Advice and Amusement

by Autumnalhogwarts

Summary

After a series of failed attempts to woo Renee, Allison turns to Andrew for help. As Renee's best guy friend he's in a unique position to offer advice. However, that doesn't mean he'll be willing to.

Notes

This is part of a series but can be read alone
As usual, Allison followed Andrew into his room after practice. She took a seat waited for Kevin and Neil to head off to class before speaking. She needed Andrew’s advice but she was not ready for the others to hear, yet. Once they were both gone she spoke up.

“Okay, I’m going to get straight to the point today. You’re like Renee’s best friend, which is weird because she's an angel and you're a demon, but whatever. I like Renee. I’ve been dropping hints for like three months and I thought she finally figured it out last night, but no. I offered her a neck rub because her shoulder was killing her, not even trying to hit on her, just being a decent person, by the way, and that somehow turned into like a full back massage and at the end, she said thanks Allison you're a good friend,” said Allison as she buried her face in her hands, “Good Friend, really?”

Andrew looked at her with a blank expression she could not decipher and said nothing. Nothing she had said so far required a reply, so he waited, wanting to see what exactly she wanted from him.

“You've noticed right?” she asked.

“Everyone’s noticed,” he said, adding “even Neil’s noticed”

“Goddamn it, if he’s noticed it’s useless. I need to take it as a sign that she’s not interested” she said, still hiding behind her hands.

“Giving up so soon?” he challenged.

“Last week she asked me to go to breakfast with her and I said it’s a date and she just laughed and said I hope they have a cinnamon roll left”

“Mhm and have you actually told you that you like her?” he asked

“Yeah, that would be a no,” she said, getting up to pace the room.

She paced the room a few times, before sitting down again with a huff. She pulled at her skirt hem a few times, then folded her hands in her lap. Andrew waited to see if she was going to speak again. He watched her from his perch on his desk for a few minutes. Then took out his phone.

“What are you doing tomorrow night?” he asked.

“What? I don’t know, homework then something with the girls I guess,” she said.

He typed out a text, sent it, then threw his phone to Allison so she could read it. The message was to Renee and said: ‘You’re going out tomorrow 7 pm.’ As she read the text a reply came in, saying simply: ‘OK :)’. She threw his phone back to him and wondered if that meant he would talk to Renee for her.

“What did you do?” Allison asked, eyeing him suspiciously.

“Created an opportunity. You’re going out with Neil and I. What you do with that is up to you,” he said, “I’d suggest you dress down a bit, we’re going to be walking a lot’.

“Where are we going?”

“The same place we always go on Thursday nights”

“No one on the team knows where you and Neil go on Thursdays. There two separate bets about it” she said flatly.

“Hmm maybe I should cancel then,” he said.

“No, it’s okay, I’ll come,” she said quickly before he could change his mind.

“Then stop complaining,” he said, getting up to get more coffee.

Allison watched him, trying to think of what she could do or say that would make it clear to Renee that she liked her. She was going between just telling her something to the effect of ‘I like you and want to date you’ or asking her out to coffee and adding as in a date date at the end when
Andrew came back.

“What do I say to her?” she asked.
Andrew took a drink of his coffee, pretending not to hear her, and looked out the window. The front door opened and Neil walked in, eyeing them both. He put his bag down then sat in the chair in front of Andrew. Allison wondered how she’d already spent an hour with Andrew when he spoke up.

“Neil, Allison has a question for you,” he said.
“Ummm... no, I don’t... Well I probably do but I can't think of anything right now,” she said confused. After a moment she spoke up again, “actually I have one question, how did you figure out that Andrew liked you?”

Neil laughed and looked at Andrew, who just waved his hand in what must have been approval because Neil turned to her looking thoughtful.

“He told me that he hated me, but he'd still blow me,” Neil said after a moment.
“And that worked?” she asked astonished.
“Not well enough because he kissed me like a week later” Neil laughed.
“And that worked?” she asked again.
“Not really? It’s a bit more complicated than that, I was having a rough day, but sure we can go with that worked”
She tried to ask more questions about their relationship but neither of them would answer at all so she decided to ask Neil what he thought she should do about Renee.

“Have you told her that you like her?” he asked.
“Jesus that's exactly what Andrew said to, no I have not. That's a bit desperate, is it not?” she huffed.
“You’re asking us for advice, you’re way past desperate” snapped Neil.
Allison got up to leave, slightly annoyed that she didn’t get any actual advice, and equally annoyed that she’d actually thought that she would get advice from Andrew at all. When she got to the door Andrew said her name and she turned towards him.

“If you hurt her I will--”
She cut him off before he could finish his sentence, “yeah yeah, you'll kill me and make it look like an accident or some shit, whatever”.
She slammed the door on her way out trying to make a point. But the gesture fell flat and came off more like a child trying to get the last word.

Thursday, February 28th, 2008, 11 am
Allison sat alone in the athletes dining hall, having a quick lunch before her noon to 1:50 design class. She was looking over her current project when Andrew sat down across from her. He played with his food more than he actually ate it. She waited for him to say something but he seemed to be paying her no attention, so she turned her thoughts back to her project.

Keeping his eyes on his plate, he spoke up, “We’re stopping by the mall for a minute, then going to dinner, then grocery shopping”.
“That’s what you do every Thursday night? All the bets are a lot sexier than that,”
“We leave for less than two hours and come back with at least four paper bags, not my fault no one pays attention”.
He got up to bus his plate, leaving his backpack. She thought about what she was supposed to wear to such a casual night out, that was somehow also a weird sort of double date. When he returned to grab his stuff she asked him.
Andrew gestured to her dress and said: “what's wrong with what that?”
“I don’t know, I get that this isn’t like a double date, but it is, what did you call it yesterday? An opportunity?” she muttered.
“Renee has seen you dressed to the Nines, and naked, and everything in between. I doubt she cares what you wear to the grocery store”. He grabbed his bag and walked off before she had a chance to even begin to think about his comment.

After bussing her tray she went to class. The almost two-hour class was completely wasted on her, all she could think about was the fact that Renee had seen her naked. It had been a few years since body image was a major problem in Allison’s life, but with one comment Andrew had accidentally brought it all back. A large amount of muscle gain had been unavoidable playing Exy, once she’d allowed herself to eat that is. It was noticeable, especially with the way she dressed. Suddenly, she worried it was too much. Seth had loved her muscles, but maybe Renee wouldn’t.

Annoyed with her sudden spiral into old forgotten habits, she texted Andrew: ‘Has Renee ever mentioned seeing me naked?’

His negative reply came only a minute later, he must not be in class she thought. She sent a second text: ‘Has she ever talked about my body at all?’ The reply was immediate this time and said: ‘Not to me. Stop freaking out.’. If only it was that easy she thought, but let the conversation drop.

Thursday, February 28th, 2008, 6:30 pm

Allison knocked on Andrew’s door a few minutes after they got back from practice. As she walked in the door she did a twirl and asked what he thought of her outfit. She was wearing black victorian looking lace up heals, dark red skinny jeans, and a tan shirt with a colorful plaid design. Andrew thought she looked like she was trying too hard, while also missing the mark by a mile, but he told her it was okay. To her okay coming from Andrew meant she looked amazing. Neil walked out of the bedroom, wearing a nicer shirt than he had been earlier, and she remembered Andrew hates how he dresses just as much as everyone else, if not more. He must have made Neil change his shirt. When Neil didn’t comment on her outfit change she asked him how he liked it.

“Umm... it’s fine? I guess? I don’t know anything about clothes apparently so,” he let his sentence fade off while gesturing with his hands to show his confusion.

He sat down at his desk sorting through papers, while Andrew looked at his phone. Allison was walking over to sit at Kevin’s desk when Andrew asked if they were ready.

“You said Seven” she exclaimed.

“If everyone’s ready now we can leave now”

“You can’t steal my 25 minutes of mental preparation” she muttered.

Neil spoke up then, “Allison chill you hang out with Renee every day, this isn’t any different”

“Neil don’t tell a woman to chill, that is literally the quickest way to make her angry”

Neil lifted his hands to surrender and Andrew said “Pity party’s over we’re leaving”

The three walked out the door and met Renee in the hallway.
Not the night she expected

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After waiting for Neil to lock the door they walked to the car together. When they got outside Renee commented on how nice the weather was for the winter. “I’m still not used to the fact that it never snows here”.

“You can keep your snow in North Dakota, far away from me,” said Andrew.

Renee laughed and climbed in the back seat behind Andrew. Allison climbed in behind Neil, but not before complaining that he doesn’t even need the extra leg room. When the started backing out of the parking spot Renee brought up something about mermaid civilizations, clearly continuing an earlier conversation. Most of the ride to the mall was taken up by Renee and Andrew debating whether or not mermaids would be nomadic. Andrew argued they would migrate like whales, while Renee disagreed, saying they would prefer to stay in one place. At one point Neil brought up the fact that they could do both, like humans, but they both disagreed with that idea. Allison thought about joining in, but she had never heard Andrew talk so much at one time and she didn’t want to ruin it. When they got to the mall finding a parking spot was impossible. Andrew offered to drop them off at the door but Renee said they’d be fine walking.

Neil’s phone went off as they circled the parking lot and he actually checked his message right away for once. “Did you tell Aaron we’re going to the mall? He just texted me that he needs Yellow Vans, I thought he already had yellow vans?”

Andrew made no reply so Renee leaned forward and said: “Kaitlyn’s dog chewed his shoes up the other day”.

Neil turned around in his seat to face her. “Kaitlyn has a dog?” he asked excitedly.

“At her parent's house” Renee replied.

“Oh,” he said and slumped down in his seat.

The parking spot they found was half the mall away from the shoe store, which meant they had to walk through a crowd to get there. Once they managed the trek Neil took one look at the prices and started complaining.

“Go sit down,” Andrew said pointing to a bench near the door. Once Neil was seated he turned to Allison. “He needs new running shoes, the idiot decided to use tape to hold his together”.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” Allison said walking over to the Nikes, “Are we going for practical, or making him buy the most expensive ones?”

Andrew pretended to think about it for a second, “Practical”.

They picked out three styles for him to try on while Renee lectured him on the evils of low-quality footwear. They brought the choices over to him and he said he liked the first pair they showed him. Andrew left the girls to fight with him and went in search of yellow vans.

“Neil, you have to try them on to know if they work for you,” Allison said.

“They’re expensive athletic shoes, they’ll be fine,” he said.

“Neil, you really should try them all on to be sure. You get a lot of use out of your running shoes, they’re worth the investment,” Renee suggested.

He gave in and tried all three pair on, in the end choosing the first pair he said he liked. However, he continued to complain about the price of his own shoes, never once mentioning that Aaron’s shoes cost almost as much. Allison offered to pay for both pair, but Neil said he could pay for them, he just didn’t want to. At the register, Allison saw that he paid with a hundred dollar bill and decided not to question it out loud.

Neil continued complaining about the cost the entire walk back. When they reached the car Andrew finally told him to shut up.

“Make me” Neil challenged.
Andrew pushed him against the car and pinned there with his arms. Allison turned away to give
them some sort of privacy and Renee acted like her phone was suddenly very interesting. Andrew
leaned in and kissed him once then shoved him away.


“We have an audience,” Andrew said waving his hand at the girls.

“Why did we bring them again?” Neil asked as they climbed in the car.

On the drive to dinner, Allison noticed that Andrew and Neil were holding hands. When they
passed the next stop light she realized they weren’t holding hands in the normal way, it looked more
like Neil had his entire hand wrapped around Andrew’s pinky finger. She nudged Renee and tilted
her head to show her, Renee smiled when she saw and grabbed Allison’s pinky in the same way.
Allison lost track of the conversation and where they were headed, focusing instead on the fact that
Renee is almost holding her hand.

When they parked Renee commented on how charming the tiny neighborhood diner was.
Andrew and Neil both nodded in agreement. Allison asked how they found it, Andrew shrugged in
response. As they walked in the door an older woman said hello boys gesturing to the back of the
restaurant.

“Your usual seat is open. Oh! And you’ve brought friends! I’m Jenny, I’ll be your server
tonight.” she says with a friendly southern accent offering both girls her a handshake.
Andrew walked straight to the last booth in the far back, letting Neil slide in first. Renee slid in
across from Neil, leaving Allison to sit across from Andrew. As soon as they were seating the server
appeared with a tray of waters.

“This is Renee... and Allison,” Andrew said pointing to each girl as he said their name.

“Nice to meet you both!” she said, then looked at Neil, “Usual for you two? Yes? Okay, and for
the guests?”

Pointing to Allison Andrew said, “Shredded chicken strip salad,” he moved his hand to point to
Renee before continuing “Chicken strips with fries and a side salad”

“Sounds good! We have all the normal dressings like ranch and Thousand Island, but this week
the special is a Raspberry Vinaigrette. What would ya’ll like?” she asked.

“Raspberry Vinaigrette sounds amazing, thank you,” said Renee.

“I’d like that as well,” said Allison.

Once the server was out of earshot Allison turned to Andrew, “since when do you order for us?”.

“Trust me,” he replied.

“Okay,” Allison said changing the subject, “Spring break is in a couple weeks do you have any
plans?”

“Not yet,” said Neil.

“I was thinking about taking the big kids to go somewhere again, it’s my last spring break after
all, but I want to get a general idea of how people are feeling before I bring it up to everyone,” she
stated.

“I’m fine with anything,” said Neil. The only reply she received from Andrew was a shrug, so
she turned to Renee.

“I think that’s a lovely idea, where did you want to go?” Renee asked.

“Not the beach, but I want horses. We could go back to Blue Ridge, if everyone's cool with that,
we’ve already been there so it may have lost its appeal”.

“Well I didn’t get to exactly enjoy it last time,” Neil muttered.

“Blue Ridge it is then,” she said looking at Renee, who nodded, then she turned to face the boys,
“Andrew?”

“A week stuck in a cabin with 8 children, yay,” he said with a blank expression looking directly
at her. They both held the stare for a few moments. Allison knew it was a challenge, but she failed to see what it was about. Nevertheless, she held out until he spoke again, “Okay”.

“Okay?” she clarified.

“Okay,” he repeated.

“That’s not a yes”

“You expect too much from me Miss Reynolds”.

The food came then so she let the conversation drop. Both Allison and Renee were amazed at the food Andrew picked for them. He somehow knew exactly what they needed, even though neither of them would have thought to order those things for themselves. Allison was beginning to realize that while Andrew rarely contributed to the group, he was always paying attention. She knew he had to be attentive in general, the amount of detail he seemed to notice amazed her. Thinking back she remembered all the times Andrew knew the exact heights of random players the team asked out.

“Hey Andrew, what’s my favorite color?”

“How should I know?”

“Humor me,” she chose this question because she knew for a fact she had never mentioned it in front of him, but she was suddenly sure he knew the answer anyway.

“Teal,” he said. He looked completely uninterested, yet he was correct. Neil’s smirk said he knew exactly what she was doing. At that point, she realized how Andrew had let Renee and herself take over the shoe situation at the mall. He had set the two of them against Neil and wandered off. Allison looked to Renee to see if she was following along. Renee smiled at her and turned the conversation back to spring break plans. They discussed which activities would be best for the whole group, and how many subgroups they could make so everyone got to have the most fun possible. When they finished dinner Andrew paid with his card, and Neil left three bills on the table for a tip.

“You left a $60 tip for a less than $40 meal,” she said when they were all seated in the car.

“Yeah, I’m aware,” Neil responded.

“You complained for half an hour about spending the same amount on a pair of shoes,”

“People are worth more than shoes Allison,”

“Where to now?” Renee asked, abruptly changing the subject. When Allison looked like she was going to speak up again she grabbed her hand and squeezed.

“Grocery shopping,” Andrew said looking at her in the review mirror.

Chapter End Notes

I switched tenses halfway through writing this chapter. I think I caught most of it in editing, but I’m sure there’s something left.
shopping and a movie

Chapter Summary

The night ends well, but Allison never gets the nerve to make a confession to Renee. At the end of the night, Andrew offers her advise and an ultimatum.

“What’s on the shopping list?” asked Renee.

“Spinach, berries, pineapple, ice cream, cereal, and assorted alcoholic beverages,” answered Andrew.

“What does assorted alcoholic beverages mean?” asked Allison.

When Andrew made no reply Neil said, “Andrew likes one beer and Aaron likes another one, Nicky doesn’t like drinking beer on school nights but he’ll have a hard lemonade, and Kevin’s not allowed to have liquor on school nights but for some reason, he can have a wine cooler. So we buy four different things every week”.

“Kevin’s not allowed to?” said Allison.

Neil shrugged, “I guess Coach asked him not to binge drink school nights or something”.

The shopping trip should have been quick since most of what they needed was grouped together in produce and beverages, but Neil and Andrew took their time walking around the entire store. Allison and Renee grabbed a few things that they needed and followed the boys around, chatting about spring break. In the candy aisle, Andrew spent almost five minutes debating between KitKats and Reeses before asking the group what they thought. Everyone said Kitkat, so he chose Reeses instead. Allison asked why he wanted their opinions then, his only answer was a shrug.

At the checkout, Neil grabbed the candy and paid for it while everyone else unloaded the cart onto the belt. Renee put a separator up between her stuff and the boys, but Andrew removed it as soon as she let go. She tried again, but Andrew swatted her hand away. Both girls tried to thank him for paying, but he just stared at them. When the cashier scanned the first six pack she asked for all of their ID’s. That explains why Neil left then, Allison thought.

As they pulled into the Fox Tower parking lot, Neil asked Allison to text Nicky and Aaron that they were back. The trek up to the third floor was a lot easier with the girls to help. Andrew was just unlocking the door when Nicky walked out of his dorm room.

“How was the double date?” he asked.

“Grocery shopping hardly counts as a date,” Neil said while the girls sent each other questioning looks. Allison wondered if Renee realized it was supposed to be a date, awhile Renee wondered why Nicky thought it was a date.

“We did the shopping you can put it away,” said Andrew as he dropped his bag on the counter.
Neil did the same and walked into the living room, so the girls followed suit. Nicky knew that would happen but still complained about not even living there anymore. Andrew claimed one of the bean bag chairs while ignoring Nicky’s speech.

“Do you guys have homework to do or something? We were going to watch a movie,” said Neil, claiming the spot on the floor in front of Andrew.

“Don’t you have to leave for practice in like an hour?” Allison asked.

“I don’t practice on Thursdays,” Neil said, “Abby said lack of sleep does more harm than extra practice does good, so we compromised and I only do an extra practice three days a week now”.

“That’s a good idea, Neil, your body needs rest,” said Renee, “What were you going to watch?”

Andrew shrugged and Neil raised his arms in an ‘I don’t know’ gesture.

“I got the Little House On the Prairie box set for Christmas, and we’ve been watching that recently. We’re on season 3 if you would like to watch too,” she offered.

“Sure, what’s it about?” asked Neil.

“Oh honey, you’ve never heard of Little House on the Prairie? That’s just sad,” said Allison. She explained the general plot of the first two seasons to them while Renee went to get the DVD. Once all the groceries were put away Nicky joined them, taking the second bean bag chair. He added some detail to Allison’s summery, claiming she left out too much of the drama.

Meanwhile, Renee came back with two pillows and blankets that Allison arranged while Renee started the video. They settled in between the bean bags, slightly squished together because Andrew had moved his closer to Nicky’s when Renee had left the room.

Halfway through the first episode, Andrew got up to get some ice cream, when he came back he saw that Renee was asleep with her head on Allison’s shoulder. He tilted his head towards them so Neil would follow his sight line. When he noticed Renee sleeping he smiled and patted Allison’s hand, she blushed in response. At the end of the second episode, Allison gently woke Renee and asked if she wanted to go to bed.

“I’m okay, we can watch another one,” she replied.

“Honey, you’ve already slept through two”.

“Oh,” Renee said rubbing her eyes, “maybe I should go to bed then, you can keep watching if you want”.

“It’s almost 11, I should be getting to bed too,” said Nicky, getting up from his seat, “Good night”.

After Nicky left Allison helped Renee pick up their cozy nest and ushered her off to bed. Allison tucked Renee in and sat on the couch to text Andrew, she sent: ‘Thanks for the groceries and dinner’. He replied a minute later with: ‘opportunity well spent?’.

She thought about that for a moment before realizing she had chickened out. Nothing that she had done throughout the night had been any different than a normal. Besides Renee grabbing her hand in the car to mirror the boys, it had been a casual night out. She responded: ‘not exactly, maybe next time’.
He didn’t reply for a few minutes, and she was beginning to think the conversation was over when her phone buzzed again. She read the text three times before she fully comprehended the meaning.

‘Here’s some advice. Stop stalling. A stone cold bitch like you shouldn’t be this scared of rejection. Get over yourself Reynolds.’

As she read the message for the fourth time a second text came in. ‘Make a choice or I will. You are not staying in purgatory forever.’
Friday, February 29th, 2008, 8 am

After a terrible night’s sleep, Allison put all of her effort into morning practice. At the end of practice, she was slow to shower and get ready for the day. By the time she left the locker room, only Neil and Andrew were still at the court. Andrew was sitting on the sofa, waiting for Neil.

“Hey, my ride left. Can I catch one with you?” she asked.

He looked at her and neither rolled his eyes nor said no, so she counted it as a yes. They only had to wait a couple of minutes before Neil was ready to go. Back at the tower she entered their room without invitation and stole Andrew’s desk chair.

Andrew made a show of looking around the room before he said, “In case you haven’t noticed yet, this is not your room”

“Were you serious last night?” she said, ignoring his statement. At that moment Neil came walking out of the kitchen. She waved a hand at him in a dismissive gesture and he mumbled something about it being his dorm room as he walked into the bedroom and closed the door.

“What part are you questioning?” Andrew clarified.

“All of it,” she said.

“Hmm... maybe you’re not good enough for Renee after all”.

“Can you stop being a dick and help me please?” she grumbled.

“I don’t like that word. You know that. And I am helping you. You’re being very difficult about it too,” Andrew responded. “How about this, you have one week to do something”.

“Or?” she asked.

“The decision will be out of your hands”.

“What does that mean?”

“It means you will no longer have the option of making a choice,” he claimed.

“Can you stop being so cryptic and give me an actual answer?” she huffed.

“Not today,” he said turning away from her, “lock the door behind you”. 
She knew she had been dismissed, but she sat in his living room for another five minutes before leaving. Not locking the door crossed her mind, but she decided against purposely annoying Andrew when he had the power to mess with her life.

Monday, March 3rd, 2008, 8 pm.

Allison knocked on Andrew’s door to ask him to proofread her sociology paper. She was taking the class for an easy A in her final term, and since Andrew was a sociology minor figured he’d be the best person to make corrections. Nicky answered the door letting her into the room. The floor was covered with scientific journals, Andrew sitting in the middle of them with Kevin’s laptop.

“What do you need I’m busy,” he asked without looking up.

“Can you proof my soc paper?” she asked handing him the essay, “it’s not due until Friday so you don’t have to do it now”.

He took the paper from her and started reading it. As he turned the first page a loud thump came from the other room and Neil screamed, then yelled “Jesus Christ”.

“He’s a screamer! Matt owes me 20 dollars,” hollered Nicky.

“Nicky,” Andrew warned with a harsh voice. Nicky raised his hand in a false surrender and ran out of the room. Then he called out, “you dead in there?”.

“I’m fine. Kevin’s stupid goddamn history book fell on me,” Neil said.

“I can make him stop for good if you want?” Allison claimed. When Andrew’s only response was a raised eyebrow she continued. “Nicky, I can make him stop talking about you and Neil”.

“Okay,” he replied.

“Answer two yes or no questions first,” Allison said. She waited for an answer and after a moment Andrew waved a hand for her to continue.

“Whatever you and Neil are doing, are you happy with it?”

He raised his lip at happy so she added, “fine, content with it”.

“Yes”.

“Is he?”

“Ask him”.

“I’m asking you,” she challenged.

“Yes”.

“Okay. Good”

She got out her phone and texted Nicky: ‘if you so much as mention Neil and Andrew in the
same sentence again I will rip off your balls and mail them to Erik, k?’
Nicky texted back instantly: ‘jesus ally chill’.

She replied: ‘I’m serious Nicholas. Not one peep about them. Or anything about their relationship. Or anything that could be even slightly taken as sexual about Neil’

He replied ‘yes dear’ and she threw her phone to Andrew so he could read the text chain.

“I doubt that will work,” he said.

“They key is you have to be willing to do it. No man would use that threat and mean it. I, on the other hand, have no qualms about it,” she said examining her nails.

He turned back to her essay and started making corrections in purple pen. After he finished going over it for grammar errors he took out a green pen and went over it again for ideas and content. Eventually, he handed it back to her and commented on a few problems he found with her argument. He claimed she’d get a high B if she left it, and at least a mid-A if she made his corrections.

Wednesday, March 5th, 2008 9 am

Allison barged into the dorm and threw herself onto the bean back chair exclaiming “Fuck. Me”.

“I’m Gay,” Andrew replied walking out of the bedroom, “and once again this is not your room”.

“I know you’re gay it’s a figure of speech,” she huffed, then paused and stared at him, “I’ve never heard you say that before”.

“I rarely do,” he claimed climbing up to his normal perch on his desk.

“Oh, why?” She asked confused.

“It’s not anyone’s business”.

“Then why’d you just tell me?” she clarified.

“To shut you up. I’m getting tired of your complaining when you do nothing to solve the problem,” he said.

She huffed and leaned farther into the chair. Since Friday she had invited Renee out on two “dates”, both times Renee said yes and asked if they could invite various other teammates along. At one point she even asked Renee if it could be just the two of them, but even then Renee didn’t seem to catch on. Annoyed she tried to turn the conversation back on Andrew.

“Is Neil the first guy you’ve been with?” she tried first.

“No”.

“I don’t believe you,” she announced.

“What you do or do not believe has no effect on me,” he said. She glared at him to no avail. He continued, ‘You’ve spent hours talking to me about your feelings, have you mentioned anything to Renee? Even once? No? Asking her out to meals does not convey new meaning after four years of
regularly going out together. You have changed your mind, not your actions”.

“You’re right,” she said burying her face in her hands, “I hate that you’re right but you are”.

Chapter End Notes

For the purposes of, this fic Andrew is a Criminology major, sociology minor.
Chapter Summary

Abby forces them to interest, and another date night is scheduled.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Wednesday, March 5th, 2008 6 pm

Andrew blocked an impossible shot from Kevin and overextended his arm. When they’re dismissed after practice Abby immediately called Andrew into her office to check out his shoulder. About two minutes after she shut the door she walked out to find Neil talking with Dan and Wymack. She dragged him into her office and shut the door. Andrew was just sitting on the table staring at the wall.

“I’m trying to check out his shoulder, but he keeps tensing up when I touch him and I can’t feel anything,” said Abby.

“Yeah, I can’t help with that,” said Neil rubbing his head, “I can go get Renee?”

“Would that help?” She asked looking at Andrew.

“Maybe,” he replied.

Neil left the office and knocked on the girl's locker room before opening the door a couple inches and called out, “Is Renee available? Or any of the big kids?”

Allison showed up at the door wearing just her shorts and a sports bra, “Wrong locker room Captain”.

“Allison needs some help, is Renee in the shower? Or can you help?”

“Give me a minute,” Allison says and shuts the door.

When she reappeared she has her jersey back on. They walked to the office together and Neil knocked before opening the door.

“Renee was in the shower, will Allison work?” He asks.

“Come on in Allison,” says Abby.

Neil opened the door wider for her to pass him and closed it behind her. Allison looked around the room noticing Andrew sitting on the table shirtless. She placed her hands on her hips.

“What seems to be the problem here?” She asked.

“I don’t like being touched from behind,” Andrew answered.

“Oh, umm... okay,” she said rubbing the back of her neck nervously, realizing why that was,
“what can I do to help?”

“Sit somewhere I can see you and watch Abby,” he said.

“Yeah, I can do that, anything else?”

He shook his head no in response. She pulled the desk chair over to the wall and sat directly across from Andrew. Once she was settled Andrew laid down on his stomach and Abby started feeling his shoulder again.

“Relax Andrew, I just need to make sure you didn’t pull a muscle,” she said when her hands were met with tight muscles.

“I already told you it doesn’t hurt,” he said.

“I still need to check, I’m your doctor”.

After a couple minutes, she announced that he had not pulled a muscle, but she was still worried about his shoulder. She said she wanted him to sit out practice until Monday. After explaining that she said she was going to give him a quick massage.

“Allison come a little closer so I can show you how to do this,” she said before he started.


“Because I’m going out of town this weekend and I want to make sure you can do it properly when I’m gone”.

Allison scooted the chair closer to the table, making sure to stay in Andrew’s line of sight and watched Abby’s every move. They traded spaces after a couple minutes and Abby watched Allison practice what she had just been shown. A few corrections were suggested, and then Andrew was allowed to sit up and put his shirt on.

“Okay, I’m leaving tomorrow after practice, so I can do it then but after that, I need you to do it every night, I’ll be back on Tuesday morning,” Abby said to Allison.

“I’ll be okay, I don't need her help,” said Andrew.

“This is not a debate young man,” said Abby, turning to Allison she continued, “if you can get Renee to help you, it’ll be easier. Neil will just give in when he says he doesn’t need it”.

“Why do I have to do it? We’re not friends,” said Allison, “and it’s kind of weird touching him”\n
The look of disappointment Abby gave her, made her dip her head. “I don’t care if you like each other. You have been through too much together to act like this. You are a team and you will help each other out. Do you understand?”

“Yes ma’am,” replied Allison

“And for you,” she said turning her disappointed too on Andrew, “I expect you to let her help you. Got it?”

“Yes ma’am,” he said with a slightly amused tone to his voice.

“No exy, no gym, no weights, no push-ups, no fight club with Renee, no working out at all,” Abby continued, “I don’t want you to pick up anything heavier than a gallon of milk. Okay?”
“Yes ma’am,” he said again.

“Good. If I hear about you doing any of that, or that you fought Allison on the massage I will bench you for a month, am I understood?”

“Yes ma’am,” he said for the third time.

“I have not been on a vacation since Kevin joined the team and I think I deserve one, don’t you?” she asked, but continued before either of them could answer, “I will not be happy if I have to cancel or come back early because you two can’t get along for four days”.

Neither one made a reply, so she told them to go take a shower.

Thursday, March 6, 2008, 11 am

Once again Andrew joined her in the dining hall for lunch. He threw his tray down without saying anything and picked at his food. Allison was busy looking over her notes and eating so she ignored him until she was done.

“How’s your shoulder?” she asked

“There’s nothing wrong with it, she’s just paranoid,” he argued.

Thinking he was in a bad mood Allison decided to reread her notes again instead of dealing with him. After a couple pages, she noticed him looking at her.

“What?” she demanded.

“Are you coming with us tonight?” he asked.

“What? No? I thought that was a one-time thing?” she stuttered confused.

He tilted his head at her, “Neil said you can intrude one more time, and your time is up in about 12 hours, so it’s up to you”.

“Are you sure? I’d have to ask Renee if she’s even available tonight,” she said after a moment.

He waved his hand at her and got out his phone. He typed and sent: “Hey Nee*, dinner tonight, same as last week?”.

The phone buzzed a minute later with a reply: “Of course :)”.

Andrew looked up at Allison for a moment, tilting his head from side to side. Trying to decide how much trouble he would be in if he stopped the clock now, instead of at midnight. After a minute he decided it’s better to ask forgiveness, not that he would, and sent another message: “It’s a double date then! How exciting! Allys been trying to seduce you for months! Maybe now that you know she can finally succeed?” Before a rely could come in he shoved his phone in his backpack and stood up.

“She’s in,” he said as he walked away.
Thursday, March 6, 2008, 6 pm

Renee was a mess at practice, she failed to block even the easiest goals. Allison tried to ask if she was okay, but she just replied that she hadn’t slept well. Dan and Neil tried to help as well, asking if she needed to rest or sit practice out with Andrew, but she waved them off and said they needed her in goal and the exercise was good for her.

After practice, Abby called Allison into her office with Andrew to watch the massage again, as well as try to help Andrew relax. The process only took a couple minutes this time, since Abby didn’t feel the need to take Allison through the process step-by-step again. When she dismissed them Allison pulled Andrew to the side.

“Do you know what's wrong with Renee?” she asked, her voice full of concern.

“Oh nothing, she’ll be fine by tomorrow,” he said calmly.

“So you do know what it is then?” she tried.

“Yes and you don’t need to know,” he sat on the couch, not needing to shower since he hadn’t practice. She perched herself on the arm of the couch and opened looked like she was going to speak.

“Go shower, I’d rather not go out to dinner with you smelling like that,” he said and she knew the conversation was over.

Chapter End Notes

*Hey Nee - Nee would be pronounced like Nay, spelled like that because of how Renee is spelled and Andrew likes to do nicknames for people

Also, the point of view for this chapter is all over the place. The plan was to only have Allison and Andrew's pov in the whole series but the beginning didn't work without Neil's.
Thursday, March 6, 2008, 6:15 pm

Back at the dorm, as soon as she was dressed to go, Allison marched over to the monster’s room and banged on the door. Andrew opened the door on the third knock and moved out of the way so she could enter, closing the door behind her. Allison stomped over to his desk and sat on the edge.

“You little bitch, you told her,” she accused.

“You’ll have to be more specific, I’ve told a lot of people a lot of things,” he contested.

“You know exactly what I’m talking about. I just asked Renee if she could see my bra through my shirt and she blushed and left the room without even looking. I ask her that every day. She’s never had that reaction before,” she glared to get her point across, but he didn’t seem to notice or care.

“Oh, oh, oh, that,” he said acting like it had suddenly dawned on him, “yes I told her. Too late to back out now, she’ll be here any second”.

She sat on the desk and stared at him. Hearing him admit to it made her angrier than she thought it would. He’d said she had 12 hours left, then immediately went against that and said something to Renee. The only good part in all of this was that she now understood why Renee was such a mess at practice.

Just then Neil walked out of the bedroom wearing black jeans and a black shirt that didn’t match the black of his jeans. Andrew told him no and he went back into the room, only to come out again wearing a gray shirt. After being told to try again he huffed and went back into the room.

“Instead of whining why don’t you help Neil find a reasonable outfit?” Andrew instructed her.

She stayed on the desk for a minute then followed Neil into the bedroom to avoid dealing with Andrew, then realized she’d been in their dorm a lot, but she had never been in their bedroom. The lofted bed was clearly Kevin’s, it had a quilt, a Trojans blanket, a red pillow, and a fox pillow. The bunks were harder to tell apart, both had one black pillow and one dark colored blanket. She guessed the top bunk was Andrew’s because it all looked expensive, whereas the blanket on bottom bunk looked threadbare.

Walking the closet a couple times she pulled out three black shirts, all clearly Andrew’s but she doubted Neil would mind. Then she asked where his jeans were and started digging through the drawer. It housed eleven pairs of jeans, but she had only seen him wear five of them. After collecting the three most abused pair she turned to him.

“These are disgusting. You have six pairs of unworn jeans why do you Insist on wearing these?” she challenged, throwing them on top of the dresser.

“I’ve worn all my jeans at least once” he mumbled.
“Neil these ones still have the tags on,” she said as she held up a pair of olive green ones. She threw them at him and picked a very plain thin black sweater from her pile of shirts. “Go put these on, take off the tags first though”.

He came back looking bored and she rolled up his sleeves twice before pushing them up to his elbows. He ran his hands over his exposed scars a few times, then shoved his hands in his pockets.

“Better?” he asked.

“Damn, I’m good,” she said to herself, “where are your shoes?”

He pointed to three pairs at the bottom of the closet. His gym shoes, the running shoes she’d picked out last week, and his worn out tennis shoes. Allison barely controlled her eye roll, of course, he only three pairs. Next to them were nine pairs of clean, perfectly lined up shoes.

“Andrew’s?” she asked confused.

“Yeah,” Neil replied, “but he’s half a size bigger than me”.

“Does half a size matter in guy's shoes?”

“I don’t know? Maybe?” he responded.

“Andrew, can Neil wear your shoes? He promises not to hurt them,” she called out.

Suddenly Andrew appeared at the door, he looked Neil over for a second, then turned and grabbed black high-top vans. After shoveing them at Neil he announced Renee had arrived and they were leaving.

The car ride to the restaurant started off in awkward silence. Allison saw Neil’s arm move from the corner of her eye and then noticed Neil had his hand on the stick shift, with Andrew’s hand was over his since he needed to shift to drive. She bumped Renee’s knee and whispered asking her if it counted at holding hands. When Renee saw she smiled and placed her hand on top of Allison’s in the same manner. After a few minutes, in a brave move Allison turned her hand around and linked their fingers. At the dinner the same woman, Jen? thought Allison, greeted them smiling.

“There’s my boys!” she chirped, “and you brought your friends back! How lovely! Hello Renee, hello Allison, how’re ya’ll doin’ tonight?”

Andrew answered her question and lead them back to the table. Meanwhile, Allison felt bad she had forgotten the server’s name when she had remembered theirs.

“Red meat?” Andrew said looking at the girls.

“What?” asked Allison.

“Do you want red meat?” he clarified.

Allison said no at the same time Renee said yes. When the server came to their booth she pulled up a chair and sat down, ruffling Neil’s hair as she did do.

“Sorry I missed talkin last week, it was too busy,” said the server.
“No need to apologize, Miss Jenny” Neil responded, “we come in and throw off your night, not the other way around”.

It was Jenny! Allison was glad to have a name, thinking of her as ‘the server’ felt weird when she was sitting with them. She watched as Neil caught her up on his week and the team, finishing up with Andrew’s shoulder injury and how Allison was helping.

“Oh Honey, you need to take better care of yourself! Injuries are serious business!” she said looking at Andrew fondly. Allison wondered how anyone could look at Andrew like that when Jenny continued, “you’ll be no good to anyone if you don’t take care of yourself and I know how you like to be useful”.

Andrew rolled his eyes without malice and Neil smiled bumping his shoulder into Andrew’s.

“Okay, enough chit-chat, usual for you two, and what will the beautiful couple here have?” Jenny said as she stood up, pulling out her notebook.

“Sweet onion cheeseburger without pickles,” Andrew said pointing at Renee, then continued pointing toward Allison, “and baked pasta with chicken, with a side of fries with...”

He paused turning his head from side to side a few times. Jenny smiled at him waiting patiently. “Poppy seed honey mustard and a side salad”.

Allison tried to argue that was too much food, but she lost when everyone agreed athletes need to eat more. When Jenny left the table Allison thought about how the boys let her mother them and wondered how they would have turned out if they had a mother like her.

As they waited for their food the conversation turned from school to what kind of pets mermaids would keep. Neil tried to offer a general fish, but Andrew said that was stupid because they’d have no way to contain them. While the boys bickered over whether or not a bond would be enough to make it work Renee grabbed Allison’s hand under the table and locked their fingers. She hoped Renee couldn't feel her heart beat as she tried to gain control of it. Eventually, Renee said dolphins and Allison said whales.

“How the fuck would mermaids keep whales at pets?” questioned Andrew, narrowing his eyes and gesturing with his hands.

“Now I know I did not just hear you swear in my restaurant Andrew Minyard,” lectured Jenny, coming up from behind him with their food.

“No ma’am,” he said turning to Jenny wide-eyed in genuine surprise, then turned back and glared at Allison when she laughed.

The food was amazing. Both girls commented on how well Andrew’s choices fit their needs for the evening. The conversation turned from mermaids to spring break plans and by the end of the meal, Allison had a full agenda for the week. Jenny returned a few times so check on them and offer dessert. Andrew accepted asking for a brownie and let the girls decide for themselves. Renee was full, but Allison asked for a brownie as well, giving Renee a few bites when it came.

“How do you know her?” asked Allison as they ate, “it seems like you guys are pretty close.

Andrew raised his hands in an ‘I don’t know’ fashion, leaving Neil to answer.

“Over the summer we were looking for somewhere to eat away from campus and found this place and she just sort of adopted us. It was really weird at first but she just kept talking to us and
eventually, we got used to it I guess? She doesn’t really take no for an answer when it comes to talking to people,” he gestured like he wanted to continue, but came up with nothing and dropped his hands.

He looked across the room at her taking the order of an elderly couple, “Have you ever tried to tell a southern woman not to feed you? It’s literally impossible”.

Chapter End Notes

This has been done for over a week and I literally forgot to post it! Sorry!
I'm super bad at tagging so feel free to let me know if I need to add any
Chapter Summary

Andrew makes an opportunity to get Allison and Renee alone together for a few minutes.

Chapter Notes

I tried to properly edit this one, but I'm sure I missed something.

After seeing the boys interact more with Jenny, Allison decided not to comment on Neil’s over tipping. She figured it was his way of saying thanks for caring. As they walked back to the car Andrew pulled out a cigarette and lit it, handing it to Neil for the first drag, then taking it back and smoking it himself. Since they both seemed comfortable to smoke in silence Allison let them. When it was about half gone Neil asked them if they were going to stay to watch a movie again. The question pulled Renee out of her own thoughts and she blinked before asking what movie they were planning on watching this week.

Neil made a face that screamed that he was not excited about the choice, “the one where the mom throws her daughters at all the rich guys and tries to sell them off before they realize what’s happening”.

Andrew rolled his eyes, “Pride and Prejudice”.

The mix of Neil’s dramatic explanation mixed with Andrew’s matter of fact statement startled a laugh out of Allison, “Yeah I want to watch that with you. God Neil that was the worst summary of Pride and Prejudice that I have ever heard”.

Neil huffed, showing how annoyed he actually was about the situation, “Kevin has to write a paper on the accuracy of the costumes. I don’t get why we have to watch it with him”.

“It’s a good movie,” Andrew stated, throwing his cigarette stub on the ground and rubbing it out with his shoe.

Allison stared after him confused. The idea of Andrew Minyard enjoying Pride and Prejudice kept her frozen in place while everyone else climbed into the car. He let her stand there for a moment as he started the car then rolled down his window. “I will leave you here if you don’t get in the car”.

She climbed in but couldn’t help asking, “since when do you like period dramas?”

Andrew ignored the comment by pushing in a cd and turning the volume up. Loud guitar started playing followed by a yell and a heavier guitar and drums. Renee leaned forward and asked him politely to turn it down. Looking in the rearview mirror Allison saw him roll his eyes. He reached
over and changed the song, leaving the volume the same. Piano started playing followed by more instruments and she recognized the tune but couldn’t place it until the lyrics started. Memories of her friends singing in Matt’s truck came to her, but the name of the song evaded her. She listened to Neil quietly sing the song to himself and swore that she could hear him smiling. Andrew seemed to be humming along as well. She turned to Renee to comment, but she saw that she was mouthing along to the words too. The lyrics spoke of a relationship coming to an impasse and ending emotionally, to Allison. While watching the other three she realized it clearly meant something else to all of them. As the song was winding down Andrew lowered the volume and asked what the girls needed at the store. Neither of them had asked Dan or made any sort of list. They went back of forth a few times naming things, in the end deciding that they didn’t actually need anything. Renee said they could always look around once they got in the store.

Andrew clicked his tongue three times, “no, sorry, you two are staying in the car this time”.

"Andrews it's freezing outside,” Allison gasped.

“It’s not freezing, its 45 degrees. You can handle 15 minutes. I’ll leave you the keys if you’re going to cry about it,” Andrew replied as he pulled into the parking lot.

Muttering whatever and crossing her arms was a childish move but she did it anyway. Andrew caught her eyes in the mirror as she did it and winked, she scowled at him in return. As soon as the car was off he threw the keys over his head at Renee and declared his car was a strictly PG zone. Neil muttered something under his breath as he got out of the car and Allison thought it sounded a lot like ‘unfortunately’.

After the doors were closed, she turned to Renee who was blushing, “that child is a menace”.

“He means well,” she said fondly, playing with the keys, avoiding looking at Allison, “he... umm... told me something earlier that I think you may not have wanted me to know”.

Allison buried her head in her hands and sighed. Looking up she noticed Renee still had her eye on her hands. Sometimes she forgot Renee was a few years older than her, at the moment she looked incredibly young.

“I did want you to know, I just... I don’t even know what he said to you,” Allison replied sitting up straighter and looking solely at Renee’s face, “I’ve been trying to ask you out for a little while but recently Andrew pointed out that my behavior hadn’t actually changed. I’ve always gone out to dinner with you and to the movies and shopping and bowling and on vacation. And I’ve always asked you to check my clothes and do my hair and... I guess I haven’t really been fair to you, I’m sorry”.

Renee looked up at the apology with a confused look on her face, “you don’t need to apologize. I understand. I’m sure talking to girls has more difficulties socially than talking to boys”.

“That’s for sure! What do you say, would you want to go on a real date? Andrew pointed out that we’re way past that but I think going back to the start might be smart”.

Renee tilted her head looking confused, “You’ve been talking to him a lot? I had no idea you talked to him about anything personal”.

“Yeah, he’s, umm, he’s been pretty helpful actually, he’s growing on me”.

“Okay,” Renee said softly, then repeated it louder and steadier, “Okay. Starting from the beginning sounds good”.


Allison smiled at that and pulled her in for a hug. “Okay, Nee I can do that”.

Renee pulled back to get a good look at Allison’s face and raised an eyebrow, “Nee? That's what Andrew calls me!”

“Oh my god, I swear I did not know that!” Allison said blushing, “Maybe I’ve been spending too much time with him”.

Renee laughed and leaned back into Allison’s arms for a hug. Allison rubbed circles on her back for a few minutes thinking about how different Renee was from anyone else she’d ever dated, male or female.

“I want you to know that I don’t have any expectations,” she stated, trying to be clear with her meaning, but not overly blunt.

“Hmm, what?”

“Well, I, ah no, umm you...” she huffed trying to find the right words, “I know you’ve never had a uh physical relationship before, and I think maybe there should be some boundaries there? I mean I don’t expect anything from you... physically...”

Renee laughed and hugged her tighter, “We don’t have to figure anything out right now Ally”.

Allison took that as a sign she needed to stop talking and laid her cheek on Renee’s hair. They stayed like that until the boys returned, using Neil’s key fob to unlock the doors from a few feet away. Renee looked down at the keys in her hand thinking she had accidentally pressed it, only to be interrupted by Andrew opening the driver's door and popping the trunk. Once the groceries were safely stored both boys climbed in without a work and they set off towards the dorm.

Chapter End Notes

45 degrees Fahrenheit is about 7.3 degrees Celsius
Once again Nee is said more like Nay
The song they listened to in the car was Cat and Mouse by Red Jumpsuit Apparatus

There is now an end in sight, I’ve added a chapter cap! This was meant to be the last chapter but that's life. The next chapter will finish off the evening and the story will continue in the next work.
The End of the Beginning

Chapter Notes

Y’all this is like 10 or 11 months late and I have no excuses. Thank you for putting up with this! I hope you enjoy the end of this little story.

Like last time Neil asked them to text Nicky and Aaron they were back when they pulled into the parking lot. As they walked into the building, carrying the grocery bags, Allison and Renee held hands. Andrew caught Allison smiling like school girl, but decided to play nice and not comment on it. He didn’t want to ruin the night by ‘accidentally’ offending her or embarrassing Renee.

When they reached their door Nicky threw it open before Neil had a chance to put his key in the lock, demanding to know what took them so long, despite the fact that they were home earlier than last week. Andrew shoved past him and put the bag he was carrying on the counter, taking out a small plastic bag first, then walked into the living room and threw himself into one of the bean bag chairs. Neil and the girls followed suit, leaving Nicky to put everything away.

Kevin was already in the second bean bag, with a blanket over his lap, having set up the movie before they got there. He had the remote in his hand and his laptop on his knees to take notes on. Neil threw himself down on the ground between Andrew’s legs and leaned back on the chair. Somehow he managed to do it all without ever touching Andrew.

Allison and Renee settled between the two chairs, on pillows someone had kindly put down. Allison leaned against the wall, while Renee settled between her legs. Aaron came in as they were settling in, carrying his own throw blanket and pillows. It was going to be a full house. He threw his stuff down on the other side of Kevin and went to help Nicky put everything away.

While they waited Andrew sorted through the small bag in his lap.

“Allison,” he said, getting her attention as he threw her favorite candy bar at her head. He did the same thing to Renee and Kevin.

No one mentioned the way Allison and Renee were sitting as they waited. However, Allison thought he saw Andrew look them over.

“I still don’t get why we have to watch this movie,” Neil complained.

“It’s a good movie,” Andrew said.

“Would you like to know the historical significance of Pride and Prejudice?” Kevin asked. Neil told him no quickly, but Kevin started lecturing him anyway. “Do you know how big of a deal it was for a woman to turn down an advantageous offer of marriage? And Elizabeth does it twice!”

Andrew leaned forward and covered Neil’s mouth when he looked like he was going to interrupt. “You did this to yourself.”

“It’s also very meaningful that Mr. Darcy takes her criticism seriously and changes his behavior,” Renee said.
“Exactly!”

Kevin and Renee discussed the major plot points while started tearing apart his sour straws. Andrew was even paying attention to the conversation, though he didn’t give any input.

“Ready?” Nicky asked, flipping off the lights and he walking in. He settled down on the far side of Andrew’s bean bag chair.

Andrew handed him his candy, then threw a box of dots to Aaron and he walked to his pile of blankets.

“No talking,” Kevin said sternly as he pressed play.

The clicking of Kevin’s keyboard, mixed with the classical music of the film, put Neil to sleep within a few minutes. His head leaned against Andrew’s knee.

Allison waited until everyone was caught up in the film to wrap her arm around Renee’s waist and pull her closer. Renee sighed as she leaned her head on Allison’s shoulder. Within a few minutes Renee snuggled up even closer. It only took another five before Renee was fast asleep, trapping Allison behind her. By the time the movie was over Allison’s shoulder was tingling, but she refused to wake Renee.

Aaron moved first, collecting his blanket and offering them a quiet good night. Beside Allison, Andrew shoved Nicky’s shoulder to wake him up. While he did that Kevin took his laptop to his desk and headed into the bedroom. Once Nicky was awake he dragged his feet out the door, leaving Allison and Renee as the last guests.

Andrew ran his hands through Neil’s hair, waking him up slowly. Allison was sure that he’d woken up with the credits, as everyone started to move around but he hadn’t opened his eyes yet. Neil stirred, only to snuggle his face closer to Andrew’s leg.

“If you don’t get up, I’m going to knee you in the face,” Andrew whispered, as he leaned close to Neil’s ear. The effect of his words was lost by the gentle stroke of his hand through Neil’s hair and the quiet way he spoke.

Neil stood up, blinking and rubbing his eyes as he walked to the bathroom.

“Your turn Reynolds,” Andrew said, standing up and looking over Renee’s sleeping form.

Allison ran her hand through Renee’s hair, not at all copying the soft way Andrew had woken Neil. “Renee? The movie’s over. Are you ready to go to bed?”

Renee hummed in her sleep. Allison looked at Andrew for help but he just stood over them, watching and judging. She suddenly felt like this was some sort of test.

“Come on Nee,” Alison said, with a gentle push forward to get Renee to sit up. “It’s time to go to bed.”

Renee groaned. “I’m awake.”

“Yes dear, of course you are,” Allison chuckled. She caught Andrew’s eye and saw him with an almost soft look.

Renee crawled off of Allison’s lap and stood up slowly. She rubbed her eyes and left the room, dragging her feet. Allison stood up to follow behind her, but Andrew caught her wrist as she passed
“You can’t play games with her. There’s no on again, off again every other week option here,” Andrew said with a stern look on his face.

“I’ve learned from my past mistakes, Andrew, I won’t hurt her.”

“Apparently we are friends now, but I will not hesitate to hurt you if you hurt her.”

Allison nodded her head. “I wouldn’t ask for anything less. So, you’re going to hold me accountable?”

“I’ve been told that’s what friends do,” Andrew said with an eye roll.

Allison left the room quickly, going to find Renee and make sure she made it pack to her own room without passing out in the hallway. She found her asleep on the couch, snoring cutely. After watching her sleep for a moment Allison gently guided her half asleep girlfriend into her own bed. She fell asleep that night feeling lighter and happier than she had in over a year.

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