is actually like, not all wildly messed up like it usually is under your hat, it looks nice.”

“You're being weird,” Craig said.

Tweek punched him in the arm, hard, “Just take the compliment asshole!”

“Ow! My one good arm!” Craig complained.

Tweek raised his fist again and Craig raised his good hand in defense, “Okay okay thank you for the compliment!”

Tweek smiled and lowered his hand, “Th-that's better.”

The two tried their hardest to just hang out on the edges of the party and not be noticed, but of course Bebe wasn't having any of that. She managed to drag the two over to the game area within the hour, and they quickly found themselves subjected to a lot of stupid and boring card and board games. After ten minutes of candy land, Craig got bored and kicked the whole thing over.

“Oops I guess we all lose,” He said flatly as Bebe looked at him in shock.

“Craig! What the hell?!”

“You can't expect good behavior when you pretty much forced me to be here,” Craig scoffed.

Bebe narrowed her eyes, and Craig had a very bad feeling suddenly. A thin smile spread over her face and she said, “Well, since Craig decided to ruin our board game, why don't we play something he can't knock over. Who's up for Truth or Dare?”

Craig shook his head and Tweek looked scared, Clyde looked excited, because he was an idiot, and the girls all seemed thrilled. Token frowned, “Uh, I have a feeling that could get out of hand pretty quickly, I don't really think-”

“You'll probably get to kiss Nichole,” Bebe said.

“I'm on board,” Token said quickly.

Craig shot Token a look that said 'you absolute traitor', and Token just shrugged apologetically. Tweek twitched and scooted closer to Craig, “D-do we have some kind of veto system? B-because I really don't want to do anything that could kill me, l-like climbing a tree or eating a bug or something.”

“Eating a bug can't kill you,” Clyde said.

“I-it can if it has lyme disease...or if you accidentally breath it in and choke to death, or if it's a poisonous spider, or if—”

Craig rested a hand on Tweek's shoulder, “I agree that there should be a veto system to avoid anything getting outlandish.”

Bebe huffed, “Well, I guess, but you still have to do SOMETHING. So, if you refuse a dare or refuse to answer a question, you should have to...” she pursed her lips, pondering for a minute, “hmm...kiss Craig!”
Craig looked appalled, “I didn't sign up for this.”

“It doesn't have to be on the mouth, just somewhere on the face, and the boys and girls both have to follow the veto rule. It is decided,” Bebe said, smacking her foot on the ground like a judge's gabble, giving the final ruling. Craig felt more like he'd just been given a death sentence.

“If Clyde comes anywhere near my face I'll give him a black eye,” was all he could think of in response.

Tweek looked pretty relieved though, and looked at Craig, “I-I know it's a lot to ask, b-but um, if you go with this, I'll really owe you. I-I just can't handle it if I have to do something dangerous o-or panic inducing.”

Craig's face scrunched up, he really REALLY didn't want to go with this...but he had a feeling he'd be saving Tweek from having a full on panic attack, so he relented. “Fine. I'll do it, but it absolutely can NOT be on the lips.”

Bebe nodded, “Deal. We wouldn't want to steal your first kiss after all. Assuming you and Tweek haven't kissed yet anyway.”

“Can we just start you stupid game already?” Craig snapped.

The kids all sat in a big circle, there were about twelve kids in total, about four of them girls that Craig knew were responsible for the art around school. Bebe sat at the top of the circle, looking like a queen ruling over her subjects, ready to rain down uncomfortable questions and embarrassment on all her people. She gave Craig a wicked grin, “Since you ruined our last game, I think it's only fair that you go first. Truth or Dare?”

“Truth,” Craig said, because he was boring and didn't feel like playing into Bebe's cruel twisted hand. He would not be embarrassed by her dammit. Not today.

“Fine. What's...the most romantic thing you think Tweek ever did?” Bebe asked.

Oh good, the questions were all going to be like this, weren't they? Craig heaved a sigh and shook his head, “I don't fucking know. We're nine, can nine year olds even be romantic?”

Bebe pouted, “Booo. Bad Craig. I don't care if it wasn't like a movie or something! Flowers and kissing in the rain are like, adult romance things! Come on, surely Tweek's given you something or done something nice for you!”

Craig glanced towards Tweek, then looked back to Bebe, “…he gave me a packet of plastic stars once. He uh, knows I like space stuff, so he gave me these little plastic stars you can stick on your ceiling. They're still on my ceiling.”

He felt Tweek's eyes on him, but he didn't look over, he didn't want to make this even more awkward than it already was. Bebe seemed satisfied with that answer and nodded, “That's pretty cute. Alright, your turn to pick someone then.”

Craig glared Token down, “Black boy. Truth or Dare?”

Token sweat, “Uh,” he gulped, Craig knew way too many of his secrets, truth wouldn't end well, but he doubted dare would either. “D...Dare,” he said uncertainly.

Craig nodded towards the ground, “Eat some dirt, traitor.”
“You're an asshole,” Token huffed.

The game went on for awhile, with Red having to cut off a piece of her hair, Bebe admitting she sort of stalked Clyde at one point, Clyde having to eat a bug Craig found, and Wendy having to prank call Stan and tell him she hated dogs. Wendy had vetoed that, not wanting to upset Stan, and had fortunately been kind to Craig and just given him a very quick peck on the cheek. Now it was back around to Bebe, and she had her hyena gaze on Tweek, who had managed to avoid being dared or questioned so far.

“Tweek,” she hummed, sugary voice dripping with a hidden poison.

Tweek jerked, afraid, and Bebe just grinned wider, like a wolf that spotted a wounded rabbit. “Truth or Dare sweetie?”

“Don't call him that,” Craig said.

Tweek gulped and shifted, “Uuhmmm...gnnrrr...t-truth?”

Bebe looked like she had been expecting this, and she sat back a bit, eyes glinting, “What's the most embarrassing thing you've ever done?” She knew Tweek wouldn't answer that, she wanted him to veto it. Craig decided Bebe was his least favorite person.

Tweek twitched and started shaking harder, “aahrrnn...I-I don't like that question. I-it's kind of much d-don't you think?”

“Oh, did you want to veto it?” Bebe asked, smiling innocently.

Tweek's jittering stopped briefly, like he also realized what she was doing. Craig expected him to get up and run, or answer the question just to avoid having to give the girls more things to scream about, or to just pass out on the spot. Then Craig realized something, Tweek had seemed okay with the veto system Bebe proposed in the first place. He actually asked Craig to go along with it. Tweek was being really weird today, and he surprised Craig again by nodding, “Yeah. I veto it,” he said.

The girls all looked like they were trying to contain screams, and Bebe leaned forward excitedly, “Okay, well, you know the rules then, go ahead.”

Tweek wrapped his arms around Craig, and Craig could swear he could feel Tweek's heart hammering away in his chest, but he didn't focus on it for long, because the next thing he knew, Tweek pressed a gentle kiss to the corner of his mouth. Tweek smiled a little and whispered, “I can't believe you still have those stars, you fucking nerd.” Then he pulled back away, still resting against Craig as the black haired boy sat there, completely dazed and baffled. The girls were all freaking the fuck out, and Clyde and Token were both quietly whispering to each other. Craig saw Token slide Clyde five dollars, and he decided he'd question that later.

The game ended a little bit after that, as it seemed the objective of it had pretty much just been getting Tweek and Craig to kiss, and all the kids gathered around soon for cake and presents. Tweek looked incredibly happy for some reason. Even though the girls were crowding around them more than before, badgering them with questions and trying to get Craig to pay them some attention. They kept asking if Tweek had kissed him on the mouth and what it was like, to which Craig waved them off, not bothering to even acknowledge them. It was getting tougher though, as the girls were just not letting up. For a minute there he felt like that battle plan he and Tweek worked out might actually be needed.

Tweek seemed weirdly calm during all this. Yes he was still jerking and twitching every time a girl
touched his arm or tried to get his attention, but for him it was calmer than usual. Craig pulled Tweek closer to him and whispered, “what the hell are you so happy about? These girls are going to tear us to fucking shreds.”

Tweek smiled a little bit more, mouth twitching up at the corner as his gaze rested on the nearby table, “I made the cake,” was his only reply.

Craig looked over at it, seeing a nice, very cutely decorated pink and white cake with little icing daisies all over it, “...it's a cute cake, nice job, we're still going to die.”

Tweek gripped Craig's hand and whispered again, “I made the cake, Craig.”

Craig frowned, not understanding. Bebe's mother walked out and lit the big center candle, a white and pink striped thing with an almost comically large wick, “Everyone, stop badgering the gay boys, it's time to sing happy birthday!”

Tweek's grin grew bigger and Craig's eyes widened, “Y..you didn't...that's not...you didn't.”

Tweek held Craig back as the other kids all moved away from them, going over to the table to sing happy birthday. Craig watched in shock and awe as the wick of the candle seemed to get shorter and shorter, until, right towards the end of the song, it went out. The little flame disappeared into the candle completely, and Bebe's mom barely had time to notice something was off about the candle before the whole thing exploded.

The little firecracker wasn't a powerful one, but it sure gave a loud pop as it went off, setting off a chain reaction of roughly five other firecrackers that were hiding inside the cake. Frosting and sweet cake bits went everywhere, flying every which direction and coating all of the kids in a solid layer of dessert. Tweek and Craig were just far enough back that not too much of the stuff hit them, but it was still quite a bit. Craig's mouth was open in shock, and he barely heard it as Tweek tugged his wrist and whispered 'run'.

The next thing he knew, they had managed to get out of Bebe's backyard and were roughly halfway down the street. He could hear the shock wearing off from the other kids as screams filled the air. That was a hell of a way to end a party.

They ran all the way to the park before they stopped, collapsing onto the grass and just fucking losing it. Craig was laughing so hard he couldn't breathe, and Tweek was snorting loudly, trying to wipe icing off of his face.

“E-exploding cake!” Craig laughed.

“Exploding cake,” Tweek giggled.

“Y-you actually...oh my god! W-we are gonna be in SO much trouble for this!” Craig snickered.

“But it was soo worth it. B-Bebe couldn't plan for that!” Tweek grinned, “Sorry they didn't do the cake before the games.”

“That was...oh my god, that was worth every single one of those boring party games,” Craig replied, finally settling down, “You...are a fucking genius.”

Tweek gave a satisfied smile and wiped a little cake off Craig's shirt, “That was the best birthday party ever.”

Craig nodded, “Agreed.”
Gay Children and Literal Vandalism

Chapter Notes

So no one is confused, This story is basically going to have a lot of time-skipping, as I wanted to write snapshots of Tweek and Craig's life as they grow up together. I hope that makes sense, and this chapter starts with them about to enter middle school. Enjoy!

Three years came and went at a breakneck speed, and before Craig knew it, he and his friends were getting ready to become the sixth graders they all used to despise. He, Clyde, Token, Tweek, and Jimmy were all sitting around on the elementary playground lamenting this fact. They had decided to come here on their last day of summer vacation because Clyde was crying about how he'd never get to use the little rocky horse again.

Tweek was sitting cross-legged on top of the monkey bars, gripping the bars tightly with his hands for extra support as he scanned over the playground, an occasional twitch causing both him and the rickety old bars to jerk, “I can't believe that starting Monday, we won't be coming back to this place. Ngh...I hear South Park Middle School is gross and filled with STDs...what if we die on the first day from accidentally touching a diseased toilet or something?”

Craig looked up at him from where he was casually hanging upside down just a few feet away, legs threatening to lose their grip on the bars every time Tweek caused them to jerk. Craig didn't care, he was still counting up broken bones, it wouldn't stop him from being a reckless little fuck. “We aren't gonna die Tweek, Stan's sister went through middle school already, and last time I checked, none of her weird middle-school stuff rubbed off on him.”

“Isn't he severely depressed?” Tweek asked.

Craig shrugged, “That's his problem.”

“Wh-what if it's a middle school thing and he just got it early because he has an older sister huh? What then?” Tweek asked, twitching hard enough that it almost knocked Craig off the bars altogether.

He wobbled a bit before answering, “No I..I'm pretty sure that's just a person to person thing. I think everybody it depressed at some point, and Stan just got it early or something.”

Token frowned, “Man, I sure hope that's not how it works. I don't want to be depressed, my life is great.”

“I think you're immune to it if you have enough muh...money,” Jimmy teased.

Clyde looked down at his hands, rocking slowly back and forth on one of the metal rocking horses, “What if...I'm depressed right now? I mean, I like...feel sad, and...like..anxious...and kinda hungry.”

Craig clapped incredibly slowly, “He's done it. Ladies and gentlemen, Clyde Donovan has done it, he's won this year's 'biggest idiot award' for confusing depression with hunger and nostalgia. Truly a victory for America, who can finally say they've found someone dumber than the government.”

Clyde pouted and crossed his arms, “You're an asshole. I AM sad.”
“I know, we all are I think,” Craig said.

“Wh-wait, you can feel things in your huhh hollow tin chest?” Jimmy asked.

Craig stretched a hand down and grabbed some gravel, whipping it at Jimmy, who yelped, “H-help! He's assaulting a cripple!”

Tweek snickered and shook his head, “I-it really is gonna be weird moving on to middle school. L-like I know we're still kids and everything, b-but I can't but feel like it's like, this whole new chapter of our lives. A-and I'm really scared it won't be a good one. Wh-what if I fail middle school o-or never hit my growth spurt or get an STD?”

“Isn't that just implying you think Craig has an STD?” Jimmy asked. Craig hurled more gravel at him.

Tweek twitched again and his face turned pink, “N-no! That's not what I meant-Jesus...I-I just meant like, from a water fountain or a toilet or something!”

“Wow what the hell do YOU do with water fountains?” Jimmy laughed.

“One more. One more quip and I'm gonna take your crutches and beat you to death with them,” Craig warned.

Tweek gave a strained sound and twisted around, swinging down gracefully off the bars and moving to sit on a swing instead, “I-it's just weird to think about, you know? J-just, everything changing.”

“Man, now I'm starting to feel sad,” Token said. Clyde was already crying. Craig rolled his eyes and dropped off of the bars, landing with a 'smack' on his back in the gravel.

“Ow. Look, we can all sit around lamenting the loss of our childhood recess time, OR we can do something awesome and hilarious.”

“Like what?” Token asked uncertainly, getting up from his place on the slide to help Craig up and make sure he hadn't broken anything again.

“Like-1-Token oh my god stop. I'm fine. You're not my mother. I'm fine,” Craig said, batting Token away as the boy tried to look him over. “We can fuck with the school, what else?”

Token sighed and picked a piece of gravel off Craig's shirt, “That sounds like the kind of thing you're going to get sent to juvie for. Can't we just get ice cream and cry like normal kids?”

Clyde sniffled, “I like ice cream.”

Craig motioned to Clyde, “You're really saying you want all of us to be like that today?”

Token seemed to think it over, “...well...what exactly are you proposing? And..how would we even get IN the school? It's been locked pretty much all summer.”

“I-I can get us in,” Tweek offered.

Everyone looked over at him, surprised evident on their faces. Tweek blushed and looked down, swinging back and forth, “Y-you can never ask how, b-but I know how to pick locks.”

Craig's eyebrows raised and he was suddenly very very curious about what exactly Tweek got up to while he wasn't around. Jimmy grinned, “I-I think it could be fuuhh..fun! W-we can mess stuff up and make it a t-total nightmare for PC Principal a-and Miss Woman.”
Craig nodded, “Okay so, now that everyone's on board-”

“I still haven't decided if I'm okay with this,” Token cut in.

Craig pressed a hand over Token's mouth, “Now that everyone's on board, I suggest we get into the school, and then split up to cause as much damage as possible. No breaking anything expensive, we don't want our parents getting sued, and no leaving our names anywhere CLYDE.”

Clyde sniffed again, “I only did that once! It was an accident..”

Craig scoffed, “The one time I invite him to graffiti with me and he signs his damn name.”

Token pulled Craig's hand off his mouth, “That Graffiti on the founder statue was you? Jesus Christ Craig.”

Craig rolled his eyes, “Yeah yeah I'm a delinquent whatever. Let's just go! C'mon Tweek, get us inside.”

Tweek hopped up and hurried over, stumbling over his own feet a bit as he headed around the building, “T-this way. There's no cameras around this way.”

“How do you know that?” Craig whispered, following close. The other boys seemed a little less certain, but also followed after them.

Tweek led them around to the back of the building and started digging around in a bush near the basement window. Craig was about to ask him what he was doing when the boy pulled out what looked like a metal wire and a filed down nail. He walked over to the back door of the school and slid the wire into the lock, fiddling around with the nail for about a minute, then the door popped open. Craig whistled and Tweek blushed, tossing the tools back into the bush.

“Holy shit Tweek, that was impressive, you gotta teach me that some time,” Craig said.

“N-not on your life. I know you'd use it for evil,” Tweek replied, poking Craig's nose.

Token whispered, “jesus christ,” as he looked at the open door, “Tweek that was like, actual robber levels of lock picking...which I don't think is probably a good thing.”

“You don't know my life!” Tweek squeaked defensively.

Token raised his hands defensively and Craig just hugged Tweek's shoulder, heading into the school with him. Jimmy whistled, “W-wow, that sure was...weird.” Clyde wiped his eyes and headed into the school, “I wanna see our old classroom! I bet it looks weird with the lights off!”

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Before long, Craig and Tweek were branched off from the others so far that they couldn't even hear them anymore. The two walked through the gym, messing with the supplies they'd pulled out of the supply closet. Craig was deflating dodgeballs and Tweek was drawing on the volleyballs, both boys snickering as they wrecked school property.

Craig held up one of the flattened dodgeballs and spun it around in his hand, “Look, it's like a rubber pizza.”

Tweek turned his volleyball towards Craig and pointed to the rough marker doodle, “I-I drew a penis.”
Craig dropped the dodgeball and started laughing, “We're gonna make people so fucking mad oh my god!”

Tweek snickered and set the call aside, picking up another one and starting to draw one of the teacher's faces on it. There was nothing but the sound of scribbling and rubber being slashed for a solid five minutes, then Tweek spoke up again, “Hey Craig...I-I was thinking...do you think we should keep pretending, um, once we get to middle school?”

Craig paused, his pocket knife still buried in one of the rubber balls, “…I guess I hadn't really thought about it. I mean, I kinda like having the excuse to spend extra time with you, you're the only person I like spending time with besides like, Token and sometimes Clyde and Jimmy.”

Tweek smiled, still jittering a bit as he continued drawing, “P-plus we might upset a lot of people at this point, right? S-so there's not really any benefit to us not dating. Uh, fake dating.”

Craig tore the dodgeball open and tossed it aside, thinking for a minute about it, “Hm...let's see, the adults all love having two gay kids around, the boys never bully us because the girls would swarm them and the teachers would suspend them for hate crimes, the girls all love us, and we like spending time together more than with anyone else. Yeah, I don't really see a downside.”

Tweek seemed to relax a bit, jittering less as he set the volleyball aside, “Yeah, no downside. Hey, Craig, do you ever think that maybe...uh..” he faltered, grabbing another ball and shaking his head.

Craig looked at him questioningly, “What? Do I ever think what?”

Tweek shook his head against and asked something else, “Do you still have those plastic stars?”

Craig blinked, “Uh, well, I don't know what made you think of that, but, yeah. They're still on my ceiling. They still glow actually, pretty good for a pizza arcade prize.”

Tweek smiled and kept drawing on the ball, “I-I'm glad they still work. Space dork.”

Craig snatched the volleyball from Tweek and bounced it lightly off his head, making him squawk. He caught it when it bounced back and looked it over, Tweek had been drawing stars all over it. “Thinking about it a lot?” he asked, tossing the ball back to him lightly.

Tweek gripped it and looked a little embarrassed, “N-no, I just started drawing what we were talking about, that's all. Come on, I think we've messed these up enough, l-let's go loosen all the shower heads so they shoot off whenever anyone turns the showers on.”

Craig snickered and picked up the ruined balls, “God you have great ideas. This is why you're my closest friend.”

After thoroughly messing up everything they could think of in the gymnasium, they just lay on the hardwood floor for awhile, staring up at the too-high ceiling and hanging lights. Tweek reached over and grabbed Craig's hand, not saying anything, just holding it. Craig didn't really think much of it, since they did this a lot. He closed his eyes and sighed, feeling pretty relaxed despite lying on the hard floor in a building they had very much broken in to. Tweek shifted some more, and after a minute Craig felt the warmth of another person very close to him. He opened one eye and glanced over to see Tweek practically pressed against his side, staring up at the ceiling.

“You okay?” he asked, the sudden sound of his voice causing Tweek to jump.

“nGH-Y-yeah, yeah I'm fine, why?” Tweek asked, looking over at Craig.
“Dunno, you just seem like...odd. You aren't usually so...mm..” Craig pursed his lips, unable to find the right word.

“Close?” Tweek offered.

Craig shrugged, “I guess. I mean I don't really mind, it was just odd I guess.”

Tweek squeezed Craig's hand a little harder and looked back up towards the ceiling, “Well...I was just...thinking.”

“'bout what?”

“Us.”

Craig wasn't sure why, but that one word made his stomach flip and his chest feel a little tighter, what did Tweek mean by that? He was happy hanging out with him right? Before Craig could ask Tweek to elaborate on this, the door to the gym swung open and Token and Clyde ran in.

“Guys, we think we saw a janitor heading into the building, we've got to go!” Token said, then just kind of stopped. “What are you gay assholes doing?”

“Looks like you're weirdly cuddling on the floor of a gym,” Token said.

Craig sighed and sat up, Tweek getting up along with him, “Well if someone's in here I guess we'd better go.”

Tweek twitched and jumped to his feet, like what was going on was just registering, “W-wait someone's HERE? Oh GOD we're gonna get caught and go to JAIL and DIE I'M TOO YOUNG TO DIE CRAIG!”

Craig slapped a hand over his mouth, “Shh!! We won't get caught if you stop screaming!” he hissed.

“Where's Jimmy?” Craig asked.

“We told him to go ahead, since he's slower than us,” Token said, “Now come on, before we get into serious trouble!”

The four boys hurried out of the gym, making their way as quickly and quietly as they could to the back entrance. They all made it outside, but they heard a call not far behind them, a sharp, “HEY!” They all ran faster. The whole back of the school including the playground was surrounded with a chain link fence, meaning they'd have to try and jump the fence. Jimmy was already pacing around by it, since he'd need help getting over it, and Token and Craig quickly hoisted him up, pretty much tossing him over to the other side. He scrambled to his feet and hurried away the best he could with his crutches. Token had to help Clyde climb up, considering he was still chubby and a little out of shape from a summer of doing pretty much nothing. Tweek was whispering 'hurry' over and over again as Token started climbing the fence.

The janitor caught up to them about then, “Stop right there!” he demanded.

“Later crackers,” Token said, giving the peace sign and flipping over the fence, quickly disappearing down the street.

Craig gulped and Tweek clung to Craig's arm, shivering terribly as the man stared them down, “You
two are staying right here until the police arrive. Vandals are taken very seriously! Now tell me who was with you? I know you were with at least one other kid and and that black boy.”

Craig cleared his throat, standing up straighter, “Sir, we are just two small helpless gay children, and the fact you would accuse us, with no proof, of vandalizing the school...it's just...it's hate is what it is. Why do you hate gays?”

The man blinked, baffled, “I-wh-I don't hate gays!”

“Then why would you accuse us of such a heinous crime?” Craig asked.

“B-but I saw you leaving the school and-there was no one else who could've-”

“This is anti-gay slander! And I have a feeling the cops will feel the same, unless...you really think you can convince the cops over the word of two adorable gay kids?” Craig nudged Tweek, “Tweek, look adorable.”

Both boys gave the janitor an innocent look, Tweek still shivering in panic. The man sputtered for a minute before turning away, “For fuck’s sake-fine! But I'm going to look for proof. You kids better pray you aren't on any security tapes.” He stalked away and Craig and Tweek both heaved a sigh of relief.

Craig hoisted himself over the fence and Tweek followed right after, “That was so close,” Craig sighed.

“Th-that was impressive,” Tweek said, “I-I didn't think the gay card worked anymore.”

“It's 2018 and we have a PC frat house Tweek, the gay card will ALWAYS work.”

“I just hope there's no footage of us in any security tapes,” Craig said.

“w-what security tapes?” Tweek asked, brandishing three small tapes from his pocket.

Craig blinked and looked from the tapes to Tweek, “You're so attractive right now.”

Tweek blushed brightly, “W-what?”


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After finding their friends and informing all of them that they weren't in any trouble, the five all got together at a local ice cream place so Tweek and Craig could explain how they got out of the situation.

“A-and then the guy just...like...leaves. B-because I guess he's afraid of PC people thinking he's a homophobe,” Tweek snickered.

“And Tweek, the little genius, I don't even know when, but he stole the security footage,” Craig said, patting Tweek's hand.

“You two are like a modern day Bonnie and Clyde,” Token said, “And I'm not sure if that's exactly a good thing...”

“It's an awesome thing,” Craig said.
Tweek smiled happily, “I-I think it's kinda cool. S-so long as we don't start robbing banks or something.”

“Aw, no bank robbing?” Craig teased.

Tweek shoved him lightly, “No way, I'm not taking a cop's bullet for you.”

Token rolled his eyes. “You're so cute it's almost sickening. So, think you assholes are ready for middle school tomorrow?”

Clyde started sobbing into his ice cream and Token patted his back. Jimmy laughed, “I-I think it's gonna be a fuh..fun year.”

Craig nodded, “It'll sure be something. If Tweek's a part of it it might even be enjoyable.”

Tweek nodded jerkily, “I-I think I'm ready. M-mostly. As long as Craig's there it'll be okay.”

Token shook his head. “Seriously, how do you not make yourselves sick? Do you even hear the words coming out of your mouths?”

After they all finished eating, everyone headed their separate ways back home. Except Tweek and Craig, who decided to walk around a little longer before the sun set. They walked leisurely down the road, their hands swinging between them as they went.

“Man, have we really been acting like, that gay lately?” Craig asked, “I thought that was how we always were.”

“W-well I mean, I think we've been slowly getting like...gushier,” Tweek said.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, d-do you ever like, find yourself talking about me when I'm not around?” Tweek asked.

Craig thought about it, he did talk about Tweek a lot...mostly talking about how much fun he was or how weird or cute things he did were, “...maybe a little.”

Tweek nodded, “I-I do that too. I think maybe we're just so close that it um, seems a lot gayer? W-we do spend like, most of our time together, and like, I like that, but, y'know, I guess we're just more and more comfortable with each other the older we get.”

Craig grunted, “Hm. Guess I didn't think about that, makes sense.”

“Or maybe we're just getting gayer,” Tweek said, laughing a bit.

Craig didn't laugh. His eyebrows furrowed and he looked up towards the setting sun.

“I-it was a joke, Craig,” Tweek said smally.

“I know,” Craig replied, “Because like...we're not gay...but..” he shook his head, “Nevermind.”

They stopped walking in front of Tweek's house, “I'll see you at school tomorrow,” Tweek said.

Then, for a reason Craig couldn't even explain, he kissed Tweek on the cheek and said, “See you tomorrow babe.”

He was so surprised by himself that he just turned and hurried off down the street, leaving Tweek
staring after him in an equal amount of shock.
The morning started with the pleasant sound of Tricia screaming in Craig's ear that he was late and needed to get his ass up. Always a fantastic way to start a day. Craig proceeded to get up so quickly that he slipped on his own covers, twisting his ankle and slamming his face against the floor. He let out a string of curse words as he hurriedly untangled himself from the attacking sheets. How the fuck had his alarm not woken him?

He threw on his clothes and then realized he couldn't find his trusty hat anywhere. He ran down the stairs and swerved into the kitchen, socked feet sliding dangerously on the tile. “Mom. Where's my hat?” he asked, his panic not exactly evident in his flat tone. He was definitely freaking out on the inside though, being late on the first day to middle school would just open him up for mockery. Or at least he was pretty sure it would, he’d heard that middle-schoolers tore apart any scrap of weakness they could find, and being late might be a weakness somehow. Was being late a weakness? Nevermind, he didn't have time to debate that. He had to find his hat.

Laura looked over from where she was cleaning the dishes, “Oh, sweetie did I not tell you? Stripe peed on it, it's in the wash. You'll just have to go without it today, but it's alright, you look so handsome without it you know.”

Craig groaned and turned, “Dammiiit. I need my hat. Will it be dry soon? I can just wait.”

“Sorry Craig, it's not even in the dryer yet. It'll be clean when you get home,” Laura replied.

Craig was pretty upset about this, normally he was okay not having his hat for a day, sometimes Tweek borrowed it or Stripe peed on it, those things happened, but today, in a brand new grade and school, he was going to feel so insecure without his protective wooly hat. He sighed and shrugged, “Do I have time for breakfast?”

“You can take a granola bar with you,” his mom said, offering him one, “You'll be late if you don't leave now.”

Craig took the bar and groaned again, “thanks. Bye mom,” he mumbled, going to slip on his shoes and hurry out the door. He always rode his bike to school, but it was days like this that he wished he took the bus. The bus always knew where it was going, it never accidentally took a detour down an alley with a stray dog in it, causing said dog to chase it for three blocks. No, the bus never did that. It also never accidentally took Craig to the wrong school, causing him to have to turn around and be late despite his best efforts.

So, after biking for an extra fifteen minutes, arriving at the middle school very much late and very much without his hat, Craig was already in a pretty terrible mood. Things didn’t get much better when he had to spend another ten minutes finding his way to his homeroom, where everyone turned to look at him as he walked in. He shot everyone a glare and made his way to an empty desk, it was tucked in the back and covered in what looked to be knife carvings of dicks and initials. The only kid he recognized in the homeroom class was Clyde, which he also wasn't thrilled about, and so he decided to ignore him when Clyde tried to get his attention.

“Psst!” Clyde hissed, leaning back from his space a few desk up, “Craig psst!”
Craig looked down at his desk, focusing on the crude carvings etched into it's surface.

“Craig!” Clyde called softly, unrelenting in his misguided attempts to get the other boy's attention. “Craaig why were you late? Craig? Craig!”

Craig slammed his hands on his desk, thoroughly annoyed with Clyde, “CLYDE. For the love of GOD. If I wanted to talk to you, I would have answered the FIRST FUCKING TIME!”

Craig's face turned red when he realized literally every person in the class was staring at him, teacher included.

“Name?” the teacher asked bitterly.

“Craig Tucker,” Craig replied, voice small as everyone continued to stare at him. “Principal's office, Tucker, now.”

Craig quietly got up, moving towards the front of the room. He thought he heard sniffling, and glanced back to see he had managed to make Clyde cry. He groaned quietly as he left the room, still embarrassed and now feeling a little guilty. Clyde cried way too easily, but still, he felt like he'd been a little harsh. He stuffed his hands in his pockets and stalked to the front office, a place he was sure he'd be visiting frequently.

He sat in a stuffy office, watching as a greying woman paced in front of her desk, looking deep in thought. She paused in front of Craig's seat, fixing him with a cold stare, “Craig Tucker.” It was never good when the adults used his full name. Craig nodded in reply.

“I have heard...a lot about you. I almost didn't accept you into this school, but your grades were high enough that I really had no choice,” she said. Craig raised one eyebrow and the woman rubbed at the bridge of her nose. “Look, Craig, I understand you've always been a pretty...troubled kid.”

“No. I just don't tolerate idiocy,” Craig replied.

The woman heaved another sigh, “Craig, you aren't a little kid anymore, you're almost a teenager, and it's time you learned to show some respect to the people around you.”

“I show respect to the people that deserve it,” Craig answered.

“It's not up to you to decide who deserves it, you have to respect ALL adults Craig.”

“Even pedophiles and murderers? That seems kinda stupid and dangerous to me.”

“Don't be a smart ass Craig!” The principal snapped, “you know what I mean. Obviously I'm not telling you to put yourself in danger, I'm just saying-”

“You're just saying that no matter how idiotic or ridiculous someone is being, if they're older than me, I should be a good little sheep and listen to them anyway. I know what you want from me, I've been given this talk countless times by people a lot more commanding than you. You have to understand, I wasn't even trying to disrupt the damn homeroom, I was just trying to get my dumbass friend to shut up. I had a bad morning and he wouldn't leave me alone,” Craig explained.

The principal scowled, “three days detention. Another disturbance of this kind and I will suspend you.”

Craig blinked, expression shifting to something that could almost be called surprise, “I'm sorry-what? I yelled at my friend by mistake and you're telling me it's a final warning?”
“You have a history of problems, Craig. Perhaps your last principal just wasn't hard enough on you.”

Craig stood up, “This is unreasonable, come on, don't you know stricter punishments never work for kids or anyone else?”

The principal’s mouth pressed into a thin line and she moved to sit back behind her desk, “Well, you seem like a smart boy, so maybe it will work for you. Now get back to class.”

Craig fought back the urge to call the principal a bitch and turned, heading out. The rest of his homeroom passed agonizingly slowly, and after that he had to apologize to Clyde for yelling at him, then he had to endure two more classes before finally getting to lunch.

Craig was pretty relieved to get to lunch, considering he had only brought that granola bar with him and had never actually found time to eat it. He walked down the hall towards the cafeteria, dodging the crowds of students with a little more agitation than usual. When one girl bumped into him he nearly punched her. The only thing he was looking forward to was the one class he had with Tweek, but that was the last class of the day, so he had another couple hours to wait.

As he pushed his way into the packed cafeteria, he was surprised and a little concerned to see Tweek there, talking to a teacher and trembling harder than usual. He made his way closer until he was within earshot, wanting to know if something was going on. Tweek was never in a packed room unless he absolutely had to be.

“M-Miss Roal please, j-just listen to me-” Tweek was saying, hands wringing together frantically.

The woman, Miss Roal, Craig assumed, didn't seem to be interested in what Tweek was saying, “Look Tweek, I don't know what to tell you. Students aren't allowed to be outside the lunch area during the lunch period.”

“B-but you have to make an exception! Please, I-I can't handle this!” Tweek said, a hand reaching up to tug harshly at a chunk of hair.

“Nonsense. You're just a little nervous around all the new kids, you'll get used to it in no time,” Miss Roal said, patting his shoulder.

Tweek jerked violently away from her and made a strangled sound, “I-I won't! I won't at all! Please-I never had to stay in such a n-noisy place in elementary school, can't I just talk to the nurse or something about this?”

“You're over reacting. You can handle a half an hour of lunch, go sit down,” Miss Roal instructed, her patience fading.

Craig pushed a kid out of his way and walked the rest of the way over, moving to stand next to Tweek, “Excuse me, Miss Roal was it? Tweek isn't staying in here.”

Tweek jumped when the extra voice joined in their conversation, but then visibly relaxed when he saw it was Craig. He hugged his arm as if he were a piece of driftwood and Tweek was about to drown in the sea, “Craig thank goodness! M-maybe you can help me explain.”

Miss Roal looked further irritated, eyes sweeping up and down Craig, “What makes you think you can change the rules for your friend? You go sit down too.”

“No,” Craig replied, “Listen, my boyfriend has problems with noise, it makes him really anxious and panicky, you can't just force him to stay in here with the rest of us, it'll hurt him.”
The teacher opened her mouth, pausing briefly, then closing it again. She thought a minute, then pointed to a table, “both of you, go sit down. You can't leave unless you have a written doctor's note.” She turned and moved over to sit with the other teachers, clearly not open to discuss it further.

Craig looked over at Tweek, who seemed to be on the brink of tears. “Do you want me to go yell at them until they listen?” Craig asked, “I'll do it.”

Tweek shook his head rapidly, “N-no, no that'll just-nngh...that'll just...that'll...make things worse.”

Craig pet his hair, “Hey, come on, you're freaking out pretty bad, I really don't think you can handle this Tweek.”

Tweek shook his head again and tugged on a chunk of his hair, “Sh sh shhh...please...it's too much.”

Craig frowned and gripped Tweek's hand firmly, pulling him towards the cafeteria door. Tweek made a panicked sound and struggled to keep up with Craig's long strides, “Wh-what're you doing?!”

Craig didn't say anything, not even when Miss Roal stood up and called after him. He just kept walking. He didn't stop walking until he and Tweek were outside. Not just outside the cafeteria, but outside the entire building. Craig stopped at the end of the walkway leading up to the school, finally turning to look back at Tweek, who was still freaking out a little.

“I wasn't letting you suffer through that,” Craig said simply.

Tweek whined and twitched, looking back towards the school, “O-oh god...b-but what if we get kicked out of school for leaving? W-what if they call our parents and we have to explain and they ground us a-and we flunk out of school and end up as hobos on the streets?”

Craig took both of Tweek's hands and waited for the boy to look at him, “Tweek. Tweek, we would be the best hobos. I'd steal you food and we'd ride trains together. It'd be awesome.”

Tweek snickered a little, seeming to calm down a bit, “Craig...we'd be awful hobos.”

Craig pulled Tweek close to his side and started walking away from the school with him, “Are you kidding me? With your cute face and my charming good looks? People would be throwing money at us. They already throw money at us for being gay. We'd be fine.”

Tweek walked comfortably alongside Craig, letting him lead them away from the school, “Craig...um, why exactly are we leaving school?”

“'We're getting lunch, duh,” Craig replied, “and if they call our parents, tell them I made you do it. I'm used to the trouble.”

The two walked to a little diner not far from the school, where fortunately the waitress didn't ask why they weren't in school. Craig sat down in the booth seat and motioned for Tweek to sit across from him, but Tweek squeezed in next to him instead, lacing his fingers back with Craig's.

“...you don't even understand why I can't handle the cafeteria...why would you risk detention for a problem you don't even get?’” Tweek asked. He'd been silent the whole walk, so Craig had a feeling he'd been trying to think of how to ask that the whole way.

“I understand you. I don't need to understand your problem to know it's a big deal,” Craig replied.

Tweek didn't seem to know what to say to that, and just stared at the menu in front of him blankly, face tinged a light pink. Craig got them drinks, a sprite for himself and a cherry soda for Tweek.
Tweek stared at that too, seeming either deep in thought or deeply confused. Maybe both. After a few minutes of silence, he looked back over to Craig.

“You ordered my drink for me.”

“It's your favorite,” Craig replied simply.

“...yeah but...how come you know that?” Tweek asked.

“You know my favorite stuff,” Craig answered, shrugging, “We're just close enough to know that stuff.”

More silence. Tweek took a long drink of his soda. Craig was looking over the menu when he heard Tweek murmur, “you aren't wearing your hat.”

“...Stripe peed on it,” Craig said, setting the menu down, “It's in the wash.”

“You look nice without it,” Tweek added.

Craig scoffed, “What is it with you and my hair? Am I just extra stunningly handsome without a hat or something?”

The corner of Tweek's mouth twitched up, “Would it be weird if I said yes?”

Craig blushed a little, surely Tweek was just teasing. He tried to say something, but the waitress was back, and Tweek looked up at her, ordering food for both of them without even bothering to ask Craig what he wanted. The waitress walked back off and Tweek looked over at Craig.

“You kissed me last night,” he said.

Craig’s face turned a little redder, he had really hoped that had just been a weird dream or something. Dammit.

“Uh...yeah, I guess I did. Just on the cheek,” Craig pointed out. That made it less gay, right?

Tweek rolled his eyes and sighed, “You're a fucking idiot.”

Craig blinked, “I mean-probably, but why are you saying it now?”

Tweek shook his head, “Thanks for rescuing me from the cafeteria. I really appreciate it. I'm gonna try to convince my parents to bring me to a therapist or something so I can get a note.”

“That's a good idea,” Craig said, “Hey, think I could hang out at your place after school? I'm already in a lot of shit and I want to postpone the lecture from my dad.”

Tweek twitched nervously, “Uh, no, you can't. It's...getting bug bombed. We can hang out together somewhere else though.”

Craig frowned, Tweek had used that excuse last time too...actually, when he thought about it, he couldn't remember ever having gone over to Tweek's house. He hung out with him at the coffee shop a lot, and that was like Tweek's second home, but...he was pretty sure he'd never been inside Tweek's house.

“Wasn't it being bombed last week?” he asked.

“Uh, no, it was being painted,” Tweek said, “I-I must've misspoke.”
“Tweek, have I ever been over to your house?”

“Sure, lots of times, w-we used to meet in front of it to go to school together all the time.”

“No-I mean like, in your house,” Craig said.

“U-uh, yeah, I'm sure you have,” Tweek replied, seeming to be getting anxious again.

“When?”

“I dunno, we do a lot of stuff together Craig, just forget about it, okay? My house is boring and full of bug bomb and fresh paint, you'd hate it,” Tweek said.

Craig sighed, knowing better than to push an issue that made Tweek so antsy. He was definitely curious now though. He dropped it anyway, and the two went back to talking about nothing while they ate lunch. They walked back to school together after that, Craig telling Tweek about a planet that had been discovered that could theoretically support life. Tweek listened happily, not understanding much of what Craig was saying, but he was always happy to hear Craig talking about things he liked.

“So even though it's in an entire other galaxy, there's this theory that, one day, maybe in hundreds or thousands of years, we'd be able to populate that planet with humans too. Then we'd have an actual space colony, isn't that incredible?” Craig asked.

Tweek snorted, “Yeah, that's pretty cool, space dork.”

“Oh whatever. If you didn't find it interesting I know you'd tell me to shut up,” Craig huffed.

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The rest of the day actually felt pretty great to Craig. Sure he got suspended for two days for leaving the school with Tweek, and Tweek got four days detention, but it was more than worth it. And Craig honestly didn't care at all about being suspended. Sure his dad would be pissed, but he actually had a feeling he might understand Craig's reasoning this time. Hopefully. Even if he didn't, Craig had helped Tweek out, and that was all he cared about. They had also missed the class period after lunch, meaning they only had to go to the class they had together. The two sat next to each other towards the back and spent the entire class whispering to each other and making jokes about how stupid the other kids in the class looked.

Both of them had detention after that, but since they still got to be in the same room, that wasn't so bad either. The teacher watching over detention kept telling them to be quiet, and eventually they gave up on failed attempts at whispering and settled for holding hands between the desks. Something the teacher seemed pissed about, but didn't bother trying to stop them.

After they finally got to leave, they walked together to the park, chuckling the whole way about how mad they had managed to make the detention teacher. Craig lay in the grass in front of Tweek's usual bench, sighing contentedly.

“That was a pretty good day,” he said.

Tweek, instead of sitting on the bench like usual, lay down next to Craig, joining him in watching the sky. “Good day? Craig a-are you kidding me? You were late, got suspended, a-and didn't you say a dog chased you this morning?”

“Well I had fun with you, and the dog didn't catch me, so it balances out,” Craig chuckled.
Tweek gave a jittery laugh and shook his head, “Y-you're unbelievable.”

Craig just smiled and rested his and Tweek’s interlocked hands on his chest, watching as the sherbet sky faded from a milky orange to midnight blue as the sun set. He and Tweek stayed there for well over an hour, Craig pointing out different constellations as they came into view and Tweek calling him a nerd for knowing so many.

All in all, Craig felt like it was honestly not such a bad start to middle school. And it was an absolutely fantastic way to end the day, hand in hand with his closest friend, star gazing and ignoring the fact his parents would be pissed at him when he got home. Yep. Completely perfect.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like this chapter was a little off or something, but I hope everyone still enjoys it! There's gonna be another couple middle school chapters, and I gotta say, this is probably the most fun I've had writing a story in a LONG time.

All of your wonderful comments are so amazing too! They definitely make me thrilled to keep writing. You're all so wonderful, thank you all SO much!
It was roughly six in the morning, and Craig was pedaling down the street on his bike, a small grocery bag hanging off the handlebars as he rode past rows of houses. He wasn't going to school today, being suspended and all, but he had woken up at five that morning for some reason and decided he'd rather spend the morning with Tweek than in bed trying fruitlessly to get back to sleep. He parked his bike outside Tweek's house and look up at the little building. It looked like a nice, normal house with clean windows and shingles, nothing was boarded up, and the lawn was well kept. Craig didn't get why Tweek didn't want him to go inside.

He sat there, waiting for Tweek to come outside. He thought about it though, and realized there wasn't really anything stopping him from just going up and knocking on the door. Tweek might seem like he didn't want him there, but he never specifically told him to stay out. Craig knocked down his bike's kickstand and grabbed the bag off his handlebars, walking up to the door.

He hesitated a minute, feeling almost like he was breaking Tweek's trust somehow, but he pushed the thought out of his mind and gave a sharp rap on the door. Mrs. Tweak opened the door after a minute, looking delightfully surprised to see Craig standing there.

“Oh Craig! Good morning!” she exclaimed, far too chipper for it being so early in the morning.

“Uh, good morning.” Craig greeted warily. He could never place his finger on it, but something about Tweek's mom always freaked him out a little. “I brought some breakfast for Tweek.”

Mrs. Tweak gave a too-big grin and motioned him in eagerly, “Oh come in come in! Tweek's just upstairs getting ready for school. I'm glad you're finally well enough to visit!”

Craig frowned as he walked in, “Uh, what?”

“Well see, we've wanted to have you over for dinner for the past few weeks, but Tweek's told us how sick you keep getting. So it's so wonderful you're doing better!” she said, giving Craig a hearty clap on the back.

He was incredibly confused, why was Tweek lying about him to his parents? Why did he not want him here so badly? He shook his head, not wanting to let Mrs. Tweak know that Tweek had been lying, and just said, “Yeah. Well, my little sister was sick, and then I got it from her, and she got it back from me...it was this whole cycle. Very nasty.”

Mrs. Tweak laughed a bit and walked off into the kitchen. A minute later she called out, “Tweek honey! Your little boyfriend is here!”

Craig actually flinched when he heard Tweek's panicked, “WHAT?!” maybe coming in here wasn't a good move after all.

There were a few sounds of things being knocked over, and then Tweek flew down the stairs, clothes more messed up than usual and eyes wide as saucers. His terrified gaze rested on Craig, and Craig returned it, kind of scared at just how freaked out Tweek seemed.

“What are you doing here?” Tweek hissed, sounding like he didn't want his mother to hear.
“I uh, brought you breakfast,” Craig replied.


Craig stood in place as Tweek tried to push him towards the door, “Tweek, what the hell man? Are you afraid I'm going to embarrass you or something? I don't get it.”

“I need you to just trust me, Craig,” Tweek said coldly.

“I need you to stop lying to me,” Craig replied quietly, “you could at least just do me the courtesy of saying you're ashamed of me or whatever. It wouldn't hurt my feelings that much.”

Tweek made a frustrated sound, “Oh my god you're so STUPID. Just-”

He stopped as his mom walked back out of the kitchen, carrying two mugs. “Something wrong?” she asked.

“N-nothing mom, Craig and I are just-ngh-headed off to school now,” Tweek answered, tugging at his shirt, which was off by at least two buttons today.

“Oh, so soon? It's not even six thirty,” she frowned.

“Th-there's an assembly. Come on Craig,” Tweek said, grabbing Craig's hand and dragging him out the door behind him.

Craig was baffled as Tweek pulled him along, but didn't say anything. Tweek's mom walked after them to the door, handing Craig a mug of coffee on his way out, “here sweetheart, you can share that with Tweek,” she smiled, “Have fun at school!”

Craig held the mug in one hand, his other still in Tweek's death grip as he was dragged out of the yard. Tweek finally stopped in front of Craig's bike, exhaling sharply. He let go of Craig's hand and took the mug from him, then, to Craig's absolute bewilderment, he turned and hurled the entire thing across the street. It shattered against the pavement, coffee and bits of ceramic spraying everywhere.

Tweek turned back and fixed Craig with a hard glare, “What the fuck do you think you're doing h-uh?”

Craig blinked, looking towards the distant mug shards, then back to Tweek's angry face, “I...I was bringing you a muffin?”

Tweek scowled, “You don't trust me. I-it's been three years and yet you think you know better. Y-you know my parents are...off. You know about...t-the coffee...can't you just trust me when I tell you you can't come inside my house?”

Craig frowned, “I trust you, I just want a reason Tweek. I know you're a paranoid kid, but you don't have to hide shit from me. Besides, you never really told me to stay away, you just said the place was being bug bombed. Which by the way, I'm pretty damn sure it isn't.”

Tweek twitched harder and gripped at his shirt, tugging at it, “Y-you knew. I could see it on your face, you knew I didn't want you in there, and you just-you just came in anyway! M-maybe my parents don't like you, ever think of that? Maybe I have reasons that are hard to explain!”

Craig was getting irritated now, “I know your dad thinks I'm annoying, but your mom was just saying she wanted to invite me over and YOU told her I was sick.”
Tweek looked incredibly panicked, “D-did you tell her you weren't?!”

“No. I went along with it,” Craig replied, “for fucks sake Tweek, what's with all the lying? I mean I might get you lying to them, but why me?!”

“Because!” Tweek snapped, “I-it's hard to explain, I just-I...I just need you to trust me!”

“How can I when you're lying all the fucking time?” Craig snapped back, “you're the one person I DO trust Tweek, but-”

Tweek's gaze darkened and he glared straight into Craig's eyes, cutting him off with a hiss, “Then don't. Come. Back.”

Craig was so taken aback by the venom in Tweek's voice that he didn't have a reply. He just stood there, dumbfounded as Tweek walked away. Craig got back on his bike, staring after Tweek as his figure disappeared into the distance. He rode back to his house silently, feeling a mixture of things he couldn't place as he rode into his driveway. He walked back inside and dropped the bag by the door.

“I thought you were gonna hang out with your boyfriend, why are you back?” she asked, turning the tv off and looking at her brother expectantly.

Craig ignored her, just shaking his head in confusion as he walked up the stairs. He walked back into his room and locked the door behind him before just laying down on the floor. He stared blankly up at the little plastic stars on his ceiling, trying to figure out why he felt so hurt. He'd been yelled at before, more times than he could count. He was used to people being pissed at him, hell, he'd even been told by several people that they never wanted to see him again. It had never bothered him then, at most he'd found it kind of amusing, so why did he feel so hurt now?

The knob on his door jiggled, and he heard a frustrated groan from the other side of the door, “Craig!” Tricia called, “Craig stop locking yourself in your room every time you feel an emotion! It's annoying!”

Craig ignored her, and after a few minutes he was able to tune her out completely. He'd never seen Tweek that angry, what if he never wanted to talk to him again? What if he stopped being his friend? Craig didn't even understand what the hell he'd done wrong by going in his house, but he knew it was something.

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Craig was still on the floor of his room when Tricia got home from school. He'd only gotten up once to go to the bathroom, and then he just went right back to laying on his floor. His room door was open now though, so she was able to come in. She sighed when she saw Craig looking like the most pitiful creature on earth, sprawled out on his floor, staring up at nothing.

“What the hell did Tweek do to you?” Tricia asked, sitting down on the floor next to Craig.

“Nothing,” Craig replied.

“He must've done something. You're never this upset,” she sighed.

“He was just mad at me,” Craig mumbled, “it was nothing I'm not used to. I don't even get why I'm upset.”

Tricia snorted, “Uh, duh? You actually care about Tweek? And you've never given one shit about
anyone else in your entire life.”

Craig looked up at her, “What's that got to do with anything?”

“...you really must be alien,” she mumbled, “you're upset because someone you love is mad at you. You just need to go talk to him and apologize for whatever dumb thing you did.”

Craig huffed, “I don't love Tweek. And how do you know I did something stupid?”

“Just assuming,” Tricia shrugged, “now get up and go apologize or talk or something! Seeing you look this pathetic is weird.”

Craig slowly sat up, sighing and taking his hat off to run a hand through his hair, “I already texted him. He hasn't answered.”

“Well he was in school,” Tricia said, “he probably didn't get it.”

Craig shook his head, “he would've answered me if he wasn't mad.”

“What? You guys always answer right away like a couple of clingy losers?” Tricia snorted.

“...yeah, pretty much,” Craig responded.

That made Tricia laugh. She stood up and offered Craig a hand, “Come on you useless baby, just go talk to him in person. I'm sure you've been laying here all day thinking about what you want to say, so just go do it, stupid.”

Craig sighed heavily and took her hand, letting her help him up, “Fine. You're probably right. Enjoy that, because I'll never say it again,” he said, bopping her nose before walking past her.

Tricia just smiled and crossed her arms, watching him go, “Whatever, you'd be lost without me.”

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Craig ended up outside the school half an hour later, sitting on his bike and wondering what the fuck he was even doing. He had thought about going to the coffee shop and waiting for Tweek there, but he had a feeling he wouldn't get anywhere trying to talk to him where his parents could hear. He had remembered then that Tweek had detention, so he wouldn't even be out of school for awhile. It'd probably be another hour or so actually, and yet Craig was just sitting outside, staring blankly up at the building as though that would somehow will the time to pass by faster.

Tricia was right, he had been thinking about what to say all day, but he hadn't really gotten anywhere. He still didn't understand how he'd upset Tweek so badly, and part of him was afraid that when Tweek had told him not to come back, he had meant for Craig to just stay away from him altogether. He was sure he was being ridiculous about this, but...what if he wasn't?

He sighed and parked his bike, moving to lie in the grass and watch the clouds to pass the time. He was only there for around ten minutes when a shadow fell over him, and he glanced over to see the principal standing there.

“What are you doing here? You're suspended until Thursday,” she said.

Craig scoffed, did she think he was an idiot? “It's after school. I'm not breaking any rules. Don't think I don't know how suspension works. You aren't the first bitch to sentence me with it.”

“Don't call me names Tucker, I can add to your punishment,” the woman said, voice steely and
Craig slowly lifted one hand up, gazing directly into her eyes as he curled his hand mostly closed, flipping her off. She barked and grabbed his hand, yanking him up to his feet. Now that caught Craig off guard, and he gave a small startled grunt as she held him by the wrist, face twisted into fury.

“Y-you aren’t supposed to grab a student,” was all Craig could think to say.

“It’s after hours,” was her bitter reply, “I’m not breaking any damn rules.”

“I-I’m pretty sure assaulting a child is still breaking a rule,” Craig stammered, honestly afraid she was going to hit him.

She yanked him forward and glowered down at him, “All I ask from my students is respect, Craig. If you give me that, we’ll be just fine. Flip me off again, however, and I’ll break your finger.”

Craig struggled to pull his hand away, but he was a panicked twelve year old, and she had the strength of anger on her side. “L-let go! Let go! I’ll file a police report! This is harassment!”

The principal gave a humorless smile, gripping his wrist tightly enough to hurt as she whispered, “Who would believe you? It’s your word against mine, child. Now, you will behave, or you will be very sorry.”

She let go of Craig then and turned, striding off to her car. Craig stood there in complete shock, rubbing his wrist. He knew he deserved a lot of what he got, but he was pretty sure that was crossing a line. He had never been scared like that before, he was sure she wasn’t kidding, and he really didn’t want her to break any of his bones. He also knew that she was right, that no one would believe his word over hers, he was just a kid. He teared up a little, he’d never actually been afraid that an adult would legitimately hurt him, it wasn’t a great feeling.

He hurriedly wiped his eyes, stuffing his hands into his pocket and turning back to stare at the building. He knew he should probably go home, but he wanted to see Tweek even more badly now. Craig didn't even hesitate when he caught sight of that blonde mop of hair, he ran over and had to stop himself from just grabbing Tweek into a hug. Grabbing Tweek was never a good idea, he had done it without thinking once and gotten an elbow straight to the gut.

Tweek looked surprised to see Craig standing there, and made a tiny questioning sound, “mrmgh? Craig? W-what are you doing here? You’re still suspended.”

Craig shook his head and opened his arms, indicating he wanted a hug. Tweek was more surprised by this, and moved forward, hugging the other boy, “Jeez, I-I know I was pissed off earlier, b-but I didn't think you'd still be worrying about it.”

Craig relaxed against Tweek, feeling a lot more at ease now, and nodded, “...yeah...I uh, I wanted to apologize...for...whatever it was I did. I won't go back to your house unless you personally invite me there, I promise.”

Tweek laughed shakily and patted Craig’s back, “You're r-ridiculous, you know that?”

Craig pulled away from him, “You're not still mad at me?”
Tweek shook his head, “N-no, stupid, I was just pissed earlier c-cause you’re an idiot.”

“Well I'm still an idiot, so…”

Tweek snorted and punched his arm, “I was j-just caught off guard, I was th-thinking all day, and I realized I really should've t-ried to tell you why before. I should've remembered you were an asshole who'd come over anyway if I didn't. Y-you're kinda clingy like that.”

Craig huffed and grabbed Tweek's hand in his, “I am not clingy. I just like being around you.” He honestly felt like a huge weight had been lifted, Tweek didn't hate him. Thank God. Now he was only worried about the principal, but he could push that worry to the back of his head for now, now that he knew Tweek wasn't going to stop being his friend.

Tweek bumped against his side and started walking with him, “Y-you are so clingy. I-if we were actually dating I bet you'd be even worse somehow.”

“I'd text you at like, two in the morning with whatever dumb bullshit I thought of,” Craig grinned.

“Y-you do that anyway,” Tweek snickered.

“Yeah but it'd be more romantic, like, how your eyes are like pretty emeralds or something gay like that.”

Tweek's cheeks tinged pink and he shook his head, “You'd seriously be the worst...B-but if you were complimenting me it might be worth it...maybe.”

Craig snapped his fingers, “Oh! I just remembered!” he reached into his pocket with his free hand and pulled out a little plastic charm, handing it to Tweek.

“What's this?” Tweek asked, holding it up to inspect it. It was a little yellowy-transparent bird, and it had a black music note painted on its chest.

“It's uh, a canary. I know you like those, and, I kinda thought you were still pissed at me. So I was gonna try to appease you with a thoughtful gift,” Craig explained.

Tweek smiled affectionately and slipped the bird charm into his pocket, “You're such an idiot. I-I wasn't even still mad.”

“Well I had no way of knowing that,” Craig huffed, “you never answered my texts!”

“I-I was in class,” Tweek retorted.

“But you always answer.”

“I was trying to avoid getting more detention,” Tweek snorted, “Can you not see how clingy you are? J-jeez, can't even go one day without talking to me.”

“Well I can't help that you're the best person in this town,” Craig replied, “I'm pretty sure I wouldn't ever do anything if you were gone. I'd just sit on the couch all day, staring at the wall until I eventually died.”

Tweek laughed and shook his head, “Aw, c-c'mon, you wouldn't even take care of Stripe?”

Craig tipped his head back in thought, “Hm...good point, I guess I'd take care of Stripe until I finally died. I'd leave him to Tricia in my will. She's a little brat, but she's good with animals.”
Tweek walked with Craig until they got to the park. They took their usual spots, Tweek on the bench and Craig in the grass at his feet. It was getting dark, but neither of them felt like heading home yet. Tweek snatched the hat off Craig's head and put it on himself. Craig didn't even bother protesting, he was used to it by now. He just sighed and leaned back against Tweek's legs, looking up at him.

"Looks cute," he mumbled, not really thinking.

Tweek looked at him questioningly, "H-huh?"

"My hat. On your crazy-haired head," Craig elaborated.

Tweek shook his head and started petting Craig's head, running his fingers through his hair. "I just t-took it 'cause I was cold."

Craig hummed in response, closing his eyes and enjoying the feeling of Tweek petting his hair. "Mm...well maybe now I'm cold."

"A-are you?" Tweek asked.

"...not really. You can keep the hat. For now."

Craig and Tweek just sat there in silence for a few minutes, before finally Craig asked, "So...are you going to explain about your house? I mean, I don't want to upset you again, but...if you want to tell me...I really do want to know."

Tweek just continued running his fingers through Craig's hair, debating whether or not he should try to explain. After a minute he sighed and nodded, "Yeah...I guess I probably sh-should...b-but you can't ask me any questions. All you get is what I decide to tell you."

"Why?" Craig asked.

"W-wow, you broke the only rule in less than a second," Tweek snorted. "I just need you to trust me. Okay? I just c-can't answer certain stuff, s-so I don't want you to ask anything."

Craig sighed, "Alright. Go ahead, I trust you."

Tweek got up off the bench and moved to sit next to Craig on the ground, tangling their fingers together and leaning against him, like he was trying to remind himself he was safe. He sighed and looked up at the darkening sky, "...my parents...are really crazy. A-and...I just know if you come over there and hang out with me, you'll see them being all...nuts...and you're you, so you'll say something, and it'll make them mad, and...I dunno, they might hurt you or something."

Craig looked over at Tweek, a little worried, "D-do-" he stopped himself, remembering what Tweek had said.

Tweek paused, and when Craig didn't finish his question, he continued, "They...do some stuff that I know you'd hate, and you might like...worry about me. I-I grew up with them, I know how to handle them a-and I'm perfectly fine, but...I know you. I know how you are and how um...p-protective you can be. You'd be mad at them, a-and I just don't want you saying anything that might piss them off."

Craig was dying to ask at least five questions by this point, but he stayed quiet, squeezing Tweek's hand to encourage him to continue. Tweek smiled softly and shifted to hug him. He sat there quietly, arms wrapped around Craig's waist. Craig thought he was done speaking, when he continued abruptly.
“Th-they think all my issues are just ADD. A-and I think they either don't know or d-don't care that their coffee is hurting me. I f-found out a couple years ago that it's...you know. A-and...I just...I hate that they've been giving me that stuff. I hate even more that I'm addicted to it and can't stop drinking it...a-and I know you're upset about it too. That's not the only kinda shitty thing they've done, b-but...it's an example and...I know if you could you'd tell them off. S-so...I just don't want to give you a chance to. I know it's tough, b-but I'll be fine, and things will be a lot easier if you just...d-don't get to know my parents and the weird shit they do. I'll be an adult eventually, th-then we won't have to worry about it at all,” Tweek trailed off, really expecting Craig to ask him a lot of things. He let out an audible breath when Craig remained quiet. “...I'm done now,” he said.

Craig nodded slowly, holding Tweek a little closer, “alright. If it's easier for you, then I'll do what you tell me. But Tweek...I'll help you with anything you know. I don't know what's going on in your life most of the time, but...if you're ever in danger or something, you can tell me, and I'll help you.”

Tweek nodded, “I know. Thank you. A-and...I'd help you too. Even though I doubt you'd ever tell me if anything was wrong in your life.”

Craig huffed, “What? How dare you. I tell you everything. How...that is blasphemy. Total slander!”

Tweek responded by grabbing Craig's hand and pushing his sleeve up, revealing a painful looking bruise on his wrist. He jerked his hand back away and pushed the sleeve down, “that...proves nothing,” Craig mumbled.

“Parents?” Tweek asked.

“God no! My parents are awesome, they'd never hurt me,” Craig replied quickly. His dad might be strict, but he'd never hit either of his kids, and his mom was a tough woman who never had to even raise her voice to get he and Tricia to listen.

Tweek nodded, “I believe you. I know they're good people...I just...ngh...wanted to be sure. So...who?”

Craig frowned, “...I uh...just pissed off a big eighth grader.”

Tweek sighed and shook his head, “You're a really bad liar. You weren't even in school today.”

“It was after school, while I was waiting for you to get out of detention,” Craig replied. That part was true.

“Why would another asshole kid have been hanging out by the school at f-five in the afternoon?”

“It's really not important Tweek. Don't worry about it.”

“When whatever this is gets worse, you b-better tell me,” Tweek warned, “O-or I'll...I'll get mad at you again.”

“My only weakness,” Craig whispered, “Curses.”

Tweek took Craig's hand again and pushed his sleeve back up, studying the bruise carefully. Then he lifted Craig wrist up to his mouth and pressed a kiss to it, “I'll ruin the life of whatever adult hurt you,” he said softly.

Craig's heart leaped into his throat and he looked at Tweek in surprise. Tweek looked back at him, smiling softly. There was anger in his eyes though, Craig could see it in there, even if he was good at hiding it.
“Tweek, seriously, it's not a big deal. I'm pretty sure I deserved it anyway. I was being an asshole.”

“All kids are assholes C-Craig. That doesn't give adults the r-right to hurt us. W-we're pretty much defenseless compared to them. It'd b-be like kicking a puppy for peeing on the rug. Y-yeah the puppy messed up, b-but if you kick it, you're just a d-damn monster.”

Craig opened his mouth, then closed it again. Tweek had a point. He looked down again when Tweek tapped his shoulder. Tweek shoved Craig's hat back onto his head and then pulled him down by the ear flaps, “I'm always here for you, just as much as you are for me,” he said. Then he kissed right next to Craig's mouth.

He stood up and dusted his pants off, “I g-gotta get home, goodnight Craig.” Then he was gone, and Craig was sitting there, dumbfounded. Tweek was absolutely baffling. Why did he keep doing stuff like that? No one was even around, he didn't have to keep pretending to be gay. Craig made his way home, still confused as he kicked his shoes off and flopped onto the couch.

“How'd it go?” Tricia asked.

“He...kissed me,” Craig replied.

“Oh, really well then!” Tricia smiled, “I knew it would.”

Craig shook his head, “Tricia! Did you hear me? He-there wasn't even anybody around-he kissed me! Not like, exactly on the mouth, but, pretty close! Why does he keep doing that?”

Tricia raised one eyebrow, looking at Craig like he was the absolute dumbest creature on the planet.

“What? What am I missing here?” Craig asked.

“How often does he do that?” Tricia asked, talking slowly, like she was explaining a difficult issue to a toddler.

“Uh...” Craig thought about it. He remembered when they were at Bebe's party a few years back, he’d done it then, but that was kind of forced by Bebe. When he thought about it though, Tweek had kept doing little things ever since then. “He...does it a lot...like, when I do nice things for him, or when I think he's upset with me...and um...it's always on the cheek. Tonight though, it was like...weird. weirder. It was like...right on the edge of my mouth...like...”

“Like he wanted to kiss you but was afraid you'd react poorly?” Tricia offered.

Craig blinked a few times, “I...I don't...I...y-yeah. Yeah? But why would he want to kiss me?”

“Think about it,” Tricia said, patting Craig's shoulder, “Really, really think.”

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Craig thought about it a lot. He thought about it through dinner, and while he was getting ready for bed, and now he was laying awake in bed, still thinking about it. He thought over every weird thing Tweek had done in the past few months, how he'd been getting more affectionate, how he'd been worried Craig would want to quit fake dating, how often he found excuses to kiss his cheek. Craig then thought about how much he liked all of those things, and how he wanted to keep pretending to date Tweek so he'd have an excuse to spend more time with him. He realized he hadn't even considered getting a girlfriend, like, ever. He didn't want one. He wasn't interested in girls at all. He just wanted to spend time with Tweek, and occasionally his other friends.
It was two in the morning, Craig texted Tweek 'Park. Five minutes.'

He snuck out his window, something he actually did a lot when he couldn't sleep, and walked to the park. He wasn't even sure Tweek would be awake, or that he'd meet him there if he was. But this was important. He couldn't believe how incredibly stupid he'd been. He was filled with relief when he saw Tweek making his way over, dressed in a thick coat.

“Craig,” he greeted tiredly, “it's two in the morning, why are you awake?”

Craig shook his head and motioned for Tweek to come closer, “Come here, come here.”

Tweek made a noise in the back of his throat and walked closer, “W-what is it? I'm tired.”

Craig put his hands on Tweek's shoulders, squinting to see his eyes in the dark, “how come you let me be an idiot?” he asked.

Tweek snorted, “This isn't worth me getting out of bed at two in the morning Craig.”

“Tweek, Why would you just let me do that?” Craig asked.

“Oh my god, do what, you giant loser?” Tweek asked.

“Why didn't you tell me we were gay?!” Craig asked, shaking Tweek's shoulders lightly.

Tweek looked taken aback by this, and his cheeks flushed red, “I-I'm sorry?!”

“How could you just let me walk around, thinking you were my best friend, when you should've always been more than that, huh? How could you deprive me of years of kisses Tweek? Years!”

Tweek was beyond baffled, “Y-you want me to kiss you? W-what are you saying here?”

Craig gripped Tweek’s shoulders, “I'm SAYING that I'm incredibly gay for you and I can't believe you never told me!”

“...y-you wanted me to tell you you were gay?” Tweek asked.

Craig nodded and Tweek laughed, face turning redder, “Y-you really are hopeless.”

“How long have you known?” Craig asked.

“...about you? I'm just finding out right now.”

“How long have you known?” Craig asked.

“...about you? I'm just finding out right now.”

“About you, asshole,” Craig huffed.

“...I k-kinda always liked you,” Tweek admitted, “I j-just didn't realize it fully 'till Bebe's party.”

“Three years? Tweek!” Craig exclaimed, “I'm just figuring this shit out now and you've been into me for three years?!”

Tweek kicked at the ground, “W-well you're really thick.”

Craig grabbed Tweek's face, looking him in the eyes, “I can't believe I've missed three years of chances to kiss you and call you disgustingly sweet names. I'm not missing another second. Tweek, can I kiss you?”

Tweek's face turned so red that Craig could swear it was glowing, and he nodded, “mmgghhnn...”
was all that came out of his mouth though.

Craig pulled Tweek into a hug, then looked down at him, leaning down and awkwardly bumping their faces together in what probably barely qualified as a kiss. Their noses pressed together at a weird angle and he could feel Tweek's lips trembling against his, then he felt like his own heart was about to explode, and he had to pull back away.

Tweek clung onto him, eyes wide and heart racing audibly against Craig's chest. “...are we...like...real dating now?” Tweek whispered.

Craig nodded rapidly, hugging Tweek tighter, “yes. Hell fucking yes. Um...sorry about that kiss, that went a lot better in my head.”

Tweek snorted and shook his head, “Y-you'll have plenty of chances to get better at it.”

Craig felt an incredibly stupid grin form on his face. He'd have more chances to kiss Tweek. He had Tweek. He was pretty sure he'd never been so happy in his entire life. He kissed Tweek's cheek and whispered, “I hope you're prepared for those embarrassingly gushy texts we talked about earlier.”

Tweek laughed, “I-I'm looking forward to them.”

Chapter End Notes

TIME TO GET A LITTLE SADDER AND A LOT GAYER.
A Meteor Shower and a Hospital Room

Chapter Notes

HOLY HELL IT'S BEEN ALMOST A MONTH. I PROMISE THIS FIC ISN'T DEAD, IT'S ALIVE AND KICKING! ENJOY THIS LONG CHAPTER TO MAKE UP FOR MY ABSENCE

Two weeks had passed since Craig and Tweek stopped fake dating and started actually dating, and Craig had never been more insufferable to his friends. They thought he and Tweek were inseparable before, but now it was just plain embarrassing to watch. Token and Clyde stood a good distance away while Craig walked with Tweek to his class, a dorky smile completely ruining his carefully built image of ‘emotionless asshole’. He kissed Tweek's cheek and the blonde made some loud protesting sounds, pushing at Craig’s face as he tried to kiss him more. Eventually Tweek pried himself away from Craig and scurried into his classroom, face flushed cherry red.

Craig stuffed his hands in his pockets and paced over to his two disgusted friends, “What?” he asked.

“Dude, what's gotten into you the last couple of weeks? It's like you're a whole different, disgustingly affectionate person,” Token said.

Craig just shrugged, after all, what could he say? That he had been fake-dating Tweek for three years and only just realized recently that he wanted to date him for real? That would be way to complicated and long of a story to explain.

“You haven't been replaced with an alien, have you?” Clyde asked suspiciously.

“I'm just happy, is that really so weird?” Craig asked.

Both of his friends nodded and Craig just rolled his eyes. Jimmy walked up about then, greeting the gang with a “wh-whats up fuh...f-fellas?”

“Craig's being weird again.” Token informed him.

“I'm not being weird, I'm being like...close to a normal person,” Craig argued.

“Weird,” Token reiterated.

“Aw fellas, c-calm duh...down. Craig probably just finally got some d-”

“Don't,” Craig interjected flatly, “I am twelve, Jimmy. The fuck?”

“I mean I-” Jimmy started.

“If you bring up that hooker one more time, I swear to fuck,” Craig huffed.

“Yeah man, nobody really likes that story, it's...pretty weird,” Token agreed.

Jimmy opened his mouth to say something else, but Craig's phone buzzed and he held up a finger,
This one was a snap of the very fat man that taught Tweek's homeroom. He'd drawn a ring around the man's waist and doodled little stars, the text across it read 'discovered a new planet'. Craig snickered to himself as he took his seat in homeroom, Tweek could be such an asshole sometimes. Whenever he knew he couldn't get in trouble for it.

Craig sent back a picture of his own teacher, Miss Applegate, with a fire filter over it, along with the text 'im stuck in hell while ur discovering planets. Not cool'.

They continued sending increasingly mean things about their teachers back and forth for about ten minutes, before Craig's phone was snatched out of his hands.

“Hey!” he protested, looking up to see the bitter glare of Miss Applegate.

“You're not allowed to be on your phone in class, Craig, you know that,” she said.

“All my homework is already done, I have nothing else to do!”

“It doesn't matter. You're a distraction to the other students,” She replied simply.

Craig scoffed, “Oh come on, my tapping keys is more distracting than THAT?” he asked, motioning to Clyde, two seats in front of him, patting on the desk with his hands like it was a drum and making mock guitar sounds.

The teacher cast Clyde a tired look, then focused back on Craig, “…I'll make him stop it too. No phones. You can come get it after school.”

Craig grumbled, knowing he lost that argument, and said nothing else as the teacher walked off, heading over to Clyde to stop...whatever was happening there.

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Craig met up with Tweek at lunch time, meeting him in front of the bathrooms since Tweek had fortunately managed to get out of having to go into the cafeteria again.

“You stopped sending mean shit, I got worried,” Tweek chuckled, greeting Craig with a hug.

Craig hugged him back with a hum, “Mm, asshole teacher took my phone,” he said, “I'll have it back after school.”

“O-oh jeez man, what if she goes through it and sees that you called her a flaming cunt?” Tweek asked anxiously, “Y-you might get detention! O-or suspended again! And I'm pretty sure the principal hates you, s-so I know she wouldn't be lenient...”

Craig grimaced, the principal hated him even more than Tweek knew. He just shook his head, “Don't worry about it, my phone has a passcode, she won't see.”

Tweek tiwtched a bit, looking unsure, “Nhh...I guess...b-but what if she guesses it? O-or hacks in or-?”

“Babe, she's a middle school teacher that usually smells like whiskey, she's not smart enough to hack
anything,” Craig assured him.

Tweek sighed and nodded jerkily, “Y-yeah, yeah, you're right...s-so, hey, want to come outside with me to eat lunch?”

“I...can't risk getting suspended again,” Craig mumbled. God he hated having to turn that down, but he didn't want to risk the principal breaking his arm or something. That bruise on his wrist had taken nearly a week to heal.

Tweek frowned, “Th-that's really unlike you. You never cared about that stuff before.”

“Sure I did, it was like, definitely something I sort of cared about.”

“Craig, you got suspended four times in the last three months of fifth grade,” Tweek countered.

“God why do you have to remember everything?” Craig groaned.

“I-I was the one stuck bringing you homework!” Tweek huffed.

Craig snorted, “Right right, well, uh, middle school is...harder than elementary. If I get suspended too much I might like, fail or something. How will I become a famous astronomer if I fail middle school?”

“You have straight As Craig, I know that's not what you're worried about,” Tweek said, voice a bit gentler now. He could tell something was up, and that made Craig feel very vulnerable.

He tugged his hat down a bit and sputtered, out of fake excuses. Tweek rested a hand on his cheek, looking at Craig in a bit of concern, “You can tell me the truth Craig, if something is going on, I'm here for you.”

Craig leaned his cheek against Tweek's hand with a sigh, “I...really don't want to talk about it. Maybe some other time, okay?”

Tweek nodded in understanding, “…alright Craig. I'll see you in last period then.” He kissed the corner of Craig's mouth, a cute habit he'd picked up since neither of them had figured out how actual kisses worked yet, and then he headed off.

Craig was on his way to the cafeteria when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He tensed at the vice-like grip, and didn't have to turn to know the icy gaze on the back of his head belonged to the principal. He slowly turned his head, jaw clenched to hide his anxiety as he met her gaze.

“What?” he asked flatly.

“You should be in the cafeteria, boy,” she said.

“Well I would be if you hadn't stopped me,” Craig retorted. Her grip tightened and he winced slightly.

“Don't be smart. You should've been there five minutes ago. You know students aren't allowed to wander around during lunch,” she said.

“I had to go to the bathroom and wanted to say hi to my boyfriend, what's the big deal?” Craig asked, trying to shake his shoulder loose of her painful fingers.

“You seem to be having some difficulties keeping to the rules,” she replied simply.
“It was five minutes, Jesus, I've actually been doing my best not to flip off teachers and stuff,” Craig said, “What is your issue with me?”

“Your homeroom teacher says you were on your phone during class,” was all the principal responded with.

“I didn't have any homework to do!” Craig protested, “I didn't even call her a bitch for taking my phone, can't you just leave me alone?!”

“Detention. Two days. My office,” she said, voice cold and dripping with malice.

Craig just clenched his jaw again, staring directly back into her eyes. If he said anything else she'd probably find a way to add on more detention time. He didn't like the fact he had to spend the detention in her office at all, what was her fucking deal? It was like she'd just decided 'screw this guy in particular' and set about making middle school an even bigger hell than it would've been already.

She finally released his shoulder and walked into the cafeteria, Craig begrudgingly heading in after her. When Craig sat down at his friends' table, they all looked over from their conversation, just staring at him. Craig's eyes flicked from one face to the next, “What?” he snapped.

“Dude, lunch is almost half over, and you look grumpier than usual. Where the hell were you?”

Token asked.

“Were you making out with Tweek or something? Don't care about your other friends anymore huh? Do you even remember who I am?! WHAT'S MY NAME CRAIG?” Clyde blubbered.

Craig raised an eyebrow and Token waved him off, “Since you started getting all gross with Tweek, Clyde got convinced that you were gonna leave us and only hang out with him. Don't mind the idiot.”

Jimmy patted Clyde's shoulder and looked over at Craig, “Suh-seriously though, where wh-were you man?”

“Not important,” Craig replied, taking a bite of his food to prevent having to answer further. He wasn't even sure exactly why he wasn't telling them about the principal, he just felt for some reason like he couldn't. Like if he did, she'd find out somehow and act even worse towards him.

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Craig was lying on his bed at six that evening, having just spent the last two hours sitting in complete silence in the principal's office. She had lectured him about being on his phone, then about not 'respecting the school schedule' or some shit, and then she'd just made him sort a bunch of paperwork for her while she went through what Craig assumed were instructions on how to hide demon horns.

So now that Craig was back home, he was content to lay on his bed, just staring up at the plastic stars on his ceiling. His phone had buzzed with a few new notifications, but he wasn't in the mood to answer, so he just ignored it. He felt like he was being ridiculous, so the principal was a little mean and berating, and so she bruised his arm and possibly his shoulder now, that didn't mean he should be afraid of her. He didn't even get why it bothered him, lots of adults told him he needed to shape up, and it never phased him before, so...why did this upset him like it did?

He was pulled out of his thoughts by the sound of a rock hitting his window. It was big, and it made a loud enough sound that for a minute Craig thought it might've fractured the glass. He got up and walked over, annoyed until he realized it was Tweek throwing rocks.
He opened the window and looked down, “Tweek, wh-” he was cut off as a rock narrowly missed his head. He ducked and Tweek shrieked in terror.

“Oh my god I'm sorry! I threw it right as you opened the window and I didn't mean to! Oh my god, what if I killed you?”

Craig couldn't help but smile at Tweek's massive overreaction, “Honey, it's fine, I've been hit with bigger rocks.”

“N-no you haven't! Don't be stupid!” Tweek called back up.

Craig shrugged, “Well I've done more damaging things. Anyway, what's up?”

“Y-you weren't answering your phone, and you always answer, s-so I got worried. And you seemed really upset during last period too, s-so um, I'm making you come out with me so I can cheer you up,” Tweek stammered, blushing a little.

Craig sighed and shook his head, “You're too much... alright, I'll be down in a second. Fucking nerd.”

Craig said a quick goodbye to his mom on the way out, telling her he was headed out with Tweek, to which she told him to get back before ten. He met Tweek outside and was greeted with another hug.

“I thought we could, um, walk out to the edge of town,” Tweek said, “Th-there's supposed to be a meteor shower tonight, right? I think the hill by the town sign would have the best view.”

Craig blinked, “Oh shit, that's tonight? How the hell did I forget?”

Tweek shrugged and took Craig's hand, “You've been pretty off today. But it's alright, it's not like I'd let you miss it.”

“What would I do without you?” Craig smiled.

“Be very sad and forgetful,” Tweek snickered.

The two made their way to the edge of town, not stopping until they passed the big 'South Park' sign. There was a tree not far from the town entrance, and it overlooked the whole town pretty nicely. Tweek sat at the base of the thing and patted next to him. Craig took a seat and Tweek leaned against him.

“Hey, so uh, are you...okay?” Tweek asked.

Craig shrugged, “I'll be fine. I just want to watch the stars with you and not talk about today, alright?”

Tweek's eyebrows furrowed, but he didn't press the issue. Craig appreciated Tweek's concern, he really did, and he almost wanted to tell him, but part of him was really hoping that if he just ignored the situation it would die down on its own. Tweek let him ramble about the differences between comets and meteors as they watched the lights streak across the sky, and after a little while, Craig actually started to relax. The day faded into the back of his mind, and he was able to just enjoy sitting here with his boyfriend, talking about space and watching meteors overhead.

“So, you think you'll really wanna be an astronomer?” Tweek asked.

Craig looked down at him, “Huh?”
“Earlier today, you said you couldn't be a famous astronomer if you failed middle school...is that what you wanna be?”

“Oh right, I mean...kind of. It's only of the only things I'm really passionate about, so I'd rather do that than anything else. Unfortunately I can't make a career out of being your boyfriend, or I'd just do that.”

Tweek snickered and bapped his chest, “You're such a fucking dork, my God. Well, I think you'll be a good astronomer, maybe you'll discover a new planet or something. That'd be pretty cool.”

Craig nodded in agreement.” Yeah, that would be pretty awesome...I'd probably get to name it and everything.”

“Wow, I've never seen a planet named after a swear word, that'd be fun,” Tweek teased.

Craig snorted, “I'm gonna make everyone have to say 'fuck' in astronomy classes.”

“Ah yes, and if you take a look directly above, you will see the faint glimmering light of fuck-bitchhole, the black hole discovered by Craig Tucker, the biggest asshole in astronomy,” Tweek said in a mock documentary voice, motioning above them dramatically.

Both boys laughed, going on to talk about Craig swearing on talk shows an in documentaries. They talked along those lines for about ten minutes, before finally they were just laughing too hard to keep talking. Both boys were lying on their backs in the grass now, snickering up at the sky. After they settled back down, Craig looked over towards Tweek, “What about you?”

“Me? No I'm not gonna swear on TV Craig,” Tweek snorted.

“No idiot! I mean, what do YOU want to be? You never talk about it. I know you better than anyone and even I don't know your dream job,” Craig said.

“Oh, that. I uh, I don't really have one,” Tweek shrugged, “wouldn't matter if I did anyway...” he added quietly.

“Come on Tweek, there's got to be something you want to do,” Craig said, “I mean, you love animals, you're pretty artistic...at least in coffee foam and in sketching, and if elementary school is anything to go by, you're a hell of an actor.”

“...I...guess I'm just not the kind of guy who has big dreams,” Tweek sighed. “I mean, I'm not even really planning on going to college. It'd be too much pressure, I'd just fail.”

Craig sat up, looking at Tweek in surprise, “You aren't going to college? But...you have to! You won't fail, I'll help you!”

Tweek looked up at him, raising an eyebrow, “Why do I have to go? It's a waste of money if you don't have a plan Craig.”

“But...what'll I do without you?” Craig asked, voice dropping off. “I...I'd have to go far away to get a masters in anything Space related...I guess I just always assumed you'd come with me.”

Tweek looked back away from him, “...long distance would work for us, I love your stupid face too much to ever want to break up. You'd just have to come visit me while you were away, that's all.”

Craig looked down at the ground, “So...what? I go to some other state, and we talk on the phone and just never see each other...and you're...where? Here? You shouldn't be stuck here.”
Tweek shrugged, “My dad wants me to run the shop when I'm that old. I'll just be doing that. I won't be bored.”

“The coffee shop? Tweek, dude, you hate that place! You can't just spend your whole life somewhere you hate!” Craig protested, “You can just...come with me wherever I go, and live with me and I can pay for you! I'll start saving more of my allowance back, and then you'll be able to come with me, and not have to go to college, and still be happy.”

Tweek snorted and sat up, hugging Craig, “You're sweet, Craig. I'd love to just be able to run away with you wherever you went...but come on...we know it won't work out that way.”

“It could! I'm really stubborn, I can make it work!” Craig huffed.

“Well...we'll both work hard then,” Tweek smiled, “I get allowance too, we can both save it, and maybe we'll get enough together for me to go with you. And...I'll just get a job wherever we go, and we can stay together. I mean...it's pretty far fetched, but...I guess there's no harm in trying.”

“You mean it?” Craig asked, looking into Tweek's eyes. He thought Tweek looked a tired kind of sad, his smile didn't look real.

Tweek averted his gaze quickly and nodded, “...yeah. Of course.”

Craig knew Tweek was lying, he didn't really think Craig's idea would work, he thought he'd be stuck here forever. Well, that just made Craig want to work even harder to make sure he could bring Tweek with him. He was twelve and he was pretty sure that enough money could make anything happen. He wasn't really sure what other obstacle there would be.

Tweek stood up, looking back into the town, “...I should really get home...I didn't exactly tell my parents I left.”

Craig chuckled a bit, “You troublemaker. I'm too much of a bad influence on you. Want me to walk home with you?”

Tweek nodded, “Yeah, if my parents catch me out and see it's with you they'll be less mad.”

The two walked back in a strange silence. The air around them felt a little heavier, and Craig couldn't help but feel like Tweek had been trying to tell him something without actually saying it. He seemed sadder than he had all night, and he wouldn't look at Craig, he just kept staring down at the sidewalk. Craig stopped a couple doors before his house, tugging his wrist to make him stop too.

Tweek made a confused sound and looked up at him, “W-what?”

“Tweek...is something going on?” Craig asked.

Tweek shook his head but didn't say anything.

“Tweek, man, come on, I-”

“Goodnight, Craig,” Tweek whispered, yanking his hand free of Craig's grip and hurrying off to his house.

Craig stared after him, confused and a little upset. What would Tweek hide from him? Was it because he wasn't telling Tweek what was wrong with him? If that was the case...he'd just tell him about the principal and pray the evil woman didn't find out. If that was what it took to get Tweek to share his problems, then he'd just ignore his fear and do it.
The next day at school, Tweek was unusually quiet, he didn't protest when Craig kissed his cheek before class, he didn't send any snaps during homeroom, and he wasn't in their usual meeting spot before lunch. Craig hadn't gotten to spend more than a couple minutes around him all day, it was worrying him and making him incredibly antsy. He thumbed his fingers against the lunch room table, not hearing when Token asked him something.

He finally looked up when Clyde hit him with an empty milk carton, “Hey! Craig! Stop ignoring us!” Clyde complained.

Craig blinked, “Huh? Oh, sorry. What is it?”

Token, Clyde, and Jimmy all stared at him in shock.

“No sarcastic comment? No bitter, biting remark? You don't even look angry...Craig, the hell is wrong man?” Token asked.

Craig shook his head and smacked a hand to his face, “Tweek...it's nothing. You'd just tell me I'm being overly concerned.”

“You do get concerned pretty easily over him,” Clyde grumbled.

“It's just...he hasn't talked to me like all day. I only saw him this morning and...it's weird,” Craig mumbled, poking at his food with a fork.

“Yeah, you probably are worrying too much,” Token chuckled, “Come on Craig, maybe you were just being a little smothering? I mean, I haven't talked to Nichole today, and Clyde only saw Bebe at first period and he's not freaking out. Maybe Tweek just wanted a break and didn't want to hurt your feelings.”

“Yeah, sometimes if I talk to Bebe too much she yells at me,” Clyde said, “So like, maybe Tweek is just nicer about telling you you're being too...like...much.”

“I...I mean, I didn't think I was being annoying,” Craig said, frowning in thought, “He's usually...but I...well, the last couple of weeks I have been...” he kept trailing off, not finishing any of his thoughts out loud.

“Just give him some space, he'll find you when he wants too, which I'm sure will be before the end of today,” Token said, offering a reassuring smile, “You two can't seem to stand being away from each other for long, I'm sure one day will be enough of a break for him.”

“Yeah, and hey! Me, Token, and Jimmy are getting ice cream after school, you should come with us! It doesn't have anything to do with Tweek, I just miss spending time with youuu,” Clyde whined, “Pleeeease come with uuss!”

Craig shook his head, “God you're ridiculous Clyde. Fine, I'll-” He paused, “Oh fuck, I can't. I have detention again today. God dammit I hate that woman,” he hissed.

“Again? You had detention yesterday, she gave you two days?” Clyde whined, “What'd you even do?”

“I don't really know,” Craig grumbled, “I was on my phone in homeroom, and I was late to lunch. That's it.”
"It's got to me more than that, we're all on our phones all the time," Token said, confused.

"A-and I u...usually get here late," Jimmy added, "So do a luh...lot of kids. Kyle is almost nuh-never on time. He's usually busy fuh...ffuh...fighting someone."

"Cartman?" Craig asked.

"Usually," Jimmy said, "He's gotten a-angrier since elementary school."

"We've all gotten angrier, he's just got a naturally short fuse," Token chuckled, "I'm so glad I'm not in his group of friends."

"We're all very thankful to not have to deal with an angry hormonal Kyle," Craig said, "Can we stop talking about things that don't matter? Even talking about him annoys me almost as much as his grating, lectury voice."

"Well okay, anyway, it's pretty weird that you got two days detention for something the rest of us never got in trouble for," Token said.

Craig nodded, "Yep. Guess she just hates me. Hey do any of you know her name? I've just been calling her 'mecha cunt' in my head."

Clyde snorted and Jimmy grinned, "I think th-that's a muh-much better name for her."

Token shook his head, smiling, "It's Petunia Sweetwater."

"You're telling me that demon of a woman has the name of a Disney fairy princess?" Craig asked flatly.

Token nodded, "I guess so."

"Okay well, I have to serve detention with fucking Sweetwater, so I can just hang out with you guys tomorrow. And I will. I'm sorry I haven't been as much lately. Things have been weird."

Clyde hugged Craig tightly, "It's okay man! Just don't forget about us! We love you Craig you're like our brother don't leave us!"

Craig pried Clyde off of him, a look of disgust on his face, "Clyde, Clyde you somehow managed to get gravy on my jacket. Never touch me again you disgusting creature."

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Tweek wasn't in last period, which worried Craig a lot. Even if Tweek was avoiding him, he was usually too anxious to just skip a class. Craig, however, had no qualms skipping a class if he thought something was more important. So, ignoring the consequences, he got up about halfway through class, leaving with a barely mumbled excuse about needing to go to the nurse. He didn't care if the teacher bought it or not.

He actually did head to the nurse, feeling like Tweek might've gone there. The nurse, unfortunately, was alone. She was doing paperwork behind her desk, looking about as tired as you'd expect a woman responsible for the health of two hundred pre-teens to be.

"Um, excuse me," Craig asked, knocking on the door frame to get her attention, "Was Tweek Tweak in here at any point today?"

The nurse looked up at Craig, offered a non-committal grunt, and shifted through a few papers
Craig nodded and took the paper, “Yeah that's me, thanks.” He leaned against the wall and read the paper, a note letting him know things were fine, but saying he wouldn't see Tweek for a few days. He frowned and looked back to the nurse, “He didn't say why he was here...what happened?”

“I'm not allowed to discuss that with a student, sorry kid,” she said.

“Look-,” Craig took a breath, being an asshole wouldn't get him what he wanted, he'd have to try to actually be nice to this lady. “...ma'am, please. Tweek means the world to me, I'm really really worried about him, can you please at least tell me where he is?”

The nurse sighed, “He told me he didn't want to worry you, but god, don't look so heartbroken kid, I can't stand that. Look, I can't tell you why, but he's at Hell's Pass, and he's not dying or anything. Alright? Jeez, you gay kids tear at my heart I swear to God...”

Craig wasn't sure if he remembered to thank the nurse or not, he was out the door so fast that he couldn't even remember leaving the school. Tweek was at the hospital? What the hell happened? Screw detention, screw everything, Tweek was more important than any of that bullshit.

He ran the whole way to the hospital, only stopping briefly at the reception desk to pretty much demand Tweek's room number. He ran into the room so quickly that he tripped and slammed onto his face on the ground. He heard a scream above him, which meant at least Tweek was conscious.

He scrambled to his feet and over to Tweek's side, “Tweek, hhh...Tweek oh my God, thank God...are you okay?”

Tweek put a hand to his chest, looking at Craig with wide eyes, “Heart attack aside, I'm fine. C-Craig oh my god. Jesus Christ...that scared the hell out of me! W-wait, how did you know I was here?”

Craig shook his head and pulled a chair up to sit next to the bed. Tweek did LOOK okay, he had on a hospital gown and there was an IV in his arm, but there were no other machines connected to him, and he just looked incredibly tired.

“I convinced the nurse to tell me. She has a weak spot for gay kids I guess,” Craig said, “Tweek, what happened?”

Tweek shook his head, “I should've known that nurse would give me away. It was nothing, really, I didn't want to worry you for no reason, Craig,” Tweek said, patting Craig's cheek.

“Well clearly it's not nothing, or you wouldn't be in here,” Craig said.

“It was just a mistake. I'm fine.”

“Why'd you say in that note you'd be gone for a few days?”

“It's nothing.”

“Tweek-”

“Stop.”

Tweek glared at Craig, jaw set firmly. He didn't really look angry though, more pleading. Like if Craig kept pushing, something would break. Craig took Tweek's hand and met his gaze. Tweek kept
holding something back, and now he was in the hospital. He didn't care if Tweek got mad at him, he needed to know so he could help.

“Tweek...I can't. This is important...and I think I need to know. I'll tell you my problem first, okay? I know you wanted to know, and maybe it's why you didn't want to trust me with this...and I'm sorry about that. It's the principal, that...woman...I don't understand what it is but I am so terrified of her Tweek. She bruised my wrist, and maybe my shoulder, she keeps insulting me and makes me serve detention in her office where she just keeps making me feel worse. I shouldn't care, I know I shouldn't, but I still do, and it's been hell and I hate middle school and I didn't tell you because I was scared. I was scared she'd find out and hurt me, and I was scared you'd try and get involved and she'd hurt you. Now you have to tell me what's wrong, please, you're making me so worried that I nearly forgot to snap at Clyde today.”

Tweek squeezed Craig's hand, meeting his gaze and not saying anything for a minute. “…thank you for telling me. That's...pretty awful Craig. She shouldn't do that stuff, and you should let your parents know. I'll stay out of it for now...just to keep you from worrying more, but you better tell an adult who can do something about this, or else I WILL get involved.”

Craig kissed Tweek's cheek, “I will, for you I will. Now please, Tweek, please, I'm begging here, what is going on with you?”

Tweek looked down at the bed, “…it was...the coffee,” he mumbled.

“The coffee put you in here?” Craig asked.

“What was in the coffee,” Tweek said, “It was my fault.”

“The-Tweek how is that your fault? You aren't the one who-”

“I did today. I was...sad. I...I don't know, I thought...I thought it'd be easy and that you'd get over it...” Tweek trailed off, tears brimming in his eyes, “I don't know what I was thinking...”

Craig was silent as the realization hit him. That stuff, Tweek tried to overdose on that stuff. “Tweek,” he whispered, squeezing his hand tightly.

Tweek shook his head and used his free hand to cover his face, “It was stupid a-and I was stupid and Kenny found me a-and he told me you would find out anyway but I hoped you wouldn't...I'm sorry Craig, I'm so sorry...”

Craig stood up and leaned over the bed, hugging Tweek tightly, careful of the tube in his arm. “Why would you think even for a second that the world would be okay without you in it? You're the only good thing it Tweek, how dare you try to take that away from everyone.”

Tweek breathed out a laugh through his tears, hugging Craig back, “You're the only one who thinks of me like that Craig...”

“Well that should be enough, don't ever ever think that I could get over that. I can't live without you Tweek, okay? I can't. Don't you dare try to take that joy away from me ever again,” Craig said, burying his face in Tweek's hair. He knew Tweek had some problems at home, though he wasn't sure what they were, and he knew Tweek had some anxiety issues, but he had no idea it was this bad. He owed Kenny so much for saving Tweek.

“I-I know it was stupid and I shouldn't have...I just...I wasn't thinking...and...I think I have some real problems Craig,” Tweek said shakily, gripping tightly onto Craig's shirt.
Craig nodded, “I'll help you. I'll get you real help and we'll work through this together okay? Because being without you...I can't picture a world like that. Don't ever make me have to.”

Tweek nodded again, sniffing and mumbling shaky apologies against Craig while Craig failed at keeping himself from crying. The door to the room creaked quietly open and Craig looked up. All he saw was a watery orange blur, but that was enough to know it was Kenny.

“I told you,” Kenny said gently, walking over to the other side of Tweek’s bed. He stood a couple feet away, giving the couple some space, “When people love you, they just know.”

Tweek sniffed and nodded, “You were right Kenny...fuck...I'm such a terrible person...I'm so sorry...”

“We all do stupid things, just be glad it wasn't something you couldn't take back,” Kenny said, “...even if it almost was.”

Tweek nodded and hugged Craig tighter. Craig kissed Tweek's cheeks and nuzzled against his face, not caring in the slightest that Kenny was watching, “It'll be okay, I promise it will be. I promise.”

Craig looked over to Kenny, “Hey, Kenny, I owe you my fucking life. Thank you for saving him.”

Kenny nodded, “What are vigilantes for? I serve and protect. By the way, Tweek, I called a lady who can help you. She mostly works with homeless kids, but she'll see anyone who doesn't exactly have the means to pay for therapy. She's real good, helped Karen when she tried this.”

“Y-your sister?” Tweek asked, sniffing, “Kenny I-”

“It's alright, like I said, we all do stupid things. All you need is a way to get there, and I have a feeling Craig will make sure that happens. I won't tell anybody about this either, it's none of their fucking business.”

Tweek blinked, “Not even-”

“If you think I'd tell the hippie that made an anti-bullying music video, the overly lectury better-than-everyone boy, and Cartman, then you'd be dead wrong. They can stay in their own little world, and besides,” Kenny pulled his coat's hood back over his face, tightening it so it covered his mouth, muffling him. He winked and said something Tweek and Craig couldn't understand. Though that was probably the point.

“...Thank you Kenny, so much,” Tweek said softly.

Kenny nodded and gave a thumbs up, then he set a business card on the table next to the bed and headed out. Craig pet Tweek's hair and looked over at it, the number of the lady Kenny had talked about probably.

“I decided I like Kenny,” Craig said, “And you...I'll bring you wherever that lady is. My parents can drive you, I know they would. And if you don't want that then I can ride bikes with you there.”

Tweek sighed shakily and nodded, “You...you can ask you parents. It's probably too far to bike. Thank you Craig, I don't deserve you.”

Craig shook his head, “No, you deserve better. But since I'm all you've got, I guess you're stuck.”

Tweek smiled and kissed Craig the best he could, “Love you...thank you.”
“I love you too, more than anything,” Craig murmured. He try harder than ever now, he'd get Tweek the help he needed, and by the time they graduated high school, he'd make sure he could bring Tweek with him. Because there was no way in hell he was letting him stay in this shit hole any longer than he had to.

Chapter End Notes

Mmmm angssstt how I've missed it. These kids aren't okay man. They aren't okay.
In case anybody's curious about what I've been doing in the 4-week span I keep on NOT UPDATING in, I run an SP ask blog that updates weekly!
If anyone's interested, that's here:
https://askthefreedompals.tumblr.com

and my main tumblr is here is anyone wants it! (it's all memes)
http://milkssecondfavoriteteacookie.tumblr.com

thank all of you so much for the wonderful comments! They really keep me inspired to keep writing this thing!

The school year came and went in a slow, blurred haze, and summer rushed by in a fleeting gust. It had been a long, difficult time, but Craig and Tweek had talked to Craig's parents about both of their issues, and now Tweek was going to a youth counselor in Denver every other week, and Craig's mom was fighting the school's council about the principal. Laura fully believed her son of course, but the others weren't nearly as convinced, and without proof, they wouldn't do anything. So Craig was still stuck dealing with the awful middle school principal, though she was being a lot more careful now, which meant she was being less cruel by necessity. Laura promised Craig she wouldn't give up, and every time she got a chance she was working on a way to get the woman fired. Craig's dad was usually the one to bring Tweek to his appointments, which had been more than a little uncomfortable at first, but after a few months the two had started to share an odd sort of bond. Craig wasn't sure how he felt about that, Tweek and his dad might gang up on him and make him be more responsible or something. It was a terrifying thought.

With the first year of middle school behind them, and both boys well on their way to actually fixing their problems, they were neither one completely dreading seventh grade. It didn't seem much harder than sixth grade for the first couple weeks, then they were introduced to the agony of pre-algebra and, for Craig, who had begrudgingly been coaxed into AP classes, chemistry.

Craig, Token, Jimmy, Clyde, and Tweek were all sprawled out on Token's bedroom floor, looking up at the ceiling blankly and mumbling something about missing kindergarten. “You know what I miss most about kindergarten?” Tweek grumbled, “Naps.”

“You know what I miss? Not having to know shit,” Craig groaned, rubbing his face, “Stupid advanced classes...”

“You're normally so lazy, why would you even want to take advanced classes?” Token asked, rolling onto his side to look at Craig.

“Ughhh...because if I take high-school courses now, I can take college level shit in high-school and actually get into a decent place for astronomy. Did you know astronomers need PhDs? Loving space is gonna fucking kill me,” Craig groaned.

Tweek rolled over and hugged Craig's arm, kissing his cheek, “Well I'll help keep you focused.”
Craig gave a half smile and rolled onto his side so he could wrap his arms around Tweek's waist, “I dunno, if you hang around too much I don't know if I'll be able to focus at all, I'll get too distracted by your-”

“Guys,” Token interrupted quickly, “I'm not sure where that was headed, but, just a reminder, other people. There are other people right next to you.”

Tweek blushed brightly and hid his face in Craig's chest, but Craig just scoffed, “Whatever, like you guys aren't worse with your girlfriends.”

“We really aren't dude,” Clyde said, “If I was that handsy with Bebe, she'd probably smack me. I WISH I could be that sickeningly sweet with her.”

“Psh, it's not my fault that she's a bitch dude,” Craig said.
“Look, could you just keep the PDA to school-acceptable levels?” Token asked.

“...this is what I do at school,” Craig replied flatly.

“I m-mean, he does,” Jimmy shrugged.

Token sighed and sat up, “Who wants to go get ice cream?” he asked, deciding to drop the subject entirely.

“I'm always up for yuh-you puh...ppuh...paying for ice cream!” Jimmy beamed, struggling up to his feet to follow after Token.

Clyde nodded in agreement, springing up impressively fast for how chubby he was, “YEAH ICE CREAM!”

“Lovebirds?” Token questioned.

Craig pulled out his phone, “Mm, can't. We have somewhere to be in like, an hour. Sorry guys.”

Tweek's head popped up off Craig’s chest and he snatched the phone from him, “O-oh shit, is it one already?! Why didn't you say something?!”

Craig snorted, “It's fine, we have plenty of time.”

Tweek was already out the door, screaming something about possible traffic or crashes or the car suddenly bursting into flames. Craig sighed and walked by the others, “Sorry guys, I have to go convince Tweek that my dad's truck won't spontaneously combust on the way to Denver. I'll see you later.”

Craig followed Tweek out of the house, calming him with a few pats on the shoulder and some quiet words that the other boys couldn't hear. Clyde sighed, giving a pouty look, “They're busy so often now, it sucks!”

Token watched the two walk off, “Hm...yeah, they really are...why do you think they go to Denver so much?”

“G-guh-gay convention?” Jimmy suggested.

Token fixed him with a flat look and he clicked his crutches rapidly against the ground, “Wh-wait wait, say it again I can come up with something buh-better.”

Token rolled his eyes and started walking, “Well, it's not like it's our business anyway.”
"You're only sayin' that 'cause we have no way to follow them, aren't you?" Jimmy asked.

"Damn straight," Token grumbled.

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"It's only twenty minutes there, and the truck has never so much as sparked even once," Craig assured Tweek as they approached Craig's house.

"I-I know, I just get so anxious you know? I-I mean it's like...really tough. A-and you can't even go in with me so I'm alone and it's like...just...tough," Tweek sighed.

"Hey, you've already done it like, what, six times? So you know you can keep doing it. And it's helping, right?" Craig asked.

Tweek took a deep breath and nodded, "Right. A-and you're still sure my parents have no idea about this whole...therapy...thing?"

"I told your dad we have a standing date twice a month, he just thinks we're off being gay...er than usual. It's totally fine," Craig assured him.

Tweek smiled as the two headed into the house to get Craig's dad, "You're the best."

They sat on the couch and Craig pulled Tweek into a half-hug, "Pretty sure that's you, actually, but whatever, I'll take it."

Tweek snorted and attempted to call Craig a hopeless dork, but he was cut off as Craig kissed him. He hummed softly and smiled wider as Craig pulled back away, "You're getting better at that."

"Grooooss," Tricia whined as she walked into the room, "And he's only gotten better 'cause he practiced on his hand. I saw him once, it was weird."

Craig grabbed a throw pillow off the couch and whipped it at her, "Get out of here you fucking goblin!"

Tweek snickered, "Seriously Craig?"

Craig's face turned red and he refused to look back over at Tweek, instead focusing more energy on hitting his sister with couch pillows. She laughed and batted them away, turning and running into the kitchen, "YOU'LL NEVER KEEP ME FROM EMBARRASSING YOU! NEVEEEEERR!"

Tweek laughed and sidled closer to Craig, "You know, dork, you could just kiss me more often instead. Unless you're enjoying kissing your hand. I don't want to get in the way of true love."

Craig blushed harder and pressed the remaining couch pillow against Tweek's face. Muffled laughter emanated from under the pillow and Craig didn't even bother trying to come up with anything to say, he knew he'd only make it worse. After about five minutes, Craig's dad came downstairs and Craig was able to escape the teasing of his boyfriend and sister, if only for awhile, he'd take it.

"Okay, good luck honey, and you're sure you don't want me to go with you at least on the ride there this time?" Craig asked, standing in the doorway as Tweek was about to head out.

Tweek nodded, "I-I'm sure. I need to try a-and do it myself. I'll snap you if I start getting anxious...more than usual. It'll be okay, your dad's a good guy, and he's only somewhat uncomfortable to be around now."
Craig sighed, “I know I know, but you can't blame me for worrying. But I know you can do it.”

Tweek kissed his cheek, “You almost seem as worried as me, just relax and watch a movie or something, I'll be back by the time it's done.”

Craig watched Tweek hop into the truck, exchange a few awkward words with Thomas, and then watched the truck drive off down the road. His face barely changed as the vehicle rolled away, but his mind was swirling with fears of Tweek not being able to handle things without him there. And, if he was being completely honest, he might've worried for just a second about the truck catching fire.

“It's hard when your husband goes out to sea, but he's a strong lad, don't worry Mrs. Tweak, he'll be back on shore leave before you know it,” Came Tricia’s teasing voice from behind him.

Craig whirled around, “C'mere you little shit! I still need to beat you up for telling Tweek about—just come here!”

She screamed and laughed, bolting down the hall as Craig sprinted after her. He eventually caught up to her, wrapped her in a blanket so tightly she couldn't escape, and decided to punish her by setting the child-burrito on the couch next to him and making her watch a documentary on black holes with him. It unfortunately backfired when she started finding it interesting halfway through, but hey, at least he was getting to watch a space documentary, so he couldn't complain too much.

“Hey, I'm hungry. Get me food,” Tricia said.

“You're a big girl, get your own damn food,” Craig huffed, focused on the documentary.

“I can't, I've been burritoed,” Tricia replied, wiggling around in her tight blanket wrap, “FEED THE BURRITO WHAT SHE DESIRES! BRING THE BURRITO HER CEREAL!”

Craig glanced over and couldn't help but snicker at his sister, wriggling in her blanket and squawking about being an angry burrito god. He finally went and got her a box of cereal, tossing a handful of it over her face and only getting about three pieces in her mouth.

“Feast, oh mighty burrito god,” he said, continuing to toss fistfuls of frosted flakes at her while she snapped at the air like a hungry shark, trying to catch the cereal rain.

“Okay okay stop!” she giggled, “There's like three bowls worth on the floor, lemme out.”

Craig unwrapped her from the blanket and watched with amusement as she hopped down and started eating the cereal off the floor. He looked at her and raised an eyebrow as she made eye contact with him and shoved handfuls of floor cereal into her mouth.

“Seriously, you have a real problem,” Craig said, “I think you might be a cereal addict.”

Tricia nodded, “It's a terrible and delicious disease. So, Craigo, I gotta question about you an' Tweek.”

Craig sighed heavily, “What now?”

“When're you gonna propose to him?”

Craig blinked a few times, “...I-what? We just turned thirteen, we can't get married!”

Tricia scooped some more cereal off the floor, inspecting it for dust before shoving it in her mouth, “Yeah but, think 'bout it. You an' him been dating for like, a long time. Like...almost four years.
Don't people usually get married after that long?"

Craig blushed a bit, “Well...I mean, I guess? But we're kids!”

“So you don't think about it?” Tricia asked, raising an eyebrow and licking a single frosted flake off her arm.

Craig frowned and sat on the couch, ignoring the crunch of cereal under him, “I mean...I guess...” he shook his head, “You're way too into my personal life. You need to get your own boyfriend,” he huffed.

Tricia hopped back up onto the couch, grabbing the bow of cereal and eating out of that now the the floor was cleaned of flakes, “Whatever. Boys are stupid. None of them like being flipped off and called little bitches.”

“Why'd you call them that then?”

“They were being little bitches.”

Craig nodded, “Fair enough.”

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When Craig's dad came back home with Tweek a couple hours later, Craig and Tricia were asleep in a pile on the couch, cereal coating the children and the floor like some sort of frosted flakes hurricane had struck. Tricia still had the box, it was hugged to her chest as she snored away. Craig was in an awkward position of being roughly half off the couch, one foot touching the floor and his face pressed into the side of the sofa. Thomas and Tweek took in the scene, and Thomas left the room without a word.

Tweek snorted and walked over, cereal crunching under his feet as he crouched in front of the sleeping siblings. “Hey losers, wake up,” he said, emphasizing his last two words with a poke to Craig’s side.

Craig grunted and waved his arm half heartedly, and Tricia cursed under her breath, still very much asleep. Tweek rolled his eyes and shook his head. They’d both hate it if he told them how similar they were. He grabbed Craig by the shirt and did what any amazing boyfriend would do, yanked him all the way off the couch, cackling as Craig woke with a start and flailed on the cereal-crusted floor.

Craig sat up and fixed Tweek with a half-asleep glare, “You are such a dick.”

“Yeah,” Tweek agreed, leaning forward and kissing his cheek, “want some help cleaning up this cereal lake?”

Craig blinked one eye at a time, seeming confused. Then he looked down and his eyes widened slightly, “Holy shit. Okay so, we were throwing it at each other, and I guess it got out of hand, and then we both had like, way too much sugar and passed out.”

Tweek shook his head, “Craig, I thought you'd be okay without me for a couple hours, but I turn my back for one minute and you get high on sugar. For shame.”

Craig gave Tweek a light arm punch and stood up, brushing himself off and looking to Tricia. “...I'm
gonna go put her in her bed. She probably needs the nap. Don't worry about cleaning up, I'll take care of it when I come back downstairs.”

After prying the box from her arms and getting her settled into her bed, Craig came back downstairs to find Tweek sweeping the floor. Craig huffed and walked over, grabbing the broom from him and poking his nose, “Bad Tweek. You have to clean enough at your dumb job. Just sit down and try relaxing, okay?”

Tweek sighed and crossed his arms, “Maybe I like sweeping, ever think of that?” he protested, though he took a seat anyway.

“No one likes sweeping,” Craig said, resuming cleaning up. “And if you say you do, you're just lying to yourself. So, how'd it go?”

“Really good actually,” Tweek said, “I talked about you some, but mostly parent stuff. A-and um, she thinks we're like...pretty good for each other. B-but she also used the word 'co-dependent'. She said I need to be okay doing more things by myself...that I uh, can't just use you like...like some sort of shield from my anxieties.”

Craig huffed, “Well, that's good advice I guess. But I like being your shield. Makes me feel special.”

Tweek smiled and turned his focus to the sweeping motions of the broom, “yeah, I know, it's one of the things that's so amazing about you. But...she really is right. I have to learn to be independent too. And...I think maybe...you need that too. Don't you think maybe you rely on me a lot too?”

Craig paused in his sweeping, “...I...I mean, I guess? I don't know, you're just the only person in the world I really give much of a shit about. I don't really want to branch out and be like a sociable person or whatever. I don't need anyone else.”

“B-but...that's...a lot of pressure,” Tweek whispered, “Craig, you can't just rely on me okay? Y-you have to have like, at least one other person you can talk to. We both do. I-it's healthy.”

“Do you...think you'd be happier if I attempted that?” Craig asked.

Tweek nodded, “I think we both would be. I mean, what if you have stuff you don't want to tell me? You should be able to talk about that stuff anyway, so having an outlet is a um, good idea. Besides, I'm sure you have to be close enough to at least one of your other friends to already share stuff with them a little, right?”

Craig frowned and kept sweeping. He walked out of the room, throwing out the cereal sweepings as he tried to think of a good answer to that. He'd known his other friends a little longer than Tweek, he hung out with them almost as much, and he guessed he'd call them his best friends. But...sharing with them? He hardly shared with Tweek, and he trusted him more than anyone. Let's see, there was Jimmy, who sex-joked his way through any attempts at a serious conversation, Clyde, who was too stupid to actually be useful, and Token. Token was...well, he was fine. A good friend, good listener, had decent advice...but Craig just didn't trust him that way. Maybe he should? Being an actual functioning human was too much damn work. But if that was what Tweek needed, he could at least try it.

He was jolted out of his thoughts by a tap on his shoulder, Tweek offered a small smiled as Craig turned to look at him, puzzled.

“You uh, just walked out of the room, and you've been standing in front of the trash for a few minutes. Did I upset you? I didn't mean to, it was just a thought, I don't want you to think-”
“I think it's a good idea,” Craig cut him off, recognizing when he was about to spiral into a wild
tangent.

Tweek visibly brightened, “R-really?!”

Craig nodded, “Yeah. Sorry I freaked you out, I was just thinking and forgot to answer. So, who will
you talk to about stuff?!”

Tweek shrugged, “N-no idea, I'm still used to just you, but, I'll figure something out!”

Craig hugged him and chuckled a little, “Alright, well I guess I'd better figure it out too then.”

Tweek smiled and pulled back, looking up at Craig, “So, now that we've talked about that...want to
go practice kissing?”

He wiggled his eyebrows and Craig felt like his face exploded. It was so hot, there was no way it
wasn't bright red. Tweek snickered and leaned up on his toes, adding, “Unless you really do enjoy
kissing your hand more.”

Craig was so flustered that he grabbed his own hat off his head and pulled it over Tweek's face,
making the blonde erupt in laughter as he fought to pull the snug fabric back off of him.

He grabbed Craig's hand and shoved his hat back onto his head, “Come on space dork.”

“W-wait you weren't just teasing?” Craig asked.

Tweek gave a mischievous grin and pulled Craig along behind him without another word.

---

The next day, Craig was walking around the mall with Token, looking at all the shop windows they
passed as Token rambled on about finding the perfect birthday gift for Nichole. Craig was only half
listening, nodding idly as he went over in his head what Tweek had said. He had only even agreed to
help Token shop for a dumb present as an excuse to try talking to him alone. It wasn't going great.
Craig was terrible at talking, and Token was getting annoying in his gift hunt.

After about fifteen minutes of silence from Craig, Token held an arm out to stop him, “Hey, Craig,
what's up man?”

Craig cast him a quizzical look and shoved his hands into his hoodie pocket, “the fuck are you
talking about? I didn't say anything.”

Token chuckled a little, “I know, that's the point. And I mean, it's not like you're overly talkative or
anything, but we've passed by a stand with planet stuff, a coffee shop, and a pet store, and you have
yet to say anything gay about space, Tweek, or your hamster.”

“Guinea pig. Stripe is a Guinea pig, and he'll bite your nose off if you call him a hamster,” Craig
huffed.

“So?” Token laughed, “so, what's on your mind, Tucker?”

Craig thought on it for a minute, glancing back over his shoulder for a minute and making a mental
note to return to that stand with all the space stuff. He couldn't believe he'd missed that. He sighed
and looked back to Token, this was probably his best and only opportunity to talk.

“Tweek thinks I need to open up more, to like, more people. And I guess I trust you the second most,
so I wanted your like, opinion or whatever,” Craig said, kicking idly at the ground. He hated talking about himself, anything about himself outside his hobbies, it was too personal. He didn't think anyone else cared enough, and he felt like he could handle his own shit pretty well, but this was for Tweek. So he had to try, no matter how uncomfortable it was.

Token blinked, seeming to take a minute to register this, “You...actually want to talk to me about things? Like, not just complaining about the new red racer theme? Actual things?”

Craig huffed again, “First of all, the new theme is shit and they should've kept it classic, everyone agrees, and second of all, it's not so much that I WANT to, I just, trust you not to go telling my deep dark secrets to the whole world.”

Token laughed again and clapped a hand on Craig's back, “Craig Tucker has deep dark secrets? Well, I'm certainly interested. Man, I've been trying to get you to open up for years, of course it was Tweek that made it actually happen.”

“Wait, you have?” Craig asked, confusedly letting Token guide him down the stretch of mall pathway to a pretzel stand.

“Yeah, duh? Why else would I always ask you how your classes were and how your weekends go? You don't even talk about your family at all. Until I met them I was convinced you actually lived in a box behind the school or something. I'm your friend dude, of course I want to know things! I'm sure you actually care about me under all that deadness too, right?”

Craig grunted and nodded slightly, “Well, yeah. I mean, I wouldn't tolerate you babbling about Nichole if I didn't want to keep you around, so, I guess I care like, a little.”

Token shook his head and ordered them each a little cup of pretzel bites, then walked to a table, dragging a reluctant Craig behind him. They sat and Token pushed a little cup of yellow sauce to Craig, “It's super good, try it. So, did you have any actual things you had in mind to talk about?”

Craig stared down at his pretzel bites, gazing at the comically large salt pieces like he couldn't find anything else in the world so interesting. “To be honest...I didn't think I'd get this far. I always assumed nobody cared about my dumb shit. Why would you? I'm kind of an asshole.”

Token smiled gently and patted Craig's hand, “Yes, but you're my asshole. ...that sounded a lot better in my head. What I mean is, you're my friend, and I actually like hanging out with you, we all do.”

Craig looked up at his friend, expression unreadable as usual. “...you're seriously a good guy Token. I got lucky, getting like the only normal guy in South Park for a friend.”

Token nodded in agreement, “Yeah man, you totally lucked out. Can you imagine if you'd been stuck with Stan's group like poor Tweek was for awhile?”

Craig snorted, “Those pricks couldn't have paid me enough to hang out with them. I went on one adventure, unwillingly mind you, and I ended up shooting lasers out of my eyes in the middle of Peru. It was awful, I'm staying away from them forever.”

Token snorted, “Wait, they weren't lying about that Peru thing? You really were on a wall carving?”

Craig sighed, “Ugh, don't fucking remind me. I found out I was adopted because of that damn trip! Mom and Dad were not happy, neither was I obviously.”

“Well I mean, genetically speaking, with your mom and dad's hair colors...and the fact that your skin is too dark to actually be a white kid.” Token trailed off as Craig glared at him.
“I'm just saying you would've figured it out eventually!” Token defended, “I bet Tricia found it funny huh?”

“Well, she tried to tease me about it, but I told her that mom and dad chose me and she was just a condom break, so she doesn't talk about it anymore,” he smirked.

Token shook his head, “I almost feel bad for that girl, having to live with your asshole ways every day.”

“Hey, Tricia and I have a great bond,” Craig protested, “I've only REALLY upset her like, twice in her whole life. We found the line pretty fast. She's a good kid. Never tell he I said that.”

Token nodded, “Do you realize that's the most you've ever talked about her?”

Craig frowned, “What? No way, I had to have mentioned her before, right? I mean, you knew her name and everything.”

“Because I met her, Craig, you don't really talk about anything, ever. Come to think of it, I don't even know like, your favorite color. I'd assume it's navy blue because you always wear it, but I don't actually know, and we've been friends for years!”

“It's green,” Craig replied, “wow, I can't believe I never told you that. ...what else have I not told you?”

Token and Craig spent the next fifteen minutes eating their pretzels and exchanging little bits of information that any friend should've known already, but Craig figured this was a good start. After Token finished up a story about his latest family trip to Mount Rushmore (very boring, he claimed, giant white guy heads are so, so boring), he said, “So, Craig, I've got a serious question for you.”

Craig nodded, “Sure, we're on a roll, go for it.”

“What's the deal with you and the principal?”

Craig turned a shade lighter and his placid expression faltered for a moment. He hadn't expected THAT. Out of everything Token could've asked, why that? “Wh...mm, why?” Craig asked, taking a minute to try and sound normal.

Token frowned and poked Craig's face, “Dude, come on. We all talk about it, it's clear something is wrong. You always look so anxious around her, and you never look anxious.”

Craig pushed his hand away and stood to throw out his empty cup, “I'd rather not share that,” he said, hoping being more polite than normal would make Token drop it.

“Craig, come on man, we've asked Tweek too and he just told us it was up to you to share that. We're really worried,” Token said.

Craig slammed the cup into the trash and looked at Token stiffly, “You went behind my back and tried to get it out of my boyfriend? It's none of your business!”

Token took a step towards Craig, touching his arm gently, “Craig, come on man, don't be pissed! We were worried and you wouldn't talk to us-”

“Because I DON'T NEED you to HELP me!” Craig snapped, “It's FINE. It's being taken care of, so don't worry about it.” He brushed Token's hand off his arm and turned away from him, biting his lip to hold his straight face. He was grateful to Tweek for not sharing that with them. He didn't want
Token and the others to know about it. His mom was taking care of it anyway. Probably. The school board wasn't listening to her, but she was working on it. He subconsciously rubbed at his wrist, still bruised from when the dragon woman had pulled him out of class for being 'distracting' or something. He couldn't even remember properly now.

He exclaimed angrily as Token grabbed his arm again, yanking the sleeve up and holding his hand tightly to keep him from pulling it back away, "TOKEN!

Token didn't seem to be phased at all by Craig flipping out on him, he had a firm grip and he wasn't letting Craig wriggle out of this. He held Craig's own arm up to him, "This? From her?" he asked.

"I-it doesn't fucking matter!" Craig spat back, still trying to yank his arm away.

"Craig, this is abuse," Token said, keeping his tone soft in hopes of calming Craig down, "It's serious, you can't just ignore this. She's an adult, but you aren't powerless."

Craig tugged on his arm again, but Token wasn't letting go. He looked away and tugged a couple more times, weaker this time. "'s fine," Craig mumbled, "Mom's trying to get the school board involved...so, it'll be fine soon."

Token squeezed Craig's hand, he stepped a little closer, holding his other arm out in a sort of invitation for a hug. Hugging Craig without his permission was a grave mistake, so he just waited patiently for Craig to look at him again. When he did finally meet his friend's gaze again, he looked so, so tired.

"Token, put your arm down, I don't need a hug," Craig grumbled.

Token slowly put his arm back down, "I think you do, but alright. Listen man, if you let me I can fix this whole thing for you. The school board doesn't give a shit, I have something much more powerful."

Craig looked at him questioningly, "What could that possibly be?"

Token smiled reassuringly, "Money. Dad would just have to say the word and she'd be out of a job so damn fast."

Craig bit his lip and slowly shook his head, "No...no it's okay. I don't want to get more people involved in this. I'd have to tell your dad and I just..."

"You feel embarrassed?" Token asked, "It's alright man, it's not your fault. She's a grown woman, she should be embarrassed-no, no she should be fucking ashamed. You have to let other people help you sometimes. And I can actually help."

Craig rocked on his feet slowly, debating it for a minute, then he took a step forward and wrapped his free arm around Token. Token was tall, but Craig was taller. He'd hit his growth spurt first, so Token found himself pressed up against Craig's chest. He finally let go of Craig's other arm and hugged him back, "See? I told you I care. A lot, clearly."

Craig laughed a little, "You must, letting me cause a scene in a mall like that without leaving. Thanks for...being more stubborn than me."

"Thank you for finally opening up a little," Token said. "You can tell my dad about it later today if you want, he's picking us up from the mall in a couple hours."

"Better sooner than later I guess," Craig sighed.
“Before you chicken out?” Token teased.

“Yeah,” Craig agreed, “Now come on, I'll even help you pick out a gift for Nichole. You’ve earned my undivided attention.”

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Later that afternoon, Token and Craig climbed into Token's dad’s minivan, both carrying a couple bags, they were chatting about cartoons and the upcoming football game since Token was part of the team. Token's dad smiled back at the two, “Well Craig, awfully chatty huh? What did Token do to you?”

Craig rubbed the back of his head, “Oh come on, I'm not THAT bad. I talk some.”

“Some might be an overstatement,” Token snickered, “but uh, actually, Dad, Craig needs your help with something. I said you could probably help.”

“Oh? Sounds serious, something wrong?” Mr. Black asked, worried gaze reflected in the rear-view mirror.

Craig went quiet at that, remembering that, right, he had agreed to talk to Token's dad about this. God, that would make four people who knew about this, not counting the school board...he hated this so much. “I um, well, Mr. Black...it's the school principal...I...have a problem.”

“Craig, you don't get along with any school staff,” Mr. Black chuckled.

“No, Dad, this is a serious problem,” Token said, deciding to help Craig out here, “The woman is physically abusive.”

Mr. Black frowned, eyebrows furrowing as he stared at the road ahead, “She is? Craig, can you tell me what she did?”

Craig rubbed his arm and focused on the floor of the minivan, unsure what exactly to say. Token patted his hand, “Hey, it’s alright man, it’s not your fault,” Token reassured.

Craig took a deep breath, thankful for Token's level-headed, dad-friend ways. “She always grabs me, by the wrist and the shoulders sometimes, and it hurts, there are bruises...I can't wear short sleeves or people might think my parents are hurting me. She hit me with a book once, it was that big soft cover of the school rules, she said she'd beat them into me if she had to. That one didn't bruise, but it uh...it hurt. I know I'm an asshole, and I deserve every detention I get, and possibly Juvie, but...I feel like beating me up is going a little too far, you know?”

Mr. Black was quiet for a minute, before calmly asking, “Anything else?”

Craig shifted a bit, “Well, she made me do a bunch of her paperwork for detention, though I’m not sure if that's breaking any rules...oh and she threatened to break my arm a couple times. She hasn't yet though. I really don't get why she hates me so much, like, more than the normal amount. She...really scares me...and...I'm kind of afraid she'll find out about me telling you this and she'll do something worse.”

There were a few minutes of silence as Craig fought to keep straight-faced. He absolutely refused to cry in public, no one was allowed to see him that weak. Well, Tweek, but he was an exception. He curled his hands into fists against his pants, “Is...is there anything you can do?” he asked.

Mr. Black simply nodded. Craig glanced up at the rear-view mirror and saw why he wasn't talking,
there was an anger in his eyes, the same Craig had seen when he'd told his mom about all this. And he hadn't told her the extent of it like he had this time. Mr. Black held up a finger, signaling to the kids not to talk, and then he called someone on his bluetooth.

By the time they got to Craig's house, Mr. Black was wrapping up his phone call, “-this Monday, eight P.M. And I will be considering donating elsewhere if the school disagrees with me. Thank you.” He hung up and leaned back in his seat, “Alright Craig, you're home. And don't worry about it, that woman will be out of a job within the week. If you get any proper evidence in the mean time I might be able to land her some jail time too, but you definitely won't have to worry about her again.”

The relief was obvious in Craig's face. He sighed and offered a smile, “Thank you. So much. You too Token. You really are a great friend.”

Token gave a thumbs up. Craig climbed out of the van with his little bag of stuff and waved as the two drove off. He walked inside feeling lighter than he had in the past year. He even hummed to himself a bit as he kicked his shoes off, prompting his sister to call out, “you're humming now?! GOD Tweek really is turning you into a total gaywad.”

“That's not a bad thing, you fucking gremlin,” Craig said, absolutely no venom in his voice. He even smiled at his sister as he headed for the stairs.

Tricia set her bowl of cereal down and watched him leave with wide eyes, not remotely used to seeing Craig in anything resembling a good mood.

Craig headed up to his room and plopped onto his bed, taking out his phone and texting Tweek, 'pretty good day today. How was yours?'

A few minutes later he got a text back, 'it was good. i made new friends....i think'.

Craig called Tweek, deciding he'd rather just talk to him. There was a click after a few rings, “C-Craig” Tweek greeted, “I-I'm working! I'll get in trouble talking on the phone!”

Craig scoffed, “Aw c'mon, your parents are that strict about it?”

“Y-yes!” Tweek replied, “Look, I'll call you later, like, two hours okay? Love you,” then he hung up.

Craig sighed and set his phone on his chest. He really wanted to know what the deal with Tweek's parents was. He was sure Tweek would tell him eventually. In the mean time, he decided that overall, the day had been pretty good. He'd get to talk to Tweek about it later, and hopefully Tweek had found someone he could trust too.

Chapter End Notes

I am SO FREAKING HAPPY about the response to this story! It's been so awesome, and it's made it so I don't ever want to stop writing it, even when my interest in South Park dwindled a bit.

I'm also freakin thrilled that I made some of you cry. That's one of my favorite accomplishments as a writer honestly. And I hope you guys are ready, because some time soon I'm going to attempt to RIP OUT YOUR HEARTS
~Enjoy!!~
Craig and the Status Quo

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was Sunday morning, Sunday morning at ten. Craig was usually asleep at this time, since he felt that the best way to spend a weekend was to sleep as much as possible and make up for the lack of rest the school week forced onto him. But Craig was not sleeping. He was groggily pulling a pant leg onto his arm as he talked to Tweek on the phone.

“Yeah no, hang on...this shirt has no head hole,” he mumbled tiredly.

“Craig those are pants. Stop trying to wear pants as a shirt and just meet me outside when you're dressed, okay?” Tweek snickered on the other end of the line.

Craig blinked at the jeans hanging off his arm, grunted, and mumbled something close enough to an agreement into the phone before hanging up. He managed to get himself dressed, a long-sleeved 'I don't believe in humans' shirt on in place of his hoodie, which he usually washed on the weekends. He pulled on his hat, decided it looked pretty stupid without his hoodie, and tossed it onto his bed.

He slid down the stair rail, prompting Tricia to warn him not to break his arm again 'like the dumbass he was', to which he simply flipped her off and stole her cereal bowl.

“Listen, midget hellspawn, I'm awake on a Sunday morning, don't bother me. And cool it with the cereal, you're gonna get diabetes.”

Tricia rolled her eyes as her brother ate her cereal and tossed the bowl aside, “Whatever, this whole family has kick-ass metabolism, I'll be fine. Why ARE you awake though? Usually you don't crawl out of your alien pod until at least two.”

Craig flicked Tricia's arm, “Tweek called me, that's why. I fell asleep before he called me back last night, so-”

“So you're being clingy dorks and getting together this morning to make up for it? Whatever. Just keep your filthy gay hands off my cereal,” she said, waving him off.

Craig imitated her in a mocking tone and wandered out of the room. At least the sugar and sister-teasing had left him more fully awake. He got outside and found a strange sight. He tilted his head and rubbed his eyes, because he could swear he was seeing Tweek talking to Kenny and Butters.

He approached the three blondes slowly, moving like a cat would in a new and unfamiliar setting. He lowered himself a bit, nearly a foot so he could be the same height as his boyfriend, who had unfortunately not hit a growth spurt when Craig had. He tilted his head slightly, stood about a foot back, and did nothing else. All three boys had stopped talking by now and were just watching Craig be a complete fucking weirdo, and none of them said anything either.

Finally Tweek snorted and punched Craig's arm, “Morning weirdo. Did you forget how to interact with other humans again?”

Craig shook his head and straightened back to his full height, “Fuck you too, first of all. And no, I just...I'm a little confused. Why are you losers here? Shouldn't you be getting roped into some wild ass adventure by this time of day?”
Butters crossed his arms and Kenny rolled his eyes, “That was actually a nicer greeting than I expected. No, the guys are at church, except Kyle, who I assume is having family time or something. I don't know, nor do I really care, about what the little martyr does in his free time.”

Craig chuckled a little, “Well, I still don't know why you're here...but keep bad talking the others like that and I might not mind it so much.”

Tweek smiled and motioned to the other blondes, “These are the new friends I told you I made.”

Butters waved, “Good mornin'!”

Craig blinked slowly, pulled Tweek a little closer to himself, and leaned down, whispering, “Them? Really? I mean Kenny's fine but Butters? I didn't think the bar was that low Tweek.”

“Well I CAN hear you,” Butters interjected, “and you ain't exactly the kinda guy anybody's jumpin' to be friends with neither.”

Craig glared sideways at Butters, “...touche.”

Tweek shook his head, “They're both actually pretty cool. Even Butters. I thought we could like, hang out for a bit today and maybe you'd get along with them too?”

Craig looked at the two for another minute, then sighed, “Fine. But don't expect me to be less of an asshole to anyone.”

Tweek smiled and kissed his cheek, “I'd never ask you to do something impossible.”

Craig smiled a little and took Tweek's hand. He couldn't help but love that snarky little shit, he was just so perfect.

Tweek smiled a bit more, “Alright, so um, Craig's on board then! So...I uh...didn't actually think any further than this. What should we do?”

“Planetarium?” Craig asked.

“No! Never again!” Kenny objected.

“What? They don't do the brainwashing anymore! That guy died!” Craig huffed.

“I will not take that fucking chance,” Kenny huffed, “Uh, let's see...well the guys usually just stand around by that bus sign, that's no fucking fun...we could hang out at someone's house?”

“That's probably not a great idea,” Craig grunted, “I don't like either of you enough to want you to come over, Tweek's house is always off limits, your house is more like a crack den, and I'm not going near Butters' totalitarian dad with a fifty foot pole.”

“He's got a point,” Butters mumbled, “But wait, why is Tweek's-”

“Park!” Tweek yelped, “W-we should go to the park.”

“Yeah, I can fuck around in a park,” Kenny agreed, “Let's go then.” He grabbed Butters' hand and the four started walking downtown.

Craig tilted his head a bit, a little confused about something. That something mainly being that he was sure Kenny was incredibly straight. Like, posters of tits on his walls straight. “Kenny, I thought you were into tits,” was how Craig so intelligently decided to phrase this thought.
Kenny started laughing, and Tweek just shook his head, “y-you are so good at people, it's insane,” he teased Craig.

Kenny snorted and glanced back at him, “Damn, Tweek wasn't kidding when he said zero social skills. I'm into pretty much anything, and women are fuckin' awesome, but I love Butters.”

Butters beamed at this, and Craig just nodded briefly, “Okay, yeah that makes sense. Fuck, Tweek come on man, you really said zero social skills?”

Tweek twitched a little, “Th-that doesn't upset you does it? I-I was just trying to warn them that you're an asshole even when you're not trying to be and-gh, this is just making it sound worse oh Jesus fucking-”

“Babe, babe it's okay,” Craig said, squeezing Tweek's hand, “you're right, and you didn't upset me. C'mon, you like never upset me. You don't have to worry about that, okay?”

Tweek took a breath and nodded, “Right, you're right. Okay. I'm good.”

“You guys have issues,” Kenny said bluntly, “Tweek, you call that lady?”

Tweek twitched again, but nodded, “Y-yeah, she's been super helpful. Thanks again man.”

Kenny nodded and Butters looked at him in confusion, “What lady?”

“Oh, it's just a personal thing, don't worry about it Buttercup,” Kenny reassured.

Tweek breathed out a sigh of relief and Craig quietly thought how incredibly quick Kenny was. He never would've pegged him as intelligent at all from what he'd seen. He was always either quiet or making sex jokes around his usual friend group. This was...weird.

---

The four boys arrived in the park and found it to be roughly as awkward as it had been on the walk there. Craig wasn't great at interacting with new people, nor did he want to be, and Tweek seemed anxious the whole time. Craig was sure it was because of how uncomfortable his anti-social ways were making things, but he wasn't really sure how to fix that.

“Man, is it just me or could you just cut the tension here with a fucking knife?” Kenny asked, “Tweek, just chill out alright? It's not the end of the world if Craig doesn't feel like hanging around us. He's not exactly the most social guy.”

Tweek exhaled sharply, as though he had been holding his breath, and nodded, “Y-you're right...but...ngh..Craig, y-you know you don't have to hang out with us, right? Like I know how you are, and I just thought-but if you don't-you can like...you know?”

Craig patted Tweek's shoulder, “I know babe, I think. I'm fine, I'm trying to be more social or whatever. It's probably healthier, right?”

“You guys wanna play tether-ball?” Butters asked, posing a solution to their tense standing around. “I like playin' with Ken 'cause he don't tie me to the pole.”

“Wow,” Craig said flatly.

Kenny gave a flat look and grabbed Butters' hand, “come on, we can take turns, it'll be fun.”

The four started heading towards the court when an annoyingly familiar voice called out to them.
“Hey Kenny! Butters! What are you guys doing here?”

Craig grit his teeth and reached up to tug his hat down, only to remember that he had, in fact, not worn it today. Great, now he had no defense mechanism. Tweek twitched in surprise at the voice and looked over. He gave Craig a sympathetic smile, “Maybe he'll just say a quick hi and then leave?” he whispered.

“Like he ever says anything quickly,” Craig hissed back.

He forced himself to look over as an obnoxiously bright green hat popped into his line of vision, “Hey! Oh, and Tweek and Craig are here too! That's cool. You know it's weird, I thought you guys would all be in church, what with how all our parents are kind of hard-asses about religion.”

“Kyle,” Craig said dryly.

“Hey, we were just um, heading to the ball court,” Tweek said.

“Yeah, man I forgot your family liked to come here on Sundays, shit,” Kenny said, laughing awkwardly as Craig shot him a glare. Everyone knew the only person on earth Craig found more annoying than Kyle was Cartman, and it was close to a tie.

Butters beamed and waved a greeting, “Hey Kyle! I ain't in church 'cause my dad said it won't do me no good 'cause I'm already goin' ta hell, so here I am!”

Kyle cleared his throat, clearly unsure what to say to that, and turned his attention to Kenny, “What about you Kenny? Doesn't your mom like, always say she's worried you'll go to hell if you skip church?”

“Eh, I've been there, it's not so bad,” Kenny replied blankly.

It was starting to occur to Craig that his little circle of friends was way, way easier to talk to than these weirdos. What the hell was up with these guys? He missed Clyde. God, he couldn't believe he thought that, but DAMN did he miss that idiot right now. He would love to just sit and listen to him ramble about aliens building the pyramids if it meant he could forget hearing Kenny and Butters casually brush off their own fucked up existences.

Kyle didn't seem to be finding it much easier to talk to his weirdo friends, as he turned his gaze on Craig. Oh no, shit, he'd already made eye-contact, he was stuck now. Craig squinted as if looking at Kyle physically injured him, and Kyle bluntly ignored Craig's discomfort, taking a step closer.

“So, uh, what're you guys up to then?” Kyle asked, “No church?”

“Small talk is for people who have nothing important to say,” Craig snapped back instantly.

“W-we're playing tether-ball,” Tweek re-stated weakly.

“You know, it's actually really nice seeing you guys aren't forced to go to church every Sunday, like Stan, for instance. His dad's an alcoholic you know, but he acts like going to church once a week means he can just pretend that doesn't exist or whatever. Catholicism is such a fucked up system you know? And all my friends parents are so strict about it, like it's such a huge deal if they don't go EVERY Sunday, it's like, a good chunk of their weekend and I don't have any friends who aren't Catholic, so it's like, what am I gonna do every Sunday morning? Such a ridiculous tradition if you ask me-”

Kyle was off on a tangent now, barely making sense and with no signs of slowing down. Craig
started taking slow steps backwards, as though Kyle was a bear and wouldn't notice Craig escape if he went slow enough. Usually one of Kyle's friends was here to shut him up before he spouted too much word vomit, but it seemed that Kenny had already taken Butters and bailed to the ball court. Fucking bastard.

Tweek kept fruitlessly trying to interject, and Craig just gently took his hand, starting to back him up too. Kyle was talking about something else now, Craig wasn't even following, nor did he care to, he just watched and waited until Kyle's eyes briefly wandered, then he took his chance and booked it away, dragging Tweek behind him.

The boys didn't stop running until the hit the ball court, both out of breath as Kenny laughed nearby.

“You can't stop him once he starts talking religion,” Kenny snorted.

“Well you could've TRIED!” Craig huffed.

Tweek snickered, “Oh my god, y-you have to put up with that all the time? I am s-so sorry!”

Kenny shrugged, “Eh, it's actually really entertaining when he and Cartman get to riffing off each other. It's like that old science thing...an unstoppable force against an immovable object. Kyle just keeps going, even though Cartman's idiocy will never waver. It's hilarious.”

Craig rubbed his head, “I guess, damn, I just have a headache from two minutes of that. I can't imagine two of them screaming like angry cats at each other would make it any better.”

Kenny shrugged, “just depends on what you get used to I guess. You guys are a hell of a lot tamer, I'll give you that. Must be nice, to be content in being boring.”

“Boring is safe and easy. Not everyone needs to live like a coked out maniac, leaping off ledges at the first chance they get,” Craig scoffed.

Kenny held the ball up in his hand, batting it around the pole towards Butters, “Tell me Butters, what do you think? Would you rather watch red racer all day, or play super heroes?”

“Well I sure do love bein' evil and schemin’,” Butters answered as he hit the ball back, “Professor Chaos is mighty! He can't be grounded and he don't take shit from nobody! I'd rather be Chaos than just sit in my room all day I s'pose.”

Kenny cast Craig a smug look, “Craig, I know you're cool just sitting around doing nothing, but some people actually like having a purpose, life goals, working to make the world better. Boring might be safe and easy, but it doesn't mean you should just stick with it your whole life.”

Craig scrunched his nose up, eyes narrowing, “I played superheroes with you losers, me and Tweek both did. It sucked ass.”

“Yeah, but you didn't even try. You just scotch-taped an S to your hoodie and punched people when they pissed you off. That was literally how you already were,” Kenny huffed.

“Whatever, I hung out with you assholes didn't I?”

“W-well that did lead to like, our only big fight,” Tweek pointed out, “It was a pretty off-week.”

“Yeah, Tweek agrees with me on this, boring is way better than running around with our underwear on the outside, being lame and pretending vigilantes are still cool. It's not like I don't have a life goal, it's just not some stupid, unrealistic dream.”
Kenny punched the ball so hard it nearly nailed Butters in the face, he ducked and Kenny narrowed his eyes, “Vigilantes ARE cool. Fuck you, super dick.”

“You don't still take our old kid game seriously, do you?” Craig huffed.

“Not all of it was a game, there was a real drug problem! We fixed that!” Kenny protested.

“We saved a cat and ousted Cartman as being a dumbass, again. It's not like we actually fixed anything. My lifestyle is better, because at least I'm not delusional, thinking I'm making a difference in this unfixable mess of a town,” Craig retorted.

Tweek hugged Craig's arm, “Craig, calm down. You guys just look at stuff differently, it's not really that important is it?”

Butters walked over to Kenny, taking his hand, “Ken, c'mon, don't get worked up, you know Craig don't mean ta be mean.”

“I DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!” Kenny yelled, shaking his hand out of Butters' grip and stalking towards Craig.

Craig pushed Tweek lightly away from him, “and because you play hero at night, you think that means you get to judge me?”

“Just because I have a sliver of hope doesn't make me an idiot!” Kenny snapped.

“Just because I'm a little boring doesn't mean I don't have a purpose! I'm gonna be a fucking Astrologist, what the fuck have you ever really done with your heroing?” Craig growled.

“You KNOW I've saved people, saving people is all I have!” Kenny was barely a foot from Craig now, both boys glaring each other down as Tweek and Butters nervously attempted to get their boyfriends to cool down.

“Why is it so important to you to hold on to this stupid dream?” Craig asked.

“Why is it so important to you to be as boring as fucking possible?” Kenny shot back.

It was clear that both boys had struck a nerve with the other, and they could both tell, but neither one seemed willing to just back down and apologize for going too far. They just stood there, glaring at each other, a parallel anger and sadness reflecting in their gazes. After what felt like an eternity, but what was probably actually just a couple minutes, Tweek shoved himself between the two. He roughly shoved them apart, making both boys stumble back.

“That is ENOUGH!” Tweek exclaimed, “You BOTH went to fucking far a-and you know it! GOD! Why can't you just apologize and admit you don't know anything about each other's lives? You know you can't fucking judge each other! S-sometimes people are boring and safe b-because they like to be, a-and it doesn’t mean they’re worthless! A-and wanting to save people isn't stupid. Being a hero can be really foolish, b-but everyone knows you've helped people Kenny, you save people, even if you are fucking reckless and stupid sometimes! Now for the love of GOD. I just want my boyfriend and my new friends to TRY to get along! So stop antagonizing each other and say you're sorry!”

Kenny and Craig stared at Tweek, who was shaking terribly and panting now that his rant was over. Craig hurried over, holding his arms out for Tweek to hug him. Tweek sniffed and grabbed onto Craig, shaking a bit less as his boyfriend held him close, “Shh...hey, hey it's okay...you're right honey, we got angry and a little out of hand.”
Kenny rubbed his arm, “I uh...look man, my little sister...she really looks up to me, well not me, Mysterion. I do what I do for her, more than anything. So I get defensive about it. Sorry for saying you don't have a purpose, that was a dick thing to do.”

Craig nodded, “…sorry for calling you lame and saying you didn't make a difference. I mean, you even helped Tweek, I owe you, and...your superhero thing isn't lame. I...” He hesitated, “I wish I was that brave.”

Craig pet Tweek's hair, “I'm sorry Tweek, hey, it's alright now, okay? We're calm, we both apologized for being assholes, it's alright.”

Tweek took a few shaky breaths, hands curling into Craig's shirt, “S-sorry, I just...the yelling...you were s-so mad and it was so loud and I just...ugh...I'm kind of pathetic, s-sorry.”

“you aren't pathetic, and it's okay now,” Craig said, “no more yelling.”

“Sensory problems?” Kenny asked, “Or parent fighting problems?”

Tweek wiped his eyes and took a deep breath, steadying himself, “well...b-both, really.”

“Your folks fight? They seem so happy,” Craig said.

Tweek snorted and gave a weird kind of bitter laugh, “Y-yeah, SO happy. Whatever, I don't want to get into it. Sorry for panicking, I-I'm a lot better now.”

Craig and Kenny both shared a doubting look, but neither one pushed it. Kenny walked over to Butters and apologized for nearly nailing him with the ball, and Craig stood by Tweek until the blonde seemed normal again.

“Oh, alright. That bullshit out of the way, let's play some tether-ball huh?” Kenny suggested, holding up the ball.

Things got a little less tense after that. The boys all took turns playing, Kenny and Craig got pretty competitive with each other and ended up in a standstill game for nearly ten minutes. Kenny finally won by rebounding the ball with a kick so solid that the ball knocked Craig over.

“Kicking is cheating!” He protested.

“There no rule,” Kenny replied, “you're just a sore loser.”

“Fine, you win this round McCormick, but I'll get you,” he grumbled.

Tweek and Butters were standing off to the side, giggling and whispering like little kids, probably talking about Craig and Kenny.

“You guys are so competitive,” Butters noted, “why do ya s’pose that is?”

“I dunno, I’m sure I’m always pretty competitive,” Kenny shrugged.

“Not near as much,” Butters hummed.

“I d-don’t suppose, you guys aren’t trying to show off for anyone, are you?” Tweek asked teasingly.

Craig grabbed the tetherball and held it up threateningly, “you are such a little shit, don’t make me hit you with this.”
“That’s not a no,” Tweek snickered.

“You guys must be subconsciously fighting to see who’s the alpha gay,” Butters teased.

Kenny and Craig looked at each other, both of their cheeks tinged pink. Neither of them had actually given it any thought, but their boyfriends might actually be right about this. Craig did definitely feel more competitive around Kenny. It was like, he suddenly gave a shit about winning, and he almost never cared about that.

Tweek and Butters both started chanting, “Alpha Gay! Alpha gay!”

“It’s not like that’s even something we’d need to prove,” Kenny huffed, “I’m way more of a top than Craig.”

“Yea-hey what the fuck?” Craig snapped, “I’ll kick your ass!”

Kenny stepped back into a playful fighting stance, wiggling slightly, “you could try!-”

Butters and Tweek resumed their quiet laughter, clearly enjoying this absurdity.

“Should we really be spurring this on?” Tweek snickered.

“Hell yeah, I wanna see Ken fight, it’s real attractive,” Butters whispered back.

Both boys threw their hands in the air, “Fight! Fight! Fight!”

“Prove you’re the alpha gay!” Butters called.

“B-but don’t actually hurt each other!” Tweek added.

Craig and Kenny considered this, how to fight without a chance of seriously getting injured.

“Wrestle?” Craig suggested.

“Yeah that’s pretty gay, that could work,” Kenny agreed.

The boys ran at each other, egged on by their boyfriends cheers as they each attempted to pin the other. Craig was sure he’d never tried so hard to win a silly competition in his life. He actually WANTED to win, and he wasn’t used to that feeling. It made things that much worse when he DIDN’T win, and was instead pinned with both arms behind his back.

He kicked and struggled, but Kenny had years of super-hero style training under his belt. He looked incredibly smug as he leaned over Craig, “say you’re my bitch, Tucker.”

“Never!” Craig hissed, “Super Craig will not yield!”

Kenny pressed Craig’s arms up to an uncomfortable angle, “say it!”

Craig groaned, finally relenting, “fuck-fine! I’m your bitch! Now leggo, that hurts, asshole!”

Kenny hopped up, throwing his arms in the air in victory, “wooo! You can’t beat Mysterion!”

Craig sat up, rubbing his arms, “Just for this, I’m gonna get super in shape and in two years I’m gonna destroy you.”

Butters ran up and hugged Kenny, “I knew you’d win! That was so cool!”
Tweek helped Craig to his feet and kissed his cheek, “I had my money on Kenny too.”

Craig snorted and gave Tweek a light shove, “you are such a little fuck.”

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After the park, Craig bought everyone ice cream, to which Kenny nearly tackled him in thanks. Craig felt kind of bad that Kenny was so poor that he’d get excited about a simple ice cream.

Once the boys finished chatting and eating, it was nearly four in the evening, and Kenny said he had to get home before the druggies woke up and bothered Karen, and Butters said he had to get back before his parents realized he was gone.

Craig and Tweek were left alone at the ice cream place after that, Tweek nervously thrumming his hands against the table as Craig said nothing. He realized after a minute that Tweek was actually waiting for him to say something.

He sat up straighter and sighed, “sorry, you’re waiting for me to say something, right?”

Tweek nodded, “y-yeah, I wanted to know what you really thought of Kenny and Butters, like, as friends.”

“Babe, you know me. I couldn’t fake liking someone if I tried. And I wouldn’t bother trying anyway. Kenny’s a cool guy and Butters is a weirdo, but not bad. I mean, I wouldn’t hang out with them regularly or anything, but I had fun today. Can’t believe Kenny beat me, fucking asshole...”

Tweek grinned and moved around the table to sit next to Craig, “well in fairness, he does climb buildings and stuff and you don’t even really exercise.”

Craig huffed as he absently tangled his hand with Tweek’s, “whatever, I’ll kick his ass one day.”

“Like you’d really give enough of a shit to get in shape and do that,” Tweek snorted. Craig shrugged, nodding a bit to acknowledge that Tweek was probably right.

Tweek fidgeted in his seat and looked up at him, “a-and hey...about earlier. Um, it’s never really bugged you before when people call you boring. I thought it was actually like...a point of pride or something. So...what was the deal there exactly? Cause you were really pissed.”

Craig sighed, removing his hand from Tweek’s and opting to pull him close against his side instead, “it was really stupid.”

“That doesn’t mean I don’t wanna know,” Tweek chuckled, “you want to know all my stupid shit.”

“You have such a way with words,” Craig chuckled.

He sighed and looked away from Tweek’s curious gaze, opting to stare at the table instead.

“I...felt guilty. Kenny saved you, you know? And I’m so incredibly thankful for that...but...it should’ve been me. I should’ve realized something was wrong sooner and just-maybe if I was less...like me, I could’ve helped you.”

Craig continued to stare at the table, gaze boring into a wayward crumb as he waited for Tweek to respond to his idiocy. He didn’t really know what to expect, but he was certainly surprised when Tweek kissed his cheek and murmured, “you’re so stupid.”

Craig looked over at him, “see? I told you it was-“
Tweek held his hand up, “no, idiot. You’re sweet...just, it’s so ridiculous that you’d seriously think
you didn’t help me. Kenny saved my life, yeah, but you save me every single day. This is gonna
sound really dumb, so I won’t say it again...but...you’re pretty much the reason I want to get up
every day. M-my life is pretty shitty most of the time, but you make all the shit worth it. You’re a
sarcastic, anti-social, generally oblivious asshole, and you’re absolutely perfect.”

Craig reached up and, in an attempt to yank his hat down to cover his flustered face, he just ended up
yanking his own hair and giving a painful yelp. He blushed harder and just covered his face with his
hands as Tweek giggled.

“How dare you make me feel emotions? You little imp,” Craig mumbled embarrassedly.

Tweek pulled Craig’s hands away from his face and kissed his nose, “I love you too, Stupid.”

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After that Sunday, things started changing around Craig. At school on Monday, the vice principal
was running the place while the principal was being investigated, Kenny greeted Craig by calling
him his bitch, and Butters hugged him, which he was absolutely not fond of. After a hard shove and
a few curses, Butters apologized and scurried off, but the damage was done. Craig’s friends were
looking at him like he was an alien, and actually, so were Kenny’s friends.

Craig fucking hated change, but he could feel its inevitability in the air. Dynamics were shifting here,
and he prayed to whatever god might be up there that it wouldn’t mean he was forced to interact with
Kyle again.

“Hey dude, I have a quick question,” was how Token started off, finally breaking the confused
silence.

Craig groaned and leaned against his locker, “Tweek made new friends, and so I hung out with them
yesterday. But that is NOT AN INVITATION TO HUG ME!” He called, glaring at Butters, who
ducked sheepishly behind Kenny and Kyle.

“You’re abandoning us!” Clyde whined, “Don’t do it man! Don’t leave!” Clyde grabbed onto him,
crying and blubbering like an idiot.

Craig pushed another living being off of him for the second time that morning and punched him in
the arm, “shut up Clyde. I’m not abandoning anyone.”

“They’re gonna replace uuus!” Clyde sobbed.

“No one could replace your unique brand of idiocy,” Craig grunted.

He intended it as an insult, but Clyde lit up, wiping his eyes and whispering, “r-really?”

Craig groaned in reply, and thankfully Token took the conversation over.

“So, Kenny and Butters. I’m kind of surprised you managed to hang out around them. Considering
you’re...you know, you,” Token chuckled.

“Sounds like suh...suh-somebody is mmixing things up. Aiming t-to change the status quo, T-
Tucker?” Jimmy asked.

“No. For the love of god, I hate change so much. I’m just doing this for Tweek. I can tolerate two
more idiots for his sake,” Craig grumbled.
“Dude, change isn’t bad. It is okay to have friends besides us,” Token said.

“Don’t give him ideas!” Clyde whined.

Tweek walked up then, greeting Craig with a kiss on the cheek, “morning Craig.”

“Good morning honey. Clyde’s an emotional mess because I spent time with people that weren’t him.”

Tweek looked at Clyde and shook his head, “you? Come on Clyde, you’re one of a kind.”

Clyde sniffed and hugged Tweek, startling the blonde and making him hit Clyde back off of him.

Clyde didn’t care, still holding onto Tweek’s shoulders, “you’re so amazing Tweek, this is why I like you.”

“P-please let go, I like you Clyde but I’m not with the touching s-stop,” Tweek babbled.

Clyde let go of Tweek, “Oh, right, sorry man. I forgot that you and Craig only like touching each other.”

Jimmy opened his mouth and Craig decked him before he could get a single syllable out.

“Wow, fighting a cripple, real manly,” Kenny snickered, approaching the group.

Everyone shrunk back on instinct, not used to any of the other kids actively engaging their group. Token seemed mildly uncomfortable, Jimmy was still on the ground, Craig tensed slightly, and Clyde started tearing up again.

“Home wrecker!” Clyde yelled at Kenny, turning and running down the hall.

Kenny tilted his head, “...now I remember why I don’t talk to him. He okay?”

“He...thinks you’re going to steal Craig from us,” Token explained.

“Me? Nah, I just came over to steal Tweek from you. I was gonna ask if he wanted to join me and the guys after school. Stan got a new game and we’re gonna take turns playing it.”

Tweek looked confused, “r-really? But don’t all your friends, like, not like me? We tried hanging out once, they kicked me out of their group after like three days.”

“Eh, they think you’re fine. Except Cartman, but no one gives a shit what he thinks. So, what do you say? It’s cool if you don’t want to,” Kenny said.

Tweek glanced to Craig, looking unsure. Craig shrugged, “you don’t have to ask my permission, it won’t upset me. If anything I’ll pity you, having to deal with those assholes all afternoon.”

Kenny stuck his tongue out at Craig and Tweek smiled a little, “a-Alright, yeah, yeah I’ll come over.”

Kenny beamed and clapped his hands together, “great! I’ll go tell the guys. See you after school!”

As Kenny walked off and the bell rang, causing Tweek to shoot off towards his homeroom, Craig couldn’t help but feel like everything was on its side. Jimmy was right. The status quo was shifting.

Craig clutched his stomach, suddenly feeling nauseous. Change was good, he knew that, but god he hated it. He hated change more than most other things. Token put a hand on his shoulder, noticing Craig looked pale.
“You okay man?” Token asked, “you look unwell.”

“I just...feel like the world is spinning or something. Change sucks so much,” Craig groaned in reply.

“It’ll be fine, Craig. I promise,” Token assured.

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The whole week went by like that, things slightly different, more people circling into Craig’s orbit and forcing him to acknowledge that other people did, in fact, exist. He was forcing himself to get used to this, but there was a knot sitting in his stomach that just wouldn’t go away. When he woke up Friday morning, he realized why.

The principal. Token’s dad was getting her fired today. Craig had been told he’d have to go and confirm what had happened. He’d have to sit in a room with her and tell other people what she did. She was going to try and kill him, he felt sure of it.

Craig greeted Tweek that morning by practically collapsing on top of him, “Tweek, today is a horrible day,” he groaned, hugging onto his boyfriend and not caring in the slightest that he’d just cut off a story Kenny was telling.

Kenny huffed in annoyance, but Tweek just patted Craig’s head and offered a small smile, “good morning to you too. What’s wrong with today?”

“Well, I forgot to mention this to you, but the principal...she’s getting fired at a council meeting tonight. And I have to go,” Craig explained, keeping things as vague as he could, since Kenny was right there.

“Oh, that great! But wait, oh, I see,” Tweek mumbled. “I can go with you, would that make things easier?”

“What's the big deal about this? Shouldn't you be thrilled? Nobody likes that bitch,” Kenny said.

“It's complicated,” Craig mumbled, “and you don't have to come, I'll be alright. But like...feel free to snap me or something. That'll probably help.”

Tweek kissed Craig's cheek, “I'm going. I'll be there the whole time, and if she says anything, I'll have her killed. I have connections.”

Craig glanced towards Kenny, just kind of assuming that was what Tweek meant, but Kenny shook his head, “Not me. I'm actually the only one of my friends who hasn't killed before. Well, aside from myself.”

Craig blinked slowly, Kenny was always saying weird shit like that, it was really off-putting. Tweek just shook his head and patted Craig's cheek, “Hey, you'll be fine. And I'm super proud of you for this. I know it's tough.”

Craig sighed heavily and nodded, “Thanks, it means a lot.”

“Seriously, what's the deal here?” Kenny asked again.

“None of your damn business,” Craig huffed in reply.

Kenny tilted his head a bit, and it was hard to tell given that his hoodie covered about three fourths of his face, but it looked like he was trying to deduce something. It was a look Craig didn't like. He
turned his focus back to Tweek, trying to ignore Kenny's burning, inquisitive gaze.

“Okay, so, I'll see you later, and the council meeting is at six,” Craig said. He hugged Tweek before heading off to his homeroom class.

He didn't pay any attention through homeroom, feeling uneasy and nervous the whole time. Tweek kept sending him various funny snaps, which definitely was helping. It turned out that Butters had the same homeroom as Tweek, and Tweek sent a somewhat blurry image of Butters' notebook. It appeared to be covered in little super-villain doodles and various crime plans. The text with it read 'hes daydreaming about villainy and planning misdemeanors again'. Craig snickered a bit at that. Butters was so ridiculous, he wasn't even mean, but he loved playing villain. He hated to admit it, but he was kind of starting to warm up to that little weirdo.

Craig was actually starting to feel significantly better by lunch time, and the uneasy feeling in his stomach was nearly gone. He met up with Tweek in front of the bathrooms, like he did every day, and talked with him for a few minutes.

“Feeling any better?” Tweek asked.

Craig nodded, “Yeah, a lot. You making fun of people on snapchat is super helpful,” he snickered.

“I thought you'd enjoy that. So hey, do you want to come eat lunch with me today? I was just thinking, since you don't have to worry about Petunia anymore, you might actually feel like breaking a rule and eating with your boyfriend?” Tweek hummed hopefully.

Craig thought about it for a minute, “Yeah...hey yeah, that's true. I'd love to go have lunch with you hun. I actually do have to pee though, so...meet you outside in like five minutes?”

Tweek nodded and kissed his cheek, “Okay, see you outside then. I actually packed extra just in case, so don't worry about food either!” as Tweek walked off and Craig headed into the bathroom, he couldn't help but think he had the most amazing boyfriend ever.

Sure, it was weird having more people in his life, and all this change was still difficult...but he'd be lying if he said he didn't feel somewhat happier. Maybe Token was right, and things were going to be okay after all. In fact, they might even be getting better. Craig even smiled to himself as he finished using the bathroom and moved to wash his hands. Yeah, things were going pretty well.

Craig cursed himself immediately for having thought something so positive, as that was the exact moment that things took a god damn nose dive. A hand wrapped around his throat and he put his hands up defensively as he felt what was likely a weapon press against his back. He wasn't shocked. He was fucking terrified, but he wasn't shocked.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like the pacing in this chapter was a little wonky, but I sure enjoyed getting to write Kenny and Butters into the story!

I also you all like my excellent, not at all stressful cliffhanger! <3
Petunia Sweetwater leaned down, whispering, “Hello there. I bet you thought you wouldn't have to deal with me anymore, didn't you Craig?”

Craig did his best to keep a flat face, having found that giving the outward appearance of being calm usually pissed Petunia off, and he didn’t want to give her the satisfaction of seeing him scared. His heart was racing and he was struggling to breathe out of sheer panic, but damn if he didn't keep his face expressionless.

Petunia pressed the object against his back a little harder, and he could tell now that it was definitely some kind of gun. Excellent. This was exactly what he wanted to be doing today. “Craig, you're supposed to answer me. Respect your fucking elders, kiddo.”

“Why me?” he managed to breathe out. He wasn’t even sure if he was talking more to her or to God, but he really did want to know. What the hell had he done to deserve this? He was an asshole, sure, but he never seriously hurt anyone, he never killed anyone and he wasn't abusive. He was nice and boring, and this just wasn't fucking fair.

“But...you know, to be honest, kid, something about you just reeeally pisses me off. You’re just, everything I hate, all in one. So I guess that makes you special. Now c'mon, walk. Nice and quiet,” Petunia said softly.

There was a slight crack to her voice, and Craig realized something. He looked at her reflection in the mirror and confirmed that, yes, she had definitely snapped. Something inside her had broken, and he wasn’t sure what, but those eyes weren’t sane in the slightest. She was usually tightly wound, but well composed. Now...now she just looked completely unhinged. It was a hell of a lot scarier than usual. Though the gun to his back and hand on his throat sure weren't helping matters.

He felt his mouth twitch slightly, fighting to break away from this carefully put together emotionless mask, but he wouldn't let it. He had to stay calm, it was the only way he'd get out of this alive. He took a deep breath and let her guide him along. She let go of him, just walking behind him now as they headed down the empty halls. Half the school was in the cafeteria, and she knew exactly where to go to avoid any people that weren't at lunch. Craig kept on just praying that they'd run into someone, absolutely anyone, because it might give him a chance to get out of this.

He felt like screaming as soon as he caught a glimpse of a figure down the hall. It looked like a teacher, he might be saved. Petunia must've seen it too though, because Craig heard the gun cock and felt it press into his side as she moved to stand next to him.

“One word, and I kill you right here,” she whispered.

Craig was trembling as the other teacher made his way down the hall, humming to himself as he walked. He was so invested in his paperwork that he didn't even look up as he turned into his office. He had only been ten feet away, so, so close. Craig teared up as Petunia gently pushed him forward, walking him past his one means of help. So fucking close.

She got outside and the gears in Craig's head were whirring like mad. She had a car, he could see the car, if she got him into that car, his chances of getting out of this went way way down. She knew that too, and she looked almost giddy as she grabbed Craig's arm and started dragging him. They were
out behind the school, and Craig was pretty sure that she was unhinged enough to seriously shoot him if he screamed, so that was out of the question. He just needed some kind of solid plan...

He stayed quiet as she opened the passenger seat and nudged him, “Go, go, get in.”

“I really don't feel like turning up dead in a ditch,” he said anxiously, trying to buy at least a little time here.

“Well I DO feel like you turning up dead in a ditch. Get in,” She whispered.

“Th-think about this a minute,” Craig was saying as she pushed him into the car, “Y-you were going to be fired today because of me, if I die, th-the cops will come for you first! You'll end up in jail forever, instead of just fired. I-If you let me go I won't say a damn thing and y-you won't go to jail. If you go through with this you'll never get to see outside a prison again!”

She bit her lip, deep in thought as she shoved him into the seat. She slammed the door closed and got into the driver's seat, still thinking. Craig cautiously slid his phone out of his pocket, just typing a fast 'help' and sending it to Tweek before he had to hurriedly hide his phone back away. Petunia turned to look at him, “You're right. They would know it was me.”

“Y-yeah, see, so I'll just go and-” he snapped his mouth closed as she pointed the gun at him again.

“No. I won't let you live, I'm in too deep now, I know you won't keep your little mouth shut. You already ratted me out for what I did at school, and that was a lot better than this.”

“That is true,” Craig said quietly, “B-but I know now that you'll absolutely murder me if I do it again. S-so just...let me live and I won't say anything. Okay?”

She seemed to think about this, then slowly shook her head and put the car in drive, pulling out of the parking lot and locking the car doors as she went. Craig fearfully scanned his side of the car, but when he tried the unlock button, it did nothing.

“Child locks. Keeps children locked in. You can only open it from my side. Nice try though Craig. You really are a smart boy,” She said. “A very smart...very troubled boy.”

“I-I'm really only troubled by one thing right now,” Craig stammered back.

“No no, you're so unhappy, so unhappy that I just bet you're going to kill yourself,” she said, a sickening smile forming on her face.

“I'm pretty sure I'm not,” Craig said. He was shivering hard, he'd never been so terrified in his entire life. Peru had fucking nothing on this. God what he wouldn't give to still have laser eyes.

“Oh yeah. Yes, you're going to leave a note, and dive off the bridge. That's perfect,” She grinned and patted the steering wheel as she drove, “I'll just write up a note, and give you a little push. Don't worry, I'm sure you'll barely feel it. Jumping off a bridge is quick.”

“No it isn't! At all! Drowning is not-” Craig went quiet again as she waved the gun towards him.

He took a deep breath and tried his best to stay calm, “You can't write a note, no one will believe it's from me. My life is pretty great...kidnapping and panic attack aside. What would you say that would possibly convince them? You'll still get caught and end up in jail.”

“The police are stupid, I'm sure I can convince them. Everyone is quick to believe a teen suicide,” She replied.
Craig closed his eyes, trying to focus on keeping his breathing even. This was incredibly bad, the bridge he was pretty sure she was talking about was just ten minutes up the road, and she was driving as though this were the most leisurely ride ever, as though she wasn't kidnapping a child. Craig had to find a way to buy time, maybe if he could keep her distracted long enough, help would show up.

“Why...do you want to kill me? I understand you hating me. Lots of people hate me, but no one has ever hated me this much. I...just want to know,” Craig managed. It wasn't the best diversion tactic, but he was panicking and it was all he had.

Petunia took a breath and patted the steering wheel to the beat of a song that must be playing in her own head. She was silent for a long time, and just when Craig thought she wasn't going to answer, she whispered, “you ruined my life.”

Craig's eyebrows furrowed, “I...don't understand. The job thing? I really didn't think that was a life ruiner...I...I never um, wanted to do anything awful to you. I just-”

Petunia burst into laughter, the kind of laughter that could only come from a person completely lost in delusion. It had no humor to it, just this wild, almost angry kind of insanity. Craig shrunk into his seat, fighting to keep from hyperventilating as the car swerved slightly and the laughter finally died back down.

“You never MEANT to hurt me! Of course. Of course you'd say that now! Because of YOU I lost my job, my home, my friends...I lost everything!” She slammed a fist against the steering wheel and the car swerved dangerously. Craig's fingers curled tightly into the sides of his seat as it dawned on him that she...wasn't actually talking about him at all.

“Wh...who?” Craig asked.

Petunia tore open the glove compartment and pointed at a half crumpled photo, not saying a word. Craig shakily took the image, on the back it read '1992 prom'. He turned it over and felt like he'd been doused in ice. There was a girl who was obviously a young Petunia, but next to her was a boy that looked familiar to Craig in the worst way. It looked JUST like him. A little older, a little more chubby, but the boy in the photo had black hair, skin too tan to be Caucasian, deep blue eyes, and a relaxed smile. His hands shook as he looked towards Petunia.

“You ruined me,” she whispered, “Daniel...why did you fucking do it?”

This whole time, she had been doing all of this because he looked like her high-school boyfriend. And now she'd clearly lost it altogether, as she seemed to be starting to think he actually was this boy.

“M-miss...miss please, I'm not Daniel, I'm not. I don't know what he did to you, but I-”

“SHUT UP!” she screamed, swerving the vehicle again. “It doesn't matter! It's too late to make him pay for what he did. You just look and act so much like he did...you...are everything I hate.”

Craig absentmindedly shoved the picture into his hoodie and shrunk further into his seat. Things made more sense now...this woman was clearly fucking insane, but at least now he got why it was only him. He silently cursed this Daniel asshole for whatever the hell he did to drive Petunia off the deep end. He jolted as he felt the car swerve again, and he had to cover his face as it jerked to a stop just too late.

The car crashed into a streetlamp, a streetlamp just before the bridge. The hood was smoking as
Petunia unlocked the doors and got out. She kept the gun trained on Craig as she walked around and opened his door, “Get out. Get out now.”

She grabbed Craig’s arm, and as she went to pull him out of the car, a gunshot rang out. Craig was in a daze as things started happening at seventy miles per hour. Suddenly there were cops everywhere, Petunia’s shoulder was bleeding for some reason, there was a lot of yelling and screaming, and he was just so relieved that other people were there that he passed out.

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When Craig woke up, he was lying on his couch, Tricia and Tweek both sitting next to him as he heard the distant sounds of his parents talking to someone in the next room. He groaned and rubbed his head, “God... what... the fuck happened? Was that real?”

Tweek gasped and hugged Craig tightly, “Oh thank God! You're awake!”

Tricia joined in on the hug, climbing up onto the couch and full on laying on top of her brother to hug him tightly with her whole body, “Craig! I thought I was gonna lose you and have to be all by myself! I was so worried..” she sniffed and pressed her face into his chest.

Craig was shocked, Tricia had been so worried that she wasn't being mean at all, not even teasing. And when he looked over, Tweek was also on the verge of tears. He hugged both of them back, releasing a shaky breath. “What... what happened?” he asked after a minute.

Tweek took a deep, shaky breath and gripped Craig’s hand, “I-I um, I’m just... really relieved you’re okay, I-I got your text and called the cops and I-I guess they managed to track her down... Oh god what if you had died? No, no I don't need to make things worse I'm sorry, you're fine and it's fine and I just-”

Craig squeezed his hand back, “Tweek, Tweek it's okay. Just calm down honey, please.”

Tweek sniffed and nodded, “I'm calm, I'm calm. But Craig, there's no way you're okay after that.”

Tricia climbed off of her brother so he could breathe properly, but she stayed close, “Tweek is right, that must've been insanely scary. Do you need to talk about it?”

Craig shook his head, “I just... I think I'm still in shock. I... I don't know... if I want to talk about it or not.”

A few hours passed and the cops took statements and left. Craig was left with his family and Tweek, everyone seeming concerned, but unsure how to help.

Craig was quiet for quite awhile, the reality of what had happened still not fully sinking in. He finally spoke, asking, “do you think... can Tweek stay over tonight?”

“I'll call his parents,” Laura said, but Tweek waved her off.

“Don’t bother. I uh, I can call them,” Tweek said, “I know they’ll be fine with it.”

Laura nodded and let Tweek walk away to call them. She sighed and looked at Craig, “…I know you don’t really like hugs, but I think you could use one right now.”

Craig nodded a bit and moved to hug his mom, wrapping his arms around her and not saying anything. She pet his hair softly, “are you okay sweetie?”
Craig turned his face into his mom’s shoulder, mumbling a muffled, “I dunno.”

Tricia hopped over, joining in on the hug, wrapping he arms around Craig’s leg, “if I ever see that lady, I’m gonna shoot her in the face.”

Craig chuckled a little and reached down to pat her head, “thanks Trish, that means a lot.”

Tweek walked back into the room a minute later, “m-my folks said it’s fine. Thank you for letting me stay over Mrs. Tucker.”

Laura nodded, “of course dear. You’re welcome here anytime. Craig, honey, is there anything I can do for you?”

Craig let go of his mom and shook his head, “no, I’ll be okay, I think...I’d just like to talk to Tweek for awhile.”

Laura pet his head, “Alright, well I’ll just be in the next room if you need anything.”

Tricia left the room along with their mom, deciding to give Craig and Tweek some alone time. Tweek hugged Craig’s arm, looking at him apologetically, “I’m so sorry man, if I had just hung around a little longer-“

“Tweek, it’s fine. Besides, you’re the reason the cops showed up at all. You saved me,” Craig said. “She was completely delusional, it’s not your fault.”

Tweek whined a bit, ‘I-if...if you want to talk about it, I’m here.’

Craig sighed and shoved his hands into his hoodie pocket, making a small questioning noise when his hand touched paper. He pulled out the crumpled mess and just stared at it. He hasn’t realized he’d put this in his pocket.

Tweek looked over at it, “what’s that?”

“It’s...why she wanted to kill me,” Craig said quietly. He smoothed the paper out the best he could, thumb running over the face of his strange doppelgänger.

Tweek blinked a few times and pointed, “that looks like-“

“Me, I know,” Craig said, but Tweek finished his sentence a little differently.

“Your dad. It..looks like it could be your dad.”

“That looks nothing like my dad,” Craig scoffed.

Tweek shook his head and pointed at the man in the photo, “no no, your BIRTH dad.”

Craig opened his mouth to say that was ridiculous, but he quickly closed it again. Petunia was a tall woman, she also had blue eyes and dark hair, but she was undoubtedly white. There wasn’t any possible way that...

His thought trailed off and he ran into the kitchen, “MOM! Mom I need to know my birth parents’ names, it’s really really important.”

Laura looked up from where she was preparing dinner, startled, “Wh? Why honey? What’s wrong?”

“Please, I need to know.”
“Well...okay, we never met your birth mother, she wasn’t involved in the adoption process at all, so I don’t know her name. But your father was a very nice man, Daniel Garcia I believe.”

Craig felt his heart pounding in his ears as he walked over, brandishing the photo, “is this him?” He asked, deep down already knowing the answer.

Laura took the photo and carefully looked it over, “Well...he was older than this...but it does look like him. Where did you get this?”

Craig looked up at his mom, voice strained as he quietly said, “it was Petunia’s.”

Craig lay on the floor of his room, staring up at the ceiling while Tweek sat on the edge of his bed, “Craig, come on man, just because he was an ex of hers doesn’t mean she’s...I mean, you just can’t know, you know?”

Craig slowly sat up, looking at himself in the mirror on his door. He pressed his palm to the glass and saw his own hateful glare staring back at him, “but you do know. Tweek, this kind of thing...you just do.”

Tweek moved to sit by him, holding his hand tightly, “I shouldn’t have said anything about that photo, I’m sorry Craig.”

Craig shook his head, “It crossed my mind too, I just didn’t want to...to acknowledge it. I would’ve put it together anyway.”

“She might not be-“

“I’m going to ask her.”

“What?” Tweek squawked, “d-don’t do that! You mom is already calling the hospital to see who your birth mother was, you don’t have to talk to that monster again! You shouldn’t!”

“I don’t think she knew,” Craig mumbled, “I want to know. I need to know if she knew.”

“Craig, why? What difference-“

Craig stood abruptly, all the swirling emotions of the day finally catching up to him, “IT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE! Everything she did to me? She almost KILLED me. I need to know if she KNEW she was fucking doing this to her own SON. I need to know because-because I always wondered who my birth parents were, and I had always pictured this kind young couple from Peru who just didn’t have the means to raise a kid, and-“ Craig’s voice broke and he had to cover his face, “and that woman...her blood is in my veins. And I...I don’t think I can handle it, I can’t handle just-just...not having that image anymore.”

Craig was crying now, tears rolling down his cheeks as Tweek gently hugged him, not saying anything.

“Instead if this image of a nice young couple in over their heads...it’s...it’s some fucking lunatic and a guy who drove her to try and kill a child-HER child. It...it’s not fucking fair, Tweek. I...I don’t know..I don’t..what did I do for God to hate me this much?” He finished in a whisper, slowly hugging Tweek back and just sobbing against his shoulder.

“God doesn’t hate you, if it turns out that woman really is...well, if it turns out that way...then I think God cared enough to get you your real family. Laura and Thomas and Tricia...it doesn’t matter who
you came from, this is your real family,” Tweek said gently.

“I know...and I know it shouldn’t matter...but it just..it matters to me,” Craig whispered, sniffing as he tried to stop crying, “Because I saw how crazy she was, I saw that hate in her eyes, and now when I look in the mirror, I see a little bit of her too. It’s..it’s sickening.”

Tweek hugged Craig tightly, “I know how you feel. I’ll help you however I can...okay? I can tell you what helped me.”

“You..what?” Craig asked, rubbing his eyes and looking at Tweek in confusion.

“My...I see a lot of my dad in myself. I have his eyes, and I hate it. It’s like his stupid, drugged out face is all I see in the mirror sometimes. B-but I know I’m my own person, and so are you. S-so...I can try and help, okay?”

Craig nodded slowly, “I...yeah, yeah I’ll let you help me. Tweek, look if you still don’t want to I understand, but...can you please just tell me one thing, anything, about your parents?”

Tweek sighed heavily, “It’d probably make you feel a bit better...and I do trust you enough...okay. But...same rule as when we were younger. No questions. Only what I decide to tell you.”

Craig nodded, “whatever, yeah, anything to distract me from my own mess for now.”

Tweek took a deep breath and lifted his shirt, turning around to show Craig a large splotch of pink, rougher looking skin along his side.

“Two years ago, and it doesn’t matter why, my dad got really pissed. He was...kind of tripped out, and he ended up hurling a fresh pot of coffee at me and Mom. It just barely missed her, and it splashed me.”

Craig covered his mouth with one hand, reaching out the other cautiously, wanting to touch the old burn mark. Tweek nodded, signaling he could touch it, and Craig carefully felt the burn. It felt almost leathery, it looked painful.

“It-okay this question isn’t related to your parents at all, does that hurt?” He asked. He had to at least ask that.

Tweek pulled his shirt back down and shook his head, “not anymore. Sometimes it gets really dry and cracks and that hurts, but usually it’s fine.”

Craig hugged Tweek tightly, “I’m so sorry that happened. If it helps...it looks pretty badass.”

Tweek smiled a little, “you think so?”

“Totally. It looks like you fought a firebender.”

Tweek snickered, “that’s me, the hopped up junkie who took on Firelord Ozai. That’s totally how that cartoon went, right?”

Craig smiled and kissed his cheek, “still better than Shyamalan’s version.”

“It’s been years man, you have to let that go,” Tweek giggled.

“But until I get those two hours of my life back,” Craig replied.

He was starting to cheer up a bit, able to push the day’s events to the back of his mind for the time
being. Tweek being around always helped him, he was, however, getting progressively more worried about Tweek’s home life.

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Tweek stayed the night that night, and even though Craig was disappointed that the hospital couldn’t confirm who his birth mother was, he said he’d try to let it go. His mom did her best to comfort him, but he insisted he was fine. Tweek could tell he wasn’t.

Craig was a little happier when his mom said it was okay for them to share a bed still, since they weren’t ‘that age’ yet.

Craig and Tweek lay there for awhile, Tweek making up constellations for the stars on Craig’s ceiling and Craig telling him different space facts about actual constellation names. Eventually the two fell asleep, limbs a tangled mess around each other, and both perfectly content that way.

Or at least, content until just a few hours later, when Craig jolted awake from an insane nightmare. He sat up slowly, removing himself from Tweek’s spindly limbs and moving over to sit by his window.

His head knocked lightly back against the glass as he gazed emptily towards the moon. His mind was racing and a part of him just wanted to run. Just for tonight.

He stood quietly, glancing towards Tweek to make sure he was still sleeping as he carefully slipped out of the room. He came back about five minutes later to find Tweek awake and sitting up in the bed.

“What’re you doing?” Tweek whispered.

Craig shoved something in his pajama pants pocket and shrugged, “taking something from Dad, I wasn’t gonna run off without you or anything,” he murmured in reply.

“What’d you take? Are you okay?” Tweek asked worriedly, sliding out of bed and walking to Craig.

“I...well I had a nightmare, and my thoughts just wouldn’t settle, you know? So I thought I’d just find something to help me calm down, and dad always said this one thing calmed him down when he gets stressed—”

“Did you take pills from your dad? That’s too dangerous Craig! Meds work differently in kids!” He said quickly.

“No! I know drugs are dangerous Tweek, besides, the only medicine dad even has is for his back. I took this,” he said, reaching into his pocket and brandishing a cigarette.

“That...mh,” Tweek puffed his cheeks out, looking unsure, “I mean...I guess that’s not as bad as some random pills...but I dunno Craig, smoking is still pretty bad. Kenny smokes and he told me I should stay away from it, that it’s super addictive. Like, as addictive as my parents’ special coffee.”

Craig sighed and stuck it back in his pocket, “I know I know...I’m still thinking about it. But I just figure...if nothing else helps, it’s worth a try.”

Tweek nodded a bit, “I mean...I do get it, but uh, do you want to try going for a walk first? I-it’s a nice night. You can talk to me about things. Maybe that’ll help?”

Craig sighed and nodded, “Yeah, that’s a good idea. Thanks honey, I really appreciate this.”
“Well of course, I’m always here for you,” Tweek said. He walked over and opened the window, motioning towards it with a flourish of his arm and a deep bow, “after you!”

Craig couldn’t help but smile as he walked to the window, “you’re a true gentleman,” he said, kissing Tweek before sliding out the window.

Craig stood on the lawn and watched Tweek make his way outside with the stealth and agility of a trained burglar. It was intriguing to watch, and it made Craig wonder even further about Tweek’s life. What could he possibly be doing to have that skill?

Tweek landed next to him and took his hand, “Alright, wherever you want to walk, let’s go. You can tell me about this bad dream you had, or anything else that’s bugging you.”

Twenty minutes passed and the two found themselves at their usual spot in the park. They opted to sit on the swings for that night, Craig idly rocking back and forth with one foot against the loose gravel as he stared up at the starry night sky.

“You can see Orion up there,” he said, pointing to a belt of three white stars, “there’s the belt, and those stars adjacent to it make up his body. It’s not always clear enough to see the whole thing, so it must be really good weather tonight.”

Tweek glanced up at the twinkling stars to where Craig was pointing, “it is nice. Very clear. You said he was next to um...Pegasus...right?”

“Close, Andromeda is by Pegasus, parts of both of those constellations make up the great square,” Craig started rambling for a bit about the two constellations, even going into the history of princess Andromeda and why she had a constellation.

Tweek let him talk, listening and nodding along, he figured he needed this distraction, and that he’d talk about more serious things when he was ready.

After about ten minutes, he went quiet, gaze turning from the sky and down to the gravel that he was kicking around underfoot.

“...I’m really scared, Tweek,” he finally said.

“What of?” Tweek asked quietly.

“I...I don’t know, exactly. But...being out here...it makes me nervous now. Like...like that woman might still be waiting to snatch me or something, even though I know she’s in jail. How stupid is that?”

Tweek shook his head, “it’s not stupid at all. I mean, I know I’m uh, kinda paranoid and everything...but I still get nervous sometimes, thinking th-that uh, the guy, the one pretending to be the spirit of human kindness? I sometimes feel like he’s just waiting right around the corner, waiting to grab me and throw me in that dingy old van he drove.”

“How do you get past that?” Craig whispered, gripping the chains of the swing like they were the only things keeping him steady.

“I...I dunno. To be honest, I think maybe a-a part of you never gets past it. B-but, it gets better. I used to be scared any time I wasn’t with you, and now I only get really nervous if I’m alone at night or in an alley or something. H-having such a strong person like you around really helped me. I always felt safe with you. And...I know I’m not exactly strong, but I’d do whatever I could to protect you too.”
Craig looked over at him, a small smile crossing his face, tired as it was, “believe it or not babe, I do feel safer around you. You’re actually pretty much the only reason I’m not a complete mess right now.”

Craig sighed and reached his hand up towards the sky, like he was trying to grab a star, “…and it gets better huh? Well…with you around, I can believe that.”

He closed one eye and then his hand, pretending to snag a star, “I’d give anything to bottle up stardust. You know that? Just have a piece of space in my room…I’d love that.”

Tweek stood up and walked over behind Craig, crossing his arms over his chest and resting his chin on his shoulder, “at least those little plastic stars sill glow.”

Craig leaned back against his boyfriend, humming in agreement, “and whenever I move, they’re coming with me. They’ll go in our bedroom, wherever we live.”

“Think you’ll still want to live with me after having to put up with me through all of school?” Tweek joked.

Craig tilted his head at an awkward angle so he could meet Tweek’s eyes, “Sunshine, one day, I’m gonna marry you.”

Tweek felt his face heat up, and he bumped his nose against Craig’s, arms curling around him more tightly. “…I like the new nickname,” he managed to murmur out.

“I thought you might like it,” Craig hummed.

They stayed in the park for a little longer, just quietly stargazing. They headed back before long, walking hand in hand, Craig feeling a little better, but still not back to normal. There was an unspoken tension between them as they walked, like both boys were afraid the empty street was waiting to open up under them, like each step they took invited the risk of being swallowed by the earth itself.

Craig didn’t like the feeling, and he found himself wondering if this kind of anxiety was what Tweek always felt. The two made it safely back to Craig’s room, scaling the tree by his house to climb back in undetected.

Tweek climbed all the way in, but Craig paused, sitting on the window sill with one leg hanging outside. He pulled the cigarette back out of his pocket and turned it over in his hands, still debating.

Tweek set his hand on Craig’s arm, “You’ll get addicted. It’s a bad idea, Craig,” he said softly.

Craig shook his head and shoved it back in his pocket, “you’re right. You’re right…I won’t.”

“You should throw it out,” Tweek advised, pulling Craig the rest of the way inside.

“I want to hold on to it. Just in case.”

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Craig insisted on going to school on Monday, saying if he could just act like things were normal, it would help him really feel like they were.

He should’ve known better. He stood, arms crossed silently over his chest and leaned back against his locker as his friends babbled around him. He understood their worry, but he just wasn’t in the
mood to deal with it.

“Dude, none of us even heard what happened until yesterday, and you didn’t text us back all weekend! Are you okay?” Token asked.

Craig glared at him through sleep deprived eyes, trying to figure out if he’d buy a lie. He decided Token was too smart for that, and answered with an irritated, “would you be?”

“How come you didn’t tell us about Sweetwater man? We would’ve helped! We’re your friends dude! You could’ve died and I wouldn’t have even known!” Clyde said, sniffing hard as he tried to keep from crying.

Craig said nothing and Jimmy chimed in, “yuh-y...yeah man, we heard you’ve buh-been havin’ problems with that bitch for muh...mh..months. What g-gives?”

Craig slammed his fist against the locker next to him, “it was none of your BUSINESS! The next one of you to say one fucking word to me is getting knocked out,” he growled.

He tugged his hat down and ducked his head, pushing past his friends and storming down the hall. He hurried off into the bathroom just to get away from everyone, but he didn’t really think that through. Going to the place where that woman kidnapped him from was a definite mistake. The whole room filled him with anxiety, and before he knew it he was on the floor, pressed into a corner with his hands over his mouth to keep from hyperventilating.

After a few minutes, he heard someone sit next to him, and the flash of dirtied orange told him it was Kenny. He slapped his arms away every time Kenny tired to hug him, but the blonde paid it no mind, just continuing to try until he managed to get his arms around Craig.

“Hey. Hey, settle down man, it’s okay,” Kenny said.

Craig shoved against him, but he was still freaking out too badly to really speak. He mostly mumbled swears between his shallow breaths and weakly hit against Kenny.

“Close your eyes and breathe with me,” Kenny said, ignoring Craig’s attempts to pull away from him. “Come on, I won’t let go until you do it.”

Craig begrudgingly stopped fighting against Kenny and did as he said, closing his eyes and taking a few slow, deep breaths along with him. Kenny let go after a minute, patting Craig’s back, “there, a little calmer now?”

Craig nodded, but didn’t open his eyes, “I...can you...can you get me out of this room?” He asked.

Kenny grabbed his arm without a word, pulling him out into the hall. Craig opened his eyes again when he heard the bathroom door close. He felt a lo better now that he was out of that room. Though his face turned a bit red as he realized he’d just completely lost it on the bathroom floor.

“I uh...sorry you had to see that. And...thanks,” he mumbled embarrassedly.

Kenny nodded, “It’s no problem. I heard a little about what happened, which probably means there’s a lot I didn’t hear. I won’t ask, but if you ever need to talk you can come find me.”

“...you’re actually a really good guy, Kenny,” Craig mumbled.

Kenny gave a thumbs up, “thanks. A compliment from you is rarer than a diamond. You good now?”
Craig nodded, “Yeah, yeah I’m good. I’m gonna get to class.”

Despite Craig insisting it was unnecessary, Kenny walked with him to his homeroom. Craig apologized to Clyde for being so snappy earlier, to which Clyde jumped out of his desk and tackled Craig. After prying him back off, he sat in his desk and spent the entire hour snapping back and forth with Tweek.

By the end of the school day, he really was feeling quite a bit better. His friends didn’t push him for more details, and he got to eat lunch outside with Tweek for once, which was a welcome change. It was a work day for Tweek, so Craig walked with him to the coffee shop after school.

“A-and you’re sure you’ll be okay? Kenny said this morning you were-“ Tweek started, but Craig cut him off.

“I’m fine Tweek, I promise. Kenny is a weird guy, but he really helped me calm down earlier, and talking with you kept me calm. I’m just gonna go home and watch a girly cartoon with my sister. I’ll be fine.”

“I thought Tricia didn’t like girly cartoons.”

“Who says I’m watching for her?” Craig joked lightly, kissing Tweek’s cheek.

Tweek smiled a bit, seeming reassured, “Alright, well...just text me if you get freaked out.”

“I will, and I’ll call you when you get home tonight.”

Tweek and Craig said goodbye and Craig headed home. He didn’t exactly do what he’d said he would though. No...he just went home to grab his bike. He took a deep breath as he hopped on and began to pedal down the street.

He parked his bike outside the jail, looking up at the tall building with uncertainty. He had questions, questions that only one woman had answers to. He closed his eyes and took a steadying breath before he pushed through the big double doors.

He approached the front desk and an officer asked him, “Are you here to see someone?”

He looked up at the officer, hands curled into tight fists, “Petunia Sweetwater. Tell her...tell her her son is here to see her.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay so this was a super angsty and all around insane chapter and I promise you the next one will have more fluff and happy things!
Craig didn’t bring up Petunia again after Monday, and any time anyone mentioned it Craig would always steer the conversation another way. Tweek tried to ask him about it too, but Craig would always just mumble something about stars and never answer Tweek’s questions.

The rest of middle school passed by without anything very exciting happening. The new principal was lenient and nice towards all the kids, and Craig went along acting completely normal for the most part. Tweek could tell things were still bothering him, and about once a month he would just disappear for a day without a word to anyone, but he seemed to be doing okay. And besides, Tweek knew he was in no position to pressure anyone to talk about their shitty family problems.

Now it was August third, Two weeks before the start of High-school, and Craig’s 15th birthday. Craig was hanging upside-down out of his bedroom window, cigarette in one hand as he scanned his yard from his upside-down vantage point.

He had managed to hold off on trying smoking for all of two days after Tweek had told him it was a bad idea, and now it had been nearly two years and he genuinely wasn’t sure how much longer he could keep the habit hidden. Obviously it only took Tweek kissing him for him to figure it out, smoke wasn’t exactly an easy taste to brush away. But so far the rest of his family hadn’t figured it out, and he just gave Kenny money to get the cigarettes for him, so it wasn’t like his dad was missing any.

He quickly put out his cigarette and tossed it outside when there was a knock on his door. He closed the window and turned as Tweek walked in. Craig exhaled in relief and Tweek shook his head, pulling a little pocket air freshener out of his jeans and spraying it at Craig.

“Hey-hey!” Craig protested, having to shield his eyes from the assault of fresh linen scents.

“Stop smoking inside! It smells gross,” Tweek huffed, “besides, y-you want your dad catching on? Or Tricia?”

Craig coughed as he accidentally inhaled some of the scented spray, “I doubt my dad would figure it out, but I guess you’ve got a point with Tricia...that little gremlin is too smart. So, what’s up anyway?”

Tweek walked over and kissed Craig, “I was gonna knock before dragging you out on a date for your birthday, but when I walked by I saw you hanging out your window having an episode or something.”

Craig snorted and ruffled Tweek’s already messy hair, “just didn’t feel like walking all the way downstairs to go outside. I wasn’t having an episode.”

“You were hanging upside down.”

“Helps me think better, what with all the blood going to my head.”

Tweek just rolled his eyes, “whatever, I know you better than you do. I know you’re stressed out. So either tell me now, or be tense through our whole date and tell me later when the guilt is too much.”
Craig sighed heavily, “You’re good. I hate that sometimes. Alright, I was feeling a little bit on edge because of...that,” he mumbled, nodding towards an envelope sitting on his bed.

Tweek picked it up at arm’s length, his wide-eyed expression already telling Craig he was about to go somewhere insane with this. Tweek twitched slightly and looked over to Craig, “what is it? A threat? A ransom note? ANTHRAX?”

Craig couldn’t help but laugh as he walked over and took the note from his panicked boyfriend, “Some things about you never change.” He kissed Tweek’s cheek and pulled out the letter to show him, “it’s from the jail, a letter from that woman.”

Tweek snatched it, wide eyes flicking back and forth rapidly as he read, “how did she even know where to send this? A-and why?”

“Beats me,” Craig replied evenly, taking the note and sticking it back in its envelope, “it’s just a happy birthday, but you know, from her it’s...”

“Really really stressful! Yeah!” Tweek finished, “w-well do you still want to come out with me? It might get your mind off that.”

Craig nodded, “Yeah, I always feel up to going out with you. What do you have planned anyway?”

Tweek grinned and grabbed his hand, “c’mon, it’s a surprise!”

“The kind I’ll like?”

“I know you better than you do, of course you’ll like it,” Tweek replied confidently. Craig was almost sure he heard him mumbled a quiet ’I hope’ afterwards, but maybe he imagined it.

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As the two walked, Tweek tried to find a way to get Craig to talk about Petunia. It was just so strange that she’s send him a letter out of nowhere...even if it was his birthday, how did she know where to send it? And why? Craig glanced over at his twitchy boyfriend, he could see the gears turning in his head, and already had several ways to divert the conversation if it went where he felt it would.

Tweek looked up at him, started off with a slow, “so...did she send you s letter last year too?”

“No,” Craig replied flatly.

“Craig...she knew your address...how-“

“Look Tweek, you don’t like talking about your parents, and I respect that. So please respect that I don’t want to talk about mine. At all,” he said, doing his best not to sound as irritated as he felt. “I just want to enjoy whatever cool stuff you have planned, and talking about that woman will just ruin it, you know?”

Tweek sighed shakily and nodded, “y-you’re right, you’re right I’m sorry. I understand more than anyone about parent issues...I’ll drop it.”

Craig leaned down and kissed Tweek’s cheek, “thank you. I appreciate it. And...please don’t mention the letter to anyone, okay?”

Tweek nodded jerkily, “I...ngh...y-yeah...okay.”
Craig returned his gaze to the sidewalk in front of them, “so, how are things with you?” He asked, clearly trying to diffuse the tension that was forming between them.

Tweek grinned a bit and nudged against Craig’s side, “small talk is for people with nothing important to say. Isn’t that what you said to Kyle?”

Craig huffed indignantly, “I would never, EVER, do anything that Kyle Broflovski would do. How dare you. No more small talk, ever, that’s a promise.”

Tweek laughed, “I had a feeling that’d do it. Okay, ready for your first stop?”

Craig nodded, “you bet. What is it?”

Tweek tugged him along quickly, going up over a hill and motioning in an excited sweeping motion, “whistlin’ willie’s! Okay, well, what’s left of it!”

Craig tilted his head, taking in the sight of the abandoned pizza place. It had closed down years ago, thanks to that horrifying yelp craze. It re-opened briefly, but it never did as well after that, and went bankrupt within a month. The last time Craig had been here was the day it went out of business. Clyde had insisted on dragging everyone over to say goodbye, half the school showed up and Kyle got into a fist-fight with Cartman. It had been a weird day.

“Tweek, this place has been closed for like six years, don’t you remember?” Craig said.

“Yeah yeah, Kyle broke Cartman’s nose and Clyde sang Danny Boy, I remember. Just come on!”

Craig followed Tweek down to the run-down restaurant. Once they got closer, Craig noticed Token, Clyde, Jimmy, Butters, and Kenny all hanging around by the entrance. Craig had gotten a bit closer with Kenny and Butters over the last couple years, so he wasn’t entirely displeased to see them. He was a bit wary at being around so many people at once though.

Tweek smiled up at him reassuringly, “Don’t worry, all the guys are only gonna be here for this part. The rest of the day involves a lot less people.”

Craig sighed in relief and nodded, “cool.”

Token waved in greeting and Butters ran up, offering Tweek a hug, which he accepted, and then making finger guns at Craig, “happy birthday pal!”

“We aren’t pals,” Craig replied, “I mean thank you.”

Tweek shook his head and Butters turned, calling to Clyde, “you were right! He did open with an insult!”

Clyde gave a thumbs up, “Yeah, that’s Craig for ya! Happy B-day asshole!”

“Don’t shorten it to B-day, you sound like a tool,” Craig called back.

“Yo Tweekers,” Kenny greeted, “you gonna tell us now why we’re in this abandoned lot?”

Craig glared at Kenny, absolutely hating the fact that he had cute nicknames for Tweek. He let it slide though, knowing it didn’t really mean anything.

Tweek nodded and ran up to the door, “Yeah! W-we’re going inside!”

“I-inside?” Jimmy asked, “buh..bu..but that place is locked up tighter than Wendy’s vagina, n-nobody can get in.”
Kenny held Craig back as he attempted to punch Jimmy, and Tweek shook his head while Clyde nearly died of laughter.

“Gross, Jimmy. A-and I can get in. To the restaurant I mean. Ken, did you bring those bolt cutters like I asked?” Tweek questioned, turning to look at him.

Kenny nodded, still holding onto Craig as he fished the cutters out of his pocket and tossed them over. Tweek smiled and used them to snap the chain of the padlock over the door. Then he pulled a lock-pick out of his pocket and got to work on the door lock.

“Still a buh-buh...breaking and entering expert?” Jimmy asked.

“I would never let a skill go to waste,” Tweek replied with a smile. There was a satisfying ‘click’ and Tweek pulled the door open.

The boys all clapped and Craig broke away from Kenny, punching Jimmy’s arm on his way over to Tweek. He kissed him and said, “you have got to teach me that some day.”

“I already said no, you’d use it for evil,” Tweek snickered, looping his arms around Craig’s neck.

“Yeah, well it’s still pretty fucking sweet that you can do that, it’s so-what?” He grunted as Token nudged his arm.

“Dude. Make out somewhere else, we didn’t all come here to watch you guys feel each other up.” Token huffed.

“I’m not objecting,” Kenny grinned.

Craig flipped him off, kissed Tweek one more time, then headed inside. The whole place was covered in a thick layer of dust, but other than that it wasn’t in terrible condition. Moss grew along one wall, Kenny picked up a rat by the prize counter, chasing Clyde around with it, and there were various cracks and dents in the equipment and tables. It was definitely better than Craig expected it to be.

“Hey dudes! I found a claw machine with stuff still in it!” Kenny called.

The rat he had been holding scurried by Craig as he made his way over, and he passed by Clyde, who looked traumatized. He shook his head and made his way over to where Kenny was standing, face pressed to the grime covered case of a claw machine.

“Look at that. Me and Tweek tried forever to get this little stuffed guinea pig out of that thing,” Craig said, smiling a little at the memory.

Kenny wiped the dirt away and pointed inside, “check it out, is that it?”

Craig walked up next to him and squinted into the thing. “huh, look at that. I guess nobody could get that thing. Or any of those minion plushies.”

“No, those were probably just left on purpose,” Kenny mumbled. “Hey! I bet there’s still some quarters in this thing! Go get Tweek, I want him to help me get this lock box open!”

Craig nodded and looked around, “hey Tweek!” He called, “Kenny wants your help robbing something!”

Tweek appeared a minute later, two skee-balls in hand, “rob something? W-what do you mean?”
Craig nodded towards the claw machine and Tweek snickered, “o-ohh that thing! Yeah sure. Hold my balls, Craig.”

Kenny laughed loudly and repeated ‘hold my balls!’

Craig rolled his eyes as he stood back, balls in hand. Tweek took out his lock-pick and worked on the machine. After a minute he stood up, gave the whole thing a good kick, and beamed as the little metal door popped open and quarters spilled out.

“Woo! Money!” Kenny cheered, tossing a handful in the air, followed by several soft ‘ow’ sounds as the quarters hit him on the way back down.

“Knock yourself out man,” Tweek said, “I-I want to get something else out of here. Craig, you should go play skeeball with Butters, he’s like, insanely good.”

Craig shrugged, “Yeah, why not? I’ve already got balls.”

“I sure HOPE you do!” Kenny laughed from his quarter pile.

Craig ignored him and instead focused solely on Tweek, “well, guess I’ll go tolerate Butters for a bit. Come find me when you’re done, okay?”

Tweek agreed and Craig left, making his way over to Butters. The blonde was hopping from foot to foot like an idiot, cheering happily as each ball landed in its target and immediately rolled back out. The machine was completely out of order, so no scoring was possible, but Butters seemed to be having a blast regardless.

Craig walked up and looked from him to the busted machine a few times, “you know it’s not on, right?”

Butters looked over, meeting Craig’s annoyed gaze with a look of unfiltered joy, “I know! The balls jus roll right back! I can play forever AND it’s free!”

“You can’t keep score very well this way you know. Pretty pointless,” Craig noted flatly.

“Pshh, ya can’t get tickets neither, that ain’t the point! It’s about fun. Maybe ya heard of it before? It’s somethin’ us humans are real keen on,” Butters said, sarcasm dripping out from under his sweet tone.

The boys held each others’ gaze as Butters lifted a ball out of Craig’s hand and, without looking, tossed it up the ramp, sinking it into the center hole. Craig felt like he’d been physically wounded, Butters didn’t have any right to burn him AND be that good at skeeball. This would not stand.

He frowned and walked up to the machine, getting ready to throw the ball he still had. Butters watched from a few feet behind him, arms crossed and a smug look on his soft face.

Craig glared at him, stuck his tongue out, then turned and accidentally tossed the ball so hard it hit the plastic barrier and bounced back, narrowly missing hitting one of the boys.

Butters approached Craig, leaning on his shoulder and whispering, ”sad.”

Craig batted Butters off of him and turned, seeing the teasing, overly smug smile on Butters’ face. It made Craig want to beat him.

“Jimmy!” He called, never breaking eye contact with Butters as Jimmy made his way over.
“Yuh-yeah? W-what’s up?” He asked.

“The machine’s broken, keep score for us,” he said.

Butters positively beamed, “ooh! I never beat somebody by a landslide before! Good idea gettin’ a score keeper!”

Craig grit his teeth, for such a sweet kid, he was pretty good at trash talking. Kenny probably taught him that...the stupid whore. He couldn’t deny that part of him enjoyed this though, maybe...maybe he was kind of having fun. MAYBE.

“We’ll just see you one-eyed...stuffed animal in human form!” Craig huffed.

Butters made a face that looked about as close as a human could get to actually making a smug ‘Nya’ face, and turned back to the machine.

“H-he kind of is like a buh...huh...big stuffed a-animal,” Jimmy agreed. “I duh-didn’t knOw humans could make face like that.”

“I’m not entirely convinced he’s all human,” Craig grumbled.

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After about fifteen minutes, Tweek showed up, and he wasn’t sure what he was expecting to see, but it wasn’t this. Butters was laughing as Craig shot insults at him, the two throwing skee balls and Craig obviously losing. The weird thing to Tweek, however, was that Craig was almost smiling. He actually looked like he was enjoying himself.

Tweek smiled happily and walked up next to Jimmy, “hey! A-am I crazy here or is Craig actually..enjoying something?”

Jimmy chuckled, “I thu-think he’s formed an unofficial rivalry with Th-the walking care bear over there.”

“Craig has an unofficial rivalry with the entire world,” Tweek snorted.

He leaned back against one of the nearby tables and called, “hey honey! Losing?”

Craig turned in surprise, “Tweek? When did you get here?”

Tweek walked up and put his hands on Craig’s face, expression turning serious as he whispered, “it’s been two days Craig...I’ve been trying to reach you, but you were stuck in an endless ballgame loop. Doomed to lose terribly for eternity.”

Craig lightly slapped Tweek’s hands away, making a sound almost like a laugh. “Hey! You’re supposed to root for me you little shit!”

Tweek stuck his tongue out and Butters walked over, “heya! I’m glad you showed up, it’s just gettin’ embarrassin at this point.”

“Oh come on, Craig was never great at this game, but how bad-?”

“It’s tuh...t..two hundred twenty to f-four...four thousand s-seven hundred fun-fifty,” Jimmy helpfully supplied.

Craig’s cheeks turned pink as Tweek fought back laughter. “O-oh babe...that’s so bad!” He giggled.
“Shut up you little blonde demons!” Craig huffed.

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They boys all hung around for another hour or so, Clyde had managed to find unopened chip bags in the back, which were a couple years past their expiration, but the boys ate them anyway. Tweek nervously chattered about how they’d all die of mold poisoning or something, Kenny was just happy to have any food, and Token teasingly called them all peasants for eating what was essentially garbage food.

After that, they all slowly headed off, Craig walked outside with Kenny first, talking to him about his stupid cheating boyfriend.

“No no I swear to god, he had to be using magic or some shit. Tell me the truth Kenny, he’s not really blind in one eye, is he? It’s secretly a terminator eye with scanner abilities.”

Kenny laughed and pulled two cigarettes out of his pocket, offering one to Craig, “Yeah, yeah throwing stars to the eye do tend to cause vision related super powers. I think that was in an issue of Cyclops.”

Craig took the offered cigarette, scoffing, “you’re such a smartass, McCormick.”

“And you’re a sore loser, Tucker,” Kenny replied, lighting up before inhaling deeply.

He exhaled with a soft laugh, “hey. Now you’re me AND Butters’ bitch. Since we both totally kicked your ass at something.”

Craig exhaled an angry stream of smoke, fixing Kenny with a glare, “well ONE of us isn’t trained in martial arts. It was totally unfair.”

“Super sore loser,” Kenny chuckled.

“I could beat you now, probably,” Craig replied.

“Could you now?” Kenny smiled, “well, I’m 120 pounds of roughly 70% muscle and I train by fighting the homeless junkies in my yard. What have you been up to, space nerd?”

Craig grimaced and looked down, “…reading physics books mostly.”

“That’s what I thought,” Kenny took another slow drag, then exhaled, “bitch.”

Craig hated to admit it, but despite Kenny’s gangly appearance, he’d seen him running around in that ridiculous spandex suit, he really was all muscle under those baggy clothes. Craig was just lucky to have high metabolism to keep his lazy ass from getting fat.

He was spared having to endure any more painfully accurate insults from Kenny as Clyde came running out, Butters right on his heels. Craig just had time to raise an eyebrow before Clyde practically tackled him.

“Fuck! Clyde what the hell you idiot?” Craig exclaimed, stumbling backwards and shooting his hand up in the air to avoid burning Clyde with the cigarette.

Clyde looked up at him with tear filled eyes, a sight that wasn’t unusual, but still confused Craig to no end.

“What made you sad now?” Craig sighed heavily, shoving at his friend to try and loosen the iron
grip he had around his waist.

“I didn’t know you weren’t tellin folks! My bad!” Butters called.

Clyde let go of Craig just to grip the arm that held the cigarette, “Craig, how COULD you?!”

Craig glanced up at his hand, then back down to Clyde, “…smoke? It’s really not a big deal. And this reaction is why I didn’t fucking tell you.”

Clyde shook his head, “no no...how could you...have something you do with Kenny and not US?!”

Craig slowly lowered his hand, taking a slow drag of his cigarette as he processed the idiotic glory that was that sentence. He blew smoke directly into Clyde’s face, effectively getting him to let go.

Clyde coughed and waved his arms wildly to try and clear the smoke, “the hell man?”

“Why would I smoke with you? Moron, you don’t smoke,” Craig finally said, “I’m not replacing you. It’s been two years man, you need to quit being so paranoid.”

It took about five more minutes and Kenny actually bursting out laughing at Clyde’s accusation that Craig was his new best friend, but Clyde did finally settle down. In that time, the others also came outside. Jimmy made a few terrible jokes and Token gently reminded Craig that smoking was unhealthy. Tweek reminded everyone that it was Craig’s birthday and they should harass him over this another time.

Token sighed, “fine, fair enough. I’ll leave you alone for now. You’re lucky your boyfriend is here to keep everyone in order.” Token then gave Craig’s arm a friendly punch to prove he wasn’t upset.

“We were gonna throw you a party, but Tweek insisted you’d like this better. We also all left your birthday gifts with Tricia yesterday, she’s been guarding them,” Token smiled,

“Presents and no people?” Craig asked, “you guys really are good friends. I’ll thank you on Monday...depending on what you got me. I’m looking at you and your hug coupons Clyde.”

“There goes my handjob coupon idea,” Kenny joked.

Craig have him a mildly disgusted look and Butters snorted. The group all said their goodbyes after that, heading off into the afternoon and leaving Tweek and Craig alone once more.

“So?” Tweek asked, “What’d you think? Pretty good party for a guy who hates parties?”

“It wasn’t even really a party,” Craig said, then smiled, “which means it was perfect. That...actually was kind of fun. Even losing to Butters. So, any other plans for the day?”

Tweek grinned excitedly, “You bet! This is gonna be your absolute perfect birthday! Hopefully it’ll make up for last year when your mom threw a party and invited most of the class.”

“Yeah I did not care for that,” Craig grumbled, “I have a lot more faith in you than I do in mom.”

Tweek took Craig’s hand and started walking with him again. They walked in a comfortable silence through town, both blissfully ignoring anyone who attempted to make small talk as they passed. It was a lot of walking, but they eventually ended up at the bus station.

“Oh no, you’re kicking me out of town. I knew it, just promise you’ll take good care of Stripe!” Craig exclaimed dramatically, throwing an arm over his eyes.
Tweek snorted and elbowed him in the gut, “oh shut up you! We’re going to Denver.”

Craig grunted from the gut-check and looked over, “Denver? Why?”

Tweek smiled a bit, “Planetarium. I think they have interactive tours now, and also no more mind control, which is a nice plus.”

Craig gasped loudly, grabbing Tweek’s arms, “seriously?! I haven’t been in years! Mom doesn’t trust it ever since-and no one else wanted-and-really?!”

Tweek laughed, “and to think the others still call you emotionless.”

Craig grinned broadly and kissed Tweek, “well they just don’t know how to drag emotion out of me the way you do. You’re special babe.”

“Stoop! So cheesy!” Tweek giggled.

Craig hugged him tight and started kissing all over his face, “you made me feel happy, now you gotta deal with the consequences!” He said between pecks.

“C-Craig! Quit it you big dork! Public-we’re in-there are people!” Tweek attempted in a half-hearted protest. He didn’t really try to push Craig off though, instead he wrapped his arms around Craig’s neck, giving up on protesting entirely. He was giggling and snorting, face bright pink as Craig nuzzled against him.

They got so wrapped up in being disgustingly cute that they nearly missed the bus. Fortunately someone getting off the bus yelled for them to please stop, getting their attention.

Craig and Tweek spent the next hour on the bus, and then three hours after that in the planetarium. By the time they got back to South Park, it was nearly dark out. Tweek was pretty pleased though, mainly because he hadn’t seen Craig this happy in a very long time.

Craig was chattering away, eyes bright and a smile on his face as he and Tweek talked about their favorite parts of the visit. Tweek went quiet after a minute, preferring to just listen to Craig. It was rare for him to talk so much and so optimistically, he wanted to drink in this rarity as much as he could.

The two sat down in their usual spots in the park, Craig leaning back against Tweek’s legs as the blonde sat on the bench, smiling down at him.

After awhile, Craig stopped and patted Tweek’s knee, “hey, how come you went quiet? I..shit, was I talking too much?”

Tweek shook his head, “the opposite. You hardly ever talk so much, it’s nice to listen to.”

“Nice? My voice sounds like an apathetic robot with a cold. How is that nice?” Craig asked.

Tweek snorted, “it’s nice hearing you so happy, you ridiculous robot.”

Craig hummed in agreement, moving to sit next to Tweek, “I guess I am pretty happy today. It’s been awhile, huh?”

Tweek nodded, then shifted to lean against Craig, “Yeah. I’ve missed it.”

Craig sighed quietly, feeling a little bad that he’d been hiding so much from Tweek lately, “…hey…sorry I’ve been so…distant and closed off. Like, more than before. I know you’ve noticed,
and, I shouldn’t be that way. With you I mean, fuck everyone else. But like, today was amazing, you worked so hard to make me happy and I-“

Tweek kissed his cheek, silencing him, “I understand. You’ve been through a lot. When you’re ready to open up, I’ll be thrilled, but for now let’s enjoy your birthday. It’s not over yet you know.”

Craig blinked and tipped his head, “there’s...did you plan more?”

“Just presents. But I think you’re gonna really love them,” Tweek smiled. “Come on, they’re at your house.”

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After getting “happy birthday”s from all his family members, Craig’s mom let them go off to Craig’s room.

“You go have fun sweetie,” Laura smiled, “just be sure to come back down and tell us how much you love our gift!”

Craig nodded, “I will. Thanks mom.”

When they got to Craig’s room, there were four boxes and a mini cake on his desk.

“That cake looks weirdly familiar,” Craig noted.

Tweek nodded, “it’s the kind I made for Bebe when we were little, heh..no fireworks this time though. Maybe.”

Craig grinned, “maybe huh? I won’t light it, I don’t trust you.”

Tweek stuck his tongue out, “just open your presents! Oh! And this one is from earlier today, it’s kind squished from being in my pocket.”

Tweek pulled a small, somewhat flattened guinea pig plushie out of his pocket. Craig took it and kissed Tweek’s cheek, “she’s perfect. I’ll name her waffles.”

Tweek snorted, “waffles?”

Craig fluffed the toy back up and set it on his bed, “Yeah. It’s what I almost named Stripe.”

Craig opened up the boxes next, a space themed joke book from Jimmy, an ‘I want to believe’ shirt with an alien logo from Clyde, what looked like a hand-knitted sweater for Stripe from Butters, and a lighter with a galaxy pattern on it from Kenny.

Craig smiled as he looked the things over, “wow, they actually do know me.” He held up the tiny sweater, “how much you wanna bet Butters actually made this? He’s so weird...”

Tweek just shook his head, looking ready to burst from excitement, “there’s still one more! It’s in your closet, and uh, it’s actually from your parents, me, and Token. Go look go look!”

Craig confusedly walked over to his closet, “okay..? Man Tweek, why’re so giddy about-“ he trailed off as he pulled open his closet door. He silently pulled out a very very nice telescope. He was at a complete loss for words.

“It’s..this...Tweek this is a Skyquest telescope. I-how-h...h...hh...” Craig gently set it back down, then turned and hugged Tweek so tightly it hurt a little.
He let go after a minute, running downstairs. Tweek laughed a bit as he heard Craig’s mom give a startled yell. Craig must not hug her often. After Craig freaked out his family by hugging all of them, he got the telescope and headed outside with it.

“I guess it was the right one then,” Laura laughed.

“I told you! He never shut up about it! I knew what I was talking about!” Tricia huffed.

Everyone stayed outside with Craig for about an hour, but eventually his parents got tired and headed inside, wishing him a final happy birthday before they went to bed. Tricia and Tweek sat in the grass, occasionally looking through the scope when Craig waved them over to point out various stars and constellations.

“You can see the moon SO clearly!” Craig said, still absolutely in awe of his new present.

“So you’ve mentioned,” Tricia chuckled, “Craig, it’s like, almost eleven. I’m tired. Are you not tired?”

“Go on inside, I’ll be in soon,” Craig replied, pretty unconvincingly.

Tricia yawned and stood up, “keep an eye on him. Don’t let him wander down the street with that thing.”

Tweek nodded, “I’ll guard him. Night Tricia.”

“Night,” she replied, walking inside.

“So, good birthday?” Tweek asked, smiling.

Craig sat down next to him, telescope held to his chest in one hand as he wrapped the other around Tweek. He kissed him warmly; a soft, slow kiss that had Tweek feeling electric prickles over his whole body.

Craig pulled back and smiled gently, “this was the best day...in just...in years. Thank you, so so much.”

Tweek blinked slowly and returned Craig’s smile, “Wow...I’m so glad Craig...and...just, damn. You have got to kiss me like that some more, woah.”

Craig laughed a bit and stretched his arm out, setting the telescope at a safe distance before wrapping both arms around his boyfriend, “I guess I kiss better when I’m happy. Seriously though, Tweek...thank you.”

Tweek nuzzled against Craig, humming happily in the warmth of his boyfriend’s arms, “of course. I love you.”

“I love you too sunshine.”

Tweek blushed a bit, “happy birthday you gay idiot.”
WOW it’s been almost a month? Holy hell the time sure flies...

Well, here it finally is! A nice fluffy chapter to lead into the boys’ highschool years!
Craig was nearly late for the bus on his first day of high school. Not because he overslept, but rather because he had gotten distracted while getting ready. He had woken up, pulled on the t-shirt Clyde had given him for his birthday, followed by an unbuttoned blue wool sweater he had replaced his hoodie with over a year ago. Blue chullo (the same from his childhood, now faded and worn) in place over his dark hair, he had paused to look in the mirror and tuck away any hair that stuck out from under the hat that was honestly way too small for him.

He didn't like to look in mirrors for long these days, and this morning was a glaring reminder for him of why. He had pulled off his too-small hat for a minute, trying to stretch the wool a little further, willing the fabric to stretch wide enough to fit properly, when his reflection caught him off guard. He took a quick step back from the mirror, casting the object a look of scorn and fear, as if it had somehow burned him. He ran to his dresser and dug around in the top drawer, pulling out the faded image he'd kept from Petunia's car.

He held the photo up next to his face as he squinted back into the mirror, and he could see himself twice. Dark hair and caramel tinged skin, and eyes so starkly contrast in their hue that they stood out even in the worn photo he held. He looked exactly like his father now, they had to be roughly the same age as when the photo was taken. Craig had never been so disgusted by his own reflection before, and as he scowled at himself in the mirror, the expression reminded him of the way Petunia would look at him when she used to pass him in the halls. He didn't really think, he just grabbed this souvenir moon rock he kept on his dresser and smashed the door's mirror with it.

It took him ten minutes to clean up all the glass and convince his mom that the loud shattering sound was definitely nothing and he didn't need or want any help. He'd just finished duct-taping a sheet over the broken and now somewhat hazardous mirror when his mom called, "Craig! I don't know what you're doing up there, but the bus isn't going to wait for you!"

So that was why Craig nearly missed the bus, and how he got a gash across his palm that he didn't notice until Clyde pointed it out.

"Dude, you're bleeding all over the bus seat, what happened?" Clyde asked worriedly, grabbing for Craig's hand.

"Don't touch me, Clyde," Craig hissed, batting his friend away and pressing his hand against his sweater in an attempt to stop the bleeding. "I just cut it while cleaning up some glass."

"You know that just makes me want to ask more questions," Clyde said, eyes wide.

Craig gave him a hollow glare, an expression somewhere between sorrow and spite, "think better of them, and for once, don't ask."

Clyde frowned, normally this would've upset him, but something about the look on Craig's face just made him worry more instead. His eyes looked wetter, like how Clyde's did before he cried. But...Clyde was sure Craig never cried, about anything. At least he'd never seen him cry.

Craig didn't bother even responding to most of his friends as they greeted him in the hall, and he noticed Clyde was weirdly quiet, but didn't bother asking about that either. Tweek came up before
too long, wandering over from where he'd been chatting with Butters.

"H-hey!" He greeted, then paused, feeling that thick blanket of anxiety he was so familiar with now hanging in the air all around him. He grabbed Craig's arm, looking at him intensely, "what's wrong? What did you do?"

Craig was surprised, looking at Tweek with both eyebrows raised, how did he just know things like that? "Tweek, what-

Tweek shushed him, "no, don't make excuses or say its nothing. Something happened, what was it?"

Craig opened his mouth to protest again, but Tweek grabbed his injured hand and held it in front of his face, "you hurt this on something."

"He said he was cleaning up glass," Clyde chimed in.

That was when Craig realized that all of his friends were just kind of staring as Tweek glared at him like an accusatory mother. It was incredibly awkward and Craig really wished he could dissipate into nothingness on the spot.

"Can I just tell you later?" Craig asked abashedly, looking down at Tweek, who was still clutching his cut hand.

Tweek tsked and shrugged his backpack off, digging around until he found gauze. He started wrapping Craig's hand up, "... Later. Later today, promise me, and clean that cut later too o-or it might get infected."

Craig sighed in relief, "I promise. So um, changing this subject completely, what's everyone's class schedule like? I need to know how much Clyde to expect." He pulled his class schedule from his bag and looked around at his friends hopefully.

Token chuckled a bit, fortunately going along with the abrupt subject change, "you're in AP classes, Craig, you really think you'll be seeing him much?"

Clyde gasped, hurt, "hey! I'm smart! I could have a class with Craig!"

Tweek snickered, "Clyde, you uh... Look not to hurt your feelings, but you kinda have to be a straight A student to even be considered for his classes, and you're more...well, you got four Ds last year."

Clyde looked down sadly and Token patted his back, "it's okay man, no one else in the group is taking honors stuff either."

Craig looked surprised, "wait, Token, your grades are fine, why aren't you taking any classes with me?"

"I'm not doing that to myself, are you kidding me?" Token laughed, "I'm going into business, not astro-science. You'd have to pay me to put the stress of college-level classes on myself. And since I'm rich you couldn't pay me enough anyway."

Craig chuckled a little, "okay, fair point. But still, I only have like one normal class this year, I won't be seeing anyone I know in class? You guys know bring in a room of only unfamiliar people is basically a reoccurring nightmare of mine."

As if on cue, Kenny bounded up, a mischievous grin plastered on his face. That look scared Craig a
little, what did the asshole want now?

"Dude, oh my god. You uuuhhm," he paused here to snicker, "you're taking AP shit right? Like English and sciencey math?"

Craig eyed him warily, "...why..?"

Kenny just snatched the timetable out of Craig's hands, eyes absolutely sparkling with amusement.

"I knew it! Oh my god this is gonna be fucking hilarious!" Kenny laughed.

"What? You? I didn't think you put enough effort into classes to-" Kenny cut Craig off, shaking his head as he barely contained his laughter.

"Oh no, not me, I'm an average student. No, not me. Him," Kenny practically snorted, pointing a little ways down the hall, where Kyle was watching the exchange in utter confusion.

Craig gasped and looked from Kyle to Kenny, "NO."

Kenny laughed loudly as he handed Craig the class schedule back, "you have the same English, Chemistry, AND math!"

Craig's whole group of friends joined in on Kenny's laughing, even Tweek unable to suppress a few giggles.

"Oh my god, babe that sucks!" Tweek snickered, "I'm so sorry!"

"You aren't sorry at all you little demon," Craig huffed. "But whatever, I just won't talk to him."

"Good luck with that," Kenny chuckled, there's never more than like ten kids in the AP groups, and Kyle is kind of friends with Tweek. He already told me he wanted to try talking to you more."

Another round of laughter from all of Craig's friends.

Tweek hugged Craig, "aww, it'll be okay. Be sure to Snapchat me if you physically fight him."

Craig groaned and Kenny added, "he's been taking judo for awhile now, he can actually suplex Cartman, I wouldn't recommend fighting him."

Craig groaned louder and suddenly heavily regretted never getting into any martial art.

The first class of the day was English, and Kenny had been right about the tiny number of students in these classes. The only kids in here were Heidi, that Mormon boy Craig was pretty sure was gay and just wouldn't admit it, Red, Wendy, who Craig also didn't care for much, and Kyle.

Ugh. Kyle. He didn't wear his hat anymore, and the fact his ridiculously bright hair was pulled back into a ponytail somehow made Craig loathe him more. He looked like a dumb hipster or a blogger or something. He scanned over the room once more, seating was limited, only about 10 desks to the 6 kids, and Craig was trying to decide who he could tolerate the most. The only open seats were next to the Mormon boy...Mark? Mike? Kyle, and Wendy.

He tried the Mormon kid, Kevin? first, taking a seat next to him and hoping he wasn't as gushingly friendly as he was when he was a kid.

"Hey there, good morning!" The stupidly friendly boy greeted, "Craig, right?"
"I don't like talking to people, Mark," Craig replied flatly.

"Um, it's Gary. But that's okay, it's been a long time and, actually I don't think we've ever talked anyway, so it makes sense you wouldn't know my name," Gary replied.

Craig groaned quietly and covered his head, he hated cheerful people. Being around them was like staring at the sun, blindingly bright and too painful not to be cancerous.

"Oh, do you have a headache? I'm sorry, I'll keep it down," Gary said, sounding genuinely apologetic.

"Nothing is worth this," Craig grumbled, getting up and taking his things with him. He sat next to Wendy, who looked bewildered by his presence.

"Why are you sitting by me?" She asked, looking at Craig as though he were a particularly unappetizing fish.

"You're the lesser of two evils," Craig replied dryly.

Craig took out his phone, sending Tweek a picture of the hellish cast of classmates around him. Tweek sent back a picture of himself and Token, who evidently had the same English class. The text across it read 'sorry you're stuck in nerd hell'.

Craig went to take a picture of himself to send back, but seeing his own face bothered him again, so instead he just sent back a blank screen that said 'mean' across it.

Tweek sent back a pout, 'what? I don't get to see your handsome face anymore?'

They always sent pictures of themselves making various faces back and forth, Craig hadn't thought Tweek would notice right away that he didn't just the once. He was too damn observant sometimes. He sent back a quick 'class starting, gtg' and then set his phone down, resting his face against the desk next to it.

"Problems?" Wendy asked, apparently unable to keep from pestering him.

"Fuck off, girl Kyle," Craig grumbled, muffled by his desk.

"You know, I don't like how I look sometimes too, it's pretty normal," she offered.

Craig glanced sideways at her, "what makes you think I don't like how I look?"

"You made that face, you know, that 'I hit the front camera and don't like what it's showing me' look," she said.

Craig huffed and didn't say anything else, because she was right, and he hated that.

"Look, you're an asshole who hates people, I get it. But I like helping anyway. You don't have to listen, but just, like, you can ask anyone. No one really likes how they look, we all have ways to handle it. So like, if you need tips or advice or anything, I am willing to help. Despite the 'girl Kyle' comment."

Craig sighed heavily and looked up at her, "you're a good person, gross."

Wendy stuck her tongue out and went back to typing on her own phone, "well, you didn't ask, but makeup can help. And I like wearing scarves sometimes when I get sick of how feminine and delicate my face looks."
"...thanks. You're right though, I didn't ask, so you know, shut up," Craig mumbled.

The teacher got up from his desk to start class then, and Craig had never been so relieved to get to the work part of the school day. Craig managed to avoid talking to Kyle or, really anyone, for most of the morning. He got to the lunch break and texted Tweek to meet him by the lockers since they hadn't figured out a better meeting spot yet. He had just slipped his phone back away when a tap on his shoulder made him tense.

"Did I do something to you?" Came Kyle's disgustedly haughty voice.

"What, you gonna give me detention?" Craig asked, voice bubbling with as much venom as he could manage.

"You've just been obviously ignoring me all day, I even said hi to you after class and you didn't say anything. I just wanted to know if I like, offended you or something," Kyle said.

Craig sighed and stopped walking, knowing his usual biting insults wouldn't be enough to deter someone as persistent as Kyle. He turned and met Kyle's eyes, a gesture that seemed to startle the redhead a bit.

"Dude, are you okay?" Kyle asked, expression shifting from irritation to genuine worry.

"I'm FINE. Kyle, listen, okay, for once in your life just listen and don't lecture. You have done nothing to me, absolutely nothing. But I know the kind of person you are, and you just aren't my kind of guy, alright? I don't want to be your friend. I don't want to hear your condescending lectures, whether they're right or not, and I just don't want...this. I have never had to tell someone to fuck off in so many words, but I know just insulting you clearly doesn't work since that fat idiot still tails you around. So just look at me, hear my words. Go away, I do not want to be around or talk to you," Craig glared at Kyle pointedly.

Kyle looked a little taken aback, "I uh...oh. I'm..uh, okay...sorry, Craig. You know, I know I was like that when we were kids, but people DO change. Not you, clearly, but other people. I don't get how Tweek puts up with you."

Kyle turned and walked briskly away. Craig thought maybe he should feel bad about that, and did a little, but it was nothing compared to how bad he felt when he turned and saw Tweek standing by the lockers, giving him such an incredibly disapproving look.

He slowly walked over, not daring say another word. Clearly that wasn't going to work though, as Tweek just kept up his tired glare, waiting for Craig to say something.

"..I didn't want to have to put up with him all year," even as Craig said it, he realized what an insanely petty reason that was to snap at someone like that.

"You didn't have to decimate him like that," Tweek replied, "I actually kind of thought if you gave him a chance, after the initial insulting and stuff you usually do, you might get along a little bit. He's really not that bad you know."

"I...look, Tweek, you know I hate people, and he's just-"

Tweek rested a hand gently on Craig's cheek, "no, I think you're afraid of people. The way you are around me, happy, relaxed, actually expressive? You aren't even that way around your friends. You can't keep running forever Craig. Because eventually, there won't be anywhere left to run."

Craig was silent, staring back at Tweek. One thing he both loved and hated about Tweek was how
well the blonde could read him, and he knew that if he really truly thought about it, he really was kind of scared.

Tweek sighed softly and kissed his cheek, "you should apologize to Kyle, for me if nothing else. But, more importantly, what happened to your hand this morning?"

Craig blinked and held his bandaged hand up, "oh." He had completely forgotten about that.

"I...I broke my mirror, must've cut myself cleaning up the glass," he finally said.

Tweek frowned, "you broke your mirror...on purpose?"

"I...kind of? I wasn't really thinking, I was just, I dunno, pissed or something," Craig mumbled, "this day isn't going great."

Tweek took Craig's hands gently, "hey, it's alright, you can-" he trailed off as Craig quietly moved back away from Tweek, staking his hands back and shoving them into his pockets before walking away.

"...talk to me..." Tweek finished quietly.

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Craig found himself, a few minutes later, outside the school, around back by the garbage and the rats who were rummaging in the garbage. He sat on the dirty pavement and lit a cigarette, not even sure why he came out here. Had he just walked away from Tweek? He couldn't think straight this morning.

He pulled something out of his pants pocket, a small, wallet sized photo. He hadn't shown Tweek this, it had been in the birthday letter from Petunia, and it was honestly a much bigger stressor than the letter itself. It was a picture of a man, maybe in his early twenties, smiling happily and holding a toddler of no more than a year old. Craig was positive that was him as a baby, and he was equally sure that the man was Daniel. He turned the little picture over, where an address was scrawled. He had been zoned out staring at the lettering for so long that he didn't even notice when Tweek sat down next to him. He didn't notice until the shorter boy leaned against him, making Craig jump slightly.

He shoved the little picture back into his pocket and looked down at Tweek, "what-how long have you-? No, wait, sorry I just ran off like that. I...wasn't really thinking."

Tweek looked up at him, giving a smile to shallow to fully hide the worry behind it, "it's alright. I think you have a lot on your mind, and I dunno exactly why you feel like you can't share it with me, but it'd be pretty hypocritical of me to ask you to when I have so many things I keep to myself."

"I know, and I swear eventually I will, I just-"

"Come over. To my house, I mean," Tweek interjected.

Craig was silent for a minute, so was Tweek. The only sounds were those of the rats, still squeaking and rummaging through the garbage. Craig sucked in a breath, positive he'd misheard, and breathed out a quiet, "what?"

Tweek looked down towards the ground, towards the rats, and repeated himself, "I...I think it's been long enough. Y-you should come over. M-my folks w-want you to anyway. You can spend the
Craig smushed out his cigarette, then turned and rested his hands on Tweek's shoulders. Tweek's eyes snapped from the rats and back up to Craig. “Are you sure?” Craig asked, “I mean...it's like, that's...huge. I've only ever really been in there twice and that one time was when the whole art craze was happening and then that second time you yelled at me and-I just...” Craig paused to take a breath, “Are you really okay with this?”

Tweek twitched, his shoulder jerked under Craig's hand and one of his eyes rapidly opened and closed several times, something that didn't happen much at all anymore. He nodded jerkily, making a small sound as he tried to still his spasming eye. He finally gave up and just covered it with his hand, meeting Craig's eyes with his non-twitching eye.

“I-I'm sure. It's uh, o-obviously stressing me out a little-”

“You think? Tweek, if it's too much-” Craig started, very worried about Tweek's continued twitching, but Tweek held up a slightly shaky hand to silence him.

“It's time. I-it doesn't matter if it stresses me out, I trust you, okay? I do.” He sucked in a sharp breath, “I completely trust you, Craig. Y-you've earned the right to know...everything.” His words petered out towards the end of his sentence, and his hand slipped away from his still slightly twitchy eye. He looked like he'd just been hit with the weight of what 'everything' would entail, and Craig didn't like that look at all.

“Tweek, don't force yourself, I understand,” Craig insisted, taking his hand.

Tweek's brow furrowed and his eye finally stopped twitching as he looked at Craig with a deep resolve, “No. I have to do this. For me, and for you. No more running from what we're afraid of.”

Something about the phrasing of that really hit Craig. Tweek was doing this...for him. So he'd stop being a coward too. Craig pulled Tweek into a tight hug, “You...you're incredible. Kyle was right about one thing, I have no idea how the hell you put up with me.”

Tweek laughed softly and hugged Craig back, “I love you too.”

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Craig understandably had trouble focusing the rest of the day, but his last class was chemistry, and he had one other thing he needed to focus on for just a few minutes. Unfortunately, that thing was apologizing to Kyle. He really didn't want to, but he knew Tweek was right, and he needed to at least give him a chance. He warily approached the red head at his table, eyes squinted as though he were staring directly into the sun.

“Kyle,” he started, with a bit more disdain in his voice than he had intended.

Kyle's sharp nose curled, and emerald eyes smoldering with fury snapped to meet his, “What?” he asked through gritted teeth, “I thought you were pretty clear earlier.”

Craig blinked a couple times, taken aback by the white-hot sear of Kyle's gaze. He had never actually been on the receiving end of his anger, and for just a second, he was impressed that Cartman could look Kyle in the eyes every day. “I-uh, holy shit, you are really terrifying.” was all he managed to say.

Kyle's eyes narrowed and he turned his focus back to his notebook. He wasn't writing anything though, he was just kind of...angrily scribbling a single line over and over. “So I've been told. Look,
did you want something? I thought you hated everything about me.”

Craig shook his head and kept his eyes down, avoiding Kyle's eyes so he could remember what he wanted to say, “Yes, I mean, no, but, okay yes to the wanting something part. Tweek pointed out that I was, well okay I was way meaner than I needed to be to you, and, I shouldn't have done that. So, I'm apologizing. I...should've given you a chance, and...I just don't like people and you kind of have this ability to pin point people's worst qualities and that always made me really wary. Plus your hair looks stupid, it just always kind of pissed me off for some reason? But I-no okay I'm getting off track. My point is that I was wrong and a huge dick and I'm sorry.”

Kyle was staring at him, one eye-brow raised, the entire time he spoke. He gently touched his ginger curls, as if assessing its ridiculousness. He closed his eyes and sighed heavily, “You...are fucking awful at apologies. But Jesus, you must really mean it if you're gonna ramble on for that long. That's more than you've said to me than...ever. And...my hair is pretty fucking awful.”

Craig cautioned a glance back up to Kyle's face, and sighed in relief when he saw the anger in Kyle's eyes had faded to a tired amusement. “So...we're good?” he asked.

Kyle sighed again, “Yeah. I guess. I mean, my current friends have said a lot worse than you did anyway. Plus I promised Tweek I'd try to get along with you.”

Craig blinked, “Wait, you...didn't want to be my friend? But Kenny said-”

Kyle laughed, a bitter, hollow sort of laugh, “Oh no. I mean, Tweek just goes on and on about you, so I figured we'd have to hang out together eventually, but no. I kind of hate your guts. And don't think I've forgotten that whole pan flute band adventure.”

“But that-you-you guys swindled ME out of my birthday money! And got us stranded in Peru! And- I-lasers! There were-I shot lasers out of my eyes!” Craig sputtered.

Kyle rolled his eyes, “Oh my god, that was six years ago Craig, you're still mad about it?”

“BUT YOU JUST SAID-” Craig started, but stopped when Kyle just grinned smugly at him.

“You're really easy to rile up. Better not talk to Cartman,” he snickered.

“Fucking Kyle,” Craig hissed, stalking off to his own table.

“T'll have Kenny let you know about our next hang out date!” Kyle called, then after a minute added, “And stop trusting things Kenny says about me!”

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School ended an hour later, and Craig met Tweek out front to talk about how the rest of the day went and to decide when he would come visit. “So, I apologized to Kyle,” he started.

Tweek looked up at him, “Oh? Seriously? How'd it go?”

Craig sighed, “Well, I mean, it worked. But dude, you hang out around him, you could've warned me that he looks scarier than a fucking dragon when he's pissed off.”

Tweek laughed, “Oh man, did you look in his eyes? That's a rookie mistake.” Craig groaned and Tweek snorted, “I-I honestly got kinda used to it, so I just forgot. But yeah, when he glares like that it does kinda feel like your skin is about to melt off.”
The two laughed and talked about Kyle and safety precautions to take when he got mad awhile longer, then Tweek told Craig about how Kenny ate a pencil for five bucks in his last class of the day.

“Man, I was stuck doing AP chemistry and you got to watch Kenny eat a pencil?” Craig asked, “I'm gonna miss normal classes.”

Tweek snorted, “D-don't worry, I hear stuff gets insanely stupid again once you hit college.”

They both sighed and an awkward silence filled the air. Craig wanted to ask when he should come visit, but a part of him didn't want to ask, in case Tweek had changed his mind or something. Tweek looked uncertain too, but, after a painful minute of silence, he finally said, “This Saturday, y-you can text me when you wake up and you can come over on Saturday.”

Craig nodded, “Alright. You've got two days to clean up your room and hide all the paranoid charts you keep detailing people's every move,” he teased.

“M-man don't make me more nervous! What if I miss one?” Tweek asked, and Craig genuinely couldn't tell if he was kidding or not.

“You...do you...have charts on people?” he asked.

Tweek laughed and shook his head, “Of course not!” then he added, more quietly, “Not charts...”

Craig opened his mouth, but before he'd even formed the question, Tweek kissed his cheek and hurried off, “B-bye! See you later!”

Craig watched him go, silently wondering what the hell he was in for this Saturday.

Chapter End Notes

Up Next, the long awaited reveal of Tweek's home life!

Which I have definitely planned out properly.

For sure.

It may take me awhile to write the next chapter.
Sunshine and Stardust

Chapter Notes

AKA - a chapter from Tweek's perspective.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

A hand tugged anxiously at sandy blonde hair as Tweek paced his room. He was biting his already worn-to-stubs fingernails, checking and double checking and triple checking every inch of his room to make sure it was all properly cleaned. It was Friday night, and if he knew Craig, he knew the dork would get up early to be able to spend as much time with him as possible. He mumbled anxiously under his breath, grabbing at his phone and shakily dialing Kenny's number as he continued to look around his room.

The other blonde answered after a few rings, tired face popping up on Tweek's screen, “duude I know I said you could call me any time, but it's like, two in the morning. Is this a Msysterion emergency?” he mumbled groggily.

“N-no, sorry, I know, I was kinda hoping you'd still be up, I-I know you tend to stay up late Fridays,” Tweek mumbled apologetically, “G-go on back to sleep, it's fine.”

Kenny yawned and stretched, “Mgh, it's cool, something must be on your mind, right?”

“Is that Tweek?” came Butters sleepy voice from nearby. His cute little face, all done up in teal and pink makeup, popped into view, “Heya Tweek.”

Tweek couldn't help but smile a little, “Oh, date night? Sorry guys! Butters, you look r-really nice!”

Butters beamed and Kenny kissed his cheek, “It's alright Tweek, we're your friends, c'mon, what's got you so anxious at two in the morning?”

Tweek gave a loud, shaky sigh and flopped back onto his bed, holding his phone up at arm's length, “I k-kind of invited Craig over, he's coming to visit tomorrow.”

Both of Tweek's friends gasped loudly, fully awake now. Butters started clapping, “Ooh! That's so brave! We haven't been in your house yet neither, ya must really trust him! That's so great!”

Kenny hushed Butters hurriedly, and all three boys went quiet as they heard Kenny's mother yell, “KENNY! SHUT UP! I'M TRYING TO GET HIGH IN PEACE!”

Kenny sighed heavily and handed his phone to Butters, “Here Buttercup, talk to Tweek a minute, I'm gonna go make sure Karen is safe.”

Butters smiled awkwardly at the phone screen, “Heh, parents, right? Always' yellin or hittin you.”

Tweek returned the anxious smile, “At least not all parents are like that. Like, Craig's parents. They're good people. W-we should all hang out at Craig's some time so you can see what a good adult is, Butters.”

Butters sighed, “Maybe some time, but this ain't about me an' Kenny! Ya called 'cause you're nervous bout Craig bein' around your folks, right?”
Tweek whined and nodded, “Y-yeah...he just...he's such a good guy, and he's really protective of me, w-which is nice because all the assholes at school are to scared of him to try hurting me, but like, I just know he's gonna yell at my parents. A-and what if they hurt him? Maybe this was a bad idea...oh Jesus I shouldn't have told him to come over, I just-I thought it was time but what if I'm wrong? What if he hates my parents so much that he stops wanting to even be around ME?”

Butters frowned and made a sort of 'calm down' motion with one of his hands, “Hey, hey it's alright Tweek, take a breath okay? Craig clearly loves ya enough that he was willin' ta be with ya forever without ever even goin' to your house. He won't leave ya just 'cause of your shitty druggie parents. An' they won't hurt him neither! He's tough, he's been through a kidnappin! He can handle it.”

Tweek took a deep breath and sighed shakily, “That's the problem though. I-I know you guys think Craig is this like, emotionless tough guy that doesn't get scared easy, but...please never tell him I told you this, he's scared of a lot of things. And my folks...what if...what if they remind him too much of that Petunia lady that hurt him so badly? What if he can't handle it? I wouldn't blame him...I mean, he's just been so on edge lately...”

Butters frowned, seeming to take a minute to ponder that, and while he did, Kenny showed back up with Karen at his side. Karen knelt down by Butters, hugging him and turning her tired brown gaze to the phone screen. A small smile forming when she saw Tweek, “Hiya Tweek, trouble sleeping?”

Tweek waved in greeting, “H-hey Karen. Yeah, but I guess you're having some trouble too.”

She yawned and leaned against her brother, who wrapped an arm protectively around her, “It's okay...I know my brother and my guardian angel will keep me safe...mm...and...whatever's wrong, I bet Craig will keep you safe too Tweek. You guys are like, each others' guardian angels.”

Kenny pet Karen's hair and sighed, “everything's alright, Stuart and Carol aren't violent tonight, so don't worry. I just brought Karen in here to be safe. So, Tweek, what's going on?”

Tweek smiled softly, Kenny did so much to protect his sister, and she still didn't know that he was the masked superhero that watched over her from time to time. He thought about what she had said, that he and Craig were each others' guardian angels. She was kind of right. Craig had done so much, he had always been there for him and even got him to therapy after that terrible mistake he almost made...he could handle a couple shitty parents. Tweek needed him to see this, so that he could return the favor, and give Craig the support he needed or once. He knew this would work. He wasn't quite as anxious anymore.

He sighed and shook his head, “It's no big worry. Karen is right, we watch out for each other, I'm sure things will go fine tomorrow.”

Kenny nudged his half-asleep sibling, “You hear that? You calmed Tweek down. You performed a miracle sweetie.”

Karen giggled sleepily and waved at the camera again, “Yaaay I helped...good...good luuck...mm...an' if you see Tricia, tell her I say hii.”

Tweek smiled and nodded, and Butters looked a bit confused, “Wait, so, you're good now? You ain't worried about your folks?”

“I mean, of course I am. I drank like, four cups of coffee out of worry and now my heart won't slow down, but, you're right. He cares about me, a-and he's dealt with a lot worse. Maybe...maybe they won't even be so bad with company over,” Tweek said, “we're there for each other, so, it'll all work out.”

“You've come so far Tweek,” Kenny smiled, “text me tomorrow morning if you get anxious again.
I'm gonna go sleep in a pile with my boyfriend and sister now.”

Tweek laughed and nodded, “S-sounds good. Thanks guys.” He saw Kenny flop over on top of Karen and Butters, who both gave tiny screams, and then the phone clicked off. Tweek sighed and set his phone down on his chest.

His fingers thrummed against the glass screen as he stared up at the ceiling. He wondered if Craig was still awake, staring up at his own, plastic-star covered ceiling. Were those stars still up there? They had been last time Tweek saw. He still couldn't believe they lasted so long.

//Tweek lay on the floor of Craig's room, Stripe set between them as Craig talked about getting a tiny space suit to dress him in. Tweek squinted up at the dark ceiling, the plastic stars barely glowing bright enough to be seen. “The stars aren't very bright anymore.”

Craig smiled and nodded, lifting Stripe over his head, “Yeah, they stopped lighting up so well about a year ago.”

“Then... why don't you take them down?”

“Because, stupid, they're from you.”

Tweek smiled as he thought about that night. Craig was such a sap, no one else could even fathom what a romantic idiot he really was. They all knew he'd kill anyone for Tweek, and Tweek was pretty sure Kenny had video taped that one time Craig beat someone up for calling Tweek an annoying, stupid drug addict.

He unlocked his phone and checked, yep, that clip was still online. Craig wasn't thrilled about it, but he wasn't stupid enough to fight Kenny over it, even though Kenny had dared him to. He couldn't help but grin, watching the video again. It was stupid of him to beat someone up, sure, and he had gotten a broken nose and suspended, but the fact he cared that much made Tweek happy. And no one said anything bad about Tweek after that.

He set his phone aside and got up, pacing around his room one last time to make sure it was completely clean. He didn't have charts on the people of the town, but he did have journals he kept on a lot of various people. He really didn't want Craig to see that, so he made sure his box of notebooks was tucked neatly under his bed. He figured Craig wouldn't be scared of him or anything, but he might be concerned. It wasn't even that big a deal to Tweek, more of a habit now than something out of paranoia. He fidgeted slightly, pulling the box out and grabbing the top notebook, a space-patterned college rule journal.

He flicked it open and sat on the edge of his bed, all the notes he took about Craig. He had thought about getting rid of this journal, but reading through it always made him feel pretty happy and relaxed. It was like a record of everything they had done together...along with a list of things he liked, didn't like, and people he hated. Tweek thumbed through the book, reading over some of his favorite memories.

He was just starting to feel relaxed enough to sleep when his door burst open. He shrieked and dove under his covers, screaming "ROBBERS!"

A robber did not greet him, however, and instead it was his father's voice said, “Son, you're still awake? Good good, your mother and I need you to run out for us.”

Tweek peeked out from under the covers, eyes narrowing, “I already picked up a shipment today. It's almost three, I-I'm not going back out.”
His father walked into the room, looking around with an amused expression, “You cleaned. It looks very nice son, I'm sure your boyfriend would've been fine even if you hadn't tidied up.”

Tweek climbed all the way out from under his covers, shoving his notebook back into the box and kicking the whole thing under his bed, “Well, dad, I DID have to clean. The whole house. B- because I'd rather Craig not ask me why there's “flour” everywhere.”

Richard walked to Tweek's dresser, picking up a framed image of Tweek and Craig, one from their recent visit to the planetarium, “This is a nice picture.”
“Put it down.”

“You know how dangerous it is to have glass around though, you don't want to get hurt on this if it ever gets cracked.”

“I don't break shit like you do,” Tweek grumbled softly.

Richard thrummed his fingers against the frame and looked over to his son, “Tweek, son, I need you to go out and get your mother's rainy day money from under the store counter, alright?”

Tweek twitched and stood up, hands wringing nervously, “S-so you got in over your head again w- with some criminal?”

“Our business associate just insists we pay him tonight,” Richard smiled calmly, “he said it's either money or collateral. I thought you might prefer money, right son?”

Tweek twitched harder and grabbed his phone, “Oh Jesus not again,” he whispered, “Y-yeah, I'll go I'll go...j-just keep those people away from me. A-and please don't do any of this shit tomorrow, I-I'm trying to get out of this without traumatizing Craig.”

Richard laughed, a warm, soft, completely hollow sound, “Don't worry son, everything will be fine. But only if you go get that money quick! Got it?”

Tweek whined and scurried out of the room, zipping out the door so fast that he barely heard his mother telling the men on the couch that the money was on its way. He fumbled around with the store keys as he approached their shop, twitching and whispering to himself to just calm down. His heart was hammering and his hands were so unsteady that the key kept missing the lock.

A small, scream-like sound escaped his throat as he gripped one wrist with his other hand, trying to keep it steady enough to line the key up. “S-stupid parents...stupid fucking drugs....f-fuck fuck fuck I hate this town...I h-hate my fucking family,” he was hissing under his breath. The key finally slid into the lock and Tweek sighed in relief as he pushed the front door open. He froze, blood turning to ice when he heard a voice not too far away.

“No see I told you, like every Friday,” came a voice, followed by a second voice saying, “Oh good fucking job, he definitely heard you.”

Tweek sighed heavily and turned towards the familiar voices, seeing Kyle and Cartman hanging around by a tree across the street. He crossed his arms and glared at them, “W-what the fuck do you assholes think you're doing, s-scaring me like that?! I thought I was about to die!”

Kyle nailed Cartman in the gut, “I told you this was a stupid fucking idea!”

Cartman coughed and shoved Kyle so hard that the ginger nearly fell over, “Fuck you! It was a good idea! It's not my fault he heard us!”
“It literally is! You're so fucking loud!” Kyle spat back.

“GUYS!” Tweek yelled, voice a high-pitched shriek, “I am under a LOT of pressure right now, so tell me what you want, or f-fuck off. PLEASE.”

Both boys looked at him a minute, then Kyle shoved Cartman back and walked across the street, hands shoved into his pockets, “Cartman said he saw someone going into the coffee shop every other week or so, and he was sure you were stealing something. I told him to stop being a stupid fat fucking LIAR!” he yelled as Cartman made a mocking sound from across the street. “...but he told me to just come see for myself, so, here we are. And um, what exactly ARE you doing here at three in the morning?”

Tweek sighed in aggravation and leaned against the open door, “Running an errand for my dad. It's t-time sensitive, so I don't have time to explain.”

Cartman hurried over, standing next to Kyle and saying, “It's drugs, right?”

Tweek tensed visibly, green eyes lifting to glare into the mis-matched eyes of his friend, if he could even consider Cartman a friend. Which he honestly didn't. The asshole stood at nearly six feet tall, so Tweek had to actually tip his head back to meet his eyes, “The FUCK did you just say?” he whispered, already on edge from everything going on.

Cartman took half a step back, “Th-the thing, you're doing. I mean, everybody's heard the rumors about your coffee, and you know, it's like, the dead of night, and just given the circumstance...” he trailed off as Kyle's burning gaze joined Tweek's.

“You are SUCH an asshole! You just accuse Tweek of doing illegal shit?? He's not you fat boy! Not everyone is committing crimes at night!” Kyle was yelling. The ginger, who was a whole head shorter than Cartman, walked up and lifted onto his toes to yell in his face.

Any other time, watching the skinny little Kyle yell at this boy who was not only taller, but nearly three times as wide, would've been hilarious, but Tweek had a job to do, and fast. He slipped into the shop while the two were busy yelling, and ducked behind the counter, looking for his mom's lock-box. He found it, and dug around in his pocket for his lock-picking gear.

His mom didn't trust anyone with the key to this box, so instead she'd just taught Tweek how to lock-pick. It was a skill that had come in handy quite a lot, but Tweek still couldn't help but resent that he needed it at all. He got the box open and grabbed a nearby paper bag. He poured the coffee grounds onto the floor and took the money, he had the right amount memorized by now, then he locked the box back and headed outside.

Kyle and Cartman weren't yelling anymore, and Cartman was holding a black eye while Kyle was rubbing a bruised cheek. “Y-you guys have issues,” Tweek mumbled as he walked back by them.

Cartman waved his arm frantically, “Wait wait! What's in the bag?! Where are you going? I need to prove I'm right!”

Tweek looked over his shoulder, “If you follow me, I'll tell the principal exactly what happened to her dog.”

Cartman went quiet and held his hands up in defeat. Kyle looked over, terror evident on his face, “What did you do to the principal's dog?!”

Tweek didn't hear if Cartman answered or not, he was already jogging in the other direction, hurrying towards home. He skittered to a stop just outside, a puff of snow flying up as his feet
scrambled to a halt on the doorstep. He opened the door and screamed as a vase soared over his head, hitting the door behind it. He dropped down into a crouch and extended the bag, “P-please calm down! It's here it's here!”

A man dressed in a smart suit and tie walked over, taking the bag from Tweek. Tweek cautioned a glance up, noting that this man was clean-cut, had a very nice watch, and didn't have any particularly strong smell. This wasn't some low-level drug dealer, it was someone higher up. That was so much worse. Usually the people they paid were druggies themselves, or a corrupt cop. What was his dad doing getting involved in a real crime syndicate?

“Get up, you look like an idiot,” the man said, looking down at Tweek. Tweek quickly got to his feet, bowing his head to avoid eye contact.

The man patted Tweek's head, making him twitch instinctively. “Good kid you've got here. Kid, you ever get sick of your shitty parents, you could come work for me.” He laughed and ruffled Tweek's hair. “So, you gonna repeat the cycle and get into drugs like them?”

Tweek shook his head a little, “N..no..no I don't want to do that sir.”

“Good kid,” the man repeated, “You keep your parents from getting into a lot of trouble, kid. No, that's good, don't work for someone like me.”

Tweek's heart was hammering in his chest, terrified despite this man's strangely friendly demeanor. He was too scared to say anything else, and instead just stood completely still as the man motioned for his friends to go ahead and leave. He snapped his fingers in front of Tweek's face, getting him to look up.

“Hey, you got a name?” he asked, dark brown eyes boring into Tweek's.

“T-Tweek,” he whispered.

“That's your last name, isn't it?” the man asked, looking towards Richard, who was standing across the room with his wife, who looked a little more concerned about a drug lord standing in front of her son.

“It's his first name too,” Richard offered.

“You dealers are all fucking morons,” the man mumbled. He looked back to Tweek, “Well, Tweek. Sorry about that vase, my friends get a little over reactive. Keep your head above water and your parents out of trouble, kid.” He ruffled his hair again and left the house, gently closing the door behind him, he called back through the door, “Sorry about your stupid name too! Jesus Christ.”

Everyone in the room was completely still as they listened to car doors slamming and an engine starting. When they heard the car pull away, Tweek collapsed onto the ground. Richard exhaled heavily, and Mrs. Tweak ran over to her son, helping him back up, “Oh baby! It's okay, it's alright, are you okay?”

Tweek rubbed his head, “N-no, no I'm not okay! Wh-what the hell are you guys doing?! I thought you just got stuff from Kenny's family a-and shitty cops!”

“We did, but lately there's been less activity, lots of the folks getting arrested, the cops being monitored more closely, we have to make money somehow Tweek,” Richard explained. “How else would we make money?”

“BY SELLING COFFEE! NORMAL FUCKING COFFEE!” Tweek yelled.
“Don't raise your voice at your father dear,” Mrs. Tweak said gently.

Tweek gave a frustrated scream, “When you wind up SHOT because some f-fucking CRIME LORD decided you were t-too much trouble, I w-won't be fucking sorry!”

“He seemed like a very pleasant man,” Mrs. Tweak offered, “I'm sure he wouldn't hurt us.”

“HE'S ONLY NICE WHEN YOU'RE GIVING HIM WHATH E WANTS! CRIME LORDS ARE EVIL! EVIL! AAAARRRGH!!!” Tweek screamed, moving away from his mother and making his way up the stairs. “AND IF YOU INVITE ANY CRIME LORDS OVER TOMORROW, I'M LEAVING WITH CRAIG AND NOT COMING BACK!” he called down.

Richard sighed, going to stand by his wife, “Mary, what'll we do about that son of ours?”

Mrs. Tweak shook her head sadly, “I don't know...he's just so paranoid...I suppose we should just not invite anyone over tomorrow while his boyfriend is over. Maybe then he'll calm down a bit.”

Richard took a deep breath and replied, “Okay, let's do that. We'll just have to make sure he knows he can't have his boyfriend over then.”

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Tweek had managed to get some sleep, since thankfully his parents had actually been in agreement last night and therefore didn't spend the whole night yelling, and woke up around nine to see he had texts from a lot of his friends. One from Cartman asking if he was 'doing crimes or not', one from Kyle asking 'What the fuck did Cartman do to the principal's dog??' and a picture from Butters of him, Kenny, and Karen all wearing make-up and grinning, holding up a little piece of paper with 'good luck' written on it.

Tweek smiled and texted Butters first, 'u all look super gay. Id know im an authority on gay. Its very cute.'

Butters texted back 'lol thnx! Karen wnted every1 2 do makeup 2day :P'

Tweek then explained to Kyle that the dog story was classified, and Kyle would have to trade him a pretty good story of his own for it, and then he texted Cartman to fuck off. He sighed and got up, stretching. Craig usually slept until past noon on Saturdays, but today he might get up earlier than that, so Tweek decided to get ready fast, just in case.

It was around ten when he got a text from Craig, which said 'Good morning sunshine, I heard Cartman bugged you about some dumb shit last night. You okay?'

Tweek snorted, wow, how had Craig heard about that already? ‘dude how did u hear that? It happened last night. Also morning space dork <3’

Craig replied 'Kyle told Kenny who told me. Kenny is such a fucking gossip. Its annoying. Also did Cartman do something to the principal's dog or was Kyle speaking nonsense?'

Tweek laughed and shook his head, his friends really were gossips. He told Craig they'd talk when he saw him, and that he could come on over if he wanted, to which he replied 'Awesome, because I'm in your yard'. Tweek blinked and ran to the window, looking outside to see Craig standing by his bike on the sidewalk, smoking. They made eye contact and Craig waved.

Tweek rolled his eyes and made his way outside, approaching Craig and hugging him, “Oh my god,
you're ridiculous! You could've just come and knocked!"

"After last time? No way," Craig chuckled, "Besides, I thought knocking on doors always kind of made you jump."

Tweek smiled and kissed Craig's cheek, "I love you so much for remembering stuff like that."

"You love me but no proper kiss?" Craig teased.

"Not right after you've been smoking, I swear I'm gonna get lung cancer from just being around you this much," Tweek huffed. He understood why Craig smoked, and he'd never try to make him quit, but he did hope one day he'd quit on his own. It was really terrible for him. Of course, if anyone understood unhealthy coping mechanisms, it would be Tweek.

"Fiine, I'll eat a mint or something. But you aren't gonna get lung cancer. And neither am I, hopefully," Craig said, then took another long drag.

Tweek swatted his arm, "Don't talk like that! I get worried! Urgh, just-put that out and come inside."

"Your parents don't like smoking in the house?" Craig asked.

"They don't give a shit, I don't want you smoking in the house," Tweek replied.

Craig shrugged and snuffed out the cigarette, "Fair enough. You seem kind of on edge today. Is it just that you're anxious about me coming in or...did something happen?"

Tweek's eye gave a little involuntary twitch, "H-happen? What do you mean? I'm just always nervous."

"Didn't you just finish saying two days ago that you'd tell me everything? Look, I'm not gonna pressure you, I'm just reminding you what you said," Craig said, his voice taking on that flat note it did whenever he was trying to hide how worried he actually was.

Tweek sighed heavily, "God, you're right, I hate it when you're right. But just...I'll tell you later, okay? I wanna just focus on this for now."

Craig nodded, "Okay. Whatever you want babe. So, what should I expect here, like, is it a wreck? Are your parents violent? Drunk? Stupid?"

Tweek laughed a little, "N-no no, I cleaned up, and it's a nice house anyway. They aren't typically violent or drunk...maybe stupid. The jury is still out on that one."

"That might be the worst of the three," Craig teased, "Well, come on already! Last time I was here we were like, twelve and it ended with you chucking a mug into the street."

"Uh, yeah, I guess visits can't really go worse than that," Tweek said, walking Craig up to the door, "S-so this should be good by comparison at least!"

Tweek opened the door and led Craig inside, heading into the tidy living room. He motioned around, "Tada! The house you've been waiting to see for six years! Underwhelmed?" he asked, smiling as he brushed bits of broken vase under the tv stand with his foot. Shit, he must've missed that while tidying up this morning.

He hoped Craig hadn't noticed, but he saw his gaze flick down towards the stand briefly. Sometimes Craig was the most oblivious asshole in the world, but the one time Tweek didn't want him to catch
something, of course that'd be the time he did. He didn't ask though, he just looked around the rest of the space. Tweek stood by the kitchen doorway, hands wringing as Craig wandered around the room like an animal that had just gotten home from the pound.

Craig pointed at the walls, which had no pictures, but were instead lined with shelves and shelves of porcelain figurines. “Dude. What is up with all these little dolls? They're creeping me out.”

“Mom collects them,” Tweek said, walking to stand next to him. He leaned a bit closer and whispered, “Some of them were used to smuggle drugs into the country. I have no idea which ones.”

Craig nodded slowly, “So when you said the coffee was drugged...”

“If you ever thought I was kidding, then you're thicker than I realized,” Tweek replied.

Craig nodded some more and wandered into the kitchen, where Tweek's mom was standing by the counter, quietly kneading dough. Tweek joined him in the kitchen and greeted his mom, “Good m-morning mom. Look, Craig's here.”

Mary looked up from her dough, face covered in flecks of flour and cinnamon, “Oh! Craig! My goodness, you're here so early. Tweek said you usually sleep in, why, I haven't even had time to finish preparing the cinnamon rolls.” She approached him for a hug, but stopped when Craig took a quick step back.

“Uh, sorry, I'm not really a hugger,” Craig said, tentatively offering a hand, “Nothing personal.”

Mary smiled and shook his hand instead, “It's fine! Tweek is the same way. Doesn't stop Richard from hugging him though, so I doubt it'll stop him from hugging you! It's been so long, you've gotten so tall and handsome!”

Craig withdrew his hand, Tweek could tell his overly friendly mother was making him a little uneasy. “Uh, thank you. It's...nice to see you again.”

Mary turned back to the counter, “Well, why don't you run along and see the rest of the house? I'll call you boys when breakfast is ready.”

Craig nodded again and left the room with a mumbled thanks, Tweek following close behind him. Tweek snickered and nudged Craig's arm, “Wow, you aren't good at interacting with adults either.”

Craig chuckled a little, but there was no humor in it, “Uh, yeah. Sorry, I feel like I have a kind of bias against your parents, you know, considering what they've done to you. And I'm sure there's more I don't know...I just...your mom is nice. It just seemed...really fake.”

Tweek looked up at him, surprised, “You mean, you could tell? I didn't think you knew how to read people for shit.”

Craig headed down the hall with Tweek, “Well, not usually, but like, she had that voice, you know? That tone that uh...that lady...fuckin...Liane. Cartman's mom. I only met the woman once but like, you know how she is. Your mom sounded a little like her.”

“Well they are both on some pretty heavy drugs,” Tweek snorted, “Don't feel bad man. My mom is pretty fake. She's like that with me too though, so I dunno how she really is. Cartman actually met my mom once, he came into the coffee shop, she said one sentence to him, and he left again. He told me that uh...oh how did he put it...? 'that fake ass whore reminds me of my slut mom, I can't deal with two of them'. That's what he said.”
Craig grunted, “Wow, even he recognized it? Well, sorry about her then. She's not like, mean to you when no one is around though?”

“No, she always has that voice,” Tweek sighed, “I mean, I dunno, maybe she's mean? It's hard to tell. She just doesn't listen to me, it's not that bad. So uh, this is the bathroom,” Tweek added awkwardly, opening a door to show Craig a spotless bathroom. Pink carpets, beige wall, floral pink shower curtain, and another shelf of figurines.

“Wow, your bathroom looks like the inside of a vagina,” Craig said, then added, “I assume.”

“We all look up porn Craig, it's fine,” Tweek snorted, “Yeah, the downstairs bathroom always weirded me out...I guess that could be why. I never did like the colors.”

“Who designed this and didn't realize what they were doing?” Craig snorted, “Close the door, I feel like I'm looking at something I shouldn't.”

Tweek laughed as he closed the door, “Well, there's another bathroom upstairs, so don't worry. And that one is blue, so it's fine.”

Tweek's dad came out of another room towards the end of the hall, waving when he spotted Craig, “Craig! You did come over. That's good! After last night I wasn't sure Tweek would still want you over, I'm glad you realized it was nothing to worry over, son.” Richard walked over and patted Tweek's back, looking at Craig.

“Uh, what happened last night...?” Craig asked.

“So, Tweek giving you a tour of the house?” Richard asked, ignoring Craig's question completely, “Don't go in our room son, though I'm sure you already knew, but just in case.” He smiled at Craig, “Our room has some work related things I don't want to risk getting messed up, you understand.”

“You mean d-” Craig started, but Tweek cut him off, “Right! Sure thing dad! I was just gonna show him the basement before we headed upstairs.”

“Ah yes, that's a great idea. You cleaned up in there already, right?” Richard asked, looking a bit concerned.

Tweek's eye twitched again and he felt a little pissed, it shouldn't be up to him to make sure his friends didn't come across his parents' drug bullshit. “Yeah. It's spotless. Best it's looked in a long, long time,” he said, hoping his dad could tell how bitter he was about it.

If he did notice though, he didn't show it. He just hummed in approval and ruffled Tweek's hair, “you're a wonderful son, Tweek. And Craig, so good to have you over after all this time!” Craig went to protest, but Richard pulled him into a hug before he could get a word out.

Craig went very still and Tweek could see he was fighting the urge to punch Richard. He was impressed by Craig's restraint really, his dad's hugs were always too tight, and Tweek knew even normal people would get visibly uncomfortable with how long his dad would just hold them in place. Tweek could practically feel Craig counting backwards in his head to stay calm, so he spoke up, saying, “Uh, dad, Craig doesn't like hugs. Or..contact, like, at all.”

Richard squeezed Craig a little harder before letting him go, “Ah well, no harm in a hug! You should just get used to them, how else will you express to your family that you care?”

Richard squeezed Craig a little harder before letting him go, “Ah well, no harm in a hug! You should just get used to them, how else will you express to your family that you care?”

Craig exhaled sharply and took a minute to settle himself down before answering, “I just, tell them.”

Richard shook his head, “people need affection, Craig! Do you not hug Tweek either?”
“He's an exception,” Craig replied, “but my parents understand. And listen, you're...great. But I don't know you at all, so like, don't ever touch me again.”

Richard frowned, seeming hurt by Craig's words, “Well Craig I don't think-” he had clasped a hand firmly onto Craig's shoulder, and Tweek knew that was probably the worst thing he could've done. Ever since what happened with Petunia, anyone suddenly gripping him like that really freaked Craig out. Craig's eyes widened and he ducked quickly away, backing up into the wall and knocking over a figurine by mistake.

Tweek winced as he heard it shatter against the floor, and Richard looked scared as he glanced past Craig, probably checking to make sure the figurine had been a normal one. Craig looked down at it, “Fucking-fuck. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to break your figurine-you know what? You people have too many fucking figurines. I mean, I'll pay for it, but seriously, there are too damn many.”

Richard sighed, just relieved it hadn't been filled with any kind of powder, “It's fine, it was an accident. But why did you get so scared? I always thought you were the opposite of my son, but that's just how he reacts sometimes.”

“It's not important,” Craig snapped, “you should just respect people when they ask you to not fucking touch them.”

Tweek took Craig's hand gently, “Hey, hey it's alright man, you won't do it again, right dad?”

Richard frowned, “Well...I still think you're being unreasonable, but fine. If it really bothers you that much.”

“I don't care what you think,” Craig replied, voice flat.

“This is honestly going better than I expected...” Tweek mumbled, mostly to himself, “O-okay! Come on Craig, let me go show you the basement.”

“Could you clean up that figurine first son?” Richard asked, then, before Tweek could answer, he said, “Thank you,” and patted Tweek's shoulder before walking by him and off into the kitchen.

Tweek grit his teeth, “Fine. Guess I'm doing that first. I'm sorry Craig, it'll just take a minute.”

“Where's the broom? I'll get it,” Craig replied, “I know you don't like sweeping.”

Tweek smiled a bit and went off to get the broom. He insisted he could clean it up, but Craig took it from him anyway and swept up the broken pieces. “So, this one wasn't a drug doll I guess?” he asked.

Tweek shrugged, “Guess not. That was really lucky honestly. I didn't want dad flipping out thinking you figured out our big secret.”

Craig looked over as he tossed out the pieces, “He doesn't know I know then?”

Tweek shook his head, “No...and you're the only one who knows. Well, and Kenny, since his family supplies a lot of the stuff, and I think Kenny told Butters. Other kids suspect, but me and Kenny just keep it quiet. W-we don't need people making fun of us or beating us up for being involved in drugs, you know?”

Craig stepped over and set his hands on Tweek's shoulders, “Is someone insulting you? Who is it? I'll fuck them up.”
Tweek laughed and threw his arms around Craig's neck, “You fucking dork, nobody has said anything since you beat up that one kid a few months ago. We just didn't want rumors to turn into something worse, that's all.”

Craig sighed and hugged Tweek back, “God, this fucking town is the worst.”

Tweek nodded in agreement, and the two continued talking about the shitty town while Tweek showed him the basement. It was a nice, finished basement with a couch and a little TV, as well as a bookshelf with assorted books and old video games. Most of the basement was open space, but it was all carpeted, Tweek was sure if he had a normal, non drug-dealing family, it would be the perfect space to hang out with his friends.

Craig walked over to the shelf, looking over the games, “Dude, Gamecube? That's pretty retro. This is a nice basement too...way more space than my house. Of course, our basement is also filled with boxes of clothes no one wears and my dad's craft projects, so that's part of it.”

Tweek walked over and flopped onto the couch, “Retro, really? Craig, that word is fucking Retro.” Craig flipped him off and Tweek snickered, “But yeah, it is a nice space. I've thought about having all our friends over here before...but I just can't, I'm too worried about the way things are around here. Especially at night.”

Craig joined Tweek on the couch, a copy of Mario Kart Double Dash in his hands, “Hm, yeah, I get what you mean. I mean, it took you this long just to invite me over. But hey, if it goes well, maybe you'll get to the point where you're cool with having other people over too.”

Tweek sighed and leaned against him, “Yeah, maybe...that is a nice thought. I could never put some of our friends in that situation though...like Butters and Clyde. Especially Clyde.”

“Hey, who do you think would win in a fight, Butters or Clyde?” Craig asked.

“Butters, hands down. He's fucked up man, you don't know,” Tweek snickered, “Clyde's just a soft crybaby. I'd never change how Clyde is, but Butters is bipolar and carries around weapons.”

“Butters carries weapons?” Craig asked, sounding shocked.

“A tazer he and Kenny stole from a police car, and a dagger Kenny gave him for his birthday three years ago. A druggie outside Kenny's house tried to mug him and he fucking stabbed them. Butters is nuts,” Tweek said.

“Holy shit,” Craig whispered, “I want to see that happen. Did he kill the guy?”

“No no, just got him in the arm, the dude didn't come back around after that though,” Tweek snickered. “Oh, and sometimes he and Kenny practice sparring together. Butters is almost as good as Kenny. They could kill all of us if they wanted to.”

“That's terrifying,” Craig said, “Wow, well uh, guess I know not to piss off Butters then.” He set the game down and looked around the space again, “Man, this room is so much cleaner than my basement.”

“Yeah, I w-worked pretty hard to get it this way,” Tweek sighed, “It's nice though, having this space back.”

“How much cleaning did this take?” Craig asked.

Tweek pursed his lips, thinking about how he had borrowed a steam cleaner from Stan to take up the stains, and how he had spent nearly three hours trying to trap the family of raccoons that had found a
way to move in. “Uh, you know, some.”

“So, way more than you want me to know about,” Craig chuckled.

“Did you wanna see the rest of the house now?” Tweek asked.

Craig shifted closer and wrapped an arm around Tweek, “Yeah. I guess we could do that right now. Or we could do that in a few minutes, and we could sit here and kiss.” Tweek blushed, “Craig my parents are right upstairs!”

“So? We make out in my room all the time,” Craig replied.

“This is different, those are your parents, I wouldn't be as embarrassed by them catching us!” Tweek protested.

Craig kissed his cheek, “I mean, we don't have to...” he nuzzled against Tweek, kissing his neck and making the blonde squeal.

“Craig! Ticklish!” he squeaked.

Craig kissed his jaw, “Heh, sorry.” He wasn't sorry at all, the asshole.

Tweek huffed, face bright red, “you're such a jerk.”

Craig hummed in agreement, kissing Tweek's nose, “Yeah, but you love me.”

Tweek glared at him, feigning anger for all of three seconds before he gave in and kissed him back.

They headed back upstairs a few minutes later, Tweek still blushing and Craig looking very happy with himself. Tweek jumped slightly when his mother rounded the corner, “Oh! There you are! I was just coming to get you two. Breakfast is ready.”

“Oh Jesus, you startled me,” Tweek sighed, “Yeah, okay, thanks mom.”

“You were in the basement still? There's not much down there, what were you up to?” she asked, smiling teasingly.

“I was looking at all the Gamecube games, they're pretty cool,” Craig replied.

Tweek was relieved that Craig hadn't just flat out told her they had been making out for the past five minutes. Tweek wouldn't have put that past him. He sighed in relief, “Yeah...yeah, where is the old Gamecube? Do you know? I never found it while I was cleaning.”

Mary clicked her tongue, looking deep in thought, “Hmmm...no...I'm afraid I haven't seen it. Maybe in the attic, don't go up there though! Rats and asbestos are probably up there too!”

“Uh, yeah. Right,” Craig said flaty.

“Well, anyway boys, breakfast is all set up! Craig, would you like some coffee? Ours is the best out there!” she beamed.

“Allergic!” Tweek squeaked, “Craig is allergic...to coffee.” Fuck, wow, that was a terrible lie. He just wanted a solid excuse for Craig to be avoiding the coffee here.

Craig looked like he was trying to keep from cracking up as he said, “Uh-huh, super allergic. I once ate a coffee bean and my tongue nearly fell off.”
Mary made a confused sound, Tweek hit him in the arm and he snorted, “Sorry, sorry Mrs. Tweak, we thought that'd be a funny joke. Nah, I actually just don't like coffee. It's kind of uh...nostalgic, in a bad way, for me.”

Mary tipped her head, “Oh? How so dear?”

“My Grandma's house always used to smell like coffee whenever we'd visit, so ever since she passed away, smelling it can make me kinda sad, and I just can't stand the taste at all anymore,” he said. His voice was toneless, expression void of any actual sadness, but he cast his glance downward, feigning sadness pretty well.

Tweek had always thought he was the better liar between them, that was impressive. His mom even seemed to buy it, nodding slowly and saying, “I'm sorry for your loss dear. Water then.”

Craig's face broke into a grin as soon as Mary was out of sight. Tweek laughed, “Holy shit! Did you just pull that out of your ass right this second? That was convincing!”

Craig shook his head, “No, actually I'd been working on that excuse for awhile, I thought they knew I knew about the drug stuff, but I thought a back-up reason to refuse would come in handy.”

“You're amazing,” Tweek grinned, “I really thought you were serious for a minute there! Did...did your grandma really die though?”

“Well I mean, one of them is dead, died before I was adopted into the family though, so I never met her,” he shrugged, “And everybody hates the other one. She's an old bitch with a pill addiction and she keeps trying to give my sister Adderal.”

“Wow,” Tweek laughed, “sorry about your living grandma then, Jesus.”

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After breakfast, Tweek's parents headed out. They ran the shop until five on Saturdays, and Tweek was so glad they had let him take the day off. He was all ready to go up to his room and spend the majority of the day watching TV and talking with Craig, but right before his parents left, his dad said, “Oh, and there's a package for us at the post office, could you pick that up while we're out? Thanks son.”

Tweek went to say something, but Richard popped back out of view. “Shit,” Tweek hissed.

“What? It's just a quick run to the post office. I can go on my bike and grab it for you if you want,” Craig offered.

“No, I can't let you do that,” Tweek sighed, “Thank you though. It's just...p-probably something illegal.”

“They have you pick up their illegal shit?” Craig asked, “That's pretty shitty.”

Tweek nodded in agreement, “Yeah, I know. I'm like...I dunno, non-threatening I guess? So they have me get the deliveries from the post office and from Kenny's house.”

“Well you've like five foot three and weigh less a hundred pounds, so I'd say you're pretty non-threatening. But man, that's really fucking dangerous,” Craig said.

“Well, I'm used to it, I've been doing this junk since I was like, seven,” Tweek said, grabbing a jacket, “You can come with me if you want, better to get it out of the way early on.”
“Since before you knew me?!” Craig asked, “Holy shit. This is insane! You should tell them if they want to do illegal shit they should do it themselves!”

“I do tell them that, but my dad always just says something vaguely threatening, like, implying I might end up dead or used as collateral or something if I don't do it. So I just do it,” Tweek said, “That's...that's actually what happened last night.”

Craig was quiet, and Tweek wasn't sure he was listening, but when he glanced back to check, he saw Craig with this unsettling expression, something between concern and fury. So okay, he was definitely listening then. “Craig, please don't try to talk to them,” Tweek said softly, “They wouldn't even let me go to therapy, you and your dad still sneak me there. You can't change any of this.”

Craig stayed quiet, putting his shoes on and heading out the door. Tweek stayed put, utterly confused, until Craig waved for him to follow after. Tweek hurried along behind him, “Craig, Craig what are you doing? Please don't do anything stupid.”

Craig remained silent as they walked, not saying a word until they were inside the post office, at which point he calmly walked up to the counter and said, “I'm picking up a package for the Tweaks.”

The woman behind the counter nodded, smiling brightly as she sorted through boxes. She gave a small package to Craig and glanced over him to where Tweek was standing, “Hey Tweek! This month's package is from Columbia! Isn't that cool? Are your parents trying a Colombian blend?”

Tweek smiled nervously, “Uh, sure. Thanks Tina. Oh, and this is-”

“Your boyfriend, I know. Everybody knows. You're always walking around together after all,” she chuckled, “My girlfriend thinks you are just the cutest things, and you totally are, like I wish sometimes I was still a teen, able to-” she stopped, looking at Craig, who had walked over to a counter and pulled out a lighter. “Um, you really shouldn't have that out in here.”

Tweek gave a startled yell and hurried over, “No! No! Bad Craig! You can't light it on fire!”

Craig hissed, waving the lighter around as Tweek tried to grab it from him. “They can't just-Tweek- I'll take the blame just-stop!”

Tweek managed to snag the lighter, and he shoved it into his pocket, “No Craig, not this way, alright? It won't work.”

Craig looked pissed, glancing from the package to Tweek. He sighed in frustration and grabbed the box, “Fine. Let's go then. Don't think I'll drop this though.”

“I know you won't,” Tweek sighed as they headed out of the post office, “It's why I waited so long to invite you over.”

“What kind of things does your dad say?” Craig asked.

“Craig, that really doesn't matter,” Tweek said, trying to get him to calm down. Sure, he only looked mildly pissed off, but Tweek could tell that he was absolutely seething on the inside.

“It does matter. It matters a LOT,” Craig replied, “What does he say?”

“Our rule, Craig,” Tweek insisted, “You can't ask me-”

“Well I'm asking!” Craig snapped back, “He burned you when we were kids, and now you're telling
me he just fucking coerces you into committing crimes for him?"

"Th-that burn was an accident! I didn't even think you remembered that," Tweek mumbled.

"Your whole side is scarred, of course I remember!" Craig said, "Tweek, I'm worried, I've been worried, but I'm more worried the more I learn. I want to help you, but if you keep dodging my questions and keeping me at arm's length, I can't do that!"

Tweek took a deep breath and said, "I'll make you a deal."

Craig hesitated, "I...what deal?" he asked.

"I told you I'd tell you everything, and I want to keep that promise. So I will...but...I want you to confront your fear too," Tweek said.

"What fear-"

"Why have you been visiting Petunia every month?" Tweek asked.

The silence was palpable. It was so thick that Tweek thought it might be muffling other noises. Birds sounded farther away, the voices of passerby melted into an unintelligible mass of murmurs. The look in Craig's eyes, Tweek was sure that look would never leave his head. He looked like he had just been caught standing over a dead body. Fear and sadness and a hint of betrayal radiated out of him. For the first time in years, Craig Tucker didn't look any different than a normal boy. Emotions sat clear as day on his face, he made no attempt to try hiding them now. He gripped the box he was holding more tightly, fingers white and shaking against the parcel. Tweek took a step towards him, and he made no move to step back, so Tweek closed the distance the rest of the way. He wrapped his arms around Craig, wanting more than anything to just take that pain away.

"It's okay, Craig, I-"

"You were following me?" Craig asked, voice a small, broken whisper. "I would never do that to you."

Tweek pulled back, searching Craig's eyes again, "I-n-no, I wasn't following you. Not...I only followed you once. Craig, you weren't telling me anything, and I suspected, but I just...I wanted to know for sure and...I didn't think you'd ever tell me unless I found out myself, I didn't-"

"You followed me," Craig repeated. "I trust you, I trusted you. You were the one person I never thought would go behind my back like that."

"You're mad at me for following you?!" Tweek asked, bewildered, "It had been months and you wouldn't say a word!"

"It has been SIX YEARS Tweek, and you have NEVER told me about your family problems. After you told me where the line was, I made fucking sure not to cross it again. Because I don't just love you, I RESPECT you. I thought you fucking respected me Tweek!" Craig was yelling now.

Tweek shrunk back, eyes wide and heart racing, Craig had never yelled at him, not in the entire time they knew each other. Even when they fought in elementary school he hadn't yelled. "C-Craig I didn't mean to-"

"That doesn't matter! You of ALL people should have known better! I gave you all the time you needed, why should it have been any different for me?!” he demanded.
“Because you're you! And you NEVER open up about ANYTHING!” Tweek said, feeling something snap. Craig was pissed at him for being worried? He might've crossed a line, but Craig was being ridiculous about this! “Craig, the last time something serious was going on, you didn't tell me until MONTHS into the problem, you got SCARS, and then you got fucking KIDNAPPED! You could have been killed, a-and you're mad at ME for worrying you might be hiding something major?!”

“You don't think that's how I feel about you all the fucking time?” Craig asked, “You live in a god damn DRUG DEN Tweek! Sometimes I won't hear from you after school and I worry that something happened to you at the coffee shop, or that some drug dealer fucking killed you! You just told me you actually pick up this shit for your parents, and you don't think maybe it's a LITTLE hypocritical of you to break your own fucking rule about respecting each others' privacy over something that's honestly still less major than what you've told me about your parents today?!”

Neither of them were sure who started crying first, but somehow both of them ended up just completely breaking down on the sidewalk outside the post office. Their yelling had drawn a small crowd, and people were murmuring to one another, thoroughly confused by the teens, who were now just sitting on the sidewalk next to each other, quietly sobbing. They both started trying to apologize at once, and it took several attempts and words getting mixed up, but they started laughing a little through their tears.

“I h-had no idea you worried that much about me,” Tweek finally managed, “I g-guess I didn't think about how stressful it must be for you, knowing my life is dangerous, but not knowing what I'm even doing or how to help...g-god, my rules were so fucking stupid, I should've told you these things y-years ago...”

Craig shook his head, wiping his eyes and sniffing, “I-fuck, I shouldn't be so closed off all the time. I just feel like I'm going to make your life more stressful with my problems, but I guess I did that anyway,” he laughed a little, “And now we're fucking crying on a sidewalk in the middle of downtown. God, I'm such a stupid asshole, we both are. From now on, everything serious, I'll share it with you. And...I'm not mad you followed me...I understand. I wanted to do the same.”

“But you never did,” Tweek murmured, “you're a better boyfriend than me. I-I think you're right though. From now on, full disclosure. No more 'no questions' rule.”

“And if either of us thinks the other is in danger, we're allowed to stalk them,” Craig added.

Tweek giggled and hugged him tightly, “Y-you know what? That's fair.”

Tweek leaned up and kissed him, and Craig kissed him back. They kissed until someone threw a pebble at Craig's head, making him snap his attention over, “What?”

Kenny and Butters were standing there, and Butters was holding two more pebbles, looking pleased with himself. Kenny walked over and picked up the box from where Craig had set it beside him, “What the hell was that mess about?” he asked.

“Yeah, you guys were yellin', so we wandered over to check it out, and then ya both started cryin, which was super weird, and then you started mumblin' bout somethin and then just started kissin,” Butters said.

“Yeah, that was like, the weirdest fight I've ever seen. And I once saw a fight between Kyle and Cartman end with Kyle kicking down a small tree,” Kenny said.

“Fight?” Tweek asked, wiping his eyes.
“Oh, damn, I guess that was a fight,” Craig mumbled, “We've never fought before.”

“Obviously,” Kenny snorted, “It usually doesn't end in crying.”

“Also since when does Craig cry?” Butters asked.

Craig jumped to his feet and Tweek had to hold him back to keep him from punching Butters. After a few minutes of explanations, the boys all walked together to a diner to talk more. Butters bought Kenny some food and Tweek had to physically separate them so Kenny would stop making out with him at the table. So they sat, Tweek next to Butters and Craig next to Kenny, and discussed what exactly was going on.

“So is this full disclosure thing something we're gonna have to do with our friends too?” Craig asked.

“I mean, I think it might be a good idea. M-maybe we should ease into that, but, I think we should,” Tweek said.

“So, Tweek's gonna tell you everything about his parents then?” Kenny asked, “And you...wait you have secrets?”

Craig smiled a little bit, “I'm just such a good secret keeper that you had no idea.”

“Or maybe they're borin' secrets,” Butters offered before shoving half a pancake into his mouth.

“Oh no, C-Craig's secrets are almost as interesting as mine, a-and both of our stuff is equally sucky,” Tweek assured them.

“Well, I like gossip, I wanna know,” Kenny hummed.

“Fine, I guess I'll tell you,” Craig grumbled, “Oh, shit, one thing. You can NOT let Clyde know I told you before I told him. He still thinks you're trying to steal his spot as my closest friend.”

Kenny snorted, “Alright, got it. I tell Clyde I win and I'll dance on his grave.”

Tweek and Butters both laughed and Craig rolled his eyes, “Okay, fuckin' dick, so basically, I've been visiting my birth mother in jail.”

Kenny stared down into his plate of waffles, “…your...mother...now, I might have this wrong, but, isn't your birth mother that bitch who kidnapped you in middle school?”

“Yeah, that's right,” Craig said.

“My mom tried ta kill me too, it's okay Craig,” Butters said, clearly trying to be reassuring, but instead everyone just grew increasingly uncomfortable.

Kenny reached across the table and patted Butters' hand, then nodded, urging Craig to continue.

“Well, I've been visiting her once a month...because..I don't completely know why. I guess...a part of me always wanted to know my birth parents, but, also it's like...I feel like maybe one day I'll get answers from her or something? Like, about why she did that and why...” he trailed off and Tweek reached out, taking his hand. “…I asked her about my birth father, I tried every month, because I wanted to know. I needed to know who he was, you know? But that woman...she's insane. She'd never tell me much, and she'd just mumble about how every month I look more and more like him...”

Craig stopped here, squeezing Tweek's hand and not saying anything else.

Everyone was quiet a minute, before Tweek gently asked, “So...the letter she sent you...it said...”
'Happy Birthday son, your dad should've known what he missed'. Does that mean...did she finally tell you something?"

Craig took a deep, shuddering breath and slid his free hand into his pants pocket, pulling out a photo that he now carried with him everywhere. He set it in the center of the table, and the blondes all leaned closer to look. A picture of a young Daniel holding a one year old Craig.

“Aww, you were such a cute baby!” Butters grinned.

“Turn it over,” Craig murmured.

Tweek reached out, flipping the image to see an address on the back. Everyone was quiet for awhile, and it was Kenny who spoke up first, “You should go.”

Everyone looked at him, and he handed the image back to Craig, “That's a piece of you, it's something you'll never be satisfied with until you know. I bet you're scared that he'll be worse than Petunia, but Craig, man, trust me. You need to know. Any answer is better than an infinite 'what if'.”

Craig stared at the image for a minute, then looked back up to Kenny. He looked over to Tweek, who was nodding slowly, “Kenny is r-right. God, that's like...huge, and terrifying...but I'll go with you! I-if you want, a-and...you should know. You have a right to know who he is.”

Craig slid the picture back into his pocket and looked at Kenny, “You just hit my top five favorite people.”

“Where does Clyde rank?” Kenny asked.

“Sixth now,” Craig said.

Kenny whooped, “Yeeah! Suck it Clyde!”

“Where do I rank?” Butters asked curiously.

“I dunno, I stop ranking after ten,” Craig replied.

Butters crossed his arms and huffed, “You're still just mad 'bout skeeball.”

“You better believe it you little bitch,” Craig said, eyes narrowing, thought there was no anger behind it. Tweek thought he might've even seen a little smile.

The mood lightened quite a bit after that, and Tweek said Craig should still spend the night, because it was best he see things first-hand so Tweek could better explain. They did all talk about it some though, about the coffee and the drugs that Tweek would pick up for his family. Kenny informed Craig that it was meth, and Craig thought that honestly explained a lot of Tweek's problems. After talking about the meth coffee for awhile, they moved on to a lighter subject, talking for a couple hours. They finally left, Tweek and Craig giving Kenny their leftovers to take with him, as well as leaving the blondes with a promise that they'd arrange a group sleep-over some time soon, after all these messes settled down.

Craig and Tweek walked, hand in hand, the package tucked under Tweek's arm, back to Tweek's house, both feeling lighter than they had in years. The night was probably going to be long, and maybe a little frightening, but Tweek knew they would face it just fine. While alone their burdens seemed like a lot, when they shared them like this, they felt like nothing at all. They were each other's guardian angels. Only...no, not quite. Craig said Tweek was his sunshine. And Craig...Tweek thought on it a minute before smiling.
“I finally thought of a nickname for you,” Tweek said, looking up at Craig.

“Isn't my nickname Asshole?” he replied, earning a laugh and a punch in the arm.

“Well, if I'm sunshine, then you...you're like...outer space, the rest of space,” Tweek said, trying to explain what he meant.

“I'm an empty void?” Craig asked.

“No! You're...you're like, the lights in the sky, but also the sky itself. Like, where the sun rests. You're...” he scrunch up his nose, thinking hard on how to articulate it, “You're the galaxy, you're stardust. You're a home.”

Craig laughed a little, but Tweek could see him tearing up again, “Wh..Tweek, what do you mean? I haven't even done anything for you.”

Tweek stopped walking, holding Craig in place with him. He looked up into his eyes, “We fought over something pretty serious, and resolved it in five minutes because we love each other that much. Craig, I don't stutter around you, I don't feel anxious. I feel like a home is supposed to make you feel, warm and happy and...safe. If I'm you're sunshine, you're the stuff space is made of, my stardust, my home.”

And then Craig was crying again.

Chapter End Notes

HMM OKAY SO
I didn't have things planned out properly at ALL, and I sat down last night, and instead of sleeping I wrote this 10k+ chapter. So, it's been ONE DAY and I wrote this long hecking chapter already. Went back through and edited it too, but I am running on like - 2 sleep, so I apologize for any typos!

So, enjoy this EXTREMEMLY EARLY update, holy hell. Man if this keeps up I might have the next chapter soonish too.
Craig was having such an emotional day, it was kind of embarrassing. He had cried, what, two or three times today? Things were really getting out of hand. It was strange though, he felt so much lighter than he had before. Like all that crying and rambling like a moron had taken some weight off of him. He looked over to Tweek, who was currently sitting next to him on Tweek's bed, and felt like yeah, all this emotional garbage was worth it. Tweek looked happier too, and that was really what mattered most to Craig.

Tweek gave a small, nervous smile and shifted a bit, “What?”

Craig blinked slowly, “…what?”

“You're staring at me,” Tweek replied.

Craig shook his head, “Oh, fuck, sorry. Just...thinking. So uh, hey, your room is like, a lot more normal than I expected. I mean, honestly I was kind of expecting boards of conspiracies all over your walls or something.”

“No boards,” Tweek replied.

“Okay do you or do you not have information on everyone in town? I need to know,” Craig asked, genuinely unable to tell if Tweek was joking when he said stuff like that.

Tweek laughed a little, “W-well, I guess since we promised full disclosure and all...oh man...just-I hope you don't think I'm a complete psycho for this.” He slid off the edge of his bed and crouched down, digging around underneath it.

Craig shifted forward, leaning over and watching curiously as Tweek pulled a box filled with journals out from under the bed. His eyebrows raised and Tweek's face turned pink as he refused to make eye contact. Craig's eye was instantly drawn to a journal on top, navy blue and covered in planet stickers. He reached for it and Tweek's hand shot out, stopping him.

Tweek looked up at him, eyes wide and face bright red, “W-wait! Um, I'm not saying you can't see it, but like...oh god...it's so embarrassing...I just, um, that one is about you.”

Craig bounced lightly against the edge of the bed, looking excited, “Ooh it is? I knew it! I knew you kept notes on everyone you little weirdo! I gotta know what you wrote about me. How far back does it date?”

Tweek continued staring at the ground, hand firmly on Craig's wrist, as he mumbled, “That one covers most of elementary school. It's on top 'cause I like reading it a lot...I'm sorry, it's so creepy and weird and stalkerish.”

Craig laughed and shook his head, “No-well okay yeah, but it's pretty flattering too. You must think about me a lot to write so much, you beautiful, perfect little stalker. Now let go of me so I can see what you wrote about me!”

Tweek whined, still embarrassed, but looking less tense now that he knew Craig wasn't upset or freaked out about the journals. He slowly let go of Craig's wrist and the boy instantly snatched up the
space notebook, looking absolutely thrilled as he opened it.

“Y-you aren't worried I wrote bad stuff in there? If I found out somebody had a notebook about me, I'd be worried it was all negative or something,” Tweek said, “I can't believe you're just, like, excited about it.”

Craig shrugged, “You pretty much tell me whenever you're pissed or when I do something stupid, so I know there can't be much in here you didn't just tell me yourself already. Okay, let's see...wow, man this goes back to before we were even friends. Oh! Bebe's birthday party! That was when you said you realized you were super gay for me, right?”

Tweek slowly moved to sit next to Craig, “Yeah...but man, you were so damn oblivious. I kissed your mouth and you still didn't get it for another three years. Fucking idiot,” he snickered.

Craig shook his head, then he cleared his throat and started to read the entry out loud, causing Tweek's expression to shift from embarrassed to mortified. “Today I made a trick cake for Bebe's birthday party, I bet I get Craig to laugh today, he's always so flat-faced, but I can tell he's got a sense of humor under there. I like it when he smiles, it's not often, but last time I saw him smile, all white teeth and sparkling eyes, he was talking about space, and I didn't feel scared at all. I'm starting to think he might be trustworthy and not an alien doppelganger—”

Craig stopped as Tweek ripped the notebook out of his hands, face absolutely on fire, “Y-you weren't supposed to read it out loud you fucking asshole!”

Craig grinned and looped an arm around Tweek, “I think it's sweet. It's also pretty funny that you were still worried I was an alien after we'd been friends for over a year. C'mon, I want to read the rest!”

“N-no! You'll keep reading it out loud, I don't like hearing my own words, god...I thought everyone was aliens back then...so embarrassing...” Tweek whined.

Craig leaned his head on Tweek's shoulder, continuing to read from there since the book was still open, “I got to the party way too early and was surrounded by girls asking me about Craig. They asked me if I loved him, I was pretty sure I didn't, but I didn't know what the hell I should say. But then Craig showed up, and he looked amazing, he was amazing. He got the girls to leave me alone and he stayed close to me, he didn't have on his hat today, it made my heart do a weird flip, but like, a good flip and not my usual anxiety related flips. I think I realized something then, but I wasn't sure until he said that he still had those stars I gave him. I'm sure now.”

Craig paused here, glancing towards Tweek to gauge his reaction. He was red up to his ears, silent, but not trying to close the book or take it away. Craig figured that meant he could continue. He cleared his throat again, “I realized that I do love him. I was so unsure of things just this morning, but now I'm sure of a lot. I'm sure I love his smile, I'm mostly sure he's not an alien, and even if he is, I don't even care. I'd stay with him anyway, he'd be a fucking cool alien.”

Tweek shifted slightly and huffed, “You done now?”

Craig kissed his cheek, gently closing the book, “I would make a sweet fucking alien.”

Tweek set the book back in the box, “I'll let you read more later, but only if you don't keep reading it out loud! You're so mean sometimes.”

Craig hummed in agreement, kissing Tweek's jaw. He hoped the rest of Tweek's journals were that adorable, he had a feeling they probably were. He kept kissing Tweek's face, making the blonde
“You're so clingy, I swear!” Tweek huffed, even as he pulled Craig closer and tilted his head back to let Craig kiss more of him.

“Says the guy who keeps a log of everything I've ever done with him,” Craig retorted, smiling against Tweek's neck as the boy mumbled 'touche'.

Craig felt like it was a pretty good afternoon, they spent a good twenty minutes just kissing, they watched old VHS tapes of red racer, and after awhile they relocated to the living room and played a crappy Mario Party rip off until Tweek's parents got home a little after five. Richard walked in first, and Craig could actually feel the mood shift. He looked over towards Tweek, who had tensed slightly upon hearing his father walk in. Of course it didn't help matters that Craig had an active hatred for the asshole now.

Richard either didn't notice the tension or else pretended he didn't, offering a wide smile and greeting the boys, “Good afternoon! I hope you boys had a nice morning. Tweek, did you pick up that package for us?”

Craig reeled his arm back, ready to chuck the wiimote at Richard, but Tweek quickly grabbed his arm, restraining his boyfriend from physically assaulting his father, “Y-yeah dad, we picked it up! I left it in the kitchen for you.”

Richard thanked Tweek and headed to the kitchen while Mary entered the house, walking over and humming as she set a pretty purple vase on the coffee table, “look Tweek, I found this at the store on the way home. So nice isn't it? Even prettier than the one that broke last night!”

“We never even have anything to put into vases,” Tweek replied, “But yeah, I g-guess it's nice.”

“Well Tweek, it's still a nice centerpiece, and since you broke-”

“It was thrown at me. Th-that was not my fault,” Tweek cut her off, pointing his wiimote at her.

Craig was quiet this whole time, but he was watching Mary with narrowed eyes. The only thing keeping him from trying to hit her was Tweek, who still had his free hand gripping Craig's wrist, keeping him grounded.

“Yes well, there shouldn't be any problems tonight,” Mary said, patting Tweek's head sweetly, “I know how freaked out you were about the possibility of Craig not getting along with our friends, so nobody should be coming over tonight!”

“Thank god,” Tweek sighed, “well, thank you for that at least mom...”

Mary kissed his forehead, “Of course, sweetheart. So then, Craig, how are you enjoying your visit?”

She asked, turning her bright, plastic smile to Craig.

“Young bathroom looks like a vagina,” Craig replied.

Tweek couldn't help but snort at that, and Mary blinked, confused, “I'm...sorry?”

“You have a lovely home,” Craig said flatly.

Mary continued to look baffled as she walked off to the kitchen. Craig glared at the dancing bear on the TV screen, watching with animosity as its idle animation played, making it spin around cutely. He wasn't really mad at the animated bear, obviously, he just found that with every word Tweek's
parents said, the more he hated them.

“D-dude, you're gonna melt the TV,” Tweek said, “it's really okay. I know how to handle my folks, we should just try to enjoy our game.”

Craig exhaled sharply, setting the wiimote down, “Sorry Tweek, I just can't focus on Gustav and Flint right now. I know I can't fix it, but it won't stop me from being pissed every time your parents act like total dicks.”

Tweek looked back to the TV screen, where their characters, a bear and rabbit they had dubbed Gustav and Flint, idled on their spaces, waiting for Craig to roll. He looked back to Craig, “I know, I feel the same way. Maybe we could go do something else until you feel calmer?”

Craig sat on the couch and patted the spot next to him, “They're your shitty parents, you shouldn't be the one trying to make me feel better. C'mere, let's like...let's think up a story for our game pieces until I calm down a little.”

Tweek nodded, liking that idea, and joined Craig on the couch. He hugged his arm, leaning against him as they tried to come up with something creative for their little game characters.

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After about an hour, dinner was ready and Craig was back to a manageable level of anger. He sat, straight-faced and with his jaw clenched, as Mary and Richard talked so cheerfully and casually about their business. As though they had any right to that, as though they were just a well-meaning family with a simple coffee shop that wasn't wearing out poor Tweek's energy and fraying his nerves. As though they weren't terrible abusive assholes in their own right, as though they had ANY RIGHT-

Craig took a deep breath and tried to shove those thoughts aside. It wouldn't help anyone to get pissed at Tweek's parents here.

Tweek patted Craig's leg under the table, he could probably sense how stressed Craig was. That or he saw that his hand was balled into a fist against the table cloth.

"You look tense, Craig, is everything alright?” Mary asked softly.

“I always look like this,” Craig replied flatly.

“It's fine, just a long day, we uh, went down to the post office and everything and had lunch with some of our friends,” Tweek explained.

“Oh? That sounds very nice!” Mary said, wide grin still on her face, “Was it the McCormick boy?”

Tweek nodded, “Y-yeah, Kenny and Butters.”

“And they were just hanging around the post office?” Richard asked, sounding slightly suspicious.

“Yes,” Craig answered for Tweek, “funnily enough, in small towns, people tend to just be places. Hard to fathom I know.”

There was a long, tense silence after that. Richard looked at Craig for a minute, eyes narrowing slightly, like he was trying to figure him out. Craig continued eating quietly, face still expressionless. His friends couldn't figure him out, he was pretty confident this druggie asshole wouldn't be able to either. Tweek thrummed his fingers anxiously against the table cloth, and Mary just had this spaced-
out look on her face. She was still smiling, but looked confused, like she just wasn't entirely present. After a solid five minutes of no one talking, Tweek finally stood up.

“H-hey um, we're pretty much done, we're just gonna head upstairs for the night okay?” Tweek said, resting a hand on Craig’s shoulder.

Craig shrugged and set his fork down. He still had a decent amount of food left, but honestly he wasn't sure how much he trusted anything edible in this house anyway.

Richard sighed and nodded, “Fine. And Tweek, remember not to share anything too personal about our shop! we can't have people trying to re-create our special house blends.”

Tweek made a small growling sound and just hurried off, dragging Craig behind him. Mary blinked a few times and looked around the kitchen, “Where'd the boys go?”

The boys got to Tweek's room, where Tweek proceeded to flop over onto his bed and stare angrily at the ceiling. Craig shoved his hands in his pockets and made his way over, leaning against the edge of the bed and joining him in staring at the ceiling. It was yellowy-white, old, cracked in some places. Craig noted a crack right by the edge of it, which seemed to actually trail halfway down the wall. He pointed it out.

“What's up with that?”

Tweek grunted and sat up, eyes following Craig's hand, “Oh. Me and Dad argue sometimes, a-and he got really pissed and punched the wall. That was just a couple weeks ago actually.” He sighed and laid back down, “I bet your dad doesn't punch shit and yell at you, huh?”

“Well, he yelled at me after that time I lit Tricia's hair on fire, but I definitely deserved that,” Craig replied. “She was being a little shit and I took things too far. But Dad never like, hit us or walls or anything, just yelled that it's never okay to light someone on fire. I disagree, but like, yeah probably almost never.”

Tweek giggled a little, “God, you're a terrible brother.”

“Hey! I was twelve, we were both kind of little shits when we were twelve. We vandalized the elementary school and everything.” Craig pointed out.

“We're still little shits, Craig, two nights ago you broke into Clyde's house,” Tweek snorted.

“He said I would never catch him off guard. He was wrong,” Craig whispered, mostly to himself.

The two talked for awhile longer, talking about their parents and their friends, deciding they needed to plan out some kind of mass sleepover with both of their friend groups. They then discussed possible emergency plans if things got to be too much for them, if Kyle physically fought someone, or if Kenny gave someone an existential crisis again. After about an hour of making plans and (mostly) joking about possible disaster scenarios with the entire group, they were both getting pretty tired.

Tweek usually felt too tightly wound to relax in his own house, but with Craig over, he found himself a little calmer. Craig actually thought it might be the first time he'd ever seen him looking sleepy. The two would video call a lot of nights, and Tweek looked wide awake every time. But at the moment, he was sprawled across his bed, eyes half closed, looking like he was a little too tired to be fully aware of where he was. Craig felt like that was probably a good thing, there was no way he typically got enough sleep.
Craig smiled and nudged the blonde, “Hey, don't fall asleep in your jeans, stupid.”

Tweek waved a sluggish arm, “Mmh, I usually sleep in my day clothes, iss fine.”

Craig shrugged, figuring Tweek had his reasons. Craig took his own pajamas, a pair of pants with alien faces on it and an old t-shirt, and went to change in the upstairs bathroom. Tweek was right, this one was blue, and looked nothing like the inside of a human being. He faced away from the sink mirror as he removed his jacket and hat, still really not caring for his reflection, and was just finishing up changing when he thought he heard something downstairs.

Curious, he pressed an ear to the wall, trying to hear better. It was pretty muffled, but he thought he heard a handful of figurines breaking, one after the other, followed by a woman sobbing and saying something he couldn't quite make out. Then came a voice he could hear pretty clearly, Richard, yelling something to the effect of 'we need to be more fucking careful, if that boy finds out about us, we're done'. Craig was pretty sure the boy they were referring to was him. He was also sure that Richard was a fucking moron, yelling about it with him still in the house. Of course, he also already knew their secret, and was only keeping quiet for Tweek's sake.

He quietly opened the door, and things were much clearer in the hallway. He didn't move for a few minutes out of fear of being heard. He just stood in the doorway, one hand on the knob, immobilized as he listened to Tweek's parents. The parents who always seemed off, but friendly. Dangerous in a way he just couldn't pinpoint, until now. Now he understood.

“Stop it! Stop it! My figurines! Richard don't take it out on them, they've done nothing!” Mary was sobbing.

“We're figuring out right NOW which of these has product in it! Calm down! We'll get you new figurines, good god!” Richard yelled back, throwing another against something as he emphasized 'now'. “We can't just let kids figure shit out Mary! You want us to go to jail? You want Tweek to go into the system, huh? Is that what you want?!”

Mary was crying harder, almost over-dramatically, and in all the ruckus, Craig risked moving to the stairs. He just had to see what the fuck was going on down there. He felt really uneasy when he saw that Mary was just standing in the kitchen doorway, completely still. Her shoulders didn't even shake as she cried, the tears just rolled down her face and her eyes still had a spaced out look to them. Richard was a little scarier, he was walking around the living room, arguing with his sobbing wife as he grabbed statue after statue off the shelves, smashing each against the floor as he went.

Craig hurried back to Tweek's room, quickly and quietly shutting the door behind him. He locked it just for good measure, then turned to see Tweek, now fully awake and sitting bolt upright in the middle of his bed. His eyes were wide and the covers were coiled around him like a protective shell. Craig would've asked if they did this often, but now didn't seem like the best time for questions.

He hurried over and stood in front of Tweek, hesitating, “are you—is it okay if I hug you? Or do you need space?” he asked, uncertain. The last thing he wanted to do was freak Tweek out even worse.

Tweek just nodded vigorously, holding his arms out and motioning Craig forward. Craig climbed up onto the bed and wrapped his arms around Tweek, who just pressed as close as he could, making a small noise, but otherwise not saying anything. Craig pulled the covers around both of them, sitting with him in the middle of the bed and not saying anything either. There wasn't really anything to say. He was scared too.

It was nearly two hours before things calmed down downstairs, and when things finally went quiet, Craig felt himself relax. He sighed heavily, feeling like he'd just made it through a tornado or
something. Tweek didn't seem to get any calmer though, he was still clinging to Craig like he was driftwood in the ocean, and while his breathing had steadied quite a bit, he still wouldn't say anything. Craig went to ask him if he was okay, but then he heard two sets of footsteps coming up the stairs.

One pair walked right on by, and the other stopped in front of Tweek's door, trying the knob. Tweek curled his hands tighter into Craig's shirt and whispered, “Don't answer.”

Craig felt like his insides all froze right then. Never before had those two words filled him with such dread. He looked to the door, holding Tweek a little tighter as he watched the knob jiggle. There were some mumbled curses, followed by, “Tweek! It's your father! Open the damn door son!”

“G-go away! Come back when you aren't high!” Tweek called, voice cracking slightly.

“You're high!” Richard called back. The door rattled a bit and a soft 'thud' was heard, as though Richard had just sort of slumped his fist against it. “Tweek! I'm not mad okay? I just need you to clean the living room alright? There's-there's some kinda mess down there. Somebody must've knocked over your mother's shelves.”

Tweek exhaled shakily, “Okay, I'll clean it up. J-just...just go to bed!” he called back.

The doorknob jiggled again, more softly, then Richard mumbled something Craig couldn't hear, and he heard footsteps retreating down the hall. Craig's eyes were wide and he wouldn't let go of Tweek as he whispered, “What the fuck.”

Tweek sighed again, nuzzling closer against Craig. It took him a minute, but he finally spoke, “He always ends up breaking stuff i-in my room. If...If I open the door when he's all messed up, h-he doesn’t even remember doing it most of the time. He broke all my f-fucking picture frames, I only have one now.”

“God, the way you said it I thought he was gonna kill us or something,” Craig said, breathing a sigh of relief.

“O-oh no, he almost never does anything th-that dangerous,” Tweek murmured, “Um, I just...well I don't even know i-if he remembered you w-were here. He might've g-gotten mad and thought I like, s-snuck you here or something. I didn't want him to throw things at you o-or something. I promise, he'll be totally fine in the morning. Th-they just, get kinda messed up sometimes. T-too much-” he did air quotes here, “-Coffee.”

“So like...kinda how you were in third grade?” Craig asked, trying his best to stop freaking out internally. That was terrifying, he had never heard adults flip out like that, or, only once before. It was definitely trying to force some unpleasant memories to the surface, but he was doing his best to beat those memories back with a stick. He'd deal with that later. Tweek needed him more right now.

Tweek nodded jerkily, “Y-yeah, kinda...a-and I...I mean, I'm still o-on the stuff too...b-but I'm trying so hard to avoid it when I can. I-it's really tough man, but I...n-hh...I don't wanna end up like THAT, you know?”

Craig nodded, “yeah, yeah I know. But you wouldn't anyway. I'll make sure of it.”

Tweek leaned up and kissed Craig's cheek, “Thank you. For not um, running out of the house when they started freaking out like that...thank you.”

“Why the hell would I run out and leave you to deal with it?” Craig scoffed.
“Well, I just thought it might make you think of her,” he mumbled.

Craig took a deep, steadying breath, “It...it did. But they aren't her. They aren't going to kill anyone, unless it's from stupidity, it's okay. I'm okay. What about you? You have to deal with that every night?”

“Once or twice a week,” Tweek mumbled, “M-man...I'm...really exhausted now...a-and don't worry, my folks will be completely passed out all night after that mess.”

Craig nodded, “Okay, um, yeah, okay, let's try and get some sleep. Jesus, no wonder you never sleep well.”

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The boys had both managed to fall asleep after awhile, though it did take awhile of hiding under the covers like kids before they finally felt safe enough to drift off. When Craig woke up the next morning, he was briefly confused. Why was it dark? And this didn't smell like his room.

It took him about thirty seconds to remember that he was at Tweek's house, hiding under the covers with him to try and get some decent sleep. He yawned and leaned forward to kiss what he thought was Tweek, but it turned out to just be a pillow. He grunted in confusion and shifted out from under the covers, realizing Tweek wasn't anywhere in the room.

He grabbed his phone, eight A.M., really fucking early to be awake on a Sunday. He wondered briefly if Tweek had been up for long, but as Tweek walked back into the room, looking tired and a bit dusty, Craig felt like he had his answer.

"Dude, what time did you get up?” He asked, the sudden voice in the otherwise still room made Tweek jump.

Tweek put a hand to his chest and sighed, "Holy shit, you startled me. I-I um," he paused, nose scrunching up like he was debating what to say. Finally he sighed and finished, "I didn't actually go to sleep. Guh, I don't like our new full-disclosure agreement."

Craig sat up, frowning worriedly, "babe, why not? I thought you fell asleep around when I did. What happened?"

Tweek walked over to Craig, who pulled him the rest of the way over into a hug. "Nnh..I-well-I started to fall asleep, but I realized that if I didn't clean up the living room before Dad woke up he'd freak out. S-so I waited to make sure you were asleep, and you snore by the way, its really cute. And um, then I went downstairs a-and I kind of just finished up."

Craig pet Tweek's hair, "that had to be like, at least five hours of cleaning. How bad was it down there?"

"I'm just super thorough," Tweek said, "plus I had to put all the powder into containers and try not to breathe too much in O-or I'd get super fucked up."

"Tweek...fucking-Jesus. Well, if that shit happens again, at least let me help clean it up. I'm a good cleaner. Er, good enough anyway," Craig said.

"I-I just felt really guilty. You've already been dragged into this enough, I don't need you cleaning up their messes too. You're sweet though, really," Tweek replied, moving so he was sitting by Craig, still leaned against him.
"Hey, I love you enough that you make me give a shit about things, so like, you should let me help when I offer. I don't offer for most people."

Tweek giggled and yawned, "mm, I'll think about it."

Craig sighed, "Well, you've got to be fucking exhausted now, get some sleep okay?"

"What'll you do?" Tweek asked, words already sleepier.

"Um, it's Sunday. I'll go back to sleep. It's like, my dream to sleep all day on the weekend," Craig chuckled.

Tweek mumbled something that sounded like he was calling Craig lazy, but Craig couldn't quite tell. He settled back into the bed, hugging Tweek to him as the blonde made one weak protest before giving up and pretty much passing out on the spot. Craig kissed his forehead and snuggled close, arms wrapped around Tweek so he would have to stay there and get some actual rest.

When Mary checked in an hour later, wanting to tell the boys breakfast was ready, she found them both sound asleep, curled up together like a couple of cold kittens. Her plastic smile softened a bit, turning to something more...genuine. She sighed softly and closed Tweek's door back, deciding to let them sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Okay! Those tense few chapters done, the next few are gonna be lighter for sure!

I have a giant sleepover to plan, may take a few chapters
On Monday, everyone seemed to notice something really off with Craig. They all have him strange looks as he passed in the hall, though he really didn't give a shit what they were so confused over. As he stopped in front of his locker, however, he realized his friends were all staring at him too.

He paused, AP English book still only halfway out of the locker, and looked toward his friends, "what the hell are you all staring at?"

"Um, your face," Token said, as if that cleared anything up.

Clyde pointed to the corners of his own mouth to emphasize as he said, "You're smiling."

Jimmy nodded, "y-yuh...Yeah man, and it's suh-ssuper freaky. Y-you haven't been replaced by some kind of aah...a-aalien, right?"

Clyde whined, "don't even joke about that man! I saw this X-files the other night and that shit is real! It could happen!"

Craig rolled his eyes and punched Clyde's arm, "You're so fucking stupid. So hey, moving on from your dumb thing, I was thinking, and I realized I haven't actually been hanging out with you guys all that much recently, and as idiotic as you can all be, except you Token, I do actually like being around you assholes. I was thinking we could actually go do something after school today."

Craig's friends all had wide eyes, and none of them said anything for a minute. Token spoke first, slowly reaching out and poking Craig's face.

"It's...really you in there, right? You haven't been brainwashed?" He asked.

Craig crossed his arms, "what? Im not allowed to be happy?"

"I just like...didn't know you were CAPABLE of this level of emotion," Token said, "it's-it's a really good thing of course! I just...like..It's weird to see you like this."

"So what, you guys just thought that for the entire fifteen years I've been alive I never felt a strong emotion?" Craig asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Uh...kinda," Jimmy said, "like, I agree with Token, its suh-ssuh-super. But w-what happened man?"

"You're scaring me," Clyde whined, "I want you to be happy but I...I just...I'm so confused!"

"It's really not that hard to confuse you," Craig pointed out. His insults were lacking their usual bite today, and he actually seemed more amused than annoyed for once. It was very unsettling to everyone around him.

The weekend had been a rough one, but after going through all that with Tweek, after seeing his home life for the first time and after sharing all their secrets and worries with each other, he felt ten pounds lighter. All those things that were worrying hin so much, all the upsetting things, they all felt so much more bearable. And yeah, Tweek's home life was awful, but he shared that burden with
him, and Craig could actually be there for him now. It was an amazing feeling, and Craig realized it really might be the first time he felt so light and happy, even with Tweek not right next to him.

When Tweek did finally wander over, Craig felt even happier, and his face actually lit up as his boyfriend approached.

Tweek smiled and leaned up to kiss him, "w-wow, the last time you looked this happy was at the planetarium. Having a good morning?"

"H-he's done this before?!" Clyde asked, absolutely baffled.

Tweek looked over at them, puzzled, "yeah? C-come on guys, you've been friends a long time. You can't tell me you've never seem Craig in a good mood."

"No no, they seriously may not have," Craig said, "I think I'm giving Clyde a panic attack."

Clyde wheezed out sharply and dramatically flopped onto the floor. Craig laughed and shook his head, which just made Clyde look even more freaked out.

Craig rolled his eyes, "you're such a fucking moron Clyde."

"I mean, it's definitely still him.." Token mumbled, "sorry, this is just...so strange. It's good! It's...good strange."

"We had a really good weekend," Tweek smiled.

"Oh-hoh?" Jimmy grinned, to which Tweek turned bright red.

"N-not what I meant!! Oh my god!" He whined, covering his face.

"Jimmy, would you drag your mind out of the fucking gutter for one second-" Craig started, but was interrupted when a blur of dirty blonde and orange smashed into him and Tweek.

Kenny had an arm slung over both of them, and grinned up at Craig, "hey man, you look happy. Get laid?"

Tweek screamed in a mixture of surprise and embarrassment, and Craig punched Kenny square in the nose, making him stumble back a step.

"God, not you too! And don't touch either of us you little shit!" Craig snapped.

Kenny held up one hand, the other still on his nose, "shit man, my bad! Ugh, that did not justify a nose punch, asshole."

"Your presence justifies it," Craig said flatly.

Kenny stuck his tongue out, "whatever bitch, I could still bench-press you if I wanted."

"Guys, guys for the love of God just chill out!" Tweek protested.

Craig sighed and crossed his arms, "fine. Maybe I shouldn't have punched you. I did enjoy it though."

Kenny grinned, "hey, it wouldn't be fair if I didn't let you have a free shot now and then."

Craig raised his fist again, but Tweek waved his arms in protest, making him think better of it. He
lowered his fist again, feeling incredibly annoyed by Kenny's smugly amused face.

It didn't matter though, even with Kenny being a total fuck head, Craig was still in a much better mood than usual. He turned back to his friends, who seemed relieved that he was still getting pissed at people like usual.

"Oh thank god, it would've just been too freaky if you were happy towards Kenny too," Token sighed.

"Yeah, Kenny is a total jerk who you shouldn't hang around," Clyde said.

"Dude, let it go, Kenny is not replacing you," Craig said, trying to assure him.

Over his shoulder, Kenny directed a smug look at Clyde, then stuck his tongue out and walked away. Clyde pointed wildly after him, making annoyed huffing sounds.

"Did-did you see that?! He's totally after me! He's trying to squeeze me out of the dynamic. Well I'll show him! I'll just steal one of his friends!" Clyde said, glaring after the blonde.

"Dude, you're over reacting," Craig said, trying his best not to sound as amused as he was.

"Who would you even steal? Stan?" Tweek asked, "all the others really don't get along well with you man."

"Stan and I are both on the football team..." Clyde mumbled, looking deep in thought, "that's a great idea! Thanks Tweek!" Clyde said, rushing off.

"Oh lord, where is he going?" Token sighed.

"I can only hope it's back home, before he does something embarrassingly stupid," Craig replied.

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Craig took his seat next to Wendy during English as usual, but he made himself nod in acknowledgment to Kyle, who seemed surprised by the motion.

"Wow, in a friendly mood today?" Wendy greeted.

Craig shrugged, flipping his notebook open as he did, "I guess. Still not friendly enough to actually go say hi to the entitled asshole though."

Wendy chuckled, "Hey, it's a nice first step. Tweek must've really gotten through to you. He had said he was getting worried."

Craig shifted a bit in his seat to face Wendy fully, "uh, I wasn't aware you and Tweek talked."

Wendy rolled her eyes, "I'm Stan's friend, I hang out with his friends sometimes. That includes Tweek."

"Jesus Christ, does everyone hang out with each other except me?" Craig asked.

"Pretty much," Wendy said. "You should try it some time, you know, the whole 'socializing' thing. It's really not so bad."

"That's debatable," Craig mumbled, "but I am making an attempt, so, shut the fuck up."
The class started, and the teacher informed them that today they would be starting on a research project, and they'd have to work in pairs. Craig groaned quietly and turned to ask Wendy, who was the safest choice in his mind, but she'd already shot off towards Gary, grinning back towards Craig as she went. She knew exactly what she was doing, the little fuck.

Kyle wandered over, taking Wendy's spot, and looked at Craig uncertainly, "...well...guess that leaves us then. Cool."

"Cool," Craig echoed, matching Kyle's unenthuesed tone. "I mean, I'm sure it won't be so bad...you're a complete nerd anyway, so I know you'll do your part of the work."

"And what about you?" Kyle asked, "You had better do an equal share. You don't tend to care about anything, so like, just don't think you can push the work off on me."

"Hey. Schoolwork is different. I mean yeah it sucks, but I have to do well to get into a good Space program. Dick," Craig huffed.

"...to be totally honest, I didn't even realize that you were smart enough to be in these classes. So...I'm sure there's plenty you have to contribute that I just don't know about," Kyle said in that condesending tone that Craig couldn't stand.

"I'm gonna rip off your stupid ponytail and shove it up your ass," Craig hissed under his breath.

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Craig's mood had dampened considerably by the time he got to lunch. Kyle was a lot less of a condescending prick than Craig remembered, but he was still a pretty annoying little know-it-all who talked like a snarky PTA mom half the time.

He also seemed to be under the impression that Craig wasn't as smart as him, which was a whole other level of annoying. He could write out the chemical composition of a star from memory, could Kyle do that? He fucking doubted it.

So, as Craig made his way towards his meeting spot with Tweek, he was feeling pretty bitter. He paused however, when he saw Tweek standing at their usual meeting spot, just saying goodbye to Butters. Tweek looked...really happy.

Craig felt his own demeanor lighten when he saw just how happy and, almost calm, Tweek looked. He sped up his pace, practically dashing to meet Tweek by the lockers. He greeted him with a kiss and a hug and whatever last bit of bitterness he was feeling towards Kyle just kind of fell out of his mind.

"You look like, really happy," Craig said, finding himself smiling again too.

Tweek gave an adorably crooked grin, "Yeah. You know, I really am! I could even focus enough in class to like, retain some of the work. It was..pretty amazing. How's your day going?"

"I have to do a group project with Kyle...I think I'm pissed at him, but I don't really remember why right now. I think he was acting like I was stupid or something, I'll figure it out later. But just, you seem so much happier Tweek. It's actually making me happier too."

Craig stepped closer and hugged Tweek to him, giving a happy hum. Tweek hugged him back, laughing a little, "I know, I feel like...way lighter. I guess you must too. It's pretty great. Though, um, does this mean you're going to be even more affectionate than usual?"
Craig pulled back from the hug, "I mean, probably. Unless that's a problem?"

"N-no...I mean, like, I love it, it's just kind of embarassing in public, don't you think?" Tweek asked.

"Not really, but I also don't really care what people think about me. They can just deal with my happiness dammit," Craig said. "I'll stop though, if you're uncomfortable. I do care what you think."

Tweek quickly shook his head, "no, no. Just keep being your dorky self, I love it. You're right, everyone else can just deal with it."

He leaned up and kissed Craig sweetly, then softly added, "maybe try not to get us detention for PDA though. That would still suck."

Craig snorted and gave a sideways smile, "no promises."

---

Craig sat down at the lunch table with his friends about ten minutes later, a soft smile still present on his face. Clyde scooted a bit to make room for him, and Jimmy waved a hand in front of him to get his attention.

"Huh-hey Craig, dude, y-you're pretty late to lunch, wh-wuh...where. Where've you been?"

Craig shrugged a bit, "I'm always a little late to lunch, you guys know I always meet up to talk to Tweek beforehand."

"Well, yeah, but you're later than usual. Lunch is like, half over," Clyde said.

"Fine. We were making out in the bathroom, happy now?" Craig replied.

Clyde's nose scrunched up and Jimmy laughed.

Token just shook his head, "wow, you guys can't wait until school is over like respectable teens?"

"I've never been a respectable teen," Craig replied.

"I really didn't want that mental picture today," Clyde mumbled.

"Dude it's been years, gay stuff still grosses you out?" Craig asked.

Clyde shook his head vigourously, "no no I'm fine with that! It's just like, you guys are both my friends, so it's weird to think about. Like, I don't like thinking about Token making out with his girlfriend either."

"Wu-wow, you have something against gays a-and blacks?" Jimmy teased.

Clyde whined and waved his arms, "no!! I don't-Jimmy you are not helping!"

Craig actually laughed a little at Jimmy's teasing, something that surprised everyone, even himself a little. He tapped his fork against his food and mumbled a soft 'huh'.

"Did you just like...laugh at something Jimmy said instead of trying to strangle him?" Clyde asked.

"...I think...I think I did," Craig said, "wow, guys I am like, really fucking happy. It's pretty weird, I'm not gonna lie."
"It's really weird for us too!" Clyde whined, "but...its good I think. So, you know, good."

"You have the best words Clyde," Craig said, patting his friend's head, much in the same way one might pat a particularly skittish dog. Clyde did act like one a lot.

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Craig found himself still feeling pretty good by the time the final bell rang, enough so that he managed to force himself to talk to Kyle after Chemistry and set up a good time to work on their research paper. And so he was engaging in a conversation that was only mildly painful as he walked out of school.

Kyle had these stupid square reading glasses perched on his nose as he leafed through a binder, trying to find clear time in his schedule. Craig had his hands shoved into his sweater pockets, looking over Kyle's shoulder curiously, honestly surprised that enough people tolerated him to allow for that busy a schedule.

"Wow, you're a busy fuck," Craig noted.

Kyle pushed the glasses up on his nose and flipped the binder's page, "well, some people at this school actually enjoy the after school activities, you know, socializing? Plus I allow a lot of time for Stan, he's kind of a high-matinence friend."

"Mh, after school clubs are so dumb. Who would want to spend precious free hours around teachers and a bunch of classmates you'll probably never see again after graduation anyway?" Craig shrugged.

"You sound just like an old jaded senior. Come on, we're 15, you don't want any kind of friendship bonds for the next four years?" Kyle asked.

Craig scrunched up his nose, this was getting into a personal territory, and he didn't like Kyle remotely enough to get into his people problems. He thought for a minute on what to say, and ended up just breathing out a quiet, "ugh."

"Well, you sure hang around Kenny and Butters a lot for someone who claims he never talks to people outside his friend group," Kyle pointed out, taking off his reading glasses and using them to point at Craig.

"Okay first of all, Tweek hangs out with them, and I tend to like being around my boyfriend, so sometimes I have to hang around those weirdos too. Secondly, Kenny and Butters don't pry about my social shortcomings. Thirdly, and this one's important, fuck off."

Kyle snorted, this grossly haughty sound, and closed his binder, "I'm free Wednesday afternoon. God, you're such a damn pleasure to be around. It's amazing."

"Your sarcasm could use some work," Craig said flatly.

"Are you ever in a good mood?" Kyle huffed.

"I am in a good mood, you just have the uncanny power to dampen it," Craig retorted.

Tweek walked over to the two, looking between them curiously, "h-hey guys! What're you talking about?"

"How much I hate school clubs and nosy people," Craig replied.
"Your boyfriend is such a dick, I really don't get how you hang out with him all the time," Kyle said, turning his focus to Tweek completely, as though Craig just suddenly wasn't there anymore.

Craig made an exasperated arm motion, but Kyle ignored it. Tweek giggled behind his hand and shook his head, "Craig is a total asshole, but he's nice to me, so you know, sucks for you I guess."

Kyle rolled his eyes, and Craig briefly wondered if he ever got headaches from doing that so much. Tweek mirrored the motion, then moved over to Craig, leaning up to give him a kiss.

"So yeah, we were talking about after school stuff being dumb, or that I think it's dumb, and finding a time to meet up to work on this stupid group research paper," Craig stated.

"Well, more like a pair paper, there are only six kids in the whole class, so we couldn't exactly do groups," Kyle said.

"Oh, so you guys have to spend a lot of time together?" Tweek asked.

"Hopefully not much," Craig grumbled.

"It should just be a couple days, provided Craig contributes like he should," Kyle added.

"I will work extra hard if it'll mean this goes faster," Craig replied, holding his hands up in front of him, as if he wanted some kind of physical barrier between him and Kyle.

Tweek looked between each of them as they spoke, an uncertain look on his face. Kyle scoffed again and shook his head, "fine, just...see you Wednesday, asshole."

After Kyle walked off, Tweek grabbed Craig's arm, practically glueing himself to his side, "so...just a couple days of work?" He asked.

Craig nodded, "yeah, and hey, don't worry. I promise I won't try to fight him or something, I'm not as stupid as I used to be."

"Not what I was worried about..." Tweek mumbled under his breath.

Craig looked down at him, a bit confused, "what? Tweek, is something bothering you?"

Tweek shook his head, "n-no...well, kind of, but...it's stupid. I'm just being, you know, me."

Craig frowned, about to press further, but Token interrupted, calling out to them as he walked over, "hey! I wasn't sure if you still wanted to hang out with us this afternoon, but me and the others were gonna go to that laser tag place."

Craig looked down at Tweek, then over to Token, "well...yeah, I can do that. But Tweek-"

"It's fine! I promised Kenny and Butters I'd hang out with them today anyway. I'll talk to you later tonight," Tweek assured.

"Well, alright, but Tweek, about Kyle-" Tweek cut him off, kissing him and scurrying off down the hall in a hurry, "talk to you later! Have fun!" He called as he disappeared around the corner.

"Wow, that was pretty weird," Token said.

"Yeah..." Craig agreed. He was pretty concerned and a bit confused. Why wouldn't Tweek say something to him if something was bothering him? Hadn't they just finished agreeing to be fully honest with each other? He shook his head, Tweek had mood shifts and episodes sometimes, so
maybe he just needed a little time.

Token snapped his fingers in front of Craig's face, "hey! Craig, dude, you've been zoned out for like three minutes. Is something wrong?"

Craig blinked a couple times, "I...don't know."

"Alright, well listen, let's just head out and you can tell us about it on the way. If you'll actually tell us something's wrong this time anyway," Token said, only half teasing.

Craig shook his head, "I uh...yeah, I had stuff to talk to you guys about anyway. But like, I actually have no idea what's up with Tweek."

"We can help figure it out then, come on, what're friends for?" Token assured him, offering a smile.

Craig sighed, "alright alright, thanks dad. You're a way better friend than I am, dann."

"I know, we can work on it." Token chuckled.

---

Token, being about five months older than the rest of the boys, had turned sixteen recently, and had also gotten a license. So everyone was pretty excited that they had a way to get to Denver without having to beg one of their parents.

Everyone was currently in Token's car, a nice red car that Craig was pretty sure was nicer than anything his family ever owned. They weren't friends with Token because of his money, but damn, it was a fucking nice perk sometimes.

Craig was sitting in the passenger seat, admiring the dials and buttons on the dashboard as his friends tried to process everything he'd just told them. He had decided to open with finally explaining everything having to do with Petunia. It had taken about twenty minutes, and his friends had stayed silent the whole time, listening intently as he explained the kidnapping and subsequent jail visits, all the way up to this current predicament about his birth father. It was understandably taking them a little time to process.

"So...you're adopted?" Clyde finally said, breaking the silence.

Everyone, including Craig, pretty much lost it laughing. Clyde turned red and sank down in his seat a bit.

Craig snorted and nodded, "yeah dude. You seriously hadn't noticed? I have black hair and native features. My parents are both white.

Clyde shifted a bit and quietly mumbled, "I thought you were just really tan."

It took nearly a full minute before everyone managed to stop laughing, and Token nearly had to pull the car over a couple times. Clyde crossed his arms, pouting quietly now.

"Oh my god...just really tan...fuck, don't ever change you hilarious idiot," Craig said, "no, no. My birth father is Peruvian, meaning very much not white. My birth mother though...I actually think she is all white."

"So...you're like, half Peru?" Clyde asked.

"Half Inca Indian, yeah," Craig replied.
"Wuh-wow, you're almost as oppressed as Token," Jimmy chimed in.

"And you have an opportunity to meet your real dad?" Token asked.

"My real dad is Thomas Tucker. He raised me," Craig said defensively, "...but the guy who I share DNA with, yeah, I could meet him. He might suck though. And like, after that woman-" he shook his head, "it's this whole long thing that's tough to get into."

"Your mom kidnapped you and now you visit her in jail...man, that's more fucked up than where I visit my mom," Clyde mumbled.

There was an uneasy silence, before Craig softly said, "it's not more fucked up, and it's fine, she's not my real mom, just the bitch who made me."

Another long pause before Craig added, "you don't have to keep going there, you know."

Clyde looked down, "...you don't have to keep seeing your jail mom either. But you do anyway."

"Clyde..." Token started, but wasn't really sure what to say, "...you okay man?"

Clyde nodded, "yeah, I'm cool. I wanna listen to Craig's shit. He never opens up, it's a really fun distraction!"

"My life problems are fun?" Craig asked.

"Well...getting a chance to help you solve them is!" Clyde said, "so okay, parent stuff, super complex. What about the Tweek thing? Token said he was being all weird?"

Craig nodded. He was honestly surprised his friends cared so much about his petty issues. It was...kind of nice. "So, it was just...he kept looking at me weird when I was talking to Kyle earlier. I have to do a project with him, so I'm being forced against my will to hang out with him to get this fucking thing done. Tweek just seemed all like...weird about it. I thought he was afraid I'd get into a fight with Kyle, but he said that wasn't what he was worried about. So...he is worried about something. Right? He ran off before I could press it any further...I don't get it."

This time, Craig's friends were laughing at him. He was even more confused now. Token spoke first, shaking his head as his laughter died out, "you're so fucking thick, oh my god."

"What? I'm missing something?" Craig asked.

"Okay man, look, I've never had a boyfriend, but I've had Bebe off and on for like...awhile. I know a jealous girl when I hear about one. Or, dude, I guess," Clyde said.

"Yeah, like, Nichole is really level-headed, but even she gets the occasional jealous pang. I have too. It's a totally normal thing," Token said.


"K-Kyle is a suh-smart, quick-witted, fiery guy, a-and you could bounce a quarter off his ass," Jimmy said.

Everyone turned to look at him, Token giving a questioning look in the rearview mirror.

Jimmy just shrugged. "Yuh-you all know I'm right."

Clyde shrugged, "I guess objectively, Kyle does look pretty good for a guy. I'd probably be jealous if
"That sounds like your problem," Craig said, "I couldn't care less about his ass. He IS a giant ass, and that's about all I think about him. Well, and I've been attempting to get along with him because Tweek practically made me."

"Look man, no one is saying you even think Kyle is attractive in the least, we're just saying that objectively, a lot of girls do seem to whisper about him, he and you have a lot in common, and Tweek is a little paranoid sometimes," Token said.

"I mean...I guess, but all we do when we talk is end up arguing," Craig said. "I'm sure Tweek can tell I'm not interested in Kyle at all. He's not stupid."

"I still think you should talk to him man," Token said, "I'm no idiot either, but it doesn't stop me from being jealous sometimes. Hell, I actually used to be jealous of Kyle myself. He and Nichole get along pretty well, and Kyle is an amazing person. I would think things like 'what if he's better for Nichole than I am? What if she realizes she could do better?' You know? Just really dumb shit, but it didn't stop me from thinking it. Have you never felt that way?"

Craig frowned at his reflection in the side view mirror, tugging his hat a bit lower to hide the soft black of his bangs, "...I...feel that way a lot. I guess I never knew that was jealousy. I'll talk to Tweek about it."

They changed the subject to lighter things after that, talking about school and TV shows until they reached the laser tag place. It turned out to be a whole arcade complex, a fact that Clyde was thrilled about. Craig was less enthusiastic, but told himself to just try and have fun.

He took out his phone and took a picture of his group of friends, Token helping Jimmy out of the car, smiling and laughing as Jimmy called out for Clyde to wait for the rest of them. Clyde was barely in the shot, just an excited blur already halfway to the doors. Craig smiled a bit and sent the picture to Tweek.

Tweek sent back his own picture just a minute later, Butters laughing as Kenny stuck his tongue out at the camera, Tweek was smiling, looking back towards the two. Beneath it said 'I couldn't get Kenny to smile, such a jerk! Have fun at laser tag, remember not to hit anyone with your plastic gun again!'

Craig sent back a picture of himself, also sticking his tongue out, and added 'no promises' beneath it.

Token nudged him in the side and Clyde grabbed his arm, having run back to the car just to drag him along.

"Come on dude, you have to actually go inside," Token laughed.

Craig slipped his phone back in his pocket, groaning exaggeratedly as Clyde pulled him to the doors. The boys spent a good half an hour just running around the complex, or, they chased after Clyde, who was so thrilled to be in the place that he couldn't seem to settle down.

Craig stopped in front of one of the arcade games, a machine with a touch-screen and a near impossible to navigate maze. He smiled as he remembered watching, transfixed, as Tweek navigated one of these things flawlessly. He wanted to give it a try, but since he didn't have any tokens, he just snapped a picture of the machine to show Tweek later.

"Dude keep up! Clyde is getting away!" Token called.
"Wh-we may have tuh-tuh knock him out to calm him d-down!" Jimmy added, crutches clacking rapidly against the floor as he zipped past Craig.

Craig shook his head and walked after them, "Clyde! Get back here! I want to play laser tag, not watch a sad man in a cat costume hand out pizza coupons!"

"YOU GUYS THERE'S BUMPER CARS!" Clyde called back.

It took another fifteen minutes before they were able to placate Clyde by getting crappy arcade food and a cup full of tokens for him.

Craig munched on a piece of too-greasy pizza and gazed around the massive arcade area, "you know, this place is kinda like a bigger Whistlin' Willie's."

"It pretty much is, the only real difference is that this place has money to get actual cool arcade games. And laser tag," Token said.

"Denver has some pretty sweet stuff. I wish this place wasn't so loud, then I could bring Tweek some time. He'd love to watch Clyde freak out like this," Craig said.

"D-do you E-ever stop thinking about your buh...bh...buh...Tweek?" Jimmy teased.

Craig hummed softly, leaning his face against his hand and looking towards the prize booth, where he could just see an old packet of plastic stars, "mm...I don't think I usually stop thinking about him, no."

"You guys spend so much time together, you never like, get sick of being around another person all the time?" Token asked.

Craig shook his head, "No, I could never get tired of him. When we're together, it's not even like I'm around another person, it's like...like he's just an extension of me. It's hard for me to think about doing most things without him, he's just kind of a part of me I guess."

"Wh-wow. That muh-might be the gayest thing anyone has e-ever said," Jimmy chuckled, "I cuh-can't even imagine liking someone else that much."

"I get the feeling we should stop talking about it before Craig starts gushing about him, he'll never stop talking," Token chuckled.

Craig rolled his eyes, "Tweek sure doesn't mind me rambling. You guys are just assholes."

"Wow, you say cheesy junk like that to his face? And you aren't embarrassed?" Token asked.

"E-embarrassed? I'm more suh-surprised he isn't getting laid, suh-saying stuff like that. G-girls love stuff like that," Jimmy said.

"Okay first of all, we're fifteen, and second of all, Tweek isn't a girl," Craig said.

"C-close enough," Jimmy shrugged. "A-and fifteen is a puh-perfectly reasonable-"

"Stop. We aren't having this conversation again," Craig said flatly, "I really do not want a repeat of middle school health class."

"I bet Kenny-" Jimmy started, but Craig shoved a pizza slice into his mouth, effectively silencing him.
Token dropped Craig back at home around nine. The boys had finally gotten around to a couple rounds of laser tag, Craig might have tripped a kid, but no one saw so it was fine. Clyde had managed to convince them to ride bumper cars with him, and they had spent the last few tokens on the photo booth. Craig had also gone up to the prize booth and just given the guy ten bucks for one of the prizes, something he wanted to get for Tweek.

He had been thinking something over the whole way home too. He wanted to figure out some way to let Tweek know he didn't need to be jealous over Kyle. He knew just telling him wouldn't really matter, he wanted some kind of gesture that proved to Tweek he would never want anyone else. It had finally hit him about halfway home, and when he'd asked the guys about it, they seemed to think it was a good, but probably unnecessary, idea.

"You know that's a pretty serious thing, right? We're freshmen in high school, do you really-" Token said from his car, looking uncertainly at where Craig stood on the sidewalk.

Craig held up his hand, quietening him, "It's Tweek. I couldn't be more sure."

"Do you even have a-"

"I'll find one," Craig insisted.

He told his friend goodnight and walked inside, carrying a small plastic bag containing the prize, a photo strip, and a coupon for 10% off pizza.

He set his bag down in his room and flopped over onto his bed, tossing his hat onto his nightstand and setting the photo strip next to it as he dialed Tweek's number.

"H-hey," came Tweek's voice after just a few rings.

Craig smiled, scooting up to a more comfortable position on his bed, "hey. We went to that massive arcade complex in Denver, I wish you could've handled going with us."

Tweek laughed on the other end, "what, you don't get enough of me already?"

"Never," Craig replied, "besides, I couldn't help but think about you with a bunch of that stuff. It reminded me of our first date, when we were little kids."

"That was NOT a date, we were just pretending back then!" Tweek snorted, "it's cute you think of it that way though.'

"Hey, it counts. You got me the stars there, oh, and they had one of those maze things, the one you were wicked good at," Craig said.

"Oh my god, I forgot about that! Man, I love those things, only game I'm any good at," Tweek said.

"Yeah, I remember. Hey, I got you a prize from the complex," Craig said as he got back up off his bed, digging around for his lighter.

"You won a prize?" Tweek asked, surprised.

"What? Oh no, I just gave the dude ten bucks. I'm terrible at all those games," Craig chuckled.

He moved to his window, opening it and leaning outside. He lit a cigarette and took a long drag before adding, "you should come over. I wanna give you the prize."
"It's like nine thirty, you can just give it to me at school tomorrow dork," Tweek laughed.

"No way, not at school! That's not romantic at all," Craig huffed, puffing smoke out out his nose.

"It's an arcade prize, how is that romantic to begin with?" Tweek asked.

"Well, if you'd stop being a little dick and just get over here, you would see!" Craig argued, snuffing out the end of his cigarette and going back inside to dig around for something else.

"Oh my god, alright alright, so your house?" Tweek asked, sounding amused.

"Yes! No! No not here, the park! That's better," Craig replied.

"You are so extra sometimes, I swear," Tweek snorted.

"Extra?" Craig mumbled, pausing in his drawer-digging.

"...I need to stop hanging out with Stan, he uses that word so much and I think it's rubbing off."

Craig shook his head, "just as long as his alcoholism doesn't rub off on you, we're good."

---

Ten minutes later, Tweek and Craig both showed up to the park, Craig bouncing on his heels a bit as Tweek approached. He had finally found what he was looking for, and he was feeling pretty excited about the whole thing.

"Alright space dork, what's this thing you had to give me at nearly ten at night in the park?" Tweek asked.

He didn't sound annoyed, looking more interested and amused than anything, hands shoved into his jeans as he looked pointedly towards the bag in Craig's hand.

"Okay, well, I actually have two things for you, and one of them did not come from an arcade," Craig said.

He handed the bag to Tweek and practically bounced, "here's the first thing, go ahead!"

Tweek smiled and shook his head, reaching into the bag, lifting out a packet of blue plastic stars. He smiled softly at the packet, "Craig...okay, this actually is kind of romantic."

"I thought you might like something to brighten up your room," Craig said softly.

"It's perfect," Tweek hummed, "So...what was the other...thing..?" He trailed off as he looked back up at Craig.

Craig's face flushed red from where he was down on one knee, "this doesn't feel like how I'm supposed to do this..." He murmured, mostly to himself.

"Craig..?" Tweek asked, voice an octave higher than usual.

Craig held up a little plastic ring, it looked like an old toy, painted silver with a plastic star molded onto the top.

"This is plastic, um, fuck, God I'm a train wreck. Okay, so...you...I love you. And...we've been a lot more open about our shitty lives with each other, and I actually feel truly happy for the first time
in...maybe for the first time ever. I'm kind of wishing now that I'd waited and gotten you a real ring, because you deserve way better than this star ring I found in my dresser, but I didn't fully think this through. I just-we're too young to get married, but this is a promise. Something to symbolize that...that I'm gonna love you forever, and that we'll keep on being there for each other no matter what, and...and that one day this shitty plastic ring will be a real, much better, wedding ring," Craig paused, taking a breath. Fuck, had he not breathed that entire time?

He shook his head and looked up to meet Tweek's eyes, "So, I'm probably doing this super wrong, and I really should've planned things better, but um...will you accept this ring, as my promise to be by your side no matter what?"

Tweek stared with eyes so wide that the moon reflected in them. He was completely silent the whole time Craig spoke, color slowly rising to his cheeks as Craig went on. After a solid thirty seconds of silence, Tweek took a step forward, then another, then he tackled Craig backwards into the grass.

Craig tried to ask what he was doing, but then Tweek was kissing him, and the question died in his throat. Craig wrapped his arms around Tweek's waist, holding him close as Tweek assaulted his face with kisses.

Finally he let up, giving a breathless laugh as he looked down at Craig, "fuck yeah I accept. God, and I didn't think I could love you more...you...man, you really are serious about me, huh?"

"When have I not been?" Craig asked, smiling up at him.

Tweek blushed, "I know! But this is like...it's like as close to an engagement as we can possibly get."

"That was the idea," Craig hummed.

Tweek took the ring from Craig, slipping it onto his hand with a soft giggle, "it might be plastic, but it's perfect."

Chapter End Notes

I originally wrote something super dramatic and dark, but then I remembered I wanted to write some lighter chapters first, so I'm putting that in my back pocket for later. You won't know when it'll strike!

Enjoy the happy gay kids!
Craig and Tweek stood by Craig’s locker, murmuring to one another as they looked over a small stack of cards Craig was holding. Tweek picked up one of the cards, checking it over, “Alright, so these don't LOOK like jokes,” he mumbled.

“I told you I was serious,” Craig replied, “Come on, we talked about it before, and your parents aren't even gonna be home this weekend, right? The druggies are off for an Anniversary?”

“W-well...yeah, but-”

“And the house is still cleaned up from my visit, and I can come help hide anything that needs to be hidden,” Craig added.

“Y-yes but I still have so much I have to do over the weekend, and eight is a LOT of people to have around all at once, and neither of us tend to like big groups like that. I-I have to run the coffee shop while my parents are out of town, and do homework, a-and there probably won't be time for this,” Tweek said in a quickly rambled string.

Craig hummed, thinking it over, “Okay...well...I'll help you run the shop. You really shouldn't be doing it alone anyway. And I know we don't like big groups, but this is a group of people we all reasonably get along with. Except two of them, but it's kind of a package deal with those assholes so...”

Tweek laughed a little, “Yeah, I guess besides Kyle and Cartman we do both get along with everyone...and they all get along okay with each other...except Cartman and Kyle again. I...I guess I could show you what to do and you could help me run the shop...mmhh...I still dunno...I haven't let anyone in the house for years. What if it's too much?”

Craig looked down at his small stack of invitations, then back at Tweek, thinking it over, “...well...it might be. But if it isn't...it would be a big step in the right direction. So...if you don't, that's alright, but...do you want to just try?”

Tweek took a deep breath, thinking it over for a good thirty seconds, during which he didn't release the breath. Finally he gave a sharp exhale and nodded, “Yes. Yes, we should try. You have to help me get everything we'll need too. I'm terrible at parties.”

“Me too, but alright. I think it's pretty much just junk food and games and we're good. So, alright! I'll give the invitations to Clyde, Token, Jimmy, and Kyle, and you can give the invitations to the others,” Craig said.

“Um, why Kyle?” Tweek asked.

“Because I have my first class with the douche, and you don't see him around most days,” Craig replied, “Babe, relax, you don't have to worry about Kyle.”

“Worried? Pff, I'm not worried. I know you hate him, and hating someone isn't the same as loving someone, it's not even like, close, I get that,” Tweek said.

Craig patted Tweek's hand, lifting it up to show Tweek the little plastic ring, “Take a breath,
remember why I gave this to you. It's alright, I worry sometimes when I don't need to too, but I only
love you, and honestly at this point, I don't think you could get rid of me even if you wanted to.”

Tweek gave a small chuckle, looking from the ring up to Craig's eyes, “...thank you. I'm glad I'm
stuck with you, you clingy little fuck.”

Craig kissed his cheek, “Anytime.”

Tweek frowned for a second, “Wait, I just really want to know...you worried I might leave you?”

Craig blushed, “That was like, a year or two ago, I don't want to talk about it, it was really stupid.”

“For who?” Tweek asked, and Craig was glad that he didn't seem upset anymore, but he really
wished he hadn't exchanged it for a laser focus on this topic.

“Oh, it's really not important,” Craig mumbled, still feeling like an idiot for having worried at all back
then.

Kenny walked up with Butters, wolf whistling and making both boys jump. Craig shot him a glare
and Tweek put his hand to his chest. Kenny gave a big, lopsided grin, “Sup fuckers?”

Butters gave a chipper, “Mornin!'”

“Craig used to be jealous of somebody, and he doesn't want to say who!” Tweek answered, huffing
exaggeratedly.

“Oh my god, is this middle school again? I thought everyone was past this kind of thing,” Craig said,
face getting redder.

Kenny's grin grew unbearably wide, “Oh, that's easy. It was me.”

Tweek snorted loudly, “Good one Kenny. I'm pretty sure Craig wouldn't-” but he stopped, seeing
Craig looking away. “...seriously?” he asked, voice nearly a squeak.

Craig waved his arms, “I don't want to talk about it!”

“Alpha male!” Kenny yelled, throwing his arms up in the air while Butters laughed. Tweek looked
like he was trying not to laugh too. Craig really wished he had the skill to kick Kenny's ass.

Tweek snorted and took two of the invitations from Craig, “Here, these are for you guys. Craig, hey,
sorry, it's not that silly or anything! I just...like...I try to picture some scenario where I could possibly
think Kenny is attractive and-pff...it's just too funny...”

Kenny frowned as he snatched the invite, “Hey, rude!”

Tweek shook his head, “It's not my fault that slutty white boys aren't my type.”

Craig snickered a little, and Kenny's indignant gasp made him actually laugh. Butters was just
shaking his head and patting Kenny's shoulder, trying to hide his own amusement, “It's okay Ken,
Tweek just has bad taste.”

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Craig was in a great mood on his way in to English class, despite the awkwardness of how it had
started out, that whole conversation actually ended up almost fun. He walked up to Kyle's desk and
stood in front of it, arms crossed as he debated whether or not to try being nice again. Kyle looked up
from the book he was reading, one eyebrow raised, and Craig decided Kyle looked like a fucking
douche and he didn't want to be nice him. So he just slid the invitation into Kyle's glasses and
walked off to his desk, listening to Kyle squawk angrily as his vision was blocked.

“Are you just writing mean things to me now? That's so fucking unnecessary!” Kyle called across
the room.

Craig smiled a bit, “That's a good idea, but no, actually, it's an invitation. Don't be a dick, jeez.”

Kyle's nose scrunched up and he opened the card, which read 'It's no one's birthday this weekend,
but fuck it. Party.' and beneath it was a time and Tweek's address. Kyle snorted and shook his head,
tucking the card into his backpack. “I guess that could be fun. Uh, who else is going? Is...am I gonna
have to deal with Cartman?”

Craig sighed, “We all have to deal with him no matter what. Tweek said if we didn't invite him he'd
show up anyway and just be a bigger problem, so, you know, suck it up. Or don't come, either is
fine.”

Kyle huffed, “Fine. But I'm not paying for damages if we end up fighting.”

Wendy interjected in the conversation at this point, setting her phone down and looking at Craig,
“You and Tweek are having people over? Multiple people? Including Kyle?”

“Hey!” Kyle squawked.

“Yeah. I told you I was trying my hardest at this dumb socializing thing,” Craig replied, “we're
attempting a sleep over, it's gonna be actual hell, but who knows? Maybe it'll be like, some fun too?”

Wendy chuckled, “Well, Kyle and Cartman were both at my birthday party last year, and the damage
to my wall is why they aren't invited this year, so you know, good luck.”

The morning classes came and went, and by the time Craig got to the lunch table, he was more than
ready to just go home. It was over halfway through the semester, and work from all his advanced
classes were starting to pile up so much that he actually had to work on some of it during lunch if he
wanted any free time for this weekend. He sat down at his friends' table with a heavy sigh and a
heavier physics book. He looked up from it after about a minute, realizing that, once again, everyone
was staring at him.

“What now?” he asked.

“Why are you...uh...reading?” Clyde asked, pantomiming opening a book, “And it's not even a story,
it's like, math. Are you turning into an even bigger nerd?”

Craig rolled his eyes, “It's not for fun, stupid. I have mostly AP shit, and the work is kind of difficult.
I have to do some of this shit now because I'm not gonna have time this weekend.”

“Man, I know you love space, but like...I just can't believe you can love space more than you hate
math. I don't think I love anything more than I hate math,” Clyde said, then, after thinking for a
second, added, “girls maybe.”

“Why are you going to be so busy this weekend anyway?” Token asked.

“I'm spending pretty much all weekend with Tweek, his parents are going to be out of town so-”
Craig was cut off by Jimmy rapidly patting the table, a mischievous grin on his face.
"I'm helping him run the coffee shop," Craig finished, then he closed his book and lifted it up threateningly, "Go on Jimmy, what were you gonna add?"

Jimmy looked at the book, decided it looked very heavy and Craig probably wasn't bluffing, and made a zipping motion across his lips. Craig set the book back down, it thumped loudly against the table, rattling it slightly. "Good. Oh, shit, hang on."

Craig rustled around in his backpack, pulling out three slightly crumpled invitations, handing them to his friends, "Here. This is another thing we're doing this weekend."

His friends looked the invites over, and Token was the first to say something, "Dude, but like...you? And...other people will be there? Like, other human people you'll have to interact with?"

"I'm not a fucking robot guys," Craig hissed, "I'm actually trying to learn how to like, interact like a normal human. I still don't like people, but Tweek thinks I should try, and he's right about most of these things."

Token motioned for Jimmy and Clyde to lean closer, and all three huddled at an awkward angle over the table, whispering to one another for a few minutes. They finally sat back again, all nodding slightly. Craig squinted, trying to figure out if his friends had finally just lost their collective minds or what.

"We'll go," Clyde said, "one question, are Tweek's other friends gonna be there? Kenny and them?"

Craig nodded, "Yup. It's a lot more people than I generally care to be around, but it's cool, if anyone is too annoying I'll just kick them out."

Clyde nodded, the other boys nodding along too. "Too risky?" Clyde murmured, to which Jimmy shook his head.

Token whispered, "five to one guys, come on."

"Ten to one," Clyde countered.

"T-ten is good," Jimmy agreed.

Token groaned, "Fiine. Ten to one, but no over under."

Craig waved his arms around to draw their attention back to him, "Hi. Uh, yeah. So, what the fuck are you talking about right now? Or am I having a stroke?"

"Oh, sorry," Token said, "I just assumed you'd tune us out. We're just talking about some bets is all."

"Why would I be tuning you out? And what bets?" Craig asked, eyes narrowing.

"You always tuned us out before," Clyde said, "We've talked about this like, at the table, right next to you, at least five times. You were usually on your phone or just like, staring straight at a wall."

"That does sound like me..." Craig mumbled, "No, okay, what bets? Are you betting on me or something?"

The others all nodded, "Yeah, we have long and short term bets," Token said, "I usually get a couple dollars if I win, and I give them like ten to twenty if they win. We figured that was more fair since I'm rich, and I just like the feeling of winning, I'm not in this for the money."

"H-he has a buh-box with all the money he's won from us," Jimmy said, "It's su...suh...super
annoying.”

Token grinned smugly, “I love our betting game.”

Craig stood up, baffled and a little irritated, “You assholes are betting on my life? Like-like what? What kind of bets?”

“Oh shit he’s mad about it,” Clyde murmured, then cleared his throat and tried to explain, “U-um, okay, so, basically like, it just started as this small thing. You and Tweek started dating, and like, I was super, beyond sure, that you weren't actually gay. And Token was pretty sure you were, and Jimmy said he thought you were just pretending, but that you were gay deep down and were just in denial. So like, Jimmy won that bet. And um, remember at Bebe's birthday like...however many years ago? Well, I didn't think YOU were gay, but I was positive Tweek was in love with you. I bet Token five bucks that Tweek would find some way to kiss you, and I won! And it was really fun. And so...we just kind of kept on making bets, and um, I guess saying it out loud now it does sound kind of creepy, but like...it was just a normalish thing that I guess kind of spiraled and none of us realized how weird it was.”

Craig sat back down slowly, mumbling, “so that's why he gave you five dollars...”

“I buh-bet that you would tuh-totally ruin the party,” Jimmy said, “Clyde had to give me tuh...ten dollars for that one.”

Token rubbed the back of his head, “Man, I guess it does sound kind of weird now...but we never meant anything bad by it. We were just having fun, and to be honest, you guys are so unpredictable that just...trying to figure you out was weirdly entertaining.”

Craig sighed heavily, “well...yeah. That's pretty fucking weird. I guess it's not so bad though. Just...god, you guys are way too invested in my life.”

“...can we keep betting?” Clyde asked.

“Whatever,” Craig said, “Just don't tell any of Tweek's other friends about this. I don't want Kenny in on this bullshit.”

There was a heavy silence among the boys, and Craig looked to each one of them, “ Fucking-no. No. But-none of you even LIKE Kenny!”

“I l-like Kenny,” Jimmy said.

“He always makes bets that are really outlandish, but most of them turn out right. It's wild,” Token said.

After another few minutes, Craig went back to his physics book, deciding he'd figure out how pissed off he was about this revelation later. He'd ask Tweek his thoughts and maybe it'd help him figure out how hard to punch everyone. Clyde kept asking him if he was mad, and Craig never answered, just continued writing equations on the inside of his arm until the bell rang.

---

Craig caught up with Tweek after school, both heading to Craig's house to plan out the weekend. They decided they needed to make a list, dig out any games Craig already had, and Craig was going to see if he could stay the entire weekend with Tweek. They had also decided to just say Tweek's parents were there, so Craig's parents would have less reason to say no. They were discussing the list of what they'd need in Craig's kitchen when Tricia bounced in, pigtails hopping up and down as she
skipped to the fridge.

“Hey ass face,” she greeted, followed by, “Hi Tweek.”

“Mini Bitch,” Craig replied with a nod.

“Tweek snorted, “God, you guys are so mean to each other.”

“Oh nah, Bitch boy's a great brother,” Tricia said, “Mostly. We just have the best sibling nicknames, that's all. Hey, I want to watch that Alien movie tonight, because Karen is coming over on Saturday and she doesn't like scary movies.”

“Oh, that works out anyway, if things go well, I won't be here this weekend at all,” Craig replied.

He grabbed the milk out of her arms, pouring himself a glass before handing it back to her, along with a bowl and a box of Trix. She set the stuff on the table, getting to work fixing what was likely her third bowl of cereal that day, “So you were just gonna flake on our Saturday night movie and not even tell me? Asshole,” she huffed.

“I was going to tell you,” Craig replied, “I just worked this out at school today!”

Tricia looked over to Tweek, “So, what are you gays getting up to this weekend then?”

“Oh! Um, well Craig is gonna help me with some stuff at the coffee shop while my parents are out of town, a-and we thought it'd be easier if he just stayed with me over the weekend,” Tweek replied.

Tricia nodded, humming in thought, “So,” she said slowly, “you guys gonna fuck?”

Craig spit his milk halfway across the kitchen. Tricia burst out laughing, and Tweek just covered his mouth.

“No! Tricia what the fuck?!” Craig asked, quickly grabbing paper towels to clean up the milk.

Tricia shrugged, still laughing, “I just assumed that teenagers all did that! Oh my god, your fucking face...”

“Older teenagers maybe!” Craig said, “well and probably Jimmy, but he's really fucking weird.”

Then Craig’s dad walked in, and the conversation dropped immediately. Everyone was awkwardly silent, Tricia still snickering a bit as Craig cleaned up the floor.

“...hey kids,” Thomas greeted, “Man, sure got quiet in here fast. What were you guys talking about?”

“Drugs,” Craig replied.

“Murder!” Tricia added, making a stabbing motion with her spoon.

“W-what just happened?” Tweek whispered.

Thomas laughed and shook his head, “Alright, don't tell me. You kids are weirdos, you know that? Well, you're alright Tweek.”

Tweek smiled a bit, “Thanks Mr. Tucker.”

“So, you just over here to spend some time with Craig today?” Thomas asked, “Because that's fine of course, but his work has been piling up a lot, so you can’t stay too late.”
“Dad!” Craig said, “It's fine, I have plenty of time for homework, I promise. And, we actually wanted to ask you about this weekend.”

“What about it?” Thomas asked.

“Um, my parents could use some extra help at the shop this weekend, and...I didn't think I could do it all myself. And Craig offered to help, so we were thinking to make everything easier, maybe he could just stay the weekend at my house?” Tweek said.

Thomas thought it over as he grabbed a beer out of the fridge, “hm...your parents are okay with it?”

Tweek nodded vigorously, “Y-yeah! They're totally cool with it.”

“Alright. But Craig, only if you catch up on all your schoolwork before Saturday, and if me or your mother calls, you better answer,” Thomas said.

Craig nodded, “That's fine. I'll get everything done, thanks dad.”

“Movie?” Tricia whined.

“We'll watch it tonight,” Craig said, “I can do work afterwards.”

Tweek found himself smiling as he watched the family interactions. Craig stole Tricia's cereal from her, sticking his tongue out as she cussed him out and lightly hit his arm with her spoon. Thomas shook his head and told them not to break anything before leaving the room. He felt like this was what family should be like. It was nice, he needed to spend more time around Craig's family.

Craig finally gave Tricia her bowl back and walked over to Tweek, “Alright, well hey, it worked! Now we just need that list. Um...alright...so, do...do you know what a party actually like, needs? Like what kind of food?”

Tweek shrugged uselessly, just as lost as Craig.

Tricia cleared her throat, “Hey, socially inept bitches, down here. You throwing a secret party in Tweek's house and not telling dad huh?”

Craig realized he really should've waited for her to leave the room. Tweek just nodded. Tricia beamed, eyes glittering with mischief, “Awesome! Let me help!”

“What? Trish, what would you know about parties?” Craig asked.

“I actually have friends,” Tricia retorted, “and like, enjoy people. Trust me, I at least know more than you two. Tell me, what were you planning?”

“Uh...games...and food,” Craig said, “but we don't actually know what food.”

“Or games,” Tweek added, “We were just gonna bring everything we could find.”

Tricia clicked her tongue and set her cereal down, racing around the kitchen to find a paper and pen. She started writing furiously, mumbling under her breath as she did. The boys watched, curious, as she scrawled words over the entire page. It took her about five minutes, and when she finished, there was a list with two columns. It said 'party snacks' on one side, and 'party games/supplies' on the other. At the top was written 'how to be a fun human (for dummies)'.

Craig took the list, looking it over, “Wow, this is...actually really good.”
“I know what I'm doing,” Tricia huffed, “and I'm just assuming it's probably a sleep over, because like, what good party ISN'T a sleep over? So make sure to have lots of extra blankets and pillows. Trust me. It's like, number two on the games and supplies list.”

Craig read 'blanket fort' on the games side, and smiled, Tricia was definitely better than them at this. And she seemed excited to help. As much of a little shit as she was, he really was glad for his little sister. Tweek took the list from Craig, scanning over it.

“Wow, this looks like it could make for some fun stuff. Thanks Tricia,” he said.

Tricia nodded, then smiled a bit wider and said, “Now, the small matter of my payment...”

“Tricia,” Craig warned, eyes narrowing.

Tricia grinned wider, “I won't tell mom and dad you're having a sleep over party in an empty house with no adult supervision, and I'll let you keep my super awesome list, if, IF...you buy me a BIG chocolate bar at the store, and watch that barbie movie I like with me next week.”

“Barbie and the Nutcracker again?” Craig groaned.

Tricia nodded, sticking out her conniving little eleven year old hand, “So...deal?”

Craig sighed heavily, shaking her hand, “Fine, deal. You sneaky little fucker.”

---

It was difficult, but by the time Friday night rolled around, Craig was caught up on homework and ready to go. He was also exhausted from having stayed up until 3 every night for the past few days to finish his work, but it was worth it.

He had a backpack filled with clothes, video games, Tricia's list, and the stuffed Guinea pig, Waffles. He tugged his hat onto his head and slipped his backpack onto his shoulders, walking past his broken and covered mirror with a yawn. He cast it a passing glance, fleetingly hoping he looked okay since he couldn't check, then he headed out.

He hugged his mom goodbye, gave Tricia finger guns and her chocolate bar, and waved to his dad before making his way down the darkening sidewalk to Tweek's house.

There were no cars in the driveway when he arrived, so he assumed Tweek's parents had already left. He texted Tweek to let him know he had arrived, and Tweek was at the door a moment later.

"They already left?" Craig asked, nodding towards the driveway.

Tweek nodded, "y-yeah, they left a couple hours ago, and honestly I was panicking a little. I don't really like being alone when it gets dark out, so I'm really glad you're here."

Craig hugged him gently and kissed his cheek, "your parents are such assholes."

Tweek nodded in agreement and stepped inside, letting Craig walk in, "yeah, they're the worst. But I have you, so I can handle it."

As Craig unpacked his games in Tweek's basement, Tweek went over the basics of the coffee shop, basically how Craig could help and what they would be doing. Craig nodded along, doing his best to internalize the information.

"Do we have to mix up any 'special' coffee?" Craig asked.

"No, no, no," Tweek said, "just regular stuff. We're just here to learn and have fun."
"No, luckily I have no idea how my parents blend that junk. They just prepare stuff for me to sell while they're away," Tweek replied.

Craig yawned and nodded, "good. Alright. I think I've got it, and all the games are set out. I thought we could get the food after we close the shop tomorrow, and then we should have enough time to set things up."

Tweek exhaled slowly, "yeah, man, I'm still so anxious...but this might be fun. And um...I know it's a lot to ask, but...you said you'd help me make sure this place is all clean, right?"

Craig nodded, "yeah, of course. It looks pretty clean to me, but I'll help with whatever you need."

Tweek sighed, visibly relieved, "thank you so much. It's just...well, I was cleaning off and on for the last few days, and every room is fine, except the kitchen. Mom and Dad got into an argument earlier today, so it's a huge mess. I-if it's too much I can do it myself though! I don't want you to have to stay up late cleaning with me."

Craig shook his head, ignoring the protests of his sleep deprived mind, "it's no problem. It'll go way faster if we both clean."

"You aren't too exhausted from staying up to get all that schoolwork done?" Tweek pressed.

"Maybe a little, but I want to help, come on," he insisted, heading up the stairs.

He wanted nothing more right now than to just curl up with Tweek and sleep for an entire day, but Tweek was actually letting him help with this. He couldn't NOT help, and besides, he was sure it wouldn't be too bad.

Tweek hurried past him and stopped at the kitchen entrance, barring Craig from walking in, "No, shoes and mask," he said, pointing to a nearby closet.

Craig raised an eyebrow, feeling like that was entirely unnecessary, but he went anyway, opening the closet to find boxes and boxes of gloves, masks, trash bags, and a variety of cleaning supplies. There were a slew of questions running through his head, but he was tired, so he just silently took a mask and, at further promoting from Tweek, a pair of gloves.

Tweek looked like he was ready to enter an operating room, all decked out with thick blue gloves, a chemical-grade mask, and a pair of rain boots Craig swore he'd never seen before.

"Okay, sorry, I know it seems like a silly thing, I just want to be sure you aren't exposed to anything that might make you sick," Tweek said.

"It's fine, but man, it's a kitchen, not a plague site," Craig chuckled.

Tweek didn't respond, just turned and walked into the kitchen, Craig close behind. He suddenly felt that Tweek was a lot less paranoid than he seemed, and that maybe the gloves and mask weren't even enough. Because whatever he had been expecting, it wasn't this.

The floor glimmered in front of Craig, the florescent light bouncing off the insane amount of glass shards and porcelain bits that littered it. There were flecks of red dotting various surfaces around the room, ruined boxes of cereal and rice strewn across powder-laden counter tops. What looked to be half of a coffee pot, coffee still gently seeping out, was cracked angrily against the now stained linoleum. Shelves that used to hold tiny figurines now hung bare, some barely clinging to their spaces by a single nail. Cupboard doors were open, the contents of most thrown around, and the walls looked as though someone got into a boxing match with them.
Bits of glass crunched under Tweek's boots as he walked to a sink spattered with red droplets and dusted with unidentifiable powder. He said nothing as he turned the faucet on, grabbing the sprayer and turning it directly on the counter and nearby wall.

"This...this looks like a damn crime scene!" Craig exclaimed. "How are you calm about this of all things?!!"

"I-I panic about the unknown, Craig, this is nothing new. If it's too much I get it though, it is pretty bad," he said.

Craig forced his face back into something resembling a calm state and shook his head, "no. You want my help, I'm helping. Just...where do I start?"

Tweek's eyes crinkled behind his mask, betraying a smile, "it means a lot. Thank you. Okay, just...get a broom and start sweeping everything into the middle of the room, then let me know when you're done."

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It took three hours, and Craig wasn't sure if he wanted to cry or just pass out by the time they were done, but the kitchen was finally back to looking like a normal, livable space. Tweek dusted the last corners for any missed particles, Craig tossed the last of the trash bags out into the dumpster, and the two peeled off their cleaning gear, finally done.

Tweek hugged Craig tightly, "you're amazing, thank you so much for helping me with that...you must be beyond tired by now."

Craig nodded, blinking a few times, "yeah...damn, that was...definitely a lot worse than I expected. I'd help again though. Anything for you."

"Don't push yourself too hard, dork," Tweek replied, "come on, we can go sleep now."

As Tweek guided him up the stairs, Craig found himself awake enough to ask, "so...like...I just...the red stuff."

"Dad tends to hurt himself by accident when he starts throwing shit around, it was probably just a cut on his hand or something," Tweek replied.

Craig hesitated a moment, "...does he ever-"

"Do you really want to ask what you're about to?" Tweek countered quickly, weary gaze turning to meet Craig's.

Craig thought it over a minute, and decided it might be best to not ask some things. He quietly shook his head, and Tweek nodded appreciatively.

The two laid down, Craig not even changing into pajamas, too tired to bother. He curled around Tweek, hugging him close with a soft yawn. Tweek sidled close, tucking his head comfortably under Craig's chin with a sigh.

He shifted slightly in Craig's embrace, murmuring a soft, "get some sleep Stardust."

Craig felt a tired giggle rise up in his throat, and he kissed the top of Tweek's head, murmuring a last 'love you', before drifting to sleep.
At eight the next morning, Craig was tiredly following Tweek to the coffee shop. Tweek was already halfway through a mug of coffee and talking so quickly that Craig wasn't sure it was actually still a human language. He found himself wishing for a cup of coffee to just wake up a little more, but he figured it wasn't worth it.

He settled for another unhealthy option, and lit a cigarette as they walked, nodding slowly as he tried to register any of what Tweek was saying.

Tweek paused outside the shop, "do you smoke more often than you used to?" He asked as he fumbled around for the right key.

Craig blew a stream of smoke out his nose, "I don't think I do. It's mostly a stress habit, I was just hoping that nice burning feeling I get in my lungs would wake me up a little."

Tweek shook his head, "Well...just be careful, okay? I'd hate for you to end up as reliant on your vice as I am on mine."

"Just let me push my way through adolescence with this crutch, and then I might stop," Craig replied.

Tweek gave a short sigh, which Craig took to mean he didn't feel like he could argue any more without being hypocritical, and the two walked inside.

Tweek gently pushed Craig back outside though, pointing at the no smoking sign on the window and giving a teasing smirk.

Craig shook his head, "fine jerk. I'll be like, five minutes." He took a long drag, "God forbid the smoke ruin the stale coffee-drug smell you've got going on in there."

"Touché," Tweek huffed.

When Craig walked inside again a few minutes later, Tweek was already busy setting up some machines and humming to himself.

"So, what exactly do you want me to do?" Craig asked.

Tweek ran around the counter, grabbing his arm and dragging him along, "you...come put on an apron and start sweeping. We only have like, half an hour to get set up."

Craig regarded the apron Tweek handed him with uncertainty, "do I have to wear one of these?"

"It's the uniform Craig. Besides, you'll be thankful if hot coffee spills on it. It won't burn through that, unlike your dorky 'I Don't Believe in Humans' shirt," Tweek said, tugging lightly at the thin material of Craig's shirt.

Craig sighed, tying the green apron around his neck, "alright, fair enough. I just feel so silly."

"Well, I don't think I look silly," Tweek replied.

"No, that's because you look cute," Craig answered, "and I'm not cute."

Tweek snorted and kissed his cheek, "well, you might not look cute, but you do look pretty hot."

Craig blushed and Tweek pushed a broom into his hands, "now get moving, handsome."
Tweek walked back behind the counter, going back to his own preparations, leaving Craig a bit flustered.

He shook his head and got to work. The store opened at nine, and Tweek put Craig on counter duty for the first couple hours while he took care of things in the back. Craig wasn't sure how the hell Tweek ever managed all this work by himself, just being at the counter alone felt pretty uncomfortable.

He took a deep breath and patted the counter, "alright, I'm terrible at talking...at all..but I can be polite. I think I can do that," he mumbled to himself.

A few people stopped in, grabbing something quick on their way to work, and as Craig struggled with the various coffee machines, he suddenly felt that maybe his straight As in school didn't translate to an actual practical intelligence.

He was in the middle of trying to get one of the machines to stop spitting steam everywhere, cursing under his breath as the demonic thing decided it wanted to be a fog machine, when the bell told him another mistake waiting to happen had walked in.

"Hello sexy, the apron's a nice look for you," came Kenny's voice from behind him.

Craig turned around, pushing his hair out of his face as he glared at the grinning blonde, "aren't you too poor to be in here?"

Kenny pulled out his phone, snapping a picture of Craig, "now, I'm pretty sure that's not how you're supposed to treat customers. But I'm just here because I knew you were helping Tweek out, and I had to see for myself how bad you were at this."

Craig reached over the counter, grabbing for Kenny's phone, "delete that! And I'm doing just fine!"

Kenny stepped out of range, "you should really just ask Tweek how to work that thing, it's smoking up pretty bad."

Craig growled and turned, unplugging the wretched thing for the time being. He didn't want to interrupt whatever Tweek was doing.

Kenny snickered, "Man, you're so incompetent, it's absolutely stunning."

"Do you want to fucking fix it?" Craig asked, gesturing angrily at the machine.

"I mean, dude, I would, but I know you already feel so inadequate around me..." Kenny said, fighting down a grin.

Craig reached over the counter, swatting at him, "Out! Out! Paying customers only you little fuck!"

Kenny laughed loudly, side-stepping to the door, "Kicking me out of a drug den? It's like being forced out of my own home."

Craig swatted at the air again, more dismissively, and Tweek peeked out to the front of the store, "I heard mocking laughter, is Kenny here?"

Kenny gave a loud snort and Craig groaned quietly. Tweek scurried over to Kenny, patting his shoulder before harshly flicking his nose, "He's helping me! Leave him alone!"

Kenny rubbed his nose, looking, cross-eyed, at Tweek, ‘Fuckin' ow! Hell, alright alright, I'll let him
be for now! He needs your help though, he might've broken a machine or something.”

“Bitch!” Craig protested.

Tweek shook his head, pushing Kenny towards the door, “You better go before he starts just chucking mugs at you.”

After Tweek all but threw Kenny out, he turned his attention back to Craig, eyes accusing. Craig held his hands up defensively, “I don't think it's broken! I just think I can't figure out how to work it..”

Tweek shook his head, walking around behind the counter, “The espresso machine, right? Come here stupid.” He plugged the machine back in, and Craig watched as he hit a flurry of buttons. The machine stopped spewing steam instantly, and Tweek grabbed a nearby mug, sliding it into place.

“Allright, it still works fine, you didn't break anything.” Tweek assured him, “You should've just come and gotten me you nerd. I don't expect you to be great at this, the whole job is a fucking mess.”

He smiled up at Craig, and Craig felt a little better.

“Yeah...I just...I didn't want to bother you with it,” he sighed.

Tweek pursed his lips and walked over to the far end of the counter, rummaging around until he produced what looked like a small metal teapot. He didn't say a word as he started doing...something. Craig had no idea what he was doing, but he watched, transfixed, as Tweek moved skillfully and effortlessly around the small space. Any jittering or shakiness gone as he walked around, steaming milk and sorting out mugs and machinery. The counter space, which had become a bit of a mess with Craig fumbling around, was back to being spotless and perfectly organized in a matter of minutes.

“Wow, Tweek-” Craig started, but Tweek shushed him, tapping a finger to his lips before returning to his task.

He grabbed the metal pot, walking back over to the espresso. He waved Craig over, and the taller boy watched as Tweek picked up the mug in one hand, pouring the milk deftly with the other. Craig found himself absolutely in awe as Tweek twisted and moved steady hands, milk mixing with the coffee and creating a picture. It looked like Saturn, floating in a void of coffee among the cream stars. Tweek set the things back down and Craig noticed a touch of shakiness return, fingers twitching over each other as the blonde smiled confidently up at him.

“I wouldn't drink it or anything, but that's for you,” he said, leaning up and kissing Craig's cheek. “You're helping me more than you know by just being here, don't hesitate to ask me for help dummy.”

Craig nodded, looking from the coffee to Tweek. “That's...incredibly impressive. Damn, Tweek...this is like, really your element, huh?”

Tweek's smile twitched slightly, eyes downcast, “Well...I mean, I guess when you've only done one thing your whole life, it makes sense you'd end up good at it.”

Craig hadn't thought of it that way. He nodded slowly, then hugged Tweek, “Well...thanks. I'll keep helping however I can, and maybe you can teach me those damn machines some time, then I can help out again.”

Tweek shook his head, “You really think you have time to do a job on top of your advanced classes? You need time to breathe, Craig. I appreciate it though,” he chuckled.

“Well, you know, anything for you,” Craig murmured.
“I love you too, dork,” Tweek chuckled.

Chapter End Notes

I hope everybody's excited for the next chapter! Sleepover time!

Watch as I hopelessly fumble, attempting and failing to write interactions between ten boys at once!

Also that's my bad, the kitchen thing. My bad. I just can't seem to keep from slipping darker undertones here and there. And I have SO many plans! I finally have a clear course to the end you guys! Don't worry though, it's still going to take me SEVERAL chapters to get there. But...yeah, an actual plan!

And hey! Hit me up on Tumblr if you want! I'm always desperate for attention!

main
http://milkssecondfavoritetea.tumblr.com

art
http://cookie-doodles.tumblr.com
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Tweek sat on his couch, checklist clutched in one hand, pen shakily held in the other, as Craig listed the things they had. Tweek nodded, marking off each one as they went. Craig and Tweek had taken about fifty dollars and picked up all the snacks they'd need, a deck of cards, and some extra pillows and blankets. Craig figured Tweek could use some newer, less tattered ones anyway. He finally finished listing the things from their shopping trip, looked up, and asked, “Any level of confidence?”

Tweek gave a breathless laugh, saying, “Uncheck. Dude, this is so much, God, and we're SO bad with people. Wh-what if this is a huge mistake?”

Craig plopped onto the couch next to Tweek, “It'll be fine, our friends all know we suck at even basic human skills. We're in friendly territory. And I have no issue kicking people out if they get too out of control.”

Tweek took a deep, steadying breath, “Okay, okay...you're right. These aren't random people, they're our close friends...we can do it. A-and what if they find drugs somewhere?”

“This is South Park. I doubt they'd even blink really,” Craig said, “and that crime-scene is all cleaned up, so no one will ever guess how messed up things are. It'll be fine. And hey, if it'll make you feel better, I can ask Kenny to keep an eye out for anything, so he can keep his nosy ass friends from finding anything first.”

Tweek nodded, “That would be helpful...thank you. Sorry, I know I'm paranoid, I just...nhh...”

Craig assured him it was okay, he felt like if he were in Tweek's situation he'd probably be equally on edge, if not more so. He and Tweek set up the table with snacks, did a last check around the kitchen for anything they may have missed, and then went about setting up the blankets and pillows in the basement.

They were just finishing setting up the last blankets when there was a knock at the door. Tweek nearly jumped out of his skin, and Craig cursed himself for not mentioning to everyone that they should just text, and not knock, when they got here. He went to get the door while Tweek calmed down from his mini panic attack.

He texted everyone on his way up the stairs, a quick 'text dont knock when u get here. Tweek will have a fucking heart attack'.

He got a 'sorry!' back from Clyde, so he was already pretty confident who was already here. He opened the door, where Token was telling Clyde off for knocking.

“I told you, didn't I? Didn't I say 'Tweek is a really anxious person, maybe you should just text Craig'?” Token huffed.

Clyde looked sheepishly at Craig, “Sorry...I didn't think anybody could be freaked out by a door. It's just, like, a door, you know?”

Craig shook his head, “I don't blame you, you're an idiot. You couldn't have known. Come on assholes, inside.”
Clyde looked relieved, just ignoring that Craig had called him stupid, and headed in. Token followed after, looking around a bit warily. Token was a smart guy, Craig figured he was probably suspicious of the house, considering how guarded Tweek was about it. He seemed to be the only one though. Everyone else seemed completely unaware of the house's hidden darkness. Well, everyone except Kyle.

Kyle was tense, and seemed to sense something, eyes narrowing as he glanced up as an empty white shelf on the wall. Thankfully, Kenny quickly distracted him by pointing out Cartman, who was already being an asshole to someone. Craig corralled everyone downstairs, and was honestly surprised at how happy and relaxed everyone seemed to be to be here. He had expected more tension, more wariness. Seeing everyone just being totally normal helped him to calm down too. Even Tweek looked less panicked, seeing the no one was snooping around or asking any questions. Hell, no one even tried asking why he hadn't let them in the house before.

Stan set a backpack on the little table in the basement, tired smile on his face, “Man, this is a nice basement. Mine isn't even finished. I might take inspiration from this and make dad let me fix up ours.”

“O-oh, you're into construction? Isn't that dangerous?” Tweek asked.

“Kyle insisted I do something positive for my mental state or whatever, and construction projects do make me feel kind of accomplished. Besides, it's not like, that dangerous. Not unless dad gets drunk and tries to use the buzz saw. Again,” Stan said, chuckling dryly.

“Stan! Don't depress Tweek by talking about your shitty dad! Can't you just go like, one day without talking about that?” Cartman huffed.

Stan rolled his eyes and Kenny quickly blocked Kyle, who was already aiming a kick towards the large boy. Clyde looked uncertain, not used to being around Tweek's other friends, and tried sidling up to talk to Stan. He just kind of rocked back and forth for a minute while Stan rummaged through his bag.

After a couple minutes, Stan let out a sigh and looked up, “You aren't going to try and be my best friend again, are you? I don't want a repeat of that football practice.”

Clyde blushed, “No! I was just—it—it doesn't matter why I did that! Sorry, that was super weird. Um, I was just wondering what you're doing.”

Stan stuck his tongue out and produced a bottle of whiskey from the bag. Clyde gasped and Kyle called a sharp “no!” from across the room. Suddenly everyone's attention was on Stan, some negative, most curious.

“Dude, where'd you get that?” Clyde asked.

“Stop sneaking alcohol everywhere we go!” Kyle snapped.

“That looks like a bad idea waiting to happen,” Craig mumbled.

“NOW it's a party!” Kenny grinned.

“O-oh man, Stan, things are tense enough, you have to bring underage drink into it?” Tweek whined.

Stan shrugged, “Dad never notices when I take his shit. And yeah, things are kind of tense, you might not know this, but alcohol has a good relaxing effect. No one has to drink any, just thought the
option might be nice.”

“It's been like ten minutes,” Craig said, “At least wait a couple hours before getting drunk in someone else's house, Jesus.”

“I-I came here already tuh-totally plastered,” Jimmy joked.

Craig punched his arm and he laughed. Stan set the bottle back in his bag for the time being, and Token suggested they all play Mario Party when he spotted it on the shelf. Since there were ten of them and five controllers, everyone split into teams. Tweek relaxed a bit more as the night went on. He sat in Craig's lap, letting him take the controller for their team game. Butters and Kenny grabbed the Wii U pad, wanting to play a Bowser round so they could fuck with everyone.

“Shouldn't Cartman be the bad guy? It feels more fitting,” Kyle said as he sat down with a controller.

“Fuck you! You're way more of a bad guy than me, fuckin Jew!” Cartman snapped, snatching the controller from him.

“I call Jimmy as my teammate,” Stan said, quickly moving away from the two angry teens.

Clyde hugged Token like his life depended on it, and everyone kind of laughed as Kyle and Cartman realized they had been forced into a team. Tweek snickered and told Kenny to just start the round. He knew the two would only settle down if everyone stubbornly ignored everything either of them said. It usually worked anyway.

After five minutes of Kyle fruitlessly complaining that he would rather watch Passion of the Christ again than stay Cartman's teammate, he finally just sat down and quietly seethed. He had accepted his fate. Craig was starting to see why the others found it amusing when the two argued. It was like watching a reality show, drama from the outside looking in.

Butters grabbed the pad from Kenny, jumping up onto the table excitedly and saying, “It's time! Team Bowser is gonna destroy you! Bwahaha!”

Kenny clapped and Cartman rolled his eyes. Token smiled and shook his head, and Craig said, “Team Gay is gonna fucking kill Bowser.”

“Oh so we're team gay?” Tweek snorted.

“Yeah, let's play as Birdo, they're gay as fuck and you can't tell me otherwise,” Craig said.

“That's...actually a good point,” Token mumbled, “Clyde, you pick our guy.”

“Let's be the Boo! I love ghosts,” Clyde said.

A few of the kids shifted uncomfortably at that, but Token just nodded in agreement, “Sure thing Clyde.”

“We call Luigi,” Stan said, “He's the best one.”

Jimmy nodded vigorously, “Y-yeah, fuh...fuh...fuck Mario.”

“Please do not fuck Mario,” Kenny snorted.

After Kyle and Cartman fought for a good ten minutes, they finally settled on being Peach, and the game started.
“You always want to be a princess, it's fucking weird,” Kyle huffed.

“It's not weird! Peach is just cool!” Cartman argued.

“I hope we die first so I can leave,” Kyle grumbled.

“I'm gonna kill you last,” Butters snickered, “just ta be extra mean.”

After a good hour of screaming and everyone failing terribly at one minigame or another, Butters and Kenny managed to wipe them out, and, true to his word, Butters had done his best to make sure Peach went down last. Kyle was practically fuming by the end of it, and Kenny laughed as he held him at arms length, dodging swinging fists.

“You guys are such assholes!” Kyle yelled.

“We only lost 'cause you were being uncooperative,” Cartman huffed.

“You kept thinking Peach's parasol could make her jump higher! What kind of fucking logic is that?!” Kyle exclaimed.

“Um, Mary Poppins could fly with hers. I feel like it's pretty sound logic,” Cartman said, rolling his eyes.

“I think we should take a break from the games,” Token chuckled, “Kyle, man, calm down. It was just a game.”

Kyle made a strained sound and crossed his arms, “Whatever, we would've done better if Cartman wasn't a complete idiot.”

“Sure Kyle, just like a Jew to blame everything on someone else,” Cartman tsked.

Kenny and Butters both had to tackle Kyle to keep him from attacking Cartman. He was so pissed off that he sounded like an angry cat. Craig took a step back, pulled out his phone, and recorded. Tweek looked a bit scared, but snorted when he saw Craig calmly recording everything.

“Dude, he's gonna kill you, oh my god,” Tweek laughed.

“I'll get it on the internet before he has a chance,” Craig whispered.

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The group was all sitting around in the living room about twenty minutes later, laughing and eating the various snacks. Stan had decided he'd waited long enough and mixed whiskey into his soda, which was extra weird because it was sprite. Craig couldn't imagine that tasted remotely good. Kyle had calmed down significantly, and was munching quietly on a chocolate bar as he scanned the room.

“Man, your house is really nice,” Kyle said, “Kinda weird that all the walls are bare though.”

Tweek tensed, “my family isn't much for decorating.”

“I mean, I guess, but like-” Kyle started.

“Kinda weird how your dad isn't in jail, Kyle,” Craig countered calmly.

Kyle closed his mouth, glaring. A few of the boys snickered and Stan pat Kyle's shoulder.
Butters patted his feet rapidly against the floor, “Oh oh! We should play 'worst parent!'”

All of Butters' friends groaned, and Craig and his friends looked confused, “Wh...what? What the hell is that?” Craig asked.

Kenny patted Butters' shoulder, “Oh, it's a sort of game we all made up as kids. I think Stan actually came up with it. Basically, every time we were all together in a group, we would list off a current terrible thing one of our shitty parents did. It helped us all feel like we were going through junk together, you know? But we try not to play around other people. We wouldn't want to depress or freak anyone out.”

“Oh yeah, I 'spose Craig's pals wouldn't like it so much,” Butters murmured, “And Tweek never plays anyways.”

Tweek nodded, “Y-yeah, that's true. A-and Token is so normal, you guys would traumatize him.”

“Hey now! I can handle things!” Token argued, “Just because I have a normal life doesn't mean I can't handle hearing about other people's messed up ones. I watch the news!”

Kenny leaned forward in his seat, maintaining eye contact with Token as he said, “My mother once got so fucked up on meth that she chased us around the house with a blow torch, trying to 'cleanse our demons' with fire.”

Token gulped, saying nothing, and Kenny sat back again, slinging an arm lazily over Butters' shoulders, “That's not the worst one. Just admit you're too weak stomached for the ugly bitch that is reality.”

Token looked to the rest of Kenny's friends, who were all nodding, as if to agree they all had or knew worse events. Token bowed his head, “Yeah, okay, I can't handle it.”

“Aw, so we can't play then,” Butters frowned, “Ah well, another time! I betcha Craig could play.”

“Craig is pretty bland too,” Kyle said, “I think Tweek is the only actually weird bit of South Park he's experienced.”

“That's not true, I have my own shit.” Craig said, but left it at that.

“Guys, why don't we play a nice, happy game? Something less...um...hugely depressing?” Clyde suggested.

“I guess we could do that,” Kenny sighed. “Token's terrified face sure lifted my spirits though.”

Token shook his head, trying to clear the terror from his face, “We should play truth or dare.”

This suggestion was met with a mixture of groans and murmured agreement. Craig was the loudest in saying no, having never liked the game, and liking it even less after Bebe's stupid party years ago.

“It could be fun,” Tweek said, looking up at Craig.

Craig was pretty surprised at that. Even a year ago Tweek would've never been bold or confident enough to play that of his own free will. It almost made Craig change his mind, almost.

“Let's put it to a vote,” Kyle said, “Since I'm pretty sure we'll never unanimously agree on anything.”

“Neeerrd. Democracy is stupid,” Cartman said. Kyle nailed him in the gut.
“Voting it is,” Cartman wheezed.

Stan downed the rest of his drink and sighed, “Whatever, I think I have enough alcohol in me to have fun. I vote sure.”

Stan, Token, Butters, Kenny, Tweek, Jimmy, and Clyde all voted in favor of playing. So, at six to four, they all headed back to the basement, sitting in a big circle on the cushy, blanket covered carpet. Stan sat between Kyle and Cartman, deciding a solid barrier between them would be for the best.

“Okay, ground rules,” Craig said, “I don’t want shit getting too weird. I flatly refuse to kiss any of you, and I know Kenny is a sadistic bitch, so rule one is no sexual dares, no kissing or anything. I would rather eat dirt.”

Kenny whined, not happy with that at all, but everyone else agreed pretty quickly. Most of them didn’t want to end up having to kiss any of their friends either. Kenny huffed and crossed his arms, “You guys are fucking boring. Just for that I am gonna make Craig eat dirt.”

Craig stuck his tongue out, then said, “Rule two, no matter how pissed off you get, no fighting in the house. Kyle, you fucking demon, take it outside if you get too damn worked up.”

Kyle crossed his arms and looked away, not saying anything.

Craig rolled his eyes, “And rule three, we’re all allowed three vetos. Pick wisely what you say no to, and if you use up all three then I guess that sucks for you.”

Everyone agreed to Craig’s ground rules, most of them thinking they were good compromises, and Token started the game. After about twenty minutes, half of the boys had switched shirts or hats, Clyde drank out of one of the toilets, Butters informed everyone of the shocking secret that his name was, in fact, not actually Butters, and Cartman and Token were both wearing full faces of makeup.

Kyle was in the middle of painting his own nails and mumbled, “This is just like sleepovers at Stan's house.”

Everyone looked at Stan, who waved his arms frantically, “Kyle! Explain things more clearly! M-my sister, she likes testing nail polish and stuff on Kyle, it's not like we just sit around putting on makeup!”

“I mean, dude, I'm pretty sure no one would care,” Kyle said, shaking his head.

“That's what me and Ken do sometimes,” Butters replied.

“We were just surprised to hear Kyle casually mention you guys hang around being all gay together,” Craig chuckled.

“We don’t!” Stan replied, “We-I'm not even-you guys suck!”

“That just makes you seem gayer,” Tweek snorted.

Kyle held out his hands, “Alright, well that took fucking forever. My turn I guess. Tweek, truth or dare?”

Tweek shifted anxiously, “Umm...T...da...mm...Trr...dare. Dare.”

“Alright, I...dare you to try and climb up to the roof,” Kyle said, “It's fine if you can't do it, but you
have to try your hardest!"

A small smile tugged at Tweek's lips, "Oh, that's all huh?"

Kyle looked puzzled, "What do you mean 'that's all'? Can you scale buildings or some shit?"

Tweek just got up and hurried outside, the others following, now thoroughly interested. Craig already knew Tweek was a skilled climber, but he really didn't expect to see him scaling the house with such grace and ease. It was like watching a cat climb a tree. He swung easily from the top window sill to the gutter and pulled himself up, crouching on the steep slope of the shingles.

"How the hell did you do that?!" Kyle called.

"Man what the fuck?" Stan mumbled.

"SPIDERMAN!" Clyde yelled.

"Watch your footing babe!" Craig called.

"I had no idea Tweek was so acrobatic," Kenny murmured, "wonder what he's getting up to with a skill like that..."

Craig glanced back at him, that thought having crossed his mind as well. Their eyes met briefly, two pairs of concerned blue eyes, then Craig tore his gaze away, looking back up to Tweek and ignoring the unease he and Kenny both seemed to feel towards this. Tweek grabbed onto the side gutter, sliding down it like a fireman's pole and landing, nearly soundless, in the frosty grass.

"T-tada!" he beamed.

Everyone clapped, all very impressed, and Tweek bowed. Craig and Tweek both agreed that that was a good place to end the game, and everyone headed back in, a few mumbling about making something for dinner.

After a small debate, everyone decided that only five people could probably walk around comfortably in Tweek's kitchen, so Tweek picked out four people and took them with him to figure out dinner. He and Craig hadn't really thought beyond snacks, and now it felt like a pretty big oversight. Cheetos and Gummy bears were great, but Craig was pretty sure if they just ate junk all night they would feel sick in the morning, and Kyle helpfully supplied that he was diabetic and probably shouldn't even be eating that much sugar. He then added that he was surprised Cartman wasn't diabetic, and Tweek and Craig hurried out of the room, dragging Kyle with them so the arguing wouldn't evolve into a fist fight. They also brought Token and Butters, since those two seemed to have some idea of how cooking worked.

Butters was showing Craig how to preheat the oven, trying not to laugh at how confused Craig was at the simple concept of a stove. Token and Tweek were rummaging through cabinets, looking for something that might qualify as decent food. Kyle was checking the fridge, calling out various things they could use in recipes.

"There's butter, eggs, milk, cheese..." Kyle opened the cheese drawer and hesitated, "...I..." there was the sound of the drawer sliding back closed, and it took Kyle a minute to resume, "...some fruits, um, onion..."

Tweek froze, dropping the box of rice-a-roni he had been holding. Token tilted his head, looking down from where he was kneeling on the counter to reach the highest shelf, "You okay man?"
Tweek shot over to Kyle, grabbing his arm so hard the Kyle actually exclaimed, “Ow! Hey, Tweek what the fuck-”

Tweek loosened his grip, eyes scanning the inside of the fridge, rapidly flicking over all the shelves. He spotted it. He slid the cheese drawer open, sliding the small silver revolver out of the drawer. He stuck it in his pocket and met Kyle's anxious gaze.

“You didn't see shit,” he whispered. Kyle slowly nodded, too confused and shocked to argue.

Tweek closed the drawer slowly, then turned back to the others, “I'll be right back, you guys keep looking for dinner stuff!” he hurried out of the room, leaving Kyle scared and confused, and the others a bit worried.

“What was that about?” Token asked, “He just suddenly looked really scared.”

Kyle shook his head, running a hand through unruly hair, “It's...um...I...I don't know.”

Craig walked over to him, leaning in towards the fridge, scanning it as well. He looked over at Kyle, quietly saying, “Tweek is really defensive of some things, I wouldn't worry about whatever you saw.” He realized as he said it just how sketchy and terrifying that sentence actually sounded.

Kyle just looked more freaked out, and Craig rubbed at his face, “N-okay no that made it sound worse...it's just-it's cool. Is what I mean. And you know, Tweek gets paranoid and stuff. What did you see anyway?”

“How much do you know?” Kyle asked, eyes suddenly ice cold. His gaze locked with Craig's, and he was surprised to see that burning intensity ignited so quickly.

“How much do you know?” Craig asked, “I just know he gets defensive of certain things, but that like, you don't need to worry, it's nothing dangerous. You know I'm shit with words.” He was glad he'd had years of practice in keeping a straight face, because Kyle looked far too close to a revelation for comfort.

His heart hammered as Kyle leaned up, the green fire of his eyes burning into Craig's. Craig's mouth twitched just slightly, but other than that betrayed no emotion. Kyle's eyes scanned his carefully blanked face. The ginger leaned back again, eyes still narrowed.

“You know something. I know I have my suspicions...what with all the midnight visits to the coffee shop and the strange people I see in this area at night. Tucker, if you know something's going on here-” Kyle stopped when Kenny placed a hand on his shoulder.

“Hey. Kyle,” Kenny said, “leave it alone man, we're actually having a good time tonight, let's leave it at that alright?”

“But Kenny, what about-”

“Sh. No. Hush. We can talk about it later. One night won't make a different in anything Kyle. Though I've told you before not to get involved at ALL, but, like I said, we can talk later,” Kenny said, hand squeezing Kyle's shoulder.

Kyle shrugged him off, “Don't get all Mysterion with me dude! You sound like such a douche when you act all cryptic.”

Kenny shrugged, “You always sound like a douche. Just go sit in the living room and try to relax and have fun with your friends for once without making shit into a whole thing, okay?”
“mm...but...I-”

“If you ruin one more party, I will burn your fucking college thesis,” Kenny snapped.

Kyle held his hands up defensively, “Okay okay! Jesus fucking Christ...I'll talk to you about this another time Craig.”

He turned and left the kitchen, arms crossed and head down. Kenny and Craig both released a heavy sigh, and Butters just shrugged when Token gave him a confused look. Token picked up the box of rice-a-roni, seeming to debate something. He sighed and set the box by the stove.

“I could ask what kind of weird conspiracy club you guys have going on over here, but man, I'm hungry and just want to chill and not get roped into anything. So, that being said, Craig, get the butter and eggs. Kenny, get me some kind of meat from the freezer, not pork, and Butters, dig us up some veggies. I'm gonna make dinner and not think about whatever the fuck just happened,” Token said.

Kenny and Craig nodded, appreciative of Token's decision, and the four all got to work on dinner. Tweek popped back into the kitchen a few minutes later, looking anxious. Craig was sure he expected questions, and he looked relieved when the only thing Token did was ask him to get out plates.

Tweek was setting plates up on the counter, and Craig grabbed the glasses to set out. As he walked by, Tweek whispered, “What did Kyle say?”

Craig set a glass down, “I'll tell you later, but he was basically just trying to grill me for information. He's on my shit list now, I'll tell you that much.”

“He was already on your shit list,” Tweek replied, managing a small smile.

Craig chuckled a bit, “Yeah, well, he's like, almost at the top of it now.”

Everyone sat around the living room table, most of the boys sitting on the floor, all looking pretty excited when they got the food. Token, it turned out, was a much better cook than the rest of them. He had made them some pretty delicious looking chicken, and the box of rice-a-roni was actually pretty good. It still tasted like pure salt, but it was probably as close to good as rice product from a box could get.

“Man, I always thought I was a decent cook, but I ain't near as good as this!” Butters hummed.

“This is so much better than everything I've ever had,” Kenny mumbled into his plate.

“Of course you're good at cooking chicken,” Cartman noted, “I mean, after all-”

“This is really good,” Stan said loudly over Cartman.

Token laughed, “Thanks guys, my dad taught me how to cook. And you know, I know how to properly season things. It does help.”

“Pretty much everything impresses me,” Craig said, “then again, I couldn't actually figure out how to work Tweek's stove...”

“It's okay baby, it's a difficult stove,” Tweek snorted.

“Don't patronize me,” Craig huffed.
The boys laughed, everyone except Kyle, who had been unusually quiet this whole time. He hadn't even said anything about Cartman's blatant racism. Craig noticed, but thought it would be best to just ignore it for now.

Stan got out the whiskey again to mix with his soda, and Kenny took some this time too. It wasn't really surprising, Kenny was pretty blasé about that sort of stuff. The most surprising thing to Craig was that he wasn't insanely sick from the amount of illegal junk he got into.

Stan held the bottle out, “Anybody else? No one else cool like me and Kenny?”

Craig rolled his eyes, Tweek shook his head politely, and, to his surprise, Kyle held out his cup, “Fuck it. I'm done being sober for the night.”

“Stan raised an eyebrow, “But, dude, your kidney-”

“A little is fine! I just can't drink often,” Kyle replied.

“Someone killed Kyle's logic,” Cartman mumbled, then, louder, added, “Who did it? I need to give them a medal.”

Kyle rolled his eyes and sat back with his newly spiked drink. Stan still seemed a little uncertain, but Kyle was smart enough not to get himself hospitalized. Usually.

“Man, everyone's gonna be drunk by the end of the night, aren't they?” Tweek sighed.

“Not everyone, Cartman's too fat to get drunk, you'd need that whole bottle,” Kyle snorted.

“I'll smash the damn bottle over your ginger head,” Cartman growled.

“I'd like to see you try, dough boy,” Kyle shot back, then he downed the entire glass in one gulp and set it on the table.

“I think we stressed Kyle out,” Craig whispered.

“Man I don't even care, maybe he'll loosen up a little now,” Tweek mumbled back.

Everyone finished their dinner, Butters and Tweek cleaned the dishes, and Craig guided everyone else back down to the basement. They all headed over to the sea of blankets, all the boys adding the stuff they brought from home to the pile. Kyle flopped face first into a pile of two large pillows and a massive bunny plushie that Butters had brought. He rolled onto his back and looked up at the ceiling, eyes unfocused.

“You okay there dude?” Clyde asked, looking down at Kyle.

“No but dude, why the fuck? Like, in Europe they aren't called bakies?” Kyle mumbled.

Everyone started laughing, even Craig found himself snickering at that. It was clear Kyle was pretty drunk from just that one glass. Of course, he was 15, weighed roughly one hundred pounds, and never drank, so that made a lot of sense. Stan sat down next to him, patting his head and saying he was glad Kyle hadn't had much.

“No but dude, why the fuck? Like, in Europe they aren't called cookies, you know? They're called biscuits. Sweet biscuits. It makes no sense,” Kyle mumbled, rubbing his face with his hands.

“Alright, I'll be guarding Kyle for the rest of the night to make sure he doesn't get out of hand,” Stan sighed.
Kenny sat down on the blankets, leaning back against the edge of the couch, “We should just chill for awhile and like, watch a movie or something.”

“Let's watch a scary movie!” Butters exclaimed.

There were several groans in response, and Butters frowned, “Well...I thought it was a good idea.”

“Dude, nothing scares us,” Stan grumbled, “Scary movies aren't fun when they're tamer than your own life.”

“We could always put in a shitty 80s horror flick and just laugh at it,” Craig suggested.

Clyde jumped to his feet, gasping excitedly, “Guys! I have the PERFECT movie! Friday the 13th! It's perfect, cause it's super suspenseful, and lots of things in it are like, staples or cliches now, so we can still laugh at it!”

Everyone mumbled in agreement at this, but Tweek shook his head, “I mean, it's a good idea, but I don't have that movie.”

“Streaming, dude,” Stan pointed out.

“I can broadcast it from my phone to your TV,” Token said.

“Our TV doesn't do that,” Tweek said.

“Seriously? It's not the 90s anymore,” Token huffed.

“We can try to get it to play on the Wii U,” Craig said, “an old movie like that is probably on youtube or something.”

“If I was at that camp,” Kyle started, then said something incomprehensible and waved his fist in the air.

“He’s trying to fight movie characters again,” Cartman mumbled, “This is why we shouldn't let him drink.”

“You're just worried he's gonna go all Jersey on you again,” Stan huffed.

“Fuck yeah I'm worried about that!” Cartman replied, “he's an absolute monster.”

“Guys, shut the fuck up, I'm trying to navigate this shitty youtube interface,” Craig called over his shoulder.

“Hey, why don't we all change into sleep clothes?” Token suggested, “I don't want to end up falling asleep in jeans.”

“It's not that uncomfortable,” Tweek replied, “And it's only like, ten thirty. You think you're gonna fall asleep by midnight?”

Token shrugged, “I just really want to put on more comfortable pants.”

Everyone took turns going to the bathrooms and changing while Craig set up the movie. He left it paused at the start and changed last. He came back downstairs, holding a few bags of candy, as well as his little stuffed guinea pig. He tossed the gummies and chocolates at his friends, who all protested and swatted at the candy rain.
“Stop it! I don't want to take a chocolate to the eye!” Token said.

“Gummies have pork in them,” Kyle whispered.

“You are really fucking out of it,” Stan grumbled.

“He's actually right,” Craig said, moving to start the movie, “gelatin is made out of meat bits, bones, boiled pig skin, basically stuff butchers can't sell.”

“Well fuck. Thanks for ruining gummy bears,” Clyde said, crossing his arms.

“I muh...mean, they're still really good. Kinda like McDonalds, how th-the nuggets-” Jimmy started, but Clyde covered his mouth to silence him.

“No,” Clyde whispered, “You will not ruin mcnuggies for me.”

Craig snorted and hit play before moving to lay next to Tweek. Everyone shifted into comfortable positions, and Kyle rolled onto his stomach, attempting to focus on the screen.

“You okay with the movie?” Craig asked quietly, “it won't make you panic?”

“W-well...it might be a little much, but you're here, so it should be fine,” Tweek replied, smiling nervously.

Everyone was making fun of every cliché and trope they could spot in the first fifteen minutes or so, all laughing and making jokes about the movie and the general 70s-80s style of it. By halfway through, they were all yelling various things at the screen, several screaming 'Jason!' every time they got a glimpse of him. By the final act, everyone was leaning forward, all getting really into the movie, despite the fact that they all knew how it ended.

“There he is,” Craig whispered.

“The stabby boy,” Stan added.

“Oh my god I forgot about the mom!” Token gasped, covering his mouth.

The boys were all shifting here and there, Cartman mimicking the swinging motion of the machete, Tweek clutching Craig tightly, eyes wide as he mouthed silent words. Clyde was wrapped up in two blankets, mouth open and eyes fixed on the screen.

“Oh my god I can't remember, does she die?” Tweek whispered.

“N-no no, she's the...the final girl, they're ah-always fine,” Jimmy assured him.

“Doesn't she behead that woman?” Token asked.

No sooner had he asked than the screen flared with movement, sword on skin as the woman was beheaded in all her 80s glory. Everyone yelled excitedly, then the lights to the house went out, and everyone screamed.

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Phone lights were out at record speeds, and Craig stood up, Tweek rising with him. He rested a hand on Tweek's head and scanned the room with his phone light. Kenny was doing the same, mumbling assurances to Butters as he surveyed the room. Clyde was hiding under the blankets now, Jimmy was using his light to look for his crutches, which he'd set aside to lay down, Kyle was on his feet,
warily squinting into the darkness, and everyone else seemed to just be mumbling and trying to illuminate as much of the room with their phones as possible.

“It was just a coincidence,” Craig said, “Tweek, where's your fuse box?”

Tweek took a few deep breaths, fingers curling into Craig's shirt, “It's...outside. In the back yard.”

“Lame,” Kenny mumbled under his breath, “gonna fuckin' die...”

“Nothin' bad is happenin! Don't be so down,” Butters said, “We'll just go get the lights back on! Right?”

“What would have knocked them out?” Kyle asked, voice strangely serious for a boy literally swaying on his feet.

His tone unsettled even Craig, but he shook the feeling off, “It's fine. Just a freak accident. It happens. Come on, me and Kenny will go get the lights back on.”

“Just gonna volunteer me like that?” Kenny huffed.

“You know you would be going regardless. Come on, everyone is really freaked out, so let's just hurry up,” Craig replied.

“I'm going too,” Tweek said, “I know exactly where it is and everything...so, yeah.”

The three boys got outside, and as the frosty grass crunched under their feet, Craig could swear he caught movement out of the corner of his eye. He shook his head and kept on walking, following where Tweek guided them.

The fuse box was inside a little shed in the backyard. Craig went straight for the handle, just wanting to get this over with, but Tweek grabbed his wrist, yanking him to the side of the building. He watched, confused, as the two blondes cased the shed. They circled it slowly, Kenny resting his hand on something in his pocket as he peeked into the one dirty window.

“Clear,” Tweek whispered.

“Clear,” Kenny echoed.

“The fuck?” Craig whispered.

Tweek took Craig's hand, opening the shed door, “We just wanted to be sure nobody was inside,” he explained.

Kenny stood by the door, back facing them as he continued to survey the yard. Craig checked the breaker, and strangely, the main switch, the one that controlled all the others, had been flipped. It was a big, heavy plastic thing, and usually the main breaker wouldn't just trip like that. Someone probably would've had to deliberately flip it off. Craig turned it back on, and Tweek sighed in relief as the shed and house flooded with light once more.

“Thank god, just a tripped breaker,” Tweek sighed.

They turned off the light behind them, closing and locking the shed before heading back in. Craig was unsettled to find Kyle, still blankly staring out the window. It was like he was trying to piece together some great mystery that his tipsy mind just refused to process.

“It was just tripped,” Tweek explained, “We locked the shed just in case, but it's fine now.”
Everyone murmured their relief, but Kyle, without turning around, said, “Who turned on the shed light?”

“Wh..what?” Tweek asked.

“When you turned the power back on,” Kyle murmured, “the shed's light was already on. It wasn't earlier, right? So...who turned it on?”

Craig felt his veins turn to ice, not liking what that implied one bit. Tweek didn't seem to like it either, and shot up the stairs so fast he practically left a cloud of dust behind. Craig hurried up the stairs after him, just to find him frantically zipping around through the living room and kitchen, checking all the doors and windows.

“Tweek, Tweek it's okay, I'm sure it was just some weird coincidence!” Craig tried to assure, even if he didn't fully believe it himself.

“I-it's my parents fault, it has to be!” Tweek growled, “well, that's fine! I won't let them ruin this. I'm actually enjoying myself dammit. Craig, all the doors and windows are locked, so we're safe for now. I think. Please reassure me that we're safe..”

Craig hurried over to him, hugging him and kissing his cheek, “Everything is fine Tweek. It was just a power outage, and the house is secure anyway. Besides, this house has like, several hidden weapons, and Kenny, Butters, and Kyle could probably kick about anyone's asses, especially all together. There's nothing to worry about.”

Tweek closed his eyes, taking a long, deep breath, “Okay. Thank you...you're right, we're fine. It's okay.”

He took Craig's hand in his, “Alright...let's head back downstairs. God, I hope this won't freak everyone out so much that they won't want to come back...”

Craig brightened a bit, pushing the anxiety from just a few minutes ago to the back of his mind, “Wait, you...want them to come back?”

Tweek thought it over for a minute, pausing by the top of the stairs. He nodded a bit, “Yeah, yeah...I think...this has been really fun. Just because my parents make things awful doesn't mean I shouldn't be able to have friends, right? I uh, I'll apologize to Kyle tomorrow about that gun thing too...I'm sure I can find a way to explain it.”

Craig chuckled, “I can help you figure something out. Man, I'm just happy you actually want people around. I haven't had a terrible time either, so that's something.”

When the two got back downstairs, their friends were all sprawled around the room, most asleep in the piles of blankets, some tiredly talking to one another. Clyde, Jimmy, and Token had all fallen asleep in a sort of pile on a bunch of the blankets. Stan was mostly asleep, leaned against the couch where Kyle was laying, staring up at the ceiling and saying something that barely made sense about lights. Cartman was looking tiredly out the window, squinting into the darkness while Kenny stood next to him, saying something that Craig couldn't hear; and Butters was curled up with a bunch of pillows, asleep in the middle of their blanket ocean.

After checking in with Kenny and assuring him that the house was all locked up, the boys that were still awake all settled in to try and get some rest. They were a little on edge after the power problems, but managed to fall asleep after awhile.
When Craig woke up the next morning, he found himself tangled in a pile of blondes. Tweek was wrapped around him, Butters was pressed against his side, and Kenny was draped over his legs. He felt very claustrophobic, and had to twist and wriggle his way free. He may have kicked Kenny, but he didn't really feel bad about it.

He got up, brushing himself off and groggily looking around the room. Daylight filtered through the window, and when he checked his phone he saw it was a little past nine. He couldn't believe Tweek was still asleep. A quick survey of the room told him that a few people were already up, Token, Stan, and Kyle were nowhere to be seen, but everyone else was still dead asleep.

He headed upstairs, yawning as he walked into the kitchen. He could hear hushed voices, and mumbled a good morning to the boys that were sitting around the table. Token was mixing something in a big bowl, and Stan and Kyle both looked like they had bad headaches.

“Hey bitches,” Craig greeted, “Two of you look filled with regret.”

Stan grunted and Kyle flipped Craig off. Token chuckled and shook his head, “This is why underage drinking is a bad idea.”

“Whatever, you're not my real mom,” Kyle mumbled.

“I was going to make coffee, but I dunno, I just never really trusted Tweek's parents' coffee...is that bad?” Stan asked.

Craig shook his head, “No no, I'd say it's better to not trust it.”

“I know you know somethin’ Tucker,” Kyle grumbled, “I'm gonna find out one day dammit.”

Craig picked up a metal measuring cup, grabbed a spoon, and clanged the two together so that the dingling sound reverberated through the air, making both hungover boys curse and clutch their heads, “Mind your business Broflovski.”

Token shook his head, “Craig, Stan didn't do anything to you, be nice. Or at least be civil.” He took the measuring cup from Craig, “by the way, I'm making breakfast, why don't you go wake everyone else up so these two can suffer in peace for a few minutes?”

After twenty minutes of grumbling and Craig kicking people, everyone was awake and sitting around in the living room, tiredly talking about their plans for the day and school things. Token made pancakes, which thoroughly excited everyone, and Tweek advised people to drink anything besides the coffee.

“So hey, it was kinda surprising from the two most anti-social people I know, but this was actually pretty fun,” Stan said.

“Yeah, it wasn't so bad,” Kyle yawned, “definitely better than how most sleepovers at my house go.”

“Your mom won't pay for the damage anymore,” Cartman chuckled.

“Even with that power scare, I think this was pretty awesome,” Clyde beamed, “It actually kinda added to the scary movie anyway! And it's fine since there was no real danger after all.”

Tweek seemed surprised and relieved that everyone had had a good time, and Craig was pretty pleased that they had managed to pull this off. No injuries or anything. He found himself speaking, and was honestly a little surprised at himself as he said, “We should do this again some time.”
Everyone looked at him, a few of his friends chuckled, and Token said, “Look at that, you're finally becoming like a real human person!”

“They grow up so fast,” Clyde said, sniffing and wiping away a fake tear.

“Next time let's fuck up Craig's house!” Kenny grinned.

“Fuck you guys, my mom will literally beat you up if you damage our house,” Craig snapped back.

Everyone chatted and joked around over breakfast, talking about various things from the night before. They teased Kyle and at one point Butters excitedly hopped up on the table again, trying to laugh evilly while Kenny supportively clapped. Things wound down after awhile and everyone slowly started heading out. Stan and Cartman had to get home to get ready for church, Kenny had to help Butters sneak back into his house, and Token had to drive Jimmy to some comedy event. Clyde decided to tag along with them, and he took most of the leftover candy with him.

Tweek walked with Kyle to the door as Craig started tidying up around the living room. They where whispering about something, and Craig strained to hear, but couldn't make out enough of what was being said to piece anything together. Tweek motioned back towards Craig, said something else, then patted Kyle's shoulder before heading back in to help clean. Kyle awkwardly waved goodbye before heading off, not saying another word as he went.

“What was that about?” Craig asked as he grabbed a trash bag from the closet.

“I was just apologizing for being so freaked out last night, and I also told him if he tried pressing you for information again instead of coming to me, I'd kick his ass,” Tweek said.

“You did not,” Craig snorted.

“...okay I said I'd tell his mom. That usually shuts him up, so, whatever works, you know?” Tweek said, shrugging.

Craig laughed and shook his head. He began to gather up leftover candy wrappers and empty chip bags, “Well, sounds like a kind of terrible apology, but I'm not great at them either, so oh well.”

“Yeah, well, oh well,” Tweek agreed.

“So...I actually feel like that went really well. What do you think?” Craig asked.

Tweek hummed in thought, pausing in his cleaning. After a moment he walked over to Craig, kissing his cheek and smiling, “It was actually fun. Thank you for convincing me to do this.”

He hugged him tightly, then added, “But next time we're doing this at your house. You're suffering the anxiety of having that many people in your home with me.”

Craig whined, giving an exaggerated, “Nooooo!”

Chapter End Notes

Woo! Finally got to write this fun chapter! I feel like it went pretty well, and now now...
time for my OTHER plans!
The Line and How to Cross It

Chapter Notes

*Busts down the door*

I'M BACK

September was a busy month for me, and I got a retail job recently as art does not exactly pay the bills

So, less time to work on the story, but I finally have an update!

Buckle up! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Craig was in high spirits through the week, lasting for an entire two days until Wednesday morning rolled around. He greeted his friends, kissed Tweek until Clyde begged him to stop, and kicked one of Jimmy’s crutches out from under him for a particularly inappropriate comment. It was all going great. At least until he checked his planner and remembered what day it was.

Tweek leaned against him, peeking at the planner, "what's the matter? You look like you suddenly got indigestion."

Craig groaned quietly, "I think I might've. Ugh, I fucking forgot, I have to go to the library this afternoon and do that stupid research paper with Kyle. God, I didn't even think of any topics either, he's going to be such a dick about it..."

Tweek frowned, "gross. Well, if you need me I'm just a call away."

Tweek's attitude towards Kyle had changed quite a bit in the last week. Since he still tended to feel a bit jealous towards him, he had grown more distant towards Kyle in general. But more than that, what happened over the weekend at the sleepover, and with the fact he seemed to still be sniffing around for clues, Tweek had started actually acting a bit mean towards him along with Craig. Craig wasn't sure how pissed at Kyle Tweek was, but he sure wasn't encouraging their friendship anymore.

"So hey Tweek, you still jealous of Kyle or something? Cause you seem like you don't like him lately," Clyde stated.

Tweek snapped his attention to Clyde, eyes narrowing, "what he did is none of your business."

Clyde hid behind Token and Token raised his hands defensively, "if this is about that kitchen thing, I really wouldn't worry! I'm sure he'll lose interest pretty quickly."

Tweek snorted, something between an angry sound and a laugh, "You clearly don't know Kyle."

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When Craig got into class, he didn't even have a chance to sit down before Kyle approached him, a
strange expression Craig couldn't place resting on his face, "I hope you didn't forget about the library today."

"I'm not an idiot. It's in my schedule," Craig huffed, "now move, your self righteous ass is in my way."

Kyle crossed his arms, but stepped aside, "I'm impressed that you keep a planner at all, considering it takes some actual effort."

Craig grit his teeth and walked to his desk, resisting the urge to break Kyle's glasses. What was his deal today? The annoying ginger usually only got snarky when he was pissed at someone.

Kyle walked stiffly to his own desk, "oh, and don't worry about picking out a topic, I have a really good one."

Craig's eyes narrowed as he studied Kyle's face, ah yes, he could place the expression now, scheming with a hint of smugness, "What the hell are you planning?"

Kyle pushed his reading glasses up on his nose and turned his attention to his own planner, "I'm planning to make a good research paper, Craig, and I picked a topic I'm sure you're more than knowledgeable enough for."

Craig could feel a knot tightening in his stomach, because he was pretty damn sure Kyle wasn't talking about space. Wendy tried to ask what was wrong, but Craig just shook his head and pretended to read his English textbook.

Wendy sighed and closed her own book, "Kyle has something on you, doesn't he?"

Craig visibly tensed, but said nothing. How much did Wendy know?

"Look, Kyle has debated becoming an investigative reporter sometimes, and he has a hell of a knack for it. I know he's been asking around about Tweek. If something is seriously going on that you don't want to get out, maybe you should just be upfront with Kyle about why. Because once he thinks justice needs to be served, he sinks his teeth in and does not let go," Wendy said. "He's on the school paper, and I've had to stop him from printing more than one potentially harmful story. Sometimes his blind drive for truth gets in the way of him seeing who it could hurt."

Craig glanced over to her, the gears in his head already turning, "...thanks for the heads up Wendy."

The school paper huh? Well, fuck talking to Kyle about this, it wasn't his right to know. He'd just talk to Jimmy, he was the editor after all, he could just make Kyle stop, right?

---

Craig had just sat down to lunch, and Token already had that concerned dad look on his face.

"What's wrong?" He asked.

Craig blinked, "wh-how the hell do you do that?"

"Well for one thing you forgot to get food," Token stated, gesturing to Craig's empty tray.

Craig swore under his breath and stood back up, "I fucking hate Kyle," he grumbled.

"Yeah, that's actually the other thing," Token said, "Kyle came over a few minutes before you got here, he was asking some really weird questions. I had a feeling your mood might have something to
do with that."

Craig turned, shooting a glare towards Kyle's table. Kyle looked over from his conversation, eyes narrowing back at Craig.

"Kyle needs to keep to his own fucking problems," Craig hissed. "Jimmy, what's he said to you?"

Jimmy blinked, "uh, juh-just asking about you and Tweek mostly. Wh-why?"

"Did he say anything about some story idea for the paper?"

Jimmy shook his head, "n-nothing new. I have him cuh-covering sports this week. He actually v-volunteered to do it."

Craig slowly sat back down, "interesting..." Alright, so talking to Jimmy about this was clearly out...but Kyle was definitely up to something. Craig could just feel it.

"Is something going on? I'm confused," Clyde said.

"Nothing, just Kyle being a nosy bitch," Craig huffed. "Let's just talk about something else."

"Um, Craig?" Token said, "food?"

Craig looked back down to his still empty tray, "fucking-..."

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When Craig finished Chemistry, he texted Tweek and begrudgingly headed to the public library.

Kyle was already sitting at a computer, typing away. He didn't even look up until Craig sat down next to him.

"What're you working on?" Craig asked.

"A story for the paper," Kyle said, "the homecoming game is tonight, and I'm covering it."

"Oh yeah, I think Clyde had mentioned some kind of game tonight..." Craig mumbled, "well, whatever, let's get started on this research project so we can be done with it."

Kyle saved and closed his document, "Right. So, our teacher suggested we go for a current event or a continuous local issue, you remember, right?"

"Yes, I do actually listen to the teacher," Craig stated flatly, "we could do something with the local cops or maybe that bill in congress about-

Kyle held up a hand to silence him, "That's alright, I told you this morning, I already have a perfect subject to tackle. You know as well as anyone about the homeless problem, and of course the police corruption and the higher foot traffic than normal at night. Well, I think they all have a connection."

"That...seems like a pretty vague topic," Craig huffed, even though he was pretty sure Kyle hadn't gotten to the point quite yet.

Kyle narrowed his eyes, "well, the connection is what I think we should research. That connection is this." He pulled a bag out of his backpack, tossing it to Craig.

Craig's eyes widened as he caught it, "dude, what the fuck are you doing with this?! You're gonna
get us in trouble!"

"I found it around Kenny's house," Kyle replied, "meth. It has to be the connection. And Kenny won't say much about it, but there's absolutely no reason YOU wouldn't want to help solve the mystery of a major local problem, right?"

Craig tossed the bag back to Kyle, "um, there are lots of reasons! It's not my problem, it's fucking dangerous, it's way more effort than we need for a stupid research paper, I want to live through my teens, take your fucking pick!"

Craig hoped that was convincing, because truthfully he was just getting terrified about how close Kyle was to Tweek's family secret. He couldn't let Tweek's parents get caught, not when it would mean Tweek either being sent to a juvenile center or put in the system. Kyle really had no idea how much this could ruin Tweek's life.

Kyle scoffed, shoving the bag back away, "Peru was more dangerous than this. Actually so was our superhero game as kids thanks to Cartman."

Craig crossed his arms, "what's the real motive here Kyle? We could be doing literally anything else. Why this?"

Kyle raised an eyebrow, "Are you saying...there would be some reason I might have an ulterior motive?"

Craig rolled his eyes to hide his anxiety, "I dunno, you just tend to get a lot of stupid and wrong ideas in your head."

Kyle zipped up his backpack and stood, "well, we're doing this. And you told me you'd carry your weight. So unless you plan on explaining to the teacher why I did all the work, you'll tag along."

Craig stood up, arms still crossed over his chest as he followed Kyle out of the library, "whatever, if I get hurt, you're paying the hospital bills."

"I am more than capable of protecting both of us, you useless lazy asshole," Kyle huffed.

Craig feigned a bored, mildly annoyed look and texted Tweek as he trailed after Kyle. Tweek was smart, he could figure out what to do, right?

He sent a quick 'Kyle insisted on looking into the towns meth problem. Heads up' Tweek replied only a minute later, 'I'll choke him with his own ponytail if he drags you anywhere dangerous. Keep urself safe, i got this covered'

Craig snorted and tucked his phone away. Kyle glanced back over his shoulder, "who was that?"

"My amazing boyfriend. I just told him we're doing a fucking stupidly dangerous project and he said he'd kill you if I get hurt. I love him," Craig replied.

Kyle groaned, "it's not even that dangerous! We're just gonna start at Kenny's house and look for leads. Unless," he paused, glancing back at Craig suspiciously, "you can think of anywhere...else, that we might be able to start?"

Craig shrugged, ignoring the shiver that ran down his spine, "homeless camp in the park?"

Kyle's eye twitched and he turned, pulling out his own phone to type a rapid message to someone.
Craig caught up to walk along next to him, leaning to try and see who he was texting, "and who's that? YOUR boyfriend?"

Kyle turned red up to his ears, shoving the phone away, "no! I don't even have a-I mean I don't-I I like girls!" Kyle stammered out.

Craig laughed loudly, "oh my god! I was just kidding! Do you seriously have a crush on one of your idiot friends? Which one? Is it depressed or sadistic?"

Kyle turned redder and refused to look at Craig, "just fucking focus."

Craig smiled to himself, this was good, he had a topic he could use to distract Kyle now. If he brought up the others more, maybe he could keep him from staying laser focused on Tweek.

They arrived at Kenny's house and found Butters was hanging around outside. He was sitting on the hood of a junked car, wearing what looked to be a bloodied tank top and holding a board with nails sticking out of it. Craig grimaced, remembering when Tweek had told him about Butters being bipolar. He didn't look cheery at all today, so Craig took it as a warning and stopped at the edge of the yard.

Kyle didn't seem to get the hint, however, and walked straight up to Butters, "what are you doing?" He asked, sounding irritated.

Butters looked over at him, eyes seeming almost distant as he looked him over, "Just got done beatin' some druggie off a the property. Ken is still chasin' another down. The heck do you want?"

Kyle rolled his eyes, "Craig and I are here to try and talk to some druggies actually. Do you know how we get into that garage?"

Kyle pointed over to the garage, which was usually padlocked shut. Craig took a couple uneasy steps forward, looking up at Butters hesitantly.

Butters slid off the car and leaned on his splintery board weapon, "No. Ken said not ta let anybody in. Sorry Kyle."

Kyle crossed his arms, "okay I really don't have time for this. Butters, tell me where the key is, or I'll just go look for it myself."

"Kyle, Butters seems pretty serious about this, you should probably just leave it and come back when Kenny is home," Craig said.

Butters smiled, a half crooked smirk, and shifted to point the board at Kyle, "you're trespassin'. Get out 'fore I hit ya."

Kyle's features hardened and he didn't move, "I'm going to find out either way. You can't protect Kenny's dumb decisions forever you-" Kyle was cut off as Butters smacked him across the face with the non-nail side of the board, his teal eyes were ice cold as he took a step and got right in Kyle's face, "don't you ever fuckin' blame this mess on Kenny. If you really think he WANTS any a this, then you're dumber than I thought."

Craig took a couple quick steps back, unsure if he should try to stop this or just take cover. Kyle rubbed his cheek, pulling a splinter out. He met Butters eyes, and Craig swore he could feel fire coming off of both of them. Yeah, yeah he'd just take cover and call the cops if either of them got close to dying.
"I don't want to fight you," Kyle said through gritted teeth, "this is important, got it? If I'm right, it might even help Kenny in the long run."

Butters tossed the board aside and crossed his arms, "Don't talk down ta me. That's your problem, ya always think you're right, and no matter what anybody else tells ya, ya won't give up. Even when ya might end up hurtin' people. So, if ya wanna ruin everybody's lives so bad, you're gonna have ta fight to get through." He shifted back into a fighting stance, eyes locked on Kyle's.

Kyle breathed out slowly, like he was attempting to calm his temper, but then suddenly, he swung. Craig blinked, because fuck, Kyle was FAST. His fist connected with Butters before the blonde could even react.

Butters stumbled back, reeling from the punch, but he stayed upright. He shook it off and launched at Kyle. Craig ducked behind the rusty car, feeling very conflicted. On the one hand, this was insane and dangerous and one of them could get really hurt, but on the other hand, this was an experienced street fighter against a trained martial artist and it looked fucking awesome. He wanted to stop the fight...but he kind of wanted to watch more.

Butters threw a couple of hard punches, missing Kyle by a hair each time. He ducked down low, crouching as Kyle aimed a kick over him, and managed to uppercut the ginger square in the gut.

Kyle fell to the ground, but was quick to turn it into a backwards roll, landing back up on his feet as he coughed and fought to regain his breath.

Kyle spun around and connected a roundhouse kick with Butters arm, as he'd raised it just in time to block. A small crunch could be heard as shin connected with forearm, and Butters winced as he stepped quickly away.

Kyle twirled around like a dancer, moving mostly on his toes as he spun around Butters, dodging the punches he kept throwing. Butters stopped punching after a minute, breathing raggedy as he analyzed the situation.

Kyle leapt straight over Butters head, moving with the grace of a cat as Butters stayed low to the ground, just waiting for an opening. As Kyle tried to land another spinning roundhouse kick, Butters grabbed his ankle, twisting him around and throwing him to the ground like he was weightless.

Kyle tried to punch, but Butters caught his wrist and pinned him, slamming his arm to the ground with enough force that it would likely bruise. Using his free hand, he pulled a dagger from his pocket and pointed it at Kyle. "I win. Now get out."

Kyle struggled for a minute, then exhaled in frustration, holding out open palms as a sign of defeat, "Fine. I'll go...you fucking psychopath."

Butters stood, letting Kyle get up. "Good."

Kyle got to his feet, groaning a bit as he walked back over to Craig, who had just stayed behind the car the whole time, opting to not help at all.

"Thanks for your fucking help," Kyle spat.

Craig raised his hands, "hey, you said you could protect both of us, that's on you."

Butters smiled in satisfaction as he sat back up on the car hood, dagger still in hand. Craig glanced back at him and swore Butters gave him a brief nod.
Craig sighed and followed behind as Kyle walked down the sidewalk, now with a slight limp from where Butters had thrown him like a rag doll. "So, what's your plan now?" Craig asked.

Kyle grinned, "well, bruises aside, that actually went about how I was hoping."

"You hoped Butters would kick your ass?" Craig snorted.

"No, asshole!" Kyle snapped. "I just needed to keep Butters occupied. I didn't expect him to know how to fight."

"It looked like he hits like a tank too, that was...honestly a pretty badass fight," Craig said.

"Yeah...well...I guess Kenny trained him, and you already know I take martial arts, so...I guess it would look kind of cool," Kyle said. He glanced towards Craig and slowly added, "hey um...not that it matters, but who looked cooler?"

Craig wanted to say Butters, just to be an asshole, but he had to admit Kyle looked pretty good too, "I...ugh, you both looked fucking awesome. And it pains me to admit that."

Kyle beamed, then Craig added, "you lost though, so you're still a weak bitch next to Butters."

Kyle sighed, smile falling back into a scowl, "Whatever, let's just go get that key now."

Craig raised an eyebrow, "uh, how exactly are you planning on doing that? Butters is guarding the house and, as I just mentioned, he kicked your ass. And also he has a knife that I know for a fact he has used."

Kyle looked back towards Craig, a mischevious glint in his eye, and Craig felt his stomach flop. Fuck, Kyle was one step ahead, wasn't he?

"I would've had you get it while I was distracting him, but I have no idea if you're good at being sneaky, and I honestly don't trust you." Kyle said.

This wasn't a great sign. "So...who then?" Craig asked, uneasy.

"Cartman," Kyle replied.

"Bitches," came a response from an alley between two shops.

Craig blinked and looked over in surprise as Cartman walked out, dressed in all black, and tossed a key to Kyle.

"Hey Jew, Peru," Cartman greeted.

Kyle caught the key, rolling his eyes as he slid it into his coat pocket.

"Wow, how long did you work on that greeting?" Craig asked flatly.

He took out his phone, shaking his head and feigning boredom as he texted Tweek 'kyle and cartman are working together on this and have Kenny's key we are FUCKED'.

Tweek texted back 'distract them 4 a minute'.

Craig put his phone away as Cartman looked over, "texting your boyfriend?" Craig smiled wryly, remembering how worked up Kyle got earlier over a certain topic, "I asked Kyle
the same thing earlier, and since it looks like he was texting you, I guess I was right."

Kyle gasped angrily and Cartman laughed.

"Oh my fucking god! Dude Craig thinks you're gay for me!" Cartman snorted.

"You fucking idiot, he clearly thinks you are too! And stop laughing! And I do NOT have ANY interest in Cartman!" Kyle snapped back.

Cartman blinked, "but I'm super not gay, everybody knows that."

"Didn't you tell every one back in elementary school you were Kyle's boyfriend?" Craig asked.

Cartman's face turned pink, "I-that was to get Token and Nichole together!"

Craig raised one eyebrow and Cartman stammered on, "n-no listen, like, Nichole was into Kyle so I told her we were gay so she wouldn't go out with him, it was the easiest way to make her lose interest!"

"By...saying you were BOTH gay? You could've just said Kyle was gay," Craig pointed out.

Kyle crossed his arms and looked at Cartman, "uh, actually yeah, what the fuck was that about?"

Cartman blushed brightly, "I-it was just-shut up! It worked and that's what mattered! You're gross and not handsome at all and I'm not gay so shut up!"

Craig snickered, "you sound pretty gay to me, and I'm kind of an authority."

Cartman sputtered and finally said, "yeah well, Kyle is way gayer than me!"

Kyle put his hands on his hips and glared up at Cartman, "Okay first of all, it really doesn't matter if either of us are gay, there's nothing wrong with being gay, but I am fucking NOT! You literally wear dresses and makeup on a regular basis!"

"Um, wow Kyle, get your fucking toxic masculinity away from me," Cartman said, holding his hands up and feigning disgust.

Kyle made several baffled gibberish sounds before just screaming in frustration and mimicking a choking motion with his hands. Craig snorted, watching this was honestly pretty entertaining. His attention was drawn away from the scene in front of him when his phone buzzed, a text from Tweek that just read 'got it'.

What? When? He hadn't even noticed Tweek around the area. Man, Kyle and Cartman were really distracting.

"Guys guys, lets just calm down and agree you're both pretty gay, alright?" Craig chuckled.

Kyle growled, "Whatever! Let's just sneak back to Kenny's and get into the garage. Give me the key."

Cartman crossed his arms, "um, I tossed you the key already, you put it in your pocket. Remember? Fucking moron."

Kyle patted his pockets, digging around in them before turning them inside out. Lint and a couple coins fell out of the pockets, "...you actually got me there, good job. Now stop fucking around and give me the key fatto."
Cartman turned his pockets out, shaking them to emphasize, "I already told you I don't have it! You drop it or something?"

Kyle whipped around and pointed at Craig, "you. Did you take it?"

Craig patted his sweater, "no pockets. Besides, what possible kind of ulterior motive would I have to take it?" He asked smugly.

Kyle grit his teeth, "take off your hat."

"Why?" Craig asked, crossing his arms.

Kyle reached up and snatched it off his head, looking in it, "...seriously? Come on! Where is it?!"

Craig grabbed his hat back, "God, stop freaking out. This was stupid anyway, can't we just go back to the library and do our paper on the congress's bill? We're clearly getting nowhere with this mess."

Kyle puffed his cheeks out, looking angry and determined, and walked around Craig, patting his sides and back, "you've got to be hiding it..."

Craig slapped Kyle, making the ginger quickly back off, "That was wildly fucking inappropriate. Touch me again and I'll break your glasses."

Kyle took a step back, rubbing his face while Cartman laughed. "...okay, okay, you're right. I shouldn't have done that...but I still know you took it."

Craig huffed, "I've just been standing here watching you two bitch and dodge your obvious gay feelings. How and when could I have possibly taken it?"

Kyle yelled and punched Cartman in the gut, "this is YOUR fault for distracting me!"

Cartman grunted and stumbled back a couple steps, "KYLE! I WAS FUCKING HELPING YOU! It is not my fault you got distracted over how gay you are!"

"ME?!" Kyle exclaimed.

Craig didn't wait for them to calm back down, he just turned and walked away, letting them stand there and fight with each other. He'd go to the library and write up as much as he could on a different topic, then Kyle would have to just go with it.

---

On his way back to the library, Tweek caught up with him, catching him in a hug around the waist, "hey handsome, what happened to your study partner?"

Craig snickered and kissed the top of Tweek's head, "he and Cartman are still arguing over who's fault it is that they lost the key."

Tweek took Craig's hand, walking alongside him, "oh man, what a downright shame." He held up his free hand, something metallic glinting in the fading afternoon light, "what on earth could've happened to it?"

Craig laughed and shook his head, "how did you even do that? I never saw you!"

"I'm very, very good," Tweek smiled, "I'm a pretty skilled pickpocket too, so that helps."
"That's pretty hot," Craig said.

Tweek snorted, "it's really weird how into my illegal skills you are."

"What can I say? I just love a neurotic bad boy," Craig hummed.

Tweek laughed, "fucking nerd...okay okay, seriously though, how much trouble are we in here? I know Kyle won't give up on this."

"Well, he might be set back without that key, since he's not the type to just accuse without proof. He's suspicious, but he won't do anything too drastic without evidence...right?"

"W-well maybe he won't, but didn't you say he's willingly involving Cartman in this? He doesn't have a line like Kyle does," Tweek pointed out.

Craig sighed heavily, "if he kidnaps one of us, I'm gonna be fucking pissed."

"We need a plan. I already told Butters to feel free and beat either of them up if they go to Kenny's, but that'll only stall for so long," Tweek frowned.

"Oh, so YOU told him to act psychotic towards Kyle?" Craig asked.

"I just told him to fight him off, was he in a mood? I should've known...he didn't put ANY emojis in his texts today. He didn't cut Kyle did he?" Tweek asked worriedly.

"Well I mean, he pointed a knife at him and smacked him with a big wooden plank, but no major damage," Craig said, "I...almost wish I had recorded it, that fight was honestly one of the coolest things I've seen that wasn't related to space."

Tweek shook his head, "you're unbelievable. If you saw me fight, would you even worry, or would you just think that was cool too?"

"I-" Craig started, then paused, "...depends on if you were winning or not."

Tweek sighed, smiling teasingly up at Craig, "You're so caring it blows my mind."

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The two spent the next two hours working on the new research paper to deter Kyle, as well as brainstorming ways to block Kyle's possible plans.

Kyle eventually showed up at the library, pissed that Craig had run off, and even more pissed that he had gone ahead and written up a page and a half of a different research topic. Tweek smiled and made an exit so speedy that Craig swore he left a dust cloud in his wake, and Kyle watched him go with narrowed eyes.

Kyle sighed and motioned to the computer, "what's all this?"

Craig pursed his lips, clicking 'save' on the document, "a good research paper, Kyle. One that won't get us killed."

Kyle crossed his arms and tried to glare Craig down, but Craig just returned his gaze emptily.

"Craig, I thought I told you-"
Craig rested a hand on Kyle's shoulder, "look, you tried, and you failed. I'm going with this, so unless you want to explain to the teacher why I did all the work, you'll go along with it."

Throwing Kyle's words back in his face like that felt amazing, and watching his shift from seething anger to bitterness to acceptance was truly a thing of beauty.

"You win this round Tucker. We'll do your paper," he said, conceding to loss, at least for now.

Craig sighed in relief. He knew Kyle wasn't finished with this, but he'd rejoice in this small victory while he could.

By the time the two were done, the library was about to close, and Kyle realized he was going to be late for the homecoming game he was supposed to cover.

As Craig exited the doors, he heard Kyle call out after him. He sighed and turned, "what? Aren't you running late for a sport game?"

Kyle looked at Craig, standing just in the shadow of a street lamp, glasses reflecting some of its yellow light, "...why are you doing this?"

Craig yanked a cigarette out of his pocket, too stressed to go another minute without one. He lit it, focusing on its calming orange glow for a moment before asking, "what do you mean?"

Kyle gave Craig a flat look, "drop the act. I know you know, you have to. Everyone has suspicions...and I get why you'd want to protect him, but...this is about his parents. I'd think you'd want him out of that situation."

Craig took a long drag, there were too many things he wanted to say, and none of them could be said without confirming Kyle's suspicions. So in the end he just went with, "you...really are an annoying fucker."

Kyle clenched the straps of his backpack, teeth grit as he glowered, "that's all you have to say?! Don't you care about this? I don't have solid facts, but if the rumors are true, his parents...how could you be okay with leaving him in that situation? Don't you want to help him?!"

Craig closed his eyes, exhaling smoke through his nose as he tried not to get any more furious with Kyle. "You really think you're helping?" He asked, restrained anger making his voice crack, "do you ever think about repercussions? Good intentions mean fucking nothing when they lead to suffering. Or did that Canada incident teach you nothing?"

Kyle took a couple hurried steps towards Craig, his evident rush to get to the game completely forgotten, "don't you DARE bring up Canada. We all make mistakes-"

"Yeah, and we're supposed to learn from them," Craig retorted. He knew he struck a nerve with Kyle, but he didn't care, Kyle had struck a nerve with him too.

Kyle sneered, "you know what I think? I think it just takes less effort for you to pretend there's no problem. Is that it? You think if I find out the truth, things will be too complicated? I want to actually FIX this issue, and Tweek would be better off in the long run too. But I guess you just don't care enough to-

Craig wasn't sure when exactly he had moved forward, and he wasn't sure if he had consciously made the decision to punch Kyle, but his fist connected all the same. He hit him square in the nose with everything he had, guided by white hot fury. He heard a loud crack, and Kyle took a few stumbling steps back, eyes burning with contempt and pain as he covered his nose with his hands.
"You FUCKING ASSHOLE!" He yelled. Craig could see blood dripping out from under his fingers, glimmering faintly in the dim streetlight. He had definitely broken his nose.

"You have NO business telling me I don't care when you don't know the fucking situation! You'll just make things worse you arrogant asshole! Do I have to beat it into you?! You aren't some magical all knowing martyr! You're just a fucking kid like the rest of us! You think the world's issues are so damn easy to solve! They aren't! Nothing is easy and you don't have ANY idea what the fuck you're talking about!" Craig yelled.

Kyle wiped his nose off, blood streaking his cheek as he stood straight and glared with eyes of boiling lava, "I'm not wrong. You're just a short-sighted delinquent who's too afraid of change to see the good it could bring!"

Craig went to block, already seeing it coming, but Kyle moved like lightning. His foot connected with Craig's side before he could react, knocking him to the ground.

Craig coughed and wheezed, managing to raise himself shakily back to his knees before railing an uppercut into Kyle's stomach, "y-you don't know shit! This isn't a black and white-fucking-issue!"

Kyle took a step back as the fist connected, coughing a bit, but other than that hardly reacting to Craig's punch. It was at that moment that Craig really wished he had learned how to fight properly.

Kyle jumped forward, easily dodging as Craig tried to hit him again. He nailed Craig in the chest with a sturdy punch, bowling him back over with the force of it, "drugs are pretty fucking black and white! I'm doing the town a service by taking them out!"

Craig coughed and wheezed, straining to push himself back to his feet, "y-you...you're so far up your own ass that you...you can't s-see past your self-righteous ego boost, c-can you?" He was panting out each word, finding it a struggle to talk or even stand. It didn't stop him from taking another clumsy swing at Kyle though.

Kyle ducked under Craig's punch and wrapped his arms around his waist, lifting him up and spinning him around before slamming him onto the sidewalk. Craig landed on his back, all the wind knocked out of him as he painfully connected with the ground. Kyle pressed a foot harshly against Craig's chest, holding him in place.

"Don't start fights you can't win," he growled.

He moved his foot back off of Craig, cursing quietly and trying to stop his nose's continued bleeding as he walked off. He left Craig there on the ground, all the fight quite literally knocked out of him.

He groaned and coughed, fishing his phone out of his pocket. He didn't even attempt to get back up, he could tell he would be in too much pain to move for a little while.

He dialed Tweek, squeezing his eyes shut as a spasm of pain ran through him, "hey babe," he mumbled when Tweek answered.

"Craig? Are you okay? You sound hurt!" Tweek said, evidently hearing the pain in Craig's voice.

"Okay well, remember how I said I wasn't dumb enough to try and fight Kyle?" Craig started.

There was a shaky sigh on the other end of the phone, something between exasperation and worry, "where are you?"
"...outside the public library, lying on the sidewalk," Craig mumbled, wincing as his back spasmed again.

"I'll be there in ten minutes, don't move," Tweek said.

"I seriously doubt I could," Craig replied.

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Tweek was standing over Craig roughly ten minutes later, arms crossed and an unamused expression on his face.

"How badly did you get hurt?" He asked.

"Yes," Craig replied in a pained whisper.

Tweek took a deep breath, then sat next to Craig, resting his hands on his chest, "you have no idea how difficult it is for me not to panic right now," he mumbled.

Craig could practically see the effort of it though, his eye twitching just barely as he slid his hands along Craig's chest, pressing down lightly every now and then. Craig felt bad for doing anything to cause Tweek worry, but Kyle deserved that broken nose. Hell, he deserved worse.

Craig winced slightly with each touch of his chest, but he jolted when Tweek squeezed his sides, face turning pink, "Wh-what the hell are you doing, exactly?" He asked, mind just tuning in to the fact the Tweek was repeatedly touching all over him.

Tweek glanced up to Craig's face, eyebrows just slightly furrowed, "why? Did that hurt? I'm trying to see if anything is broken."

Craig nodded a bit, "I-yeah, well, a little. It's just-" he jolted again as Tweek curled his fingers into his sides a little harder.

"Doesn't feel broken..." Tweek mumbled, "why are you jerking around like that?"

Craig sighed shortly, mumbling a slightly embarrassed, "it tickles."

Tweek blinked, then snickered, "it just tickles? Craig you fucking baby, I thought you might have a cracked rib or something!"

Craig laughed too, wincing a bit as the feeling made his chest tighten uncomfortably. Then he started coughing, and that's when Tweek's expression shifted from amused to horrified.

"What's wrong? It's okay, Kyle just really knocked me hard, coughing doesn't mean I'm dying," Craig tried to assure. He wiped his mouth off only to find a reddish smear across his arm. He squinted at it in confusion for a moment before he felt himself being pulled into a sitting position.

He didn't like that feeling at all, pain jolted along his spine and radiated through his chest, making him feel dizzy and nauseous, "nGh Tweek what the-" he was cut off by another coughing fit, which left the sidewalk spattered with flecks of red.

"This is really bad, oh Jesus...okay, okay, I know it hurts j-just stay sitting up for me," Tweek said, clearly struggling to keep from panicking as he felt along Craig's back.

Craig winced and hissed quietly, unvomfrotable heat and prickling needles seeming to form under his skin in every place Tweek touched.
"Tweek-Tw-stop," he managed, "fucking-hurts!"

Tweek shifted around, sitting in front of Craig and holding one of his hands to keep him upright while he dialed his phone with the other.

"Kenny? Hey-I think Craig needs to go to the ER. Kyle fucked him up and he's coughing up blood. A-ambulance or no?"

"Tweek, I don't need-" Craig tried, but Tweek shushed him firmly.

The blonde nodded a few times, then said, "right, okay. Thank you so much."

Tweek hung up the phone and squeezed both of Craig's hands, "Kenny's gonna help me bring you to the hospital. I know I'm paranoid, but he agreed that the blood is pretty serious. So we're going, and you don't get a say."

Craig wanted to protest, but he was in a lot of pain and he was still exhausted from the day as a whole, so he just gave a slow nod and mumbled, "okay."

The walk to the ER was agonizing, and Tweek and Kenny supported him on his feet the best they could. Kenny stated that he would have carried him, but he was worried about making any possible spinal injuries worse.

After being admitted and insisting Kenny take Tweek for a walk to calm his nerves, Craig sat uncomfortably in a temporary bed in the ER until his parents arrived and yelled at him for stupidly getting into a fight.

"What were you thinking son? We both know you're no fighter. You're terrible at it!" Thomas scolded.

Laura shook her head, taking one of Craig's hands, "that really isn't the point here. Thomas. The point is you got hurt, and you can't keep putting yourself in situations like this. What happened Craig?"

Craig shifted a bit, propped up with a few pillows against the shitty hospital cot as a device on his finger monitored his oxygen. He didn't really know what to say. His parents had a right to be worried, hell, he would be too if it were Tricia in his place. He stared down at the neon glare of the oxygen monitor for what felt like hours, watching the number tick back and forth between 63 and 67 as he struggled to come up with a decent response.

"I...he pissed me off," Craig mumbled.

He couldn't think of any other way to say it, what could he tell them? The truth? They were adults, they would get in trouble if they kept Tweek's family's secret, and Tweek would be in trouble if they didn't. Craig just had to act like it was a normal stupid fight. Even if he really wanted his parents to know the truth.

"I thought you had moved passed this kind of aggression," Laura said gently, "you promised me you wouldn't get into any more fights over your short temper."

"Yes, I thought you were going to be less stupid," Thomas added.

Craig rolled his eyes and Laura glared at Thomas, "Don't call him stupid while he's in the hospital! At least wait until we know it's not serious!"
Thomas shrugged, "I just don't get it is all. He's a smart boy, a lot smarter than us, so what the hell made a him do so much reckless shit?"

Craig didn't bother saying anything, and just turned to glare down at the monitor while his parents' arguments faded into white noise. He appreciated Kenny getting him here and taking Tweek to calm down, but he really wished Kenny hadn't insisted he call his parents.

He closed his eyes and tried to keep his parents tuned out, not wanting to listen when he couldn't do anything to ease their stress. He realized after a minute, however, that he didn't need to actively work to tune them out. He could hear his heart pounding in his ears and it was plenty loud enough to muddle the other sounds around him.

His eyes snapped open as he tried to remain calm, but the whole room was spinning, so he had to close them again. He could feel his breath quickening, and his heart rate with it. He was no stranger to panic attacks, and had them every now and then after a bad nightmare, but this felt different. He could deal with panic attacks, but this, well for one thing nothing had brought it on.

He swore he could hear the distant voices of his parents asking what was wrong, and he just registered the fact that his hands were gripping the bedsheets. He forced his eyes open again, and through the spinning he could just make out a bleary '53' on his finger monitor.

He tried to take a deep breath, but found he was having trouble doing so. His knuckles turned white against the sheets as he hacked up more blood, dizzy and starting to panic. He felt a hand on his back and it sent another wave of pain through him. The pain and stressed panic mixed with the lack of oxygen was making the world fade fast.

He felt himself mumbling something incoherently before he felt the air thicken and strain to reach his lungs, and the world around him turned black.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully I'll have the next chapter out in a week or so, but in the mean time, the screaming line is this way, please yell at me in an orderly fashion, Thank you, thank you.

I'm glad to be back, and I hope you all continue enjoying this story! I'd say it's at roughly the 3/4 mark!
Kenny rested his hand on Tweek's shoulder as they sat on a bench just outside the hospital, "Deep
breaths, it's gonna be okay."

Tweek took a few deep, shuddering breaths and wiped his face, "fuck, gh-Jesus...K-Kenny I-I don't
Ng h-I...I can't I j-just-"

Kenny squeezed Tweek's shoulder, "hey, look at me, he'll be fine. You did amazingly, and maybe
he does have a serious injury, but if he does, the hospital will fix it. They have much better doctors
than they used to."

Tweek sucked in a sharp breath and nodded, eyes still watering as his whole frame shook. He hadn't
had tremors this bad in years. He couldn't remember the last time he had been this panicked about
something. Craig was coughing up blood, which meant internal bruising, which could lead to tears,
which could lead to a painful death. He couldn't stop thinking about it. Craig was probably fine, and
he knew that, but the image of his boyfriend painting the dark sidewalk with blood wouldn't leave
his head.

He didn't even realize he was hyperventilating until Kenny pressed his face against his dirty orange
cloth, "it's alright Tweek, you held it together really well for Craig. It was probably a good idea he
sent you with me, because now you can panic for a couple minutes and get all that stress out. It's
alright, I'd be scared too."

Tweek curled his hands into his friend's coat, taking a few more deep breaths before he could meet
Kenny's eyes, "if he dies...I'll never-nhh-nev-never forgive m-myself. K-Kenny...what do I do? What
if he d-dies?"

Kenny looked away, eyes distant and hazy. He didn't like the topic of death, and Tweek knew that,
but he needed some assurance right now. He felt like throwing up and screaming and tearing out all
his hair, he needed someone to ground him, and Craig wasn't here to do that.

"I...don't think he'll die," Kenny said softly, "in fact, would you feel better if we went and checked
on him?"

Tweek nodded shakily, yeah, yeah he could hold it together in front of Craig just as long as he knew
he was safe. He clung to Kenny's arm as the two walked back in, feeling like gripping that parka was
the only thing keeping him physically tethered to the ground.

The boys stopped when they saw Craig's parents in the hall. The adults faces were colorless and
Laura looked like she had glimpsed hell. Tweek felt his heart quickening, he could hear it thundering
in his ears as he let go of Kenny, drifting forward towards Craig's parents.

"What happened?" He asked, voice barely a whisper.
"He-they're stabilizing him," Thomas managed, "he'll be okay, he's a tough boy. He just-it was close, for a minute..."

Laura covered her mouth as tears threatened to spill over, "my baby...god, Tweek, you-thank you."

Laura crouched down, pulling Tweek into a tight hug, and for once he didn't protest, "if it hadn't been for you getting him here when you did-" she choked up a bit, shaking her head.

Thomas nodded, looking on the brink of tears himself, "...he's okay, but he almost wasn't. You really are an angel son."

Tweek's head was buzzing, and he could barely feel the teary-eyed woman that was clutching him so tightly. Craig had almost died? He really had been right to worry for once...and all this from a stupid fight.

"What caused this?" Tweek asked shakily.

"He-whoever he was fighting, he knocked him in the chest," Thomas said, "the doctor showed us the x-rays, it bruised his lung or somethin'."

Tweek nodded slowly. Kenny walked up next to him, offering Laura a consoling hand pat. "Are you guys allowed to see him?" He asked.

"Soon I think," Laura said, finally letting go of Tweek and wiping her eyes.

Tweek opened his mouth to ask something else, but a doctor stepped out into the hallway then, gesturing to them, "only immediate family right now please, but you can come in."

Tweek wrung his hands together anxiously, unsure if Craig’s parents would let him join since he wasn't technically immediate family, but Laura grabbed his hand and walked him right in, not even saying a word about it.

Craig was laying in a proper hospital bed now, awake, but looking very tired and pale. He had a tube in his nose, several sticky pads wired to his chest, an IV, and seemed to not be all there as he looked dazedly around the room.

Tweek whined, shifting from foot to foot until Craig smiled a little and motioned him forward. Tweek ran up next to the bed, grabbing Craig's hand, "oh god oh my god Craig what is all this? Are you dying? Are you okay? What's that tube for? My heart can't TAKE this!"

Craig's parents stood on the other side of the bed, Laura reaching down to smooth her son's hair, "the doctor said that Tweek saved you, isn't that something else?"

Craig nodded a bit, squeezing Tweek's hand, "Honey, it's okay. I'm not dying, I'm totally stable, and tube is for the breath air."

Tweek whined softly, he was happy to hear Craig wasn't dying, but why did he need oxygen? "Wh-um, what exactly...happened?"

Craig sighed, looking between Tweek and his parents, "well, first of all, I have morphine in me, so my thinking is not so smooth. But um, my lung is bruised, and that makes the blood coughs. Which is...not so good. Um, the tube..." He squinted, like he was trying to focus thoughts, "it...um, I'm breathing. And...my back doesn't hurt so much no more."

Laura sighed, smiling softly, "we should probably just ask the doctor, I can't believe you can even
"I'm smart cause space facts," Craig replied, then nodded in agreement with himself.

Tweek giggled and squeezed Craig's hand, "You're the smartest." His heart was still thundering in his chest, and he was still worried that Craig was this injured at all, but seeing him not dying and just a little out of it on pain meds made Tweek absolutely dizzy with relief.

The doctor walked in, scribbling away on a chart, "so, you're his family? I know friends worry a lot, but too many people can overwhelm patients," she said acussingly, but not angrily, looking towards Tweek.

"I-I'm sorry," Tweek started, "I thought it would be okay b-because-

"Madam," Craig said, pointing at Tweek, "that is my HUSBAND. He can stay if he wants!"

Tweek turned pink and the doctor laughed, shaking her head, "well, he doesn't seem to mind I suppose...do you folks mind?"

Laura shook her head, "not at all, I brought him in with us."

"He's practically family as it is," Thomas agreed, "he deserves to hear what happened, he's the reason Craig is okay after all."

The doctor nodded, "alright, well, right now he's on a fairly high dose of morphine, and I'd say it's kicking in fully around now, so he won't likely have many coherent thoughts for awhile. It should help with the pain, lung contusions can be pretty painful, and he had some pretty decent bruising on his back. No damage to the spine, fortunately, but it looked like someone hit him with a slab of concrete. That will definitely take a couple weeks to heal. The lung will take longer, about a month, and he'll need supplemental oxygen while it heals."

"S-so he has to stay here for a whole month?!" Tweek asked.

The doctor shook her head, "oh no! If everything goes well, he'll only be here for a couple of days. Oxygen tanks are portable, and I'll be sending him home with some pills for the pain as well."

Tweek sighed in relief and Laura continued petting Craig's hair, "well, it seems bad, but it could have been worse. It's a huge relief knowing he'll completely heal from this."

"Yeahh," Craig said, "I fuckin...uhh...psh, that sidewalk HURT. Kyle can...sssuueck my ass."

Tweek blinked a couple times, Kyle. That's right, Kyle had done this, hadn't he? He was so busy being relieved that he forgot to be furious. He would stay here for now, he didn't want to leave Craig, but the next day at school? He was going to murder Kyle.

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Tweek came to school with just under three hours of sleep and just over two cups of coffee in him. Kenny came up to him before he even reached his locker, looking worried.

"Hey," he greeted, giving a lopsided smile, "you never texted, is Craig doing okay? And...are you?"

Tweek scowled, eye twitching a bit, "he's gonna need oxygen for like a month. And he won't be back to school for another few days."

Kenny sighed, "well, that sucks, but hey, he's gonna be okay! So that's good!"
"Tweek, don't do this, I know Kyle went way overboard, but fighting him isn't the answer. At least wait and me and Butters will rough him up a little for you. I mean, what are you planning to do? Just assault him in the school hallway?"

Tweek paused, fingers thrumming against his backpack straps as he thought it over. Fighting him in the hall did seem like a bad idea...but just as he was trying to think things through rationally, he saw Kyle and all ration flew right out the window.

"Yeah, yeah I'm gonna f-fucking break his arms," Tweek said, rushing off towards him.

"Wait!" Kenny called.

"Sorry Kenny! Craig was eighty percent of my impulse control!" Tweek called back.

Kyle looked up when he heard Tweek's voice, seeming confused about the blonde rushing towards him. Tweek noted Kyle's swollen nose and the large white bandage over it. A tinge of purple was just visible under the white. Craig had broken his nose? Good.

He stormed up to him, coming to a stop right in front of the confused ginger. Before Kyle could get a word out, Tweek snapped his hand out, grabbing him by the nose and slamming him back against the lockers.

Kyle let out a sharp yelp of pain as the lockers clanged behind him, and Stan and Cartman reflexively jumped back, neither one wanting to get involved in whatever was happening here.

"TwEeK!" Kyle shrieked, trying to shove the boy back off of him, "what the fuck is wrong with you?!

Tweek held onto his nose firmly, slamming his head into the locker with each word, "YOU. PUT. CRAIG. IN. THE. HOSPITAL!"

"He did WHAT?" Stan asked, eyes wide.

"Dude that's weak," Cartman said, "kinda funny though."

Tweek snapped his attention to Cartman, "what in the FUCK is funny about that?!!"

Kyle gripped Tweek's wrist, managing to pry him off while he was distracted, "I-wh-Craig is in the hospital?" He asked through pained tears.

Tweek ripped his wrist out of Kyle's grip, "yes. He is! You bruised his fucking LUNG."

"Dude, why the fuck did you fight Craig? We all know he can't fight for shit," Stan said.

"He broke my nose!" Kyle snapped, "and people have recovered from worse than a bruised lung, I didn't fight him just because I thought it would be fun or something! It was-

He was cut off as Tweek railed both hands, curled together in a ball, into Kyle's gut. Kyle wheezed and shoved his arms straight out, pushing Tweek harshly away from him, "d-dude! I don't want to-fuck...fight you!"

Tweek held up his fists, "you think I give a shit?! You shouldn't have fought Craig! Your d-damn temper got in the way, you hurt someone who never stood a chance against you, and you haven't even apologized! So I'm going to f-fuck you up!"
"Guys guys please! I'm sure Kyle is sorry!" Stan said, standing between the two, "Tweek, I don't want you getting hurt too, and you really shouldn't do this here anyway, you'll get suspended."

"Boo! Don't be a pussy! Fiiight!" Cartman exclaimed.

Kyle pushed gently past Stan, "Tweek. Look, I'm sorry Craig ended up in the hospital, but he deserved a lot of that, he wasn't seeing reason, and he broke my nose! It's not like I just attacked him completely unprompted."

Tweek inhaled sharply, about to swing at Kyle again, but Butters ran up and grabbed his arm.

"Tweek! Don't fight in school!" Butters narrowed his eyes at Kyle, "wait till after, when no teachers can stop ya."

"You're on his side?!" Kyle asked, exasperated, "look I never meant to hurt him that badly! But it's not my fault that fight even happened!"

"Well you should have enough self control not to land someone in the god damn ER!" Tweek yelled.

Stan held onto Kyle's shoulder, looking between the angry teens with confusion, "okay, I think maybe we need to just calm down and talk things out a little. Kyle, why don't you explain why exactly you put someone in the hospital?"

Kyle rolled his shoulder out of Stan's grip, taking a step forward, "I won't apologize for fighting him. I won't apologize to you. I know what you're hiding, and figuring you out is a lot more important than a couple minor injuries that I'm sure Craig will heal from."

Tweek snapped his arm out of Butters' grasp, striking it out and gripping the front of Kyle's jacket. He was a lot shorter than Kyle, but those burning green eyes didn't faze him anymore, he just yanked him down to his own eye level and stared right into those core-of-the-earth-fiery orbs.

"You don't fucking scare me Broflovski. And your self proclaimed justice mission won't keep me from destroying you. You want the deep dark truth that bad? Then come and take it," he hissed, trembling all over, but not from fear. He hadn't been afraid since the moment he knew Craig would be okay. No, he was done being afraid, weak, unable to prevent himself or Craig from being hurt by this twisted mess. Never again.

He let go of Kyle's jacket and turned, walking straight out of the building. He might get in trouble for not being in class, but he wouldn't retain anything anyway. He needed out of that place, and more importantly, he needed to show Kyle something. He wanted the whole truth? Fine then, he'd give it to him. Every last terrifying and unfair detail.

He didn't look behind him as he walked, he knew Kyle would follow. Out of either rage or curiosity, he would follow.

"Where the hell are you going?" Came Kyle's voice after a few minutes.

Tweek glanced over his shoulder, not surprised to see the ginger tailing after him, "I'll give you a fuckihg problem, let's just see how easy you think it is to fix, mister 'means justify the ends'."

Kyle looked confused, but moved up to walk along next to Tweek anyway.

"I don't think I understand. You're mad at me...so you're giving me what I want?" Kyle asked.
"No one wants this. But it's what you asked for," Tweek replied coldly, "and if it'll keep you from nearly killing my boyfriend, then I'll show you. Maybe if you actually see, you'll understand just how many lives you'd be f-fucking up by exposing it."

Kyle didn't say anything. He shoved his hands in his pockets and just silently followed along. Tweek hoped he felt bad, he hoped he felt guilt for years to come after this.

The two walked until they reached Kenny's yard, which was currently empty save for a passed out bum and a few rats.

"You can't get into Kenny's garage without a-" Kyle started, then stopped as Tweek produced the key from his pocket.

"How...?" Kyle mumbled, baffled.

Tweek didn't answer him, just kind of grunted and went about unlocking the garage. There was a lot of movement inside, followed by a couple curses and the thunk of someone falling over. Kyle covered his nose as the drug smell hit him, Tweek barely scrunched his nose at it.

"It's just me, the c-coffee kid," Tweek called, "n-no guns or my parents will be pissed!"

A ratty man covered in too many stains to identify peeked put from behind a table, "coffee kid? You're early."

"Yeah well, I can't uh, stay predictable. Do you have it or what?" Tweek asked.

He hated this, every single week he had to do this, and he had to swallow down his snarkiness and try not to act paranoid, because it would get the dumb druggies paranoid too. He told himself he was done being scared, but alright, he was still a little shaky. Picking up meth for his parents wasn't exactly a stress free ordeal, and now he was taking a huge, huge risk. If Kyle could just understand, then Craig wouldn't be at risk anymore. Butters and Kenny would be safer, and so would he. He NEEDED Kyle to understand, and if this was the only way, so be it.

"What the hell-Kenny really does have a roving meth lab in his garage?" Kyle asked, dumbfounded.

"Not Kenny-" Tweek started, but the junkie started freaking out, yelling and pointing at Kyle.

"IS THAT A COP? WHO IS HE? DID YOU RAT US OUT?!" the man grabbed a piece of broken glass, pointing it at the boys.

Tweek raised his hands defensively, Kyle following his lead, "H-he's a friend! Calm down, please! I don't want a repeat of last week!"

Kyle looked at Tweek in horror, but fortunately kept his mouth shut. The junkie swung the glass in a wide arc in front of him, as if to create some sort of barrier between the boys and himself. He threw a paper bag across the room and it landed at Tweek's feet, dusting the ground and his shoes in little bits of white.

"Take it and get out, or I'll slit your fucking throats!" The junkie yelled shakily, eyes wide.

Tweek picked it up slowly and walked backwards out of the garage, watching to make sure Kyle did the same. He waited until they were back out of the yard, then let out a breath.

"Shit...man that was close. S-stupid junkies," Tweek whined, feeling his heartbeat in his throat.
"Um hi, yeah. What the hell was that?!" Kyle exclaimed, "I mean I figured you knew about it and all, but what are you doing?! I thought you were going to talk to them or something, not pick up a package!"

Tweek smiled bitterly at Kyle, "Oh I'm so sorry, did you want to go back and try talking? I'm sure it'll work out well for you."

Kyle made a few puffing sounds, like he wanted to argue but couldn't think of a good way to do it. He finally just shrugged, "okay, fine, fair point. But what exactly are you doing picking that stuff up?"

Tweek turned and started walking, licking white dust off his shoes as he went, "Done it since I was seven. I'm hoping if I show you my routine, you'll realize what a colossal moron you are. Ever heard about how things aren't black and white? B-believe it or not Kyle, morality is a lot greyer than a-anybody cares for."

Kyle followed along behind him, eyebrows furrowed, "routine? Since you were...Tweek, what-"

Tweek whirled around and flicked Kyle's bandaged nose, making him yelp, "hey! If you just sh-shut your fucking mouth for an hour or so and WATCH, maybe you'll l-learn something!"

Kyle held his face, eyes filled with pained tears. He nodded slowly and didn't say anything else. Tweek nodded in approval and continued walking.

He walked until he got to his parent's coffee shop, where he tossed the bag up onto the counter and rang the little service bell.

"Oh! Good morning sweetheart!" Mary greeted, picking up the bag, "aren't you supposed to be in school right now?"

"It was a teacher assembly day," Tweek lied smoothly, shoving his hands in his pockets, "w-would you mind if I show my friend Kyle our stock room? H-he has an interest in how coffee shops are run."

Kyle looked at Tweek, then up to his mother, who gave him a wary look. "I don't know Tweek. We can't have customers discovering our secret recipes. After all, then everyone would use them!"

She put on a plastic smile and turned her full attention to Kyle, greeting him with a pat on the head, "Where is Craig? Why don't you boys go play with him? He's nice and calm and doesn't ask questions."

Kyle winced a little at the way she gripped his hat as she mentioned questions. Her hand uncurled as quickly as it had grabbed him, and she stood up straight behind the counter.

"Craig is in the hospital," Tweek replied hollowly, casting an icy look towards Kyle.

Mary paused for a minute, gaze suddenly dark as she leaned over the counter and grabbed Tweek's wrist, "did Kyle go with you to pick this up?"

Tweek squeaked and shook his head quickly, "n-no of course not! I a-always go alone! I just ran into him on the way here I swear!"

Kyle's eyes widened a bit, shocked to see a woman as nice as Mary gripping her son like it was a threat. Tweek was scared too, heart in his throat as his mother looked at him with the first genuine expression he'd seen in a long time, panic and anger.
She looked him up and down, probably trying to determine if he was telling the truth. She yanked him forward and pressed a kiss to his forehead before letting go, "alright. I believe you honey. And go clean your shoes off, you're tracking snow in."

Tweek let out a shaky sigh and nodded, hurrying back out of the shop. Kyle slowly followed behind him, feeling Mary's eyes boring into him the whole way.

Tweek was cussing under his breath as he kicked his shoes clean of powder, "fuck f-fucking fuck! H-how am I supposed to make you understand now? I-I didn't think she'd say no...m-my mom is such an idiot, h-how could she be suspicious?!"

Kyle slowly approached Tweek, reaching a hand out towards him, "hey, Tweek I-"

Tweek smacked his hand away, standing up straight and looking him in the eyes, his own glistening with the beginning of tears. He needed Craig right now. This was spiralling quickly and he needed his lifeline.

"D-don't fucking touch me Kyle!" He hissed, "I can't show you what you want. I'm sorry, I thought I could b-but I was just stupid and-and if Craig were here he would have talked me out of this! He would've been all like 'don't tell that pretentious bitch anything, I-I'd get my ass kicked again to protect your secrets'. And I would've told him that was stupid a-and then...then...maybe we would've just talked to you, I-like I should have when you first found that fucking revolver."

Kyle blinked slowly, a lot of thoughts seeming to be running through his head. "...then...talk," he said quietly. "The park. You like it there, right? Let's go there and talk."

Tweek rubbed his eyes before tears could fall, looking at Kyle in confusion, "I-I don't understand...I haven't even shown you anything yet, what changed? Y-you were so adamant before, and I couldn't even get to-

"I saw plenty," Kyle said, voice laced with guilt and worry, "and if that's the surface, I can assume what's beneath it."

Tweek looked down, still not really getting what softened Kyle so much. He was glad his plan had somehow worked though, and waved for him to follow along as he started off towards the park.

"When did you realize?" Tweek asked as the treeline and street lamps came into view.

"I'd suspected since we were kids. That time you went into the store in the middle of the night kind of piqued my interest, and...that gun, well, your and Craig's reactions to it. That's what did it for me. I thought that there was no way you were safe in that place, no way you or anyone in town could possibly be okay around people who would supply this stuff to them without even telling them what the hell they're being served. Cartman said he could help me take them down, because you know, he likes taking people down, so I thought it was a pretty good idea."

Tweek sat down on one of the swings, feet scuffing up the dirt as he killed over what Kyle was saying, "...so...this was all s-some misguided attempt to save me? Y-you seriously thought it would be that easy?"

Kyle took the swing next to him, fingers curling around the chains, "I mean...yeah? It seemed pretty black and white. Take down your parents, the drug coffee problem stops, Kenny and Karen are safer and you're safer. I didn't know they tangled you up in it too."

Tweek laughed a little, then a little more, his shoulders shook as he doubled over in his swing, snorting and wheezing, "y-you thought-m-my-oh my fucking god you're an idiot!"
Kyle frowned, "hey, I was trying to help!"

Tweek looked up at him, wiping his eyes again, "do you ever think about the consequences of your actions for one second? If my parents are arrested, where would I go? If the druggies don't get their money from my folks, what's stopping them from selling to other people, or hurting people for money? My folks aren't the top of this mess either, did you honestly think t-two Colorado hicks were at the top of a drug ring? Fucking use your brain Kyle! I-I know you have one in there!"

Kyle worried his bottom lip with his teeth, looking down at the ground, "I...I didn't really think of all that. Why didn't Craig just say this stuff to me?"

Tweek huffed, "would you have listened? He told me what happened, kind of, he's a little drugged up but I got the gist. He says he told you that your meddling would hurt me, and you called him lazy."

Kyle grimaced a bit, "I did, didn't I? I just thought...I was just so MAD...I thought if he cared-"

"That he would be doing everything in his power to get me out of a shit situation?" Tweek asked, "K-Kyle, you didn't know this, you couldn't have, but Craig...he has cleaned up more of my messes...helped me through nights when I didn't feel like I could go on...he paid for my therapy until I could afford it myself. We're just kids, Kyle. I know fifteen seems a lot more grown up than ten, but if you think about it, we don't have much more power now than we did then. Craig might be boring and lazy compared to the wild adventures you and your friends have, but when it comes to me, to us, he's the hardest working person I know. He spent three and a half hours with me cleaning up the bloody kitchen that my parents left for me to deal with. He works harder than anyone to keep me safe, and you put him in the fucking hospital. We don't want you to stop digging because we're afraid of change, Kyle. We just don't want things to get worse. My whole life is a tightrope walk over a fire pit, and sometimes...all I can do is try to survive it."

Kyle was quiet for a long time, he and Tweek sat in silence, watching the cold morning sun rise in the sky and melt patches of ice laden leaves. Tweek's hands felt numb against the metal of the swing, and he wasn't sure if it was just from the cold, or if it had something to do with the fact that he had just basically poured his heart out to someone who was actively working to destory him less than an hour ago. Not that Kyle knew that was what he was doing, but still.

Kyle finally shifted, inhaling sharply and startling Tweek out of his thoughts. The blonde looked over, attention fully on the ginger.

"...you're right. I'm sorry," Kyle said, he gripped the chains harder and shook his head, "I keep thinking I can change things...I keep on thinking my intentions will win out in the end, but there's just too much evil for that, isn't there?"

Tweek closed his eyes and tilted his head back, "...don't lose faith in people, Kyle. As a pedophile dressed as Human Kindness once taught me, sometimes situations are less than black and white, and most people have good intentions. You had good intentions, it just bit you in the ass. Letting things that are less than moral go on around you...sometimes its the only way to truly protect someone. A-and I'm being pretty selfish, just trying to protect myself, but...it seems like that's what you wanted too, right?"

"Jesus Christ you've had a fucked up life," Kyle breathed, "yeah. I...yeah, you're right. I just-seeing you nearly get stabbed by that guy, and your mom...she didn't care about your safety at all, just who might've seen...it might not have seemed like much to you, but that was plenty. Plenty for me to realize that you're a lot deeper in this than I thought, and I can't untangle you. No one can do that right now...and I'm sorry."
Tweek kicked at a stray leaf, "it is what it is Kyle. Just...promise me you'll drop this. Y-you'll only get me or Kenny hurt if this gets out, so...you can't tell people. Especially not Cartman. P-please."

Kyle took a deep, steadying breath, "if that's the only thing I can do right now, then...I'll swallow my morality. For you and Kenny."

"Thank you," Tweek breathed, incredibly relieved.

Kyle was quiet for another minute before he asked, "so...are we friends again?"

Tweek snorted, "fuck no. You put my Craig in the hospital. You'll have to work your way back up to friend."

Kyle sighed, "that's fair."

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Kyle and Tweek talked for a bit longer, and eventually Kyle headed back to school. He promised Tweek he wouldn't let the secret out, and that he'd figure out how to get Cartman to back down too somehow.

Tweek waved as he headed back into the building. "I-I'm just gonna ditch the rest of the day and visit Craig. Good luck with Cartman. Try kissing him as a distraction, that should do it."

Kyle rolled his eyes and hoisted his backpack up more comfortably, "ha ha you're so funny. And...tell Craig I'm sorry about what I said."

Tweek smiled and shook his head, "you can tell him when he comes back to school."

Kyle sighed heavily, "fine. I'll see you tomorrow Tweek, good luck with...everything."

Tweek watched as Kyle headed back into school, barely running late for second period. He shifted and idly messed around with the plastic ring on his hand as he walked. So many thoughts were running through his head, and he hardly even registered how or when he got to Craig's house, but he suddenly found himself in Craig's room.

Craig's parents were at work, and Tricia was at school, so the house was empty when Tweek walked in. He got up to the room and flopped onto the familiar bed. He blinked up at the ceiling, staring at the plastic stars that had long since lost their glow.

"I-I definitely shouldn't be here right now," he mumbled to himself, though he didn't move to leave. He found it so comforting being here, surrounded by nerdy posters of red racer and the tiny squeaking sounds of Stripe.

Tweek sat up and looked around the room with a sigh, finding it so much more relaxing than his own room. And surely Craig wouldn't mind him being here. He looked at Craig's door and frowned, the mirror was still cracked, and the glass that was usable was plastered over with posters and pictures of Craig's friends. Tweek noted a few pictures of himself around the room, all wild hair and nervous smiles, but there didn't seem to be any of him and Craig together. Did Craig still have a problem with how he looked? He would have to talk to him about that.

He got out his phone and texted Craig, 'feeling any better? I thought I might come visit'.

After a few minutes came a reply of 'spagettii nodle', so Tweek figured that meant he was definitely awake, and still very drunk on pain medication.
Tweek snorted and left Craig's house, going to the hospital instead. Being around Craig always made him feel better, and besides, maybe being around morphine high Craig would cheer him up and get him to stop thinking about more stressful things.

He got to the room just as a nurse was leaving, "hi sweetie, are you here to visit Craig?" She asked.

Tweek nodded, "y-yeah. How's he doing?"

The nurse smiled, "he's still pretty out of it, but his back and lung are doing better. Don't worry, your friend will be out of here in no time."

Tweek nodded, "thank you. A-and actually, he's..." Tweek thumbed at the ring on his hand, "we're b-basically engaged."

The nurse brightened, "Ooh you're Tweek! That is so sweet! He won't stop babbling about you, he'll be so happy you're here!"

Tweek turned pink, "h-he's been talking about me?"

The nurse nodded, "nonstop. He kept asking where you were."

Tweek felt his heart hammer in his chest, even completely out of it, Craig really liked him that much? He made a small noise and thanked the nurse before going into the room. That dork...and just when Tweek thought he couldn't love him anymore than he already did.

Craig was propped up in the bed, pillows behind his back as he squinted hard at a plate of plain buttered pasta, missing it with the fork each time. Ah, that explained the text.

"H-hey there Stardust," Tweek greeted, walking up to the bed, "how are you holding up?"

Craig looked over at Tweek, confused for half a second before gasping and trying to hug him. Tweek gently held his arms, stopping him from knocking over the tray positioned over his bed or tugging on his IV.

"Craig! Careful!" He said, struggling as Craig wiggled to get out of his hold.

"Tweeek! Baby I missed you soo much! Did..hey, did you get my text? I think...it was important," he greeted.

Tweek moved the tray away from his bed before going back to give him a proper hug, "yes, I got it. Thank you for the message."

"How's...um, bitch face? Didja kill him?" Craig asked, looking up at Tweek curiously.

Tweek snorted, "n-no no, actually, things worked out. I d-did definitely make it so his nose is gonna take forever to heal though."

"Crunchy," Craig stated.

Tweek shook his head and sat on the edge of the bed, "I mean, I guess kinda yeah?"

Craig smiled and grabbed Tweek’s shoulders, trying to kiss all over his face, "you're so amazing! Maan, Kyle can...he can eat a rock. You're strong as fuck, you...I would let you kick my ass anytime."

Tweek laughed, god, Craig was definitely out of it, and it was amazing. "I didn't fight him! Not uh,
not much, but thank you. It's sweet you think I'm that strong."

Tweek looked out the window towards the blue sky, it was the first nice day he could remember in awhile, "so hey, sky's pretty clear, wanna go stargazing when you get out of here?"

"What about the wedding?" Craig whispered, "we can't miss it!"

Tweek looked back at him, "Craig-pff...what wedding honey?"

Craig grabbed Tweek's hand, pointing to the ring, "our wedding, duh? If we miss it then like...there'll be NO wedding. Unless...let's stargaze AT the wedding!"

Tweek blushed and laughed, leaning down to give Craig a gentle hug. "Okay, we'll do that," he smiled.

If a part of him had still wondered before if Craig really thought he was worth it, he didn't wonder anymore. He was in the hospital over him, and completely high on painkillers, he was still babbling about marrying him. The day had been a rough one, and it wasn't even halfway over, but Tweek actually felt hopeful for what the coming days would bring. Kyle was being more reasonable, Craig was healing...things were definitely looking up.

Chapter End Notes

Tada! A deeper dive into Tweek again!

Man, I love making this thing an emotional rollercoaster, I hope you all enjoy riding it!
Craig slammed his locker door closed and whirled around, eyes burning into Kyle's, "I'm sorry, are you fucking speaking to me?"

Kyle bit his lip, looking Craig up and down. Craig could see the guilt on his face. Good, he hoped he felt like shit for a long time for this. Craig still had a tube hooked to his face, it was more annoying than anything, but it kept him breathing properly. He had a small tank to carry with him everywhere now too, which made lugging his books from place to place an even bigger hassle. He blamed Kyle for this, and he could tell Kyle knew that. He met Craig's gaze and took in a breath to repeat himself, but Craig held up a finger.

"Hold that thought. I don't actually care what you said to me," Craig stated. He picked up the oxygen tank and stalked off down the hall.

Kyle hurried after him, "Craig! Come on man at least let me apologize!"

Craig stopped and fixed him with an irritated kind of smile, "oh apologize all you want, I just don't accept." Then he turned and continued down the hall.

Kyle growled in frustration, "Craig! You're being unreasonable! Tweek forgave me, and I understand the situation better now, surely you have to see where I was coming from!"

"And you should know where I was coming from. I'm not being unreasonable, by the way." Craig wheeled around so suddenly that Kyle nearly ran into him, "unreasonable is hospitalizing someone because your damn temper got out of control!"

Kyle crossed his arms, "I know I went too far okay?! But I'm sorry and I want to make this right! How is that not enough?"

Craig tapped on the plastic tube, clicked his tongue, and flipped Kyle off before walking briskly off into his homeroom class.

He refused to even acknowledge Kyle throughout English, something Wendy was smart enough not to ask about right away. Craig was sure she'd heard what happened anyway. He could just tell she wanted to know more though, he could see her out of the corner of his eye, biting her lip and tapping her fingers rapidly against her desk.

After five minutes of tense tapping, Craig said, "your fucking fingers are going to fall off. Just ask me already."
Wendy exhaled harshly, like she had been holding her breath, and whirled to face Craig fully, "is it true you broke Kyle's nose? Did he seriously put you in the hospital? What were you guys fighting about? Did Tweek tell you what he did to Kyle at school a few days ago?"

Craig held up a hand, feeling a little overwhelmed by the string of questions, "Jesus Christ Wendy, one thing at a time maybe? Yes to your first two questions, I decked him because he pissed me off, and I am a very shitty fighter, hence the injuries." He motioned to himself, then paused, "...and uh, no. He just told me there was nothing to worry about. What'd he do?"

Wendy groaned, "that's the thing! No one knows! He knocked Kyle into the lockers, they both yelled, and then they left the school! When Kyle came back he looked...um...harrowed. I want to know what the hell Tweek did, Kyle has never been so quiet."

Craig frowned, Tweek hadn't told him anything about that. All he had mentioned was that Kyle wasn't going to be spreading any rumors. He'd have to ask him about that later. "Huh, no, he didn't tell me."

"Well...thank you for your info. And uh...sorry about the whole oxygen situation. That has to be frustrating."

Craig shrugged, "better than suffocating to death."

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Craig had already decided as he met up with Tweek before lunch, he wasn't going to the cafeteria today. He felt like he needed to talk to Tweek about what happened, and he really didn't want to wait until after school. Besides, if he waited, Tweek might find a way to dodge him and avoid the topic. He was doing a lot better about opening up, sure, but it was easy to fall back into old habits.

Tweek greeted Craig by the lockers with a hug and a kiss on the cheek, "hey handsome, how's hauling around that tank going?"

Craig grunted, "shitty. It's awkward to try to carry it and all these damn books."

"You might want to get a backpack," Tweek suggested.

"Backpacks are for chumps," Craig replied. "Let me suffer."

Tweek snorted, "after school I'm getting you a backpack, and you're gonna use it. Chump."

"Alright alright," Craig conceded, "I guess it would make things a lot easier."

Tweek gave a smug little grin, and Craig rested a hand on his shoulder, "hey Tweek...you aren't keeping anything from me, right?"

Tweek twitched slightly, expression shifting to worry and panic, "wh-why? Would you ask that I mean? I don't um, I don't do that anymore."

"...what'd you tell Kyle?"

"What did he tell you?" Tweek replied, voice shaky.

"Nothing. I won't let the fucker talk to me. It was Wendy, she said you scared the hell out of him. Which, nice, by the way. But like, what did you do?"

Tweek shoved his hands in his pockets, taking a deep breath, "o-okay, um, promise you won't be
"...do you think I'll have a reason to be mad?" Craig asked slowly, getting more worried by the second.

Tweek twitched slightly and shrugged, "u-um well, you...you'll probably think it was dumb, and that I shouldn't have done it and that I could have gotten hurt. A-and you get mad when I do dumb shit that hurts myself."

"Yeah, of course I do," Craig said, "so what did you do?"

Tweek looked down, whining quietly for a minute before answering, "l-let's talk outside school, so no one overhears."

The two walked in a tense silence, leaving school grounds and eventually coming to a stop by the baseball field. Tweek gripped the chain link fence with one hand, gazing emptily into the field, "...I know you wouldn't, but I'm still a little worried you'll hate me for this." He took a deep breath, "I showed Kyle."

Craig tilted his head in confusion, "showed Kyle..?" He trailed off as he realized, eyes widening, "Tweek! What the hell were you-" he cut himself off, waving his hands around as if dissipating the remaining words.

"Tweek. Of course I don't hate you," he started, more calmly, "but what the hell made you think that was a good plan?"

Tweek gripped the fence harder, knuckles white against the metal, "...I was really scared Craig. Not of him or of my family or even of the hobo who tried to slice my throat open-"

"I'm sorry a who that did what?"

"Craig, I was scared because I almost lost you. You probably don't remember this, but your parents filled me in. You almost died. It took them ten minutes to stabilize you. Do you have any clue how long a time that is when you're so close to death?! You could have stopped breathing and it would have all just been over, just like that!" Tweek's eyes were brimming with tears now, his hand shaking were it gripped the fence.

Craig took a step towards him, "Tweek, hey, I'm okay now-

"But you almost weren't!" Tweek cut him off, "and that's it, that's when I realized. My secrets, my family garbage, the stupid cartel bullshit under this town's nose...I don't care if they know the truth! Not if it means I don't have to risk losing you like that! You nearly died because you were trying to protect me, my dumb secret life, a life you don't even know much about! I'm sick of it! So...I showed Kyle the truth, and prayed he'd do the right thing. Not all of it, but...enough."

Tweek finally let go of the fence, turning and latching onto Craig instead. He buried his face against his chest, mindful not to tug on his oxygen tube, "Because I would gladly risk everything of my own if it means I don't have to risk you."

Craig wrapped his arms around Tweek, pressing them tightly together. A cold wind blew stiffly by, kicking up leaves and rattling the fence behind Tweek. Neither of them said anything, but Craig could hear Tweek's sharp, unsteady breaths, feel them against his chest. Tweek panicked often and dealt with a lot, but he didn't really cry that often. Craig knew it took a hell of a lot to push Tweek to that point, and this...this must have been a much closer call than he had realized.
He didn't really know what to say, for once he felt like there wasn't anything he could really do to fix this. Tweek's parents mess was catching up to him, all its ugliness bubbling to the surface like hot tar, thick and dark and snagging people close into its rancid depths. Tweek was stuck in deep, and Craig felt like he couldn't pull him out. He had risked everything by telling Kyle, and now there was one more person they had to worry about letting something slip. Tweek did that for him, did it to protect Craig...but Craig knew it wouldn't really protect him from anything, because this wasn't going to stop him from doing everything in his power to keep trying to help Tweek out of this mess.

Craig shifted in Craig's arms, like he was going to move away, but Craig just held him tighter, pressing his face into Tweek's wild hair and mumbling a soft, barely audible, "I'm so sorry."

Tweek didn't reply, he didn't say 'it will be okay' or 'things will get better', he just turned patted Craig's back and smiled sadly at him as they pulled away. Craig knew that smile, it was the one Tweek did every time he talked about them leaving this place together, and he had never really understood what it meant until now.

Tweek leaned up and kissed Craig's cheek, "don't be sorry, you were just trying to keep me safe."

Craig nodded slightly, shoving his hands in his pockets, "...yeah...lot of good that did huh?"

"Just don't scare me like that anymore, no more starting fights with Kyle," Tweek said teasingly, though Craig could hear the genuine worry behind his teasing.

"I won't," Craig murmured, "I'll be more careful, and uh...you too, okay?"

Tweek smiled that smile again and just patted Craig's shoulder, "we should get back inside, the cold air can't be good for your lungs."

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"Dude, you weren't at lunch, what happened?" Token asked, jogging up next to Craig as they headed towards their final class.

"Huh?" Craig looked over, Token having pulled him out of his thoughts, "oh, right. I was just with Tweek."

Token smiled, "Ohh I see, well don't take so long next time man, and don't be doing anything that could get you suspended!"

Craig exhaled a bit and smiled, shaking his head,"nothing like that today, pervert. We were just talking."

Token tilted his head, "oh, really? You kinda make it sound like a bad thing...did you guys fight or something?"

Craig shook his head, "no, I think I might've preferred that. I can fix dumb shit I cause myself. It was just some home life stuff."

"...something to do with Kyle and that gun at the sleepover?"

Craig stopped walking, looking at token with a slightly panicked expression. Token held his hands up, "hey now, it's cool, I'm not asking what happened. Not my business! Just...is he okay?"

Craig shook his head slightly and adjusted the tank and books in his hands, "I...guess. I hope. I think there's still a lot he doesn't tell even me. Hey uh, Token...hypothetically...if someone wanted to
know about people behind some...less than legal stuff...where might you look?"

Token raised an eyebrow, "Tucker, you are already toting around an oxygen tank from your last mistake, and you're in some hurry to make another?"

"No, no! I just wanted some answers to some stuff, not anything dangerous...I think."

"Well, asking questions can be dangerous too in this damn place. It's why I don't ask you shit, I don't ask Cartman about that blood I found in his locker, I don't ask Kenny about what he does at night, and I don't ask Tweek about his family. Some things are best left in the dark," Token stated, "it doesn't affect me directly, so I do not need to know."

Craig shifted the stuff in his arms uncomfortably, "but that's just the thing. I love him. It DOES directly affect me, because if I lose him, I don't know what the hell I would do. I can't just not know. Not when knowing could potentially save him from...I don't even really know what from, but I know he needs saving."

"Well...I guess I get that, but Craig, no matter how you go about it, it's not really a safe venture. You'd probably need to talk to Kenny, who would tell Tweek you were asking around, a homeless guy or something, which is...REALLY not wise, or someone in prison. And I highly doubt you're in contact with any convicted criminals. I think maybe you should just tell Tweek why you're worried, and let it go if he doesn't want you to know."

Craig's eyes widened and Token gave him a questioning look, "what is it?"

Craig shook his head, "uhh nothing! Nothing. You're right, totally right Token, thanks man, once again you come in clutch as a fantastic friend. See you after school."

Token looked like he was going to ask Craig something, but Craig quickly walked off, veering into his own classroom as Token barely managed to call a 'don't do anything stupid' after him.

Craig's foot tapped rapidly against the floor as he waited for class to be over with already. Token had given him the perfect idea without even realizing it. Kyle kept looking towards him, but he ignored the boy, and he nearly poured the wrong chemicals together during their class experiment, but he managed to make it through. He was out the school doors less than a minute after the bell rang.

He texted Tweek as he walked down the sidewalk, telling him not to wait up and that he had to go do something important. Tweek texted back pretty quickly, but Craig had already slid the phone back into his pocket, focused on the task at hand.

He pushed open the door to That Place, struggling to hold the heavy thing open long enough to get himself and his stupid tank inside. An officer waved to him from the desk and he waved back.

"Hey! A little early for your monthly visit, isn't it?" She asked, "and what on earth happened? You have a not so fun looking accessory!"

Craig smiled a little, the officer who always checked in visitors was a sweet lady, blonde hair and thick glasses, and talking to her always made him a little happier, "hey Gloria. Yeah, I got in a fight and uh, the other guy was a lot stronger than me."

"Oh sweetie! You want me to arrest him for you? I can probably get Jamison to arrest him," she said, giving Craig a sympathetic look.

Craig chuckled a little, just imaging Kyle's face if that actually happened, "nah, I threw the first punch anyway, but thanks."
"You gotta be careful sweetie, you can't just fight people like that," she tsks, "and knowing you it was because of that nice Tweek boy. Trouble follows that poor child."

"Yeah, well I-wait, Gloria, how do you know Tweek?" Craig asked, surprised.

"Oh uh, oh I'm not really supposed to say, he's a minor so I can't say much. I'm sorry sweetie," Gloria replied, brow furrowing, "I'm kinda surprised he never told you, you both seem to care for each other so much."

Craig couldn't believe this, more pieces to the puzzle and a dozen more questions. He talked to Gloria about Tweek sometimes, but Tweek had talked to her too? When did he have the chance? And why couldn't she tell him, did that mean Tweek had been arrested? Craig saw him nearly every day, how the hell would he not know if Tweek had been arrested?

"I'll ask him about it," Craig said, "um, hey is it okay if I check in? I need to talk to Her."

"Oh of course honey, name on the sheet, you don't have to take off that tank either, just go on through the detector. You know the drill," she smiled sweetly and handed him a pen.

Craig smiled back and scribbled his name on the sheet before heading in. The officer on duty greeted him, and Craig sat down in one of the chairs as he waited for the man to go get Her.

She came into view, once well kempt dark chocolate hair hanging limply to her shoulders, clinging to her pale face and making her sharp blue gaze even more intense than it used to be. She sat in the chair on the other side of the glass with a thin, tight smile. Her hands were almost bony now, cheeks sunken and gaunt, looking even more akin to Craig's naturally narrow face. He hated even looking at her, but this was important.

"Hello baby boy," she greeted, voice dripping with sickly sweet venom, "this is sooner than usual, did you miss your mother?"

Craig's nose scrunched in disgust, "you look worse than usual. Maybe you'll do us both a favor and drop dead before your trial even comes up."

"Did you just come to make polite conversation?" Petunia asked, arms crossed over her chest, "or do you have more annoying questions?"

Craig returned the tight smile, leaning a bit closer as he glanced towards the officer. He seemed distracted by some paperwork, so Craig wasn't too worried he'd eavesdrop, "I'll get go the point, woman, there's a cartel in this town, and I'd bet anything your crazy ass knows at least one person involved in it."

Petunia tilted her head, eyes still locked uncomfortably on Craig, "this is about that blonde boy, isn't it?"

Craig forced himself to keep his gaze level with hers, he wouldn't let her see him shaken, "why would you assume that?"

"Because, they talk about him," she purred, "I never would have taken your little boyfriend for the criminal type..."

Craig clenched his teeth, "Tweek isn't a criminal, he never did a damn thing wrong."

Petunia leaned back in her seat, "if you really believed that...well, you wouldn't be here right now. You want to save him from his own poor choices."
Craig had to struggle not to yell at her, he took a deep breath before responding tensely, "this is his parents problem, not his."

"Genetics are a bitch, baby boy. Kids turn out like their parents pretty often...I mean, just look at you, can you really say your Tweek isn't like them when you're more and more like your father every time you visit?" Petunia asked, pressing her palm against the glass. She fixed Craig with a look of deep hatred, and Craig saw it mirrored in his own reflection in the glass.

He stood sharply, trembling slightly, hands curled into fists. He didn't say anything, too angry to speak.

Petunia smiled, always seeming to enjoy getting a reaction out of Craig, "sit down, child. I'll tell you who's in here with me, but you have to answer my questions first...sound fair?"

Craig slowly sat back down, his love for Tweek the only thing keeping him there. He thought it over, and in the end, he wanted to help Tweek more than he wanted to avoid more emotional scarring, so he slowly nodded.

Petunia's smile grew and she scooted closer to the glass, "I only have three questions. The first one is...do you still have nightmares? About me I mean."

Craig felt his chest tighten, this was a mistake, he should just leave. But...he felt like he needed to know, "you're a fucking monster," he said quietly.

"A yes or no honey, it's very simple," she chuckled.

"Yes," Craig hissed.

"Have you looked for your father yet?"

"I live with my father," Craig said stubbornly, "but I haven't looked for Daniel yet, no."

"You'll give in eventually," Petunia replied, "finally...I notice you staring awfully hard past the glass...so I want to know. Craig, sweet boy, can you look at yourself in a mirror? Or is your reflection too upsetting?"

Craig tore his gaze away from her, staring pointedly at the floor, unable to hold eye contact anymore, "stop it."

"Stop what? You said I could ask you-"

"Just STOP. You already fucking know the answer, what kind of twisted pleasure do you get out of this? Do you honestly hate me THAT much?"

"Oh honey," Petunia sighed, "yes. I really do. So just answer me, can you look at your reflection?"

There was a thick, heavy silence for a solid minute, and then finally, Craig managed in a broken whisper, "no."

Petunia, satisfied with her continued torment of her child, nodded and sat up a bit straighter, "thank you. See, simple answers, all yes or no. So then. The only people in here for drug related crimes...the only ones I know of anyway, are Miss Cardinal and a man named...I think it was Paul...Parks? He was a dealer, but I think she was in some bigger thing, shady people are always visiting her. So you know, a drug supplier or a whore. Good luck trying to fix your little boyfriend's problems sweetheart."
Craig didn't say another word to her, just stood up and walked away. He had what he needed, and he knew he couldn't speak again without risking breaking down. The officer noticed him leaving and just moved to bring Petunia back into the prison. Craig's visits like her ended this way more often then he cared to admit. He couldn't stand her...and she always left him with some new emotional scar, so why did he feel the need to keep visiting her? Today was for different reasons...but still. He told himself he wouldn't come back next month. He said that to himself every month.

Gloria opened the door for him on the way out, "you need a hug?" She asked softly.

Craig quietly shook his head and just sort of awkwardly patted her arm in thanks before leaving. He pulled out his cigarettes instinctively, needing something to relieve stress right that second, but as he bumped his oxygen tube he remembered. Right, no smoking around highly flammable gas, and it would probably fuck up his lungs worse too. He grit his teeth and shoved the pack back into his pocket, swearing and storming off in no direction in particular.

He didn't know if he needed to scream, cry, or some mix of both. He could already feel tears picking his eyes, and he couldn't even tell if it was out of anger or pain. After walking for about ten minutes in the freezing cold, his lungs couldn't really take it anymore and he just collapsed under a nearby tree. Even with the oxygen, straining himself like this was probably stupid, he thought as he coughed and took stuttering breaths.

He pulled his knees to his chest, laying his head down and coughing into his arms a few more times. He wasn't sure how long he sat there, but after awhile he found himself being annoyed by the honking of a car horn somewhere nearby. It took about four honks for him to look up and realize that the car had been honking at him.

He was Token's car, and inside were a worried looking Token and Tweek. Craig slowly stood up, leaning against the tree, making no move towards the car.

"We've been looking for you for nearly an hour," Tweek said, "Just...come get out of the cold."

Craig stayed in place for another few seconds, but finally the desire to not freeze to death won over and he got in the car. He sighed in relief as the car's heater instantly warmed him, and Token and Tweek both looked into the backseat at him.

"What were you doing near the outskirts of town?" Token asked.

"Y-you didn't answer my texts, so I got worried...m-my parents think I'm out getting a coffee shipment," Tweek said.

Craig coughed a bit more and looked away from them. Tweek sighed and reached back, patting Craig's head, "were you visiting her?"

Craig shifted slightly, nodding a bit. He was too physically and emotionally drained to actually answer at the second.

Tweek shook his head, looking a little more worried, and maybe a little sad, "oh Craig, you're just hurting yourself, why do you keep doing this?"

Craig fixed Tweek with a tired glare that made him immediately withdraw his hand, "wow, what the hell did I do?" Tweek asked, taken aback.

"I would love to know," Craig replied shortly.
"Yeah okay, I'm gonna cut in real quick here," Token said, waving his hand between them to interject, "look, I might be getting in over my head here. What with the whole uh...vibe, going on right now, but I'm sure that if you both just sat down somewhere, alone, and discussed everything going on in your lives with each other, maybe you'd feel a little better. Don't you have this whole full disclosure thing going on or something? I thought that was working pretty well for you guys."

"That doesn't stop him from keeping secrets," Craig replied.

"You haven't asked about a lot of things! You can't pin that on me Craig!" Tweek snapped back.

"Lies of omission are still lies, Tweek! I shouldn't have to ask about every little detail to-"

"Oh my god, are you f-fucking serious? I'm taking things in steps, and you already know more than ANY other kid in this entire-"

"You showed KYLE!" Craig hissed, "what do I have to do to get you to divulge that much to me? Do I have to nearly kill someone too?!"

"That was to PROTECT you! Don't you DARE turn that around on me!" Tweek gasped, "I thought you understood!"

"Understanding doesn't mean I'm fucking happy about it!"

"So what, now you're jealous of Kyle? Because I thought we kind of ran through this with me, and we both agreed Kyle is a fucking twat, so I don't see why-"

"I'm not JEALOUS, I want to protect you Tweek! You're so busy trying to keep me at a safe distance, well who the hell is looking out for you?!" Craig demanded.

Tweek was red faced, shaking slightly, though Craig couldn't tell if it was from anger or if he was stress-shaking. However, right now he was so frustrated and exhausted that he couldn't bring himself to care.

"Well? Who? Who the hell is going to keep YOU safe?" Craig repeated.

Tweek let out a strained scream, the kind Craig hadn't heard since they were children, and yanked hard on his hair, "NO ONE! NO ONE CRAIG! NO ONE CAN HELP, NO ONE CAN FIX THIS! YOU CAN'T JUST SWOOP IN AND MAKE IT BETTER CRAIG! THERE IS NO SAVING ME! WHY WON'T YOU GET THAT ALREADY? AFTER HIGH SCHOOL, YOU'RE GOING TO MOVE AND FIND SOMEONE ELSE AND I'M GOING TO FUCKING DIE HERE!"

Token very quietly opened the driver's side door, as he was still parked, and just gently stepped out of the car. He closed the door behind him and shook his head briskly before walking a few yards away. He wasn't getting tangled up in whatever the fuck THAT was about.

There was a thick tension in the air, the only noise was the hum of the car's engine and Tweek's shaky breathing. Craig reached out to touch Tweek's shoulder, but the blonde slapped him away and curled up in the passenger seat, "don't fucking touch me."

"T-Tweek, you aren't going to die here, and I am not leaving you for anyone else-"

Tweek let out a sharp, bitter laugh, "They'll never let me out. I know too much shit. And that's why I won't ever show you, because the less you know, the better a shot you have at actually making it out of here."
"Tweek, come on, don't-"

"You think I haven't shown you because I don't trust you. Or because I don't love you, but you're wrong. Its because I love you more than anything. Craig, my life is a black hole nothing escapes from, and I refuse to suck you in."

Craig leaned into the front of the car, trying to meet Tweek's gaze, but he wouldn't look at him. Craig sighed and set his hand next to Tweek's, an invitation to hold it.

"Tweek. You aren't changing my mind. I'll stay here if that's what it takes, you're my sunshine, I'm already stuck in your life, and I don't have any plans of leaving it. Maybe I can't change anything...but I won't stop trying. And if you helped, maybe we'd be able to do it. If I didn't have to talk to convicted criminals for information, and could just talk to YOU instead...I mean...come on, I'm damn smart, and you're a masterful thief. Baby, I know you wouldn't want it, but I would die for you. I would give up space itself for you. So please, this time for real, let me in. And we can fix it together, or we can fail together, but we'll be together."

Tweek had slowly turned back towards Craig while he talked, seeming to be slowly considering each word. He closed his eyes and took a long, shaky breath. He took Craig's hand and leaned towards him, "Tucker...if you go down this rabbit hole, there's no going back."

"Who says I want to go back?" Craig asked.

Tweek pushed Craig back into the backseat, and at first he thought he'd made Tweek mad, but then Tweek climbed carefully into the back next to him and hugged onto him tightly.

"Back, back ouch," Craig breathed.

Tweek loosened his grip and smiled apologetically up at him, tears in his eyes, "sorry. Hey, so um...that's why you were visiting her today..? For...for me?"

"I told you, I'd do anything for you," Craig replied, kissing his cheek, "I was just...I was just so pissed that I couldn't help, you know?"

Tweek nodded, "there's um, a lot to explain...meet me at Kenny's later tonight?"

Craig nodded, "yeah, alright. And you'll tell me everything this time?"

"Promise. As long as you promise to not die for me," Tweek replied.

"Alright, we die together or not at all then," Craig nodded.

Tweek laughed a bit, "it's a deal."

---

It was around ten that night when Craig went to Kenny's house. He had bundled up extra tight to account for his shitty lungs, and made it there within ten minutes. He knocked on the door and let out a small sound of surprise as Tweek yanked him inside.

"Hey Stardust," he greeted, hugging him, "Sorry about that, it's just best not to hang out in Kenny's yard for too long."

"Yeah, you might get stabbed baby," Kenny greeted from where he was laying on the couch. He gave finger guns and a wink and Craig went from smiling lovingly at Tweek to glaring at Kenny.
“Only Tweek is allowed to give me nicknames, I'll kick you in the dick,” Craig replied.

Butters poked his head out of the kitchen, “Hey Craig! I heard we're tellin' secrets tanight!”

Kenny sat up and clutched his heart like he was giving some awful confession, “My name is Kenny McCormick, and I have a porn problem.”

Butters laughed and Tweek rolled his eyes, “Guys come on, this is actually kind of serious.”

“Oh I know Tweekers, it's dead serious, that's why jokes are so important. Can you imagine having all this information dumped on you at once with nothing to lighten the mood?” Kenny asked.

Tweek grimaced and Craig just rolled his eyes, “Come on guys, I know there's a lot I don't know, but I've seen Tweek's home life. I can't really be scared off at this point.”

Kenny hummed in disagreement and Butters walked into the room and patted Craig’s shoulder, “that's real cute Craig, sit down.”

Kenny hopped up, “Eh, let's go sit in my room, there's more space and less beer stains. Oh, and don't worry about talking loud, Karen is spending the night at Ike's, and my parents passed out like two hours ago.”

“What if they wake up?” Craig asked, glancing towards the shut door as they all made their way down the hall.

“They passed out after smoking some combination of weed and crack, I think they're out,” Kenny assured, opening his door for them.

Kenny's room was a bit cramped for the four of them, but there was a mattress and just enough floor space. Craig glanced around, noticing the dingy walls and rats just kind of chilling in the corner, eating something that he wouldn't try to distinguish. There was also a small dresser and a dirty standing mirror, which instantly made Craig uncomfortable. He walked over and sat in front of the mirror, with his back to it, so he wouldn't have to worry about being distracted while they talked.

Tweek sat down next to him and gave him this kind of worried look, it seemed like he wanted to ask something, but he never did. He bit his lip and just looked back towards Kenny and Butters, who both sat on the mattress. Kenny tilted his head, looking Craig up and down.

“Hey, you know you don't have to sit in the corner. I know there's not much space, but there's enough.”

Craig shook his head and flatly said, “I'm fine here.”

He saw all three of them exchange a look, which did not make him happy at all, and then Tweek patted his leg, “Alright, well, I guess we should start explaining then.”

“Yes, that would be nice,” Craig sighed, “So just...complete, unvarnished honesty. Are you guys mixed up in some kind of cartel thing?”

“Yes,” Kenny replied.

“My parents more than us,” Tweek added, “b-but it actually didn't used to be quite this bad. It all started a-a couple months ago, some bigger name guy started coming around, and my parents are involved with him now. Most of the actual coffee-” Tweek shook his head, “fuck codes. Most of the drugs still come from here, the unstable as hell drug dealers that live in Kenny's garage, but this
actual cartel guy has been hanging around and like, making deals with everyone.”

“I only seen him once,” Butters said, “He came up ta me after I knocked out somebody tryin' ta get inta Kenny's house. He told me I was doin' a good job protectin' my friend, then warned me that if I ever killed any a his guys he'd kill my family. So...seems like a nice guy ta me.”

“Butters, I doubt he knows how shitty your family is, it wasn't a nice offer,” Tweek grumbled.

Butters blinked, “What? Oh, well then that's just mean!”

Kenny shook his head, “I've tailed him before as Mysterion, he caught me once, but I still have a lot of good information on him.”

Craig blinked slowly, nodding and processing, “Alright...so...and...what exactly IS all of your involvement in this?”

“I'm the runner,” Tweek answered.

“I'm the eyes,” Kenny said, mimicking binoculars around his eyes.

“I'm the tank,” Butters hummed proudly, kicking his legs.

Craig nodded again, “Uh huh...okay what do any of those words mean in this context?”

“Oh, right,” Tweek sighed, “Okay, basically, I get the drugs for my parents, Kenny is a lookout that keeps an eye on the people who make the shit, he makes sure they don't get too dangerous, and Butters...Butters takes care of them if they do get too dangerous. Kenny and I can do that too, but it's a lot easier when it's just one guy if Butters handles it.”

“So...you guys basically protect Tweek while he takes care of shit his parents shouldn't be making him do?” Craig asked.

Butters and Kenny nodded, “I used to be the only one, up until we were about...eleven,” Kenny said, “Then Butters started learning to fight, and he helped out too.”

“Still better than my house!” Butters smiled.

“Yeah actually, you're like...always over here, is you dad cool with that or..?” Craig asked.

“Oh, I got kicked out a couple years ago for bein' gay with Kenny,” Butters replied, “I live here now.”

Craig shook his head, “Wh...what? Butters holy shit, your parents can't do that!”

Butters held up a hand, “Craig, if ya knew my parents, you'd be fine with that. I like it here, I help protect Karen an' Tweek. You don't gotta worry.”

Tweek leaned against Craig, “You and Token have pretty much the only good families in town, don't worry too much. We all have our ways of coping.”

“Too bad Cartman's coping method is being a crazy bastard,” Kenny said, “But anyway, our shit lives aren't what we're discussing right now...we're discussing TWEEN'S shit life.”

“And then we're gonna talk about Craig's,” Butters added.

“Wait I didn't agree to that,” Craig said quickly.
“So basically,” Tweek said, ignoring Craig's protest, “There's this mysterious man who's pretty much a drug lord, me and these two fight off drugged out assholes on a near-nightly basis, and if any of us tell or stop what we're doing, we'll likely die.”

Craig rubbed his head, staring at the floor, “Jesus fucking christ...yeah, that is quite a situation. So uh...how...how can we fix this...”

“We can't,” the blondes all replied. Craig looked around the room, seeing the same sad, trapped look on each of their faces. Kenny tried to shake his off first, smiling tiredly and locking his hands behind his head, “We're all dealt a hand in life, some just get worse hands, we just deal with it.”

Butters closed his eyes and grinned, though it had no real cheer to it, “We jus' gotta make it till we're adults! Then...uh...well I dunno what but it'll probably be better!”

Tweek hugged Craig's arm, “I know you think we can all work together and fix it, but I don't really think we can take down a crime lord...”

Craig was quiet for a minute, thinking things over. He didn't want to see them all so sad...especially not Tweek, but...he cared about Kenny and Butters too. He hated to admit it, but he really did. He thought about the last time he felt hopeless, like nothing could possibly save him...trapped...he looked behind him, seeing his own deep blue eyes staring back. That woman took so much from him...he wouldn't let some man take any more from his friends, from his love...no, he WOULD fix this. He glowered at the mirror for a minute, then stood, startling Tweek.

“I'll tell you what I know and what I think I know, tell me how much of it is right, and then...we're calling Kyle and Cartman,” Craig said.

“What?!” Tweek practically screamed.

“You lost your fucking mind?” Kenny asked.

Craig shook his head, “No! Think about it! The last time there was a major drug operation in town, Cartman was the one running it, back when he was being stupid Mitch Conner. He would know better than anyone how a crime lord operates, he practically IS one. And Kyle is almost as smart as me, and he knows how psychopaths work, he's kind of really obsessed with one. Together, those two are practically unstoppable, you three have all the skills they're lacking, you can stop them even when they work together, which means you should be able to cover any weakness they have. Kenny, you're more observant and less hot headed than Kyle, Butters, you're fucking terrifying and I think the strongest out of all of us, and Tweek, you beautiful little thief, you can pick-pocket, lock pick, and fucking scale buildings! Not to mention the detailed notes you have on probably everyone in town. If the five of you aren't some kind of perfect storm capable of stopping one shitty crime lord, I don't know who the hell is.”

“He has a good point...” Butters murmured, “Those two would make things maybe...doable?”

“I...I mean...maybe...” Kenny mumbled, “Damn, that was a lot less crazy than I thought it would be.”

“We're still missing one key piece,” Tweek said, standing up as well.

“What? What'd I miss?” Craig asked, looking at him.

“We'd need somebody good at strategy...somebody who saw all these skills and could help keep us all on track. Maybe someone really smart, some kind of...leader?” Tweek said, smiling up at Craig, “Then...then maybe it would work.”
Craig blinked a few times, “...m..you honestly think I’d be useful? I can’t even fight!”

“You can learn,” Tweek replied, “I mean...I don’t want to put you in danger, but I feel like you’re kinda doing that yourself anyway...so...you might as well be fully involved, right?”

Craig kissed Tweek, hugging his waist tightly and making him give a surprised squeal. He smiled broadly as he pulled back, “We’re gonna do it, we’re gonna get you all out of this mess.”

Tweek smiled up at him, and for the first time when he mentioned this topic, it wasn’t a fake, sad smile, it was a real, genuinely hopeful one. “We’ll win, or die trying,” Tweek said softly.

“We’ll win,” Craig replied.

Chapter End Notes

I need to change up all the tags on this I swear to god it was just a sweet love story what happened why am I like this.
It's still a sweet love story, but man, I always go so dark with things...I wanted your guys opinion on something, with the direction this is going in, the topics involved and stuff, is it still fine rated 'Teen' or should I bump it up to 'Mature'?
Recovery and Reflections

Chapter Notes

I RETURN FROM A FAR TOO LONG BREAK, MY FRIENDS

I am so so sorry for my absence, I swear I tired to write this chapter 20 times, but I finally got it! And I'm slowly getting back into the swing of things! I hope you enjoy, even if this update it somewhat short!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Slow steps. Baby steps. No, smaller than that. Tiny, baby guinea pig steps. That was the pace they had to go at, and it was killing Craig.

As he sat in Kenny's shitty room that morning, the pale light of dawn illuminating some questionable stains, he thought about how angry he was at himself for having already set them back. If it weren't for his damn oxygen tank, they could take bigger steps, but Tweek insisted that Craig learn how to properly defend himself before they get started on anything dangerous, and Craig understood that.

"So it's agreed. Three weeks," Kenny said, idly petting a rat that climbed up onto his leg.

"I might only need this tank for another two," Craig said.

"Good, that'll give you a week without it to make sure you're fully healed," Tweek replied, "None of us are really planning to go easy on you, you'll need to be totally recovered."

Craig sighed and tugged absently at his tubing, "cool. Well, I'll just try to get better fast."

"No more walking around in the bitter cold," Tweek said, scooting close to Craig to nudge his side.

"And no smoking either," Kenny stated, "even once your better, it'll fuck up your lungs if you pick that habit back up."

Craig groaned and leaned heavily against Tweek, "Nooo! I need my stress reliever! Especially with this giant mess!"

Tweek kissed his cheek, "it's alright, we'll find you something else for the stress."

"I know one thing," Kenny snickered.

Butters smacked his arm, "Ken! Now ain't the time for jokin'!"

Tweek blushed and hid his face in Craig's arm, "I meant like chewing gum or something, Jesus!"

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They had decided to wait on clueing Kyle and Cartman in on anything until they were fully prepared. After all, those two were wild cards, and they needed backups upon backups before they would feel safe letting those assholes in on their heavily complicated and dangerous situation.

That being said, it seemed Kyle had kept his word and not told Cartman anything Tweek talked
about, but it wasn't stopping the fat asshole from doing his own digging. He was prying at every opportunity he got, and they had to tread carefully. They couldn't tell him anything, not yet, not when he could still so easily fuck everything up for them.

The first week was nothing but questions, questions and Craig having to be physically restrained from stabbing him with a ballpoint pen. Quitting smoking on top of all the stress and the pain from his injuries was putting him more than a little on edge.

It was halfway through the second week, and Craig was just gathering his books in the backpack Tweek had gotten for him. It was a big guinea pig face with little ear flaps on top, and it was honestly one of the few things that could make him smile lately.

Token was gathering up his own things, and attempted a greeting, "Hey, uh, today going any better than the last few days?"

Craig sighed and closed his locker, "I guess. The back pain is getting better. Dude, you don't need to tread lightly or whatever. I'm a little irritable, but I'm not gonna fucking bite you."

"You bit Clyde literally yesterday," Token pointed out.

Craig scoffed, sliding his backpack over one shoulder, "yeah well, he's Clyde. I would never bite YOU."

"Look man, I get it, quitting smoking is rough. And you're clearly dealing with a lot on top of it. Why don't you take this weekend and find ways to relax? I can even drive you somewhere if you want to get out of town."

Craig hoisted up his tank in his free hand, sighing, "...yeah...thanks. Maybe...you and the other guys will put up with me for awhile on Saturday? Spending time with you guys doing nothing would be a nice break."

Token nodded in agreement, "yeah, we've been missing you, man. And you can bring Tweek too of course. I bet he could always use a little stress relief."

Craig nodded, "especially now."

Token gave Craig a questioning look, but didn't press it. He and Craig parted ways, and Craig headed off to his homeroom, nailing Cartman in the gut with his oxygen tank when he tried to approach.

The school day went fairly well, Craig managed to refrain from making a scene in any of his classes, even when Kyle said something so arrogant that it made him want to choke him to death with his oxygen tube. He was pretty proud of himself for having the self control it took to NOT attempt murdering him.

After school, he and Tweek went to hang out in the park and discuss things. Tweek was flopped across a swing on his stomach, foot idly rocking him back and forth as he stared down at the scuffed ground.

"Cartman is asking so many questions...I know I'm gonna break under all the pressure! I just feel so wound up, m-maybe this is all a huge mistake, we shouldn't do anything or tell anyone, and I'll just try to survive until we graduate!"

Craig was leaning against the swings' metal frame, watching as Tweek rocked in the swing and tugged on his hair. He just sighed and shook his head, "well, your panic attacks are growing more
sparse. It was nearly three days this time. I'm not backing down babe, we're saving you no matter how tricky it is, and you just need to try and relax. Things suck right now, but they won't forver, I'll make sure of it."

Tweek whined and looked up at him, "how can you be so sure, huh? It's not like you're doing a great job keeping it together either! Kenny told me he saw you hit your locker so hard it dented! I know you aren't REALLY this calm."

Craig took off his hat to rub his temples, "maybe not...but I am trying extrodinarily hard. I don't want to be pissy around you, especially since it's not your fault. Quitting smoking on top of all this shit is probably the hardest thing I have EVER done.

Tweek laughed a little, which made Craig frown, "how the hell is that funny?"

Tweek snorted and rolled off the swing into a sitting position, looking up at him, "the hardest thing you've ever done? Babe, you survived a kidnapping, helped me clean a very crime-scene like kitchen, and regularly visit the woman who tried to kill you. How exactly is THIS the hardest thing you've ever done?"

Craig blinked, "I...hadn't really thought about all that. But I mean..doing things for you isn't hard, even if it is cleaning up absurd amounts of blood, and that woman..she's not DIFFICULT, just...emotionally draining."

Tweek shook his head and stood up, walking over to Craig, "you fought Kyle. And lost really really bad. You're still on pain meds from how hard you hit the sidewalk. Fighting Kyle wasn't harder than this?"

Craig rubbed his arm, "I mean...losing was pretty easy, I suck pretty hard." He chuckled a little, "I guess it was kinda cool I did it at all..."

Tweek laughed again, reaching up and cupping his face, "You sat with me in my room when my drugged up dad tried to maybe hurt us. And you STAYED afterwards. That was definitely tougher than stupid cigarettes. Stardust, you're the toughest guy I know, you've got the strongest will of anyone. Definitely stronger than Kyle. And THIS is hard? I don't think so. You've got this."

Craig blushed lightly, meeting Tweek's eyes, "...you really still think I'm tough after I got my ass kicked like that?"

Taeek kissed his nose, "it takes courage to fight a losing battle. And stupidity. But mostly courage," he grinned,

Craig snorted and lightly shoved Tweek, "gee thanks, I love you too."

Tweek laughed, "Alright alright! But I do mean it, you're recklessly brave. You know, for a guy that likes a nice, boring life...you sure do get roped into a LOT."

Craig hugged Tweek, "yeah, I guess so. It's worth it for you though."

"Is it worse than Peru?"

"NOTHING will ever be worse than Peru. Two days confined to a small space with Kyle and friends? THAT was the actual hardest thing I've done."

Tweek laughed some more, leaning against Craig, "you're ridiculous. Hey, it's starting to get a little windy, we should go to your house before the cold start a hurting your lungs."
Craig sighed heavily, "fine. I guess I have to stop hugging you then."

Tweek kissed his shoulder and gently pulled away, taking one of his hands instead, "we can cuddle in your nice, warm room. Much better than hugging in a freezing park."

Craig smiled and nodded, "alright, I like that plan."

They walked back to Craig's house, with Craig feeling considerably more relaxed than he had been. They really were pretty good for each other, and Tweek was making him think that maybe not smoking anymore really wouldn't be so tough. Tweek's situation was a whole other issue, but they kept each other calm, and for the time being, that was enough.

---

That Saturday afternoon, they all sat in Token's game room, having decided that just relaxing at Token's house sounded better than travelling anywhere.

Craig was sitting in a bean bag chair, Tweek in his lap as they all watched Clyde play Resident Evil 7. Jimmy was leaning back and forth, watching in anticipation at every door Clyde opened, and Token was laying on the floor beside Clyde, continually pointing out what he needed to be doing.

"That door looks like a trap, I wouldn't-" Token said as Clyde promptly opened a wrong door and got himself killed.

Everyone groaned and Clyde crossed his arms, "Token! Stop backseat gaming!"

"But I was right!" Token argued.

"I always tuh-trust a minority over a wh-white dude's judgment in huh...h..horror situations," Jimmy teased.

"Yeah Clyde, you're giving white people an even worse horror rep than we already have," Tweek snorted.

"Shut uup! I am not! I was just unlucky, that's all!" Clyde huffed.

Craig pointed at the screen, "you know, if that dude was smart he would've just had the cops come investigate with him. He probably could've avoided losing his hand."

"Y-yet another nugget of wisdom fruh-from someone smarter than a wh..wuh..white boy," Jimmy laughed.

Clyde gave another whiny protest, trying to defend the protagonist's reasons as his friends all just laughed.

"You know man, I've really missed this," Token grinned.

"What do you mean? We always rip on Clyde," Craig replied.

Token snorted and shook his head, "not that, just, hanging out with you guys. It really has been awhile. And I know we still hang out at school, but like...actually hanging out outside school. It's nice."

Tweek nodded in agreement, "Yeah, you know, hanging out with Kenny's friends is fine, but they really aren't as much fun as you guys."
"This is a really nice break," Craig agreed, "hanging out here again makes me realize just how intense Butters and Kenny can be."

"Why are you hanging out with them so much anyway? What does Kenny have that I don't?" Clyde asked, throwing his controller down and turning to look at Craig with big, sad eyes.

"It's honestly more of a bond of trauma than anything," Craig huffed, "Kenny is cool and all, but don't worry, he'd never replace you guys. Not even you Clyde."

"Trauma huh? Well, I guess that's one way to form a solid base for a friendship," Token said, "but I don't want to stress either of you out, so let's just hang out and not bother them about Kenny and Butters, CLYDE."

Tweek settled more into Craig's lap, patting his leg, "yeah, you have nothing to worry about Clyde. And thanks, Token."

Clyde sighed, "alright, okay that's fair. Just...no replacing me."

"Never," Tweek chuckled.

Token clapped his hands, "okay! Do we want to keep watching Clyde fail at video games, or do we want to do something else? I have lots of board games, and we can stream pretty much any movie."

"You don't have DVDs anymore?" Clyde asked.

"Last time I checked this wasn't the early 2000s," Token replied, "so, who wants to do what?"

"A movie sounds nice," Tweek said.

"Let's watch a cartoon movie!" Clyde said.

"I've never seen ruh-rise of the guardians. I heard it was guh..g..gg...enjoyable," Jimmy offered.

Token nodded, "oh yeah, it's awesome! Totally underrated. I'll find it."

While Token flipped through his various streaming subscriptions, Clyde fished out his phone and turned on the front facing camera. He held it up with a grin, "hey, hey I want a group picture, all us awesome guys, finally hanging out again!"

Craig covered his face with one hand, like he was shielding himself from a harsh light, "it hasn't been THAT long Clyde."

Clyde pouted, "aw, c'mon! I still want a nice picture of all of us! The last one I have with everyone is from middle school!"

"I have a tube in my face, it's not really a great picture," Craig grumbled.

"No need to be cuh-camera shy," Jimmy said, "nobody cares if you don't look p-perfect!"

Tweek squeezed Craig's hand, "hey, why are you being so weird about this? Is something else-"

"It's nothing," Craig replied, a bit more sharply than intended. "...fine, we can take a picture. I won't like it though."

"Well, you don't like most things, soo.." Clyde leaned up, stretching his arms way up high and grinning, "group selfieee! Token lean back a little so you're in the shot!"
Token shook his head and leaned back, sticking his tongue out at the camera. Jimmy gave Clyde bunny ears, and Tweek grinned up at the camera. Craig looked up flatly and stuck his tongue out too, only managing to look tired in the photo, but hey, he figured it was better than looking pissed at least.

Clyde laughed and flopped back into his seat to look at the picture, "awesome! Hey, thanks for not flipping the camera off, Craig."

"Whatever," Craig grumbled.

Tweek rubbed his knee, looking at him in worry. He had that look in his eyes that said he wanted to bring this up again later. Craig didn't like that look. He sighed and ruffled Tweek's hair, "hey, don't give me that look. It's nothing, alright?"

Tweek made a squawking noise and batted his hand away, "you're SUCH a shitty liar, but I won't ruin our hangout time. Don't think I'll forget about this later though!"

Craig sighed and smiled a little, "yeah yeah, I know you won't, Mom."

"Gross! Don't call Tweek your mom," Clyde said, leaning back in his seat, "what're you guys even talking about?"

"Tweek just worries too much about me," Craig replied.

"You have an oxygen tank and anxiety. I worry about you exactly enough!" Tweek huffed.

"Anxiety? Craig? You sure about that?" Clyde snorted.

"Let's NOT talk about that," Craig said, "I think Token's found the movie, shoo shoo!"

He waved Clyde's attention away and shot Tweek a look. Tweek just stuck his tongue out and settled more into his lap, kicking his legs lightly.

---

After the movie, it was already almost dark out, and Clyde was passed out in his bean bag chair. Craig and Jimmy were taking turns trying to throw popcorn into Clyde's open mouth, and Token looked like he was thinking something over.

Tweek snickered as Jimmy landed a piece in Clyde's mouth, and he just ate it in his sleep. Tweek snorted, "wow, he didn't even stir."

"Sleep eating, one of the only talents Clyde has had from a very young age," Craig said.

Jimmy chuckled, "w-wonder what it would take tuh-to wake him up?"

"Healthy food probably," Craig replied.

Tweek looked over to where Token was just quietly watching all of them, looking like he was a scientist studying some gathering of wild animals. "Hey, you uh, thinkin about something over there?"

Token blinked, "oh! Sorry, I guess I was staring. I was just thinking about how late it's getting and-"

"O-oh! Oh I'm sorry, we didn't mean to stay so late!" Tweek said, going to stand, even as Craig protested and tried to hold him in place.
Token laughed, "no no, that's not what I meant! I was just thinking, it's so late anyway, and mom and dad are out for the weekend on a business trip, so what if you all just stayed the night? I have pajamas everyone could borrow."

Tweek looked back over, pausing in his struggle to get free of Craig, "stay the night? Y-you sure?"

Craig pushed Tweek's hand off of his face, "I'll have to call my folks, they've gotten all protective since the whole hospital incident, but yeah, we could probably do that, right Tweek?"

Tweek whined, tapping his chin with a shaky hand, looking like he was weighing things in his head, "Saturday night means...but if I did that...early enough to...I guess if he didn't KNOW..." He was mumbling, only a word here and there actually coming out clearly.

"Babe. Babe you're thinking out loud," Craig said, snapping his fingers in front of Tweek's face.

"GuH?" Tweek shook his head, "sorry! Uh, yeah, I can stay the night. I just gotta leave kinda early in the morning."

Token smiled and nodded, "that's fine, I'm excited to get to spend more time with you guys again!"

Jimmy nodded in agreement, "and I'm sure my puh-pahh...parents will be fine with it too. C-Clyde too. Hey, the gang is finally puh-properly hanging out again!"

Craig shook his head, "it really hasn't been that long guys."

"I think it's been longer than you realize, man," Token replied, "you've been really busy, we don't blame you or anything, but...I mean, the last time we hung out was at Tweek's, and it just isn't the same with all of Kenny's friends around too. They're not...BAD, just...it's nice to just hang out with JUST you guys."

Craig nodded a bit, "huh, yeah, I guess it has been a little bit since it's been just us...well, I think it'll be nice too."

"It'll definitely be a calmer night," Tweek hummed, "I missed calm."

"Yuh-you know, you've actually c-cahh..calmed down a lot yourself. You buh-barely stutter or screech anymore," Jimmy said, "it's n-no fair, now I'm the oh..only weird one!"

Tweek snorted, "I'm pretty sure all of us are plenty weird, except Token maybe."

"I dunno, a black guy with p-privilege? That's puh-prettty weird to me," Jimmy replied.

"So then we are all weird," Craig stated.

Token rolled his eyes and shook his head, "I'm gonna go grab some blankets and stuff, you're all cool sleeping in the game room, right?"

"You Kiddin? This room is nuh-nicer than my whole house," Jimmy laughed.

"I'm fine just sleeping like this," Craig said.

"In a beanbag chair with Tweek in your lap?" Token asked.

"Yeah," Craig smiled.

Token smiled and shook his head again before walking out of the room. Clyde finally shifted, rolling
out of his seat and onto the floor with a yawn.

"Aww, you guys stopped throwing popcornnn..." He whined.

"Were you awake that whole time?" Tweek laughed.

"No! Just after a piece went in my nose...and even then I only half woke up. But uh, I think we're all staying here tonight, right? That's cool."

Clyde grabbed his phone and tapped away for a minute, "let's...I want to take more group pictures and document tonight," he yawned, still clearly half asleep.

"We aren't teen girls," Craig scoffed.

"I'm kind of like a teen girl," Tweek snickered, tugging on his wild blonde hair so it was pressed down against his shoulders, "wouldn't I be pretty?"

"Long hair and a cute face doesn't make you a girl," Craig chuckled.

"You don't hafta be a girl to want to take lots of pictures of your friends hanging out!" Clyde protested.

"Y-yeah, you should see how much...much junk Butters posts," Jimmy added.

Craig shook his head, "alright, well, I don't want a part of it."

"Too late! You're already stuck in this friend group, and you're gonna put up with this!" Clyde laughed, shooting his arm up so fast that the phone nearly flew out of his hand.

He screeched as it fell and smacked him square in the face with a loud 'smack'. Jimmy snickered and took a picture of Clyde with his own phone, "buh-beautiful."

Token came back with blankets and pillows, and the boys spent the next ten minutes throwing everything around in a big fluffy mess, eventually creating a mix between a blanket fort and a massive pillowy nest. Clyde flopped down onto a pillow underneath the big sheet they had hung up like a canopy, and Token helped Jimmy climb inside.

"You guys know its gonna be almost impossible to sleep on the blankets like this, right?" Token chuckled.

Tweek dove into the blankets and rolled onto his back, "shh, don't ruin this, let's pretend we're twelve again for a little while."

Craig crawled in and tucked himself into a corner, trying to set his oxygen tank out of the way, "yeah, let's talk about crushes and make fun of Clyde."

"We do that already," Token chuckled.

"Stop making fun of me!" Clyde huffed.

"Stop making it so easy," Craig retorted.

Tweek scooted over next to Craig, leaning against his side, "it's alright Clyde, we still love you."

Token sat down in the little fort, "Hey, why don't we play a sleep over game?"
"I am nuh-not playin spin the bottle with these o-options," Jimmy stated.

Token smacked a hand to Jimmy's face, "we could play Never Have I Ever, see what weird shit we've all neen up to."

"Tweek would win," Craig chuckled.

Tweek smacked his arm, "hush!"

Clyde nodded, "yeah yeah, that could be fun! I bet Craig hasn't done anything though. Other than fight Kyle and get kidnapped I guess."

"Wow, fucking insensitive," Craig huffed.

Jimmy licked Token's hand, making him squawk and shake it off, "I'll guh-go first. Nuh-never have I ever...drove a car."

Token put up a finger, "that's not even close to what I thought you'd say, I mean, of course you haven't, and I'm the only one who has a license, so why even bother-" he paused when he saw Tweek shyly put up a finger.

Jimmy clapped, "I guessed right!"

Tweek crossed his arms, "don't try to call me out! Rude!"

"Babe, when did you drive a car?" Craig asked, surprised.

"I was fourteen, Kenny and Butters needed my help and I was the only one who knew how to hotwire, so I had to drive," Tweek said.

"What is your life LIKE?" Clyde whispered in awe.

"My god that raises so many questions," Craig murmured, "I'll save them for later. Okay, uh, never have I ever drank alcohol."

Everyone else put up a finger, and Craig raised an eyebrow, "Token? Even you?"

Token shrugged, "I know I'm like the dad friend or whatever, but come on, I'm still a teenager with access to a very high quality liquor cabinet. It's not like I do it often!"

"Ooh Token gets fuh-fancy drunk. I just dru-drink gross beer behind the school with the g-guh...ggoth kids," Jimmy said.

"Me and Bebe stole her dad's vodka once, it was super gross!" Clyde chimed in.

"Sometimes I just need a freaking drink," Tweek sighed.

"Tweek-all of you! C'mon, drinking is bad," Craig said.

"You smoke, you have no argument here," Token replied.

"Well I'm quitting..." Craig huffed, "alright fine! Token, you go."

"Alright, um, never have I ever been to jail."

"Wait, arrested or just visiting?" Craig asked.
"Um...either I guess," Token replied.

The other boys mumbled and Craig, Tweek, and Jimmy put a finger up.

"Ooh, now we gotta figure out who got arrested and who was just visiting someone," Clyde snickered.

Tweek's face turned red, "I don't wanna play this game anymore."

"Wuh-well we know Tweek's answer then," Jimmy snorted.

Clyde held his phone up, "awkward truth selfiiee."

Tweek flipped off the camera and Craig shielded his eyes, "Clyde, fuck off with the camera already!"

"Dude, what is up with you and cameras?" Token asked, "have you always had a thing with them? I feel like this is somewhat recent..."

"He duh-definitely wasn't like this in middle school," Jimmy noted.

Clyde whined and set his phone down, "yeah, you used to at least put up with my pictures!"

Craig crossed his arms, "it's nothing. I just think selfies are stupid."

"Do you not remember that entire month in sixth grade when you would take a ridiculous amount of pictures of yourself and Tweek?" Token asked, "your facebook was very annoying."

Craig shrugged, "dunno, was a stupid twelve year old I guess."

Tweek had been oddly quiet during all of this, like he was debating whether or not to say something. He finally gave in, sighing in frustration, "Craig, stop lying! They might be able to help you know, they are your friends."

Craig blinked, surprised, "Tweek, what are-"

"Your mirrors are all still covered," Tweek replied softly, "why don't you like seeing yourself?"

Craig rubbed the back of his neck, "oh...um, look this is really killing the whole 'relaxing with friends' vibe we had going..."

Clyde frowned, "do you not like how you look or something? But you're super handsome! That's insane! Oh oh, or is it that uh, body...transformia..?thing that Wendy is always talking about?"

"Body dysmorphic," Craig corrected, "and it's none of your business."

"Yuh-you know, you might feel better if you ta-t..talked about it," Jimmy said, "I'll even limit my j-jokes."

Token nodded, "yeah man, if you're having issues, you can share. I know that's not really your thing, but last tiem you confided in me, I did help, remember?"

Craig shifted a bit, feeling a little ganged up on, "...I guess...it kinda backfired when she kidnapped me, but, before that you DID help..."

"We aren't trying to pressure you," Tweek said, "but...I noticed you've been weird about it for
awhile...I wanna help. Is it...does this have something to do with Petunia?"

"Our old middle school principal?" Clyde asked, confused.

"Craig's biological mother," Token reminded him.

"Gross, don't fucking call her that," Craig hissed, "and yeah, I guess it does. It's really no problem though, I just don't like pictures or mirrors, alright? Can't we leave it at that?"

"Friend therapy!" Jimmy insisted, "were guh-gonna FORCE you to feel buh...better! Buh...b...bitch!"

Craig couldn't help but smile a little, Jimmy was being really nice...for him anyway, "come on, we were having fun. My stupid shit will just ruin that."

"Learning stuff about you is fun!" Clyde said.

"And helping a friend is also fun," Token said, "well, maybe not FUN, but definitely rewarding. And Clyde is right, knowing more about you is always pretty cool."

Tweek nodded rapidly, "yeah! See? You aren't bothering us or anything! Hoenstly it bothers me more when you don't share shit."

Craig looked down, "well...I mean, I appreciate that, I really do, but it's just..." He shook his head. It was such a stupid thing, he felt pretty embarrassed about such a small thing bothering him, he'd feel even more embarrassed sharing it with his little friend group.

"What? Think it's stupid?" Token asked, "I'm still scared of the dark, which is stupid to me, but it's just human nature."

"And you don't think any of my stuff is stupid," Tweek pointed out, like my problems with crowds and loud noises and enclosed spaces and...w-well my point is there's a lot! And you don't think it's dumb. I know whatever your reason is, it isn't dumb either."

Craig sighed heavily, looking down, "...fine. If you all gotta insist on being good friends, jeez. It's...I've had a problem ever since I got kidnapped, but it's gotten worse the last year or so. It's...it's that stupid picture. The one of Daniel. I look so much like him, and the older I get, the more I look exactly like that picture. And it's the reason she went after me...and it's why she hates me, and it's not his fault, and it's not my fault, but I just...I can't stand my own face anymore. It's like...it's like my reflection doesn't belong to me anymore. And I just can't stand that..."

The room was silent for a minute, then Craig heard sniffling. He looked up to see Clyde trying hard not to cry. He raised an eyebrow, but before he could ask anything, Clyde flung himself at him, hugging him tightly and nearly knocking his oxygen tube out.

"Fuckin-Clyde! Be careful asshole!" Craig exclaimed.

"Sorry! I just-that's so sad!" Clyde sniffled, loosening his grip, but not letting go.

Tweek hugged Craig's arm, "Oh Craig...that's not stupid at all...it's really sad."

Craig shifted a little, but for once in his life didn't push Clyde off of him, "yeah well...it's whatever."

Clyde gripped Craig's hand, "No dude, it's not whatever, it's everything. I know I can be an idiot
"Sometimes, but you listen here man, you are you, and a dumb mirror can't take that away."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Craig asked, not really following Clyde's rambling. He seemed convicted about whatever it was though.

Clyde shook his head, trying again, "Mirrors are liars, Craig."

"Wh-"

"They only show us what we see, how we see ourselves, and that's a lie! Our friends see us way better than mirrors, and you aren't anybody but you. Make sense?"

Craig frowned, thinking it over, "I...guess? But, what makes you say that? About mirrors I mean."

Clyde leaned back on his hands, sighing and looking away, seeming strangely serious, "look, we've all had times when we were really depressed. And you aren't the only one who's gone through some kind of hell, you know? My mom..." Clyde paused, like he could feel the air thicken around them. No one talked about Clyde's mom, and everyone was deadly silent as Clyde continued, "...my mom hated me."

"Clyde, don't say that-" Token started softly, but Clyde held up his hand.

"It's okay. It was a long time ago, you know? But...my mom, she was kind of a terrible person. Her ghost told me I killed her, at her own funeral and everything, remember? That was a uh, kind of unforgettable day. Kyle tried to fix things, but man, he fucked up everything so bad...that's so like Kyle, right? Trying his best but just making a mess of things..." Clyde was kind of rambling, but no one stopped him. It was rare to hear him so serious about something, no one wanted to interrupt.

Clyde rubbed his arm, "I couldn't look at myself in the mirror for a long time after that funeral, 'cause I have my mom's eyes, and every time I'd see my eyes it was like seeing her call me a murderer over and over. And I kinda started to believe it."

Craig shifted forward slightly, softly asking, "but you love pictures now...what changed?"

Clyde smiled, bright and goofy, even if his eyes were still clouded by a long passed sadness, "I realized that's what she wanted. She wanted me to see a stupid murderer in the mirror every morning, she wanted her son to feel that mistake every day for the rest of his life...and...that by believing the mirror, I was letting her win." He put a hand to his chest, looking at Craig, "the mirror lies, Craig. And if you listen to it, then she wins. Is that what you want?"

Everyone was quiet for a few minutes, looking at Clyde and actually taking some time to let his words sink in. The still was finally broken by Craig grabbing Clyde's hand and yanking him forward into a hug.

Clyde gasped loudly and Craig let go pretty quickly, blushing slightly, "...that was a one time thing, don't get excited."

"CRAIG HUGGED ME!" Clyde screeched.

The other boys laughed lightly, the tension easing again. Tweek smiled and crossed his arms, "wow, Clyde got through to you, Craig?"

Craig nodded, "yeah. He's right, I won't let her win."

Clyde clapped his hands, "oh! Does this mean I can take a proper group picture now?!"
Craig sighed, "I won't like it you know."

"Whatever, it's still a start! Right?"

Tweek looked at Craig hopefully, and Token gave a small nod of encouragement. Jimmy grinned and gave a thumbs up. Craig sighed and closed his eyes, trying to picture the somewhat normal kid he had been in sixth grade. "...yeah. It's a start."

Chapter End Notes

Oof, so my absence, well friends

Depression is a stone cold BITCH but the mighty Dragon can't be held down for long! And so I am BACK from the pits of writers block and sad times

Look forward to more chapters soon! Before another 3 months pass, again, so freaking sorry about that lapse in updates my dudes

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