The boys get stuck together five times, then one time miraculously they don't (though the first time is more 'thrown together by circumstance' than 'stuck together'). There's lots of mutual pining and mutual idiocy about it. Miscommunication abounds, and Isak drools a lot.

Written for the evakteket birthday challenge (Happy Birthday to you! This is so exciting!). Prompts were: pining, college/university and stuck together. Me being me, I made it a 5 + 1 as well because I have no chill at all.
Chapter 1

“Hold the door!”

The voice is deep, and the owner sounds out of breath. Idly, Isak presses the button which stops the doors from closing and a guy thuds into the elevator with him, ending up leaning against the back wall and panting heavily. For a moment, Isak smirks at the overly dramatic display, but then he takes a better look at his companion once the elevator starts moving and he freezes. It’s Hot Guy.

Hot Guy has been haunting Isak since he started at university a few weeks ago and saw Hot Guy across the crowded courtyard. He’d been walking, just walking, but the sunlight had glinted on his perfect hair and his saunter had been incredibly casual and attractive. Then, when he’d got to his friends, Hot Guy’s smile had come out, crinkling up his eyes and lighting up his face and Isak had been gone. Dead. There was no saving him. He’d tripped over a nearby crooked spot on the path because he’d been staring so hard. Blushing, Isak had pulled his snapback down over his eyes and scuttled away. But the memory of Hot Guy had followed him everywhere he went from that moment on.

And now here he is, standing casually in Isak’s elevator and looking both impossibly hot and impossibly cool at the same time. Hot Guy’s jean jacket is probably a little too heavy for this time of year, and he’s surely overheating in it, but it sits so nicely on his shoulders that Isak can’t quite bring himself to worry too much about his health. His hair is perfect, as usual. Not that Isak’s paid attention or anything. Just. It sits in such a gravity defying way that Isak’s wasted a few moments here and there wondering how he does it. Here in person, it’s still impossible to tell what he does to get it that way, and Isak has to clench his fingers tight into a fist to prevent himself from reaching out to run a hand through it to try to find out. And maybe, just a little, to find out what it might feel like as well, in case it’s as silky as it looks. Because that would not only be weird but also inappropriate for someone he hasn’t even properly met yet. Borderline creepy, in fact. Hot Guy is also wearing a pan pride button on that jacket, and the sight of it is enough to make Isak’s insides clench in startled delight. If he’s pan, there’s an outside chance that Hot Guy could possibly notice Isak back.

Hot Guy is now lounging casually, as if elevators are his natural habitat, and he looks like a fucking model even in this dull and unflattering lighting. Isak wonders idly what those cheekbones might look like in good natural lighting, but instantly forces his mind away as the picture that idea conjures sends a shock of desire right through his body. Hot Guy’s breath is still coming in ragged little pants after his dash into the elevator, and the sound echoing in the confined space just adds to the sexual charm the guy exudes.

“So … uh, what level?” Isak asks, trying to drag his thoughts away from Hot Guy’s very very sexy body before those thoughts get him into trouble.

“Level?” Hot Guy smiles, his eyes crinkling and making Isak’s stomach plummet as if he’s on a rollercoaster. “Oh. 4 please.”

Isak gapes for a moment too long before Hot Guy’s smile slides a little and he starts looking confused. That recalls Isak to his senses and he blushes as he pushes the button.

He can feel Hot Guy’s eyes on him, but he keeps his gaze strictly on the doors. His heart is beating too fast and his face is surely betraying too much for Isak to trust himself to look at Hot Guy again or try to interact with him any further. Soon, Hot Guy is humming to himself. It’s pleasant and Isak tries to figure out the tune. He knows it, but the answer is just tantalizingly out of reach. Thankfully, trying to work it out keeps his attention away from the proximity of Hot Guy’s body and the
beautiful way his smile transforms his face. Which Isak is definitely not sneaking looks at, not at all.

The silence stretches (well, silence apart from the irritatingly adorable humming) and Isak desperately wants to say something else, to interact more deeply, to find out Hot Guy’s name maybe. But the longer the moment lasts the less he feels he can say anything. So he keeps his eyes firmly on the doors and tries not to react to the way Hot Guy shuffles around behind him, presumably trying to get something out of his pocket. There’s a grunt and a soft “yessss” coming from behind Isak, but he can’t look around now. It’s become too much of a thing now, and Isak can’t bring himself to do it.

So he huffs out a relieved sigh when the elevator pings and shudders to a stop at Level 4. He steps back a little to let Hot Guy out and gets a glorious smile again in return. Outside the doors, a stunning blonde girl is waiting. Her eyes light on Hot Guy and her face glows.

“Babe!” she says, reaching out a hand.

Laughing, Hot Guy takes it and pulls her to him. His eyes have the deepest crinkles around them that Isak has ever seen, and he’s so focused on her face that it almost takes Isak’s breath away. As the doors slide shut, Isak sees him dip his head to take her lips in a searing kiss. Not that Isak has ever wondered what kissing Hot Guy might be like, of course, or not more than once or twice a week anyway, but it looks good; he looks like he knows a thing or two about kissing. The girl leans into it and it’s clear they’ve done this many times before.

Sighing, Isak sets his sights back on the door as the elevator rises to his own level. That’s that, then. Hot Guy has a girlfriend, so Isak can now officially write Hot Guy off his list of fantasies.
“Jonaaaaaas,” Isak moans, flopping down backwards onto Jonas’ bed and screaming into the hands he has thrown over his face. “Jonas!! He was there again.”

Totally unconcerned, Jonas carries on with his studying. He’s sitting at his desk leafing through a huge book. “The hot guy who you refuse to talk to?” he asks in a bored voice.

“He’s so beautiful, Jonas. Beautiful and taken.”

“Isak we’ve been over this. Hot Guy likes you.”

Glowering, Isak sits up and runs a hand through his hair. “You don’t know that! He has a girlfriend; a very pretty, very loving, very affectionate girlfriend.”

“Mmmmm,” Jonas agrees, still flipping pages of his book and ignoring Isak and his serious issues, which is frankly quite rude. “But he also likes you.”

“Stop trying to make me feel better. It’s not working!”

Disgruntled, Isak lies back down on the bed. Jonas doesn’t get it. He doesn’t understand the pain of seeing Hot Guy around with her; the beautiful girl who makes his eyes crinkle so deeply and his smile light up. The biggest issue, from Isak’s point of view, is that Hot Guy is so fucking kind along with it. Isak wouldn’t be as fucked as he currently is if Hot Guy was an asshole. But he’s not. He’s nice to everyone he sees, and on the occasions that Isak’s managed to actually get up the courage to interact, he’s smiled at Isak like he’s the most precious person in the world and his voice has been so soft and charming.

“Isak. I have two words for you,” Jonas says, finally deigning to turn around and address the severity of Isak’s issue. “Paper towels.”

“That … that wasn’t a thing. He just had really--”

“Wet hands? Yes, I heard your ‘reasoning’ before.” There’s amusement in Jonas’ voice as they talk, and Isak groans again.

Following the moment in the elevator, Isak has been unsuccessful in stopping his traitorous brain from noticing Hot Guy everywhere. That Hot Guy has a girlfriend is apparently of no concern to that brain at all as it keeps helpfully pointing him out to Isak every chance it gets.

Noticing him around had become even worse on the day of the great paper towel incident, as Jonas always insisted on calling it. They’d been in a university bathroom, washing their hands and joking as they always did, when Hot Guy had come in. Isak had instantly frozen, become incapable of forming any sort of coherent speech, and Jonas had stared at him like he had completely lost the plot. Just as they had reached out for the paper towels, Hot Guy had started to pull them out of the container. He’d kept going until they were all gone, crushing them in his hands to ensure they were completely dry. Eventually, Hot Guy had noticed that Isak and Jonas were both standing at the sinks with dripping hands and baffled expressions, and he’d smiled. That goddam beautiful crinkly smile.

“Oh? Did you need some too?” he’d asked, his voice smooth as silk, just like Isak remembered. “Here.” And then he’d pulled the least wet towels out of the bin he’d put them in and handed one each to Isak and Jonas before sauntering away. Isak had followed him with his eyes before groaning as the door shut behind him.
Jonas insisted that Isak had just been too captivated by the smile and the sheer presence of Hot Guy to notice that his eyes had lingered on Isak and his smile had widened every time he’d looked specifically at him. Which, according to Jonas, was at least 75% of the time they were in that bathroom.

Isak shakes the memories away and glares at Jonas.

“Jonas! Be nice.”

“Why?” Isak’s best friend laughs as he turns back to his work. “We’ve had literally this exact conversation at least five other times. I’m bored of it.”

“He doesn’t like me.” Isak’s defiant when he speaks. He can’t allow the worm of hope in. That way lies a life of obsession and overanalysis. And he already has Biology for that.

“Okay, sure, Isak. He doesn’t like you. He hates you so much, and the paper towels were a clear case of extremely wet hands.”

“Thank you!” Isak says, nodding his approval. “That’s what I thought.”

Jonas groans, rolls his eyes and aggressively flips another page. Isak lies on his bed and allows thoughts of hot-guy-who-definitely-hates-Isak to wander into his mind. Despite there being exactly zero hope of Isak ever meeting and interacting with Hot Guy for more than a minute, and even less hope of anything coming of it if such a meeting were to happen given the beautiful girlfriend and the passionate kissing that usually accompanies her, Isak allows himself his daydreams. They don’t hurt anyone, after all.

A few days later, Isak is walking through the campus again and he spots a familiar jacket out of the corner of his eye. It’s not his fault, he argues with himself, that Hot Guy has several spectacular jackets and that Isak knows them all. That’s just a sign of Hot Guy’s impeccable taste. So it’s not like it’s a surprise that Isak can pick them all out of a lineup, or across a courtyard filled with other students.

Hot Guy spots Isak and grins, his eyes crinkling in that way that makes Isak’s heart flip over in his chest and he starts jogging in Isak’s direction. Isak freezes, unsure what to do. Does Isak have something embarrassingly wrong with his clothes? Has Hot Guy spotted someone behind him? But it quickly becomes obvious that Hot Guy is coming to Isak himself, coming right over to where Isak is standing and gaping like a fucking fool.

“Hey. Isak, right?” Hot Guy asks as he falls into step next to Isak.

Isak’s staring and his breath is coming in short gasps, horrifying Isak with his distinct lack of cool. “Yeah. Uh … yeah. Isak; that’s who I am.”

Hot Guy’s eyes crinkle and Isak’s heart flips again. It’s so much more devastating close up, that crinkle.

“Even,” Hot Guy says, holding his hand out.

Isak takes it, acutely aware of the way his heart rate speeds up even more at the touch, and blushing profusely. He’s sure Hot Guy (Even; his name is Even) must think Isak’s a total mess but here he is still smiling, still crinkling his eyes in that way that never fails to get Isak hot and bothered.
“Hi,” Isak says, reluctantly letting go of Even’s hand a moment later than most people would consider strictly socially acceptable, and his blush deepens.

Even looks at him with his head tilted to the side and that goddam smile all over his fucking perfect face and Isak swallows. He has to drag his eyes away from the fascinating lashes that frame those eyes and make the smile so enticing.

“So,” he says, trying to come across as someone who’s at least a little put together even while every atom in his body is betraying him in the worst possible way, “did you need something?”

“You don’t think I just wanted to spend time in your company?”

Exasperated, Isak rolls his eyes. Hot Even apparently likes teasing, which makes him slightly less attractive (Isak is honest enough to admit that it is only a slight lessening in attractiveness; he’s pretty gone and he’s willing to own up to it). It’s enough to allow Isak to relax and actually speak.

“Even, I just met you. Wanting to spend time in my company would frankly be a bit creepy.”

There the crinkles go again, along with a widening of the sunny smile and Isak can’t quite contain the delighted grin that blooms on his face in response.

“Oh, you think I’m creepy? Maybe I’ve changed my mind on wanting your help then.”

Isak stops still in the middle of the path. Even takes two more steps before he notices Isak isn’t with him and turns to come back. People crash into Isak as he stares at Even in consternation. They glare and mutter as they alter their own paths to avoid the two of them but Isak can’t bring himself to care.

“You want my help?”

“Yes.” Even’s still smiling, he still has that relaxed lounging look even though he’s standing upright in the middle of nowhere. And he looks like he doesn’t quite understand why Isak has an issue with all this.

“Me? Who you don’t know? You want my help?”

“Yes, Isak.” Even shoves his hands in his pockets and quirks his eyebrow at Isak. “I want your help.”

“But … why? I don’t understand.”

“Come with me,” Even says and walks away.

His stance and pace scream certainty that Isak will just follow along, and there’s a part of Isak that rebels at that. Who is this guy to assume that random people he starts talking to will just follow after him like lost little puppies? But Isak knows he’s not kidding anyone. It’s Hot Even and this is the first time he’s ever had a conversation of more than five words with Isak. Isak’s not going to let this opportunity to slip through his fingers.

So he follows Even, still confused about what the fuck he might want Isak’s help with. They trail right across the campus and into a small building. It’s dim and dusty, sun beams lighting up the small motes as they move languidly through the air. It smells terrible; must and dank dust mixing together in a cocktail that assaults Isak’s nose. He coughs, clapping his hand over his mouth and gagging.

“What the fuck is this place?” he manages to get out between choking gasps.
Even turns to look at him and his eyes light up. In this dim light, his hair looks ethereal and Isak is completely fucked, and he knows it. He should make an excuse to leave, he should remember that this guy has a girlfriend who he’s evidently very much in love with, and he should protect himself. But when Even looks at Isak like that, pinning him with a gaze that says he’s seen and noticed and important, well Isak is only one man and he has very little will power.

“We’re filming, Isak. We needed some extras.”

“You’re filming …?”

“And need extras, yes,” a new voice cuts in. Isak blushes as he realizes he’s just flat out not even noticed the other three guys in the room. The three very large, very loud guys. He must look like a total prize dick right now.

“Isak, this is Yousef, and that’s Elias, and Adam. Guys, this is Isak. He’s agreed to help us out today.”

Isak may be completely, embarrassingly, willing to do anything Even might ask of him, but he’s not going to stand for that sort of thing. He hasn’t agreed to anything and he’s not willing to look like quite that much of a pushover.

“Excuse me, I did no such thing. You didn’t even ask …”

Even turns those eyes on him again and Isak falls again. They’re so intense and blue and beautiful and fuck it; how can anyone say no to them? Fuck.

“Will you be an extra for us, please, Isak?”

Trying not to show the way he’s internally combusting at the sound of that voice, Isak narrows his eyes in suspicion and asks, “what would it involve?”

The one Even pointed out as Elias claps him on the back and grins. “Nothing much. You just have to walk down those stairs there while Even follows you with the camera. You’re going to die horribly, but we’ll edit that bit in later.”

Well, that doesn’t sound bad, and Isak is willing to do a fair amount to be in the same place as Even for any amount of time. Girlfriend, remember the girlfriend, he yells at himself while his body betrays him and his head is apparently nodding a cheerful yes. Because his body has no sense of self preservation at all.

The end result, of course, is that Isak is walking down a dusty set of stairs, trying not to choke on the puffs that drift up as he steps and having to deal with the sound of Even’s footsteps behind him and the imagined feel of his breath tickling Isak’s neck. Or is that cobwebs? Isak shudders and Even huffs out a slight laugh.

“Relax, Isak. Just forget the camera’s even here.”

As if that’s the problem. It couldn’t even be further from the problem.

“Fuck you, asshole,” Isak groans, but he tries to relax anyway, tries to force his thoughts away from images of Even in the dark with him somewhere a lot sexier than this. His brain does not want to cooperate, suggesting a lot of ideas that are very inappropriate to be thinking about someone you only met properly less than an hour ago. Isak grits his teeth and forces himself to keep inching down the stairs.
There’s suddenly a bang from the room above and the stairs are plunged into total darkness. From behind him somewhere, Isak hears Even’s muttered, “shit.” There’s a clatter, some thumping, and more cursing.

“Are you okay?” Isak asks, turning and trying to see Even through the deep blackness that surrounds them.

“Fuck. Yes. I just stumbled a bit when the lights went off.”

There’s a small light suddenly and Isak squints against its bright intrusion. When his eyes adjust, he realizes Even has his phone out and is shining it down the stairs at Isak. Behind the phone Isak can just barely make out the soft lines of Even’s face, once again crinkled in smile lines. It makes his heart skip, seeing it here in this dark place.

Even climbs back up the stairs, tries the door and then rattles it impatiently. “Fuck. It’s locked,” he says then bangs on the door. “Guys? What the fuck? We’re locked in.”

There’s a muffled thud from the other side of the door and more cursing. “Yeah, sorry, bro. There’s no key. We’ll … uh. We’ll go find someone who might have one. You guys … you guys stay tight, okay?”

There’s something like suppressed amusement in that voice, and Isak growls. “It’s not fucking funny!” he yells at the retreating footsteps.

“It’s a little bit funny,” Even says.

In the dim light he sits down on the stair by the door and leans against the wall. He looks exactly as if this sort of thing happens to him every day and that’s he’s completely at ease. It’s okay for him, Isak thinks morosely as he sinks down on his own step, sneezing as the dust puffs up around him, and drops his head back against the wall in a fit of grumpiness. Even isn’t stuck here with a god among men who he’s been fantasizing about for weeks now. Even isn’t desperately trying not to think about being in the dark and all the exciting possibilities that could create. Even isn’t freaking out because he doesn’t know what to say to his crush.

“You think it’s funny, stuck here with no food and no way out? We could starve to death, or miss important classes …”

“Wow, you’re dramatic. You should be the one doing film, not … not … “ Even stops for a moment and tilts his head, eyes crinkling beautifully at Isak. “Actually, what do you study?”

“Science. Biology, mostly.” Isak smiles, trying to deflect the impact, bracing for the snort of derision when he tells Even. It always comes, when he tells others. Somehow they don’t picture snapback wearing, grouchy assholes to be scientists.

“Science,” Even says, and his voice runs gently over the word, as if he’s caressing it, trying to savor it. He glances down at Isak again. “It suits you. You seem like a man of theory.” He laughs, those eyes crinkling again and sending embarrassing heat into Isak’s cheeks. “Well, apart from your tendency to over-dramatics. Starve to death? Seriously?”

“Well,” Isak starts, trying to defend himself. “It was a bit of a shock …”

“Mmmmm,” Even says with another of those gorgeous laughs. “Well if it comes to that, I have a chocolate bar here, which might stave it off for a while.”

Silence settles in then, but it’s not awkward for which Isak is going to be eternally grateful. In all his
wildest dreams he hadn’t imagined being stuck somewhere in the dark with Even and not being able to take advantage of it. Not that he would because of the girlfriend. As if his thought has conjured her up, Even’s phone lights up with an incoming call.

“Yeah?”

Even’s voice softens as he answers, and his head leans back against the wall in a way that suggests intimacy and love. Isak grits his teeth against the stab of jealousy that runs through him.

“No, no, I tried to get there,” Even continues, his voice becoming a little tense. “It’s just I’m stuck in … yeah, I know … no, but it’s locked, and I can’t … no, the boys went to find a key … mmmm, I’ll be there when I can. Okay.” He smiles again, the crinkles slipping back into place around his eyes. “Yeah, love you too.”

Seizing his opportunity, Isak says, “girlfriend?” as Even slides the phone back into his pocket. It leaves them in total darkness, but Isak finds that better anyway. He doesn’t have to see Even and his stunning cheekbones and fabulous hair, which makes it easier to be casual.

“Mmmm, yeah,” Even agrees. “She’s a bit …” he stops talking for a few moments and Isak can hear his breath sharp in the darkness, and the way his clothes rustle as he settles back into position. Even hums for a moment before he speaks again. “Do you ever have those moments, Isak? Where you want to be in control of your own destiny but there’s someone else there? Standing in the way, running it all for you?”

“Um … no?” Isak says, startled.

“You’re lucky, then,” Even says, and there’s something sad in his voice now that tugs at Isak’s heart. He’d been wrong before. Without sight, all his other senses have come to the fore and the sound of Even’s voice is doing embarrassing things to Isak’s body even while he sounds so defeated. His scent isn’t helping either. He smells of cologne and hair gel, and something that seems very earthy, and Isak has to surreptitiously wipe his chin in case there’s drool as Even moves again and another waft of the scent drifts towards him.

The door above them clatters, and Isak can make out small laughs and snorts of amusement. There’s a rattling sound, a squeak and then sudden blinding light that makes Isak squint in pain.

“Behold, we have returned!” Elias says, gesturing dramatically at their path to freedom.

“ Took your time,” Even says, scowling at the guys standing framed in the doorway. He stands up, brushes himself off, and moves out into the room above them. “Sonja is so pissed.”

It’s with a sinking heart that Isak, too, stands up. As he moves into the room, Yousef ostentatiously puts a huge metal key in his pocket, then pats Isak’s back and says, “thanks for helping. Sorry it ended so shit.”

“Ah no,” Isak says, forcing a smile onto his face. “It’s fine. I wasn’t doing anything anyway, so …”

“And you didn’t even starve to death,” Even says, pulling Isak into a one-armed hug that lights up his body and almost causes an embarrassing groan. “If I had to be stuck in a place where starvation was imminent and important classes missable, I’m glad it was with you.”

“Shut up, don’t be a dick,” is all Isak can muster in response. He’s so affected by Even’s proximity that he can’t allow himself anything more or he won’t be held responsible for what his traitorous body might do. So he laughs, ducks out from under Even’s arm and waves at the other guys. “I’d
better … uh. Go. I have to … get to classes.”

“Oh. Okay,” Even says, his face crinkling a little again as he steps back to let Isak pass. “Next time I need to be locked in anywhere, I’ll be sure to call you.”

Laughing to cover up his feelings of self consciousness, Isak walks away from them. As he leaves he hears the golden sound of Even’s laughter and he cringes. Being able to pick that out of a lineup seems more intimate somehow than all the jackets. He curses the impulse that sent him following after Even. Before, his dreams were harmless, rooted only in fantasy and good looks. But now, Isak’s spoken to Even and he knows something of what he’s like. Now he knows, firsthand, Even’s kindness, his humor and his easy going nature. Now Isak’s really fucked and he has only himself to blame.
Chapter 3

“Isak, you need to snap out of this.”

Jonas’ voice is filled with amusement, but there’s a serious undertone and Isak groans as he flops over on the bed, trying to pretend that his best friend doesn’t have a good point.

“I do not! I got stuck in a basement with the man of my dreams. Who, I remind you Jonas, has a girlfriend; a very beautiful, very loving girlfriend. And all I could do was tell him we’d starve if we stayed in there.”

Isak muffles his despair in his pillow. He wishes he could just shut up about Even, but he’s so pissed at himself for the way he acted when he squandered the one chance he had to really get to know Even, that he can’t help but rehash it over and over wondering what he could have done differently. Thankfully, Jonas is a bro and indulges him. To an extent.

“I know, Isak. You’ve already told me the tragic story of your impossible love affair.”

“Fuck you, Jonas.”

Ever since his experience in the basement, Isak has been plagued with Even sightings. He’s everywhere, almost literally. Isak can’t set a foot onto campus without Even being somewhere in the corner of his vision. Some days Even sees him and raises his hand in a friendly wave as his fucking crinkly fucking smile lights up his face. Other days, he doesn't notice Isak at all and Isak can look at him in peace. Those days are the worst. Those days Isak always ends up here with Jonas, moaning his distress into a nearby pillow. He wishes Even were just a little less hot or a little less kind or a little less everywhere. Because if he was any of those things, Isak might have a chance to recover and live a normal Even-free life where he could find himself another nice, hot guy and fall in love and live happily ever after and have lots of babies. Or something. But no. Even has to wander around being so fucking beautiful he sets Isak’s world on fire. He has to be so kind that the memory of his voice automatically sends shivers down Isak’s back. He has to be always right there so the memories are never allowed to fade.

Isak sighs and throws himself onto his back again.

“What am I going to do, Jonas?”

Jonas grins over at him, setting his controller aside with an indulgent smirk. “Well, since you asked my opinion, I think you should talk to him.”

“Jonaaaaas! Be serious.”

“I am serious, Isak. Tell him, straight up. Hey dude, I like you.”

“I can’t fucking do that,” Isak says, feeling morose. “He has a girlfriend, and he loves her. He said so.”

“Mmmhmm, so you keep saying. But he also said she’s controlling, right? And he definitely likes you.”

“Not like that, he doesn’t,” Isak says, refusing to be mollified.

“Whatever.” Jonas rolls his eyes before returning to his FIFA game. “Sometimes I think I liked you
better before you came out. You never wallowed like this back then.”

“Yeah, fuck that,” Isak says, glowering as he remembers how shit his life had been those first couple of years at upper school. “I wasn’t happy then.”

“I know, bro.” Jonas’ tone says he knows exactly how unhappy Isak had been, and it holds a deep sympathy. It changes, however, when he continues. “But maybe … perhaps. This is just an idea, mind. But maybe you could shut up about wonderful Even for just a few minutes.”

“Fuck you,” Isak moans again. But he sits back down next to Jonas. Maybe a game will be enough to take his mind off all this.

“I just need to get over it,” he says. “That’s all. How hard can that be?”

Jonas smiles knowingly at Isak, before throwing him a controller then trashing him at FIFA, and thereby very successfully taking Isak’s mind off Even while he tries to wrest just one victory for the day.

How hard getting over Even could be becomes very obvious just a few days later. Isak is minding his own business, and he isn’t feeling grumpy because he hasn’t seen Even around at all in the last two days. Not at all. There is no cause for grumpiness, after all. This is exactly what Isak wants: a chance to not-see Even so he can get over Even. It’s working, dammit. No Even means no more than two or three thoughts about him popping into Isak’s head every day … okay, hour. Isak is on track for success. It’s a victory for level heads and scientific approaches to tricky problems. There’s only one very tiny problem with this success: Isak is not happy. He’d been happier when he allowed himself his harmless fantasies which meant nothing. When Even was just Hot Guy and all Isak had to worry about was which of his perfect jackets he’d be wearing on his perfect body. Sighing, Isak resettles himself. He’s going to make this work. If it kills him.

“Isak!”

Isak tenses. He knows that voice, has played it over in his head ever since their last meeting. He turns, trying to prepare himself for the onslaught of Even’s charm and his goddam crinkly smile that has been haunting Isak’s dreams for the last few days.

“Even! Hi. How’re things?” he asks, proud of the way he manages to stay relatively calm and composed. His voice doesn’t squeak and he doesn’t blush. Isak will take it.

“Oh, you know. I have to go to the library. So that’s not much fun.”

Isak can’t stop his mouth from blurring out, “so do I,” and he watches in horror as Even’s perfect face breaks into that smile he can’t resist and pulls another helpless one of his own onto his face in return.

“Great!” Even says, with a sidelong glance at Isak. “We can go together. Be study buddies.”

And how can a reasonable man say no to that? Isak has no fucking chance. For starters, he’s unwilling to admit to Even that no, I can’t in fact do that because I’ll drool all over your perfect self rather than studying and secondly, he doesn’t have enough willpower to deny himself this new chance to not be a dick in front of Even. Isak’s not strong enough to pass that up.

“Okay, sure,” he says. His voice is a little high and a little breathy and he can’t keep eye contact
with Even for more than a second. But it’s not bad; he’s managing to seem almost like a normal human being.

They walk quietly together towards the library building, Even humming that same maddeningly familiar tune from the first time they met and Isak frantically trying to think of something to say that doesn’t sound either desperate or stupid. He can’t think of any, so he shoves his hands into his pockets and wills his legs to move faster so they can get there faster and end this torment.

The worst of it is that Even seems completely unconcerned. He’s walking, hands in the pockets of another of those amazing jackets, and he seems at peace. With himself, with Isak, with the world. Isak’s absolutely sure that Jonas is wrong; no-one who’s acting this chilled out and relaxed while with Isak can possibly be into him. Surely if he liked Isak the way Isak likes him, there’d be more tension, more nervousness. No, if this walk has taught Isak anything it’s that Jonas is mistaken and Even is just a genuine, friendly guy who has inexplicably decided to spend some time with Isak studying.

He breathes a sigh of relief when they push open the doors to the library and he can step inside. Even turns his spectacular smile on Isak again and his very blue, very crinkly eyes bore into Isak’s.

“We should grab a seat,” Even says. “Maybe at that table over there.”

“Wha …?”

It takes a few seconds for Even’s comment to register with Isak because his brain is too busy going pretty, so pretty as it happily gazes into those blue eyes. When he realizes he’s staring, Isak blushes deeply, feeling the heat rise into his face as he drags his eyes away from Even’s and looks in the direction his hands are pointing.

“Oh. Um … yes, good. Good idea.”

He’s still blushing, still on edge, when they sit and pull their books and computers out. But it’s not long before he becomes immersed in what he’s doing. Biology is one of the things Isak feels comfortable with. In general it makes sense, and he can read a chapter and get it and think he’s the fucking master of this shit. Today, though, it’s irritating him. He can’t make the concepts fit together in his head; they seem counterintuitive today and eventually his head starts to throb with the effort of making it make sense.

“You’re okay?”

Isak starts as he realizes Even’s speaking to him. He looks up and into those goddam beautiful eyes again and his heart leaps. Which he really needs to get a control on because Even has a girlfriend and Isak needs to remember that before swooning every time the guy so much as looks at him.

“Mmmm, yeah. It’s fine. Just this piece of shit concept makes no sense.”

Even laughs. “I’m sure it’s not a piece of shit,” he says. “Some famous biologist probably made his or her name with that concept and you’re dissing it?”

“You’re not helping,” Isak grumbles as he glares back down at the page. “Whoever made it up is a dick.” He throws his pen down on the paper he’s been trying to take notes on and slams the computer lid down. “I’m not doing this anymore. I need a break.”

“You need more than a break,” Even says, grinning at him again. When Isak looks at him in confusion, he nods to a sign just visible on the front desk. It’s handwritten but the message is clear: library shutting early today. Isak shakes his head. He must have been really unfocused when he
arrived (or, to be more honest, really focused on Even) not to have noticed it immediately. He sighs.

“Fuck! What?”

“Mmmm, I’m afraid so. We have to go.”

Reluctantly, Isak gathers his gear up, shoving it all haphazardly into his bag. Even gathers his much more neatly, and is still somehow finished before Isak who scowls when he notices.

“Smartass,” he says as he grabs his bag and throws it on his back. He grins helplessly as Even’s laugh rings out over that comment, and he forces his mind onto some sort of sensible track. “Okay, I’d better get back home and finish this off then.”

Together they walk to the doors. Even reaches them first, but when he pushes against them they don’t give. He rattles the handles, to no avail.

“Fuck,” he says. “What is it about you?”

“What …?” Isak gulps, though he’s pretty sure he knows exactly what Even’s talking about. “What do you mean?”

“We’re stuck. Again.”

There’s laughter in Even’s voice as he says it and Isak grimaces. He’s glad Even can see the funny side of this, because Isak sure can’t. What did he do to deserve being stuck twice with the man of his dreams, the hot guy of all his fantasies, when said hot man of Isak’s dreams isn’t available and anyway even if he were available Isak can’t string more than one sensible sentence together when he’s nearby.

“Stuck?” he asks, rolling his eyes internally at how wobbly it sounds, how pathetic.

“Yeah, stuck,” Even says, his eyes still crinkled in that gorgeous way and his voice as smooth as fucking silk. Isak shudders at the sound, hoping that Even thinks it’s irritation at being locked in and doesn’t actually sense Isak’s creepy desire to climb into his clothes and stay there with him. “You know … can’t get out.”

Swallowing, Isak groans. “Fuck. This is such shit. Why didn’t they say something? We’ll be here all fucking night. Jesus Christ!”

“Relax, Isak. I’ve got you.” Even’s clearly noticed Isak’s hesitations now and his voice has taken on a soothing tone which is actually not helping Isak’s state of mind. “My friend Mutta works here and he has a key for when he closes up. I’ll send him a message and he can come along and free us, no harm done.”


“Frankly, I could get a little insulted here,” Even says now with a small frown. “You get really dramatically upset whenever we end up spending a little quality time together.”

“I’m not!” Isak gapes at Even, confused that he could even think such a thing. Except, yeah, Isak has maybe been overcompensating for his ridiculous crush by trying to convince Even he doesn’t care at all. With, it seems now, possibly too much success. “I’m … it’s not about you. It’s …”

Even’s eyes crinkle again as he looks at his phone and sends a message to someone. “That’s almost more insulting, Isak. You sure know how to wound a man’s ego.”
Groaning, Isak slides down the wall next to the door on the opposite side to Even. “I just get a bit … uh. Intense. Sometimes.

“I’ve noticed,” Even says with another of those frustrating grins. “You should get a massage one day, Isak. They can do wonders for stress.”

“Mmmm, I’ll think about it,” Isak says now, horrified at the way his voice has gone squeaky at the thought of a massage and Even in the same sentence. To deflect, he nods at the phone Even’s still holding. “Any idea how long this might be?”

“Ah.” Even looks down at the screen again. “Mutta’s about half an hour away. He’ll get here as soon as possible. And in the meantime …” Even pulls out a small packet of chips and opens it before offering it to Isak.

“We’re not allowed food in the library?” Isak says. But he takes one anyway, because he’s hungry and because it’s Even offering. As embarrassing as it is, Isak would do pretty much anything Even asked of him. Jump off a building? Sure. Break the law? Bring it on. It’s a little unsettling that Isak can’t seem to think of anything Even could ask that he wouldn’t do.

“You know,” Even says conversationally as he munches, “I always carry a snack now just in case we get stuck together again; I need it to protect me from your ravenous temper.”

“Fuck you,” Isak says, but there’s no heat in it.

He reaches out to take another chip and his fingers accidentally brush Even’s as they reach into the packet at the same time. Even’s touch burns and Isak finds himself shivering, as if all heat from his body has flown to that one point. Even grins again, his face soft and his lips starting to form a sentence when his phone beeps insistently in his hand. He looks down and grimaces. He answers it with a frown and an irritated glance over at Isak.

“Yeah? … no, I said I couldn’t … no, I can’t just change my plans …” He listens for a moment before rolling his eyes. “No, Sonja … yeah, you’ll just have to do that … mmmm sorry, but I already made other plans … yeah. Bye.”

Even sighs heavily as he pockets the phone and shrugs at Isak.

“Girlfriend?”

“Yeah. But I don’t know for how much longer.” He smiles, a small sad lift of his lips before the frown returns. It’s so different to the usual crinkling masterpiece that it twists something in Isak. He frowns in return.

“You’re not happy? You always seem … uh, I mean you seemed happy last time we spoke.” Isak is blushing, feeling the heat high in his cheeks and sure Even can bore through his head and see his innermost thoughts. He’d almost slipped up, almost let Even know that he’s been watching.

Even doesn’t appear to have noticed the slip as he looks up at Isak again. “It’s been four years you know, that we’ve been together. It’s hard to let it all go after so long. But—” he says, with another sad sigh. “Maybe sometimes we should stop and think if what is happening is still working, yeah?”

“Yeah, I think so,” Isak says softly. He can apply this to his own situation, with all the damn ridiculous pining he’s been doing. “Maybe it worked once, but eventually it starts to hurt more than it helps.”

He thinks about all the great times he’s had obsessing over Even, or rather over Hot Guy. It had
been all just harmless fun, but now he’s getting truly fucked over by the situation. He’s falling for Even, dammit. Why couldn’t he have been a fucking asshole? Then Isak could have admired his body (and maybe jacked off to the idea of him naked) in peace. But no, Even’s so nice and he’s so interesting and funny and fuck … Isak is so fucked.

“Yeah exactly,” Even says. There’s something deep in his voice when he continues. “If something isn’t working, do you step up your game or do you call it quits?”

“Four years is a long time,” Isak says now. Because it is. That’s a lot to just throw away, and he wants to say something to that effect but it’s not his place to do so. Even doesn’t know him; it’s a miracle he’s being told this much, and Isak doesn’t want to rock this fragile boat they have.

“It is,” Even agrees. “Maybe too long.”

He sounds like he’s trying to convince himself, and his eyes are so distanced and he seems so pensive that Isak can’t bring himself to say anything else. So they sit there in silence until Even’s phone pings again and it calls him back to himself.

“Come on,” he says, standing up. “Mutta says he’s at the back door. So we gotta go that way.”

He points towards the shelves of books and starts walking, once again assuming Isak will follow. Which he does, because he always will. Because it’s Even.

“Well, Isak, it was nice to be caught with you again and to talk deep shit. You’re a good listener.”

He crinkles those beautiful eyes again and there’s no trace left of the sadness that had been so powerful just a few minutes earlier. Isak blinks. He’s drowning in the blue again and he’s predictable as hell because he loses his train of thought almost immediately and gapes at Even like the loser he is. But before his attention is fully caught in the beauty of those eyes, Isak wonders how such a change can happen so fast, almost like Even is very practised at covering up his true feelings. The idea makes him sad.

“Here we are,” Even says as he leads Isak to a small door to the side of the library. He checks it, grins and pushes. It opens. “Looks like Mutta unlocked already.”

He walks out and grabs the guy outside into a huge bear hug. Isak salivates a little, wondering what it might feel like to have those arms around him, how a hug like that might feel after so long without. He really needs to find himself a nice guy, Isak thinks. When a hug between friends can make him have to stifle a groan and he has to clench his hands into fists to avoid reaching out and joining in, he has a serious problem.

“This is Isak,” Even says to the guy. “He gets very angry when he gets locked in small spaces so thanks for saving us.”

Isak gasps in outrage. “I do not! I’m a perfectly lovely stuck together companion. The master of it.”

“The master?” Even says, grinning and fucking hell there’s Isak’s heart goes again, speeding up and trying to urge his feet to throw themselves at Even. He grits his teeth to keep himself from saying anything stupid.

“Yep, the master. But,” he adds solemnly, “I’m not going to go through this again. As nice as you are, Even, being locked in places is hell on my schedule.”

The guy, Mutta presumably, laughs and Isak is suddenly struck that he looks familiar.

“Weren’t you here earlier?” he asks now. “I honestly thought I saw you when we came in.”
Mutta looks at Even, and Isak can swear he can see panic in his eyes before he swiftly shakes his head and says, “no. I don’t work today. I’m just here doing my buddy a favor.”

“Hey,” Even cuts in. “You guys want to go get a coffee or something? I’ll pay. To say thanks for keeping me company in my hour of need and thanks for rescuing us.”

“I can’t, sorry,” Isak says. He wishes he could. He wishes he’d never agreed to meet Jonas and the guys tonight. He wishes a lot of things actually. “I have plans with the boys. But next time maybe.”

There’s a slight flicker of what looks like disappointment on Even’s face before his grin lights it up again. “I thought you said it wasn’t going to happen again.”

“It’s not.” Isak retorts. “But in the unlikely event that it does … I will go for coffee with you afterwards to recover from the trauma.”

“I’ll hold you to that,” Even says, holding his hand out. “Shake on it.”

Isak takes his hand, and once again that burn rushes through him as if he’s suddenly been lit from within just from this one touch. He struggles to contain the blush that is again threatening to stain his cheeks.

“I … uh. I’d better go. The boys … you know. Waiting.”

Even smiles kindly as he drops Isak’s hand and whispers, “bye.”

Mutta is muttering to himself behind him. Isak can’t quite make out what he’s saying but he’s sure the word ‘idiot’ is mixed in there somewhere. He walks backwards for two steps keeping eye contact with Even like the lovesick fool he is, before turning and starting to sprint in order to make it to his meeting with the boys on time.
“What’s your problem?” Jonas asks, eyeing Isak where he’s lying on Jonas’ bed. Before Isak can even open his mouth to explain, Jonas sighs. “It’s about him again, isn’t it?”

“No,” Isak says, trying to keep the guilt out of his voice. He doesn’t mean to obsess over Even every second of every day. It just seems to happen, and Jonas (who is definitely the best of bros) does sometimes seem to bear the brunt of it. Isak shrugs. “I’m not doing this again.”

“Doing what?”

“Wondering what he’s doing and who he’s doing it with.” Isak sighs, thinking back to the last time he spent any amount of time with Even. But then he can’t help himself and blurts out, “he didn’t seem happy, that’s all.”

“Mmmmm,” Jonas says, rolling his eyes. Isak groans internally; he wasn’t going to do this. He had decided before coming here today that he wouldn’t burden Jonas with all this yet again, but what does he do? The minute Jonas shows any interest at all, Isak caves and the giant mess of feelings just pours from his mouth. As if he knows what Isak’s thinking, Jonas smiles, pats his leg, then continues. “And you said he was thinking of breaking up with his girlfriend?”

“No. Yes. Maybe.” Isak groans, out loud this time because fuck it. He’s already this pathetic; it’s not like Jonas doesn’t already know exactly how stupidly in love Isak is. “I don’t know. They’ve been together for four years. That’s a long time.”

Jonas shrugs now. “Long enough to know he’s not happy, maybe.”

“Long enough to know it’s a lot to throw away.”

Isak can’t help it; he’s been watching Even surreptitiously ever since that day in the library. He certainly still seems the same. His eyes still crinkle in that devastating way and he still perks up whenever his girlfriend is around. Looking at them as dispassionately as he can, Isak thinks he can see the edges of strain between them. But it’s not like he’s exactly objective, is it? Maybe he’s seeing exactly what he wants to see.

“Don’t hate me, Isak, but you really just need to either tell him or get over it.”

“I know!” Isak grumbles, feeling like exactly the worst sort of loser. He should just stop this stupidity right now. It used to be fun, but now it’s not.

Isak steels himself, determined to do it this time. Next time he sees Even he’s going to march right on over to him and just blurt it all out, girlfriend or no girlfriend. Isak’s not a fool, he knows it’ll be hard, but he also knows that this ridiculous pining from a distance is not working for him. So. This time he’ll lay it on the line, girlfriend or not, and he’ll know one way or the other what Even thinks. He lets out his breath in a slow hiss.

“Okay Jonas,” he says. “I’m going to do it.”

Jonas smirks as he turns to face Isak square on.

“You’re going to tell him?”

Jonas’ tone is filled with disbelief which is frankly a little insulting, so Isak’s, “yes,” is possibly more
strident than it needs to be. Jonas will see; Isak’s not so pathetic that he can’t tell the hot guy he has a
 crush on how he feels. He’s going to do this.

Isak doesn’t do it. In his defence, the next time he sees Even, he is looking terrible, like the world
 has fallen on his shoulders. He’s slumped down as he sits on a low wall as evening closes in, and his
 head is in his hands. His hair, which is usually so gravity-defyingly perfect, is messed up and in
disarray around his face which looks vulnerable, even from this distance and in this light. He’s not
wearing any of his spectacular jackets, and the oversized white t-shirt that sits on his frame
emphasizes how fragile he looks. Isak’s first thought is that it wouldn’t be polite to throw yourself at
someone like that, when he’s so clearly down. And Isak is a very polite person; his parents raised
 him well, thank you very much. It’s not that he’s being a coward; it’s that he’s being a thoughtful
gentleman. Just like his mamma always said he should be. So, instead of telling Even his deepest,
most intimate, thoughts, Isak approaches him slowly.

“Hey, Even,” he says and is rewarded with a quick snap of Even’s head as he twists to look up at
Isak. His eyes are ringed with dark circles and he looks like he hasn’t slept in a month.

“Hei, Isak,” he says, and even though his smile is small and sad, it manages to still be devastatingly
crinkly and beautiful. Isak suppresses a completely inappropriate sigh and sits down next to him.

“You’re okay?” he asks, trying not to let his creepy attraction seep into his tone. Even’s obviously
unhappy and Isak needs to respect that.

“Yeah,” Even sighs. “I’m okay.”

He looks out into the distance, with his hands clasped between his legs. The look on his face is so
 pensive that Isak’s breath almost catches in his throat. Don’t be a creepy stalker asshole, Isak
admonishes himself. Eventually, Even turns to look at him and smiles, a wider, more natural one
than he’d managed earlier.

“Isak,” he says. “I feel like pizza and a movie. You want to share?”

His usual confidence is missing, and there’s something vulnerable in his voice as if he thinks Isak
might refuse. Ha, as if, Isak’s infuriating brain reminds him, but he can’t exactly say that to Even
right now. Not when he’s in this state. Coward, his brain sneers; you promised Jonas you would,
but Isak silences that voice, and just nods.

“Oh course. Who can turn down pizza?”

“Great,” Even says, his voice a little more cheerful now, even though his smile still looks strained
around the edges.

They make their way through the campus and swing past the pizza stand with the only conversation
being to ask what toppings they each want. By the time they make it back to Even’s apartment, Isak
is so restless he wants to run. But one look at Even’s tired face stills his tongue and makes him enter
without a murmur. The lack of conversation has been something of an eye-opener, really; it lets Isak
know that he’s actually comfortable with Even, that a silence between them isn’t something that’s
fraught and that even when Even is so clearly not his usual bubbly self, there’s a presence and a
charm he has that Isak can’t help but fall into. He’s fucked basically, is what he’s realized and now
he definitely needs to tell Even how he feels. But maybe not right now, depending on what it is that’s
making Even so down.
“So,” he says when they’re both seated on the small couch in front of a tiny coffee table and Isak has carefully and deliberately ignored the fact that Even’s apartment is a horrifying mess of unwashed clothes and stale food and the musty smells associated with being locked up for too long, “what’s … uh … what’s been happening?”

“I broke up with my girlfriend,” Even says casually as if those words weren’t designed to just tip Isak’s world right off its axis.

“Oh. That’s … that’s shit, I’m sorry.”

Even looks over at him, and smiles, a gentle thing that warms his face and brings out the very smallest of crinkles. It is, if possible, even more devastating than usual.

“No, don’t be,” he says. “I’m not sorry. I’m a bit relieved, actually.”

“Oh.”

Isak is silent for a long while, chewing on a slice of pizza while he tries to work through his whirling thoughts.

“Well, I’m sorry anyway. That’s a long time to be together.”

“Mmmmm,” Even agrees. “Too long really. It had run its course.”

He crinkles his eyes at Isak in the way that always, without fail, manages to make Isak’s heart flip over inside his chest. Which, if Isak is perfectly honest with himself right now, is causing all sorts of complicated issues for him. On the one hand, he feels sad, because despite the crinkling smiles and gorgeous grins, Even is so clearly unhappy about the situation. On the other hand, Isak is ready to do a tap dance in the middle of the coffee table because hell yeah Even’s free and there’s a tiny smidgen of a chance that Isak might benefit from that. But that thought is such an asshole that Isak screams silently at it to shut up and stop being a dick since Even needs a friend and not a creepy asshole who delights in his misfortune.

“Oh okay,” Isak says. “Do you want to talk about it?”

Even laughs, a small bitter thing, and shakes his head. “No, Isak. I’d rather not talk about this with you. With you I’d rather--”

The lights disappear with a snap of electricity, and Isak imagines he can hear a slight pop and sizzle as he can’t stop himself from gasping. It’s not that he’s afraid of the dark, exactly. But he’s never been very fond of being in a darkened place he doesn’t know well with no way of seeing how to get out. That’s at least partly why the basement adventure with Even had been so stressful.

“Fuck” Isak says now. “Shit. This sucks.” He can hear the fucking quiver in his voice and closes his eyes to try to compose himself.

He feels Even’s hand on his arm, steadying and reassuring, and he gasps again. This time it’s for an entirely different reason. The jolt of warmth that shoots through him at the touch is startling, not least because, apart from one or two small brushes of his fingers in the library, this is the first time Isak has really been touched by Even. It’s a lot, and he can feel himself blushing. Thank Christ for darkness, and the concealing cover it provides, or Isak would be hard pressed to keep his currently-inconvenient feelings from Even.

“Isak. Relax. I’ve got you,” Even says and Isak can feel his traitorous body obeying Even as if he just has to utter one word and Isak is helpless putty in his hands. Though, if he was to be entirely
honest, Isak would be forced to admit that maybe … perhaps, possibly ... that might actually be true and that maybe, possibly, Isak would do pretty much anything Even asked of him.

“I’m fine,” Isak says, taking a shaky breath and trying to make out Even’s features in the surrounding gloom. “I should get home though.”

He looks out the window and his heart sinks. It’s not just a small power cut, apparently. It’s taken out a lot of the surrounding streets as well. In fact, all Isak can see is darkness, with one small patch of light so far away it’s like it’s mocking him. It’s pretty obvious the trams won’t be running, at least not right now.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” Even says, mirroring Isak’s thoughts, his breath hot by Isak’s ear and making him shiver. “That’s a long way to walk in the dark with no light source.” He sits back, and Isak can hear the shuffle as he rearranges himself on the couch. Then he feels the slight brush of Even’s body next to Isak’s. The press of that body sends a thrill down Isak’s back and makes him shudder. There’s suppressed amusement in Even’s voice when he adds, “seems like we’re stuck together again.”

“Yeah, what the fuck,” Isak agrees. “It’s like you’re some sort of problem magnet.”

Even laughs. “It’s not my fault! I could say it’s you. It’s always you I end up stuck in awkward places with.” He shuffles again and somehow ends up even closer to Isak, their thighs pressed together from top to bottom, which is doing nothing to help Isak’s equilibrium. “Are you sure you’re not causing this so you can spend quality time with me?”

Isak shrugs uncomfortably, aware that while he hasn’t been making these strange encounters happen, he wouldn’t exactly be averse to the idea and that the thought of maybe orchestrating a meeting might have crossed his mind once or twice. His blush is intensifying and he’s grateful once more for the cover of darkness. This conversation is all sorts of embarrassing.

“No!” he almost shrieks. “No.” He says in a more normal voice, as he coughs. “I … uh, I guess it’s just a really odd set of coincidences.” He considers adding a laugh to the end for authenticity but the moment passes and he just sighs wistfully.

Is it his imagination, or is Even’s face closer than it was before? Isak thinks he can maybe feel his breath on his neck, and he shivers a little at the idea. But he has to stop this stuff, stop thinking about Even like this. Even’s sad! He broke up with his girlfriend! Isak is being a creeper perv by even thinking this stuff while Even is so vulnerable. So he clears his throat and shuffles a little himself, enough so that their thighs, while still touching, aren’t pressed together in quite the same way.

He thinks he hears a soft sigh beside him, and turns his head, trying in vain to make out Even’s features. It’s so dark that even an outline of the boy next to him is near-impossible to discern. But Isak feels like there’s disappointment in that sigh. He clears his throat, uneasily. He doesn’t want Even to think he’s not interested; he just doesn’t think this is an appropriate time to let himself think about this.

On the other hand, what better time than in an intimate moment of darkness to actually tell Even what he’s been thinking? He doesn’t have to act on it, after all. Just telling Even, hey I like you, isn’t a come on. It’s not like Isak’s trying it on or anything. But, as he thinks about doing it with Even right here beside him, Isak realizes that actually saying it is much more daunting than he’d expected.

“How long?” he blurts out, then tries to swallow the words back in horror.

“How long what?” Even asks, and his voice is close to Isak’s ear again. The shudders are back, and
not making this ‘being chill and a good friend’ thing any easier.

“How long since … uh … since …”

“Oh, since Sonja?” Even’s voice has softened and there’s the sound of a smile in it, as if Even’s forming the words around his amusement.

“Yeah,” Isak says, his voice soft too.

“About a week, now. Maybe a bit longer.”

“Oh.” Isak’s silent for a while. That seems a very short time to be over someone, so Isak is even more certain that now is not the time to say anything, no matter how much his brain desperately wants to just do it.

“Do you know why we broke up?” Even asks quietly, his voice a low murmur now.

Isak shakes his head, before realizing that Even won’t be able to see him. “No,” he says, just as quietly.

“It’s because I met someone else, someone I … someone I--”

The lights flash back on, cutting Even off, and Isak is blinded. He blinks rapidly, trying to readjust to the sudden glare. When he stops seeing bright bursts of color, he glances at Even, who has indeed been sitting very close but is now moving back a little to their original positions.

“Someone …?” Isak asks, his heart in his throat.

Even’s giving him a long look, taking in every inch of his face and body and Isak cringes away from the scrutiny. Even grimaces then and says, “it doesn’t matter. Just someone.”

Isak sighs, turns away. That’s that then. Surely if it was him and he had a chance, Even would be saying it? He’s not, so that pipe dream may as well be over. He has Even’s friendship and that is a beautiful thing. That it’s attached to a beautiful, unattainable boy is just something Isak’s going to have to bear.

“I’d better … I’d better go,” he says, as casually as he can. “The trams will be on again and I shouldn’t worry Eskild.”

“Yeah okay,” Even says, and there’s a sad tinge to his voice. “I’ll walk you out.”

For the first time that day, the silence as they walk to the door together is uncomfortable, and Isak is actually almost happy to shut Even’s door behind him.
Isak runs into Even far too often for it to be at all coincidental. There’s a wounded look on Even’s face whenever he catches Isak’s eyes, though. That look always, without fail, makes Isak’s heart flip over in delighted appreciation for the aesthetic (Even’s always fucking hot, but this melancholy suits
him somehow, and Isak is fully aware of how assholey that is, okay; his goddam brain doesn’t need
to remind him he’s a dick. Every time he sees that look, Isak also feels a deep icy stab of guilt as if
it’s somehow his fault. Which is fucking ridiculous. Because Isak’s being a saint now that Jonas has
dropped that mantle. It’s for the best that he doesn’t see Even, and Even doesn’t see him, because
Isak’s stupid not-going-away-even-though-he’s-trying-really-hard crush shouldn’t be allowed to
interfere with Even’s life. He doesn’t need a creepy stalker hanging around. Isak’s doing him a
favor, and Jonas and his rolled eyes and exasperated sighs can just go fuck right off.

It all comes to a head, so to speak, one balmy evening at a local traveling fair. Jonas, Magnus and
Mahdi have all bullied Isak into coming with them because, in Mahdi’s words, “you can only do this
sort of cringey thing if you have a squad with you. That makes it acceptable.” So Isak is here,
grumbling and irritated. The food is disgusting, and the few rides boring and underwhelming. But, he
guesses, at least he’s out of the apartment, and at least he’s not currently obsessing over Even. Those
are both actual achievements today, and Isak is a little proud.

“We’re going on the ferris wheel,” Magnus says, breaking into Isak’s thoughts, and his eyes alight
with what looks like genuine excitement as he claps Isak on the back. “You coming?”

“Oh. No. I don’t think I’d better. I get … sick, you know.”

Jonas is looking at him as if he knows what Isak is really thinking, which he probably does, the
asshole. “You’re just scared,” he says, and shrugs, turning away. Which … fuck him, honestly. Isak
may be a little nervous, but that’s not like actually scared and so he shrugs. He’s not letting a bunch
of assholes bully him onto that … that death trap, even if they are his best friends. Magnus grins his
happy grin and runs towards it, dragging the others behind him. Isak remains with his feet firmly on
the ground and not scared at all.

He glances around the small fairground and his heart sinks when he spots a familiar jacket and
perfect hair combination. Even. Fucking Even is here. This is pretty much Isak’s worst nightmare.
How can he avoid the guy in such a small place? He casts his eyes around, desperate to find a place
to hide from Even. The ground is so small that it’s really only a matter of seconds before Even sees
him and gets that super hot, horribly sad, look on his face again.

“Last call!” Isak hears from his right. “Last call to ride the ferris wheel.”

In a sudden moment of inspiration, Isak scampers for the line. There are only two other people there,
and it’s his best bet to avoid a hideously embarrassing scene. He’s breathless when he arrives and
passes a floppy-haired guy who looks far too cheerful to be operating a death machine. But this
death machine is infinitely superior to having to interact with Even. The guy gives Isak a nod as he
slides into a seat in the last remaining compartment.

Isak tilts his head back, resting it on the back of the seat and trying to catch his breath. The idea of
going up in this thing is starting to settle in, and his nerves are ramping up. Fuck this, he thinks.
Why am I such a loser?

“Hold the ferris wheel!” he hears and he freezes. He knows that voice. He also knows there’s
exactly one seat left on this hell-sent contraption. He’s so fucked.

“Isak,” Even says carefully as he gingerly takes the seat next to him. His legs have to fold up almost
to his chin, much like Isak’s, and there’s no room for both of them, not really. They’re already
pressed together in an uncomfortable way and Isak sighs internally.

“Hey, Even,” he says as brightly as he can as the ride starts up with a sickening lurch and he grabs
hold of the nearest thing to keep himself steady. Unfortunately, that’s Even. His leg to be exact, a
leg that’s comfortingly muscular under Isak’s hand and which tenses fractionally when Isak touches it.

Isak lets go as if he’s been burned. The seat they’re in is swaying in an unpleasant way, and Isak can feel his stomach starting to churn. He’s not sure if it’s the ride or the proximity of Even that’s having this effect, but either way Isak is 100% certain he’s fucked. This is going to end in an unsightly emptying of his stomach, he’s sure of it. He groans, wishing he was anywhere but here.

Even’s humming that damn song again, the one Isak had first heard from him that first day in the elevator. He closes his eyes in wistful nostalgia as he listens. That his closed eyes prevent him from seeing the way they’re swaying precariously as the ground falls away beneath them is just a bonus.

They’re almost at the top when Even speaks again. “You’ve been avoiding me,” he says.

“I … uh …” Isak starts, trying desperately to think of something to say that isn’t, you’re too hot and I can’t stand being with you and not having you, but before he can think of anything, there’s another lurch and a screech of machinery. There’s a sudden eerie silence and a couple of screams from nearby compartments. Isak finds himself shaking.

“What the fuck was that?” he asks.

Beside him, Even is laughing suddenly, big belly laughs that shake his whole body and make the compartment they’re in bob around in a disconcerting way.

“I think we’re stuck together again,” he says. There’s something in his tone that makes Isak look at him sharply.

“Again?” he asks, momentarily distracted from the fact that they’re miles above the ground and he could topple to his untimely death at any moment.

“Yes, again.” Even’s face takes on the sad mask again, and he grimaces. “If it wasn’t so obvious that you are avoiding me, I’d think you’re just trying to get into my pants.”

“I … I wouldn’t! I mean, you’re kind of … attractive and everything, but I wouldn’t do something like … like that …” Isak says, knowing he’s babbling but unable to contain it. He doesn’t miss the smug grin that blooms on Even’s face before fading almost immediately, and he blushes. “You are attractive, and you know it,” he says now.

Even shrugs. “I try.”

There’s something in his voice that triggers an understanding in Isak. “You try?” he asks, as he tries, and fails, to keep the grin off his own face. If Even really has been trying, then maybe Jonas wasn’t quite so far off the mark, after all.

“Well … you know, that’s a saying. Like a hashtag or something. I don’t actually try,” Even says, and his voice is definitely higher pitched and almost anxious now. He glances down at the ground and Isak follows his gaze. The floppy-haired guy seems to be looking right at their compartment, and it looks like he’s grinning. From this distance anyway.

Isak turns in his seat to stare at Even, somehow managing to navigate the many long legs that are still folded together like pretzels. Despite Even’s protestations, there’s something vulnerable in his voice that gives Isak some hope, which mingles with his growing suspicion to make some sort of confused longing sit in his chest. “This is a really big coincidence, right?” he says, allowing the suspicion to seep into his voice. “All these places? And we always happen to be where people you know work.”
Even shrugs again, but there’s a slight pink tinge high on his cheeks. “I know a lot of people?”

Feeling suddenly more confident in the face of Even’s obvious and not-so-subtle machinations, Isak laughs. “You know a lot of people? That’s your cover story?”

Even crinkles his eyes a little at Isak, and that small sad look from before is entirely gone now. “Cover story? I don’t know what you mean.”

Forcing himself not to react to the crinkle effect, Isak glares at Even. “I think you know exactly what I mean.” He pokes a finger into Even’s chest. “Who’s the guy working the machinery down there?”

Even squints down at the ground and they both see the cheeky gaze of the floppy haired guy grinning up at them.

“I have no idea?” he says.

Still looking down, Isak says, “you have no idea?” He glances up at Even in enough time to see him solemnly shaking his head. “If you have no idea, then why is he grinning at you and doing a thumbs up?”

Even’s head snaps downwards to where the guy is standing and groans, because the guy is, indeed, grinning right at Even and giving him a thumbs up. “Fucking Mikael,” he mutters almost too softly for Isak to hear. He takes a deep breath and looks at Isak almost pleadingly. “I … uh. I might have been trying to get your attention,” he says in a tiny voice that is at once vulnerable and defiant.

“My attention? Why?”

This doesn’t make any sense to Isak at all. Even; hot, unattainable, kind Even, couldn’t possibly have been looking back at Isak in the same way, even if Jonas had said he was. Even if Isak has occasionally allowed himself a tiny fantasy. Isak had been making such a fool of himself, practically drooling every time he spotted one of Even’s perfect jackets and falling over his feet whenever they were in the same place. Not to mention his tongue-tied inability to string a sentence together whenever they ran into each other. There’s no possible way that Even found any of that attractive.

“Oh, but I did find it attractive,” Even says, and there’s amusement in his voice. Isak can feel the ugly blush starting at his toes and working its way up his body. He’s on fire, and this time it’s not because of the hotness of Even’s body so close to his own. This time, Isak is dying because he couldn’t possibly have done what he thinks he just did. Right?

“I … didn’t … say all that … out loud? Right?”

“I’m afraid you did,” Even says and this time he’s actually laughing. Isak can feel the blush deepening. He swallows, the shame seeping out of his every pore. He’s never going to live this down. As if he gets it, Even’s smile slips into one that looks more fond. He adds, “and I did. I felt like such an uncoordinated, gangling loser, trying to attract the attention of the cool wisecracking boy. The most beautiful boy I’d ever laid eyes on.”

Isak starts, shakes his head. He hadn’t expected this, at least not this soon. He’d expected denials, equivocations. He’d expected this to be hard. “No, you can’t have,” he says. “You had a girlfriend.”

Even’s smiling is wide now, his intense gaze completely focused on Isak. It’s a little intimidating, having all that attention on him. It’s all Isak can do to hold that gaze and not squirm like a restless five year old. “Mmmm, I did,” Even says, in a voice that’s impossibly soft and impossibly fond, “and I think I told you I’d met someone else.” There’s a searing blaze in those eyes and Isak finds
himself shivering as he looks at Even.

“Someone else? That was … me?” Isak can’t quite process this. He’s hanging here, in a death defying spot, trying to reassess his entire life. It’s a lot, and Isak is not doing a good job of the processing.

Even laughs, and the sound is joyous. He’s clearly a little ahead of Isak in the whole processing department because he takes Isak’s hand and rubs his thumb over the back of it. It lights up tiny points of fire everywhere it connects and Isak finds himself shuddering, from something other than horror at their current precarious position. “It was you, yes,” Even says and the words light something fragile up inside Isak. He wants to allow himself to hope, but there are a few things that still don’t make sense and Isak’s asshole brain is insisting on butting in and demanding answers.

“But … but you seemed so down, that day at your place. After you told me about … about breaking up with your girlfriend.”

“Oh.” Even looks sad again for an infinitesimal moment, before he looks at Isak again with a small smile. “I mean, yeah, you were right. Four years is a lot to throw away. And I didn’t think you were into it, too.”

Isak gapes at him, letting all his disbelief show on his face. “You didn’t think I was into it … you mean you, right? You didn’t think I was into you? How?”

Isak can hear the petulant incredulity in his voice and cringes, but Even laughs, all traces of the sadness gone. The hand that’s holding Isak’s is still running circles over his knuckles and Isak’s insides are slowly melting but that’s totally chill. Isak can handle all this perfectly well.

“Isak, you didn’t exactly make it easy to know how you felt. You were so tense and distant.”

Isak curses his body’s tendency to seize up whenever Even is near. Stupid need for self preservation. He swallows, forces himself to meet Even’s eyes.

“I’m sorry,” he says. “I get so tense around hot guys.”

“You think I’m hot?”

Isak rolls his eyes, the tension breaking finally as he scoffs. “Now you’re just trawling for compliments.”

Even laughs, his amusement clear in his eyes. “Is it working?”

He reaches out and tucks a strand of hair behind Isak’s ear. His fingers trail down Isak’s neck to rest just where it meets his shoulder. Just like that, the tension is back, but this time it’s different. This time it sings in Isak’s blood and he wants. Isak swallows again and stares at Even. In all of his many (many! So goddam many!) dreams about this moment, Isak never really thought about what might happen if they ever got here. He nods dumbly, though he finds he can’t actually articulate a compliment right now. His body is still too set on the fact that he’s here with Even, squished together in the least romantic death trap ever. That situation is melting every one of Isak’s mental capacities one by one. His body feels like it’s trying to meld with Even’s, and every single one of his nerve endings is on fire. It’s too much, that one simple gesture has affected Isak too much, for him to be even a tiny bit coherent. Even’s gaze changes from amusement to something that holds an undeniable want too.

“Isak,” Even says, and the sound of his name from that mouth right now makes Isak melt entirely. “Isak, I want …” Even stops, re-evaluates, then tries again. “Can I maybe kiss you?”
Isak nods, a little beyond words right now. That one small gesture with his hair has shorted out every brain cell Isak owns and he’s putty in Even’s hands. Even nods, smiling, and then his hand cups Isak’s head more firmly, his fingers slide into the hair at the base of Isak’s skull, and his thumb rests on Isak’s cheek. It’s so big, that hand, and Isak feels every inch of it as a pull deep inside his chest. He’d never really thought about the connections across his body until now. But now, the way the skin on his cheek makes lightning fire in his chest is suddenly fascinating.

“Stop overthinking,” Even says, then bends forward just a little and connects their lips. Isak gasps and his own hands fly up to hold Even’s arms. And now he feels the tingle in every inch of his body. Even’s hand is firm on the back of his neck and Isak is drowning in the feelings swamping him. The trails of fire that Even leaves behind him are intoxicating and Isak whimpers a little as he tries to get closer. Taking that as permission, Even tilts his head a little and slips his tongue into Isak’s mouth. Isak’s kissed before, of course, but nothing has caused feelings like these ones before. *Maybe,* he thinks, *there’s something to be said for pining for weeks or months.* The experience, when it comes, is so much *more.*

There’s another lurch, his teeth click against Even’s, and Isak is jolted out of his Even-related fog. They both pull away with simultaneous exclamations of pain, and Even laughs, pressing his forehead to Isak’s despite the rocking of their compartment.

“Fucking Mikael,” he says now, his voice actually fondly amused again. “He did that on purpose, I’m sure.”

“You’re such a dork,” Isak says, smiling and connecting their lips again. It’s harder now the rocking is hindering them, but they make it work. There’s no way Isak’s going to stop kissing Even now that he’s started. That would be cruel and unusual punishment, and Isak is not into punishment. Not like that anyway.

Eventually, they reach solid ground again, and Even takes Isak’s hand as they unfold their legs and make their way off the ride. The floppy-haired guy is waiting for them at the bottom with a grin. His eyes are knowing and Even punches him in the arm.

“You’re an asshole,” he says, making the other guy grin even harder.

“Takes one to know one,” he says, then tilts his head at Isak in query.

“This is Isak,” Even says. “And this,” he adds, pointing at the guy, “is my asshole best friend, Mikael. Who owes me like a hundred kebabs for this.”

“Hey,” Mikael says, shrugging in unrepentant delight, “you deserved it after so long being a love-sick dickhead.”

Isak laughs, delighted, as he grins over at Even. “I was right? You organized it all?”

“Shut up!” Even looks anxious, and Isak is about to tease him to get rid of that look, when his own friends step off the ride behind them. He sucks in a breath, because *shit.* He’d forgotten they were here too.

“Isak! I thought Even hated you, and you were going to expire for want of his attention!”

Jonas is the world’s *biggest* dickhead, Isak thinks as he feels the slow creep of the blush up his cheeks. Even’s laugh is joyous this time and he turns to Isak with a quirked brow.

“Shut, up, asshole.” He glares at Jonas, who looks like he’s about to say something else. “Both of you. *All* of you,” he adds as Magnus opens his mouth. “You’re all banned from speaking about
this.”

Even chuckles and presses a kiss to Isak’s hair, making him blush even more as he catches his friends’ eyes. “I’m going to hear all about this someday,” Even says. “But right now … right now I think we should head off somewhere. By ourselves,” he says pointedly as Isak’s friends all look like they’re about to follow.

“I believe you owe me a coffee anyway,” Isak says. Even looks confused for a moment before Isak adds, “you said next time we got stuck together you’d buy me coffee to make up for the trauma.”

“I did,” Even agrees with a snort. “But technically, that was the powercut. So technically that’s not a thing anymore.”

“We could make it a thing,” Isak says, ignoring the way his friends are openly smirking at them now.

“There’s coffee at my place,” Even says. “And privacy,” he adds as he glares back over his shoulder at Mikael. “That seems like a better plan right now, don’t you think?”

“Mmmm,” Isak agrees. He takes Even’s hand, to the collective mirth of their asshole friends. Their jibes follow after them, so Isak flips a finger up behind his back as they walk away. He hears Jonas call, “thank fuck you finally stopped being blind, Isak,” and the laughter from the others that accompanies it. Right now, Isak doesn’t care. He’s with Even and he’ll live with whatever teasing he gets after all his dramatic pining; Even is worth it.
Chapter 6

They walk in silence away from the small fairground, and Isak can’t help the joy that’s bubbling up inside him. His seemingly-unrequited crush appears to have been well and truly requited, after all. So maybe Jonas wasn’t such a dick in the end. Maybe he’d actually been onto something and Isak had just been a little too stubborn to accept it.

“I’m such an idiot,” Isak says eventually, as they approach a decent-looking apartment building in a spot not too far from where the fairground had been set up.

“Why are you an idiot?” Even asks. He pulls Isak in for a short kiss as he gets them into the building. Isak’s body flushes with joy and what is probably a giant mix of hormones. He doesn’t care, just lets himself revel in the feelings coursing through him and how heightened even this one small contact with Even is.

“I didn’t notice it, all the times you engineered us being stuck somewhere together.” He looks sideways at Even as they enter the elevator. “Even that first one was, wasn’t it? The filming?”

It’s Even’s turn to blush and Isak is so charmed. He looks pretty with that particular shade of red on his face. Isak can’t fight the compulsion to just kiss him because of it, and he figures why the hell should he? So he reaches over and kisses Even, who hums into it in a pleased way.

“I … uh .. yeah,” Even says when they part again. “But that wasn’t the first one.”

“It wasn’t?”

“No. I saw you in an elevator one day, and I ran so I could get in with you.” He presses a soft kiss to Isak’s lips again. “Just like this, only I was much less cool.”

Isak snorts, remembering the panic elevator-Isak was feeling in the face of the beautiful and seemingly unattainable Even. “You were so cool that day.”

Even pulls back a little so he can search for something in Isak’s face. “You remember that day?”

“Of course I do,” Isak says, rolling his eyes. How could Even have possibly missed just how completely gone Isak has been all this time? “You were hard to miss. I saw you everywhere. Called you ‘hot guy’ in my head.”

Even laughs, genuine amusement in his voice. “I called you ‘mystery boy’ in mine,” he says. “But then I found out your name not long after that elevator ride.”

Isak sighs, wrapping his arms around Even just because he feels like he can now, and pulling him in closer. “Why didn’t you say anything?”

“Why didn’t you?”

Isak shrugs. “I thought you weren’t interested and … you had a girlfriend! It’s not like I could guess.”

“I was so obvious,” Even says, kissing Isak’s neck just under his ear and making Isak shiver. He tilts his head to give Even better access and the resulting chuckle into his skin sends shockwaves right through him.
“You were not even remotely obvious,” Isak says, on a gasp as Even’s kiss turns into small sucking nips, and he shudders at the sensation.

"I brought you food,” Even says as he moves his kisses around to follow the line of Isak’s jaw.

Isak can feel himself getting hard, and he hopes like hell Even can’t feel it too. He buries his fingers in Even’s hair to distract himself as he tries to will the boner away, and it is exactly as gloriously soft as Isak had imagined all those weeks ago. “I’m supposed to interpret food -- a bag of chips, to be exact -- as a romantic gesture?” Isak asks, as steadily as he can. Which is, in reality, not very steady at all. Thankfully, Even’s voice is also starting to sound a little breathy and unsteady when he answers.

“It’s very romantic, Isak. I was making sure you wouldn't starve; I can’t help it if you don’t recognize important gestures when you see them.”

Isak manages a shaky laugh as he pulls back a little. His hands roam down Even’s arms, reveling in the way Even shivers in their wake “I’m sorry; I didn’t know there was a handbook that says you should orchestrate ridiculous situations to spend time with your crush.”

“I think your education is a bit lacking, Isak,” Even says, leaning his forehead against Isak’s as he does so. Isak realizes he really likes it when Even does that. In fact, he’s almost swamped with the emotions that simple gesture creates. “But don’t worry, I’ll fix that,” Even adds after a moment of staring into each other’s eyes.

“What I don’t get,” Isak says now, his breath coming a little easier now that he’s not quite as attached to Even as he has been, “is how you managed to do the powercut.”

Even laughs. He runs his own hands up and into Isak’s hair, curling part of it around his fingers. The resultant shivers make it very hard for Isak to focus on what Even’s saying, but he forces himself to do it.

“That one wasn’t me,” Even says. “I was trying to get to know you in a more normal way, but when it happened I went with it.”

Isak laughs, dragging Even back into his arms. “You’re ridiculous.”

“Mmmm, that’s true,” Even agrees, burying his nose in Isak’s hair and humming contentedly. “But you’re the one who’s here with me.”

At this proximity, Isak can feel that Even is just as worked up as he is. He groans. “I want to take this somewhere else.”

“What’s wrong with right here?” Even asks, with a wicked gleam in his eye as he presses his hips against Isak’s, making him groan again. “We could push the stop button, get stuck together again. Make it worth our while this time.”

Isak shakes his head, already amused at this ridiculous dork he seems to have landed. “I’m not having our first time be a quickie in an elevator, Even.”

“So there’s going to be another time?” Even asks. There’s something vulnerable in his voice, at odds with the bantering he’s been doing the last few minutes, and Isak swallows the teasing remark he was going to make.

“Yeah,” he says instead, looking directly into Even’s eyes. “Yeah, there is, if you want.”
“I want,” Even says, capturing Isak’s lips with his own again. “But since you insist on being boring …” he nods at the elevator door, which is sliding open. Isak hadn’t even noticed them slowing to a stop. “We should get off, here.”

Isak rolls his eyes. “You’re a goddam dickhead,” he says as he leads the way out. “It’s been nice to be stuck with you. But I think I want to be not-stuck with you from now on.”

Grinning, Even takes his hand. “I think we can arrange that,” he says.

He hums again as they walk out, and Isak stops still, which drags Even to a halt next to him as well. He finally recognizes the tune. “You’ve been humming ‘I’m Yours’?”

Even blushes a little as he nods, and it’s so endearing that Isak can’t help the swelling of emotions he feels.

“It reminds me of you,” Even says, ducking his head. “Because I’m yours, you see.”

Rolling his eyes, but incapable of suppressing the fond grin he can feel on his face, Isak laughs. “You hummed it that day in the elevator.”

“I did, yes,” Even agrees.

“It’s been that long?”

“It’s been that long.”

Isak takes his hand again and starts walking, happiness exploding in his chest so intensely that he’s not sure how he’s managing to breathe right now. “You are the cheesiest asshole I’ve ever met,” he says, trying desperately not to let on just how much those words have affected him. He’s 90% sure Even has figured it out, though; his smug grin says it all. “But I’m yours, too,” Isak adds. “For as long as you want me.”

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