Love is All That I Can Give to You

by Ark666

Summary

Following the events after the bridge the survivors were rescued by another group and horrific events ensue making the group leave. Now back on the road with new found love, secrets, lies, betrayal, and other complications to their eventual rescue for the nightmare that they had found themselves in Savanna or were the real nightmares other people to begin with and not the zombies?

Notes

Hello everybody reading this fic I want to warn you I don't have beta reader so forgive me and be patient with my errors, and comment if you have suggestions for the story or grammatical errors. I'd love to hear your feedback to improve my work.

Just for a warning this may trigger someone who had PTSD. I decided not to make it an explicit fic with making it graphic like that because I have made one before for another account, and I think I may have traumatized my one peer who read it without my permission. I do have beta chapters of this one whenever it was a different story set on different things. I'll
post them after the main story is completed.

Enjoy.
Chapter 1

Time stood still. Icy blue eyes locked onto emerald ones. A broken kicked in door laid on the ground of where the emerald eyed man was standing and panting. Rage all over his face. The conman has seen calmer days. The icy blue eyed man looked at him with fear in his eyes as his tormenter had realized what was going on finally. Everything moved like it was made in slow motion, and all at once in an adrenaline fueled blur that the three men felt. It had felt like an eternity, and like they had magically teleported to a time after.

Ellis’ expression was that of terror, fear, and hope. Nick’s was one of murderous rage, and hate. The man on top of Ellis was that of ‘ah fuck’.

Nick grabbed the man that was on Ellis dragging him to the ground. Sickening crunches and wet hits were heard from his fists as he beat the face of the assailant. Petrified Ellis covered himself up with a blanket. He hysterically sobbed when he knew for sure that he wasn’t going to be harmed anymore. Relief washed over him knowing that he was safe now. Tears ran down his face like rivers. His eyes were already red, sore and puffy with all of the crying that he had done beforehand. The blanket was a scruffy woolen thing that covered his chest, groin, and thighs.

All Nick could thing about was beating the man below him to death. Hate, rage, and anger fueled his punches. The conman was a formidable foe when angered. Enraged that the man had done that to his teammate. Sure Ellis was young and naive, but he hadn’t done anything to deserve being raped by a predator. Nobody had realized the signs that Ellis had become his prey before the supply run.

Strong hands wrapped around Nick’s torso and drug him off the man whose face was now a bloodied pulp. Once let go Nick turned to see that it was Coach that had drug him off the man.

“What the actual fuck Coach!” Nick growled through his teeth standing up and positioned to be ready to kill. His head was cocked to the side, and if looks could kill this would have been it. The anger and venomous look on his face told Coach not to piss around with him. Splatters of fresh blood littered Nick’s face and clothing from the nose that he had broken. Coach stood defensively ready for Nick to launch himself at him too. He was almost like one of the hunters ready to pounce on someone if they made the wrong move.

‘He’s a few screws loose right now. I better be ready in case he attacks.’ Coach thought carefully.

Ellis’ assailant, or Nick’s victim laid on the floor was unconscious. Crimson flowed like rivers from hell out of his nose. Dark circles that indicate a broken nose had already shown up making him look more like a raccoon then a person. He wasn’t wearing any pants, or rather it was around his knees. He hadn’t bothered to take them off when he raped Ellis. It had made it too easy for Nick to throw him on the ground and beat the ever living shit out of him.

Rochelle and a couple others were outside the room trying not to step on the door that had been broken in like ones they had come across on the outside. Nick had broken through it like he was one of the infected ready for a fresh meal.

“We don’t kill humans Nick!” Coach motioned to the man who a few minutes ago had been raping Ellis. The expression of Nick’s face remained unchanged, just as crazy and as unhinged as before Coach had said anything. Like what Coach had said didn’t matter. In his warped angry mind Nick took it like Coach had been defending the rapist.

“He doesn’t deserve to live! Scum like *him* don’t change!” Nick growled pointing at the man on
the ground. The others had been content to let Nick to administer his own vigilante justice upon the rapist. They hadn’t moved at all when while they watched Nick beat the man. They knew that the man on the ground had deserved it, and they didn’t do anything to Nick to stop him.

They only merely observed him.

Bystanders… bystanders who were content with watching and not intervening at all. They wouldn’t have rescued Ellis because they were too mentally weak to deal with the incident. In a way they do feel the pain of what they could’ve done to help, but they won’t learn…

Nick and Coach were the only ones in the house with the willpower to take action on such a monstrosity.

Coach however on his moral principle had went to break it up. Having to make his way through a crowd of content, unmoving, and uncaring individuals. “I’ve participated in many punishments for scum like him when I served a couple years for fraud.”

“Just fraud,” Coach sarcastically taunted him, and Nick rolled his eyes like a teenager that was being lectured by their parents. Nick had made many lucrative comments on his weaponry, medical, and stain removal skills in the past. In prison Nick and the others would beat rapists often. Those kinds of people were not very liked in prison and got the vigilante justice from the other inmates. Child predators, and people who attacked the elderly, young, and disabled were almost always punished all the way by him and the other inmates.

“Fuck you!” He pointed at Coach and picked up Ellis bridal style off of the bed. The blanket was still draped over Ellis. “And stay the FUCK out of my sight for awhile!” Murderous rage in those emerald eyes told Coach to heed his warning for the meantime.

Charging past Coach, and kicking the man on the floor as hard as he could manage he made his way out of the room with Ellis in hand. Warm tears soaked through Nick’s blue dress shirt quickly during their exit. The others had let them through to not become part of Nick’s rage. From how quickly everything had happened for Ellis he went into shock and couldn’t quite remember how he ended up in the situation that led him into being in Nick’s arms at the moment. Nick took him into the bathroom and locked the door behind them.

Setting down Ellis on the toilet first he then went to run a hot and steamy bath. He thanked whatever god that was out there for people who lived off of the grid with solar power, well water, and septic. A nice self sustaining house. Nick rummaged through the cabinets in the bathroom and found a bubble bath mix.

‘This should make him feel a little bit more comfortable with me being in here with him bathing after what that asshat did to him.’ he reasoned in his mind as he poured a large amount of the mixture into the water. Large bubbles formed almost immediately. Satisfied he turned to Ellis and put him in the tub still wearing the blanket. Bubbles and hot water continued to form and rise up.

Despite being extremely distressed he appreciated what Nick was doing for him. Cynicalism that he had never felt in his entire life began to rise up and out of him. He wanted Nick to beat the man to death, and he wished that Coach hadn’t gotten in the way of that. For once he was content with someone else being murdered right in front of him. Ellis stared at those bubbles on top of the water like it was the only thing that was keeping him grounded to his own being.

“I know that it’s hard right now champ, but you will get better. Just trust me,” Nick told Ellis. He didn’t actually hear what Nick had said to him, but knew that he had spoken and looked up him at the side of the tub. His features had softened to a rarely seen caring side of him that had worry to it.
He had also taken off his suit jacket and rolled up the sleeves of his dress shirt to help with his bath.

If this hadn’t been the apocalypse Nick would have just tried to comfort him until the police and medics arrived as to not tamper evidence. To make sure that the rapist could be charged although he would have gotten charged with a crime of passion, but Coach would have stopped that before it got to the point that he would have wanted. This wasn’t like the before times and all Nick could do was help the young man and make him feel safe. He tried to coax him into feeling more secure.

Love. It’s a four lettered word that he realized that he had felt for the young southerner when he was out on the supply run with the rest of the group. During the outing Nick had gotten a feeling a bad feeling not towards the run, but what was going on back at the safehouse. Dread filled his veins, and in one moment he was with the group, and then the next he was sprinting back to the safehouse. His skin crawled the more he thought about it as he ran back. The fear in his mind tormented him confusing what was real to him. He violently opened the safehouse, and ran in listening to only have his fears validated. The door to the room was bashed in by him like it was nothing but a mere hinderance.

That lack of self control had almost made him kill that man on the spot. In a way he’s glad that Coach had interfered because he wanted to plan that man’s demise now and make it painful for what he had done to his love.

Numbness was all Ellis could feel. It was like his mind and emotions were completely turned off. His body as well. Unaware of his surroundings for a lack of a better word. Nick talked to him, but he couldn’t make out the words. Wracked with mental and emotional pain as well as physical pain, it almost felt like it wasn’t his. That he was just there existing, everything and nothing at the same time. Being there physically, but not mentally. The foamy water that caressed his skin was there, but he felt like he was floating on the surface. His body felt so alien to himself, and yet Nick was here cleaning him with some soap.

If it wasn’t for Nick being right there he would have taken the one way ticket out of the pain and torment that he felt. Agony was the best way to describe the mental pain that he was in, agony. The agony of being raped. The agony of other people knowing. The agony of eventually having to talk about it. The agony of the PTSD to come. The agony of knowing of what people are thinking and what they are saying to him is because of the knowledge that he was raped. All of the agony was brutal. Worse than the apocalypse, and what it had taken away from him. It wasn’t fair, all of the hope and all of the optimism had been drained from him in a matter of minutes that the assault had taken place over.

“Ellis,” Nick’s voice was a whisper drawing Ellis out of his daze to look at the conman. “I know what you’re thinking. Don’t do that, please” Nick begged his voice breaking a little bit. Ellis looked down sadly at the foam; he had heard the crack in his voice with all of the worry and sadness in it, and sadness was written on Nick’s face. He knew that Ellis would take his life if he let him be alone for a few minutes.

“I just want the pain to end, and to not feel the pain of recovering and remembering,” Ellis choked out. Nick hugged him despite all of the water. Holding him closely to his chest he let the younger man cry safely in his arms. His head resting on Ellis’. Gingerly petting his soft brown curls as Ellis let all of his cries and frustrations out on his chest.

Close to his heart it lolled Ellis into calming down his hysterics a bit. Each heartbeat calmed him down a little bit more at a time. Enough to get him to want to talk a little bit when Nick talked to him again,”Make sure that you clean yourself down there because I don’t believe that you would want me to, right?”
Ellis shook his head no and looked up to Nick’s emerald eyes. “I need to tell you something important Nick,” Ellis shook in the water already thinking of chickening out on what he wanted to tell him.

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“You should have let him do it,” Meredith spoke up looking at her teammates unconscious body.

“He’s a living person,” Coach reasoned. Meredith kicked the man hard as to disagree with the notion that the unconscious man was indeed a person. Like Coach she was sturdily built so there was a lot of power behind that kick.

“He’s a piece of shit that deserves to die. I should have said something earlier. I knew that he was planning something. I could have stopped it,” she beat herself up blaming herself. Rochelle put a hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

“Nothing you could have done would have-“ Rochelle started.

“YESSSSSSS I could have,” she dropped to the floor putting her hands on head pulling at her light brown hair. Tears fell from her eyes. “I was with him since the beginning. When there were still some people who weren’t carriers left, heh. He’d fuck anything that seemed unintelligent to him. He’s a predator. He admitted once that he was under Megan’s Law before all of this shit had happened. I saw how he was looking at your friend. The look in his eyes. The way he would talk to him. The way he would whisper when he would think nobody was listening. I just didn’t wanna see it I guess. I wanted to turn a blind eye.”

“Meredith,” Tomas their last teammate crouched down next to her hugging her crying as well. “Nobody’s going to blame you.”

“You should feel like shit,” Nick sauntered across the room growling and snatched another blanket his shirt covered in water. His face was hard and pissed. “All of his innocent pure heart is gone. Now before you say shit I have to go back in case he tries to drown himself.”

‘Goddamnit Nick. You’ve wrecked her now too’ Coach thought. Nick didn’t care. He had projected/deflected his anger, and sadness onto Meredith. It’s hard to control psychological coping mechanisms, but it was still uncalled for.

He had shoved himself past Coach before the man could say anything. Meredith was balling on the ground now. Her whole body trembling and shaking. Rochelle decided that was her que to leave. Coach decided to follow her out as well.

Nick carried Ellis down the hall wrapped up in the blanket that he had just picked up a minute ago. He took him into the other bedroom and sat down on the bed with him still being held tight in his arms. Although Nick grabbed a gun off the table and had it now resting next to his thigh on high alert in case anyone *unwanted* would enter the room.
Take my heart and please don't break it

Chapter Summary

Back out on the road. Drama, forgiveness, first aid, meaningless conversations, and fights. Isn't that just life or am I wrong?

Chapter Notes

I like dialogue if you think there is too much. Some things can only be conveyed through speech. Sorry for not knowing how to work the site, but I'll continue trying.

"You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated." -Maya Angelou

A couple of days later the group separated from the other one at Nick’s threat to leave with Ellis if they didn’t come with. Ellis hadn’t talked since that day, and hadn’t moved around. Nick practically force fed him to get him to get hydrated and be fed. Rochelle and Coach hadn’t wanted to leave, but they wouldn’t abandon their team. The house was safe from zombies, it had running water, hot water, electricity, and food. However, it had a greater threat than zombies, people.

Nick knew human nature pretty well at least in his mind. People were generally more dangerous than wild animals most of the time. Preying on the weak, or the kind. He really should know because of the years he amounted spent gambling and conning people. It was generally a safe bet that there was almost always someone that he encountered everyday that tried to screw him over as well. People lie, cheat, steal, murder, abuse, and more all in the sake of nature. The only people that he’d trusted in years was Coach, Rochelle, and Ellis. That was because he had to, but they’d have an unbreakable bond now.

Nick carried Ellis in his arms as Coach and Rochelle led the way with their melee weapons. They didn’t use their guns on anything except the special infected in fear of drawing a hoard to their location. They couldn’t use guns forever. The ammo would eventually start to run low and soon. It had been about a month since they had been on the bridge. Nick internally smiled at the memory. There had been so much hope and optimism at that time. So close to being safe they could almost taste it. Ellis had been so happy. He had been practically bouncing off the walls of that safehouse before running across.

Events happened and that didn’t happen. They crashed, but the group that they were staying with had brought them to safety, and had stayed with them… Like it always does shit happens, and shit does what it does best to ruin everything that it comes in contact with.

They haven’t spoken since they had left. Coach and Rochelle had been idling for a couple days hoping that Nick would change his mind. It was today that Nick picked up his and Ellis’ bag of supplies and walked out the door that Coach and Rochelle had said their goodbyes quickly and followed suit. Nick was still pissed off at Coach, and Coach seemed to sense that and decided not to talk.
A few days had passed without incident. The only time that the group minus Ellis would speak was to point out a special infected. They were in some melancholy town, and none of them have smiled in more than a week. Dreary and grey looking, it was sad looking. No trees or colors anywhere. The only thing littering the town was burned cars, houses, buildings, and death.

“For the love of god can you two please stop not talking to each other! This awkward silence is getting to me!” Rochelle stopped where she had been walking and had yelled at the two. Coach and Nick had stopped in their tracks as well. Wasn’t too much stopping any of them. No direction and no place to go only wondering around for days.

“Only if he apologizes,” Nick chuckled because he knew Coach wouldn’t do that and he had shaken his head no.

“Knights of Columbus! I’m not moving until us three will talk to each other again!” Rochelle yelled loudly. The infected roared off in the distance.

“Thanks a lot loud girl because we only need more of them to find us with our *perfectly* fully loaded weapons!” Nick’s sarcasm could cut through concrete with ease. Bullets had become a gift to the group. He set Ellis down and pulled out his magnum.

“Shit! Look I’m sorry if things got out of hand Nick, but we have to be a team you know, and being all divided like this isn’t going to do any good,” Coach apologized seeing the zombies start to appear in the distance. He wished that they were in a bit more of an alley or had a higher advantage.

“I agree,” Nick sighed letting go of his pride as he fired at the zombies that were drawing closer and closer. Ellis picked up the crowbar that Rochelle had dropped on the ground and stood up ready to defend. Nick didn’t show it, but he was happy for the first time in awhile.

After they cleared out the hoard the group was panting and breathing heavily. Ellis went to go and pick up a firearm. Nick plucked it out of his hands and gave him his baseball bat instead. Ellis looked very upset at him.

“I’m not going to let you shoot yourself. You’re not going to have one until I know that you aren’t going to put it against yourself,” Nick soothingly spoke to him. It was the kind of voice he used when he was healing someone.

“I agree with Nick son. Just stick to the middle of the group with that bat,” Coach indisputable agreed with Nick. Ellis grunted dissatisfied, but not quite ready to argue back.

“Sorry sweetie,” she squeezed his shoulder. “I agree with them.”

“Damn I really would kill to have a stereo right now to listen to an Eminem album,” Coach smiled starting up the group’s pace. Nick laughed a little bit.

“Seriously? I really didn’t picture you as a fan of Slim Shady,” Nick had covered his mouth with his hand that held his magnum. He put the arm away back into its holster. He loved the damn thing more than his suit.

“Yup. Between the choice of going to a Midnight Riders concert or his I’d have to say I would go to see Slim Shady,” Coach threw his pole over his shoulder. Rochelle and Nick still have no idea how he managed to rip out a stop sign.

“I never really listened to him. I liked other artists at that time,” Rochelle piped into the conversation.

“Britney Spears?” Nick asked mockingly.
“Neeeeeeeeeeeeeck!” she blushed immensely batting at him with her free hand. All Coach and Nick could do was laugh. Nick glanced over his shoulder to make sure that Ellis was still there. He was, but he wasn’t amused by the conversation.

“Well… my favorite band was Queen,” Nick scratched the stubble on his chin.

“Oooooooh Nicky I didn’t picture you as a man as old as me,” Coach laughed. Pissed off Nick flipped him off.

“Shut up, I didn’t eat a McDonalds in one sitting,” Nick jabbed.

“Hey Ro,” Coach nudged Rochelle. “I think Nick was alive to see Frank Sinatra make his debut.” They continued laughing at Nick’s expense.

“Fuck off… I think Frank is good,” Nick mumbled under his breath. Ellis made a disapproving sigh that went unnoticed by the rest of his group.

In the midst of their distractions a spitter spat at the group. They all scattered as soon as they heard it hit the ground. Splashing a little bit on Rochelle’s forearm as it went down. She yelped and hissed in pain a bit. Nick pulled out his magnum and shot the mutated zombie down casually.

“This is why we can’t have nice things like talking, and fuck I had just put this away,” he tucked his piece back into its holster again.

“Anyone know anything about burns. I mean we got lucky before when we would get hit. The rescue people always knew how to take care of them,” Rochelle went off trying to distract herself from the pain. Nick took steps to her pulling a water bottle out of his pocket.

“I do, just hold still,” he poured water all over the wound. “Coach can you grab me some sterile cloth, bandages, gauze, and ointment… don’t grab the ointment. It’s a tad too deep. Ellis can you hand me another water bottle.”

“Can do,” Coach set down his bag and rummaged through it. Carefully Nick washed the wound without touching it as to not contaminate it. Ellis readied another water bottle for Nick by the time his ran dry.

“Does it hurt still, and is anything numb?” Nick asked her meticulously.

“It stings and it really hurts. I’m glad this is my left arm because my middle, index, and thumb are numb,” She explained. “How do you know this much about burns?”

“In high school before… anyways my chem partner dropped acid and it landed on his leg, and I took a first responder elective class. Was good at the elective, but terrible at chem, but that kid had really bad third degree burns all running down his leg. That acid was much stronger than this, bUUUuuUuUt… you got your carpal tunnel nerve damaged. I don’t want to scare you, but I don’t think you’re gonna get a full recovery of it,”

“Damn son I’m glad that we let you stay. I thought you only learned all of these skills on the streets,” Coach admitted.

“Well I certainly practiced them and improved upon them on the streets,” Nick flashed a devilish grin to the older man. “You wouldn’t believe the limited range of an EMR’s skills and scope of practice is.”

“I don’t think I care right now as long as you’re helping us,” Rochelle squired when Nick patted
the wound dry with the sterile cloth.

“Now this absolutely needs to stay dry until it’s fully healed. We need to change the bandages more than twice a day or you will get an infection,” he laid down the gauze on top of the wound gently. He wrapped the bandage loosely around it, but twisted the bandage so that there was some pressure over the wound. Feeling satisfied with his work he tore off the rest of the bandage and tucked the remaining part of it under some of the rest of the bandage. “I think we’re good to go now.”

“Now back to you being horrible at chem and your cut off comment about school,” Coach smiled getting his revenge for the offhand comments.

They finally made it to a safehouse. “More like saferoom!” Nick audibly shouted his disgust for the small room with no sleeping bags, lights, or even a makeshift toilet. Even though they didn’t say anything they all agreed with Nick’s cynicalism at that moment. They hadn’t found a safehouse in days and this is what they got.

“It could be worse,” Ellis mumbled.

“Yeah… I guess it could,” Nick sighed sitting down on the floor. “I hope that we’ll find a safehouse so damn nice that we won’t have to move again. Like one that we can plant crops so we don’t have to scavenge for food anymore, and—”

“Look at you being optimistic for once, and sounds an awful lot like Lenny and George’s dream in Of Mice and Men,” Rochelle smiled sitting down as well. Nick stuck his tongue out at her, and resumed his fantasy of that dream safehouse in his mind. Coach was checking the supplies so he wasn’t facing them. “Anyways we should try to find a map to see where we are. I also have another plan.” Everyone perked up. “I was thinking if we can find a cellphone with a charger. A smartphone, a cell tower / radio tower, and a generator we may be able to contact someone on the outside to come and help us.”

“That’s the best thing I’ve heard in ages,” Coach laughed. Nick shot daggers at him. Had he not heard what he wanted?!?

“Let’s get some sleep. I’m tired as hell,” Nick shut his eyes. Ellis was laying against him using him as a pillow. Rochelle joined in on using Nick as a pillow.

‘Damn It! Guess I’m on watch first then.’ Coach thought angrily wanting to get some shuteye. His eyes drooped and before long he had fallen asleep as well.

Nick woke up to the bright sun and his arms and a leg too numb to move. Coach was asleep on the table slumped over. He wiggled around trying to wake Rochelle and Ellis up. When they finally moved rubbing their eyes. Rochelle glared at Coach.

“What the hell!” She yelled at him startling him awake and made Nick and Ellis jump a little bit.

“Calm down Ro nothing happened,” he tried to calm her down.

“But SOMETHING could have!” She yelled again. A loud roar cut her off before she could say something else.

“Damnit Ro, that’s the second time in two days your loud mouth has gotten us in trouble,” Nick
rolled his eyes while getting up and pulling the little slot on the safehouse door open. He pulled out his magnum ready to fire.

“I didn’t mean,” Rochelle apologized.

“But you still did,” Nick argued sighing. Ellis frowned at the argument.

The ground shook and the roars of an incoming tank were becoming louder and more pronounced. Before he saw the tank it had tried to smash the door in. Nick fell to the ground startled, fear was on his face briefly. Everyone saw it. The others had never seen him afraid before because of how well he had masked it.

Coach took his shotgun and shot at the tank through the hole before Nick could get up. Ellis hugged Nick letting him know it’s alright to be afraid. The conman softened leaning into the hug and cried softly. He hadn’t cried since before the zombies roamed the streets. He thought that the door would have flung open and he would watch all of his teammates die one by one before himself. Ellis didn’t tell anyone that Nick was crying so that he could keep some of his pride for having been visibly shaken by the event.

All of them had cried at some point because of some event that triggered it. For Coach it was when they came across an uninfected deceased family back at the swamps. The fallen ceda evac at the mall was the first time for Rochelle. Ellis had shed quite a few at the witch’s wedding before they had killed it. The witch bride had looked at him confused as to whether he was like herself or not, like self awareness for the monster that she was. Nick a shed a couple when the liquor store that they found and it had been completely raided.

Coach sat down on the table again after the tank was dead and reloaded his gun. Rochelle took out some cans of food and opened them. She gave a can to each person saving the mixed fruit one for herself. She didn’t want another can of tomato soup again otherwise she thinks that she would rather starved herself to death. They ate in silence then left the safehouse. Before that Rochelle changed her bandages.

Ellis was with the baseball bat in the center of the group. Nick followed behind him with a rifle that had a suppressor attachment. Rochelle and Coach had their melee weapons out as well taking care of anything ahead to them.

How long had things gone on like this? Nick shook his head. He had lost track of how many days it had been since they left that safehouse. The little group that he’s in had been unbelievable lucky since then. He knows that their luck will run out soon enough, but he doesn’t know when that will happen.

Silently they moved through the streets. It was sometime in the afternoon. The sun was beating down on the survivors. Nick had taken off his suit jacket and tied it around his waist. His blue dress shirt’s back was covered in sweat. The other survivors cloths didn’t fare as well either. It was surprisingly hot for being November. It was going to be the last of the warm weather. They had found a map and they were in Southern Pennsylvania.

Coach had suggested that they go to Philadelphia so that he could get a real Philly cheesesteak. Rochelle was being the cynic for one and asked him where he was going to get the beef from. His dream of that food had died with Rochelle’s comment. Ellis had laughed a little bit at the comment as did Nick.

‘At least he can still smile. I wonder if I can get him to do that again?’ Nick thought looking around. He saw a witch in their path. She was sitting in the shade and their was a suspended car in the air
being held by a cable connected to a crane. His mouth twisted into a smile and ran to the crane.

“Nick! The hell you doing boy!” Coach whisper yelled. Nick turned around smiling and put a finger to his mouth telling Coach to be quiet. He hotwired the crane and dropped the car on the witch. She crawled out from under the car and clawed at the car like she would one of them until she broke a nail and ran away screaming.

On the ground laughing was Ellis. Nick had fallen out of the crane laughing. Rochelle was trying to contain her laughter failing at containing it. Coach had a hand to his head disappointed and with a headache.

“That was funny as shit Nick!” Ellis laughed rolling around on the ground.

“Well that bitch was in our shade, and I saw something like this in a cartoon when I was a kid!” Nick clutched his side wincing in pain from all the laughing he was doing.

“I love how she looked right before it fell on her! She was like ‘Oh NOOO!’” Rochelle doubled over in laughter.

“Will you two start acting your age?” Coach asked Rochelle and Nick who were acting like they were in their early 20s like Ellis. Coach pinched the bridge of his nose waiting it out. He won’t say it out loud to any of them because it would cause tension, but he knew that Nick did that risky maneuver without asking like Ellis would have just to make the boy smile.

After they calmed down in the shade the survivors stayed in the shade until they were cooled down enough to move again. It was unseasonably hot for being mid November in Pennsylvania. They would need to find warmer clothing before the cold would move in on them. Nick would be the last person who needed anything since he was wearing a suit.

Rochelle had grown to miss Ellis’ stories. She had also been trying to convince the group to go to Columbus to see if anyone she knew was alive. Coach has lost so much weight that his belt want doing a great job of holding up his pants anymore. Everyone had lost weight. Ellis especially. Nick had given Ellis his suit jacket to keep warm until they find more suitable winter wear for the upcoming cold that was moving in.

“Look down there,” Nick pointed. A pharmacy stood at the end of the street. “I bet that we can get some medical supplies there. We might not be as lucky to keep relying on safe houses for everything.”

“Gotta agree with you Nick,” Coach agreed to the plan.

Nick guided the group with ease through the zombies. He threw his ax at a smoker that appeared and struck it dead in the face. Ellis smiled at that while Rochelle congratulated him. Coach thought it was a dumb and risky move. They finally made it to the pharmacy. It looked disgusting like everything else, but by the looks of the building it hadn’t been raided yet.

They swept the store for zombies before they began to loot it. Ellis was searching the refrigerator when Nick came up behind him. Poking at his shoulder to grab the young man’s attention. Ellis turned, and Nick handed him a pregnancy test box. Gingerly taking the box out of his hands he looks at it sadly.

“There’s a bathroom over there,” Nick pointed. “I’ll tell the others you went to take a shit.” Ellis nodded thanking Nick.

“Can you stay close to the door?” Ellis asked him.
“Of course,” Nick replied and they went about their business.

Ellis turned on his lantern in the bathroom. He set it down sighing. The toilet didn’t have running water he noted when sitting down on it. He held the box up to his face staring at it before he removed it from the box. He set the actual test down on his thigh as he read the instructions. When he was done reading them he took the device out of the sterile packaging and did as the directions said.

He was scared because he felt like he already knew the answer and was doing this just to prove it. He missed his period as far as he was aware. The smell of meat made him nauseated. His body was growing more in certain places. He lost a lot of his muscle mass since not being able to find T since the beginning of the outbreak. As he sat there alone in the dimly lit room he felt like his fate was sealed.

A knock at the door drew him back to reality. “Are you alright in there?” Nick asked him on the other side of the door.

“Sorry, I kinda just spaced out for a minute,” Ellis answered. He was sitting on the lid of the toilet at this point waiting for the answer to pop up.

“Okay, just let me know if you need anything,”

Ellis sighed and closed his eyes. Tearing up a bit. He sniffled. His answer would come in a few moments. When it was finally time he opened up his eyes and held up the test to the light and started bawling. Dropping the results in the process. The door flung open Nick rushing over to him. He hugged the shaking Ellis.

“Calm down we’ll find a way outta this,” Nick cooed petting him.

“It’s not that,” Ellis choked out.

“Dude,” Nick laughed a little looking at the results. Ellis sighed.

“I was just so scared that it would come up positive. I don’t want to have a rapist’s baby,” he cried to Nick.

“It’s alright. You might just have irregular periods because they’re starting back up,” he cooed petting Ellis’ hair while holding him close to his body. “What I don’t understand is how near invisible the scars on your chest are.” He distracted.

Ellis chuckled.”Bandage up Keith enough times and take care of his wounds and you’ll figure out how to make horrific looking wounds have very little to no scarring. As long as yew have the right supplies.”

“I wonder why he went after me?” Ellis mumbled.

“He was a predator. I don’t know why,” Nick lied. He knew exactly why he targeted Ellis. Ellis was young, looks and acts like a child, and was nïeve. Ellis trusted Nick to his secret of being transgender after the incident when he was in the tub. Nick had gained Ellis’ ultimate trust for being his savior. Finding out that Ellis was transgender had not changed Nick’s love for Ellis. He loved him all the same.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Tragic backstories, funny backstory, foreign people, American dialect confusion, and cross dressing for the hell of it.

Chapter Notes

Sorry I kept thinking about different ideas. Most of them were a bit too dark in my opinion. I always will say that I'll update more often, but I probably won't til the end of the month. One thing is for sure is that I hate stories without an end so I'll eventually update to the end that is already been written from the beta story, but until then you'll have to endure what I write to getting there. 'I'm an asshole, but I'm proud of it' (Denis Leary).

"A kiss is a lovely trick designed by nature to stop speech when words become superfluous."

-Ingrid Berman

“I hate the fucking cold. Never did like it and we are going to freeze our asses off quicker then the zombies,” Nick griped with a chatter of his teeth. The group had huddled up in a corner for warmth. The unseasonable heat wave had left the four survivors wracked in shivering panic. The safehouse they were in had only a few morsels of food left in it. It was leave soon or starve to death. It wasn’t snowing, but it was fucking freezing.

“I’ve never seen cold like this before,” Ellis chattered next to him. Nick nodded agreeing.

“Never this cold in Ohio,” Rochelle talked to herself to calm herself down a bit, unfortunately it wasn’t working out too well for her.

“Babygirl I don’t think you noticed it before because of the heaters,” the oldest survivor tried to reason with her.

“True, but there was this one time when me and my family went camping when I was nine in the Laurel Highlands in Somerset Pennsylvania… Me and my siblings were in one tent, my parents in another. I was the oldest of my siblings. Didn’t know a damned thing about first aid so I thought nothing was wrong and I ended up becoming the only child overnight. My younger sisters and brother, all gone… because it was too damn cold,” Rochelle’s voice cracked through her story. Her soft sobs permeated the air.

“I lost my older sister when I was twelve,” Nick stated blatantly looking out at nothing. Coach and Ellis turned to him. “I blamed myself for losing her as well.” The sobbing women turned to him.

“Although I didn’t explicitly say it how could you tell?” She asked him through a broken voice.
“Because you mentioned if you had some sort of knowledge of first aid that you could have prevented it,” he tilted his head to her. “I… I was home… alone with my older sister. There was a knock at the door… her ex… I didn’t know that they’d just broken up recently… he shoved me aside and tore after my sister who was in the kitchen…” he covered half of his face with his hand. “Never in my entire life have I heard… or seen something comparable to that night. The blood was everywhere… Her screams still haunt me at times… My entire family outrightly blamed me. For what happened.” His expression softened with a smile and a rub of his cheek. “Got my revenge at least. He’d initially gotten away. I made a few bad friends who took care of him. One of the rings that I wear is his. Still don’t talk to my family to this day.”

“Wholly shit y’all need therapy!” Coach exclaimed to his ragtag team of misfits.

“Thankfully my parents didn’t blame me at all,” Rochelle ignored Coach.

“I was Coach until all this shit happened,” Ellis defended himself. Nick laughed under his breath.

“Son, I think you need it the most,” Coach gave the young man a serious look.

“Nah… Despite how much shit I got thrown at me Nick needs it the most,”

“HEY!” Nick snapped, Ellis grinned.

“I think that Coach is the only one who needs therapy,” Rochelle picked at him. “Here we all are spilling our shit and you are holding yours inside.” Ellis laughed and Nick nodded in agreement.

“Fine. Until I was old enough to go to school my mama dressed me up like a girl. Thought my name was Belle until then too. She really wanted me to be a girl. Despite it being the 80s at the time I really think that she was disappointed that I didn’t come out as trans as a teenager. Everytime we were at the damned store she would point to a dress say it was cute, but not for her,” The older man angrily vented.

“Hmmmmm. My sister did force me to play dress up too, but I was much older when she stopped wanting to do it to me,” Nick lightened the mood. It made the older man calm down, and that was all that he cared about.

“You,” Rochelle pointed to the best that she could. “In a dress. I cannot see that.”

“I used to be a lot thinner, and she had a lotta wigs,” Nick smiled. Ellis perked up.

“That reminds me of when Keith and I entered a drag race. I ended up getting disqualified, but Keith ended up winning. Oh man did he set fire to his dress during a talent portion,” Ellis started zoning off into his story not noticing that he gave away information that would have a follow up to it.

“That and fire should stop going out together,” Nick snidely commented.

“True, true, but fer the talent portion he was tossing bottles of vodka that his brother had given him. One of them bottles had something that explodes when shaken, and when it did it done gone did it to them other bottles. The other two rained fire all over Keith and his dress, and it was like watching dry hay catch on fire. I’m just glad a few people had gotten the fire extinguishers on him before he could really get hurt that time, but damn if it didn’t look awesome,” Ellis finished his story. Rochelle looked intrigued on asking more questions.

“So Keith won because they thought the explosion and fire was planned?” he nodded quickly at her. “Why were you disqualified then?”
“Uhhh,” he stalled. “That one is a bit of a dozy Ro.”

“We’re going to need to leave soon and find somewhere a bit more secure,” Coach told the group with urgency. The older man was unknowingly Ellis’ saving grace. He and the others were shivering and shaking. All of them were afraid to fall asleep. They’d been talking for hours and hours anyways.

“We should go soon then. There’s nothing here for us,” Rochelle added.

“Let’s just go now,” Nick agreed. They all stood up and wore the blankets. “I suggest that we find a clothing store asap because I don’t want to freeze to death.”

“Agreed,” Ellis said.

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There weren’t too many infected wandering around because of the cold. Nick and Coach had mended their relationship somewhat. They still fight about what happened on that day from time to time.

Ellis was doing better. He didn’t make subtle attempts on his life. He was walking around and attacking the infected. It made Nick happy to see him slowly turning back to normal. Nightmares plagued his dreams making him believe that he was back in that moment in time. Nick would hold him and coo him while he had those nightmares.

Rochelle had tried to be a bit more calm as to not cause a hoard, but sometimes the men got to her. Their arguing, fighting, or silence made her insane. Coach led the group as best as he could manage becoming more aware of Nick’s feelings for Ellis. Rochelle had even become aware of his feelings for the young man. Ellis wasn’t aware of Nick’s feelings for him although he had developed his own feelings for Nick long ago, but hadn’t done anything in fear of being rejected and abandoned by him.

They totally like each other, but were too scared of being rejected.

Hiding Ellis’ more womanly nature had become a full time job for the two. When about in a store they would both sneak pads and tampons into their clothing. Weary of coming out to the rest of the group Nick kept quiet for his sake. It felt nice to Ellis to have some sense of privacy left in his life that hadn’t been shattered by his rape.

They had finally found a clothing store and went to the winter clothing section for men first. Nick went to the dress shirt section and grabbed a new blue dress shirt before going back to the others.

“Oh Niiiiiiiiick,” Rochelle teased off in the distance. She came over hopping up and down like a rabbit with a red dress in her hands.

“No.” he rejected pushing her hands down.

“Please Nick I think you’d look so adorable in it,” she put it in his hands. “Here is some black platform heels, and a long blond wig. I’ll also do your makeup when you’re done getting dressed. Please.” She pleaded with him.

“You owe me a favor if I do this. A big time one on my terms,” the gambler bargened.

“Whatever, just go do it,” She agreed while Nick sulked off to the changing room grabbing a bag of socks along the way.
The red dress was of a softer and more stretchable material, something that was meant to cling to the body. He climbed out of his dingy, dirty suit, and put on the floor length ball gown. It was surprisingly really warm. The high neckline and long sleeves made it really warm, and the skirt trapped heat. The heels were only two inches high which was something that he could work with. He fit the socks into the built in bra of the dress, put on the wig and he could now see why Rochelle wanted to put him into a dress. He had some soft curves like a women, and had a nice ass that was complemented by the dress. He noticed that there was extra padding at the hips on the sides. Yup, he was totally going to use that favor for something big.

He stepped out of the dressing room hearing Rochelle’s squeak of delight. Coach and Ellis both laughed.

“Damn Nick if I just met you at the bar and I wasn’t married I’d totally hit on you,” Coach’s laughs became more gruff and heavy.

“Stand still or I’m going to mess this up,” Rochelle came forward with some makeup in her hands. Nick froze up.

“I’ll owe you a favor too if you stay dressed up like that for the rest of the day,” Ellis bargained.

“Nope,” he denied.

“I’ll owe you one big too,” Coach added now on the floor having actually laughed his ass off. Maybe he found it so funny because of how womanizing asshole like him could look like a sexy women.

“Please Nick it’ll make me so happy,” Ellis begged. Nick couldn’t refuse him and agreed. Ellis hooted and hollered around the store.

Now armed with warm clothing and Nick’s temporary attire they left. Rochelle had gone back to the women’s section and grabbed herself a nice dress that she could celebrate in when they’d be safe.

“Aww shit!” Coach said disgusted seeing snow falling to the ground.

Pretty white flakes fell softly to the ground. Glimmering as they went down and slowly began to pile one on top of another they went. They would go until they became a blanket on the street. Holding the warm down so that it could be the cold’s turn for the season.

“We better find a grocery store to hold up in,” Rochelle suggested looking at the pretty white flakes.

“Well at least nothing will come by there but witches, but we can put the sugar somewhere else. I’m glad that they scare off all of the other infected in the area so we won’t have to worry about barricading the exit,” Nick told them. Witches really did love sugar. The sugar mill had proved that.

“Your optimism is starting to scare me boy,” Coach commented. Leading the way through the streets. Overall Coach was undefined and unobjected leader of the group.

“Hehe, I think that’s my job Nick,” Ellis smiled looking at him. Nick laughed a little bit, blushing under his makeup that hid his face.

“Will you two please just make out already,” Rochelle getting annoyed at their obvious interest for one another.
“What are you talking about Ro?” Ellis asked afraid he’d been outed for having a crush on Nick.

“What makes you think I like him?” Nick stopped moving. Worried as well because he didn’t want to scare Ellis off.

‘Damn it.’ Coach thought stopping as well.

“You two keep making obvious flirting with each other and the way you take care and protect Ellis says everything to me about your feelings Nick. Ellis you really only talk to Nick since the incident with the other group,” Ellis winced at the mention of the other group. Nick stood in front of Ellis.

“Don’t you dare bring up those asshats again!” He yelled at Rochelle looking a tad bit ridiculous with the mismatched voice to his looks. “You know what fuck this I need to take a walk.”

“Nick,” Ellis wrapped his arms around Nick pressing his face into the conman’s back tearing up. “Don’t leave,” He breathed heavily. “I don’t want you Nick. You’re the last good thing in my life Nick. I DON’T WANT TO LOSE YOU TOO! If you leave you’re going to die. Please.” Ellis begged. Nick pried off Ellis’ arms and turned around to face the young man.

He cupped Ellis’ face in his hands. His gloved thumb rubbed his cheek. Nick leaned in and kissed Ellis much to his and the others surprise. After the initial shock wore off Ellis leaned into it. A few moments later Nick pulled back and whispered.

“I couldn’t imagine my world without you too kiddo,” he whispered into Ellis’ ear. He backed up, winking as he and the rest of the group started to walk again. Red crept up all over Ellis’ face as he rushed to keep up with the group.

Nick’s sudden action and confession had his head swirling in confusion and happiness. He hadn’t been this happy in weeks. Not even earlier in the store Nick was happy as well having finally confessed his feelings to Ellis and having them reciprocated. Although he didn’t exactly say I love you it was implied. Coach and Rochelle were gloating because they were right about the two.

They found a dollar store and ate some of the Halloween candy in the store. Nick and Ellis were being a bit lovey dovey with each other like they were two teenagers in love for the first time. Nick maintained his distance as to not trigger the young man. Ellis appreciated Nick’s concern for his mentality and respecting his boundaries.

“Can you two tone down giggling and pda a little bit,” Coach commanded them. Nick and Ellis had looked up giggling.

“No,” Ellis slyly rejected Coach’s command giggling into Nick’s chest. They had barricaded up the dollar store to be safe for them. Luckily because of the snow they didn’t have to worry about water.

They heard the click of a few shotguns close enough to the point that they didn’t want to move.

“Yinzers better put yer hands up where I can see em!” A man’s voice called out.

“Aw knights of columbus he’s from Pittsburgh,” Rochelle frustratedly sighed.

“Damn right you jagoffs now I see yinz have taken the liberty of fixing the front of ‘aur’ store, and redding it up too, but yinz are trespassing,”

“I don’t understand what y’aller sayen?” Ellis asked hands held high in the air. The man stepped out with his five companions.
“He’s trying to say that he is grateful for you all making the store nice and safe because we have not, but you all came here with no permission,” a Japanese man had stepped forward.

“Oh, I just done don’t understand his accent,” Ellis answered.

“The same goes to you kid,” the Pittsburger agreed coldly. “I’m not the leader of ‘aur’ group, but I generally speak for her since I’m more scary up front. You want to talk Yolanda?”

“Yes I will, oh and before you ask he is the only American of the group. That is the main reason why I usually let his speak for me,” she paused her accent thick with spanish influence. “I try not to think about how anyone survives out there without at least six people so youse must be good.”

“I think we all are. How’s about we all introduce ourselves?” Coach asked the woman. She motioned for her people to put down their arms, and for them to put their hands down.

“I’m Yolanda. I come from Mexico, but I moved to Boston a few years back,” The leader spoke.

“I’m Logan, but my nickname is American Johnny since I’m American. Yinz alreddy know where I’m from,” Johnny hulked up his frame as if to appear more in charge, but he wasn’t.

“My name is Takano, Shogo. Me and my mother are from Japan on vacation. She kick zombie ass real good. She does not know English,” Shogo explained.

“Konban wa mina san. Watashi wa Takano Yasuko desu,” (Good evening everybody. I am…) She answered somewhat knowing the situation.

“Salut! I call myself Dimitri and I am of France. I am here on study abroad,” Dimitri waved to the group. Much around Ellis’ age.

“And I’m Dr. Elliot Mayweather. I’m from England, but I came here to assist with the flu with the CEDA. Unfortunately, my coworkers all caught it and tried beating me to death. If you have any questions ask away after all of you introduce yourselves. May the lady in red say her lovely name first,” The scientist insisted.

“Her name is Belle, but she don’t speak none. She’s mute,” Ellis answered for Nick who nodded quickly.

“Such a beautiful name. Is French for beautiful,” Elliot went off in his dream world.

“I’m Ellis by the way. I’m from Georgia,”

“Everyone calls me Coach, and I expect y’all to do the same. I’m also from Georgia,”

“I’m Rochelle. I lived in Columbus Ohio before this all happened,”

“Such a ways away. I’m surprised because of what Dr. Elliot has said about the traits of a carrier that half of your team is female. Because it’s supposed to be a one to four type of thing. Genetically recessive sex carried trait,”

“That is right. By the rules of probability there should have been only one women on your team and you got two women,” Elliot eyed up ‘Belle’.

‘I wish that I could speak, but I really don’t want my head blown off right now’ Nick thought annoyed. He crossed his arms. On the bright side he was still warm.

“The good thing with the cold is that most of the infected if not almost all of them up here will die of
the cold… I mean they are… just sick…” Elliot added.

“Keep it in your pants. I don’t want to keep them,” Yolanda commanded Elliot. He backed away ashamed.

“Come on Yorrrrranda,” Shogo butchered her name. If Coach and Nick didn’t know any better they’d say it was on purpose. “Please reconsider your actions. We could help each other out. We may not run into anyone else until we find refuge.”

“Fine, take this walkie talkie,” She handed it to Coach. “It has a range of 100 Kilometers. We are going to stay here for a few more days. Find us all a safe house to hold up in for the rest of winter. Board it up like you did here, and scavenge for any supplies. God knows we’ll need all that we can find. I will radio you in about a week for your team’s location. If you get into any trouble contact us. I shall expect the same kind of action from youse. Are we clear?”

She raised her brow high up. Coach smiled putting the device into easy access in his bag. “Yes ma’am,”

“Can we trade people for now. We’ll give them Yasuko to take to safety and Belle can stay here and help us,” Elliot pointed to the older lady. Yasuko hit him on the head with her purse hard enough to get him to the floor.

“Yasashikunai no kodomo!” (Not nice child) She yelled at him.

“Sorry Elliot!” Shogo apologized. “In Japanese culture it it very ignorant to point at someone. I forgot to tell everyone that.”

‘Hoshikunakatta’ (I did not want) Shogo thought snidely. He didn’t particularly like anyone in his group besides his mother.

“Elliot,” Yolanda rolled her eyes. “Like I said.” she crouched down to be close to his face. “Keep it in your pants. You aren’t the horniest bastard out here. Just take a few minutes to yourself in the bathroom. I’m catholic and I personally don’t believe it’s a sin to rub one out. It makes the world go around better.” she whispered at the end.

“I’m just a guy in drag, and I’m Nick,” All of the new people looked at him strangely.

“Are you positive?” Elliot asked. The others were too stunned to ask or comment anything else.

“I’m getting three big favors for wearing this all day,” Nick frowned. Yasuko took a polaroid of him. Nick growled.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

They always say try to put yourself in someone else's shoes.

Chapter Notes

Had a hard time coming up with how to write this segment because I felt like the original lacked a bit of the necessarily emotional prep. It's a happier funnier chapter, and I was feeling inspired for once.

"I'm selfish, impatient and a little insecure. I make mistakes, I am out of control at times hard to handle. But if you can't handle me at my worst, then you sure as hell don't deserve me at my best."

-Marilyn Monroe

Point of View from Ellis

I really didn’t know what to say other then I’m still trying to go on. Trying to get a real reason to believe in life after having it and my security ripped away from me. One minute I was having fun with my buddy Keith and the next I was fighting zombies and *other* things. I’m happy to have Nick around to help me through it. Never been the best with words even though I damn well try, but… sometimes it doesn’t work out quite the way I thought it would. Just got to keep one foot in front of the other even if I want to let myself fall.

Nick threw me a smile. We walk behind the rest of the group while we’re tredding through the snow. I think that the stuff looks pretty. While I did find Nick in Rochelle’s outfit nice’n all, I kinda just wanted to see how handsome he looks with the snow without it. Despite Ro outing our affections I was glad she did. I didn’t think I had it in me to talk to him, and I think he was nervous talking to me too.

I looked up at the sky and just stare at in wonderstruck awe at the glittery flakes of white that flew to the ground. The only time I saw snow before all of this was on the tv. I wasn’t a big fan of how cold it was, but to have seen the snow was worth it. I could only hope that one day Nick and or Rochelle would teach me how to build a snowman.

Nick offered out his hand to me to keep up a bit more with the group. I hadn’t noticed and jerked back frightened when he touched my gloved hand. Ashamed I looked away. It had been hard for me the past couple of weeks. I was having a hard time even with my teammates even trying to patch up my wounds.

“I’m sorry,” I murmured to Nick as soft as I thought the snowflakes were falling at. Those plump little monsters were melting into my cap.
“I understand,” he replied turning swiftly. It’s not that I didn’t want to hold his hand,... or be held by it… it was just that I couldn’t handle that sort of thing right at that moment. Those people we ran into were complete strangers with intents that we didn’t know of. Maybe I was just paranoid, but wouldn’t anyone be.

We found a small safehouse with a working gas stove. Coach got himself right away on making dinner for everyone. Something about housework for him seemed to calm him down. That and caring for us like we were his kids. It brought him joy. Nick was sitting down pawing at his face to rub some of the makeup off of him. I’m sure that he was glad to have the day be over soon so that he could change into his actual winter cloths. I did wonder what he’d cash all of his favors in for.

Point of view from Coach

As soon as we got our asses in that safehouse with that gas stove I went right to work on making my kids dinner. I really did see them as my kids. Nick is that whiny kid that throws tantrums and likes to misbehave like my one daughter. They act like angels when you give in to their demands, temporarily. Rochelle is like the middle child always looking for the compromise in the situation and can influence anyone because of those compromising skills. Ellis is like the sheltered child who gets themselves into danger. After that whole debacle he turned quiet and rather dark most of the time.

I raided the safehouse for food. All I found was rice, beef jerky, and half a wheel of cheddar cheese. “This will do nicely,” I stroked my chin smiling. We would eat whatever cheese was leftover tomorrow morning. Even though I wasn’t I totally pretended to be a master chef cooking up the kids food. Doing some tricks with it too. Nick and Rochelle had looked at me like I was totally insane. Hahaha I didn’t mind none because it felt really good to have a kitchen to work in finally without being shooed out. I cooked for my family at home all of the time. My wife was always happy because I worked, cooked, made sure the kids were all good, and made her feel special at night. Damn I miss her and our kids. I’m happy that they were outta town though.

“What the actual hell is this Coach?” Nick lifted up his spoon wearily.

“Just eat it Nicky. It tastes better than it looks,” I pointed at him between scarfing down burning hot bites of the motion concoction. He took a ginger bite of it before really digging into the spoonful of it.

“Ro. I wanna cash in that favor now.” Nick didn’t even finish the food in his mouth as he was grabbing at Rochelle’s bowl. She growled at him grabbing at it. Well at least I made good food.

“NO! SOMETHING ELSE PLEASE!” She fought him off. It was funny because he still was all dressed up.

“You SAID that you’d owe me so paws off doll!” he ripped her bowl away and dumped its contents into his bowl. Me and Ellis couldn’t help but to laugh. She went to grab his food and he got up with his bowl which was heaping full and ran over to the counter yelling no the whole time.

“GIVE IT TO ME,” she yelled at Nick who was now standing on the counter smirking and stuffing his face full of food. He looked like a squirrel because he was stuffing it in that fast. I really did think that he was going to choke because he was laughing as well.

“There ain’t no stripper pole for you to use there boy so get yo ass down before it falls down choking ta death,” I yelled at him. Ellis fell over laughing hard. Rochelle had given up and was trying to raid the unexplored parts of the safehouse. She got lucky with a granola bar. Nick resigned to sitting on the counter.
“Yew thought that this was gonna be shit when yew first looked at it Nick,” Ellis remarked, Nick shrugged his shoulders.

“I decided to try something new and I liked it, and yeah I did think it was going to be. But, I don’t think I have eaten anything this good in weeks. I wish that I’d fought harder to get you into the kitchen Coach,” Yup just like my daughter.

Point of View Nick

Can’t say that I was disappointed that there wasn’t any leftovers. I had licked my bowl and the pot used to cook it clean. Coach really does make one mean dish. I was also secretly disappointed to take the dress off because of how warm it was, but I had my pride to think about. I can only hope that Rochelle didn’t manipulate me into doing something on that level or below again.

On a mission to find us a house yaaaaaaaaaay. I hoped that those asshats would bring a lot of food there. I looked beside me. Ellis was holding my hand again after his fears yesterday. Maybe someday I would teach him how to have a proper snowball fight, or build a snowman. The thought of that made me smile.

I guessed me and Ellis were technically dating now. The rest of the group acknowledged it as such. It felt a bit weird since I hadn’t intended to fall so hard for anyone ever again. Ah well, it was like the old saying ‘you find love when you’d least expect it’ or something like that. I know that I was insecure about my feelings for him, but I’ve always been like that. Just always knew how to mask it, but I can’t mask my feelings for him.

‘I think I love him’ I thought.

In Rochelle’s view

If I was more of a fangirl of yaoi type things I think that I would have been trying to set Nick and Ellis up more. I did feel like that they were made for each other. Their personalities counteract perfectly to cover up their flaws. Nick’s protective nature would keep Ellis safe, and Ellis’ playfulness would keep Nick from turning into a ball of negativity. A better word for an old old man with no sense of fun. Having watched them for the past while had made me jealous that Jacob wasn’t here, or that hunk named Francis from the bridge. Well I did make my bed with that one. I hoped that he was doing well still.

Coach seemed to be happier now that Nick was more preoccupied with Ellis then to nag him on where we were going, or why were going there, and every single negative thing that was wrong with the situation and surroundings. I secretly thought he missed the nagging so I’ll do some more from now on.

“Coach when we get to the house there isn’t going to be an us for the house to have,” I told him annoyed. He turned back at me confused.

“What?” he asked me.

“I’m just saying all of this walking. I mean there can’t possible be anything around here close enough that’s good enough to hold up at,” I complained, and I heard Nick’s stifled attempts to control his snickering behind me.

“Oh lord don’t be going all complainypants on me too lil sister,” Coach turned back to the road.

“I’m not *that* bad,” Nick defended himself from Coach’s accusation.
“Well, my burn hurts, ow,” I lied comedically.

“In a few hours we’ll stop then I can give your burn all of the tender, love, and iodine that wound needs,” his choice of words made me flinch. Iodine would hurt like hell on this.

“But Coooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooaaach!” I whined.

“No buts missy,”

‘Damnit!’ I had lost this one good.

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The lovebirds hung back in the group to hold hands together, and to have a semi-private conversation. Things had been going well between the two men. Ellis had a hard time initially with physical contact from the other man, but warmed up to it. He was still unable to bring himself to be touched by the others or risk having a panic attack.

“I think I know what it is, but what’s yer favorite color?” Ellis asked. They were basically playing 20 questions with each other finally since a lot of infected seemed to have died off.

“Blue,” Nick smiled. “What’s a place that you dream of going to?”

“Your hometown,” Ellis answered.

“Why?” Nick smirked.

“So I ken see where ya grew up,”

“There may be a few people at Harvard as well trying to find a cure,”

“When the weather gets a little warmer we could probably convince the others to go there,”

“Maybe,” Nick smiled at him and gave him a quick peck on the cheek.

“Have you ever gone ice skating?”

Nick shivered,”Yeah. I don’t want to talk about it though.”

“If you ever do I’m here,”

The group of four continued on like this for awhile. Nothing seemed to really pop up until Coach spotted an incoming horde. Not as good as Ellis with the rifle Nick took it off of his back and took the stragglers and anything that seemed too strong for the rest of the group to handle. Ellis wasn’t allowed by the rest of the group to use firearms yet. Far off in the distance a hunter spotted its target. Growling and shrinking it flyed into the air and landed on Nick from behind.

Nick was thrown onto his stomach by the monster and screamed on impact. The monster wasted no time before trying to claw through his coat. It wasn’t very successful due to how puffy the coat was. He looked up to see the others still to busy with the hoard to notice or help him. He only glad not to be wearing that dress with its thickness of the fabric. When the horde seemed to have thinned out Ellis whipped around and ran to Nick with his baseball bat in hand, managing to knock it off with one swing and killing it with another.

The moment the others had heard the hunter they knew what was going to happen. They still couldn’t afford to use ammo on the common infected though. Having to fight through them one at a
time until there was an opening for Ellis to go and help. Blood pounding to his ears so fast that he thought his heart was going to explode he finally made his way over to help his boyfriend.

“Nick! I was so scared! Let me help you up!” Ellis cried dragging Nick to his feet. Nick looked up sharply. At least a dozen infected were closing in on the two. Nick took out his magnum and started firing. Ellis hit anything that would get too close to them. After the hoard subsided Ellis started to practically rip off Nick’s jacket.

“I’m fine Ellis. It didn’t get anything. The jacket stopped it from doing anything to me. It’s alright, it’s alright. I’m okay,” he hugged Ellis tightly in his arms kissing him on the forehead.

“I was so scared when you screamed. I thought I’d lost you,” Ellis quivered. “I was terrified to think how that hunter would have ripped ya open. I was so scared because I love you Nick!”

I love you.

Three little words with so much meaning behind them.

The butterflies in his stomach.

The fear in his chest.

The way his heart threatened to explode.

All in this moment being held right here in his love’s arms.

He had confessed his love for Nick for the first time as a blurt of caring for his safety.

“I love you too,” Nick confessed as well. Ellis tilted his head up to look at Nick in his warm emerald eyes that looked down at his icy blue ones and leaned in for a passionate kiss. Nick’s strong arms held him tight to his chest, and all of Ellis’ worries and insecurities went away. In that strong embrace he could feel the heat coming off of his body and onto his. Soft lips had kissed one another. Nick’s stubble scratched the soft skin of Ellis.

And in that moment it was just them. Like Coach and Rochelle had disappeared. That there was no such thing as zombies or the green flu. Just like they were all alone together. The soft snowflakes that caressed their cheeks with a freezing bite to it added to their moment when suddenly-

“If you two are done can we go now?” Rochelle asked breaking their moment.

‘That bitch! She should have asked Francis to come along if she’s jealous’ Nick thought bitterly. Angry that she ruined the moment of perfect bliss. Nick and Ellis let go of each other and Nick took his scarf off and put it on Ellis.

“I don’t want you to get too cold now,” Nick kissed him on the forehead. The scarf hid Ellis’ blush.

‘Well… at least I know he loves me back’ Ellis thought finding the good in the moment disturbed.
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Familiar faces return, but drama always does seem to surface wherever the gang goes.
With a new jealous face will things go bad?

Chapter Notes

I'm your host 'lying asshole of the week' in I felt like writing. Stay tuned in for 'I start classes in one week' so be prepared for more lies, procrastination, and more dumb commentary on my life. In this episode of I felt like writing, I felt like writing because I ran out of things to read during the day and I usually only write at night so you may get better written chapters starting in the upcoming weeks, and this has been it for I felt like writing.

"We all need mirrors to remind ourselves who we are."

-Leonard Shelby, Memento

“Look there,” Rochelle pointed in the distance. It was on a hill that there was a tower with a small building beside it. “That’s a radio tower. If Ellis can get a generator running we might be able to contact someone to come and rescue us.”

“I’m a car mechanic, but I don’t see why I couldn’t fix it up. Let’s try it,” Ellis scratched his head. Nick stopped walking scraping his shoes on some snow. He was obviously looking for some sort of attention.

“Doesn’t anyone think this is a shitty plan?” Nick asked. The rest of the group stopped walking. A frustrated Coach turned around and walked a little closer to him using his height to intimidate the other man as a display of dominance. Glancing down at the smaller man with a stern face he crossed his arms. Nick mimicked his movements subconsciously.

“I know you ain’t going to shut up until we ask your opinion on this so spill it,” Coach commanded irritated. All he wanted to do was find somewhere safe to sleep, but he would indulge Rochelle to keep some sort of peace. The women was running on a shorter and shorter fuse since the botched rescue back in New Orleans.

“Even *if* we get the generation running if the electronics are still there are we going to to assume there are still people out there that are *willing* to go through this bullshit. Besides those other people we ran into yesterday,” Nick reasoned. Ellis was bemused by Dr. Elliot’s name because if anyone used a shortened version of their name they’d both look up.

“Let’s just try it because I’d rather live on a prayer than to risk freezing to death,” Coach retorted. Nick caved while playing with the strap of the rifle.
“Fine.” he sighed knowing if there was a chance to be warm even for a minute it would be worth it to him. He straightened up his coat before stalking off to the building with the others following him. Coach’s face became calm again and he uncrossed his arms only to raise an eyebrow when Nick turned around to glance in his direction, blatantly and only to say, “Bon Jovi.”

Coach huffed a laugh, “Well, it is a good song.” Ellis and Rochelle were confused as to have only realized that they had missed something in their conversation.

…

They made it to the radio tower with no more trouble. Beaming with happiness Rochelle went to the tower control room to see if all of the electronics were in place. Coach went with her inside to loot any vending machine if any at all. The man longed for a nice candy bar. Nick and Ellis stayed outside to go and see if there was a generator out back. Ellis playfully nudged Nick in the arm while walking, earning him a smile from the older man.

“Sooooo… about earlier,” Nick said with a goofy smile on his face. “Ya love me.”

“Yes,” Ellis blushed the red scarf covering it again. “I know that you love me too. I only realized it on the way over here that you loved me for quite some time otherwise you wouldn’t have been as kind to me as you have been. Am I right?”

Nick paused and thought for a moment,”I don’t know to be honest. I still would have beaten him, and cared for you, but I wouldn’t have taken your mental health into as much consideration. Yes I did fall for you some time before that though.” Nick had the feeling that he had the I liked you before that conversation before, but people are forgetful. It made Ellis smile though hearing his response.

“Well I love you too,” he grabbed Nick’s arm and held it to against himself before they found the generator. Nick covered him while he went to work on the machine with the limited tools that he could find to fix it. The older man found himself deep in thought.

Nick couldn’t believe that he fell in love again. He’d loved his wife at one point and had broken her heart, but she’d also shattered his. Their relationship had been a series of sorrys and bad choices. His wife had cheated on him with his best friend. Nick would gamble and con people. She would spend all of the money. He would go to strip clubs. Their relationship had ended in a cloud of lies, hate, and broken promises leaving them to be broken people. He had promised himself in his mind that he would never fall in love again because the pain was all too fresh in his mind, but here he is now in love with a young mechanic.

He looked out at the snow that seemed to be slowly sticking more and more to the ground. The dusting of the white stuff covered the concrete, but hadn’t made a dent on the grass. He had loved snow when he was a child. However, he had grown to dislike the stuff. Despite its beauty snow is cold, wet, and blindingly white. There quite a few other things he hated about winter like Christmas. The holiday was fueled by happiness and loved ones. He hated it because of his ex wife pretending to be nice for once around his in laws so that she could say that she had a happy marriage. He didn’t have any family because he was disowned at 17 when he was caught experimenting with his ‘friend’.

New Years was a little bit better for him because at least he could drink his troubles away for as long as he was drunk, but he had to watch his wife makeout with several different men while he sat on the couch and watched the New York party on tv. Valentine's Day wasn’t as bad as Christmas, but still awful. He caught his wife and best friend having sex in their bed a few months before they decided
to get a divorce. At least he could find a desperate man or women to sleep with during the day with a box of chocolate and wine.

“Nick did you even hear me?” Ellis interrupted his thoughts.

“No. What?” He blinked a few times still coming out of his daze.

“We need to climb the tower to make sure one part is on otherwise it’ll be all good,” Ellis told him. Nick groaned not happy with how much they’ll have to climb up. “It’s good exercise. Besides there’s something I need you for up there.”

“Mmmmkay,” he begrudgingly agreed. Even though they run around all of the time now the two men were out of breath by the time they reached the top of the tower. “It’s a bit foggy up here Ellis. Maybe we should head back down.”

“No. It’s perfect.” he grabbed Nick and hugged him and stayed there. Nick reciprocated the hug and laid his head on top of Ellis’, and smiled.

“This what you wanted to show me?” he asked soothingly. Ellis nodded into his chest.

“Yeah that way were not interrupted by zombies or the others this time. I haven’t had a great chance to hug you or kiss you since the hunter attacked you,” he murmured.

“Well I can’t complain,” Nick kissed him.

Down at the radio station rooms with Rochelle and Coach they’d finally turned on the signal and searched through the signals. She put out her own broadcast and told anyone to contact her by whatever means that would work to reach her. It seemed like they were cut off from the rest of society and only were receiving old messages until a very familiar brut voice came on the radio.

“Are you going to give me that kiss or not for lowering the bridge?” the gruff voice asked. Rochelle laughed knowing who it was already.

“Well I think you should come and find me Francis because I’m not walking back down south again. No sir-i,” she answered him.

“Awww… It’s good to hear you though. Are all of you still alive?”

“Yes we are. How’s Louis and Zoey doing?”

“Louis got attacked last night when we were on the move. He wasn’t quick enough to doge the tank this time on account for his bad leg. I really miss him, and so does Zoey… I don’t think we could’ve continued on without some good news. Which she’ll be happy to hear when she’s up from her nap,”

“I’m sorry for your loss, and what do you mean I thought you guys were going to be on a boat?”

“Well the boat quite LITERALLY sunk to the bottom of the sea so we were heading back up north, and pass through home before going to Canada. I think that they’re safe,”

“How did the boat sink, and Canada does sound nice. Though, it seems likes it’s getting a bit too cold to move;”

“I agree with the plan of finding a place to stay, but you wouldn’t believe what had happened to the boat,”

“Damn you’re smart! Although they more like a group of asshole priests who were saying that we brought the end of the world upon ourselves and that this is our retribution for our greed.”

“The fuck?”

“I know where do they get off on deciding who gets to live or die,”

“So they shot the boat down?”

“Yup, but they weren’t able to hit the life boat at least,”

“That’s good. We’re in south eastern Pennsylvania if that helps,”

“Wow! How’d ya end up there?”

“It’s a long story. I can tell you sometime in person,”

“Wow a kiss and a date. Neato! We’re actually pretty close to there if you all want group up. Like seriously. I’m not joking it’s been really rough without a set of hands and I don’t think we can survive another week without more people especially after Louis died,”

“Do you want us to come and find you?”

“No. I can see the tower I think you guys are at from where we are now. No point in getting lost now,”

“I suppose that you’re right. Just be careful,”

“Always am. We’ll head out in a few minutes while there is still light out. I’ll kiss you then,”

“See you soon,” with that she shut off the microphone. Coach sat silent the entire conversation while eating a candy bar.

“I can’t believe that they made it up this far already,” Rochelle wondered. Had they really taken that long from seeing them until now?

“Well they have no desire to get rescued anymore, and we were running around trying then we stayed at a spot for about a month and then moved on… so it’s been about three months since we’ve seen them last. I mean it’s almost Christmas,” Coach went on.

“It’s a week until then,” Nick and Ellis walked into the room holding hands. The other two hadn’t noticed them enter.

“Damn how’da know that Nick?” Ellis asked turning to look at him.

“I’ve kept a small calender with me. I jot down some things on the small space for reminder of what happened on which day. It’s not something I share because it’s almost like a diary for me,” he gazed off in a different direction embarrassed.

“Can I see the pages for October?” Coach asked him.

“Alright,” he didn’t fight something for once. “Please don’t vear off though. Some of the things are a bit more private, and if you do can you not say it out loud.”
“I can’t promise you that Nick,” Coach told him. Nick sighed and took out the small calendar from the inside of his coat and handed it to the older man. Coach took it carefully and opened it as such.

He looked through the dates in late September and all of October. The older man was impressed by the records that Nick had taken about the outbreak. Some of the notes for earlier days in October and some in September were skibbled in under existing notes. Like the first appearance of a special infected, or different states conditions. He saw a little medication note at the bottom of one of the pages.

“What’s this and do you need it?” He showed Nick his little note.

“It’s an antidepressant that I was on before all of the pharmacies closed. I could use zoloft as well, but the prozac helped a lot when everything had first gone to shit. I lost it when we were in the swamps. I do feel better then when I did them though…” he trailed off.

“Do you want to go to another pharmacy and find some more?” Coach asked genuinely concerned with Nick.

“I’m good now. It was prescribed to me by my doctor to help deal with my divorce, and what went on during my marriage,”

“Everytime I heard you talk about her I always pictured you to be the one breaking her heart,” Rochelle snidely commented. Feeling him tense up Ellis squeezed Nick to bring him back to reality before he dozed off in a memory.

“It went both ways,” he sighed easing up in Ellis’ grip. “A shitstorm would be the most accurate word to describe it.”

“Anyways the notes are really detailed about the outbreak and infected. I’m glad we haven’t ran into any new special infected since the last one appeared,” Coach changed the subject clearly seeing the uncomfortableness on his face.

“Oh by the way we contacted the other group,” Rochelle interrupted a would be conversation.

‘Thank god they aren't talking about me anymore’ Nick sighed relieved.

“Really? Where are the three of them at?” Ellis asked excited.

“They lost Louis yesterday, but the other two are on their way over now. They should be here within an hour,” Rochelle said solemnly, and Ellis lost all of his excitement. Him and Louis had really gotten along when they had met because they had the same optimistic views.

“We should stay here for the night,” Coach said.

“I agree. Me and Ellis climbed the tower and it should be safe as long as there is some fog and someone to keep watch,” Nick offered up.

“Sounds good. I’ll take first watch,” Rochelle offered up. Nick grabbed a couple of blankets.

“Don’t mind me I’m gonna get some sleep then,” Nick eagerly announced exhausted. He didn’t want to see Francis today, and he wanted to get as much sleep as possible before he was woken up with the shittiest watch shift. The second to last shift. Ellis followed him out like a puppy. The sun had set when they reached the top, and Nick and Ellis snuggled up to go to sleep.

Coach remained with Rochelle. “You think they’ll be good?” he asked her.
“I don’t think they’re having sex yet,” she answered.

“I meant their relationship,” he shook his head.

“They will be because even though Nick’s a hardass on the outside he’s a hot marshmallow on the inside. All soft and ready to melt out,” Coach laughed at her analogy of him. “Ellis is doing better as well so I don’t see any reason to be concerned about their relationship. They really do love each other.”

“Yeah, I guess so. Now what about you and Francis,” he teased. She blushed immediately. As Nick fell asleep holding him he looked out in the distance. Ellis couldn’t remember a time before when he last saw the sky with no lights and not being able to hear anything out in the distance. Hearing Nick’s heartbeat lulled him into a sense of security. Each beat pulling him into slumber.

“Hello gorgeous! Where’s my kiss?” Francis called out in the distance to Rochelle.

“I told you you had to come and get it big man,” Rochelle teased. Zoey’s glare went unnoticed. She harbored a crush on him as well. They walked over to each other and kissed.

“Damn it first Nick and Ellis and now you two. I’m going to bed,” Coach announced grabbing more blankets to bring up.

“Sounds like a great idea,” Zoey helped him with the blankets. She tried distracting herself. Everyone was getting laid except her and Coach in her mind. She knew that Coach was a committed married man. The other two followed up. The climb was exhausting.

“Awww… their cute together,” Francis pointed at the sleeping couple.

“Don’t wake them up,” Rochelle laid down and Francis proceeded to cuddle her.

“I’m too small I’ll freeze and there is like no room up here unless we turn into one human cuddle,” Zoey complained.

“Just lay down with me then too. We’re both girls it won’t be weird,” Rochelle calmed her. Begrudgingly she complied. Coach was ready for sleep, and the forgotten promise of taking first watch made him the designated first watch person.

They woke up to a later of snow on top of their blankets. Ellis had turned himself around in the middle of the night so that he could borrow his face into Nick’s neck for more warmth. Zoey woke up first glaring at the couple that she was next to. Her face burned with hatred for Rochelle. She was finally making progress on hooking up with Francis before she showed back up and snatched him up.

It wasn’t that they weren’t both good people, but she’s just really sexually frustrated and needed some release. Although a bit disappointed to find out that Ellis was already with someone, and that someone was also the only remaining bachelor before the relationship she still found it cute. The fan girl in her squealed with delight to have found out that they were totally gay for each other. When she initially went up the ladder and saw it had taken all of her will power not to be a flaming shining beacon of an otaku, she had to thank her hatred for the other women and Francis shacking up with her for that.

“COACH!” Zoey yelled at the sleeping man throwing her snow covered blanket at him. The man
had fallen asleep sitting straight up with a rifle resting in his lap. A bit of droll had turned into ice on his face. He groaned shifting a bit. Her yelling at him had shaken the others awake. Rochelle jolted up.

“Not again Coach!” Rochelle sighed frustrated. Something that the two women could agree on was being angry at Coach for not waking someone up to take watch. Nick groaned and held Ellis a little bit tighter to him. Nope, nope, nope two angry women is not something he would deal with at this hour… any hour. This is why he generally prefered to sleep with men.

“Sorry Ro… Damn cold put me out this time,” he pawed the frozen droll off of his face.

“Can you guys not yell and summon a horde, or another tank, please,” Ellis begged his eyes still being closed.

“I think Nick nearly got the shit scared out of him when that happened last time,” Rochelle chuckled. Nick released one of his arms and flipped her off.

“You mean Colonel Sanders shit himself, Sheeet I would’ve paid money to see that,” Francis got up.

“Well we’re alive so I don’t really think it matters if he fell asleep because we’re all rested now.”

“Francis is right, he *always* is. We should get going soon,” Zoey said with a hint of sultry in her voice.

‘Oh shit’ Nick, Coach, and Ellis thought. That was enough for them to realize that there was going to be a fight eventually between the two women. Francis seemed to not have noticed because of how inflated his ego was, but Rochelle did. The other women glared at her like she was the devil with her deep dark pink jacket.

‘Let the war begin bitch. I bet you’re underage’ Rochelle thought glaring at the younger women.

“We should let him lead the way because he’d be a knight in armor,” Rochelle said flirtatiously grabbing onto Francis’ arm. Coach sighed, he knew that he should have called off work to go visit the inlaws with his wife and kids.

“Awww thanks Ro, but I ain’t that good,” Francis smiled at her. Zoey squinted her eyes at Rochelle while she flashed a smile back at her.

“I vote that the old man leads the way,” Nick sighed sitting up and wrapping the blanket fully around Ellis to keep him warm.

“Shit! I ain’t old, but I agree. I’m not doing any hanky-panky with anyone or lusting over someone, but I agree that we should get a move on,” He defended himself from Nick’s remarks. The other man only shrugged.

“It’s good to see the two of you alive. How ya been?” Ellis asked getting up. Francis shrugged his shoulders and thought for a minute. Zoey turned to him depressed.

“We had some trouble. I miss Louis and the wheelchair that we rigged up for him to have two M16s on the sides. All we had to do was aim him and we could wipe out a horde really quickly. I see that you and Nick are being all adorable together,” Nick huffed at her observation. “Have you lost a lot of weight because you look a lot thinner?”

Ellis’ face cringed. Sure he’d lost a lot a weight and gained some in other areas, but he wasn’t ready to come out to the whole group. Fortunately Nick saved him. “We’ve had a rough month and half. Stuff happened… but we’re all working through it. Hell Christmas is in only a few days and frankly
I want to find a house or something to ride out the rest of winter in.”

“That was exactly what I was thinking. Something small to be defensible, but large enough so I don’t hear you, Ellis, Rochelle, and Francis’ sex noises,” Coach stated as if it was a matter of fact. Ellis turned bright red, Rochelle had to look away from him, Francis smiled, and Nick glared. Zoey laughed hard.

“Let’s just go before I get pissed,” Nick said pissed off already. Ellis rubbed the side of his arm, then hugged Nick’s waist. Zoey made the first move by going down the ladder.

Nick and Ellis lagged behind the main group as usual to hold hands. The older man raised their gloved hands to kiss Ellis’. He blushed behind the red scarf that Nick had given to him. He loved how the desolate white landscape looked in contrast to Nick’s dark hair and smooth features. The flakes of snow that fell onto his head and melted soon after, and the way he would look at him whenever he spoke up. He wondered if it was as good as it was going to get, but realized that because of how much they loved and cared for each other that it would become much better eventually.

Ellis and Nick had searched the pharmacy when they had the opportunity earlier to find T for Ellis, but had no luck. He had fully gotten all of the hormones of a women back, and he was miserable for it. Outrightly he couldn’t complain about his crams or heavy flow to the group so he and Nick had came up with codewords since then to relay if he needed pills or a bathroom break to change tampons or pads. The young man when he had started the drugs danced for weeks when he didn’t have his period anymore. Keith had thrown him a small party when he got enough hairs on his moustache, but he never could get a full beard so he had decided to shave it off a few months after.

Keith was one of the few people that knew and fully accepted Ellis the minute that he came out when they were teens. He was there for all of the surgeries and milestones, and Ellis was really missing him. They had been friends forever and it wasn’t like Nick was chopped liver, he was just missing his bro.

“Do you need to go? To make sure your balls aren’t twisted up again?” Nick asked snapping him back to reality. Ellis shook his head. He really did find their code amusing, but at the same time strange. Coach and Rochelle had given the two some weird looks for it before.

“No. The last time that happened was a couple days ago,” Ellis mused thinking back. He was sure it was a couple days ago, but unlike Nick he didn’t keep a calendar. Ellis was glad that Nick didn’t mark down his own personal stuff incase he lost it or shared it with Coach. They continued to follow the group at a distance.

Coach let the way with an axe tiredly. He was so done with hearing the couple and the wannabe behind him flirting. Starting to wonder if it would have been better to let them lead the way and hang out with the boys in the back. Nick’s constant bitterness to anyone, but he and Ellis were better than hearing Rochelle and Zoey giggle and flirt like school girls fighting over a jock.

‘Praise the lord!’ he thought seeing a spitter. He was so done with their shit that he was glad to have the acid spitting infected attack them so their minds would be off of ‘mating’.

“Spitter!” Coach called out just as the thing spit the acidic goo at the four up front. Coach ran forward and took out the monster before it could make its retreat. Francis had tugged Rochelle out of the way only to get a little splash on his exposed part of his torso. He hissed in pain. Zoey had also made it out of the way in time not to get hit.

“I’m glad we stay behind,” Nick smiled a little bit seeing the scene unfold in front of him and Ellis.
Rochelle and Zoey rushed quickly to get items out to heal Francis’ burn.

“Hehehe, yeah… I’m glad too. It makes for a bit of a show. Before I had rejected Keith he and another guy were practically doing the same thing over me. It ended when I yelled at the two of them because they had both been asking me to the middle school dance. This was before I came out too so they were giving me flowers, candy, and all kinds of other shit. The two of them showed up to my house all dressed up at the same time and started fighting on the front lawn of my parents house. I shouted to them ‘I don’t want to go with either of yew! Now stop asking me and giving me stuff. Treat me normal again’ It worked because Keith had stopped and the other guy had gotten a date. Me and Keith didn’t go we watched a movie at my house once I explained to him that he was a brother to me, and that I held no romantic feelings for him at all,’’ Ellis rambled off on his story.

Francis loved the attention that he was receiving and finally realized that Zoey harbored a crush on him as well. ‘I won’t reject Zoey because it will make things awkward or worse between the women, and I kinda don’t want to see that happen. What’s the worst that could happen?’ he thought while they fought to care for him with flirtatious lines and touches, but those were the famous last words that he had thought…

Coach wasn't too pleased to see girls pawing over Francis. He saw Ellis talking to Nick off in the distance. Fuck if a beer that tastes like piss sounded good to him right now. Trugging on forward he continued on. Nick and Ellis made their way to the rest of the group and joined in on a friendly conversation with the rest of the group until it turned into how did you end up dating his sort of thing.

“I fell for him slowly and realized my love for him all at once. They say you fall in love three times. The first one being innocent and stupid. The second believing it’s true forever love, but there’s so many flaws that you vow to never fall in love ever again. The third time creeps up on you unexpectedly,” Nick smiled at Ellis and he grinned in return with a slight blush.

“Whadda bout you?” Francis asked.

“I had a crush on him before, but it was Rochelle that told us just to make out already that got us together. Only realized how much I loved him when I thought I lost him when that hunter attacked him,” He squeezed Nick’s hand a bit.

“So when was the first time you two had sex then?” Zoey asked. There really wasn’t much to any privacy being stuck together in a group so Coach and Rochelle knew the answer to this one too.

“Uh… not yet,” Ellis stumbled with a shiver that ran down his spine and turned his blood cold. A stroke of Nick’s thumb on his glove brought him out of his daze.

“He’s not ready yet,” Nick started. Francis and Zoey looked at them confused. Francis didn’t take Nick for the type of guy to wait, and Zoey didn’t understand why they had reservations about fucking considering each day could be their last. “The group we ran into was bad, stuff happened… it ended with me nearly beating someone nearly to death.”

“Had to pull him off to prevent him from killing,” Nick was thankful for Coach’s save.

“Ahh,” silence ensued.

’I knew people would act like that’ Ellis thought quietly to himself. His expression had grown sad. Nick had also looked away in shame. Rochelle hadn’t wanted to dwell on it either. ‘I’ve been feeling low since then, and I’ve wanted to die since then, but… Nick makes it better. Sometimes though it feels like too much for me to handle anymore. He’s like the light in the darkness for me. My knight
in shining armor’

After a few hours with no incident. They had made it to a safehouse with a few bedrooms. Rochelle had decided to take first watch. “Go on go to bed everyone. We’ll contact the other group about our new additions and location tomorrow,” the shorter women shooed off everyone, but Francis.

Nick and Ellis walked away, but Zoey and Coach remained. Coach crossed his arms with one brow raised. “Alright, but keep the noise down because I’m going to get some shut eye,” he turned and moved away off to his quarters. It took a few more moments for Zoey to turn away eyeing up the new couple suspiciously.

Rochelle wanted to give Coach a break and let Ellis and Nick have some alone time after having professed their love the other day. Nick and Ellis had taken the master bedroom. Zoey locked herself in a small room without talking to anyone.

Nick and Ellis were on the king size bed making out. It was spacious and warm. The room was nice and cozy. They had taken off their winter clothing despite the house not having the heat on. Hardwood floors in the house with nice stone tile in the bathrooms. Nick was surprised to see that there was no master bathroom in the house despite the expensive look of the house. The velvety blanket was incredible warm just to sit on. Nick went on to make a move on Ellis by sliding his hand down his back, but pulled away when Ellis quivered.

“We’ll go at your pace,” he told Ellis. “I don’t want to make you uncomfortable. We don’t have to do anything if you don’t want to.” He took one of Ellis’ hands and held it to his face. “I want you to feel as safe and as secure around me, and with me as I can make it. I love you Ellis and I wouldn’t do anything that I know that would hurt you.”

Ellis cupped Nick’s face in his hands tearing up a bit. “Thank you Nick for being so kind and understanding to me. I still have a hard time adjusting and trusting, and you’ve been with me the entire way. I love you, and I’m not ready yet, but I think I will be eventually as long as I have you by my side. When I’m lonely and full of bad emotions you make it all better just by being by my side.”

They continue to kiss then cuddle before finally falling asleep. Rochelle and Francis were sorta disappointed by the lack of noise that she heard coming from upstairs before making some of their own. “I can give you more than just a kiss for lowering the bridge,” Rochelle suggested playfully. Her hand making circles on his knee while they sat on the couch.

“This really is my lucky day,” Francis purred leaning in to go to kiss Rochelle. She met him halfway right before ripping into each other. Coach was making a lot of noise which killed the mood a little bit. She began to wonder if he had sleep apnea from how much he snored.

She kept watch the entire night since they could actually stay at this house for a couple of months from the ample food supply so they didn’t really need to worry about having one teammate that was exhausted, but the sex refueled her. Zoey was pissed off pacing the room she was in listening to Rochelle and Francis fuck downstairs.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Family feud, and fun with references to Pokemon.

Chapter Notes

The lying asshole is back with another chapter. It was mostly already written so don't give me too much credit. I push my own SJWness with a derogatory term that describes the mentally handicapped because I don't like that word. I also make a couple characters do the Team Rocket motto. Just because.

“The real evil is the power to kill people. Someone who finds himself with that power is cursed. No matter how you use it, anything obtained by killing people can never bring true happiness.”

– Soichiro Yagami, Death Note

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

This would be their permanent shelter for the rest of winter. The house was in a quiet looking neighborhood, granted they were in the suburbs. Cookie cutter was the only way that could accurately describe it. All the other houses would have the same generic inside, but look different to the eye. That's the way suburbs are along with their complex road systems.

Coach had radioed Yolanda about their whereabouts. She made it very clear over the radio that she wanted her own room. She said it could be a garage, an attic, a closet, a laundry room, or whatever as long as she had her own space. He reassured her that she would have her own room wherever that may be.

They had to do something as to fortify the house, and make sure that there is enough food to eat, things to do so they don't get cabin fever, and something to burn for warmth. That's how the morning conversation went for the group. After eating breakfast they split off on their own separate ways.

Coach and Ellis worked on fortifying the safehouse even further while Nick and Rochelle went to the other houses with duffle bags to scavenge up more supplies in case they got snowed in for the rest of winter. Zoey and Francis went to collect firewood. The older man insisted on having a father son like talk with the young man.

“So did you two get busy last night?” He asked nailing another plank onto the house. Ellis picked up another board to nail down.

“No, and please don’t have this conversation with me,” he begged Coach. He really didn’t want to talk about his private affairs.
“I just want to know if he’s treating you nice,” Coach told him.

“He is. Nick is really nice to me. You have nothing to worry about. I appreciate your concern, but really,” he stopped and looked at Coach to emphasize. “You have nothing to worry about.”

“Alright boy, but if you ever do have a problem,”

“I know, I know,” Ellis sounded almost annoyed. Coach knew that he wouldn’t have any problems with the sarcastic conman. The man had a soft, romantic, protective soft spot for the kid. He knew that Nick would have no problem sacrificing his life for his younger lover. When looking at Nick’s eyes while his were trained onto Ellis said that he would leap in front of a bullet or other some kind of thing of death. As far as he could tell Nick would kill himself slowly if it would help Ellis.

Rochelle and Nick were looking through the neighbors house and ransacking the pantry. A golden cardboard box caught the conmans attention immediately. He grabbed it almost instantly and opened it up.

“Jackpot,” he smiled. “Do you think he’ll like it?” Rochelle smiled back at him. The look on her face said what do you think as she she reached for a bag of candy corn.

“He will if it’s from you. I think that’s the assorted chocolate box. Too bad the coconut was already eaten. I’m quite fond of coconut,” she reassured him while looking in the box for the coconut ones. She seemed very disappointed. They took all of the food and medicine that they could carry from all of the houses that they went to before heading back. They helped Ellis and Coach on fortifying the house further until the sun started going down.

When they went back inside Nick made sure to hide the box of chocolates before he could see them. Christmas was only a few days away. He was sure that he was the only one keeping track of what day of the year it was to much of the conmans dismay.

“Francis did I ever tell you how much of a good aim you are,” Zoey flirted grabbing some of the coal from the ground.

“No ya didn’t, and I already knew it,” his narcissism showed like the naked man streaking during a football game.

“Look at that hunter over there. Do you think that you could hit it with your silenced handgun from here,” she pointed at the monster from rooftops away.

“Hell yeah I can hit that wussy!” he pulled out his silenced handgun and carefully aimed and fired. It struck the monster dead between the eyes. Zoey hugged him.

“My hero!” she held him tight against her. Francis could only focus on how much he was gloating inside his mind.

Coach being the dad of the group started to make dinner. Francis and Zoey had finally returned with duffle bags full of coal. Zoey clung against Francis in a flirtatious manner as they entered the house. They had raided people’s backyards instead. The coal would last much longer than wood would. Rochelle glared at the way she hung onto her man. Zoey had shot her tongue out at her briefly before
giggling.

Seeing the childish display while cooking Coach decided to face the wall while cutting up spam. If there was one thing he disliked more than Nick’s constant bitching it was heavy PDA with love triangles. One thing was for sure though, he wasn’t homesick anymore. They were acting all like children, and being the only one with their senses left wasn’t fun. He internally laughed at the thought of being the father of the group. Leading people to safety. Commanding the group around. Cooking for the group, unless he makes Nick do it. Teaching Rochelle and Nick how to throw. Keeping the group in line, and the list goes on and on.

Ellis found a working radio in the house, and giddily ran over to his bag and pulled out a DVD. It was a burned CD so Nick didn’t know what kind of musical hell they were in for. Rochelle was glad when they were in the racecar that it didn’t have a stereo at the time. The end of the world being all too real at the time. He rushed over nearly tripping over his feet. Francis made a crack at him saying that the zombies wouldn’t get him, but a piece of furniture would.

He placed the CD on the tray and started it up. Ran right back to Nick on the couch before the song could even start. Nick wrapped his arm around Ellis. The sound of a fiddle started playing. “Devil went down to Georgia,” Ellis smiled at Nick. “It’s my favorite song. I don’t know if it’s because it’s a kick ass song, or if it’s because it has Georgia and I’m from there.”

“It is a good song though,” Nick mused resting his head on Ellis’. “Christmas was always nice. It was ruined for me for quite some time, but my favorite song comes from the season.” He chuckled a little bit. Ellis made an amused noise of interest. “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas… My favorite version is the original made by Judy Garland because of the emotion and in her voice and the story behind the song. She wrote it right after Pearl Harbor happened. It appeared in the Christmas movie she played in that Christmas. Damn they used to make movies fast back then.”

“Damn son, that went really heavy real quick,” Coach interjected into the conversation. It made Nick smirk a little bit.

“That was deep,” Ellis agreed with Coach. They listened to Ellis’ music until it was time for dinner. They enjoyed a nice meal of instant potatoes and spam. Hot cocoa was their treat for a good day's work, and they all chatted about their previous lives.

Francis found out that he and Nick were part of the same gang. Nick wasn’t amused to find that out. The man nearly choked on his food when Francis had pointed it out. He wasn’t a part of the MC chapter like the biker, he was part of the Vegas chapter at one point in time before he left. Still wore the ring even though he left.

“Why did they kick you out for being gay?” Francis asked him. “Also I knew you were SOO gay when we first met back at the bridge. That gay ass suit of yours was almost like you were wearing a rainbow flag.” Everyone but Francis raised a brow out of confusion. Like the kind where it’s ‘how did you get that out of that’ type of deal.

“No…not because of that…” he shifted uncomfortable taking a bite of the mixture. “I was a mess during my divorce, and they kicked me out because I saw a shrink. Don’t regret it because I was one messed up drunken mess at that point in time. Almost gambled all of my money away too.”

“Well what about your suit, and I didn’t know you were married before. Gay marriage isn’t legal in the US yet. Did you all go to Canada or some shit?” Nick sighed at the biker’s idiocracy. Francis was truly just that ignorant.

“It was the nicest thing I owned until this happened, and no I was married to a women,”
“So you realized you were gay?”

“Doesn’t work like that man,” Ellis defended Nick from the onslaught of questions even though it can work that way, the men were irritated with his questions.

“What are you going to do about your harem? Hmmmmm!?!?” Nick exposed into the open having enough of the biker man’s attention on him.

‘Goddamn it Nick. What the hell did you just do?’ Coach thought. He wasn’t pleased with the fact that this was now a public affair. Of course everyone knew, but it had not been brought up to light until now. Francis could only manage an uhhhh sound.

“I knew Francis longer then you and then you just snatch him away when I was finally making progress!” Zoey yelled at Rochelle from across the table.

“Well maybe he just thought you were the last women on earth, and now that he sees that you’re not he doesn’t want you!” Rochelle defended herself. All of the men at the table were visible uncomfortable.

“You’re such a whore. Meet up, and fuck the first night. You two were so loud that even Bill’s corpse could hear the racket,” Zoey low blowed.

“Excuse me if he doesn’t want to be a pedophile! What are you 15?” Rochelle sunk to her level.

“I’m 22 you old hag!”

“I’m closer to his age sweetie,”

“Age is just a number!”

“Unless he wants to go to jail,”

“Well aren’t you 50?”

“I’m 28, but that’s not the point-”

“I hope you’re barren, or you’re going to have retarded kids,”

“That’s not a nice word sweetie,”

“It’s a word, hag,”

“The r-word is derogatory so don’t *ever* say it again!”

“WHATever,”

“You’re still too young to realize that you should keep your petty childish comments to yourself,”

“Well, I hope you die and go to hell. Also burn in hell, cunt!” Zoey stormed off having lost the argument.

“I’ll make sure to save you a spot next to me,” Rochelle called at her. Zoey flipped her off and went up to her room and slammed the door shut.

“Speaking of hell it doesn’t seem like anyone who was left handed is alive,” Ellis broke the silence.
“You are messed up in the head for thinking about that right now…, but yeah I think you’re right,” Coach reprimanded Ellis. He had to think about it because it’s true.

“Or it’s because there aren’t any first person shooters with a left handed character,” Nick looked up at the ceiling (4th wall break, and something that irritates me personally. Lefties Unite!).

“Link, counterstrike original,” Francis added having to hear all about the game jabber before.

“Before the wii, link was left handed, and Ain’t counterstrike original old as hell?” Coach corrected.

“I don’t know and I don’t care,” Nick got up with his plate, and was leaving for the kitchen.

“Does anyone like Pokémon?” Francis held up a deck of cards. Nick stopped in his tracks and turned around. “Cuz I found a pack on the ground earlier and I thought-“

“I’ll have them,” Nick grabbed them sheepishly form Francis.

“You like anime?” Rochelle questioned with a raised brow of confusion.

“I was weeaboo before it was cool,” he pocketed the cards.

“Pokémon though?” Coach asked.

“I was a 90s kid,” Nick stalked off to clean his dish.

“I was a metal head in the 80s. Damn those Midnight Riders were good,” Coach smiled taking another bite of potatoes.

“I was the jr champion of chess in middle school. I was really into chess because my grandfather taught me how to play and he played a lot,” Rochelle gave out her information. Faintly in the background Nick could be heard singing the Pokemon theme song.

“I was really good at the piano before I quit,” Francis added about himself.

“Hmmmm,” Ellis thought carefully about what he would say. ‘I was little miss Georgia. I had a harem of men before I came out. Damn this would be easier if I was out in the open’ “I won first place in a shooting competition when I was 12.”

“Damn look at us all sharing, UNLIKE NICK WHO DOESN’T WANT TO BE HERE,” Francis poked at Nick.

“Eh fuck you too,” Nick said from the other room.

The evening settled down and Coach took watch that night even though it wasn’t necessary with all of the adjustments to the house to make it more safe.

Nick couldn’t sleep. He played with Ellis’ wavy brown hair while he slept. The love that he felt for the young man was so much stronger that what he had felt for his ex wife. Ellis was the light in his life, and he’s happy to know that he’s the light in his little lovers life as well. He loved the way he fit into his arms while he slept. The smell of the lavender shampoo in his hair relaxed him a little bit. Rochelle had found some earlier. It was better than that strawberry stuff that they had found on their supply run.

“I couldn’t have found a nicer and sweeter guy or gal to fall so deeply in love with,” Nick confessed in a low murmur unaware that Ellis was still awake and heard him.
‘I couldn’t have found anyone better than you too Nick, and I love you as well’ he thought not wanting to ruin the moment by stirring or speaking, but he couldn’t help himself from smiling.

“I don’t deserve you because you are too perfect,” Nick hummed. Ellis couldn’t help, but stir and turn himself over so that he was facing Nick in their embrace. The older man smiled he thinks that Ellis was awake, but will never be sure because he never did ask him about that night. They both fell sound asleep soon after.

The next morning they all got up to find that they had been snowed in the house. The survivors were glad that they had wasted no time in getting supplies and making sure that the house was secure. Rochelle was wearing the dress that she had picked up at the store finally finding it fit to tear it. The dress was light pink with sheer long sleeves and an empire waist with a skirt that went well past her feet and onto the floor. The others were wearing clean clothing that they had scavenge from the house. Zoey was nowhere to be see, presumable in her room. Francis and Rochelle were snuggled up on the couch.

True to his nature Nick wore a dress shirt with a pair of khaki pants. Coach found a pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt in the teenage boys room. Ellis wore an oversized green sweater and a pair of ill fitting sweatpants that he will neither confirm or deny that they’re women’s. Nick and Ellis were also snuggled up together on the couch enjoying a cup of hot cocoa. Coach was in the kitchen trying to make cookies. Rochelle got up and was looking at the calendar trying to figure out what day it was.

After a few minutes of watching her getting more frustrated Nick decided to tell her. “Today is the 23 Ro,”

“Why did you make me go through all of this pain then?” She turned to him angry.

“I wanted to see if you could figure it out for yourself,” he shrugged.

“Damn it, I won’t be able to get anyone anything since we’re stuck here,” Ellis lamented frowning.

“I think we’ll all be fine Ellis. Being alive and not fighting with each other is present enough in my opinion,” Coach tried to calm him down.

“It is nice to be alive for the holidays. In the spring we should go west. Maybe they’ll find a cure by then,” Rochelle smiled thinking about being rescued for good.

“I agree with you. It’s a good idea to go westward. Maybe they Can up with a vaccine for everyone so there’ll be no new zombies and we can be cured,” Nick agreed.

“Me and Zoe we were heading to Canada,” Francis revealed past plans.

“Awww then I wouldn’t get to see Bosten,” Ellis pouted.

“Don’t worry about it. You’ll get to see it eventually. I think the US wants their top college up and running as soon as humanly possible,” Nick chuckled giving Ellis a kiss on the forehead.

“When are the cookies going to be done Coach? I’ve been dying for home baked goods,” she strolled over to the kitchen.
“Soon enough lil sister,” he shoved her away live she was a child in the kitchen. Ginger filled the air. They were glad that Coach knew how to cook without a recipe on hand.

“Damn I’m starving just thinking about sugary baked goods,” Francis sprawled out.

“We should get a Christmas tree!” Ellis piped up.

“Ain’t no way in hell we’re gettin that door open boy. You’ll have to see if you can find one of those fake ones in the house,” Coach sternly told him. ‘These children are going to be the end of me.’

Ellis practically ripped Nick’s arm off getting him off the couch to help him look around the house. He suggested that they go try the attic first because that’s where seasonal things are usually placed.

It was a stairwell that led to the attic. When Ellis pushed through the door strong scents of dust and cobwebs permeated the air. It was colder than the rest of the house too. Nick wished that he had worn his jacket up there.

Box after box they searched. Antiques and seasonal items they found. Stashes of different items were found as well. A bottle of whiskey was in a box of baby cloths, Ellis pocketed it to give to Nick as a gift later. It was most likely the mom’s considering that nobody else would have gone through them, but her.

Nick found a secret stash of porno magazines in the box of bolts. He wondered why the man had hid them here and not in the garage. The stash would make a nice gag gift for Coach. After he set the magazines down next to the ladder and shrugging to Ellis he searched some more finding a box called wedding. A bottle of nice red wine from 1949 was in there. No doubt it was a wedding gift, and it still was sealed.

‘Seems like they were going to save this for a nice occasion. Too bad for them it looks really expensive.’ Nick thought hiding the bottle back into the box. He made sure that Ellis didn’t notice it. It deeply saddened him to look through the wedding pictures. He’d been married and divorced before, and a lot of items in the house pointed to them having an unhappy marriage. Looking through the album and box of other wedding items made him sure that once this was all over…. or not that he’d propose to Ellis.

After a few boxes dropped and some searches they managed to find a Christmas tree. With Rochelle’s help they put it up and put tinsel on the tree. Feeling too weird to put someone else’s ornaments on it they left them off the tree. Francis was content on watching them.

“Wish we had power so that we could put the lights on it,” Coach was all smiles taking gingerbread men and women off the baking sheet and onto parchment paper. Ellis hopped off the couch and grabbed one taking a steaming bite out of it only to be burned by it. “Young’un wait until the damn cookies are done!”

Ellis incoherently talked while munching on the cookie. “Now I want one,” Nick laughed.

“Me too!” Rochelle beamed running over and snatching a cookie from the paper.

“Ugh children, you’re worse than my own,” Coach said nearly having a stroke by their stupidity. Since Nick had mellowed out he hadn’t had someone completely sane to back him up.

Ellis had bounded back over to Nick letting him having a bite of his cookie. Nick smiled approving of the cookie’s taste. “Pretty damn good Coach,”

Rochelle had gotten one for Francis as well. He ate it in two bites. He hummed in delight at the
cookie and got up to go and grab more. Coach shooed him off by threatening him with a hot pan.

The radio buzzed and Coach picked it up. “Hello?”

“We should be there on Christmas Eve so cook us all up something good,” Yolanda radioed over.

“Can do,” Coach answered laughing.

“Can’t believe that’s tomorrow already. The snow has been hard to push through, but we got ya a snow plow to clear the way,” she couldn’t wait to be warm and safe for a few weeks.

“Alright, stay safe,”

“Will do, see you then,” then silence ensued. Zoey had come down for something to drink and eat. As quickly as she came down she went right back up with armfuls of stuff. It was clear that she didn’t want to see or talk to anyone.

“Since yew watched Pokemon do you know the Team Rocket intro?” Ellis asked coyly with a big grin on his face.

“Yes I do,” Nick answered wondering what he was about to get into.

“Coach do-”

“Yes boy I do,” Coach cut Ellis off. It only made him smile more.

“Can you two sing it?” he asked the two.

“No,” they both answered at once. It disappointed him greatly.

“Prepare for trouble!” Rochelle yelled jumping up. Ellis turned to her surprised. “I did watch tv when it was on.”

“FINE!” Nick sighed getting up and theatrically going, “Make it double.”

“To protect the world from devastation,”

“To unite all peoples within our nation,”

“To denounce the evils of truth and love,”

“To extend our reach to the stars above,”

“Jessie,” Rochelle looked up.

“James,” Nick looked up.

“Team Rocket blasts off with the speed of light,”

“Surrender now, or prepare to fight,” they finished puffing.

“Meowth! That’s right!” Francis added in laughing it up.

“Oh lord save me now for I am surrounded by full grown children,” Coach quietly prayed to himself.

Rochelle turned to Francis, “I didn’t know you watched Pokemon?”
“Me neither,” Ellis added. “I think I’m the only one that didn’t or wasn’t allowed to watch tv.”

“I watched way too much tv when I was young,” Francis admitted.

“Explains a lot,” Nick commented taking back his seat. The trio turns to him.

“Who’s that directed to?” Rochelle asked.

Chapter End Notes

“If you look away and just turn your back on those you don’t understand, you’ll regret it someday. Accept what’s happening before your eyes as a fact. That’s a shortcut to becoming an adult.”

– Nobuchika Ginoza, Psycho Pass

Next chapter is going to get dark.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

I give you the deep with also the feels, but I at least give you some fluff.

Chapter Notes

I don't have some witty comment, sarcastic remark, or commentary for this one so please feel free to comment. Please I ran out of the draft to go off of now. I need someones opinion even if it's just a trolls to go off by to connect the story from here to its written ending. Also I write a lot and I sometimes need a break from writing the same story so if you have any ideas for oneshot stories just tell me. "As you wish" -Princess Bride

“In order to measure a person’s worth, you must do more than push them. The real way to test their worth is to give them power. When they gain the freedom to act outside the boundaries of law and ethics, you can sometimes see their souls.”

– Shogo Makishima, Psycho Pass

Christmas Eve was nice. Zoey decided to act civil to Rochelle and Francis for the holiday. The new group came bounding in with boxes and bags full of goodies. They managed to fill up the useless bathtub with MREs to everyone's happiness. There was more stuff that was put into the garage, but all in all everything was good.

Yasuko and Shogo had taken the garage to be have a more private residence to themselves. There was no car in the garage so it was spacious even with all of the excess supplies. They pushed the supplies in front of the door and threw blankets down on all the exposed patches of concrete. It made the room feel warmer and more cozy. Their cots were in the corner side by side to another.

American Johnny had tried to get his bed in the pantry in which he was quickly denied. “You ate all of my candy while you were sleepwalking,” Dimitri scolded him.

“He drank all of my rum! I don’t like tequila you racists!” Yolanda told the others. Francis had his head turned when she had said rum.

“My mother is making him fat because she enjoys feeding people, and he likes her cooking,” Shogo said.

“He ate my Kinder eggs that I brought,” Elliot said darkly. “I can’t get anymore here unless there is a stash hidden in a drug addict house.”

“Jyani wa ii hito desu,” (Johnny is a good person) Yasuko said.

“She says he’s an awful person,” Shogo incorrectly translated for her. She poked her son with her knitting needle. She knew enough English to know that he was lying.
Anyways he ended up getting the attic. He set up a fire pit up there for himself and if he had company. Also setting up chairs to go around it, but it was mainly to keep him warm at night. Dimitri got the pantry room. Dr. Elliot took up residence in the upstairs bathroom shower. There was just enough room in it for a cot. With enough joy Yolanda was overly ecstatic to receive the only remaining bedroom.

“I miss my husband,” Yolanda talked to Coach. She confided in him because he was the only other person that was married there. The two really clicked with eachother being the only middle aged people there.

“I miss my wife too, but I hope to see them. I’m sure my family got evacuated,” Coach thought happily to think about rescue and finally being able to see his family again. Yolanda sighed leaning forward against the island, and held her face with her hand.

“You are lucky to have a chance at that. I was forced to watch him turn. He didn’t hurt me only because my teenage daughter shot him as he lunged, but she got sick shortly after. I held her while she took her life,” she cried and laughed a little. “I was thinking ‘is this it, am I going to turn to?’, but I didn’t and I kept on fighting.”

“Damn girl I’m sorry. I don’t think that I could have carried on,” Coach rested a hand on her shoulder.

“That is not what I believe,” she looked up at him. “I believe that the struggles of life are worth it because rolling over and dying is too easy because you can choose to die at any time, but you have to fight to live.”

“Still doesn’t make it any easier,” He rubbed her shoulder soothingly.

“No,” she shook her head. “No it does not.”

Dimitri and Zoey were up in her room having sex, and Elliot was right next to them in his ‘room’ getting off to it. American Johnny walked in took off his pants and started taking a shit on the toilet. Elliot scrambled to cover himself. “What the bloody hell are you doing?!?”

“I think I’m taking a shit in the bathroom Dr. Smartepants, or should I sat Dr. Ben Dover,” he sarcastically said opening his magazine to read. It was a gun maintenance magazine.

“Can I have a couple more minutes?” he asked flustered.

“I really don’t give a damn. You can continue all you like,” Johnny turned the page while shrugging his shoulders.

“It’s kinda hard to do in here while you’re shitting,” Elliot tried to reason.

“Well, seemed to be getting off to enough to them,” he motioned his paper to the wall where the noise was coming from.

“Do you have any shame?”

Nick and Ellis were both lying down snuggling on the couch. Ellis played with Nick’s hair while he had his head tucked under Ellis’ chin. He hummed a tune that Ellis didn’t recognize.
“Next Christmas will be better,” Ellis stroked Nick’s hair.

“You got that feeling like shit’s going to go down too?” Nick grumbled out. Ellis nodded in agreement. “I hope that nothing too bad happens other then an argument or maybe a broken lamb.”

“Do ya… you know,” Nick shifted to see Ellis’ face. He had said it shyly and low enough to where only if someone really wanted know what he had said that they’d have to ask. “Wanna have some fun tonight?”

“Let me know if you change your mind,” Nick reburried his head to nap.

“I will, I will,” he nuzzled against Nick further.

Dinner time has always been a source of any drama to unfold. Tonight it seemed to be an air of tension. Coach, Yolanda, and Yasuko were the oldest members of the group. They subconsciously sat next to each other at one end of the table. Yasuko’s son sat next to her to act as a translator. Nick, Ellis, Elliot, and American Johnny sat in the middle of the table. Down at the other end Zoey, Rochelle, Francis, and Dimitri sat.

The conversation with the fling and the couple was tense and awkward. They made small talk of what foods they can’t wait to eat again.

Nick was comparing his notes with Elliot about the outbreak. Ellis and Johnny talked about the differences in their accent because they had found it harder to speak when they used region specific words.

The older members of the group discussed food, water, safety, and evacuation. Yasuko was content with staying where they were until it started to thaw out because the infected would start to migrate up. Coach was thinking about heading west when it thawed out. Yolanda was more concerned about the safety of the group now saying that ‘nothing is ever set in stone’.

“I’m worried about them,” Shogo translated for his mom. It was about the women of the group.

“They are getting worse. Maybe we should step in and separate them for now,” Coach agreed.

“It won’t solve anything. They need an epiphany for themselves to solve it. Mainly the younger one. She’s full of anger. I’m worried when it’s going to boil over, or worse,” Yolanda paused looking at her conversation mates. “Explode.”

“It’s going to happen soon, and when it does it will be messy,” Shogo agreed.

“Nobody has to get hurt,” Coach stated. Yolanda offered him a sympathetic look.

“Young women are like vultures for a mate. Unconsciously they are seeking out the alpha male mate to breed with because he can take care of her offspring. They will kill over a mate,” Yolanda squinted her eyes thinking back to where she saw something like this in a show.

“I agree, they are like birds. People when put into the correct position will be willing to do or say anything to get what they want,” Shogo added.

“We just need to be there to prevent it when it does happen,” Coach solomy said. “Yolanda I kinda expected a sentamos like that from the Doc, not you.”

She shrugged her shoulders, “I have a masters in psychology, but it doesn’t mean that I really want to put it into use.”
“Why aren't they fighting for Nick then too?” Coach asked her. Yolanda sighed thinking back from her observations so far.

“I don’t have too much information about him yet, but he puts out a vibe of get the ‘fuck away from me’. Most likely the cause of emotional trauma from his past. Judging by how natural he acts with it means that it’s gone on long enough to become a scar, but luckily scars can still fade,” Yolanda sighed.

“That was deep,” Shogo said.

After dinner everyone settled down for the evening. Everyone, but Zoey stayed by the fire. She had gone up to her room, avoiding everything and everyone. Nick and Ellis pretty much had their own spot that they owned on the couch by this point.

“Been a long day,” Yolanda spoke up. Her group had moved in and was settling in pretty nicely. The old man had hit it off with the older women. Yolanda was in her late 50s, about a decade older than Coach. Yasuko was the oldest at 82.

“It has been a long few months,” Shogo mumbled.

“It’s been hard for everyone,” Francis said.

“I took my mother on this trip as an ‘I’m sorry that I don’t have kids yet’ and as a last vacation for her since she’s dying. I feel like I’ve disappointed her greatly. When and if we get home I want to focus less on my career and more on people. I can’t work 90 to 100 hours a week anymore, and I won’t,” his mouth was trembling. “All this trip has taught my was that I can get my ticket punched at anytime, but I treat life as if I’m going to live forever. The only thing I’ve been working for is an early grave with no friends or family.” Though she didn’t understand what he said Yasuko started rubbing his shoulder.

“What’s she dying from?” Rochelle asked.

“Heart failure,” his entire group was stunned. He hadn’t told anyone that she was dying. “She ran out of meds a month ago, and she’s getting worse. She doesn’t believe in transplants. At least she got to spend time with me before she goes. I haven’t been there since I was before college, but after high school.”

“She loves you, and she knows that you do too,” Coach patted his other shoulder as he started to cry.

“A parent’s love for their child is unconditional Shogo,” Yolanda got up and hugged him. “Why don’t you go spend some time with her alone.”

He nodded and left with his mom for their room. Everyone seemed to be on the edge of falling apart at one point or another. American Johnny had also slipped out of the room to go up to his room. He was unnoticed by the group.

“Wish that we had a working tv. I really want to watch a Christmas movie,” Francis whined.

“If you could which one?” Rochelle asked him. She playfully nudged him.

“Office Christmas Party because that one guy deep throats ice,” he answered, everyone had that look of ‘of course’ on their faces.

“My favorite was A Christmas Story,” Ellis smiled.
Coach laughed, “Mine too.”

“I like that one with the deer and the guy who wanted to be a dentist… they uhhhh… sing the song ‘We’re a couple of misfits… that’s where we fit in’” Dimitri stuttered and stammered.

“Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer is what you’re thinking of,” she paused in thought. “My favorite is the Garfield one.”

“Mine is one that nobody will know because it’s not American,” Yolanda shook her head.

“I don’t do Christmas,” Elliot walked out of the room to go to bed.

Ellis turned to Nick, but before he could speak, “Christmas Vacation.”

“That’s a good one,” Coach agreed thinking back to the movie.

“’If that cat had nine lives, I think that it just spent them all.’” Nick tried to quote the movie. Most of the others didn’t realize that he was quoting the movie at all and only spared him a confused look. The conman only smirked at their confusion.

“I think I’m going to hit the hay too,” Yolanda got up and stretched lazily stumbling out of the room as if she was drunk.

“Me and Nick are gonna go as well,” Ellis drug Nick off of the couch. Nick groaned because he was comfortable. The grandfathers in Christmas Vacation had the right idea to fall asleep on the couches the older he got. Coach and Rochelle wished them goodnight.

Once out of sight Ellis playfully nudged Nick’s arm while giggling. Nick returned the gesture with a warm smile and a peck on the side of the head. The house was warmer than it was before with all the people in it. Also that Logan had started a small fire pit in the attic. It helped to keep the house a little bit warmer. The couple locked their door behind them, and started kissing lightly.

“I took some candles from the clothing store that we were at when Rochelle was making you play dress up. They’re lavender scented,” Ellis seductively bit his lip while he talked. His older lover could only look at him with a coy face. He had taken the candles out of his bag.

“What’s special about the scent of lavender?” Nick asked genuinely picking up one of the candles from Ellis’ hands.

“From what I’ve read they’re a natural aphrodisiac,” he bit his lip again turning his face away.

“Won’t need it, but it sure will make things even hotter,” Nick leaned in for a tender kiss.

“I’ll light them while you make sure you have everything we need,” Ellis broke off their kiss to go and grab his lighter. Nick went over to the stand next to the bed and picked up the condoms from the drawer. They weren’t in a box, but there was no expiration date on the strip. He shrugged his shoulders assuming that they were still good. Setting them down on the stand he went back over to hug Ellis from behind, wrapping his arms around the smaller’s waist. He rested his head on Ellis’ shoulder, placing a gentle kiss on his neck.

With the candles lit they set them down on the stands. They went on the bed to make out as their foreplay. “At anytime you want me to stop or slow down I will. Just let me know and I love you,” Nick promised.

“I love you too Nick, and I trust you,” Ellis blushed leaning into a kiss. The room seemed to get
warmer and hotter as they made out. Tender passionate kisses sent butterflies into their stomachs with anticipation. The smell of the candles only drew them in more.

They embraced each other like they were the only ones that could keep them anchored to the earth. Each wave of pleasure rattled them to their core. Trails of kisses all over their bodies. Hot touches that felt like they could be burnt into marks on their skin. Quiet whispers and gasps of their names. Escaped moans that left them wanting more. Hands held as each thrust threatened to send them over the edge.

Sex had never been this good for either of them. Needy whispers cried through the air. Chests flush with one another, and passionate kisses.

Love… love was it.

Their heartbeats had synched up to match pace. They say that only people who are in love heartbeats do that.

“Nick…” Ellis huffed out between pants. His face was flushed, and so was Nick’s. He gripped his lover tighter on the back with his arms. Nick pulled away slightly to see Ellis’ face. Illuminated by the candles, never have looked sexier. “I think… that it… that it broke…”

“Oh shit…” he panted as well. He had a worried look to his face now. “I think… you’re… right.”

Getting a grip on his breathing he then checked, and Ellis was right, it had broke on them. The silence confirmed for Ellis that it break. “Nothin we can do about anything right now,” Ellis managed to get out.

“I’m sorry I thought that these ones were still good… They didn’t have an expiration date on them… Shoulda just asked Ro or Fran-” Nick apologize rolling off of Ellis to cuddle.

“Ro uses an IUD so she don’t get her period. She and Francis don’t use condoms otherwise I would have found them in the trash when I’m doing chores. Before you ask Zoey takes the shot every three months. I didn’t like either of those two options because the IUDs side effects can be nasty if it goes wrong, and people forget that they’re on the shot sometimes too,” Ellis explained.

“How do you know that?” Nick asked feeling Ellis’ paulse in his hand.

“I have better hearing than you, old man,” Ellis retorted turning over to face Nick placing his hand over Nick’s heart to feel his beat too. He placed his hand over Ellis’ to hold it there.

“I don’t mind as long as I have you here with me,” he got the thought to propose to Ellis. Rain or shine. Saved or not saved. He would think of the perfect plan along with that bottle of wine. “We will figure things out given enough time, but for now let’s sleep.”

“I couldn’t agree more,” Ellis kissed Nick on the neck before falling asleep there to his heartbeat.

……………..

Christmas started out like a blur. People exchanged gifts or IOU’s that they could scrounge up to give out. Nick handed Coach his gag gift to him first thing without words or even a good morning or merry Christmas. The older man opened up the box only to go straight to his room and not come out until the middle of the afternoon. Yasuko gave Nick her polaroid camera with 40 things to be used to take pictures. He thanked her, but he didn’t have anything to give back at this time.

Yolanda had given herself the gift of vodka and cola making her more fun to be around for the day.
American Johnny gave Ellis a small history book about Pittsburgh, and Ellis gave him some travel brochures that he collected along the way from Savanna. Dimitri tried to give Zoey a gift, but she wasn’t paying attention. She was only glaring at Rochelle and Francis who were exchanging gifts with the others.

Nick gave the chocolates that he found to Ellis. The gambler was very appreciative of his gift of whiskey from him. He shared a couple glasses with him, and was well on his way to settling down on the couch for the afternoon. When Coach finally did return he corralled the group in for a group photo. He got them all situated, then set it on a timer to get in the picture. It was nice to have a group photo for them to look at when they’re down or whatnot.

Zoey and Rochelle started arguing with each other as soon as Nick was done taking the picture, and then it happened. Like it was happening in slow motion, and everyone else was just being forced to watch it all happen. She had pulled out a gun on Rochelle. Not just anyone’s gun either, it was Francis’ silenced handgun. It had been in her oversized hoodie pocket.

“Please don’t do this,” Rochelle begged. The people around were too shocked to move. Both women were crying.

“You took him from ME. I had fought with him, and lost with him! You don’t GET to have HIM!” Zoey yelled through her tears, and pulled the trigger several times. Nick, Coach, and Yasuko didn’t reach her in time to shove the gun in a different direction.

Coach and Nick didn’t know what to do, but Yasuko hit her hard on the head with the bottle of vodka to knock her unconscious.

“Dekimashita,” she muttered setting the bottle back down where it was. She took back her seat as the others rushed around Rochelle who was quickly bleeding out.

Rochelle chuckled coughing up blood, “I finally get my big story to put my career on the map only to die.”

“Don’t talk girl. It’ll be alright,” Coach tried to calm himself down with that. He had a tight grip on her hand.

“No… I won’t. Taking six point blank shots to the chest with no hospitals isn’t survivable. Even if there were still hospitals I’d still likely die,” She weakly smiled to reassure him. “Just one of you…” She looked around at the people with her choosing one of them. “Nick…promise me that you will tell the story for me on the news. I want to make sure everyone knows what was out here, and what we had to face in order to survive.” she lifted herself up a bit from the ground to stare straight into his eyes.

“Ro…” he cried out. “I can’t!”

“You’ll find a way. Besides you need to do something other then drink, gamble, and rot away on a couch otherwise you’d be better off dead,” she stated coldly and let herself sink back to the ground, eyes closing one last time. Nick covered up his mouth with his hand and stood up to go hide himself for a few hours.

‘It’s your fault she died Nick. If we’d been a little bit faster she would still be alive’ his mind yelled at him. ‘ “You shouldn’t have let him in Nick! What were you thinking! She died because of you! I wish that he would have killed you over her because you’re going to turn out to be a good for nothing godforsaken gangbanger, and if you’re lucky you’ll end up living to the ripe old age of 32 found dead in a ditch! In the middle of nowhere! It should have been you and not her! She was a
good, smart girl, and your a stupid piece of shit that deserved to have died that horrifically and not her!” ‘he could hear his father’s voice in his head shouting that the police station again as if it had only just happened.

‘“I don’t know what to do about you Nick. Why do you find it fun to be mean to your siblings because your sister died from it this time.”’ his mother shed her tears into a sobbed up tissue. His father held her in his arms while they were there at the police station. He couldn’t speak that’s how horrified by the situation he was. All he could do was stare at the floor and cry. His family did make him really believe that his sister was dead because of him. The yelling and looks that he’d get. ‘

He sat on the floor blocking the bedroom door so that it couldn’t be opened up. Nick cried lightly to not make a sound as his brain convinced him further and further that he was responsible for Rochelle’s death.
Chapter Summary

Eh, mostly the aftermath of what happened last chapter and what you'll see almost immediately.

Chapter Notes

I hope that this chapter disappoints everyone like it did me.

"It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for what you are not."

-Andre Gide

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Decisions were to be made; punishment, retribution, vengeance, exile, it all didn’t matter because it would come down to one decision. Her body laid on the ground losing more heat as the minutes went by. The older man had sat himself down on a dining chair with his face covered up by his hands, unsure as what to do. Francis was being restrained by American Johnny and Elliot, he spat slurs out at his former partner who was also laying on the ground.

Ellis had only continued to sit there in silent horror at the sight. Dimitri was also frozen. Yasuko had stopped knitting and handed her son her materials. She got up and went beside the other older women. Yolanda had only briefly registered what she was doing. The old lady got down to Rochelle and picked her up effortlessly and went to the door that led outside.

“OKAAAAAASAAAAAAAN!!! IIE, IIE, IIE!!!” Shogo yelled at his mother who was going to leave. He tried to stop her, but she had already made it out the door. She covered up the door as well as she could so that nobody could follow her out. Her dying heart had told her days ago that the end of her would be coming shortly. She’d rather her son not see her body.

Shogo was left at the other end of the door crying and banging on it to try and open it… She was gone. Took Rochelle’s body with her to bury her, but the blood remained. Yolanda went over to him minding the blood on the floor and hugged him, and held him against her chest to let him cry himself out.

Coach stood up to take initiative of the group. “Alright,” he said more for himself then to get the others attention. “I know your furious Francis, you have a right to be, but she’s a person. We all make bad decisions and now is not the time for panic. We’ll deal with her, but for right now I need you here, not harming her too.”

Francis shook off the two men. “Fine.” he stormed off.

“What the bloody hell are we going to do mates? I mean she just killed her. For all we know we might be a few in a hundred left alive on the planet. We can’t just kill her or force her to leave. For
one thing we lose more firepower, and two, back to that whole population thing…” Elliot reasoned. Ellis snapped out of his daze enraged and stood up, stance braced ready to fight.

“Don’t look at her as if she is some kind of breeding machine yew swine. Is that all yew ken think about? Just because she is a women means that she has to suck up all the seed from your cock? Do you know how wrong that sounds! She may be able to have children doesn’t that she’ll want to even if she was the last fucking person on earth! It ain’t even right of yew to suggest or use that as a reason in what to do with her! Huh! Huh!” Ellis ranted on his snap. His face was red with anger.

“Well we won’t have to worry about the population thing if she died,” Elliot squinted his eyes at Ellis.

“What the hell is that supposed to even mean?” Ellis matched him. Elliot crossed his arms defensively.

“It means I know that you have been keeping a secret,” Everyone turned to look at Elliot and Ellis. “This might only be because that you and Nick wanted to be safe, but I messed with all of the rubbers in the house and kept a close inventory of them. I also purposely go around listening to shit that goes on.”

“Pervert eavesdropper,” American Johnny said.

“Considering that you and him were the only ones to get it on with one, and from what I heard being the ‘pervert eavesdropper’ I am. I know that your transgender,” Elliot the new asshole announced and outted Ellis.

“No I ain’t,” Ellis defensively said not able to make eye contact with anyone.

“Yes you are because I tampered with all of the rubbers and I know that it broke on you two and I heard your-”

“Elliot!” American Johnny yelled. “Fucking shut’er ass up before I strap you into a buggy and shove it down a hill and leave you for the dead.”

“We should send him away too,” Dimitri agreed. Yolanda turned herself with Shogo angrily.

“Nobody is sending anybody away. Youse need to sit your asses down and listen to Coach. Hijos de puta!” (Sons of a whore)

“I’ll talk to you later Ellis, but you can go,” Ellis immediately ran from the room with that permission. “Let’s just put her in her room for now and talk to her when she wakes up. Johnny can you and Dimitri do that please.”

“Okidoki,” Johnny hopped up. Dimitri groaned, but followed anyways.

“Elliot clean the damn floors because of what you did,” Coach commanded. Elliot squinted at him and pointed.

“You know I’m bloody right though. If there is nothing left out there we shouldn’t be wasting our chances to repopulate the earth,”

“Go do it now otherwise I’ll do it again you donkey!” Yolanda threatened him.

A while back Elliot had done something to piss her off and she punished him for it. He had been being a dick to everyone and so she taped earbuds in his ears with music on. If she caught him trying
to take them off or turn off the music she’d extend his punishment another day. It ended up being a
19 day punishment that was only supposed to be three days. Elliot would rather gouge out his ears
and be willingly deaf over having to listen to The Monster Mash ever again.

Yolanda and Coach gave each other sympathetic looks. That look of what the hell are we going to
do now. They were the oldest, maturest, and the ones everyone looked to for guidance and answers,
but they didn’t know what to do now.

“I don’t know what to say to him,” Coach admitted rubbing his arm.

“It has to come from you since he’s known you longer;”

“I know that, but it’s just difficult,” Coach sighed.

Ellis knocked on the door. He had tried to open it, but it was locked. “Nick… can I come in,” he
whispered. The door clicked. He pushed the door open and let himself in. Nick was sitting on the
bed with his head in his hands. He moved to sit with him on the bed wrapping his arms around his
torso, and he laid his head on his shoulder. “It’s okay to be upset. She did say something harsh to
you. Did you hear the fight?”

“I can’t help to blame myself for her death. No, I heard yelling and screaming, but I couldn’t make
out the words,” Ellis sighed with temporary relief not to dump even more on shit on Nick’s shoulders
at the moment. He’d find out soon enough that everyone know, and that Elliot had sabotaged the
condoms. For now he’d rather just help him cope with the guilt of Rochelle’s death.

“You didn’t do anything to cause her to die and you were too far away from Zoey to step in. If ya
would’ve she woulda rushed into it,” Ellis explained rubbing Nick’s sweater.

“I know, but I just can’t help the feeling that I could have done something to prevent it,” Nick rubbed
his bloodshot eyes. Ellis rubbed the small of his back.

“You just have to remember to tell yourself that ya did nothing wrong at all. Let me tell you a story
of how I learned to do that,” Nick turned to look at him. Ellis thought for a moment on how to put it.
“In all those stories I tell about Keith getten inta trouble and hurt I used to blame myself for not
stepping in and helping him not do all of the crazy shit that he does. All of the hospital visits and trips
to the police station, then I realized something, he was going to do all of that shit one way or another.
With or without me. With or without someone sayen not to do that because yew’ll get hurt. I learned
that there was nothing I could do to stop him from doin the crazy shit that he comes up with. What
I’m sayen to yew is that even if you knew what was gonna happen before it did you wouldn’t have
been able to stop her. She would have found a way to kill or worse to Rochelle one way or another,
and ya still woulda blamed yourself.”

“Didn’t really think of it that way,” Nick nuzzled his head onto Ellis’ shoulder. “I don’t really
understand what she meant by her last wish to me.though. Was she trying to motivate me, or put me
down?”

“I don’t know, but I know that I want to leave now to go wherever,” Ellis murmured petting Nick.

“Why?” he murmured back.

“I got into a fight with Elliot the know all, see all, sabotage all. He knew what happened last night
that pervert. He was trying to get Rochelle and Zoey pregnant I think, to restart the human
population if there is no one left. It frustrates me that he outed me to everyone,” Ellis teared up a bit
and sniffled.
“I don’t think we could leave the house anymore even if we wanted to. It’s all snowed in too much now, but at least the condom didn’t break because it was old since he tampered with it. That son of a bitch better not run into me for at least for the next day or so,” Nick hugged Ellis tightly. Ellis chuckled a little bit.

It wasn’t unknown to them to be on the outs of a group or anything. Nick was originally an outcast of the group he was forced into in Savanna. He wasn’t happy go lucky like the others in his group and he had street smart knowledge that made Coach and Rochelle weary of him. Ellis was an outcast in society for being who he is. Being transgender wasn’t something to be out and proud where he lived. It’s the case for most people. Unlike the transwomen that came out around the same time as he came out he wasn’t beaten to death by his classmates. They thought that he’d grow out of wanting to be a man and for him to realize his womanliness. As the days rolled into years some people forgot that Elaine turned into Ellis, and that Elaine didn’t die.

They stayed in the room like that for quite awhile. Holding each other in their arms to comfort one another. Not dozing off, but to just enjoy the other’s presence. It was the little things that mattered. Not that the big things weren’t because they tend to pale in comparison to the big ones. Holding hands, snuggling, a light peck in the morning, share each other’s presence, always having someone there to talk to and not to judge you, someone who is always there always willing to listen, and being on the same team. Those are the little things that people forget about.

They barely noticed a knock at the door until it opened up. Coach wore a sorrowful expression on his face. The face of misery, grief, and hurt. “Can I talk to you for a minute about what happened down there with Elliot?”

Ellis sat up straightening himself out. “There really isn’t anything *to* talk about,” Ellis walled himself up with narrowed out eyes with a glare that Nick gave props to that could contend with even his.

“I just want to know the truth son. I see you like a man, and you definitely hid yo shit like a champ, but you don’t have to hide anymore. If you need something we can get it for you because I don’t want anyone hiding their feelings and shit in the shadows anymore to get anyone hurt physically or emotionally,” Coach had moved himself over to have his back lean up against the door frame.

“Just because something is true doesn’t mean I want to talk about it with anybody,” Ellis mumbled still being defeated from the earlier argument. His features softened back down into that of shame and defeat.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to, but I’m here for you, and it seems like everyone else doesn’t care because you have to be strong as shit to make it this far in life and for what we all went through. Is there anything that you will need?” Coach asked. His explanation was on par with the rest of the house. Maybe not Elliot, but Elliot is an asshole that needs to mind his own business and doesn’t need to sick his nose where it doesn’t belong.

The thing that Ellis needed was obvious at that point in time to everyone in the house.

“You know what I need. Can you please just get it secretly and not say anything about it. Please?” Ellis begged. Coach put his hands up defensively.

“Alright I will. I’ll set it in here if I find it,” Coach agreed.

American Johnny had a fire going in the attic again. He was burning coals and whatever other people would let him burn up. For him it was a strange feeling to be near other Americans again after being surrounded by people who all came from different countries. Dimitri had a hard time speaking
in English. Yolanda almost always spoke in English even when blurt out swearing. Elliot was Elliot. Then the mother son duo usually only kept to themselves.

“Do you mind if I sit here with you?” Shogo asked interrupting his thoughts.

“Nah, it’s cool,” American Johnny gestured to the other seats. Some of them had dolls or dressed up mannequins on them.

“I am deeply sorry that I ignored you and everyone else Logan,” American Johnny jolted his glance up at the use of his actual name. Shogo was sitting down looking down. “I was having a hard time adjusting, but it was not fair of me to put you out and not talk to you or anyone else, but you seemed to struggle the most.” He gestured to the various items on the chairs.

“None taken friend,” He accepted the apology. “Hey I found something in a stash up here. It’ll help beat some of this cabin fever that we’re having.” He handed a shoe box to Shogo. He opened it up and could only smile.

“You need to show me how first,” Shogo agreed.

Chapter End Notes

Flashback chapter Next chapter. I'm leaning to a character backstory for Ellis, but I might do one that takes place during campaign.
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Ellis' backstory, and some info on the group during campaign.

Chapter Notes

This one took me a bit to write because it's honestly hard for my to really show emotion. I'm generally emotionless and tend to watch other people or read book, and etc. I hope youse enjoy the chapter. Comment to give me inspiration. I tend to write more when people give me noticeable attention, like I'm an attention whore for kudos or comments. XD

"Get busy living or get busy dying."

-Stephen King

“Damn I hate those new low flow automatic toilets Elaine,” Keith bounded up to his best friend in the halls. “It ain’t not fun having diarrhea in those things.”

Elaine laughed, “I hate them too. You can’t flush anything down them at all.”

“That’s what happened. It flushed while I was on it and when I got off it, and I was wiping for about a good five minutes too. You’d think by the time it was done doing all of those flushes it wouldn’t be clogged, but nooooooooooooooooppe the damned thing started overflowing. Thank god I was the only one in there, but if anyone starts asking I didn’t do it.”

“Ok Keith I won’t tell anyone. You can tell Dave when we hang out latter,” Eliene promised him.

“Thanks beautiful,” Keith shamelessly flirted then took off to his class on the other side of the building. The late bell would ring in 20 seconds, but Keith had gotten more detentions than anyone else has had in the entire school history so why not add to the record.

Keith has had a crush on Eliene for years. He’s asked her out before and she had rejected him. Asked her to go to the middle school dance with him before and she rejected him and sat him down and gave him the friend talk, but he got to hang out and watch a movie with her while the dance was going on. They have been friends since they were really little. Best friends, but Eliene started to keep secrets from him once she hit puberty. She was angrier, and more volatile at the mention of more what Keith would say stereotypical women things. She wore more clothing to conceal herself, and had her hair in a short cut, but she was the most beautiful women in the 10th grade according to most people in the school.

The prettiest most asked out girl in school. She rejected every single one. Some people started calling her a lesbian behind her back and taunt her to her face until she told them that she didn’t want to date anyone there as to lose her freedom to her friends. People do change once they are in a relationship
so she did have a point. She liked to hang out with her friends and go on stupid and ridiculous
adventures with them. Keith almost always ended up going to the hospital or to jail.

It wasn’t her fault that she was born different it was who she was, and how she felt, but she didn’t
know how yet to express it…

“Eliene please pay attention, or would you rather stay and learn this after school,” the class laughed.
Her teacher was getting tired of telling her to pay attention when she was spaced off in her own little
world alone.

“Sorry sir,” She said shifting to be sitting straight up and look at him while taking notes.

‘I hate geology. I’m not going to use this when I’m older. Me, Keith, and Dave made a pact years
ago to all become mechanics. All we really need to know is math, then we’re good’ Elien started to
space out again. ‘I want to be myself, but how will everyone react to it? They’ll probably rape me as
to say that I’m just not embracing being a women. Or they might just laugh at me. *sighs audibly*
Maybe just lynch mob me. Maybe you should try embracing your womanhood by fucking with
Keith. He has had eyes for you since you two were in just elementary school. Maybe’ She convinced
herself to try, yet again to be more like a women.

Eliene didn’t get called out by her teacher again that class, but she still zoned out again and thought
of nothing. After class she waited for Keith outside his class. He was talking to the teacher about
why he was late to class. Keith was all smiles and the teacher looked horrified by him. The door
creaked open and Keith came bounding out.

“What just happened. I’ve never seen a teacher besides Mr. Devieen afraid of you?” Eliene asked
him. He stopped and talked with his hands too.

“Yew know how I was talking to you before class and was running late. I went to go ditch and I saw
mu teacher smoking dope. She was so afraid of me ratting her out that we made a deal. I don’t have
to do my papers or homework anymore and she’ll put random grades in her gradebook that are my
average grade. She said that I’d still get after school detention for trying to skip class, but I think I’ll
turn that into a suspension. Free day off,” Eliene laughed at his story.

“That’s so funny Keith. Me and you should hang out sometime, alone,” Eliene bit her lip. Keith
wasn’t as dumb as his grades and looks said and he caught on to that.

“Sure we could do that sometime. We coulda go to that abandoned cabin if ya wanted to tomorrow?”
Keith was rubbing the back of his head.

‘Wholly shit. I can’t believe what is happening right now. I better get some condoms from the
pharmacy, or mu brothers’ Keith thought excitedly.

“Sounds good to me,” Eliene agreed part of herself dying at the same time. It’s not that she didn’t
like men. It was just that she was uncomfortable in her body.

She and Keith met up with Dave at the convenience store. They bought some soda and went to go to
Keith’s house where they proply traded the sugary drinks with Keith’s oldest brother for beer. They
headed to the secluded part of the lake and drank. Eliene was quiet and content with looking out at
the lake. Keith and Dave were talking about some new gun part that Dave wanted to buy.

‘Why is it since I hit puberty that made him like me anyways? I don’t try anything. He sure jumped
on my suggestion for sex almost immediately. Why couldn’t I have been born a boy then it would be
normal to have the conversation that they are having right now in public, but no I’m supposed to talk
about makeup that I don’t use, boys I don’t date, and cloths I don’t care about. The worst being when my mom talks about me becoming a mom. I don’t think I want little monsters crawling out of my body’ She had already downed half of the pack. Keith and Dave were still on their first and only bottle as she went for another one.

Keith took the bottle out of her hand. “Hey, hey, hey! You shouldn’t drink another one because we ain’t carrying yer ass when you fall into the lake,” Keith scolded. Eliene grabbed the bottle back out of his hand and gave him the bird. The beer was high content alcohol.

“Yeeееееееееewwwww’d love to see that,” she slurred while opening the beer. Keith blushed unnoticed by her.

“Not my type still,” Dave announced. The man had no verbal interest in anything even masterbating. He eventually came out as asexual to the group after years of not knowing.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if I caught you with a pool noodle one day,” Keith snidely said. Eliene snickered.

“Tell that to the time I caught yew doing that Keith,” Keith turned red. Dave fell over laughing. Eliene continued by saying, “Had to get yer brothers to cut it out because yew got stuck in there.” Keith stuck his tongue out at her.

“Well at least I ain’t getting shitfaced right now. Do yew need to go to AA because you drank all the damn booze?” Keith roasted her. She only looked at him expressionless and lifted up the can held out one finger and downed the rest of the bottle. “Yer cut off now and we still have half of out bottles.”

“Not for long,” she dove after Keith’s beer. They rolled around the ground so much so that the beer ended up getting dumped out. Keith wasn’t too heartbroken though because her was able to touch Eliene.

“Damn it yew made me spill it,” Keith laughed. Eliene looked at Dave.

“Do and I’ll tell yer ma,” Dave quickly said. She pouted for a moment before climbing off of Keith. Eliene’s mom was anti alcohol and thought the stuff was evil because her father was an alcoholic way back in the 50s.

“I got an idea. Dave finish yer bottle off,” Keith commanded and Dave groaned chugging the rest. When the bottle was empty Keith took it from him and took the other bottles. Then he started digging in a marked off area in the ground and pulled out a box with vodka, soap, and a lighter.

“Keith no. You and fire need to break up,” Dave scolded him. Keith muttered something about him being his mom. “I’m serious yer gonna eventually end up getting third degree burns.”

“Maybe after I deep fry a turkey, and make fireworks,”

“I agree with Daveeeeeeeeese on this one Keith,” Eliene hiccupped.

“Fine I’ll make just one then. Yer not gonna talk me outta it,” the other two resigned to watch Keith.

The mixture was ready now. Keith lit it with a mischievous grin. He aimed high and threw hard. Then they were forced to wait to see the results of Keith’s experiment. It hit the docs on the other side. They packed up and ran after that. Keith supported Eliene while she ran so she didn’t trip in her drunken stupor. The police came to Keith’s place right after they heard that there was a fire. Keith’s mom hid Eliene in her room so that she wouldn’t get caught with an underage.
The police questioned and questioned him for about an hour with him denying it. They told him that they’d be back if they found out if it was him. Once the coast was clear Eliene came out of the room. She was more sobered up now enough to go home.

As much as she loved her mother she couldn’t stand her at times. She didn’t want to go home because she didn’t want to talk about the things that her mother wanted to talk about. She missed talking to her father. He had passed away little over a year ago. She had been able to talk about anything with him.

Walking up to the house she had a feeling of dread creep into her gut. The door was unlocked so she let herself inside the house and locked it behind her. She dropped her bag and boots off at the door. In the kitchen her mom was finishing up cooking dinner.

“Hey ma,” she greeted her mother looking at the pots and the oven to see what was for dinner.

“It’s beef gravy and biscuits with ham sugar. How was your day?” She asked her distant daughter. Eliene shut the oven door.

“Eh, much of the same,” she shrugged going to the stairs. Her mom crossed in front of her blocking her accent.

“What’s going on sugar, you’ve been distant even more lately?” She tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear. Long blond curls that were starting to grey. Eliene crossed her arms.

“Nothing ma. Everything is peachy,” she lied. Her mom caught the scent of alcohol on her breath, and frowned. Eliene went to go around her mom, but her mom blocked her again.

“Are you sure?” she pushed, and Eliene snapped.

“I’m fucking fine! Now leave me the hell alone!” she screamed at her mom pushed past her and ran up to her room. She slammed the door so hard that it didn’t click closed. Tears blurred her vision and she finished closing the door. They fell as she went to her bed and cried her eyes out into her pillow. Unfortunately for most teenage girls snapping like that is more common because the extreme shifts in hormones constantly.

Her mother was left at the bottom of the stairs quietly crying wondering what she did wrong to have her have such an outburst. Eliene didn’t come down for the rest of the night. She stayed in her room until morning. The older women had set food outside her room in case she decided that she wanted food. Eliene had fallen asleep from exhaustion. When she woke up she slipped out of the house unnoticed by her still sleeping mother.

The reason to her outburst was unknown to her, but she felt horrible about it. She can’t remember the last time she yelled like that. The depression, and dysmorphia was getting to her mind harsher and harsher as time went on. Everything seemed to be boiling over.

She met up with Keith outside his house. He was all nervous about it, and Eliene didn’t seem to care about what they were about to do at all. When they got there Eliene couldn’t go through with it and took off on him deeper and deeper into the woods. She couldn’t hear Keith yelling for her on where she went anymore. All alone in the woods, like some forgotten tragedy she continued to get further and further lost in it’s darkness.

The trees were so densely populated that you couldn’t see past 30 feet. The birds were chirping because it was still early morning. Eliene ventured to where the woods became more swamp. She paid attention to the snakes looking for the one that might be death. It’s not like she wanted to suffer
a painful death from the venom, but she didn’t want to play knifes in a barrel with them too. She didn’t know where she was going, or why she was doing it anymore besides to escape.

To look at her mom and Keith would be painful, and all of the people that made fun of her at school. She didn’t want to go home, or go to school, or see her friends.

Escape was the only thing that was on her mind.

Stepping on a misplaced rock sent her falling into the mud. She rolled over tears swelling up in her eyes, deciding not to get up.

‘I don’t want to go back. I’ll just die here, and everything will be better off without me. Nobody likes me. My mom hates me for yelling at her, she has to, and Keith hates me too because I really rejected him this time’ She didn’t realize that she was screaming until her throat was raw with pain. ‘Someone cruel out there must be getting their kicks. If there truly was a god them why would he ever let someone feel this way. None of this would have happened if I was born a boy. Everything would have been better. I hate my body I never wanted to be a girl. I didn’t think I would grow boobs until it happened. I really did think I was a boy when I was younger. When everything started happening I didn’t know what to think’

Laying there on the swamp ground Eliene had decided that she would rather die than to face the truth. Sometimes the truth you know to be true is harder to face yourself then it would be to tell others. It’s a truth about yourself that you can’t accept about yourself because your entire world would change. People will see you differently, but would you rather be yourself or disappear into monotony. The sooner you realize that everyone is an asshole and will judge you anyways the sooner you can get on with your life. If there is one truth to the world is that deep down everyone is an asshole that looks out for their own.

The landscape was peaceful. The chirping birds in the distance. Flowers and other plants permeated the air. It wasn’t sunny, but it wasn’t dark either. Just some normal beautiful day. She closed her eyes too tired to keep them open anymore, and just focused on listening to the sounds of the landscape around her.

(Ellis’ reflection)
In that moment when was laying there on the ground I had realized how miserable and angry I had become over my identity. I felt like I had nowhere to belong. That nobody liked or loved me because I wasn’t being my whole self. That I had forgotten myself so much so that I was always acting. I have had enough of it by that point, and was at my most miserable that I ever was at that point in time, despite all that has happened to me in the past few months. This was the time that I wanted to die the most and to have never have existed.

Later on I never blamed myself for how I felt at that time because it helped me move on because I was a hollow shell of myself that was built on being other’s expectations. Once I learned to let that go everything went more smoothly. I don’t remember what happened, but I was told that I was rescued by some hiker that had a feeling that something was really wrong and strayed over five miles to my location and carried me to rescue. At least that was what everyone told me when I woke up in the hospital almost three days after I went missing. Like a guardian angel.

Sounds of a beeping machine woke Eliene up to the sterile white room of a hospital. She hated hospitals since she was always in and out of them because of Keith’s shenanigans always getting himself admitted to them. Her mother was in a seat that was drug up close to the bed. She looked raged like she had been up for a week with no coffee.
"Hi sugar. If ya don’t feel like talking can you please listen to me them?" Eliene didn’t move a muscle. “I want you to know that I love you, and I don’t know what’s been going on with you for the past like five years and it scares me to think that I coulda lost you too. I think that I woulda actually joined you in death.”

“I’m sorry,” Eliene mumbled trying to move her hands. They weren’t able to move because she was cuffed down to the bed on suicide watch. Her mother started crying again.

“You went missing and you were gone for a few days. By the time you were found you were almost dead from dehydration. The person that found you said that it looked like you had just given up. Like defeated by everything.”

“I didn’t mean to *do* anything at all. I just wanted everything to go away once I was out there,”

“Was it something I did?”

“No, nothing at all you coulda prevented or done,”

“Then what is it sugar? You can tell me anything and I’ll still love you, but please tell me what has been bothering you for the past five years. It’s killing me,” her mom pleaded. It was now or never for her Eliene decided.

“Mom, I’m transgender,” Eliene spoke clearly to his mother.

“What?” she softly asked.

“I’m transgender. I feel like a guy, but I’m trapped in a body that isn’t mine. I’ve felt it for years and it’s not going to go away,” his voice cracked. Tears threatening to fall down his cheeks. “I’ve tried that before and it hasn’t worked. Nothing about me screams women besides my body. I’m passionate about cars, guns, beer, and porno. I *hate* makeup, skirts, dresses, acting funny, periods, boobs, and worst of all is how I’m treated for having this body and I doN’T WANT IT ANYMORE.”

Every card was laid on the table. It was now up to the house to decide who won the round. Eliene had poured his heart out in about a minute, and not it was up to his mother to love or reject him. Really, it did seem like an eternity in a serious conversation for her to think up of a response to give to him. In a casual conversation the pause in talk would be more normal.

“I accept that you won’t be my daughter anymore,” she stopped. Before he could respond, “But I gained a son.” They cried together for few minutes. Both were relieved, his mother for not being the cause of anything that went wrong, and Eliene for being accepted and no longer having to hide in the shadows.

“If it’s ok with you sugar can you take your father’s first name?” his mother asked.

“Yes,” Ellis agreed.

Over the course of the next few weeks Ellis went to intensive therapy for the apparent suicide attempt and to work out the gender issues. He came out to Keith and Dave by just wearing the look. Keith even planned a little celebration. Ellis was glad to have such accepting friends, but the people at school weren’t as nice. He dropped out and got his GED after a trans woman came out and was murdered. Over time people forgot who Eliene was and who Ellis is. Keith thinks it was the smell of all the burning tires and ‘skunks’ in the area. Everything was good up until the flu outbreak.

When it first started back when it was ‘minor’ in Eastern Pennsylvania.
(Going based off the fact that the entire first game takes place before the events of LFD2 started. The Sacrifice campaign at the latest would take place during Dead Center. This would make LFD2 take place about 3-5 weeks after the outbreak happened with LFD taking place after the first 2 weeks. Timelines are weird)

They reported it as a flu that was quickly spreading. Initially nobody thought anything about it, except for Keith who was running around with a bible in his hand preaching about the end of days for all of the people who judge, and murder others. He was run over and attacked several times until the first rescue was announced. He tried to convince Dave, and Ellis to go along with. They refused saying that he was just paranoid again.

“Keith ya ain’t maken no sense right now,” Dave said to him. Keith had a bag of his clothes in his hand ready to bolt.

“I agree Keith the news says it ain’t that bad,” Ellis agreed with what Dave said. Keith really did look like he had a few more screws loose then normal. His hair was ragged, his clothes were stained and ripped, his beard was unkempt, his nails were long and broken, and it looked like he hadn’t slept in days.

“This time it is. I have never acted this way before about anything and you two know that. Something is coming and it’s gonna be bad, and I ain’t sticking around to see how the shit hits the fan. They’re not reporting too much of what this flu is doing or why it’s spreading so fast. I’m leaving. Ellis your ma is going too because I convinced her. I hope that convinced you to come with” Keith waved his hands around like an insane person.

“Sorry Keith. I don’t think it’s gonna be as bad as you think it is. Me and Dave will run the shop in your absence, but take care of my ma,” Ellis told him. With that being said Keith took off.

More evacuations took place over the next few days. Frantic customers came in with their cars. On the last day before Ellis went to the Vanna hotel a customer came in around three needing a spare tire. Dave got him everything he needed and when he went to go pay Ellis his eye turned yellow. His skin was already pale and veiny with the cold, but the blood ran dark. The customer turned zombie lurched for Ellis and bit him on the bicep drawing a little bit of blood. Dave came up from behind and killed it with a screwdriver.

“That guy’s a maniac! Why’d he bite me?” (Resident Evil 2 Opening Cutscene 1998, god I love quoting) Ellis exclaimed. Dave examined and grabbed out the first aid kit.

“I hope that this doesn’t have anything to do with the cold that’s going around,” Dave cleaned the wound up. “You should take the shirt off cuz it’s covered in blood. You have spares here, I’m sure of it.”

“I’ll grab my Bullshifters shirt from there once yer done. At least the sleeves are long enough to cover the bandages.” Ellis mumbled wincing as Dave tended to it. He had a nervous look to him like he was in deep thought. Ellis rarely saw this side of Dave. Ellis sighed, “You think that’s what everyone was afraid of.” He pointed to the body. “And that I’m gonna turn into a zombie.”

“Yeah…” Dave muttered then let out a loud sneeze. He sniffed, “Maybe, just maybe, You won’t turn because I wouldn’t want to have to hurt you.”

“Me too,” Ellis smiled slightly with no real happiness behind it. Dave sneezed again and choked slightly on his snot. “I’ll lock up. Go home and get some rest you’re starting to look sick as hell Dave.”
Too tired to put up a fight he embraced Ellis in a hug, “Alright El, the keys are where they usually are, and don’t stay here too late.”

“No can do I’ma armour up a truck to be zombie proof, and I’ll pick you up when it’s done,” Dave gave him a faint smile. The one with the knowledge that that wasn’t going to happen.

“I’m dying Ellis. Look at me. You were even bit and yer not sick. That guy that came in today he was sick as hell before he turned. I started getting a sore throat earlier today. I’m gonna turn, and I’m going to leave so you don’t have to see me that way. Okay, El? You go on and fight and mostly run your way out of this shit and live,” he paused for a moment and gave a breathless soft laugh. “I guess that Keith was right.”

Disheartened Ellis gave him a reassuring smile. Sickened Dave gave him one back. Skin as pale as a piece of paper, but discolored like he’d been splashed with a painter’s cup of water that’s used to clean the brushes. The sick man hugged his friend again for the last time.

“I love ya El, and I hope that you make it out, but please don’t cry. You have to be strong for me, Keith, and yer ma,” he squeezed Ellis tightly. He couldn’t help himself but to start to cry.

“I dono if anyone’s left alive anymore. I mean it could just be me?”

“You can do this,” Dave rubbed the back of Ellis’ head. “I have to go now or I think I’ll hurt you. Lock up as soon as I leave and don’t look for me. Promise me that much.” Dave commanded him with as much force as he could muster into his voice.

“Alright, I won’t go looking for you,” he squeezed his eyes shut pained.

“Goodbye Ellis…” Dave broke off the hug. It was hazy for him, one moment Dave was there, then the next he was gone. As if he had disappeared…

Honoring Dave’s wishes he locked up the garage and went to work on his vehicle. All of tv was focused on the reporting of the Green Flu. Ellis had it on for background noise while he worked to get an idea somewhat what was going on. Not much of anything was reported about it other then stay inside, lock your doors, and avoid the sick…

Turned out that the truck was only 99% zombie proof. That one last percent tore the thing to shreds, but the evac was in sight. All he had to do was make it up to the rooftop of the hotel. He wasn’t the only one as well having run into three other not sick people on the way up. The rescue had left them stranded before they could reach the top. They were only greeted by the sound of them flying away. The man in a suit was furious. The women was in denial, and the older man looked as if he could keel over right that second from all of the exercise.

They made a really good team, and had made it to the mall evac center only to find that it was overrun. In the safe house near it they started bickering on what to do.

“We’ve been lucky not to get bitten yet by those fucking freaks yet! It’s just like goddamn 28 days later out there! Fucking running at us! We’ll all get bit sooner or later and turn!” Nick griped, none of them have gotten hurt by the infected yet. Ellis was nervously pawing at his hair because he had been bitten almost a full day ago now.

“I agree with ya Nick, but now is not the time to start panicking. We’ve made it this far, I’m sure we’ll find a way out-Ro say the meme and I’ll throw you out myself,” Coach tried to shed some light on their situation. Rochelle had the habit of cracking memes or inappropriate jokes at inappropriate times. Almost always one liners so she couldn’t really be stopped unlike Ellis’ stories. She slouched
back disappointed.

“I mean, we will get bitten sooner or later, and I don’t want to have to shoot you guys if you’re trying to take a chunk out of me. I also don’t want to put you three in that position as well,” Rochelle grimly stated.

“Don’t think that way baby girl we’ll find a way. Ellis you’re being all quiet,” Ellis perked his head up at the mention of his name. “What’s your opinion on it?”

Shyly he rolled up his left sleeve and showed the bandage. Some blood had shown through just lightly. Rochelle gasped and covered her mouth with her hand.

“Oh sweetie,” she whispered.

“It’s alright son, when’d ya get it?” Coach asked him. Ellis couldn’t help, but to notice Nick’s burning glare.

“Why the hell were you hiding this from us! You could have killed us!” Nick accused him. Ellis rolled his sleeve back down.

“Hold up Nick,” Coach put himself between the two men.”

“Yesterday… there was this customer who came into the shop sick. All through the day he kept getting sicker’n sicker. When he went to pay he snapped and bit me. I didn’t know what went on until he chopped down on ma arm. I’m not sick. That’s why I said nothin. I thought y’all would've left me to die,” Ellis explained solemnly remembering his final goodbye to his friend.

“You mean you’re not sick *yet*, and yes we would’ve left you behind at the start if we had known that,” Nick nitpicked. Coach opened his mouth to argue, but Nick beat him to it. “You know that’s true because fuck if we know how it spreads, and he could have been bitten less than an hour before that so don’t tell me that you wouldn’t have.”

“I hate to give you a victory, but you’re right. I’m sorry son, but if you would’ve shown us that when we first met up I’d have sent you to check a room and then push something up against it to barricade it,” Coach admitted to the youngest. “Since you’ve gone this long with no symptoms of the virus I think it’s safe to say that you’re immune.”

“Coach is right people usually turn within a couple of hours of getting infected,” Rochelle agreed. Ellis smiled thinking of a story.

“I ever tell you about the time mu buddy Keith-”

“Not now please, I’d rather stew about how we’re all going to die in the next ten minutes,” Nick stopped him.

Nick was wrong and they lived. Right about one thing though, they all got bitten at some point for the first time or another. His first bite came from when his axe slipped out of his hands because he’d just used some hand sanitizer that hasn’t dried yet. It was a bite to the forearm.

Coach had a less embarrassing story because he was drug off by a smoker, and bitten by a common on his bad leg. Rochelle’s contends with Nick’s story because she made a joke too loud around a witch who seemed to understand the joke and instead of slashing her to pieces she bit her hard on the shoulder. Completely involuntarily because she’s into BDSM she orgasmed when the witch bit down. That fazed the witch so much that she committed suicide by stabbing herself. Guess that witches don’t like the comment of ‘I think that a witch was someone who was PMSing while her
boyfriend broke up with her’.

All Nick could say about the incident through the shock of what happened was ‘kinky’. Ellis couldn’t look her in the eye for a couple of days. Coach tried to forget what happened as well…

Quote from Big Smoke, GTA San Andreas: “All we had to do, was follow the damn train, CJ!”

This was it all they had to do was make it across the bridge and then they’d finally be safe. The group all exchanged big smiles, even Nick before they lowered the bridge to safety. One more fight they had all thought, until the helicopter went down with them in it due to some unknown power failure.
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

I really don't know what to say other than this sets up the plot for the next chapter. Yolanda is one conniving bitch though.

Chapter Notes

There was no proof read on this one it was just me typing it and saying it was good enough.

"Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma, which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition."

-Steve Jobs

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Have you ever met someone that was truly happy… no one is. Everyone is always fussing over some shit that has happened to them and tries to deal with it in one way or another. In our culture we are taught that if you work hard then everything will be okay and that you’ll have a successful life… which is the biggest fucking lie I’ve ever heard… people work their entire lives as slaves to just barely get by and be unhappy, or they become successful and have nobody their to share their wealth with because they destroyed their relationships to get to the top. In my life I have only ever met one truly happy person. It makes you realize that that kind of happiness will never exist for you or anyone else you know because of how rare it is. It makes you jealous to know that you will never feel that way. Hell yeah I’m nihilistic, but only because would some god that’s out there wish for almost nobody to be happy. There is no good or evil because I can fucking say the goods about any evil deed that happens because of the butterfly effect. Nothing truly matters because you live and then you die. Nothing else, but I’m gonna damn well do whatever the hell I want in the meantime.

We’re also all slaves one way or another. It just doesn’t seem apparent to most people. Ourselves, family, friends, work, taxes, laws, etc,” American Johnny puffed out a mouthful of smoke. Shogo was only able to stare in awe at him. His unruly black hair was disheveled around his face.

“Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuck, that was heavyyyyyy,” Shogo slurred. His eyes were glazed over and the whites of his eyes were pink. They were both high as kites. Logan was the kind of high that got philosophical with very dark themes.

“You’n I know it’s true,” Johnny inhaled again. Shogo only managed to get a nod out before falling off of his chair to lay on the floor. Just barely missing the fire by a few inches.

The entire attic was full of smoke that lingered around it. Smoke permeated everything that it touched. One thing was for sure, the smell would never permanently go away. Knocks were head at
the door leading to the attic, then it opened.

Coach wasn’t happy to see the vacuum of smoke that was sucked towards him. He stopped up the stairs and puffed out his chest. When he got to the top he crossed his arms at the bewildered American and the almost passed out Japanese man. Johnny tried to give off his most innocent look that he could make, but it failed miserably. All he’d managed to do was piss off the older man even further.

“I thought the damn house was burning down, and you two were only up here smoking weed!?!?” Coach yelled at the two younger men. He moved to Johnny where he promptly took the pipe and lighter out of his hands.

“Well, you see…” Johnny started hysterically until Coach gave out a huff of a laugh at him. Bewildered now Johnny cocked his head while Coach took a few hits.

“Next time son, make sure to share with me or it’s all gonna be mine,” Coach took a seat next to Johnny, and handed him back the device. He took it gratefully, but still unaware on how to react to what had just happened.

“So…I kinda thought ya’era stiff,” Johnny hesitated in his choice of words.

“I was young once too,” Coach leaned back into his seat enjoying the sensation.

“Guess so,” Johnny played with his stomach fat. Just as they were getting relaxed again a very pissed off Yolanda barges up the attic with Dr. Asshole trailing behind her with a smirk of an expression. He’d ratted them out.

“I asked you to do one damn thing Coach! Check on them and then come back down to have a course of action, and you get fucking high! Dr. Dipshit here told me that you probably joined them and he was right!” she pointed at the younger two stoners. Shogo was asleep on the floor with a bit of drool leaking from his mouth.

“I’d prefer not to be called a dipshit,” Elliot interjected.

“Can it!” she sharply turned to him then back to Coach. “If what he says is true then that means that if Ellis is pregnant then the smoke will do harm to the baby…SO GIVE ME ALL THE FUCKING DRUGS YOU FOUND!!!”

Johnny immediately did what he was told to not feel the wrath of the angry spanish lady. He’d seen it with Elliot and he didn’t want to be her next victim. When he handed it to her he had fear in his eyes while hers held with the anger and a twitchy smile. She promptly left the room after taking them away.

Yolanda was one scary ass bitch when she wanted to be. Her thick spanish accent helped with that along with the spanish countries stereotypes. Raised in a poor household she had to learn from a very early age how to get food and money. She was a con artist like Nick, but unlike him when she came to America she cleaned her slate of that, and tried to forget about it. However, she is better than Nick at it because of how long she had done it, and because she had a masters in psychology. She sighed setting the box in the safe in her room.

Locking it up nice and tight so nobody else could get them. Internally she fought with herself on whether or not to teach Nick an intensive crash course on conning better and less messily, and psychology while they were trapped in the house. Pulling her hair into a messy bun she got out a notebook and began writing down what would important to teach him.
She chose to teach Nick because it may help him cope better and because he was young enough to not keel over easily, he wasn’t a complete asshole (cough cough Elliot), was native speaker of English, had the aptitude, and because he had a family that he would have to protect if Ellis was pregnant. Clicking the pen in her hand she thought of what would be of use now to him. She didn’t know where to begin.

Tensions remained high as Zoey woke up. Self appointed warden, sheriff, deputy, jury, and executioner Yolanda took charge of the situation. Nick and Ellis were too shaken up still by Elliot, Francis was too angry to think straight, the three high musketeers were still too damn high, Dimitri barely understood English as is, and Elliot was being sentenced as well.

She let Elliot off easy by making him the maid for the rest of the time. For Zoey she had something a lot more harsh in mind. Zoey was going to be locked in a Yolanda's closet 24/7 until they moved out in the spring. No light at all, but it was better than being exiled. Death would’ve been preferable in her mind.

A month rolled by in the house. Nick being taught by Yolanda for a few hours everyday. What she didn’t know is that Nick’s poker face was too perfect for her to even to tell that it was fake. He had it whenever the subject of the importance of procreation came up. Like population, babies, ‘nother shit came up. Coach put his grief into cooking. Johnny was more than eager to be his apprentice. Elliot wasn’t allowed to talk because he got in trouble again. It was better than having to listen to the same damn song over and over again for days. Dimitri had pulled out his textbooks to study and practice English with Ellis.

Coach had found the item that he’d requested. Like he promised he kept it subtle and put it on his dresser and couple of weeks ago, but he hasn’t worked up the courage to use it yet. He knew that he was late by more that a couple of weeks.

Today he finally worked up the courage to take the test to have his answer for sure. He took it to the bathroom and locked the door behind him and plopped down on the toilet. He sighed reading the instructions to it. There was a chance for a false positive, and he thought that to be worse than to see if it was positive. A light knock came from outside the door. Ellis perked his gaze up slightly.

“It’s me kiddo,” Nick called out. Hesitantly Ellis got up and unlocked the door to let him in. The older man locked it behind him. He noticed that the device was still in the foil wrapper. Ellis had plopped himself back down on the toilet.

“I don’t want to take it because I don’t want to see the results of it,” Ellis chuckled slightly as if it was going to ease his mental pain of Elliot’s sabotage.

“Just because you don’t test for something doesn’t mean it’s not there,” Nick reasoned placing his hand on Ellis’ shoulder and rubbed it soothingly.

“I know,” he looked away picking up it. “Can you turn around and hum. I know that we love each other and all, but bathroom stuff is still gross.”

Nick laughed and obliged his request. Yeah… he would’ve have been caught dead if one of his lovers had seen him take a piss or dumb. The sound of Nick’s humming soothed him and followed the instructions. When he was done he pulled up his sweatpants. All they could do now was wait. He loved the sound of Nick’s humming he’d have to get Nick to sing to him one day.

“It’ll be done in a couple of minutes Nick,” Ellis sat down on the lid of the toilet. The older man turned around and crouched in front of his love and hugged him. Ellis melted into him and started sobbing.
“Whatever the answer is we’ll find a way through this. Shhhhhhhhhhh, shhhh, shhhh. It’ll be alright El,” he kissed Ellis lightly on the shoulder. “Commander dipshit or someone might know what they’re doing.”

“I know, but it just scares me. I never wanted to have biological kids of my own because I was afraid of what could happen and what will happen down their,” Ellis shuddered.

“It’s okay. As long as we have each other we’ll be fine,” he rocked Ellis, and he calmed down into the touch slowly. They remained like that for some time trying to prolong the inevitable just a little bit more. Ellis sat up straight up shaking Nick off slightly. He pushed his unruly hair out of his face while wishing someone in their group knew how to cut hair.

“Well, I guess it’s now or never,” Ellis sighed. Nick sat on the floor in front of him patiently waiting for what he had to say. The young man picked up the device off of the counter, looked at it for a moment, then dropped it to the floor. Unable to control his emotions he started hysterically crying. Nick glanced at it on the floor then pulled Ellis into his embrace onto the floor. He petted his soft curls, and he started to feel his sweater getting wet on his shoulder. The older man not as known for crying shed a few tears of his own. He mumbled ‘It’s okay’ to Ellis over and over again in his ear.

They were going to be parents, and it terrified them because for one they weren’t in a safe environment. Having to worry about the zombies, food, water, and most of all people. What would happen to Ellis if he had a medical emergency? Deep down they knew that he would die if he had one. Nick didn’t want to think of what would happen if he lost Ellis. In his mind he believed that he would commit suicide soon after. The screams would bring too much unwanted attention to themselves as well.

“Do we keep this to ourselves for now or are we going to tell the others because of what this means for everyone?” Nick asked after he calmed himself down a bit. Ellis bit his lip.

“I’m not sure. They’ll find out soon because there are no secrets,” Ellis lamented.

“Yeah, seems like peoples only entertainment is telling people others secrets around here. It makes me feel like we’re back in middle school,” they enjoyed a slight laugh together despite the tension.

“Heh, Elliot can’t shut his damn mouth up. I don’t believe that he has any of his own,” he squeezed Nick a little bit tighter to himself.

“Well on the bright side-”

“We don’t have to wear condoms anymore.” Ellis interrupted Nick. The older man laughed.

“That too, but I was going to say is that Yolanda keeps everyone in line. I really didn’t think of that. You really do have a devious mind,” Nick suggestively said to Ellis lowering his hands on his back.

“Later we can. Just not here,” Ellis promised.

“I’m going to remember that,” Nick smiled and gave Ellis a peck on the lips.

“I think I’m going to just put it on the counter and that’s how we’re going to tell everyone so I don’t have to answer questions as a follow up. I’ll set it there before we have *playtime* together,” Ellis laid it on extra thick with a devious grin. Nick chuckled at that and stood up.

“Then I guess you want to keep the evidence hidden for now,” he picked up the device and handed it to Ellis. The country boy stashed it in his pocketed and disposed of the wrapping somewhere where Elliot wouldn’t find it.
They rejoined the rest of the group downstairs soon after. One thing that they learned about Dimitri was that he absolutely hated English. The foreigner had taught a lot of French to Francis, somehow.

“Mon frere s’appelle Nick. Nous ,” Nick facepalmed at Francis’ attempt to call him his brother. Shogo had no interest in learning French and would actively criticize him and the language to Dimitri’s face. At least Francis was having fun with it.

“That’s cool as hell Francis!” Ellis exclaimed at Francis’ pitiful attempt at the language.

“No entiendo nada. Francis es muy estupido,” Nick snidely commented earning cackling from Yolanda. Francis shot up out of his seat angrily. Elliot wanted to say something but he wasn’t allowed to speak without permission. He turned to the cackling women. Her laugh showed her affinity to cigarettes throughout her life.

“EHHHHH! I know enough spanish to know you called me stupid!” he yelled at the conman.

“Congratulations it’s called a cognate,” Nick shrugged causing Francis to growl lowly. Elliot pleaded to Yolanda with his eyes.

She rolled hers and shoved the air, “Fine Elliot, just this once until I say so.”

“Cheers love,” he thanked Yolanda who promptly rolled her eyes again and crossed her arms growing impatient. “Francis you’re bloody dumb, and Nick you’re a sarcastic douche!” Both men lunged for him as Elliot turned to run away. The men couldn’t keep up with the scrawny weasel. Everyone else was laughing.

“Okay,” Yolanda coughed in between laughs. “Maybe I should give him partial autonomy to speak.” Francis and Nick had tripped over each other when they had lunged and were on the ground glaring at the rest of the room. Francis had fallen on top of Nick.

“Get off of me (grumbling something incoherent)!” he shoved at the taller man.

“Speak louder princess!” Francis got up and helped Nick up. The conman’s glare at him could cut through steel at this point.

It was only broken when Yolanda spoke up again, “You’re hiding something kid. Just say it and I won’t bug you or your boyfriend.”

She saw straight through Ellis’ posture and worried gaze. If there was one thing any of the people knew about Yolanda was to not lie to her and to do as she says. Ellis nervously scratched his head glancing at Nick for reassurance. He gave a slight nod in return.

Ellis took a deep breath, and exhaling, “I’m pregnant.” Saying those two words made him feel dirty inside. Almost everyone was surprised.

“KNEW IT!” Francis yelled, and Nick jabbed him hard in the gut sending him to the ground wheezing. Yolanda kept her face.

‘I might need to put a leash on Francis. If commander dipwad kept his mouth shut then we could discuss our plans a little bit more freely. It can’t be helped. I’ll talk to him later when they’re all asleep’ Yolanda thought.

“Can you NOT be a raging ass all the time!” Nick growled at the biker. Francis grabbed ahold of Nick’s left leg and forced him to the floor too. “Goddamnit!”
“I could say the same about you colonel Sanders!” Francis and Nick pathetically fought on the ground. It looked more like they were two siblings playing. The people in the room watched them in disbelief. Francis pinned Nick to the ground by straddling him on his back and having his hands to the side of his head. “I win!”

“You CHEATED!” Nick accused.

“No I didn’t,” Francis claimed.

“Yes you did! You kneed me in the gut!”

“That was for the ellllllllllllllllllllllllllbow!”

“I’m the only one that’s supposed to do that Francis,” Ellis claimed seriously. Nick never felt his face burn up any more in that moment. Francis laughed at Nick’s very red face, and gave the conman a quick peck. The conman’s eyes rolled into the back of his head because he had fainted. Ellis started laughing then turned serious again at Francis got up. He growled, “Do that again and I will seriously knock you into next week.”

“Oh shit!” American Johnny got in closer. “I always love these kinds of plots. That’s why I always watch daytime soap operas.”

“The hell is wrong with you boy?” Coach questioned Logan’s sanity.

“There ain’t no tv t’watch anymore,” Logan shrugged. Topics shifted again.

“What are we going to do when we’re not trapped in here anymore?” Shogo asked Coach and Yolanda specifically. Coach shifted in his seat uncomfortably, Yolanda shifted her standing stance as well.

“For one I want to find my family. Canada might be the way to go for that,” Coach threw out his own personal plan. Yolanda was more reluctant to give out her personal plan than him.

“I think that I want to go look for other survivors. There’s nothing for me left in this world,” she didn’t completely lie, but she still didn’t tell the truth. Ellis was pregnant and that was high on her list of priorities. Internally she deviously grinned thinking of a way to get her plan into action. “What do you think will happen *if* we get to Canada? We’re all carries. If they don’t shoo us away they’ll probably kill us all. I wouldn’t want that to happen to a such a young couple. It’s a waste of life.”

Nick was up again by this point, but just chose to remain seated on the ground. She had a point, they’d didn’t know what would happen to them if they went there. He wasn’t too sure about her though. There was always something so off about the women that he didn’t like. Something more sinister than she was letting on about herself.

“Maybe we should reconsider going?” Shogo voiced concerned for his life. His eyebrows were raised very high to highlight the collection of lines in the middle aged man.

“FUCK THAT!!! I’M GETTING THE FUCK AWAY FROM THAT CRAZY LADY!” Logan shouted jumping out of his seat. Yolanda raised a brow at him. “You’ve punished all of us at some point turning us all on each other or to each other. You have everyone wrapped around your finger you crazy bitch! Screw you guy’s I’m going to go to my room with some water and some food. I’ll only see you when I run out.” He turned to Shogo a bit bashfully. “You’re free to come and go if you want dude.”

Shogo glanced around the room sadly before helping Shogo carry the stuff up.
‘Guess they’re an item as well’ Yolanda thought while watching the men.

“Hate to say it, but they’re kind of right Yolanda. You can be a bit too controlling,” Nick pointed out to her. She shifted to stand straight up and crossed her arms to look down at everybody.

“You’re not in the position to make such demands. I don’t know about you but I really like old western movies!” Everyone turned their heads, but Dimitri who got up and joined her. Thumping from the stairs could be heard as Elliot came down the stairs as well.

Chapter End Notes

In one of the original versions Rochelle had the ability to die and respond to be intended as comic relief, but that version of the story was just way too dark. Don't get me wrong I do like dark stories, but I need some humor to it. Hence a couple more out of place things in this chapter. Coach, Logan, and Shogo being potheads; Nick laughing his ass off because of common cliques. I hope I spelled that right...french...

Anyways like I said in like chapter one or two I will post the drafts of the story after the main story is complete only because the draft before this one I'm going off that ending. Damn maybe I am a romantic because I have it set up perfectly.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Yolanda-esk conversations. She is the master manipulator.

Chapter Notes

Sorry that this is a shorter chapter. I only just realized when rereading my one shot Letters of Sadness that most of it was basically my own suicide note so I'm trying to work on being more positive. I've also had a ton of writing to do because of creative writing. My writing style flips between a few things because it's more convenient to be dialogue heavy sometimes and it's sometimes better to be descriptive heavy, ect, ect.

On that note here is a good quote by a rapper,

"The truth is you don’t know what is going to happen tomorrow. Life is a crazy ride, and nothing is guaranteed."

-Eminem

“Aww hell what did we get ourselves into?” Coach questioned to himself. As he glanced at the trio that decided to take charge.

Their stature tall and proud as they made the rest in the room highly aware of their status in the group now. Yolanda was the leader. Elliot and Dimitri were her left and right hand man respectively.

“Our ideas are different. Me and Elliot are highly educated. That one is the muscle, and don’t worry he doesn’t mind being called that,” she answered him. The aura she gave off told the others not to move.

“Why?” Ellis asked a bit of fear biting at his voice.

“Because from our knowledge the rest of the world is gone, and we need to rebuild. Rochelle was a lost cause. ‘Belle’ turned out to be a guy in drag-”

“A bloody fine one-” Elliot fantasized cutting her off. Since that day he couldn’t stop thinking about Belle even when he-

“HEY!” Ellis and Nick both yelled. Ellis *is* the jealous type.

“Elliot shut the fuck up!” Yolanda yelled so fast that she was almost not have been able to be heard. “And Zoey is infertile due to PCOS. I’ve been through menopause already. This makes Ellis the only human that we know that is alive that is able to breed. Don’t interrupt me or I won’t tell you the rest.

“This is our best shot at restoring humanity, and yes it’s barbaric, but it’s a necessary evil for the
greater good. Nick you’ll be there too. Willingly you’ll have some freedom, but you won’t be able to
take any risk like Ellis as well. Unwilling and you two will be cuffed to each others fronts if we’re on
the move. Unable to escape and protects the front more. I can’t have you killed Nick because that
would put too much stress on Ellis. Don’t want to hurt the baby now do we.

“Unfortunately for you Coach you will be demoted to everyone else’s position unless you, and the
other two musketeers want to go to Canada to have a big gay poly wedding. We’ll be here creating
civilization.”

“Your heart is cold,” Coach critiqued. She shrugged, and Nick couldn’t help but to laugh at her.

“Why is it the clique of the villain telling their entire plan to the ones who can stop them always true.
That’s the most stupid clique ever!” he rolled around on the floor. What a strange coping mechanism.

She snapped her fingers. “Lock him in the linen closet, and tons of fun with the other musketeers.”

“Hey that’s my nickname for him,” Nick still couldn’t control his laughter. Ellis was paralyzed with
fear even though she’d do no harm to him. The two minions drug Coach into the attic and locked the
three musketeers up there. Yolanda smirked, she put the box back up there. They’d be fine for a few
weeks.

It only took Dimitri to carry Nick off to the closet. He couldn’t resist cracking one more joke before
he was carted off, “I don’t want to go back into the closet. I already came out before.”

When Nick couldn’t be heard anymore she turned to Ellis, and sat down with him on the couch.
“So…before anything else I just want a pleasant conversation between just us,” she coaxed him.

“What’s there to talk about? You seemed really nice before-well as nice as you would let on, but
now you’re being very discriminatory,” Ellis leaned back uncomfortable being left alone in her
presence. She paused for a moment to purse her lips.

“The impossible brings out the worst in man,” she let out then proceeded to shrug saying,
“Sometimes the best in people, but we are mostly primal beings with a few motives…Everyone has a
motive even if they think that they don’t. You catch me?”

“I suppose, but I still don’t really know why you’re doing this,” Ellis murmured lowly leaning back
into the couch as much as humanly possible.

She sighed and went on to explain, “Because one of those primal things is survival. We don’t know
if we’re running into friendly people, people who want us gone, or a lost cause. I’d prefer to take my
chances on reviving humanity, but that’s not what I wanted to talk to you about.” He remained silent.

“I want to know if there is any family predisposition to having to need a C-section, preeclampsia, ect,
ect.”

“My aunt died because she had an ectopic pregnancy and the church threatened to excommunicate
my mom’s entire family publically if she were to have an abortion. She was 14 at the time. I don’t
think that information really helps you though because she wasn’t done growing. My mom described
it as one of the worst things she’d ever had to see,” Ellis thought back on the story losing his focus.
He didn’t pay attention to what Yolanda said to him next because of how entranced he was in the
story his mother had told him years ago.

His aunt was 14 before the Ro VS Wade case. His mother was around 7 at the time and didn’t really
understand what was going on at the time. He doesn’t know for sure if she’d gotten a basement
abortion to end the pregnancy or if she really didn’t. All he knew is what his mom remembered of it.
It could have been said publicly that she died due to an ectopic pregnancy even if she had gotten a failed abortion so that the rest of the family wouldn't be shamed.

Shamed, what a word to describe an action caused by someone. It really is cruel to think about how one word can describe an entire family over what one person did or didn’t do. The pain that comes along with such a word. Alienation and being resigned to being stared at with a story that’s told to every newcomer so that they know to stay away from you because of the ‘awful’ deed that someone in your family did or didn’t do.

Yolanda shook his shoulder to draw him out of his daze. “Can you actually pay attention?” she asked more rhetorically than not.

“Sorry,”

“ANYWAYS...I think we’re going to head west because North Dakota has a non existent population...Which means fewer zombies...or infected if they mutated enough not to need food or water.”

‘I wish she wouldn’t talk to me like I’m dumb. I’m not that smart, but I ain’t stupid’ Ellis shifted uncomfortably as Yolanda drew in closer to him.

“So…”

“So what?” Yolanda asked mockingly.

“What’s going to happen to the rest of them if we’re stuck here for about another month?” he asked moving away from her. She threw her legs over his lap to pin him to his spot.

“That’s one I didn’t think through as much, but I guess Nick is going to get a slightly better treatment then Zoey. He’ll be able to see you and not be in total darkness all of the time. The three musketeers have enough shit to last them the rest of the time here. They can leave with Zoey when we leave if they want to separate,” She pursed her lips looking up to the ceiling as if were to give her the wisdom she needed.

“And I’m under constant watch,” Ellis nodded sensing the gap in her words. She smiled and stifled a laugh.

‘Kid is smarter than I think he is. I need to remember that, don’t think he even knows how smart he is. Damn souther voice and child likeness threw me off. I’m usually really good at this!’ she thought composing herself.

For what happened to Francis is uncertain other than that he disappeared from the house with some supplies before Yolanda could think of a plan for him…

Was this the first week that he’s been stuck here or has it been longer? Nick did not know the answer to that. All he knew is that he occasionally got fed and got to see Ellis. He needed to think of a way out and fast. Naturally being a conman he thought of the weakness’ of his captors. Elliot’s was sex, Dimitri’s was language, Yolanda’s was ironically not being able to tell his poker face.

As much as it pained him to have to do this he came up with the best plan possible that ensured at least him and Ellis got away. However, the method of approach goes against almost all of his beliefs, but it had to be done.
Yolanda made frequent visits to come and talk to him because she regarded Nick more as an equal to her rather then everyone else who was below her. She enjoyed talking to him because he didn’t care about pissing her off and likewise. Too similar to each other. She sat on the other side of the door to him.

‘Now or never to start this up, but this is going to be one hell of a tedious conversation. If I play the wrong card I’ll never get the chance again!’ Nick thought. The conman was right as he bit the nail of his thumb. He’d never get the chance to influence her again if he screwed this plan up.

“So…” Nick started the conversation. He needed the conversation to be about her first so that she would inquire about him. “How’d life treat you before all of this?” Calculated, but on the right track. “I mean you know that I’m a con artist and that you were too.”

Although he couldn’t see it she smiled. “Ya know, I still was even with my masters. I never could get away from doing it. Why’d you think I majored in psych when I went to college. I wanted to be even better. Some of the stuff I learned in the classroom was utterly wrong because I learned the truth when I was a child. Never did tell my husband or daughter. That weak minded bastard would’ve left me the minute he found out and taken our daughter with him. I don’t know how he thought I made all of that money just by being a psychologist. I had to pay for his drug abuse somehow. What about you?”

“I started gambling when I was a teenager, and got into the world of conning around that time. My ex wife was a better conman then me. She stole my heart, my money, and robbed me of something I value even more…” he alluded.

‘Perfect! This should be all I need for her to take the bait’ Nick thought sneering on the other side. “Something more…” Yolanda thought aloud.

‘This could be the leverage I need to get him on my side? Better not shit in the milk on this one’ she thought formulating her plan.

“Tell me, was she going to be the mother of your children?”

Hook, line, sinker.

Nick quickly thought of the best way to phrase it, and added a bit of his own pain on remembering, “Yeah...one day I came back to our apartment and I found blood all over the floor. It trailed into the bathroom. My ex… she was leaned up against the bathtub, covered in her blood. Telling me that she was sorry because she didn’t want to have my kids. I took her to the hospital, but she got pregnant with my best friend’s kid soon after. She kept that one...while we were still married.”

‘The whole self inflicted abortion is a lie!’ Yolanda thought bitterly.

“Did she ever explain after why she did that?” She asked in her most curious voice.

‘Damn it! That's too suspicious!’ Yolanda cursed at herself.

‘She must be thinking that the abortion was fake. I mean I wish it was, but that's the truth. Most of what I’m going to be feeding her is a platter of bullshit and lies’

“I confronted her in the hospital room. She told me that she didn’t love me anymore and hadn’t for awhile. She knew that it’d kill me to find out that I could’ve been a father because I really wanted to be a dad so she did it herself. No credit cards or debit cards to track online where they were spent at. The bitch really didn’t want me to know at all. I wish I hadn’t known. She didn’t even try to scrape
up cash to pay for one. Risking death to not have my kid was better to her in her mind,” Nick’s voice cracked. Not all of what he said was a lie. He really wished that he never had to find that out. It pains him to remember.

‘Maybe it wasn’t a lie. That’s good that he wants to be a father. I’ll push being or was a parent angle to get him on my side’

“I’m sorry for your loss. I can’t imagine the pain that you went through during that time. Being a parent is one of the most rewarding things in life. When you get to hold your child for the first time or see them walk for the first time. It’s one of those things that you’ll never forget. Your ex wife sounds like an awful person for what she put you through. Did you always want to be a father?” she pushed her angle.

‘Hahahaha! This is getting even easier!’ They both thought.

“Honestly I didn’t want to be a dad when I was a child until my late teens. I watched Beavis and Butt-Head a lot as well. It kinda put me off a bit on children. I really wanted kids I suppose when I learned that I could’ve been a father, but only to learn at the same time that the chance was ripped away from me,”

“Funny how life works,” Yolanda stated bitterly. “You only realize how much you care or want something until you can’t have it or if it’s taken away from you.”

“Yeah...I’m scared that I’ll lose Ellis if something happens to him during the pregnancy,” no lie, no exaggeration, just the complete truth. Hint of fear in his voice as he spoke that one crucial sentence that aids Yolanda more than him.

It was a power struggle between the two, and if you’ve ever seen or read Death Note their conversation is pretty much how the entire series goes, always trying to think one step ahead of the other of whom has their own secret agenda. All roundabout til the finale.

‘Bueno…’ Yolanda thought her eyes narrowing with the realization that she could checkmate him now if she played her pieces right.

“Despite Elliot’s apparent incompetence he has some medical training, and I was a midwife when I was a teenager back at home,” she threw out there. Nick turned around in the closet to face the door. Hearing that she turned to face the door.

“You were?” Relief was in Nick’s voice and she knew that she had won him over.

With a sick and twisted grin she spoke out, “Claro que s(accent i).” (Translates to: very strongly agree).
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The climax of the story already happened if you haven't noticed. This is the resolution of the falling action. AKA the ending. Fuck, I did remember something from english class I didn't care to remember.

Chapter Notes

I'm getting help for my personal problems now so I hope to make some overall happier stories. However, I've noticed from my creative writing class that people love tragedy more, I don't know why. I don't think I'll make an epilogue, but like I promised the drafts will be posted after this.

"Take my heart and please don't break it"

-Frank Sinatra, LOVE

The title of the fic is from the song as well.

Time had passed yet again. It was confirmed when they left the house that Francis had disappeared not to come back. Outside of the house there was no trace of him. The trio and Zoey left the rest of the group in the hopes of finding family and to be away from Yolanda and Elliot’s schemes. Shogo and Logan were a thing by the time that they left the house. They were as infatuated with each other as Ellis and Nick.

The new group had found the remains of Yasuko and Rochelle, more specifically Elliot who chanted profanities for a few days afterwards. Ellis and Nick were their captives. Nick being brainwashed into staying, also known as stockholm syndrome. Ellis was irritated by Coach and the others not doing anything to save them by letting them go without even so much of a bat of the eye.

They ran into a new infected type, and that was the only type that was alive. It was a cross between a hunter with predatoriness, but it didn’t like to sound or act like an angry cat all the damned time. The monster didn’t have claws, but it was stronger than the tank even with no apparent muscle. Choking was its kink according to Elliot.

Speaking of Elliot he had made several attempts to make a move on Nick. Yolanda would curse him out while Ellis possessively grab onto Nick’s arm. Saying stuff to insinuate sex wasn’t being very covert or successful for him. It got so bad at one point that Dimitri smacked him in the head for how distracting he was being.

Yolanda seemed a lot more calm being away from everyone else. It was very apparent that she didn’t like big groups. She also has made a few flirting gestures to Nick that only Ellis picked up on. The young man and the con artist/master manipulator had their own unspoken conversations. She would attempt to flirt with Nick and he would glare at her and pull Nick closer to him. Nick never seemed
to notice at those times, but it was only because he was shoving down his pride, feelings, and happiness to keep Ellis safe.

They FINALLY made their way to North Dakota, the state that has nothing that famous for it besides being vastly empty.

“You said empty, but I did not think this empty,” Dimitri commented complaining. His english had vastly improved over the months that they’d been together. Summer was around the bend with it being late May.

“Feel like we’re in a less swapier version of the swamps we went through Nick,” Ellis agreed with the Frenchmen rubbing his growing stomach. Enough time had passed to where Ellis was showing. He’d kept his coveralls with him and wore it respectively, different shirt though. Nick wore another suit that was in one of the high end stores that they’d pass through back in Columbus. The two wrote a little memento in Rochelle’s memory in the city.

“I hate empty places like this. It always meant for me that I had to haul ass if I pissed off someone,” Nick griped as well. He was pissed off that he and Ellis hadn’t had a moment alone since January.

“Shut up you three, it’s usually the other one I have to tell to be quiet,” Yolanda announced. Elliot looked so smug at that moment. That smug face of his would earn him a well deserved punch around the wrong people, and by wrong people it would be Dimitri and Nick if she wasn’t around.

“We can stop at the next town if possible. I mean as long as there is enough food to last until we can grow some bloody crops. I’d kill for a fresh a-” Elliot started.

“Do not say,” her majesty growled. Everyone was getting on her last nerves the past while.

“I’m-”

“ELLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLIOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOT!” She turned around to cuss him out. Nick frantically turned to Ellis.

“We need to go right now or I don’t think I will ever be mentally be able to again!” Nick yelled to him in a hushed tone. Ellis nodded briefly watching Yolanda bitch at Elliot. The pair moved their way away from the group slowly before breaking off into a sprint away. They didn’t hear anything until they were about a mile away when they hear Yolanda scream their names.

They panted until they caught their breaths. Soon, and quickly, they needed to run further away from the rest otherwise they’d catch up to them. Ellis glanced up at Nick who was still breathing heavily from the cardio. Silently he closed the space between them and hugged him gently, but tightly.

“I love you,” Ellis said almost wordlessly, Nick reciprocated the hug.

“I love you too El,” he ran a hand through his young lover’s hair.

The past few months have been nerve racking and miserable for them both. Ellis had been constantly watched by the others, forcefed when not hungry, and examend. Nick had been locked in a closet most of the time with no interaction and no concept of time. Damned if he didn’t hate solitary confinement when he served a couple of years in prison. Yolanda had turned into a tyrant and she didn’t take judgement very well at all. Dimitri was her generally quiet non questioning right hand man. Elliot was the perverted smart left hand man of hers. Nick was just thankful that she kept him at bay because he’d sexually harassed him multiple times. Apparently he’d kept that photo that Yasuko took of him when he was dressed up as ‘Belle’.
During their few months journey they found that new infected type. You could at least fight it off if it pinned you, but it was nice to have other people help. They didn’t give it a name because there was no point for them if it was the only thing running around besides other survivors. Scenery wasn’t too bad, however, Nick and Ellis were forced in the center of the group because they were forced to be defenceless. Ellis never got pounced on by the infected because of Yolanda’s orders of if need be get in the way of it and get pinned yourself.

At night the couple never had to ever take watch because of you know, trying to escape. Nick took as many precautions to be as far away from Elliot as humanly possible. The dude was too desperate to get his dick wet. There was this one time that he saw Elliot hit on Yolanda and she backhanded him so hard he split his lip. That was the last time as well. He’d tried to hit on Dimitri too, but he just looked at the scientist like he was weird before continuing to move on. If there was one thing though is that he never tried that shit with Ellis in fear of getting his dick chopped off by Ellis, Nick, or Yolanda.

Dimitri had grown less afraid of using his English because he’d become almost fluent in the language. He occasionally made jokes about observations he’d make about American culture. Nick wondered if he didn’t like Yolanda as well because of how she treats him as well, but is afraid to rebell because she’s another number. Her plans are generally carefully calculated and planned very near flawlessly.

Yolanda hadn’t changed very much. She still made conversation with Nick, but he for the most part would shut down the conversation. He held a lot of resentment at her for what she did to him and especially Ellis. Disappointed she’d attempt to talk to Elliot rationally, but it usually ended up with her yelling at him. When she’d talk to Ellis occasionally, but he’d usually never answer her because of her abuse to him.

Ellis was sick and tired of being everyone's puppet, plan, cow, and prisoner. He was sick of being betrayed and lied to. All he wanted was to be with Nick, alone. The young man squeezed him tighter in his arms.

“We should get something to defend ourselves with,” Ellis suggested nuzzling his face into Nick.

“Also a vehicle. It’s not good for you to get your heart rate too high right now,” He scratched the soft overgrown brown curls of Ellis’. They both needed a haircut. Zoey did know how to cut hair, but she was gone with the others as soon as she was let out. She’d gone insane trapped in a small dark space with nobody to talk to for a couple of months. Shouting that she was Cornholio and that she needed teepee for her Bunghole.

“Yeah…” Ellis frowned breaking away from Nick. “We should hurry as well. I don’t want them finden us.” he mumbled. His lower lip was trembling with fear. “I can’t image what she’d do to you.”

Nick gently grabbed Ellis’ chin and tilted his face to look him in the eyes. He gently rubbed his thumb over his chin. “Don’t worry,” he murmured. “They aren’t going to find us and hurt us again.” He leaned in turning his face. “I won’t let them.” He sealed their lips with a kiss.

“Ok...but can we please hurry...I really don’t, feel safe, with them so close,” Ellis stumbled over his words. Nick let go of his chin nodding.

It didn’t take too long for them to find something to defend themselves with, but it was a crowbar. It would have to suffice for now. With the sun setting quickly they found a gas station and went into the office in the back and pushed the desk up against the door. The sex starved couple decided to take advantage of their new found solitude.
“Ellis…” Nick moaned breaking off their kiss.

“Hmmmmmm…” Ellis mused. The older man grabbed his hand with his and intertwined their fingers, kissing his young lover’s hand lightly.

“I love you so much,” Nick rested his head atop of Ellis’ chest to listen to his heart.

“I love you a lot too Nick,” Ellis smiled running his free hand in Nick’s hair.

“So…” Nick began.

“What?” Ellis asked gingerly.

“What if I asked you something?” Nick playfully lifted his head to look his lover in the eyes.

“Like what?” Ellis inquired, Nick smiled hugely. “Nick, just tell me. We have been through hell and back...so I think you can tell me what’s on your mind.”

“It’s...a bit harder for me to ask,” Nick blushed turning his head away.

“Come on, tell me,” Ellis didn’t exactly beg, but kinda was.

“From the moment I met you I thought you were a kind hearted man. Your optimism annoyed the hell out of me at first, but you showed this grouch that there is good and kindness in the word. With your permission I Nicolas Nisko would like your hand in marriage. I accept you for who you are and who you may grow into in the future and I would be honored to do that by your side. So what do you say Ellis, you want to stick by me?” he proposed. “I don’t have a ring, a home, or anything worth any monetary value right now...but, would you want to when this is all over?”

Ellis hugged Nick tightly against him and breathlessly whispered, “I’d love that...but I love you even more.”

Fate had brought them together in the apocalypse. Two people that would have never spoken to one another before it had fallen hard for each other. An indestructible bond made from being survivors. To falling for each other’s true personalities. Their love would be everlasting.
Deleted Conversations

Chapter Summary

Some conversations that I made for it. It's only a couple of them, but the one was lengthy. It also made the fic way too dark even for me.

Chapter Notes

If you want an epilogue written for the story I'd be more than glad to make one, but please do comment if you want it otherwise I'm going to take it as a no.

For this one I went along with a similar situation to Ellis. It was even supposed to be the same person. If I would have went along with this one then the second group would have never shown up, and they would've met back up with the first group. I decided that this was way too dark for the story. I had done a lot of typing when I was originally working the story. These were the only two conversations that I moved in the document to use for reference source if need be. The rest I usually deleted.

“I’m not a very optimistic person… I lost that a long time ago…” Nick stated. His feet and the prints that they left behind felt very ironic.

“What happened?” Rochelle asked.

‘I guess that they’re not going to stop asking me unless I spit it out…’ Nick thought dragging his feet.

“My mom left me at my father's doorstep when I was five. He then dumped off at his parents house. My grandparents didn’t like me, but raised me out of not believing in the foster system. Me and a couple of my teammates on the hockey team I was on when I was 12 survived an accident when the lake we were on broke through. At thirteen my grandmother was murdered while I was grabbing mike from the store. I got into a gang shortly after. Small one, local, not violent, just stole… I left it no problem… The real problem happened when I was 16…

“I got a fake ID and went to the bar. Me and this guy were chatting about life. He kept getting me drinks and I thought he was just being nice and wanting to chat… but I was wrong… his name was Eric. I wish I could be sure, but… I really do wonder if that Randy guy was him. Anyways, I was so drunk that I didn’t know what was happening until I was at his place while it was going on. I want to believe I blacked out, but that might just be the years of drug abuse that kicked in.

“He kept whispering into my ear n stuff. When I was coherent enough I ran into the bathroom and locked it. I puked until I couldn’t see. Waited in there until I knew he left then grabbed my clothes and ran to school in the same clothing as the day before. Nobody said anything to me, but I felt like some of them could tell something was wrong with me, but decided to say nothing. My grandfather when I had came home that day looked at me and handed my a cigarette and a cup full of vodka. His way of *solving* the problem. He didn’t even say anything to me at all. It was like he could tell. Spent quite some time self medicating and getting myself into more problems after that. That’s why
I’m not an optimistic person,” Nick sighed. Coach put his hand on Nick’s shoulder.

“You were raped too?” Ellis asked rhetorically.

“Yeah…” Nick mumbled. “Was a long time ago. It doesn’t bother me now.” He lied smiling.

When I was working out the conversation between Yasuko and Shogo there was to be some supernatural element to be had with her, and it was going to passed down to Shogo when she’d pass away, but I wanted the story to be more realistic.

“Nope,” a loud thunk hit the water, and Elliot decided with that to roll over and hide himself in shame.

“(I think that the new group is alright son),” Yasuko smiled at her son who was helping her knit a blanket.

“(They do act nicer than our smaller group, except those girls. I mean they seem to be really fighting),” he shifted his weight. He was holding the yarn for her.

“(Girls will do what girls will do. My senses have never fooled me before and that boy, the one around Dimitri’s age was born female),”

“(Really)?”

“(I am certain, but I’ve never really cared for such affairs. I’m how does he say it) Laissez- faire (about that sort of thing),”

“(Well they seem happy, and happiness does spread so I think that it’s good that they’re keeping morale up),”

“(That’s how I raised you my sweet child),”

“(I do wonder how you know these sorts of things)?”

“(I’m very sensitive to my surroundings son. My grandfather was before he passed away, and he passed it on to me. I don’t think you got it. The only way I can describe it is ‘seeing the future’ before it actually happens),”

“(Now I know why grandma always said you and her father were crazy),” they both shared a laugh.
The original story

Chapter Summary

This is the original idea for the story.

Chapter Notes

This was one of three beta stories for the work. It was originally going to be 4 chapter revolving around one thing, the character's gender identity. Coach saying in the final story is a legacy attribute of this idea.

This was if it was originally Nick who was Female to Male transgender. The Original FanFic name was Of Zombies and Humanity. It was also going to be them going along the Ohio river into the Mississippi to the Ocean to meet up with the original group, but all the chapters were to be around 6 thousand words. I really didn't expect to go above 40 pages when typing.

“We should stop a pharmacy on the way to the safe room. We could use more pain pills and we could stand to get some antibiotics for our bites,” Nick suggested by pointing to the sign that advertized the store.

“I don’t we should take that kind or risk Nick, the safe room is down this street,” Coach sternly retorted. Rochelle shifted, and Ellis was keeping an eye out for the idelling group.

“Coach, I hate to do this to you, but…” She started shifting her stance again. “I really think we should. We’re low on supplies and we could use a surplus if the next safe room doesn’t have anything again.”

Coach sighed agreeing to go look for meds. Nick wasn’t usually the one to give out suggestions on where to go, and to a place that Coach would believe to be raided during the beginning of the apocalypse of all places. He thought back to the gun shop back in Savanna thinking how that the store was fully stocked, and that the man would have killed them all if it wasn’t for forgetting the cola that he so desperately forgotten to get.

Rochelle couldn’t wait to get to the pharmacy because she wanted to get some birth control pills to lessen her cramps and make her period more predictable. Ellis didn’t care much for the place other than to see if it had any postcards so that he could give one to Keith when they would meet up again. Nick was looking for a specific prescription that he needed, but kept forgetting about since the outbreak started. There really wasn’t time to think of such things when you’re just fighting to stay alive after all.

They group quickly and quietly killed the infected with their melee weapons as they went. Ammo for their guns and guns that weren’t jammed or broken were getting harder to find as its been about 4-5 months since the infection began in Pennsylvania. The group was currently making their way west in hopes of getting back to civilization.
Thankfully there hasn’t been as much infected as there once were. It seemed as if some died off or that previous groups cleared out most of them. Ellis and Coach weren’t too keen on leaving the southern states until realizing that the cold of winter would give them an edge because zombies can’t move if their bodies are frozen solid. They were somewhere in West Virginia. Nick called it the North-South since it reminded him so much of what he had seen.

Ellis ran ahead… again, but quickly ran back to the group. “It’s one of those things again!” He yelled.

“Jesus,” Nick mumbled.

“Boy calm down, and take that gun out,” Coach told Ellis. They all took out their primary weapons in a line waiting for the special to come around the corner.

It wasn’t loud and it looked just like any other common infected, but one major difference in sight was that it twitched and jolted around. It doesn’t make any sound except when it’s knocking survivors unconscious for some ungodly reason unknown to the survivors. They named it Sandman.

The sandman came around the corner ready to leap, pounce or run at them. Just as they were about to shoot it the thing turned around sprinting to the wall. Ellis ran after it only for the thing to kick off the wall and land on him.

“SHIT!” Nick cursed. Coach grabbed the infected off the boy and Rochelle gave it a well placed headshot with her shotgun. Nick picked the drowsy Ellis up off the ground carrying him bridal style. He would be out of fighting for about 20 minutes so that he wouldn’t collapse asleep.

“Sorry y’all,” Ellis apologized.

“It’s alright sweety. Just try to be more careful next time,” Rochelle cooed. Nick was having a hard time carrying him and starting to struggle to carry him.

“Jesus Christ Ellis! Did you manage to gain weight?” Nick criticized him.

“Maybe in muscle,” Ellis chuckled. He had actually lost 26 over the months. All of them had lost weight. Coach lost the most and had to get new clothes several times.

They reached the pharmacy without anymore trouble and Ellis was able to walk and run again fine by then. The exterior of the building looked fine minus all of the blood, puke, etc that was everywhere. Coach went through the door first followed by Rochelle on his left and Nick on his right. Ellis keeping an eye out behind them and shut the door softly while the other’s checked for infected.

After checking the entire store the team rendezvous at the entrance with Ellis to say that the store was clear. “Make sure to take all of what y’all can carry,” Coach ordered handing out drawstring bags.

Nick went to the refrigerator in the back of the store and started rummaging through it. Most pharmacies they raided early on still had power going to it from a replenishing fuel source. This one was no different. Frustration filled Nick as he searched harder for what he was looking for. He found it hidden under a box of biologics used for rheumatoid arthritis.

“Thank god,” he sighed quietly raising it up to his eyes. A large hand snatched it out of his. Nick turned to Coach pissed who was also pissed.

“What the HELL Nick!!! Ya could have gotten us all killed trying to get roids!!!” Coach yelled. Rochelle took the box and started inspecting it.
“Nick I think that’s how the tanks formed. I don’t want to see you turn into one of them,” Ellis worriedly hugged Nick. They couldn’t turn since they were carriers, Ellis was just trying to find an excuse to be close to Nick again. Coach gave the look of what the hell is wrong with you to them.

“Nick,” Rochelle called Nick. “Can I talk to you alonish for a second?” Nick shook Ellis off of him and went over to her.

“I think that you know what it’s for and please don’t tell the others,” he asked her. She pointed to the expiration date.

“It’s expired. I can’t imagine how you feel, but I wouldn’t take something like this when it’s expired. Pills are one thing, but liquids could outright hurt you,” She explained her reasoning. Nick rubbed his face.

“Shit… I don’t want to do this anymore. I haven’t had any in more that two months… I think. I’m going to get it soon then. I’ve lost muscle, and other stuff started working again for the first time since my early 20s,” He dropped to the floor with his hands on his head and his elbows on his knees.

“I wish there was another way,” she knelt down patting his head.

“There was a patch or pill, or something, but I can’t remember the names because I only did injections,” he buried his face into his legs starting to sob silently. Ellis came over and hugged Nick trying to comfort him.

“Coach was just being a meanie. I’d like roids too because then I’d that tank a piece of my mind with my fists,” Ellis told him unaware of the actual situation.

“Hoard incoming!” Coach shouted. Nick didn’t budge when Ellis tried to get him up. He resolved to protect him. Luckily there weren’t too many zombies and they got through them with only their melee weapons. Ellis got an idea and took out a packet of jerky and dangled it in front of Nick.

“You ken have it if ya get up,” Ellis teased. Rochelle walked over after filling up the rest of the bags.

“Come on we’re going to the safe room, and if you say down there any longer someone might mistake you for the witch,” Rochelle looped an arm around Nick’s and Ellis did the same with his other one. Ellis ended up dragging Nick back to the safe room.

Nothing to much on the way to the saferoom presented itself to be a challenge for Coach and Rochelle to take care of. Ellis held onto Nick who had buried his face into Ellis’ shoulder sobbing. He made sure to keep an eye out for anything that could approach the group since he and Nick were defenceless.

On the way back he began to think that he would have to tell the others eventually because it was going to get real obvious real quick. Period, cramps, and worst of all PMS should all be reactivating soon. Because of the sandman everyone…minus Nick had agreed to never be alone. Because of that going bathroom had been limited to toilets and Nick hasn’t cleaned himself in a couple of weeks to avoid being exposed.

Once inside the safe room Ellis set Nick down and hugged him. “You can tell me what’s wrong Nick. I L… I think that we’re close friends,” Ellis stumbled over his words trying to think of the appropriate thing to say in the situation. Nick didn’t acknowledge Ellis’ words.


“There was a prescription that he needed, but the store was completely out of it, and I don’t think that
we’ll find another pharmacy for at least another month or so that hasn’t been completely raided. Just leave him alone for a bit. I’m sure that he’ll calm down soon enough,” Rochelle advised Coach who had just finished barricading the door.

“Alright then,” he said taking a seat. “I don’t want to continue going west back to civilization. I don’t know about y’all but I think we should head north to Pittsburgh and try finding us a boat to float in the river.”

“Isn’t that a dirty city? Ya know steel?” Ellis asked concerned. Coach and Rochelle gave him a funny look.

“It’s not dirty anymore Ellis. I’ve been there before since I live in Columbus. It’s a nice city with some really good food. The steel mills haven’t been in operation since Regan’s term… or something like that,” she explained to him. “I would like to go to my hometown first since I want to see if some people from there are still alive.”

“I guess that we could. Hopefully they’re nicer than that group that we met up with in Kentucky about a month ago,” Coach reminisced.

“Please do not bring them up again,” Ellis started. “That one guy I didn’t realize that he was flirting with me-”

“More of predator,” Rochelle interjected.

“And he took me back to a private room and locked the door. Thank gawd Nick was weary of that guy and kicked in the door before he did something to me,” Ellis finished his story shivering a bit.

“I didn’t think he would do anything like that until I saw you curled up in Nick’s arms. I’m sorry for not realizing something like that could happen,” Coach apologized to Ellis.

“It’s alright Coach,” Ellis accepted his apology. The boy refused to talk to anyone for a week after splitting up with the other group.

“That girl in their group was a massive bitch,” Rochelle gagged thinking about her. “I still cannot believe that she refused to use anything other than a magnum. Her nails and hair were perfect and she had no injuries.”

“Izzy never left the safehouse very often she told me once. She stayed in the safe house while the boys went out and scavenged because she became pregnant with the brunnet’s kid,” Coach told her.

“That reminds me of this one time mi buddy Keith got his girlfriend at the time pregnant in 8th grade. She didn’t want to leave the house or anything because she was too embarrassed so Keith suggested that she should coverself up with a sheet, but she got-” Ellis started.

“Ellis not now please,” Rochelle told him. Ellis pouted hoping that Keith was in whatever place they were going to go to next. He couldn’t wait to tell him all of his zombie fighting stories. Nick sat up sighing.

“Better I tell you all now then find out randomly later,” Nick started. “I’m transgender and I was looking for hormones in the pharmacy. I really can’t remember the last time I took my meds so I should be getting a scene from The Shining sometime in the next month.”

Everyone was silent for the next few moments. It made Nick very uncomfortable as he looked at his teammates faces, but Ellis got up and dove hugged onto him. “It don’t matter to me Nick, I still like you,” Ellis reassured Nick. He smiled relieved and reciprocated the hug.
“Damn son you’ve been hiding that to yourself for months from us, that musta been hard,” Coach chuckled. Rochelle finally let out a breath she’d been holding in. Glad that Nick was accepted by the whole group.

“It’s a tough gig. The only reason I knew to go kick that guys face in was intuition. You wouldn’t believe the amount of times I’ve had to defend myself against someone like that,” Ellis shivered again.

“Shit! Did anything ever happen?” Coach asked.

“Nothing other then them needing to get plastic surgery,” Nick smiled reminiscing of beating the shit out of his would be assailants. He patted Ellis’ head. “You good sport?”

“I think so,” Ellis and Nick had grown a lot closer since the incident with the other group. They’ll share the same bed, take watch with each other, be the first one over if the other needs help, and comfort one another. Nick hugged Ellis before he let go and sat next to him.

“I can’t believe there are no sleeping bags here,” Rochelle lamented.

“Well, at least there is a lot of food and we now have enough aid supplies to stay in here for a week or two,” Coach smiled wanting to get some rest from the constant action. Nick and Ellis agreed while Rochelle groaned.

The saferoom was a small room with a kitchen and a makeshift toilet in the other corner. No windows, but there were candles and lanterns to light up the room. There was a little light that was able to peek through the door. The safehouse was small, but secure.
The What If changed

Chapter Summary

Like the chapter's name this is what if it was Ellis instead. This was the darkest variation of the story. Rochelle had the ability to die and come back to life as a comic relief to the story, but the fic was still way too dark in my opinion. It really was planned just to be an onslaught of nightmares in this one. I was going to originally have Ellis die in childbirth in this one. This plot depressed me too much to write and I couldn't think of anything else to write by the end of the page. This was scrapped and had some revival in the actual draft and final copy.

Ellis looked down at his feet as he walked. He was behind Coach and Rochelle and in front of Nick as they walked to a safe house.

“Hey there’s a pharmacy over that way. We should go to it,” Nick commanded it rather than suggesting it. Coach frowned putting a hand to his head.

“No we’re not going outta our way to go there Nick,” Coach disagreed with Nick.

“Well fuck you then,” he turned and started heading the direction to the pharmacy. “Come on Ellis.” Ellis gave an apologetic smile to Coach.

“I hate to agree with him, but he’s right. I’m going with,” Rochelle followed. Coach begrudgingly followed the rest of the group.

The group was kind of just wondering around since the main outbreak. They were somewhere in West Virginia which Nick called the north-south. It had been 4-5 months since the outbreak started in Pennsylvania. They primarily used their melee weapons now since guns and ammo were hard to come by nowadays. Ammo was scarce and many guns they found were jammed or broken in pieces.

Ellis had been keeping mostly to himself. The only person that he really talked to the past month and a half was Nick. He had been too depressed to speak most of the time. Nick had gotten more protective over Ellis over the time spent with the boy. Rochelle had grown to miss Ellis’ stories. She had also been trying to convince the group to go to Columbus to see if anyone she knew was alive. Coach has lost so much weight that he had to get new clothing often. Everyone had lost weight. Ellis especially. Nick had given Ellis his suit jacket to keep warm until they find more suitable winter wear for the upcoming cold that was moving in.

Nick guided the group with ease through the zombies. He threw his ax at a smoker that appeared and struck it dead in the face. Ellis smiled at that while Rochelle congratulated him. Coach thought it was a dumb and risky move. They finally made it to the pharmacy. It looked disgusting like everything else, but by the looks of the building it hadn’t been raided yet.

They swept the store for zombies before they began to loot it. Ellis was searching the refrigerator when Nick came up behind him. He handed Ellis a pregnancy test box. Ellis took the box sadly.

“There’s a bathroom over there,” Nick pointed. “I’ll tell the others you went to take a shit.” Ellis nodded thanking Nick.
“Can you stay close to the door?” Ellis asked him.

“Of course,” Nick replied and they went about their business.

Ellis turned on his lantern in the bathroom. He set it down sighing. The toilet didn’t have running water he noted when sitting down on it. He held the box up to his face staring at it before he removed it from the box. He set the actual test down on his thigh as he read the instructions. When he was done reading them he took the device out of the sterile packaging and did as the directions said.

He was scared because he felt like he already knew the answer and was doing this just to prove it. He missed his period as far as he was aware for the past couple times. The smell of meat made him nauseated. His body was growing more in certain places. He lost all of his muscle mass since not being able to find T since the beginning of the outbreak. As he sat there alone in the dimly lit room he felt like his fate was sealed.

A knock at the door drew him back to reality. “Are you alright in there?” Nick asked him on the other side of the door.

“Sorry, I kinda just spaced out for a minute,” Ellis answered. He was sitting on the lid of the toilet at this point waiting for the answer to pop up.

“Okay, just let me know if you need anything,”

Ellis sighed and closed his eyes. Tearing up a bit. He sniffled. His answer would come in a few moments. When it was finally time he opened up his eyes and held up the test to the light and started bawling. Dropping the results in the process. The door flung open Nick rushing over to him. He hugged the shaking Ellis.

“Calm down we’ll find a way outta this,” Nick cooed petting him.

“I can’t Nick. I’m Catholic and I don’t believe in that,” Ellis choked out.

“Dude,” Nick laughed a little. Ellis sighed.

“Even though I am what I am. I still have my own beliefs on it sides It’s probably too late to take a pill to make it all go away. No… I’m more afraid of the pain if I want to abort because it’s not like I can go to a clinic. I could die so easily trying that,” he cried to Nick.

Coach and Rochelle were at the door of the bathroom at this point. They were now both aware of the situation. Coach sighed. “Maybe I should have let you beat that guy to death Nick,”

Rochelle was silent. She too would be horrified if she was pregnant. “But you didn’t, and I’m going to cut that guy up piece by piece if I ever see him again,” Nick vowed picking up Ellis to carry him to the safe house.

“Alright. I’ll let you have your fun with that guy. Me and Ro got all of the bags filled up. Can you carry more so that me and Ro are unhindered to clear the path for you two?” Coach asked. Nick nodded and they loaded him up like a pack mule.

There wasn’t much resistance getting to the saferoom, but Nick was definitely exhausted once they got there. After the room was secure Rochelle and Coach took all the bags off of Nick, setting them where they could. The safe house was very small. A kitchen on one side and a makeshift toilet on the other.
He sat Ellis down on the counter and leaned up against the counter on the other side. Coach was cooking up dinner and Rochelle was leaning against the counter as well.

“What should we do?” Ellis asked desperate.

“I don’t know,” Coach said stirring boiling noodles.

“I think I’d try to abort,” Rochelle gave her own opinion.

“I’m scared of dying,” Ellis whimpered.

“What are you afraid of happening?” Rochelle asked.

“My great grandma died a couple of years after having my grandma tryen to abort. She died of blood loss days later in severe pain. It’s not like she could really go to a hospital since she could get in trouble with the law. Ma great grandpa had to raise my grandma alone because of a backyard abortion gone wrong,” Ellis explained grimly. “My aunt also passed away because she would be excommunicated from her church if she went to a clinic. She died during the process. My entire family was banned from the church. I didn’t care, but I was 8 at the time. It horrified me enough to decide not to have an abortion ever.”

“We have enough food and meds to not leave here for a few weeks,” Coach tried to convince him that it was a valid option. All of them thought of what the screaming would attract. It’s not like a baby would know to be quiet. Even Ellis going through labor would draw in all the zombies in the radius.

“I think it’s something you should consider,” Rochelle said. Ellis put his hands on his face. Nick walked up and hugged him.

“It’s okay. It’ll be alright. We’ll find a boat and float on it if that’s what it takes,” Nick reassured him.

“Hell I was just about to suggest that we go to Pittsburgh so we could find a boat and do that,” Coach said.

“Can we stop by Columbus first? I really want to see if anyone I know is still there,” Rochelle asked the group.

“If there’s a group along the way that wants to do it. I don’t think I want him out here any longer then he needs to be. Once he starts showing then it’ll get harder to move around as easily,” Coach expresses his concern for Ellis’ safety.

“Kay. I’ll check the radio to see if anyone’s nearby,” She sighed depressed getting up to grab the device outta her bag.

“I wonder why he went after me?” Ellis mumbled.

“He was a predator. I don’t know why,” Nick lied. He knew exactly why he targeted Ellis. Ellis was young, looks and acts like a child, and was nïeve. Nick was the one to find Ellis. He learned of Ellis’ secret, but he didn’t care. All he wanted to do was beat that man to death for hurting Ellis. The other group, Rochelle, and Ellis were content to watch.

Coach pulled Nick off of him before he could beat him to death. Pissed at Coach he went to Ellis and gave him a bath and pain pills. He didn’t know how long the man had forced himself on Ellis. The young man was inconsolable from the pain and emotions. The only good thing that came out of the situation was that they finally confessed their feelings for one another.
“Well I hope we don’t see them again,” Coach stated tending to the spam. Nick and Ellis agreed. Soon it was time for dinner on the floor of the safehouse. Spam and noodles.

“Here,” Nick gave Ellis his spam. “You’re thin enough as it is.” Ellis thanked him for the extra food. “Any luck Ro?”

“Yes I did,” she took a bite of food. “There’s a group a little bit north of here. I told them that we could meet them in a few days at a rest stop just off the highway. They have a safe house there.”

“That’s good. We’ll rest up for tonight. Pack up the rest of the food en meet them there,” Coach agreed hoping to move on ASAP. He wanted to get Ellis to some really safety before problems would arise from him being pregnant.

“You know the guy I sometimes mention?” She smiled slyly.

“You mean the one you say in your sleep?” Nick being a bitch told her. Red cheeks told him that he was right.

“Yeah… that one…He told me that nobody’s left in Columbus so I might as well not go. I asked if there was a Keith for you Ellis, and he said that they hadn’t heard of one,”

“I was kinda looken forward to given Keith the postcards I collected on the way,” Ellis sighed wanting to trade stories about the zombies with his best friend.

“Just kidding Ellis! I hope I didn’t spam you there,” Rochelle made an awful awful dad joke. “He’s there! The other group agreed with the idea to find a boat, but they want to go down south just in case the river freezes up. Maybe we can find Bill’s group down there.”

“I can’t wait to tell Keith about our adventures,” Ellis smiled for the first time in about a month. Nick smiled as well hoping that Ellis would return to normal soon enough after the weeks of pain.

“We’ll pack all the stuff up and head out tomorrow,” Coach announced. “I’ll take first watch. Who wants the second and who wants the third?”

“Coach I can take a watch you know. I’m pregnant not injured,” Ellis told him.

“Alright you can take first watch then. I’ll take second,”

“I’ll take third,” Rochelle chimed in.

“Well at least I’m awake awake by the time we leave,” Nick smiled.

“And,” Coach started laughing. “You gotta make breakfast.” Nick glared at Coach who was laughing.
wearhouse or a high end dress shop along the way. He smiled thinking to Pittsburgh maybe having one when they go to find their boat.

Ellis got up first grabbing the handle outta Nick’s hand and plopped a heaping scoop into his bowl. Nick went to say something, but before he could Ellis had put his hand on his mouth while walking around him.

“Looks like he doesn’t want to deal with your shit this early, Nick,” Coach laughed grabbing his own bowl.

“Doesn’t anyone know how to wait? It’s not done until the cheese is melted and mixed in otherwise it’s exactly like shit. There’s no butter, no milk, and the spam is not mixed thoroughly in yet,” Nick complained while Rochelle grabbed her bowl.

“If It’s any consolation we feral enough to eat just about anything. Sides, we really don’t care. It’s just food,” Rochelle said between bites.

“It doesn’t have to taste like shit,” Nick rolled his eyes.

“I think it tastes good. I like the chunks,” Ellis complimented the food. Nick smiled and thanked him for the compliment. He finished cooking what was left and sat down to eat the rest using the serving handle. He was just about to take a bite out of the heaping handful when Ellis took it out of his hand and gave him his spoon instead. Ellis chuckled while eating the handleful. Nick decided not to get into an argument since Ellis was feeling goofy for the first time in awhile.

“We’ll finish eating, pack up our stuff, then leave,” Coach informed the group. “Boy stay in the center of the group. I don’t need your goof ass getting hurt.”

“I’ll try,” Ellis sheepishly smiled.

“Ellis so help me god you better stay in the center of the group otherwise I will do what I did before,” Nick threatened, Ellis grimaced.

“It worked before, and I’m sure it’ll work again,” Rochelle agreed with Nick.

Ellis had ran to far ahead once and had gotten attacked by several infected. He ran back to the group screaming because he had startled two witches and there was a tank chasing as well. No injuries to anyone, but patience and tempers. After the situation was resolved Nick had taken a stray wheelchair, forced Ellis on it and tied him down to it leaving him only able to pull the trigger on two automatics. He wasn’t happy. Nick had been smug about it. Rochelle and Coach were happy to not have to worry about Ellis getting himself killed for once. He would make good on his threat especially since an injury could hurt him severely.

They left the safehouse and headed off for the rest stop. When they’d reach a point on the highway where there are less cars the group will have Ellis or Nick hotwire a car. Nothing much presented a challenge getting into the highway. Ellis did as he was told much to the group’s delight. Some of the zombies were hiding underneath the cars. It wasn’t too much of a challenge, but they were annoying because they could pop out at anytime.

Coach couldn’t believe his ears at first when he heard that Ellis was pregnant. His first thought was to abort immediately because the noise could draw in unwanted attention. Then he realized that this was humanities future because they were evolved humans that were genetically chosen to survive the infection. Lastly he realized that Ellis was transgender, it had taken a while for him to process that. That the goofy kid had been hiding a huge secret from all of them.
Well Nick had found out first because of the incident with one of the groups that they had ran into. He thinks to himself that he should have known. Ellis always volunteered for first watch, never went skinny dipping with the rest of the group, had lost nearly all of his muscle mass, and his weight had gotten redistributed to different parts of his body. Part of him wants to ask him about everything, but the other part says that’s too personal of information to ask of him.

Rochelle kept yapping on about her boyfriend Jacob that they were going to meet. She had mentioned him previously before, but she kept going on and on about him. It was to the point where Nick found it worse than Ellis telling one of his Keith stories at the most inconvenient times.

They finally reached their goal of a clear highway. They set their stuff down to take a breather.

“This will do great,” Ellis said petting a car. “This type gets good gas mileage and it has a full tank. I’ll work on trying to find a key before I try to hotwire it.”

“We’ll cover you,” Coach told him. For the first couple of minutes nothing came up and everything was alright. However their luck ran out as they heard the roar of the tank. Ellis went to get out of the car to help, but Coach motioned for him to continue working on the car.

They tried to keep quiet, but Ellis got the car started. Both the engine and the tank roared. “Get the shit into the car, and let’s get the hell outta here!” Nick yelled. Ellis stayed in the driver’s seat ready to make the quick getaway. The others loaded up the car.

The tank came into view in the rear view mirror. “Hurry up!” Ellis yelled at the rest.

“No Ellis we want to stay out here and get crushed by a car,” Nick sarcastically answered. It caught up to Coach and went to punch him. He was able to dodge it in time. Rochelle wasn’t so lucky it hit her and she was thrown into a car. The car was dented and Rochelle didn’t make a sound.

“Rochelle!?” Ellis yelled drawing attention to himself. It went after him instead. Ellis got out of the car and ran over to Rochelle.

Her injuries were severe. Ellis checked for a pulse. There was one, but it was faint. He took out a first aid kit and wrapped up some of her superficial wounds. The commotion of the battle raged on, Nick and Coach had been taking turns pissing off the tank to give the other a breather during the fight.

After the tank had died the two come over to Ellis who had stopped bandaging her up. He shook his head and hugged Nick. “She’s gone. I think she died from internal bleeding,”

Nick pet Ellis, “Ok. Let’s get in the car.”

“I’ll drive,” Coach somberly said.

“We can’t just leave her like this,” Ellis told the others.

“Those gunshots are probably drawing in more of zombies right now. We can’t bury her because of time and safety, and I don’t feel comfortable bringing a dead body in the car,” Coach explained.

“What about Jacob?” Ellis whined.

“I’m sorry, but I agree with Coach. We can tell him where her body is,” Nick ushered him into the backseat of the car. Ellis had let himself be drug away from Rochelle and into the backseat with
Nick. Coach drove away from the scene. Ellis looked back at her as long as the visibility would allow him to. Nick was holding onto Ellis and petting him.

Everyone, but Ellis tried to ignore the pain of Rochelle’s death. He sobbed. He saw her die. He heard her last words to him. She had told him to tell Jacob that she loved him and to rest as much as possible because he was showing some signs that he was going to miscarry. He couldn’t bring himself to tell Nick and Coach. Stress wasn’t going to help him and he knew it. It was only going to increase the chance of him miscarrying.

Hours later they finally arrived at the rest stop. Coach and Nick left the car first to check around for zombies. Nick whistled to Ellis to let him know that he could come out.

‘I think that Ro was right about me going to miscarry. All of those pain pills and processed food with all the running and getting hit.’ Ellis thought clutching his lower abdomen. The moonlight glistened off of Ellis’ sweat covered skin.

“Hey! We’re over here!” A voice yelled. Nick and Coach waved heading over to the store. Ellis just stood there, a tear escaping his eye.

“Ellis,” Nick called. He didn’t budge. “Ellis?” Nick went up to Ellis. He was pale, and in a cold sweat. “Jesus!” Nick picked him up bridal style and ran in.

“What the hell happened to him?” Coach asked.

“Ellis?” a younger male voice chirped up.

“I dono,” Nick panted. “He was like this. Should we get the bags because we have more medical supplies?” He set Ellis down on a table, he had passed out in Nick’s arms.

“Is that Ellis?” The same young male asked. Coach turned to him.

“Holy hell! All of those stories were true!” Coach yelled. A red headed young male with scars and burns all over his exposed skin with a tattoo of ‘I’m a Moron’ was standing in front of him.

“I guess he is,” Keith spoke. He went over to Ellis and took his shirt off. “I assume you two already know his secret, but I don’t know to what extent. He does wear a binder. Those things are hard as hell to breath in.” He took it off of Ellis quickly covering him up with blanket.

“I didn’t know to what extent,” Coach mumbled taking not finally of the other people in the safehouse. They were confused and worried.

“I knew, but I kept it a secret for him. I knew I shouldn’t have because I don’t think the meds were good for his condition,” Nick lamented while carrying in all of the bags of food and medicine.

“Are you saying that he was-” Keith started.

“Yeah. A guy in the last group took advantage of him. When the rest of us were scavenging,” Nick said quietly.

“Is he dead?” Keith asked.

“No,” Nick looked at Coach.

“I don’t think we should kill someone Nick,” he emphasized on Nick’s name.

“So said you. I was that close. If you would have come a minute later. His own group hated him
anyways,”

“Where’s Rochelle?” A man Coach and Nick presumed to be Jacob asked.

“She passed away a few hours ago. She had gotten punched onto a car by a tank. If you want you can take the car and follow the highway back if you want to verify yourself,” Coach delivered the news to him.

“Jacob! You’ll die!” A woman with blond hair yelled at him.

“I was going to kill myself anyways,” Jacob yelled getting into the car.

“Shit!” Keith yelled. The blond went to go after him, but Keith stopped her. “Maria please don’t go. I can’t lose everyone I know in one day.”

“I’ll bring him back. I promise that I’ll at least come back. Just barricade the door until we come back,” Maria assured him. He let her go and she ran after the car.

“They won’t be back,” Keith sunk to the floor.

“You don’t know that son,” Coach told him. Keith’s expression didn’t change.

“They won’t. I heard their conversations before. Ever since our forth died they stopped talking to me for the most part. They blamed me for his death. They wanted to take Rochelle, and you two with them and leave me and Ellis behind. We have a lotta stories that we need to trade. If we get to trade them,” noting Ellis’ condition.


“They made fun of me to my face and would try leave me behind. When Zane was still alive he was nice to me and would keep the other two in line,” Keith ranted.

Ellis woke up and stirred around in pain. He turned to curl up on his side. “Keith,” he choked out.

“Ellis!” Keith popped up and hugged his friend being careful not to hurt him.

“Where’s the other people that were supposed to be here. I have to tell Jacob what Rochelle said to me,” he craned his neck.

“Jacob and Maria left for good. Why what did she want to say to him?” Keith asked. Nick and Coach were also hovering around the table unsure what to do.

“She wanted me to tell him that she loved him,” he spoke. “Also that I should take it easy otherwise I’ll end up miscarrying… but… I think that’s happening now. I guess I didn’t have a choice.”

“It’s alright. We’ll take care of you,” Nick assured him.

“There’s a bed in the back room. Let’s carry him to it,” Keith told the others. Nick carried him by the shoulders, Coach by the waist, and Keith by the feet leading the way.

Keith opened the door to the backroom and screamed. Coach, Nick, and Ellis looked up and screamed themselves. Rochelle stood there. She looked at them, then looked at herself and screamed. (Rochelle is comic relief).

“I was dead!!” She shrieked. “Who the hell are you?” She asked Keith as he and the others set Ellis on the bed.
“I’m Keith. Nice to meet your acquaintance ma’am,” he stretched a hand out to her. They shook hands all weirded out.

“You missed Josh by a few minutes,” Nick told her.

“Fuck! And his name is Jacob,” she sighed.


“How the hell are you alive girl?” Coach asked.

“Not sure. I always feel like someone is controlling what I do and say…” Rochelle trailed off thinking about the video games she’d played in the past.

“I told that to my therapist once and he told me I had this disorder called skitzowhatever,” Keith laughed.

“Whatever. Ellis is too sick to move. We don’t know how to do shit to help, and now we can’t leave because two assholes took our car ditching Keith. We’re fucked and I’m gonna blow my brains out if Ellis dies,” Nick complained.

“SAAAAAAAAAME,” Keith agreed.

“Y’all two quit maken a suicide pact over there. I ain’t gonna die,” Ellis crocked up annoyed.

“I agree with the boy. Let’s just hold out here until he gets better. We’ve got enough food to last a few weeks,” Coach rationalized. Everyone sighed. There wasn’t too much to do in the rest stop besides all of the junk food to eat.

They would have to wait until Ellis recovered whether that’d be him micarring or the fetus being able to survive. Despite being barley aware of his surroundings and what’s going on with everything he was still shit face nervous. Nick and Keith’s hovering over him didn’t help at all it had only made him more worried.
Chapter Summary

This was the last draft I wrote before I decided to post. Most of this work was intact in the final copy. I decided to have all of the characters in this one be cisgender, but keep the original plot. I liked this version of the three I wrote and decided just to sprinkle in a few details that ended up being 75 more pages to the story. The plot in this one moves faster after the beginning, but I do like the ending a lot happier in this one then the final copy. It was a tad more unrealistic to go this ending/ I already fucked it up by forgetting what I posted that made it impossible.

Chapter Notes

The relationship between Zoey and Francis of lust was a legacy of this version, also Louis dying. It shows that if they didn’t meet up with the LFD2 group that they’d have gotten together, and been a couple.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Time seemed to have stood still for him as his eyes were locked on that of the conman who had come to his rescue. It was moments ago that the door was being kicked in by the conman. The icy blue eyes had locked on to the emerald of his savior. It felt like in eternity before he attacked the assailant, but in reality it was only seconds.

Soon the man who had been on top of him was thrown onto the floor and was being beaten by the conman. Ellis was petrified covering himself up with a blanket, and started crying. Nick was throwing all of his hate, rage, and anger into the man below him hoping to kill him. Strong hands threw him off.

“What the actual fuck Coach!” Nick growled through his teeth standing up ready to kill. Coach stood defensively ready for Nick to launch himself at him too. The man on the floor was unconscious. Rochelle and a couple others were outside the room trying not to step on the door that had been broken in like ones they had come across on the outside. Nick had broken through it like he was one of the infected.

“We don’t kill humans Nick!” Coach defended the man who a few minutes ago had been raping Ellis.

“He doesn’t deserve to live! Scum like him don’t change!” Nick growled pointing at the man on the ground. Coach had to make his way through the crowd to keep Nick from beating the man to death. The others had been content to let Nick to administer his own vigilante justice upon the rapist. “I’ve participated in many punishments for scum like him when I served a couple years for fraud.”

“Just fraud,” Coach sarcastically told him. Nick had made many lucrative comments on his weaponry, medical, and stain removal skills in the past.
“Fuck you!” He pointed at Coach and picked up Ellis bridal style. “Stay the FUCK out of my sight for awhile!”

He charged past Coach and the others making sure to kick the man in the ground hard on his way out. Ellis had turned his head into Nick’s chest crying. Everything had happened so fast for him he doesn’t even really remember how he ended up in that situation due to the shock of it. Nick petted Ellis’ head and took him into the bathroom locking the door behind him.

He sat Ellis down on the toilet and ran a hot steamy bath. Thank god for people who lived off the grid with solar power and well water. He put a fuck ton of bubble bath mix into the water and watched it fix up. He picked Ellis up still wearing the blanket and put him into the water.

Even though he was still extremely distressed he appreciated what Nick was doing for him. He wished that Coach hadn’t gotten in Nick’s way when he was beating to death his attacker. The young man had never felt that sort of cynicalism before in his life. For once he was content with someone else being murdered right in front of him.

He stared at the bubbles and foam on top of the water while he heard Nick talk and not understand what he was saying because of how numb he felt. Nick had taken off his suit jacket and rolled up his blue dress shirt sleeves to help give him a much needed bath. If this hadn’t been the apocalypse Nick would have just tried to comfort him until the police and medics arrived as to not tamper evidence. Although he would have gotten charged with a crime of passion, but Coach would have stopped that before it got to the point that he would have wanted.

Nick tried to coax the young man. It was all that he could do. He realized that he loved the young southerner when he felt a bad feeling in the pit of his stomach during a supply run with a few others who had left the safehouse. Nick had been with the group one moment, but then felt something crawling in his skin. The fear what could happen and did happen tormented him on the inside confusing what was real.

That lack of self control had almost made him kill that man on the spot. In a way he’s glad that Coach had interfered because he wanted to plan that man’s demise now and make it painful.

Ellis was numb. His mind the thoughts and emotions had shut down. It felt like his body had as well. He wasn’t aware of his surrounding for the most part. Nick was talking to him, but he couldn’t make out the words. He was in pain physically and mentally, but it was like it wasn’t his. The water and foam that touched his skin was there, but he only felt like he was floating on the surface. Nick was cleaning him with some soap, but his body felt alien to himself.

If Nick wasn’t there he probably would drown himself right there on the spot. The torment and pain that the man had inflicted on him was worse than anything that the apocalypse took away from him. It’s not fair, all the hope and optimism had been drained from him in the matter of minutes during the assault.

“Ellis,” Nick’s voice was a whisper drawing Ellis out of his daze to look at the conman. “I know what you’re thinking. Don’t do that.” Nick begged his voice breaking. Ellis looked down sadly at the foam.

“I want the pain to end,” Ellis choked out. Nick hugged him despite all of the water. Holding him closely to his chest he let the younger man cry safely in his arms.

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“You should have let him do it,” Meredith spoke up looking at her teammates unconscious body.

“He’s a living person,” Coach reasoned. Meredith kicked the man hard.

“He’s a piece of shit that deserves to die. I should have said something earlier. I knew that he was planning something. I could have stopped it,” she beat herself up blaming herself. Rochelle put a hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

“Nothing you could have done would have-“ Rochelle started.

“YESSSSSSS I could have,” she dropped to the floor putting her hands on head pulling at her light brown hair. Tears fell from her eyes. “I was with him since the beginning. When there were still some people who weren’t carriers left, heh. He’d fuck anything that seemed unintelligent to him. He’s a predator. He admitted once that he was under Megan’s Law before all of this shit had happened. I saw how he was looking at your friend. The look in his eyes. The way he would talk to him. The way he would whisper when he would think nobody was listening. I just didn’t wanna see it I guess. I wanted to turn a blind eye.”

“Meredith,” Tomas their last teammate crouched down next to her hugging her crying as well. “Nobody’s going to blame you.”

“You should feel like shit,” Nick sauntered across the room growling and snatched another blanket his shirt covered in water. His face was hard and pissed. “All of his innocent pure heart is gone. Now before you say shit I have to go back in case he tries to drown himself.”

He had shoved himself past Coach before the man could say anything. Meredith was balling on the ground now. Her whole body trembling and shaking. Rochelle decided that was her quew to leave. Coach decided to follow her out as well.

Nick was carrying Ellis down the hall wrapped up in the blanket that he had just picked up a minute ago. He took him into the other bedroom and sat down on the bed with him still being held tight in his arms. Although Nick grabbed a gun off the table and had it now resting next to his thigh on high alert in case anyone *unwanted* would enter the room.

A couple of days later the group had separated from the other group at Nick’s threat to leave with Ellis if they didn’t come with. Ellis hadn’t talked since that day, and hadn’t moved around. Nick practically force fed him to get him to get hydrated and fed up. Rochelle and Coach hadn’t wanted to leave, but they wouldn’t abandon their team. The house was safe from zombies, it had running water, hot water, electricity, and food. However, it had a greater threat than zombies, people.

Nick carried Ellis in his arms as Coach and Rochelle led the way with their melee weapons. They didn’t use their guns on anything except the special infected in fear of drawing a hoard to their location. They couldn’t use guns forever. The ammo would eventually start to run low and soon. It had been about a month since they had been on the bridge. Nick internally smiled at the memory. There had been so much hope and optimism at that time. So close to being safe they could almost taste it. Ellis had been so happy. He had been practically bouncing off the walls of that safehouse.

Events happened and that didn’t happen. They crashed, but the group that they were staying with had brought them to safety, and had stayed with them…

They haven’t spoken since they had left. Coach and Rochelle had been idling for a couple days
hoping that Nick would change his mind. It was today that he picked up his and Ellis’ bag of supplies and them walking out the door that they had said their goodbyes quickly and followed suit. Nick was still pissed off at Coach, and Coach seemed to sense that and decided not to talk.

A few days had passed without incident. The only time that the group minus Ellis would speak was to point out a special infected. Today would be different…

“For the love of god can you two please stop not talking to each other! This awkward silence is getting to me!” Rochelle stopped where she had been walking and had yelled at the two. Coach and Nick had stopped in their tracks as well.

“Only if apologizes,” Nick chuckled because he knew Coach wouldn’t do that and he had shaken his head no.

“Knights of Columbus! I’m not moving until us three will talk to each other again!” Rochelle yelled loudly. The infected roared off in the distance.

“Thanks a lot loud girl!” Nick’s sarcasm could cut through concrete with ease. He set Ellis down and pulled out his magnum.

“Shit! Look I’m sorry if things got out of hand Nick, but we have to be a team you know, and being all divided like this isn’t going to do any good,” Coach apologized seeing the zombies start to appear. He wished that they were in a bit more of an alley or had a higher advantage.

“I agree,” Nick sighed letting go of his pride as he fired at the zombies that were drawing closer and closer. Ellis picked up the crowbar that Rochelle had dropped on the ground and stood up ready to defend. Nick didn’t show it, but he was happy for the first time in awhile. After they cleared out the hoard the group was panting and breathing heavily. Ellis went to go and pick up a firearm. Nick plucked it out of his hands and gave him his baseball bat instead. Ellis looked very upset at him.

“I’m not going to let you shoot yourself. You’re not going to have one until I know that you aren’t going to put it against yourself,” Nick soothingly spoke to him. It was the kind of voice he used when he was healing someone.

“I agree with Nick son. Just stick to the middle of the group with that bat,” Coach indisputable agreed with Nick. Ellis grunted dissatisfied, but not quite ready to argue back.

“Sorry sweetie,” she squeezed his shoulder. “I agree with them.”

They finally made it to a safehouse. “More like saferoom!” Nick audibly shouted his disgust for the small room with not sleeping bags, lights, or even a makeshift toilet. Even though they didn’t say anything they all agreed with Nick’s cynicalism at that moment. They hadn’t found a safehouse in days and this is what they got.

“It could be worse,” Ellis mumbled.

“Yeah… I guess it could,” Nick sighed sitting down on the floor. “I hope that we’ll find a safehouse so damn nice that we won’t have to move again. Like one that we can plant crops so we don’t have to scavenge for food anymore, and-”

“Look at you being optimistic for once,” Rochelle smiled sitting down as well. Nick stuck his tongue out at her. Coach was checking the supplies so he wasn’t facing them. “Anyways we should try to find a map to see where we are. I also have another plan.” Everyone perked up. “I was thinking if
we can find a cellphone with a charger. A smartphone, a cell tower / radio tower, and a generator we
may be able to contact someone on the outside to come and help us.”

“That’s the best thing I’ve heard in ages,” Coach laughed. Nick shot daggers at him. Had he not
heard what he wanted?!?

“Let’s get some sleep. I’m tired as hell,” Nick shut his eyes. Ellis was laying against him using him
as a pillow. Rochelle joined in on using Nick as a pillow.

‘Damn It! Guess I’m on watch first then.’ Coach thought angrily wanting to get some shuteye. His
eyes drooped and before long he had fallen asleep as well.

Nick woke up to the bright sun and his arms and a leg too numb to move. Coach was asleep on the
table slumped over. He wiggled around trying to wake Rochelle and Ellis up. When they finally
moved rubbing their eyes. Rochelle glared at Coach.

“What the hell!” She yelled at him startling him awake and made Nick and Ellis jump a little bit.
“You could have gotten us all killed! If you were too tired to take watch first you should’ve said
something!”

“Calm down Ro nothing happened,” he tried to calm her down.

“But SOMETHING could have!” She yelled again. A loud roar cut her off before she could say
something else.

“Damnit Ro, that’s the second time in two days your loud mouth has gotten us in trouble,” Nick
rolled his eyes while getting up and pulling the little slot on the safehouse door open. He pulled out
his magnum ready to fire.

“I didn’t mean,” Rochelle apologized.

“But you still did,” Nick argued sighing.

The ground shook and the roars of an incoming tank were becoming louder and more pronounced.
Before he saw the tank it had tried to smash the door in. Nick fell to the ground startled, fear was on
his face briefly. Everyone saw it. The others had never seen him afraid before because of how well
he had masked it.

Coach took his shotgun and shot at the tank through the hole before Nick could get up. Ellis hugged
Nick letting him know it’s alright to be afraid. The conman softened leaning into the hug and cried
softly. He hadn’t cried since before the zombies roamed the streets. He thought that the door would
have flung open and he would watch all of his teammates die one by one before himself. Ellis didn’t
tell anyone that Nick was crying so that he could keep some of his pride for having been visibly
shaken by the event.

Coach sat down on the table again after the tank was dead and reloaded his gun. Rochelle took out
some cans of food and opened them. She gave a can to each person saving the mixed fruit one for
herself. She didn’t want another can of tomato soup again otherwise she thinks that she would rather
starved herself. They ate in silence and left in it.

Ellis was with the baseball bat in the center of the group. Nick followed behind him with a rifle that
had a suppressor attachment. Rochelle and Coach had their melee weapons out as well taking care of
anything ahead to them.

How long had things gone on like this? Nick shook his head. He had lost track of how many days it
had been since they left that safehouse. The little group that he’s in had been unbelievable lucky since then. He knows that their luck will run out soon enough, but he doesn’t know when that will happen.

Silently they moved through the streets. It was sometime in the afternoon. The sun was beating down on the survivors. Nick had taken off his suit jacket and tied it around his waist. His blue dress shirt’s back was covered in sweat. The other survivors cloths didn’t fare as well either. It was surprisingly hot for being November. It was going to be the last of the warm weather. They had found a map and they were in Southern Pennsylvania.

Coach had suggested that they go to Philadelphia so that he could get a real Philly cheesesteak. Rochelle was being the cynic for one and asked him where he was going to get the beef from. His dream of that food had died with Rochelle’s comment. Ellis had laughed a little bit at the comment as did Nick.

‘At least he can still smile. I wonder if I can get him to do that again?’ Nick thought looking around. He saw a witch in their path. She was sitting in the shade and their was a suspended car in the air being held by a cable connected to a crane. His mouth twisted into a smile and ran to the crane.

“Nick! The hell you doing boy!” Coach whisper yelled. Nick turned around smiling and put a finger to his mouth telling Coach to be quiet. He hotwired the crane and dropped the car on the witch. She crawled out from under the car and clawed at the car like she would one of them until she broke a nail and ran away screaming.

On the ground laughing was Ellis. Nick had fallen out of the crane laughing. Rochelle was trying to contain her laughter failing at containing it. Coach had a hand to his head disappointed and with a headache.

“That was funny as shit Nick!” Ellis laughed rolling around on the ground.

“Well that bitch was in our shade, and I saw something like this in a cartoon when I was a kid!” Nick clutched his side wincing in pain from all the laughing he was doing.

“I love how she looked right before it fell on her! She was like ‘Oh NOOO!’” Rochelle doubled over in laughter.

“Will you two start acting your age?” Coach asked Rochelle and Nick who were acting like they were in their early 20s like Ellis. Coach pinched the bridge of his nose waiting it out. He won’t say it out loud to any of them because it would cause tension, but he knew that Nick did that risky maneuver without asking like Ellis would have just to make him smile.

After they calmed down in the shade the survivors stayed in the shade until they were cooled down enough to move again. It was unseasonably hot for being mid November in Pennsylvania. They would need to find warmer clothing before the cold would move in on them. Nick would be the last person who needed anything since he was wearing a suit.

As fate would have it the heat went away as soon as the cold front moved in. The four were huddled in a safehouse with dwindling supplies. They would have to leave soon otherwise they’d starve. All four of them were in the corner with all of their blankets on top of them. It hadn’t started to snow yet, but it was fucking freezing.

“We’re going to need to leave soon and find somewhere a bit more secure,” Coach told the group.
He and the others were shivering and shaking. All of them were afraid to fall asleep.

“We should go soon then. There’s nothing here for us,” Rochelle added.

“Let’s just go now,” Nick agreed. They stood up and wore the blankets. “I suggest that we find a clothing store asap because I don’t want to freeze to death.”

“Agreed,” Ellis said.

There weren’t too many infected wandering around because of the cold. Nick and Coach had mended their relationship somewhat. They still fight about what happened on that day.

Ellis was doing better. He didn’t make subtle attempts on his life. He was walking around and attacking the infected. Sometimes he would speak or laugh a little bit on occasion. It made Nick happy to see him slowly turning back to normal. Nightmares plagued his dreams making him believe that he was back in that moment in time. Nick would hold him and coo him while he had those nightmares.

Rochelle had tried to be a bit more calm as to not cause a hoard, but sometimes the men got to her. Their arguing, fighting, or silence made her insane. Coach led the group as best as he could manage becoming more aware of Nick’s feelings for Ellis. Rochelle had even become aware of his feelings for the young man. Ellis wasn’t aware of Nick’s feelings for him although he had developed his own feelings for Nick long ago, but hadn’t done anything in fear of being rejected and abandoned by him.

They had finally found a clothing store and went to the winter clothing section for men first. Nick went to the dress shirt section and grabbed a new blue dress shirt before going back to the others. Now armed with warm clothing they left. Rochelle had gone by the women’s section and grabbed herself a nice dress that she could celebrate in when they’d be safe.

“Aww shit!” Coach said disgusted seeing snow falling to the ground.

“We better find a grocery store to hold up in,” Rochelle suggested.

“Well at least nothing will come by there but witches, but we can put the sugar somewhere else. I’m glad that they scare off all of the other infected in the area so we won’t have to worry about barricading the exit,” Nick told them.

“Your optimism is starting to scare me,” Coach commented. Leading the way through the streets.

“Hehe, I think that’s my job Nick,” Ellis smiled looking at him. Nick laughed a little bit, blushing under his red scarf that hid his face.

“Will you two please just make out already,” Rochelle getting annoyed at their obvious interest for one another.

“What are you talking about Ro?” Ellis asked afraid he’d been outed.

“What makes you think I like him?” Nick stopped moving.

‘Damn it.’ Coach thought stopping as well.

“You two keep making obvious flirting with each other and the way you take care and protect Ellis says everything to me about your feelings Nick. Ellis you really only talk to Nick since the incident with the other group,” Ellis winced at the mention of the other group. Nick stood in front of Ellis.
“Don’t you dare bring up those asshats again!” He yelled at Rochelle. “You know what fuck this I need to take a walk.”

“Nick,” Ellis wrapped his arms around Nick pressing his face into the conman’s back tearing up. “Don’t leave.” He breathed heavily. “I don’t want to lose you Nick. You’re the last good thing in my life Nick. I DON’T WANT TO LOSE YOU TOO! If you leave you’re going to die. Please.” Ellis begged. Nick pried off Ellis’ arms and turned around to face the young man.

He pulled his scarf down and cupped Ellis’ face in his hands. His gloved thumb rubbed his cheek. Nick leaned in and kissed Ellis much to his and the others surprise. After the initial shock wore off Ellis leaned into it. A few moments later Nick pulled back and whispered.

“I couldn’t imagine my world without you too kiddo,” he whispered into Ellis’ ear. He backed up and pulled his scarf back up over his face. Winking as he and the rest of the group started to walk again. Red crept up all over Ellis’ face as he rushed to keep up with the group.

Nick’s sudden action and confession had his head swirling in confusion and happiness. He hadn’t been this happy in weeks. Nick was happy as well having finally confessed his feelings to Ellis and having them reciprocated. Coach and Rochelle were gloating because they were right about the two.

They found a dollar store and ate some of the Halloween candy in the store. Nick and Ellis were being a bit lovey dovey with each other like they were two teenagers in love for the first time. Nick maintained his distance as to not trigger the young man. Ellis appreciated Nick’s concern for his mentality and respecting his boundaries.

“Can you two tone down giggling and pda a little bit,” Coach commanded them. Nick and Ellis had looked up giggling.

“No,” Ellis slyly rejected Coach’s command giggling into Nick’s chest. They had barricaded up the dollar store to be safe for them. Luckily because of the snow they didn’t have to worry about water.

Ellis and Coach were having a difficult time adjusting to the cold. The snow and cold had been neat at first, but now they were finding it as much of a nuisance like the native northerners found it. Rochelle and Nick had taught them how to make snow angels, snowmen, and how to have a snowball fight before the gate had set in for them. The two northerners cannot recall the last time they had seen this much snow or if they had just grown oblivious to it.

After a couple of weeks they had to leave the dollar store because they had almost eaten all of the edible food. They were out on the road again walking and waiting to come across something good. Ellis and Nick had hung back from the group and were talking while holding hands.

“I think I know what it is, but what’s yer favorite color?” Ellis asked.

“Blue,” Nick smiled. “What’s a place that you dream of going to?”

“Your hometown,” Ellis answered.

“Why?” Nick smirked.

“So I ken see where ya grew up,”

“There may be a few people at Harvard as well trying to find a cure,”

“When the weather gets a little warmer we could probably convince the others to go there,”
“Maybe,” Nick smiled at him and gave him a quick peck on the cheek.

“Have you ever gone ice skating?”

Nick shivered, “Yeah. I don’t want to talk about it though.”

“If you ever do I’m here,”

They kept moving and talking like this for awhile until Coach called out an incoming hoard of infected. Nick stayed back with a sniper rifle taking down anything that looked too strong for the other survivors to get.

Off in the distance a hunter spots its prey. It growls and flyed into the air landing on its target in one leap.

Nick let out an ear piercing scream when the hunter landed on him and started to try and claw through his jacket. Ellis had whipped around and sprinted to Nick with his baseball bat he knocked it off of him with one swing and bashed its head in with another swing.

“Nick! I was so scared! Let me help you up!” Ellis cried dragging Nick to his feet. Nick looked up sharply. At least a dozen infected were closing in on the two. Nick took out his magnum and started firing. Ellis hit anything that would get too close to them. After the hoard subsided Ellis started to practically rip off Nick’s jacket.

“I’m fine Ellis. It didn’t get anything. The jacket stopped it from doing anything to me. It’s alright, it’s alright. I’m okay,” he hugged Ellis tightly in his arms kissing him on the forehead.

“I was so scared when you screamed. I thought I’d lost you,” Ellis quivered. “I was terrified to think how that hunter would have ripped ya open. I was so scared because I love you Nick!”

I love you.

Three little words with so much meaning behind them.

The butterflies in his stomach.

The fear in his chest.

The way his heart beat in his chest.

All in this moment being held right here in his love’s arms.

He had confessed his love for Nick for the first time as a blurt of caring for his safety.

“I love you too,” Nick confessed as well. Ellis tilted his head up to look at Nick in his warm emerald eyes that looked down at his icy blue ones and leaned in for a passionate kiss. Nick’s strong arms held him tight to his chest. In that strong embrace he could feel the heat coming off of his body and onto his. Soft lips had kissed one another. Nick’s stubble scratched the soft skin of Ellis.

“If you two are done can we go now?” Rochelle asked breaking their moment. Nick and Ellis let go of eachother and Nick took his scarf off and put it on Ellis.

“I don’t want you to get too cold now,” Nick kissed him on the forehead. The scarf hid Ellis’ blush.

They had made it to a safehouse with a few bedrooms. Rochelle had decided to take first watch. She wanted to give Coach a break and let the couple have some alone time after being cooked up in the
dollar store in the open for the time that they were there. Nick and Ellis had taken the master bedroom. They were on the bed making out.

The king size bed was spacious and warm. They had taken off their winter clothing despite the house not having the heat on. The velvety blanket was incredible warm just to sit on. Nick went on to make a move on Ellis by sliding his hand down his back, but pulled away when Ellis quivered.

“We’ll go at your pace,” he told Ellis. “I don’t want to make you uncomfortable. We don’t have to do anything if you don’t want to.” He took one of his hands and held it to his face. “I want you to feel as safe and as secure around me, and with me as I can make it. I love you Ellis and I wouldn’t do anything that I know that would hurt you.”

Ellis cupped Nick’s face in his hands tearing up a bit. “Thank you Nick for being so kind and understanding to me. I still have a hard time adjusting and trusting, and you’ve been with me the entire way. I love you, and I’m not ready yet, but I think I will be eventually as long as I have you by my side. When I’m lonely and full of bad emotions you make it all better just by being by my side.”

They continue to kiss then cuddle before finally falling asleep. Rochelle was sorta disappointed by the lack of noise that she heard coming from upstairs. Coach was making a lot of noise. She began to wonder if he had sleep apnea from how much he snored. She kept watch the entire night since they could actually stay at this house for a couple of months from the ample food supply.

The next day Coach and Ellis worked on fortifying the safehouse even further while Nick and Rochelle went to the other houses with duffle bags to scavenge up more supplies in case they got snowed in for the rest of winter. The older man insisted on having a father son like talk with the young man.

“So did you two get busy last night?” He asked nailing another plank onto the house.

“No, and please don’t have this conversation with me,” he begged Coach.

“I just want to know if he’s treating you nice,” Coach told him.

“He is. Nick is really nice to me. You have nothing to worry about. I appreciate your concern, but really,” he stopped and looked at Coach to emphasize. “You have nothing to worry about.”

“Alright boy, but if you ever do have a problem,”

“I know, I know,” Ellis sounded almost annoyed. Coach knew that he wouldn’t have any problems with the sarcastic conman. The man had a soft, romantic, protective soft spot for the kid. He knew that Nick would have no problem sacrificing his life for his younger lover.

Rochelle and Nick were looking through the neighbors house and ransacking the pantry. A golden cardboard box caught the conmans attention immediately. He grabbed it almost instantly and opened it up.

“Jackpot,” he smiled. “Do you think he’ll like it?” Rochelle smiled back at him. The look on her face said what do you think as she she reached for a bag of candy corn.

“He will if it’s from you. I think that’s the assorted chocolate box. Too bad the coconut was already eaten. I’m quite fond of coconut,” she reassured him. They took all of the food and medicine that they could carry from all of the houses that they went to before heading back. They helped Ellis and Coach on fortifying the house further until the sun started going down.
When they went back inside Nick made sure to hide the box of chocolates before he could see them. Christmas was only a few days away. He was sure that he was the only one keeping track of what day of the year it was. They enjoyed a nice meal of instant potatoes and spam. Hot cocoa was their treat for a good day's work.

Coach took watch that night even though it wasn’t necessary with all of the adjustments to the house to make it more safe. Nick couldn’t sleep. He played with Ellis’ wavy brown hair while he slept. The love that he felt for the young man was so much stronger that what he had felt for his ex wife. Ellis was the light in his life, and he’s happy to know that he’s the light in his little lovers life as well.

The next morning they all got up to find that they had been snowed in the house. The survivors were glad that they had wasted no time in getting supplies and making sure that the house was secure. Rochelle was wearing the dress that she had picked up at the store finally finding it fit to tear it. The dress was light pink with sheer long sleeves and an empire waist with a skirt that went well past her feet and onto the floor. The others were wearing clean clothing that they had scavenge from the house.

True to his nature Nick wore a dress shirt with a pair of khaki pants. Coach found a pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt in the teenage boys room. Ellis wore an oversized green sweater and a pair of ill fitting sweatpants that he will neither confirm or deny that they’re women’s. Nick and Ellis snuggled up together on the couch enjoying a cup of hot cocoa. Coach was in the kitchen trying to make cookies and Rochelle was looking at the calendar trying to figure out what day it was.

After a few minutes of watching her getting more frustrated Nick decided to tell her. “Today is the 23 Ro,”

“Why did you make me go through all of this pain then?” She turned to him angry.

“I wanted to see if you could figure it out for yourself,” he shrugged.

“Damn it, I won’t be able to get anyone anything since we’re stuck here,” Ellis lamented frowning.

“I think we’ll all be fine Ellis. Being alive and not fighting with each other is present enough in my opinion,” Coach tried to calm him down.

“It is nice to be alive for the holidays. In the spring we should go west. Maybe they’ll find a cure by then,” Rochelle smiled thinking about being rescued for good.

“I agree with you. It’s a good idea to go westward. Maybe they Can up with a vaccine for everyone so there’ll be no new zombies and we can be cured,” Nick agreed.

“Awww then I wouldn’t get to see Bosten,” Ellis pouted.

“Don’t worry about it. You’ll get to see it eventually. I think the US wants their top college up and running as soon as humanly possible,” Nick chuckled giving Ellis a kiss on the forehead.

“When are the cookies going to be done Coach? I’ve been dying for home baked goods,” she strolled over to the kitchen.

“Soon enough lil sister,” he shoved her away like she was a child in the kitchen. Ginger filled the air. They were glad that Coach knew how to cook without a recipe on hand.

“We should get a Christmas tree!” Ellis piped up.

“Ain’t no way in hell we’re gettin that door open boy. You’ll have to see if you can find one of those
fake ones in the house,” Coach sternly told him. ‘These children are going to be the end of me.’

Ellis practically ripped Nick’s arm off getting him off the couch to help him look around the house. He suggested that they go try the attic first because that’s where seasonal things are usually placed. Strong scents of dust and cobwebs permeated the air once they were up there. Colder than the rest of the house too. Nick wished that he had worn his jacket up there.

Box after box they searched. Antiques and seasonal items they found. Stashes of different items were found as well. A bottle of whiskey was in a box of baby cloths, Ellis pocketed it to give to Nick as a gift later. It was most likely the mom’s considering that nobody else would have gone through them, but her.

Nick found a secret stash of porno magazines in the box of bolts. He wondered why the man had hid them here and not in the garage. The stash would make a nice gag gift for Coach. After he set the magazines down next to the ladder and shrugging to Ellis he searched some more finding a box called wedding. A bottle of nice red wine from 1949 was in there. No doubt it was a wedding gift, and it still was sealed.

‘Seems like they were going to save this for a nice occasion. Too bad for them it looks really expensive.’ Nick thought hiding the bottle back into the box. He made sure that Ellis didn’t notice it. It deeply saddened him to look through the wedding pictures. He’d been married and divorced before, and a lot of items in the house pointed to them having an unhappy marriage. Looking through the album and box of other wedding items made him sure that once this was all over…. or not that he’d propose to Ellis.

After a few boxes dropped and some searches they managed to find a Christmas tree. With Rochelle’s help they put it up and put tinsel on the tree. Feeling too weird to put someone else’s ornaments on it they left them off the tree.

“Wish we had power so that we could put the lights on it,” Coach was all smiles taking gingerbread men and women off the baking sheet and onto parchment paper. Ellis hopped off the couch and grabbed one taking a steaming bite out of it only to be burned by it. “Young’un wait until the damn cookies are done!”

Ellis incoherently talked while munching on the cookie. “Now I want one,” Nick laughed.

“Me too!” Rochelle beamed running over and snatching a cookie from the paper.

“Ugh children, you’re worse than my own,” Coach said nearly having a stroke by their stupidity. Since Nick had mellowed out he hadn’t had someone completely sane to back him up.

Ellis had bounded back over to Nick letting him having a bite of his cookie. Nick smiled approving of the cookie’s taste. “Pretty damn good Coach,”

Everyone had seemed to get gifts from around the house for one another, and Christmas had came and the day went by. After Coach had revived his gift from Nick he peeked at it and ran off to his room and hadn’t come out. Rochelle and Ellis didn’t see it, but could assume what it was. Rochelle was happy with her gifts and was making decorations for the house now. Ellis and Nick blushed at her gift to them, a week or two back she had stopped at an adult store and had gotten them a sex game.

The box of chocolate lit up Ellis’ face for the romantic gesture. A whiskey here and there had made Nick very happy. He’d downed a couple of glasses with Ellis. They laid on the couch cuddling while watching the fireplace. Rochelle had just gone to bed. A kiss planted here and there on Ellis’
head and neck sent the younger man into a warm blushing mess.

Ellis rolled over to face Nick and look up into his eyes and told him,"I think I’m ready. I don’t want to play the game Ro got us—at least not yet.”

“Alright,” Nick kissed Ellis. “At anytime you want me to stop or slow down I will. Just let me know and I love you.”

“I love you too Nick, and I trust you,” Ellis blushed leaning into a kiss. The room seemed to get warmer and hotter as they made out. Tender passionate kisses sent butterflies into their stomachs with anticipation.

They embraced each other like they were the only ones that could keep them anchored to that couch. Nick took it slow and there were a few times that he stopped for Ellis to comfort him. The heat from their bodies wound them up more. It wasn’t just sex to them, but it was love making for them. They fell asleep on the couch with a blanket on them, and fire went out sometime during the night.

Nick woke up to getting hit in the head with a magazine. “What the hell! You let the fire go out!” Coach yelled at him.

“Sorry,” Nick yawned. Ellis stirred in his arms.

“Keep your sexy time to your room next time,” Coach reprimanded him lighting the fire.

“Good thing I didn’t like that couch anyways,” Rochelle went back to her work making decorations. Fully awake now Ellis burrowed himself more into Nick being embarrassed that they hadn’t woken up first to get dressed. Despite being afraid to after what had happened to him he was glad that he had sex with Nick. It would get easier for him to be more comfortable with sex eventually, but for now he’ll still take it slow.

Nick moved the blanket so they wouldn’t be fully exposed to Coach and Rochelle as the went to their bedroom to get dressed. They were super cuddly and lovey dovey with one another to the point that the others didn’t want to be near them, but were stuck in the same house until the snow melted.

It was about a week before the snow melted enough for them to be able to leave the house much to Coach and Rochelle’s delight.

“All I’m saying is that we should take them ice skating since they’ve never been before,” Rochelle reasoned. “We might not have the chance to do it again this year.”

“Yeah, go without me then,” Nick snapped.

“We don’t stay alone. You know that Nick,” Coach put a hand on his shoulder.

“The house is safe enough to leave me in it,”

“Get your ass moving Nick!” Coach sternly warned Nick. After a minute of doing nothing the group manhandled him into his coat. Coach carried the thrashing man over his shoulder following Rochelle to the nearby lake.

“Come on Nick, lighten up a bit it’s only one afternoon. I don’t think too much could go wrong,” Ellis tried to get Nick to be more reasonable.

“I can name a lot that don’t include zombies,” he started. “Someone could slip and fall and instantly die, fall through the ice, get frostbite, drown, break a bone, drown, get a concussion, or drown.” He
shivered every time he said drown.

“We'll make Coach walk on if first to see if it’s safe. K Nick?” Rochelle laughed while Coach rolled his eyes.

“It’ll be fun Nick,” Ellis tried.

“Go ice skating Nick, it’ll be fun they said. Then you end up trapped under the ice drowning while the others have to bash the ice over your face in to safe you,” Nick rambled. The others decided to ignore him at this point finding it useless to argue with him.

When they got to the lake Coach set him down on a bench. At least there weren’t any infected around. It seemed that most of the infected couldn’t stay alive in the cold. Their body’s had froze solid. The only ones alive were the spitter, witch, hunter, charger, and smokers. Just some special infected.

Nick sighed wishing that he had time before Coach had picked him up to have grabbed his bottle of whiskey. The three of them seemed to be having fun trying to stand up and move around on the lake. He kept his rifle close to him in case something tried to pop up out of nowhere.

He sighed again remembering back to when he was 10. Nick and his friends were playing ice hockey on a lake. The ice had gave away after all of the pressure that him and his friends had put on it. He and a few others had fallen in. Nick had been rescued from the lake by a bystander and resuscitated because he had drowned. Only a couple others had been rescued and revived. The rest had drowned. He shakes thinking about the looks on their faces when the ice broke and when they were trying to swim up, but couldn’t because there was ice in the way. It had haunted his nightmares for years. He had never been able to bring himself to ice skate on an actual ice rink since then. He’d quit hockey not being able to bear the reminders that the equipment had given him.

Fate *is* a cruel bitch.

The telltale sign of snarling was heard by the survivors. A hunter was nearby.

“Shit!” Nick cursed pulling up the rifle to look around. It was on the ice. Cursing again he told the others to get down on their stomachs before shooting it. The ice cracked and snapped loudly.

“What do we do?” Coach asked Rochelle and Nick.

“I don’t have very much experience with this,” Rochelle said. I’ve only ever gone on a company run rink.

“Shit!” Coach cursed.

“Start sliding your way to the edge. Wherever is closest. If you hear more cracking around you stop!” Nick told them breaking a piece off the wooden bench to use to help them to shore.

“Nick sweetie is there something that your hiding from us?” Rochelle asked wanting to be a bit distracted.

“The ice broke and me and everyone else who fell in had drowned. Only me and a couple others were rescued in time. Happy?” Venomous sarcasm was aimed at her.

“Why didn’t you tell me Nick?” Ellis asked.

He sighed,”I was scared to. I thought if I ignored it forever it’d go away.”
“Well you can talk to me about it more over a glass of hot cocoa,” Ellis promised.

“With lots of Irish cream in it,” Nick agreed.

“Shit! Nick I can’t move! The ice is about to go from under me!” Coach panicked.

“This is why you don’t do this shit when the snow has been melting,” Nick scolded heading over to Coach. When he got to the ice he took a deep breath and crawled out onto the ice with the wooden plank. Never in a million years did he think that he’d be back on the ice let alone to save someone.

The ice gave out from under him and Coach. Nick panicked letting go of the plank. Coach picked it up before it could go to the bottom. Rochelle wasn’t afraid to run over since she weighed half of Coach and Nick. Ellis had made it over to the edge too and grabbed a crowbar trying to smash the ice. Nick didn’t know how to swim because of the cold shock and was panicking under the water and ice. Coach made it over to where Ellis was and got up over the solid patch of ice with his and Rochelle’s help.

Nick was nowhere to be seen to them. Ellis went to go jump in and find him, but before he could small and icy cold hands grabbed him to hold him back.

Nick resigned himself to drowning again, but he held his breath as long as he could and looked around the water. Despite knowing he fate he felt at peace under the calm water. He looked up seeing Ellis trying to jump in after him. The panic, worry and fear on his face told him that he had to make it back up to the surface and live. He swam up as fast as he could, but not before he breathed in the water. Quick hands reached into the water and pulled him out of there and let him get air back into his lungs.

As he choked and coughed he reminisced on his entire life. His family, friends, “friends”, coworkers, and fellow survivors. All that he could soon think about was Ellis. Realizing that his life could end at any moment he wanted to propose to him as soon as he could a jewelry store so that Ellis could have his own ring and not one off a dead person. He wanted to give Ellis a life free of pain and worry once this was all over. He had finally realized what was truly important in life and he wasn’t going to let that go now.

“Nick, we need to go now. Yew need to get inside soon before you get hypothermia,” Ellis pulled Nick up and had him lean on me. “Just lean on me and let me lead the way.”

“Okay,” Nick choked out. ‘At least I didn’t drown this time.’ He thought leaning on Ellis. He let him lead him and see for him.

They got back to the house alright. Ellis had set Nick down in front of the fireplace. Coach sat down as well. Rochelle had lit the fireplace in record time. “You two need to strip or you’re going to get sick,” Rochelle’s motherly instincts kicked in.

Coach and Nick protested before stopping down into their boxers. Rochelle threw Coach a blanket and told him all the way down. Ellis had stripped down to his boxers and was wearing a blanket. He threw it around Nick so that he was in it too. Thankful for the privacy he striped down further.

“Thanks kiddo,” Nick wrapped an arm around Ellis.

“I didn’t want you to feel alone,” he snuggled Nick’s freezing body. Rochelle had gone to work on heating some hot cocoa up.

“I hate to admit it Nick, but you were right on the ice skating,” Coach stared into the fire.
“It’s alright. I’m just glad none of us are hurt, and that you all had fun before then,” Nick’s near death experience spoke for itself. He was still trembling and shaking and that wasn’t just for the cold. He felt Ellis squeeze him tighter.

“You’re here Nick, and you’re alive. It’s alright to feel scared. You can talk to me about what happened before too if yew want,” Ellis told him. Nick rest his head on his shoulder and let the tears fall from his eyes.

“You don’t know how much I love you,” Nick murmured.

“I think I know what you mean too, and I love you too,” Ellis laid his head on top of Nick’s. The couple shared a cup of cocoa warming up slowly.

Ellis was almost as terrified as when he heard Nick scream because of the hunter that had pounced on Nick about a month ago. Coach was shaken up from having fallen in and almost losing Nick to something preventable. Rochelle was happy that the day had a happy ending and not something that would have ended up on her news station.

“What should we do when we start to run low on food?” Rochelle asked wanting to know about the future.

“No need to worry about that for another month little sister,” Coach assured her.

“We should go north. If there ain’t anything but a few specials then up further north they may be none,” Ellis reasoned.

“That’s a mighty fine plan youngen,” Coach agreed. Nick was content not to talk and snuggled Ellis.

“We’ll have to find a car to take some of the supplies up,” Ellis smiled happy with his plan.

Car and supplies chapter

It was the morning of when they were to leave. It was about a week before Valentine’s Day. Nick had the bottle of fine wine from the attic hidden in his bag, and he also had the perfect ring so that he could propose on the day. They loaded up the car unhappily because they were leaving their home. Winter wasn’t over, but they had run short on supplies. It was also better for them that they stayed ahead of the hoard in case they wanted to travel.

Ellis drove while Nick was in the passenger seat listening to a Glen Campbell cd that Coach had picked up. The highway did them good until they reached New York. They had to detour on some more populated streets. They hadn’t seen this many bodies since New Orleans. It was quite shocking for the survivors to see. Ellis had even quieted down as they went through it.

Gunshots rang in the distance.

“Let’s go check that out,” Coach commanded Ellis.

“I don’t have a good feeling about this,” Nick mumbled. Ellis did as Coach told him to. The drive to the noise wasn’t too hard. Just listen to the gunshots and growling. Their jaws dropped.

It was a hoard of hunters, chargers, and witches attacking a group. Ellis and the others ran out and
attacked the infected. Rochelle caught the attention of one of the witches. She dispatched it but still getting her coat damaged in the process. A charger had rammed into Coach. Nick shot it before it could smash him into the ground.

A few minutes later and panting the other group walked up to them. “Holy shit it’s suit!” A gruff voice happily yelled.

“Holy shit it is them!” Zoey said shocked and still exhausted.

“Nice to see you folks too,” Coach greeted. “Where’s Luis?”

“He’s gone,” Zoey looked at the pavement.

“Our boat sank and he didn’t make it to the life raft in time,” Francis finished explaining for her. Nick winced knowing how he implied Luis’ death was.

“Pirates! Fucking pirates got to it!” Zoey pulled her hair frustrated.

“Babe,” Francis put a hand on her shoulder. “We decided to head to Canada. If there wasn’t infected there then at least it would get too cold for most things.” He pointed at the pile of specials.

“We’re headed to Canada too. Y’all wanna join up with us?” Ellis offered.

“Hell Yeah!” Francis smiled thankful. “What about you Zoe?”

“It’ll be nice to be able to not be so sleep deprived again,” Zoey agreed. The pair looked incredibly rugged and haggard.

“Ellis you want to let me drive for awhile?” Coach asked. Ellis nodded agreeing with him. They piled up in car. Rochelle took shotgun in the car. The couples squeezed into the back. True to their more possessive nature and having seen their lovers flirt before they had been together Nick and Francis had sat in the middle.

Francis and Zoey had told their tales of when the infection started until that day. Nick played idelly with his gang ring while they reminisce on their journeys. His group had had it much better then what would have been Bill’s group.

“Hey we’re in the same gang brother!” Francis cheered pointing at Nick’s ring.

“Was… I got more into gambling and drinking when I found my ex with one of my “brothers” balls deep in her,” Nick rolled his eyes. This man was surly going to get on his nerves. He still wore the same damn vest over his winter coat.

“Wow I thought they’d linch you for that. What branch were you part of?” Francis asked.

“Las Vegas. They didn’t seem to care too much when I came out. They practically asked me to leave,” Nick confessed. “I’d hidden my sexuality for years. Married my ex to please everyone. It didn’t turn out the way I expected and I was still horrified to walk in on her cheating on me. Heh, I guess that’s what I deserved though from all of the odd sexual requests I had for her.”

“Shit, I’m sorry I outed you,” Francis apologized.

“They already knew I was because-“

“I meant for the gang thing,” Francis had cut him off. He assumed everyone thought that Nick was gay. Nick would murder him for that comment at some point later in time.
“Ummmmm………… okay………… they kinda did know from the offhand comments I’d make……”
Nick tried to shrink. Rochelle sat in the front disappointed still that Francis and Zoey had gotten
(together.

“It’s alright Nick I don’t care what yew did in the past as long as we’re together now,” Ellis kissed
him and intertwined their hands much to Francis and Zoey’s surprise.

“How long have you two been together?” Zoey asked Ellis.

“Bout a two or three months now,” Ellis thought out loud.

“Sometimes darkness does show you the light in someone,” she looked up at Francis who gave her a
warm smile in return.

“I agree with you. I think it was funny cuz Ro told us when we were meandering around our feeling
to just make out already,” Ellis told the story of how they confessed their love for each other. Nick
warmly smiled and laid his head on top of the young man’s.

Before long they were at the Canadian border. The group left the safety of their car to inspect the
gate. It seemed abandoned yet secure at the same time.

“Halt!” A loud voice boomed on an intercom. Everyone froze in their tracks. “Put your weapons on
the ground and re-enter the vehicle!” Everyone did as they were told without complaint. Once
situated back in the car the gate opened and they were told to drive in.

Inside they were told to stay in their car until a few people in hazmat suits came up to them with a
tray of syringes. One by one the survivors were allowed out of the car and injected with a few
different shots. They were kept in quarantine for a few weeks until the vaccine took full effect. Nick
didn’t get to propose on Valentine’s Day.

Life seemed to go back to normal after a while. They had their own apartments. Rochelle’s was
sandwiched in between the couple’s apartments. Coach had found his wife and kids thanks to
Rochelle. Francis and Zoey had a courthouse wedding because they didn’t know too many people
anymore.

Ellis and Keith reunited and agreed as soon as they had the money to to start another auto shop.
Keith had almost killed Ellis from how hard he squeezed him in their embrace. Nick was happy to
see Ellis exuberant. He let them talk in peace as he hid a few of his secret items for a special night.
He’d finally come up with a plan to propose to Ellis.

Rochelle had made it quite big as a reporter. She was now the lead anchor on national television. She
had interviewed all of her friends who made it through. Although hesitant at first Nick and Francis
finally agreed to share the nightmares and the good times they had in the “wild”. Ellis was the most
popular person she interviewed. She was happy to achieve her dreams.

The infection was halted and limited to the east half of the US. Sweden had found the cure to the
rage virus. It only worked on carriers and non-turned people. The green flu had been caused by
someone wanting to play god. They didn’t catch a name of that person, but they found lab notes in
an abandoned research facility.

“Ellis I’m making dinner tonight so actually come home on time. I know that you want the extra
money for you and Keith to start up the business, but please come home on time,” Nick begged Ellis
who was on his way out the door.
“Okay, I’ll try,” he and Nick kissed goodbye. “Love you.”

“Love you too,” Nick lingered on for an extra moment than what was necessary.

He had it all set in his mind. He would propose to Ellis in the candlelight of the apartment when he came home. Bring out the good wine, and eat a romantic dinner of spaghetti and meatballs from the local Italian diner that he’d pass off as his own because he’d rather get the mood ready then worry about the food.

When Ellis arrived back to the apartment he was greeted with soft candlelight lighting, and Frank Sinatra playing low in the background. Nick came into view wearing nothing special, but looked so handsome to him when he greeted him. The light green dress shirt would accent his emerald eyes perfectly in the light. He wore navy khaki pants.

Ellis shut the door and Nick got down on one knee. He had expected Nick to propose a long time ago, but this was worth the wait in his mind. Everything was perfect. They were safe, and they had a place to call home.

“From the moment I met you I thought you were a kind hearted man. Your optimism annoyed the hell out of me at first, but you showed this grouch that there is good and kindness in the word. With your permission I Nicolas Nisko would like your hand in marriage. I accept you for who you are and who you may grow into in the future and I would be honored to do that by your side. So what do you say Ellis, you want to stick by me?” Nick poured the words out of his mouth holding the ring out to Ellis.

“Yes Nick!” He dropped down hugging Nick. “I will, and I love you, and I think that this is so perfect of you.” He ranted on crying a little bit because of how sweet Nick had tried to be on making this the perfect evening for him. They stayed like that for a few moments and Nick slipped the ring on his finger.

“I got this when we were scavenging for supplies for the car. Me and Rochelle had passed by a jewelry store. There wasn’t anything in the front of the store, but we searched through the back and helped me find the perfect ring for you. I wanted to propose in Valentine’s Day if we hadn’t been quarantined, but I think now is perfect as well. Do you want to dance a little bit before we eat?” Nick explained. Ellis nodded and they got up and danced slowly along with the sweet voice of Frank.

Fate had brought them together in the apocalypse. Two people that would have never spoken to one another before it had fallen hard for each other. An indestructible bond made from being survivors. To falling for each other’s true personalities. Their love would be everlasting.

Chapter End Notes

In the end I really enjoyed writing the story, and I encourage people to post their drafts too because I would like to believe that one of the original ideas brings entertainment to somebody. If there were to be an epilogue Rochelle is to regain a legacy attribute of reincarnation. She was to have been found by Francis and they were to rescue Ellis and Nick when Yolanda’s group would run into them again.

Speaking of them I included so many foreign characters because why the hell not. I’ve studied French (a little), Japanese (is still shitty), and Spanish (quite a bit) over the years.
Honestly thinking back on it now this was my favorite version of the story because the romance in my opinion was a tad more natural and not as forced in this version, but the final draft has a lot more humor to it. Thanks for reading, and have a good morning, great afternoon, and a good night.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!